PERSONALSTRUCTURES
TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE

WITH THE PERSONAL PARTICIPATION OF THE FOLLOWING ARTISTS

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Note:
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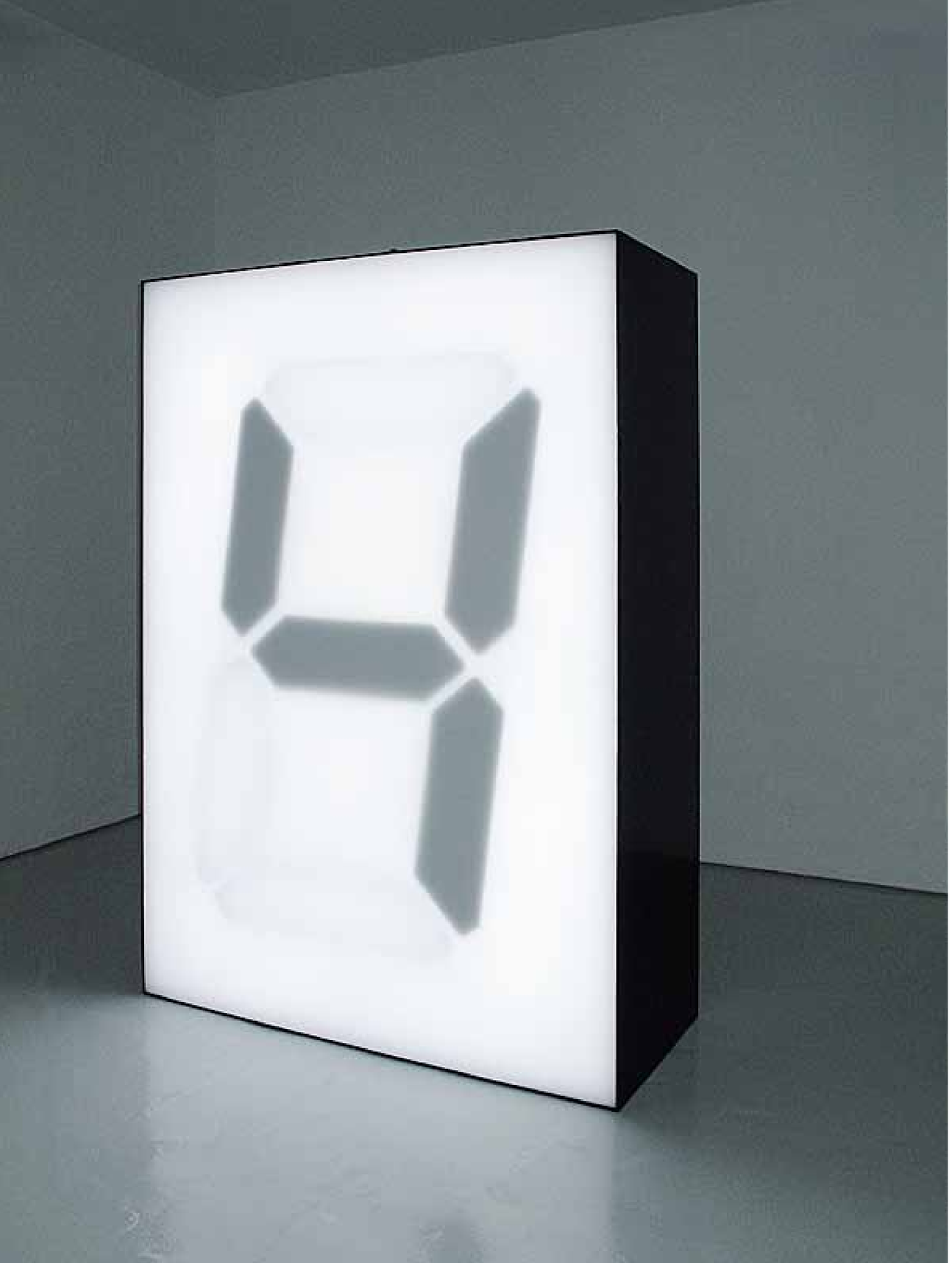

INTRODUCTION

By Sarah Gold

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By Sarah Gold

The making of *Personal Structures Time · Space · Existence*
The following words are an extract from the events that occurred from 2005 until 2009. It tells about how this project came into existence, about the difficulties and beautiful things that came our way in order to complete this publication.

In February 2005 I met the artist Rene Rietmeyer at the Rotterdam Art Fair in the Netherlands. I had just finished my Masters in Art History and I was working as an assistant curator for the Caldic Collection in the Netherlands. Rene Rietmeyer is the initiator of the project *Personal Structures*. He gave me a copy of the first publication of *Personal Structures, Works and Dialogues* from the year 2003, which he had made together with the art historian Dr. Peter Lodermeyer. Rene told me to contact him. I was 26 years old at the time, and this seemed like an interesting opportunity, to organize exhibitions and have the chance to work at an international top level. We started to cooperate and in that first year we held a symposium at the Ludwig Museum in Germany, published a little book about that and we organized several exhibitions in Europe, USA and Japan.

Rene liked the idea of organizing symposia, where artists speak for themselves. And then in order to not loose all these spoken thoughts and words, publish them in a significant publication. We felt that there is a necessity to do so; I also feel that words from a direct source give a better insight than the interpretations from an art historian. So we decided to ask whether artists would be interested to participate in future symposia which we would organize.

In June 2006 Rene Rietmeyer and I were in New York for some appointments. There we also visited Joseph Marioni in his studio on 8th Avenue and we came to talk about our projects. Joseph indicated that he liked speaking at symposia. Encouraged by that, we then decided to seriously start our quest to ask more artists.

Later on that month, we had the opportunity to meet the French-Polish artist Roman Opalka. We had called him and he told us that we could see him on the 27th of June, at 1 pm at the Musée d'Art Moderne in St. Etienne, where he had an exhibition at that moment. So, we drove the 2000 km (1300 miles) by car, to France and back, just to meet Roman Opalka. I remembered having seen his work at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in Germany and Rene had encountered his work for the first time in the Centre Pompidou in Paris. We could have never imagined that our meeting with Roman Opalka would turn out to be so impressive. Inside his Octagon, Roman stated that he would keep on counting and painting his numbers to show his concept, the passage and infinity of time, until he could not stand "straight and proud" in front of his canvas anymore. Rene however tried to convince Roman that he was sure that Roman would keep on painting until the very end, like Matisse, painting on his deathbed with a brush on a stick. It was this meeting that made us decide that we, definitely soon, should try to organize an event, including Roman.

A few days later we had a meeting with the Dutch art dealer Paul van Rosmalen from Borzo modern & contemporary art, in Amsterdam. He told us that he was looking for a special event to take place at his gallery, with the possibility that this event would even travel and go to other cities as well. During this discussion we came to believe that the art world could use a serious project, with significant topics.

The following day, the first of July 2006, when Rene and I were on our way to Moordrecht in the Netherlands for an erotic evening, Rene said that the subject matter Time, Space and Existence are the most fundamental subjects he could think of. We came to the conclusion that Time, Space and Existence must be the most interesting philosophical subjects to mankind. Probably since long before these topics were discussed under a Greek olive tree, the thoughts about them have been made visual in art works. So, driving in the car, we decided to organize symposia, to which we would invite artists who have Time-Space-Existence as an important aspect in their work. To let them speak about their life and work in relation to these topics and then publish a book about that.

We started discussing our idea the days after, and one evening whilst sitting in a bathtub, we decided that, because of the complexity of the subjects, we should separate the topics. We should organize one symposium about Time, for which Amsterdam seemed to be the appropriate location, to discuss Space in Manhattan, New York, and I thought that for Existence an environment like Japan, for instance Tokyo, would be the right setting.

We were able to get a symposium and exhibition date at the oldest art-society in Amsterdam, Arti et Amicitiae, so we started looking for artists who could speak about Time. We had already the goodwill from Roman Opalka and we wanted also somebody from the Netherlands. Henk Peeters, the co-founder of the NUL-group, who was 81 years old at the time, welcomed us at his home and liked our project. In 1961 Piero Manzoni had declared Henk to be a "living sculpture" by putting his signature on him, and Manzoni was right.

That winter we stayed in Miami-Beach, Florida, USA, where Rene has one of his studios. We had organized some exhibitions in Florida and had to be present at the art fair in Miami in order to earn some extra money to finance the beginnings of our project. We knew we had no financial support to expect from anywhere and the finances would solely have to come out of the sales of the art works from Rene.

As usual money was scarce, but nevertheless, we started and back in Europe, we asked Hamish Fulton to grant us an interview. On the 27th of March 2007 we got up at 2 o'clock at night in the Netherlands, picked up our German author Peter Lodermeyer in Belgium, drove to Calais, France, took the ferry to England and at 12 o'clock, we arrived at the home of Hamish Fulton in Canterbury. Peter Lodermeyer conducted the first interview for this publication and 23 hours after we had left, we arrived back home.

One month later on the 28th of April we had scheduled a meeting with Joseph Kosuth in Vienna, Austria. Rene had met Kosuth in Tokyo in 1999 and back then Joseph had told Rene, if he ever could help him, he would do so. We met Joseph at a brunch-event at Georg Kargl Fine Arts Gallery and during that discussion Joseph said that he would be interested in coming to Tokyo and speak about Existence. He suggested we organize it in 2008 during the Sakura, the cherry blossom time.

But before going to Japan, we would have to make our first symposium and exhibition in Amsterdam happen. We were scheduled for the 15th and 16th of June 2007, and mainly with the help of Irene de Haan of the Caldic Collection and Thomas Rieger from the Konrad Fischer Galerie, we were able to put together the exhibition Personal Structures: Time. After having almost all speakers for the symposium and no budget left at all, I called Lawrence Weiner, from a public phone in Vienna, in New York. I told him that I had dreamt of him being present in Amsterdam and he said in his ever so deep voice: "Everything is possible in this life". He later flew to Amsterdam, countered written attacks by Joseph Kosuth, spoke for hours and never asked for any compensation to cover his expenses.

It was very special to bring all these sincere people together and to hear them speak; some of them had not seen each other for decades. Like Michel Baudson and Roman Opalka or Lawrence Weiner, Jo Baer and Klaus Honnef, and although our event was only a few days after the opening of the 52nd Venice Biennale, everybody had come to us in Amsterdam.

We started to organize the next symposium, while Peter Lodermeyer went on to conduct interviews with Wolfgang Laib, Ulrich Rückriem and others. We would have preferred to do the next symposium, *Space*, in November in New York, but we were totally broke and we could only continue because that September, a Belgian collector, Andre Carez, bought an installation from Rene. We were able to pay all our bills and visited Joseph Kosuth in Rome, Italy, to discuss the Tokyo symposium. Google showed us that the cherry blossom time was most likely to start in Tokyo in the first week of April. With the help of friends we were able to get a date scheduled at the Setagaya Art Museum for the 2nd and 3rd of April 2008.

That winter, back in Miami, I met Dan Graham, who agreed upon an interview. I also met Richard Flood, the chief curator of the New Museum in New York, who was interested to host our Space symposium. The New Museum was really new at that time, for a long time we had followed the construction of its new building in the Bowery, and we had always said that it would be fantastic, if we could organize our symposium there.

As always we were still struggling for money but we felt that, since our project was getting more complex, we needed to involve more people. At that time Rene sold an installation to the American collectors Rita and Joel Cohen, and some other installations at the art fair in Miami. So we asked Karlyn De Jongh, who had assisted us at our symposium in Amsterdam and recently finished university, to come and stay with us in Miami. Very quickly she became an important person within our project.

Together with Karlyn we flew to Tokyo in March 2008. We had rented a traditional Japanese house, with sliding doors, paper walls and an old Japanese toilet and bath system. Japan was a whole dif-

ferent experience. I noticed that what I consider to be logic is not universal and that sometimes I really have to except not to understand the argumentation for certain decisions.

We had contacted great artists for the symposium, but first we had to visit them in order to explain our project and gain their trust, which was only possible by having the artist Yuko Sakurai as mediator and translator. We met Heartbeat Sasaki who would do a performance; we visited Toshikatsu Endo at his studio north of Tokyo and we drove the whole day through the Japanese country side to meet Saburo Ota in Tsuyama. We had invited Tadashi Kawamata to the symposium as well but, due to serious difficulties of one of his installations at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, he had to cancel at short notice. We also arranged photographers, which turned out to be an interesting but successful undertaking.

Over the whole period we were in Japan preparing our symposium, it had been very cold and wet and the trees did not show any sign that there were any flowers to blossom soon. Also, for some weeks we had not heard from Joseph Kosuth. I was very happy when on the 31st of March, my cell phone rang and it was Joseph saying "I am in Tokyo, let's meet". The next day, out of nowhere, everywhere the cherry blossoms opened-up, Sakura had started. Joseph also had a surprise for us, he wanted his text to be translated and have it read out loud simultaneously in Japanese during his presentation. We had 2 days for that, it took 3 translators working overnight and some tears from them, but they managed and Joseph seemed satisfied.

The two days of the symposium were very interesting in an unusual way. We were unable to understand most of the spoken texts because our speakers mainly spoke Japanese. Besides that, I was not even able to interpret the expressions and gestures correctly, since Japanese have such a different culture. What I remember most from those 2 days was Toshikatsu Endo who represented Existence, sheer by the sound of his voice and his being; and the lunch breaks, everybody eating sushi and sashimi in the museum park under the cherry blossoms. We stayed in Japan for some more days, and it was during that time, walking between the cedar trees of the Old Tokaido route and experiencing space on the lake by Mount Fuji, that I felt, Existence in Japan.

After returning to Europe, we were broke as usual. I was able to place some art works from other artists in collections and Rene worked on a large installation for a public space in Japan. We recovered financially and even went on a small trip to Greece together with Karlyn to see traces from the past. Directly after that, in September 2008, the art world came almost to a financial standstill.

From different sides we were advised that it would be wise to postpone the last symposium and the printing of this book, but we felt that if we would do that, we might never be able to continue and complete this project. In the meantime Karlyn had conducted her interview with Antony Gormley, and also Peter had continued doing interviews. So, all of us decided not to stop, but use as little as possible money, and continue to give this project our best, the maximum of our capabilities.

I got into contact with Eungie Joo, a director at the New Museum in New York and she arranged that the New Museum would host our symposium Space at the 3rd and 4th of April 2009. At that time, we did not have any fixed speakers yet, but after some telephone calls we managed to put together a very interesting group of artists. Unfortunately Rene and I were not able to attend the symposium we organized. In real life we are living like nomads and therefore we were not able to get in time the visa which the USA required from us to "work" at our symposium. But nevertheless by communication via Skype, from a holiday home in the Netherlands, and with the help of Karlyn and Peter, who were able to be present in New York, it became a fantastic event. Robert Barry, Peter Halley, Richard Tuttle, Keith Sonnier, and all the others, they had taken this symposium serious. We followed it from a distance.

Now we had completed all three symposia and had collected and recorded a lot of spoken text. These texts together with all the texts from the interviews that Peter and Karlyn had conducted, all that material, had to be transcribed and edited. We had already started this procedure one year before, but it was time to settle down somewhere in Europe in order to finish this publication. Rene had been invited to participate at the 53rd Venice Biennial. Also, we had been asked if we could organize a small symposium during the opening of the Biennial; therefore we decided to rent an apartment in Venice. On the 4th of June 2009 Rene and Peter

spoke in Venice and after that we had a panel discussion with Marina Abramović, her appearance was impressive.

Being based in Venice, Italy, has been very positive for us; it seems that all the people we needed to meet come here. For a long time, Karlyn had been trying to conduct an interview with the Mexican artist Teresa Margolles and when we found out that she was representing Mexico at the Biennial this year, we took our chances and tracked her down. It was an adventurous undertaking and it worked out. We also met with Roman Opalka, Joseph Kosuth, Tatsuo Miyajima, Dan Graham and many others.

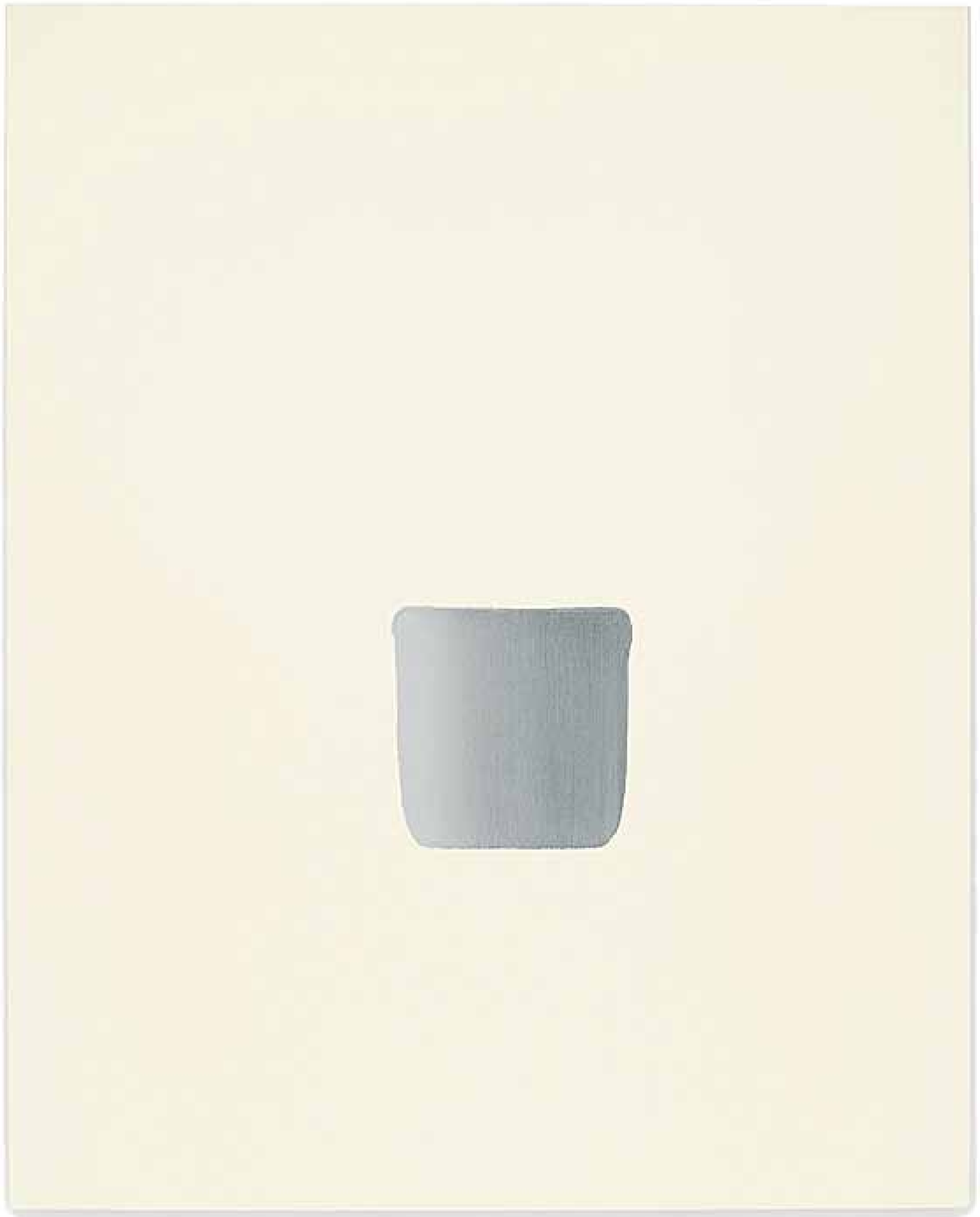
Through Daniel Marzona, the director of the Konrad Fischer Galerie in Berlin, we got introduced to Uta Grosenick who at that time was working for DuMont. Rene always had said that he wanted to find a well-known publishing company for our book. We could publish ourselves, but people seem to judge a book by its cover, and the name of the publisher. Since our goal is to spread as many books as possible, to raise awareness about Time, Space and Existence, this was a fantastic opportunity. Uta proved to have knowledge and understanding about contemporary art. She recognized our sincerity and the quality of our project; she offered us to acquire a certain amount of books and distribute them under the name DuMont. She hoped that we could have the book printed before the Frankfurt Book Fair 2009 , which is in October. On the 7th of June 2009, Karlyn, Rene and I discussed it, and decided that if we worked, day and night, it should be possible to finish this publication in time, without compromising the quality of the content. We also decided that we would continue to include more artists. I was thrilled, when on the 6th of July 2009 I was able to get some answers from the 97-year-old French-American artist Louise Bourgeois, and after that, I interviewed the 28 year old Chinese performance artist Xing Xin.

We could not realize all interviews we had hoped for. Because I was unable to fly to California, I could not interview Robert Irwin, who told me on the phone, after receiving my questions by email, that it would take at least one or two sessions in person, to answer them. And, Sophie Calle, who I had spoken to on the telephone while she was still in Paris, she would have liked to give an interview for our publication, but she was leaving for Sao Paolo and be travelling to the heart of Brazil. After receiving my questions, from Brazil she wrote to me in an email: "the main problem is time and very soon not even mail. I am Sorry, sophie calle". Nevertheless we had more then enough to do. It was an enormous task, collecting, organizing, and preparing thousands of images of the artists, their work and our encounters with them. Transcribing interviews, editing, translating, editing again and placing it all on the computer in Indesign.

The book was growing, day by day, but therefore we barely saw the summer of 2009, and we barely managed to finance everything. But finally we arrived at the final stages. On Sunday, the 20th of September, we took the car and drove over the San Gotthard pass from Venice to Oberlimberg, in Germany where we had rented a holiday apartment close to the printing company. Rene has been printing by this company since 1999 and the owner, Andreas Krüger, trusted us so much that he promised to print our book and let us pay in installments. Without his help, we would not have been able to print at all. We started to work the next morning, rechecking and printing all the images as Epson-proofs, while Karlyn did the fine tuning of the texts, but we also had a cover to make. We had asked Joseph Kosuth for an image for that, but he answered: "Free up the space you are using that badly serves any artwork and put all the names of the artists in a larger point size on your cover instead. Make your background color in red or orange and the type in black or white. It will be clear, strong and bold". With this proposal by Joseph Kosuth as a starting point we finally decided upon the cover as it is now.

Today is the 27th of September and I am writing the last words for this introduction. Rene finally has time to edit his own text and Karlyn has just received the final version of her interview with Peter Halley, he made many last minute changes. We will start printing tomorrow, the 28th of September 2009.

We feel that, with this book, we have achieved the maximum we could have done at this point in time; in the most honest and sincere way we are capable of. Of course, there are various artists who should have been included, but we are already looking forward to *Personal Structures Time · Space · Existence* Number Two. For now, without a doubt, the publication of Number One as it is, can only be compared to Pheidippide's run to Athens in 490 BC, "Victory". The only difference being: we did not die.



PERSONALSTRUCTURES
TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE

By Peter Lodermeyer

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By Peter Lodermeyer

I.

Time, space and existence are among the greatest of themes—so great that we could never be so presumptuous to think we could do them justice, and much too close to ourselves that we could ever escape them, whether with our thoughts or actions, in life or in art.

Apparently there are no longer any themes fundamentally closed to art. For centuries, post-antique art in Europe had more or less been limited to religious and political subjects (often inseparably interlocked with each other). During the Renaissance the field of the thematic possibilities was increasingly expanded—we need only think of the development of landscape and portrait painting in the 15th and 16th century, for example. In the face of this development, academic art theory had always endeavored to maintain a stringent hierarchy of themes worthy of art that was ultimately based on ontology. Modern art may be defined precisely through its claim of expanding the domain of art using everything in its power, and then bringing down this hierarchy. If you look back at the development of art over the past hundred years, you will recognize the ambition of the artists to keep ramming the boundary posts ever further outwards, and to make art capable of something it would have been excluded from earlier by its very definition. Just think of what all the Modern Movement has introduced to art: Exoticism, the unconscious, blasphemy, absurdity, the irrational, the immaterial, industrially-manufactured things, technology, elements of the trivial such as advertisements, pornography, everyday objects… etc., etc.—and last, but not least: pure forms with absolutely no claims for being interpreted objectively. Above all, however, it is about art itself. The questions concerning what art *is*, how it is perceived, what is particular about it, its functions, what its social contexts are, etc. were themselves to become a theme in the medium of art, especially in the 1960s and afterwards.

The desire to put art and life on a par with each other is a modern utopia that would have been utterly preposterous in earlier centuries. Due to the social upheavals during the 20th century, there is no longer any *one* more-or-less homogenous social class as upholders of civilization and culture, as had been the case with the upper bourgeoisie in the 19th century. It has long since been the most diverse groups, i.e.: interests, ways of thinking and aesthetics that nowadays manifest themselves through and in art. Added to this is the fact that the attention to art is increasingly freed from its Euro-/Americo-centrism, while artistic achievements from Asia, South America, Africa, and Australia with their specific cultural backgrounds and perspectives are receiving growing recognition. The diversity of the art scenes (and there is far more than just one such scene) is greeted by some critics as an expression of the progressing pluralizing of society, while others deplore a mess of confusion that all too often drifts towards randomness plaguing our post-modern (or rather, most likely our post-post-modern) situation. In this respect, we should not forget, however, that such differentiation is being counteracted at the same time by the diametric process of aesthetic norming in the wake of globalization reinforced by the mass media. Finding an orientation in this confusing situation and being able to raise the question about even the most general themes of art seems, therefore, a worthwhile endeavor. This question is central to the project *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence*. It has often been said about literature as a form of art that there are really only two great themes, those of love and death (perhaps we might mention the striving for power here as well). But what would these basic themes be concerning what we only now refer to with some hesitation as the 'fine arts'? Are there themes any more basic than space, time, and existence? Perhaps form, color, light, and material come to mind, but we must not forget that there is no possible expression of these entities that do not *exist* in *space* and *time*.

II.

Time, space and existence initially seem to fall under the auspices of philosophy. It is necessary to briefly cast a glance in this direction in order to make it clear that these three concepts do not exist independently from one another, but rather display an inner connection. Several central views from Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* from 1927 come to mind, which have lost none of their relevance even after more than 80 years (and have not become compromised by the philosopher's later aberrations during the Nazi era). By existence, Heidegger means in particular man's own way of being that he calls 'Dasein', which differs from the mere existence of things and the lives of plants and animals by the fact that 'Dasein' manifests itself " in its very Being, that being is an *issue* for it".[1] In other words, we humans have a primal understanding of existence. At the same time, this means that we must constantly care for our existence. Being able to hope, desire, worry about, plan, and despair are all things rooted in this. We can and must organize our existence, care about it, and do this with the knowledge that we will inevitably die. 'Being-towards-death' ('Sein zum Tode') is one of the major conditions of human existence. At the beginning of *Being and Time*, Heidegger anticipates the results of his research: "We shall point to *temporality* as the meaning of the Being of that entity which we call 'Dasein'. […] Dasein *is* in such a way as to be something which understands something like Being. Keeping this interconnection firmly in mind, we shall show that whenever Dasein tacitly understands and interprets something like Being, it does so with *time* as its standpoint."[2] The human form of existence is certainly temporal, so much so that, in a lecture having to do with *Being and Time*, Heidegger stated: "[…] time is Dasein. […] Dasein always is in a manner of its possible temporal being. […] Dasein is its past, it is its possibility in running ahead to this past. In this running ahead, I am authentically time, I have time. In so far as time is in each case mine, there are many times. Time itself is meaningless; time is temporal."[3]

This last statement is of particular importance: There is no such thing as *time* per se, but rather it is always 'my' respective time, i.e., there is a tremendous plurality of times. Just as my Dasein is 'in each case mine' ('jemeinig'), and not delegable, not exchangeable, inalienable, neither is its temporal sense. The "homogenization" of "binding", measured time is, on the other hand, an idealization, "an assimilation of time to space, to Presence pure and simple. It is the tendency to expel all time from itself into a present."[4] Measurable time is not lived temporality, the experienced existential temporality, but a simplification due to everyday requirements.

III.

The fact that Heidegger's analysis of Dasein not only reveals its temporality, but that it also basically contains a theory of its original spatiality is something that has not yet received sufficient attention. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk has taken note of this: "Only a few interpreters of Heidegger seem to have realized that with the sensational programmatic title of *Being and Time*, there is also a kernel of a revolutionary treatise of existence and space."[5] By calling attention to the fact that Heidegger perceives Dasein as 'being-in-the-world', whereby the 'in' does not simply denote being present in a 'spatial container', but rather designates a complex happening of spatially defined attitudes, Sloterdijk gains important reference points for his own ambitious *Spheres* project, an attempt to portray man's multi-layered reference to space.[6] A significant point of departure in this is sections 22 to 24 in *Time and Being*, in which Heidegger provides several references to an existential analysis of space: "When we let entities within-the-world be encountered in the way, which is constitutive for Being-in-the-world, we 'give them space'. This 'giving space', which we also call 'making room' for them, consists in freeing the ready-to-hand for its spatiality. […] Space is not to be found in the subject, nor does the subject observe the world 'as if' that world were in a space; but that 'subject' (Dasein), if well understood ontologically, is spatial. And because Dasein is spatial in the way we have described, space shows itself as a priori."[7]

An important difference (one of many), in which Sloterdijk goes far beyond the spatial analysis that Heidegger only sketched out, consists in his viewing Dasein not as one-sided, as a 'being-toward-death', but also always under the aspect of its 'natality', its 'coming-into-the-world'.[8] The fact that we are born, and must leave the first place we have ever lived in, the womb, without changing into an ambience that is nature-like is more than a biological fact. It is existential, driving us to orient ourselves to the world and set ourselves up there: as living, living together, creating orders, as stays in highly-complex, changing systems of spatial environments that interlock with each other. "When 'life' seems boundlessly diverse in forming spaces", Sloterdijk writes, "then not only because each monad has its own environment, but what is more, because all of them are interlocked with other lives, and are composed of numerous units. Life articulates itself on stages simultaneously interlocked. It produces and consumes itself in workshop networks. But decisive for us is: It produces first of all the space it is in, and which is in it, respectively."[9]

IV.

Perhaps there are no longer places of wilderness; but the wild, the ever new is still: time.
Peter Handke, Über die Dörfer

Space is not only high, it's low, it's a bottomless pit.
Sun Ra, Space is the Place

What is that, to exist—and not we or the world—but existence per se?
Fernando Pessoa, Faust-Fragmente

In as much that we exist as 'Dasein', we are spatially and temporally 'in-the-world' in a primal sense. And thus, time, space and existence are the givens, which stand closest to us—and at the same time, as soon as they force themselves upon us, they become the strangest and most enigmatic things of all. The 'wild' part about time, i.e. what is not to be controlled or what eludes us, the bottomless abyss of space and the infathomableness of existence at all, expressed in the quotes above by an Austrian and a Portugese author as well as an Afro-American free-jazz musician, are experiences we constantly encounter in life. One of the most ingenious places in the analyses contained in *Being and Time*, is when Heidegger shows us how we necessarily "proximally and for the most part" succumb to "everydayness", warding off the strangeness of our existence with "idle talk", with "vulgar" notions.[10] An even deeper confrontation with it is—and this is what is remarkable—not restricted to any lofty philosophical thought, but can affect any of us at any time. States of fear, boredom, sleeplessness, for example, are superb opportunities for confronting our existence as a whole.

What is not mentioned in *Time and Being* is the encounter with art (in the broadest sense of the word), which in its own specific way may also ensure an experience of space, time and existence extending beyond our everyday preconceived notions. Even though a binding definition is impossible, we may still say that art is (also) always man's conception of himself. "With the concept of self-conception we can explain the value of art as follows: The value of art consists in its making special aspects of the world, in which we live, and ourselves understandable for us."[11] The fundamental aspects of 'Being-in-the-world', however, are time, space and existence. Art has always dealt with these themes—for the most part not explicitly, and embedded in certain ideological contexts. Just to give a random example: A

medieval altar painting showing the 'Last Judgment' emphatically portrays time (earthly time and eternity), space (the topography of the here and the hereafter, earth, heaven and hell) and existence (exaggeratedly, as eternal blessedness or damnation).

Modern art, and non-objective art in particular, has increasingly detached the themes of time, space and existence from their preconceived narratives (mythological, religious, political, etc.) and thus been able to show them with growing explicitness. Especially in the diverse artistic trends after World War II, much 'fundamental research' has been taking place on the theme of art. Questions concerning how space may be defined and structured, what formal solutions may be found for portraying temporal processes, and how art may be used to prove individual existence are among the typical issues of art of the 1960s and 70s. To refer to these questions today certainly seems to be important to us, especially at a time when the increasing commercialization and, along with this, the trivialization of art in connection with making it a marketable, streamlined, art business are greatly lamented. It is a major intention of *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence* to remind us of the basic questions of art, admittedly not in the sense of a return to the discussions of the past decades (that would be senseless and destined to fail from the onset), but as a platform where these issues may be further discussed and from which possibly new answers may be explored.

V.

The importance of artists grappling with the themes we have discussed here, precisely with respect to today's situation of art and society, seems obvious to me. We need only point out several aspects of the theme of 'space' as an example. Without a doubt it is no coincidence that the number of publications dealing with the theory of space has grown dramatically in recent years. It may not be overlooked that our living spaces, both natural and cultural, rural and urban, have been changing quickly. Ecological changes, the effects of the globalized economy and worldwide expansion of media and telecommunication technologies are simply the most obvious reasons for this process. That the utopia of the ZERO artists concerning a reconciliation between nature and technology may not merely be cast off as wishful thinking, but must rather finally be put into practical action, is more and more urgent in light of the worldwide climate change. The relationship between public and private has shifted completely in an age of technological mass media. Artistic suggestions for dealing with public space in a new way, such as Dan Graham and Vito Acconci undertake with their completely different works between art and architecture, may be instrumental in thinking the concept of public space anew. Where space and rooms are rigorously subjected to all kinds of monitoring, planning, and commercial interests, free artistic spaces are vital as counter concepts. Thus, for example Lee Ufan's sculptures are models of an open and unbiased encounter with the Other. In the face of the omnipresence of mass-media aesthetics that is threatening to dominate and deform our perception, the spaces of wax of someone like Wolfgang Laib have a virtually therapeutic effect by lastingly confronting the visitor in an intense way with the most primal existential conditions such as birth and death. May these examples suffice, though the list could easily be continued with names of other artists and by means of the themes of time and existence.

VI.

The project *Personal Structures* has a somewhat longer prehistory. Initiated by the Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer and accompanied by me in terms of its conception, it went public for the first time in 2003 with the book *Personal Structures—Works and Dialogues*[12]. 16 artists from 11 countries were introduced in that first book, all working more or less with 'minimal' formal means. The focus was on the issue of concerning how personal, subjective components could also be revealed in 'minimalist' structures. The consciously contradictive title *Personal Structures* connects the supra-personal, or impersonal, through which structures are defined, with the personal and subjective components inherent to the works of art we presented. An apparent difference to this book as opposed to the first *Personal Structures* project may be seen in the selection of artists taking part. The departure point was a statement made by the Austrian art historian Johannes Meinhardt, which I already approvingly quoted in the first book. It goes: "Painting"—and here I mean "contemporary art" in general—which has not forgotten its own history, and which not only understands history as a collection of things that may be used again […], is based today upon the great new approaches of the 1960s".[13] In the first book from 2003 only artists took part, who *tied in with the tradition of* the new approaches of the 1960s. In conjunction with the second book the question now was: What about the artists of the 1960s themselves? And not only these people, what about the ZERO artists, who had already in the 1950s anticipated many things that later became famous as happenings, land art (earth art) etc, or what about the performance artists of the 1970s? Most of them are still highly active, having developed their art further over the past 40 years, refining it, partially taking it in different directions, sometimes revising it (to cite only two examples of this: the painter Jo Baer switched from minimalism to figuration in the mid-1970s and the previous performance and video artist Vito Acconci has been dealing with architecture since the 1980s). In deliberating about how the *Personal Structures* project might further develop, it seemed logical and consequential to learn from the huge treasury of experience these older generations of artists dispose over. We wanted to know firsthand how artists who have already written art history, decisively expanding the definition of what art is, think today about the basic themes of time, space and existence. In selecting the artists it did not make sense to us to simply dutifully follow the old well-trodden paths of art history. Our concern was rather for the individual personalities, not for their belonging to certain styles, genres and groups.

Be that as it may, neither does this book merely present positions that have become established. Precisely the combination with younger artists seemed attractive, as have rediscoveries, such as the work of Erwin Thorn. It is our endeavor to show the greatest possible diversity of personalities, views, and perspectives, which have resulted before various cultural and personal backgrounds, and also from the various stages of life (the youngest artist in this book Xing Xin is now 28, the oldest artist, Louise Bourgeois, is 97 years old).

VII.

Subsequent to a lecture about the *Time · Space · Existence* project I presented on 17 December 2008 at the Sculpture Park Cologne, a gallery-owner I know asked me whether we used a standardized questionnaire for our conversations with the artists taking part and if, at the end, we would conduct a statistical analysis of the responses. At first, I was speechless, since this question brought up exactly the opposite of what we are trying to accomplish. The focus of this book is upon the individual, the personal, the mutuality of life experiences and the views towards time, space and existence tied to this. But there is no science about the individual, as Aristotle already knew.[14] For this reason the book was not to become a scientific treatise, no book of theories, no art historical compendium, no evidence for any theses, nothing of a statistical analysis. Time, space and existence immediately pertain to life. And for this reason we wanted to discuss these themes in a lively manner, in a way open to different aspects, to interpretation and theory as well as to the anecdotal, polemical, to humor, philosophy, and the wisdom of life. In short, it was our dream to write a 'Book of Encounters'. The concept of encounter, which the artist Lee Ufan placed central to his existence as an artist,[15] seemed to us to provide the keyword for our book, because space, time and existence meet in the encounter, and in a way are brought into focus by it. It is no coincidence that the two most important media of our project, the symposium and the interview, are media of encounter.

Time, space and existence inevitably play a role when people encounter one another in order to enter into a conversation. Such an encounter with an artist takes place at a certain place, a certain time and under not completely foreseeable and not completely repeatable circumstances. The interview and symposium texts as well as the photographs are the lasting documentation of what takes place at such an event. Their particular value lies in the uniqueness of each encounter. That is why we were not concerned with making the individual contributions uniform. They were supposed to be individual, 'colored' by the peculiarities of each individual meeting, which already begins with the highly differing length of the texts and interviews. Length is no criterion for the value. The short sentences by Carl Andre ("short but sweet", was how he put it) as answers to the questions I was allowed to ask him by way of exception, bear the same weight as the long discourses of a person like Toshikatsu Endo in this book.

VIII.

We may not refer to encounters as a means to bring time, space and existence into focus without saying a word or two about language and the languages we dealt with in producing this book. The way we form concepts, how we think, perceive, and feel has a considerable amount to do with the language at our disposal. In this book, people are represented who come from different languages and cultural backgrounds. All texts appear in English here, the main language of the globalized world, and also of the art business. Several of the texts appear additionally in the original language. It is inevitable that the problem of translation arises in this context. Basically, already the transcription of a conversation into written language is an act of translation. Of course, the texts must be revised, but it would not suit a book called *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence* if the articles collected here would have been reduced to talks taking place under 'laboratory conditions'. An interview taking place under stressful conditions at the opening of the Biennale, such as was the case between Teresa Margolles and Karlyn De Jongh, will necessarily have a different character than one conducted in peace and quiet for hours between Gottfried Honegger and Sarah Gold. The person speaking in his native tongue will express himself differently than someone communicating in a foreign language. All this belongs to the nature of human communication and should be accepted as such. It is to be hoped that the reader, despite the translations, will nevertheless be able to detect what is special and unique in each of the respective encounters.

Especially my interviews with Lee Ufan taught me that it is not always possible to equate a concept on a one-to-one level in other languages. Not only the three basic themes of this book, but also apparently notions such as that of the body are fraught with highly different traditions of language and thought in Europe and Asia. The fact that this sometimes leads to mutual misunderstandings is no wonder, but it is also not to be lamented. It is very simply an impetus for continuing the dialogue.

IX.

I have referred to this book as a 'Book of Encounters'. This applies not only to all who have contributed to its coming about, but also hopefully applies above all to the readers who may encounter numerous artists and works of art in texts and photographs. The many individual texts may be read in random sequence. It may be hoped that, in doing so, an effect will come into being such as we know from seeing an exhibition where works from different regions and epochs are presented alongside one another. New neighborhoods may be able to make visible heretofore-unnoticed characteristics of a work. That something comparable might happen in reading this book, that new things may show up in things that are known and familiar, and that in turn familiar things show up in the unknown, and that many red threads of unexpected correlations running through this book may be discovered, this is the hope with which I close my part of the work on this book. To all who have contributed to its realization, especially to Rene Rietmeyer, the 'motor' of this project, my sincerest and heartfelt thanks.

1 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Malden, MA / Oxford / Victoria AUS 1962, p. 12.
2 Ibid., p. 17.
3 Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time.* Translated by William McNeill, Oxford / Malden, MA 1992, pp. 21-22.
4 Ibid. p. 18.
5 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I. Blasen*, Frankfurt a. M. 1996, p. 336.
6 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I - Blasen, Mikrosphärologie*, Frankfurt a. M. 1998; *Sphären II – Globen Makrosphärologie,* Frankfurt a. M. 1999; *Sphären III – Schäume, Plurale Sphärologie*, Frankfurt a. M. 2004.
7 *Being and Time*, p. 111.
8 See, for example, Peter Sloterdijk, *Zur Welt kommen—Zur Sprache kommen*. Frankfurter Vorlesungen, Frankfurt a. M. 1988.
9 Peter Slopterdijk, *Sphären III. Schäume*, Frankfurt a. M. 2004, p. 24.
10 *Being and Time*, §§ 35-38.
11 Georg W. Bertram, *Kunst. Eine philosophische Einführung*, Stuttgart 2007, p. 45.
12 Peter Lodermeyer, *Personal Structures. Works and Dialogues*, New York 2003.
13 Johannes Meinhardt, *Ende der Malerei und Malerei nach dem Ende der Malerei*, Ostfildern-Ruit 1997, p. 9.
14 Aristotle, *Met. III,* 1003a.
15 Lee Ufan, *The Art of Encounter*, London 2004.

TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE

Von Peter Lodermeyer

I.

Zeit, Raum und Existenz gehören zu den ganz großen Themen – zu groß, als dass man sich einbilden könnte, damit jemals zurande zu kommen, und viel zu dicht an uns selbst, als dass wir ihnen jemals entkommen könnten, sei es im Denken oder im Handeln, im Leben oder in der Kunst.

Es gibt offenbar keine Themen mehr, die der Kunst grundsätzlich verschlossen wären. Die nachantike Kunst in Europa war über Jahrhunderte mehr oder minder auf (oft untrennbar miteinander verzahnte) religiöse und politische Sujets beschränkt. Im Laufe der Neuzeit wurde das Feld der thematischen Möglichkeiten zunehmend erweitert, man denke nur etwa an die Entwicklung von Landschafts- und Porträtmalerei im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert. Die akademische Kunsttheorie war angesichts dieser Entwicklung stets darum bemüht, eine strenge, letztendlich ontologisch begründete Hierarchie der kunstwürdigen Themen aufrechtzuerhalten. Die Kunst der Moderne lässt sich geradezu definieren durch den Anspruch, den Geltungsbereich des Künstlerischen mit aller Macht auszudehnen und diese Hierarchie umzustürzen. Wer auf die Entwicklung der Kunst in den letzten hundert Jahren zurückblickt, wird den Ehrgeiz der Künstler erkennen, die Grenzpfosten immer weiter „außen" einzurammen und das zuvor noch *per definitionem* aus der Kunst Ausgeschlossene kunstfähig zu machen. Was kam mit der Moderne nicht alles in die Kunst: Exotik, das Unbewusste, Blasphemie, Absurdität, das Irrationale, das Immaterielle, industriell Vorgefertigtes, die Technik, Elemente der Trivialkultur wie Werbung, Pornografie, Alltagsgegenstände… usw. usw. – und nicht zuletzt: reine Formen ohne jeden Anspruch auf gegenständliche Lesbarkeit. Vor allem aber: die Kunst selbst. Die Fragen danach, was Kunst *ist*, wie sie wahrgenommen wird, was ihre Besonderheiten, ihre Funktionen, ihre gesellschaftlichen Kontexte sind usw., wurden insbesondere ab den 1960er-Jahren zunehmend im Medium der Kunst selbst thematisiert.

Kunst und Leben zur Deckungsgleichheit bringen zu wollen ist eine moderne Utopie, die in vorausgegangenen Jahrhunderten nicht einmal denkbar war. Aufgrund der soziologischen Verwerfungen während des 20. Jahrhunderts gibt es nicht mehr *eine* mehr oder weniger homogene kulturtragende Schicht wie das gehobene Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert; es sind längst unterschiedlichste Gruppen, und das heißt: Interessen, Denkweisen, Ästhetiken, die sich heute künstlerisch manifestieren. Dazu kommt noch die Tatsache, dass sich die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Kunst mehr und mehr aus ihrem Euro-/Ameriko-Zentrismus löst und künstlerische Leistungen aus Asien, Südamerika, Afrika und Australien mit ihren spezifischen kulturellen Hintergründen und Perspektiven international wachsende Beachtung finden. Die Vielfalt der Kunstszenen (es gibt deren weit mehr als nur eine) wird von manchen Kritikern als Ausdruck der fortschreitenden Pluralisierung der Gesellschaften begrüßt, von anderen als unübersichtliche und allzu oft ins Beliebige abgleitende Konfusion unserer postmodernen (oder, eher noch, post-postmodernen) Situation beklagt. Dabei darf man jedoch nicht vergessen, dass diese Ausdifferenzierung zugleich von dem gegenläufigen Prozess der ästhetischen Normierung im Gefolge der massenmedial verstärkten Globalisierung konterkariert wird.

In dieser verwirrenden Situation Orientierung zu suchen und nach den *allgemeinsten* Themen der Kunst zu fragen, scheint daher eine sinnvolle Unternehmung. Diese Frage steht im Zentrum des Projekts *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence*. Von der Literatur als Kunstform wurde oft gesagt, es gebe für sie eigentlich nur zwei große Themen, die Liebe und den Tod (vielleicht sollte man auch das Streben nach Macht noch erwähnen). Was aber wären die Grundthemen dessen, was man nur noch widerstrebend mit dem schon anachronistisch anmutenden Begriff „Bildende Kunst" bezeichnen möchte? Gibt es grundlegendere Themen als Raum, Zeit und Existenz? Wem etwa noch Form, Farbe, Licht oder Material in den Sinn kommen, sollte bedenken, dass kein mögliches Beispiel dieser Entitäten vorstellbar ist, das nicht in *Raum* und *Zeit*… *existierte*.

II.

Zeit, Raum und Existenz scheinen zunächst in die Zuständigkeit der Philosophie zu fallen. Ein ganz kurzer Blick dorthin ist unverzichtbar, um deutlich zu machen, dass diese drei Begriffe nicht unabhängig voneinander bestehen, sondern einen inneren Zusammenhang aufweisen. Hier ist insbesondere an einige zentrale Einsichten von Martin Heideggers *Sein und Zeit* von 1927 zu denken, die auch nach mehr als 80 Jahren nichts von ihrer Relevanz eingebüßt haben (und auch von den späteren nationalsozialistischen Verirrungen des Philosophen nicht desavouiert sind). Heidegger versteht unter Existenz insbesondere die dem Menschen eigene Seinsart des „Daseins", die sich von dem bloßen Vorhandensein der Dinge und dem Leben der Pflanzen und Tiere dadurch unterscheidet, dass es dem Dasein in seinem Sein *um* dieses Sein selbst geht."[1] Anders gesagt, wir Menschen haben ein ursprüngliches Seinsverständnis. Das bedeutet zugleich, dass wir in ständiger Sorge um unser Dasein sind. Die Fähigkeit hoffen, wünschen, bangen, planen, verzweifeln zu können usw., hat darin ihren Grund. Wir können und müssen unser Dasein gestalten, für unsere Existenz Sorge tragen, und das vor dem Hintergrund des Wissens, dass wir unvermeidlich sterben werden. „Sein zum Tode" ist eine der wesentlichen Bestimmungen menschlicher Existenz. Heidegger benennt zu Beginn von *Sein und Zeit* vorausgreifend das Ergebnis seiner Untersuchungen: „Als der Sinn des Seins desjenigen Seienden, das wir Dasein nennen, wird die *Zeitlichkeit* aufgewiesen. […] Dasein *ist* in der Weise, seiend so etwas wie Sein zu verstehen. Unter Festhaltung dieses Zusammenhangs soll gezeigt werden, daß das, von wo aus Dasein überhaupt so etwas wie Sein unausdrücklich versteht und auslegt, *die Zeit* ist."[2] Die menschliche Existenzform ist durchweg zeitlich verfasst, sosehr dass Heidegger in einem Vortrag im Umkreis von *Sein und Zeit* sagen konnte: „Zeit ist Dasein. […] Das Dasein ist immer in der Weise seines möglichen Zeitlichseins. […] Das Dasein ist sein Vorbei, ist seine Möglichkeit im Vorlaufen zu diesem Vorbei. In diesem Vorlaufen bin ich die Zeit eigentlich, habe ich Zeit. Sofern die Zeit je meinige ist, gibt es viele Zeiten. *Die* Zeit ist sinnlos; Zeit ist zeitlich."[3]

Diese letztere Aussage ist besonders wichtig: Es gibt nicht *die Zeit* schlechthin, sondern immer „meine" jeweilige Zeit, d. h. eine riesige Pluralität von Zeiten. So, wie mein Dasein „jemeinig" ist, nicht delegierbar, nicht austauschbar, nicht veräußerbar, so wenig ist es sein zeitlicher Sinn. Die „Homogenisierung" der „verbindlichen", gemessenen Uhrenzeit ist dagegen eine Idealisierung, „eine Angleichung der Zeit an den Raum, an schlechthinnige Präsenz; die Tendenz, alle Zeit in eine Gegenwart aus sich fortzudrängen."[4] Die messbare Zeit ist nicht die gelebte, die *er*lebte existenzielle Zeitlichkeit, sondern eine Vereinfachung aus Gründen der alltäglichen Erfordernisse.

III.

Dass Heideggers Analyse des Daseins nicht nur dessen Zeitlichkeit aufzeigt, sondern im Kern auch eine Theorie seiner ursprünglichen Räumlichkeit enthält, ist noch viel zu wenig gesehen worden. Der deutsche Philosoph Peter Sloterdijk hat dies bemerkt: „Nur wenigen Heidegger-Interpreten scheint klargeworden zu sein, daß sich unter dem sensationellen Programmtitel von *Sein und Zeit* auch eine keimhaft revolutionäre Abhandlung über Sein und Raum verbirgt."[5] Indem er darauf aufmerksam macht, dass Heidegger Dasein als „In-der-Welt-Sein" begreift, wobei das „In" nicht einfach ein Vorhandensein in einem „Raumbehälter" meint, sondern ein komplexes Geschehen von räumlich verfassten Verhaltungen meint, gewinnt Sloterdijk wichtige Anhaltspunkte für sein eigenes ambitioniertes *Sphären*-Projekt, den Versuch einer Darstellung der vielschichtigen Raumbezogenheit des Menschen.[6] Ein Ausgangspunkt sind dabei die §§ 22-24 von *Sein und Zeit*, in denen Heidegger einige Hinweise gibt für eine existenziale Analyse der Räumlichkeit: „Das für das In-der-Welt-sein konstitutive Begegnenlassen des innerweltlich Seienden ist ein ‚Raum-geben'. Dieses ‚Raum-geben', das wir auch Einräumen nennen, ist das Freigeben des Zuhandenen auf seine Räumlichkeit. […] Der Raum befindet sich nicht im Subjekt, noch betrachtet dieses die Welt, ‚als ob' sie in einem Raum sei, sondern das ontologisch wohlverstandene ‚Subjekt', das Dasein, ist in einem ursprünglichen Sinne räumlich. Und weil das Dasein in der beschrieben Weise räumlich ist, zeigt sich der Raum als Apriori."[7]

Ein wichtiger Unterschied (einer von vielen), in denen Sloterdijk weit über die nur in Ansätzen entwickelte Raumanalyse Heideggers hinausgeht, besteht darin, dass er Dasein nicht einseitig als „Sein zum Tode", sondern immer auch von seiner „Geburtlichkeit", seinem Auf-die-Welt-Kommen her betrachtet.[8] Dass wir geboren sind und unseren ersten Aufenthaltsort, den Mutterleib, verlassen müssen, ohne in ein naturhaft vorgegebenes Ambiente überzuwechseln, ist mehr als eine biologische Tatsache. Es ist ein Existenzial, das uns dazu treibt, uns in der Welt zu orientieren und einzurichten: als Wohnen, Zusammenleben, Schaffen von Ordnungen, als Aufenthalte in hochkomplexen, veränderlichen, ineinander verschachtelten Systemen räumlicher Umgebungen. „Wenn ‚Leben' grenzenlos vielfältig räumebildend wirkt", schreibt Sloterdijk, „so nicht nur, weil jede Monade ihre je eigene Umwelt hat, sondern mehr noch, weil alle mit anderen Leben verschränkt und mit zahllosen Einheiten zusammengesetzt sind. Leben artikuliert sich auf ineinander verschachtelten simultanen Bühnen, es produziert und verzehrt sich in vernetzten Werkstätten. Doch was für uns das Entscheidende ist: Es bringt den Raum, in dem es ist und der in ihm ist, jeweils erst hervor."[9]

IV.

Vielleicht gibt es keine Orte einer Wildnis mehr; aber das Wilde, immer Neue ist noch immer: die Zeit.
Peter Handke, Über die Dörfer

Space is not only high, it's low. It's a bottomless pit.
Sun Ra, Space is the Place

Was ist das, existieren – und nicht wir oder die Welt – sondern die Existenz an sich?
Fernando Pessoa, Faust-Fragmente

Insofern wir als „Dasein" existieren, sind wir auf ursprüngliche Weise räumlich-zeitlich „in der Welt". Und somit sind Zeit, Raum und Existenz die uns nächsten Gegebenheiten - und zugleich, sobald sie sich als sie selbst aufdrängen, die fremdesten und rätselhaftesten überhaupt. Das „Wilde", d. h. Unbeherrschbare und Unverfügbare der Zeit, die bodenlose Abgründigkeit des Raumes und die Unergründlichkeit von Existenz überhaupt, die in den oben angeführten Zitaten eines österreichischen und eines portugiesischen Autors sowie eines afroamerikanischen Free-Jazz-Musikers aufscheinen, sind Erfahrungen, die sich im Leben immer wieder einstellen. Es gehört zu den genialen Stellen in den Analysen von *Sein und Zeit*, wenn Heidegger aufzeigt, wie wir notwendigerweise „zunächst und zumeist" der Alltäglichkeit verfallen und uns mit „Gerede", mit „vulgären" Auffassungen das Befremdende unserer Existenz vom Leibe halten.[10] Eine tiefer gehende Konfrontation mit ihr ist – und das ist das Bemerkenswerte – nicht irgendwelchen philosophischen Höhenflügen vorbehalten, sondern kann jeden von uns jederzeit betreffen. Zustände der Furcht, der Langeweile, der Schlaflosigkeit z. B. sind hervorragende Gelegenheiten, um uns unserem Sein im Ganzen zu konfrontieren.

Was in *Sein und Zeit* keine Erwähnung findet, ist die Begegnung mit Kunst (im weitesten Sinne des Wortes), die auf ihre spezifische Weise ebenfalls für eine über das alltägliche Vorverständnis hinausführende Erfahrung von Raum, Zeit und Existenz sorgen kann. Auch wenn eine verbindliche Definition unmöglich ist, kann man doch sagen, dass Kunst immer (auch) eine Selbstverständigung des Menschen über sich selbst ist. „Mit dem Begriff der Selbstverständigung kann man den Wert der Kunst folgendermaßen erläutern: Der Wert der Kunst besteht darin, dass sie für uns besondere Aspekte der Welt, in der wir leben, und unserer selbst, verständlich macht."[11] Die grundlegenden Aspekte des „In-der-Welt-Seins" aber sind Zeit, Raum und Existenz. Die Kunst hat immer schon über diese Themen gehandelt – meist unausdrücklich und eingebettet in bestimmte weltanschauliche Zusammenhänge. Um ein beliebiges Beispiel zu nennen: Ein mittelalterliches Altarbild, das „Jüngste Gericht" zeigend, bringt eindringlich Zeit (irdische Zeit und Ewigkeit), Raum (die Topographie von Diesseits und Jenseits, von Erde, Himmel und Hölle) und Existenz (zugespitzt als ewige Seligkeit oder Verdammnis) zur Anschauung.

Die Kunst der Moderne, insbesondere die gegenstandslose Kunst, hat die Themen Zeit, Raum und Existenz zunehmend aus vorgegebenen narrativen (mythologischen, religiösen, politischen usw.) Kontexten gelöst und sie damit immer expliziter zur Geltung bringen können. Insbesondere in den diversen künstlerischen Strömungen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg wurde „Grundlagenforschung" zum Thema Kunst getrieben. Die Fragen, wie sich Raum erleben und strukturieren lässt, welche formalen Lösungen für die Dokumentation zeitlicher Abläufe zu finden sind, wie sich Kunst als Nachweis individueller Existenz verwenden lässt, gehören zu den typischen Themenstellungen der Kunst der 60er und 70er Jahre. Daran gerade heute anzuknüpfen, zu einer Zeit, in der immer wieder die zunehmende Kommerzialisierung und, damit einhergehend, Verflachung der Kunst zu einer marktgängigen, stromlinienförmigen Kunstbetriebskunst beklagt wird, erschien uns überaus wichtig. An die basalen Fragen der Kunst zu erinnern ist ein Hauptanliegen von *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence*, freilich nicht im Sinne einer Rückkehr zu Diskussionen vergangener Jahrzehnte (das wäre sinnlos und von vornherein zum Scheitern verurteilt), sondern als eine Plattform, auf der diese Fragen weiter diskutiert und von der aus womöglich neue Antworten gesucht werden können.

V.

Die Wichtigkeit der künstlerischen Auseinandersetzung mit den hier behandelten Themen gerade in der heutigen Situation von Kunst und Gesellschaft scheint mir auf der Hand zu liegen. Als Beispiel sei hier nur auf einige Aspekte des Themas „Raum" hingewiesen. Es ist zweifellos kein Zufall, dass die Zahl der Publikationen zur Theorie des Raumes in den letzten Jahren dramatisch angewachsen ist. Es ist unübersehbar, dass sich unsere Lebensräume, die natürlichen wie die kulturellen, die ländlichen wie die städtischen, in schnellem Tempo wandeln. Ökologische Veränderungen, die Auswirkungen der globalisierten Wirtschaft und die weltweite Verbreitung der Medien- und Telekommunikationstechnologien sind nur die offensichtlichsten Gründe für diesen Prozess. Dass die Utopie der ZERO-Künstler von einer Versöhnung zwischen Natur und Technik sich nicht einfach als Wunschdenken vom Tisch wischen lässt, sondern dass sie endlich nach einer praktikablen Umsetzung verlangt, wird angesichts des weltweiten Klimawandels immer dringlicher. Das Verhältnis zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit hat sich im Zeitalter der technologischen Massenmedien völlig verschoben. Künstlerische Vorschläge für einen neuen Umgang mit dem öffentlichen Raum, wie sie etwa Dan Graham oder Vito Acconci mit ihren sehr unterschiedlichen, zwischen Kunst und Architektur changierenden Arbeiten machen, können dabei helfen, das Konzept „public space" neu zu denken. Wo Raum und Räume rigoros allen Arten von Überwachungs-, Planungs- und Verwertungsinteressen unterworfen werden, sind künstlerische Freiräume als Gegenentwürfe unverzichtbar. So stellen etwa die Skulpturen von Lee Ufan Modelle einer offenen und unvoreingenommenen Begegnung mit dem Anderen vor. Vor dem Hintergrund, dass die Omnipräsenz der massenmedialen Ästhetik eine Überformung unserer Wahrnehmung zu bewirken droht, entwickeln die Wachsräume eines Wolfgang Laib einen geradezu therapeutischen Effekt, indem sie den Besucher nachhaltig mit den ursprünglichsten existenziellen Gegebenheiten wie Geburt und Tod konfrontieren. Diese Beispiele sollen genügen. Sie ließen sich mit anderen Künstlernamen und anhand der Themen Zeit und Existenz mühelos weiterführen.

VI.

Das Projekt *Personal Structures* hat eine längere Vorgeschichte. Von dem niederländischen Künstler Rene Rietmeyer initiiert und von mir konzeptuell begleitet, trat es 2003 mit dem Buch *Personal Structures – Works and Dialogues*[12] zum ersten Mal öffentlich in Erscheinung. In jener Publikation wurden 16 Künstler aus 11 Ländern vorgestellt, die alle mit mehr oder minder „minimalen" formalen Mitteln arbeiten. Im Mittelpunkt stand die Frage, wie persönliche, subjektive Anteile sich auch in „minimalistischen" Strukturen zeigen können. Der bewusst widersprüchliche Titel *Personal Structures* verbindet das Über- oder Unpersönliche, wodurch Strukturen definiert sind, mit dem Anteil an Persönlichkeit und Subjektivität, der den Kunstwerken, die wir präsentierten, innewohnt. Ein offensichtlicher Unterschied des vorliegenden Buchs gegenüber dem ersten *Personal Structures*-Projekt zeigt sich bei der Auswahl der beteiligten Künstler. Ausgangspunkt war eine Aussage des österreichischen Kunsthistorikers Johannes Meinhardt, die ich bereits im ersten Buch zustimmend zitiert hatte. Sie lautet: „Malerei" - und hier setze ich „zeitgenössische Kunst" allgemein ein -, „die ihre eigene Geschichte nicht vergessen hat und Geschichte nicht nur als wieder verwertbare Ansammlung […] versteht, gründet sich auch heute auf die großen Neueinsätze der 60er Jahre".[13] Im ersten Buch von 2003 waren nur Künstler beteiligt, die an die Neueinsätze der 60er-Jahre *anknüpften*. In Zusammenhang mit dem zweiten Buch war die Frage nun: Was ist mit den 60er-Jahre Künstlern selbst? Und nicht nur mit ihnen, wie steht es etwa mit den ZERO-Künstlern, die schon in den 50er-Jahren vieles von dem vorweggenommen haben, was dann später als Happening, Land Art usw. bekannt geworden ist, oder mit den Performance-Künstlern der 70er Jahre? Die allermeisten sind ja noch höchst aktiv, haben ihre Kunst in den vergangenen 40 Jahren weiterentwickelt, ausdifferenziert, zum Teil in andere Richtungen getrieben, zum Teil revidiert (um nur zwei Beispiele zu nennen: Die Malerin Jo Baer wechselte Mitte der 70er-Jahre vom Minimalismus zur Figuration, und der frühere Performance- und Videokünstler Vito Acconci befasst sich seit den 80er Jahren mit Architektur). Bei der Überlegung, wie das Projekt *Personal Structures* sich weiterentwickeln könnte, schien es uns logisch und folgerichtig, von dem riesigen Erfahrungsschatz dieser älteren Künstlergenerationen zu lernen. Wir wollten aus erster Hand erfahren, wie Künstler, die bereits Kunstgeschichte geschrieben und die Definition dessen, was als Kunst zu gelten hat, entscheidend erweitert haben, heute über die Basisthemen Zeit, Raum und Existenz denken. Bei der Auswahl der Künstler schien es uns nicht sinnvoll, brav den kunsthistorischen Trampelpfaden zu folgen, es ging uns um die einzelnen Persönlichkeiten, nicht um Stil-, Gattungs- oder Gruppenzugehörigkeiten.

Jedoch sollte dieses Buch auch nicht bloß durchgesetzte Positionen präsentieren. Gerade die Kombination mit jungen Künstlern schien uns reizvoll, ebenso mit Wiederentdeckungen wie etwa dem Werk von Erwin Thorn. Wir wollten eine möglichst große Diversität an Persönlichkeiten, Ansichten, Perspektiven zeigen, die sich aus unterschiedlichen kulturellen und persönlichen Hintergründen, aber auch aus verschiedenen Lebensaltern ergeben (der jüngste Künstler in diesem Buch, Xing Xin, ist zu diesem Zeitpunkt 28, die älteste Künstlerin, Louise Bourgeois, 97 Jahre alt).

VII.

Im Anschluss an einen Vortrag, den ich am 17. Dezember 2008 im Skulpturenpark Köln über das Projekt *Time · Space · Existence* gehalten habe, fragte mich ein befreundeter Galerist, ob wir für unsere Gespräche mit den beteiligten Künstlern einen standardisierten Fragebogen benutzten und ob es am Ende eine statistische Auswertung der Antworten gebe. Ich war zunächst sprachlos, weil in dieser Frage das genaue Gegenteil dessen aufschien, worum es uns zu tun ist. Der Focus dieses Buchs liegt auf dem Individuellen, dem Persönlichen, der „Jemeinigkeit" der Lebenserfahrungen und der damit verbundenen Ansichten über Zeit, Raum und Existenz. Vom Individuellen aber gibt es keine Wissenschaft, wie schon Aristoteles wusste.[14] Daher sollte dieses Buch keine wissenschaftliche Abhandlung werden, kein Theoriebuch, kein kunsthistorischer Abriss, kein Beweis für irgendwelche Thesen, nichts statistisch Auswertbares. Zeit, Raum und Existenz haben unmittelbar mit dem Leben zu tun. Daher wollten wir, dass diese Themen auf lebendige Art diskutiert werden, in einer Weise, die für Aspekte offen ist, für Interpretation und Theorie ebenso wie für Anekdotisches, für Polemik und Humor, Philosophie und Lebensweisheit. Was uns vorschwebte, war, kurz gesagt, ein „Buch der Begegnungen". Das Konzept der Begegnung (encounter), das der Künstler Lee Ufan ins Zentrum seiner künstlerischen Existenz gestellt hat[15], schien uns das zentrale Stichwort für unser Buch zu liefern, weil sich in der Begegnung Raum, Zeit und Existenz treffen und gewissermaßen bündeln. Die beiden wichtigsten Medien unseres Projekts, Symposium und Interview, sind nicht zufällig Medien der Begegnung.

Zeit, Raum und Existenz sind unvermeidlich im Spiel, wenn sich Menschen begegnen, um miteinander ins Gespräch zu kommen. Solch eine Begegnung mit einem Künstler, einer Künstlerin geschieht an einem bestimmten Ort, zu einer bestimmten Zeit und unter nicht vollständig vorhersehbaren und nicht vollständig wiederholbaren Bedingungen. Interview- und Symposiumstexte sowie Fotografien sind die bleibende Dokumentation dessen, was sich bei einem solchen Ereignis abspielt. Ihr besonderer Wert liegt in der Einmaligkeit jeder Begegnung. Daher lag uns nichts an einer Vereinheitlichung der einzelnen Beiträge. Sie sollten individuell sein, „gefärbt" durch die Besonderheiten jedes einzelnen Zusammentreffens; das fängt bereits mit der höchst unterschiedliche Länge der Texte und Interviews an. Umfang ist kein Kriterium für Wertigkeit. Die kurzen Sätze von Carl Andre („short but sweet", wie er es nannte) als Antworten auf meine mir ausnahmsweise gewährten Interviewfragen haben in diesem Buch dasselbe Gewicht wie die langen Ausführungen eines Toshikatsu Endo.

VIII.

Man kann nicht von Begegnungen als Verdichtung von Zeit, Raum und Existenz reden, ohne ein Wort über die Sprache und die Sprachen zu verlieren. Wie wir Begriffe bilden, wie wir denken, wahrnehmen, fühlen, hat ganz wesentlich mit der Sprache zu tun, die uns zur Verfügung steht. In diesem Buch sind Menschen aus unterschiedlichen Sprach- und Kulturkreisen vertreten. Alle Texte erscheinen hier in Englisch, der Hauptsprache der globalisierten Welt und auch des Kunstbetriebs. Mehrere Texte erscheinen zudem in der Originalsprache. Unvermeidlich kommt hier das Problem der Übersetzung ins Spiel. Im Grunde ist schon die Übertragung eines Gesprächs in geschriebene Sprache ein Übersetzungsakt. Selbstverständlich mussten die Texte redigiert werden, jedoch stünde es einem Buch mit dem Titel *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence* schlecht zu Gesicht, wenn es die darin versammelten Texte auf ein Reden unter „Laborbedingungen" herunterredigiert hätte. Ein unter dem Stress der Biennale-Eröffnung gehaltenes Interview wie das von Teresa Margolles mit Karlyn De Jongh hat notwendigerweise einen anderen Charakter als ein in aller Ruhe geführtes langes Gespräch wie etwa das von Gottfried Honegger mit Sarah Gold. Wer in seiner Muttersprache spricht, drückt sich anders aus als jemand, der in einer Fremdsprache kommuniziert. All das ist Teil menschlicher Kommunikation als solcher zu akzeptieren. Es ist zu hoffen, dass man aus allen Texten, auch durch die Übersetzungen hindurch, das Besondere und Einmalige der jeweiligen Begegnungen herausspürt.

Insbesondere meine Interviews mit Lee Ufan haben mich gelehrt, dass man Begriffe nicht immer eins zu eins in andere Sprachen übersetzen kann. Nicht nur die drei Grundthemen dieses Buchs, auch scheinbar selbstverständliche Begriffe wie der des Körpers sind in Europa und Asien mit jeweils sehr unterschiedlichen Sprach- und Denktraditionen geladen. Dass das manchmal zu gegenseitigem Missverstehen führt, ist nicht verwunderlich, aber auch nicht zu bedauern, ist es doch nur ein weiterer Ansporn den Dialog fortzusetzen.

IX.

Ich habe dieses Buch ein „Buch der Begegnungen" genannt. Dies gilt nicht nur für alle, die an seiner Entstehung beteiligt waren, es gilt hoffentlich vor allem für die Leser, die hier in Texten und Fotografien zahlreichen Künstlern und Kunstwerken begegnen können. Die vielen Einzeltexte können in beliebiger Reihenfolge gelesen werden. Es ist zu hoffen, dass sich dabei ein Effekt einstellt, wie man ihn von Ausstellungen kennt, in denen Werke aus unterschiedlichen Gegenden und Epochen nebeneinander präsentiert werden. Neue Nachbarschaften können bislang noch unbemerkte Eigenschaften eines Werks zum Vorschein bringen. Dass etwas Vergleichbares beim Lesen dieses Buches geschieht, dass Neues auch im Bekannten und Vertrautes im Unbekannten aufblitzt und sich viele rote Fäden unerwarteter Korrespondenzen entdecken lassen, ist die Hoffnung, mit der ich meinen Teil der Arbeit an diesem Buch abschließe. Allen, die dazu beigetragen haben es zu realisieren, insbesondere Rene Rietmeyer als dem „Motor" dieses Projekts, gilt mein tief empfundener Dank.

1Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*. Sechzehnte Auflage, Tübingen 1986, S. 12.
2 Ebd., , S. 17.
3 Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit. Vortrag vor der Marburger Theologenschaft, Juli 1927*, Tübingen 1989, S. 26.
4 Ebd., S. 24.
5 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I. Blasen*, Frankfurt a. M. 1996, S. 336.
6 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I – Blasen, Mikrosphärologie*, Frankfurt a. M. 1998; *Sphären II – Globen, Makrosphärologie,* Frankfurt a. M. 1999; *Sphären III – Schäume, Plurale Sphärologie*, Frankfurt a. M. 2004.
7 *Sein und Zeit*, S. 111.
8 Vgl. z. B. Peter Sloterdijk, *Zur Welt kommen – Zur Sprache kommen. Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt a. M. 1988.
9 Peter Sloterdijk, Sphären III. Schäume, Frankfurt a. M. 2004, S. 24.
10 *Sein und Zeit*, §§ 35-38.
11 Georg W. Bertram, *Kunst. Eine philosophische Einführung*, Stuttgart 2007, S. 45.
12 Peter Lodermeyer, Personal *Structures. Works and Dialogues*, New York 2003.
13 Johannes Meinhardt, *Ende der Malerei und Malerei nach dem Ende der Malerei*, Ostfildern-Ruit 1997, S. 9.
14 Aristoteles, Met. III, 1003a.
15 Lee Ufan, *The Art of Encounter*, London 2004.

TIME

Symposium at

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PETER LODERMEYER

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"…still alive".
Thoughts on experiencing Presence in Non-Objective Art
My talk will be about time in contemporary art. But I will not deal with time as an artistic theme or address the issue of the portrayal of time. Neither will I talk about the time of the production of art or how an artist experiences time. My topic is formulated in a stricter sense and focuses on the experience of time in the perception of non-objective art. I will only speak from the perspective of the person who views art and his or her experience of time in the aesthetics of viewing. I will speak about presence and contemporaneousness.

It is in keeping with a good academic tradition to first define the concepts you wish to speak about. I will not be doing this for compelling reasons. Time is the main concept of my talk, and this is precisely where the difficulties already begin. For at least 2,500 years now, the nature of time has been a theme of philosophic contemplation. But the results achieved in finding widely accepted definitions during this long period of research and probing have been sobering: To sum it all up, the answer is "Time is not definable."[1] This is how succinctly the philosopher Michael Theunissen expresses it in his book *Negative Theologie der Zeit* [*Negative Theology of Time*]. The reason we do not dispose over any definition of time is not due to a lack of philosophical thought. Not even the natural sciences find themselves in a position to define time. They simply presume it to be a fundamental concept, which is the same thing they do with space. Philosophy can at least teach us why time may not be defined. As soon as we begin to think about time, the time we need to think about it comes into play. Time is not an object we can grasp, but rather the medium of our experience, in which everything we experience, do, and think takes place. As Michael Theunissen puts it: "(…) the experience of time is caught up by the time of the experience, which is to say: the time the experience, always a process, takes. Because in this respect time acts behind our backs, we are never wholly able to make an object of it, never quite able to place it before us. It remains indefinable for this reason."[2]

Time is thus something we do not grasp objectively, but only experience. We know time not by concepts, but from practical life. In today's post-industrial, media and service society, this largely happens in our stating, as it goes, we "have no time", that we lack time. All too often we experience time in the form of its lacking: we feel time constraints and are put under pressure by business appointments and deadlines. One of the most surprising consequences is the so-called leisure stress. No wonder that books advising us on "time management" are very popular. The anthropological background for our lack of time is well known to us and yet for the most part we go to great lengths to suppress it: It has to do with the knowledge of our own limited lifespan. Humans are mortal beings. We do not have enough time for the simple reason that some day we will die. The fact of death imbues our sense of time with the necessary existential seriousness. Michael Theunissen says that we are inescapably subjected to the rule of time and suffer from this fact. To be liberated from time—and this for Theunissen means happiness—may only be perceived in what he terms as "tarrying awhile or lingering": Lingering is not going with the flow of time, tearing yourself away from it. The most important paradigm for it is aesthetic contemplation.[3] If aesthetic contemplation indeed comprises a moment of existential happiness, then this should be reason enough to ask what the experience of time is all about that we encounter in our aesthetic contemplation of non-objective contemporary art.

This is why I will first speak of the element of time in art and the difference between the effects of meaning and the effects of presence. Secondly, I will remind everyone that those first generations of the non-objective avant-garde, let's say from Mondrian to Ad Reinhardt, mostly tried to evade time by attributing timelessly valid meanings to their works—unsuccessfully, in my opinion. Thirdly, I will talk about the experience of time in painting following after Minimalism, which had sought to liberate itself from all metaphysical meanings. Fourthly, I will attempt to interpret a work of concept art, namely several telegrams by On Kawara, though not under the usual premises of the effects of meaning, but rather the effects of presence. I do this in the hope of ultimately gaining something towards the understanding of the importance of non-objective art today.

1. From the very second a work of fine art is completed, it conveys something of the time of its origin. Strictly speaking then, each encounter with a work of art is already a view of the past. This fact seems trivial. But it is precisely this phenomenon that makes an academic discipline such as art history possible and meaningful in the first place. The iconology of Erwin Panofsky is still one of the leading methods that defines art history. It is concerned precisely with determining the "intrinsic meaning or content" of a work of art by perceiving it as a document of its time and conditions, and placing it within a history of cultural symptoms.[4]

By understanding works of art largely as the symptoms of notions typical for an artist, an art landscape, an epoch, a class consciousness, a view of the world, etc. we are achieving a vast amount for regaining a historical context that had been losing its contours in the past. Art works of the past open themselves up to us through the historical reconstruction and interpretation of their levels of sense and meaning (and if you think about it, each work of art we encounter is art of the past). But on the other hand, this methodic approach continually passes over the moment, which stands, or should stand, at the center of all our dealings with a work of art: the aesthetic experience of its physical presence now.

The interpretation of art—and not only professional interpretation, but precisely also the intuitive understanding by the interested art lover—focuses for the most part entirely on the level of meaning of a work of art. Already in the first semester of art history we learn that we should only examine works of art by their historical context and that we should not trust our own senses. Artists, for the most part, have a diametrically opposite understanding. Many of them react skeptically or very badly to attempts at interpretation because they fear that wanting to understand will damage the direct sensual perception of the works. Anyone dealing with painters who work with monochrome colors, for example, knows their dilemma of being constantly faced with questions as to what their works mean. Or people tell them they cannot understand their paintings. That the demand is not for understanding, but for viewing, that the concern is for the sensual presence of the work, for an aesthetic experience of the work of art in its material presence, is something we are unable to understand if we are primarily concerned with establishing a meaning. Therefore, what is continuously expected or even demanded, are explanations of the artist's intention, which is to say: more or less elaborate theories. We live in a culture of meaning. Meaning is conveyed by all types of media. What this amounts to may be witnessed in any large exhibition where visitors, instead of allowing the presence of the works of say, a Francis Bacon or a Caravaggio to exert their visual effects on them, instead hold their audio-guides close to their ears in order to get the significance of the works as quickly as possible.

To reiterate here: In following the literature scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, we may differentiate between the effects of meaning and the effects of the presence of a work of art. Effects of meaning are all effects that make interpretation and understanding necessary. Effects of presence are effects that originate solely from the material presence of the work of art. They address the senses alone. Works of art always inevitably produce both types of effects. They may not be played off against each other.

2. My hypothesis is therefore that non-objective art is in an excellent position for producing effects of presence, and thus make possible an aesthetic experience of an intensive presence. The reason for this is that by dispensing with a portrayal of the outside world in its changeability and randomness, it (non-objective art) is in a position to make a theme of the material facts of the work itself, such as color, form, material, light, etc. With Gumbrecht, the concept of presence is initially understood as being mainly spatial: "What is present to us […] is in front of us, in reach of and tangible for our bodies"[5] But the corporeal presence may only be felt in a special experience of time: at this very moment, in the present, highlighted in the flow of time. Non-objective art can be a contemporary art in the most literal sense of the word, because it focuses on the present with its material, non-depictive appearance. We might designate this as the utopia of non-objective art: to stop the flow of interpretations and processes of understanding and—if only for a few moments—make possible the experience of a pure and intense present.

At this point I must remind you briefly that the historical avant-gardes of non-objective art mostly strove to evade time by fixing the meaning of their work, i.e. defining it through the use of general concepts. Within the European as well as the American avant-garde art there are numerous concepts of timelessness. This means: Art was based on universals, invariant structures of nature or of the human intellect or mathematical laws. In other words: they were supposed to be unchanging on principle and thus, timelessly valid. I will cite only three extremely different examples here: Piet Mondrian, Barnett Newman, and Ad Reinhardt.

For Mondrian, art was to be the visible expression of the universal in its unchangeableness, i.e. timelessness: "This unchangeable thing we attempt to create as purely as possible. (…) the portrayal of the unchangeable relationship : the relationship of two straight lines standing at a right angle to each other."[6] "If the universal is the most essential, it must be the primal reason of all life and all art", he wrote in *De Stijl* in 1917, continuing: "The more definite (conscious) this being at one with the universal is felt, the more the subjective, the individual, is abrogated."[7]

In his articles, Barnett Newman repeatedly referred to presence and to his interest in the experience of time. "The concern with space bores me. I insist on my experience of sensations in time—not the sense of time but the physical sensation of time."[8] But instead of relying solely on the presence of effects in his colors and forms, he repeatedly loaded them down with metaphysical meaning in his articles, especially with the concept of "the sublime", which he describes with concepts such as "world mystery" or "metaphysical secrets".[9]

Ad Reinhardt is a special case because particularly with respect to his most recent pictures, he denies any sort of attribution of meaning to works of art. Reinhardt, too, speaks of universality and transcendence, of "style-less universal painting". His "black paintings" are only mere repetitions of the same ideal: "a pure, abstract, non-objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless, disinterested painting, (…), ideal, transcendent, aware of no thing but art."[10] The absolute negativity of the picture recalls the negative theology of the mystics, God's existence without any attributes. In this respect, Reinhardt relies on the effect of sense of his pictures in as far as he refuses them any positive attribution of sense—but in doing so he does not escape attributing sense, because this negation is precisely what constitutes their significance.

All of this and further attempts to bring the interpretation of pictures to an end by attributing timeless meanings is doomed to fail. The reason for this was clearly stated almost 200 years ago by the philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher: "Those desiring to exclude what is individual completely overlook that fact that what they establish as objective knowledge always relies precisely on the particular understanding of their special language."[11] Mondrian's universal, Newman's sublime, and Reinhardt's negativity comprise these particular concepts and notions, which we do not automatically grasp from our own horizon of understanding. They must be accessed through interpretation. The studies on what Mondrian anyway meant with his concept of the universal, whether he was influenced by his Protestantism, his occupation with theosophy, etc., fill entire bookshelves. Similar applies to Newman's notion of the sublime and Reinhardt's negativity.

3. Minimal art was the heroic attempt to end once and for all the notion of a work of art as a sign for metaphysical meaning and allow it to revel in its pure self-identity. The fact that this claim may not be met without contradiction is not a topic I shall enter into here. I will not speak now of Minimal Art, but I would like to point out that works of art, which have passed through the experience of Minimalism afford a good departure point for making presence possible. For example, this applies to the Radical Painting of someone like Günter Umberg. Unlike Ad Reinhardt's *Black Paintings* bordering on the immaterial, Umberg's black pictures are entirely material objects, i.e. painted color, multi-layered pigments on a picture carrier. An object in space, which the viewer confronts, searching for a viewpoint. An alterative Other, a counterpart not at our disposal. Not at our disposal because it is vulnerable, since the pigment surface cannot withstand even the slightest touch. This is how an almost personal relationship to the picture comes about: "Paintings as objects, as bodies in the world, are extensions of the human condition".[12] Pictures as bodies desiring touch and refusing it at the same time, bodies without a message, without meaning—an ideal situation for experiencing presence: "My relationship to color is determined by its physical presence."[13] Actually I mention Günter Umberg merely for the reason that he is the only artist I know of who has ever referred to the pain of saying farewell in connection with viewing a picture, the "sense of pain upon departure" from the picture.[14] This pain at departing says a lot about the time structure of presence. For we may not keep up presence for any length of time. The picture, when it approaches us, when it "presents itself" has the quality of a phenomenon that opens itself for timeless moments, but then withdraws again in terms of its presence. The pain of departure means that we must leave the direct physical presence of the picture at some point and experience that even the strongest memory of it can never replace the direct contemplation. According to Aristotle, the time of presence in aesthetic experience is "separate", something Gumbrecht refers to as "fragmented". It is the experience of the moment—but of a moment, which in a way remains timeless.

The measure of time, namely, plays no role in the experience of presence. It is even an age-old topos of the aesthetics of presence that a moment of eternity may flash in an intensively-experienced moment. And yet, we must still allot a picture the time it needs to reveal itself and open up. In museums, objects with a viewing period averaging more than 20 seconds are considered to have a great "holding power". If you look at the two pictures by Thomas Pihl outside in the exhibition for 20 seconds, you will have scarcely seen them yet. It takes a much longer time of contemplation until the pictures approach us, until they reveal themselves as pictures, until they reach us. But if you allow it to happen, they present entirely astonishing viewing experiences. Upon longer contemplation, namely, it emerges that these pictures are not at all as uniform and monochrome as they first appear to be. Rather they consist of numerous stacked layers of poured acrylic paint shining through. After taking a certain time for the eye to get used to them, the layers that lie deeper below very slowly emerge, the color becoming more complex and ambiguous. If you stand close enough to the paintings, their surfaces begin to blur into an incomprehensible color phenomenon, one in which our gaze loses any kind of hold. It is an astonishing experience when suddenly the eye perceives a tiny irregularity, a spot of color or an air bubble. Instantaneously the picture reveals again its tangible material surface, which now suddenly proves to be much richer in detail than had been initially detected.

4. I would now like to try to take a look at a work by On Kawara under the premises of the experience of presence. This is not the way we customarily look at his work. Kawara is normally reckoned among the concept artists and this is considered to be an art directed towards the effects of sense par excellence. According to Joseph Kosuth, art works anyway do not do anything else but produce meaning. Nevertheless, I believe it is legitimate to view On Kawara's 19 telegrams shown here in the exhibition as material objects. For whatever their underlying concept or idea is, it may anyway only be experienced by the viewer through its material implementation. We are dealing here with 19 telegrams from the series *I AM STILL ALIVE*, which Kawara had written to Klaus Honnef in the 1970s. My thanks go to Klaus Honnef at this point for loaning them to us for this exhibition. The message of these telegrams does not exhaust itself in the semantics of their text, which simply reads: "I am still alive. On Kawara." But the semantics are dependent on what is referred to in media theory as the "materiality of communication".[15] Regardless of whether a sentence has been written by hand on paper, or if it has been printed, chiseled in stone, or lights up written in neon, it definitely makes a difference for the meaning of the text. In the case of *I AM STILL ALIVE* we are dealing with telegrams. The telegram is a medium of urgency. You send telegrams if you have to say something important quickly and urgently. And you do this tersely and precisely, because they are expensive, their price being based upon the number of words. Thus, a telegram is in a hurry to get to its recipient. It also means that it outdates very quickly. Kawara's telegrams are overly saturated with time that has passed. Not only the postmark and the address of the recipient, which is no longer valid, attest to the time, which has passed since then. Also the yellowed paper that was never meant anyway to be kept for any length of time. Likewise the typewriter print—today we use computer print-outs. The postal institution, the German Federal Postal Service, is something of the past since having been privatized in 1994. And anyway the telegram is an outdated medium in an age of e-mail and cell phone. In many countries as a result there is no longer any possibility to send a telegram. As material objects Kawara's telegrams are saturated with signs of time past. But they still bear a message in the first person singular present tense: "I am still alive". As the material trace of past moments they store these. The telegrams bear in addition the name of the artist, though of course, not as a handwritten signature, only the name.[16] Thus, they are bound to the person of On Kawara and yet separable from him because it always remains uncertain whether the name is the actual author of the sentence or whether the sentence is mere quotation or indirect speech. These telegrams will not stop saying that I am still alive. They will not even stop doing this when On Kawara is indeed no longer alive. Carl Andre once defined Minimalism as "attempting the greatest efficiency with the least means."[17] In this respect Kawara's telegrams are extremely minimalist. In the poverty of their aesthetic appearance and the simple repetition of their terse message, life and death, past and future collide into moments, which perforate the sluggish surface of the flow of time like pin-pricks. In experiencing presence, the boundaries between subject and object become blurred—what the telegrams say becomes identical for a moment with what the viewer experiences.

5. Here in this exhibition we are showing works by renowned, mature artists alongside works by younger artists, who besides Thomas Pihl, include Nelleke Beltjens, Yuko Sakurai, András Gál, Rene Rietmeyer and Miriam Prantl. What is the reason anyway that artists are still creating pictures and sculptures with a simple language of stylistic means, works which do not portray anything, do not represent anything, do not narrate, symbolize nothing, and bear no message? Moreover these are works about which we have long stopped believing they reveal to us the universal nature of the world or metaphysical reality. What is the reason that so many people still find it so important to deal with such non-objective works nearly 100 years after the beginning of abstract art, and 40 years after Minimalism? Based on what I have already said, I would like to attempt to provide a short answer here.

As Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht notes, we live in a culture of meaning, not in a culture of presence. We constantly produce effects of meaning and multiply them with the mass media. This applies not only to the humanities but also to a large degree to our wholly normal everyday lives. There is no event, no claim by any politician, and certainly none by a soccer coach or pop star, which is not interpreted and laid out, commented, and discussed in a hundred ways. We pile sense upon sense, even if this may not be differentiated from non-sense. And in this, our experience of presence is getting drastically lost. Of course in this symposium we also wish to discuss and produce effects of sense. This is necessary and important. But, precisely as art historians or art critics, we must continuously bear in mind that art works may never completely be explained by theory or meaning. The sensual, material makeup of the work in its presence is not the cinders, slag, and ashes, the undigested remains of theory. It rather serves to make aesthetic experience possible at all, the experience of an intensified moment, the thing others refer to as the "happiness of lingering" (Theunissen) or the "joy of presence" (Jean-Luc Nancy). In my opinion this is the reason why we need such pictures. Put in the words of the Frankfurt aesthetics professor Martin Seel: "In the perception of the incomprehensible peculiarity of something which is a sensually given, we gain a view of our lives in the present that is otherwise not at our disposal. The attention to what is appearing is thus at the same time attention we pay to ourselves."[18] To an even greater extent this applies to the appearance of a work of art: It makes the experience of an intensified feeling of self possible, a fleeting moment of breaking free of the reign of time, allowing us to experience the intensive moments that we are still alive…

1 Michael Theunissen, *Negative Theologie der Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, p. 37.
2 Ibid., p. 43 f.
3 Ibid., pp. 285-298.
4 Erwin Panofsky, Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art, in: E. P., *Meaning in the Visual Arts. Papers in and on Art History*, New York 1955, pp. 26-54, quote p. 30.
5 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning cannot convey*, Stanford 2004, p. 17.
6 Piet Mondrian, *Dialog über die neue Gestaltung*, quoted in Hans L.C. Jaffé, *Mondrian und De Stijl*, Cologne 1967, p. 117.
7 Piet Mondrian, *Das Bestimmte und das Unbestimmte*, in: ibid., p. 106, footnote 8.
8 Barnett Newman, *Selected Writings and Interviews*, New York 1990, p. 174 f.
9 Ibid., p. 140.
10 *Art as Art.The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*. Edited by Barbara Rose, New York 1976, p. 83.
11 Friedrich Schleiermacher, Dialektik (1811), quoted here after: Manfred Frank, *Die Unhintergehbarkeit von Individualität*, Frankfurt am Main 1986, p. 118.
12 Quoted after: Hannelore Kersting (ed.), Günter Umberg, Cologne 1989, p. 47.
13 Ibid., p. 20.
14 Ibid., p. 23.
15 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (ed.), *Materialität der Kommunikation*, 2nd edition, Frankfurt am Main 1995.
16 In my opinion, this aspect is not taken enough into account in the otherwise instructive discourse by Takashi Hiraide. Die Revolution des Augenblicks. On Kawara als Sprache, in: *On Kawara. Erscheinen - Verschwinden*, edited by Udo Kittelmann, Cologne 1997, pp. 31-46, (on I am still alive: p. 40 f.).
17 *Artists in their Own Words, Interviews with Paul Cummings*, New York 1979, p. 191.
18 Martin Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens*, Frankfurt am Main 2003, p. 9.

RENE RIETMEYER

Text as presented during the symposium Time at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 15 June 2007

Rene Rietmeyer (1957, Netherlands) creates Boxes with which he expresses himself and his awareness of time in relation to his surroundings.*

Depicting self-experienced and non self-experienced time

We humans perceive time only as a result of memory. If we had no conscious memory, we would not be aware of time at all, we would only see the Now. The result of having memory and the creation of our way of measuring time causes our perception of time to appear as a line. Mathematicians, physicists, philosophers and others have made statements about space being finite and time being infinite, but to me it seems as if Time and Space themselves, as well as Existence, are all infinite.

I am an artist, not a philosopher, and unfortunately my lifetime is simply too short to focus on both directions equally good. So I decided to concentrate on expressing my thoughts, myself, in objects and not in writing. Therefore I will not explain here my philosophical thoughts about time, but rather explain how time is expressed in my works. I express not only the time I have experienced, but also time I have not witnessed myself. My installations do not just represent me, they are part of me. My works are often classified as minimal- or non-representational art, but they are not. Although I admit that for communicational reasons I have used the word non-representational myself, I am of the opinion that each work of art represents something, even more than just itself.

My works have become the way they are because of many influences from the past. Knowledge and experiences have formed my intellect, and my work is also influenced by my personal and emotional condition at the moment of their actual execution. Some artists claim that their work is purely intellectual, and others claim they are purely emotional artists. Both influences, emotional and intellectual, are indeed present in my work and me. The separation between the emotional and intellectual is another discussion, but these tendencies exert both a great influence on me and my work. They are strongly related to the time and space I exist in.

Expressing the present and the past

The closest my objects come to something called 'expressing the present' is when I execute the actual manual handling of the physically present construction of the object. At the actual moment of execution, my emotional constitution adjusts the decisions I had made earlier on. Variations in color, the amount of and the way in which I apply material on the carrier, are for example influenced by my emotional condition during the object's execution. These emotional influences are mainly momentary. Of great influence are, for example, my surroundings and my personal constitution, whether I am hungry or if I just had sex and am tired but satisfied. Many of the decisions about how my objects turn out are made long before the actual execution. The decision about how a series of Boxes will look like is a conscious choice of my means of expression. Certain colors, materials, textures, shapes and compositions express for me certain thoughts and emotions. By connecting them to the subject, I am able to express my intellectual and emotional relationship to the subject. Knowledge about material, color, size, surface-structure, composition and space. Knowledge about the thoughts of other artists I communicate with, but also the knowledge about thoughts and works of artists who are already dead. Knowledge about us, mankind, about the world and the space and time we live in. The thoughts standing at the origin of the intellectual decision about how to construct my work come from somewhere. That origin is to be found in the time that has passed.

Roman Opalka, who sits here next to me, is older than me. He lived before I ever started my life and before Roman, there were other humans. As a human, I am capable of creating an awareness about 'Time which has passed', but in order to create that awareness, I need knowledge and there just isn't enough lifetime to collect all the knowledge I would wish to collect.

How little do I know about the time before the earth existed, about the origin of the earth and the beginning of life. I know a little more about the era when dinosaurs inhabited the world and for me it is not hard to imagine that once dinosaurs probably walked where I am now standing at this very moment. At that time humans did not exist. We, Homo sapiens, came much later, perhaps about 200.000 years ago, and it looks like it took us roughly another 150.000 years before we developed the first cultural aspects. This would mean that, Homo sapiens existed probably 150,000 years without cultural things. From this period we have not found evidence of anything,

having to do with music or art. All those cultural acts must have only started an approximately mere 50,000 years ago.

It was communication which mainly helped us to develop. Writing seems to be the most crucial of all human skills. The, up to now, oldest discovered writing only dates from 5,500 years ago. Communication seems to be the key to so many things. But although we humans have become capable of managing very complex communications, in order to reach as many humans possible it remains wise to use a language, words and sentence constructions, which have a fair chance of being understood.

We communicate not only through spoken language and writing, music and gestures, but also through our paintings and objects. Humans express their thoughts in the paintings and objects they make. These thoughts and the knowledge expressed create an awareness about us as human beings, and the way in which we are able to communicate. But without written statements by the artist, or without having spoken to the artist in person, we will never know what the creator really meant with the works he or she created, and even then, transporting thoughts and emotions honestly and sincerely, remains difficult.

During the last few thousand years many paintings and objects have been created, but it seems to be just the last 150 years where artists have been looking for other goals for their creations than just making religion-related works or representing visually experienced or imaginary scenery. Around 100 years ago, an abstract language in art appeared with people like Kandinsky, Malevich, or later with Mondrian and Barnett Newman. It was Frank Stella who created more or less by coincidence a framework, which made his painting look like an object. The nature of what painting was indeed changed. Painting no longer had to merely depict an image or simulate a window. A painting now became an object in itself, a physical entity in a room. Surrounding all the creations, abstract thoughts had developed. Donald Judd for example, tried to depersonalize his objects. Although he failed in this attempt, his thoughts and all the knowledge I gained from such people who lived before my personal, consciously experienced time, have helped me in creating my own thoughts about all the formal elements I use to make my works.

Time and my work

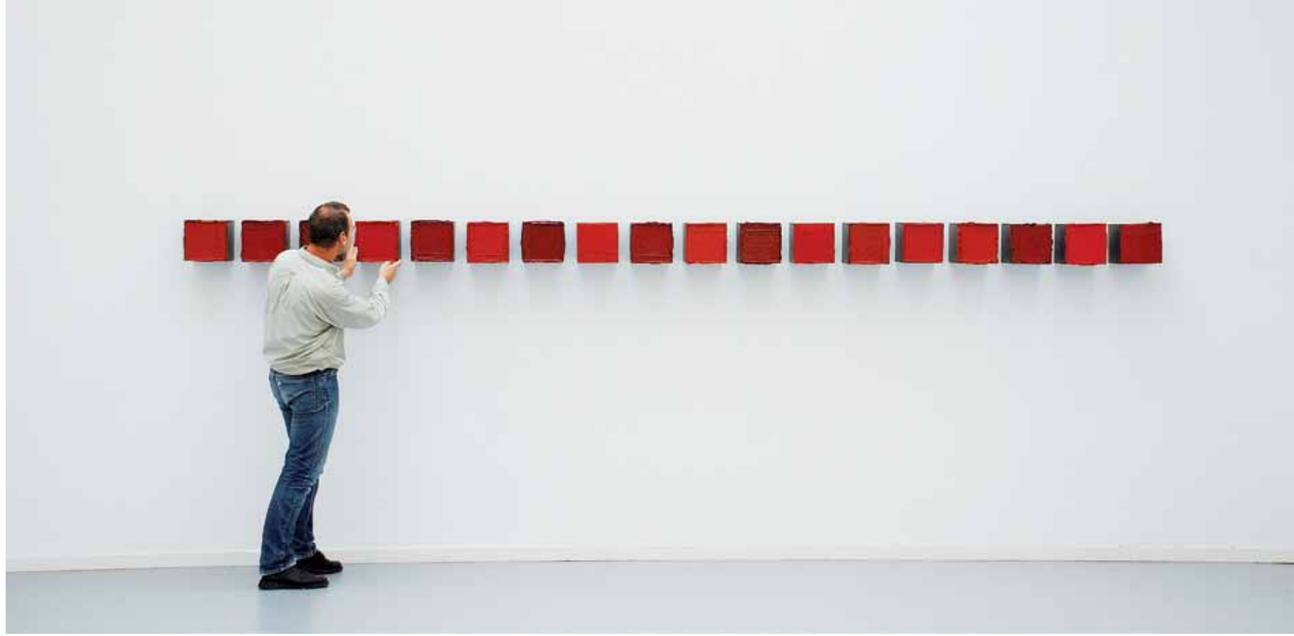
I was born in 1957 in the Netherlands. Many events have taken place since then, but it took several years for my brain to reach the level of development where I was able to realize that those events actually happened. It took time and effort to consciously become more aware of myself and my surroundings. That awareness of consciously experiencing my own existence will hopefully continue to grow.

To live my life within art, contemporary art, was an intellectual decision I made in 1993 while living in Greece. Listening, reading, observing, discussing, as a human being, I have learned and continue to learn from others. It is a combination of adopting knowledge and adding my own thoughts to it.

In 1996, I lived for a while in Vallauris, in the South of France. With the little money I earned from selling my work, I went to Paris, to the Centre Pompidou, to look at Roman Opalka's work. At that time three works by Roman Opalka were being shown there. I sat in front of his works, while Polish numbers came out of the speakers. He tried to explain Time to me and I tried to understand. Ten years later, in 2006, again in France, I stood with Roman in his Octagon, discussing Time and now, on 15 June 2007, we are both speaking here in Amsterdam, aware that soon I might witness that Roman will not be able to continue painting infinity, because some day he will die.

Robert Rauschenberg told me that when he was younger, he believed that there was not enough world for him to discover and now, conscious of the fact that he would soon die, he said; "I am running out of time." It is this awareness, of how short my own expected Life-Time actually will be, that made me decide to create the best possible balance between a professional life that is as challenging as possible, experiencing as much as possible in this world, and enjoying a sexual life that is as interesting as possible. Time itself does not stop. We just cease to exist.

Time in my work is expressed in the choice of color, in the choice of shape, size, surface, composition and even in the choice of the materials. These choices are always made in relation to the subject I have chosen for that particular series. These choices are made emotionally as well as intellectually. In order to express the emotions I wish to express, and in order to communicate with the spectator, I have to have at least some knowledge of abstract language. Take color, for example: the thoughts about color came from people such as Goethe, Itten and even Wittgenstein. Their knowledge helped make it possible to use color for communication more consiously. So when I choose a color, the choice is always a combination of my momentary emotional condition and of the knowledge I gained about human thoughts made in the past. But not only color, also other elements such as shape, texture and material can be used to communicate and it is all these things I can make use of. This is not only because of the knowledge about how these elements have been



used in the past, but also because of the knowledge about how most humans respond to these elements. With my consciously taken choices, I express myself and my awareness about human history and the history before humans, my awareness about Time.

In 2001, I lived for some months in an area of Germany called Saarland, which is a coalmining region close to the French border. I always claimed that you could see the coalmines in the genes of the people living there. It was such a dark feeling. For the Boxes I made there, I wasn't able to choose any material other than heavy steel, but as a person very much alive and living in that surrounding, unwilling to be sucked into that society, I gave it a powerful presence. On one side I painted red oil paint, human life.

Here in the next hall, I am also showing Boxes with the title "USA, New Orleans, May 2002". While driving by car from Miami to Los Angeles, I stopped off in New Orleans, experiencing the city, and I remember being disappointed. So later, back in my studio, I chose black and then I chose a shape like a coffin. Now, years of time have passed and meanwhile, disaster has struck New Orleans. The knowledge of what happened in the time after I created my objects has changed the meaning of them. While creating an object, only thoughts and knowledge of the past can go into it, but after the object has been made, through the passage of time, the meaning of an object changes. As time passes, new thoughts are created, we add our newly acquired knowledge to the objects we observe.

Just a month ago I created an installation of Boxes called "Life". For these Boxes I choose the color red because it is human and has a strong presence. I chose the size, compact; and I chose the material, ceramic, because ceramic lasts a long time, longer than wood. Within all their formal elements, with all their subjectivity, these ceramic Boxes represent all my thoughts, me as a total entity. These Boxes, "Life", are proof of my existence. They capture my awareness of the time I could not witness myself as well as my personally experienced Life-Time. And, after I myself have died, each "Life" Box will continue to exist and communicate.

Questions from the audience

Valerie Laxton: How satisfied are you with your paintings?

Rene Rietmeyer: My work is always the maximum result of what I am capable of at that specific moment in time and space. Sometimes I'm very tired and I just cannot create anything better, or sometimes my arm hurts so much that I am unable to work like I would want to, or maybe I had to work in a very small studio and could not create larger works. Whatever the circumstances and the limitations are, I always try to attain the maximum result. Therefore I always have reason to be satisfied with the outcome.

VL: So you never feel that you have to commit suicide because…

RR: No, and that is a nice feeling. I look at my work and I can see the situation, the time and the location where they were made. I remember that I went to Japan and as usual I was totally broke. The paint became very thin, the canvas had a very cheap quality and the wood and I got thinner as well. That was my first 'Japan Time'. Later, in Germany, I had some money and could order 107 steel Boxes to be made and put thick oil paint on them, but I also remember having worked for weeks in a cold garage in the Netherlands, where it was just 3° Celsius (38°F). I had to put my oil paint on a little heater so that I at least could get the paint out of the tube. And then there were times when I worked in August, in my Miami studio and I was trying to not let too much of my sweat drip into the oil paint because it mixes so badly. My objects become what they become. Always. Each Box I make is a honest result of me, my existence at that moment in time and space, an object from that specific time in my life.

KLAUS HONNEF

Text as presented during the symposium Time at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 15 June 2007

Klaus Honnef (1939 in Tilsit) is an art critic an curator. In 1970 he wrote the very first book on* Concept Art. *Lives in Bonn, Germany.*

Time—A Challenge for the Visual Arts

The much-feared Viennese theater critic and writer Alfred Polgar once noted that when he looked at his watch after two hours of a piece about as eventful as a journey across the Argentine plains, he was shocked to realize only five minutes had passed. Albeit, the biting remark casts significant light upon a phenomenon more difficult to grasp than a swarm of bees, and all those who dare to tackle it might just end up with comparable results. By differentiating between at least two different levels of time, the one passing objectively, and the one subjectively-felt, the witty author made clear first of all that there is no such thing as absolute time, and secondly, this insight notwithstanding, he opened a Pandora's box of all the endeavors for tailoring time to fit the human imagination by using plausible systems. Even the simple question of what we may understand by objective time culminates in a dilemma people have been trying to tackle with the most varying models until now, without ever being able to achieve anything approaching objectivity, defined as the "objective" meaning of the concept. Any answer is, namely, always based on premises that, according to the philosopher Karl R. Popper, may not be verified in the final analysis, i.e. checked for their ultimate claim to truth. At most they may be falsified, and must therefore be discarded as untenable.

In this respect what is considered to be an objective passage of time, following in the globally-connected world a mathematical, linear scale gained from astronomic observations, is in no way more objective than the opinion according to which time passes in a constant cycle of the eternal return of what is always the same, or at least similar. The model of a linear and measurable progression of time is fed from a host of observations. In his deductions concerning the phenomenon of time, however, empirical facts get mixed in with a number of a priori premises, such as the unprovable assumption that mathematical principles guarantee objective findings, among other things. The whole matter becomes even more complicated by the fact that even empiricism is only one of a number of possible approaches to reality, or more precisely, to what is located outside the subjective environment of every person, i.e. his external world. Long before the clock began to rule sovereign in the European Middle Ages, symbolizing the linear progression of time, the Chinese had their own instrument of measurement. They relinquished it, however, because it was not in keeping with their notions of time. In the linear and cyclical models of time, both notions of time are mirrored, which as a rule, characterize complex cultures, whereby the cyclical is much older than the linear model, and more common, too.

The feeling that time is a phenomenon that progresses in a certain direction is probably one of the consequences of the arduous process, where at the end mankind learned to walk in an upright position and then became aware of his or her own mortality. In western cultures of Antiquity, death affirmed the path of life, so to speak. This notion lives on in the monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, yet in contrast to the polytheists, they hold in store more comfort beyond death than Hades, that desolate shadow realm of high Greek culture. In medieval European thought, the eschatological perspective was heightened even more. Death all but supplied the beat for the progression of time. This is manifest in the many poignant sculptures of the body of Christ dying on the Cross, which on the other hand promise the redemption of man through the death of the Son of God and his physical resurrection after death. In other words: a life in absolute timelessness. The short phase of life proffered the tempting possibility of gaining chances for a joyous existence in a timeless paradise, if man only behaved in a certain way, a paradise mankind had once been driven out of for its sins. From the standpoint of the secular Modern movement, the chronological imperative has been expressed ultimately as a radical belief in progress in this world, thanks to which things inescapably and constantly develop for the better. Consequently, in their wake death has taken on features of something random, so that its occurrence seems more and more like an act of sabotage in a logically planned world. Simply suppressing it is the inadequate, though understandable, answer.

Although mankind began very early on to document the varying relationships to the fleeting phenomenon of time, also in pictures, this only happened rather indirectly. Pictures, in as much as they do not shine out as metaphors in the literary disciplines, belong to the material facets of what is real, they are part of the world of things. And their creators have no other choice than to illustrate in the visual form of things the supernatural, the divine, and the spiritual. It is not by chance that we apostrophize what picture works deal with, even as objects. Nevertheless, there often emerges in the visual exploration and portrayal of the respective objects a moment of the fourth, temporal dimension. It is sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger in the pictures, but it is on principle closed to the picture works themselves due to its specific nature—except as a reflection of the passage of time happening in them as such. Up to the late modern times, before the beginning of the Modern movements, it was even customary that literally in and on the surface of paintings the most varied time periods found their places beside each other, so that earlier and later events were realized in the same time frame. To cite only a random example, there is the way Baroque master Caspar de Crayer (1584-1669) places the *Pietà*, the grieving Mother of God with the corpse of her son lying in her lap, immediately next to the wealthy Brussels citizens Henric van Dondelberghe and his wife as donors of the work of art. The gap in time only strikes an eye schooled in the modern mode of perception. To portray the life and passion of Christ from station to station in small cassettes within a topographically secluded context was a common practice of medieval wall painting, by the way. The picture language of comics maintains only a superficial, formal reference to this mode of portrayal today. The murder ballads in medieval folk art and modern film served as the models for this.

Also, in the late-medieval portrayals of the changing seasons, such as we find in the famous *Book of Hours* of the Duke of Berry by the Limbourg Brothers, a moment of the progression of time is revealed, albeit only subliminally. It may well be that it is physically experienced in the act of the book's user turning the pages. Most likely he will have given no thought to this, however, since time was not yet a problematic factor of his cosmos. Yet at the beginning of the modern times in panel painting, Pieter Breughel the Elder and a whole army of painters occupied themselves with the theme of the seasons. However, the rediscovery of Antiquity in the art of the Renaissance proved to be the more important impulse. By the artists' adapting and renewing antique narrative patterns, they decisively enlivened what had been, for the most part, a static picture surface prior to this. In comparison with the rigid picture world of the Middle Ages, the pictures and sculptures literally burst with movement in a view of the world more oriented to life before death, and it is a truism that movement takes place in time. Time is, so to speak, the non-visible desideratum of movement. A polemic art criticism later branded the achievement of picture representation and narration as elements of a machinery of illusion. In doing so, starting in the second half of the 19th century its proponents helped the cause of the artistic avant-garde against the superior strength of what had in the meantime become a hardened and too academic tradition, thereby attributing to the avant-garde a higher content of truth—whatever that is in art. Nonetheless, in the repertory of narrative painting a certain duration is bound to develop, within which the narrated material takes place, regardless of whether the dimension of time (as time) was relegated to the periphery of artistic interest. The painters and sculptors always commit the kinetic realization of what is portrayed to the imagination of the viewers of their pictures.

In such works of art, expressly focusing on the birth and passing in the human and material world, the situation is considerably different. Granted, they too force the capacity of the viewers' imagination in a special way. But the demands put upon them not only comprise the visual level of the events shown, the iconic signs, but rather some of the objects portrayed indicate a meaning beyond what they factually appear to be in the pictures. They are symbolic signs referring to a repertory of knowledge. In the *Still Lifes* by Willem Kalf and his contemporaries in 17th century Netherlandish painting, the deciphering of the symbols still seems to be relatively simple, when for example, the wonderfully painted fruit is accompanied by one bearing signs of decay. Like the famous bad apple that spoils the whole bunch, this fruit, too, infests the rest of the pieces and imbues the entire atmosphere of the painting and its demonstratively shown splendor with the admonishing undertone of transience, with a 'memento mori'. In addition, certain animals and plants also stand for the passage of time. Flies above all. On the one hand, Christian iconography attributes to them features such as sinfulness, death,

and destruction, but on the other hand the insect, due to its short lifespan, embodies the transience and limits of human life.

And thus, unabated until the beginning of the Modern, it is death that sets the measure for the orientation to the temporal in the visual arts. As opposed to this, the civil techniques and forms for meeting life's challenges, originating in the cities with their inhabitants, the craftsman, merchants, and bankers and expressed in measuring, scaling, and a maximum of efficiency in the use of disposable time do not play a significant role in the visual arts. At best the fact that the pictures gradually detached themselves from their one-time ritual ties, emancipated and established themselves as works of an art tending towards autonomy, attests to the growing social influence of the bourgeoisie. The rise of genres such as portraits, landscapes, and still lifes and the decline of history painting marked the best side of social and cultural development.

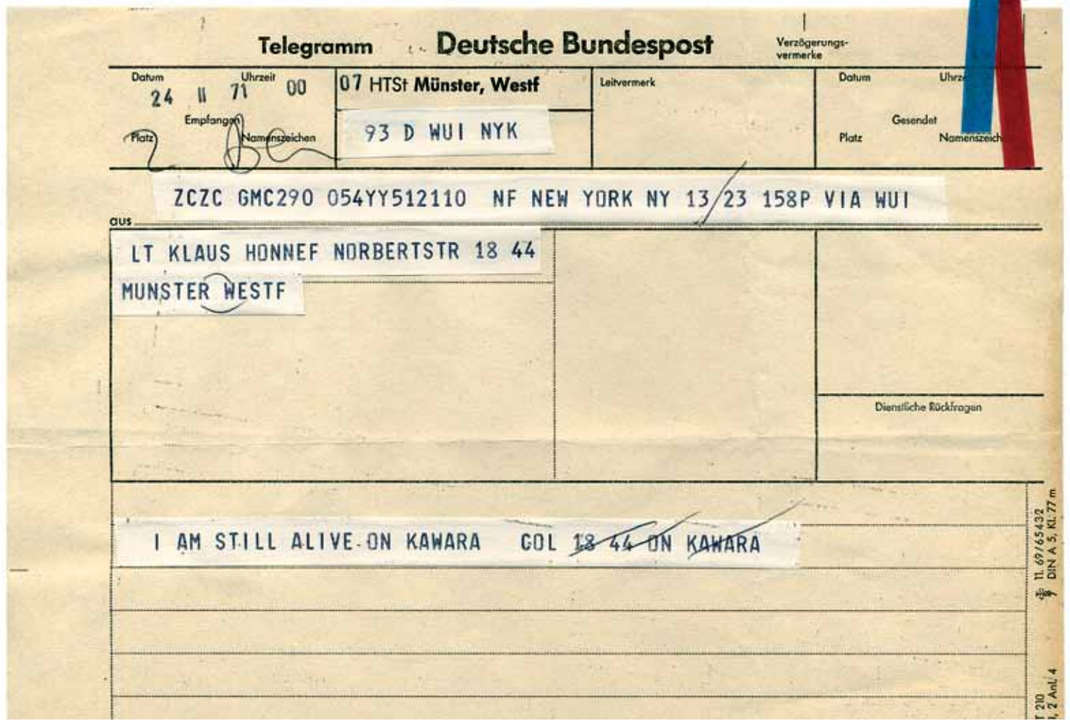
Anyway, the particular world view of the bourgeoisie, which had established itself in the western hemisphere in the mid-19th century as the leading social power, rather made a way for itself through external, formal, methodical and technical innovations in the world of pictures than through its thematic reformation. Nevertheless they threatened the notion of the world that was literally adopted in the art of the past five centuries. In the window view of a painting determined by central perspective, which subordinated and made everything calculable that was visible from a specific viewing angle, it had found its valid form. The seemingly external innovations undermined, shook up, and demolished this picture, leaving only pieces as remains. It is an aspect of time, which reveals itself to be one of several causes: speed. The quicker movement uses the disposable quantum of time more effectively than the slowness of the pre-Modern. Time becomes objectified. The Industrial Revolution brings a fast acceleration of life, its consequences deeply affecting all aspects of the universe both for the individual person and society in general, changing everything completely. All of a sudden, time is the prevalent theme. "Time is money", so the saying goes, as "Benjamin Franklin formulated it, and according to Max Weber the epitome of the capitalist spirit." (Wolfgang Reinhard, *Lebensformen Europas*, Munich 2004, p. 582).

Human perception changes at the same pace as the changing conditions. The "distracted view" (Walter Benjamin) begins its rule, and art, the most prominent branch of the picture world, reacts with increasingly vehement and ever quicker successive attacks on the traditional structures of pictures. The distracted view is also the accelerated view. Sometimes it has been negatively assessed by culture critics. "My contention, on the contrary," art historian Jonathan Crary states emphatically, "is that modern distraction was not a disruption of stable or 'natural' kinds of sustained, value-laden perception (…) but was an effect and in many cases a constituent element of the many attempts to produce attentiveness in human subjects. If distraction emerges as a problem (…) it is inseparable from the parallel construction of an attentive observer in various domains." [Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1999, p. 49].

The attacks on the traditional structure of pictures come in explosive bursts and at ever-shorter intervals. They find their expressions in the infamous '-isms' of the artistic avant-garde. Because of their impact the modern plastic picture has shattered into thousands of individual, heterogeneous parts. Modern Art may be defined as the ongoing attempt to put individual parts back together again, each time in a new way. And at the opposite end of the spectrum, especially in the European variations of abstract art, there is a contrary, idealistic design that dissolves the contradictions in a loftier aesthetic unity, and releases them from any notion of time. Things become independent—in art and elsewhere. The form, which once gave objects its artistic shape, becomes a decisive key to the picture relationship and sometimes even to the autonomous category, to its actual content. The assemblage replaces perspective as a symbolic structure, the technique replaces craftsmanship, and the tension-filled, dynamic interplay of the fragments replaces the ordered overall view.

Thanks to a new technique the figures on the cinema screen have gained the ability to actually move before the eyes of the viewer. The time it takes to complete a movement is now also the object of the portrayal. It no longer unfolds merely in the viewer's imagination; it may be directly experienced and measured. Time and movement are suddenly becoming illustrative standards as reference points within an apparently objective framework. In reality, however, only the pictures move and create a grandiose machinery of illusion. A perforated film that races through a projector so quickly as to combine the individual phases of a movement to form a continuous progression, overcomes the natural sluggishness of the eyes. Granted, it did take a long while for the film, which had won out over traditional painting in matters of illusionism, to be attributed any artistic quality.

The distracted view, which is not the same as a fleeting view, corresponds to the flickering pictures of the film and the rhythm of the scene-settings and sequences. It is an attentive view, always vigilant and flexible, directed from the outside and at once externalized—a view which reacts to the increasing demands with respect to real life and the social changes, but which is also easily diverted. Like the pictures in a film the view jumps from object to object, from event to event, sometimes lingering for a longer or shorter period of time, sometimes concentrated, sometimes incidental. To capture this view is the goal of a surging world of pictures, increasingly industrially produced, that vies for our attention, inevitably unleashing 'media competition' with the traditional craft of the visual arts. The distracted view is one with temporality written into it, and contrary to the contemplative view, it has a processual character. Impressionist painting, the pictures of Manet, Pissarro, Monet, and Cézanne answer to the changes in the "regime of perception" (Jonathan Crary) required by the exterior conditions that liquefy, so to speak, the phenomena on the screen. It takes an active perception in order to be able to recognize the objects portrayed in the frenzy of color spots. It requires a perception involving physical effort to expose the physiologic core of seeing. At the same time the form of the portrayal relying on spots of color and complementary contrasts puts the objects out of the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psychic reach of the viewer, making the symbolic grasping more difficult, and incorporating into the perception a subjectively detectible factor of time. Whether the painters already made use of the most recent knowledge of the flourishing science of perceptual physiology, as some scientists believe, or achieved the changes in visual structures of portrayals intuitively or by way of experiment in the interplay of 'trial and error', as others believe, does not play a role in this context. Of more importance for the development of art is rather that color attained an individual value with the Impressionist manner of painting.

To the extent the trend in the traditional visual arts was heading for a 'realism' of concrete things—actually a nominalist tendency—and a denial of the 'as if' of appearance, their share in conceptual content was increased. As a result the viewer's power of imagination won renewed interest and significance. 'Art in your head' was an apt motto at the height of this development. In this connection the dimension of time played a major role. In order to track the laws of movement, at least to subject its continuous progression in time to the demands of visualization, Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey, in the second half of the 19th century and independently of each other, created experimental photographic set-ups, which made this possible. In their pictures movement became materialized as an element in the realm of the visible. The respective stages in the gallop of a horse, in a person's walk, in the flight of a bird or in the trajectory of a bullet added up to a temporally marked succession of pictures. The thing about it was that time became spatial in the portrayal. More than Marey, Muybridge extended the formal program of the pictures to include the scheme of the series, so to speak, breaking out of their traditional and customary frame. He introduced models into the world of pictures that had been used for analysis in the natural sciences as well as served in the professional sectors of the Industrial Age to make work more efficient and productive than before.

On the other hand, the division of a continuing process of movement into equal intervals has a hint of illustrative awkwardness about it. In comparison to the pictures in Baroque painting that were so loaded with mobility, the visual picture series seemed to be dry and didactic, as if the dynamic energy had been completely driven out of movement. Even the efforts made by painters of the Futurist Movement, in trying to do justice in their paintings and sculptures to the general acceleration of existence, makes an impression of a shaky construction. It is no coincidence that Marcel Duchamp ended his career as painter after finishing his famous *Nude descending a Staircase*, declaring painting to be a purely 'retinal art', which stood in striking disproportion to the aesthetic claims of a modern industrial civilization. In doing so, he opened the door to a largely Conceptual art, whose visual phenomena are limited to the most significant hints in the form of signs, words, sentences, drawings, and photographs and whose structures are only grasped through more or less complicated operations of thought. It is no

coincidence that a fundamentally non-visual phenomenon such as time has become a preferred motif for Concept art.

The opposite path was taken by abstract art and its geometric variant of constructivism. Distilled from the viewing of pictures emphasizing structure, such as those of Fauvism (color) and Cubism (form), which still primarily referred to the visual interpretation of the experience of nature, they aimed at portraying the elementary laws of the universe beyond empirical perception. Either they were looking to convey experiences of the mystical void with a formal apparatus reduced to an extreme, such as Kazimir Malevich and his followers in Suprematism or, more politically, sought to explore the elements for creating the 'new man' and a 'new world', such as Alexander Rodchenko and the protagonists of Revolutionary Art. Or else they were artists like Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky who, albeit with different results, tried to achieve the absolute in art as well as the dissolution of all contradictions in this life in the sphere of aesthetic utopia. In the name of a new artistic "nominalism", painters such as Frank Stella were to object to their designs with claims that they remained within the boundaries of portrayal and in the final analysis only extended 19th century artistic illusionism in a different form. Frequently, the pioneers of abstraction, by claiming to use a quasi-scientific approach, drew their concepts from rather obscure sources, as Beat Wyss has determined.

Be that as it may—in the light of an increasingly disillusioned world at once stoned on the commercially-oriented and industrially produced narcotics of illusion, it was space and its aesthetic assimilation, and not so much time, that continued to be the key issues of painting, sculpture, and drawing, which had emancipated itself as an independent medium in the meantime. Whereas photography, film, and the electronic techniques, due to their conditions and their 'noema' (Roland Barthes), as well as their nature, were a priori more receptive to the influences of a radically changed notion of time and in addition, more suitable for making the respective means available. Although Einstein's theory of relativity, which mowed down all traditional relationships of space and time, has blocked (up to now) any plausible aesthetic presence other than a mathematical one and only reveals its stunning beauty, according to widespread conviction, in the gripping power of the mathematical formula, the evenly progressing linear model of time is gradually losing its sovereign meaning both in our everyday world and in the world of art. The more comfortable the social conditions, the stronger mankind's desire is to stop time from passing and extend it to an indefinite eternity. The craze to stay young and the thriving of the cosmetics industry and cosmetic surgery are a few of the major symptoms. Time has become an important element in the psychic budget of human subjects. And this, by the way, in the reverse form of the quote by Alfred Polgar cited at the beginning: When I looked at my watch after five minutes, I had to realize in dismay that years had already passed, and this is probably a widespread experience by now.

The arts have long since taken up the complex structure of the individual as well as the collective experience of time in the OECD-societies, i.e. in the western hemisphere, reflecting it in various shapes and structures. The commercial narrative cinema film no longer follows almost exclusively the 'and-then-and-then' narrative pattern scheme of unfolding the story. Flashbacks, jumps to the future, the exchange of time levels through a change of the levels in the plot—the life reality versus the cosmos of the stars as well as slowing down and speeding up are part of what is in the meantime its most natural formal means. With Conceptual art the visual arts have conquered a terrain, if at the price of a plastic vividness, which they could only grasp in metaphors and symbols. The prismatic space conception of the Cubism of, say Picasso or Braque, had placed the visual identification of each picture at the viewer's temporal discretion and his or her ability to (re-)construct. And according to Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (in his phenomenal monograph on Juan Gris), it transformed the picture vocabulary into a kind of writing. Concept Art tied into this via many interim phases.

Out of mere numbers and a mathematic trick—the sum of the digits—Hanne Darboven construed a mighty cyclical system of time. The mathematical mechanism ensures the cyclical character and destroys the pressure for continuity ad libitum. Each day of each year, be it B.C. or a day in the distant future, is listed in her elaborate operations of numbers. The result is a time for all the world, containing all of life and all of death. On Kawara unfolds time as well. In practically unending series he not only fixes the progression of each day of his life, but also constantly extends the subjective perspective by integrating impulses from the outside world into his diversified work. His artistic documentation gathers so-called date pictures, paintings on which the date of their completion is recorded in white numbers and digits on various monochrome-colored grounds. Series of telegrams such as *I got up* with the time noted or *I am still alive*, which he sends to selected representatives of the art business in telegram or postcard form, the headlines from newspapers of a respective country or city, in which he happens to be, or the recording of the steps and paths he takes every day. The result is the archives of an existence apparently exclusively dedicated to the archiving of his own life data. And even in Lawrence Weiner's sentence-sculptures the theme of time plays an essential role. His artistic 'handle' is the grammar of a language. As one of many examples, I mention here the work *SLOWLY RAISED WATER*, which he did in 1970 for his first large outdoor exhibition I organized and produced in the little town of Monschau in the Eifel region. German grammar has no conjugation for the future in the past tense: "Slowly raised water" melts nevertheless on the level of the sensefully-combined words past, present, and future. Granted, water may slowly rise, it might have also slowly risen, but the adverb 'slowly' indicates a continual process and its position at the beginning of the work shows that here the present and the future are addressed in the mirror of the past.

MICHEL BAUDSON

Text as presented during the symposium Time at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 15 June 2007

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The exhibition Art & Time (*Art and Time – A Look into the Fourth Dimension*) held at the Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels in November 1984 was later shown in Geneva (at the Rath Museum), Humlebaeck (Louisiana Museum), Mannheim (Kunsthalle), Vienna (Museum of the Twentieth Century), London (The Barbican Centre) and at Villeurbanne / Lyon (The New Museum).

The idea of an exhibition with this concept came as the result of my interest at the beginning of the 1970s in video art, which led me to curate the Artists' Videotapes Exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in February 1975, and later on in June of the same year to organise an exhibition of the work *Double Mirror with Double Time Delay* by Dan Graham. I was then put in charge of a course *Audio Visual Theory* at the National Visual Arts College at Cambre, Brussels. In 1976 I met Roman Opalka at a time when he was exhibiting at the Palais des Beaux Arts.

The conjunction of these several meetings, exhibition commissions and the theoretical and practical questions raised on the course set the idea in motion of this exhibition, which was subsequently put to and accepted by IBM Europe. Their support permitted me to bring the project into being and organise it for international presentation.

I wanted to show that the distinction, largely accepted as such at the time, between space art and other artistic disciplines such as music, dance, theatre cinema etc. had become obsolete. Successive discoveries in photography, the cinema and the theory of relativity, at the same time as scientific, philosophical and artistic thought developed from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, brought about a critical, analytical and theoretical break with the past after which time and space dimensions could no longer be differentiated without taking into account their connections and their globality, notions which were prominent right throughout the twentieth century.

The following extracts from the introduction to the book, published on the occasion of the exhibition, give an impression of the ideas being pursued at this time.

«As a result of Einstein's theory of relativity, the fourth dimension has definitely come to mean a temporal dimension included within the dimension of space.

The notion of space-time is now a commonplace in both the sciences and philosophy.

René Thom, the mathematician and founder of catastrophe theory, recently noted that, "The only true true scientific concepts are those connected with the geometry of space-time',[1] and the philosopher Henri Bergson pointed out on several occasions that 'spatialized time is in reality a fourth dimension of space."[2]

Now that the notion of space-time has become such a natural element in the relationship between perception and thought, is it not something of an anachronism for the art lover to go in using theories such as those put forward by Lessing in his *Laocoon* (1766) to make a distinction between the arts of time and the arts of space ? There is something incongruous here, something that goes against the grain of contemporary thought.

Is it not time to consider not only modern and contemporary art but also the history of art in terms of a multi-dimensional critique or aesthetic in which space-time becomes a a continuum rather than a dislocated referent?

Such is the ambition of this exhibition on *Art and Time: Looking at the Fourth Dimension*: to consider time as a dimension which is both integral and essential to our perception and understanding of the visual arts, of the so-called arts of space.

In a sense, this takes to a question the art historian E.H. Gombrich raised twenty years ago: "Whilst the problem of space and its representation to an almost exaggerated degree, the corresponding problem of time and the representation of movement has been strangely neglected."[3]

(…)

It becomes apparent that time is essential to any understanding of contemporary art and that it offers a wealth of possible ways to renew our perception of other works of art. The idea of a multidimensional aesthetic suggested two objectives. The first was to organize an exhibition in which contemporary works of art conveying a specific notion of temporality could be both shown together and alongside certain statements from the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Our second, related objective was to publish a collection of studies which would develop and refine the various notions of temporality that come to mind when we begin to want to look at the fourth dimension, to include it in visual space rather than to excluding or banishing it from our field of perception. »

The book takes on a threefold approach, scientific, philosophical and artistic. (The French, Dutch and German versions and a catalogue version in English giving only limited choice of text were sold out on publication). From the various texts two sections emerge. The first part deals with the temporality of knowledge and the temporality of scientific research on the one hand and philosophical time or that of poetical time on the other. The second section emerging is the temporality of art in works of art. Some particularly striking examples in the history of art are presented in the book, not as part of a new museum of the imagination but as propositions from space / time based on our cultural references, similar to the articulations of the late nineteenth century or the multi-dimensional expansion of works in contemporary art. Ilya Prigogine, granted the Nobel Prize for Physics, the philosophers Paul Virilio, Umberto Eco and Jean-Francois Lyotard, the writer Michel Butor, have all contributed, amongst other individuals of international renown, to this theme.

The notion of irreversibility which pervades the book is based on the spatial concepts explored at the first exhibition in Brussels, proposing to visitors a number of thematic approaches and directions to be taken on their visit by the interplay of correlated themes, confrontations and reversals suggested by the suspension of the works displayed. The exhibits were placed in perspective alongside each other in the form of cloisters of panels emphasizing the seamless passing from one theme to another and also in the theme of *The course of man* by Muybridge, repeated along the frieze. The intention here, which was to link visitors to the connections between the various parts of the exhibition and draw their attention to its multidimensionality, was evident in each of the successive presentations according to the specific nature of the individual exhibits.

The works of more than one hundred artists lent rhythm and movement to the exhibition. From painting to photography, from sculpture to environments or installations, from experimental cinema to video art and conceptual propositions, the various researches marking the movement from artistic thought at the end of the nineteenth century to the eighties, were all included.

Some examples we can give representing amongst others the space / time relationship are: *Rouen Cathedral* by Monet, *Sad Young Man in Train* by Duchamp, the futuristic works of Balla and Boccioni or the research by Kupka and Delaunay and also *Man Walking* by Rodin, opposite a *Danseuse* by Degas, or the *Flight of Goeland* by Marey and studies of movement by Malevich. The fourth dimension concept was examined in works by Malevich, El Lissitsky, Van Doesburg, and in research integrating the cinematograph techniques of Eggeling, Richter and Moholy-Nagy. The walking theme was articulated at various points, with examples from Rodin, Muybridge, Boccioni, Archipenko, Giacometti to Stanley Brown, Fulton, Long, Shigeko Kubota and *Foxtrot* by Warhol. In contrast, the theme of 'Time at a stop' was developed, with exhibits such as the bronze *Zip*, the *Here I* by Newman, *Minute* by Broodthaers and sculptures by Segal. With surrealist time by Dali, Magritte and Man Ray, to archaeological time by Poirier or Charles Simmonds, to cosmographic time by Luca Patella and Nancy Holt, to the narration by Boltanski and Le Gac or the theme of gesture as sculptural as pictorial representation by Pollock, Van Anderlecht, Mathieu, Henri Michaux, Andre Lambotte, Camesi.

But the exhibition also brought to light those artists whose works had impressed me at the time I initiated the project. Let me mention for instance *Time Delays* by Dan Graham, the videos of Nam June Paik, who set up an installation specially for the exhibition, *Details* by Opalka, *Clock one and five* by Kosuth, *Date Paintings* by On Kawara or *One Century* by Hanne Darboven, and to this list I should add *Questions of Simultaneity* or the *Times Zones* video by Ira Scheider and also *Themes on Accident and Waiting* by Dennis Oppenheim in his *Prediction* pavilion.

Projections of video themes were also a mark of the exhibition. Complementing these were two documentaries, one on the history of art produced by BRT (*Tijdsbeelden*) and the other primarily a scientific work produced by RTB (*The History of Time*), which were shown on Belgian television and in the exhibition halls.

This exhibition was the first of its size to raise the question of the integrality of time in the spacial arts, plastic and visual. Twenty five years later art is seen as a single space / time whole, accepted as an everyday experience and as a notion so normal that the question of integrality no longer arises. The onset of the internet and the web, communication in real time and virtual exchanges have made the difference well and truly obsolete between time art and space art. An exhibition thought out identically today would appear an anachronism. Which convinces me long after the event of the relevance of its message which has now become part of the history of art, and of science and philosophical thought.

The logogram by Christian Dotremont *Time is an active partner* illustrated early on in the book remains today as relevant as ever.

1 René Thom, *Parabola and Catastrophes. A Discourse on Mathematics, Science and Philosophy*, Paris. Flammarion. 1983 p. 122
2 Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity. On the Theories of Einstein* (1922) in Melanges, Paris PUF 1982 p. 112.
3 E.H. Gombrich, Moments and Movements in Modern Art. In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol 27 1964 p. 293.

ROMAN OPALKA

Text as presented during the symposium Time at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 15 June 2007

Roman Opalka (1931 in Abbeville, France). In 1965, Opalka began a conceptual work, painting the numbers from one to infinity.*

(At the beginning you hear a recording of numbers read out in Polish for several minutes)

Roman Opalka: I will simply tell you what this is all about: about time, about numbers. Most of you are aware that I am realizing a program with which I document time. The pictures I paint are my *Details*. I call them that because the pictures are parts of one work, one concept. There is only one date, the beginning: 1965, at some point, of course, there will be an end, but there will be no other dates. It is about the time we find ourselves in. I cannot know when I will die. I know that I will die, but the moment when it happens is so infinite because no one will know that he has died. This is something I have meditated upon in my work, that perhaps it is a chance for people who will never receive this news that they are no longer there. In this sense we are eternal.

The numbers in Polish are more logical than in German or French. I would still like to say something about the concept of time: Time cannot be measured. That is the one difficulty most people have with my work, even when compared with other works that refer to dates, such as those of Hanne Darboven or On Kawara. To give you an example: Back then I was waiting for my wife in Warsaw, and she was two hours late. What happens in the interim time, this relativity of how long an hour or two hours can last, cannot be measured. This is an entirely phenomenal emotion as opposed to time. Normally it works like this: If I fly to Paris tomorrow, of course, I have to look at my watch. But what happens in my head during the flight, that is time. And my work features precisely this. It is like taking a walk. There is nothing to see in particular, no problems, you just have time for time. So you could say, I am the one person on this earth who has more time than other people, that is for sure. This is not a *boutade*, as they say in French, no joke. It is unfortunate that I am unable to tell you all of this in French, but I will try it in German, since the translation would otherwise be so complicated that we would loose one another. My work was interpreted at the beginning as if I were a prisoner, an inmate in my work program. This also had something to do with the socialistic society I was living in at the time, of course. There was also this certain *nyet*, as they say in Russian, to the system. But it is also what any person would like to do. I say I am not a prisoner, I have more time, and I am freer than other people. When I go to my studio, I have no questions concerning how I am to do my picture. Most people have this problem, even other artists who also make time manifest. Even they have to select something. I have chosen my life as the time period, as the emotion facing what would be time. This is the work of someone freer than any man in history has ever been before. He reflects upon his existence and thus, it is also an echo of philosophy, for example, Heidegger, the 'existence' is in my work. I have often asked myself, if I met Heidegger, would he be able to understand this? This is extremely complicated, the philosophers, the scientists, they do not understand the phenomena, the *cosa mentale*, as Leonardo da Vinci called it. Most philosophers, probably poets as well, would probably not understand it, because it is such nonsense as maybe nothing ever before in history. But this nonsense has a meaning. Like a *dimension de non-sens*, to put it in French. This is a story that is very difficult to convey. But it is slowly emerging. My work has been going on for 42 years now, and slowly, slowly people are beginning to understand it.

Rene Rietmeyer: Roman told me that when he began this work, he thought: "Each time I make a new picture, I will add one percent more white to the background so that this background will become increasingly light. And estimating an average age of 75 years, then I will probably die and at 75 my numbers will be white on white."

RO: Most people think it is just numbers, but what's the sense? It is a painterly concept. It is part of the world of painters like Robert Ryman, of artists trying to create a painting that can still be proud in the face of history. And this white would be a so-called 'well-earned' white, because I had to earn it. It was referred to as 'monochromy', and naturally, monochromy is a wonderful thing for Yves Klein or Manzoni, for example. But here we are dealing with something entirely different. This has more to do with Malevich. His work is the white square on a white ground, but in my case, when I painted the first number—which is not a number, basically, the 1 is everything, a unit—the square already existed. And then comes life, and to that then comes the work. Malevich was unable to paint any further, this was the end stop.

Question from the audience: I would like to know the reason for and meaning of the constant repetition of the same thing, all these numbers we see and what you are talking about.

RO: I am sorry, but you have misunderstood my work because there is not a second, which is repeated here. When you get up in the morning, you only seem to repeat yourself, but the body, the marks of your existence are not the same. And in my work, this may be very logically determined. It is what is called in French a *unité en extension*, not a repetition. If you live on, do you repeat yourself? With my work it is something like a river, but the river has only one direction. The voice you heard in the recording goes in all directions. That is this *mixage*, the mix we always have going on in our heads. If you go for a walk, you go in one direction, but your head goes all directions. And that is why there is certainly no repetition, no monotony. It only looks like there is. It might sound pretentious now, but such emotions have never been there before in art history. Because I paint my existence, just like Heidegger. So, no one else has ever accomplished this. May I say something about repetition? Basically, every artist repeats himself. Only that is not so clear. You cannot simply produce things here and there, back and forth. All great artists, if I may reckon myself to be among them, repeat themselves. It just doesn't happen at all that artists always produce something new. It isn't possible and it doesn't happen. And this is also a certain criticism of this back and forth. I was already recognized as an artist before the time when I began my program. Without this past, without this experience, I would not have given myself the credit of realizing such a program, such a crazy work for my entire life. I had to know what I was doing. It is about art history as such, if I may be so pretentious as to think this.

Klaus Honnef: This model stands in opposition to our notion of time. I quoted the main catchphrase: "Time is money". That means time is needed in order to do something allegedly efficient with it. What you do, Mr. Opalka, is in reality something very luxurious, a wasting of time, since nothing meaningful and practical is produced. You can neither fly to the moon with your pictures nor can you wash your hands with them or eat them. It does not lack sense, but it is without purpose. It violates a purpose-oriented utilization of time.

RO: The sense of my program is in its nonsense. That is its definition, if you will. This is also part of the socialist system I lived in. In Poland there were galleries, good galleries, but "time is money" was not part of it. And that was my chance. I was freer, strangely enough, than people such as On Kawara or other artists, say Bob Ryman, certainly good artists. The phenomenon of the strangeness of this concept comes from these experiences. That was also, of course, a catastrophe for the system. Like I said, I was already known as an artist, who had received many prizes in Bradford, in Tokyo, fairly well-known. And they said, the party comrades: "Get a load of this guy, now he stops getting prizes and starts to count numbers, that is scandalous." And this is how it was presented on television, as a criticism, as ideological impertinence. Because this nonsense was so pronounced. Here in the free world, which nowadays also applies to Poland, it would not be so strong, but at that time, such a crazy concept was a provocation.

Peter Lodermeyer: You mentioned freedom. This morning I also talked about freedom, specifically about freedom from time. I quoted the philosopher Michael Theunissen who said, we feel happy when we are able to detach ourselves from the rule of time, under which we in reality only

suffer, even if only for moments at a time. Of course, we may not escape time, but there are the intensively experienced moments, for example during aesthetic contemplation, and thus, I could imagine, also in the production of art. Moments, in which time is experienced so intensively that paradoxically these moments become timeless. From Kierkegaard we get the idea, for example, that the moment contains eternity.

RO: Yes, Kierkegaard has contributed a lot to my thought. It has often been said that there was an obsession in this concept, I might be able to accept that, but here, the concern is for painting, particularly for painting. Painting in order to be able to portray time. All the machines we know of, the clocks, *tell* the time, but I *show* time, and that is something entirely different. This is the painterly solution to the question concerning what a visualization of time might be. In this sense numbers accomplish best what we up to this day may show of time in the sense of progression, in the sense of dynamics, in the sense of the unity and the expansion of time.

RR: A year ago I had a discussion with Roman in Saint-Étienne. We had a difference of opinions. Roman said he wants to continue painting these numbers until he is no longer able to stand proud and upright before a new picture and paint any further. For me, it was always impressive to see photos of Matisse, how he lay there and drew on the wall with a long stick. I hope that one day I will be able to experience that Roman Opalka, old and bent, but with unbroken dignity, continues to paint his numbers.

RO: I have nothing against that. I can continue to paint as long as my strength holds up and I can still stand. Of course, I do not wish to sit or lie down, but this pride that manifests itself in this work I call *verticalité du peintre*, this is something I wish to keep. Perhaps then I will only paint one number per day. This work simply contains all aspects of existence. Also the psychogram aspects, the nervousness, the differences between morning and evening, etc. Back then in Warsaw I hardly traveled, but these days I have to travel a lot and only have a little time to paint time. Back then, however, you could see the difference between eight in the morning and twelve at night. I was able to work so much because it was not so attractive to leave my studio. My picture had a certain magic. I had to profit from it somehow, otherwise it would not have been possible to realize such a program over such a long period. This always sounds strange, but maybe it is very important to say that my work is always virtually complete. It is no problem, not to finish a picture. Excuse me, this is not aggressiveness, but On Kawara says: "If I do not finish a picture a day, then destroy it." I have always completed the work. Like my life, it is always complete. There is always enough there to die, here again Heidegger's 'Sein zum Tode, Being-toward-death'. Maybe you could say I am pretentious or crazy, but I know what I am talking about: I am always there, like in a mirror. This is my work, that is my body, it is almost Christian. It is part of it, even though I am an agnostic, but that is in our culture, in our tradition, *la cosa mentale*. In the work the concern, as I mentioned, is for the completion of existence. This is a very special situation inherent to its construction. The work is always sufficiently there. You could say, in the beginning, when I painted the first number, the one, the *l'unité*, everything was there already. Of course, this was only in the sense of a concept. In order for it to be a work I had to make this sacrifice, otherwise it would only have had a logical basis, but would not be a work. For example, if I had died after two or three years. I still have to mention, in the beginning, after the first picture, I had a heart problem. I was in the hospital for a month, because it was unbelievable even for me, to understand that I would carry out such crazy work. The body revolted. After a month I returned and took a look at my picture on the easel—the pictures always stand on an easel, which is a certain homage to painting as such—and then I continued.

In 1965 I painted my first picture. It is a feature of my work that it not only unfolds as a program, but also as thoughts about the program. This runs parallel. When I paint, I do not reflect upon my numbers.

When you are at the computer, always jumping back and forth, and if then something doesn't work, you start again anew… With me everything always works! Even if I make a mistake, it is correct because it is part of existence. Maybe I was thinking about something else and made a mistake. Of course, I react to the mistake. Like a person, who sets out to achieve a certain goal and then realizes: "Oh, that is the wrong direction." Then he retraces his steps, but this path that was wrong, is still there. And that is how it is with the numbers: When a mistake occurs, a wrong number—no problem! I am a free person. It's like a walk. Only each step I take includes all other steps. It is very important to understand this. If you take a walk, somewhere at the seaside or lake, the water comes and all the footsteps are erased. In my case there is this obsession that all the steps are there, each individual step.

RR: Your concept has remained the same since 1965, but have your thoughts about it, about what time is, changed over the past 42 years?

RO: And how! It simply developed like the work. I understand it better, though even today I don't really understand it. Like life. Do you understand what that is, life? How can you understand a thing as stupid as our existence? Maybe that sounds too brutal, but this existence makes no sense, it is nonsense. And this nonsense is my work.

PL: Once I tried to describe your work to a painter-friend, who is about your age. He was not acquainted with it, though he found it fascinating. But there was one thing he could not understand. This painter has a lot to do with color. For him, color is life and he said, how can Roman Opalka do without color? Doesn't he sometimes miss the green, red and blue?

RO: Strangely enough, your friend is right, since I began with a black picture, and the next was a gray one. And the third was red, it is in Germany today. I was naïve back then. Your friend is also naïve in that sense. Basically all colors are contained in the gray, that is something that is known. We are dealing here with a painterly concept that extends to white. And if I may be permitted to say, extending to the German "Weiß/sheit", the wisdom of white, something which could not have happened with color. *Weiß/sheit*, this has a wonderful ambiguity in German. *C'est la sagesse*, you could say. And this has been fully calculated. As I only came to understand later, the thing about the red didn't make any sense. But you cannot just set up a perfect work that will apply your entire life, it doesn't work like that.

Question from the audience: What did your works look like when you were 20 or 30 years old?

RO: A while ago I mentioned the Christian aspect. I began my concept when I was 33 years old. You can't determine work like this before you understand enough about it and have experience with it, also in art. To this I must add that we in Poland were totally free towards art. Sometimes people did not seem to know this in the west. Stalin died in 1953, things were still bad until 1955/56, but then there was total freedom for art. But total freedom without commerce, that is very important. I think such work, would not have been possible in young years. And by the way, also not if I had had children. I did not want children. My wife at the time was also an artist, and we decided not to have children. That was already a certain sacrifice to art. An obsession for art. We were crazy. I was already known as an artist. I did a retrospective show in various museums where all of the early works of significance were included from the time when I was a student in the first year at the art academy. These were very simple, figurative works, and I must tell you very pretentiously, I was a so-called talent, I could do anything. And that was my chance. Before the concept, before this story about the Café Bristol, I had already tried to paint something along the lines of an hourglass. I asked myself how time could be painted. At the moment when I was waiting for my wife, the idea occurred to me that each dot could be a number. For these *Chronomes*, that's what I called these pictures, there is no direction. Time has a direction, however.

JO BAER

Text as presented during the symposium Time at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 16 June 2007

*Jo Baer, * 1929 in Seattle, USA. Jo Baer was one of the pioneers of Minimal Art in the 1960's, committed to painting as a radical art form. In the mid-70's she switched to a style she called 'radical figuration'. Since 1984, she has been living and working in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.*

The following text is reprinted from The Pursuit of Painting, *the catalogue to a group show of the same name at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1997. The text was expanded for the catalogue* Jo Baer: Paintings 1960-1998, *Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1999, pp. 26-27, as reprinted below. Jo Baer made additions and corrections to these texts for her symposium presentation,* Personal Structures: TIME.

When I was working as a minimalist painter in the 60's and 70's I used the diptych form as an iterative device, which is to say that saying something twice or more can reinforce what is meant (or for the viewer, practice makes perfect). Chasing 'essences,' I became interested in the differences between the singular, the doubled and the many, whereupon I came to realize that single paintings objectified the unique, doubled identical ones spoke of entity, and three or more under or within one rubric implied sets, series, and continuums ad-infinitum. These concepts served me well as simple thumb-rules for muck of that body of work.

I should stress that the above passage refers particularly to my Minimalist, ABSTRACT art, and—as is rather infamously known, "I am no longer an abstract artist." So I would like to interpolate here a few remarks and revisions of the above, in consideration of the parameters of this symposium.

As the expression goes, in time all things can change. In deference to this forum's requisites and although a single painting still enunciates the unique, in today's-speak, an 'entity' might also designate EXISTENCE. (I have changed horses here). And in a further volteface, today's triptych may now address SPACE (since each part of a series can be expanded into very large pieces or else be divided into an infinity of miniscule parts that could, as well, be made very large). Accordingly, the serial —when bounded by a subject or statement of function or purpose—is a spatial term.

Which, for the nonce, allows the diptych to express TIME.

Today, thirty years later, I once again find the diptych form efficacious, but now use it to embody relational propositions rather than assigning it to redouble entity and its specifics. Augmenting this shift, current diptychs have also become asymmetrical in size, configuration, and matter. Three recent large works produced in this new, up-dated approach investigate three particular but related courses: coupled panels now delineate examples of conjunction, alternation and the conditional.

Conjunction is a mode of composition which joins elements to make a fuller, compound entity. In the painting titled *It's Time*, one panel, *When Every Lamplight Spent*, abstractly lists images of incorporated lines of poetry that itemize illustrations. Its larger sister panel, *The Sardana Becomes Infernal*, depends instead an colour, composition and a variant, yet similar set of images to treat the same text. In other words, in this single work the diptych form allows two separate ways of conjoining the same material at the same time: in form, a "this and that" exposition.

A 'this or that', alternating use of the diptych is seen in the painting *Vision and Prayer*. Here the two-part division performs a linkage in which, although each panel addresses opposite moods and intentions, together they still speak of their one implicit subject, 'Creation', in both its dark and light-adoring modes. This kind of ordering, an 'and/or' or 'or both' set of alternatives, allows an expansive and varying view of complementaries (and hence complexities) for rendering broad gists or motifs.

Of a particular relevance for today's symposium, a third use of doubling can be seen in the painting titled *The Old Lie*, an 'if this then that' [p-horseshoe-q] conditional orchestration, wherein the horizontal panel Slaughter shows some contingent effects arising from the words of the vertical panel, *Holy Oil and Holy Water*.

The painting's signifying texts—*Holy Oil and Holy Water, Mix* and *Fill the World with Slaughter*—have been reversed in each panel vis-à-vis its Images, so allowing each part then to also be read in a 'this from that' manner. As it so happens, the truth of conditional statements is essentially time-neutral, that is, is indifferent to the tense of its indicative verb—*Mix*, in this case—so that by using this causal short-hand, TIME'S past or future dimensions are available as well, for a reading usually denied to the tenseless, primary-language of painting, dreams and animals.

Inclusions and parsings of poetry along with the divided format of the diptych would seem an odd or even bizarre avenue to follow in the fabrication of paintings. Yet through inclusions of texts plus assays of their logistics, 1 find 1 can greatly extend the prospects of possible meaning in a discipline (painting) which has latterly become trivial and almost exclusively a decorative (or journalistic) art. Arid while both 'headlining' and 'doubling' in one's work require some care with a close attention to grammar, syntax, and content, results can be rewardingly broad. For instance, the premise of the painting mentioned immediately above rests intrinsically an its verb 'mix'. The 'mix' is dogma and power, its effect carnage, a subject, action and predicate implying 'War'. Outside of such a focused reciprocating duet, this is a leitmotiv which more usually appears in paintings only as still-born description, metaphor, or strip illustration.

The nod to (symbolic) logic need not unduly surprise. The conjugation of logic and painting offers several things in common, amongst which one finds both endeavours able to present huge subjects via the command and manipulation of the finest details. For just as logic's operant marks exist to specify the most exact relations occurring in its scrutinized sentences, so too, it is painting's precise surface marks—no matter how general, fuzzy or oceanic an artist's chosen concept—which must finally specify and deliver the work of art. Equally, where logic's primary objective is to sort out and render the truth or falsity of statements, so too must a painting's *raison d'être* reside in placing that other form of truth—authenticity—before the viewer.

It appears that the well worn idiom holds good yet once again. Whether early or late, as tautology or paraphrase, the diptych has granted my undertakings a productive framework imparting identities of both instance and sort. *Plus ça change*…

Question from the audience: Could you tell us more about your figurative diptychs?

Jo Baer: For the first one I did (1993/94), I used a text by Eugenio Montale called *It's Time* and I did an illustration of the words he used. I used different ways of portraying time. The earliest dog and the modern dog, the earliest horse, the modern horse, some Egyptians scarabs, thousands of years, the globe of Pangaea… It's excerpted from a poem called *Piccolo Testamento*: "and a shadowy Lucifer descends on a prow / at the Thames or Hudson or Seine / thrashing bituminous wings half- / shorn from the effort, to tell you: it's time." So I took a modern stealth airplane, a modern nuclear submarine, the prow, the boat, etc., stuck a Lucifer on it because I enjoyed that. I put a list of the illustrations on one panel, and then I used all these kinds of images in totally different form. I kept the text on the list like a laundry list of things. And then played with it. It's remarkable that what I started as an abstract artist just to say: Hey, here's how it is. This is how time has changed me, if you're interested about time changes—or age has changed me, I don't know.

HENK PEETERS

Text as presented during the symposium Time at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 16 June 2007

Henk Peeters (1925 in The Hague, Netherlands) was part of the ZERO movement. Together with other Dutch artists, including Jan Schoonhoven, Jan Henderikse and Armando, he formed the NUL movement in the 1960s. Typical for Peeters's work addresses our sense of touch by using soft materials as feathers or cowhide. He lives and works in a village near Arnhem, Netherlands.*

To be able to see time, you can only look back. Because of what will come, you know nothing—not yet. Is that actually not the essence of our profession: you see, foresee the time until it stops in zero?

Then you fill in: you draw your conclusions. Only afterwards can you look back and see to what extent the conclusions you made were correct.

I find myself in the advantageous position that I, now 81-years-old, can look back to oversee what I have done. But my way of seeing is determined by the manner of seeing, which again is determined by the way I see today and that will be different tomorrow. That is the nice thing about Time: it always changes—although only few see that.

I grew up in a 'left', so to speak, communist family. We learned at home to think critically: this dialectic thinking always helped me to take the steps I had to take.

To analyze a given situation and to see from there the contradictions, the conflict, as information for the decision I had to take.

Like Marx, who saw the solution for the struggle of the classes, in the classless society I also saw, in post-war expressionism, all components of my ZERO art.

It was simply to omit, or to redirect to the opposite, all elements their art had been built upon.

Thus, you could remove color and composition, because the forms could also be eliminated and I could go on like that.

It was astonishing that certain things remained; it became obvious that it was not possible to eliminate them. No content, no message anymore, but nevertheless there came Yves Klein with his Rosicrucian Order and Uecker with Buddhism.

Here again, the building blocks for art, or the social commitment or the personal handwriting, became elementary components.

Fortunately, in art you can never say that the one statement produces better quality than the other—in that sense Mondriaan is, for example, not a better artist than Pollock.

While writing this and listening to Bach's *Kunst der Fuge*, I consider that the grandeur of this music has, in fact, arisen outside these matters. It has been built out of elements from that time, but Time has in fact disappeared in it. You can hardly imagine that Bach, sitting between his sons, said a prayer before each dinner.

For any moment of the art, we can also think outside of the time in which it was created. Through the eyes of this time. This causes whatever is created at a certain time to be lifted out of that time, to transcend it. I have that with my own work.

When I began in the Bauhaus tradition I foresaw a society, of which only little has come to fruition. Instead of a society without classes, in which private property has been abolished, we now have a G8 conference, formed of capitalists who can suppress the young anti-globalists, with whom I must sympathize from a historical standpoint.

Because in searching for a solution for the problems of today, you must, just like in art, look up the contradictions again and be aware that the person at the bottom today will get a new chance tomorrow. I have always seen my work with this in mind.

Therefore, to the topic 'Time', a statement fits by Raspail, "we think that the time goes by, but we are mistaken: the time remains and we are it that go by." Looking back, I think that this is the motive, from which I have always worked.

As a teacher I always pointed out to my students that in the structure of their time, they had to look up the contradictions again, to make going from there something new. That to be an artist you always have to be non-confirmative, otherwise you do not find anything.

It has, however, the result that you are never financially successful with those confrontations; you will never sell this point of view, you only face trouble. I nearly lost my job at the academy, because we had made a leaflet showing how we had fun with the idea that

everybody thought that we were Nazi-followers. And this because the Chairman of the Board of the academy had been a member of the Nazi friendly 'Artze Kammer' during the war. The core of the NUL-group thus consisted of artists, who earned their living not from selling their art, but had to get through in a different way.

Armando was a journalist at a newspaper in The Hague; Jan Schoonhoven worked for the postal-service; I taught art history after having worked for a while in a psychiatric institution and at the Gemeente Museum in The Hague for the educational service. Thus, you always have to try to be independent for your income, because "if 'time is money', everyone lives above his class," Ludwig Fulda once said.

And George Ade once said after his work was sent back by numerous publishers: "It is better that you write for posterity and not send the text to the publishers at all."

Because you can only see the actual day today really clearly with the light of tomorrow and it is in this light that you must see your profession as well. Do not lengthen the past, but make yourself independent of the so-called appreciation or recognition of the existing art world, supported by the timelessly-valid rule: time will tell.

Although it was not our intention in those beginning years, we were only able to hang our work in the canteens of universities, in the midst of youngsters who were of an age that accepted everything against the good taste of their forefathers.

In 1961 the whole art world asked itself how we managed to get the NUL-exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. That was certainly not towing to the taste of director Sandberg, because he did not see anything in our work, and he did not spent any money on it. But Sandberg provided sufficient encouragement with his point of view that you have to show everything that showed the change of time. If it is worth anything, time would tell. His joy in the museum was in fact that he always got it right, so parallel to the 'boring' art he showed us as well. It was frequently the artists, who persuaded him, not their work.

There are examples of people who made sure that in my time exhibitions were talked about: Spoerri with the moved movement, Tinguely, and after him, the Nouveaux Réalistes such as Arman, especially promoted by Sandberg's nearest employee Ad Petersen.

I was writing a text concerning 'looking back' for an exhibition, which I have at the moment in London (with the NUL-group) and I thought of a beautiful statement by Georges Bataille:

"the past is not behind us, the shadows of what was are in front of us: what is dead exists and goes ahead of us. So, time exists out of future and past at he same time."

Whilst writing this text, I of course reflected about the meaning of this topic, which connects us all here: Time. Of which Berlioz once said, that time is a great teacher, but unfortunately kills its students.

I also considered that defining the term 'Time' must be man's work, because structuring Time, in the ovulation cycle or the nine months of the pregnancy is already a naturally built in clock, which man does not have.

Emerson wrote already that women do not have the desire to have a strict time setting. There is a clock in Adam, but not in Eve. She is one herself, and in keeping with this, you could say: there is a clock in historians, but artists have to do without it.

"We do not need the power of the word, because people believe their eyes more then their ears", Seneca once stated. I feel myself going beyond my territory, by trying, with my humble words, to persuade you of what you more rapidly can see in our works.

That you can understand Time better by feeling yourself to be a part of Time instead of feeling like a spectator, because the people of yesterday are not the people of today.

Is it already time to finish? Then as an ending, I have a quote by Charles Lamb: "Nothing puzzles me more than time and space; and yet nothing troubles me less, as I never think about them."

KITTY ZIJLMANS

Text as presented during the symposium Time at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 16 June 2007

*Kitty Zijlmans (*1955, Netherlands) is professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands*

Reflections on Time in Art and Art History

Art history is faced with a particular space/time problematic. An artwork is—mostly—a physical object created in a temporal moment whose bounds are defined relatively precisely. The artwork will—mostly—continue to exist, and in that respect has a coexistence in space as well as a duration in time. In contrast, the 'tool' of art history is language, which is characterized by a succession in time: Lessing meets Virgil again. The encounter with a physical artwork in the here-and-now is contrasted by the time consuming writing and reading about it. However, where the first has an heuristic, the latter has an ushering effect on the artwork. The first implies a more aesthetic, the latter a more historicist view. To complicate matters, art history ceased to think in teleological ways; contingency brings about multiple histories. How would contemporary relational art fit into this picture?

Time seems to be mainly something I am short of. This is however just a matter of how you experience it. To paraphrase a poem of the nineteenth-century Dutch poet Hildebrand (pseudonym of Nicolaas Beets), it is not by the measure of the hours, but of what one endures, that we live by, and every day is either long or short according to what one has experienced. This brings us near Henri Bergson's distinction between temps and durée, between the rigid time grid of the clock and how we experience time.

All art is connected to time: it takes time to produce art, and to see and to understand it. And it has a life of its own. It may continue to exist for years, centuries even. An artwork is, mostly, a physical object created in a temporal moment whose bounds are defined relatively precisely. The artwork will, mostly, continue to exist, and in that respect has a coexistence in space as well as a duration in time.

In contrast, the 'tool' of art history is language, which is characterized by a succession in time: Lessing meets Virgil again. For the eighteenth century Lessing, the artwork—and to be more precise—a sculpture, had an immediacy and a direct impact, a text could never have. A text (in this case Virgil's recount of the priest Laocoon who with his two sons was strangled to death by a sea monster) has a time span to cover, in which the story enrols in the passing of time. The, by many, admired quality of duration, the building up of the suspense, the detailed descriptions, and the fact that the reader can construct his own image, was precisely what Lessing found the weaker aspect of this art form. The encounter with a physical artwork in the here and now—what he preferred—is contrasted by the time-consuming writing and reading about it.

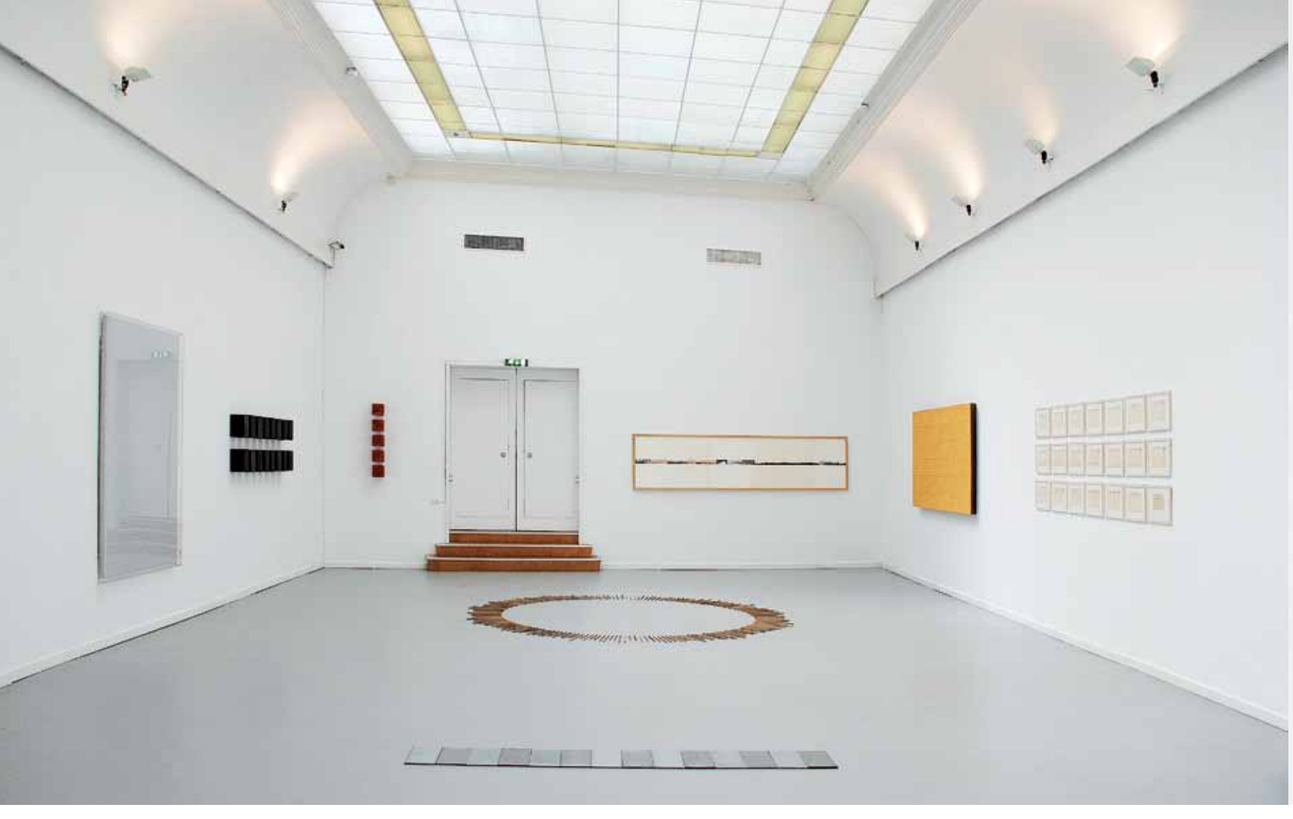
Yet, art history's medium is the time consuming text. Precisely here lies the unbridgeable gap between the visual, tangible object and the fact that reflection on it is always carried out in text—thus in time—in writing about what we see; and in doing so we take along with us in the process what we think we see. Whereas the direct encounter with the artworks has a heuristic effect, the process of reading takes you step by step into the artwork: you read how another person has seen (and digested) the artwork.

The direct interaction with an artwork implies a more aesthetic, evaluative approach; written encounters or encounters through text a more historicist view. To complicate matters, art history ceased to think in teleological ways; its contingency brings about multiple histories. Consequently, art history is always also about time, about layers of time, about the simultaneity of dissimilar processes. It is inherent of the discipline.

Albeit the fact that in all art the aspect of time is involved, not all art is about time. In the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, we see art that tried to depict the succession of a story; we see for example in one painting the birth of Christ, as well as his life until his crucifixion, and his resurrection. Reading the image as a story tells us about the passing of time. Time, and the grasping of time as a subject of art however, is predominantly a twentieth-century and a contemporary one. Michel Baudson's book *De Tijd. De vierde dimensie in de kunst* ('Time, the Fourth Dimension in Art') of 1984 is still the most comprehensive book on the subject.[1]

Time in/and Art

An example of art – or rather of an artist – who is consumed by time is the German artist Hanne Darboven. For her the writing of time is her way of existing: 'I exist when I write'. She is obsessed by time; by systemizing time through writing, the writing of numbers, of words



or just mimicking words in her Konstruktionen (Constructions), abbreviated to the capital 'K', it seems like she clings to existence. In the work 'Schreibzeit' (Writing Time) 1975-1980 from 1980, for example, she has taken texts by Baudelaire, Sartre, Homer, interviews, articles from magazines, excerpts from encyclopaedia, etc., and all is ordered on the basis of dates. Time becomes history. Writing is a by Hanne Darboven self imposed assignment. Registering time makes that time does not escape the artist; however, in doing so time passes by. Darboven's work enrols in time, but at the same time it has the direct confrontation of the physical object: directness and duration meet in her work. The heuristics are the astonishment when the visitor comprehends what the artist has been doing, but it takes far more time to take in the work systematically and wholly. It makes you think about what one does with one's life.

Hanne Darboven's name is often mentioned in one breath with On Kawara. Kawara takes his own life and his own travels as the starting point of his 'storage of time'. On January 4, 1966 he started to paint a painting every day, registering the date of the day on a monochrome surface in colours ranging from red and blue to black on which he paints the date using a template. When finished, he puts them in a box, often accompanied by a newspaper clipping of that day. The yearly production of works is registered in a Journal listing country, city, language, colour, time, and event: he thus systemizes time and is holding on to it. He also sends telegrams stating 'I am still alive', or he lets you know how he has travelled, as testimonials of his existence.

The work *One Million Years (Past)* and *One Million Years (Future)* [1969] registers time that was, and time to come. The starting date of *One Million Years Past* covers from 998.031 BCE (Before Common Era) until 1969 AD, On Kawara's then present time. This is when the future starts and it continues until 1.000.980, another million years. He spans two million years by writing down in numbers year after year. Both Past and Future consist of ten big volumes. The entire work was also performed live in London on Trafalgar Square in 2004, taking two readers seven days of non-stop recital to recount all the years listed in the ten volumes. The average human life is equivalent to only a few lines, and human history transpires over no more than a few pages.

A third artist I would like to mention is Tatsuo Miyajima, who in his work has been presenting a unique view of the world with flashing light emitting diodes displaying numbers and letters. The LED components, each counting at different speeds in linear rhythm from 1 to 99 and back again, use the global and universal language of digits, to show the actual motion and flux of infinite time passing. According to art critic Fumio Nanjō, Miyajima raises philosophical questions with his work, such as: 'What does it mean for time to be counted for 300.000 years? Is time that we can see and count the same as time that passes by after our deaths? What is the significance of time that we are unable to experience?' Miyajima's answer to that is: 'Keep Changing, Connect with Everything, Continue Forever'.[2] His study of Buddhist philosophy is undercurrent in many of his works, but most all-embracing in his *Revive Time Kaki Tree-Project* (2000 onwards). Fifty years after the destruction of Nagasaki, Miyajima visited the city and was deeply impressed by the story of a single tree, a Kaki tree, that was exposed to the radioactive radiation from the atomic bomb but that miraculously had survived. A tree surgeon managed to revive the tree, and its cuttings started to grow again. Moved by the beauty of this, Miyajima started his *Revive Time Kaki Tree-Project*, first in Japan and then as an international art project. The project revolves around the planting ceremonies, the adopting, planting and tending of the cutting, complemented by meetings with local artists, workshops and activities with children.[3] The issues at heart of the project consist of major themes of life: How are we shaped by the past? How vulnerable are we at the passing of time? What are our hopes for the future? The Kaki tree project literally lives, and will continue to do so for times on end. But that is not all: Of paramount importance is the bonding between people, their communication and exchange. With each planting ceremony, the project increases not only geographically but also socially because the sites, and through them the people, are connected.

Linkage

This brings me to my last and central point: the aspect of time in what Nicolas Bourriaud calls 'relational art'. In his view, the social bond has turned into a standardised artifact. The world is governed by the division of labour and ultra-specialisation, by mechanisation, the law of profitability, and the channelling of human relations. They are no longer 'directly' experienced. He pleads for, and discerns more and more, an art form he refers to as relational art: an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context.

In this art form, the substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and it takes the beholder as a central theme, it is the power of linkage. At an exhibition, so Bourriaud states, there is the possibility of an immediate discussion—both between the viewer and the artworks, and between the viewers. Art is for him a place that produces a specific sociability, it represent a social interstice. "The interstice is a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly in the overall system, but it suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within the system. (…) It creates free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the 'communication zones' that are imposed upon us."[4] As part of a 'relationist' theory of art, inter-subjectivity becomes the quintessence of artistic practice.

The artistic practice is focused upon the sphere of inter-human relations, inventing models of sociability. It tends to draw inspiration from the processes governing ordinary life. Since human relations are involved, this 'durational' art is inherent to time—time is its medium. It poses a challenge to Art History to cope with this time-related art form.

1 Michel Baudson (ed.). 1984. *De Tijd. De vierde dimensie in de kunst*. Amsterdam: H.J.W. Becht.
2 Alexandra Munroe. 1994. *Scream Against the Sky. Japanese Art After 1945*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, p. 223.
3 Nicole Roepers. 2000. 'Revive Time Kaki Tree', in: *Decorum*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, July 2000, Special Issue: 'Voices From Japan. Contemporary Japanese Art in Leiden', Supplement pp. 10-12.
4 Nicolas Bourriaud. 1998. *Relational Aesthetics*. Paris: Les Presses du Réel, p. 16.

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"Wreckage is More Interesting than Structure"
Robert Smithson, Gordon Matta-Clark and Modernism in/as Ruin

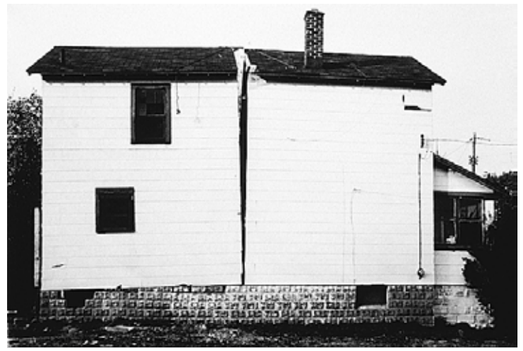
1. Structure + Time = Ruin

Ruins are hot. In the world of (contemporary) art, they even seem all over the place, as several recent exhibitions prove.[1] Contemporary, post-nine-eleven-society seems to be flirting with aspects of decay & deconstruction. In many installations by younger artists, fragments of modernist structures are combined with trashy or defective elements. Progress is history, the future uncertain: trash and debris take over, erosion and entropy seem to be around again. For centuries these characteristics were closely associated with ruins. Combining the picturesque and the poetic, ruins seem to be an old-fashioned and even sentimental motif from 17th century topographical prints, 18th-century landscape paintings and 19th century photographs. But since the turn of the century, ruins have lost their friendly face. Our millennium kicked off with the catastrophic images of Ground Zero: together with the Twin Towers our belief in high-tech security and the monopoly of materialism imploded. 9/11 and new notions such as 'collateral damage' might have changed our perception of ruins; turning the friendly face of slow decay into the terror of destruction.

With this paper I will focus on the ruin as a creative force and a critical metaphor. I plan to illustrate this with the cases of two American artists I regard as being of crucial importance for the recent re-interpretation of the ruin: 'earth artist' Robert Smithson (1938-1973) and 'anarchitect' Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978). Both artists died very young (at 35) but can be considered forerunners of the contemporary fascination with ruins. So it is no coincidence that the interest for the work of these artists, and especially Matta-Clark, is big but still growing as the row of posthumous and recent catalogues on my bookshelf testify to. In a conference on 'personal structures' the choice for these two post-minimalist and, therefore, 'anti-structure' artists might seem a bit awkward. By using the ruin, one of the most 'a-structural' things we know, as a keyhole, we can see certain things more clearly. Taking the ruin as a late modern answer to high modernism's preoccupations with clear cut forms, slick structures and geometrical grids, this essay tries to serve as a counterbalance and reveal the fact that structures and anti-structures share a dialectical relationship.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the heritage of postwar/cold-war modernism evokes 'archaeological' feelings. Often not yet considered as being of art-historical value by officials, many buildings from the fifties, sixties and 70s are considered outmoded, and hence, treated with indifference, left in an abandoned state or simply demolished. In many ways (physically and mentally) high modernism can be perceived as a field of ruins. And these modern ruins speak of different things than the same buildings did when they were brand new. This 'post-modern' appreciation of modernism in or as a ruin goes back to the late 60s and the early 70s. At the end of the sixties, the formalist and reductivist appearances of late modernist, minimalist sculpture seem to provoke some counterreactions. Artistic practice in the U.S. in the late 1960's is obsessed by fragmentation, ephemerality, erosion and entropy. This tendency was already spotted in 1968, when critic and curator Lucy Lippard wrote her seminal essay on the dematerialisation of art: "Today many artists are interested in an order that incorporates implications of disorder and chance, in a negation of actively ordering parts in favor of the presentation as a whole."[2] It is very seducing to project a link between the way some artists turn to chaos, entropy and decomposition and the troubled American society after the euphoric Summer of Love of '67 (with images of Vietnam, racial tensions and political killings filling the daily news). As a matter of fact, already in the early 1960s, in the wake of Allan Kaprow's happenings and the beginning of fluxus, some traces of 'ruinism' can be found, for instance in Walter De Maria's proposal of May 1960 for an Art Yard in La Monte Young's *An Anthology*: the happening consists of digging a big hole in the ground using steam shovels and bulldozers, while explosions go off: "bulldozers will be making wonderful pushes of dirt all around the yard. Sounds, words, music, poetry."[3]

At the end of the decennium however, post-minimalism, anti-form, process art, land art, earth art and Italian arte povera all seem to share this fascination for disorder and decay. Talking about 'disorder and chance' Smithson and Matta-Clark come to mind of course, but one can also refer to the installations, projects and proposals of Walter De Maria, Robert Morris and Dennis Oppenheim. The ruin motif is later used in a more explicit and literal way by, among others, Charles Simonds, Anne and Patrick Poirier and Giulio Paolini, paving the way for 80s postmodernism and its fixation on art historical references and/as fragments. Where the 'grid' can be considered as a pars pro toto for a big part of early and high modernism (especially in American art), the 'ruin' might be an equivalent for the late-modernism of the late 60s and the roots of postmodernism in the 70s. Entropy, deconstruction and utopia are the key-concepts here. Entropy relating to the post-minimal debate on sculpture and earthworks during the late 1960s; deconstruction referring to the debate on modernism and architecture during the late 1970s, and utopia relating to the social and activist component of much art of the 1960s and 1970s.



Ruins and 'art' as we know it were born in the same period. As a matter of fact, ruins were more or less 'invented' at the beginning of the Italian renaissance.[4] The ruin is an artifact: it is in the eye of the beholder. Resulting from the fact that people are beginning to look back to the past at the same time they are concerned with progress, it is a crucial cultural construction. So, in many ways, the cult of ruins is connected with the birth of modern thinking. The so-called renaissance was triggered when artists and architects considered the ruined fora, palaces and temples of Rome as monuments, for the very first time giving them the right to be a ruin. From that time on, they have been used as a source of inspiration by architects and painters. In many ways, a ruin is an abstraction of architecture. A ruined building has become obsolete, no longer bears a roof or a function, but becomes a bearer of meaning. In its incomplete and 'destructured' state, the ruin becomes a fluid frame for personal projections and possible reconstructions. Some periods are more 'ruinophile' than others.

The 18th century for example is 'ruinist' *par excellence*. Bored with the burden of classicism, rococo architecture was heavily inspired by nature, mixing organic forms and floral motifs with traces of a defect classicism. In many cases the result of this synthesis resembled a ruin. Piranesi produces ruins in print popularizing the motif on a grand scale. Faked and forged ruins in gardens and interiors evoked poetical and political reflections. Until the late 19th century, ruins inspired modern (neo-classicist and neo-gothic) architecture and critical thinking. During the 20th century, classical and medieval ruins were to become more and more associated with bourgeois culture and tourism. They become old-fashioned clichés and for hardcore modernists as the futurists, symptoms of 'passeism'. 'Modern', instant ruins, resulting from new ways of warfare, will become the emblems of the troubled 20th century. The most popular ruins, the Roman Coliseum, took ages to become the image it is now, while new ruins only need a few seconds. In other words: the old ruins resulted from erosion, the new ones from explosion, the latter ones showing the traces of slow decay, the former ones showing the results of quick destruction. In short: the ruin as an indicator of tourism and the ruin as an indicator of terrorism.

But quick destruction is merely a 20th-century invention. Already in the early 19th century the American painter Thomas Cole (1801-1848) represented the destructive impact of man in his magnum opus The Course of Empire (1833-1836), a series of five paintings that the artist explains this way: "The history of a natural scene as well as an epitome of Man, showing the natural changes of landscape & those affected by man in his progress from barbarism to civilization, to luxury, to the vicious state or state of destruction and to the state of ruin & desolation."[5] The series depicts the rise and fall of a fictive, but very classical and 'Roman' looking civilization, by representing the same site in five 'states', the last one being the state of ruin and desolation after war destroyed the city with its magnificent temples and palaces. Both kinds of ruins, the peaceful one and the catastrophic one, have indeed always existed and were depicted by artists from the 17th century on, although artists until the early 20th century were mostly fascinated by the former ones. Modern, technological warfare has created enormous amounts of 'modern, ready-made ruins' and the medium of photography was perfectly suited to document them as happened for the first time in the second half of the 19th century with the depictions of destroyed buildings in the photographs of the American Civil War and the revolt of the Paris Commune.[6] The romantic ruin as a site for longing and melancholy, had to clear the way for the modern ruin as a site of conflict and loss. Think about the postwar *Trümmerfotografie* (photography of the rubble) showing the bombed cities of Berlin and Dresden and the haunting images of the all-but-erased Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

2. 'Disintegration in highly developed structures'

Ruins are hybrids. In the images of ruins, catastrophe, creativity, and criticism are combined. There seems to be some continuity in the way artists and architects have used the ruin as inspiration and/or allegory. Robert Smithson and Gordon Matta-Clark can be seen as part of a tradition of ruin enthusiasts and entropists that started somewhere in the mid-16th century in Italy and continued with Giambattista Piranesi, Hubert Robert, Caspar David Friedrich, Thomas Cole and many others. Isolating the motif of the ruin in the oeuvres Smithson and Matta-Clark gives us the opportunity to focus on its role as a critical and a creative tool for deconstructing modernity. Robert Smithson is one of the first contemporary artists to reconsider and to reintroduce the motif of the ruin, giving it a new artistic meaning. Probably the first to point out Smithson's fascination for ruins is critic Craig Owens in his review of Smithson's posthumously published writings.[7] While

his sculptural work of the late sixties demonstrates how Smithson tries to find a way out of the impasse of minimalism, his essays already show an involvement with the decomposed and the decayed.

The same year in which Lippard wrote her aforementioned essay, the magazine Artforum published Robert Smithson's remarkable article *The Monuments of Passaic*.[8] In it Smithson describes a very unconventional walk through the suburbs of Passaic (where he was born) as a picturesque expedition through an entropic landscape, and he makes snapshots of some of the 'monuments' he finds on his way: a bridge, a pontoon, pipelines and a derelict sandbox at the playground. In the following, famous quote, he watches the wasteland with the eyes of an archeologist from the future: "That zero panorama seemed to contain ruins in reverse, that is—all the new construction that eventually would be built. This is the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they are built. This anti-romantic mise-en-scene suggests the discredited idea of time and many other 'out of date' things. But the suburbs exist without a rational past and without the big events of history."[9] For Smithson the landscape is not a homogenous and idyllic synthesis of nature and culture, as it was conventionally depicted in the traditions of landscape painting. He reads the suburban site (a "zero panorama") as a decomposed tissue of contingent elements, gaps and layers of several histories, in other words as a ruin.

Smithson stresses the differences between the 'romantic' ruin as a trace of natural decay, and the 'ruin in reverse' as the rising skeletons of unfinished buildings. As a matter of fact, in the 19th century Goethe already observed that there is not so much difference between a decayed and an unfinished building. And going even further back in time, we can point to the fact that Pieter Breughel's Tower of Babel actually used the image of the ruined Roman Coliseum to represent the unfinished Tower of Babel. Paradoxically, Smithson connects his entropic visions with the clean geometrical shapes of minimal art. One year before his essay on Passaic, he wrote the famous essay *Entropy and the New Monuments*.[10] (There he relates the works of minimalist sculptors such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris and Dan Flavin to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, "which extrapolates the range of entropy by telling us energy is more easily lost than obtained, and that in the ultimate future the whole universe will burn out and be transformed into an all-encompassing sameness." He refers to the electricity blackout that struck the Northeastern states as a preview to that future: "Far from creating a mood of dread, the power failure created a mood of euphoria. An almost cosmic joy swept over all the darkened cities. Why people felt that way may never be answered."[11]

In Smithson's eyes the minimalists seem to create monuments against time, forever young, without decay and erosion. He connects these a-historical or even post-historical constructions with the high modernist skyscrapers in NY and postwar housing developments in the suburbs. For the artist, minimalism seems to have been inspired by the dullness and vapidity of these modern structures. Read that way, minimalism and its fetishism of grids compositions, geometrical shapes and slick surfaces is more a mannerism of modernism than a symptom of it. Smithson also refers to the fact that many contemporary artists are finding inspiration in horror- and SF-movies and in collecting piles of printed matter at random, using it without any hierarchy or rational method. All these are symptoms of entropy as an artistic inspiration, he concludes. A few years later, in the early 1970s, however, Smithson seems to interpret entropy less as the visual emptiness of hardcore minimalism than increasingly as the complete disintegration of rational structures. Entropy becomes less a symptom of, than it is a reaction against high-modernist minimalism. Probably inspired by Rudolf Arnheim's influential book *Entropy and Art. An Essay on Disorder and Order* (1971), the concept of entropy is more understood as a form of destructurization.

In an interview with artist and critic Gregoire Müller, Smithson argues: "Some day I would like to compile all the different entropies. All the classifications would lose their grids. (…) It would be a study that devotes itself to the process of disintegration in highly developed structures. After all, wreckage is often more interesting than structure."[12] The 'losing of the grids' and 'disintegration of structures' point to a discovery of disorder that can be seen as an aesthetic correction to Greenbergian modernism and its obsession with repetition and grid-structure. A year later, in an interview with Gianni Petenna, he explicitly refers to the ruin: "It's interesting too, in looking at the slides of ruins there's always a sense of highly developed structures in the process of disintegration. You could go and look for the great temple and it's in ruins, but you rarely go looking for the factory or highway that's in ruins. Lévy-Strauss suggested that they change the word anthropology to entropology, meaning highly developed structures in a state of disintegration. I think that's part of the attraction of people going to visit obsolete civilizations. They get a gratification from the collapse of these things."[13]

Again a year later, in an interview with Alison Sky (from the collective SITE, that created fake ruins for supermarkets), Smithson relates the topic to architecture: "Architects tend to be idealists, and not dialecticians. I propose a dialectics of entropic change."[14] He refers to a building pit in Central Park as "entropic architecture or a de-architecturization". He mentions an anecdote of his childhood: "I know when I was a kid I used to love to watch the hurricanes come and blow the trees down and rip up the sidewalks. I mean it fascinated me. There's a kind of pleasure one receives on that level."[15] Some projects and proposals from the same period, the years between 1970 and 1972, seem to illustrate Smithson's changing interpretation of entropy from minimalism to a contemporary form of ruinism, that in many ways reflects the ruin-traditions of the earlier centuries. Crucial in this regard is the *Partially Buried Wood-shed Project* (Kent State University, Ohio, 1970), for which Smithson covered a derelict wooden building on the periphery of the university campus with several truck loads until the central beam was about to crack. Drawings such as *Partially Buried Two-Storey Building* and *Island of the Dismantled Building + Demolition Site* (both 1970) demonstrate that Smithson was interested in the creation of modern ruins.

Giving nature a hand, the artist speeds up the natural forces of entropy. In the famous *Hotel Palenque* lecture for architecture students, delivered in 1969, Smithson describes a derelict Mexican hotel near the famous Maya ruins where he had recently stayed.[16] Illustrated with color slides, the fully detailed lecture, given with a tongue-in-cheek seriousness, mimics a guided tour through a modern Pompeii, where nature and structure, growth and geometry all lose their proper identities and seem to mix up in a continuous cycle of decay and reconstruction. Time and process, two aspects modernist architecture seemed to lack, are omnipresent in *Hotel Palenque*. This aspect of Smithson's work demonstrates how the ruin functions as a critique of modernism and its architectural offspring.

3. 'Violence turns to visual order'

In the first minutes of the lecture, Smithson introduces the word de-architecturization that in one way or another seems to presage (and parallel) Gordon Matta-Clark's notion of anarchitecture. Smithson's ideas appealed to the young architecture student Gordon Matta-Clark. In 1969 Smithson received a fried Polaroid photograph of a Christmas tree, resulting from a performance in the NY John Gibson Gallery, from Matta-Clark as an entropic Christmas wish. Five years younger than Smithson, Matta-Clark was heavily influenced by the land artist, whom he had met as a student during the Earth Art exhibition at Cornell University in 1969. A few years later Matta-Clark himself would become known for his cutting actions in abandoned buildings. Creating 'modern ruins' by cutting the walls, floors and ceilings of empty houses in the Bronx, the former architecture student would point to the decay of the urban fabric. The 'created' ruin was to inspire a reconstruction of social and ecological values.

As a matter of fact, Matta-Clark's oeuvre is a ruin in itself: it has come to us in many fragments, photographs and leftovers. Trying to understand Matta-Clark's work means taking the position of an archeologist, reconstructing the whole from bits and pieces. After his premature death in 1978, his work was 'rediscovered' in the early 1980s. The link with ruins had already been made at that time. "A Matta-Clark 'deconstruction', unlike minimal, pop or conceptual art, allows historical time to enter", artist Dan Graham wrote. Graham was the first one to recognize the ruin-value in Matta-Clarks art: "Matta-Clark used houses and building structures which were about to be demolished and created deconstructed 'ruins' which reveal hidden layers of socially concealed architectural and anthropological family meaning… Matta-Clark's work attached itself to the notion of the instant ruin of today: the demolition".[17]

The former architecture student started cutting up walls during the renovation of the artist-run restaurant (and performance space) *Food*. "This cutting up started with a number of counters and built-in work spaces. It then progressed to the walls and various other space dividers", he recalls in an interview.[18] Later that year, in 1972, Matta-Clark started to perform this cutting act in abandoned buildings in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and the Bronx, stopped on several occasions by the police and by gangs from the neighborhood. The young artist had been attracted by the ruined state of the derelict houses: "I couldn't help but feel for the claustrophobic, cluttered rooms, stinking hallways, burned-out and windowless environment that, in their abandoned condition, still reverberated with the miseries of the ghetto lives. By undoing a building there are many aspects of the social condition against which I am gesturing: to open a state of enclosure which had been preconditioned

not only by physical necessity but by the industry that profligates suburban and urban boxes as a context for insuring a passive, isolated consumer—a virtually captive audience."[19] Using abandoned buildings in derelict districts such as the Bronx, Matta-Clark tried to revitalize and redefine the already existing ruin by cutting it up and transforming it into a vital site of artistic meaning.

In the beginning the cut out fragments were carefully removed and transported to the gallery, where they were presented as geometrical shapes, not very different from minimal sculpture, but showing the architectural layers (wood, plaster, wall paper, linoleum) and the traces of their history. Referring to his love for "big, rough edges", artist John Baldessari adequately describes Matta-Clark as a "messy minimalist".[20] The former clean cut and hard edge aesthetics of hardcore minimalism have indeed become messy: they show the traces of wear and tear. The high modernist cult of the forever new makes room for a sensitivity towards patina and history. This becomes manifest in Matta-Clarks well-known piece *Splitting (Four Corners)* from 1974, in which he cut through a complete one family house in New Jersey, literally transforming it into a site of Unheimlichkeit (mostly translated as uncanniness, this German word literally means 'unhomeyness'). Cutting through the house Matta-Clark was also cutting through an American ideal.

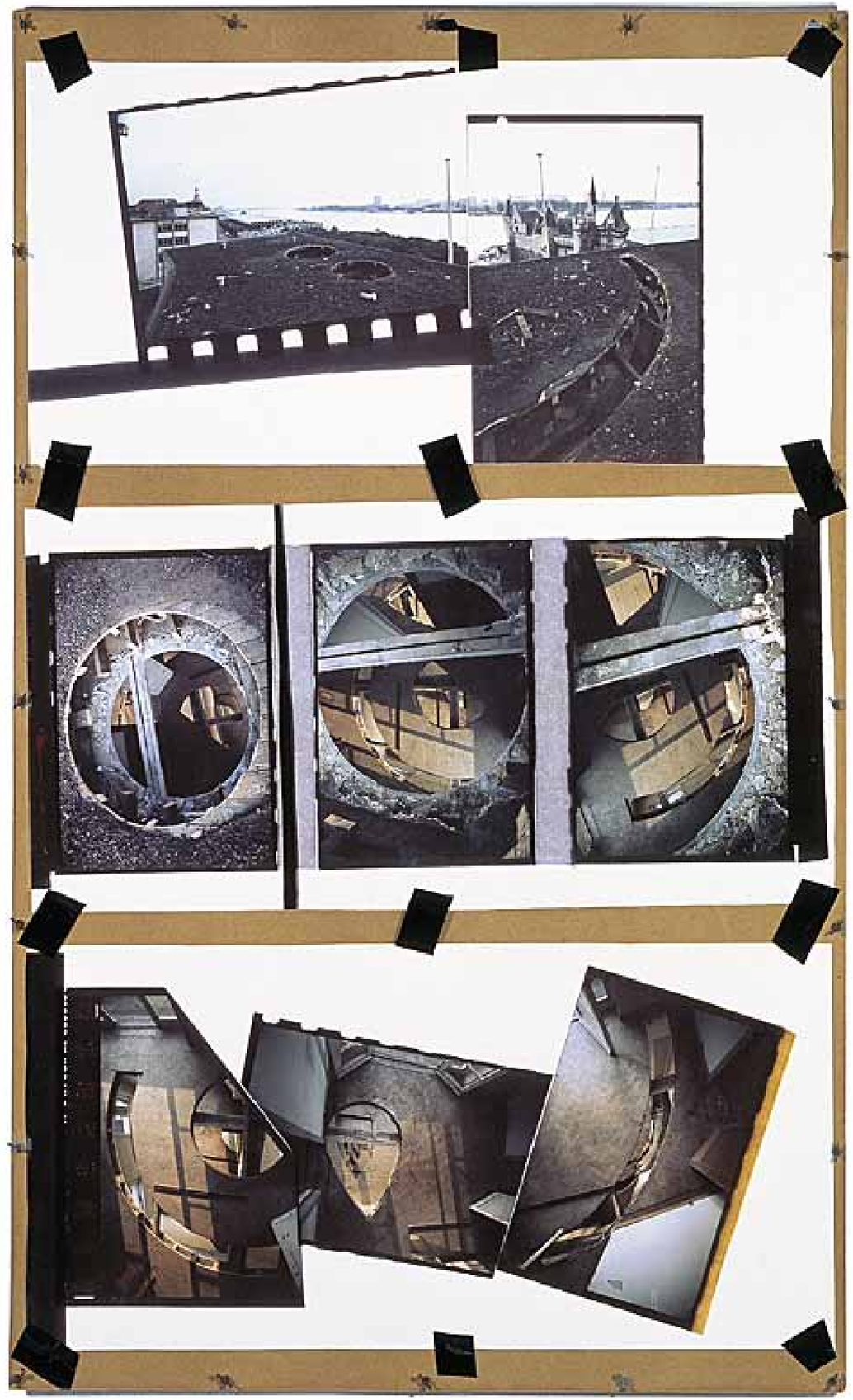
Smithson being first and foremost a gallery-artist rooted in the late 60s, Matta-Clark was more into the Soho alternative spaces movement of the early '70s. Together with the members of the Anarchitecture group (with Laurie Anderson, among others), Matta-Clark evolved towards a more critical and creative position towards the social implications of late modernist and capitalist urban planning: "I am altering the existing units of perception normally employed to discern the wholeness of a thing. It is an organic response to what already has been well done. More than a call for preservation,

this work reacts against a hygenic (sic) obsession in the name of redevelopment which sweeps away what little there is of an American past, to be cleansed by pavement and parking."[21] Whereas Smithson chose the post-industrial wasteland, Matta-Clark gradually became more interested in sites as social tension and possibilities for real change: "I will be collaborating with a well organized, very aware and integrated group of ghetto youths on envisioning and funding a large-scale take over of derelict property for their rehabilitation into community owned alternatives to a substandard environment", he writes to ICC-director Flor Bex in 1976.[22]

In this proposal for Antwerp, he states clearly: "I use the urban fabric in its raw, abandoned state transforming unused structures or spaces into revitalized areas. The actual space in its final stage is the 'exhibition' and hopefully will have a life of its own within the community." He concludes: "My special hopes for a project in Antwerp would be to complete a 'non-u-mental' work that the city could go on enjoying for a certain period after its realization."[23] Eventually, this action would result in Matta-Clarks major piece *Office Baroque* (1977), in which he created a dazzling composition using all the five floors, the walls and the roof of a former office building in the historical centre of Antwerp.[24] Although the work might provoke sensations of intimidation and even aggression, Matta-Clark stressed the fact that his actions were more about positive energy: "The confrontational nature of the work is every bit as brutal physically as it is socially. Tackling a whole building even with power tools and a couple of helpers is as strenuous an action as any dance or team sport. Perhaps the physicality is the easiest reading of the work. The first thing one notices (is) that violence has been done. Then the violence turns to visual order and hopefully, then to a sense of heightened awareness. …My hope is that the dynamism of the action can be seen as an alternative vocabulary with which to question the static inert building environment."[25] Just the way ruins might provoke feelings of tranquility and of anxiety, beauty and terror, hope and despair, Matta-Clarks anarchitectural interventions are ambiguous. Their combination of elegance and violence, of creation and destruction, makes them hard to grasp but easy to love.

In the practices of Smithson and Matta-Clark, the 'ruin' functions on a different level. Postminimalist Smithson's aesthetical discovery of 'de-architecturization' (the beauty of the catastrophe and the dialogue between art and nature) gains an activist dimension in anarchitect Matta-Clark's urban practice (the social aspects of demolition and the transformation of abandoned sites in living areas). Both artists use the ruin as a critique and an alternative for high modernism and its idealist and Cartesian preoccupations. Smithson, Matta-Clark, and other artists of their generation have liberated the ruin from its sentimental and/or catastrophic associations, and reintroduced it as a sharp tool for a possible critique of post-war modernism, be it in its sculptural-aesthetical, its social-ecological or architecturally-urban appearance. Smithson introduced entropy as a possible alternative for the cult of the new and the permanent modern. Matta-Clark introduced the transformation of derelict buildings as a trigger for rethinking modern urbanism. It is a tempting contradiction to say that the rhetoric of decay, the fragment and the cut form a link between late modernism and so called postmodernism, but modernism probably never really ended. The erosion, the mutilation and the recycling of the modernist idiom pave the way for rethinking its heritage and its value (in ruins or not) for today. Ruins always contain the possibility of renewal.

1 In 2002 I curated a show *Le Petit Cabinet d'un Amateur de Ruines* (with contemporary photographs and ruin-images from the 16th century until today from my own collection). Since my lecture *Personal Ruins* at the symposium *Personal Structures: Time* (15.6.2007) there have been several exhibitions dedicated to the motif of ruins in or as art. A few examples dating from 2008: the Ghent Museum of Fine Art (Belgium) hosted a wonderful exhibition on Piranesi. The curatorial concept of the first Brussels Biennial centered around the notion of the modernist heritage and its image of decay. The Queensland Art Gallery (Brisbane) had a group show called *Modern Ruin*. The London Hayward Gallery hosted a show called *Psycho Buildings. Artists & Architecture* (an explicit reference to Martin Kippenbergers subversive photobook with the same title of 1988) were the relationship between art and architecture is explored. The Bozar in Brussels had a show titled *Reality as a Ruin* presenting ruins in photography from the early 19th century until now, and based upon a text I wrote a few years ago. While I am writing this, the Generali Foundation in Vienna even presents a group show Modernism as a ruin. An archaeology of the present, in which Smithson and Matta-Clark have a key role. In recent years, some interesting books have been published about ruins in/as art, such as Christopher Woodwards In Ruins (Vintage, London, 2002) and Michel Makarius' *Ruines* (Flammarion, Paris, 2004). In 1997 The Getty Research Institute had a show called *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed* (Los Angeles, 1997). Things seem to go back to Rose Macaulays pioneering *The Pleasure of Ruins* (1953).
2 The Dematerialisation of Art, *Art International*, vol. XII, no.2 Feb. 1968, reprinted in Lucy Lippard, *Changes. Essays in art criticism*, New York, 1971, pp. 260-255-276, quote from pp. 260.
3 Walter De Maria, Compositions, essays, meaningless work, natural disasters, in La Monte Young (ed.), *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, New York, 1963 (no pagenumbers)
4 For a historical survey of the ruin motif in art, see Makarius 2004.
5 Thomas Cole, quoted in Ella M. Foshay, *Mr. Luman Reed's Picture Gallery. A Pioneer Collection of American Art*, Abrams, New York, 1990, p. 130.
6 See my own essay on ruins and photography De realiteit als ruine (Reality as a ruin) in Inge Henneman (e.), *Het archief van de verbeelding (The archive of imagination)*, Fotomuseum Provincie Antwerpen, Mercatorfonds, Antwerpen, 2002, pp. 59-89.
7 Craig Owens, Earthwords, *October* 10, fall 1979.
8 *Artforum*, dec. 1967, reprinted as A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey in Jack Flam (ed.), Robert Smithson: *The Collected Writings*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1996, pp. 68-74.
9 Ibd., p. 72.
10 *Artforum*, June 1966, reprinted in *Flam* 1996, pp. 10-23.
11 Ibd., p. 11.
12 "… The earth, subject to cataclysms, is a cruel master." Interview with Gregoire Müller, *Arts Magazine*, Sept. 1971, reprinted in *Flam* 1996, pp. 253-261, quote from pp. 256-260.
13 Conversation in Salt Lake City. Interview with Gianni Petenna, *Domus*, nov. 1972, reprinted in *Flam* 1996, pp. 297-300, quote from p. 299.
14 Entropy made visible. Interview with Alison Sky, *On Site* # 4, 1973, reprinted in *Flam* 1996, pp. 301-309, quote from pp. 304.
15 Ibd., p. 308.
16 See www.ubu.com/film/smithson.html.
17 Dan Graham and Marie-Paule Macdonald, Project for Matta-Clark Museum, 1983, reprinted in *Dan Graham. Works 1965-2000*, Richter Verlag, Düsseldorf, 2001, p. 206.
18 Interview with Matta-Clark, Antwerp, September 1977, in cat. *Matta-Clark*, ICC, Antwerpen, 1977, p. 8.
19 Ibd., pp. 8-9.
20 John Baldessari in cat. *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1985, pp. 19.
21 Cat. ICC 1977, p. 11.
22 Letter to Flor Bex 28.7.1976, quoted in Johan Pas, *Beeldenstorm in een spiegelzaal. Het ICC en de actuele kunst 1970-1990* (*Iconoclasm in a mirror hall. The ICC and contemporary art 1970-1990*) LannooCampus, Leuven 2005, p. 204.
23 Ibd., quoted in Pas 2005, pp. 207-208.
24 For a detailed account of the history and reception of *Office Baroque*, see Pas 2005, chapters VII and IX.
25 Cat. ICC 1977, p. 12.



LAWRENCE WEINER

Text as presented during the symposium Time at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 16 June 2007

*Lawrence Weiner, *1942 in the Bronx, NY, USA. Since 1968, Weiner has been using language as the primary vehicle for his work. He lives in New York, USA, and Amsterdam, Netherlands.*

Lawrence Weiner has opted not to edit the transcript and accepted it in this form as an authentic documentation of his talk.

I have been able to catch some of the talk that has preceded mine, and some of it I found interesting, some charming, and some about people whose work I genuinely like. But it has very little to do with time, unless time in relation to—what? At the worst, an attempt to place those activities of human beings within a linear historicality—essentially, a place in the sun, without any sense either of knowing or of giving [a care about] what the sun is, or any accord of what the sun does. It all seems to me it's not about time, it's about "slam, bam, thank you ma'am." I am not trying to be funny.

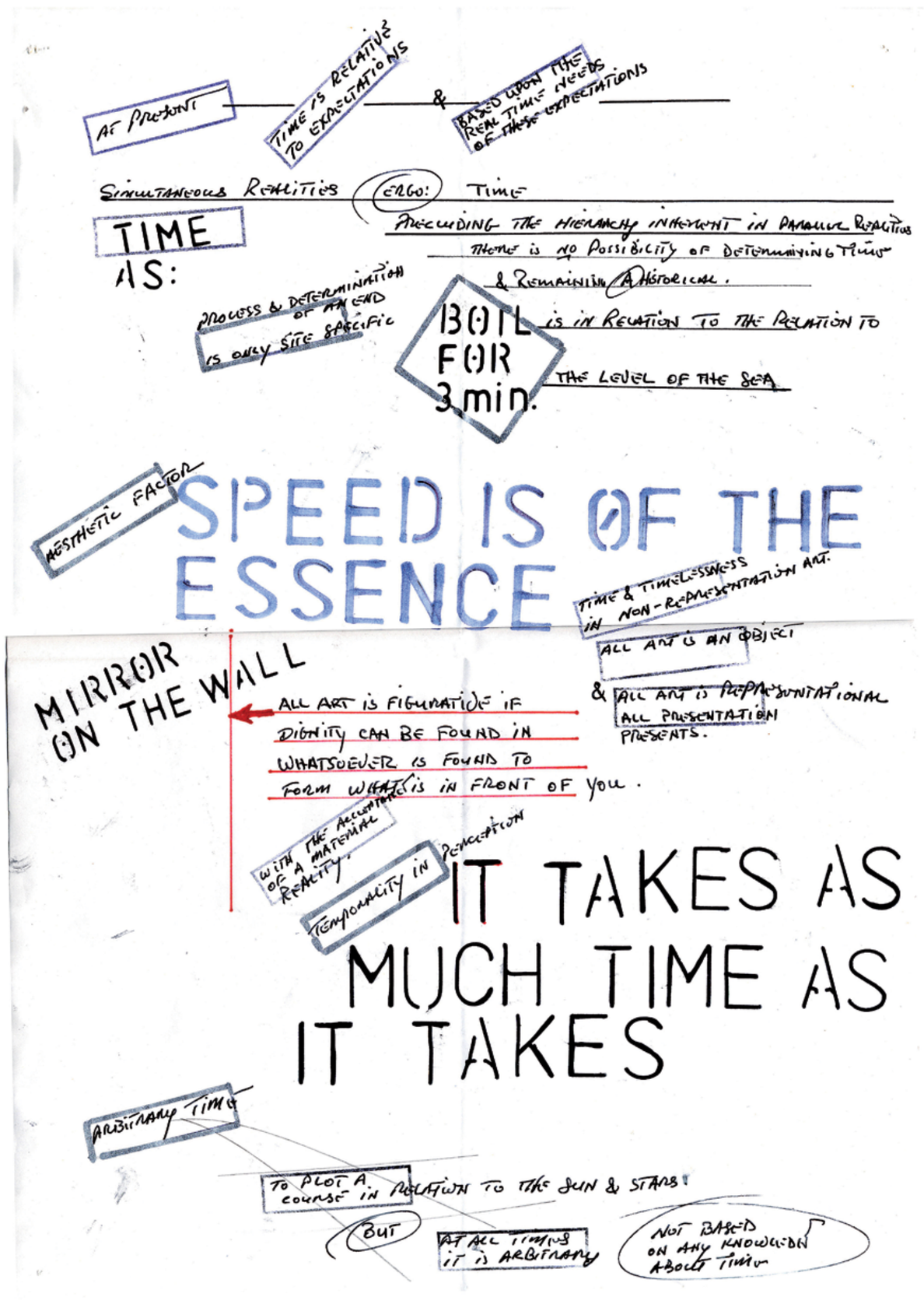
When we speak of time, especially since so much art since, I can almost say, since Mondrian is involved with the passage of time—not the reflection of time, but the passage of time, reflections of times, or nostalgia at present. And that's all we have in our lives. Time is relative to expectations, and it's based upon the real-time needs to fulfill those expectations. We have no other means of judging the value of time. Essentially, to be really vulgar, it can't be about lifetime, it can't be about lifespan. It's the same problem that all artists have. We all make movies, and yet, a movie is the great imposition on another human being, because it asks them to give up their real time. Your real time is making a movie. I don't know if their real time is watching a movie, because it's an imposition of time.

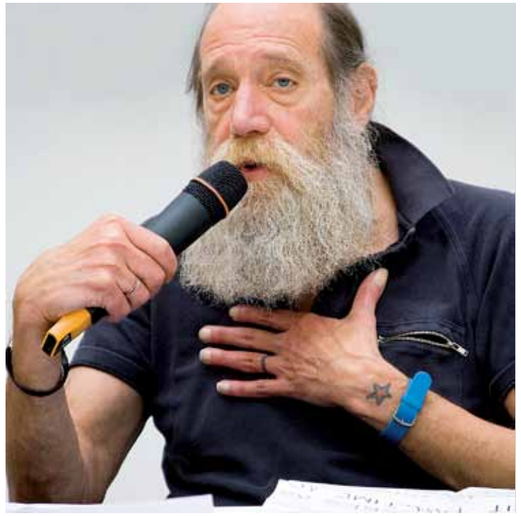
I use time as a designation within the process of making art. That designation, though, is never an absolute. I'm a materialist, personally, and as an artist, I really see things in relation to the materials as they're presented. I read through the questionnaire of the panels and of the discussions that we're having, and in an attempt to sort of answer them, I kept coming up against these very, very strange things. These notes—you must excuse me—we were on board the boat and it was literally the only paper I could find that I could write on. But we have this problem here about non-objective art, figurative art, so-called minimal, so-called this, so-called that. Now let's just step aside—there is no art that is non-representational. If you can see it, it exists. If it exists, it represents itself. If we can—and all art is essentially figurative—if we can find dignity in whatsoever is found to form, whatever you come across—"All art is representational," "All art is an object"—it's another false issue. It's another problem of trying to single yourself out from linear time.

Process is determination, in the way I have used it—spray something, do something, for a period, an amount of time, and then tell somebody about it in the past perfect, that it is already an accomplished, accommodated fact. It has already entered the culture. Try boiling an egg for three minutes in Amsterdam, and try boiling an egg for three minutes as you go higher and higher and higher, and you rise to the heights. It's not the same, but it is the same idea. But a three-minute egg on the top of Kilimanjaro is not a three-minute egg sitting in the Harbor of Amsterdam. It takes into account where you are, when you are.

If you can, leave behind what we're running into this afternoon, parallel realities—I'm sorry to have missed the discussions yesterday, but we're seeing so many parallel realities. These parallel realities allow for a hierarchy though the entire reason for making art was to help reduce the hierarchies between materials. If we attribute a metaphor to absolutely everything that's being done that fits into whatever culture you happen to be in and this idea of a linear historicality, fine. Otherwise, the only aesthetic factor, essentially, of art is "speed is of the essence"—time and timelessness. All art is involved in time, all things are involved in time. But at present, why are we not accepting the fact that perhaps there is a simultaneous reality? Have we been so absolutely messed about by probably one of the few people in the world who would love the idea of postmodernism, namely Heisenberg—whose egocentricity was to such an extent that he really convinced the entire world, after the Second World War, that if it weren't for him going to the bathroom a lot, the Nazis would have had atomic power. But he slowed it down.

Heisenberg is interesting. Chaos theory liberated all of us. It liberated Gordon Matta-Clark, who I have a great admiration for. It liberated everybody to the fact that it empowered us. The whole purpose of art is to empower other people—not yourself. Touch it, it will never be the same. It all sounds just marvelous. The only problem is there





was another person who came along long before this called Galileo. And, although he had to recant it, he recanted it with great wit. After having to admit that he was wrong—that the world did not revolve around us—he said, "But you have to admit, at least it moves." That's about all you can get as an artist sometimes. But in fact, why are we accepting with no restrictions, an idea of talking about time, which is—again, I don't know how it fits into art. It's like going to a Michel Butor lecture that Dory Ashton had set up once in the 60s, all excited to see him talk about language in art, because we were all artists who were being rejected because we used language, and he showed pictures with words on them. That's not language in art. And that's not time, when you talk about the historicality in the things.

There is an accord for an idea to come together about what time is, but I don't know why it's necessary as an artist. I was reading a book last night where something turned up, and they were talking about working with the Maasai. The Maasai have a different sense of time, a different way of explaining it. But in fact, the egg boils for a certain period of time and it has a certain desired expectation. It doesn't much matter. It really and truly doesn't. I'm so completely involved in the fact that—why are we so jealous of entropy? We are. We as human beings, we as intellectuals, we're completely jealous of entropy. Entropy takes care of it all by itself. The entropic nature of life is the entropic nature of life; it's not a philosophical fact. In becoming a philosophical fact, again we get into this thing—we use arbitrary time.

I just did a show at the Maritime Museum in London, and it was dealing with the rhumb line. The rhumb line is that line that curves around and allows you to have a flat surface, to understand how to get from point A to point B, and the problem is that you can't get lost. I thought exploration was all about getting lost. We're caught up in a problem here. There has to be a way to put in what they call "postmodernism"—but I don't really see why. There was no need to put in the tachists. They existed, they came, they went, and it didn't really influence anybody. Schneider didn't influence a soul. We can leave out the so-called little escapade of postmodernism. All it led to was some urban renewal; it didn't lead to any genocides or anything.

If "speed is of the essence," and "mirror, mirror on the wall," is what we're looking for [with respect to] time, I'm totally confused about why we are staying within this Heisenbergian concept, which is totally pre-Galilean, instead of existing within a post-Galilean sense as artists, where the work one makes has no metaphor—it has nothing implicit in it. It is totally explicit, and each person comes to this explicit thing that stands in the way—because all art gets in the way—and he or she brings whatever needs and desires [it takes] for understanding their own place in the world. That's time. That's time, not as a quantitative thing, and it's not as a qualitative thing. It's time just for what it is. It takes as much time as it takes. And each thing takes as much time as it takes, and each person does [as well].

As artists, why do we have to intellectually determine what this arbitrary time is? I mean, if you were on a Julian Calendar, if you were on another calendar, you're all working on different times. I mean, it's nice in New York sometimes, where there are four different New Years that go on—one right after the other—and they're not even close together most of the time. But they are New Years. And each one, you walk around, and you learn whatever the phrase and whatever the culture is having it, and you learn how to say, "Happy New Year" in an awful lot of cultures—but it makes no sense whatsoever.

Now, art is not supposed to make sense. Art is supposed to have meaning. And if we really believe that we're international, this concept of time has to be moved about again. Somebody who's hungry has to be fed really rather quickly. Somebody who's not hungry doesn't have to be fed really as quickly. Our determination as artists within this time span is to decide how much of our resources can be used to speed up, for the people who need it, and perhaps to slow down, for the people who don't need it. But that's slow down, that's speed up—that's all still arbitrary time. That's not time as any way of designating your place in a linear, historical thing.

They've made a big fuss about a colleague of mine, who I used to be friends with—I'm not friends with now, and there wasn't even a falling out. It just—it was a political problem. There is no answer. It's nice; I'm so glad when somebody else talks about what I do, so I don't have to. I'm very serious—you know, it's the old theatrical thing that you read in the newspapers. "Oh, did we get any coverage for our play?" "Yes, they say it stinks." "Oh, good! Did they use capital letters or did they use small letters?" Art is something that is talked about. Art is something that—it's this concept that we have, where somebody does something that strikes a universal chord, and that's placing something in the way of something else. And that universal chord can then be used by other people without any rules, without any regulations. It's almost the joke—there used to be a time in Africa where people had never seen a motion picture. They even didn't quite know what a motion picture was. But every single person knew that Greta Garbo wanted to be alone.

Aha! You got to the core of the whole thing: All art is the anecdote that you walk away from it with, the anecdote that you use. It's why a

Caspar David Friedrich functions the same as a Barnett Newman. There's nobody there! It's a picture of somebody, but there's nobody there. And you, if you were at that moment in an existential crisis, can use that at that time—but it's always at present. And our present, I'm afraid, is being taken over—no offense meant—but by an academic need in order to convey information that we're only talking about the past. I had hoped when I entered the world of being an artist that I would be able to spend my life trying to reach that one point of making work that was in the present. Because there is no future. The future would mean that you were determining things. Nobody determines anything. As Jo Baer said, you think you're changing the world a little—maybe you don't even change it at all.

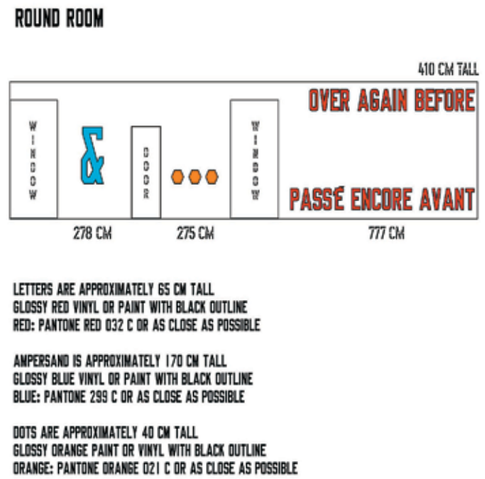
But the present—if you can make something and present it to other people, in any culture—and language is not a problem in my terms, because it can all be translated, it's all quite simple. And that gives a sensual pleasure at the moment, a sensual awareness at the moment—sensual, not visceral. Design is visceral and art is sensual. At that moment, it does not rely upon your remembrance of the past. I ain't been able to do it yet, but I'm trying. And I think every artist essentially is trying to do that—to make something that, at that given moment, changes your entire sensuality to such an extent that when you think back on it, in the next moment, you've changed your whole logic pattern. And that's all I have to say about time.

There was one English thing that was wonderful. The English knew they had to have accord on time because they invented "false time" with the Greenwich Mean line. They had to invent it in order to do what they had to do. And they used to stand up in English pubs and say, "Time, gentlemen." Now I thought that was sufficient, but when I told this to a colleague from Britain on an airplane recently going to Munich, he said, "Lawrence, you forgot. It was, 'Time, gentlemen, please.'"

Please accept my reading of temporal time. And that "please" is what all art is supposed to be about.

Question from the audience: First of all, I would like to apologize for my academic question. I wish to mention it is a fact that, for me, without love, there is no real academic activity. I think even academic activity is stimulated by a love for something. It might be a love of the arts. But I would like to ask you about a specific subject, the fact that you stopped making paintings and started making textual or text related works, and how the aspect of time, in a way, played a role in this process or in this moment or in this decision, or whatever it was. For me, there is a gap in my perception of your work between painting and the textual pieces.

Lawrence Weiner: Hmm-mm. I don't know if I ever stopped making paintings, because the paintings themselves—by the time you got to know about them, not the things that sort of went through one's life—by the time I got to that, the paintings were doing exactly what the use of language was about. They were presenting a material fact—the fact of removal, the fact of a spray for a period of time. And then I began to discover that they were



not believing me that the paintings were just basically a conversation. And they were turning them into these other objects, and I found that language allowed itself to function better. But in a sense, I'm still doing exactly the same thing I was doing then. I'm making things to show to people that they can identify with, what I had seen as a logic pattern—I hope. So there was never any break. I happen to like painting. I like painters. I like Jo. I mean, I have no real problem with any of that, there is not a problem about who I show with. I don't believe that they were even minimalists. I don't believe certainly that there are certain things called conceptualists; it's as if… I just saw some beautiful Ellsworth Kellys that I was very impressed by at Venice. And don't tell me they're not conceptual—you have to figure out what size canvas to buy, what size stretcher to stretch, what kind of paint to mix. I don't know where the word "conceptual" came from. It was—I think, and this is maybe a little low shot—but there came a point somewhere, when it began to look like it might be hard to make a living. It was before the work was really beginning to be accepted, and somebody called it "conceptual" and they figured, "Oh, well. If I screw up, I can become a professor of conceptual art in the university or in an art school." Now, wanting to survive is no reason for me to look down on anybody—I wanted to survive all along, it's just about what you're willing to do for it. Might be a little bit sad. But I have nothing against the academy. I believe in teachers, you know, I really… the reason I don't teach is that I think it's a full-time endeavor. And the few times that I've had to give seminars for financial reasons, to try to do something, I found myself not being able to work. I found myself totally engaged with these other human beings in a room, who were passing their real time—and they only get one real time. And you have an obligation. I live with somebody who's fascinated by history. And history is an interesting aspect for me—but not when I'm making art. I don't want to make art that relies upon the past in order to have validity. I think that we are dignified enough at our own present time in this moment that we don't have to justify what we do by the accomplishments of other people. We really ought to be able to go [action] without having to say, "See? It looks a little bit like a Picabia." Yeah, it might look a little bit like a Picabia, but we all look a little bit like whatever grandparents we had. There's no real way to get away from it. That would be the answer. But it's not about—when I say "academic" I meant an academic reading of looking at something that perhaps had no explanation, and the only explanation would be to put it in line with our knowledge of history. Somebody who had been educated in Asia would not have that same line of history, and yet the same work would have the same amount of power, like Gordon Matta-Clark. The same work could mean all of that, but it doesn't always have to be counter-cultural. Let's say it's acultural. Maybe art is acultural. Art is not about opposites—it's about apposites, and it could be acultural. Acultural means that each individual time, as we know it, attempts to find a means and attempts to find its own level. And with global warming, we've discovered that the level of water is probably the most profound thing in the world, because there is no level of water any longer. [using the term Waterstand in Dutch] Yeah, it's true! [a few words in Dutch] And as long as that's every single day, we have another water level, the level of water is the only question we can answer—and [the fact] that the level of water finds its own level. Well, that's very interesting because we had hoped that for artists as well, didn't we? Yeah, it's a piece I'm doing in Liege, at the University, and it's all about water finds its own level, because its own level is the most important part of it.

Question from the audience: Why is it so difficult to be an artist in the present, I mean, not related to the past, which is anyway hard enough? Why is it so hard to deal with the here and now? Is it because it is actually now learned?

Lawrence Weiner: Oh, but it actually is there—it's just that by the time you tell me about it, it's gone, okay… That kind of paradox sounds great, you know we're living in the City of Ammm… and the City of "everybody being better then everybody else because they have an inner glow." But in fact, it's not any harder to be an artist now than it was to be an artist—and again, I can only speak from the '50s or the '60s. What happens is you are not content… "One is not content with the configuration that is presented to us." That configuration is what we build our logic pattern for survival out of. We get through the day by using our logic pattern to get through it. That logic pattern can come from a Mondrian, it can come from a popular song, it can come from Beethoven. It doesn't much matter. But we build a structure within our heads for how to get through each day. That is the present. The reason that it looks so complicated for artists to find something to do, which is what the problem was that I saw in Venice—not that they don't know how to do what they do. They do. But they don't really know why they're doing it, because they didn't—and they'll say it out loud—they don't know what they're doing, they're just doing something to do something. That's not an answer. When there's nothing to say, maybe it's best to say nothing. Yeah. I mean, I'm sorry—you know, artists are no different than any other person. When I'm speaking, I'm speaking from the standpoint

of being an artist. And that's why I was asked to speak, because I'm an artist talking about something else. I don't really—I'm not a scientist. Yes, I mean, we all know Heisenberg, we all know how to sing *Melancholy Baby*. These are things that our Western culture has taught us as we were growing up. Calculus is not complicated. Fixing a VCR might be—but they're not going to exist any longer, so it's one of those things you didn't have to learn. The thing about art is maybe there are things that artists are supposed to be smart enough that they don't have to learn because it's not going to be of any use—they're dead ends. But every dead end has always produced [things] like a cure for syphilis or a cure for this or a cure for that. So I don't know why we're all supposed to know so much—but time itself is the interesting thing. How do we give a value to time that's not related to our own fear of death? You know, there's that joke about—this thing about a lifetime. How can you give value to a life when it's the thing that everybody has? And everybody has it like the level of water for a different period of time. That's it, I don't really know. As I've said, I'm one of those people who, if given the opportunity, and when I've had the opportunity, would start schools and start things. I think people should know about the past and should know about history, but I don't know if it's a necessity when you're talking about art. And it has a tendency to trip up a lot of the aspirations of a lot of younger artists—and I don't mean in their twenties, I mean in their teens—who are starting to enter into the world and want to have a discourse to force them, to make it resemble what they have heard of. Maybe art is taking on another phase, but it does that every 10 years—happily. Yeah. You know, there's no such thing as a young artist. There are artists who show a lot and artists who haven't shown a lot, and that's the difference. And art is a public thing—when it's not shown, it doesn't exist. Art is a public conversation. I mean, that's the horrible thing. You must all have [conversation] when you have seminars, and sometimes you see intelligence in eyes, but they say, "Oh, I can't talk about that!" And you look at them and say, "Then get the fuck out of here." Because art is a public job and if you can't talk in public about what you are thinking, then you shouldn't be an artist—you should be something else.

Question: How is time related to the medium of artists' books?

Lawrence Weiner: I don't see them related really to time. It's a real-time experience to read a book, but I've always made books because—and if you'll notice all the books I've made, and there seem to be a lot of them, they don't have any explanation or any table—they don't tell you how to use them. It's one of the ways of leaving around things that I've been working. You can do books for children, you can do them for adults. Where they turn up, it's the one thing that our overwhelming society can never get rid of it. They can burn books, they can kill the people who make them, they can kill the people who read them. Somehow or other, one turns up behind the, behind the toilet, one turns up under the bed, and then you're back in business again. And media, you forget, if they turn off the electricity, you're screwed. Forget it. That's the big mistake of McLuhan. McLuhan misread immediately and it became obvious that the benevolence of the society should be in no way, means, or otherwise, to restrict yourself in your communication with other people. Remember artists like Ian Wilson or artists like Stanley Brown, where the expenditure of the time of the involvement is an essential part of it? For me, the expenditure of trying to figure out how to use what I make is an essential part of a person's use of my work. They basically first have to figure out what it is, and then they have to figure out if it's of any use to them—and if it is, they have to change their logic pattern—without my having to tell them how to do it. So I find books wonderful as long as they don't have instructions on them. And I continue to make books and I will continue to make books. I like making children's books, too, because you can talk about something like time without worrying about historicality and things.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Joseph Kosuth (in absentia) e-mailed his answers to questions about Time

*Joseph Kosuth (*1945 in Toledo, Ohio, USA) is one of the pioneers of Conceptual art and installation art, initiating language based works and appropriation strategies in the 1960s. Due to other commitments, Joseph Kosuth couldn't participate in the Amsterdam symposium in person. He did agree to take part in the form of submitting written statements, however. The idea was that Peter Lodermeyer would ask him a series of questions on the theme of Time and he would select those he wanted to answer. The answers we print here reached us by e-mail, and served as the departure point for a panel discussion, to which numerous speakers at the symposium and people from the audience contributed.*

Peter Lodermeyer: After 2500 years of philosophical contemplation about time, the German philosopher Michael Theunissen has reached a conclusion that "Time is not definable" [*Negative Theologie der Zeit*, p. 39]. What is the meaning of time for you personally?

Joseph Kosuth: There couldn't possibly be a meaning of time, for me or anyone else.

PL: The main subject of your work is "meaning". What, in your opinion, is the prevailing effect of time, the formation or the erosion of meaning? Is time an ally or an enemy of the artist?

JK: On first thought I would assume 'time' to be, intrinsically, devoid of meaning. At best it would be a flow which provides the dynamic within which meanings are formed for individuals or society. But for itself, it has no 'meaning' per se.

PL: A very significant time structure in the life and career of an artist is artistic success. Lately, a critic wrote in relation to your show at Sean Kelly Gallery: "Theory's over. […] Like it or not, intentional or not, both Theory and Conceptual art have made it. They're the establishment." (Matthew L. McAlpin, The Brooklyn Rail, November 2006). The art critic Klaus Honnef has referred to the "Pyrrhic victory of Conceptual art." Does the art world still need debates on theory or theoretical debate?

JK: Well, the word 'success' seems more precise than it is. A market success like Damien Hirst or, once upon a time, Markus Lupertz, is clearly not an artistic success, for example. The 'success' of my own activity—as a cultural contribution—has shown a healthy indifference to the market, for a different example, with interest in my work quite often based on grounds quite independent of whatever charm the market had for my production. As for your quote, what a curiously enslaved avant-gardist idea to equate having 'made it' with being 'over'. So, apparently, at the moment in which one is exercising influence and arriving at the possibility of an enlightened responsibility for a social and cultural impact, the suggestion is that the actual unavoidable destiny is one of impotence, since it's only the possibility of the new rather than the reality of responsible engagement of an actual 'arrival' that matters? I think not. If so, 'the new' becomes a formalism without content or value. Are the Conceptual artists the establishment? I really doubt it.

Do I feel that my contribution opened art up, cleared out modernist prescriptions, replaced the male expressionist shaman model of the artist for a practice open to both genders based on the power of ideas? Yes, I feel I helped that happen. Just because I was right forty years ago doesn't make me the establishment, even if respect tends to take an institutionalized form. It amuses me to hear that when I see artists of my generation, painters, who are well known but, frankly, artistically mediocre (like Ryman or Marden) sell for millions in the auctions simply because they make their production out of paint and canvas and, thus, impact with an appeal to the market's prejudice toward formal continuity, thus appealing to its conservatism rather than effecting the history of ideas. Or Richard Prince, no mediocrity in terms of his original contribution, but look what happened in the market to his work when he switched from photography to painting! In this way the market often numbs the brain, so one can only follow it with sociological amusement. I would need to know how Klaus is applying 'Pyrrhic'.

But an 'art movement', be it mine or someone else's, tends to have two contributions. You have those who started doing it first, and we know it's often one person who personally influenced others, so it's rooted in their work and from that the movement gets its authenticity, it flows from those first works and the ideas that formed them. Such authenticity is the result of work being anchored in the lived location of an actual human being, a human being connected to a particular historical and cultural moment. In short, it originally flows from their own belief in their own work. Then, the other contribution is that belief becomes the basis of the discourse within which other artists work. I had to confront Duchamp and Ad Reinhardt, but I think my work has certainly added more than you would get by just adding up those two. Yes, we need debates on theory (or theoretical debates) because that is how we can pull back and see the concrete instances of our practice and get an overview of where we might seem to be going.

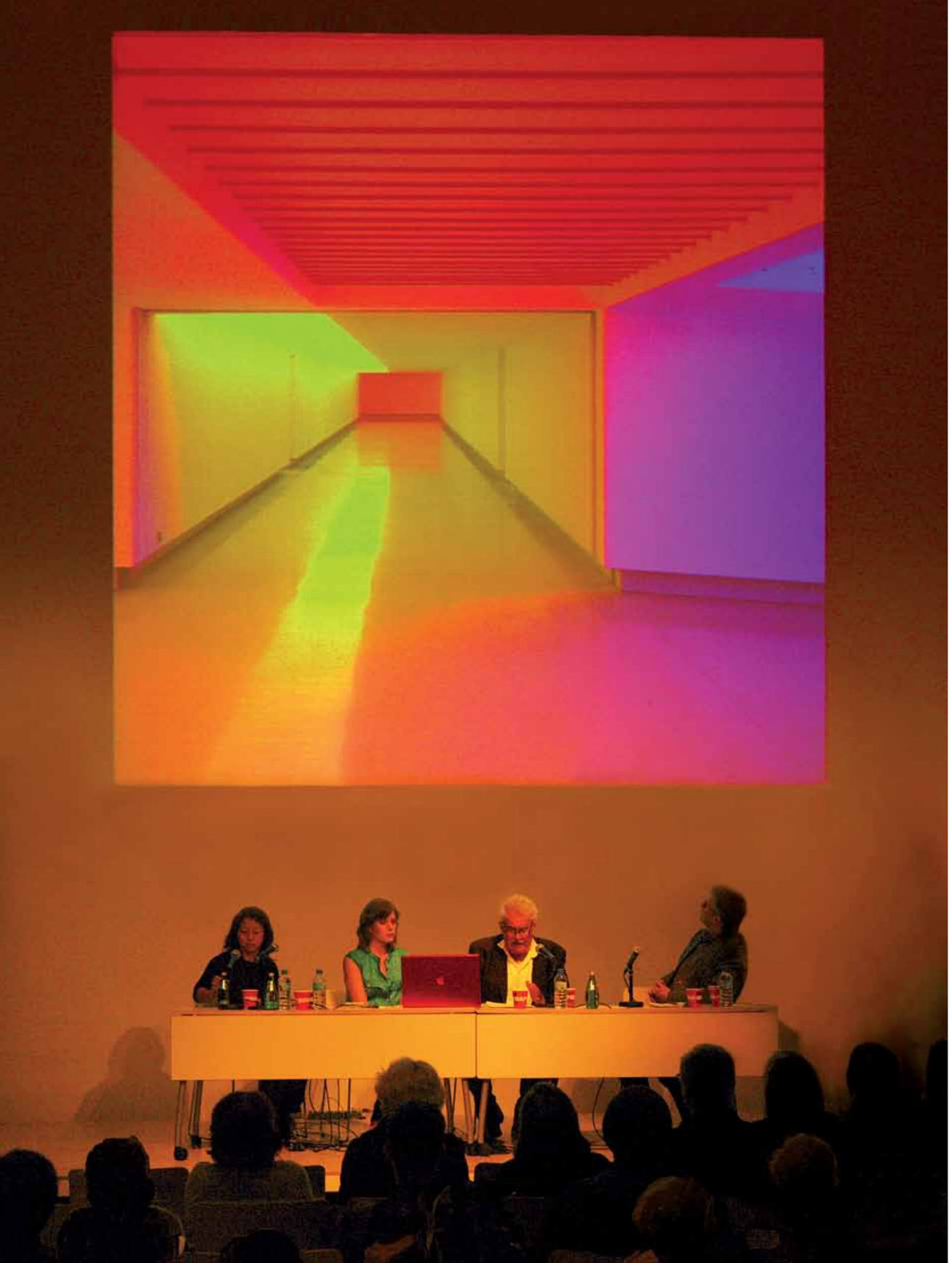
PL: In your text *On Picasso* (1980) you wrote about the "point when Picasso stopped making art and began painting Picassos. This process […] is a potential fatal side-effect of success for any artist." No doubt, you are a successful artist. Have you ever been in danger of beginning to make Kosuths? (If not, how have you been able to avoid it? / If yes, how has this come about?)

JK: I think Picasso's problems are not mine. As Freud put it, 'The tiger and the polar bear cannot fight.' But I do apparently share a historical space (or, as the joke goes, 'we went to different schools together') with others who have fallen into similar traps. My works connect, they really come out of the historical and cultural location that forms them.

They are always too much 'about' something to simply be signatures. However, I'm often asked about my thoughts on the work of Lawrence Weiner and have said relatively little over the years. I've always thought that the ad hominem gossip around us makes a serious discussion rather difficult. But maybe I should try. For me his work is a continuous variation on the same graphics job (those zappy colors and joyfully bouncing type fonts!) and the 'look' functions as a kind of parody of style enough to have a market identity, since it's important that you can easily identify them, as they feed from each other.

The promise of profundity is in continuous delay. But what he actually 'writes', frankly, is functionally devoid of any actual effective content. I don't think that is an accident. I was quite amused recently when I was told that his criticism of my work is that he says he actually 'writes' but 'Joseph just cites.' Apparently the fact that what he writes is quite consistently meaningless is not an issue for him. We'll forget the 23 or so books I wrote, compared to his prudent absence of nearly any theorizing in the last 40 years, but I ask you: my appropriation or his pseudo-poems, who generates the meaning? I would gently point out to Lawrence that he didn't invent the words he uses any more than I invent the sentences and paragraphs that I use, and, in any case, that language functions differently within an artwork than in the practical world. (Should I quote Wittgenstein here?)

As I've written a lot about how that works (which means, of course, I actually thought about it as well) and he hasn't, it's hard to know what he claims now his activity is based on. Post minimalists (this term, not Conceptual art, was invented for work like his and it is actually appropriately descriptive) like Weiner, and minimalists like Judd, Andre, Flavin are joined by the fact that formal identity from one work to the next gives them a market identity that parodies earlier art historical notions of 'style'. The minimalists get my respect in spite of it, but Andre's got to put it on the floor, Flavin's got to use fluorescent lights, Judd's box is always nearby. Their form of late modernism, along with Weiner who uncritically inherited it, insists that consistent, repetitive form insures integrity. Well, it might have for the former, but it collapses when attempted with language, or more accurately in Weiner's case, really with just words. Words as objects suffer along with the rest of concrete poetry by having neither the integrity of a Juddian 'specific object' nor the essential quality of language: signifying acts, a system of relations between relations, ultimately the production of actual meaning coming from the work. In short, the transparency of meaning-generating relations. Such work as Weiner's and concrete poetry in general, is, to my mind, deeply bankrupt. Such work reifies language ultimately into dumb decoration at best, as it parodies itself in a shell-game performance of signification, exploiting the authority of language but without generating any actual new meaning, parasitically hoping some myth of profundity can be simply borrowed from art history to mask its emptiness. But a pretention of the celebration of meaning shouldn't be confused with a practice which actually produces it. After the minimalists I prefer Nauman, who risks play as an artist and generates new meaning with each work. But the one artist who actually uses objects linguistically is Haim Steinbach. To my mind he is one of the few artists to actually make a new contribution to the use of language within art, and he does so without using words. I speak here of his most well-known work in which he positions objects on shelves. Later, with delicious paradox, he underscored this work by using actual words as objects, thereby exposing the cultural, and political, homelessness of work like Weiner's by appropriating words from mass culture and not just putting them into play like cultural objects, but putting them into a particular play: from word to object, from object back to language, and in the end arriving with works quite the same as his other appropriations. His linguistic use of them are in spite of the fact they are words, and in this way he shows the complexity of the relations between language and art, and art and its objects. Sorry, but how simplistic and naive post minimalist production looks when compared with work such as this.



SPACE

Symposium at

New Museum
New York, USA
3 & 4 April 2009

ROBERT BARRY

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 3 April 2009

*Robert Barry (*1936, New York City, USA). Since 1967, Barry has produced non-material works of art using a variety of otherwise invisible media. His word pieces provide complex spatial linguistic fields of thought that activate the viewer's powers of imagination. Barry lives and works in New Jersey, USA.*

Robert Barry: I will speak about an exhibition in Paris. It is a group exhibition of artists who—over the last thirty years—have worked with the empty gallery as their exhibition. It starts with Yves Klein, who closed a gallery in Paris. Over the past years, I have made a number of empty gallery exhibitions. I was also included in the show. When you go to the museum to see the exhibit, in the entrance you first encounter some information about the artists and their exhibitions. But when you then go into the exhibition itself, what you see is just a number of empty rooms: the walls are clear, there is only a small information label with when the exhibition took place and what it was about. During that exhibition I shot a video of the people wandering around these empty rooms. What are they looking at? What are they talking about? The video was edited in Paris. Recently, I have been putting the images in the words. Instead of superimposing the words over the images, I like the idea of the words rising and then fading away. In this video you have the use of space in a couple of different ways: there is the blank space between the various images. Time is also present in this work: I took images of a previous exhibit and recycled them into the video you are looking at now. So, you have various levels of time; people roaming around the space, the art space in the video which existed in the past, and now we are looking at it in the current art space. That was the idea about that video. I thought it was interesting to have it running while you came in as an opening idea of using space as a part of the symposium. In January I did an exhibition called *62 09* at Yvon Lambert Gallery, here in New York. I shot a video of that exhibition as well. The show deals with space and time. The exhibition showed works from 1962 till the current: it showed old works, new works, old works presented in a new way, and old works combined with new ones. Once again, we have the idea of space and time, which—by the way—are very important aspects of my work. Amongst the works in the exhibition are some of my telepathic works, which I did in 1969. For me, light is also very important. In this exhibition the light tended to change quite a lot.

Peter Lodermeyer: You just said that several artists worked with emptiness and showed empty spaces, why is it still important or necessary to do that? Why is it important to deal with emptiness?

Robert Barry: I don't know whether it is important or necessary. It is just an interesting approach. The galleries really aren't empty: there is something in there; the space is designated in a certain way. The space is used for a certain kind of thinking. In my work, for example, I used invisible material, such as radio waves: if you walk into the gallery, you would not actually see anything, except for a label saying that the space is filled with various radio waves. If you had taken your radio, you would have been able to hear something. I worked with other invisible material as well, such as thought waves. There is no such thing as 'completely empty'; there is always something there. Just because you don't see something does not mean there is not anything going on. The reason I made these works, was to test the limit of visual art. What makes something visual? Is it something you see with your eyes? Or is it something going on in your head? That is why I worked with so-called empty galleries. In the first piece I did, I simply closed the gallery. I knew Yves Klein had worked with empty galleries, but I did not know of any artist who simply closed it. I was aware also of the work of Daniel Buren, who filled the gallery with this striped wallpaper. But in his case there was always the striped paper. My piece was very direct: close the gallery.

PL: Your interest in empty gallery spaces comes from your questions about art. Does it also take its inspiration from philosophical questions?

RB: Whatever the influence, I am an artist; I deal mostly with art. That time in the 60s and 70s was a very rich time in terms of pushing the boundaries of what art could possibly be, what the term 'art' was about, and what it meant when going public. Unfortunately—except for a few artists—that time is over. The art world became a very conservative place in terms of thinking.

PL: Why did you come back to your telepathic pieces in your show at Yvon Lambert?

RB: These pieces had never been shown. They were originally meant to be shown in an exhibit in São Paolo, Brazil, in 1969. There were a lot of political problems there at that time. Out of protest against the way people were treated there, the American artists decided to pull out of the show. The pieces were therefore never exhibited. I was just waiting for the right time to do it, really. Because the show at Lambert was about taking old ideas, working with current ideas and trying to transcend the bridge between that space and time… There is a piece in the show that you may have seen. They are two paintings next to each other: one from 1962; the other from 2008. The space between the two represents 45 years, my whole career as an artist really. In the same room you had the red and black grid painting. My teacher at that time referred to that painting as wrapping paper, because I brought the red and black squares around the edge. So, even at that time, I was dealing with the painted object in time and space. Suggesting that it extends both physically as well as ideally beyond the work itself.

PL: To come back to your telepathic work; I am really fascinated by it. Our topic of today is space and telepathy has a lot to do with space: the space between you and me, for example, and trying to bridge that space in an uncertain way. As far as I know, even yet today there is no scientific proof that it actually works. So, please, tell us a bit about your telepathic performances and how they work.

RB: Well, it was like this: I would sit in front of an audience and telepathically transmit ideas. For example from a university in Canada there was a conference call organized by a gallery called Seth Siegelaub. There I telepathically transmitted an idea that could not be expressed verbally, that was the idea of the piece. I was in New York; they were in Vancouver in a conference hall. And I tried to transmit something. I also did a performance at Franklin Furnace. I would sit there behind a table and people were telling me they were picking up ideas. In the same building as one of the galleries back then was the telepathic society. They actually had a library and publicized this sort of thing. You could go there and study books about telekinesis and moving objects by thought. I was fascinated by it and thought it was good material for me.

PL: I saw pictures of your exhibition at Yvon Lambert. How big is the influence of the space in which you show your work?

RB: Yeah, it's important. I think about it. You have these general ideas about what it is you are doing in your work. Often I translate these ideas into the space itself. I like works that only exist for a short amount of time, that will only be there for the run of the show, then they are painted over. It's like a jazz performance or something: when you are there, you are listening to it and have to really focus on it at that moment: if you come back later, it will not be there anymore. That sort of transitory aspect of art brings that to the fore, but this is true of all art. In terms of meaning, that is how we today think about the old masters, such as Rembrandt. Today we look at his paintings in a different way than back then in the 17th century. These ideas are changing all the time anyway.

Also: I like the idea of combining things that age or change very slowly compared to those who go out of existence very quickly. The works I showed on the floor at Yvon Lambert, for example, are made of acrylic. They are tough and strong and stay in this configuration. I like that work in comparison to something on the wall, something changing all the time and only lasts for a certain amount of time. So, the elements of time and space: I really try to work with them in different ways. Just going to a gallery and filling the space with stuff is really not interesting to me. If you start working with space, you have to consider time as well, what it is to move around the space. That is also why I like to use language or words: words grab your attention, they speak to you. Even though they might be red or acrylic, they are addressing themselves to you in a way—if you choose to become engaged with them.

PL: Words usually don't need color. Why do you choose to work with different colors?

RB: You can't avoid color: there is always something, whether it's pencil or something else.

PL: But it does have an impact.

RB: Yes, it has an emotional impact. It is a good way of separating things. It looks good. Look, you should make work that looks like something. It's called visual art. Even in the so-called invisible works your mind is working and trying to somehow come to grips with the idea that is suggested to you. Whether it is gas flowing back into the atmosphere or something else… The reason why it is inert is because it does not mix: the molecules don't mix with other molecules; they remain intact. There is this ever-expanding form that is invisible to us, but that exists in your mind. You can think about the nature of this form and you can engage with it if you want. It's also recycling. I think the statement is that the gas is 'returned' to the atmosphere after it had been taken from the atmosphere. You have this recycling process going on.

PL: Nowadays, we talk a lot about virtual space. Has this ever been interesting to you? Did you try to work with that kind of space?

RB: No, not really. No. Maybe I am just the wrong generation. I am interested in real space, space you can get into and walk around and deal with or anticipate. In the panel after the opening of the show [at Yvon Lambert] we were talking about void. Mental voids, for instance. If someone offers you an exhibition and you have to decide what it is you are going to do. An artist such as myself isn't always bringing out work by making variations on his style. Then this becomes a problem, you are confronted with this void: what are you going to do? This mental problem can be referred to as a void. To me that is a kind of void. Or the void that remains after a friend of yours died. This is something you experience when you get older: people die. There is a void in your life, a space; it's a space that cannot be filled. It's a challenge, something that cannot be changed; it can be quite emotional.

Question from the audience: With regard to the piece that is now at Yvon Lambert—of the hanging pieces with the cylinder. It appears as if you are compressing a certain kind of volume of the space into those couple of millimeters at the bottom into an invisibility. In my mind, that seems to relate to the way you move material: in and out of consciousness, in and out of perception. Can you speak a bit more about that particular work in relation to space?

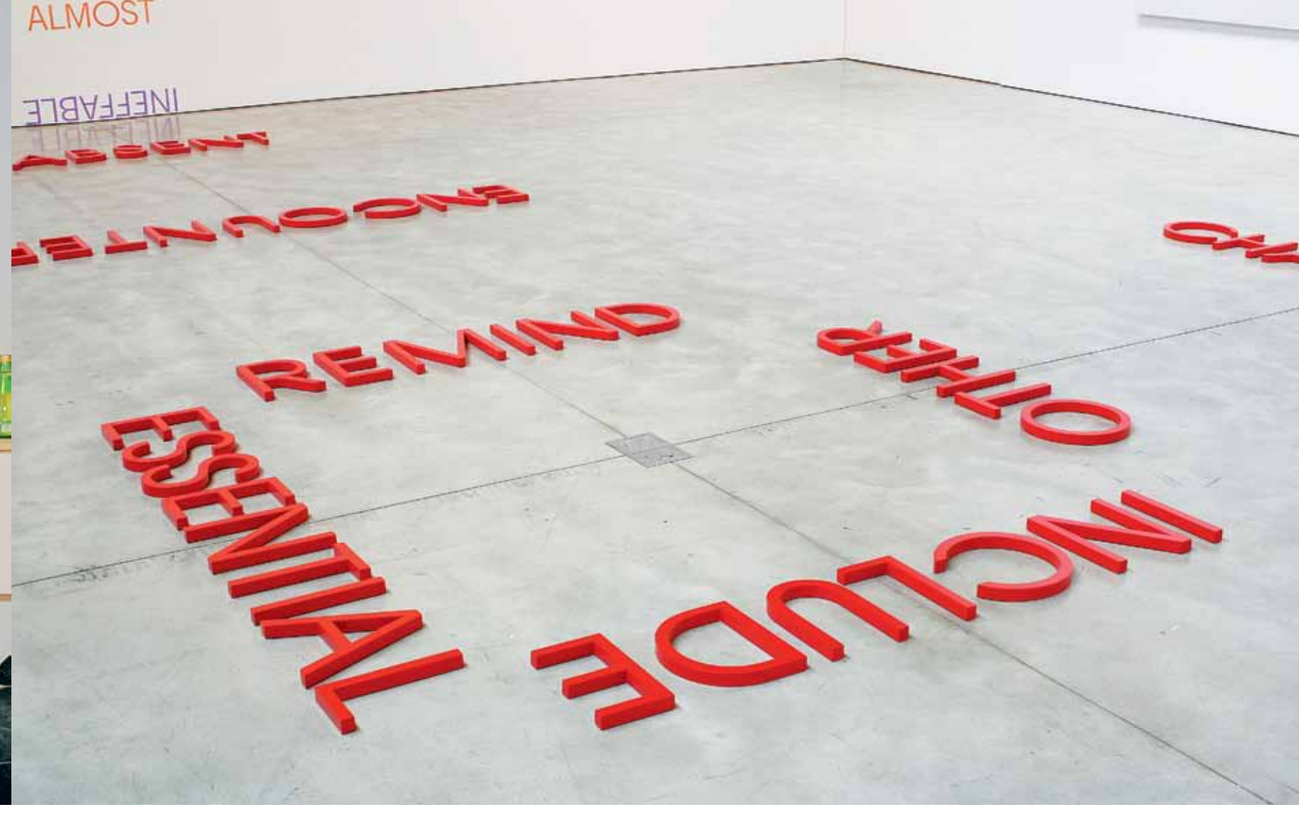
RB: Well, that piece is about expansion and compression. The steel disc is supposed to float 1/8 inch above the floor. The disc is suspended on a nylon monofilament, which is quite reflective. The monofilament expands a little way up to the ceiling. With the skylight in the gallery the effect is quite beautiful. The nylon filament can be invisible sometimes; the steel disc is quite strong and shiny. There is a little tiny space between the discs. The atmosphere makes the disc move very, very slightly. The blade of the monofila-

ment is different every time it is shown, depending on the situation it is in. That is the idea of what the piece is really about. The piece dates from 1967, I believe. It has been around for a while. The work is part of a series: always a disc or a cube that's being suspended. Attempting to have one solid idea implying that every time it's shown, it's shown differently because the situation is different. It is an art idea, it's about material and space and becoming engaged with the space. I am fascinated by space and time, because we live in space and time. We really can't avoid it. We move around in it and it sort of means something to us. The point for me is to use it as directly as possible and contrast these various elements of space and light and how this light is reflected.

Question from the audience: When you revisit these old pieces, do you find that—besides the changes in situation—the fundamental idea changes too?

RB: Yes, absolutely and that was the whole reason for doing it. I started to use my old age, my past, as a material for making art. That is what that show [at Yvon Lambert] is about, it is not a retrospective. At the moment I have an exhibition at the Paris gallery of Yvon Lambert. There I show only new work. The idea of combining old and new work is not new; I have been doing that for a while. I guess I started doing that after I turned 60, making something new out of the old and new work together and activating the space between. I don't know about other people, but I see things in the work that I hadn't seen before. I sometimes wish I had that same I-don't-give-a-shit attitude that I had in those days. I really didn't care; I still don't care, but these days I am a little more cautious. There are a few people now whose opinion I respect—there are only very few—but there are more than when I was young.

Question from the audience: You work mostly in gallery spaces, which are confined volumes of space. Could you tell a bit more about your conception of the medium of space itself?



RB: I like galleries and museums, because people come to actually look at the work. I like it: that is what these places are for. People come there with anticipations and expectations. They are focused on the art. Sometimes it is good to do something out in public, too—and I have done that. But I find that the people who respond to it are the same people who go to galleries anyway. There is work of me in public; I am not sure whether people recognize it as anything. Anything you do is certainly going to change the space. There is no such thing as just plain space; there is always a specific kind of space or a certain kind of place. If you are sensitive, you don't just take something from your studio and plump it into a gallery; you take into account the aspects of what this space is about and the people that go there. This is kind of challenging and it affects the way the piece is going to look—at least for me it does. I don't take something out of my studio and put it in an abstract space. I did some paintings, but they are in galleries because that is where people go to look at things. Art is a very particular human activity. It is a very important activity. And it is a special activity. In the beginning you need a few people who will support it and respond to it. Maybe that group will grow, maybe not. At least you put it out there. When you put it out, you want it to be taken seriously. At least I do, because I think a lot about what I do. For me, art is a very complicated process.

Question from the audience: I was wondering about the diptych and the 45 years between them. What was the formal consideration for the space between them?

RB: That was a problem when we were hanging the show. In fact, it was a problem making a new painting to go with the old one. I think I did three or four possible paintings. Some of which I may put in another show some place else. I wanted to reflect my ideas of change; I did not want it to be something so totally different, so that people could see some sort of connection between the two. The old one is a sort of found object from my youth, the other one I had to make with my old brain.

Question from the audience: If you show the piece again, will it change or is the in between space locked now?

RB: I have to see what it looks like when I show it again. Nothing is locked in; everything is changing.

Jessica Stockholder: I wonder what you think your work will be like after you, when you yourself are not here anymore, in terms of exchanging and other people making those decisions on your behalf.

RB: That is the definition of nothing, right? The void? When you are dead? That is nothing. I mean, do I really care? Yeah, I do. I care now; I probably won't care when I am dead. So, it is a question to be dealt with now. You have a certain amount of control. I have two sons, they are in their forties. You have a certain amount of control over their lives and then you totally lose control. It's like that, I think. How much control can you possibly have? A friend of mine, a fellow artist, I have known him since the 60s, happens to have a magnificent collection. I went to his place in the south of France sometimes. He showed one of my works that was in his collection in a museum in Mouans-Sartoux, France, which is a beautiful little museum. We traded works sometime. I did not go to the opening but he showed my piece in that museum. Some people were quite disappointed because the wall piece completely changed everything. Here you have someone who is a fellow artist and should know better, really. What he did with the piece was unforgivable. I sent him an email. He came to my show here in New York. I said: "look, the next time you do this, let me know, we will try and do something or don't show it." People do things to your art when you do not have any control. You think you've got it locked in, but you don't. Barnett Newman used to say he wanted his paintings to look the same in the gallery as they did in his studio. I think that is impossible. Anybody who makes paintings knows that, as soon as you move them, they will change. To a certain extent I try to build that into my work. There is always that sort of flexibility. Also: if something is where it is, just leave it.

PL: I have a question about your work with words, with language. Artists such as Lawrence Weiner or Joseph Kosuth care a lot about typography. Is this a topic for you as well?

RB: Yes, but I use the same kind of words all the time. I like a very simple geometric form. I developed this look. It works well with architecture and does not distract from the word object itself. I think of them as objects really. How do you distinguish one word from the other? Each word has got its own individual history and meaning and look and color. I don't want to get involved in borrowing anybody else's text. My sensibility is always to just be very direct. Without a lot of extraneous things going on.

Question from the audience: Your work strikes me as very generous to the viewer in terms of interaction, which moves it away from a kind of commodity status. Would you consider your work as an institutional critique or something utopian?

RB: No, I don't use terms like that. Earlier I spoke about losing a certain amount of control and I have that built in. I address my work directly to the viewer. That is ultimately where the meaning is going to be. It is what other people are going to think and write about it. Once the work gets into the world, it gets a life of its own. You have to consider the fact that I am undressing myself to other people. No matter what meaning I give to the work, ultimately it's going to be dealt with by other people. Over time this is going to change: people have different attitudes towards it and think about it in a different way. That is one of the reasons why I use words: they address themselves. But, I don't like words in a text. I have sort of stopped that. I did that years ago, but don't do that anymore, because I want the words to exist in all their possible meanings and then be addressed personally by the viewer. However, he may refer to them… No, it's not utopian; it's realistic. I am very much interested in how art exists in the real world. I am very much a realist, even though I am often called a conceptualist.

JESSICA STOCKHOLDER

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 3 April 2009

*Jessica Stockholder (*1959, Seattle, WA, USA) creates architectural multimedia installations using found objects, such as construction materials, furniture, textiles, and household items.*

Notes arising from Symposium Space NYC, 3 April 2009
It's interesting that I can't seem to think about space without thinking about time. I work with how the experience of things 'now' bumps up against memory and knowledge accumulated in time. I am particularly enamored with picture making—picture making in space. The relationship between picture making and space is an awkward one. Pictures are still, seeming to exist outside of space and time. They are flat on the surface. The volume of things takes time to experience. The experience of space requires movement; and movement takes place in time. Conflating time and space causes a feeling of being torn from 3-dimentional space as the only way it is possible to experience space outside of time is in the space of mind (imagination, thought.)

I don't work in a verbal space. There is a knowing that accumulates from experience and in relation to the body that directs my making. There is structure and intelligence to what I make that grows from things I have made before, and in response to what I know of other people's work and the world. My capacity to articulate the work comes after the fact. I work in response to things in the moment, to how things feel, and to visual structure. It is difficult to explain how it is that I work with fiction—perhaps even narrative but not with words. The fictions I use are tied to the generalities that the mind invents through metaphor grown from particular experience of things in real or exterior space. The flow of these generalities in mind through time, cued by the experience of painted objects is a kind of narrative. That we tie emotion to these experiences is part of how we think. Fiction includes emotion thereby tying information to our memories and encompassing many parts of us. Words are general and abstract although strung together they can point at particularities. The word 'microphone' for example, describes the object but it tells us nothing about any particular microphone and how it exists now in relation to where it is and who's looking at it. I value this disjuncture between the words we put to things to quickly know what they are, and the fact that each and every single thing or objects is different. I am interested in the space in the mind between the word and experience. We think abstractly in order to function. Every single moment we live is quite particular. I use objects and my making to call attention to that part of being human.

All my work is site related—either in a generic way or in a more specific way. I travel to work in response to the specific nature of different places. The work I make in my studio is made in relation to the generic convention of white cube exhibition, and in response to the intense particularity of different objects. Places are different than spaces. With the studio work I am assuming a kind of generality of place—perhaps that is a kind of space. With the site-related work I respond to the physical particularities of architecture, light and scale.

Our experience of mind as inhabiting space is metaphoric, fictive. We generate this fiction in our internal mind spaces. Somehow, flat picture-making space seems easier to live with: it proposes not to exist in the flow of time. Of course it does; everything does. But it proposes that itself as static, and it can be imagined as static. The experience of 3-dimensional things requires that we imagine or acknowledge the flow of time. The collision of these two experiences: one feeling more comfortable, more controlled; the other chaotic and uncontrollable. Though we understand fiction to be something distinct from reality, in fact, fiction merges with reality. The Internet is a kind of fiction: it is full of words and images that we invented. Our bodies are not actually there, but we think of it as space. Fiction defines the whole world. Architecture is constructed to present us with certain kinds of images. If the walls had holes in them revealing plumbing, electrical wires, and the darkness inside, we would feel less comfortable. Clean white walls give us the feeling that we are safe and cared for. Buildings in this way present a kind of storytelling to comfort us.

These shared cultural fictions are distinct from our personal fictions: our dreams and the stories of our lives. Our personal stories are certainly part of us, though not necessarily part of the shared world. All of our stories in mind space, shared and private, are known very differently than our knowing about things in exterior space. These two kinds of space exterior and interior hold the flow of our lives.

I aim for my work to be—in a classical way—ordered and complete. I aim for stasis in the midst of chaos. I have not been interested in watching a work fall apart. Although conceptually it is interesting to think about entropy that is not what gives me pleasure. I do like to think about how the work is a very slow process, a slow event in time—much slower than film or video. I like to notice the extreme slowness of the work in contrast to the speed of my body.

The dualities presented by my work are dualities of life—they are not between life and an imagination of death. The duality of the static picture versus the mass and space in time, and the demand to notice the particular bracketed by the abstract structure depending on the generality of thought in mind. These dualities embodied by my work can be understood as metaphor for the relationship between mind and body. I am an atheist without certainty as to what happens after death, though I wish for continuity! In any case, we do, while living, experience ourselves as separate from our bodies though we can't escape them. This seems like an experience of space colliding with time.

Sam Ran Over Sand or Sand Ran Over Sam: Rethinking Character
Materials and form have character and or give rise to character. This text aims to give voice to how and what might be a character in this work and what parts might be played by the various actors. The action takes place as the senses of the body meet the constructs of the mind.

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS: Three shadows wait to be. They wait for Sam to stand on three different occasions just there, in the future, out of sand. Three figures eclipsed; lost to the lights and slipped between the pages—the covers of a bed. They act—standing still on the stage. The event moves down the path, Life's middle road, the yellow brick road; mark-making as they go, teetering between artifice and good will.

Those three bend down, whispering to the lake flowing underground—their noses pressed to the floor—pressed some more—the nostrils squeezed tight so nothing can ooze. Backs bend, awkwardly. No robes flowing—no fabrics blowing in the wind. It is quiet.

The pots and pans clatter in the background. The ongoing nature of daily life in this case is sidelined. The stopped hush of snow falling is centered in the gallery. Projections—pictures—in the mind's eye and in the eye are patched together onto the wall and felt through a tunnel and in an empty space. They are in the middle of a page. The wind blows the leaves around their feet. Purple slime slips over their backs. Their noses are runny.

That eccentric branch at the door! Unsettled in isolation beckoning to the intruder with warm and enthusiastic invitation. So in love! Some wind slipping through the door and the energy and envy of the air moving is also a protagonist in the midst of the still staged artifice. The plateau of colors is still and yet more gushing, twisted and upsettingly alive than the plants at the door were last year. Here is a big heap of static event piled up like shards of broken plastic buckets.

The icebox is full of love metered out over time. Metering is a kind of control. Control is necessary to living, in concert with passion, breaking the bounds of predictability and ordered knowing. The cold of winter slows life processes. The cold of the icebox mimics winter. The cold of the gallery/white cube, like the icebox, is full of love and control.

Building—the verb and the noun—in all of its life process is a character in the event here orchestrated. The stuff—carpet, stone, hardware, wood, couch, freezer, lamps, cloths, shoes, and sheetrock—is in process as is the food cycling through our tubes—making passage.

Slow dancing mingles with the tinsel, the flashing lights of Christmas, the dance floor, and the cars on the highway at night passing through downtown. The dirt under the building is alive with worms, beetles, and mold. Being kept safe, but the surfaces are too clean and the walls have too much flex in them.

Plastic is so beautiful and so frightening.
The shiny thinness of experience.
Making holes in the veneer of the hard clear surface.

The line between two colors charged! It's impossible to separate one from the other, impossible to take that impossible place away and put it somewhere else. Try to put feet there. Dive into that place that is not there and point. Finger stretched out long and pointing like . . . and to the beach shore—the inter-tidal zone.

Carpet always stampes his feet—hard like there is mud on them. He doesn't like sand between his toes. She brushes her hair often. And she worries about the color fading.

Green waterproof drywall rigidly embarks on a sea journey of mammoth proportions. The green sea seems to go on forever in all directions until you step back and see the edges. The size of experience changes so drastically! He is a little dry but then she likes to swim.

Wires with electricity mess up together with the air and dust specks and balls carried on breezes through colored air.

Colored air is thick and interrupted by body parts, bone, flesh, and blood flowing along channels. Channels, like the eye's point of view, flow through space and come into focus at the end, on the wall. Projected pictures overlay the rough and tumble of the current in all directions.

The Characters are orchestrated for the eye—riding on wheels—legs flapping in the wind. The eye screeches—along in the grooves laid out for it. like a train on its track. Meanwhile, experience and oceans of color inform the action, figures, belly, dancing, and knitting.

Back to the wall, body and wall are screen; eyes painstakingly turned around character plots of stuff. The light tunnels weave together two kinds of mapping that lie side by side: the darting map the eye manufactures and the map of being as the body learns it.

The plot thickens. (Jessica Stockholder 2004)

RENE RIETMEYER

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 3 April 2009

Rene Rietmeyer (1957, Netherlands) is the initiator of the project Personal Structures. Rietmeyer creates objects, which he calls 'Boxes'.*

The Emotional Perception of Art and Space

This article does not cover the physics of the space/time continuum. Other people have discussed that scientifically very well and honestly, it is not easy to comprehend. I would like to focus more on the subjective human relationship with self-experienced art and space, our surrounding environment, while being aware that space and time are not to be separated.

Perception with our senses and other influences

Art creates "meaning" and is an essentially human endeavor. As such, questions about art and its evaluation are linked to processes of how we humans perceive and create thoughts and emotions. Perception is not just a passive processing of sensory information. Perception is the active selection and processing of all information that reaches our brain, mostly from outside of our own body in combination with knowledge we have gained beforehand.

It is commonly said that we have five senses, although some even claim a sixth sense or more. Our senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste each provide a different perspective to the space around us. By combining the input from our senses, we like to believe that we have an objective understanding of the world around us. In reality our personal understanding from the space surrounding us is a complex whole created by the input from our senses as well as our memory, knowledge, intellect and sexual perception and our personal constitution at that moment. All these factors are unstable. They influence and interact with each other constantly. What we see influences our emotions and these emotions influence again what we see. Most of the time we lack consciousness concerning these factors. We are simply not aware of them, though the total of all our perceptions in combination with all other factors is the foundation of our emotional status.

Part of our lack of awareness of emotional perception is due to our lack of attention as well as our lack of education and vocabulary. We can educate our emotional center in our brain with art. Giving art the chance to have an impact on your own emotional state means, not only perceiving art with your senses, but also creating a consciousness about the intellectual "meaning" of the art work.

We normally do not think of our intellectual abilities as important for perception, but intellect and knowledge have indeed a great influence on the way we emotionally perceive our surrounding. We should not only "feel" art, we should also "think" art.

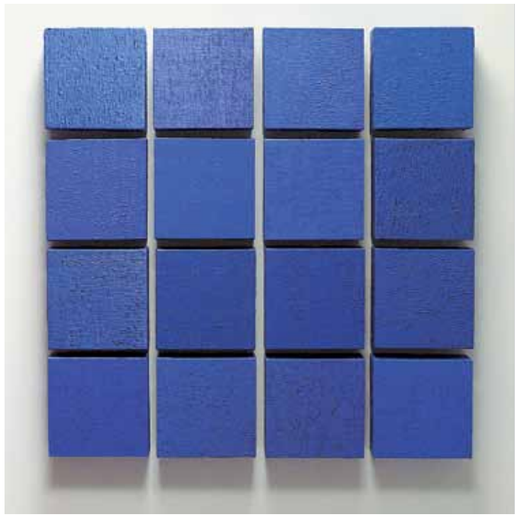
Perception of space

The visual and/or tactile perception of the space that surrounds us makes us aware of the relative position of our own body as opposed to the objects around us. It provides us with dimensional coordinates such as height, depth and distance. This perception of space provides us with information concerning the spatial forms in which we manifest ourselves and that is essential for our movement and orientation within our surrounding environment.

It is not clear how long humans have been capable of being aware of themselves and the space surrounding them. What is clear is that our understanding of space has changed a number of times. Greek mathematicians, British physicists and German philosophers, many people have had a great influence on how humans developed their thoughts about space. Especially in the last century, the latest scientific theories concerning the structures of atoms and the research on the universe have expanded our boundaries and the way we have to see and understand Space. And although we have attained a greater, more accurate awareness about the space, we can and cannot actually see or touch, still many questions remain open.

What we know is that awareness creates emotions, so even the space that we do not actually experience can have an emotional impact on us. But in general, humans and some of the other animals react emotionally towards the space they are directly surrounded by. These emotions can vary enormously from person to person. Experiencing the same space can produce different emotions in different humans. Some people feel safe and comfortable in a very small room with the door closed, others just want to get out.

I cannot present here an explicitly articulated understanding of what emotions are, but emotions are mainly a reaction of our brain to what we perceive through our senses, and rarely the result of a spontaneous release of hormones. In order to create a larger awareness and better understanding about our emotional reactions in general and to space specifically, we will have to find the origin of these emotions.



The consciousness we perceive about the space which surrounds us is the result of the interplay between many factors, such as for example: our biological constitution, experiences we had in the past, our cultural background and our personal experiences from seeing, touching, smelling, hearing or even tasting the space. I remember very well walking around my studio in Saitama, Japan, in 1998. Tasting the pollution in the air made me aware that I should not live there for too long.

In order to create awareness, humans needed to develop a language, a set of words for being able to define and communicate the subject matter. A communication not only with others, but especially with oneself. Philosophers like Heidegger with his existential analysis of "Dasein" as "being-in-the-world" present a suggestion of how it is possible for us humans, as temporal, spatial, beings with language, to be consciously emotional. "Being-in-the-world" as an emotional human is also shaped by the articulation of "meaning" through language. Our developed language, with its set of words concerning emotion, gives "meaning" to the emotional experience of living in the space surrounding us.

Works of art

For approximately the past 100 years, art has no longer mainly focused on being a representational reproduction of people and scenes, influenced by the emotions of the artist. Art has now often become an intellectual construction. By becoming more aware of the emotional impact of our perceptions and the intellectual intentions embodied in the art works, we can perceive more refined impressions from the art we encounter. Humans are capable of reaching consciousness about increasingly refined emotional impressions, and it is only through the conscious recognition of the totality of all influential factors, that we can begin to exercise our full potential of human perceptivity.

There are a lot of objects created these days by many different people who call themselves artists. It is not easy to distinguish what is art and what is not. We need to have a really close look at the sensible present of the objects as well as gain knowledge of the thoughts and ideas leading to the creation of the purported art work. Also we have to question the integrity of the creator in order to label an object as art or not. Whether this is an important issue or not is another matter that should be answered by each person by and for him or herself. But for me it is important to question this, since I do not just trust my senses while observing a work that is supposed to be art. In forming our opinion if an object is art or not, we really must be conscious of the input we receive from our senses, as well as the influences that our memory, knowledge, intellect, hormones and also our personal constitution have on us at the moment we form our opinion.

In my opinion most of the objects created by people called artists, regardless if they became famous or not, are for various reasons not to be considered art. But, although I, to my way of thinking, have good arguments for my points of view, at the end my personal subjective opinion is nothing more or less than just my opinion.

Each of the art works I make stands on its own, but every work of art is always perceived within its environment, within the space it itself exists. The way we perceive a work of art therefore always stands in close relationship with the way we perceive the surrounding space.

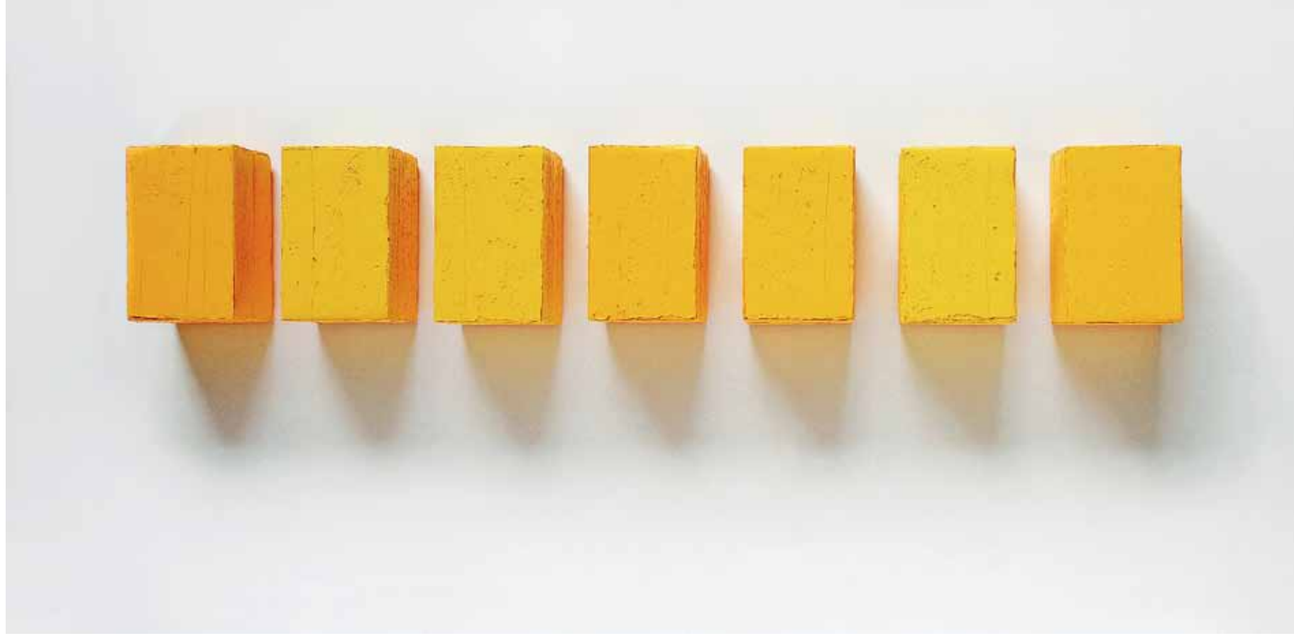
Many architecturally "beautiful" spaces have been devaluated by placing horrible objects in them but the reverse also applies, often fantastic works of art have been totally misplaced in space. A museum usually has its own exhibition design department. Wall colors, lighting and interior design elements, everything is selected with the goal of creating the, in the creators' view, best possible environment that complements an exhibition or individual work of art. And as usual, each person claims he or she knows it best, reasons best and feels best emotionally, where the artwork should be placed.

When an art work is placed in a space, the art work and the space interact with each other. Any artist aware of this fact should always try to create the best possible environment in which, in his opinion, it seems best to view the art work and the space as a whole. If possible the artist should try to influence all aspects stimulating the senses of the viewers. The viewers will still create their own unique art encounter experience, simply because each of them is a different individual, with unique ways of perceiving their surroundings.

I am an artist, not an architect. I cannot create the buildings in which my art works will be placed, but my installations take into account the environment in which the work of art is placed. When my installations are installed closely following my personal instructions regarding the space in combination with my art works, I do have a strong influence on the surrounding space itself. I basically create a new, a different space and I will have great influence on the viewers' emotional perception of that space as a whole.

Perception of art

Each person is an individual, a configuration of unique manifestations, a complexity of habits, temperament, language, beliefs and with powers such as abilities and the capability to consciously



want something. Therefore, each person will approach new forms of art differently and create its own personal opinion, awareness and emotions from the perceived impressions. Experiencing one hour of sitting in the Mark Rothko room at the Tate in London or in the James Turrell Skyspace near Vejer de la Frontera in Spain is something different for each person for many reasons.

The problem with attaining an accurate perception of new forms of art stems from the fact that humans always take into account their previous knowledge while perceiving something new. The extent of our knowledge creates our reality. The human mind can only contemplate what it has been exposed to. When works of art are perceived without understanding, our brain will try to find something that it recognizes in order to process what it is perceiving. These processes of perception can change what humans actually perceive.

The previously acquired knowledge about art works we have experienced before and that most closely relate to the unknown works of art we will see in the future, will influence what we see when we look at works of art that we still do not comprehend at that point in time. Therefore, communication concerning human progress in knowledge and the intellectual and emotional achievements from other humans is very important.

My works of Art, I call them Boxes, are three dimensional objects themselves and as all matter, they occupy space. The materials I use, the colors, size, shape, texture and composition do have an immediate impact on the senses of the viewer, but my works contain more than just the sum of these formal means. There is the intellectual aspect of my works, the ideas, the thoughts that formed the foundation of the creation itself. With our intellectual ability we perceive ideas and thoughts. Ideas are real things, just as people and the art works themselves are real, but we can not automatically perceive the ideas and thoughts of somebody else without learning how to do so.

As with other human functions, we have to train our intellectual and emotional abilities in order to be able to perceive clearly.

The emotional center in our brain can perceive "meaning". It does not perceive this "meaning" directly, but creates "meaning" through language as it is represented in our surroundings and the objects, things, we observe. These things may be physically present objects such as stones or works of Art, or they may be less concrete, such as ideas. To create consciousness about our emotions and "meaning" we need to be able to define our surroundings with words, language. If the words chosen to describe the encountered art turn out to be "unknown object", we should always try to find out more about it.

The way to develop our intellectual perception is the same as it is with the development of the perception of our senses, through paying attention and developing the abilities our body, our brain, has. It is a long and complex process, earliest illustrated by Plato, as he writes about Socrates' search for truth. Observing art, experiencing art and letting art have a conscious influence on your emotional perception of the space surrounding you, is a learning process, which calls for education.

Verbal as well as non-verbal expressions of thoughts play an important role in the communications between humans. With my art and the texts written about my works and thoughts, I try to educate the viewer concerning the emotional and intellectual content of my work. I try to heighten the consciousness of the viewer as to his own observations. Through my work, I communicate with the viewer in order to have influence, I try to instill in each of you a greater awareness about your own emotional perception of art and space. Knowing that, although we can experience the exact same "art and space", our conscious perception, emotions and understanding will always be very personal.

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PETER LODERMEYER

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 3 April 2009

The Unknown Space

To be honest, I have no idea what we will be speaking about today and tomorrow. Or, to be more precise: I do know, of course, that we will be talking about space, but do we really know what that is: space? Less than a year ago I listened to a lecture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy by an artist-friend, Esther Stocker from Vienna, called "Everything I do not know about space". For a long while I was convinced I should choose the same title for my lecture because this is precisely what has become clear to me while dealing with this theme: that space is, granted, something completely self-evident to us, but yet, or maybe even because of this, it is something unknown. The fact that I did not, after all, choose this title has less to do with the fact that I would have been stealing it—a writer does not necessarily shy away from such a crime: You know the adage about "bad writers copy, good writers steal". What ultimately counted more was a logical reason. How can we know what it is we don't know about space? How can we strive for completeness if we are ignorant about what we do not know? How can we speak at all about things we do not know? My talk has therefore received a more modest title: *The Unknown Space*. Neither do I see it as my task to come up with a hypothesis, but rather to open up space for questions here at the beginning of our symposium, which might conceivably provide the talks given by subsequent speakers with space again to resonate in.

Maybe you are familiar with Book 11 of the Confessions of St. Augustine, where he meditates on the essence of time. There you can find the famous statements so often trotted out: "What then is time? If no one asks me about it, I know. But if someone asks me to explain it to him, I do not know."[1] Might we not claim the same to be true about space, which next to time, according to Immanuel Kant, is a "pure form of sensible intuition"? That Augustine primarily focused his attention on time was for obvious theological reasons. The relationship between time and eternity touches upon 'last questions'. But what is the case with space? For our existence as physical, material beings it is, of course, no less relevant than time. And naturally, we all certainly know in pragmatic terms what space is: we are experts of space as pedestrians, drivers, travelers, home-builders, acrobats, real estate agents, astronauts, etc. We know how to move about in space, how to orient ourselves, we know how to design, plan, and build spaces. But just because we do, does this mean we know what space is? Space itself? "If someone asks me to explain it to him, I do not know…" Really, has anyone ever seriously asked you what space is? Asking such peculiar questions seems to be the privilege of groups of people like scientists, philosophers, and artists.

In our science-based societies it is in particular the natural sciences that are deemed responsible for dealing with basic questions. We trust them most to have something to say that is definitive and oriented to hard facts. If you are a non-physicist attempting to extract from popular science magazines what the situation looks like concerning the theory of space in today's physics, you will quickly discover that it apparently no longer has anything to do with our everyday notion of a homogenous, three-dimensional entity called space. Above all, there is no one theory, but rather several competing models. Even as a layman we know that the greatest challenge of theoretical physics today consists in combining the theory of relativity on the one hand with the quantum theory on the other hand to a single unified theory. The candidates for this, bearing such exotic names as 'loop quantum gravitation' or 'super string theory', work with concepts of time and space that tax the power of our imagination beyond its limits. While Albert Einstein (as well as several of his successors) tended to view the succession of the time sequences past, present, and future as an illusion of our limited human intellect and space as the sole bearer of reality, the aforementioned aspirants are working with sheer unbelievable models of time and space. These are models, which, if they need to be explained in language, quickly take on metaphoric shades of the nearly mythological or metaphysical. Due to my lack of expertise here, I will not elaborate any further. I merely wish to urge you to consider that we may not expect from physics any smooth answer to the issue of space as long as competing models such as the 11-dimensional entwined 'threads' of space and time or 'crumbly' time and space structures or 'quantum foam' are being discussed.

Concerning foam: the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk—and with him we come to the second professional group of space specialists—published an extensive, three-volume work between 1998 and 2004 on the theme of man's relationship to space called *Spheres*.[2] Here, foam, in addition to bubbles and globes, is the main metaphor. Mind you, the concern is not for the interpretation of geometrical or cosmic space, but rather for our own inherent reference to space, which becomes more and more differentiated from the time of our prenatal, intrauterine spatial situation onwards. Humans, this is his basic thesis, are never isolated monads, but relational beings, standing in reference to others and other things. And these relationships and memberships are always somehow determined by space. We create our own bubbles of space, i.e. all kinds of possible spatial references that we are integrated in: partnerships, the place we live in, the family, the workplace, travels, trade, cultural membership, political structures, etc. etc. Taken together it is a veritable foam of space bubbles, which permeate one another, sometimes burst, and then always form anew.

Since his book has not yet been translated into English, Sloterdijk's morphological approach will hardly be known here in the USA. And I suppose that his literary style, which does not exactly shy away from bold speculations, might rather be received with some reserve in a country of pragmatism and analytic philosophy. A thinker schooled in analytic philosophy would approach space very differently and ask: "What do you mean when you use the word 'space'; what context do you place it in and how is it used in ordinary language?" While writing this lecture I had to consult the dictionary several times because I had doubts as to whether the word 'space' would coincide in all its usages with the use of the German word *Raum*. Looking it up, I imagined a possible art work by Joseph Kosuth, one of his *Proto-Investigations*, whose most famous *One and Three Chairs* dates from 1965. *One and Three Spaces* does not exist as far as I know, but it would be feasible. What would this work look like? A real room, a photo of this room, and a dictionary entry about 'space'. The language the dictionary was in would be a decisive factor.

One of the things we do not know about space certainly has to do with the linguistic determinants the concept of space is subject to in foreign languages. Here at this symposium we are speakers of English—but what are concepts of space like in African, Asian, the Oceanic languages, what possible unfamiliar, even completely foreign, variants of the notions of space might there be? I have a little experience with Japanese artists, enough at least to know that the Japanese concept of space MA means something other than a geometric space we can measure. It is rather an interim space (which we may also understand temporally), a tension-filled in-between, for example, the empty surfaces between the motifs of a pen-and-ink drawing, etc. Enough said, allow it to suffice that notions of space are determined differently by different cultures. That the respective typical architecture of various cultures plays a decisive role in this would seem immediately plausible. I will return to this in a moment, in a different context.

Since 2006, when we had worked out the conceptual idea of the symposium trilogy *Time · Space · Existence*, a statement by Donald Judd about space as the unknown has lodged in my mind as the nucleus of my own thoughts. His last lecture written in 1993, a year before his death, when he was already so ill that he was no longer able to deliver it himself, bears the title *Some aspects of color in general and red and black in particular*. Interestingly enough, more than the first third of this text about color deals exclusively with space.

I am not able to enter into a detailed discussion of Judd's arguments—it would make sense, and certainly be worthwhile, to organize an entire symposium about his hypotheses—rather here I will merely initially juxtapose several quotes about space as the unknown. Already the first sentences read as follows: "Material, space, and color are the main aspects of visual art. Everyone knows that there is material that can be picked up and sold, but no one sees space and color. Two of the main aspects of art are invisible, the basic nature of art is invisible."[3] This strong thesis is further expounded upon: Judd points out that architecture has "occasionally" dealt with space; he mentions classics of the Modern such as Kahn, Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and van Doesburg, but also Japanese and Korean literature and Feng Shui. "But the subject of space in architecture, the nature of architecture, is not developed. Judging from the evidence of the buildings by recent well-known architects, space in architecture is no longer known. It's not unseen; it's not there. Within the clothes there is no Emperor."[4] Judd's findings with regard to art are no better. "There has been almost no discussion of space in art, nor in the present. The most important and developed aspect of present art is unknown. This concern, my main concern, has no history. There is no context; there are no terms; there are not any theories."[5] And then, once more, for all who are still unwilling to believe this: "After a few thousand years space is so unknown that a discussion of it would have to begin with a rock."[6] I will stop quoting him now, as exciting as it would be to enter into a discussion of Judd's notion of space and to follow him in his description of a rock, its position, its substratum, a flat or a slanted level, when he asks what happens if a second rock is placed alongside it, etc. etc. What interests me is the fact of how seductive, tricky even, Judd's idea is in selecting a very simple, 'stone-age' situation for departing upon his discussion of space. But do note, he expressly does not undertake this in order to look back, but so that he can describe "how a primitive discussion might begin tomorrow, if this civilization were advanced enough to bear it."[7]

Judd's socio-critical attitude is expressed here clearly enough. But with his skepticism he makes us forget that for us city people (most people who work in the art business really are city people) looking at rocks in an empty landscape is in no way one of our primary experiences of space. Quite the contrary, it is rather rare, if not fairly foreign to most of us. Should a "primitive discussion" not begin with the most normal experiences of space that each of us encounters day for day? The person who opens his eyes in the morning, gets up, goes into the bathroom, makes coffee in the kitchen, goes down the stairs or takes the elevator in order to get to the street, goes to the subway and then to the office, the university or studio…has already had complex experiences in terms of spatial phenomenology in that first hour of his or her day. He or she has already passed through the intimacy of the bedroom, the privacy of the apartment, the public space of the street, narrow spaces, wide spaces, quiet spaces, lively spaces, lonely spaces, crowded spaces, secure spaces, potentially dangerous spaces, spaces under surveillance…

If what Peter Sloterdijk says is true, that we transfer "early experiences of space to new locations and primary movements to new

venues"[8]—and if the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard is correct with his statement in the wonderful *Poetics of Space*, where he says "[…] the house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word"[9] …if both philosophers are therefore correct, then the question concerning space could begin with the home, ideally the home we grew up in, which constitutes for most of us an formative experience of space.

There is a metaphoric way of comparing the Freudian structural model of the psyche with its three instances of the id, the ego, and the superego with a house and its three parts: the cellar, the living spaces, and the attic. These are metaphorics connecting man and space, which continue to inspire us even if, from a scientific standpoint, they were to be completely false. Gaston Bachelard plays around with this and dreams of supplementing psychoanalysis with what he refers to as "topoanalysis": "Topoanalysis, then, would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives."[10] The attic above us with all those things we normally store up there that we have inherited from our ancestors is the typical locality of the superego. The living spaces, bright and functional, fulfill the expectations of the ego-consciousness. Most interesting are of course, the cellar rooms with their dark corners, strange smells, secluded areas and other secrets that make our childish fears rear up. The fact that these metaphorics seem so clear to me certainly has to do with my having grown up in a single family home with a cellar and attic. That I still dream of this house 30 years later without having been back there again, and that I can still vividly recall the particular atmospheres of each individual room shows me how formative early experiences of space can be.

Like no other artist, the German Gregor Schneider makes a theme of the metaphor of the house as the embodiment of emotional and psychic powers. His major work *Totes Haus ur* [Dead House ur (primal)] is the house he grew up in; he keeps working on its rooms, which he copies and transfers to museums and exhibition rooms. Several weeks ago I visited his dark building expansion at the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, a labyrinth black as night, perfectly illustrating the cellar Bachelard swears is "the dark entity of the house": "If you start to daydream there, you get into touch with the irrationality of the house."[11] If you grope your way through the dark in Schneider's spatial installation, you find rooms of ghostly and desolate bareness and in addition the proverbial skeletons in the closets. In Schneider's works space is emotionalized to a considerable degree, staged as an eerie entity and tied into deeply-rooted memories and fears.

It would be worth thoroughly researching Schneider's house-obsessions and confronting them with the work of Gordon Matta-Clark, one of the most significant 'topo-analysts' in 20th-century art. Where Schneider conserves the house with all of its ambivalent emotions, Matta-Clark literally cut it open, changed it, dissected it, dislocated its parts and thus, also the states of consciousness correlating to it. Matta-Clark spoke of "being fascinated by the architectural spaces, or 'recurrent dream spaces'", as well as of "converting a building into a state of mind."[12] This is to say, he did not merely accept the given effect of architectonic rooms, but rather, on the contrary, tried to change their effect. Architecture became sculpture. Where the concern is for space as the unknown, Matta-Clark's project of the *Fake Estates* from 1973/74 is a virtually classic work. The project, which was never finished, dealt with 15 extreme forms of tiny splinters of space in the middle of New York City, 'gutterspace' that Matta-Clark had bought up at auctions. These splinters of space were to be photographed and documented in writing. They are property scraps, left over from the act of planning, purchasing and use in urban space. Space, which otherwise remains unnoticed, an absurd rest, unusable scraps of space that have sunken, so to speak, into the unconscious and become nearly forgotten. Unlike Gregor Schneider, who in many of his works retains the eerie effect of spaces, even enhancing it, Matta-Clark's interventions in houses and his making us aware of forgotten urban spaces have an enlightening function. We could think here of the Freudian formula: "Where It was, I shall become."

But let us return to the analogy between the house and the psyche. It would be an interesting question from a 'topo-analytical' standpoint to examine how a different way of building other than the classical three-part division with a cellar, living spaces, and attic would be reflected in the psyche. This not only applies to the living situation in a big city. "In Paris there are no houses, and the inhabitants of the big city live in superimposed boxes" is what Bachelard already had to say in 1957.[13] And how does the situation look with other culture-specific types of residences, such as lake dwellings, caves, houseboats, early half-timbered houses, etc. etc.? Just think of the traditional Japanese home without a cellar, which is not structured vertically, but rather horizontally and has movable walls.

And lest we should forget, also the "white cubes", of modern apartments, exhibition rooms and offices lit by large windows by day and halogen lighting by night would not function as such if there were no openings in the walls and floors, connecting conduits to the outside and to the dark underground such as electrical lines as well as water and sewer pipes. Each bright residential unit of our daily consciousness is linked up by numerous connections to the underground part of the cities. Robert Gober made an artistic form of this with his *Drains* and *Sinks*. The artist himself has described the function of the *Drains* as a contact point to the unconscious. Quote: "I thought of the drains as metaphors functioning in the same way as traditional paintings, as a window into another world. However, the world that you enter into through the metaphor of the drain would be something darker and unknown, like an ecological unconscious."[14] We know of such phantasmatics from films. Hitchcock's *Psycho* comes to mind with its long camera shot of the drain after the murder in the shower. Or think of the fact that in horror films which are no longer set in the classical haunted house in the country, but in the big city, the evil, the ghosts prefer to get into the apartments through water and sewer pipes, bathtubs, and sinks.

But what interests me much more than these almost classical topo-analytic motifs is the fact that the new electronic media in our bright, well-lit, and functional rooms bring us a multitude of spatial expansions, which are no less confusing, unknown, and incomprehensible than the processes underneath our cities.

Since not only radio and TV have been bringing the outside world into our apartments, but also internet, e-mail, webcams, etc., entirely new spatial situations have been coming into existence. There are people who have outfitted their entire apartment with cameras, placing their daily lives in the internet. Conversely, we can bring the privacy of other people into our own homes at a mouse-click, as a passive viewer or interactively. In real time we can speak across the continents and see each other. These extensions of space also confuse the spaces of our legal system as we know them. There are websites which are illegal to click on, depending upon the law of the state you are in. In Germany at the moment there is a controversy going on concerning the extent that law enforcement authorities are allowed to search through private computers online, and to what extent this clashes with the basic right of the inviolability of the home. Hybrid spaces have come about via the electronic media, in which public and private, inside and outside, reality and virtuality, mix in a way that had been science fiction until just recently.

Not long ago I read an article in a German literary magazine about the so-called 'spatial turn', the motto being "space is back". To tell the truth, I had never noticed it had been missing. Nevertheless, especially in the 1990s, there had been a lot of discussion, fueled by simulation theorists such as Paul Virilio, concerning the "disappearance of space". The thesis was that, due to telecommunications, high-speed travel, but above all because of the information technologies, real time was triumphing over real space. Space was literally becoming meaningless and/or insignificant. Such theses are in no way new. Already in 1843, the German poet Heinrich Heine had written at that time about a very new means of transportation: "Even the elementary concepts of time and space have started to become unstable. Space is being killed off by the train, and only time remains left for us. If only we had enough money to respectfully kill time, too."[15] We may laugh at such statements but they clearly show how new technologies and new media incite fears of space. Sometimes the reactions are hysterical, no matter if they favor or reject the new technologies.

It is sad that something like 9/11 had to happen in order to make clear to intellectuals who are fascinated by simulation that events we mostly only know from media pictures, are not mere pictures, but that time and space and the existence of humans and things are real facts. The historian Karl Schlögel, one of the leading German representatives of the so-called spatial turn in the cultural sciences, wrote in this matter: "We are reminded that not everything is a medium and simulation, that bodies may be crushed and houses destroyed, […] we notice that even in global space there are lines and knots, which are not just virtual, but may really be severed and damaged."[16]

Not even the internet, new media, and global markets will be able to make time, space, and existence disappear. They are immediately connected—each in itself mysterious, hard to comprehend, and always to be interpreted anew. In recent years space has increasingly become a theme, the present flourishing of the sciences of space is an indication of this. But what we call space is increasingly unfolding, forming ever new hybrids. "The proliferation of hybrids" as the sociologist Bruno Latour put it.[17] Media spaces, political spaces, economic spaces, mental spaces, spaces of the imagination, geopolitical spaces, legal spaces, surveillance spaces, protective spaces, sacred spaces, memory spaces, cyberspace, spaces that Marc Augé called non-places[18], spaces like shopping malls, cash machine rooms, airport lounges and so on… Space multiplies itself, revealing ever new, unknown facets.

In conclusion, two quotations. The first is the title of a book by Karl Schlögel "We interpret time in space." (Im Raume lessen wir die Zeit). What he means is that we do not have a completely valid notion of history, or of art history, if we lack knowledge of the real spaces, the places and regions where it took place. And once again, I must quote Gaston Bachelard: "In its thousands of honeycombs, space stores condensed time. That is what space is for."[19] As beautiful and poetic as this sentence is, we should not forget that the honeycombs of this space, unfortunately, do not always contain only honey.

1 Augustinus, *Confessiones*, lib. 11, XIV,17.
2 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I – Blasen, Mikrosphärologie*, Frankfurt am Main 1998; *Sphären II – Globen, Makrosphärologie*, Frankfurt am Main 1999; *Sphären III – Schäume, Plurale Sphärologie*, Frankfurt am Main 2004.
3 Donald Judd, Some aspects of color in general and red and black in particular (1993), in: Dietmar Elger (ed.). *Donald Judd. Colorist*, Ostfildern-Ruit 2000, pp. 79-116, quote p. 79.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 80.
7 Ibid.
8 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I – Blasen, Mikrosphärologie*, Frankfurt a. M. 1998, p. 14.
9 Gaston Bachelard, *Die Poetik des Raumes [The Poetics of Space]*, Frankfurt am Main 1987, p. 31.
10 Ibid., p. 35
11 Ibid., p. 43.
12 Quoted after: www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/07spring/attlee.htm.
13 Bachelard, l.c., p. 51.
14 Quoted after: Alexander Braun, Robert Gober. *Werke von 1978 bis heute. Amerikanische Kunst der Gegenwart im Spannungsfeld einer vernetzten Bildrealität*, Nuremberg 2003, p. 388, footnote 217.
15 Heinrich Heine, *Sämmtliche Schriften*, Hamburg 1862, vol. 9, p. 122.
16 Karl Schlögel, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, München 2006, S. 31.
17 Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, Harvard 1993, p. 1.
18 Marc Augé, *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Oxford 1995.
19 Bachelard, l.c., p. 35.

KOCOT & HATTON

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 4 April 2009

Kocot & Hatton is an artist couple living in Philadelphia. They have been making art about the 'in-between space' for over fourty years.

Space. What and where is space? When confronted with the word, we often think of "outer space", the infiniteness of deep space, but in our everyday world, space seems to be defined by enclosure and the degree of closure. How much space are we allotted? What shape is the space? The classic psychology book illustration of a vase versus two silhouettes presents a constantly shifting ambiguous space of figure / ground, black on white, white on black and back again. The mind wants to create a three dimensional space. Space and the void… is the void an empty space? What about the fullness of the void? Is negative space "no space" or just an inversion of space? Perhaps among the best known examples of artists externalizing negative space, turning it into solid objects are: Marcel Duchamp's bronze cast of female genitalia, Female Fig Leaf, Bruce Naumann's A Cast of the Space under my Chair and Rachel Whiteread's House, an enormous cast of the interior space of a row house. What about space and time? Looking up in the night sky we may see dead stars, their light still traveling through space, at the same time the light of some new stars has not yet reached us. Experiencing space. Walking over defined space or defining space with each step. Choreography. What about the inner space, the space of the mind? Thought. How is it measured? We can measure activity in the brain, but thought is more elusive. Space in music is silence; silence can give form to sound. Throughout art history formal organization of space has played a role. Perspectival systems have defined space: aerial, hierarchical, flat, deep perspective and so on.

Our work has navigated through differing aspects of the 'between space'. The between that defines our work exists beyond just mathematics and physics, the between of our collaborative art. Our collaboration, like our work, negotiates both physical & cognitive space.

The between and its place or placement have been fundamental to our collaboration conceptually, procedurally and to the final result. Our work begins with either a concept or inquiry which then dictates the media. If we have an idea for a project that requires using a medium unfamiliar to us, we undertake the challenge to realize the concept. Perhaps it is natural that with a collaborative team like ours, where division of labor is not an issue, duality and an emphasis on the 'between' occurs. Often there is a straddling of opposites: between thought and form, two dimensional and three dimensional, light and dark, inside and outside, infinite and bounded, public and private, night and dawn, asleep and awake, seen and unseen.

The between has been a part of both the process and subject. 'Betweenness' can be found in our photography, from our early 1970s proposal to install a *Life Size Photograph of the Empire State Building*, for and across from the iconic building; the paradoxical time/space of our *Seventy Mile Per Hour* series inspired by Albert Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* and in our double exposure portraits, combining two perspectives and two moments. Doubling and the between reappears in *Scale/Ratio*'s pairs of standing canvases and in prints, paintings and drawings created in the hypnopompic realm, the period between sleep and wakefulness.

Although common to all of us, the hypnopompic state is rarely utilized. For the past ten years we have been creating work in the semiconsciousness preceding waking. This space is not to be confused with Hypnagogic, the period between wakefulness and sleep. Andre Breton described in his first surrealist manifesto as "one evening… " when, just as he was about to fall asleep, he first became aware of the possibilities of automatic writing. Hypnagogic is technically the in-between space of wakefulness and sleep. From our attempts to paint in this space, we have found it is a space much more suited to composing written language and not so accommodating to visual language, but the hypnopompic, that is a different story.

We began the hypnopompic work as a way to extend studio time, but found that working in the dark, in the middle of the night, in the space between sleep and wakefulness also increased our level of collaborative interaction, heightening trust in our senses and sublimating our egos. There is no place for ego in the hypnopompic. The semiconscious state seems to dissolve ego merging it with everything else, as a wave becomes part of the ocean. Immersion in the quiet, interconnected space the work alone came to the forefront.

We had been working with heraldic color codes, the representation of color using graphic patterns—i.e. a series of horizontal lines represent blue, vertical lines represent red. We realized quickly that the color codes were well suited to not only drypoint but also this unknown state. Drypoints led to drawings, drawings to paintings, paintings to polaroids and on to video. No medium seemed deterred by this unorthodox studio approach. Technically, in that one is neither asleep, nor awake in this in-between state, it is not uncommon to make one's marks, fall back asleep, awake in the morning and have no recollection of participating. Working in total darkness and in the hypnopompic state became an immersion in sensations. Physically it is a feeling of floating or like standing in a rowboat. Everything seems interconnected, constantly moving, a shifting ground. Ink lines met and paint lines joined, like seismographic self-portraits.

We quickly learned several things about hypnopompic space. It is only entered when one awakens of their own accord and sudden noises will instantly jar one out of and into the thoughts of the everyday world. The duration of the hypnopompic does not last long; the moment conscious thinking takes over, it is time to stop working.

Occasionally some truly peculiar moments happen. One time Tom sensed he was making the straightest line he had ever drawn, I rolled over in bed, bumped his elbow and so much for the straight line. In the morning light, the line was remarkably straight. Perception in the hypnopompic is not what one expects outside of it. We have also found the between space of the hypnopompic to be expandable; as the years have gone by we have been able to incrementally extend our working time. Numerous techniques have been used to determine completion. A process to decide finality facilitates when one is working quite literally in the dark. In some instances it would be predetermined by a set number of days or weeks. Specific amounts of paint would also regulate the stop point for a canvas. One hypnopompic variation even included turning on a one thousand watt quartz lamp rather than working in the dark. This moving from sleep to white light and back to sleep produced some good canvases and an intriguing twist on the problem all artists face when entering the studio from a previous days work. Going from the darkness of sleep to the bright white of the studio seemed to eliminate the need to rethink and catch up to the point where one was involved with the process the day before. When the lights go on, the previous session flashes back and one can immediately get back to work.

16 June 2007 we began photographing our digital clock recording the initial moments of our entry into the 'hypnopompic' state. Each night for one year, in the middle of the night, at some indeterminate waking moment, one of us would pick up the camera from the side of the bed and point it at the clock, the only light in the room. After capturing the glowing fluorescent green display, that night's 'photographer' returned to sleep. In some photographs the moment is so precise, the camera captures the change from one minute to the next as numbers float in an undefined space.

The Color of Blue are our most recent paintings utilizing aspects of the hypnopompic. What is it about the color of blue that elicits dramatically different responses among artists? Painter Kasimir Malevich avoided blue for his square Suprematist compositions saying it was limited to sky and water; he spoke triumphantly of blue 'defeated' by white. Though Yves Klein also associated blue with sky and water, he saw the color as freed by the association, viewing blue as expansive and as the most abstract and living color, "beyond dimensions". Donald Judd stated "Color is very hard to learn, since it is hard to know what is useful. The particulars must be the artist's own." The primary hues, and now blue in particular, have played an integral role in our work. These blue canvases are painted under contrasting conditions, both in the light and consciousness of our 'awake studio' as well as in total darkness, in the middle of the night, in our semi-conscious 'hypnopompic studio'. Previous series have relegated preparation of the grounds to the awake studio. No longer. Now all phases of work slide between the awake and the hypnopompic studios. Some grounds are even prepared in the dark.

These paintings continue our incorporation of medieval 'Heraldic Color Codes', whose simplicity conveys a pulse of hues in graphic form. *The Color of Blue* paintings represent blue via both pattern (the code) and through retinal perception (the pigment), this union amplifying blue's resonance. In some paintings the horizontal code is barely perceptible, in the act of forming, and in others, the code is more obvious. The horizontal paint seems to activate the color in a way similar to the way magnetic fields energize metal filings. The only hue in these paintings is Ultramarine Blue, though the color of blue ranges from inky shadows to a noctilucent, electric blue.

We wanted a picture plane contrasting highly absorbent and reflective light, operating much like Chartres Cathedral's stained glass windows, somber or luminescent, depending upon vantage point. On a sunny day outside the windows are dark and opaque, but once inside, the sun pours through, illuminating the glass, jewel-like colored light fills interior spaces. We hoped to bring both simultaneously, as if straddling between the inside and outside of the cathedral windows, experiencing both at once.

The Andy Warhol Museum commissioned us to create a project. Procedurally, it was an extension of our 35-mm double exposure "conversational portraits" begun in 1985. We began with a triangular set up with the sitter at the apex of the triangle; we would shoot and converse with the sitter while passing the camera back and forth. For this project we used a Polaroid camera instead of a 35 mm. Our use of a Polaroid camera may be a little unorthodox when taking double exposures, however, its use was an homage to Warhol's prolific use of straight Polaroid photography, eliminating any darkroom manipulations. Our portraits capture two moments from two viewpoints on a single frame. Sometimes the sitter's movement is obvious as though the sitter is being transported from one space to another. The literal blurriness is due to the choice of film, exposure, the movement of the sitter and the movement of the photographer.

In 2000 we asked visitors to the Delaware Art Museum's Biennial to volunteer to have their portraits videotaped. They were asked to sit in a darkened room with their eyes closed and to think about the exhibition they had just viewed. Each of the sixty participants was video taped for about one minute. Once all were completed, the infrared video ran in the galleries for the remainder of the exhibition. Portraits of museum visitors thinking about the Biennial could be viewed by current museum visitors surrounded by the same art.

A quiet, dark, empty conference room versus a boisterous reception spilling onto two floors of the museum. How is thinking affected by environment? What does thinking about art look like? The sitters' responses to the session were varied. Some thought it was the most relaxing part of their day and did not want to leave. Others were uneasy about being alone in a darkened room with two strangers. There was an element of trust and lack of trust. Some people fell asleep. One woman even verbalized that she thought we might riffle through her purse. Sleepiness? Relaxing?… Or an uneasiness of being photographed in the dark by strangers. Does this involve their personal space? Perhaps it explains the varied reactions.

In 1999 we were invited by Larry Becker and Heidi Nivling of Larry Becker Contemporary Art, to create a work for the *Fringe Festival*. *Outside / In-between / Inside* was the result. Two 8' high trapezoidal pieces of bubble-wrap served as printing plates to transfer the ink on to the gallery windows. Their shapes came about while experimenting with a variety of origami folds, settling on two that would suggest shutters flung open. The images reverse themselves depending upon which side of the glass you are standing on. From the outside the 'shutters' open in and when standing in the gallery the 'shutters' open out. The prints balance and mediate an interplay between the inside of the gallery and the outside urban landscape, altering both spaces with changing light marking time and space. Throughout both day and night, changing sunlight, reflections, shadows, gallery lights and automobile lights shift the perimeter of spatial inclusion. Shadows of the individual 'bubbles' move across the gallery walls and floor, subtly joining paintings and the environment. A vertical shadow, cast by the wood dividing the two windows, was frozen in time, painted in place. Individual 'bubbles' from the white ink transfer were so dense, a moth came to rest on one of the facets as if it had form. Even the ink color appeared to change, morphing from white to yellow and even to black.

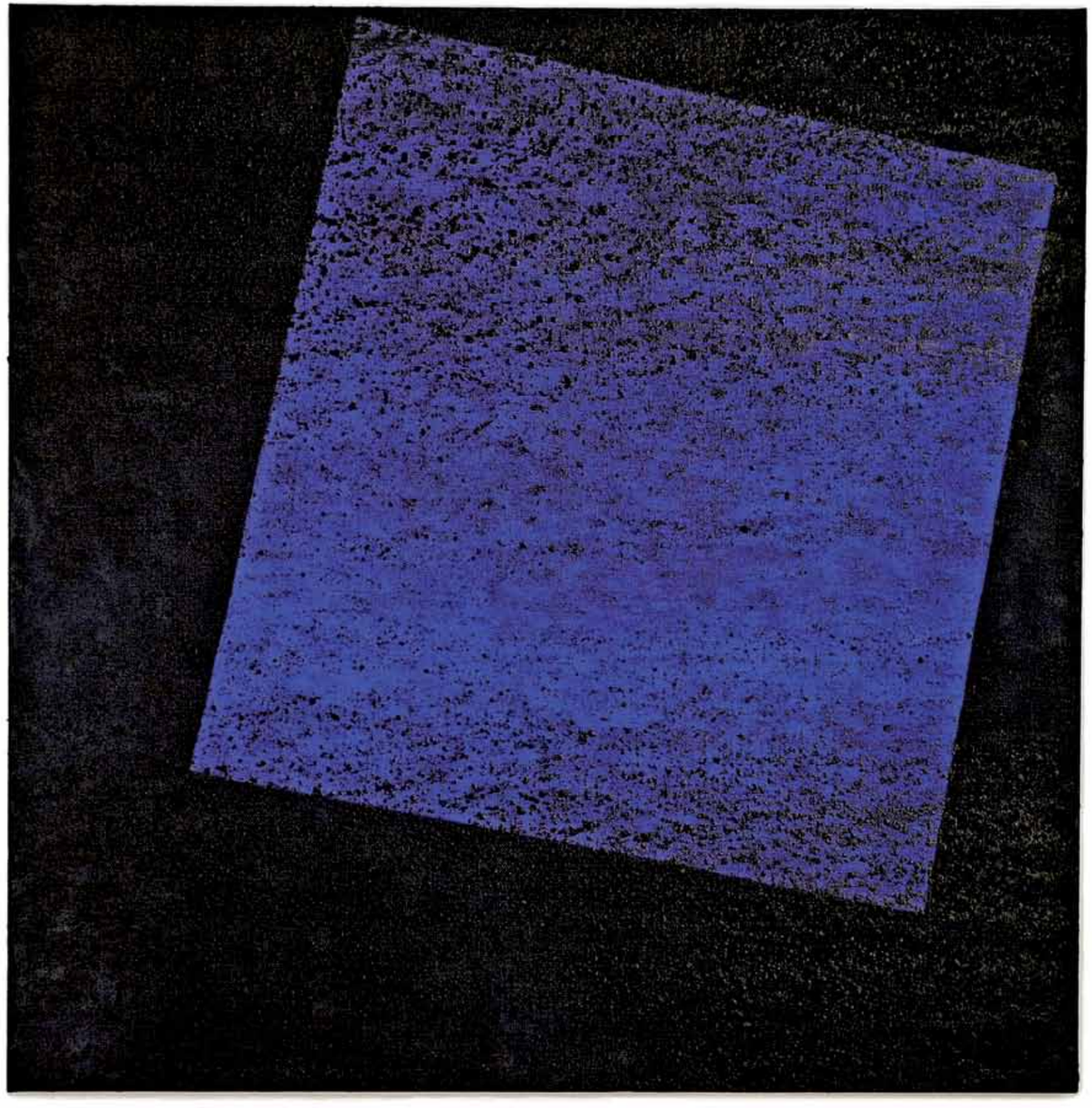
Scale/Ratio: A Work for Two Sites, installed January 1989 addresses how paintings affect context, site and scale and conversely how context, site and scale affect paintings. *Scale/Ratio* was the culmination of our 1985 question of why was it that when a painting is wall hung it is considered to be a painting, but when standing on the floor, or leaning against the wall, at least outside of the studio, it was, in the context of the times, looked at more as sculpture. Unlike Donald Judd's specific objects, the paintings in Scale/Ratio are paintings.

What was it about this reorientation of the canvas in space and the exposure of the back, the skeletal framework that changed it from being viewed as a painting? Why was it being perceived as a sculpture rather than as a painting? Is a painting just a surface, a skin, or does the 'bone structure' play a role? These paintings are intended to be viewed as paintings that happen to be standing in space. The reason they stand away from the wall is so that viewers can approach the picture plane from angles that wall hung paintings simply cannot provide. The reorganization of the viewing space of the painting is what has changed and with it the perception and perspective of the painting.

Our installation for two sites engages Moore College of Art and Design's institutional presence versus the charm of Jessica Berwind Gallery's historic, residential townhouse. As an introduction to the standing paintings, installed in each gallery was a Plan of BiPolar Dynamics, a slightly altered standard textbook image of the activity of metal filings within a field of magnetic activity, illustrating the geophysical force field between the paintings in their respective sites. At Moore College of Art and Design the yellow and black graphic is painted on a 9' x 20' freestanding wall and in Jessica Berwind Gallery it takes the form of a 4.5' x 10' floor cloth. The paintings themselves are simple graphic images, two stripes, one white and one black with a narrow strip of raw linen down the center separating the pigments. Light coming through the center of the canvas conveys a space behind the surface. The four canvases are three sizes: one large, 11' tall, enveloping, overwhelming, authoritative, two medium, 5.5' tall, an average adult size, and one small, childlike, approximately 2.75' tall. As they stand firmly mirroring each other in pairs, the viewer circles finding their own position.

The project was initially conceived to be primarily about painting's place and physical space. The literal space between each set of the two canvases surfaced as an integral part of the concept of Scale/Ratio. Unlike Barnett Newman's ideal viewing distance of the viewer from the canvas, in this case it is the ideal distance between each canvas that allows their relationship to each other to form their 'between space'. To experience this exhibition required carrying the memory of not only the components of half of the exhibition just seen, but of their own physical interaction with it. Once across town, they could compare the two experiences. Visiting both spaces provided full realization of this work.

Ocracoke Island provided not only the right environment for translating Albert Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* into a chant; it was also the setting to make an audio recording of the work. Later, it was performed live in a tiny darkened theater in the city. The acoustics of the contrasting spaces, one expansive and windy, the other confined, narrowly focused and controlled. Differing auditory spatial attributes seem to change perception. The chant made us wonder, "when a body is moving through space, is it actually, or is the body stationary and the environment moving around and past the body, or is it both?" The question began to receive an answer some thirty-five years later while photographing landscapes from an automobile moving at seventy miles per hour. Often it involved calculating future spatial relations further down the road changing with each fraction of a second the speed showing through the elastic stretching of space. Foliage and sky flow together blurring time and space becoming more like thought. Boundaries dissolve creating a dimensionless space. Atoms of matter elongate horizontally and appear as a special form of energy, the photographs reading in two directions at once: right to left (the trajectory of the car) and from left to right (the vanishing landscape as it passes). When preparing our statement for this work, we called on Daniel Marlowe, chair of Princeton University's Physics Department, to confirm or disprove our theory. According to Marlowe, the answer to whether we are moving through space or if the environment flows past us, was something that could only be articulated in mathematical terms, but he said the simple answer is "both are correct." However, there was "one element of the equation" which was "very wrong." Even though we were driving 70 miles per hour, we were actually moving at a speed of 800 miles per hour, factoring in the earth's rotation.



PETER HALLEY

By Karlyn De Jongh

*Peter Halley (*1953, New York, USA) has been painting prison-like spaces since the 1980s. He gave a presentation about his work at the* Space *symposium at the New Museum, New York, but because he did not have the time to edit his speech, Halley has asked me to write it up, providing a short impression. This is what I heard him say:*

For Peter Halley space has always been the subject of painting—painting, which he understands as anything that involves an image. To him, we live increasingly in a 2-dimensional world of images. The flatness of painting reflects this; the imagistic world is less affected by our physical or 3-dimensional spatial experience.

Peter Halley came to New York in 1980. The space of New York has been the primary drive of his work. The paintings Halley made in 1980 had cinder block walls. They were about a walled-up space, a denial of the infinite or transcendental space of 'Abstract Expressionism' and 'Color Field Painting'. At that time, for Halley, there was a transition from an interest in the natural world—the expansive American landscape, a probing into into what physical or natural space was about—to an inquiry into social space. Halley's paintings are an inquiry of social space: a space that we humans create, rather than the natural space created around us.

When he first came to New York, Halley had a distinct sense of isolation. That partly had to do with living alone and finding himself isolated from others. He became interested in our spatial experience and our psychological experience in society, which to him is determined by physical isolation. Being in a car or at home in front of the computer, we may be interacting with other bodies, but these are not physical, social experiences. According to Halley, our spatial experience in our society is not a free determination of how we use space, but is more-and-more governed by the social structures that have been built by others—be they streets, highways, or any other kind of transportation system. This has also been extended to our spatial experience of communication; the space of communication used to be almost identical. At the time, there were no home computers and no Internet. But Halley says that this even extends to the telephone: if you speak to somebody on the phone you are entering a spatial network very similar to our physical spatial network in which the network of determination is almost completely pre-determined.

Halley believes we spend a lot of time in isolated situations, in cars, office cubicles, time at home, etc. He adds that this is maybe less so in New York or any other city, but it is definitely the case in suburbs. This isolation seems to be in contrast to the history of the city: the city is a gathering place. That idea of the heterogeneity of the city is essential to the development of humanism. Isolated space and the idea that you communicate or connect with others, but only through predetermined networks, had become an obsession with him. In a diagrammatic way, Halley depicts how communication goes in and out of these prisons. That has become the basis of his exploration of space for the last thirty years.

Halley's work is autobiographical. The relationship between the 'cell' and the 'self' is clear, he says. In the mid-1980s there was a transformation of the space he felt he was in: it was the first time that the flow of information or communication emerged above the ground line. It was in those days that Halley heard of Jean Baudrillard and his emphasis on the hermetic self-referentiality of our social or technological situation: the way we are in fact more-and-more separated from the forces of the natural world: if we want cold air, we turn on air-conditioning; if we want to speak with someone, we often use technology rather than going to see him.

By 1993/94, Halley started drawing at the computer using Illustrator, a program that created a 'stretchy' kind of space, which allowed him to easily change the proportions of rectangles, for instance. He has compared this stretchiness with animated cartoons, like *Road Runner* that he enjoyed as a child and that showed extreme situations in space. When Road Runner pops out of a little rodent hole, gets stretched and then pops back to his original shape, it is the kind of metamorphosis of space and shape that Halley found throughout our popular culture. In fact, to him, it reflects our actual experience.

The point Peter Halley made was that he started painting during the time of the telephone monopoly and cable TV. Now, we have a fully developed Internet and with it come these entire social networks, this multi-modal access to information and to one other. In some ways, Halley thinks his paintings tend to reflect his personal experience as he goes through life: as decade follows decade, our lives become more complex and multi-connected. At the same time, he thinks that his attention to this subject also reflects the proliferation of communication, which we have seen in the last fifteen years.

RICHARD TUTTLE

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 4 April 2009

Richard Tuttle (1941 in Rahway, NJ, USA) is an artist well known for his small, subtle, intimate works. His art deals with issues of scale and the classic problems of line. Although most of Tuttle's work are three-dimensional objects, he commonly refers to his work as drawing rather than sculpture. Tuttle subverts the conventions of modernist sculptural practice by creating small, eccentrically playful objects in often humble materials such as paper, bubble-wrap, rope, string, cloth, wire, dye paint and many more. An important issue in his work is to leave the modern 'cubist' concept of space behind and try to address other dimensions. Lives in New York City.*

By way of a little foreword I am going to try to read four lines of Euripides of fragment 25. I am going to attempt to read it in Greek first, so I hope there are no classic Greek scholars here.

φεῦ φεῦ, παλαιὸς αίνος ὡς καλῶς έχει·
γέροντες οὐδέν έσμεν άλλο πλὴν ψόφος
καὶ σχῆμ᾽, όνειρον δ᾽ έρπομεν μιμήματα·
νοῦς δ᾽ οὐκ ένεστιν, οι᾽όμεσζα δ᾽ εὐ᾽ φρονεῖν.

Aïolos, Fr. 25

alas, alas, how well the old story holds:
we old men are nothing except noise
and appearance. We creep along like dreams,
thinking we alone have sense. We make no sense to others.

Aiolos, Fr. 25

People have always said, that I look like I have something to say, but they cannot understand what it is. Now, I get to blame it on being old.

The reason I was happy to be asked to speak about space is: it is a subject I know nothing about. Either you can change that, or try to fathom it. The phone just rang, my mind being on the subject of space. The person calling had to hear things like: "dimensions are not space." But I liked saying: "my generation invented space as frame." This was just a first step, a kind of door. Now, the frame can be in another dimension. Thus, proving the dimension, while accepting, even justifying, three dimensions and constructing a bridge between it and another dimension. What seems strange is, when another dimension is grasped as space. This is probably because the grasp of that dimension is using this dimension's space definers. Part of using another dimension as the frame is, it helps you understand dimension free of space. It is outrageous that space is either measured in the world, or is held measureless in the mind, quantitatively and qualitatively. Time, of course, is the same with chronology and chronos. We go on measuring time and space, parsing part and parceling them to heart's content. Every sentence we speak has to balance qualitative and quantitative. Beauty is thought to derive from such a balance. Because quantitative issues have so dominated thought since the 17th century. And to those issues are added a predilection for concrete. Artists have been left with the issues of qualitative abstraction. This is upsetting to me, because no matter how great their very needed discoveries, they are seen as not being important research and/or development in the real world.

So, there is the space to be measured and the space not to be measured. I have usually tried to cast my mind between them. That seems uncomfortably close to immeasurable space. Perhaps, that is because I labor under a persuasion for the abstract. Piero Manzoni, for example, being persuaded for the concrete, gets more sensual. This is a condition, which allows him to say interesting things about space. Things, which seem abstract, but are not. One way I have experienced space, is while in Japan, a very two-dimensionally oriented culture. I squint, thereby reducing my habitual three-dimensional seeing down to two. The squinting flattens everything. I am talking about the interior of a coffee shop, for example. But I cannot tell if my sense of space comes from destroying the three-dimensional, or from creating the two-dimensional. Of course, I am not interested in illusion created umpteen ways to such fanfare, though I should be, and maybe will take up the subject later on. It is the real experience of space, which haunts me, eludes me, fascinates me. It argues for all experience of the real.

I wonder what a dog thinks of space. Chucko, my dog, thinks in facts. Comfortable, or not. On the right track emotionally, or not? Is there space, or not? I am equally impressed by how careful he is, not to be stepped on and how disregarding of feet when they are in the space between him and where he wants to pee. He thus depends on my spatial judgment. He never complains, when I yank him.

In the late 80s, people needed more space. In the new increased space certain judgments became possible, the promise that a new epoch had arrived. Many people were happy for unheard-of liberties, but there was a new destructive energy unleashed. This was the repeat of a pattern, where space starts within the self. Even our understanding of an ambiguous human being is ambiguous. Perhaps that means space must be ambiguous, that real space must accommodate measured and unmeasured space. Easy to say, but ultimately, this space turns into ambiguity too, without the possibility for definition. Does one hold the very indefinable in one's mind as space? Is space something we cannot hold in the mind? Is there another entity, like mind, not just an extension, like soul or consciousness, where all things fall, where space does not have to be found, but is, like a promised land?

I once heard a behavioral psychologist talk about how the five senses reform themselves upon waking after sleep, which was supposed to prove a kind of ordering principle through self-observation emergence from darkness into light. But as a two-way path reforming as well as 'unforming', it depicts real space, not illusory. I promised myself—and us—to look at illusory space, though I normally would never look at such a thing. It is just a hunch, there is something interesting to be found. What occurred to me was, in the relation between light and illusory space, there are certainly artworks which have taken this up. For example, James Turrell's projected light cube in the corner of a darkened room. We have to consider the interchangeability of time and space. For example, in Ad Reinhardt's painting. The time you take from perceiving a black square to 'not a black square' defines a space Turrell objectifies. But Ad's space is real, in the sense his art is reality based, giving an actual experience of reality. It is the purpose of existence. To do so takes enormous love and defines existence, leaving no doubt of its existence in doing so. Still, we have nothing concrete except the frame.

Infinity is a point extended forever. This is dimension, but could it be space? This is a question, which should be able to stand on its own two feet. But even then, it may be about dimension. Space eludes us once again. Is the very nature of space illusory? This is what Turrell's piece seems to bring, even as a relief, albeit serious, to the quagmire of picturing space as real. Ad called his squares 'absolute paintings', because the artificial illusion was replaced by the real. He himself enjoyed a reverse chronology. Also Rauschenberg cleverly always started at the end and finished at the beginning. But these searches and researches are again linked to larger cycles. Ad had a very compelling side directed toward the Byzantine world-view, so opposite from the Western-European, which calls it corrupt. Each culture has its space. Is this illusory space as real as the culture, which can be defended until death, as many have? That seems to argue space is real. Why then is it so hard to be real? Scientists have their problems, artists have theirs. Is representation of space a problem for artists? Decidedly, yes. You could say painting tries illusionistically, so space cannot be an illusion in this sense. And sculpture must be in it, which never is quite possible. A good question would be: if we were to locate space in another dimension, would it matter? Oddly enough, I think it would. A keyword is 'matter'. I think the matter of space would extend throughout. That proves light is not illusory and cannot illuminate space. Ad was right.

So, 'matter'—forgive me for taking advantage of the easy correlation in English between the two meanings—has appeared suddenly in the space-frame. We need to go on defining, trying to define, matter. Just like we need to go on defining the human being endlessly, our health depends upon it. Always testing the current opinions with a mind toward creating new ones. Some get trapped; some get lost. Do these imperatives require space? Do they operate in what we call space? Is space then a kind of matrix? Do we enjoy having this matrix played upon? Are there borders beyond which we are offended? Is this matrix space, the same as, or a hindrance to its apprehension? What is the imperative to represent space? Is this imperative what defines the artist? One of the things? Or in which all things reside? That we are in no way perfected, though we are perfect? Can we see our inabilities in the inability to see space? Is space a mysterious whole we claim to be, but are not, and thus we are removed from it? The artist being what restores us to it, makes us honest with ourselves. Why do we hate the idea of the corrupt artist so much?

The Japanese admire cherry trees, think symbolically the flowers drop at their peak, not after, like other flowers. We should live life like this. Perhaps the flowers take on a weight at full bloom that breaks their stems. Many flowers seem to make light: daffodils, roses, and cherry blossoms. Sitting under a blossoming cherry tree, the intoxication is more about space being created before it dies in the polarities of the world. Maybe artists' space is the moment space is born. Is the space the artist wants to depict the space at the moment of birth, or some other? Can one say the moment of birth is like all things *a priori*? Then, is the space, which can be measured or not, *a posteriori*? Is the space we want between, is that just a concept, a word, not outside? Can space be put into a word like this? Can only a philosopher or philologist examine this kind of space? Does it have some unique capacity for depiction? Is it a space only seen in art? Do we reach it through the a priori portal, thus the somewhat mystical position of art? Why art is a language, for example? Why it has rules? Why would we be asked to speak about space? The only space you can speak about comes from and takes along with it *a posteriori* space. Therefore it sounds very intelligent to speak about it, but you never know what space you are talking about and forget the vehicle is language, so you are really saying nothing about, well, space.

The same could be said of time. Certainly there could be no art coming from the equal. To be asked to speak about space is therefore to

ask you to make a fool of yourself. On the other hand an actual place in the mind for the meaning it holds, for space, is a whole other thing. If you look at almost any work of mine you see this space. This is a space actually in the world, it is of/in art. How we make this space could be the subject of a symposium directed toward each artist's very practice. It is very lonely work for the artist, for the world-space is hostile and extreme individualism is backward. This space is dimensionless and permanent, not personal, arbitrary. Achieving it is like achieving art. You can feel it, whether it has ever been achieved in a city's culture, for example. You can feel if it has died, is living, or if it is needed. Ordinarily, space is not something you look over. But the space of art is easily recognized by this. This space might be represented by the frame, holding experience inside, creating another space. This space has no words in it. A space with no place for words is unthinkable. Filled with pictures. We like this space because it is the only full embodiment possible within a tradition of word, deity and origin. So, satisfactorily enhanced through genius. Jan van Eyck always used words in his framing. In fact, the creation of the world could be the creation of space. The word: this is the deity.

When have I ever experienced space? Never. Normally I go through space on the way to the mailbox, as in a soup of air and light. An invisible soup, something which defines 'invisible'. When something takes up space, it becomes visible. I can experience the visible, not the invisible, unless mystical through the visionary, or as illusion. Is space an abstract concept? How do we know an abstract concept? By building a space around it? So, if the space is the abstract concept, we build a space around a space and that is what we call 'space', even projecting it into the universe? We do not like to think that we cannot experience the real, but when you give up the false claim of knowing the real, you can experience the real through art.

Certain artists give space. Tony Smith brought home an Agnes Martin painting. His young daughter said: "that's not painting, that's space." So, are we asking ourselves: what is space? The way the world sees it, or the way art sees it? How can you talk about space the way art sees it? You cannot. Piero Manzoni, Yves Klein and Lucio Fontana are artists who have focused on space, you could say in opposition to time. Their work can be spoken of. The famous Yves Klein Blue, nothing but ultramarine, becomes art as space. Fontana's compositions over and over reveal space and are usually titled 'Spazio' this or that. I always liked them, so hungry for space am I. But what is it, I feel about this space? Usually, I feel good, unburdened, expansive, as if this abstract concept has become real, not tortured that the mind has gone outside the body. Real space has been conjoined with the space in experience. Color is part of this; color has been conjoined through the process. Abstract concepts lack color, are colorless. Space also is colorless, therefore cannot be experienced by itself. What then is the relation of color to art? Why will man never dominate art, his own invention? Why do Manzoni, Fontana and Klein always come with the message of hope? Is the decline of hope always associated with the decline of art's ability to make space real? The surefire acceptance we can experience space in life?

These three artists were particularly vulnerable to the loss of hope. Have Mediterraneans, their mythology, always created hope from the concrete? Fontana is suggesting he made the leap from the spatial to the concrete, or vice versa through art. He was so hopeful and excited with this discovery, for he could say it in words. One quality of space is that it is 'concrete' in the sense of real, a discovery he made through art, that meant art was real, too. On this side of the Atlantic, time had to be abstract. It was too much to say that time was real, too. But it was great to say time was not real, something which was definitively not abstract, opening space for all.

My apprehensions of originary space coincide with the development of human history through the great discoveries of inductive and deductive reasoning. But my apprehension of non-originary space is still more meaningful, helpful, affecting and truthful. I have struggled to unify what is not remembered in originary space with what seems like the same in non-originary space and in memory. Thank you. Thank you for the chance to say that. It's a confession.

Peter Lodermeyer: Thank you very much, Richard, for this really profound text. I like your confession that space is a subject you know nothing about. Yesterday, I made a somewhat similar confession and talked about 'the unknown space'. In order to start a discussion it would perhaps be helpful to talk about your current show Walking on Air *at Pace Wildenstein gallery. I think that most people here have seen it. So, I would like to ask you how you dealt with the space, that impressive, strong gallery space, in terms of it being a frame for your work.*

Richard Tuttle: The space of the gallery as a frame? I think one of the major themes in this show is the notion that ambiguity is not a bad thing, but a good thing. Each piece has three different thematic levels. The content of each piece is supported in three different ways, which is one way more than is normally asked to support an argument. Peter, what you said interested me, because of some of the things I was saying here about dimension. I mean, physicists are now telling us there are eleven dimensions. So, how can we extend to a dimension outside the three dimensions? I feel, in these new pieces, that the framing as such is actually done in another dimension.

I love that. When Jan van Eyck built the picture plane that most of us use in our daily lives, he would always include words on his frame. I do not know why artists have forgotten that, because these certain kinds of spaces can only be said in language. In Van Eyck's case, he is giving you a message that is ambiguous too, because he is either using the frame to exclude the language, the word, the kind of space that is in a word from the central area. In my talk, I say that space then becomes a place for a picture. Or conversely, you could say that he is holding in the frame as functioning, as coming from the external world, which is not involved with that kind of space.

I feel the pieces in the show are in a direct lineage from Van Eyck, because the word, of which we always undervalue the importance, is a passage or a linkage to a dimension that can be used in framing. I have made a lot of works, which are trying to see what it would look like if you could look beyond the three dimensions, which I consider very limiting. But in this case, it also says why we have the possibility to be happy in the three dimensions that are primarily operative for us.

Back to the answer: The ambiguity in the framing is that the pieces themselves are framed, as it were, from the viewpoint of another dimension, as well as they are framed by the gallery space. A very intelligent friend of mine said that we are still in a cubist period. If you look at a little photograph from a cubist period, you see that cubist art leaves the wall and goes out to the viewer, through the space of the gallery and everything. You become cubistic, the space becomes cubistic, the painting becomes cubistic. And that is really great, that is a wonderful, wonderful feeling.

But as time has gone on, the cubist pictures have gone back to the wall and just sort of sit there. I mean, just as the way this room is set up and all of us being here, we are very much in cubistic types of interrelationships. I am tired of living in a cubistic world, but lo and behold, that turns out to be the linkage between these ambiguities, which are as extreme as you could be. On the one hand, you get an intense argument for the access to another dimension, and then you get its opposite, where fundamentals are clearly built within the three dimensions of a typical gallery space. A lot of people have problems with the white cube. It is something that allows the artist to play a social role, which normally does not exist for them because they are alienated.

KEITH SONNIER

Text as presented during the symposium Space at the New Museum in New York, USA, 4 April 2009

Keith Sonnier (1941 in Mamou, Louisiana, USA) is one of the first artists who worked with light as a sculptural material. In the late 1960's he started experimenting with the combination of incandescent light fixtures or neon tubes with all kinds of objects to explore the diffusion of light through various materials and the surrounding architectural space. Sonnier's material and process based work encompasses a large range of media including performance and film (in the 1970s). His largest and most seen work is the more than 1.2 kilometer-long light installation (0.77 miles) at the Munich airport (Germany) from 1992. He lives in New York City.*

I usually talk about space when I talk about my work. I have always dealt with space, but being invited to participate in this 'Space Symposium' prompted me to make divisions in the different periods of my work and how I thought about space and how I used it in each period of my work.

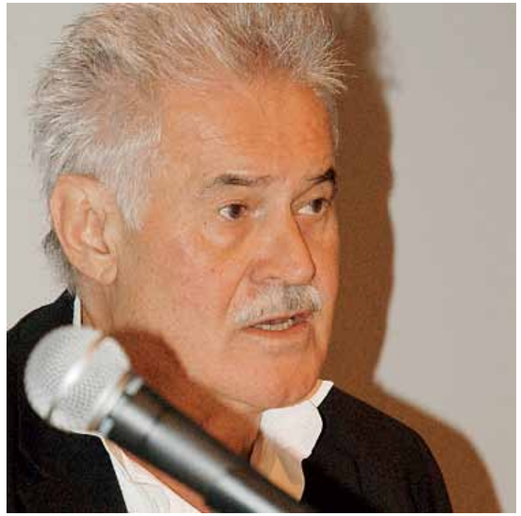
I use space constantly. Every artist does. When I first made objects, I dealt with the space in between things. The first objects were based on the five senses: on how something felt, or looked, even on how something smelled. I began to notice that there were all these different associations that came up when making the early pieces. In the end the most intriguing thing about the sculptures was that they became about the space in between, and what actually happened when you physically got inside the piece and how the body actually felt being there. I began to conceive the works by focusing on how a person would move within the space created by the artwork. This was the start of my the interest in how work was actually made in relationship to space. The floor-to-wall relationships within space became important to the design of the work as did the architectural confines of the space the work would eventually occupy. In defining a given space, the relationship of the floor to the wall replaced the traditional sculptural base, or plinth, as a support. You have to realize that, at that time, I was making sculpture in which the base had been left behind. We didn't use it anymore because of the influence of Carl Andre and Smithson. Even Brancusi, in his towers and columns, the support is integral. This approach to sculpture without the need for a traditional support altered the spatial possibilities in ways that were very important in influencing how I thought about making sculpture.

In order to develop this floor-wall-relationship further, my rubber and latex pieces attempted to open up the frame of the space. They not only used the architectural support of the wall and the floor, but created an illusion whereby you feel you can physically enter the wall: you can go into the space created by pulling something away (the latex) and move into the void created by having done this. It's very much what happens in cinematic space: the camera opens up the frame and moves into the space itself.

I began to introduce light into the idea of the 'space-in-between'. Before, all the pieces were based on touch, or different kinds of tangible principles, but not so much light and only infrequently sequenced light. In particular I'm thinking about a series of pieces called *In Between*, where I stood in front of the piece and watched the lights on either side of the sculpture blink on and off and somehow this seemed important in the creation of a sense of another spatial dimension. It was this weird kind of psychological thing where I could sense that I could somehow go into the wall. It was very romantic in that way too. This series of work introduced transparency by actually allowing you to see through space. By leaning the work on the wall and by using the architectural support of the wall, I could physically move into it. I was beginning to use the camera a lot at this point too, so I could photograph being inside the sculpture.

Somehow the light, the reflection, the physical being of the person in the sculpture—and the fact that one could physically move through the art—became increasingly important to me. I began to embrace light, at first it was incandescent light, in a very intense way. But it wasn't until I started using neon, which is a 'gas' generated light, that the effect of the color became much more intensified. The psychological affect of color and how it altered space became very interesting to me. These early glass and neon pieces from the sixties provided the groundwork for all the architectural installations that were later done on a much larger scale as public commissions.

I had a sculpture installed in my studio for a while and it evolved into the beginnings of a set that was used to make a tentative



body of video work. The sculpture was called *Mirror Act* and it was made from two parallel mirrors: one on one wall, and one on the other. In the space that was created by the placement of these two mirrors, I did at least ten years of video work. *Mirror Act* was the set for the early simple television narrative pieces that were done in what I came to refer to as an 'infinity channel'. The two mirrors facing each other began to create a different kind of space (like a channel) and a much more complex kind of space for me to work within. Before, I could stand in front of the work and somehow attempt to move into it, but now with these mirror pieces, I could literally be in the sculpture and see both my front and my back. It was this front and back sort of working idea that began to alter my thinking about using light and working within architectural space. When I stood in the sculpture and the mirrors allowed me to open up the frame so to speak, I could begin to set up a different kind of dimension. As I mentioned before, I could see the front and the back, the top and the bottom of the space, I could move into space in its entirety. I could literally go into it and feel all its dimensions. These ideas were very important to me and led to the video works which in turn led to a whole new way of approaching the architectural work that would came later.

These works allowed me to think about another type of space: deep space. What was beyond this concept of the enclosed space? I thought about space in terms of being literally immersed in the space. In a way it was this research into the concept of deep space that led to a series of sound works. I began experimenting with radio waves, sound waves, different types of radio signals, and wrote radio plays for theater people. I began to bug telephones. I did interactive sound pieces, where one space was connected and amplified and bugged to another space, which in turn was amplified and bugged back across the country. So, say you were in the Los Angeles space, your voice would be in New York. You could feel these people were enclosed in a confined space, but there was also this sense of the sound traveling through the expansive space between.

After the sound pieces, I tried to make this same sort of transmission happen visually. After several years of research, I formed a bogus kind of company called the "Send/Receive Satellite Network" with Liza Béar. We made propaganda tapes to convince NASA that we had to be allowed the use of a satellite. It was hilarious. For me, this opened up a political arena: going to Washington and dealing with NASA, presenting these ideas and why we had to actually use the satellite and what it was going to cost. The first tapes were all propaganda. I went to four blast-offs. The first one I went to was at Cape Canaveral and it was hilarious. A big bus took us to the site and there were all these people there, Indian Chiefs from the West, businessmen and others who wanted to invest in the project. In the end we were allowed to use the satellite that I actually saw go up—it was a CTS satellite, a low flying one. We convinced NASA to loan us a satellite truck. We did a weekend of interactive connection, with actors, musicians and artists in downtown New York City.

In the 80's, the art world reverted back to normal, with paintings and lots of bronze sculptures. I had to reinvent myself once again, because I realized that if I were to continue to make art and have some sort of interest in space, I would have to try and work in other directions. I went back to the early work, and from there to a series of works that dealt with the environmental use of space; how one physically moves through space.

Fluorescent Room was made in Eindhoven, in the Netherlands. It was completely lit with fluorescent powder. It was like a wild abstract disco. The piece was extremely successful and being inside it felt like being in a kind of lunar landscape: it felt like you were moving in deep space in a controlled abstract environment. It brought to mind some of the early works where I felt I could enter the space, where I could "move" through the mirrored glass. This led to a totally renewed embracing of the architectural element and a new understanding of what contemporary architecture is really about. The recent current trends towards what I refer to as 'skin' architecture has really changed the traditional notion of architecture.

Being an artist, one continues to make art no matter how absurd one's investigations might have become. I made a lot of drawings and a lot of sculptures, and I began to use the kind of objects that I was seeing and reading about. I made a series called Antenna as I'd become interested in what sound waves actually looked like. I did a lot of research in sound: how one might actually draw sound, and how one might draw sound and space and those kinds of phenomena.

There was a series of inflatable pieces that I did very early on and that began to re-enter the work. I got interested in atomic bombs and what happens to a space when a bomb goes off: the impact, the explosion and the implosion.

After this body of work I started working with the idea of architectural space and how a pedestrian—I think of the viewer as a pedestrian in these circumstances—might negotiate and move through the space to experience the art. I did airports for a while, lots of them. Now I am working on a type of space that is a totally natural type of space. I am doing work in a cave and am trying to deal with space in its most primitive sense. The piece is in Japan and is an old abandoned quarry. I learned a lot about space from doing the architectural work.

I had such a strong background in color, but began to think about color as being able to create a volume within architectural space. It made designing the pieces a lot more interesting and challenging to me. It led to some huge commission works.

Questions

Karlyn De Jongh: Your light installations are partly material objects and partly light. The light seems to go beyond the material space of the object. How do these 'two' aspects relate to one another?

Keith Sonnier: Sometimes objects can transmit or project light. In the larger sculptural works that are not environmental, but are more architectural in nature, light can be perceived as a volume that one could physically move through. In the floor-to-wall works, especially the works that deal with projection or reflection (mirrors), one can move into the pictorial space and in doing so, one becomes aware of the parameters of the space.

KDJ: How does the physicality of the viewer relate to the seemingly not so physical light?

KS: One has to consider the psychological aspects of light… take the moon for instance… it affects us all; it affects the tides; it affects the world. Light on the surface of the body affects the mind.

KDJ: In your symposium text you spoke about moving through a space. And that you see the viewer as a pedestrian, someone that moves through space. Do you see this moving as a bodily action? Or is it something intellectual as well? How do you understand the encounter the viewer has with your work?

KS: I have always approached work with a somewhat 'situational' condition in mind: one moves into the work; one moves out of the work; one moves past the work. The sculptural conditions of space are very different now as we no longer think of sculpture as merely an object on a pedestal.

KDJ: To be able to move through space, it seems the space needs to be of a certain size. How important are size and scale for you?

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KS: One can think of space as a microcosm or a macrocosm… in the sense that it is either small and you look into it, or it is big and it encompasses you. And then of course there is infinity.

Question from the audience: Do you consider color a material in the architectural sense?

Keith Sonnier: Yes, pretty much. At the beginning a lot of architects didn't; they were very pissed. But that changed a lot and I have great working relationships with architects now. Even if it is just white light it still has a tremendous amount of volume. The new architecture is 'skin' architecture: transparent and translucent. It provides a kind of lit volume within space.

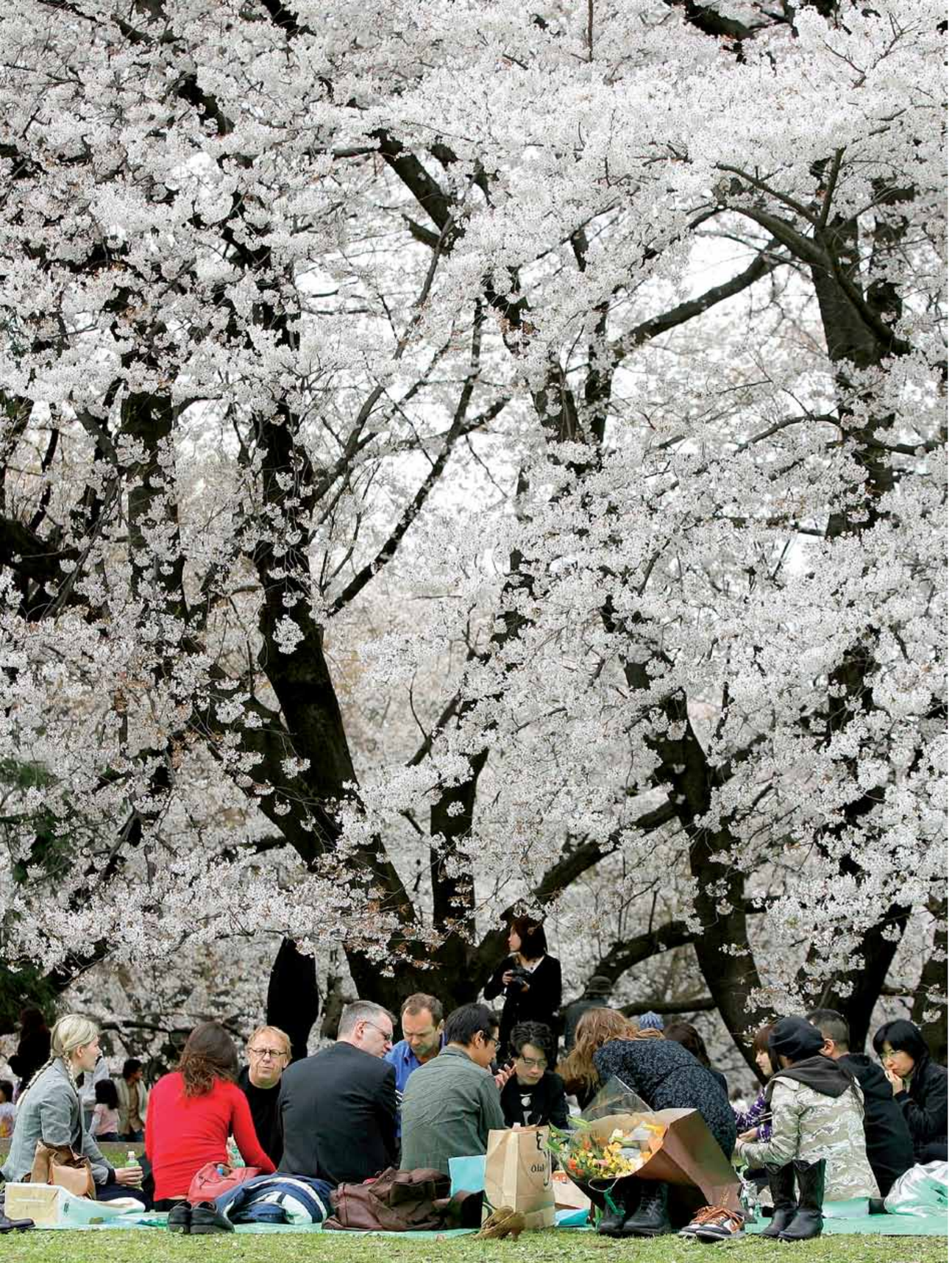
Question from the audience: Your early neon lights date back to the early sixties. That is about the same date as Dan Flavin, isn't it? Are you influenced by him?

KS: I am ten years younger than Flavin. Flavin was never really forthcoming. I referred to Flavin as *prêtre manqué* and he referred to the artists of my generation as Dada Homosexuals. But we did get along, even though he was hard to talk to. I was friendlier with Donald Judd. Flavin is a great artist but he's from a different generation, a different outlook. The Minimalist artists were not very established and so they really had trouble accepting us. I feel I have more in common with Rauschenberg. But I am interested in lots of different kinds of art and lots of different artists.

Question from the audience: You seem to be a very interdisciplinary artist. I feel that in contemporary art nowadays, there is not so much interdisciplinary work being made. How do you see this development?

KS: I think you are right. The art world is going to change a lot with this recession. Everybody has been interested in what I call 'art on the hoof': let's get it sold, let's get it merchandized, and let's get it bought. My generation wasn't so interested in that. I was amazed whenever anything was sold. I am very happy that I've sold work. But I think that in order to interact with something, you have to devote some time to it. It is about personal endeavor and personal research. I am glad Mr. Tuttle has time to study his Sanskrit. I think that this kind of thing is very important. Artists are supposed to do that. Artists are supposed to delve within many different levels of the culture. Our job is to acculturate society. We need art in order to live.

The art world has become a very big machine now; we might have to readdress what it does for the culture and why we need it. In America it became very much equated with economic value. Before the last twenty years this didn't apply so much. We are a global art world now which I think is a very important and interesting development. One must have a world view!



EXISTENCE

Symposium at

Setagaya Art Museum
Tokyo, Japan
2 & 3 April 2008

SABURO OTA　太田 三郎

Text as presented during the symposium Existence at Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan, 2 April 2008

Text edited: January 2009

Saburo Ota (1950 in Yamagata, Japan) is a conceptual artist. His series such as* Date Stamps *and* Seed Project *reveal the core of his concept indicating the continuation and expansion of time and space, and also pinpointing particular places and times in history. In Ota's investigations, for instance his series* Post War, *questions of human existence and self-identity arise, making time and space visible as central existential categories. Saburo Ota lives and works in Tsuyama, Japan.*

Date Stamps

In 1980, I had my first solo exhibition. I exhibited portraits of people close to me. During that time I often visited galleries in Ginza, and in that way I encountered contemporary art. At that time, I did not have any questions, I made paintings. But after I saw Minimal art, Conceptual art, New painting, Installation, etc, I lost the foundation for my paintings and I could not draw a line on paper anymore. I tried a new expression, not classical painting, but it was not easy to find out what to do. In the beginning I thought it would be good to learn lithography, so I started going to a print school and although I learned techniques, I could not create art at all.

I had started looking at all kinds of prints existing in ordinary life. For example, shopping receipts, train tickets, account statements from ATM machines and stamps from post offices. Stamps are definitely printed, so we can say 'prints', a postmark also is a kind of stamp, so it can be considered a 'print'. I thought, with stamps and postmarks I have the possibility of many combined expressions. I bought a sheet of 100 stamps, separated them, and I put each stamp on a postcard, which I sent to my own address. To restore to original, I peeled off the glued postmarked stamps from the postcards and they became one sheet of one hundred used stamps.

When I was looking at the postmarks of this sheet, it came to my mind to create the art work, *Hundred Consecutive Days of Postmark Dates*. Postmarks are records of time and place. I thought, if I go to the post office myself and I get the postmark, it will become the proof of my existence. At that time I was busy thinking about how I myself can exist within my work. It was a very important subject for me. I could make clear the issue with a work, which is recording my present location. But, I did not have any confidence about the question concerning whether postmarked stamps could ever be accepted as an art work. To get over my fear, I had to go to the post office every day. At that time I had just read a book, *American Indian Poetry*, that described how, through repetition you can lose your fear; you should get used to the unknown thing, and by doing so, you can incorporate it in the system of the things which you already know.

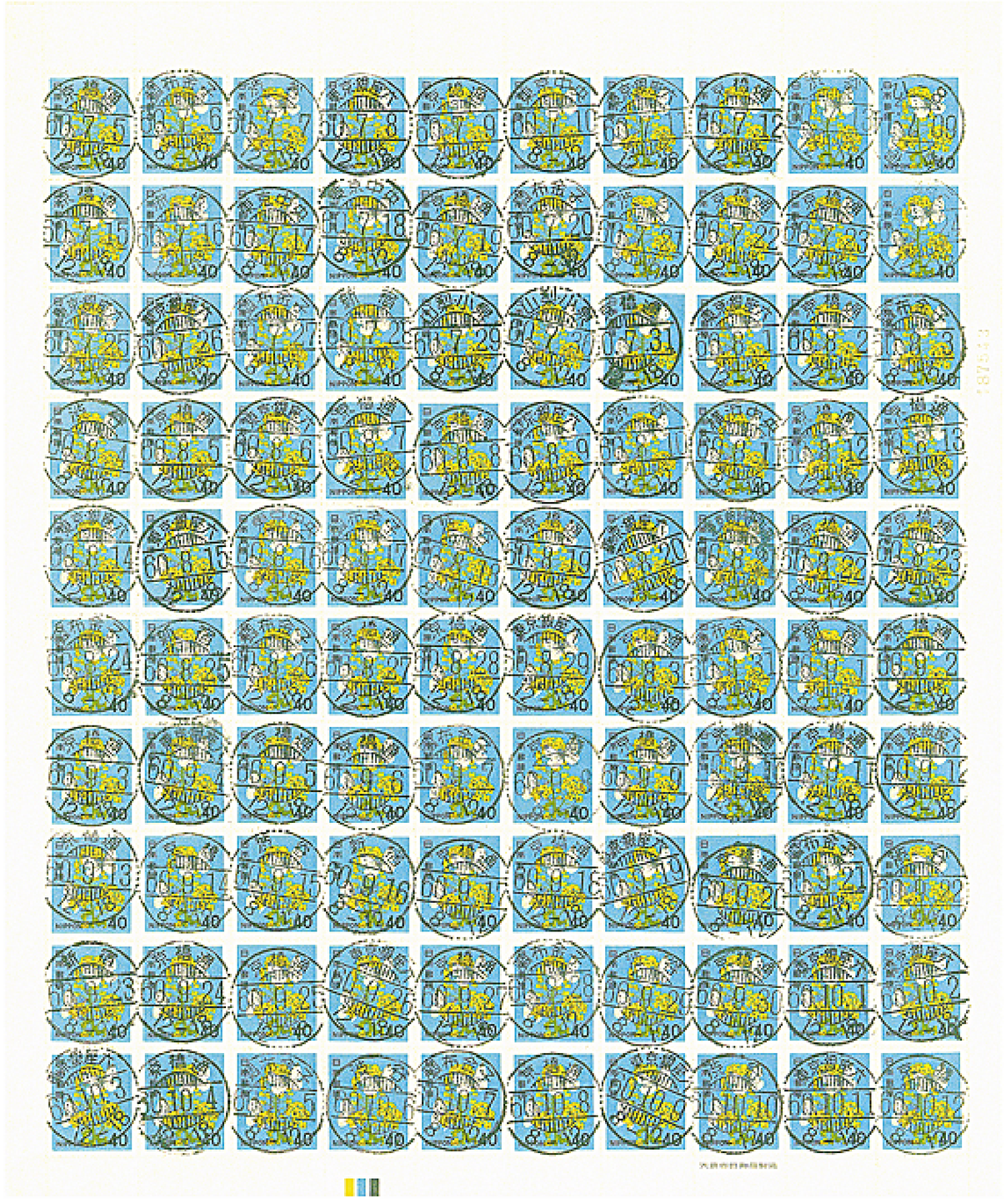
My postmark collection did begin on 5 July 1985, and until now it is an ongoing work of art. The last time I counted, I had collected over 6,500 postmarks. I collected more than 2,000 stamps with the same picture printed on it. I have reckoned that I can do this project until around the year 2015. These small stamps would represent 30 years of my life, and I will leave the footprint of a human.

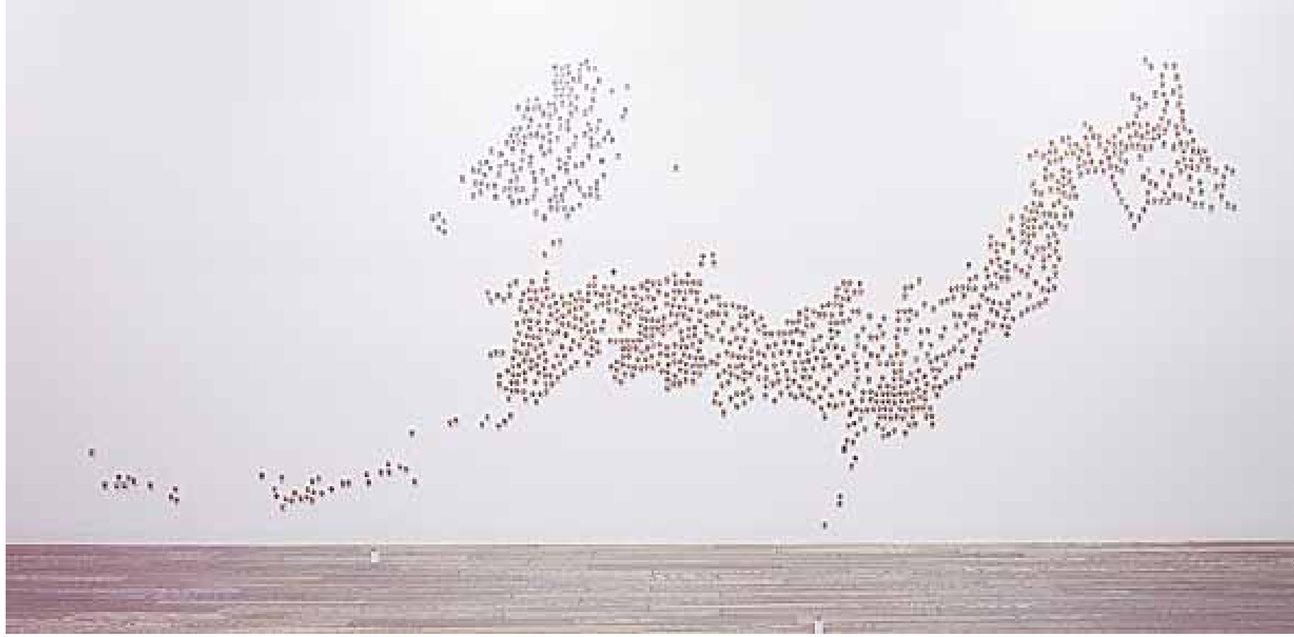
In 2000 I had a solo exhibition at the CCGA, a museum in Fukushima, Japan, and the exhibition title was *Saburo Ota—Daily Existence*. I mainly exhibited the *Date Stamps* there, and after several years the information still exists on the Internet. Rene Rietmeyer, the initiator of the project *Personal Structures* and this symposium on 'Existence', found me on the Internet by searching the word 'Existence'. In fact, what happened here was that, by using the keyword 'Existence', he had found 'my Existence'.

Stamp-Map of Japan and Korea

From the postmark on the stamp I can find out when and where the letter was posted. If you look at it in a different way, I can say that the postmark proves the 'existence' of that town in the world on that day. On the morning of 6 August 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. From that day, the 6 August 1945, the postmark from the center of the explosion does not exist, simply because the post office of the city itself had disappeared from the earth.

My work, the *Stamp Map of Japan and Korea* contains postmarked stamps which I collected from all main post offices in Japan and Korea, I put each postmarked stamp on the wall in the position corresponding with the location, where it was postmarked. By doing so, I created a map out of postmarked stamps and it was this work I exhibited. In order to be able to collect all these postmarked stamps, I had sent out a letter with a return postcard inside and in that letter I had written my preferred postmark date





and my explanation of why I wished for the card to be sent back to me on that specific day. I had put a stamp on the return card and had sent them out to post offices in various locations, almost everybody sent it back. The stamps I used were postmarked 6 August 1990, exactly 45 years after the atomic bomb. I wanted the stamps to become a visually present form, creating in our eyes the true existence of all those cities. [The postmark reads 2.8.6, because the official Japanese postmark on stamps displays not our calendar year, but the amount of years that the present emperor is instated, then the month, then the day.] I actually also sent my translated letter with return cards to Korea. The reason why I included a foreign country was that radiation contamination is simply not just one country's issue any more.

For my art work, I chose the 41 yen stamp, *Crystal Light and Promising Clouds*, because I saw an association with the flash light and the mushroom cloud of the atomic bomb. Sometimes there are other stamps on my map, which is because the post office man sent me, for whatever reason, another stamp back, but with the right date. I got back a total of 981cards from Japan and 174 from Korea. Korea is closer than I thought. If I in my life still have the chance, then I would like to do one more similar work, collecting postmarks from South Korea, North Korea, China, Russia and Japan to create a map of Nihonkai, the Japanese sea.

Seed Project

Seeds of plants can ride on a breeze because of their lightness; they burst open and stick on humans and animals with their hooks. Seeds have found many ways to go other places than the places they originate in. Stamps can go further by putting them on a card and mailing them. I thought, if I can put seeds on a stamp, I could bring them more far than by natural power. So, I had started creating works by putting seeds on Japanese paper. At that time, 1991, I was living in Tokyo and on the weekends I took my sons to a large park. Little children like the tiny things they can pick up. While spending time with them, it looked like I myself, had started to become interested in small seeds.

On the stamps I created with these seeds, I printed the place and the date where the seed was collected, as well as the name of the plant. Plants can only grow in particular places and under the right conditions, and seeds have a specific time to grow. I am recording my existence by collecting postmarked stamps. I think I could say that, seeds of plants themselves also express time and place.

My seed project consists of three parts: collection, conservation and sowing. Putting the seeds in a frame is 'conservation', putting the seed on a stamp, putting the stamp on a special postcard and then mailing that card, that is 'sowing'. At the beginning I was sowing my seeds any time people wanted, so I had no time to put stamps in a frame. I did put separate stamps in a Petri-dish and exhibited that, but later my main form of presentation became eight stamps on a framed sheet. The number of seeds and the structure of the arrangement on the stamp are dependent upon what kind of seeds they are. The smaller grains and flatter seeds are the most useful for my work.

In the spring of 1994 my oldest son was entering primary school. Because of this my family decided to move to Tsuyama in Okayama, Japan. Tsuyama is my wife's hometown. It has a relatively mild climate throughout the year and it is surrounded by fields, a mountain, forest and has a river. It is very green there. The following year, 1 January 1995, I started to collect seeds there as a daily routine. One year, 365 days, each day is somebody's birthday or celebration day, so if I do not miss one day in creating my work, this is how I can connect with all people. Actually, for every season certainly some kinds of seeds exist. It looks like as if all kinds of life die out in the desolate winter fields and hills, but in fact, they contain treasures of seeds. I take the seeds into my hand and when I imagine them sprouting and blooming, I get a positive feeling about the future.

Post War 50. Who am I?

In 1931 the Manchurian Incident began with the Japanese invasion of China. Many Japanese were sent into the Manchuria and they were called Manmou (満蒙), Pioneer Immigrants. In 1945, on the Chinese continent, especially in the old Manchu, many of the children and woman were left behind in the chaos of our defeat and these children and women became separated from their relatives. For 33 years, until the conclusion of the peace treaty between Japan and China, they grew up mostly adopted by Chinese families, but because most of the people had broken up with their relatives at an early age, their identity had been lost.

In 1981, 36 years after our defeat, the ministry of welfare had started a program for them to visit Japan, to look for relatives, but of course identification was truly difficult. In 1994, a photograph book called *Who am I?* reached my hands. There were portrait photographs of 1092 people, photos of Japanese orphans in China, photographer by Taku Aramasa, a document from 1981 to 1990. Aramasa, born in 1936, had been in Manchu during his early childhood years, and one year after our defeat, in 1946, he came back to Japan. He took portrait photos of all the orphans who came to Japan to find their relatives, and in 1990 they published the book.

I learned about it from the newspaper, and I realized that even now Japanese orphans exist in China and that they are basically living in China and Japan at the same time. I got the idea to present this in my work. So I asked Aramasu if I could create stamps with the portraits of the orphans based on the documentation in his book, and Aramasa liked that idea. I had chosen from each group of unidentified orphans which visited Japan in their search for relatives, a man and a woman. On my work I printed, the name of the orphan, the separation date and location, blood type, estimated age in 1945 and the title of my project *Post War 50*. I also placed on the stamp sheet their Japanese name, family structure, parents, family's job, life situation from the time they were still with their family, physical features, the situation of the separation and the date they visited Japan.

In order to express the feelings of the orphans and the disaster of the war, I thought the only title for my work could be *Who am I?*, so I used it. At that time, I just had moved away from Tokyo and I did not have friends, I was lonely. I did not have much work as a graphic designer and that gave me an additional insecure feeling. But after I finished my work and I looked back at it, my loneliness was unimportant compared to the feelings of the orphans, people who do not know themselves, separated from their own country.

The End

In November 2008, I had a solo exhibition in my hometown at the Yamagata museum *Saburo Ota—Daily*. There I exhibited my works from after 1985, 27 selected series with 3 concepts, 'War', 'Life/Seeds' and 'Existence'. From that exhibition, I presented in this text four works which all have a strong relationship with 'Existence'. I would like to interpret these four works as follows: *Date Stamps* is: my existence, *Stamp-Map of Japan and Korea* is: the existence of space, *Seed Project* is: the existence of life, and *Post War 50, Who am I?* is: the existence of identity. We are living within Time and Space, nobody can escape Time and Space, I want to continue to create works while watching myself and others as being One Existence in the universe.

PETER LODERMEYER

Text as presented during the symposium Existence at Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan, 2 April 2008

The idea behind this series of symposia is to make the fundamental prerequisites of the production and reception of art a theme in itself. In terms of form and content, the fine arts can deal with the most varying fields, but it is impossible to imagine subjects as being independent of time, space, and existence. These three realities are not only basic themes in art, but apply in general to the way we perceive the world and structure our thoughts. There is virtually no being imaginable, which would not be present in time and space. Time and space are the fundamental forms of our way of looking at the world. And there is no perception or notion imaginable in time and space, which would not immediately have to do with our existential constitution as human beings. Only because of the way we are, which obviously differs considerably from other forms of life, and especially from the essence of non-living things, is there something like a world, which may be perceived, experienced, interpreted, and changed by us. The point of departure for our symposium trilogy *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence* was the question as to what these three basic themes mean for contemporary art, what possibilities are presented here for explicitly making them into subjects, and how this in turn reverberates in what and how contemporary art may look like and be perceived today. It seems obvious that what we normally refer to as non-objective art is better suited for dealing with these questions than figurative works, which by their very definition are oriented to identifiable themes, which may be depicted. I do not wish to enter into a discussion here of whether—on a deeper level—something approaching a form of the fine arts that is completely free of representation is at all possible. As a pragmatic solution there was the option to focus the discussion on only those artists who do not work figuratively, and who, using a concentration (I prefer this term to the more customary term reduction) of their formal and conceptual means, make a topic of the basic subjects named above.

The fact that our symposia take place in Amsterdam, Tokyo, and New York not only provides an opportunity to discuss our subject on an international level with as broad a perspective as possible. It is also to make immediately clear that the locations we speak at, and the languages and cultures we move about in, exert a very decisive influence on the contents. The symposium on the subject of time took place in June of 2007 in Amsterdam, a city whose architecture already refers back to historical periods in time. The Golden Age of Netherlandish Art, the 17th century, is still ever-present as an architectural reality today. The Amsterdam symposium took place in the rooms of the society of artists Arti et Amicitiae, housed in a building from the mid-19th century. Piet Mondrian, one of the key figures in the development of modern art, became a member of this society in 1897, the same year he had his first exhibition there. Certainly, it had something to do with this environment, with the genius loci of Amsterdam, that the lectures of our symposium had a strong reference to history and dealt with the subject of time, above all from the angle of the historicity of art. This made it all the more important to have as a kind of critical counter-pole an artist like Lawrence Weiner as a guest, who in his contribution came out against a contemplation of art using historical criteria. In Amsterdam he defended this counter position. In an interview Dan Graham granted me a few weeks ago in New York, he in turn was critical of Weiner's attitude towards the subject of time, calling it a "60s' utopia of instant present time". This one example just goes to show the importance of placing varying opinions alongside each other in our symposia. The *Personal Structures* project, and the symposia that go along with it, see themselves as an open forum for discussion, where a plurality of views and opinions from various cultural and language backgrounds may be articulated. This is why it is imperative in terms of concept to allow the speakers and artists complete freedom regarding how they approach the basic themes of time, space, and existence.

The fact that the symposium on existence is taking place precisely here in Tokyo always seemed totally obvious and clear to me for one particular reason. The artwork that, in my opinion like no other, formulates an elementary existential statement so concisely, precisely, and convincingly was, after all, made by a Japanese. Of course, I refer here to On Kawara, in particular to his *I am still alive* series—telegrams from the beginning of the 1970s. Granted, Kawara does not come from Tokyo, but was born in Aichi. He did begin his career as an artist in Tokyo in the 1950s, however, before he moved to New York in 1965, by way of Mexico and Paris. It was in New York that he achieved an international career, the first contemporary Japanese artist to secure a place in all the great museums of the world. What I find so fascinating about Kawara's telegram series is that, for all its simplicity, it is so tremendously complex. "I am still alive. On Kawara"—a single sentence and a name, printed in block capitals and sent as a telegram to various addressees. The work has not been certified with a personal signature, but is signed with the mechanical typewriting used by post offices; thus, it is confusingly personal and impersonal at the same time. The sentence "I am still alive" is the confirmation or ascertainment of one's own existence—what could be more important than this? And yet the sentence is empty of content, banal even, since one would have to be alive in order to be able to make any kind of statement at all, artistic or otherwise. Precisely this act of making us aware of what is apparently self-evident is what reveals its tricky depth of meaning. That one little word "still"—"I am still alive"—transforms the banality into subtle, existential drama. It is derived from the quiet implication of what Martin Heidegger regarded as the fundamental structure of human existence. Presence is 'Being-toward-death' [*Sein zum Tode*]. Still being alive means to be conscious of the fact that there will be a time when this will no longer be the case. It is this knowledge, from which all of Kawara's works draw their existential seriousness and conceptual stringency. On Kawara's *I am still alive* series will undeniably take on a different character from that very day on, when the artist is no longer alive.

When the *Personal Structures* symposia assume that space, time, and existence are three fundamental themes for every artistic activity, then we must bear in mind that these themes portray concepts, which have been formed throughout the centuries by philosophical contemplation, but also by the simple practices of life. In their meaning and connotations, concepts are dependent on being embedded in the culture of the respective language in which they were formulated. Such insight brings the whole weight of the problems of translation into the picture, which will characterize our symposium to a large degree. Saburo Ota has just opened the symposium with his lecture. I will only find out what he said when I have had the opportunity to read the transcript of his lecture in translation. On Kawara did not write his telegrams or his other text works in his native Japanese tongue, but rather in English, the language of the international art business after World War II. Takashi Kiraide once wrote in a beautiful article about the works of On Kawara: You have to understand "that by excluding precisely his native tongue, Japanese, the art works of On Kawara have wholly taken on the relationships of language in our century. It is a language, which—being robbed once and for all of its nature as native language—had been blown out into the world and relinquished to the public; […] a language, which gradually reveals the identity crisis of the ego of the person who is narrating."[1]

Speaking to you here in Japan as a German art historian, I am very conscious of the problem of languages and their questionable possibility of being translated. Since arriving on Monday at the airport in Narita and seeing this country for the first time, it has been impossible for me to ignore that I am moving about in language space that is very foreign to me. In order to have a better chance to make myself understood, I am speaking to you in English, a language which, you will have noticed, I do not have complete command of. When Heidegger refers to language as 'the House of Being' [*das Haus des Seins*] I imagine this house rather to be like the houses 'worked on' by Gordon Matta-Clark: full of cracks and breaks, full of unexpected openings and incalculable risks upon entering. This, too, has directly to do with our way of existence. In an age of globalization, we are more conscious of this than ever.

In speaking here of 'existence', I do not know the entire ramifications and scope of what happens to the meaning of my words once they have been translated into English, and I know even less what will happen with this transformed meaning when it is heard by a mostly Japanese audience. This risk itself reveals, I think, a basic existential condition of mankind: that of being able to be a foreigner and guest. I will return to this subject in a moment.

I have already stated that it is important to leave our symposium speakers complete freedom concerning how they choose to understand and interpret the basic themes of space, time, and existence. For example, the English 'walking artist' Hamish Fulton told me in an interview at the beginning of 2007 that the most important theme for him is time: "Existence then would come into something that, in recent years, has to do with the state of the planet." What he means here is the unpredictably great challenge we all see ourselves faced with due to the worldwide change in climate. It is understandable that the concept of "existence" would cause an artist like Fulton, who is interested in nature and ecology, to first think of the existence of mankind as a species. In addition to the ecological threats to human existence, some artists have made themes of other threats, such as the atom bomb or man's genetic manipulability and his transition to a 'post-human' species. There are two reasons why I perceive the concept of existence differently, namely individually, and related to the person. For one, I am skeptical of attempts to use art for a precise definition of themes that are ethically and politically complex, such as the threat to mankind. Here is where the argumentative procedures of science and philosophy undoubtedly have an advantage. The other thing is that, for me, with my background of studies in Germany of art history and philosophy, the concept of existence is unavoidably linked to the individual because of what Heidegger terms the *Jemeinigkeit* ['mine-ness'] of being. This means I view the concept of existence in the tradition of the European Philosophy of Existence. Contrary to the philosophical system of, say, Hegel, this philosophy views man's being not from a universal concept of reason or intellect, but from the conditions of the individual existence. This individual existence is what we all, each person for him/herself, must live. We may not delegate it, or divide it. It is 'mine-ness'.

(I would only like to state here as an aside that I am aware that existence-philosophy, especially that of Heidegger, found its way to Japan very early. It is nice to know that for decades now, owing especially to the philosophy of the 'School of Kyoto', a philosophical dialogue has been going on between both cultures, among other things between Heidegger's ontological thinking and Zen thinking on the absolute nothing. Recently I came across a fitting remark made by the philosopher Riuji Endo from Tsukuba during a visit to Germany. He says "that we could try to communicate with one another, not 'face to face', but 'back to back'. After all, for all our moving more closely together now, we are still of varying origins."[2] I understand this to be a communication that does not seek consensus, but rather does justice to the various cultural backgrounds.)

In this connection, I would like to stress not only Heidegger's, but also Jean-Paul Sartre's, significance because he makes it especially clear what it means to be an artist, emphasizing freedom and responsibil-

ity in the choice of one's own existence. The artist's existence can serve as a model to illustrate the structure of human existence in Sartre's thought, because it makes clear what it means to choose to be oneself. In my many conversations with artists, it is one of the most exciting topics for me to hear each time how they have found out for themselves that they not only want to be artists, they have to be artists. Often enough this knowledge had to grow and assert itself in the face of an unsympathetic environment, and against the prevailing notions of economic reason. The German artist Wolfgang Laib once told me about his works with pollen, for which he sits in fields for months, laboriously collecting his material. "Collecting pollen is a very special activity, challenging everything in our society that has to do with time, what you do in a day, what you do in a week, in a month, why you do things, and the way you do it. This reverses all such activities." If Laib were to think along conventional economic lines, he would simply hire assistants to collect his material for him. But his art emphasizes precisely the unity of work and life. It grants him the "experience of intensity and independence that allows me to create something from out of my innermost, something no one else does. This is actually the simple mystery of my life."

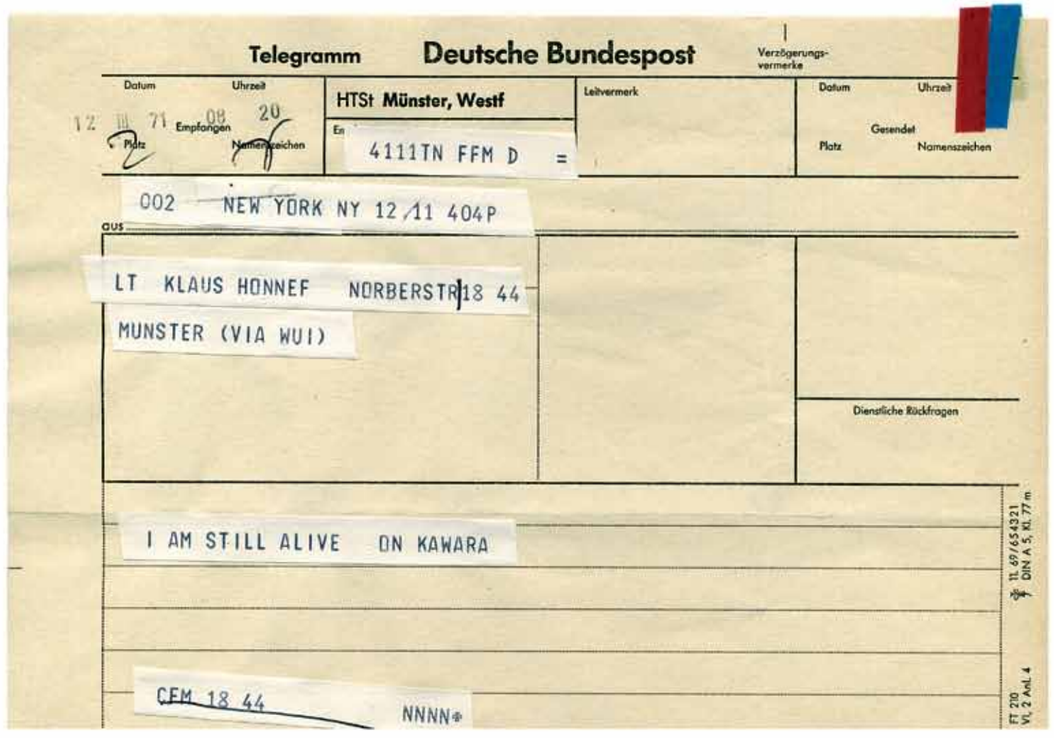
Whenever artists connect their activity to the existential experience of time, it comes to such reevaluations of the conventional notion of economy. I think, for example, of Roman Opalka, who has been painting pictures with rows of numbers for more than forty years now. Nothing new is produced here; it is rather merely one's own existence, the experience of time in one's life that is made visible here. The rows of numbers do not hold any surprises in store. There is no recognizable goal, only a linear progression that comes to an end at some time or other, simply because life comes to an end at some point, without us being able to document this end. This unfinished quality is what Opalka refers to as infinity. Some critics referred to Opalka's concept as craziness, but what often goes unrecognized here is that it has the purpose of making the absurdity of life bearable (these were Opalka's exact words to me in Amsterdam).

I consider the work of Heartbeat-Sasaki, who will be performing here tomorrow, as closely affiliated to both On Kawara and Roman Opalka. Sasaki also holds no surprises in store. In his works ever since 1995, he has been repeatedly making visible the heartbeat in a simple arrangement of oscillating marks. And they are always red, the color of blood. Making his marks go up and down as the visualization of the rhythm of systolic and diastolic actions, this is existential 'music' that accompanies us from our prenatal existence to our last day. (That this really can be music has been demonstrated to us by the great Russian dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov, who once danced to the rhythm of his own heartbeat, made audible with amplifiers.) The apparent self-evidence that our hearts beat for as long as we live is illustrated in these works in all its amazingness. We are moved precisely because we are conscious of the fact that this rhythm will one day end. Only because of this, does each individual mark the artist draws attain its special significance as a document of a certain, fleeting moment in a time series, which—we all know, and yet are not, for the most part, wholly conscious of—is terminal.

I mentioned already that the artist's existence is especially suited for demonstrating certain basic principles of our existence. I cited as a reason first the fact that artists must develop and define themselves, often under adverse social conditions. In conjunction with this I will now return to a subject I mentioned above, that it is part of the essence of our human existence to be a foreigner and a guest.

Joseph Kosuth, whom I am particularly delighted to welcome here in Tokyo as a guest of our *Personal Structures* Symposium, dealt with this theme extensively with his threefold installation in Frankfurt, Dublin, and Oslo in 1995 and 1999. In his book *Guests and Foreigners. Goethe's Italian Journey*, he speaks about the role of the artist. "There is the experience of the artist as 'guest', and the artist as 'foreigner', working with a language he/she does not speak nor read, yet 'speaking' with that language within another system (art) which has a cultural life within an international discourse. […] One can be a celebrated cultural guest and have the socially foreign profession of the artist. One can be the guest of the art market and equally easily its foreigner. One can be, as well, art history's guest as well as its foreigner. The artist works in an interface which is between the two. Being one makes the other all the more an organizing presence."[3] With these words Kosuth refers to texts written by the philosopher Hans Dieter Bahr in Vienna, who has studied the state of being a guest, recognizing it as an existential, fundamental structure of our existence. When Kosuth says that the artist is working in an interface between guest and foreigner, we can add that this is transmitted to the viewer of the art as soon as he or she seriously confronts himself/herself with the works of an artist. By entering into a dialogue with the work of an artist, getting into it, so to speak, the artist becomes the host. When looking at art, I feel over and over again as if I were a guest of the art, a foreigner to it. In recent years, I have visited dozens of artists in many countries. Very often I have found myself a guest at their studios. And I have repeatedly perceived very clearly in their works the core of foreignness, of something, which cannot be wholly grasped with my concepts and my interpretations. What we somewhat casually refer to as the subjectivity of the artist is revealed to the viewer as a complex set of characteristics of the work of art, which is not at our disposal, and not completely transferable to us in meaning and understanding. That there is always an element of the foreign between the work of art and the viewer is nothing we need to lament. The idea of a complete understanding with nothing left unresolved is mere utopia. Precisely in perceiving what is foreign and unavailable to us lies the chance of forming and giving profile to one's one subjective existence. The subject experiences itself in the dialogue encounter with the other, the foreign element. Only by means of this encounter do we have the chance to meet as guests again and again, and thus, the chance to grow. Exactly here is where I see the existential meaning of the sensual and intellectual encounter with art.

1 Takashi Hiraide, Die Revolution des Augenblicks. On Kawara als Sprache, in: *On Kawara. Erscheinen – Verschwinden*. Mit einem Text von Takashi Hiraide. Herausgegeben von Udo Kittelmann, Cologne 1995, pp. 31-46. Quote, p. 45.
2 Quoted after: www.capurro.de/zen.htm.
3 Joseph Kosuth, Second Memorandum, For Guests and Foreigners, in J.K., *Guests and Foreigners: Goethe's Italian Journey*, Frankfurt a. M. / Basel 1999, pp. 56-71, quote p. 59-60.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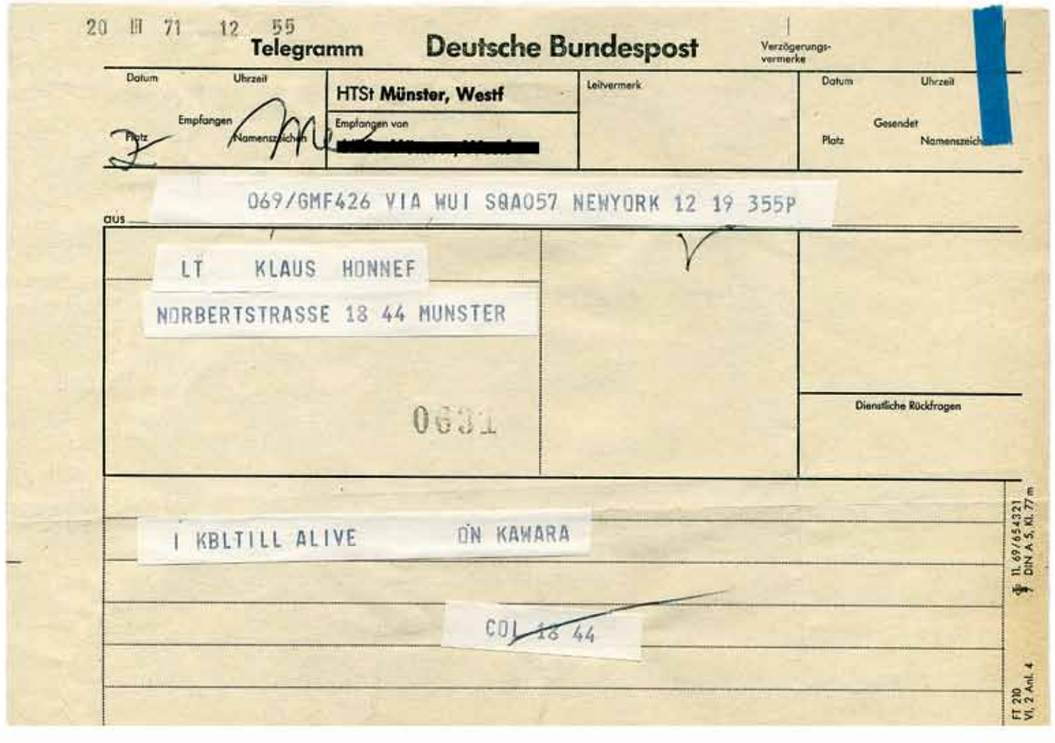
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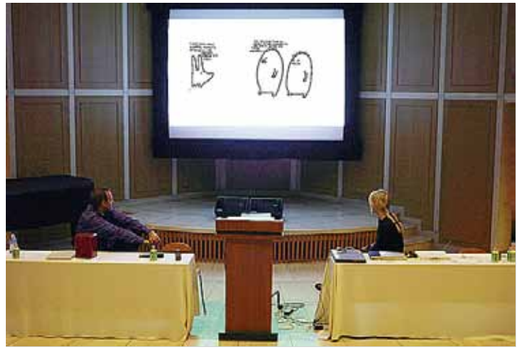
SANNA MARANDER

Film presentation at the Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, 2 April 2008

Text by Peter Lodermeyer



*Sanna Marander (*1977, Sweden). She lives and works in Rome, Italy.*

Nothing to Communicate—Sanna Marander

The most astonishing thing about Sanna Marander's drawings—provided this genre designation applies at all—is the contrast between her simple, linear figures redolent of children's book illustrations and the highly complex speech and thought situations these figures are involved in, and into which they draw us as viewers/readers. For example, when she has one of her typical bunny-like figures say: "I have nothing to communicate", the abyss opens to what linguists refer to as 'performative contradiction'. The statement that you have nothing to convey is itself a communication—and as such it precisely does not say 'nothing'. The statement and the act of stating it contradict each other. It is most likely no coincidence that it is an 'animal' that speaks here. This belongs to the topoi of philosophical anthropology that man, as a zoon logon echon, a being with the gift of speech, differs fundamentally from animals; the speechless animal has nothing to communicate. But when it speaks nevertheless, like it does in fables, fairy tales, and children's stories (or in dreams) then it is mostly an allegory for human, all too human characteristics. One of the prerequisites for a text to function—and I indeed regard Sanna Marander's works as texts—is what studies of literature oriented to the aesthetics of reception call the "basal expectation of meaning constancy."[1] This expectation by the viewer/reader, that a constant layer of meaning runs through the course of the text, is perhaps most striking where it is duped the most. Only at a very superficial glance do Marander's drawings seem like cartoons, drawn jokes. Their structure, however, is much closer to that of the dream. Sigmund Freud once described the difference between dream and joke as follows: "The most important difference lies in their social behaviour. The dream is a completely asocial, psychical product. It has nothing to communicate to anyone else. (…) A joke (…) is the most social of all the mental functions that aim at a yield of pleasure."[2] Sanna Marander's works do not pull the viewer over to her side by her coming up with a successful punchline for him, through which the text and picture may suddenly be 'understood', revealing their 'meaning'. Quite the contrary, in general they allow all such expectations of meaning to collapse, virtually denying any kind of communicable idea and dissolving them in paradoxes and indeterminable ambiguities. This is what creates their enigmatic character—and their artistic meaning. They do not function by illustrating contents stipulated by someone else; precisely because they communicate 'nothing', they clarify, at least somewhat, how pictures and texts function as a communicative means in the first place. This is—like the interpretation of dreams—an 'asocial' process (in the Freudian sense) in as much as it only happens very individually, since each viewer/reader must create his own context (or rather: may playfully create it). Let's put it to the test: The same drawing six times seems simple enough, a snail and its shell. Does the snail approach it or does it remain in place? Is it its own shell or a different one? The texts are neither speech bubbles nor picture captions; they have been added more like footnotes to the drawings. Their reference to the scene portrayed remains ambiguous, if not completely mysterious. How would it be if we looked at these drawings in the context of philosophy? Because, for example, Horkheimer and Adorno once claimed in a text associated with their famous *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "The emblem of intelligence is the feeler of the snail, the creature 'with the fumbling face'"[3] Or because Sanna Marander reads Kierkegaard and likes to view her drawings as a "Kierkegaardian landscape", "that is to say a construction where human situations, reflections, and in particular different world views are confronted"[4], and because the fairy-tale writer Hans Christian Andersen allegorized his critical relationship to Søren Kierkegaard, six years after his death, in the fairy tale *The Snail and the Rose Tree*—with the snail as the personification of an introspective Kierkegaardian philosopher.[5] Above all, because the lines of the text reveal themselves to be quotes by Nietzsche to his steadfast interpreter, or rather, they are fragments of sentences Nietzsche wrote in various essays and fragments that have come down to us. Does this knowledge help us to discover the meaning of this drawing? Not at all! A work of art is not a crossword puzzle that can be solved. No possible context per se offers a privileged access. But by placing these drawings in the context of philosophy, at least it becomes clear what Sanna Marander's drawings have to say on the theme of 'existence': In quite a humorous way, they make clear—entirely in the sense of Nietzsche—that all life, all living existence, even the simplest organic form of life (such as the slug, for example), presupposes interpretation. Life is interpretation.

1 Wolfang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens*, Munich 1990, p. vi.
2 Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, SE 8:179.
3 Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*. Edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noer. Translated by Edmund Jephcott, Stanford 2002, p. 213.
4 E-mail to the author, 17 August 2009.
5 Hans Christian Andersen, The Snail and the Rose Tree, in: H.C.A., *Complete Fairy Tales*, London 1997, p. 853 ff.

3. THE INVENTION OF THE LAWS OF NUMBERS WAS MADE ON THE BASIS OF THE ERROR.

4. THE WILL TO IGNORANCE, TO THE UNCERTAIN, TO THE UNTRUE!

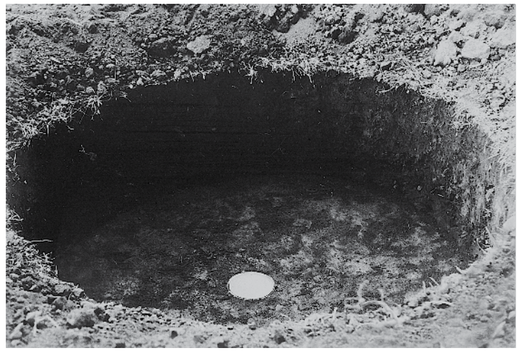
5. INFINITE SEAS.

6. IS THERE STILL ANY UP OR DOWN?

TOSHIKATSU ENDO

Text as presented during the symposium Existence at Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan, 2 April 2008

Text edited: April 2008 - January 2009



Toshikatsu Endo (1950 in Takayama, Gifu Prefecture, Japan). Endo's sculptural work stems from the realization of "a certain sense of absence, a feeling of something lacking" and the unattainable desire to fill this 'lack' in human existence. He offers images and interpretations of such elementary forces as fire and water, addressing the most basic human energies. Inspired by excavations of age-old sacrificial places and 'primitive' sacrifice ceremonies, the works of Toshikatsu Endo draw the viewer to them through their powerful, elementary shapes (mostly circular), scale and textural energy. Lives and works in Saitama, Japan.*

About Existence and Concerning Phenomena of the Empty Space

Introduction

Existence, the theme for this symposium is, as you are aware, a complex theme. It is a universal and eternal philosophical issue, and we cannot reach a simple, satisfying answer for this subject. In fact, I would claim there are as many answers as there are humans in this world. The reason why each human lives within his or her own context and each is only able to think of those things he or she is able to question, that is a very difficult theme.

It is not up to me as an artist to solve this question. I am only in a position to address it, to try to expand the discussion of the individual by using my personal context as an artist. Furthermore, wherever there is a place where I am attached to art, like in this symposium, art itself already provides a platform for the question of existence; we cannot remove ontology as a basic requirement, as a medium of outgoing correspondence. Art is the special field that oscillates intensely between a linguistic and a non-linguistic aspect, in which we often move to duplicate an ontological manner through exposition, construction and destruction.

Existence and language

In art, questioning existence is a matter of questioning the human condition, and questioning the human condition also entails a questioning of language. Furthermore, our human consciousness of things that happen serves as a point of view of objectifying ourselves as well as having the possibility for us to see ourselves objectively, like gaining a perspective of ourselves from the outside. I think, for this reason, we should first talk about language as the foundation of ontology. As mammals, why are we humans distinguished from other mammals? As I just said, because of the inherent human desire that we are relentlessly driven to the objectification of things, but it is not because we are highly developed mammals, the reason is rather because we are defective. Because of failure, for example, we at are born prematurely, and so, for that reason we had to come up with an incubator, a close relationship to a mother, for a long time. And through the process of mirror images, called education with language as a medium, the sense of the self as well as our subconscious region began to form. Then, gradually we created for ourselves a very complex artificial environment, which is a mental structure, and this structure grew to become part of ourselves. I think that that is the origin of existence and our roots. Because of such a starting point, the artificial environment became very unstable, and this is why we are in search of temporary stability and we are always driven to exist and to the objectification of the outside world. And for humans, who are dominated by language, the result of there being no limits to the language mechanism, has been that existence has become endlessly open. On the other hand, disengagement from reality is one side of the language mechanism and we have therefore become close to an illusionary existence. The fact is, we have lost our realistic base as given to us by nature, using culture now as a replacement; in other words, because of the constructing with language we have started living in an illusionary, artificial environment. Ultimately, we have become first and foremost a virtual existence. I think it is here that we exist in ontology.

In the beginning we humans were in close contact with reality, but a world built by language is strong in altering phenomena. Language changes the original meaning of the actual situation. We started to separate and become distanced from realistic bases, over time becoming increasingly abstract. And, because the language mechanism is filled with abstraction, humans began to understand and recognize the world. We humans have no consciousness without language. Without language we do not believe existence exists. That means for us, we perceive the world and gain our experiences through seeing with our eyes and our other senses, and this is mediated by language. In other words, how we see the world can be endlessly extended, and because of that, any world can be possible. It follows that there is no firm structure of the world, nor is there any abstract concept such as a concrete 'thing' in the world. Before our eyes there stands a constructed language, made up by the combination of a collective language filled with false appearances and the illusionistic experienced world, which, in the process, only takes on a more diffusive reflection. Basically in the first place, there were polymorphous perversions, such as those noted by Freud, and then later a certain value structure was shared as an illusionary combination. Ever so gradually, it has become something that could only exist in the world as shared values.

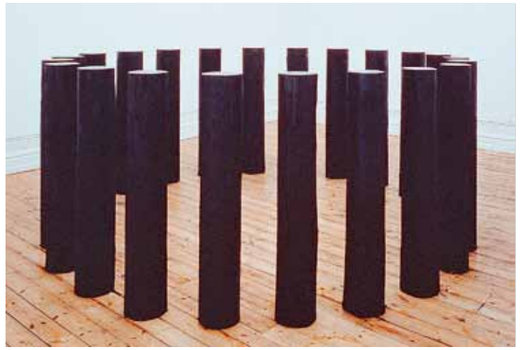
I will try to cite a specific example of this as an explanation. For instance, there is a thing, a stone. This object has been named stone, for us this object now exists in front of our eyes. But, we wonder if we really are looking at a stone or not, we start noticing. If we are looking at the stone, then this is really true, in reality it looks like we are looking at a stone, but are we really looking at an object called stone or more precisely, are we merely looking at something defined by the word stone? Between the thing called a stone and the origin of the object itself there may be a gap, which is not easy to span. These questions have arisen in me. We begin to see things perceptibly by giving them a name first. But, if we see something similar in nature to the stone, we then become very uncertain. What is the stone itself? What are the differences between things referred to as stones and why is it not easy to recall a thing in front of your eyes when it has not been named, not been identified? What are the differences between 'giving something a name' and the 'essence of existence'? First of all, for us existence is defined through language, so in the case of the stone, is it possible to understand it, without having previous experiences? No, in reality that is already impossible, isn't it? Moreover… do we have the possibility to see the stone for the first time only through the mediation of language…? If I understand it in this way, for us, the existence of the thing is only possible by giving a name to the thing. On the other side, without language mediation we could not begin with our understanding of it. I think that, considered from this viewpoint, there are no contradictions. As you can see from what I have said, in certain steps of the image of existence, my personal context is involved.

About Mono-ha

In Japan there is an art movement called 'Mono-ha'. One of the members of that movement is the artist Lee Ufan. Ufan has written about the theory of Nobuo Sekine, in which he has expressed important thoughts. One statement is "wipe the dust from Mono (the thing)". Later, the term Mono-ha came to represent the movement. I take that word myself as being essential for the encounter between humans and things. In his article Lee Ufan mentioned a real encounter with Mono (the thing) by wiping the dust from (Mono) the things. He says you have to start with that first. We are human, and exist just as (Mono) the thing itself exists or perhaps I should say both we and things exist. How may we have a pure encounter with things? First of all, we need to wipe the dust deposited on the surface of Mono (thing), and confront the thing itself as a naked form not attached to any impurities. This is how he expresses it in a metaphorical sense. Back when Lee Ufan first stated this, it became the base line for the art of Mono-ha.

'Dust' is related with Mono or 'dust', which is related in turn with existence. It means the 'deposit of too much used, dead language' This is how I understood it. The thing covered by 'too much used, dead language' became an impossible thing to have an encounter with. We can only look to a non-mediated pure thing through a fixed set of thoughts. If that is so, it can never become a fundamental pure encounter, a path towards opening a new dimension. It does not amount to bare existence being confronted in a direct way. Thus, from the other side, when we desire a primary encounter with Mono (the thing), we first wipe off the 'dust' covering the surface, which is in fact, wiping off 'too much used, too much dead language'.

Conversely, are there encounters with ultimate existence? Actually, I would claim we can only achieve it subjectively by approaching it in a form as exposed possible. An absolutely successful mediated encounter with a thing or an existing form means: The 'covered existence', the 'language of the dust' has been completely removed, so that the bare existence phenomena are fully exposed. Please try to imagine in this case that the reality of the situation is the exposed gap area itself, the scorching heat that uncovers everything, burning away all taboos, like an open volcano. It is impossible to keep on doing this. The unseen thing, the hell, you must not look at it. If



you look at it, you might collapse in total fear. I could venture that this area also marks where the exposure of the contradictory dimension of the disclosure of existence begins.

I will try to explain this from another angle using the stone as an example. The stone exists everywhere in daily life. Normally when we see the stone, we immediately recognize it as stone. With our eyes, we consider a stone to be a stone; this is an ordinary method. It is the gray area of security and immobility, relaxed, as it contains no disclosure or crises. By the way when from the stone, as an axiomatic classification of stone, the deposits of dust on the surface have been wiped away, and all customary perceptual notions have been removed; what then is left over, is the stone which is not covered with any dust and has now reached the state of absolute purity. It can be assumed as being a stone, as the stone in the world of absolute purity. Perhaps for us it is an impossible perspective to imagine, isn't it? For us, who have become humans existing with language, therefore the thing reduced to purity and the world of direct encounter has been shut off from the beginning on. The only encounter that seems possible is mediated by language. The first encounter opens the door to the next dimension, a realistic stone encounter with language. We can reach an approximate value through the process of removing the dust of too much dead language. I think this is the only way possible for us.

Things and Language

I have spoken about the relationship between the thing and the language. Next it is the thing itself and the name of the thing. I would like to explain a little bit about this, which amounts to expressing doubts concerning classification. I will take granite as an example. Please try to imagine certain minerals. For instance, there is this huge piece of rock sticking out of the sea, which we generally refer to as the land. And when it becomes a bit smaller, it is a mountain, and then at a moderate size it is the rock, if the pieces are even smaller than that, they are known as stones, and then they become sand… Although it is all the same granite material, the change of scale changes its name and meaning completely. In fact, depending upon which part of the substance we are seeing, which context we are seeing them in, such things become very unclear indeed. Certainly since these things share the same scientific, chemical symbol, we are looking at the same thing in each instance, but in reality we identify them differently. Under such circumstances, a world constructed by language seems vague, illusionary, and doubtful. And in fact, consider the daily life we live, we think we live in a world that has established a certain position, but in reality we live in a vague area. Such is the life of humans and the evidence that the uncertainty we live in brings a characteristic increase in fantasy, passion, and eroticism.

Anima and Language

I have referred to us as humans who essentially live a linguistic existence that I have explained in basic detail; I would like to proceed to the next stage, which initially concerns the mechanisms we have constructed through language. If I speak in this context, we attribute value to words and we recognize the world we live in, even as we continue that process. And this language of the world, the artificial or cultivated world, is not the way it is in the natural world, one defined by instinct. The two can be imaged as being opposite poles. Because of artificiality there is no limit, and there is no 'having a break'. By way of illustration, non-linguistic animals such as the dog or the zebra do not have culture. Their specific instinct keeps their species going through reproduction. And this is the reason they do not change their lineage. The surviving form cannot be changed; the same form is virtually repeated from the very beginning when the species occurred. We as humans, however, don't have such form phenomena anymore or rather, since the form is considered to be unlimited and uncertain in its continuation, it brings us, on the contrary, a variety of development. For example, we create magnificent cities, establish systems and institutions, and develop many kinds of tools. Also, many architectural buildings and other constructions have evolved, we are developing space.

But, within that process, there is only one thing that can stop the chain of language construction. There is something limiting the phenomenal world of language. I feel it is an extremely important part of it, namely, the thing we call: life. In fact, it literally means it is the vital body of the human and its living physical form. Only here do we connect with the non-linguistic life form of the wild animal, only here is the part we share with them. We are separated from the wild because we have advanced. So, before the language departed, and far away from the humans we are today, our living body and with the left over parts of instinct have come down to us from ancient times along with an increase of sadness. But this is the sadness of existence, by all kinds of meaning, for us that are the roots of life, attached to the sacred passage deep inside.

What is then the living human being? What is the body itself, which we can maintain for our species and which must repeat itself in the reproduction process, independent of human's choice and our activities? That body of course is not created by humans, and certainly not by human language, but it was acquired and has been successful since long before the linguistic creature. Understood like this, it might be said we belong to otherness. That point of human existence we deny unlimited language and attach limitation to. At the same time, on the other hand, it connects with eroticism as the roots of energy and activity of the human world.

When I define the existence of the human being for myself, I would say we are defined by language at the same time, as I just mentioned, the living body is also limited by this. There is, I think, a polarity between human's insane beauty and its embodied antipode, between passion and reason. In fact, individuals as an organism and the limits of that continuation, the human's spiritual transcendence and the time limit of the existing human body, the end of its physical presence, induce the cycle of sadness and embody the dynamics of sadness. And life and death, the existence of the two sexes, eroticism going together with the excitement of their association, gradually brought such opportunity to a magnificent dimension. Life, sex, god and death, those associations are the only things that prove our existence and they are deep inside us.

Language and Sacrifice

We humans are linguistic animals, and at the same time we exist we have a physical life as well. Both of these poles cross each other, a form of existence that has continued since ancient times. This bipolarity gets overheated and creates a spark, this dimension is being located in our innermost existence. Within us this most fundamental area has been created and this is space-time itself. I look at this as it has been done since ancient times; it is accompanied with the destruction of life as a religious act. I assume that that act is fundamental, this phenomenon is seen early on by all religions and is unevenly distributed in the depths of any of the cultures. These are the reasons for the spiritual attributes of humans. The destruction of life as a religious act within a communal act or inherent act, is the general definition of sacrifice. Sacrifice is a collective ceremonial act, to offer a sacrifice is to be considered transcendental existence. An act of killing, to be chosen by fellow men of a community or acted upon one self, the destruction act of the living body appears to be sacrifice. And gradually, those definitions generally shift towards the destruction of animals, a doll or a sculpture of animals, which were made as objects for representation. All such acts are carried out in relationship with a divine thing.

This act of destroying life in a ritual space, is part of primal human nature, a cruel act whose potential has not been lost even in these modern times; it has merely changed shape, changed location. I think its meaning has been updated and its appearance dismantled. Although accompanied by a kind of barbarianism, without it being tradition, in daily life we do not recognize the situation. It has changed shape like it is trying to avoid that it can be predicted and I think that it might have erupted in many places. The mystery of this sacrifice is that this object of fear, without our being able to reason it logically, attracts people very much. But in the end, that eternal mystery, since it has two opposite poles within us, is tearing us apart with its ambiguous power. Rejecting this interpretation is blocking one's way and brings us to the place of silence.

Context of the Works

I would like to talk about this based on the context of my own works. First of all, the work on the first photo shows the origin of the concept I was talking about before. It was made for an outdoor exhibition in Tokorozawa in 1978. At the onset of making this work, I had a completely different plan but, by trial and error and several accidents, at the end it turned out in this form. First, I made the hole with a diameter from about 2 meters (7 feet) in the ground and in the center I placed a container filled with water. I repeated this work, making several holes. As I continued with this method, I was seized with a certain illusion. It was like images of excavated remains, and at the same time because of the substance of water, I saw images of archaeologically-excavated ruins. I became obsessed with this illusion. This water which I had just poured in was no longer simply water now. Not water as in H_2O anymore. It became rather cultural, human history and memories cumulated from layers began to appear. Special water, the water of a culture, a substance with the accumulated set of meanings, a collection of symbols, I saw it as if it was the representation of the collection of the unconscious. I myself was in doubt and surprised by the sudden appearance of an illusion or angle for viewing the world. I was overcome with dizziness, spinning around to see the world. I felt like I had excavated water in an archaeological manner, that water became the intensified representation of the primal. And at the same time, I began to remember another important thing. It was the memory about the remains of the Buddhist temple at my home town. From that temple only one stone was left and it was said to be a big stone from the foundation of the five floors high pagoda. I remembered this stone. A circular hole was dug for the stone foundation, said to be for the main pillar of the tower. Now these days, the building and pillar are both gone, only this stone is left and the hole is always filled with rain water. This was a place where I played when I was young. When I was creating the work I mentioned before, I was reminded of this stone. Furthermore, there had been a tradition in which a woman was buried under this foundation stone. In Japan when building a strong building meant to last for a long time, it had been a custom to bury a girl under the pillar as a kind of sacrifice. This is the concept of animism with superstition in the background. Indeed, could a girl have been buried under there…? I remembered the story of this tradition. At that time in my mind, I felt a constant flow of fragments of connected unconscious images. The water, which filled the hole that had lost its pillar, that water itself and this image of the dead body are vertically connected, I felt the full context of all kinds of intuition, the continuity had been established. That water, the circular form of the hole, and the representation of death, this kind of meaning managed to become connected with unusual life, religion, sacredness. I claim that it connected vertically.

The anthropological meaning of the act of burying a girl alive is sacrifice. In Japan it is called 人柱 [human pillar], which means human sacrifice. That ritual, I could say, is a kind of sacrificial ceremony and, the water that filled up the area above the foundation stone, above the girl who had been sacrificed, that water is clearly not just water. The phenomenon that appeared to me was that it sounded like the water was whispering to me to tell me to read the signals of the depths of what had happened to the girl. In that context, this water and the water mentioned in my work also appears in a representation-related context, not just as a chemical material condition, not just as H_2O, the essential meaning of water. This is not limited to Asia and the Japanese culture; I think that Europe and Africa are also basically connected, although at the surface they look different. Water is used as a symbolic material and in many cases, treated as such. It occurred to me that water as a substance contains those different meanings. After some time, the story of the sacrifice became unrelated to the foundation stone of my hometown Buddhist temple, but while I was using water in my work, I began to think that ignoring the cultural factor would be impossible. Therefore, I often use water now.

About the Circle

For this event, as shown in the second photo, I used water. I buried several round containers in the ground in the shape of a circle and I made a water circle. This was just a one-day event, I had started working in the morning and I worked until sunset, and then I destroyed it. I returned home that night. I had made my first work as a circle structure. Some months later in the gallery, I used old utility poles and lined them up and installed them in a circular form, this circle being composed of wooden pillars. I carved the top part of the pillar and placed water on the top, just at the height of my eyes, the circle-shaped surface of the water placed on top of the pillars created a circle of water… as shown in the third photo. In the midst of installing this work, I had a strange physical experience. While I continued working, going in and out of the circle, as I approached the circle center, a feeling of power began to exert itself. As I went to the center, I felt as if a vertical power extending downwards was penetrating me. Like with the energy of the circle shape, I thought this may be just an illusion; but I was strongly affected by it. This energy, felt like places with a magnetic field.

During the time that I made these works, I heard the news of the remains of a circle structure being excavated from the Jomon period (5000 years ago) on the coast of the Sea of Japan. That shape was almost the same as my circle work which I mentioned. I made a replica of these Jomon period remains. I divided a chestnut tree into halves, each with a diameter of about one meter (40 inches) and lined them up into a circle shape. This form was also a common structure, similar to the stone circle in England [Stonehenge].

What I remember from that time was a feeling I had experienced during my last installation as well, energy like a magnetic field within that circle. This time I might have experienced close by the center of this work some kind of vertical power of the constructed object of the circle structure from the Jomon period. I think that the meaning of the circle structure of the Jomon period, might be connected at some point. I understood that this circle structure was repeatedly rebuilt in the same place. The trees would always rot; and then they would rebuild at the same place. I think that they repeated this several times, the circle was rebuilt at the same spot. This circle structure had totally different pillar traces from a normal house, a house around a dwelling pit, and they were scattered around the center, the circle structures, of the village. That means, and here I speculate, the circle structure must have been a certain kind of special place. The remains were only leftover parts from the wooden pillars, the top part did not exist anymore. So, how high was the top, what kind of structure was it…? I cannot know this, but for me, considering the structure and the place it was built in, I think it must have been a special place or ceremonial space for a symbolic religious service. A religious, service-like event may have been performed…

Further excavation results, digging deeper, showed remains of an ancient circle structure from where archaeological findings discovered large quantities of the bones of creatures. It was a very fascinating and important discovery that strongly attracted me. There were innumerable dolphin- and human bones and a wooden sculpture, which looked like a totem pole. It was understood to be from the local life of the late Stone Age. The dolphin at that time had been an important protein source. Wherever circle remains of ancient structures are found, there are also abandoned places with the bones of dolphins. It had been a place such as those known places containing large mountains of shells. How-

ever, later in the knowledge of the study of Confucianism, most of the shell mounds, which seemed to be merely a garbage place, had included memorial services for the shellfish. These were special places, a notion, which is generally gaining in strength. That is why this place may also have been a ritual place of mediation for the dolphin, and a place made for establishing contact on a transcendental level. I think it was a special place running vertically through space-time. In this context, unknown, undefined sculptures could be made. These remains are called 'Mawaki Iseki', located on the coast of the Sea of Japan, similar remains are excavated intensively, for example in Niigata and Toyama in Hokuriku and also in the area of Shiga. Up to now, I would guess they have discovered about 10 places. Probably underground in other places there are many more tree-pillar-circle structures asleep under ground. Whether or not they are excavated sometime soon, I think that outlines of the primitive religion from the Jomon period will be gaining in clarity. In the north-east district of the Japanese island, Honshu, there are more stone circle remains. It becomes clear that the stone circles from the north of Japan are graves of leading figures of the area. So, it shows that the use of circularly arranged wooden pillars is concentrated only near the Hokuriku area. In one way or another, they have religious purposes pertaining to death, which seems logical to me.

From the fact that the dolphin bones appeared as archaeological finds, the natural hypothesis is that this was the place where the world of the death spread through space, with the bones of the dolphins as representation. Perhaps that place was the particular place for the sacrificial ceremony for the dolphin… The sacrificial location surrounded by the circle of wooden pillars, this structure was the space which included the empty, hollow, space, which comprised the inside place surrounded by a circle. And the inside of the circle is the concentration of the peculiar magnetic energy that towers in the center. I mentioned before, as the energy whose magnetic field appeared as shape and as death, life, sex, violence and destruction, this turning place is a representation for a deeply related and affected ritual. It embodies a combination of the vertical representation, and the place and form that strive to reach holiness. All the power of my imagination joined together here.

Uneven Distribution of Empty Space Phenomena—
Eastern and Western Types

These empty spaces are about life and death, the place where non-routine religion was founded. The interpretation, which arises, is that here is where sacrifice developed. So, it is my belief that sacrifice has connections with the empty spaces, with their dynamic force, their energy. This vertical energy and the strength for opening up human's living body have parallels. That is why that place where we fall into the depth of human existence is the dimension where the place of sacrifice is opened. But, what I should not fail to state is how important it is to open the physical level as a place of sacrifice, and we must also bear in mind the importance of the existence of the language structure. Sacrifice is nothing more than an artificial and cultural act. Even by falling into the depth of human existence, without language we cannot create our structures about existence. So, for instance, the extent we are seeing the non-verbal world on the surface, that essence exists only as a linguistic event. For example, animals which do not have language cannot have complicated customs like sacrifice. That is also why the vision of sadness appears at our side, in humans with language. Language is obtained in the process of creating some kinds of system such as the custom of sacrifice and those dealing with the relationship to life; I am convinced this had to arise from necessity. In that space-time, empty space phenomena appear that are directly related to and associated with the four elements of fire, water, earth and air. Since the beginning of humanity, these have always accompanied our environment and are related to materials. I think that it is in connection with them that we have established our view of the world since ancient times.

A characteristic of my Japanese culture, or Eastern culture in general is, that this culture, as has often been pointed out before, has empty space in its very center. For example, Roland Barthes indicated that there is an empty space called Imperial Palace in the center of Tokyo, the Japanese capital. Shinto, the Japanese religion, animism, uses a mirror as Goshintai - 御神体 (an object representing a god). Goshintai - 御神体 is central to the representation of what is inherent to religion (sometimes another Goshintai is used). This mirror normally stands on the other side of the door and that round mirror which is a two-sided mirror, is hidden quietly. That mirror, the two-sided mirror, is an amazing thing. It shows everything and thereby empties itself, getting into becoming empty space itself. Roland Barthes points out that that is the shape of representation in Japanese culture. In addition, the mirror takes away the center by having empty space in it, embodying the unique construction of society.

According to Roland Barthes, in western culture there is God, monotheism, seated at the center of society. It is the acquired order of the circle that has a center point. European culture all began from that structure he said. I think, by comparing it, there are surely clear differences in the structures, but, I think the center of the empty space phenomena is also there, hidden in the European culture. For example, there are stone circles in England, or also the amphitheatres can be seen as representations of these phenomena. Or even the structure of the European streets, which are the expanse of the concentric circles from plazas, for the most part rectangular in shape. There are places where there is nothing in the center of the Plaza, the circle, and there are the empty places. In fact, I think, on a fundamental basis, Eastern and Western structures correspond with polytheism and monotheism. We may define these cultures by having the empty space phenomena in the center and cultures, which are packed with rules and norms. However, I wish to get closer to the bottom of this, to the level affecting the depths of the human society where the empty space energy exists that appears in the center of the circle. I think in this respect both Eastern and European cultures have a lot in common.

Sacrificial Ceremony in the Work (1)

The concept with the burning empty space phenomena exists in one of my works [the circle shape on the full-page photo]. Of course, this concept theory is a contradiction, this burning of the empty space phenomena, it's not possible to burn a non-existing substance. Therefore this is only symbolic, a metaphoric expression. The title of the work is *EPITAPH*. It is created with wood; a tube-shaped form which is about four meters wide, hollow and the thickness of the wood is about 60 centimeters. I built the wood up and put oil over it and after that I burned it on the field. The tube-shaped form was a symbol for the empty space phenomena and at the same time a representation of the grave monument. It is also the representation of the body. And burning it with fire is, to burn the symbol which is the empty space 'as the sacred place' of the community, and at the same time burning the representation of death. The burning of the dead person's bodies continuously destroying it and then sacrificing it, those are the only reasons for it. Driven by emotion from this action and experiencing my innermost, if I had to express my emotions in words, it would be ecstasy, enjoyment with a sexual undertone, suffering, overflowing with enthusiasm and fear, this major confrontation, set against a fountain of multiple and conflicting interpretations about a situation, I can only express it like this.

In any case to burn the hollow, so to speak, the 'sacred place', is paramount to burning god. In addition, it is on a par with the sacrifice of god. From this composition, destroying the body as sacrifice, as well as an Gogh cutting off his ear, as it is dealt with by Georges Bataille, I might venture, it touches the sacrifice of god. In Georges Bataille's

opinion, the most pure form of sacrifice is the sacrifice of oneself. The pure form of sacrifice is: to organize a sacrificial ceremony, to execute the sacrifice and to receive the sacrifice. It is the shape in which those three parts unite together, and by space-time transformed from a sacrifice to god into the sacrifice of god. As a thing following the sacrificial ceremony, Georges Bataille cites sacrificial body mutilation as an example. For me, Van Gogh cut off his ear as a gift to a person, perhaps Gauguin. In essence, what Van Gogh did, he must have felt like being the sun itself, god itself, he sacrificed himself like the sun. This is why most of his pictures from his late stage are turned towards the sun. Van Gogh sacrificed his own ear and he turned into the sun itself, to which he continued to devote his entire existence. The sun is slowly destroying itself, burning itself and it keeps on continually giving selflessly itself as the only one existing thing for us. Symbolically the sun is making a sacrifice, is god, priest and, at the same time, sacrifice as existence. The sun is the character of existence, sacrificing itself to god and by sacrificing itself it became god, and therefore it became a sacrifice of god. Van Gogh, who himself by nature is sacrifice religion, in the end by sacrificing himself, I would say, he moved to the other side of the wheat field and he arrived at space-time, a sacred place. I think that the sacrifice of the empty space contains those momentums.

Sacrificial Ceremony in the Work (2)

The origins of my works may be traced to my student days in my human body sculpture class. A certain experience is related to that. I noticed the connection years later, that strong mental relationship or continuity that I have deeply rooted in my memory. At that time, I experienced difficulties with the sculpture practice of using clay to make sculptures of nudes. Because the submission deadline was coming close and I had continual doubts about how to make a sculpture of a nude, I stopped working with the clay. I switched to a direct method of applying plaster. At first I welded a support rod and made a rough form and I attached plaster to that and started modeling. I used newspapers so that the plaster wouldn't leak from the gap of the reinforcing rod, packing them inside the reinforcing rod. I worked in that way and I pushed forward the modeling work. The next difficulty was that I could not unite the bust of the sculpture well with the lower half of the body, so I severed the bust from the lower half of the body. The next step was to remove little by little the pieces packed inside of the work and hollow it out through that process, but I wanted to shorten my work time, so I placed the flame of the gas burner inside my sculpture and burnt it. The result was that the smoke which was coming up by the burning paper and the smoke of the acetylene gas, spread over the inside and the outside of my sculpture, meaning that I ultimately mutilated and scorched it; it became a miserable human body. During that process, I actually experienced certain emotions and a sense of destruction, like setting a living human body on fire and destroying it. In that rough work, I felt my own intoxication by excitement being immersed from that mood. And I had a completely incoherent reality experience, I understood that I would not have experienced these emotions if I had created human sculpture as figurative art and at the same time, I felt a kind of fear and loneliness, a guilty consciousness. The act I had performed was taboo in art. Unexpectedly I had been trying to reach a taboo place. However, I felt excitement there and I even remember sexual pleasure and that condition extended very deep and distanced me. I continued the experienced sacrifice through space-time, scared by deviation phenomena. After that I stopped such actions.

The manifestation of Sacrifice

A life-and-death related invasion, violence, sexual pressure, transcendence and holiness, I think that these elements, colored by space-time, appear in the now and the past and come up in various forms and in unusual places. For example some time ago in Japan a crime was committed, a life destroyed; a 14-year-old boy had cut off the head of another 10-year-old boy and hung it on the wall of the school gate. The boy's confession was a declaration of the action of his work as a sacred ceremony and in the statement after his arrest he declared, "When I was in the fifth grade of elementary school (ten years old), I had my first erection while I dissected a frog, and later in my first year of Junior High School (thirteen years old), I imagined dissecting a human being and greedily devouring the intestines, then I masturbated." That is what he said. And he said about the crime, "I did get an erection while I tightened his neck, I ejaculated at the moment I cut off his neck", and further, when I hung his neck on the front gate of the school, "I got excited without giving any stimulation to my genitals and I had an orgasm, many times". That is what he said. Across this story of the young boy's crime there seems to be some kind of anthropological primitivism, I think I can say there is something in it which is connected with the ancient form of sacrifice. For example, a famous custom from ancient Central America is the sacrificial ceremony of the Aztecs. They believed that honoring the sun god always called for blood. They thought if they did not sacrifice blood, the sun would stop shining. Prisoners of war or members of the community were chosen for sacrifice by their priest. These persons were laid upon the stone altar, tied down, and then a stone blade was driven into their chest and their heart, still beating, was removed and offered to the sun, while they screamed facing the sun. Also, the flesh of the sacrificed person was eaten by members of the community. In fact, I think there is something those ancient ceremonies have in connection with the story from the young boy.

Concerning the Empty Space Theory

I return to what I said earlier 'about the circle'. In the first half of this article, I spoke about the inherent power acting inside of the circle structure. Jomon-ruins were discovered at the coast of the Sea of Japan, the remains of a complex of circular structures, which had been built by lining up wooden pillars. It contained the empty space in the center and at the same time, the bones of innumerable dolphins were discovered directly beneath the empty space, which I have spoken about before. And this fact shows these ruins were a special place that was extended vertically with spirituality. I also spoke about the inherent power acting inside of the circle, which is somehow related. In finding out what is important for questioning the meaning of existence, the crucial elements are: language, life, sacrifice and the circle with its empty space. I imagine this to be the final arrival point of my text. Therefore, now I am going to conclude by explaining the 'empty space theory'.

First of all, I would like to explain why I connect sacrifice with the excavation of the collected dolphin bones brought together in the Jomon remains. Life during the Jomon period was similar with the life form of the Eskimos, they lived on a diet of marine species such as dolphins and seals. In the northern part of the Japanese islands, the Ainu way of life had continued until modern times, these culture forms are overlapping with the Jomon culture. By referring to these two examples, I think we can see this more clearly. For example, I refer to the Eskimo way of life according to what was written by Marcel Mauss in his book of the early 20th century, *Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo*. I think there we can see the situation. Of course it cannot be made directly equivalent to the Jomon society, their fighting with nature, or their hunt without the use of modern weapons, or the communication with nature, but I think there is the possibility to speculate upon their homogeneity with the Jomon society. There is a particular importance in the Eskimo society attributed to the time between the warm summer period and the dark hard winter period, in between changes, almost anything that is continuing to live in the same form, is changing its way of living. During summer, each family spreads over the inland area, engaged in normal family life. But when winter comes, their family structure is dismantled and reorganized into another framework. For example, men gather along the coast and create a life group with a big, shared house. They live in a cooperative housing arrangement and regardless day or night, feast continually, staying high, and often going crazy in such situations. Marcel Mauss sees it expressed in beautiful thoughts, such as sorrowful poems, and as a result he regards the situation as religious life. Every day they are exposed to risking their lives because of the continuous group hunt activities, their half-trance states, where they conquer their fear and then go out for hunting. This is how they reached a passion for religion. The feasts, prayer, play, and work—all of these things we cannot easily separate from each other. They are shared together, as are the possessions of the person, the captured animals, and also concerning women, there is no individual 'ownership'. Everything is shared by the cooperative of society members. Through the communal properties there are no fights over ownership. The fear of death due to the dangers from hunting is the most prevalent, but by getting into a state of emotion, you can overcome fear. When the winter is over, however, this way of living is spontaneously dissolved again and the members go back to their other family life. Perhaps by illustrating these details of the dolphin and seal catches by the Eskimos, the state of Jomon society becomes transparent. I think, furthermore, we can see a parallel relation of the religious feeling and the deposited bones of the dolphins.

For the Ainu, the people who used to live in the north of Japan, it was not the dolphin, but rather their life form had always relied upon the brown bear as their primary source of protein. For them, the brown bear was also a significant religious animal. In a religious context, they would capture a bear cub and respectfully over time, raise it separately from the brown bears they usually eat. So, this cub was given the finest food, better than the regular meal for themselves, and it was attributed the greatest respect as it grew. Then they waited for the right moment, and the community commenced with the ritual. They built the altar and killed the bear that grew up entirely in the center of their human circle. It was killed by a group of people and then the head of the bear was cut off and worshipped on an altar and prayed to. After that, the animal was skinned and tanned and the meat, organs, brain and all those parts included were given separately to community members so that everyone could partake. I think the implication of this ritual is to get in touch with a transcendental meaning. For example, the Aztec gave a heart as task of sacrifice to the sun, and for the Ainu, sacrificing the bear to the community of god was an offering proffered for successful bear hunting and thanksgiving to the bear. The slaughter was the continuing devotion to the divine and also joy. It was a sacrificial cere-

mony. This is one of the reasons on which we might agree that the mental state of the Ainu and the mental state of the Jomon society, overlapped with each other. The group action must be deeply connected with the same kind of mind-set in the Jomon culture. Although, with the example of the Eskimo and Ainu, there the concreteness of the empty space phenomena or circle structure almost never occurs. But, for instance, there were indeed examples where the Eskimos and the Ainu in unusual space-time circumstances appeared as ceremonial sacrificed space-time in the inverted world in an everyday space-time construction, it is certain that it is not possible to see from the outside what the hidden area is, the interior of the empty space, but I think it is safe to say there is no doubt that the empty space phenomena themselves exist within there.

I spoke from different angles about what sacrifice means, but even at present it does not change its eternal mystery. Sacrifice is to cause a mental state of the imagination to switch to another dimension of possibilities. Violence and cruelty exist as an attribute of sacrifice. They are reversed psychological dimensions located in the limitlessly deep beyond. Sacrifice is a kind of a violent mechanism, which has been brought up to the visible world. The sacred dimension is the part of the community, which normally lives as taboo. We experience it when it revives on this side of the community, and its experience becomes fear and joy, as appears with the shared psychological experience involved with life and death. The construction of the process in which the world has been reversed, this level is a metaphor-like image, even if visual from the inside of space-time, when you look from outside, it itself is invisible, it is the thing which is not there, in fact it is only the area of the perception of the empty space. There is no specific thing to be seen, at the place of the community, only space-time is inspiring a sense of magnetic field, it is an implicit recognition.

Until now I have spoken about the empty space characteristic mainly as it appears in Japan, as I mentioned before I think it is also hidden in Western context. There, for example, the existence of Jesus Christ, that should be read in context with sacrifice and the empty space phenomena and that gives us an indication. Jesus, executed on the cross, this clearly takes on a sacrificial character. This sacrifice started before he was born. He received attention but when he died they buried Jesus in a rock tomb, a cave, to show the true meaning of his sacred existence, to work he exists in a quiet way. In fact, from the beginning on he was holy, but he stayed on this side of the world, so to speak as a normal human existence. Through Jesus's execution he disappears; the location where Jesus was buried became hollow and void, empty, the empty space. And by becoming the empty space, he attracts thoughts of people who pursue the hollow. They create questions for the hollow void and answer them themselves and the empty space itself becomes a movement. This process repeats itself and accelerates. The thoughts of the people back then matured in their process of development and as a result a thing called the New Testament was written. This is the point where I would claim that systematized Christianity had begun. The energy that is coming up from that bible was to be further accelerated by the presence of the empty space, the absence of Jesus.

Also in parallel with this revival story, I have come to believe in the existence of 'The Zone' as in *The Stalker* of Andrei Tarkovsky. 'The Zone', which has the supposed potential to fulfill a person's innermost desires, when seen in parallel with the absence of Jesus, provides for the first time a concrete image of the empty space character. This movie, *The Stalker*, does not say much. A certain place appears but it does not disclose what kind of place it is. Because of certain circumstances the place was closed as being taboo. It was suggested that it is a place where something seems to have happened, falling meteorites or visitors from outer space, and it all goes quiet as an alien world which only is called 'The Zone'. But, there are guides for anonymous people who somehow managed to get into it illegally, and it brings up questions as to why they have the wish to go there illegally. What does 'The Zone' mean for those anonymous people with their guide who want to try to get in? This film does not show anything related to that. We are just at the beginning, only to be encouraged to think about this, eventually the region called 'The Zone', no one comes up with meaning or is expecting answers, and it leads to the thought that the empty space itself does not have the will to simply answer the question of meaning. I think, 'The Zone' is the representation of the empty space phenomena. It shows a 'room', in the center of 'The Zone', where humans are granted a wish. The opportunity to realize the desire is in a certain sense a miracle and a sacrament that reminds us of a sacred center. Therefore the location for 'The Zone' involved the centralized dynamic forces as such, the distant location, the invisibility, indicated by the illusion from the daily world we normally live in. I imagine that this perhaps could emerge for the first time in space-time. It is as if the thoughts separate from the consciousness of individuals, like the sea of Solaris to be actualized as a visual thing, the insides of the thoughts in the community, these thoughts are like small fires lighting up the place. I would like to say, this is a place where the illusions that have been eliminated from daily life are collected. When the intruder from 'The Zone' was brought back by the guide and returned to the original location, he noticed that not a thing about him had changed, the nature of 'The Zone' does not allow to look into the inside without violating taboo. Therefore, the person who had returned was the equivalent of having sacrificed himself. The specific location phenomena of 'The Zone' or the empty space phenomena, by any meaning, does not allow an invasion by a member which is living on this side of the world, it only appears to members from outside of the community.

If we can create a sculpture as an entity, including the complete essence of the nature of these empty space phenomena, it would be the ultimate sculpture. But at the same time, ironically, these works of art are only possible as invisible things. In that sense, the sculpture of the empty space phenomena occurs only in its conception. In reality it is not possible to create this; only the thoughts of the possibility for creating the ultimate sculpture exist. So, for an artist, 'Sonzai' 存在 [Existence], which are thoughts deep inside humans or an illusion, is the ultimate sculpture, you might find a light on the horizon by maintaining an awareness concerning all thoughts that are hidden deep inside.

遠藤利克

2008年4月2日、世田谷美術館において行われたシンポジウム、「存在」においてのトーク

テキスト補足：2008年4月 - 2009年1月

遠藤利克、1950年岐阜県高山市生まれ。

「存在」から、あるいは空洞性について

はじめに
「存在」について。今回与えられたこのテーマは、御承知のように、永遠普遍の哲学的課題であり、納得のいく解答が容易に得られる類のものではありません。むしろ答えはそこに言及する人間の数だけあるとすら言える。個々の人間が、どのような文脈において、どのように考えたかということだけが問われる、困難なテーマなのです。

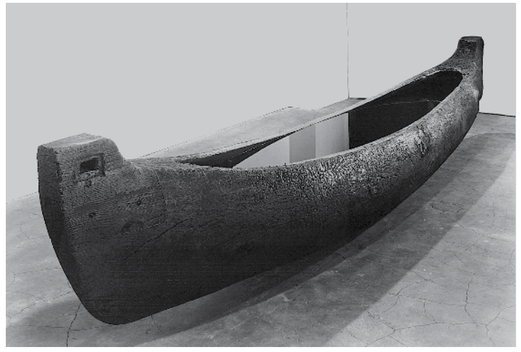
だからこの課題は、一介の美術作家である私の手に負えるものではありません。唯一、私に取り組むことができるのは、ひとりの美術家の個的な文脈において個的な議論の展開を試みること以外にはありません。さらに今回のシンポジウムのように美術に引き付けたところでとなると、すでに美術そのものが存在への問いかけに促された領域であり、存在論を発信し続けるメディアであるという大前提は外せません。美術は、言語的側面と非言語的側面のあいだを激しく振動する特殊な場です。そこにおいてわれわれは常に、解体と構築という、二重化された存在論の様態へと促され、晒されているのです。

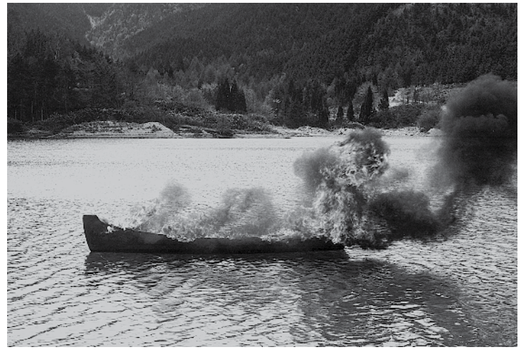
存在と言語
美術において存在を問うということは、とりもなおさず人間を問うことであり、人間を問うということは言語を問うことであります。さらに、われわれ人間が事物を認識しうるのは、事物を対象化すると同時に自己を対象化する視点をもったからであり、自己を対象化しうるのは、われわれが言語という手段によって自己を自己の外へ置く視点を獲得したからです。だからわれわれはまず、存在論の大本である言語についての言及から始めるべきだろうと思います。

ところで、哺乳類としての人間が他の哺乳類から区別されるのは、いま述べたように、事物の対象化へと執拗に駆り立てられるわれわれ人間固有の欲望ゆえですが、それは人間が進化した哺乳類だからではなく、むしろ、できそこないであったためだと言われています。できそこない故にわれわれはある時期から超未熟児として生まれるようになり、未熟児であるがゆえに、長期にわたり母親との密接な関係性の保育器の中で養育されざるを得なくなった。そして養育という鏡像的プロセスを通して自我が、また同時にその背後においては無意識領域が、言語を媒介として形成されるようになった。そして、極めて複雑な人工環境である心的構造が徐々に内面化されていった。それが我々の、存在の本源であり、根っ子なのだろうと思います。そうした成り立ちゆえに、その人工環境は極めて不安定なものとならざるを得なくなったわけで、ゆえにわれわれは、かりそめの安定を求めて外界の対象化へと常に駆り立てられる存在となったのです。

そして言語の介在を被った人間が、いかなる結果になったかというと、われわれは、言語機構に伴う際限の無さによって、無限にひらかれた存在となったわけです。また他方、言語構築のもう一つの側面としての現実との遊離性において、われわれは限りなく幻想的存在となった。つまり人間は、自然的所与としての現実的基盤を失い、その代用品としての文化、つまり言語によって構成された幻想的な人口環境の中に暮らすようになった。要は、われわれは本源的にバーチャルな存在となったわけです。ここにこそ、われわれの存在論の在り処があると思うのです。

言語によって構築された世界は捏造性が強く、本来の意味での実態というものはない。言葉は、最初のあいだは現実と密着して機能してゆく。けれど、しだいに現実的基盤から遊離してゆき抽象度を増してゆく。そしてその抽象性に満ちた言語機構により、人間は、世界を認知、把握するようになってきたわけです。かといって、われわれ人間には言語が介在しない認識、言語なしで成立する存在のありようというものは、無いわけです。ということは、われわれにとっての世界とはひとえに、言語を介在させることによってはじめて経験し得るもの、目に見えるもの、知覚できるものなのです。逆に言えば、すべては無限定的であり、可能性においてはどのような世界もありうる。何か確固とした世界の構造、あるいは物象化世界が存在するのではなく、われわれの目の前には、言語によって構成された、つまり、言語共同体の共同幻想が立ち上げた現象世界が、仮象性に満ちてきらめき、乱反射するのみだということです。つまり、まずはフロイトのいう多形倒錯場のようなものがあって、そのあとに、一定の価値構造が共同幻想として共有されてくる。そして、しだいに共有された価値だけが、世界において唯一、存在しうるものとなっていったということです。





それを具体的な例をあげて説明してみます。たとえばここに物があるとします。たとえば石。石と命名されたこの物体が、我々にとっていま目の前に在る対象です。しかしわれわれは果たして、本当に石を見ているのだろうかということが気になってくる。われわれは石をみている、それは確かなのだけれど、しかし実際には、石を見ているようでいて、本当は石と命名された事物を、さらには石という言葉に規定された何かを見ているのに過ぎないのではないか。石と名付けられた事物と本来の石自体の間には、もしかしたら埋めがたい断絶があるのではないのか。そのような疑問が湧きあがってくるのです。

われわれは名付けることにおいてはじめて、事物を知覚可能なものとして見ることができるようになる。でもそれは、石自体の本質をみることと並行しているのかというと、そのあたりはきわめて不確かになってくるのです。石自体とは何なのか。石と名付けられた事物と、名を剥奪されて目の前に投げ出されて在る、名状しがたい事物とのあいだの違いは何なのか。「名づけること」と「存在の本質」のあいだにひろがる差異とは何なのか。そもそも言語的存在であるわれわれにとって、石を先入観なしで経験することは可能なのか。いや、ほんとうはもはや不可能ではないのか。というよりわれわれは、言葉を介在させることによって初めて石を見ることが可能となるのではないのか・・・。

このように考えてくると、われわれにとっての存在とは、むしろ、名付けることにおいてはじめて立ち上がってくるもの、逆に言語の介入なしでは作動を開始しないものと捉えた方が矛盾がないのではないかと思います。以上述べてきたことが、私の個人的な文脈における、存在についてのある段階までのイメージです。

モノ派について
ところで、日本にはモノ派と呼ばれる美術のスクールがあります。そこに属する、李禹煥という作家は、彼の書いた関根信夫論の中で重要な言葉を語りました。「モノの埃をはらう」という言葉です。それはその後、モノ派を象徴する言葉だと考えられるようになりましたが、私としてはそれを、人間がモノと出会うことの本質的な在りようについて語った言葉だと捉えています。そこにおいて李禹煥は、モノとの本当の出会いは、事物から埃を取り払うことにおいて始めて達成されると語っています。われわれ人間がモノ自体——あるいは存在自体と言い替えてもよいと思うのですが——と直接、純粋に出会うためにはどうすべきかというと、まず、モノの表面に堆積した多くの埃をはらう必要があるだろうと、そして何の不純物も付着しない裸形のモノ自体と対峙する必要があるだろうと、そのように、比喩的に表現したわけです。それがある時期のモノ派の制作基準となっていきました。そして私はその「埃」とはすなわち「言葉」のことではないかと解釈したのです。

モノに纏わりつく「埃」、あるいは存在に纏わりつく「埃」、それらはつまるところ、「手垢にまみれた言葉の堆積」である。このように、私は解釈しました。「手垢にまみれた言葉の堆積」によって覆われた事物は、事物との純粋で無媒介的な出会いということを不可能にし、むしろわれわれは、使い古され固定化された観念を通してしか、事物を眺めることができなくなった。それではけっして、新しい次元を開いてゆくような根源的な出会いとはならない。むき出しの存在性と直にまみえることにはならないのだと。だから逆に、モノとの本源的な出会いを達成するためにはまずその表面を覆う「埃」を払うこと、つまり「手垢にまみれた言葉」を払うことだと・・・。

では他方、そのような究極的な存在との出会いがあるかといえば、現実的には、漸近的な接近の度合いにおいてしか達成され得ないと言えます。逆に、事物あるいは存在なるものとの完全なる無媒介的な出会いが達成された姿とは、存在を覆う「言葉の埃」が完全に取り払われた剥き出しの存在性が露呈した状態です。想像してみてください。そうなった場合の実態とはすなわち、禁忌の覆いを剝ぎとられた溶解と灼熱の煉獄、むき出しの開口部そのものなわけです。耐えられるものではありません。見てはいけない冥界です。われわれはそれを覗いたことによって、むしろ絶対的な恐怖の中に墜落せざるをえない。ここにもまた、存在の開示をめぐる矛盾性の次元が露呈してくると言えます。

角度を変えて説明してみます。ふたたび石を例に挙げます。石は、日常いたるところに存在しています。通常われわれは、石を見た瞬間に、それを石として認識する。その、石を石と見る我々の視線は、常套化したものです。何の危機も何の開示ももたらすことなく、安全で惰性化し弛緩した灰色の世界です。では、その石の上に堆積した埃を払って、石を石とする自明の命名性、習慣化した知覚を全部とり去っていった場合、最終的に残るのは、何の埃にも覆われない絶対純粋性の事物へと至った石そのものであると想定できま

す。ところがその絶対純粋界に入った石は、おそらくわれわれにとっては知覚不可能な次元ではないでしょうか。逆にいえば、言語的な存在となったわれわれ人間には、純粋還元された事物や世界との直接的な出会いはあらかじめ封じられており、われわれに許された出会いとは唯一、言語を介することにおいて始めて扉が開かれる次元でしかないのではないかと・・・。そして、世界との実存的出会いは、言葉という埃の除去作業の過程において近似値的に達成されるほかに、可能性はないのではないでしょうか。

モノと言語

さて、それがモノと言葉の関係のありようということなのですが、次に、そのモノとモノの名前、つまり命名ということの怪しさについて少し触れてみたいと思います。例えば花崗岩なら花崗岩でよいのですが一定の鉱物を思い描いてみてください。たとえばそれが、海から突き出た巨大な岩の塊であった場合、我々は通常それを陸と言うわけです。そしてそれが少し小さくなってくると、山、それがもっと小さくなると岩、適度な大きさであれば石、それがもっと砕かれてくると砂になって、粒子状になってくると土になると・・・、同じ花崗岩性の物質であっても、その大きさによって名前が変わり、意味がぜんぜん違ってくる。ここにおいて、実際は、われわれは物質のどの部分を見ているのか、どの文脈を見ているのか、そうしたことが、非常に曖昧になってくる。たしかに科学的な元素記号としては同一のものを見ているのだけれど、実際的なイメージとしては、それぞれ違うものとして認識している。このような具合で、言語によって構築された世界の曖昧性というか幻想性というか怪しさというものが、図らずも漏出してくる。要するにわれわれは日常において、世界を、確立された確実なものとして思い込みがちですが、実際にはこのあたりの曖昧さの中に住み込んでいる。逆にそれこそが、人間の世界であり、いかに幻想性に満ちていて、情念的で、エロティックなものであるかということの証左となっているのです。

生命と言語

ここまでは、われわれ人間が本質的には言語的存在でありそこに根源的に規定されているということについて話をしてきましたが、そのことを前提として、次の段階に行きたいと思います。まず、言語によって世界を認識し構築してゆく機構についてですが、ここではとりあえずそれを、言語分節という言い方で統一させていただきます。

その文脈でいえばわれわれは、世界を言語によって分節し、認識して、そのプロセスの連続性において世界内部に住み込んでいるわけです。しかもその言語分節された世界は、人工的世界あるいは文化化された世界であって、対極としてイメージされる、本能に規定された自然世界ではない。だからそのプロセスは、人工的であるがゆえに限界がなく、歯止めというものがないのです。わかりやすい例としては、たとえば非言語的な生物、たとえば犬やシマウマは文化を持たず、本能に規定された行動形式を繰り返すことで種を維持しています。だから彼らは、けしてその循環からはみ出すことはない。生存形式が変化することはなく、種が発生した当初から同じ形式をくりかえしているわけです。しかしわれわれにはそうした形式性はもはや無い。そしてその限界がない不確定な生存形式が、逆に、われわれに多様な展開をもたらし、たとえば壮大な都市を創出させ、システムや制度を作らせ、さまざまな道具を発明させてきたのです。また、いろいろな建築物、構築物へと向かい、さらには宇宙開発にまで進展させてきたわけです。

でもその過程において唯一、その際限のない言語構築の連鎖を止めるものが存在する。その言語的現象世界を限定する何かがあるのです。私はそこがひじょうに重要な部分だと感じているのですが、それこそが生命とよばれるものだと思っています。つまり我々人間における生身の肉体、生身の身体です。そこが唯一、われわれが、非言語的生命体つまり野性性に満ちた動物世界へと繋がり、また彼らと共有する部分であるわけです。われわれはあらかじめ野生からは隔てられている。だから、言語発生以前はるか彼方から継承し続けているこの生命、身体、本能の残滓には太古から立ち昇る悲しみがあります。しかしこの存在の悲しみこそ、いかような意味においてもわれわれを、生命の淵源性、内奥性に結び付ける聖なる通路だと思うのです。

では、その生身の身体とはなにか。人間の意志からは独立して生命活動を維持し、生殖作用を繰り返し、種を持続させていくその生身の身体というものは何なのか。それはもちろん人間が作ったものではなく、人間の言語が作ったわけでもなく、我々が言語的な生き物になる以前から獲得され継承されてきたものです。その意味では他者性に属しているといってよい。そこが人間存在の言語的無際限性というものを否定し、限定付けているのです。それと同時に他方では、人間世界の活動性というか、エネルギーの根源としてのエロティシズムにも繋がってゆく。

人間存在を、私なりに定義すると、われわれは明らかに言語によって規定されていると同時に、いま述べてきたような生身の身体性によっても限定されている。そしてその両極性こそが、人間の狂おしくも美しい、情念と理性の対極性を体現させてきたと思っています。つまり、生命体としての個体とその存続の限界、人間の霊的超越性と肉体性の限界は、死滅し消滅する物質的存在が引き起こす悲の循環性というか、悲のダイナミズムを体現させてきたのです。またそれは、生と死、そして生殖する二つの性の連関の坩堝の中で、エロティシズムを伴いながら次第に超越的なる次元へと吹き上がる契機ともなったのです。生と性と聖と死の連関運動が、われわれの生の深奥を、また存在を保証する唯一のものとなったのです。

言語と供犠

われわれ人間は、言語的な生きものであると同時に生身の肉体的生命を持った存在でもある。そしてその両極が交錯するような生存形式を古代から持続してきたわけです。さらに両極が過熱しスパークし、存在の深部に下降してゆくような次元が現れ、その時空こそが、われわれにとってのいちばん根源的な領域を形成している。そして私はそれを、古代からおこなわれてきた、生命の破壊を伴う宗教的行為に見るのです。ではなぜその行為を根源的と看做すかといえば、それはこの現象がどの宗教に始まりにおいてもみられること、また、世界のどの文化の深部にも偏在する、人間の霊的な属性であること、以上の理由からです。そしてそれこそが、一般的に供犠として定義付けられる、共同体内に内在する行為に他なりません。

供儀は、超越的とみなされる存在に対して犠牲をささげる共同体的儀式行為です。具体的には、選ばれた同胞の殺害行為として、あるいは供犠当事者の身体毀損行為として現れます。そして次第に代理としての動物の破壊へ、さらに工作された人形や動物の像あるいは物体へと移行して行くのが一般的です。そしてすべては神的なるものとの関係性において実行されるのです。

一方、このような、生命を破壊するという非日常的な儀式空間は、古代的心性にいろどられた残虐行為ではありますが、そのポテンシャルは現代においても失われているわけではなく、それはかたちを変え、場所を変えて、ひそやかに出現し、その意味は実現されているのではないかと思われます。装いは解体され、ふつうには目に見えない状態で、風習ですら無く、一種の野蛮性をともないながら、予測を裏切るような形に変容し、いろいろな場所に噴出しているのではないかと考えるのです。

この供犠の謎は、人々を訳もなく、狂おしく惹きつけるのですが、その謎は最終的にはその両義的なパワーをもってわれわれを引き裂き、一様な解釈を拒絶して立ちはだかり、われわれをして沈黙の場所に呪縛するほかないものでもあります。

作品の文脈

このあたりで気分をかえて、私自身の作品の文脈に即した話をしたいと思います。

まずこの写真の作品（英訳頁-図版1）は、今まで話してきたような考え方の発端になるような作品だと考えています。１９７８年に所沢の野外展のために制作した作品です。制作当初、私はこの写真にあるようなものとは全く別のプランを持っていました。しかし、試行錯誤を繰り返してゆく過程で、いくつかの偶然も加わって、最終的にこのようなかたちになりました。まず、地面に直径2m位の穴を掘り、その中心に器を埋める。そして、器に水を満たす。この作業を繰り返し、私は複数の縦穴を掘りました。

私は、その作業を続けながら、ある幻想にとらわれていきました。それは、あたかも遺跡を発掘するようなイメージ、また同時に水という物質を考古学的な埋蔵遺産として発掘しているようなイメージでした。私はそうした錯覚にとらわれていったのです。いま満たしたこの水は単なる水ではない。H_2Oとしての水ではない。むしろ文化的に、人間の歴史と記憶が堆積する地層から湧き出してくる特別な水、むしろ文化的な水、あるいは水という物質に仮託されて蓄積されてきた意味の集合、象徴の集合、まさに集合的な無意識の表象としてみえてきたのです。私は突然現れた幻想、あるいは世界の見え方の角度に、自ら訝り驚きました。世界のみえかたがぐるぐると回転し、眩暈のような気分に襲われました。古代から蘇った表象としての水を考古学的に発掘したと感じたのです。

そしてそれと同時に、もうひとつの重要なことを私は思い出しました。それは、私の生まれ故郷のある仏教寺院の、ある遺物についての記憶でした。その寺院には一つ石が残されていて、それは五重の塔の礎石だといわれる大きな石でした。私は、この石のことを思い出したのです。礎石には塔の芯柱が埋め込まれていたとされる円形の穴が掘られていました。いまでは建物も柱も無くなっているにも関わらず、この石だけ残り、穴にはいつも雨水が溜まっていました。子供のころいつも遊んでいた場所なのですが、先ほど述べた作品を作った時、この礎石のことを思い出したわけです。

さらに、この礎石の下には少女が埋まっているという伝説がありました。日本には、建物を作るときに、建物を強固な永遠の建築にするため、一種の生贄として柱の下に少女を埋める風習があります。迷信というかアニミズムを背景にした考え方なのですが、確かにこの下には少女が埋められていたはずだと・・・。私はその伝説を思い出したのです。そのときに私の中で、断片的で無意識的なイメージが、一定の流れを伴って繋がった気がしました。柱が無くなったこの穴に溜まった水、その水というものと、この死体のイメージが垂直的に結びあうような、一種の直感に満

ちた文脈というか、連続性が成立したのです。その水と、穴の円環形態と、死の表象が、意味として垂直に直列したのです。

人類学的な意味としては、少女を犠牲として生き埋めにする行為―日本では人柱というのですが―も、供犠の一種だと言えるのではないでしょうか。だが、その供犠された少女の上の礎石にたまった水。それは明らかに、ただの水ではない。そこに現れた事象は、現れた記号を深層の思考において読み込めと囁いているように思えたのです。その文脈においては、この水も先ほど述べた作品の水も、H_2Oとして規定される化学物質ではなく、表象性の文脈において現れる―それはアジアや日本の文化に限定されたものではなく、ヨーロッパにも、アフリカにも通底するものだと思いますが―意味の総体としての水なのだと。水というものは、一つの象徴的物質として使われ、扱われる場合が非常に多いわけですが、そうした意味を含みこんだ物質ではないかと考えたのです。

私はその後、作品に水を使用するとき、つまり美術の文脈において水を用いる時、その水が歴史的に持っている背景、意味性、その他文化的要素を無視しては成り立たないと考えるようになったのです。そして、以降、私は水を使うことが多くなりました。

（その後、生まれ故郷の仏教寺院の礎石と人柱の話は無関係であり、近隣の城の建設時における伝説と、記憶が混同されていたことが判明した）

円環について
これは水を使ったイベントです（英訳頁-図版2）。丸い器を、地面にサークル状にいくつも埋めて、水の円環を作りました。これは、一日だけのイベントだったのですが、朝から作業を開始して日没までかかり、解体して帰ったのは夜でした。先ほど穴の作品の話をしましたが、それを引き継いで、ここでは水による円環を作りました。このとき初めて円環構造の作品を作ったのです。さらに数カ月後、画廊において、今度は古い電信柱を用意し、それもまた円環状に並べ設置しました。木の柱による円環でした。柱の上部を彫り貫き、その頂点に水を満たして、ちょうど視線の位置に、柱の上部に貯められた水が円を描き、サークル状の水面になるように･･･（英訳頁-図版3）。

この作品の展示作業中、私は、ある身体的な奇妙な経験をしました。円環の外と内を出入りしながら仕事を続けるうちに、円環の中心に近付くにつれて、微妙な力が働き始めるような感覚を覚えたのです。たとえてみるなら、中心にゆくに従い垂直的な力が上方と下方に突き抜けて行くといった感じでした。これはまったく錯覚かもしれないと思いましたが、それよりも、円環が持つ形態的な力ではないかという考えに強く捉えられてゆきました。そういう場の持っているちから、いわゆる磁場なのではないかと･･･。

さらに、その作品を制作した時期に、私はあるニュースに出会いました。それは、日本海沿岸の入り江において、縄文時代の円環状の構造をもった遺跡が発掘されたというニュースでした。そのかたちは、先に述べた円環の作品とほぼ一致していました。その後、縄文時代の遺跡を再現したレプリカを制作しました。直径１ｍぐらいの栗の木を半分に割って、円環状に並べた、イギリスのストーンサークルとも共通した構造物でした。

そのとき私が思い出したのは、私が以前に感じた円環がもつ磁場のようなちからでした。もしかしたら作品の中心で経験した、垂直的なある種の力というものと、縄文時代の円環構造の構築物に仮託された意味とが、どこかの点で繋がっているのではないかと･･･。

発掘調査を続けていくうちに、何回にも渡って同じ場所に同じものが繰り返し建て替えられていることが解りました。木は朽ちてなくなるものですが、なくなるとまた同じ場所に建て替える。そういうことの繰り返しのなかで、何回も同じ場所に同じ円環が作られたのだと思うわけです。しかもこの円環構造の構築物というものは、周辺に散在する竪穴式住居などの普通の住居とはまったく違う柱跡を持っていて、しかも集落の中心あたりにある。ということは、ここが、ある特別の場所であったのではないかという推測にゆきつくわけです。遺跡としては柱だけが腐らないで発掘されて、その上は腐ってしまって存在しない。だから上の方がどの程度の高さだったのか、どういう構造だったかということは定位できないのですが、でも私としては、その構造物およびそれが建てられていた場所が、特別な、象徴的な祭祀空間というか儀式的空間だったのではないかと考えるわけです。そこで祭祀的な行事が行われていたのではないかと･･･。

また発掘調査において、その環状遺構をさらに掘り下げていった結果、そこからは生物の骨が大量に出土したのです。これは極めて興味深く重大な発見であり、私を強く惹きつけました。まず、無数のイルカの骨、そして人骨、そしてトーテムポールのような様相をした木の彫刻などでした。その事実からわかるのは、石器時代後期のその地域の生活の中で、まずはイルカが重要な蛋白源であったとこと、もう一つは、その環状遺構のあった場所が、イルカの骨の捨て場所。たとえば貝塚のような場所であっただろうということです。しかし最近の考古学的知見においては、多くの貝塚が単にゴミ捨ての場であったという以上に、貝の供養も含めた特別のトポスを形成していたのではないかという説が有力になっています。だからこの場所もまた、イルカを媒介とした祭祀性というか、超越的なレヴェルとのコンタクトを目的とした場所。垂直的に時空を貫く特別の場所であったのではないかと思うわけです。その文脈の流れにあって、こういった不思議な彫刻も、作られたのだろうと。

この遺跡は「真脇遺跡」と呼ばれていますが、真脇だけではなく、その遺跡に近接する日本海沿岸各地、例えば新潟、富山、北陸、それから滋賀県を跨ぐ地域にも、同じ構造をもった遺構が集中的に発掘されています。現在まで発見されているのはおそらく１０数箇所くらいだろうと思うのですが、おそらく他の場所の地底にも、遙かに多くの同じような環状木柱列構造の遺構が眠っているはずで、いずれさらに発掘されていくだろうと思います。そしてそのあかつきには、縄文時代の原始宗教形態の輪郭がもっと明らかにされてゆくのではないかと考えます。

ところで、日本列島の東北地方に行くと、石の円環遺構が多くなってきます。そして、北日本のいわゆるストーンサークルは、土地の有力者の墳墓であることが明らかになってきています。だから、その使途の明らかになっていない、北陸近辺だけに集中する環状木柱列遺構も、何らかのかたちで死にまつわる祭司的目的をもっていたと考える方が無理が無いのではないでしょうか。その下にイルカの骨が出土しているという事実からしても、そこは、イルカの

骨に表象される死の世界がひろがる空間であったという仮説は不自然ではないはずです。おそらくその場所は、非日常的な聖なる場所であった。さらに言えばそこは、イルカをめぐる供犠の場であったと･･･。

また、環状木柱列に囲まれた聖なる場所性は、構造的には空洞性を内包する空間でもありました。空洞とは円環に囲まれた内側の場のことです。そして円環の内側とは、中央に向かって磁場が集約する特異な場所です。だから、前に触れたように私はその形態が現わす磁場としてのちからと、死、生、性、暴力、破壊といった祭祀的表象が循環する場が、深く関連付けられて成立しているだろうと考えるのです。その場は共同体の垂直的表象性へと収斂してゆき、聖性に至りつく場所であり、形態だったということです。ここに、私のすべての想像力は集約してゆくわけです。

空洞性の偏在・東洋と西欧
かの空洞の場が生と死をめぐる祭司的な非日常の場であったという前提にたてば、続いてそこから導き出される解釈としては、その場所がかなりの確率で、供犠が展開される場であったということです。だから供犠は、空洞が内包する力動性と表裏一体だったと考えられるのです。存在の深みに降りて行くことと、生身の身体が開かれてゆく強度は比例します。だから、その深みに降りていった場所こそが、供犠という次元が開かれる場所であるといえるわけです。でも見逃してはいけないのは、いかほどに身体的レヴェルへと開かれた供犠の場であるとしても、そこもまた厳粛に、言語的構造の中にしか存在しないという側面なのです。供犠もまた人為的、文化的行為に他ならないということなのです。ゆえにわれわれの、存在の深みに降りてゆく構造性もまた、常に言語というものを抜きにしては考えられないということです。だから、仮に表層的にはいかに非言語的な世界に見えようとも、その本質は言語的な出来事でしかありえない。たとえば人間意外の言語をもたない動物が供犠のような複雑な習俗を持ち得ないというのが、その反証になるだろうと思います。ゆえにそれは、人間の言語的側面が現わす荘重なる幻像だといえるのです。

供犠という風習は、言語が、ある種のシステムを作り上げてゆく過程で派生してきて、生命との関係においてどうしても発現せざるを得なかった必然性を、どこかに持っているのだと私は確信しています。その時空間に、空洞性が現れてくる。同時に、火と水そして土と空気というような、四元素といわれる原初的な物質が直接的にかかわってくる。人類の発生以来、常に付き従い関係してきた物質、そして環境。それらとの対応関係のなかで、われわれは古代からの世界観を蓄えてきたと考えるわけです。

日本文化、あるいは東洋文化の特徴は、その中心に空洞をかかえた文化だと、たびたび指摘されてきました。例えばロラン・バルトは、日本の首都である東京の中心には皇居という空洞が存在すると指摘しています。また、日本のアニミズム宗教である神道は、その御神体（神そのものではなく、神の表象としての依代）に鏡を用いています。御神体とはこの宗教固有の中心的表象（鏡以外が御神体である場合もある）のことですが、それは普段は扉の向こう側にあって、その丸い両面鏡はひっそりと隠されている。鏡は、周りをすべて写し込み自らを空虚にして、空洞そのものとなりきる不思議な事物です。ロラン・バルトは、それが日本文化を表象するかたちであり、加えて、なかに空洞を擁することで中心を不在化した、固有の構造性を体現しているのだと指摘するのです。

しかし、それに反して西欧文化というものは、中心に共同体の核としての一神教の神が場を占め、そこが中心となってすべては同心円状に秩序つけられている、ヨーロッパ文化のすべてはそこから始まっている、そういう構造だと彼はいっています。確かに比較すればその構造的差異は明らかだと思います。でも私は、中心の空洞性は、ヨーロッパ文化の中にも潜在しているのではないかと考えています。たとえばイギリスのストーンサークル。あるいは円形競技場などにみられる表象性。また、ヨーロッパの街路の構造、そ

れは正方形状の広場を中心に同心円状の広がりを持ちますが、その円の中心の広場には何もない場所がある、そこは空っぽの空間になっているのです。

それで、私はこのように考えます。つまり、基本軸としては東洋的構造と西欧的構造は、多神教と一神教に対応し、それは中心に空洞性をもつ文化と中心が超規範によって充填された文化として定義付けてもよいと考えます。しかしそうした次元をさらに下方に降りていった、人間の共同体の深層に連なるレヴェルにおいては、その円環の中心部に現れる空洞の力というものが存在し、そこにおいては東洋もヨーロッパも、その作用は同質のものとして共通しているのではないかと思うのです。

作品における供犠（1）
ところで私の作品のひとつに、空洞性を焼くというコンセプトを持った作品があります（全頁写真）。もちろん空洞性を焼くなどとは論理矛盾であって、物質として実在しないものを焼くことなどできません。だからこれはあくまでも象徴的、比喩的言い方ではありますが、その作品のタイトルは「ＥＰＩＴＡＰＨ」というものです。空洞を内包した円筒状の形態で、木材によって制作されています。直径は４m、壁の厚みは0.6m程あります。それを原野に組み上げてオイルをかけて焼きました。垂直に立った円筒形態は空洞を表象するものであり、同時に、墓碑を表象するものです。さらに、身体を表象するものでもあります。それに火をかけて焼くということは、空洞という、共同体の「聖なる場」としての記号を焼くことであり、同時に死の表象を焼くことであり、あなたと私自身を、そして死者に連続する身体を焼くこと、そして破壊し供犠することに他なりません。その行為のうちに働く感情、そして私の内に経験される感情をあえて言葉にするなら、それは、狂喜、悦楽、苦痛、熱狂、恐怖といった、相矛盾し、対立し、相反する多義性の泉としか言いようのないものなのです。

ともあれ、空洞といういわば「聖なる場」を焼くことは、神を焼くことに等しいといえます。さらには神の供犠に等しいといえます。この構図は、「供犠的身体毀損とゴッホの切られた耳」においてバタイユが語るところの神の供犠に近接すると言えなくもない。そこを、バタイユは、供犠のもっとも純粋な形態として評価し、自己自身の供犠という言いかたをしています。

供犠の純粋形態とは、供犠するものと、されるもの、そして供犠を執行する祭司という三者が一体化したかたちであり、また、神への供犠が神の供犠へと反転する時空でもあります。そしてその供犠に準ずるものとして、彼は供犠的身体毀損をあげます。ゴッホはゴーギャンへの贈与として耳を切り落としますが、本質のところでゴッホが見続けていたのは、自己供犠者の表象としてその頂点に立つ太陽そのものでした。だから彼の晩期の絵は、その殆どが太陽に向かっています。ゴッホは自らの耳を供犠し太陽自体に向かって全存在を贈与し続けたのです。

太陽とは、自己を破壊し、自己を燃焼させ、自己を無償に贈与しつづける唯一の存在者の表象なのです。象徴的には、太陽は、供犠する者であり祭司であり、同時に供犠されるものでもある存在者なのです。そうした、太陽的存在へと同一化した者は、神へ供犠する者から瞬間的に神へと同一化し、そして神を供犠するものして反転する。天性の自己犠牲的宗教者であるゴッホは、最終的には、自己を供犠することによってはじめて麦畑の向こう側へと反転し、聖なる時空へ消尽していったのだと言えるのです。そして空洞の供犠とは、同様の契機を孕んでいるものだと思うわけです。

作品における供犠（2）
はなしは飛びますが、この作品系列の背景には、学生時代の人体彫刻制作時における、ある体験が関与しています。関与に気付いたのは後年になってからなのですが、その強い心的同質性というか連続性に深閑とした記憶があります。

当時、彫刻実習の粘土を用いた裸婦像制作の課題が難航していました。提出期限が迫っていたことと、裸婦像を制作することに疑義が湧き続けていたことで、私は、粘土による制作を切り上げ、急遽、石膏の直づけ工法に切り替えました。その工法を説明しますと、まず鉄筋を溶接しておおまかなかたちを作り、そこに石膏を盛り付けてモデリングしてゆくのです。そのとき、石膏が鉄筋の隙間からもれないように新聞紙などをまるめて鉄筋の内側に詰め込んでいきます。そうしておいてモデリング作業を進めてゆくわけです。ここにおいてさらに、彫像の上半身と下半身の造形を統一できず、私は、上半身と下半身を切断してしまいました。

そのあとの工程としては、なかに詰め込まれた紙片を少しずつ除去していってなかを空洞にしてゆくわけですが、私はその手間を短縮するために、ガスバーナーの炎を内部に吹き込んで燃やしました。

結果として、紙が燃焼する時に発生する煤と、アセチレンガスの煤が彫像の内と外に蔓延し、結果的に、切断され黒こげになった、悲惨な人体ができあがったのです。その過程で、いつしか、生身の身体を火にかけ破壊しているような感覚に、そしてある種の情念に、私はとらわれていました。その粗暴な作業のなかで、歓喜と陶酔の気分に浸されてゆく自分を感じていました。そして、造形芸術としての人体彫刻制作の文脈ではけして生きられることのない、まったく異質のリアリティーを経験していたのです。

同時にそのとき、恐れというか孤独な罪悪感のようなものも感じていました。自分がやっていることは、美術において実現させてはいけない行為であり、図らずも禁忌の場所に到達しようとしている。にもかかわらず私はそこに喜悦をみていて、また、性的な快楽すら覚えつつあり、その状態が深々と恐ろしく見離されたものでした。

いまから思えば、これは供犠の時空において経験される何ものかと連続していると考えられるのですが、そのときはあまりの逸脱性に怯え、以降、そうした行為を封印してしまいました。

現れとしての供犠
こうした、死と生をめぐる侵犯性、暴力性、性的快楽性、超越性、聖性にいろどられた時空は、今においても、あるいは過去においても、日常の閾を超えてゆく場所に、さまざまにかたちを変えてあらわれるだろうと思います。

たとえば日本で起きた「酒鬼薔薇事件」と呼ばれる、１４歳の少年による犯行においては、被害者である１０歳の少年の頭部を切断して、小学校の校門の塀の上に設置するという生命破壊が実行されました。犯行声明文において少年は、聖なる儀式としての作品行為だと表明しており、また、逮捕後の供述においては、「初めて勃起したのは小学５年生で、カエルを解剖したときです。中学一年では人間を解剖し、はらわたを貪り食う自分を想像して、オナニーしました」と語っている。また彼は、被害者の少年の「首を絞めながら勃起し、首を切断する瞬間、射精した」と、さらに、首を小学校正門に置いた時、「性器に何の刺激も与えていないのに興奮し、何回もイってしまった」と語っています。

ここには単なる少年犯罪を超えて、どこかで原始心性というようなものに、供犠の祖形というようなものにつながってゆく何かがある気がします。

たとえば古代中米の有名な習俗、古代のアステカの供犠の儀式。彼らは崇拝する太陽神が常に血に飢えていて、血を捧げないと太陽が輝きを止めてしまうと信じていた。そして彼らの祭司は、戦争捕虜や、犠牲として選ばれた共同体の成員を石壇の上に寝かせ、身体を押さえ、黒曜石の短刀を胸に突き立てる。そしてまだ鼓動をつづけている心臓を抉り出して太陽に捧げ、太陽に向って咆哮する。また生贄の肉は共同体の成員によって食される。つまり私は、こうした、古代の儀式と通底してゆく何かがあるのではないかと考えるのです。

空洞説について
前半の「円環について」の項で述べたことに話を戻します。そこでは円環構造の内側にはたらく固有の力について語ってきました。そして日本海沿岸の縄文遺跡では木の柱を円形に並べて建てた環状遺構が複数発見され、その遺構の中央部は空洞を内包すると同時に、空洞直下の地層からは無数のイルカの骨が発掘されたことを語ってきました。またこの事実は、この遺構が霊的なものと垂直に連続する特別な場所であったことを示しており、さらに、こうした霊的な性格を持つ場所に、円環構造、あるいは空洞性の構造が導入されたのは、円環の内側にはたらく固有の力と何らかの関係を持っているのではないかということを語ってきました。そして、言語、生命、供犠、円環、空洞といった諸要素が、存在への問いかけにおいて重要な意味を投げかけているのではないかと・・・。これが今回の話の終着点として私がイメージしているものです。そこで、最後に、「空洞説」なるものへと、向おうと思います。

先ず、縄文遺跡におけるイルカの骨の集合的発掘を、なぜ供犠と関連付けるかについて説明したいと思います。それはたとえば、イルカやアザラシなど、縄文時代の民と類似した海洋生物を食料としてきたエスキモーたちの生活形態、そして日本列島の北方において、縄文文化と重なる文化様式を近世まで続けてきたアイヌ民族の生活形態、それら二例の習俗を参照することによって、より鮮明に見えてくるものがあるのではないかと思うのです。

たとえばまず、エスキモー民族の生活形態に関してですが、それは、マルセル・モースが２０世紀初頭に著した、「エスキモー社会ーその季節的変異に関する社会形態学的研究」によって窺い知ることができると思います。もちろん縄文社会と直接的に結び付けるわけにはいかないのですが、機械力を使わない狩猟のなかで自然と戦うこと、あるいは自然と交感することにおいて、彼らは縄文社会との同質性を共有していたと推測することが可能なのではないかと思うのです。

そこにおいてとりわけ注目されるのは、エスキモー社会が、温暖な夏の期間と、暗く厳しい冬の期間のあいだで、連続性が感じられないほどにその生活形態を変容させるという、行動の特異性についてなのです。夏のあいだは、それぞれの家族は内陸の地域に分散し、気ままな家庭生活を営んでいる。ですが、冬になると彼らの家族構成は解体され、別の枠組みへと再編されてゆく。たとえば男たちは、海岸沿いに集結し、大きな共同家屋で集団生活を営むようになる。そこにおいて彼らは、共同住居に住みこみ昼夜を問わず熱に浮かされ饗宴を繰り返し、熱狂状態に陥ってゆく。モースは、惻惻と迫る詩篇のように美しい論考のなかで、その状態を、宗教的生活として位置付けています。彼らは毎日の集団的狩猟活動において継続的な命の危険に晒されており、それゆえに、宗教的熱狂に至り、なかばトランス状態に入り込むことで恐怖を克服し、狩猟に出かけてゆく。饗宴と祈りと狂騒と労働は、そこでは分かちがたく結びついており、また、個人の資産も、捕獲した獲物も、女性すらも個々の所有権は放棄され、共同社会成員によって共有される。しかし、共有されながら所有権をめぐる争いはない。そこには狩猟の危険への恐怖、命の危機への切迫がすべてに先行しており、熱狂に入り込むことで、はじめてそれは、のり超えられるものとなるわけです。

しかし冬が終わる頃になるとその生活形態は自然に解消され、個別の家族生活に戻ってゆく。そして、これらの暮らしのその先に、縄文社会のイルカ漁のあり様が具体性をもって透けて見えてくるのではないでしょうか。さらに、堆積したイルカの骨と宗教的感情の関係についても、平行して見えてくるのではないかと思うのです。

他方アイヌ民族は、イルカではなく、ヒグマを主要な蛋白源とする生活形態を継続してきました。彼らにとって、ヒグマは宗教的に特別な動物でした。その宗教的文脈において、彼らは、ふだん常食するヒグマとは別に、小熊を捕獲し時間をかけて丁重に育ててゆくわけです。だから、自分たちが食べるものより上等の食料を与え敬

い育ててゆき、充分に育ったのを見計らい、共同体は祭儀を開きます。祭壇を作り、そして、人の輪の中で心をこめて成長したクマを殺してゆく。集団で屠殺し、頭部を切り落とし祭壇に祀り、祈りをささげます。その後、肉、内臓、脳ミソを含めすべての部位が共同体の成員に分け与えられ、全員によって食される。そして皮ははがされ保存されるのです。

この祭儀の意味するところは、超越的なるものとのコンタクトだろうと思います。たとえばアステカ族が太陽に気使い犠牲者の心臓をささげたように、ここでは共同体の神に対して、クマの狩猟拡大の祈願とクマへの感謝を込め、大切な犠牲が供される。その殺戮は、神的なるものと連続するための祈りであり熱狂であり、供犠であったのです。だからここにおいて見てとれる心的状況と北陸の縄文社会にみられる心的状況は、同じ縄文的心性を濃厚に引き継いだ共同体的行為であり、それらは互いに重なり合うと判断できるのです。

ただ、エスキモーとアイヌの例においては円環構造や、空洞性は具体的には現れてはいません。でも仮に、エスキモーやアイヌの例に現れる非日常的な時空間の在り様が日常の時空構造を反転した世界の現れであるとするなら、その供犠の祭儀的時空間は明らかに外側からは不可視な、空洞の内に隠された領域であることは間違いないと言えるわけで、空洞性そのものはそこにも内在されていると考えても良いのではないでしょうか。

供犠とはなにかについて、いくつかの角度から語ってきましたが、それが現在においてもなお、永遠の謎であることにかわりはありません。ですが、強引さを承知でいえば、供犠とは次元の転換をもたらすための、仮想としての心的装置ではないかと考えるのです。供犠の属性として在る暴力性、残虐性は、限りなく奥深い無の彼方に吸引されてしまいかねない心的次元を反転させて、こちら側の可視的世界まで引き上げてくる一種の暴力装置なのだと。聖なる次元とは、ふだん禁忌としての共同体に生きられていない部分を、共同体のこちら側に再生させてくる時に体験される、恐怖と歓喜に染め上げられた発現性なのだと。つまり、共に死に、共に生かされる心的共同体験の噴出なのではないかと思うのです。

こうしたレヴェルはいわゆる比喩的なイメージとしてしか伝えられないものなのですが、世界が反転されてくるその過程の構造は、時空の内側では可視的であるとしても、外側から見た場合には不可視そのものであり、何もないもの、つまり空洞として知覚されるだけの領域なのです。そこには具体に見える物は何もなく、共同体のある場所において、ある磁場の感覚として、暗黙に認知され示唆されるだけの時空でしかないのです。

これまで、主に日本の中に現れる空洞性について語ってきましたが、先ほども申し上げましたように、西洋の文脈においてもそれは潜在していると私は考えます。そのなかでたとえば、イエス・キリストの在りようも、供犠と空洞性という文脈において読み込まれるべき構造性を擁し、われわれに示唆をもたらすものだと思います。イエスは、十字架上で処刑さたわけですが、これは明らかに供犠的性格を帯びたできごとだと言えます。さらに、この供犠は、生前から奇跡を行い注目されてはいたが市井に埋没した存在であったイエスを、真の意味での聖なる存在へと転化させるための、密やかな機構として働いたとすら思われるのです。つまり、イエスは当初から聖人ではありましたが、こちら側の世界に留まる、いわばありふれた存在でした。でも、処刑を契機として、イエスはこちら側からは姿を消し、向こう側の世界に向けて、はじめて真に出現を果したと言えるのではないでしょうか。かの、イエスの十字架上の処刑は、イエスを真の唯一無二の聖なる存在へと復活させることに寄与した、そう言えるのではないかと思うのです。

イエスが処刑されて不在になること、それはイエスのいた場所が空洞になることです。そしてそこが空洞になることによって、残された使徒たちの思いはその空洞に吸引され始める。彼らは空洞にむかって言葉をなげかけ自問自答し、さらに空洞性そのものが、その自問の運動を促進し、加速させてゆく。その過程において使徒たちの自発的な思想は熟成し成就し、結果的にはいくつもの福音書というものが書かれていくわけです。まさにそのとき、キリスト教の体系化は始まったと言えるのではないでしょうか。だから福音書が立ち上げられてくるエネルギーというものは、イエスの不在、空洞の出現によってよりいっそう加速されていくものであったわけです。

また、この復活の物語と並行して、私はタルコスキーの「ストーカー」におけるゾーンの存在を思わざるをえません。ゾーンはイエスの不在と並行して読み込まれる時、それははじめて、空洞性について多くの具体的なイメージを提供してくれるのではないでしょうか。

この映画は多くを語る作品ではありません。ある場所が現れますが、ここがどういう場所であるかは明らかにされない。しかし何らかの事情によってそこは立ち入りが禁止されており、禁忌の場所として閉じられている。隕石の落下か、それとも宇宙からの来訪か、何かが起ったらしきことを暗示させる場所は、ただゾーンと呼ばれる異界として静まりかえっている。しかしそこには無名の道案内人が潜り込んでいて、どうやら非合法的に侵入を希望する者を案内するらしいのです。

ではこのゾーンなるものは立ち入ろうとする者にとって、また、無名の者たちを道案内しようとするこれもまたひとりの無名者にとって、何を意味しているのだろうか。この映画においてはそのことに関してなにひとつ明かされはしません。われわれはひたすら堂々めぐりの思考に促されるのみで、やがて、このゾーンと呼ばれる領域が、期待される解答や事物を何ひとつもたらすことがなく、ただ単に意志を持たない空洞そのものではないのかという問いと思考に導かれてゆきます。

ゾーンは表象としての空洞であり、無為の空洞なのだと思います。ゾーンの中心には人間が切望する願いをかなえる「部屋」が存在することが示唆される。想うことが実現してしまうという契機は、ある意味で奇跡であり秘跡であり、聖なる中心を想起させるものです。ゆえに、そうした中心に向かう力動性を内包するゾーンなる場所は、われわれが通常に暮らす日常的世界からは隔たった不可視の場所であって、ある場所を、ある共同幻想のもとで指し示すことにおいてのみ、始めて現れ出る時空ではないかと想像されるのです。それはあたかも、意識から隔てられた個人の想念を、可視的な事物として現実化するソラリスの海と同様に、識閾下の共同体の想念を埋火のように輝きださせる場所、つまり日常から排除された幻想が集約する場所なのではないでしょうか。そして、道案内人に連れ戻されて元の場所にもどった侵入者はなにひとつ変化していない自分に気付く、でも、ゾーンなるものの本質は、禁忌を犯して内部を視てしまったものを許すはずはありません。なぜならその帰環者は、すでに自己を供犠したものと等価だからです。

ゾーンは、あるいは空洞性はどのような意味においても、こちら側の世界に暮らす成員の侵入を許さないものであり、唯一、その外側から共同体の成員によってさし示されることにおいてのみ現われる、特異な場所性なのだろうということです。

仮に、この空洞性の本質を、彫刻作品として完全に実体化できるならば、それは究極の彫刻ということになるだろうとおもいます。でも同時に、皮肉なことに、そのような作品は美術という領域においては、不可視のものであらざるを得ません。その意味で、空洞性の彫刻とは観念の内にのみ出現する彫刻であって、現実的には不可能性に閉ざされ、たとえば可能態としてのみ位置付けられる最終彫刻というほかありません。ゆえに、一人の美術家にとって、存在とは、この最終彫刻という想念というか幻影に、執拗に拘わり続けることにおいて始めて仄見えるかもしれない何かなのだろうと思います。

MASAO OKABE 岡部 昌生

Text as presented during the symposium Existence at Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan, 2 April 2008

Text edited: February 2009

Masao Okabe (Japan, 1942) creates an awareness of our cultural history by showing this history through the technique of frottage: by rubbing with a pencil or crayon over paper, he brings forward the texture of the object underneath.*

In Touch with Cities—Rubbing Hiroshima

Pencil and paper, this simple and elemental method, is what I used to get into touch with cities. I put paper on the irregular street surface, and using pencils and crayons I rubbed over the paper and I got this intriguing feeling of surprise, like the shape itself was going through the paper and emerging above. I think, also the recollection of memories came with the sense of touch being transmitted through my fingers. Only through the movement of my hand did the shape appear, and at the same time, by the act of me moving, I myself was transferred on the paper. These two factors connected to create the appearance on the paper. By my hands, the form was transferred, recorded, and transmitted: this is the frottage technique. It is similar to the Oriental tradition of ink impression (拓本), which was a very popular method of old typography and print technology.

I have been working for the last thirty years with this technique. By using this method I have made rubbings of many cities. They are traces of the forms of the cities and traces of the activities of people's lives. Places where layered deposits of the happening of time and traces of history have been engraved. For me, in my art work, I have brought the past to the present in Paris, Rome, Venice, Lyon, Noosa in Australia, Taipei, Kwangju in Korea, and many parts of Japan, but I would say my life work was born in Hiroshima.

I had been asked by the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art in 1986 to make a work with the theme of 'Hiroshima'. It seemed that the museum people were interested in my art by seeing my project from the streets of Paris in 1979, and they approached me with the suggestion for the project *On the streets of Hiroshima*. But I was strongly concerned about making a work with Hiroshima as topic. As a person who had not experienced the bombing of Hiroshima, could I create art work with Hiroshima as the theme? For my answer, I had to recall my memories of experiencing the air strikes during the war. I was born in Nemuro, at the tip of the eastern end of Hokkaido, and just three weeks before the atomic bomb was dropped, there were air strikes for two days by aircraft carrier-born planes which came up all the way through Japan, up to the north. The war had also extended to the eastern cities in Japan. Eighty percent of my city was burned to the ground and we lost many houses. I was three years old at that time, and there were scenes of burning fire; it was my personal experience and it has stayed in me as memory. Without having my old memories inside me, I could not have gone to Hiroshima. After that, *After Hiroshima*, Hiroshima remained attached to me and has accompanied me through my lifetime and its feeling has stayed in me and I have felt the connection inside me because of my art having the theme of Hiroshima.

All over the streets in the city of Hiroshima, life and death are buried. The ruined city lies just fifty centimeters beneath the earth's surface. I thought the only way I would be able to deal with Hiroshima, the Hiroshima that had lost so many and so much through the atomic bomb, was to make a direct rubbing of the street with a pencil on a boiling hot summer day.

I made the work *Danbara area* (about 2000 meters from the hypocenter). This is an area where there were survivors from the bomb, because people were living very close to each other in that old part of the town and it was within the shadow of the mountain. I took the frottage from that area, slowly going towards the center of the explosion. I called it *Stroke on the Road in Hiroshima* (1987-1988). It was a big project and it took two years to finish.

Because the technique of frottage is simple and direct, by using this work concept you can bond with the city itself. I could develop the collaboration and a workshop with the citizens in the city. With the concept and technique of myself and while sharing the creativity with the people, I could look into their history and their lives from that region and city. With my work I could expose the connection with time and the memories of the past. The best thing I was able to do is that I could share with the people the pleasure of touching their city by hand.

In the summer of 1996, I had a workshop, the *Hiroshima Memoire 96* (Hiroshima city museum of Contemporary Art), with 90 people, adults and children living in Hiroshima. The workshop consisted of two different works from two places in Hiroshima.

One piece was the Hiroshima memorial park, near the A-Bomb Dome, the monument for the A-bomb victims; the approach to this place is a street, a hundred meters long, paved with flagstones. I did a rubbing of it using red oil chalk, touching the ground with my hand, thinking of the connection with what lies underneath.

The second piece was the platform of the former Ujina Station. That was the last station before reaching the military port, the Ujima harbor, where there were 560 meters of remains: it was large. In doing this project I thought of the assailant and the victim. *After fifty one years of Hiroshima* was a collaboration with the participants in order to think together about the meaning of Hiroshima.

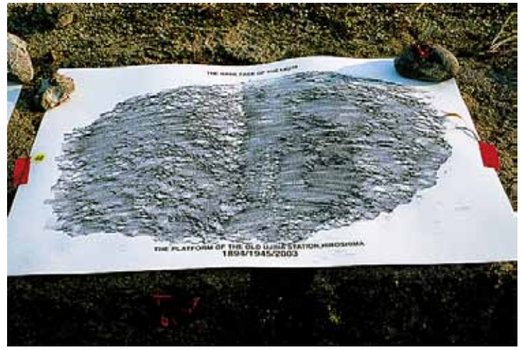
It was the summer school holiday time and the weather was boiling hot. I had many children who participated, and spent a magnificent time with them. Traces we took from two places touch Hiroshima. They were made by our hands and became print art on a huge scale, but for me it was not just a print, it memorized each participant. Since then, my project, workshop and exhibition in Hiroshima, has begun a life of its own, supporters gather together and have started the project *Rubbing Hiroshima, the ten thousand people's workshop*, and this art project is still continuing and active.

In 2007, at the 52nd Biennale di Venezia, I exhibited works from Hiroshima at the Japanese pavilion; I displayed them on the walls of the space. I also presented the stones from the Ujina Station platform. My exhibition describes history, shown by the collected stones from the place and by recording the time of past through frottage on paper, 'Making art with the body'.

These stones are from the Kurahashi Island in Hiroshima. The whole island is made out of volcanic stones. Sixty-three years ago the inhumane nuclear fire burned on these stones, they became atomic bomb stone. This is the place where numerous soldiers and major weapons left to fight three big wars in Asia and, on August 6, 1945 it was also the place where the atomic bomb hit. It is like a symbol of the boundaries between the perpetrators and the victims of wars of all sorts. I stayed there for nine years. I faced these stones and I was rubbing their past by making the frottages. It turned out to be over 4000 pieces in all, 'The skin of Hiroshima'. I thought the audience of my Venice exhibition should get an impression of the traces of that place, and get caught up in its atmosphere.

Also, in the center of the exhibition space, I placed three tons of stones from the Ujima platform, which had been hit by the bomb, on a rusted iron exhibition stand and displayed them there.

I often heard, "This space does not need any explanation". The atmosphere of the place within that space went straight into the audience themselves. I had created a place for it, this exhibition is the memory of Hiroshima, *HIROSHIMA・1945*, by seeing these two words printed in the work, the audience could understand it. They looked silently into the works and gently touched the stones. They went back to the entrance and after carefully reading the message from Commissioner Chihiro Minato by the 'Hiroshima damage map', *Is there a future for our past?*, they left the space; it was an impressive sight for me.



Also in the Venice pavilion, every day I had a workshop rubbing atomic bomb stones. This gave an even stronger impression to the people. The rough textures of the irregularly shaped stones were taken into their hands together with the sounds of the movement. We take things in with our body and we understand the subject. It was not showing the devastation of the atomic bombing at all, but the feelings from the hands, that solid feeling which recalled memories, quickened imaginations. I got the feeling that by my presentation in the Biennale space, I could share the history of that time.

I touched many traces of Hiroshima. Fragments of figures of the city emerged on paper. To record all the responses, the movement of my hand, the sound, the making visual of the past, that is my art and without the people of Hiroshima, I could not have achieved that art. One of the participants said, "Frottage is a universal act, through which we can come in touch with the presence of our life." The project *Rubbing Hiroshima* is a collaboration with citizens and the artist, we touch the memory of Hiroshima and the acts which we create can be inherited by the next generation.

Chihiro Minato said in his opening speech in Venice, "This exhibition is just one form of the question, the question which we probably can never answer. We only have the possibility to achieve ongoing questioning for hope and peace, we have to believe that our power remains to continue to question together with other people."

My art has a relation with the 'energy of others', I also could say, with the city. Traces of life of people from the city. These traces were made through repeating life and death. I touch with my hands the deeply deposited layers of memory and history, and I rubbed it out to reveal it. Through the response of the city transmitted through my fingers, I became excited and at the same time I was deeply moved, "the city itself is a huge place".

It was in 1979 that I had begun on the streets of Ivry-sur-Seine in Paris. Since then, for thirty years, I have focused my art on the 'energy of others', the 'response from others'. With the frottage-collaboration with the people of the city, I touch the city. By moving my hand, I create an opportunity to give eyes to the city, with its life and history. It is also sharing the pleasure of learning through art. I would like to say, "My art connects the people and the city."

YUKO SAKURAI

Text as presented during the symposium Existence at Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan, 3 April 2008

Yuko Sakurai (1970 in Tsuyama, Japan) grew up in Tokyo. Her work addresses traveling as an existential experience of time and space. Although she mainly uses oil paint on wood panels, she doesn't consider her work as painting, but rather as objects. It is always about her personal and emotional relations towards the places she has visited or where she has stayed for a longer period of time. Consequently she lives in various places in Europe and the USA.*

When I think about 'Existence', what comes to my mind first, is my own existence. My thoughts about the meaning of 'existence' are based on my consciousness about the passage of time and the acknowledgement that I, although living in the present, cannot detach myself from the past. My present being as a person is an accumulation of the past. The history of my own life and my surroundings and life environment are deeply related, that is my own existence and that is connected to the future in a natural way. Therefore, taking good care of my everyday life is very important in order to recognize the existence of myself.

Outside of Japan I often have been asked the meaning of my name: Yuko. The meaning of my 'Yu (由)' is freedom, 'Ko (子)' is child. Yuko means 'freedom child', freedom (自由) in Japanese means 'accept self', it means 'conforming one's own intention and original nature'. Therefore freedom (自由) is its own fundamental concept. It is not like there is freedom somewhere else and we can get it or we can do what we want. Freedom has to have a strong base within you, within oneself. Freedom, responsibility, self-consciousness. They all connect with existence. They mean that I have to face my own existence, and lead my own life, and to be aware of my own life. I want to connect with my art and I want to express myself in my work.

My existence, Yuko Sakurai, started in Setagaya, Japan, and several months later I was born in my parents' hometown of Tsuyama and I grew up in Machida, Tokyo. When I was young, each summer we left Tokyo and went to Tsuyama. My family spent their vacation there, at my grandparents' home in the countryside with cousins, uncles and aunts all together in the same house. The living environment in Tsuyama is the total opposite of Tokyo and the experiences there had a substantial impact on me, and contributed to who I am today. Learning from nature, having a life with cousins from a completely different environment, sharing a room and everybody sleeping together on futons, living together, having a sense of sharing and receiving. Real life experiences, hearing and seeing the history of my grandparents, all these experiences which I can never adequately describe in words—this is what I gained every summer in Tsuyama when I was young. Even though I grew up in Machida, Tsuyama is my hometown, the foundation of my own existence and a base. My grandparents passed away some years ago, but whenever I go back to Japan, I always try to visit Tsuyama. From those childhood traveling and life experiences I learned how important it is to have interaction with people through traveling. Travel, adventure, meeting with people, and connecting with nature is now deeply tied to my existence, and has a strong influence on my life and the creation of my art works.

I have two main concepts in my art. One is 'self-expression' from the daily routine of my own life and my 'relation' to the circumstances surrounding me. The other comes from my traveling in which I have experienced 'impression', 'touching' and 'myself' which are all embedded in my work. Also the title of my work, I take from the name of the place, the name of the mountain, river, bridge, or street. For me, because I have a day-to-day life, going on a journey brings me much excitement. And from the journey I go back to the ordinary routine of life, I then rediscover more of the inspiration and the impression from the journey. So for me, both are very important to experience the journey. I can be conscious of subtlety, dedication and sensitivity by using all my senses, and I am able to move my feelings, going deep into nature and also experiencing the joy of the interaction with people. I create my art as a way of transferring with abstract language. It is my way of expressing my feelings.

Because my father is a sculptor, I grew up with art in a natural way and it was always close by. I was always interested in art, but I also learned that as an artist it is not easy to survive and I never had enough confidence, so I did not do it and instead I went into making French pastry. I think, one of the characteristics of the cuisine world is, when you eat, it's gone, so, it has a moment of excitement, and one can keep that taste only as memory. Art, however, can

keep the form a long time, the emotion stays present and one can have a dialogue with the object, there is a sense of coexistence.

The creation and respect for the essence and the materials—these are points where the art and the food world display similarities. To express my own existence in my work and share my activities with people, I felt that that has value. I wanted to create my own art work. To create my own language for expressing my feelings was to put my life into the art work by using my own form language and I began to feel very comfortable and felt fascinated. By creating my own work and continuously observing my work, gradually I developed a sense of myself. Because of my presence and my own consciousness in my work, I can share myself with the viewer for many years to come. I hope that I can transfer a little bit of my intentions to the people through my works. I am grateful to feel that my art will age over the years, as a part of myself, together with the person who has acquired my work.

The Japanese have a strong relationship with nature. We care about feeling the four seasons and that is deeply tied to life. We are excited to have contact with nature in our daily life and are moved by it and we also share those emotions with other people, I think that is beautiful and that is the beauty of being Japanese. Because I left Japan, I am looking into Japan from the outside. I feel I have a distance. For that reason I can now better understand the beauty of Japan.

During a trip through Japan in March-April 2008, I had an amazing Japanese cultural experience. Overnight, an ordinary local shopping street appeared transformed with lanterns and pink flags, it had changed completely to the 'Hanami' (cherry-blossom festival) mood, this also occurred in all other cities which I visited. There was a Hanami atmosphere everywhere. Not only on the national news where they were showing the cherry-blossom's weather front every day, and following the situation of the flowers already some months ahead of Hanami. I felt that we, as a whole country, were being influenced by the Sakura, the cherry-blossom. It had a big impact on me, especially after not having seen the Hanami season for nine years. The Hanami event in Japan is one of the biggest seasonal events in Japan. I realized very deeply on this trip that the cherry-blossom festival is so important. I understood that enjoying the life of Sakura (cherry-blossom) in those short moments, is the awareness of our existence. The beauty of magnolia, plum, peach, cherry-blossoms and the beauty of fresh young green leaves, I enjoyed each moment. I was moved by the short period in which the season seemed to change. Getting a sense of those changes of nature, while being conscious of its role in life, as in Japanese life, I felt a high sense of beauty. Japanese sensitivity may come from being conscious about the progression of the seasons, and this being in their life.

For a long time I have been interested in the work of Hamish Fulton and for our project I was able to visit him at his studio in England. In preparation for that visit I studied his work more deeply and by doing so, I found that Haiku have influenced his work. In the process of understanding his work, I also had to re-discover my Japanese culture. When I was at school I learned Haiku but only as memorization and I could not really understand the meaning of the Haiku poems, so, after my studies were finished, they were gone from my life. But during my study of Hamish Fulton's work, the meaning of Haiku came to me in a very natural way. While creating my works, I realized I have similarities with Haiku and with the landscapes of Hokusai. It is just a different way of expressing oneself by traveling. I am discovering my own thoughts, my consciousness of my own existence by traveling, I felt that the simple and profound message in Haiku has a common point with my activities and creation.

I got the opportunity to interact with many interesting artists from all over the world. Getting in touch with the outside, and by having stimulation from others and sharing moments together, I became more aware of my own existence. I think thereby I started to find my own identity. I would like to continue creating art as a medium to express the consciousness of my existence. Therefore it is very important to interact and be stimulated by people, who show me the awareness of my own existence, as well as staying connected with nature, to stay aware of the existence of the universe, I would like to keep exploring, keep discovering existence.

In addition to this, I would like to say something about Time and Space. When I think about 'Time' as a subject in my work then, time is not just a single moment. For me time is continuity. I gain my experiences by traveling and by my surroundings of my daily life I use 'city', 'street' and 'area' for my work as subjects. Traveling gives me new experiences, new situations that are fascinating in my life, but I also center my daily life very much around my base. When I get back to my base, I can feel more strongly the differences between where I have been and my base. Awareness of beauty and appreciation for having been there on that location, I get those feelings because I came back to my base.

My work is not just an impression of a single moment, take for example my work: *La route vers la Bretagne*. My first destination abroad, in 1996, was France, which I visited again in 1997, and after that I have always had a very special feeling towards France. In the summer of 2004 I finally got a chance once again to visit France, Brittany. I started my trip by car in the Netherlands, driving towards France and the excitement stayed with me through the whole trip. All the impressions which I got on that 800 km [500 miles] road along the coast until I reached Brittany became a work. Measuring 120 x 220 x 10cm, [47" x 86" x 4"], warm yellow ochre colors contain my happiness, the peaceful feeling I had gazing out at the Normandy coast, the strong wind against my body, the smell of nature, etc…, six horizontal lines on the surface—this expresses the streets needed to get to the destination, up and down, the hilly atmosphere, the long way… continuity. I do not express myself just by giving a visual impression, I get impressions by using all my senses and it is that what I express in my work.

I care about time. When I see a chance before me, I try to take it, while using my full consciousness to get the maximum experience with all my senses. For this reason I can create work also from just a one-hour trip by bicycle, or just sitting on the backseat of a car. I do not decide upon the subject for my work until I get back from my trip. I put all information in myself when I am somewhere. Then after that, most of the time, I chose the subject at my

base in a relaxed situation and I look on the map at where I have been and follow all the streets I took. Until 2009, in Europe many decisions were taken in Heusden, and when I was in Miami, decisions were often made at the beach. When somebody asks me where my home is, I answer that I do not know yet, that I am still searching for my home myself. I do not feel as if Japan is my home anymore, I feel Japan is where my roots are, my origin, even my Japanese language has become halting. One day I would like to find my base, my space for daily life. Until now, I am open for all directions, I am still looking for my space. But I am enjoying my kind of gypsy life, to get all experiences from this world inside of me. I do not recollect merely beautiful visual experiences for my work. I express myself using all my experiences, how much impact they had on me and what I learned from these places. I also always include my own present time into my work. I do not make a work about where I have never been as a dream or desire… It is nice to have wishes in life, and make them happen, but I care much more about the reality of myself and of my existence.

I use the same subject in different times, but I do not repeat the same content in my work, not at all. I gain something more in me, in myself by time, and you get always different experiences even in the same place, also feelings change, the atmosphere is different each time. For this reason I have many works related to Heusden, Netherlands, since it was my base in Europe for several years.

My works express my development as a human being and I like this way of creating a time document. Perhaps I have this consciousness about time because I am Japanese. Japan has four very beautiful seasons and by tradition we have many ceremonies and an appreciation for each season and each month of nature and also for season related food. I now live in a Western society, so I do not perform any of those ceremonies, but I still am conscious about them, and I carry the meaning of day and month in me. I think for the last couple of years now… finally I have felt I can go more back to my own culture. I feel much stronger who I am as a Japanese now, and it is a nice feeling to have, I can recognize different cultures and I can take it inside me from different directions. Before, I thought when I adopt other cultures, over time I will lose my personality as a Japanese, but it has not been that way. Now, I can say I am a Japanese woman who likes to travel the world, who likes to be in and out of Japan. Because of traveling to many different places, I can now, looking from outside, see more of the beauty of Japan. I can learn faster from new places, and I can see differences much easier, I gain my life experiences. How much you can see, you can hear, you can experience… this is all about your consciousness, and awareness of yourself, for your time.

For me, my work is part of myself, because it contains my deep and honest emotion. My work contains the time in which I made it, but when I see work that I made 5 years ago, I notice that it grew older over time. Yet feel that I see that time, I recall my experiences, the recollection of me, myself. My work is self-evidence, a time document. And I am aware of the present time in which I am living now, by seeing myself.

桜井 由子

2008年4月3日、世田谷美術館において行われたシンポジウム、「存在」においてのトーク

テキスト補足：2008年4月 - 2009年9月

1970年岡山県津山市生まれ、東京都町田市育ち。1999年より、海外をベースとして生活を始める。

「存在」について考えるとき、最初に頭に浮かぶのは、自己の存在です。私の考える存在とは、過去から現在に至るまでの経過を、意識した上で成り立ったものであり、切っても切り離せないものだと考えます。現時点での自分自身は、過去からの積み重ね、その歴史、生活環境、が深く結びついています。そしてそれが己の存在であり、自然な形で未来へ繋がっていると、私は考えています。そのため、日々の生活を大切にすることが、己の存在を認識するために、重要だと思います。

私の名前の由来を、海外でよく聞かれます。由子の由は、自由の由。子は、子供の意味。フリーダムチャイルドです、と簡単に説明しますが、日本語では、自由とは、本来、「自らに由とする」、つまり「自らの意志や本性に従っている・さま」のことです。自由とは、自分におおもとがあること。どこかにあってそれを手に入れるものではなく、自分の「おおもと」がしっかりと有る、ということなのです。父に授けられた、由子という名前は、非常に一般的な名前ですが、私は、自分の名前の由来を非常に光栄に思っています。そして、この、自由における責任感、自己意識は、存在と結びつきます。自分自身の存在としっかり向き合いながら、人生を歩み、それを自分の作品へと結び付けて、表現して行きたいと思っています。

私、桜井由子という存在は、世田谷の経堂で始まります。母の胎内に宿り、母の実家がある岡山県津山市で誕生し、東京の町田市で育ちました。幼年期、私は、毎年夏に、家族と共に東京を離れ、その津山での片田舎の生活をいとこ達と過ごしました。いろんな所から集まった生活環境の違ういとこ同士と同じ部屋に布団を並べ生活を共にしました。そして彼らと共に自然から多くのことを学びました。その共有感、祖父母から受ける歴史の重み、この実体験は、言葉では表せない経験でした。この都会と地方という異なった生活環境が、私自身の成長にかなり影響を及ぼし、今の私となっています。そのため津山は、生活の場であった町田以上に、私にとっては、故郷であり、自分自身の存在の基盤、源と感じています。祖父母は他界してしまいましたが、帰国する際は、今でも津山を訪れようと、心がけています。そして、このような幼年期の旅の経験から、旅にでることが、私の人生にとって重要な事となっています。旅、人との出会い、自然とのかかわりが、私の存在に深く結びつき、自分自身の生活と作品制作に密接な関係を生み出しています。

私の作品には、2つのコンセプトがあります。コンセプトの一つは、私自身の毎日の日常の生活の中における「自己表現」と、自身を取り巻く環境における「関わり合い」を表現することです。もう一つは、旅の行く先々で、私が経験した「印象、感動」と「自分自身」を作品に挿入することです。作品のタイトルには、土地、山、川、通りの名前などを使用しています。日々の日常の生活があるからこそ、旅に出ることへの興奮が生まれ、そして、旅から平凡な日常の生活へ戻ることで、旅での感動を再認識することができます。また、できる限り無駄なものを削り取り、質素に生活をすることで、些細なことを意識することができます。つまり、繊細で、かつ敏感な感覚を磨き続けることにより、物事に感動し、自然を堪能でき、人々との交流に喜びを得られるのです。このような経験を、私の自己表現手段、伝達手段として、作品を制作しています。

私にとってアートは、父が彫刻家であるため、常に、身近なところにありました。しかし、あまりにも身近にありすぎたため、芸術の道へは進まず、料理の道に進みました。芸術は好きだったのですが、自らの創造性に自信がなく、自立できるかを恐れ、その方向へ進むことができませんでした。そして、料理の世界、フレンチ菓子業へと進みました。しかし、フランスを経験したことのない私が、フレンチ菓子が作れるのか、本物を見たい、という疑問と願望が次第に高まり、1996年、フランス　一ヶ月ラウンドトリップに出かけました。一日に一個その土地の郷土菓子を食べる事と、芸術に触れる事、この2点を目標に旅をしました。本場の味は、とても新鮮、しかし素朴。毎日発見を楽しみました。しかし、それ以上に芸術があまりにも生活と密着していることに感動し、その途上、フランスでアート活動をしているアーティストとの出会いから、アートの世界が、私自身の生活に、より身近なものとなりました。

料理の特質として、食べたら消えていくという瞬間的な感動が挙げられます。その後、その感動は、視覚的印象、味わいが記憶としてのみ残ります。一方でアートは、形を残すことができ、その存在感そのものへの感動があり、また、作品と対話ができるという共存感があります。私は、大変新鮮に、且つ自然にそのことを受け止めることができました。創造するという点、エッセンス、素材を大切にするという点では、アートも、料理も同じですが、自分の存在

を形に残すという表現方法、表現行為を人々と分かち合うことができるアートに、私は、非常に価値があると考えるようになりました。自分にふさわしい表現方法だと感じ、自分の存在、自分の意識を、人々と月日を経て分かち合うことができると思いました。日本人は、自然との関わりが強く、季節感を重要視します。その関わり方は、生活にいまだに深く結びついています。自然と触れ合うことへの感動や、思いは、大変美しいものです。その思いに日本人らしさを感じます。海外に出たからこそ、日本の良さをより理解できるようになったと思います。

2008年3月中旬、約一ヶ月日本に帰り、素晴らしい日本の文化を実体験しました。普通の商店街が一夜にして、提灯やピンクの旗が掲げられ、お花見ムードとなるのです。どの町を辿っても、桜祭りの雰囲気が感じられました。桜前線のニュースだけではなく、国を挙げて、桜のために動いていることを感じました。これには、さすがに驚きました。桜祭りが、日本人にとって、こんなにも大きなことなのだと改めて感じました。私は、時々日本に帰って来てはいましたが、9年ぶりの日本での春となりました。モクレンの美しさ、桜の美しさ、新緑の美しさを堪能しました。短時間に移りゆく、季節。それを意識しながら、生活している日本人。その喜び、感動を周りの人と分かち合う日本文化、自然に対する美意識が高いと私は感じました。

私はヘーミッシュ・フルトンさんの作品に以前から興味を持っており、このプロジェクトのために、イギリスのアトリエを訪ねる機会を得ました。その準備で、フルトンさんについて勉強をしていると、彼の作家活動において、俳句の世界からの影響が大きいことを知りました。それと同時に、彼の作品を理解していく過程において、日本文化を再発見しました。学生時代に習い、暗記のためだけだった俳句は、私にとって忘れ去られていたものの一つですが、フルトンさんのことを、勉強していく中で、俳句を自然に受け入れられるようになりました。私自身、俳諧に関心があったとか、北斎の風景画に特に惹かれていたということはないのですが、自分自身の制作活動を続けていく中で、最近気づいたことがあります。それは、表現方法が違うだけで、自分自身を表現する俳家と、似通ったことをしているということです。旅を続けながらの自分探しや、存在の認識を、シンプルで、かつ奥深い言い回しを使用する俳句の表現方法に、私の制作活動との、共通点を感じています。

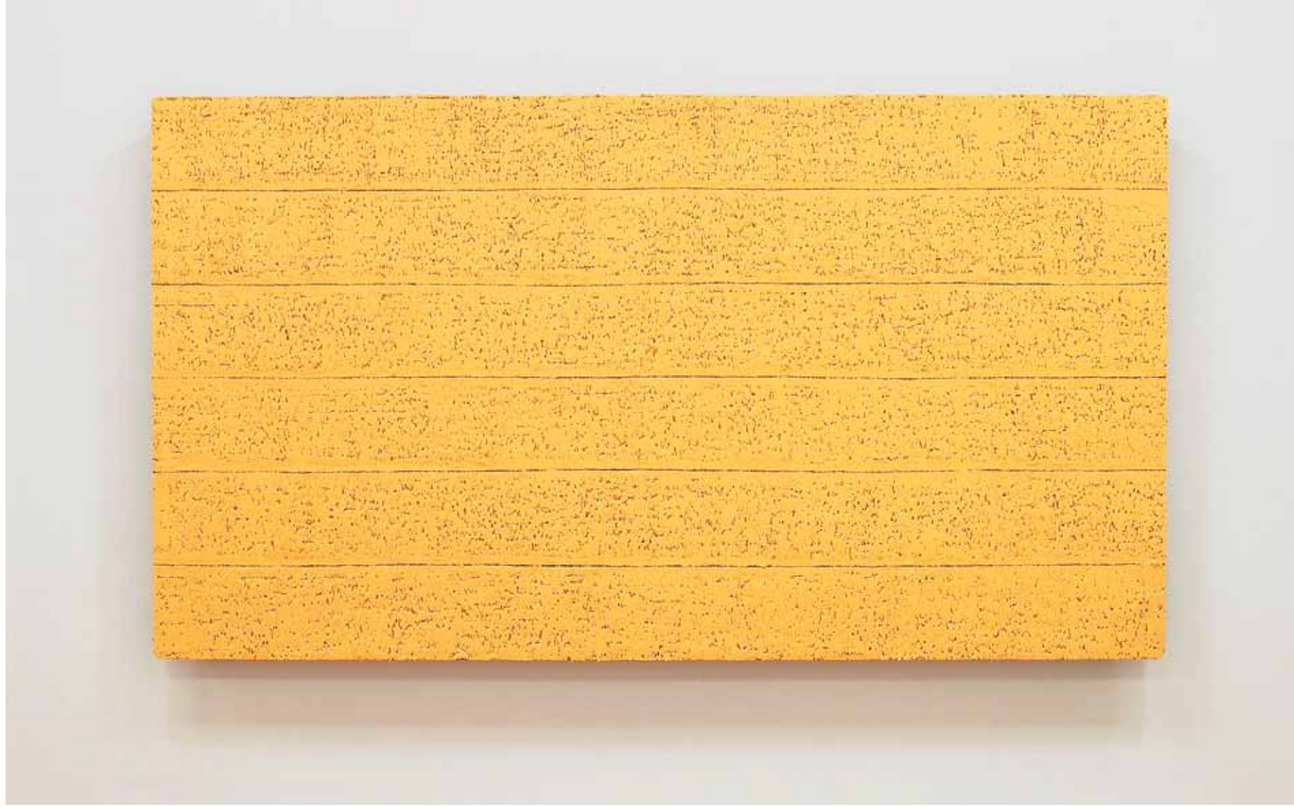
私は、幸運にも、世界中の素晴らしいアーティストと触れ合う機会を多く持つことができています。アーティスト、そしてアートに関っている人々との触れ合いの中で、また、彼らと一緒にプロジェクトに取り組む中で、私自身の存在をより認識するようになりました。自分が今まで踏み込んだことのない場所で、他の人と関わり合いそこで刺激をもらうことで、私自身を少ずつ見出し、私の存在を発見することができるようになりました。私は、ようやく日本の外でも、私自身の個性を表現できるようになりました。私は、私の存在性、存在のあり方を、これからも意識しながら制作活動を続け、私自身を表現し続けたいと思っています。そのためには、他者と刺激しあうこと、影響しあうことが、大変重要であると思っています。私自身の存在を気付かせ、そして導いてくれる人々との関係、自然との関わり合いは、より大きな次元で存在を意識するために大切だと考えます。私はこれからも、旅を続け、存在を発見し続けて行きたいと思います。

- 追加として、Time そして Space について -
私が、Timeについて、考えた時、一瞬の時ではないと考えます。私にとって、時間とは、継続しているものです。

旅を重ねるうちに、私は様々な経験を積み、その日々の環境から発生することを、街、道、そしてその背景を、作品の題材として使います。旅は、旅ごとに、新しい経験を私に与え、新しい状況を生み出し、それは大変、興味をそそることであります。しかし私は、私の生活のベース、日々の生活も非常に大切なものだと考えています。旅先から、自分自身のベースに戻ることで、普段の自分にもどって、冷静にその旅を分析、比較することによって、そこで得た経験をはっきり浮かびあがらせることができるからです。素直に感じとる美意識、旅ができたことへの喜び、そしてその場に居合わせたことへのありがたみは、ベースの場所に戻ることにより、強みを増します。

私の作品は、瞬間の私の印象を取り入れ、表現したものではありません。例を、「La route vers la Bretagne」で挙げます。私の最初の海外旅行は、1996年のフランスから始まります。1999年に、オランダで、生活を始めたものの、フランスには、常に特別な感情を抱いていました。2004年の夏、ようやくフランスのブルターニュを訪れる機会を得ることができました。興奮は既に車での旅の出発地点のオランダから始まり、道中、その興奮は途切れることはありませんでした。このオランダからブルターニュへ800ｋｍ、海岸沿いを走るその旅が、一つの作品になりました。120x220x10cm、温かい黄土色系の黄色、それは私自身の歓喜、ノルマンディー海岸沿いで感じた平和的な心和ます穏やかさ、自然から受ける香り、そして体全身に吹き付ける強い風、作品の表面にあらわれる6つのラインは、目的地に向かう道のり、上り下りの地形、丘陵的雰囲気、継続する長い道のりなどを表わします。私は、私自身の視覚的印象を表現するのではなく、作品の中に、私の全ての感覚を使って表現しています。私は、時を大切に捉えています。私の目の前に、チャンスがあると、出来る限りその時を逃さないように反応し、その時間を捕らえようと環境に飛び込みます。意識を集中させ、私の全ての感覚を使って可能な限りの経験をしようと努力します。例えば、一時間あまり自転車にのった経験からの作品、車の後方座席から感じ取った旅からの作品などが例に挙げられると思います。しかし、私は、作品のための題材は、旅行から戻ってくるまで、決めません。旅行中、もしくは外に出ると、取り込める限りの情報を体全体で吸収し、その後、私のベースに戻って、落ち着いた環境の中で、私が訪れた道のりを地図の上で辿り、旅を振り返りながら、題材を決めます。2009年初頭まで、ヨーロッパにいるときはオランダのヒュースデン（Heusden）で、アメリカのマイアミ(Miami)にいるときは、海岸にて、多くの題材を決めました。

ここ数年、生活の場を転々として来た私は、しばしば「あなたは、どこがベースなのですか」と聞かれます。「自分自身でも、まだわかりません。いまだに、私自身の場所を探しているところです」と答えます。日本は、私自身のルーツであり、私の根源でありますが、アーティストとしてチャレンジを続けていくには、日本を自分のホームベースとして考えられなくなってきています。私の日本語も崩れて、会話もうまく出来なくなってきています。いつの日か、私のベースを見つけたい、毎日の日常生活のスペースをいまでも探し続けています。しかし、今はスーツケースを抱えながらのジプシーのような生活、この環境において得られる全ての経験を私は楽しんでいます。



私の作品は、視覚的な美しい思い出から発生したものではありません。私の得た経験からどのような影響を受け、どのようなことを学んだか、ということを含んでいます。私自身の作品には、現在の自分が常に含まれるのです。願望、将来的なこと、未来的なことなどは、作品の題材には、使いません。希望を持つことは生きる上で大変大切なことで、それが叶えば素晴らしいものですが、私は、私自身の存在に関る、今を生きる、という現実性をより大切に考えています。同じ題材を使った作品を何度か、異なった時、異なった年に制作しました。しかし、同じ意味合い、印象を作品にしたものは全くありません。時間の経過により、何かしら自分自身は経験を積んでいます。同じ題材を使っても、毎回違った環境に身を置いている訳であり、違った経験をしています。エッセンス的なものは、含まれますが、決して連続するような作品にはなりえません。オランダのHeusdenに関する作品が、これにあたります。

私の作品は、一人の人間として己の発展を表現しています。タイムドキュメンを創る、それが、その方法なのです。時間に、意識を持つのは、日本人だからなのかもしれません。日本には、素晴らしい四季があり、伝統的な多くの行事があります。それぞれの季節、月々に自然を敬う行事、また季節ごとに、さまざまな料理があります。私は、西洋社会で生活している時は、伝統的な日本の行事は全くしませんが、日本での月々あるいは、日々の営みが、潜在意識として残っています。ほのかに大切にしているものでもあります。私は、ここ数年、ようやく日本の文化を素直に感じることができるようになって来たと思っています。今日、日本人としての自分自身を強く感じるようになり、それと同時に様々な文化を感じ、吸収できるようになりました。その受け入れ枠が大きくなったことを感じながら、これは素晴らしいことだと思うようになりました。以前は、他の文化を身に付けると、時間と共に、私自身の日本人としての個性が、失われるのではないかと思っていたのですが、それは間違っていました。今の私は、世界と日本を行き来しながら、また、世界を旅しながら、今までにも増して日本人であることを感じています。私は、新しい場で、学ぶことが早くなり、違いをわかることも、以前より容易になりました。生活の場が広がり、出会いが増えることによって、さまざまな経験ができるようになってきたのは、一生懸命生き、努力してきた証だと思っています。いかに多くのことを見ることが出き、聞くことが出来るか、どれだけの経験をすることができるか、これは己の意識のもち方と自覚が、すべだと思います。

私にとって、作品は、自身の一部であり、私の深層にある、正直な感情が含まれているものです。作品は、私が生きたその時を記録したものです。

私の作品は、己の証であり、己のタイムドキュメントです。私は、今を生きる私自身を見つめながら生活をし、現在の己を自覚していきたいと思っています。

RENE RIETMEYER

Text as presented during the symposium Existence at Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan, 3 April 2008

Rene Rietmeyer (1957, Netherlands) creates objects, which he calls 'Boxes'. His works are, as he says, ultimately nothing other than the proof of his existence.*

About Existence, Coexistence and Art.
Historians, philosophers, archaeologists and many others, have long been debating the question of what is it that distinguishes us humans from animals, and up until now, we have not reached a clear, universally accepted answer.

Humans
All animals learn how to obtain access to food and other resources from their environment, but when an animal dies, the only knowledge that does not die is the directly transferred knowledge. All other knowledge the animal has accumulated in its lifetime dies with the animal. For humans, though animals as well, the case is somewhat different. Many animals can use gestures and sounds to communicate with each other, but it seems that only humans can communicate information in so many different ways and with such nuances, and only humans have learned how to preserve knowledge for generations to come.

Knowledge can be transported over generations not only through writing or other means, but also through Art. Art provides probably the most powerful evidence of how humans perceive their world. The existence of art is one of the signs that humans most likely have a broader and more complex ability to communicate then other animals. It seems to be that only humans can communicate things that are abstract or that do not exist. I believe that the art humans make is also proof that humans are capable of a certain awareness concerning their own existence.

The earliest indication of the existence of art among humans is the physical evidence of powdered pigments that has been left behind. Humans seem to have ground up pigments and used them to paint themselves or their surroundings. Evidence of the use of pigment in southern Africa has been dated back over 100,000 years. My belief is that the use of language goes back even much earlier than this, but that the development of art by humans must be related to the development of a constantly improving use of language and increasingly refined communication. The human need to communicate, not only through spoken words, but also with and through art, seems to have been in existence at least since that time.

Around 40,000 to 50,000 years ago, the first figurative objects no longer created for purposes of daily survival as well as the first musical instruments and cave paintings were made. These forms of communication show some of the ways in which humans expressed themselves. From then on, in many parts of the world, human artistic expression developed fast. Humans began to produce not only paintings and carvings, but also ornamental items to wear on their body. Through their art, humans created a figurative as well as symbolic representation of their world.

First through the cave paintings, and much later through writing, photography, sound and other methods, the knowledge individual humans gained during their lifetime could be preserved from now on, which provided an enormous advantage to future generations. When exactly this process of preserving knowledge started is not clear, but this process has not changed even today, and because of the availability and increasingly easy accessibility to the growing amount of knowledge, this process is reaching ever more humans and continues to accelerate.

During the Early Stone Age a positive difference in knowledge acquired by each subsequent generation, was not very great, or most likely, not present at all. Now, generally speaking, each successive generation already has significantly more knowledge and has developed further than the previous generation, whereas 'further' is not to be understood as necessarily 'better'. This state of being more developed also does not seem to have made us any more satisfied or to guarantee us a better life quality. We can only hope that we humans will finally accept the consequences of the knowledge and awareness of the fact that we do coexist with other living beings and we should soon come to a global consensus and begin to use all available knowledge for the better of the planet as a whole. Although humans can now easily adapt to big changes in our environment, this 'coming to a global consensus', will even prove necessary for the majority of the human race in order to continue living under so called quality circumstances.

Communication

Communication is a basic need for all human beings, at least for me it is. My need to communicate is mainly driven by curiosity and my will to interact with other humans. My will to communicate is probably inherent to human nature. Here and now, I am trying to communicate with you, but here in Japan, and in several other countries I have traveled in, the people I meet do not seem to really understand my language and gestures. Therefore, I mainly try to communicate through the objects I create, but communication with another living being still needs the use of some kind of language. Although several other artists seem to have no problems doing so, I do not want to make artworks by using words I might not even understand myself. I do not want to use a language that uses words, also because I think that such a language reaches a too limited number of people and I would like to reach many people. Therefore, even now, I have to use words and sentences which can be easily understood by many. So, when you create an artwork with the use of words, the only solution to reach many people seems to be to translate the artwork, the words, in as many languages as possible. That just doesn't seem efficient and accurate enough for me to transport the contents I wish to communicate. The quality of art in general lies in the possibility for experiencing different people expressing similar or different contents while presenting the meaning they wish to communicate by choosing different forms of communication.

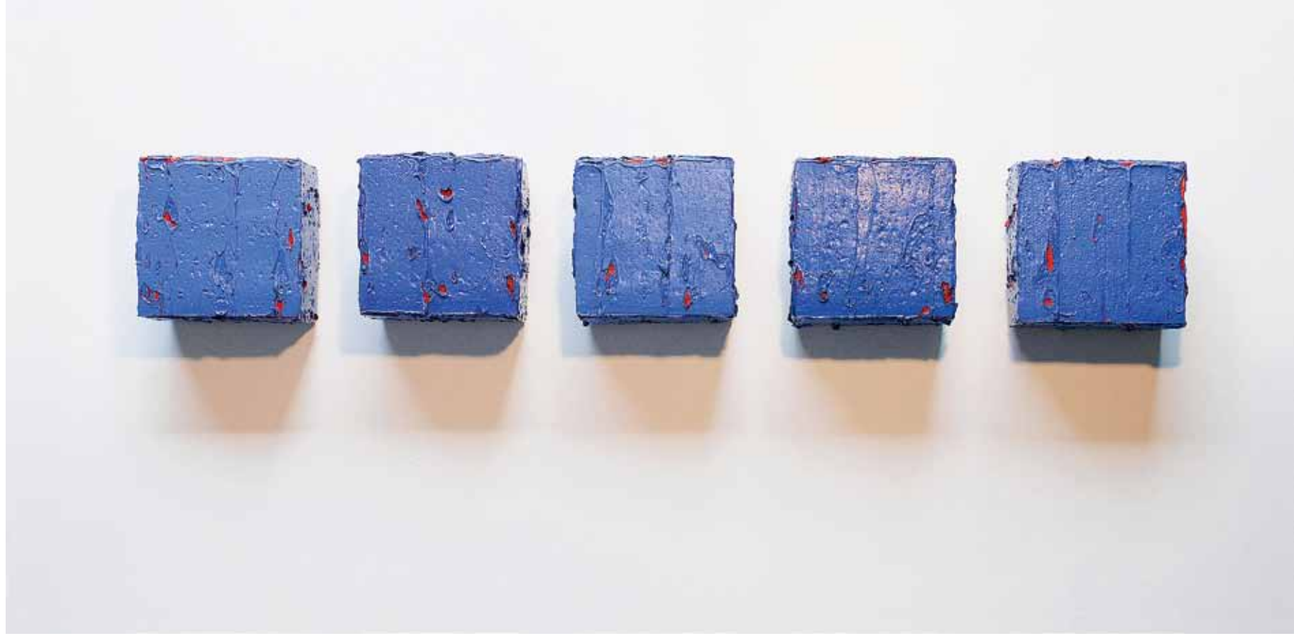
Reaching everybody in the world is impossible, but some people, not taking into account human creations, like God, have managed to reach many people with their words, and some of them had a positive, some had a negative influence on the development of significant parts of mankind. There are many ways to reach, communicate with, other humans. There are many languages and forms of expression. Because of the way I have decided to live my life, I cannot reach many people. But in order to reach as many I can, without offering up my own personal life quality and being able to maintain my own personal egoism, I decided to create objects. By doing so I decided to make use of an abstract language with formal elements like color, shape and material. With this type of communication, it may not be possible to convey thoughts as precisely to another person as when both people speak exactly the same verbal language, but the use of an abstract language in an art work seems to reach many people in a more location-independent and timeless manner than other means of expression in visual art. This was one of the reasons why I chose this abstract language as my main form of communication.

Several conceptual artists say that the form of presentation of an art work should have no value, but if you want to give an idea a physical presence, then you have no other choice than to use formal elements and it is impossible to create a form of physical presentation without value. The best you can do is to try to transport the intended meaning with a reduction of formal elements. Since there is no escape for acknowledging this and dealing with it anyway, it is the best option we have. Besides, it seems that, at this point in time, the reduced use of formal elements does represent me, is me and also seems to communicate better with the audience my works encounter, much better than the use of them in a more baroque way. However, of course, I am aware that no language is universal. The use of whatever language and the perception of whatever language remains a very subjective and personal matter. Therefore, explaining the 'meaning' of art is always very difficult, because so much depends on the cultural context of the work and on the ideas we ourselves bring to the interpretation. Even if an artwork consists only of words, the observer can hardly do more than speculate on the given meaning. I claim that the objects I make are first of all about the meaning they represent. They contain my awareness of my existence and because I want to communicate my awareness to myself as well as to you, I created those objects and I had no other choice than to use formal elements. Amongst other formal elements, I had to use color, shape and material.

Awareness

I am aware that I exist and that time passes, therefore I know that my present existence becomes past, and I therefore know that I have existed in the past. At the moment of the actual execution of my works, I always express my subjective memory of my existence in that past. The conscious action of the creation of each of my objects themselves is an expression of my awareness of my momentary existence. While making my works, they express my existence and my coexistence in the past and present. But as time passes, my works might be nothing other than the proof that I have once existed. But at this moment in time, I still do exist, and you still seem to exist as well.

I believe that gaining awareness about time, space and existence can be of great help in creating a more satisfying personal way to live our lives. Many people claim to have read texts by philosophers or other great thinkers, but reading and even understanding the knowledge acquired is not enough. This acquired knowledge should actually have an influence, real consequences, on how we live our lives. This all sounds so 'logical' and easy, but in reality it seems that



most people still do not really reach sufficient awareness of their own being in order to be able to self-define their own existence. Only to a certain extent can you make accountable that through limitations owing to the physical circumstances you are in, you were left no better choice and were forced to come to the choices you made.

Here, in this conference space in Tokyo, we see and experience several different human beings and many of them have come from very different parts and cultures of this world. And although we are all humans, we are not the same. Our brains do not operate exactly the same and during our lives we have all lived through many different experiences. Therefore, we have often come to very different thoughts, opinions, philosophies and choices.

To be human includes being surrounded by and being part of the physical, factual, concrete everyday world. Our world is here, now and everywhere around us. We are totally immersed in it, we are nowhere else, we are here and now, and we have to make the best out of that. Once we arrive at the realization that each of us is a distinctive entity, we have to fulfill our own destiny. We should start to question the input from our culture and start to rethink all values we have been taught in order to create, to self-define our own identity, our own being. To try to understand all the different identities represented in as many humans seems essential for developing a global human existence with quality.

At least since the times of Socrates, philosophers have raised and discussed many questions and sometimes they have even come to conclusions. We cannot create any awareness without the use of language, but several philosophers lose themselves in words and definitions. Although these philosophical discussions about existence stimulate our intellect they have not yet helped us to really comprehend the subject matter. There are no answers. But, whether we agree with all the thoughts about time, space and existence or not, without a doubt, in their search for truths, they at least have helped to create a greater awareness. So, we might not have gained any knowledge but we certainly have created opinions. There is no reason why we exist, and we ourselves will have to give value and meaning to our existence.

I exist and you exist. Regardless of all the different thoughts and points of view about existence, I simply have no other choice than to come to this conclusion. This means, I exist amongst other objects and living beings that exist at that same moment in time as well. The awareness of my existence always includes the awareness of my co-existence. There was a time when I did not exist and there will come a time when I will not exist anymore, but at this moment in time, I do exist.

The awareness a person has established for himself cannot be measured, but it can be expressed, in words, sounds or objects, for others to read, hear, see or feel, and to be understood by those who have reached a certain level of awareness themselves. I am not sure if we are the only animal aware of its own existence and of the fact that each of us will die in the not so distant future. We like to believe we are the only creatures who can reach this level of consciousness, but elephants for example, seem to respond with grace when they encounter the remains of a deceased family member. Do they not have any awareness at all, or can it be that we just have great difficulties in communicating with the elephants because we do not speak the same language as they do and so we must guess what they think. Is it because I come from another culture and I do not speak Japanese well enough to understand what you are thinking and why you think like that? Can I ever find out what you are really thinking? How can I find out how aware another living being is about himself and his surroundings? I need communication. Communication seems to be the key factor, not only communication with the other living beings, but also the communication with oneself.

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JOSEPH KOSUTH

Lecture given during the symposium Existence held at Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan, 3 April 2008

*Joseph Kosuth (*1945, Toledo, OH, USA) is one of the pioneers of Conceptual art and installation art, initiating language based works and appropriation strategies in the 1960s. His work has consistently explored the production and role of language and meaning within art. Kosuth lives in New York City and Rome, Italy.*

'Existence' *Applied* | Joseph Kosuth

'The self posits itself, and by virtue of this mere self-assertion it exists; and conversely, the self exists and posits it own existence by virtue of merely existing. It is at once the agent and product of action; and hence the 'I am' expresses an Act.'

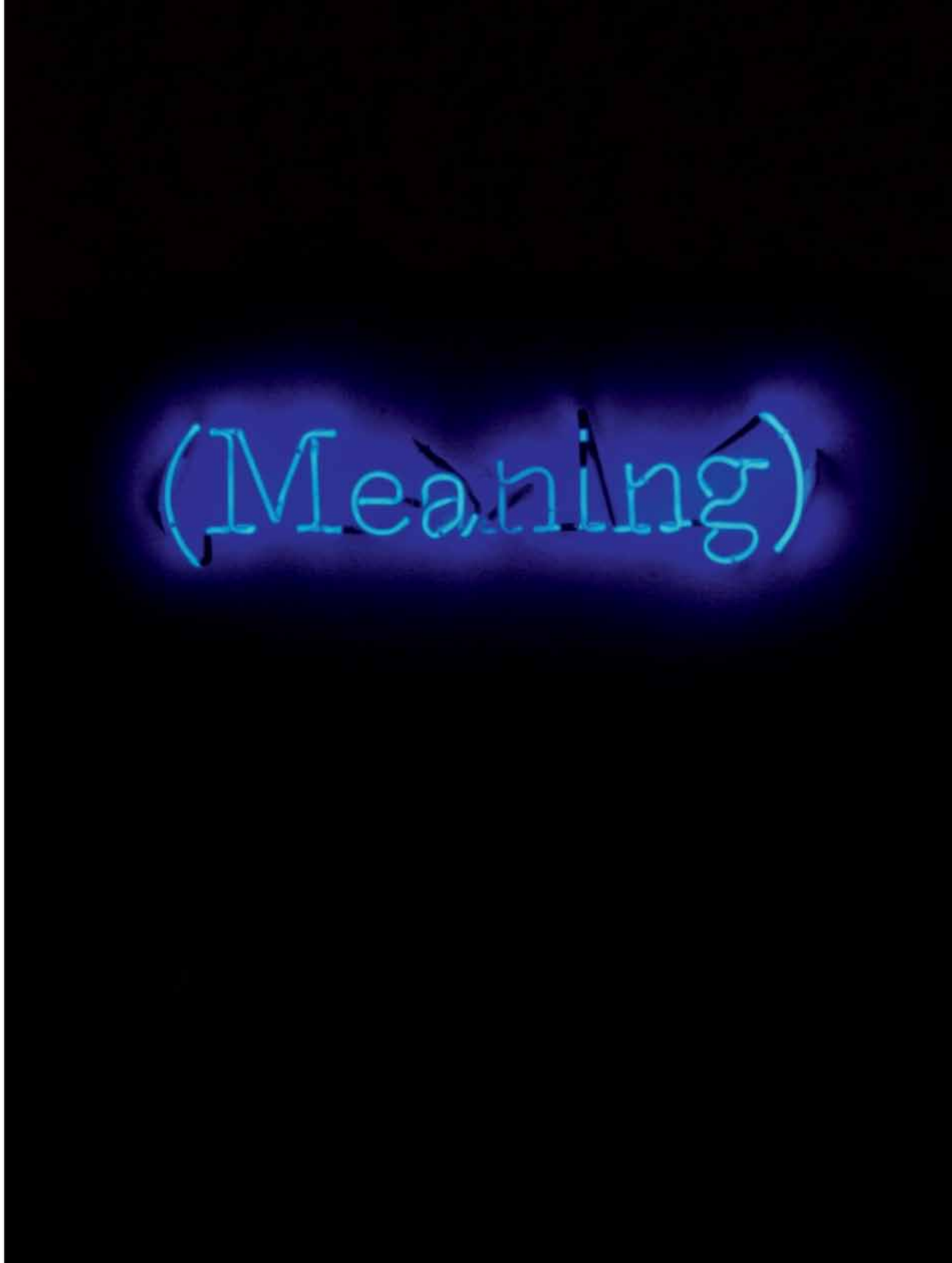
J.G. Fichte.

What I will do today is to briefly outline a certain view; it's my view of art and it will attempt to underscore an aspect of its relationship with philosophy, both implicitly and explicitly. What I say begins with a necessary understanding by you that it is grounded in a practice of art. My comments should be seen as part of a kind of manual or handbook for a device, but they shouldn't be confused with the device itself. That device, that practice of art, has dialectically evolved along with the handbook itself over a forty-year period. If you've seen my installation last summer at the Venice Biennale, or the installation at the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York last year, or my last installation at this moment visible on the facade of La Casa Encendida in Madrid, you already know that updates on my practice are ongoing and continuous. However, I won't be speaking of my present work today. For our purposes here I need to go to the beginning.

The evolution of my handbook is more than consistent and even more sporadic. It emerges when and where needed. Today we add a chapter because I have been asked to address the question of 'existence'. To do that this chapter of the handbook will attempt to look at the origins of my practice with an elliptical view of what may constitute the origin of its 'theory' and, simultaneously, possibly provide a better understanding of its history. What I say should be understood as framed by the issue of 'existence' even when it is only an argumentative presence just out of view. This is our context today. What a philosophical discipline might feel obliged to confront directly and explicitly within one or another of many established discourses, my writing, which is itself philosophically homeless outside of the practice which goes with it, is not compelled to participate within or satisfy. It qualifies itself on other grounds as part of a larger context than an academic discipline would permit. And please take that as an explanation, not an apology.

I was asked by The Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1969 to describe my work for the catalogue of a rather quick and imperfect attempt to give a public presentation of what they saw as a phenomenon, taking place way downtown, called 'Conceptual art,' by participating in a group show called Information. This is how I put it then, and please forgive the pretensions of a 24 year old: 'Every unit of an (art) proposition is only that which is functioning within a larger framework (the proposition) and every proposition is only a unit which is functioning within a larger framework (the investigation) and every investigation is only a unit which is functioning within a larger framework (my art) and my art is only a unit which is functioning within a larger framework (the concept 'art') and the concept of art is a concept which has a particular meaning at a particular time but which exists only as an idea used by living artists and which exists only as information. To attempt an 'iconic' grasp of only a part or unit of the above paragraph (which means to consider one action a potential 'masterpiece') is to separate the art's 'language' from its 'meaning' or 'use'. The art is the 'whole' not 'part';. And the 'whole' only exists conceptually." No question, that's at least part of what I had to say in 1969.

Whatever one would want to say now about that project called Conceptual art, begun over 40 years ago, it is clear that what we wanted was based on a contradiction, even if an intellectually somewhat sublime one. I wanted the act of art to have integrity (to this end I discussed it in terms of 'tautology' at the time) and I wanted it untethered to a prescriptive formal self-conception. So, in my talk to today I will return, in a sense, to the origins of my thinking as I approach the question of 'existence'. One could say that it is both the starting point of how I began to form my own conception of my existence as an artist, and thus a man, and it constitutes the tool by which I, if not also society itself, can reflectively approach those issues which form our conception of existence.



time, I. n. 1, *tempus*, *-ŏris*, n. *dies* (= the day), *spatium* (= — as a period) †*aevum*, *intervallum* (= interval), *aetas* (= age), *tempestas* (= season), *saeculum* (= a long —, a generation), *otium* (= leisure), *occasio*, *opportunitas* (= opportunity); the most celebrated general of his —, *clarissimus imperator suae aetatis*; in our —, *nostri memoriā*; at the right —, *tempore* (*temporis*, *temperi*) *ad tempus*, *temestive*, *opportune*, in *tempore*; in ancient —s, *antiquitus*; from the — when, *ex quo* (*tempore*); at every —, *omni tempore*; from — to —, *interdum* (= now and then); for all —, in *omne tempus*; in good —, *mature* (e.g. to rise, *surgere*); against the —, *sub* or *ad tempus*; in the mean —, *interea*, *interim*; according to — and circumstance, *pro tempore et pro re*, *ex re et tempore*; to require — for, *tempus postulare ad*; it is — to go, *tempus est ut eamus* or *ire*; eight —s eight, *octo octies multiplicata*;

machination, n. = a secret, malicious design, *machina*, *conatus*, *-ūs*, *dolus*; to make —s, *consilia* (*con*)*inquire*; to do a thing through anyone's —, *aliqo auctore facere aliqd*. **machine,** n. *machina*, *machinatio*, *machinamentum* (= machinery); *compages*, *-is*, f. (= framework); the —, fabric of the human body, *compages corporis*. **machinery,** n. *machinatio*, *machinamenta*, *-orum*, n., *machinae*.

object, I. n. 1, = something presented to the mind by the senses, *res*; the —s around us, *res externae*; to be the — of is variously rendered; by *esse* and dat. (e.g. to be an — of care, hatred, contempt to anyone, *alci esse curae*, *odio*, *contemptui*), by *esse* and in (e.g. to be an — of hatred with anyone, in *odio esse apud aliqm*; to become an — of hatred, *in odium venire*, *pervenire*), by nouns already involving the idea (e.g. — of love, *amor*, *delicia*; — of desire, *desiderium*), by circumloc. with verbs (e.g. to be the — of anyone's love, *ab aliqo amari*, *diligi*);

chair, n hence v; **chaise (longue)** and **chay; (ex) cathedra, cathedral** (adj and n), **cathedratic;** element *-hedral, -hedron,* q.v. sep.

1. Gr *hedra*, a seat (cf Gr *hezesthai*, to sit, and, ult, E SIT), combines with *kata*, down (cf the prefix *cata-*), to form *kathedra*, a backed, four-legged, often two-armed seat, whence L *cathedra*, LL bishop's chair, ML professor's chair, hence dignity, as in 'to speak *ex cathedra*', as from—or as if from—a professor's chair, hence with authority. L *cathedra* has LL-ML adj *cathedrālis*—see sep CATHEDRAL; and the secondary ML adj *cathedrāticus*, whence E legal *cathedratic*.

At one point in his writing Wittgenstein discusses the question of existence and says the following:

'If I say "I wonder at the existence of the world" I am misusing language. Let me explain this: It has a perfectly good and clear sense to say that I wonder at something being the case, we all understand what it means to say that I wonder at the size of a dog which is bigger than anyone I have ever seen before or at any thing which, in the common sense of the word, is extraordinary. In every such case I wonder at something being the case which I could conceive not to be the case. I wonder at the size of this dog because I could conceive of a dog of another, namely the normal size, at which I would not wonder. To say "I wonder at such and such being the case" has only sense if I can imagine it not to be the case. In this sense one can wonder at the existence of, say, a house when one sees it and has not visited it for a long time and has imagined that it had been pulled down in the meantime. But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing. I could of course wonder at the world round me being as it is. If for instance I had this experience while looking into the blue sky, I could wonder at the sky being blue as opposed to the case when it's clouded. But that's not what I mean. I am wondering at the sky being whatever it is. One might be tempted to say that what I am wondering at is a tautology, namely at the sky being blue or not blue. But then it's just nonsense to say that one is wondering at a tautology.'

Obviously Wittgenstein is not arguing against the existence of the world. While he cannot support an assertion of an absolute, compared to a relative, value because it would lie outside the world, he is saying one can however acknowledge the experience of a 'feeling of wonder' at the world. It is simply that the 'wonder' that Wittgenstein feels becomes nonsense when put into words. His sense is that the wonder which he feels when he confronts the nature of existence, shares the same kind of significance as religious and ethical truths. The wonder we have at the world isn't nonsense even if what we would say about it is.

'In a sense this brings us back to the issue of contingency. We begin with 'the existence of something' and would like a verbal explanation but cannot have one. What then do we face? We have, of course, the famous statement of Jean-Paul Sartre in his book Nausea: "The essential thing is contingency. I mean that, by definition, existence is not necessary. To exist is simply to be there; what exists appears, lets itself be encountered, but you can never deduce it. There are people, I believe, who have understood that. Only they have tried to overcome this contingency by inventing a necessary causal being. But no necessary being can explain existence: contingency is not an illusion, an appearance which can be dissipated; it is absolute, and consequently perfect gratuitousness. Everything is gratuitous, that park, this town, and myself. When you realize that, it turns your stomach over and everything starts floating about…'

So we have nothing less than the contingency of existence itself. We are forced to face the alternative to 'something', which is nothing. The way in which death lurks ahead for all of us forms our experience of existence more than anything else. Martin Heidegger has said that "Only by the anticipation of death is every accidental and 'provisional' possibility driven out. Only being free for death, gives Dasein it goal outright and pushes existence into its finitude. One has grasped the finitude of one's existence, it snatches it back from the endless multiplicity of possibilities which offer themselves as closest to one – those of comfortableness, shirking, and taking things lightly…' But finally, as Joshua Schuster, in discussing Derrida, tells us: '…Since we have yet to ask, what is death? We have avoided asking for the simple reason that we do not know who to ask. Who could tell us, guide us to ask the right questions, lead us into familiarity which we presume corresponds with knowledge? Is there a question which can question the non-empirical, what is outside epistemology, what has no thought, what is at the limits of limits? It seems to me a philosophical commonplace now, as many claim, that "death can only be represented." On one level, this assertion may be true, but in order to speak competently about the passage of dying, I must already have an understanding and recognition of death, a pre-theoretical understanding of death. This is already to suggest that death lurks not in representationality, but in between the spaces of what is representable.' Well, this question remains open ended. I could say, more on death later, for all of us.

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But, for the moment we shall return to my existence and thus my work. I want to suggest we consider, as a distinction, a rather simple diagram of something far more complex, probably, than tautologies, from a standard textbook on the theory of scientific models. It's one which distinguishes models as being of two types, one being an illustration and one a test. I understood from the beginning that art was essentially a questioning process. What I felt such questioning directed us toward, of course, was not the construction of a theory of art with a static depiction (a map of an internal world which illustrates) but, rather, one which presumed the artist as an active agent in the world, one concerned with meaning; that is, with the work of art as a test. It is this concept of art as a test, rather than an illustration, which remains. In my text of 1968, 'Art after Philosophy,' I proposed for us to see art as an analytic proposition, essentially a tautology whose interior construction could not be put in play as 'content' about the world. What is not often understood is that it is not the same as to say that the process of the practice, culturally, socially and politically does not have effect on the world. Indeed, there is no greater manifestation of our existence in the world than art. What it says, manifested as a process of art, and in the resulting consciousness that it constructs, is the most telling reflection about our existence available.

Yet, for a further look at tautologies, consider Paul Engelman, a close friend of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the collaborator with him on the house for Wittgenstein's sister in Vienna, who has commented about tautologies that they are not 'a meaningful proposition (i.e. one with a content): yet it can be an indispensable intellectual device, an instrument that can help us—if used correctly in grasping reality, that is in grasping facts—to arrive at insights difficult or impossible to attain by other means.'

The tautology was a useful device for me, in both its theory and its practice, in my work of the 1960's in specific ways. To give a concrete and early example I would cite my own work from 1965, from the Protoinvestigations, of which 'One and Three Chairs' (with examples in this series to be found at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Reina Sofia in Madrid) to 'Clock—One and Five' (from the Tate Modern in London) all being representative. This work, using deadpan 'scientific style' photographs which were always taken by others, employed common objects and enlarged texts from dictionary definitions. The physical elements were never signed, with the concept of the work being that this 'form of presentation' would be made and re-made. Necessary because the floor and /or wall should show the one seen with the object. The reason for this was an important part of my intention: eliminate the aura of traditional art and force another basis for this activity to be understood as art, that is: conceptually. For me as well as for other artists at that time, the issues of modernism were rapidly becoming opaque. One effect of this work was to 'sum up' modernism for me, and once that was visible I was able to use that view to get past it, as the work which followed showed. Thus, for me, this work was both a 'summation' of modernism and the way out of it.

Yet, the use of tautologies in the Protoinvestigations has generated a variety of confused responses. One aspect of this work was my attempt to actualize a Wittgensteinian insight: by drawing out the relation of art to language could one SPACING begin the production of a cultural language whose very function it was to show, rather than say? Such artworks might function in a way which circumvents significantly much of what limits language. Art, some have argued, describes reality. But, unlike language, artworks, it can also be argued, simultaneously describe how they describe it. Granted, art can be seen here as self referential, but importantly, not meaninglessly self-referential. What art shows in such a manifestation is, indeed, how it functions. This is revealed in works which feign to say, but do so as an art proposition and reveal the difference (while showing their similarity) with language. This was, of course, the role of language in my work beginning in 1965. It seemed to me that if language itself could be used to function as an artwork, then that difference would bare the device of art's language game. An artwork then, as such a double mask, provided the possibility of not just a reflection on itself, but an indirect double reflection on the nature of language, through art, to culture itself. 'Do not forget,' writes Wittgenstein, 'that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information is not used in the language-game of giving information.' Whatever insights this early work of mine had to share, it did, and most agree it initiated within the practice an essential questioning process which, for the past forty years, has been basic to it. It

should be obvious that the 'baring of the device' of the institutions of art would begin at the most elemental level: the point of production itself, the artwork. Seeing the artwork, in such a context, forced a scrutiny of its conventions and historical baggage, such as painting and sculpture itself as an activity. So, first inside the frame and then outside. One goal at the time of work which followed, like The Second Investigation, was to question the institutional forms of art.

Our contradictions illuminate. How can art remain a 'test' and still maintain a cultural, and thereby socially formed, identity as art, that is, continue a relationship with the history of the activity without which it is severed from the community of 'believers' which gives it human meaning? It is this difficulty of the project which constituted both its 'failure'—as Terry Atkinson has written about so well—as well as the continuing relevance of the project to ongoing art production. It would be difficult to deny that out of the 'failure' of Conceptual art's original project emerged a redefined practice of art. Whatever hermeneutic, and I really can't think of a better word for it, we employ in our approach to the 'tests' of art, the early ones as well as the recent ones, that alteration in terms of how we make meaning of those 'tests' is itself the description of a different practice of art than what preceded it. That is not to say that the project did not proceed without paradox. Can one initiate a practice (of anything) without implying, particularly if it sticks, it as having something akin to a teleology? Indeed the very concept of the 'avant-garde' which frames it even if unintentionally, when unspoken and presumed, is teleological. The fact itself of a perceived end of modernism, with Conceptual art playing a major role in that, suggests a continuum, if only in the form of a rupture. This is one of the ways in which Conceptual art's success constituted its failure. What it had to say, even as a 'failure', still continued to be art. Much art of the past couple of decades internalized the basis of such work, though such work no longer has to call itself 'conceptual', and if that's not obvious enough I'll say it again later. The paradox, of course, is that the ongoing cultural life of this art consisted of two parts which both constituted its origins, as well as remained—even to this day—antagonistic towards each other. The 'success' of this project (it was, in fact, finally to be believed as art, which obviously is why I am invited here today to speak), was obliged to transform it in equal proportion to its 'success' within precisely those terms from which it had disassociated itself from the practice of art as previously constituted. Within this contradiction one is able to see, not unlike a silhouette, the defining characteristic of the project itself: its 'positive' program remains manifest there within its 'failure', as a usable potential. One test simply awaits the next test, since a test cannot attempt to be a masterpiece which depicts an implicitly totalizing reflection of the world. Indeed, the art I speak of was finally understood to be only part of the path of a reflective process, ultimately only comprised of some manifestation of thinking, and it is only over the course of time that the process of a practice can make the claim of describing more than the specific initial program of its agenda. Such work, like any work, is located within a community, and it is that community which gives it its meaning. But meaning given is meaning which, as such, implicitly defines its own limits. And those limits, when understood well, describe what future work might possibly be. Art is always a project on limits. Now I ask you: how can a view of limits ever be reduced to simply being an object?

Going back, we can ask: what is the character of the 'tests' I discussed? As Wittgenstein put it: 'In mathematics and logic, process and result are equivalent.' The same I would maintain, can be said of art. I have written elsewhere that the work of art is essentially a play within the meaning system of art. As that 'play' receives its meaning from the system, that system is—potentially—altered by the difference of that particular play. Since really anything can be nominated as the element in such a play (and appear, then, as the 'material' of the work) the actual location of the work must be seen elsewhere, as the point, or gap, where the production of meaning takes place. In art the how and why collapse into each other as the same sphere of production: the realm of meaning.

As for the project of Conceptual art, we know that what is 'different' doesn't stay different for long if it succeeds, which is perhaps another description of the terms of its 'failure' as much as its 'success'. Thus the relative effectiveness of this practice of art was dependent on those practices of individuals capable of maintaining a sufficiently transformatory process within which 'difference' could

be maintained. Unfortunately practices begun in the past are subject to an over-determined view of art history whose presumptions are exclusive to the practice of art outlined here. The traditional scope of art historicizing—that is, as a style, and attributed to specific individuals—is most comfortable limiting itself to perceived early moments which are then dated and finalized. My discussion of those moments here is precisely intended to suggest another approach, one which suggests their usefulness here in the present. Without that they are doomed to relevance only to historians. While such conventional 'credits' provide for the kind of tidy art history both professors and newspaper critics adore, we've seen that it stops the conversation just where it should begin. In actual fact, the continued 'tests', now, of the original practitioners (in those rare instances where they still constitute a test and not simply a recognizable market entity) should be considered on their own merit equally along with the 'tests' of other generations, insofar as all are present now, and all constitute, together, our present reflection on existence. Also, together, they are capable of an accumulative effect as part of the present cultural landscape from which meaning is generated. Indeed, we may be left with the consideration that the meaning we produce in our life is what defines our existence.

Let's try it from this direction. My work, and Conceptual art later as a general practice, began with the understanding that artists work with meaning, not with shapes, colors, or materials. Anything can be employed by the artist to set the work into play—including shapes, colors or materials—but the form of presentation itself should have no value, formally or otherwise, independent of its role as a vehicle for the idea of the work, even if we must consider that 'vehicle' as part of the idea of the work. (Ah, the dialectical beauty of it all!) Thus, when you approach the work you are approaching the idea (and therefore, the intention) of the artist directly. An 'idea', of course, as an artwork, can constitute a cultural force that is as contingent (within the web of belief) as it is complex, and when I have said that anything can be used by (or as) a work of art, I mean just that: a play within the signifying process conceptually cannot be established, nor limited, by the traditional constraints of morphology, media, or objecthood, even as what it has to say is shaped by the limits which permit itself to be manifest in the world. It is precisely here where art is a reflection on existence. It is by resisting those limits, confounding them and reforming them that it defines what those less concerned can happily call 'creativity'. If art has human value it is because it is capable of asking questions which other activities cannot. In art the question of existence is not an academic puzzle, it is actually manifested, reflected upon, and made visible in its own process and result in the world.

Art can manifest itself in all of the ways in which human intention can manifest itself. It is in this regard that human existence is recorded and reflected upon. The task for artists is to put into play works of art unfettered by the limited kinds of meanings which crafted objects permit, and succeed in having them become not simply things of a discourse that demonstrate a search for authority and validation, but the production of artists as authors within a discourse, one concretized through subjective commitment and comprised of the making process. It is the historically defined agency of the artist working within a practice that sees itself as such a process, wherein an artist's work becomes believable as art within society. The ability of that process to see itself constitutes the moment of reflection in which humanity's existence is brought into view. To do that, work must satisfy deeper structures of our culture than that surface which reads in the market as tradition and continuity. Here is where 'authenticity' finds its voice and form. As Michel Foucault has said, 'Indeed, it is along this vertical direction of existence, and according to the structures of temporality, that the authentic and inauthentic forms of existence can best be allocated. This self-transcendence of the existent in its temporal movement, this transcendence designated by the vertical axis of the imaginary, can be lived as a wrenching away from the bases of the existence itself. Then we see crystallizing all those themes of immortality, of survival, of pure love, of unmediated communication between minds. Or it can be lived, on the contrary, as "transcendence," as an imminent plunge from the dangerous pinnacle of the present.'

The more enriched our understanding of that 'text' of art becomes, so does our understanding of culture. A focus on meaning, by necessity, has focused our concerns on a variety of issues around language and context. These issues pertain to the reception and production of works of art themselves. That aspect of the questioning process some thirty years after I began my work, which some have since called 'institutional critique,' began here, and it originated with Conceptual art's earliest works. It is but one of its consequential aspects. As I said at the beginning of my remarks today, these ongoing comments on this process, which some recognize as constituting a theory, really cannot be separated from the works which informed them.

The Second Investigation was my response to this situation. While I felt such work as 'One and Three Chairs' had initiated such a questioning process, it was increasingly limited by this new reading being given to work using photography because of the work of other artists in the following years using photography. The Second Investigation work used as its 'form of presentation' anonymous advertisements in public media such as newspapers, magazines, billboards, handbills, and, as well, television advertising. This is understood to be the first known use of such a context for the production of artworks, and it should be seen as something specific and quite different from the billboard art which followed in the next decade, where this presentational strategy was often used as an end in itself. The content of the advertisements I utilized in 1968 were based on a 'taxonomy of the world' developed by Roget as The Synopsis of Categories for use in his thesaurus. Each ad was an entry from this synopsis, which, in effect, put into the world the fragments of its own description. What this initiated, of course, was a questioning of the ontology of artworks: the role of context, of language, of institutional framing, of reception. For me, the concerns of this work focused clearly on what was to remain a central concern of my art.

Yet, limited as I have acknowledged it was in some regards, the 'tautology' which I employed at the beginning of Conceptual art was a useful device in blocking the 'mirror effect' which can compromise works which utilize elements from daily life (even if it was language) and do so without telegraphing the knowledge that it

was art to the viewer based on the choice of morphology or media. For my project the meaning of this work could not be established a priori by a tradition which preceded it. The need to re-constitute art as a questioning process necessitated it. The descriptive role of art was put into disequilibrium: one could construct 'a picture of relations' (even if dynamic or contingent) and use it as a 'test' by putting it into play within the meaning-system of art. Such a work proved not to be an illustration but a demonstration, a test, and in so doing it told us some things about art and culture, and the function and role of both in society.

In summation, it was apparent to me by the mid-60's that the issue for new work was not around the materialization or de-materialization of a work, in fact, it was not even concerned with materials. The issue which defined my work, as well as that activity which became known as Conceptual art, was the issue of signification. What are the questions pertaining to the function of meaning in the production and reception of works of art? What is the application and what is the limit of language as a model, in both the theory and the production of actual works? Then, following from that, what is the role of context, be it architectural, psychological or institutional, on the social, cultural and political reading of work? It was these issues which separated Conceptual art from the modernist agenda which preceded it, and it is this non-prescriptive practice which has remained flexible enough to endure and, quite obviously, continues to provide a basis for Conceptual art's ongoing relevance to recent art practice. Indeed, what I alluded to before, I find it interesting that when I started my activity I had to give it a special name, 'Conceptual art' (which was meant to be only descriptive but now seems partly apologetic) but the work of younger artists now can just be called art.

As artists we all begin to construct with what is given. We take, we steal, we appropriate fragments of meaning from the detritus of culture and construct other meanings, our own. In the same sense, all writers write with words invented by others. One uses words, all having prior meanings, to make paragraphs which have a meaning of one's own. As artists, we steal not only words or images, virtually anything at all. As I mentioned a moment ago, it was clear by the mid-60's that the existing institutionalized form of art, the paradigm of painting and sculpture, could no longer itself provide for the possibility of making 'a paragraph of one's own.' It had, for artists, become the sign and signage of the ideospace of modernism: an over-enriched context of historicized meaning institutionally signifying itself and collapsing new meanings under its own weight. What I realized, and this is what I believe my work shows, was that by reducing any ingredient of cultural prior meaning to being a smaller constructive element (functioning as a 'word' element, one could say) I could then construct other meanings on another level, producing 'a paragraph of my own' from what is culturally given and still remain within the context of art sufficiently enough to effect it. Once such work succeeds in being seen as art, it has altered it. This has been a basic aspect of my practice and has, for over forty years, necessitated some form of theft, now called appropriation, as is evidenced throughout my work.

No one better defined one important aspect of artistic practice than Kierkegaard, in 1843, when he stated, 'The difficulty facing an existing individual is how to give his existence the continuity without which everything simply vanishes' to which he then provided his own answer: 'The goal of movement for an existing individual is to arrive at a decision, and to renew it.' What we are discussing, of course, is something basic to artistic practice: repetition. Kierkegaard's point, 'The dialectic of repetition is easy; for what is repeated has been, otherwise it could not be repeated, but precisely the fact that is has been gives to repetition the character of novelty.' Perhaps the question, both for artists and for philosophers, is how one can satisfy the decision of our practice and do so without the a priori meaning which our traditions imply by their own forms.

Finally, for reasons quite similar to why Kierkegaard needed literature to ask philosophical questions at one moment in history, those reasons have no less relevance now for me as an artist. The philosopher who turns to art, as Kierkegaard did, shares the same space, is forced to confront the same modus operandi, as the artist who sees his or her project as having a philosophical dimension in a period in which speculative philosophy has lost its relevance. It seems to me such speculative questions, which once comprised philosophy completely, must now be manifested, not simply asserted. What I mean by manifested is that they be anchored to the world by locating themselves within that cultural discourse, art, which reflects as it forms consciousness. That is, such questions must be manifested in a way which reflects what we can acknowledge as 'the real' since they are linked to that horizon of meaning, one we call culture, that is the constructive web of our social reality: it is there where all of our consciousness is formed. Because of that, the once-called 'visual arts' have evolved into being a much larger context, and clearly one no longer limited to one sense, visual or otherwise, if indeed that was ever simply true, in which all our inherited cultural forms are put into philosophical play. It is there that an engaged project on meaning proceeds without an academic or formal prescriptive prejudice or agenda, satisfying at least Wittgenstein and Nietzsche, as well as most likely a few others. One pauses and considers Beckett's comment in Texts for Nothing: 'It's the end what gives the meaning' being locked in continuous play with Ad Reinhardt's well-known statement: "In art, the end is always the beginning."

And, to end this, I'll offer two last thoughts. The first is from C.D. Broad, Wittgenstein's first philosophy professor at Cambridge: '…the future is simply nothing at all. Nothing has happened to the present by becoming past except that fresh slices of existence have been added to the total history of the world. The past is thus as real as the present.' And, finally, Willard V.O.Quine: 'A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put into three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: 'What is there?' It can be answered, moreover, in a word – 'Everything.'

HEARTBEAT - SASAKI

Drawing performance at the Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, 3 April 2008

Text by Peter Lodermeyer

Heartbeat - Sasaki (1964, Japan). Lives in Tokyo.*

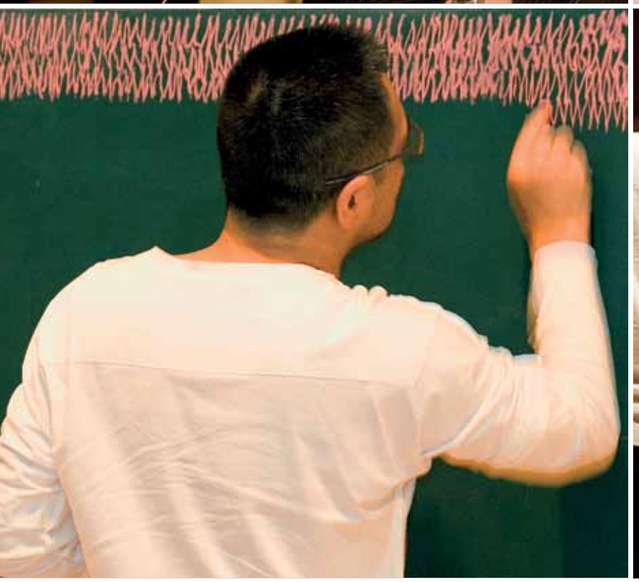
If there is anything at all akin to a soundtrack of human existence, then it is most likely made up of the music of heartbeats. On the 23rd or 24th day of human embryonic development the heart has already been sufficiently formed so that it begins to beat for the first time. In an average life this will repeat itself two to three billion times. The entire pre-history of our intra-uterine life was based at one time on something the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk refers to as the 'existential beat' or the 'cardiac basso continuo.' "The prose of normal existence is based on the fact that human beings, starting from birth, make such a trivial, but at the same time incomprehensible, discovery: The world is a place carved out of stillness, where the heartbeat and the primeval-soprano [of the maternal voice] have been catastrophically silenced."[1] Heartbeat-Sasaki's artist pseudonym is his program: When during a trip to China, the artist, who lives in Tokyo, suddenly realized that each and every individual among these human masses is the bearer of his or her own built-in rhythm machine, he based his entire subsequent production on making this primal music audible once again. In the rhythm of his own and other people's hearts he draws—in red, of course, as any other color would be ridiculously mannered—on paper, on walls, on plexiglass, on photos… It is always the simple zigzag lines going up and down, in keeping with the systolic and diastolic beats, and slowly expanding to become long lines, surfaces, entire rooms: it is the spatially visible temporal dimension of the pulse. On the basis of this concept Heartbeat-Sasaki combines the media of drawing, painting, installation and performance to form a unique overall work. During the drawing performance at the conclusion of the *Existence* Symposium at the Setagaya Museum in Tokyo the artist used a loudspeaker to amplify my heartbeat. By making the intimate sound public, externalizing the internal, which is at once familiar and foreign, oscillating between soothing and scary, a resonant room full of associations came about, where all the viewers/listeners participated. In the rhythm of this thumping bio-techno-music, and like a teacher with red chalk, Heartbeat-Sasaki drew for around 45 minutes his lines on a blackboard, the most didactic of all media, for as long as it took to cover it completely. The simple and powerful message of Heartbeat-Sasaki is: "To be conscious of the beat is to feel 'life' itself."

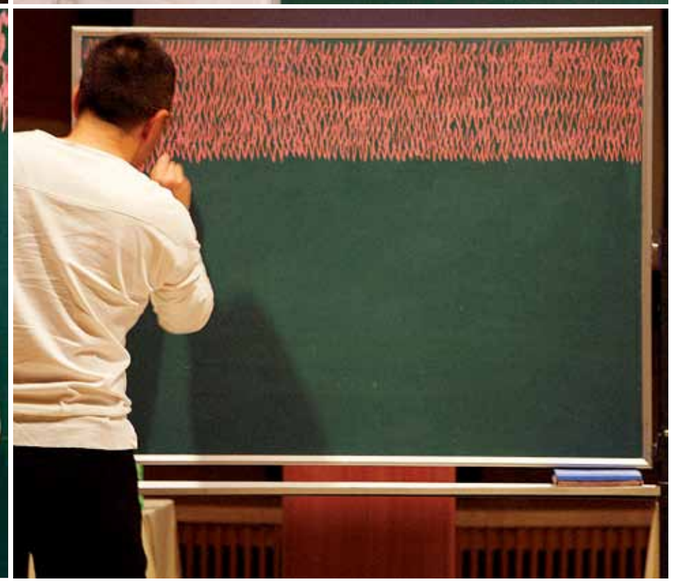
1 Peter Sloterdijk, La musique retrouvée, in: P.S., *Der ästhetische Imperativ*, Hamburg 2007, p. 8-28, quotes p. 10, 11, 12-13.

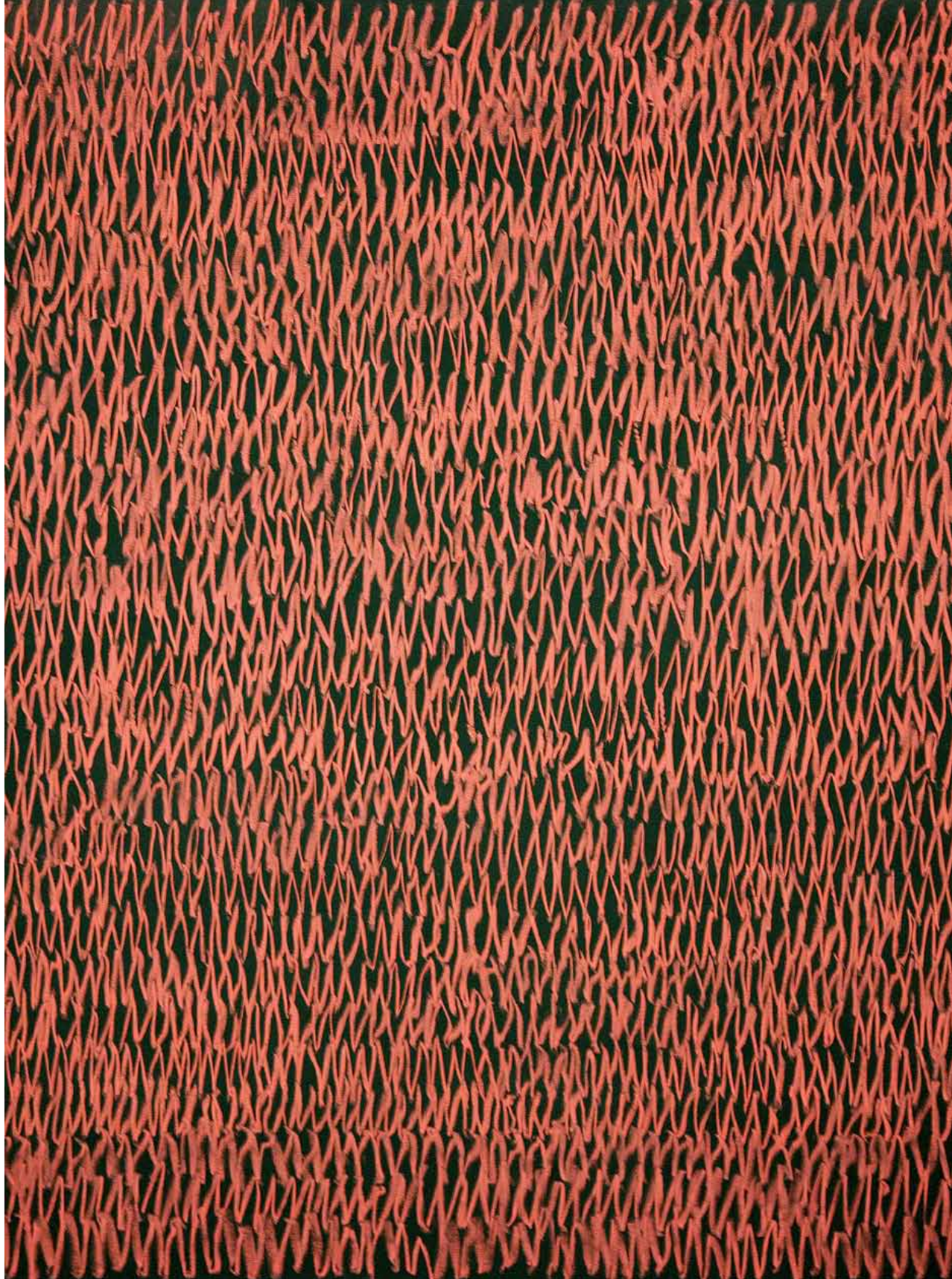
Heartbeat - Sasaki (1964, Japan). Lebt in Tokio.*

Wenn es einen Soundtrack der menschlichen Existenz gibt, dann besteht er am ehesten aus der Musik der Herztöne. Bereits am 23. oder 24. Tag der menschlichen embryonalen Entwicklung ist das Herz soweit ausgebildet, dass es zum ersten Mal pulsiert. In einem Menschenleben von durchschnittlicher Dauer wird sich dies 2 bis 3 Milliarden Mal wiederholen. Unsere gesamte intrauterine Lebens-Vorgeschichte war einmal grundiert von dem, was der Philosoph Peter Sloterdijk den „existentiellen Beat" oder den „kardialen basso continuo" nennt. „Die Prosa des gewöhnlichen Daseins hat ihren Grund in der Tatsache, dass Menschenkinder vom Moment der Geburt an eine so triviale wie unverständliche Entdeckung machen: Die Welt ist ein von Stille ausgehöhlter Ort, an dem der Herzbeat und der Ur-Sopran [der Mutterstimme] katastrophisch verstummt sind."[1] Heartbeat-Sasakis Künstlername ist Programm: Als der in Tokyo lebende Künstler während einer Chinareise sich plötzlich dessen bewusst wurde, dass jeder Einzelne inmitten dieser Menschenmassen Träger einer körpereigenen Rhythmusmaschine ist, hat er seine gesamte anschließende Produktion auf das Wieder-Hörbarmachen dieser Ur-Musik gegründet. Im Rhythmus des eigenen oder fremder Herzen zeichnet er – selbstverständlich in Rot, alles andere wäre ein alberner Manierismus – auf Papier, auf Wände, auf Plexiglas, auf Fotos… Immer sind es einfache Zickzacklinien, ein Auf und Ab im Takt der Systolen und Diastolen, das sich langsam zu langen Linien, zu Flächen, zu ganzen Räumen erweitert: ein verräumlichendes Sichtbarmachen der zeitlichen Dimension des Pulses. Auf der Basis dieses Konzepts verbinden sich bei Heartbeat-Sasaki die Medien Zeichnung, Malerei, Installation und Performance zu einem einzigartigen Gesamtwerk. In der Zeichnungsperformance zum Abschluss des „Existence"-Symposiums im Setagaya Museum in Tokyo verstärkte der Künstler mit einem Lautsprecher meinen Herzschlag. Indem der intime Sound öffentlich wurde, Inneres äußerlich, vertraut und fremd zugleich, oszillierend zwischen Beruhigung und Erschrecken, entstand ein Resonanzraum voller Assoziationen, an dem alle Zuschauer/Zuhörer partizipierten. Im Rhythmus dieser wummernden Bio-Techno-Music zeichnete Heartbeat-Sasaki ca. 45 Minuten lang wie ein Lehrer mit roter Kreide seine Linien auf eine Schultafel, das didaktischste aller Medien, solange, bis sie vollständig bedeckt war. Die ebenso einfache wie eindringliche Lehre Heartbeat-Sasakis lautet: „To be conscious of the beat is to feel ‚life' itself."

1 Peter Sloterdijk, La musique retrouvée, in: ders., *Der ästhetische Imperativ*, Hamburg 2007, S. 8-28, Zitate S. 10, 11, 12 f.







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PETER LODERMEYER

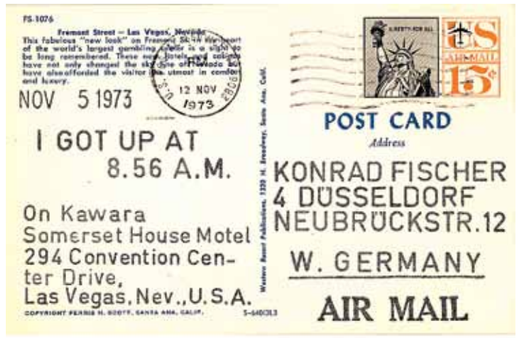
Text as presented during the symposium Time Space Existence at Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti in Venice, Italy, 4 June 2009

After the trilogy of the *Personal Structures* Symposiums on the subjects of 'Time', 'Space' and 'Existence' in Amsterdam, New York, and Tokyo it would appear that this Venetian epilogue on the theme of 'Matter' is a little out of place. Whereas space, time, and existence designate general, empirical pre-conditions, matter seems to be an object of perception, sensually perceptible materiality, which we know intimately. And in fact: time and space are not empirical facts, we may not perceive them. Rather each and every perception presupposes them. This is the reason why Kant referred to them as 'forms of intuition'. And neither is existence a mere empirical fact we may be sure of beyond any doubt. Descartes' *Meditationes* as the foundation charter of modern philosophy show the great methodical and argumentative efforts one must make in order to prove beyond a doubt what seems to be such a simple fact of existing. His "ego cogito, ego existo" however, did not hold up as a staunch and reliable basis, as a *fundamentum inconcussum* for the subsequent philosophy, especially since Nietzsche. For the existential philosophy of Heidegger or Sartre, for example, existence (i.e., human existence) may only be described as a dynamic structure, ultimately as a highly complex process.

Matter, or respectively, material—both meanings being inherent to the English term 'matter'—on the other hand, appears to be a tangible, empirical reality. The everyday definition goes something like this: Matter is everything that has mass and volume, i.e. takes up space. But for centuries we have been living in a scientific culture that has not been dealing with the mere appearance of things, but rather vehemently and with the greatest effort, desires to know what things really are. The question as to what matter actually is, we are fully justified in saying, has been the central task of research for the natural sciences in the last hundred years. We must acknowledge the results it has produced as a revolution—and we ask ourselves how our entire culture would change if these results and their implications with all their consequences were indeed generally internalized.

The research explications of what we think we intuitively know about matter has been correctly determined by philosopher Peter Sloterdijk as follows: "The higher the degree of explication, the more intense the possible, even unavoidable strangeness of the newly acquired knowledge." What physics knows today about the essence of what we naively refer to as matter, is actually utterly strange. I do not pretend to dispose over specialist knowledge, but only wish to list a few facts about which, granted, we as educated people have heard, but as a rule our power of imagination does not suffice to "grasp this knowledge" adequately. That matter consists of atoms is something we learned when we were still at school, "although" as Sloterdijk says, "the much quoted atoms, these epistemological contemporaries of the 20th century, are for me still on the same level as unicorn powder and the influences of Saturn"—in other words, pure superstition. And the fact that the atoms are in no way a-tomos, non-fissionable, is something that the 20th century has revealed with all its dramatic results: Atom bombs as well as nuclear power plants owe their efficiency to this fact. That the so-called atoms may certainly be split, and indeed to the extent that the so-called elementary particle may no longer be described as 'particles', but if at all as a dynamic haze of relations and probabilities, this fact runs fundamentally counter to our assumptions regarding the substantiality of substance. And this to such a degree that a physicist as renowned as Hans Peter Dürr could declare without hesitation: "I have spent 50 years—my entire life in research—with the question concerning what lies beyond matter. The final result is very simple: There is no matter."

And now, what does all of this have to do with art? On the surface, absolutely nothing! But indirectly the transformations the concept of matter has been undergoing in the natural sciences have had an undeniable effect on art, and have been reflected in it. One early example is the attempt the early Cubist theorists such as Apollinaire, Gleizes, and Metzinger made to justify this painting style by referring to the most recent research, most notably, the theory of relativity, the discovery of the 'fourth dimension', etc.—often in an odd mix between popular science and wild speculation. Another example would be the Informel painters after World War II, who directly or indirectly tried to introduce the experience of nuclear fission, the transformation of matter into energy ($E=mc^2$), with their destructive and yet fascinating aspects, into their dynamic structural painting. Of course, the themes of matter and material bear special relevance to the area of sculpture. The ultimately Aristotelian notion that sculpture brings together form and matter, i.e. accomplishes the spiritual forming of a material that has no form per se, a material



which is ideally durable, potentially 'everlasting', and hence with a stable form such as bronze or stone, had become invalidated with the emergence and dynamization of the concept of matter. The development of this artistic process, which was launched at the latest with Picasso's Cubist sculptures, is known.

No longer considering matter to be merely the substrate of a form process, but rather making visible the energetic potential of the materials themselves, and giving them heretofore unknown artistic forms was the program of a wholly new understanding of sculpture beginning in the 1960s. The name Joseph Beuys deserves mention here before all others in terms of the attentiveness to energetic (and emotional) processes, which may be connected to the characteristics of the material. Best known is Beuys's predilection for using fat as a material, which had never before found use in sculpture. Here the commentary by the artist: "My initial intention in using fat was to stimulate discussion. The flexibility of the material appealed to me particularly in its reaction to temperature changes. This flexibility is psychologically effective—people instinctively feel it relates to inner processes and feelings. The discussion I wanted was about the potential of sculpture and culture, what they mean, what language is about, what human production and creativity are about. So I took an extreme position in sculpture, and a material that was very basic to life and not associated with art." As we already notice from this quotation, the physical properties of the material—in this case fat—are so generalized by Beuys that it may become a metaphor for artistic, cultural, even social and political processes. It is not my intention to enter into a discussion of Beuys's concept of art here, but I do want to mention one example of the fact that certain physical research results have been adopted in art. In 1965 Beuys set up a text listing a whole series of scientific and semi-scientific concepts, each forced into the equation with the equal sign "= human (h) ": "Bender of space = the human (h) / Bender of time = the human (h) / (…) Creator of substance = the human (h)", etc. Concepts such as impulse, field, quantization, energy, matter, and causality are identified with the human and the addition (h). This h is known to us from physics as the Planck constant, which holds a fundamental role in quantum theory as a physical constant. By equating this constant and with humans, Beuys demonstrates his anthropocentric approach focused entirely upon the creative potential of humans.

Let us bear in mind: The revolutionary development of the physical picture of matter has also been reflected in the artistic treatment of the material. Granted, this is not in the sense of an "illustration" of physical research, but in the sense of a sensitivity towards the material using the physical and chemical characteristics as form potentials and as energetic (also emotional) centers of power. Only through this change in the scientific concept of matter, it would appear, has the boundless expansion of the use of material become possible in art, which literally comprises the entire spectrum from shit (such as the *Merda d'artista* by Piero Manzoni) to gold (for example, as used by James Lee Byars). As a radical example of the concept of matter extended completely into the Energetic, which is certainly not only found in Beuys's works, we need only think back to an exhibition by Robert Barry in 1969, in which the exhibition room was 'filled' only with radio waves. That Barry actually regarded the waves as material is proven by a statement made by the artist: "The carrier waves have several very beautiful qualities. For example, they travel into space with the speed of light. They can be enclosed in a room. The nature of carrier waves in a room—especially the FM—is affected by people The body itself, as you know, is an electrical device. Like a radio or an electric shaver it affects carrier waves. The carrier waves are part of the electromagnetic spectrum of which light waves are also a part. A carrier wave is a form of energy. Light waves are made of the same material as carrier waves, only they are of a different length. A person is also a source of some kind of a carrier wave. Let me call that telepathy."

The fact that light itself became an artistic material, for Dan Flavin, and later for Keith Sonnier, Robert Irwin, and others, is sufficiently known. Here, considering the exhibition that is taking place in this institute [*Glass Stress*], I would like to speak of a material which interacts with light like no other, and is thus particularly able to make visible the new energetic definition of the concept of matter, namely glass. Glass is at once entirely connected with two elementary metaphors of the western notion of pictures: what I mean here are the notions known to us in art theory since the renaissance of the picture as an open window and as a mirror. That glass was, and is, used for both, the window as well as the mirror, needs no further elaboration—but what is remarkable is

that glass, despite its sheerly overused connection with basal image metaphors, has never become a major material for artistic work. I do not wish to speculate here about the reasons for this, but would merely like to point out that glass, at least in the short period of the early 13th century, was the material and medium of one of the most advanced genres of its time, namely the high-gothic glass window with its extremely complex picture stories. That the church window recently became a hotly debated medium once again, is one of those strange phenomena of the Post-Modern Era. When the window in the south transept of the Cologne Cathedral was glazed according to a design by Gerhard Richter with 10,5000 squares in 72 colors in a random order, a passionate debate arose concerning how much obligation to content contemporary art could create.

Of all things, this is how a work of glass painting became a test case for the question as to whether or not contemporary art could still convey religious messages and in addition, activate social bonding powers.

Even though glass, as I mentioned, was never the preferred material of the Modern, still it certainly has played an important role at several pronounced and significant turning points of artistic development. Precisely where the concern was for the transition from painting as the leading medium of modern art to a conceptual understanding of art, it is interesting to note that glass repeatedly emerges as a working material. One of Duchamp's major works, the famous *La mariée mise a nue des ses célibataires, meme*, done from 1915 to 1923, was notably carried out on glass, and is often simply referred to as *The Large Glass*. This is Duchamp's attempt to break free from the painter's signature, to leave "retinal art" with its total focus on the visual, behind. Duchamp is supposed to have said in retrospect in 1958, "I used glass because in this respect there are no prejudices. A painter, who leaves the canvas blank, still places something before the viewer that is understood as an object per se. It is different with glass: except in relationship to space and the viewer, you do not linger before the blank places." The parts of the picture where the colorless glass may be seen thus dissolve the object character of the painting and function as relational hinges, as connecting elements to space and the viewer.

Precisely this characteristic of glass, namely, of remaining more or less "invisible" and as a result playing a functional part in the reception, occurs again in the concept art of the likes of Joseph Kosuth in the 1960s. By this it becomes immediately evident how much Kosuth owes to Duchamp's notion of art. His early works with glass such as the *Leaning Glasses* and the glass boxes (each 1965) take up the aesthetics of minimalism, the simple geometric forms, for example the cubes of Sol LeWitt or Donald Judd, the leaning of things against the wall of artists such as John McCracken (who actually began to make his color-planks one year later, 1966), as well as the repetition of identical forms. But where Kosuth's works fundamentally differ from Minimal Art is in his use of language, the words written on the objects of glass. They refer—tautologically—to the work itself and name nouns and adjectives we assume when we look at the objects: box, cube, empty, clear, glass as well as glass, words, material, described. The 'described' indicates that we never simply view things. Viewing cannot take place without descriptive concepts. We always use concepts in order to be able to perceive as a certain something at all what we perceive visually. Having elevated this fact of the unavoidable weave of viewing and concept into an artistic statement is the achievement of Kosuth's conceptual work. Colorless glass is an ideal material in this undertaking because it takes a background position, and because of this, its object-like character is visually strongly reduced anyway. As with Duchamp, it opens the work of art in terms of the relationship to space and the viewer. It is worth taking a moment to point out the parallels to physical research. Just as quantum physics dissolves the concept of "matter" into a dynamic "relational structure" (Hans-Peter Dürr), Concept Art also transforms the work of art into a relational structure consisting of language and visual elements. This is why Kosuth declared the context to be his actual material. In this respect, "context" is not only the exhibition space and the institutional framework within which a work of art is shown and reviewed, but also the cultural context, i.e. all elements being included into a culturally defined relationship (philosophy, language, history, etc.).

All of the artistic procedures, which I have quickly pointed out here, the energetic notion of matter with Beuys, the dissolution of the notion of material into the immaterial (with Barry) or in contextuality and language (with Kosuth) have in turn themselves become 'material' for many artists to work on further since the 1960s. One pronounced example of how minimalistic forms, a certain conceptual procedure, but also making light and color a theme (for which Gerhard Richter's cathedral window is a further marked example) all find their ways together in an idiosyncratic oeuvre may be witnessed in the work of the American artist Roni Horn. The fact that she has repeatedly worked with glass in recent years is remarkable in this connection. Her floor objects of colored glass make a theme of the energetic aspect of glass and light, the interplay between transparency, opacity, and reflection, depending upon the viewer's perspective and the light situation. There are also the age-old metaphors of the picture: The window and the mirror return in her works in an unexpected form. About her two-part blue object *Blue by Blue* of 2007, she says characteristically: "The experience of blue unlike most colours is always half you. So this is a pair that is both mirror and window. The window contains the view of blue. The mirror reflects the blue in you."

Matter, material, and its characteristics have been individual parameters of artistic work since the 1960s at the latest. Form and content do not suffice, material has taken on an equal role for the quality and meaning of works of art. It seems vital to me for our experience of the world that the scientific research of matter be supplemented by an artistic research of it. That glass with its diverse properties and its fascinating capacity to unite the most varied qualities will increasingly play a role as an artistic material in addition to its functional and handicraft importance is something we may safely assume.

RENE RIETMEYER

Text as presented during the symposium Time Space Existence at Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti in Venice, Italy, 4 June 2009

Rene Rietmeyer (1957, Netherlands) creates 'Boxes'. With their material, size, color and texture, they address time, space and existence.*

The subjective use and perception of matter

Matter, Material, Materiality

Around 450 BC the Greek philosopher Empedocles proposed one of the first theories that attempted to describe the things around us. He argued that all matter was composed of four elements: fire, air, water, and earth. He thought that the ratio in which these four elements were combined, decided the properties of all matter and after we died, we would turn into fire, air, water and dust again. Approximately 50 years later another Greek philosopher named Democritus realized that if you would take a stone and break it into two pieces, each part would still have the same property values as the stone from before the splitting. He came to the conclusion, that if you would continue to break the stone into ever smaller pieces, eventually you would come to a piece, that would be so small, that the piece itself, could no longer be divided into two parts anymore. He called these smallest possible pieces: atomos. Aristotle and Plato, rejected the theories of Democritus. Aristotle accepted the 'fire, air, water, earth' theory of Empedocles, and because Aristotle had many people who believed in him, the theory of Democritus would have to wait almost another 2,000 years before being rediscovered. Proving that, both Aristotle and Plato, could be seriously wrong sometimes as well.

Especially in the last hundred years we have to come to the conclusion that this subject is even much more complex and difficult to understand as it seemed. In praxis however, almost all artists are not concerned with the latest developments in the research of matter, and I, myself, honestly cannot understand the latest findings anymore as well. I can therefore only touch the surface from the physical discoveries and ongoing philosophical discussions. Kant tried to explain the difference between matter, material, and substance. Marx and Hegel tried to explain the differences between, material and content and material, latest from that point on, was not just a physically present object anymore, it became to have meaning. In the late twentieth century, Heidegger's thoughts gave way to the use of the word 'materiality', and Clement Greenberg, as an art critic, made an enormous effort to redefine the value of the work of art and discussed thereby the significance of physicality in visual arts. Michael Fried claimed: "the materials do not represent, signify or allude to anything; they are what they are and nothing more." Material that had been only part of the form of the art work, as opposed to being part of the content or meaning of the art work, this material now did become an important factor of the meaning of the art object itself.

Over the years many philosophers and even scientists have come to many different opinions and since art is no science, artists have taken the freedom to believe in, and express what, they subjectively like best. An artist simply does not have the time and understanding capability anymore to deal with this subject as intensively as specialist researchers do. We therefore can only include a very limited knowledge within our works, which makes our use of questions concerning matter within our art works even more subjective, and as long as we do not pretend that we know, there is nothing wrong with that.

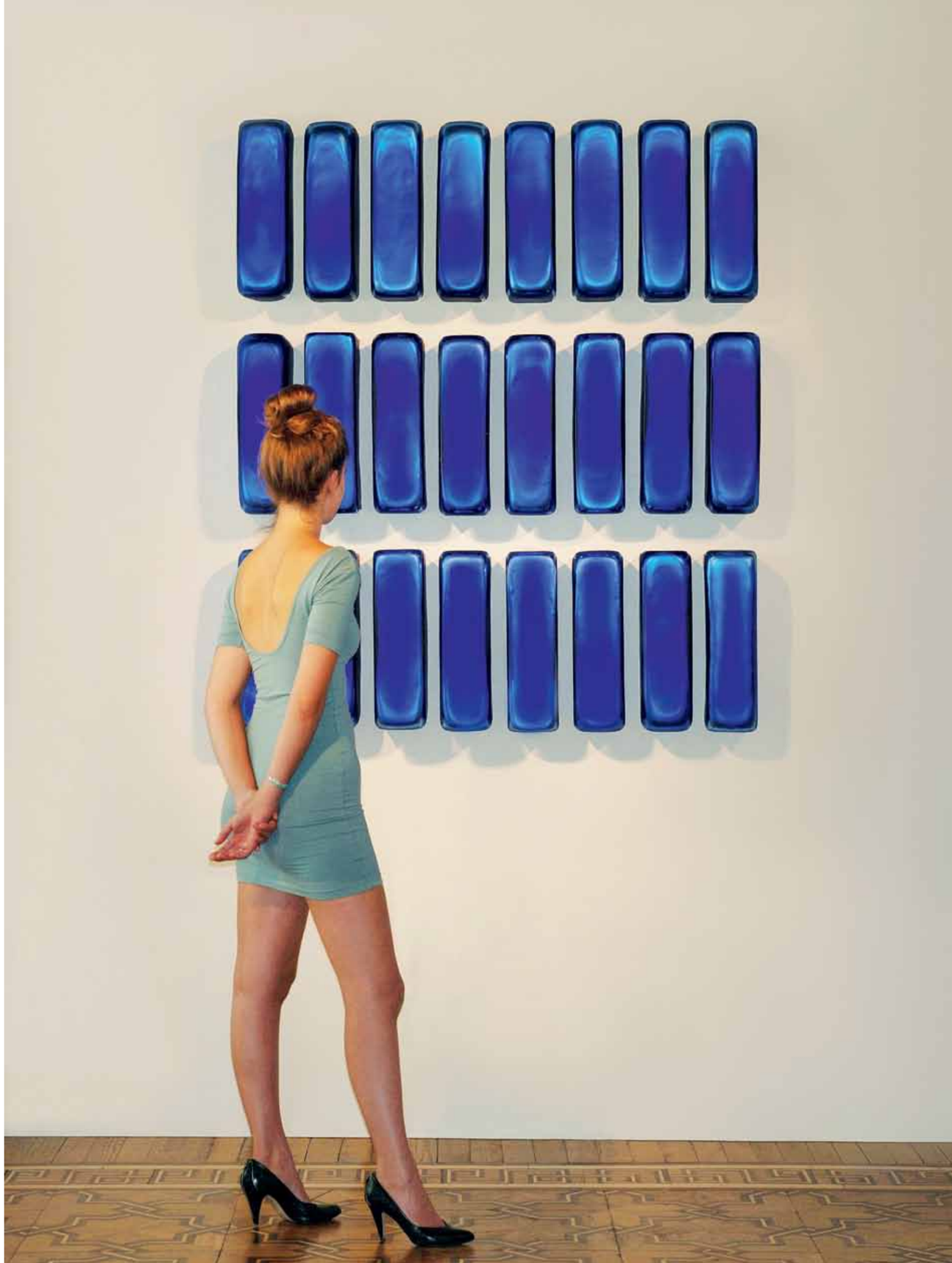
Matter; I would describe today as: something that is physically present, which emphasizes that it is at least something, something everything has been made out of. Solids, liquids, and gases are the most common states of matter that exist on our planet. Everything around us is matter and the atom is considered the most basic unit of matter.

Material; commonly refers to physical present matter, but there is also material which is associated to non-physical present matter, such as spoken words, magnetism and electricity. The material aspect of things, for example an art work, is often not obvious. In the late twentieth century the actual meaning of material became associated with the abstractness of art and that brought the word 'materiality' into the discussions about art works.

Materiality, has become one of the crucial aspects while discussing the characteristics of the media used to create a work of art. The materiality of an object seems to be; our perception of the material the object is made of; the perception of the qualities, the values of the materials as such. The different interpretations of Matter, Material and Materiality, seem to be one of the crucial aspects in understanding the characteristics of the media artists work with.

How do humans perceive matter

Matter values are personal not universal, although there are similarities in perception. Knowledge about the history of a certain material has influence on its perception. Personal experiences with materials



in the past, influence the momentary perception. Material contains qualities which transport emotions and meaning. Qualities such as: color, smell, texture and also, the sheer knowledge about what material the art work has been made of creates an emotional reaction.

Each series I make, begins with an idea. My main concern is the process of realizing what exactly I want to express, how to communicate and how to realize this in the best way possible with the available material. Once each Box gains physical reality, the perception of its meaning and emotional impact are up to the spectator, including me. Only by realizing my ideas in the object and the completion of a series of Boxes, my thoughts are made visible and can be perceived. Once I have finished my work and I display it, I have no control over the way a viewer will perceive my work. Different people will understand the same thing in a different way.

Three-dimensional art of any kind is a physical fact. The physicality is its most obvious and expressive content. Good art is made to engage the mind of the viewer by reaching his brain in any way possible. The physical aspects of my work emphasis the use of certain materials, matter, because of its specific materiality. The choice of which material I use, underlines the idea which was the foundation for the creating and supports what I want to communicate. New materials are one of the great afflictions of contemporary art. Some artists confuse new materials with new ideas. The 'tradition' of using non-traditional materials and found materials in art goes back awhile, at least since Braques and Picasso's collages and Duchamp's urinal. Today we are accustomed to seeing everyday things in museums or galleries. For me, the good use of non-traditional materials has to transform that material so that it becomes something else than the novelty of the material itself. Generally most artists who are attracted to these new materials are the ones who lack the strictness of mind that would enable them to use the materials well. It takes a good artist to use new materials and make them into a work of art. The danger lies in making the physicality of the materials so important that the material itself becomes the idea of the work.

Objectivity, subjectivity and perceptive reality

We human beings cannot perceive things or events objectively at all. A statement is objective if it is neutral and not influenced by prejudices, feelings and interests. An objective statement is consequently independent of the person who makes this statement. It is only when we could know and understand everything on earth and in the cosmos, that objectively correct observations are theoretically possible. However we are still a long way from this, even the so-called knowledge we previously thought we had gained has been revised many times. So, for example the model of the structure and properties of an atom has drastically changed in the last fifty years. Many times scientists were convinced that we now know 'everything' but our knowledge is constantly expanding. Those things which we recognize as good and correct in science and technology today, can be proven incorrect or incomplete in the future while perhaps being the basis of new findings. Even our perception within the scope of science and technology is therefore also subjective. To my opinion objectivity cannot be achieved, and should therefore also not serve as a goal, we should rather learn how to deal with and see the beauty of subjectivity.

'Perception' is how we view our world: ourselves, others, events. It was not long ago, Alfred Adler who first introduced to psychology the idea

that perception is a matter of subjectivity and personal perspective. Our perception of everything around us (perceptive reality) is purely subjective. There are a number of factors that affect perception. Among them is the personal need to see events a certain way. Our perceptions are not simply how we 'see' things, but what our minds make of what we choose to see and not see in an event. This becomes the 'meaning' of the event, a meaning that is highly personal. In the course of our personal development our own perception changes. It is however true that no one can force us to develop ourselves further. If for example we want to be miserable for the whole of our life because of the end of a relationship, we can do so. The decision is ours alone. How we experience the world is simply our subjectively perceived reality. The nice thing about subjectivity however, is the possibility of influencing the situation ourselves. If my perception is subjective then I, I alone, have all the options of influencing or being influenced in a given situation. I alone decide whether I think that something is good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, cold or hot, beautiful or ugly.

Many people assume that having this subjective influence on the neutral picture happens in our subconscious, but we also can consciously modify the way we perceive things. We ourselves can influence it, and we also can allow it to be influenced by external forces. But we can only create awareness with the use of language; we have to give words to our observations. These words are being taught to us and they are the tool for our communication with others, but also with ourselves. If we enlarge the amount of words we are capable of using, or if we learn to address the words more specific to the observed thing, our consciousness and therewith our emotional perception will change. As long as we speak the same language, the differences in the way of using words seems relatively small, but as soon as we have to discuss with for example an artist from Japan, the different meaning of similar translated words becomes obvious and communication with words can lead to serious misunderstandings.

Fortunately it seems possible to communicate without words as well, not only by using figuration in an art work, but also with an abstract language. Although colors are of course not understood the same everywhere, there are similarities in how we perceive for example the color red. The subjective perception of colors has been extensively studied, with a focus on single colors or on combinations of a few colors. It is a challenge to understand the subjective perception of colors, but it is obvious that the emotional impact of color on humans is an important factor in how we perceive our surroundings. The sight of blood causes excitement in primates, it means something important. We therefore use red for important things, like Stop signs, green can calm people down. Colors seem to have subconscious effects of which however we can become aware, although the origin, why, most often can only be guessed. But even our own perceptions are not exactly the same on a day by day basis; they depend on Location and Time. For a great part, the way we for example perceive the exact same object on different occasions, depends on our own personal situation of that moment, and on the space which surrounds the object.

Commonly we are not consciously aware of all the factors involved and, although perception seems to be so personal, there are general tendencies in how we humans perceive our surroundings, the things we encounter. Our mind is capable to create awareness about our own individual possibilities for perception, but it needs to be developed gradually. It is often astonishing how little time we take to experience consciously the emotional impact an object has and how little we consider the meaning certain materials carry within them. If we would experience, perceive, materials and our surroundings more consciously, and if we would integrate the concrete application of these thoughts to our everyday lives, we would be more aware of our own existence.

Knowledge about how matter will mainly be perceived and awareness how I perceive it myself, is the mean influence in the choice of the matter, material, which I use for the objects, the Boxes, I am going to make.

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MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

Conversation between Marina Abramović, Peter Lodermeyer, Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh, and Rene Rietmeyer

Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, Venice, Italy, 4 June 2009

Marina Abramović (1946 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, now Serbia). Performance artist since the early 1970s. Lives in New York City.*

Peter Lodermeyer: I saw you in the 1980s in Bonn doing an impressive performance with Ulay. You sat at a table for 24 hours. In terms of everyday life a completely boring action, but even today I still think about it and it still has an emotional impact on me. I wonder why you call your art Body Art; I think it is "Emotion Art". Are emotions the material you work with?

Marina Abramović: You see, at the beginning of the 70s, it was Vito Acconci who invented this title 'Body Art'. And he doesn't come from the visual art tradition: he comes from writing. He was a writer, and a poet before that. So, he actually said, "The body is the place where things happen." And the body is my place where things happen, for me. He actually supplied the title in the 70s: Body Art. But then in the 70s this term was not used anymore. Actually, not for a long time. So then Body Art actually became Performance Art. But then, Performance Art is such an unclear title: especially if you see different countries, performance can be, you know, performing a music piece, it can be a performance of dance or theater. So it's not really an exact term for my kind of work. We'll never really find the right title. But it's not just about emotions. I mean Performance Art. If somebody asks me, how I would define the question "What is Performance Art?", I would say each artist will give his own different statement. What I can explain about performance is the following: it is a mental and physical construction, which I step into, in front of an audience, in a specific time and place. And then the performance actually happens; it's really based on energy values. It is very important that there's a public present; I could not do it in my private life. This is not considered performance. Plus, I wouldn't have the energy to do it. So for me it is really important that actually energy comes from the audience and kind of translates through me, like I filter it, and let it go back to the audience. The more audience, the better the performance gets. That's because there is more energy you can work with. Of course the emotional element is there too, but there are so many other elements. They have to be unrehearsed and they have to be very direct and pure. They really have to confront your physical and mental limits. At the same time, for me and especially now, I'm very interested in pieces with a long duration: for me, time is very important. This is why I'm actually involved now in developing my performances. That's why I like your title. Let's talk about time, consciousness, and existence. It's quite interesting.

Karlyn De Jongh: Yesterday we walked around the exhibition upstairs with Joseph Kosuth and he said about Rene Rietmeyer´s work that "it suffers from aesthetics." What Kosuth seems to have meant with saying that the work is "too beautiful", is that the beauty is sort of in the way of the possible meaning of the work, of what it is the artist wants to express. In your work you use your own body as a medium. You have a very beautiful body; you are a very beautiful woman. Do you ever feel that this beauty is in the way of what you want to express? Do you think this beauty affects the reception of your work by the viewer?

MA: I don't think that. It's kind of a complex question. First of all, for a very long time, I worked on a piece dealing with this problem: *Art must be beautiful, Artist must be beautiful*. This piece was, however, doing the exact opposite: not talking of beauty and actually denying the idea of beauty, because actually I really think if art is only beautiful, it's really short, short-lived, limited in a conceptual way. For me, this whole idea that art has to have many lives is very important. Every society and every culture has to take part of the meaning of the work as they need it. So, sometimes it is about beauty; sometimes it is about symmetry; sometimes it has to be disturbing; sometimes it has to be political. And other ways have to be, you know, social. There are so many layers that one artwork has to have. If it is only just beauty and just aesthetics it is not enough. So, of course, it's an obstacle in my work, but I hope my work is not just that. And, you know, I'm sixty-three, I don't think I'm beautiful as far as my body is concerned anymore. My body, it's older. It's good to be older, so it's not about that. But it doesn't matter because I don't see the body that way. In my private life I could be very self-conscious, but the moment I am there, in front of an audience, it doesn't matter that my body is old, not old or beautiful or ugly, or whatever. It's about the context and the meaning what you want to say, it's about ideas and not about the visual part at all.

Sarah Gold: But a person is not just a visual part: it's the expression of the body, the expression of the face. And that's a lot.

MA: Yes, but this is charisma. We're talking about charisma. We're not talking about anything else. That's another thing. Performance is a

very difficult art form. It's one of the most difficult: you have to deal with presence. You have to be there, here and now, one hundred percent. If you're not there, one hundred percent, the public is like a dog: they could sense an insecurity and just leave. What I mean is: you can perform in front of a public with your body, but your mind can be in Honolulu. For the public it's all the same, you can look at the performance, but you can be, who knows where, answering your Blackberry. In that case you're not there. The idea is how to actually create a piece so that the consciousness, your body and the moment of Now is there. Then you really have something; then you really have a dialogue. Not only you, but also the public has to be there. This is why in staging dangerous moments, or staging things that even the artist has never done, there is fear because he doesn't know how he is going to succeed. That keeps you in the present time, you're not going to wander somewhere else, because you're there with the artist and the artist is there in the space too. So it's about here and now. You know: the past we know, it's already happened; the future is not clear. But the present is the only thing we can deal with. And that's escaping us so much; the performance is really about presence. If you escape presence during your performance, your performance is gone. There are so many bad performances in the world because it's hard to do a good one.

SG: I think a part of the quality of your performances was the integrity, which was visually present, that was the aura, the charisma. I saw a photograph of you as a young girl in 1970 and already there it was present within you.

MA: But again, it is always you, the mind and the body. You have to be there. There is a beautiful sentence from Bruce Naumann that he always likes to say: "Art is a matter of life and death." It sounds melodramatic, but it is so true. If you take whatever you do as a matter of life and death, being there one hundred percent, then things really happen. Less than one hundred percent is not good art. It's so hard to do it, but it is the only way. And this means: no compromises.

PL: In an interview you made once a statement that if you had a starship to leave the galaxy with, you would do it, because you are always interested in going beyond the limits. What are the limits you're still fighting with and would like to go beyond? What is the greatest challenge, or what is the strongest fight or struggle you have with limitation? Is it the materiality of our body?

MA: No, it is not about materiality at all, that is really the most unknown notion. It's actually sub-consciousness and un-consciousness. That's what is really the most interesting. And how to understand that? To me it is so important to introduce time in performance, because our lives are becoming shorter and shorter. This is why I'm now struggling to make performances longer and longer. I really like that moment when the performance becomes life itself. That is really something I'm working on. I'm doing a retrospective next year at MoMA. The title of the retrospective is "The Artist is Present". I'm literally performing three months every single day. And I would like somehow to find a system so that the performance would become life. That it's actually timeless; it becomes just timeless. I always say to the audience: "I don't want you to spend time with me looking at my work; I want you with me, to forget about time. Kind of open up the space and just that moment of here and now, of nothing, there is no future and there is no past. And that you can extend eternity." That is really my biggest wish.

PL: The limit you would like to go beyond is time?

MA: No, it is about being present. And being present longer than… You see, there are so many different meditation traditions in different religions all around the world and they all talk about the same thing. How to get into that moment of Now? That moment of Now that is always escaping us. For an artist performance is a tool; it is not an aim. Like any other tool, like a painter has his tool, a carpenter has his tool. Performance is a tool. Nothing other than a tool. For me it is the tool I choose for bringing me to that moment.

PL: Do you think that artists nowadays are better able to do this than religion, meditation methods or rituals are? Is it more fitting to our culture nowadays?

MA: Yes, it's very funny. When you talk about spirituality in art it is very badly received. The artist doesn't want to talk about spirituality; you don't talk about these kinds of things. It's too spooky. It's something like New Age and it doesn't look good. Older forms are already exhausted and we don't believe anymore. Religion has become an institution we don't believe in anymore: we know it's wrong and more corrupt than anything else. And real ascetic traditions of the past are not alive anymore. So, there we don't have any examples in order to actually take it into our own exercise. We have to make our own system based on experience and different traditions. To me, the really important cultures that changed my life are the Aboriginals and Tibetans. Aboriginals, because they are really made that way; they're born like that. But the Tibetans have their techniques to get there. And from these two traditions—to which I exposed myself for a long period of time—I actually could learn some techniques. These I can introduce in my work. And not only I, but also the young artists can do it. For me it's very important to not just do it for myself. At one point in your life, you have gained some experience and you want to pass it on to a younger generation. I think this is a very important task of an artist. This is why I'm always talking about the artist as a servant of society. We have to see our function that way. This is why building ego or… It becomes a kind of Hollywood-star look, which is really fake. Especially in Italy, I think it's amazing, you have this kind of star-looking artist that you can't even talk to because he is God. He doesn't want to talk to you because he's better than everybody else. This will completely destroy the work. It is not you that is important; it is the work that is important. That's the big misunderstanding. The best pieces of artwork in the medieval times, you didn't even know the name of the artist. That's much more healthy for an artist, instead of building that kind of stardom image. That's why the economic crisis is so good now. It is the best thing ever happened to art. Too much money—and money becoming a commodity—is never good. It never amounts to anything good. And it's funny because, the more the economic crisis stays on this course, the more performance… So these are good times, again.

KDJ: You just mentioned that the here and now, the present is very important to you. Also in your statements you often write "in a given space." Would you say that time and space are in a way materials that you work with in your performances?

MA: Time and space are quite important. If you're talking in the here and now, the actual time should not exist. So, at the same time you have a contradiction. Because you have to have a space where things have to happen in order to determine this space inside where things happen. And then you have to allot a certain amount of time that you are going to give to yourself to make things happen, in which things are going to happen. It's very important. If I say, for example, I will be performing for ten hours, I don't even know what it looks like, ten hours. So you enter a kind of unknown construction, which you created for yourself. But then you have to have the willpower to actually keep your word. No matter how difficult it is. It's a very important task. It's so easy to give up, but not to give up… You give it a certain time. You don't give up; you do it, no matter what. And then in this period of time—it can be ten hours or five or whatever it is—regardless of everything that could happen on the exterior, for example when the electricity goes out or everybody has left the space… the performance should not finish. No matter what, you have to do that period of time at this site. It is very important for your self-respect.

SG: You are such a different person than I am. I have difficulties putting a needle in my own skin, just the pain, just the trying to destroy my body, I could not do it. And I see you taking medication voluntarily, torturing your body. Are you never worried that you might destroy your own body? You seem to have had this fatalism: "who cares? If I die, I die. If I live, I live".

MA: You have to remember that both of my parents are national heroes. Just so you know. So, it must be something with the genes. But apart from that: because you pay so much attention to the body, the body is not important; it's the mind that is important.

SG: But you need your body to live a long time. Don't you want to live a long time? We spoke with Roman Opalka yesterday and he says, "I'm not stupid: I'm not just painting numbers, I'm also alive. I have sex, I drink…"

MA: I don't drink, I don't smoke, and I don't take any… I exercise four times a week with a trainer. I am very careful about where I'm going. But this is another thing than the work. The work is something other than my private life. Okay, let me explain this: You have to understand that, when you do the work, you do it from your superself, which is different than your ordinary self. You have to make this distinction, because it is not my private self who is doing this. The moment I decide I'm entering this construction I make, you're not your little self anymore, you know the one that can feel the pain, or doesn't want to cut the meat. When I cut myself, cutting garlic in the kitchen, I cry. But if I do it in front of the public, I do it for a purpose. I do it for the idea… I'm doing it with the purpose of giving the message to others. You're actually unhurt. You're totally protected. I lay on ice, naked for half an hour. And the doctor told me that my kidneys would just… you know… I never had anything.

Life's just getting longer. The mind can make you sick, can make you healthy, can make you jump out of the window. It can make you tremendously happy. Everything is about mind. The body is a tool. And the mind controls it. Our mind is the subject we need to understand, how to use it. We have to ask: "Why am I doing this?" That's much more important. It's not a little girl who wants to spin… First of all, did you ask yourself why so many other cultures and shamanism use the techniques of, or even go to face the kind of clinical dying ex-

perience? They do that. Why do they do that? Why do they cut the body? Why do you think they're doing that? It's very easy in our lives to do things we like. If you're doing things you only like, you'll never go anywhere. You will always repeat the same patterns. Things just happen over and over again. But if you do things you fear and you do things you don't know, there is a very big chance that you will actually open up your consciousness. One thing is confronting your own fear. If you're afraid of pain, this is exactly what you have to do to find out what this pain is. When you open the door to pain, you'll find out that you actually might be able to control it. You'll be free from the fear of pain—which is a great feeling. This is why the Shamans are doing it. So, go and stick some needles in your body, it's a good exercise!

PL: I can imagine that your performances really can change peoples' lives. What kind of reactions do you get from your audience? Do people write to you? Do they tell you something about what it did to them?

MA: The piece I did at the Sean Kelly Gallery[1], when I didn't eat for twelve days… You see, this is a very important piece for me, because the idea was that I purified myself. Can I purify the space? Can I change the molecules in the air? In the way when people come to see me, it is a kind of time-stop: it can be three minutes, five seconds. In New York people don't have time for anything, but they came and stayed for six or seven hours, the longest they could stay. There were twelve thousand people. And I was so surprised that at the end of this thing I had boxes of things that people had left me: handkerchiefs, necklaces, and little messages. I didn't do anything. I would just stand there and look at them. That's it, you know. But it is about presence. I was really standing and looking at them. And that makes all the difference. They could see me as I could see them. It's very minimal. It's all about energy, which is invisible in a way. But if you really go through purification, you elevate your consciousness and that really affects the audience. In an invisible way, but it is true. It's a huge work you have to do to create that kind of aura in the space. Without it, it doesn't work. And to be able to do this… You see, in these days I'm standing all the time on the edge of the platform. At this edge of the platform are the ladders with knives. You see, I'm always standing on the edge. It's just the moment that I will not be there with my mind and body, I will fall on these knives and cut myself. So, that exact point of danger is what puts my mind and body in the here and now time. The public knows it and they are there with me. This is the point. When you just sit on a chair, it's not there: you have to get to that edge; you have to really… It's nothing new. In the Sufi dance technique there is an exercise where they spin round and round. In this spinning around you have the possibility to really lose your consciousness. But you have the guys outside with swords cutting the air. If you lose the balance of consciousness, you'll fall outside the circle and be cut in pieces. You have to do the spinning and you have the possibility to actually lose control. But at the same time you have to have an enormous control of the mind not to do it, because you are going to die. When you create this kind of edgy situation in performance, I stage that situation in order to get to the point of elevating the mind. But when you elevate your mind, automatically it is sent to the public. That's why it becomes so emotional. This is why people come and cry. It's kind of the totality of the situation, if I can explain…

Rene Rietmeyer: It seems that the communication you have with your public is not just by your performances but also by spoken words. So, beyond your performances you do communicate through well-spoken words, and it does transport what you want to communicate during your performance.

MA: No, you see, this is very wrong. Because, when you see the piece and you don't have anything to do with art, you just come from the street… You have to get it emotionally. You have to get it in your stomach and not in your brain. Later on you can talk to the artist, you can understand the theory. There is so much art where you have to read lots of theory in order to understand the work. And if you don't read this theory, there is nothing there. And actually the work is becoming illustration to the theory. This is the art I don't accept. You have to have the art; you have to feel with your stomach. Then you can go in the theory. Now we're talking. I have to be able in the performance to tell all this without saying this: you have to feel it. Later on you can talk. Without feeling, it doesn't work. You know, I was always asked, "How do you know it is a good work of art?" It is very simple: You sit in the restaurant and you have a strong feeling that somebody is watching you. You turn around and you realize somebody is watching you. This sensation sometimes happens. But if you come to a space and you have the feeling somebody is watching you, and you turn around and it is a work of art. So, what is a good work of art? That energy that turns you to look behind. There has to be energy.

SG: I read about your ninety days walk on the Chinese wall, and I found it a beautiful present to yourself. Not to serve the public; not for us, but just for yourself. Does that performance differ from the work in the Sean Kelly Gallery where you wanted to communicate with the spectator?

MA: No, it was not just for myself. It was conditioning myself in order to make a work of art. After this I made lots of objects, transitory objects, which the public has to use. I could not do that if I did not walk the wall. *The Chinese Wall* was the only performance where the audience was not present. At the same time, I wanted to experience how I can walk on an energy grid system. And if you're all the time at the edge of sleepiness, you can have some kind of transformation of yourself. It would be the state of mind in which you get new ideas. So, this was the conditioning for me, not the performance itself. After this performance I created a series of works, which were actually for the public. Because I understood it is not enough that the artist goes through an experience; the public has to go through an experience as well. The objects were created with quartz, copper or iron; they all have a certain energy. You have to spent time with them before you can get to certain experiences. Now in Manchester, I am doing this whole new thing, *The Drill*. We never spend time educating the public. The public doesn't have a clue how to look at something for a long duration of time without getting bored. How we can go beyond the boredom? How we can see things when nothing is happening? So, this is my big task now: to teach the public to do that.

SG: Opalka said that as soon as he has the feeling he cannot stand proud in front of his canvas, he will stop working. Will you stop?

MA: I have a big problem with Opalka, because there is something wrong there. You see, Roman Opalka was very strict about his work—not just him, but a lot of American minimalism as well. Roman Opalka made a body of canvases enough at the end of his life. He had two sizes: one traveling size and one that can go through his studio door. He paints his numbers from seven in the morning until four. It has all the ritual and process. And when his paint runs out, he stops painting. My really big question that I only started to ask after I actually went through these Aboriginal and Tibetan experiences is: To me it is not clear what will happen by doing this kind of very meditative work. What will happen if you change? He is not expecting to change. He is not accepting transformation. That is totally wrong. So, it has become a very bureaucratic thing. You are producing, producing, producing… But this is like stamping eggs, you know, for the supermarket. Or putting stamps on the envelops for the post-office. What happens if you retransform through this process? Meditation techniques are made for transformation; they are elevating the mind. Opalka is doing all that, which is great, but what happens if this brings you to this other side? Then you have to accept that. I don't see that he's accepting that. He still has this kind of factory idea. That's really not right. He's not just a different type of person; the aim is transformation. Art is a tool to transform the human mind. The aim is to elevate the mind.

KDJ: A few weeks ago I was interviewing Tehching Hsieh in his apartment in Brooklyn, USA. He seems to be an important person for you as you dedicated your current project in Manchester to him. He did a several one-year performances. He told me he is not producing art anymore, that he is tired and just goes in life. Do you think you will reach a point that you will no longer do performances and just live your life?

MA: I'm making this work *Abramović's Choice* which I dedicate to Tehching. He's a big master. But it's not that he doesn't work anymore, this is a complete misunderstanding. He made the most magnificent performances over a five-year period, each performance a year. After this he transformed. That's why he's not working. He is making life. That's why I believe him and not Opalka, for exactly the same reason.

SG: That you accept changes means that you are flexible. Does that mean that in your last performance we will be allowed to see you dying?

MA: I'm making a theater play with Bob Wilson in which I'm doing a rehearsal of my own funeral. Why do you have to be dying? Dying is not about death. It's about the luminosity. It's not about dying; it is about luminosity. Luminosity is the most important thing for a human being to have.

PL: To come back to Roman Opalka. You said, when a transformation happens he doesn't accept it. But when it really happens then you have no choice, then you have to accept it. Then his work would change anyway.

MA: This is a totally good point. But it is also strange: the mind has to be open. Somehow the artists of that generation, especially the minimalists, have something that prevents the mind from being open in this way. They are stuck in repetition, in a hermeneutic system. I don't mind if you don't accept change, even if it is a period of time…

SG: When you accept those changes, the events that occurred in your life, they must have had certain results. Did meeting Joseph Beuys or Hermann Nitsch change anything for you in the early stages?

MA: I don't think so. You see: I'm not inspired by artists; artists are always inspired by somebody else. I always like to be inspired by the source. The sources for me are waterfalls, volcanoes, earthquakes, the shamans, spiritual masters; they were really on the source. This is what artists get inspiration from, but then it is already second hand. I was inspired by living with the Aboriginals. That changed my life tremendously. I understood so many more things from living with these people, more directly than being inspired by artists.

PL: How important is it for your performances to be connected to natural time rhythms? I've read that you prefer to finish your performances on nights when there is a full moon.

MA: It would be ridiculous not to because there is so much energy. Actually I'll finish before full moon night. It is not constructive to do something after a full moon night: the energy just goes down. It would be ridiculous.

RR: I asked On Kawara the question: "Would you have done anything in your life to get more satisfaction out of your own personal existence?" What is your answer to that question?

MA: Yes. Actually I'm a disaster now. I'm just divorcing, so it's a bad time for me. There is a lot I missed; I didn't pay attention to my private life. I'm married to my art. There are certain types of sacrifices to be made. You can't have everything. I don't have children; I don't have any kind of normal life, because it's impossible. But I really, really love what I'm doing. That's all I have actually.

1 *The House with the Ocean View* at the Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, November 15 - December 21, 2002.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews conducted

27 March 2007 until 27 August 2009
Sarah Gold
Karlyn De Jongh
Peter Lodermeyer

HAMISH FULTON

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer

Fulton studio, Canterbury, UK, 27 March, 2007

Hamish Fulton (1946 in London, UK). Since the early 1970s Fulton's concern has been the experience of walking ("no walk, no art"), initially using photography, later in large-scale wall paintings.*

PL: I'm interested in the basic themes of time, space and existence. It seems your work is related to all three of them. Your art involves making walks through landscapes in order to experience how you move through time and space. Could it be that, as you do this, you are actually consciously aware of time, space, and existence?

HF: These three entities? Probably not. Of the three, I would say: time. Existence then would come into something that, in recent years, has to do with the state of the planet. Originally, time would be a very normal kind of contemporary art issue which, in my case, is specifically related to walking and nature.

PL: Does it mean that you do your walks in order to experience time more consciously?

HF: I didn't start out with the idea to do that. I started with the idea to want to make walks. And from that, the consequences emerged, such as starting to see it has to do with time, and time has to do with your lifetime, which has to do with death. You work in space before you are dead. You can have all those different ways of looking at it.

I had the idea to commit myself to the activity of walking in a landscape. It can be in a city as well. But at that early point, in 1969, of course, I was too young to understand what the implications were or what it could all become. Through the passage of time, things have developed and turned into considerable issues in my mind.

PL: When you first started in 1969, you wanted to make walks. And you knew you wanted to be an artist. Were these two different wishes related right from the beginning? Was it clear for you that you wanted to try this wholly unusual combination of walking and making art?

HF: The first thing was being an artist. That's what I believe I am. That's what I do and what I did. I didn't want to do anything else. That was completely clear. I don't have any doubts about being an artist. That's sort of the beginning point. Then, being at St. Martin's School of Art in London in the mid-1960s, certain ideas were kind of floating about. It's a little bit difficult to say exactly where they came from. I thought about this quite a bit. There were issues of some people thinking that maybe behaviour is more interesting than an object. And from that, different ideas grew. And then there was the idea of, say, always working indoors: When you were a student at St. Martin's, when you were looking at people spending considerable amounts of time making objects indoors and maybe also breathing dust or something from the construction of the work, then you thought: well, you won't do that. You're going to the streets outside of St. Martin's, Charing Cross road where you then thought, oh, that's completely fantastic here. When I went back inside, into the studio space, then this change between the two venues seemed to become very big in my mind. And so, for example with Richard Long in 1967, actually it was on February 2nd, we organized a group walk with some other students, and we met on the corner of Greek Street near Compton Street. We tied up the students with a piece of rope going around them. It's a walk that goes along the pavement from the corner street in Soho right to the front door of St. Martin's School of Art. It takes you maybe 3 minutes, and we took 15 minutes, walking really slowly, going around, coming up to the front. And then the police said: "Are you making a political point or are you simply an obstacle?" Which, considering it was only 15 minutes, is quite good that we had that kind of attention. We came to the front door and there we had little notices which said: If you want to cross this line…—we drew a line in the front area of the entrance to the school—If you cross this line then join us and we could go for a walk to the countryside, which is what we did. If you are going on pavements the whole way, you eventually come out in the fields. And this year, forty years later, I went to the corner of the two streets and I stood there until exactly 11:15. And then I started for a 15-minute walk towards the front door of St. Martin's and I walked on to the countryside. It's the only walk I've ever made where the exact minute has been repeated. So then really… factually—it's not a sort of glossover, it's about facts—when I was a student at St. Martin's, I made a whole lot of different kinds of works. They weren't all the same kind of things. They weren't all about walking at all. That would be inaccurate to say that. I made a lot of different kinds of things.

PL: What kind of things?

HF: I made sculptures. I was also involved in a two-week project that was kind of the breakdown of the idea of making paintings or making sculptures. It was part of the project that we were able to organize. We had two weeks where we could organize our time. And so what I did with two other students was we hitchhiked non-stop from London to Andorra and then hitchhiked back again. And I taped all the times of all of the lifts. So, we started hitchhiking in London and went down such and such a street. With every lift, I made notes like *11 o'clock, Toulouse, 115.8 kilometres further along*, all these different times. So, works like that were starting to happen. And then, in 1969, when I went on my second trip to the west of the United States to visit sites of the Native American, like the site of the Battle of Little Bighorn. These days you can actually read books by indigenous people who say that this battle was a classical battle where the industrialized European people clashed with the indigenous people living in the place. That was an important thing to think about, and I have been thinking about that ever since, actually…

PL: That means you were not just interested in the beautiful landscape… in Montana, right?

HF: That's right, yeah.

PL: …but in history and in different cultures as well?

HF: Yes, this is really the beginning of cause and effect and consequences of things, because then going back to St. Martin's, you feel very strongly this kind of fork between, say, when you're making paintings and you're working within the world of history of painting and then history of contemporary painting or even history of abstract painting versus—neither better nor worse but different—these other thoughts about people, how people treat each other, how people treat the environment and the landscape. So that's the trip, sort of the beginning of these kinds of thoughts. In 1972, I made a walk from the north of Scotland to the southern tip of England, over a thousand miles. From that time on, absolutely everything that I made after that was from a walk. There was a period of deciding in 1969 to make walks, and maybe a little bit photography, since I was interested in photographs. And then in1972, this is so incredible, this span and spectrum of life and people and places, my walking continuously the whole way, for over a thousand miles. I thought: That's it! That's what I want to do. All the way through, as time has gone on, I can identify the walks I've had, say, in the last 4 years or the last 5 years that were not that great in a strong way. Or say, even ten years ago. So with the passage of time and the consistent activity, the commitment to walking, you have some things to think about because it's one fundamental subject, which can evolve.

PL: In 1972, you took a decision to only make art that is related to your walks. This was a clear choice. "No walks, no art", is your statement. Did you begin right away by documenting your walks and taking photos or creating objects related to your walks?

HF: Yes, I started there with photography because, going back to St. Martin's, if you have a studio, you are building things and you are indoors, you spend time indoors, that's one thing. And then you have the weight and the physicality of something, and that's another issue. So when you took a camera in those days, the mid-60s, early 1970s, it wasn't like it is today. I mean, actually it felt quite revolutionary at that moment in time. Now it's sort of normal, you say, "Well, this is the camera, and it is really a light thing. You go into the landscape, into the place and you're able to take your photographs." So that afterwards we say, "Ah yeah, landscape photography, isn't it?" But it wasn't really like that. People like myself didn't know anything about taking photographs. We had no photographic ability, no knowledge of the history of photography. All the way through the '70s into the '80s, people would look at one of my photographs, and they would come from the photography world and say, "Oh, really? It looks really boring. This is a really boring view." But it's about the choice of a view, which is saying something. Previously or from another part of the world of photography, composition and print quality were big issues. Some of the people who take landscape photographs had a truck or a van, so they could go along and wait for the best bit of weather, and they could decide to wait for a rainbow or something, take a photograph of it, get back in the van, and drive off. All the photographs that I take, I take only on walks and I don't wait for a better moment. I just take the moment while it is that moment, and the photograph comes from that time. Even the so-called interest in a view, you could argue, is completely boring.

PL: Did you take the photos in order to be able to communicate what you experienced? Did you think, when you started…

HF: That's a good question.

PL: …did you have the wish to share with other people? Did you think "How can I share this experience that I have while I'm walking? I cannot show a walk to other people, of course, so what could I do to convey it?"

HF: Yeah, this is one of those issues I've mentioned before. You start to make art about walking in the late '60s, early '70s and you don't know where it's going to lead or what it means, or what the implications are. So, then you can say, well, you take a photograph of a landscape to convey to other people what a place looks like. That makes no sense, but then you have to say it's not possible to convey the experience of a walk to somebody else who hasn't been there. Then you start to have the whole huge range of problems of how you can convey something to somebody else.

PL: But, unlike your walks that provide you with a personal, subjective experience, your installations look clean, impersonal, even 'minimalist'. What is the reason for eliminating subjectivity in your artworks?

HF: If you just have writing on the wall, that doesn't look at all like a landscape. Some years ago, in the late 80s, I had a show in New York and I was talking to somebody who was writing something, and he said: "I don't like your work. It's too cerebral. What I prefer is tactile landscape work." That means it is actually outdoor sculptures, outdoor materials brought indoors. That's more tactile and so it seems more direct and clear. It's not a photograph of some material. It is material. But when the person says that my work is too cerebral or, as you were saying, so 'clean' or 'impersonal', the discussion now is about the appearance of the artwork. It's not about the understanding of the reading of the contents, of what it is saying. That's completely different. When you're going for a walk then you wouldn't describe walking as cerebral, you describe

it as physical, for example. But I totally understood the questions. They were referring to the artwork. They just haven't gone further and thought about what they were reading into the artwork.

PL: This was not quite what I meant by my question. When you do your walks you have a very strong personal experience there. You feel yourself moving through the landscape, you are so close to nature. I would guess that this is a very intense experience. Yet the artwork that comes out of this walk is so far away from your person, it seems. You have taken your person and your subjectivity completely out of it, or not?

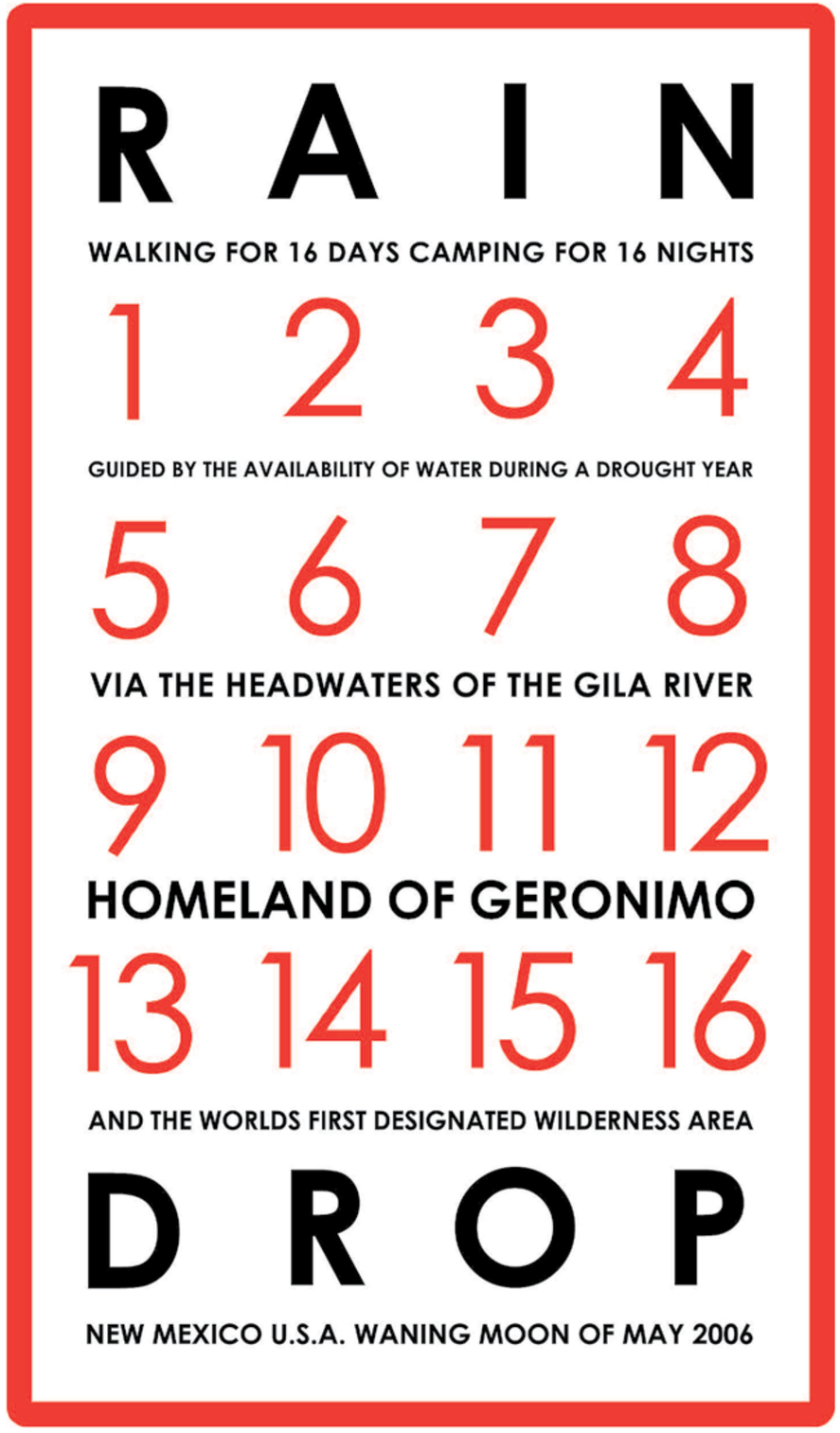
HF: Yes, not for everything, but for quite a few of my works, yes. I think it feels to me, as the artist, that this is an area of creativity. It feels quite creative. So, that's part of the reason. If you made, say, four or five kinds of works, then I think that the artist in question has a feeling that this one is actually more creative, and that one is more normal, or with this one there is less to do, while that one is becoming more depressive, this one fits more into history, that one is more sellable, this one is more…, etc. There is a whole list of qualities. The one that I actually like, however, is when you move across, getting into making something, and you can sense that this feels creative for you.

PL: When you are walking, you are much more aware of what time actually is because you are out of the normal everyday context. You are close to natural time indicators or time cycles like weather, the seasons, changes in daylight, or a river flowing. And then you do all the steps. It's like structuring time, step after step after step, and so on…

HF: Time is one aspect of it. Time can really mean something precise. I think when you're talking about it, it sometimes is a struggle to find exactly the right definition. I mean, I could say time is sort of a consequence of walking. But then, philosophically, if you spend a few hours thinking about it, maybe it might be the other way around. I don't know very well because I'm not… (laughing) I'm not sure, but I think that time is something that you become familiar with, coming out of the walk, maybe rather than imposing time onto it, time comes out of it, for you, whether you like it or not. I mean a lot of things happen on walks. Sometimes people describe me as the lonely Englishman, walking down misty country lanes. That can be one way of thinking. But if you want to make different kinds of walks, you're trying to do different things. And so then you have this walk, that walk, that kind of walk, these walks, and so you have a vocabulary or repertoire of different kinds of walks. Sometimes you make that walk and then it becomes like a different one. And inescapably, they all have to do with time. So, sometimes, I set out for a walk with a certain length of, say, 71 kilometres a day, for 7 days in succession. This becomes completely about time. I made these certain walks like that, one after the other, a few years ago. The key aspect of doing this actually is an alarm clock, because after you have walked 71 kilometres the first day, it's a little bit tiring. Then you get up and you go on to the next day. And then, the third day you actually really need the alarm clock to be able to wake up on time. Because now, say, on the fourth day, you're completely inside, you're kind of a time-object because you made this commitment to time to do this. And then you start to realise, well, maybe, in my life, maybe it's the only moment when all circumstances are perfect. They all come together. Some of them are uncontrollable like weather or temperature. And if somebody has completely pissed you off and you've run out of money and you're sort of obsessed and your mind isn't structured, you cannot actually balance your mind in a good way. So, when you're doing this 7 times the 71 kilometres, then in the middle, you're completely inside this, because it's not walking back that way. You know what you've done, and then you know the future is also like that, and so you're completely inside this invisible object. That's why I called it an 'invisible object'. And so I had these statements where I said: "Is it yesterday, today, or tomorrow?" because, at a certain point, certain days become so completely identical, and you're doing a walk exactly the same route for seven days, your mind can easily play tricks, through fatigue, so that you're not sure because you were here exactly yesterday, even though you know that's other people's schedules. Sometimes I would come to a crossroads, and a car would come along when I was there at exactly 5 minutes to 8. So you come across other people's time schedules. It's a totally fantastic experience. Once I tried to walk 80 kilometres each day, it was in June, because you have the fantastic maximum amount of daylight. But the weather was much colder, and I actually got completely chilled. The temperature had gone down quite a bit in the course of the day and all the muscles of my legs completely chilled right through. I couldn't walk. I struggled to get on. I had to phone my wife. She came and collected me in the car, my muscles were so thoroughly chilled. But previously for these 71 kilometres, the weather had been perfect and my mind was right and everything was just right. So, that's a certain sort of moment, sometimes I think wow, I know I can walk more than that 71, but the legs…, it's not just a question of physically being able to do. You have to have other conditions to be correct as well. So maybe then you think about that. That's quite difficult.

PL: Do your walks show a certain time curve of intensity? When do they feel most real for you? Is it when you are in anticipation of them, or at the start, in the middle, at the end, or even afterwards?

HF: Yeah, they're all a little bit different because you have an idea to do a walk and you have the question: "Could you do this walk?" Answer: "Yes I could do it" because you know you can do it. But the question is: "Have you done this walk?" "No." You have these different kinds of stages. Some walks you know that you can do it, but can you walk just straight through your life to get the time and the mental condition to build or successfully complete the plan? So you know that you can complete it. But another kind of walk is the joint commercial expeditions where the outcome is completely unclear, which is fantastic. You're really not sure if you can do this. I was incredible lucky with all the conditions again. In 2000 I joined a commercial expedition to climb an 8,000-meter high mountain in Tibet and so going up to 8,000 meters. I was a nervous wreck beforehand because it was not too many years before, say, 20 years before, people were writing: if you go to 8,000 meters without oxygen you will suffer brain damage. Your brain cells might die off and not come back at all. That's why I was really, really nervous beforehand. But then, when I was going up to the mountain on an expedition, we paid the money, and I made sure I earned the money myself, I didn't want to have money from some exterior source that I would have to earn or that I would have to fight to go up the mountain and have to pay people back. Otherwise it can really start to bother you. There is enough



pressure to go up a mountain without money pressure. I was very lucky I got the money and went on this trip and this climb. I'm not a mountaineer or climber. Sometimes I met people who were climbers and there were people who just have this ability. They were obviously serious mountaineers, much more experienced—I haven't got any experience—but even experienced people could get to a certain point, and then become ill. And then there was somebody like myself, an artist. I was able to go up to over 8,000 meters. That was really hard for me to believe. In fact, whenever I get concerned about something, I actually think of certain moments like "that was a beautiful sunrise going up that mountain". It was actually really helpful. It gave me a good feeling because, again, that's a certain moment in your life. Probably I could do it again, but maybe I won't. I don't know. What I do know is I did do it. But, of course, when you've done that, then you stay euphoric for quite a long time. This sense of euphoria at the end of certain walks is quite discernible. And then actually—no, don't think it's ridiculous—but then you have a little bit of heightened perception. When you finish your walk or climb and you come back down to a town filled with humans again, then, in those first moments, you have a certain heightened sense.

PL: You just referred to a situation that could have been quite dangerous. I think when such a thing poses a great danger, you experience time even more consciously, right?

HF: Yeah, I longed to spend time in a cage with a tiger with the door locked. (Laughter).

PL: Do you consciously take risks? Have you ever been in a really dangerous situation during your walks?

HF: Yes, sometimes. It's not something that I go looking for, but I definitely would defend mountaineers who want to do that. They get criticized for taking this risk. Of course, however, the risk is the thing that gives you the mental energy, the physical energy to do it. If there were no risk, they actually wouldn't be able to do it. Because you need the risk, as a kind of system, so you have the energy, the skill, the state of mind, and the concentration to do such things. But I do think that there are some different kinds of walks, and when one becomes a little bit dangerous, then that's part of the repertoire.

PL: Wouldn't it make sense to make a conscious effort to walk slowly, to make time go slower in a way because we live in a world where everything is going way too fast, and the speed is far too great? Can walking be a way of slowing down the speed of our lives?

HF: Yes, that's one of the possibilities in the different kinds of walks that I make. Last year I went to the Gila Wilderness, which is in New Mexico. If you go there, actually time does slow down. Or rather, it doesn't slow down, it's exactly the same amount of time, but we say that. It's a way of describing something, 'time is slowed down', or 'sped up' or whatever. When you go in there, at the beginning, you are in this kind of interim period and you can feel the changeover. As you were rightly saying, we live lives that are far too quick, and we are somewhat in competition with machines. And when you go there, there are no machines at all, and there is no exterior kind of contact. You go there, you sort of slow down into a rhythm, and then you start to pay attention to nature, and all these other things going on in nature which, when we are living a sped-up life, we don't get the time for. And I would say that's probably the direct source of global warming, the ping-pong to global warming. People have been so busy for quite a long time, and nature is either something like a garden—stupid—or like going to a beach on a holiday—stupid—, going skiing—stupid. Actually, to acknowledge the existence of nature is very serious and we have discounted it.

PL: Talking about global warming, is there a political aspect in your work?

HF: Yeah, I think it has always been there, but very indirectly, maybe so indirectly that nobody could perceive it (laughing). But I think, whether you're walking in towns, or whether you're walking or camping or country walking or whatever, I think it does have a political dimension. And then, of course, when you go road walking, then it's even more obvious. I have made lots of road walks. I have quite a strong feeling about that. You're legally allowed to walk there, but society thinks that you shouldn't be there. You're slowing things down for the car. You're an obstacle. But I think that now the work is slowly becoming more political. Even writing those two words, 'Global Warming'. Previously that could have referred to an artwork about landscape issues. It was not clear enough for people. Obviously I am completely involved in the subject matter. So, I say this is political. But then the next person looks at it and says: where? It's only a translation of the meaning of what it might be about. But then, consequently, it becomes political. I think today you have to actually just say 'global warming' or whatever it is. There is no doubt and that's completely clear.

PL: Obviously, you like counting, counting the days, counting your steps during a walk, counting the stones you touch, and so on. So, counting numbers is giving time a structure. Is it something that is necessary when you are alone in the landscape? Is counting then an aid in dealing with the 'unstructured' time during the walk?

HF: Somebody could be critical and say, it is obsessive or obsessed or a neurotic kind of work. It's possible. On the other hand, if you have a tree, you say: well, there is a number of leaves up there. You know, that's just too amazing to be true, isn't it? (Laughing) And how would you count them and who would count them? We're not interested in an estimate. Why should I estimate? The question is how many leaves are actually on this tree? So, things actually do have numbers. Once you've got a system of counting, then it follows that you can apply this system to something. How many days have you walked, how many paces in one day? I made a walk where I counted a 100,000 paces or steps. There is a difference between a step and a pace. A pace is where, say, you walk on flat pavements, where you actually walk in a regular, measured way. Thus, paces are very similar as you go along. Whereas steps… you're going up a hill, and then you're going down, and then you have to jump across a stream and go through woods, you can't establish a pace. These are just steps. If you ask for a walk across a country, say, from the east coast of Spain to the west coast of Portugal, then I could say, it takes about 21 days to do that. But it might be 18 days, or it might be 22, because it's raining or I got ill or something. You actually don't know what the number is going to be. It will be a number, but you can't say for sure exactly that it should be about 21. That's one thought

and then the next one is where I actually say I'm going to walk for 9 days, I going to walk for 7 days… So, I actually set a number in advance. For example, I walked from the south of France to the north of France, from Narbonne to Boulogne and I wanted to take 21 days to do that. I started on June the first and I wanted to end on the solstice, June the 21st. At the beginning, you don't know, whether you should go really fast, or you are unnecessaryly nervous or you should be really nervous. And in the middle, then you take a map and you calculate and you realise you have to go up to a certain speed if you want to arrive at the coast on the solstice. Which is what I did. That's releasing time and space in certain kinds of ways.

PL: You are interested in different cultures. Obviously you have a special relationship to Japan. You made several walks there, and when I look around here in your studio I see many books on Japanese culture.

HF: Years ago there was this coming together of Liking Hiking, a hiking club, for the preparation of hiking, which in the late 1960s, early 70s seemed like some form of minimalism. And then I got to liking walking and then I eventually read that some of these Japanese poets were walking poets. So, obviously you go for the famous ones, Basho and so on. But then you can come up to 1940, which is when a man like Santoka Taneda died. He lived in an era of cars, aircraft and telephones, but he lived more a traditional wandering, walking, hiking style of life. You can have those kinds of influence, which fit into something. I read a lot about Japan before I went, never thinking that I would ever go there. And then I was offered an exhibition in Tokyo, so I had the opportunity to go there and I thought, well the first thing I want to do is not to go to Kyoto. The first place I want to go to is Hokkaido, to go to a landscape and then, from the landscape go to culture. So, I went to Hokkaido, I've been there a few times. Nature in Japan is a big subject. Because, when you have a Zen garden, it looks in a sweeping statement like a style of something quite natural. In fact it's highly controlled. And so you have this dialogue with nature in Hokkaido, a more open volcanic landscape, snow, ice and rocks. You go into Kyoto, visit the gardens there. This presents you with a lot of art in a way. That means you can see art in some of these Japanese cultural things that people have done. That way Haiku is kind of Minimal, the Zen garden is like Land Art. So, it goes on. It gives you something to value it.

PL: And then there are the famous 'marathon monks' of Mount Hiei. You went there to make a walk.

HF: Well, it's amazing—people being able to perform enormously long continuous walking marathons. Yeah, I did go to Mount Hiei, which is north-east of Kyoto. I've gone round it 28 times, a marathon monk goes round 1000 times. (Laughter) So, they basically define the rules. That makes them really interesting, of course. I met Reinhold Messner. I wanted to meet him anyway. Then I had an opportunity to meet him at an exhibition. It's this sort of defining the rules of human beings, of what a human being can do. I asked Reinhold Messner that question: Going up the mountains, is it a spiritual experience for you? And his answer was: "No, I didn't go into the mountains for a spiritual experience, I wanted to do the impossible." Which is like a different focus. With the marathon monks, basically they do something that people can't normally do at all. It's so difficult. It's beyond comprehension. And even I've read, I don't know where, that even 1 or 2 people from the west had tried to go there. Of course, they don't last. And I think they don't last because they're not Tendai Buddhists. And I'm not a Tendai Buddhist, but I would say, that's the engine, the energy source that the monks are able to do that because their Tendai Buddhist minds can do that. If you've got some other reason for doing this, like being a sports person, maybe that's not sufficient in order to give you the energy to do that. Maybe. Anyway, I went there quite a few times and I didn't actually ever want to walk straight into an official meeting with the marathon monks. Ideally, the best way would be a chance encoun-

ter. Which is what I had. I was going on the path through a leafy wooded area, which then came to a crossroads, in bright sunshine. So, the sand was very light. And a man called Utsumi [Shunsho] came down the other way, all dressed in white and suddenly… I thought: Oh. And because you said, I might have read several books, or thought about and read about him for 4 or 5 years, and then by chance he just comes there. I was wearing shorts. He just looked at my legs… (imitating Utsumi's sceptical look and laughing). It was very good, actually cool… Then he was gone. But in terms of what I prefer, I would prefer that to meeting somebody from the British Council. That wouldn't be the same. It was literally a million to 1 chance to meet him. I think that what they have trained themselves to be able to do is incredible. I mean they do things that are impossible, like sit there for nine days. They don't sleep, they don't eat, and when they drink then they have to spit it back out again—for nine days, and that's after they've done 1,000 of the others. I get an American magazine called *Outside*. In *Outside* you get profiles of Californian surfers. One of them is called Laird Hamilton, a famous surfer. With Utsumi it's not the same thing (laughing). They're using their mind and body in a different way.

PL: I would like to ask you the same question that you asked Reinhold Messner: Do you make your walks for a spiritual experience? Does walking on our planet have a spiritual or religious dimension to you?

HF: Yeah, I understand the question. It's like a sort of definition, isn't it? Walk would be the definition of those two words. So, I could say yes.

PL: But you could also say no, right?

HF: (Laughing) Well, 'religious' is probably too much. Because then you'd have the same, maybe which religion?

PL: Yes, that's my next question.

HF: (Laughing) Buddhism would be the nearest one for me, but I'm not a Buddhist. I find it the most interesting because it can have these sort of contemporary ideas, ideas that have to do with being very practical for mental health, these Buddhist habits of asking yourself very personal, direct questions. About cause and effect, this 'where does this problem come from' thing. You know, when you track it all way back, then you must take responsibility, you can't blame somebody else. You've traced it all way back. You have to change your ways, otherwise shut up, don't keep complaining. It can be very practical, disentangling things which are troubling you. I think, Buddhism is good in that way. But spiritual, what would spiritual mean? If you would ask "Is walking life-enhancing?", I would say: "Absolutely, yes". "Does it make life more interesting, does it make life better, does it make you happier?" I would say: "Yes". "Is walking good?" "Yes". But is it religion? I don't know, maybe not. Maybe in an interpretive way, but not as a religion. Walking can be a break. If something is troubling you and if you're disturbed about something, then the activity of walking can actually help that. So, I think, in different ways it's quite healthy. I'm not a health freak myself at all, but I think, that it can be quite healthy, and then health is also mental health as well.

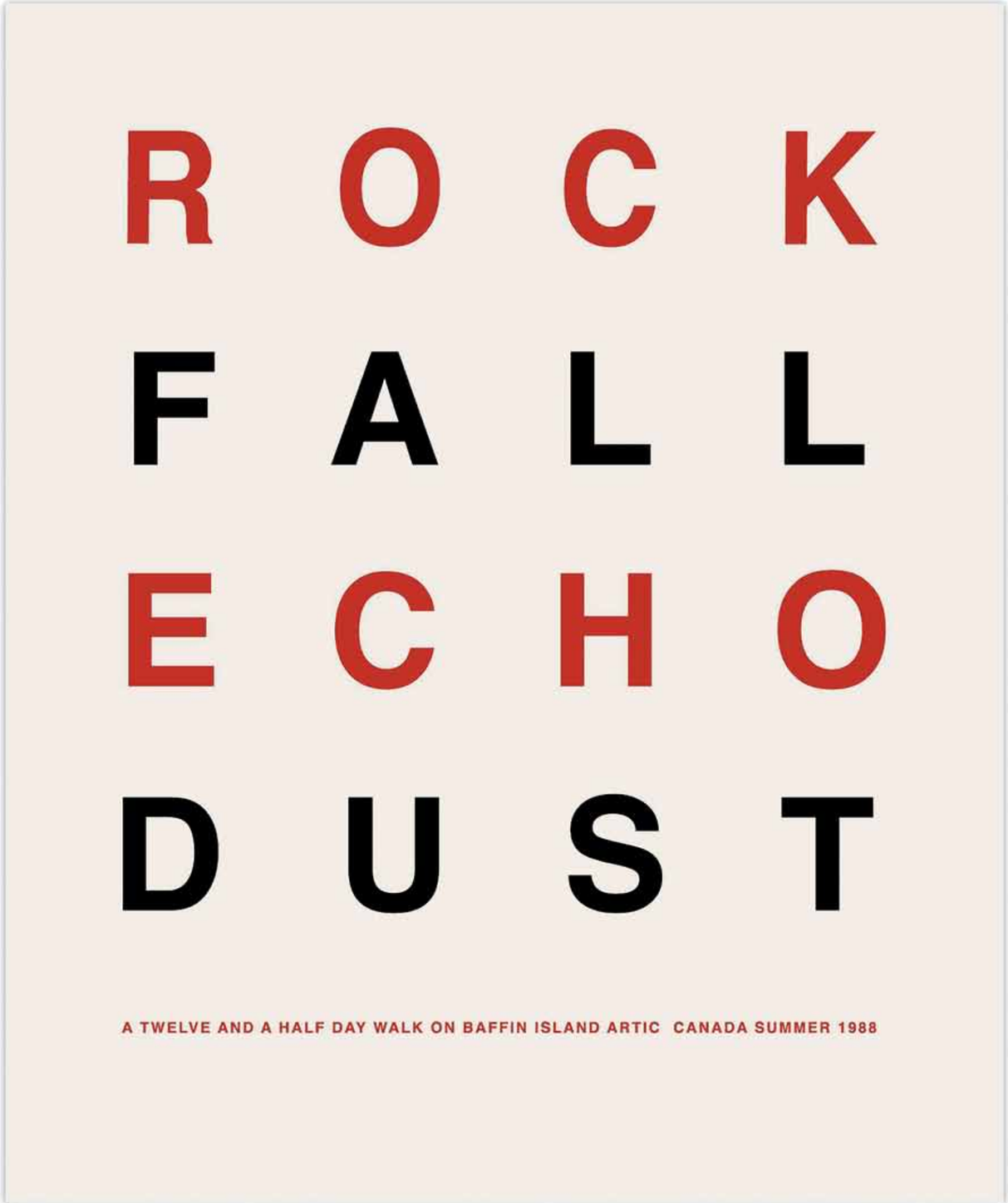
PL: You walk for 40 years, round about. Of course, we're getting older and one day walking will not be so easy anymore. The body changes, it has changed already in the last 40 years in this or that way. How do you experience the change of your body?

HF: Yeah, I think I have come to appreciate walking more as an older person than as a younger person. So if I would say it as a negative thought, I might say: Well, I wasted time when I was younger, not doing certain walks that I could have done then. I didn't have the idea or the mental energy to do it. I think when you grow older, then, say, you're going for a big mountain. When you're older, you are less supple, you don't bend so well. A younger person can be faster, and more just use the burning energy, but the older person maybe can still get up the mountain as well. It takes longer, but maybe get up there for other reasons. You're more familiar with it. You have a constant time of familiarity with being intense. What happens to your mind when you go to a certain place? It can be a different country, a different mountain, you think, here I am again, at this place again, which is a real mental place. So I think, there are real benefits in being older. But if I was having miserable thoughts, then I might say: well, maybe I should not have wasted my time when I was younger, because I didn't think so much about walking or different kinds of walks or how you could extend walking. I was doing quite normal walks. And then by 2000, I did realise I was getting older, so what I tried to do is another kind of a walk, such as go up a mountain, or make a walk that is quite long, but not really extremely long. And so that leads one to another question. I made the walk from Bilbao to Rotterdam. That was something like 2148 kilometres, which is not small and not really big, but it's bigger than a smaller one (laughing). So, then I asked myself the question: how far can I actually walk? And in the end, there are other conditions that figure in, such as time. Have you got the time to do this? Can you put aside this time to do this? Have you got the money to do this, because if you would fly, there is a flight back and forth between Bilbao and Rotterdam, it would be 30 Euros or so by Ryan Air or something. But if you walk, it costs hundreds. Walking can become expensive if you want to stay fit and well and clean and functional. I think if I were seriously decrepit or ill and old then I would make walks where I walked counted paces. I would relate old age to counting paces of done walks earlier about counting. And I could join up to the previous walks in that way. But I do think that when you realize you're getting older, it's not exactly panic, but then you do think you want to try to do a few things in the next few years, because in reality, after the next few years, then you won't be able to do this. You know, when you're younger, you have those 35 years to play with: "I'll do this next year". You can lose 35 years when you're younger. But when you're older, you have 2 or 3 years.

PL: Would you still be an artist if walking weren't possible anymore?

HF: If I lost my legs, for example, in a car crash or something, then I would still be an artist. What I would do is: I would get all my material and I would go back to the beginning and make a whole new generation of artworks from my records.

PL: Were there any particular walks that have been extraordinarily important for you, walks where you felt it was a very crucial experience or it was something special?



HF: Yes, some walks that I made were for different reasons, I wouldn't say the best walks, or the most important walks, that's quite difficult, because they're all like people, they're all different, you know. But for example, it's not the top of the list but an important one was a guided walk in Alaska during a three-week backpacking trip in Alaska. I was lucky enough to see a lot of grizzly bears and black bears. And they're actually wild bears. They're not bears from a National Park that eat hamburgers. They are actually really wild bears that eat berries, you know, the really small berries. Huge animals that eat berries. (Laughter)

PL: This is pretty impressive, I guess.

HF: Yes, it's really impressive, because it's wild. When you go walking, you carry all those habits with you, not just your own habits, also society habits. And society has rules, which, until you cross the line, then you don't even know that they exist. And so, when you encounter grizzly bears in open landscapes, not in zoos, you really realize: this is new. This is not what I'm used to, something different is happening. You make an evaluation or something. It's really important to do that. Because the bear, normally, in his environment, is numero uno, the top. You know, somebody has a gun… bang… and then the human is it. So that's a whole question, isn't it, about the way that we always want to change everything, we must build everything and change everything. If you let something be, then there's something wrong with you. So, I think influence from nature is really important, not nature on TV, actual nature.

PL: Do you, during your walks, feel like being part of nature, or do you rather feel like a stranger, going through it as a visitor that passes it and go back home again?

HF: When I worked with a guide, we actually couldn't drive, there were no roads in this place in Alaska, not even walking trails, nothing. So, to get there, I had to fly in an aircraft. You go in a plane with soft tires and land on a river bank, on the sand by the side of a dry river. And the guide said that some people, when the pilot flies away, have a certain moment of panic because it's really unusual. You see the plane flying away, and you think, "What if I break my ankle," you know? And you have that really heavy rucksack as well. So, when you start like that, you start out quite nervously. You're speeding a bit, and doing your thing all far too quickly. And then you slow down. I think in the slowing down, you also clearly understand that this is not where you come from (laughing). It's incredible, and it's fantastic and it's a privilege to be there. And it's great, but, you know, you're actually a visitor. And also, then when you see the bear, you are a visitor in the land of the bear.

PL: Looking around in your studio, in your bookshelves, I see many books on mountaineering and different countries and other cultures, but not any art books. So, I wonder if you really…

HF: (Laughing)

PL: … see your work in the frame of reference of the art world.

HF: I am an artist. I'm not something else masquerading as an artist. I'm completely an artist. But, I'm one of those super 60s artists seeing life as what they want to be dealing with in their art. In the bookshelves there might not even be one catalogue or book about art at all. But that doesn't mean that I'm not an artist, that I'm not interested in art or don't support artists. I think art is definitely something to support, an artist is something to support. But I'm all of that 60s-type of person where the material for my art, where everything is outside of art, more or less. You can go and you can see aboriginal dot-paintings or something. You are ignorant and you say, "That's beautiful". Well you look at it and actually it's a map of a landscape and we can't interpret it. So, we say this is a beautiful painting, because we're relating it to the history of abstract painting. But I don't want to go into that world at all. It's claustrophobic for me, the thought of going into the world of art in that way. But when I say that then some people think I don't like art. Of course, I do like art very much because I'm an artist, you know. But I think that the influences come very often from outside art.

PL: How did your attitude to walking change over the years?

HF: The most obvious change I would say is: When I started, then there was no kind of issue of degradation of the environment. I hadn't thought about that. And I hadn't thought that the human impact on the planet would reach this state that it has now. I mean, I've been to the Arctic, but not recently, where you go up and you actually see polar bears losing body weight. And apparently the weight of the polar bears has gone down on the average now. The land they could cross is now water and so they swim too far and then collapse and then there's no food, and so on. I mean, I cannot verify what I just said, scientifically. I'm not a scientist, I don't know for sure. But it is something that approximates this. But the melting of the polar cap is causing the environments and the life of the polar bear to be completely changed in our lifetimes. And the more you think about it, this becomes more and more shocking, doesn't it?

PL: Arriving in Canterbury, I saw a big poster, an advertisement, saying: WALK, DON'T DRIVE… *Seriously. I thought that must be a Hamish Fulton work (both laughing)… I wonder whether or not you see yourself as a role model for other people?*

HF: I think somebody has to do it. It's something that has to be done.

PL: But the problem is, the more people do the same, make walks in those beautiful areas, the quicker they are not beautiful anymore. I think what you do is, in a way, for the others? Do you know what I mean?

HF: Yeah, I think, it is something that has to be said. I definitely feel that I can't rephrase it. I think the topic is so serious, so big, and I can only occupy, activate, this small part of it all, work in a small way. But I think that this subject is really big, really important. I can feel it myself. But obviously I'm not talking about some egotistical questions, I'm just saying no, it is necessary, I feel it's completely necessary that somebody makes art about walking in these times. And that is the change from when walking, at the beginning, was sort of eccentric or escapist. I mean, when I went to art schools and talked, there was always a certain line-up, I could basically write a list of five or six criticisms that were 'romantic'—what is romantic?— and then 'escapism' and then… you know, there is a kind of list. But now you can go to a symposium on walking. I've come to one or two symposiums and now people were raising

general questions about it, about the place of walking in society. Recently I was not only walking in the landscape, but also making group walks in towns or cities. This one, I can read it: "11 people walking slowly in silence on pavements. North from 4th street for 15 minutes to Gregory Drive. East on Gregory Drive for 15 minutes to 6th street. South from 6th street for 15 minutes to Peabody Drive. West from Peabody Drive for 15 minutes to 4th street. Champaign, Illinois, USA, 3 pm to 4 pm 2nd March, 2005". So that's a change in the type of walking, from walking alone or with a guide in Alaska to when walking is actually like a university campus. That's a change in the work, but it is also variety. When you're walking in the city, then you walk from where you live to… wherever, for transport, then you go to work, and then you go to a store or the bank, and then you come back… So you have these roots that you are familiar with. When you do this kind of group walking, then you're changing the familiarity or functional, practical walking into what I would call an artwork. And then the participant is also the observer, so that, in a way, you don't need the artwork, you don't need the material result because the viewers are also the people in it. I haven't explained and I should explain that maybe to walk around this block takes 7 minutes.

PL: That means you walked very slowly.

HF: You walk in silence and you have to have a watch, and you walk just, I can't say for sure how many meters, 200 metres or something, 200, 200, 200, 200, and so you have to concentrate really on walking slowly, to arrive at the corner, to taking exactly 15 minutes, not 10, not 5, or not walking and stopping, but actually just arrive precisely at that point in time. And this way you have entered into another kind of a concentration. And you can change, you have completely changed what walking in a functional sense is about. Walking from the door of the university, to cross the street and then to the parking lot, to get in the car and drive away. This is completely different.

PL: The attitude towards walking is different in different cultures. I think a kind of 'tradition' of walking exists in England and in Germany.

HF: I don't know how many people are really interested in walking. I would say the connecting point would be art. If I have an exhibition in Germany, and it's art, and it's about walking, then people can relate to the art. I went to Missoula, Montana, a university town where I had an exhibition. It was very interesting for me. There were lots of interesting people. They were not artists, but they were maybe experts on bears, or they belonged to Earth First!, an environmental group. You can meet all kinds of really interesting people. So, then I have an exhibition and, of course, the illusion is that they might like the work, and of course, they think it's crap. They don't say it's anything. At that moment it's a one-way street. I can be interested in what a lot of other people do, but a lot of other people I'm interested in can't see what I'm doing and they don't really think that it's necessarily art, or that it is art of any consequence, because art normally, in that Missoula environment would be, say, somebody with an ability to make a really good painting of the landscape, or produce a really good photograph of the landscape. But also in England, you said England has this tradition of people walking, moorland walking, and so on. But, if they were asked to do this, then they would say: "piss off". They have no interest. Thus, the people who did the walk were art students. That's why I'm definitely an artist. I approach walking from the point of view of an artist, not primarily as a walker. I try to put walking into a different context, to make a different connection, which is very difficult.

BRAM BOGART

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer, Leni Bogart & Sarah Gold

Bogart residence, Kortenbos, Belgium, 10 May 2007

Bram Bogart (1921, Netherlands) is one of the artists of the Dutch 'Informel'. Bogart has been making works for almost 70 years, mostly with concrete. Bogart lives in Belgium.*

"We always think that a painting is ahead of its time. This is not true, it's the public that is behind the times. The painter is always influenced by his time, at the moment he lives."
Bram Bogart

Peter Lodermeyer: For many artists time, space and existence are very present themes which have an influence on their work. How would you see your art regarding to these concepts?

Bram Bogart: I myself work because I want to do something, sometimes they say: do you have inspiration? Do I need that? No, I often start 7 or 8 in the morning and sometimes continue working until deep in the night, or even sometimes until 6 o'clock the next morning. Leni then brings me a cup of hot chocolate. But I always feel the time pressure, I want to spend all my time with creating my work.

PL: Your frames are constructed very strongly, is it an important factor for you to know that your work will exist longer than you?

BB: I try to take good care for the technical quality of my work. In my early years my father made the frames I needed, then I made them myself. I have a strong health, but the last 10 years I did get some trouble with my back so now my son makes them. I think that you should create a work that will exist trough time, not for eternity, but it should keep existing as long as possible. Some artists do not care at all, they work with material which lasts only for a few years. When I was younger I did not think so much about that, but now I take much better care for my works, in order to make them last longer.

Sarah Gold: How do you yourself and your work relate to space? Your work became very three-dimensional, hardly any "painter" from your generation used space that much. Was there a point in which you decided to work three-dimensionally, or how did that develop?

BB: The oldest work made by me which I still own is from 1939. In my early years my work started out figuratively and after that, in the late 1940s, my work became somewhat influenced by cubism. Unhappy with the outcome, I moved to Paris and started to work figuratively again. This figurative work slowly became more abstract but the work also contained signs. The colors I used became more and more muted colors. My work always naturally developed as I developed myself.

PL: My first direct encounter with a large work by Bram Bogart was 2003 in Cologne, Germany. It was a yellow work, it had everything in it, painting, sculpture, architecture, Baroque, minimal, monochrome, the work was much more than painting, it was a 'Gesamtkunstwerk.' Are you a painter, sculptor, do you make objects or is your work more architectural? How do you see yourself?

BB: My work is no architecture, that develops slowly, I am looking for spontaneity, that exists only in painting, not in sculpting. I paint with matter, expressionistic, with form, movement and surface.

PL: Material and color seem to be one in your work, in your early times you worked with much less bright colors, reduced colors, why? They seem to fit good to the time of 'Existentialism'.

BB: My material is color. After having moved to Paris I worked with reduced colors, Paris actually is a gray town, but also, the ochers and blacks were much cheaper. Later, when I moved to Brussels, I started with the colors, and because of the large white rooms which I had there, I started to work also less playful.

Leni Bogart: When I first came in the studio of Bram in Paris, end 50s, everything was in one color tone. Everything was brown,

gray, black or white like, the table, chairs, the floor, it was all the same. In Paris at that time, there was a large building where many artists had their studios.

Some artists like Karel Appel and Corneille had made walls with cardboard and wood to create their space. When Bram came to Paris he had some money to live and he could have rented a studio in that large building, but there was an American artist who asked Bram to build some walls with concrete and plaster and in return he gave part of his space to Bram. With the left-over material Bram started his first material paintings.

BB: I also bought the burlap very cheap, I just told Jan Hoet, it all started out of poverty, and those early works are just as good as the later ones, perhaps even better. After World War II there were not many materials.

PL: Your work of that time has similarities with the work of Jean Fautrier and Jean Dubuffet. Did you know these artists?

BB: I met Fautrier later, but I did not like it at all. I saw drawings, I found them weak. But I often made a tour trough Paris and I visited always some exhibitions, but most impressed I was by an artist named Soltan, he is almost forgotten, but I saw him as the predecessor of Cesar and Arman. I am not an intellectual, but I was aware of the other artists around me.

LB: The group "Informelen", nobody speaks about them anymore, but that group was created in Bram's studio. Steef de Vries, the collector, came and stayed over. He gave the group that name, he knew Tapies and Fautrier well, he named them 'Art Informel'.

PL: In the postwar years, Michel Seuphor as an advocate of geometric art, was an important man in Paris. There were many hard discussions between the supporters of different directions at that time, were you involved?

BB: Yes, I remember, Michel Seuphor had in 1955 an exhibition with more than 100 works at Galerie Creuze in Paris and he was very enthusiastic about it, and I remember that the salon turned from Geometric to Tachistic and there where fights around that, but I never really occupied myself with that.

Among others I was influenced by Mondriaan, I found Picasso overestimated. I thought his work was clever-made, he understood shape very well and later started to play with it, but Picasso never succeeded to create an abstract painting. Not understanding 'Shape' is something that I disliked by Cobra and later by the German 'Neue Wilde', they did not understood shape. Shape and texture in a painting is very important to me, especially the last stroke really must fit. Two times I myself also thought that I was stuck. That was in the period somewhere in the 50s, with the signs I used, I was searching there, and one more time somewhere between 65-70. In those years I looked back to a work I made in 63 and had to admit that that was much better as what I was making at present.

PL: The presence of the artist is very visual within your work, because of the material it seems as if you bring your own body in your work.

BB: Yes, that is right and I can not avoid that. For me the rhythm of the texture is very important, the touch has to be right, the movement of the touch. My work develops with me and with the circumstances. When I left Brussels and moved to a house with large white rooms, my work became more structured. This work here, I build the frame myself and painted it here on the floor, without an assistant. You can see me in this work.

I lately saw a Chagall, very weak work, but it is a Chagall, it represents the person Chagall. But in my work there is more, I think my vitality is also very present in my work, I have to be constantly in good shape, a normal intellectual can not make work like my work.

WOLFGANG LAIB

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer

Wolfgang Laib home & studio, Biberach an der Riss, Germany, 6 August 2007

*It is a hot day in Southern Germany. The floor of Wolfgang Laib's (*1950 in Germany) studio is covered with recent works soon to be shipped to New York for what will be his first exhibition at the Sean Kelly Gallery. "It usually doesn't look like this here. Normally the room is pretty empty," he says. Through the high windows you can see the meadows of Upper Swabia, where, year for year, the artist collects flower pollen from dandelions and buttercups. In the 1980s Laib achieved international renown with his pollen works and milkstones, flat slabs of marble intended to hold poured milk in the slightly concave surfaces. We cross the meadow to the wax room. Due to the heat, Laib can only open the room for a few minutes. Inside, the chamber offers an unbelievably intense experience that engages all of the senses: the golden-yellow color of the wax on the ceiling and walls, the coolness of the shaft that extends 13 meters into the earth, the loud echo that causes you to whisper immediately, as well as the infatuating scent of the beeswax.*

Peter Lodermeyer: As you know, I am currently working together with the artist Rene Rietmeyer on a book project called Personal Structures: Time Space Existence. *In this connection, it seemed imperative to meet with you, since you are one of the few artists whose art focuses on all three themes.*

Wolfgang Laib: I have often asked myself why I am so interested in these themes. I think it has something to do with my studying medicine. A lot of people who do not know me so well fail to see a connection and ask me, "What does art have to do with medicine?" But the way I see it, I have never changed my occupation. I have done in art what I wanted to do as a doctor. I began my studies with all of the ideals you can possibly have. I noticed fairly quickly, however, that medicine has become a natural science no longer for existence, life per se, but only for the material body. Granted, the body is the prerequisite for human existence, but it is not what I have been looking for and am still searching for. I quickly realized that I would only be able to find the things I am looking for in art.

PL: Was it reasonable to expect to find these far-reaching themes in medicine at all? Was this exaggerated idealism on your part?

WL: Yes, it was idealism, but on the other hand, I do not want to be without it even today. And that means very simply: being a doctor and being an artist are the same thing, and this is something I find fantastic. Medicine deals with human existence and with the human body, but not only with its material side. I called my first wax room that I exhibited with Harald Szeemann in Berlin in 1988, *For Another Body*. At the time, I was already harboring hopes that the concern can be for an entirely other dimension of existence, about what matter really is, about the temporal limits of life, and everything that plays a role in this connection.

PL: Could you explain what you mean by "another body"?

WL: This is precisely what I find to be important. I believe it is entirely crucial that art gives no definitive answers to these questions, like the natural sciences or philosophy attempt to do this through their development of whole doctrines. I find it a greater strength that art instead shows designs in their totality —unexpected things can then suddenly happen, which would not be possible within scientific systems. After six years of studying medicine, using this approach of the natural sciences, in which everything must be proven and explained by means of scientific evidence, I found this openness in art to be far superior. It lends the whole an entirely different dimension.

PL: This brings me to a question that I often think of concerning artists: the relationship between the intention of the artist and the work of art. There are artists who claim to know everything about their work because after all, they were the ones who ultimately made it.

WL: No, I see this completely differently. The power of art lies in striking a completely open path. In the 1970s I was totally unknown and had no contacts to the art world, and then, here in a village in southern Germany, at the end of the world, I began collecting flower pollen in a meadow and bringing it to people in New York, Japan, and elsewhere. And then something happens, worlds begin to change, in your head and everywhere else. This is because of the openness of art. I do not know myself what it all means. For me, it is different than for a painter, for example. For me it is less about creating than it is about sharing in something already there, and I find that much better. A painter paints a picture and then it is he who made it. But I did not make this flower pollen. I collected it. I have initiated it all somehow, but what happens with it, what it sets off, is something that happens in much greater processes.

PL: Lately I have been grappling a lot with the concept of presence. If we see one of your pollen fields or wax works, we feel the presence of these substances—and we relate to them immediately without questioning their meaning.

WL: Yes, exactly. But nevertheless, these things contain symbolism and meanings that may be connected to them, although to define these and limit the works to them would be a pity. Putting a stamp on something is the worst kind of thinking. If you want to determine the meaning once and for all, then it is all over. It is all about, for example, simply looking at the milk in the milkstones, experiencing its presence and thinking about it, where it might lead us, and what it might mean at this moment. To feel what an openness such an experience can evoke—this is what I find decisive.

PL: Without Place—without Time—without Body, *your installation at the Konrad Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf, consists of a large number of mounds of rice, with five mounds of pollen in between. This is like an open dream world, an imagined landscape of boundless expanse.*

WL: In recent years, I have used this title several times, because I consider it to be very important and central. You have to be careful with titles. If you use too many, it compromises the whole too much and they no longer bear much meaning. There have been, over the decades, only a very few important titles, one of them being *The Five Mountains Not to Climb On*, used in reference to the mounds of flower pollen.

PL: That is an especially quiet and fragile work, though it shows how vulnerability and gentleness can exert great power. But gentleness is not always answered with gentleness. On the contrary, I could imagine that it virtually invites aggression in some people.

WL: Oh, yes. Milkstones and pollen can trigger unbelievable responses, even at exhibitions. In 2002, I had a large-scale show in San Diego. A woman came to the museum with a water bottle, passed all the guards, stepped into the flower pollen, and began dancing in it. She was just about to pour out the water bottle when the guards intervened. After that, the woman ran out of the museum and disappeared.

PL: You could see it positively: after all, the work had a great emotional effect on her.

WL: The quieter something is, the stronger the answers and reactions. And it is good that it is this way.

PL: You are very interested in Indian religions, but also in Christian mysticism. What do you think of Western philosophy? For example, I think it is interesting that Martin Heidegger also comes from this area, Meßkirch, only a few kilometers away from here.

WL: Particularly at the beginning of my studies, I attended a lot of lectures in philosophy. I have also read Heidegger, and it was important to me at the time. But that was a long time ago. What always bothered me were these university philosophers. They stood there in their perfect suits and talked about all sorts of things. But you felt that these people were just so ordinary and normal. What they talked about did not have anything to do with their lives. Ultimately that repulsed me. In Indian philosophy, I feel that they do not philosophize so much about things—but it is life per se. Having to do with people in India, who may not be able to read and write perhaps, but still have the Upanishads in their blood and live every minute according to them, is something unbelievably important to me. This is no romantic notion à la Gauguin, it is something very intense. At the time, I began learning Sanskrit, which fascinated me in contrast to these stiff philosophers. Indian philosophy has much more to do with the art I was looking for, precisely because art is life in itself. If I sit in a meadow and collect flower pollen, then it is not some philosophical structure I erect. It is at all times the reality, a reality that is so open, so indescribable, so free and so exciting.

PL: You used to emphasize that you regard your work as being political. Do you see it this way today as well?

WL: I know that some people think I am an apolitical nature romantic who sits in the meadows and takes no interest at all in social relationships. But a politician has influence on the today, at most he influences tomorrow, but culture and art exert influences over centuries. This sounds very naïve to some people because they claim that matters are decided on entirely different levels—in politics, in economics—and art plays absolutely no role. But this is not the case if you look at matters over longer periods of time. You can see it from the past: ultimately art and culture, not wars and confrontations, have stimulated change in people. Wars may have shoved this or that boundary or shifted that balance of power back and forth, but art and culture have carried mankind further, brought them somewhere else, and it has always been this way. I am still of the opinion—and this may sound insanely naïve—art changes the world.

PL: You refer to longer periods of time. How do these different time spans relate to the theme of perceived time?

WL: Time is unbelievably relative. Collecting pollen is a very special activity, challenging everything in our society that has to do with time, what you do in a day, what you do in a week, in a month, why you do things, and the way you do it. This reverses all such activities. This is why time is so central to my work. And a cosmic world is also involved, in which human life is like a spark and no longer plays any role at all because it is so short in relation to cosmic time relationships. This has always fascinated me, if you imagine what a human

life is and what the life of a star is by comparison. And thus, time has always won a central importance in my work. For example, the fact that a milkstone is only filled for a few hours. What then is also an eternity, and what is so transient? This theme of what is transient and what is eternal has repeatedly taken on a central role in my work.

PL: Your works always relate to space. They influence space and are themselves influenced by their environment. And then you create rooms directly, not only in museums, but also in nature.

WL: This takes place on wholly different levels. I am extremely spoiled in matters concerning exhibition galleries and also very radical in this respect. I have no desire to put on exhibitions in mediocre museum rooms. I have also had the opportunity of exhibiting in several of the best museums, and was very particular when it came to the rooms. What was important to me (and what has hopefully always been the case) is that the radiance of these rooms will have been changed by the few works that were exhibited there. If it really works, then it happens that these are no longer merely art works in a gallery, but the works mesh with the room, forming a unity, which makes possible an entirely new experience.

PL: You have also created two wax rooms in outside spaces.

WL: I love both, the presence of the art work in a natural space, but also just the presence in a more neutral environment.

PL: For years there have been a lot of polemics against these neutral rooms, against the White Cube.

WL: I like it. It enables concentration and calmness, an intensity that does not otherwise exist. Anything else would merely detract our attention from the works.

PL: Years ago you built a wax room in the Pyrénées. You have built a second wax room outside here on your property in Upper Swabia. What does this terrain surrounding your studio mean to you?

WL: I like to show my wax room here to my visitors, but it is not open to the public because I need a place where I can be alone and work. Otherwise, the things I have made so far will no longer exist. This is the reason I like to be here so much and work here in seclusion. It is simply because of the intensity I can experience here, and that is very, very important. Other artists need the intensity of great cities in order to be able to work. I have repeatedly returned to this place, and experience here the intensity and the independence that allow me to create something from out of my innermost, something no one else does. This is actually the simple mystery of my life.

PL: Your most recent works are granite sculptures that you made in India with the help of native stonemasons. What surprises me is the color. I would have expected you to let the stones speak for themselves in their materiality as stones. I thought at first that the stones are painted. But they are not, are they?

WL: No, this is not painted stone, though it may look like it at first glance. But this is, of course, not the concern anyway. I do find it so exciting that although my works look very different visually, still they have always remained the same in their content and what is fundamental to them. These stones have a long history behind them. Already in 1983, in my first works with rice, I included a black stone, though in a somewhat different form. In *The 63 Rice Meals for a Stone*, mounds of rice were distributed throughout the various rooms at the Konrad Fischer Gallery, and then there was a stone. I have never gotten this out of my head. I was also always fascinated by the figures in Indian temples. These figures are something entirely different than the material presence of a sculpture. When I then see the best and most beautiful figures at the Metropolitan Museum, they have been scrubbed, and everything important about them has been polished away. This is what art historians consider good, the purely material form—but what is really important is gone. By contrast, there is the way people in India treat these figures every day, how all kinds of things are poured over them, like milk and honey, and how the figures turn black from the votive lights and incense. What happens to such figures visually, that is what I am concerned with in my new works.

PL: So it is oil and lampblack for the black stones and pigmented ghee for the red. This has to do with the connection of art and life, and time. Use is shown by these traces. In them, time is condensed.

WL: Yes, I have been rubbing the substances into my stones about every two weeks. And now I am sending them to New York for the exhibition. But I have told the people at the gallery that they have to keep this up, that they should continue to rub the stones every two weeks. The time is important in order to put depth to them. On the invitation, there is a photograph of the stone quarry in southern India where I work, titled *Artist's Studio in South India*. I find it nice that such a creation process has happened on a much wider scale and not, for example, in a loft in SoHo. This is a much more open process, the concern is for much, much more. And then the rice also belongs to the stones. This black together with the white rice—it is unbelievable what happens here.

PL: Do you still have other projects you want to realize?

WL: I would like to create art works that belong together in different places throughout the world. So far, I have three ideas for works. One I would like to make in America, in New Mexico, for example, one in India, and one in Tibet. These works would be connected to one another by content and idea in such a way that they form a Gesamtkunstwerk, so to speak, that spans the world. I also have more concrete ideas. Back in the 1970s I made an egg-shaped sculpture for the grave of the poet and mystic Jalaluddin Rumi in Konya, Turkey. It is an entirely traditional sculpture, just like a Brancusi. But already at that time I realized that it was not my form: the egg is simply a universal. I chose it very consciously. And in doing so, I already had the idea back then to have a very large egg made by several hundred stonemasons in India.

PL: What dimensions are we talking about?

WL: Maybe 10 or 15 meters. I would just love to do this. This would really be a sculpture that is not by me, it would be a world egg, or as they say in India: a Brahmanda.

WOLFGANG LAIB

Gespräch mit Peter Lodermeyer

Atelier Wolfgang Laib, Biberach an der Riss, Deutschland, 6. August 2007

*Wolfgang Laib (*1950 in Metzingen, Deutschland) begann 1968 ein Studium der Medizin in Tübingen und machte 1974 seinen Abschluss als Arzt. Danach wandte er sich der Kunst zu, die er seither ausschließlich betreibt. Mit seinen Milchsteinen (ab 1975) und Pollenarbeiten (ab 1977) wurde er berühmt. Laib verwendet in seinen Skulpturen und Wachsräumen interkulturell verständliche, archetypische Formen und elementare Materialien, um existenzielle Themen wie Geburt, Tod und Wiedergeburt, Körper und Geist, Mensch und Natur anzusprechen.*

Ein heißer Sommertag in Süddeutschland. Der Boden des Ateliers von Wolfgang Laib steht voller neuerer Arbeiten, die demnächst nach New York zu seiner ersten Ausstellung in der Sean Kelly Gallery gehen sollen. „So sieht es hier sonst nicht aus, normalerweise ist der Raum ziemlich leer", sagt Laib. Durch die hohen Fenster sieht man auf die Wiesen Oberschwabens, wo der Künstler Jahr für Jahr im Frühling Blütenstaub von Löwenzahn und Hahnenfuß sammelt. Mit seinen Pollenarbeiten und den Milchsteinen, flachen Marmorplatten, in deren vertiefte Oberfläche Milch gegossen wird, erlangte Laib Anfang der 80er Jahre internationale Bekanntheit. Wir gehen zusammen über die Wiese zu dem Wachsraum. Wegen der Hitze kann Wolfgang Laib den Raum nur für wenige Minuten öffnen. Dennoch ist es ein unglaublich intensives Erlebnis, das alle Sinne erfasst: die goldgelbe Farbe des Wachses an Decke und Wänden, die Kühle des 13 Meter in die Erde führenden Schachts, der starke Widerhall, der einen sofort zum Flüstern bringt, sowie der betörende Wachsgeruch.

Peter Lodermeyer: Wie Sie wissen, arbeite ich mit dem Künstler Rene Rietmeyer an einem Buchprojekt mit dem Titel Personal Structures. Time Space Existence. *In diesem Zusammenhang wollte ich Sie unbedingt treffen, weil Sie einer der wenigen Künstler sind, für die wirklich alle drei Themen zugleich im Zentrum ihrer Arbeit stehen.*

Wolfgang Laib: Ich habe mich selbst oft gefragt, warum ich mich für diese Themen interessiere. Ich denke, das hat sehr viel mit meinem Medizinstudium zu tun. Viele Leute, die mich nicht so gut kennen, sehen den Zusammenhang nicht und fragen mich, was hat Kunst mit Medizin zu tun? Aber so wie ich es sehe, habe ich meinen Beruf nie gewechselt. Ich habe in der Kunst das getan, was ich als Arzt tun wollte. Ich hatte das Studium mit allen Idealen begonnen, die man nur haben kann. Aber ich habe ziemlich schnell gemerkt, dass Medizin eine Naturwissenschaft geworden ist, die mit den Dingen, die mir wichtig sind, fast nichts mehr zu tun hat. Da geht es nicht um Existenz, um das Leben an sich, sondern nur um den materiellen Körper. Dieser stellt zwar für meine menschliche Existenz die Voraussetzung dar, aber das ist nicht das, wonach ich gesucht habe und noch immer suche. Und so hatte ich schnell gemerkt, dass ich nur in der Kunst die Dinge finden konnte, die ich suche.

PL: War es denn überhaupt zu erwarten, dass diese weiter gehenden Themen in der Medizin zu finden sind? War das nicht ein übertriebener Idealismus?

WL: Ja, es war schon Idealismus, aber auf der anderen Seite möchte ich diesen auch heute nicht aufgeben. Das bedeutet dann eben: Arzt sein und Künstler sein ist dasselbe, und das finde ich ganz fantastisch. Medizin hat mit der menschlichen Existenz zu tun und mit dem menschlichen Körper, aber doch nicht nur mit seiner materiellen Seite. Ich habe den ersten Wachsraum, den ich mit Harald Szeemann 1988 in Berlin realisiert habe, *Für einen anderen Körper* genannt. Das war damals schon diese Hoffnung, dass es dabei um eine ganz andere Dimension von Existenz gehen kann, darum, was Materie eigentlich ist, um die zeitliche Begrenzung des Lebens und alles, was im Zusammenhang damit eine Rolle spielt.

PL: Könnten Sie vielleicht ein wenig genauer erklären, was mit diesem „anderen Körper" gemeint ist? Es bleibt ja immer relativ vage, was Sie damit andeuten wollen.

WL: Genau das finde ich wichtig. Ich denke, es ist ganz entscheidend, dass die Kunst keine definitiven Antworten auf diese Fragen gibt, so wie es die Naturwissenschaften versuchen oder die Philosophie, die ganze Lehrgebäude entwickelt. Ich finde das sogar noch viel stärker, dass die Kunst das nicht tut, sondern dass sie im Ganzen Entwürfe aufzeigt – und plötzlich können dann ganz unerwartete Sachen passieren, die in wissenschaftlichen Systemen gar nicht möglich sind. Nach meinen sechs Jahren Medizinstudium mit dieser naturwissenschaftlichen Herangehensweise, bei der alles wissenschaftlich belegt sein und erklärt werden muss, fand ich diese Offenheit in der Kunst demgegenüber haushoch überlegen. Sie gibt dem Ganzen noch eine ganz andere Dimension.

PL: Das führt mich auf eine Frage, die mich in Zusammenhang mit vielen Künstlern sehr beschäftigt: auf den Zusammenhang zwischen der Intention des Künstlers und dem Werk. Es gibt Künstler, die glauben, dass sie über ihr Werk alles wissen, weil sie es ja schließlich gemacht haben.

WL: Nein, das sehe ich ganz anders. Die Kraft der Kunst liegt darin, dass sie den Anfang eines Weges markiert, der völlig offen ist. In den 70er Jahren war ich völlig unbekannt, hatte keinerlei Kontakte in der Kunstwelt, und dann fing ich hier in einem süddeutschen Dorf, am letzten Ende der Welt, damit an, in einer Wiese Blütenstaub zu sammeln und brachte den unter die Menschen, in New York, in Japan usw. Und dann passiert etwas, dann beginnen sich Welten zu verändern, im Kopf und überall. Das ist diese Offenheit der Kunst. Ich selbst weiß doch gar nicht, was das alles bedeutet. Bei mir ist das ja sowieso anders als bei einem Maler zum Beispiel. Bei mir geht es weniger um ein Schaffen als um ein Teilhaben an etwas, das schon da ist, und das finde ich einfach viel stärker. Ein Maler malt das Bild und dann ist er es, der das gemacht hat. Aber diesen Blütenstaub habe ich ja nicht gemacht, den habe ich gesammelt und ich habe das Ganze irgendwie initiiert, aber was dann damit passiert und was dabei ins Rollen kommt, das geschieht in viel größeren Prozessen.

PL: Ich habe mich in letzter Zeit sehr mit dem Begriff der Präsenz befasst. Wenn man eine Ihrer Blütenstaubflächen oder eine Wachsarbeit sieht, dann spürt man die Präsenz dieser Substanzen – und man verhält sich sofort dazu, ohne nach ihrer Bedeutung zu fragen.

WL: Ja, genau. Aber diese Sachen haben dennoch sehr viele Symbole und Bedeutungen, die sich daran anknüpfen lassen, doch diese zu definieren und die Arbeiten darauf zu beschränken, wäre sehr schade. Das Schubladendenken ist das Schlimmste. Wenn man die Bedeutungen festlegen will, dann ist es vorbei. Es geht darum, sich z. B. einfach die Milch in den Milchsteinen anzuschauen, diese Präsenz zu erleben und darüber nachzudenken, wohin das führt und was das in diesem Moment bedeuten kann. Dabei zu spüren, was für eine Offenheit ein solches Erleben hat, das finde ich ganz entscheidend.

PL: Einer Ihrer Titel lautet Ohne Ort – ohne Zeit – ohne Körper. *Er bezieht sich auch auf eine Installation in der Konrad Fischer Galerie in Düsseldorf, die aus einer großen Zahl von Reisbergen besteht, mit fünf Blütenstaubbergen dazwischen. Das ist ja wie eine offene Traumwelt, eine Vorstellungslandschaft von unbegrenzter Weite.*

WL: Ich habe diesen Titel in den letzten Jahren mehrmals verwendet, weil ich ihn als sehr wichtig und zentral empfand. Mit Titeln muss man immer sehr aufpassen. Wenn man zu viele Titel verwendet, relativiert sich das Ganze zu sehr. Sie haben dann kaum noch eine Bedeutung. Es gab, über Jahrzehnte hinweg, einzelne ganz wichtige Titel, einer davon war *Die fünf unbesteigbaren Berge*, er bezog sich auf die Blütenstaubberge.

PL: Das ist ja auch eine ganz besonders stille und fragile Arbeit. Daran sieht man doch auch, dass Verletzlichkeit und Sanftheit eine ungeheure Kraft haben können. Aber Sanftheit wird nicht immer mit Sanftheit beantwortet. Ich könnte mir vorstellen, dass sie auf manche Menschen im Gegenteil geradezu aggressionsfördernd wirkt.

WL: Oh ja, Milchsteine und Blütenstaub können unglaubliche Aggressionen auslösen, auch in Ausstellungen. Es gab 2002 einmal eine große Museumsausstellung in San Diego. Da kam eine Frau mit einer Wasserflasche ins Museum, ging an allen Wärtern vorbei in den Blütenstaub hinein und fing an darin herumzutanzen. Sie wollte gerade die Wasserflasche ausleeren, dann sind die Wärter eingeschritten. Danach ist die Frau aus dem Museum hinausgerannt und verschwunden.

PL: Man könnte es positiv sehen und sagen: immerhin hat die Arbeit eine starke emotionale Wirkung auf sie gehabt.

WL: Je stiller etwas ist, desto kräftiger sind die Antworten und Reaktionen. Das ist ja auch gut so.

PL: Sie sind sehr stark an indischen Religionen, aber auch an christlicher Mystik interessiert. Wie steht es mit westlicher Philosophie? Ich finde es zum Beispiel interessant, dass Martin Heidegger auch aus der Gegend stammt, aus Meßkirch, nur ein paar Kilometer von hier entfernt.

WL: Gerade am Anfang meines Studiums habe ich sehr viele philosophische Vorlesungen besucht. Ich habe auch Heidegger gelesen, das war mir damals sehr wichtig. Aber das ist lange her. Was mich immer gestört hat, waren diese Universitätsphilosophen. Die standen da in ihrem perfekten Anzug und haben über alle möglichen Dinge geredet. Aber man spürte, diese Leute waren so stinknormal. Das, worüber sie redeten, hatte nichts mit ihrem Leben zu tun. Das hat mich schließlich derart abgestoßen. In der indischen Philosophie, fand ich, wird nicht über irgendwas philosophiert, sondern das ist das Leben an sich. In Indien mit Menschen zu tun zu haben, die zwar vielleicht nicht lesen und schreiben können, aber trotzdem die Upanishaden im Blut haben und in jedem Augenblick entsprechend leben, das ist für mich unwahrscheinlich wichtig. Das ist auch keine Romantik à la Gauguin, das ist etwas sehr Intensives. Damals habe ich angefangen, Sanskrit zu lernen, das hat mich wahnsinnig fasziniert, im Gegensatz zu diesen steifen Philosophen. Die indische Philosophie hat sehr viel mehr mit der Kunst zu tun, die ich suchte, weil eben Kunst das Leben an sich ist. Wenn ich in der Wiese sitze und Blütenstaub sammele, dann ist das kein philosophisches Gebäude, das ich da errichte, sondern da ist jeder Moment die Realität, eine Realität, die so offen ist, so unbeschreibbar, so frei und so spannend.

PL: Sie haben früher auch mehrfach betont, dass Sie Ihre Arbeit als politisch empfinden. Sehen Sie das heute noch genauso?

WL: Ich weiß, manche Leute denken, ich sei ein unpolitischer Naturromantiker, der auf der Wiese sitzt und sich für gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge überhaupt nicht interessiert. Ich sehe das ganz anders: Ein Politiker hat Einfluss auf heute und höchstens noch auf morgen, aber Kultur und Kunst haben Einfluss auf Jahrhunderte. Das klingt für viele sehr naiv, weil sie sagen, die Dinge werden doch auf ganz anderer Ebene entschieden, in der Politik, in der Wirtschaft, Kunst spielt doch dabei überhaupt keine Rolle. Aber das stimmt nicht, wenn man es in längeren Zeiträumen betrachtet. Man sieht es in der Vergangenheit: Kunst und Kultur haben schließlich immer die Menschen verändert, nicht die Kriege und Auseinandersetzungen. Sie haben vielleicht diese und jene Grenzen und Gleichgewichte verschoben, aber Kunst und Kultur haben die Menschen weitergebracht, woanders hin gebracht, und so war das immer. Ich bin noch immer der Meinung – und das mag wahnsinnig naiv klingen: Kunst verändert die Welt.

PL: Sie sprechen von längeren Zeiträumen, können Sie mir ein wenig mehr zum Thema der Zeitempfindung sagen?

WL: Zeit ist unglaublich relativ. Das Blütenstaubsammeln ist eine ganz besondere Tätigkeit und fordert alles heraus, was in unserer Gesellschaft zum Thema Zeit gilt, was man an einem Tag tut, was man in einer Woche, in einem Monat tut. Wofür man etwas tut und warum man es tut. Das alles stellt eine solche Tätigkeit auf den Kopf. Darum ist Zeit auch so zentral in meinem Werk, da kommt ja auch eine kosmische Welt mit hinein, in der menschliches Leben wie ein Funke ist, überhaupt keine Rolle mehr spielt, weil es im Verhältnis zu kosmischen Zeitverhältnissen so kurz ist. Das hat mich schon immer wahnsinnig fasziniert, wenn man sich vorstellt, was ein menschliches Leben ist und was im Vergleich dazu das Leben eines Sterns ist. Und so hat Zeit in meinem Werk immer wieder eine ganz zentrale Bedeutung gewonnen. Zum Beispiel, dass ein Milchstein eben nur für ein paar Stunden gefüllt ist. Was dann auch eine Ewigkeit ist, was so vergänglich ist. Dieses Thema, was das Vergängliche und was das Ewige ist, hat in meinem Werk immer wieder eine ganz zentrale Bedeutung gewonnen.

PL: Ihre Arbeiten sind immer auf Raum bezogen. Sie nehmen auf den Raum Einfluss und werden selbst vom Umraum bestimmt. Und dann gestalten Sie ja auch direkt Räume, in Museen, aber auch in der Natur. Es interessiert mich, mit welchem Raumbegriff Sie umgehen.

WL: Das vollzieht sich auf ganz verschiedenen Ebenen. Ich bin ja wahnsinnig verwöhnt, was Ausstellungsräume angeht und bin da auch sehr radikal. Ich habe keine Lust, Ausstellungen in mittelmäßigen Museumsräumen zu machen. Ich hatte einfach auch die Gelegenheit, in einigen der besten Museen auszustellen und war da auch sehr wählerisch, was die Räume angeht. Was mir wichtig war – und was hoffentlich immer der Fall war – ist, dass durch die wenigen Werke, die in den Räumen verteilt waren, diese Räume in ihrer Ausstrahlungskraft verändert wurden. Wenn es wirklich gut wird, dann geschieht es, dass es nicht mehr einfach Kunstwerke im Raum sind, sondern dass die Arbeiten mit dem Raum zusammengehen, dass eine Einheit entsteht, die eine ganz neue Raumerfahrung ermöglicht.

PL: Sie haben aber auch zwei Wachsräume im Außenraum geschaffen.

WL: Ich liebe beides, die Präsenz des Kunstwerks in einem Naturraum, aber eben auch die Präsenz in einer neutralen Umgebung.

PL: Es wird ja seit Jahren so viel polemisiert gegen diese neutralen Räume, gegen den White Cube.

WL: Ich finde den sehr gut. Er ermöglicht eine Konzentration und Stille, eine Intensität, die es sonst gar nirgends gibt. Alles andere lenkt doch nur von den Arbeiten ab.

PL: Sie haben vor Jahren einen Wachsraum in den Pyrenäen gebaut. Ihren zweiten Außen-Wachsraum haben Sie hier auf Ihrem Gelände in Oberschwaben installiert. Was bedeutet Ihnen eigentlich dieses Gelände, auf das man ja auch von Ihrem Atelier aus blickt?

WL: Ich zeige meinen Wachsraum hier gerne meinen Besuchern, aber er ist nicht öffentlich zugänglich. Denn irgendwo brauche ich einen Ort, an dem ich für mich sein und arbeiten kann, sonst gibt's das alles nicht mehr, was ich bisher gemacht habe. Deshalb bin ich auch so gerne hier und arbeite hier ganz zurückgezogen. Es ist einfach wegen der Intensität, in der ich hier sein kann, die ist ganz, ganz wichtig. Andere Künstler brauchen die Intensität der größten Stadt der Welt, um zu arbeiten, und ich bin immer wieder hierher zurückgekommen und erlebe hier die Intensität und die Unabhängigkeit, die es mir erlauben, etwas aus mir heraus zu tun, was niemand anderes tut. Das ist eigentlich das einfache Geheimnis meines Lebens.

PL: Ich möchte gerne über Ihre neuesten Arbeiten sprechen. Es handelt sich um Skulpturen aus Granit, die Sie in Indien mithilfe einheimischer Steinmetzen angefertigt haben. Was mich daran überrascht, ist die farbige Gestaltung. Ich hätte erwartet, dass Sie das Steinsein der Steine für sich selbst sprechen lassen. Ich war zuerst irritiert, dass die Steine bemalt sind. Aber das sind sie ja gar nicht.

WL: Nein, das ist ja kein bemalter Stein. So sieht es vielleicht auf den ersten Blick aus. Aber darum geht es dabei natürlich überhaupt nicht. Das finde ich so spannend, dass meine Werke visuell zwar sehr verschieden aussehen, aber im Inhalt und in dem, was dahintersteckt, eigentlich immer dasselbe geblieben sind. Und auch diese Steine hier haben eine lange Vorgeschichte. Schon 1983, bei meinen ersten Arbeiten mit Reis, habe ich einen schwarzen Stein dabei gehabt, wenn auch in einer etwas anderen Form. Die Arbeit hieß *Die 63 Reismahlzeiten für einen Stein*. Die Reisberge waren in verschiedenen Räumen der Konrad Fischer Galerie verteilt, und dann war da ein Findling hier aus der Gegend. Das ist mir nie mehr aus dem Kopf gegangen. Ich war auch immer derart fasziniert von den Figuren in den indischen Tempeln. Diese Figuren sind etwas ganz anderes als die materielle Präsenz einer Skulptur. Wenn ich dann im Metropolitan Museum in New York die besten und schönsten Figuren sehe, die sind abgeschrubbt und alles was wichtig ist, ist weggeputzt. Das ist es, was Kunsthistoriker daran gut finden, die reine materielle Form – aber das wirklich Wichtige ist alles fort. Dagegen steht der tägliche Umgang der Menschen in Indien mit diesen Figuren, wie da alles Mögliche darüber gegossen wird, Milch, Honig, wie die Figuren schwarz werden vom Ruß der Opferfeuer. Was mit solchen Figuren dann visuell passiert, darum geht es in meinen neuen Arbeiten.

PL: Es ist also keine Farbe, was Sie da verwenden, sondern Öl und Ruß bei den schwarzen und pigmentierte Butter bei den roten Steinen. Das hat einerseits mit der Verbindung von Kunst und Leben zu tun, andererseits mit Zeit. Der Gebrauch der Tempelfiguren zeigt sich an diesen Spuren. In ihnen verdichtet sich die Zeit.

WL: Ja, ich habe meine Steine ca. alle zwei Wochen eingeschmiert. Und jetzt schicke ich sie bald nach New York zur Ausstellung. Aber ich habe denen von der Galerie schon gesagt, dass das weitergehen muss, dass sie alle zwei Wochen die Steine einschmieren sollen. Die Zeit ist wichtig, um da Tiefe hineinzubringen. Auf der Einladungskarte ist ein Foto von dem Steinbruch in Südindien abgebildet, in dem ich arbeite. Der Titel heißt: „Artist's Studio in South India". Ich finde es einfach schön, dass solch ein Schaffen viel breiter gestreut ist und nicht einfach z. B. in einem Super-Loft in SoHo stattfindet. Das ist viel offener bei mir, es geht da um viel, viel mehr. Zu den Steinen gehört dann auch noch Reis. Dieses Schwarz mit dem weißen Reis, das ist unglaublich, was da passiert.

PL: Haben Sie denn Pläne für weitere Projekte, die Sie noch verwirklichen möchten?

WL: Ich würde gerne an verschiedenen Orten der Welt Kunstwerke realisieren, die zusammengehören. Bisher denke ich an drei Arbeiten. Eines würde ich gerne in Amerika machen, z. B. in New Mexico, eines in Indien und eines in Tibet, und zwar sollen die so vom Inhalt und von der Idee her miteinander verbunden sein, dass sie gewissermaßen ein weltumspannendes Gesamtkunstwerk bilden. Ich habe auch schon konkretere Vorstellungen. Bereits in den 70er Jahren habe ich in Konya, in der Türkei, eine eiförmige Skulptur für das Grab des Dichters und Mystikers Dschelaladdin Rumi gemacht. Eigentlich ist das eine ganz traditionelle Skulptur, man denkt zum Beispiel an Brancusi. Aber schon damals war es meine Idee, dass das nicht meine Form ist, das Ei ist ja eine universelle Form. Ich habe sie ganz bewusst gewählt. Und dabei hatte ich damals schon die Idee, in Indien ein sehr großes Ei von mehreren hundert Steinmetzen anfertigen zu lassen.

PL: An welche Größendimension muss man dabei denken?

WL: Vielleicht 10 Meter, 15 Meter. Ich würde das wahnsinnig gerne machen. Das wäre dann wirklich eine Skulptur, die nicht von mir ist, ein Weltenei, oder wie man in Indien sagt: ein Brahmanda.

ULRICH RÜCKRIEM

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer

Ulrich Rückriem studio, Cologne, Germany,
19 September 2007

Ulrich Rückriem (1938, Germany) has been considered one of the most important stone sculptors since the late 1960s. The form of his works results from the structural combinations of working processes. Lives in Ireland.*

This interview requires a bit of an explanation. Around two weeks prior to my visit to Ulrich Rückriem in Cologne, I wrote him a letter. After this we phoned back and forth a few times to fix the date. What I did not know was that Rückriem was busy with a conceptual work aimed at bringing his work as an artist to a logical end. These works are based on a grid of 7 x 7 horizontal and vertical lines. 7 points are entered into these in a way that each horizontal and each vertical are only used once. The lines connecting with each other result in figurations that Rückriem is fond of designating as 'birds'. In this difficult existential situation where an artist is involved in preparing his artistic finale, it was not only impossible, but also seemed inappropriate to pose pre-formulated questions. It seemed to make more sense to go along with the artist's need to communicate, for all his jumps in thought, interruptions, and deviations, and to document his statements—granted a selection of these. Also the fact that Rückriem intermittently tended to break out into English in order to address the Japanese photographer, who was accompanying me, is part of it. In my opinion this appeared to be the best possibility for doing justice to Rückriem's candid, direct, and straightforward nature.

Ulrich Rückriem: I am doing an exhibition, work that others can continue. Read this out loud.

Peter Lodermeyer: (reading) "Lines, dots, and surfaces are the basis of a drawing. These may be realized on many picture carriers, in random places, in the most various materials and techniques, individually or in groups, black on white or in color. Positive or negative, over or next to one another. The curator can spontaneously choose among these many possibilities according to what he or she finds appropriate. Once he has understood the rules that are fundamental to the work, he can develop or roll the dice for the respective figurations himself. The picture carrier: paper, all sorts and sizes; the walls: wall painting, directly applied or on a foil; the flooring: foils or rugs; the ceilings: ceilings painted directly or on foils; the windows: transparent foils; the canvas: printed; the print: as graphics or in a book."

UR: Do you know what there is? This work has been precisely defined in words. That is the crazy part, an exhibition only has such a text. Then I can say: "Here, this figuration!", which I can then use. If you have a wall, and divide the height by four, divide the width by four, then the surface is thus reduced to a sixteenth. This would be the point of departure, and everything that was beforehand (in my work), approaches this point, and departs from this point now to enter the figuration. That is the goal of my work. It is as if Lao-tse would have said, if you take steps and they lead nowhere anymore, then you have to stop, and change your direction. Otherwise you go crazy, otherwise you make a fool of yourself in front of yourself. The others are not so important, do you understand? Therefore you have come to me at precisely the right moment. When, for example, you write to me that I am a minimalist—I have never been one, and this is something that hardly anyone has ever understood.

PL: But I did not claim this. I very cautiously ventured that I am interested in artists who work with 'minimalist' characteristics.

UR: It doesn't matter. At any rate, it isn't quite right. It looks that way, because it is so simple, what I used to do with stone. I really did not do anything but split something and then put it together again. I divided something and reassembled it in its original form—which is, basically, really stupid (laughs). You then see what has been done to this thing and you can retrace it. Back then it was important to me that you could comprehend a sculpture, and a work of art in general. That was a political demand. After Tachisme, namely, we could no longer stand this kind of art. We also couldn't stand Joseph Beuys. I never could stand him because of the way he acted—always pointing a finger—and then he told us how we had to live and think. The influences of Rudolf Steiner. Well, I just can't bear it. You can't go along with it if you want to be free, you know. Somehow it is something very bad. Back then I spent a lot of time with Blinky Palermo. We practically lived and worked together, for a long time.

PL: You shared a studio.

UR: We really did everything together. We helped each other out, just to even exist. And that was great. I will never forget that for as long as I live. Even though Richter and Polke are portrayed as being so great, for me Palermo was the real painter with depth. That's why I take my works again to the wall, because the most beautiful things Palermo did were his wall works. Unfortunately they do not exist anymore. In Berlin I had a large exhibition in the Nationalgalerie. It was like the Eight Queens Chess Problem. That means, you move around all the elements as if on a chessboard, so that they are all unable to beat one another, if you are dealing with the queens. There are 92 variations of this. That is a given. That comes from the game. The best things always seem to arise from things that make no sense. Everything that somehow makes sense has nothing to do with art in the first place. Whether there is religion behind it or anything else. If the Pope wants to know the truth, and acts as if he knows it, this is an outrage. It doesn't exist, truth. I would like to see the truth once. I find it beautiful when I study Taoism—a kind of speechlessness comes about that is accepted. Most important is actually the speechlessness, and this work here is speechless. The seven points here… It was too much of an effort for me to always look for the center point, so I shrunk the field to 7 x 7, and no longer 8 x 8. Then I have points of intersection. There are 40 variations. These are the constellations [he shows various constellations in his studio]. That one there is more or less unborn or that one just born. Now that becomes the bird. I only deal with what I see and say: Oh yes, that could be a bird. Do you understand? Now comes the next point. Now I let the bird die. Now I let him fly its feathers off, then what is left is only the body, and then it is dead. Therefore, from birth to death, that is the abstraction of thought in the aftermath. Look, that is the bird, and those are all of his brothers. There are 2050 of them, only from one constellation. And there are 40 constellations. Then I reach a sum of 600,000. When you have grasped the rule, you can do it yourself. You can do the whole exhibition in a room, on windows and doors. You can lay a rug on the ground, and you can do infinitely much. That comes from sculpture. In the Berliner Nationalgalerie, there you have the 40 plates. That is where this comes from. It has so many constellations that the possibilities extend into the billions. And every 5 years they have to lay the plates down differently. When I am 70 it will be the third time. Then all those people in the art business can forget me. I won't show up anymore anyway. I don't want to see the people anymore. I can't stand them anymore. Go ahead and write that. I am sick of the whole shitty art market, the whole shitty art business. You just can't imagine how bad it is. You guys are still young, but you'll see: It will get even worse, count on that. Just look at the Documenta, or the Biennale. You can only hope to find a very quiet corner and be by yourself, so that you don't have to deal with it anymore. It has all dissolved. When an Englishman comes along and makes the world's most expensive work of art…

PL: The diamond-encrusted skull by Damien Hirst…

UR: …and then he acts like he sold it. Then he buys it himself again, that is just stupid. No one can believe that anymore. But basically, he hits the nail on the head. That is what is deep inside, this commercialization. All the constellations you see here, everything that emerges, they get given away. That is my reaction to it. You can't buy them any longer. You can only be given them as gifts. I just don't want to anymore. Do you understand that? This is an essential factor in the whole thing. This is why I am getting out. I just don't want to any longer. I have named this constellation *Icarus* that I am making for Kasper König [Ulrich Rückriem: *Icarus*. Museum Ludwig, Cologne. 14 December 2007—30 March 2008]. I found a configuration where I thought, that is an Icarus. There are the seven points, I connect them and then I have the surfaces. And then all at once a very small head comes about. There are the wings, and there are the legs. That is the human, that stupid idiot… That is everyone having to do with art. They all have such a small head (laughing). Downstairs, when you come in, that's where they will be put on the windows. The windows are so important for me because I have little to do with the museum itself, because the window is the skin between outside and inside. I have, so to speak, dug my own grave by making things that you always have to put together again because they will get broken otherwise. I have to build them so that they always have the same light. Otherwise they are no longer the monoliths. And then I have to have a room, otherwise they get drawn on and who knows what else. And that is why I have always been dependent on rooms. I have also created many rooms myself. But it is true: There is no use believing others can think along with you, feel it together with you. So everything, no matter what you make, though granted not sentenced to death, nevertheless it can't last because it has been placed so meticulously to the point. Just take the work in Bonn. They just suddenly go and put little pebbles beneath the stone so that grass won't grow there.

PL: You are referring to the Heinrich Heine *monument?*

UR: You know, somehow it is dumb to make a monument to Heinrich Heine because he said, better to read my books, then you don't need any ridiculous monuments. There is this teeny-weenie trick. They almost took it away from me, and I had to fight to keep it. The writing has been blasted into this polished stone. I had split it twice horizontally and then cut it again like that and again from the front. So this disk opens up, polished. You can close it again. There is really a door. You can only see the writing when the weather is right. If it rains, it's gone. The dampness takes away the writing. And that's the good thing about it. It's like schizophrenia. The most important thing is actually that any sculpture can only remain in a public space, in my opinion, as long as the environment is suitable. 50% of a sculpture in public space is the place, anyway. There are only a few artists in the world that work with place. If the place changes it is a damage of the sculpture… I had to do a sculpture in front of a bank. So, I closed my eyes and said okay. There was the building and here the entrance. And next to the entrance I could place the stone. That's like in Japan and also in other cultures: the stone is pushing away the bad ghosts. So, no bad things can come through the door. That's a very old custom. I didn't know that. Always when I asked where do you want to place it, the answer was: next to the door. I didn't know why. Until I went to Japan one day and did a little research and saw how important the entrance is.

PL: Your configurations function like a machine that produces forms.

UR: That is a machine that makes these things, and you stand before it, astonished. What is perhaps the most important thing: I did not want to do something about which someone says that the one thing is more beautiful than the other. I can well understand it when someone says this. It is normal. Something gets activated in your brain that you have already stored. When you say "structure"—if you can use such a super-word, then these are structures that are at the root of this. There are many aspects I also have in my work. For the works in

stone, there are the four basic forms. You can actually derive them all from architecture. First the pillar. Then the disk slice, which is really nothing more than a wall, the disk standing or lying; what lies is the floor or ceiling then. Next comes the block, the cube, which actually contains everything. At the end I have now made two works where I no longer enter into this volume, no longer cut, planed, or polished it, but only split it. I have varied the placements of how they have been put together. There are around 25 to 30 possibilities for placing them. This is now on display in my museum in Sinsteden, one of them. It is also an end-piece. Split once, cut once. Thus, it all amounts to goals in my last work. When I say "last", it is not dramatic. The reason, I know now, lies in the work itself. You really can't make anything for a certain place and then keep this place for all eternity. The place is always going to change. I have to deal with that, with the fluctuation of changing time and nature. Nature takes away some of it, after all.

PL: That is precisely our topic, time. Time, space and existence.

UR: Yes, and it is also very important to realize this. This is why I no longer like to go to museums so much, because museums do the exact opposite. Actually it is a conservation of ideas, something the Futurists opposed back then. But of course, you can always go into a museum and learn something you need at that moment. There are always excuses for why museums are still important, and devil knows what… I don't need it anymore. I no longer like the museum atmosphere.

PL: But you made all those works. They are also worth preserving…

UR: That's what's so crazy. You can't understand that, you just can't get it into your mind. When a man like Sol LeWitt died, he did so very many walls. Then I can understand why he made so many of them. He couldn't help it. It was like a motor for him. I really liked him. Sol LeWitt was very nice. And who is also nice is Niele Toroni. He is wonderful. What he did for the walls (at the Museum Ludwig), above the elevators, is just right. This raises again the issue of location. He bought up all the brushes he could find. All kinds of brushes, the colors and then the differences between them. There are a lot of possibilities within the reduction. It's the same with this here, there are 600,000 possibilities. I'll make you one today. And then you will see how easy it is. I do that every day. It's a kind of meditation. And then I listen to music, to Bach, always the same, the *Goldberg-Variations*.

PL: I always ask myself why so many artists show such reverence for the Goldberg-Variations. *Probably because they are so clearly structured.*

UR: It isn't only the Goldberg-Variations. I have nearly all of Bach's works. And besides, Telemann was even more gifted mathematically. Bach was not so good in math, but he had it inside of him. He had a lot of children, lots of trouble. But back to the basic forms. They are all ashlar blocks. The only exception is the wedge form that comes from stone quarries, where I began. And then there is another nice thing, and that is why I am so happy that the birds come automatically—because of Brancusi. There are such wonderful works by Brancusi. I built doors like he did. I made a table, I accompanied his infinite column with a finite column. I do all of this with my processes, i.e., the splitting, cutting, and removing. Never adding anything. When I take away something, you could restore exactly what I remove back to its place. So there is a repeated return to the beginning, and here (with the constellations) it applies as well, from black to black. The last ones are totally black then. This is what fascinates me the most. You have the Zen-Buddhism, it depends on Tao. Taoism. Lao Tse. Nobody knows really when he lived. Nobody knows if he really existed. It doesn't matter. All he made is this book, Tao Te King. And that is fantastic. When you do something at the point and suddenly you come to a smile. The only thing you can do is the lotus flower and smile (laughs). That's all you have to do. There is no explanation anymore. And then you are really happy. And I would like to go there. But before that I have a lot to do. I don't want any more. I want to go to the park and play ping pong with my son.

PL: In the article you say you can also make constellations with color. Does this work? In black they have such a clear, graphic structure, but in color?

UR: Yes, someone who really understands color is going to have to do that. So, if someone comes and says, I want that in color, then that's what he gets, then that is what he can do. This is the very last possibility: By going to a gallery or a museum and having the space shrink to a certain dimension. Then you have shrunk the space, very compactly. Then you do this work, and then it is closed with graphite. Then you begin the exhibition almost as if you were in a cage, and you are independent of the exhibition conditions. This would then be the last exhibition I do. The basis is always the shrinking rectangles. That shrinks in space and that shrinks inside the room. And then comes the thing with the squares. These are the divisions of the square, and that is the bird. This will be my last exhibition and then I am even independent of space. This is what I do for the space—and then I am gone.

PL: So your intention is to pack everything up, like that legendary Chinese painter who disappears into his picture at the end.

UR: Yes. It's a long way in sculpture. At first, there was God on top of the column, then the king, later the bourgeois, the most important people of the so-called democracy. Now it is empty. There is an exhibition going on in Frankfurt at the moment, I think. [Taryn Simon: *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar*, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt, Germany]. There is something very interesting about when people are going to die, then they sign a paper to have themselves preserved so that they can be woken up to life again in 100 years. They give them an injection and then they can wake up in 100 years. They believe that in 100 years the human race will be able to bring somebody who died back to life. So, they give them all kinds of treatments, their bodies will be in ice, and all kinds of things… It costs a lot of money. It's amazing. And she [Taryn Simon] as an artist, took photos. It is interesting, she loves to do that. Do you have to be an artist to do that? 'That's the question. To see that in a photo as art, that's a question for me to stop. I always had the feeling that art destroys itself. This is also a function of art. It might be that this is also present inside me. Maybe it's in myself, too, that I don't like me anymore. It could be that I don't like my art anymore after a while because I get bored with looking at my art. So, take it away from me. It's vanishing, it's gone. I don't want to be cynical. Maybe it's nice. It is something like when a doctor helps someone, although he knows he is dying, it must be something like that. When the doctor helps somebody to survive, for a moment it's fantastic. But the patient still dies. Haha, what bullshit. You live a little bit longer but you are going to die. Another interviewer will come on the 15th and after that I will not give interviews anymore. I no longer want to. This is the next to the last time. You do things you think are logical, honest, and clean. This is very important. But you can't maintain this, because it can't be done, since there is far too much dirt around. You can only catapult yourself away, take yourself away, become ever less. This is again an example of the fact that you really only produce a formula anymore for an exhibition.

PL: I find it intriguing to see an artist at the point where he says: I am getting out of everything now. When you say you no longer like your art, this is apparently an exaggeration. What did making art mean for you after all?

UR: It was a dream. A dream! It was wonderful. I was able to live like others have lived. So, at the very beginning I admired Brancusi and Lehmbruck, at a time when I was doing the heads, figurative things. Later there were the Constructivists. Then I met good people, Albert Schulze Vellinghausen, who took me along to Paris. Then I met Giacometti. I never went to art school. When I entered a stone quarry for the first time, immediately—because I was a stonecarver—I found the material most suited to me. This was a return to my beginning. The moment a stone is broken out of the rock is really the most interesting. After that I don't do much to it. This then, was my work. And then the place: where something stands and how it stands. And then there were the themes arising out of that. And now I have finished. I have worked through the themes. Now I can really only repeat myself. Of course, I could still do something particular for a very particular place. That would still work. But not necessarily. I also have enough money. I don't want to earn any more of it. Now I can disappear. It is also my private matter. I do not want to put the blame on all the others. Do you know, it is really very interesting. It is already inherent to the thing that it has to stop. Now, for example, I can learn to play piano. Why not? In October someone is coming to teach me to read notes. That would be nice to someday play one of Bach's fugues on my own. I can also continue to do these drawings I am now making until the end of my life. I can do that as well. But I will never sell them.

PL: Won't you miss the work in the stone quarry, breaking out the stones?

UR: That was always nice. But I have seen it a hundred thousand times. This would be the wrong kind of romantic. You know, if you speak the Tao aloud, you no longer have it. That is highly interesting. If you want to do something very contemplative, you will never accomplish that. Because this is something lying nicely in the dark and it very simply may not be spoken out. Art begins where it may no longer be spoken out.

HENK PEETERS

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer

Peeters' home and studio, Hall, The Netherlands, 26 November 2007

Henk Peeters (1925 in The Hague, the Netherlands). Together with other Dutch artists, including Jan Schoonhoven, Jan Henderikse and Armando, he founded the NUL movement in the 1960s.*

Peter Lodermeyer: As you know, our topic is: Time Space Existence. *At our symposium in Amsterdam you spoke about time. But I think your work perhaps has even more to do with existence. That would then be a good topic for us to speak about today. The NUL group you belonged to developed during the time of 'Existentialism' and has to do with typically existentialistic philosophy in as much as you could define your own existence, choose your identity (?) in this postwar situation. There were no obligatory traditions and—this is probably the sense of ZERO as well—you had to begin at NUL, the point zero.*

Henk Peeters: Yes, and we also thought it was the end of an epoch, that was it. Painting itself is over, the museums are over, and of the feeling was a bit like a new Futurism there. Such thoughts were strongly present, and also there was the fact that we had to start to find new collectors for art, a different art for art-interested people, because around painting there was only a very limited, not a very far-reaching influence there. And we thought, we will begin now to change architecture, politics, everything. We no longer remained limited to pictures in the sense of painting.

We, the Dutch, had a lot of things in common with the Germans, since we also wanted to start new again. And the Italians had the same feeling. With the Italians we even had, I think, our first connections, because Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni and Enrico Castellani exhibited here with us at a very early stage. So we met them like that and we became friends with them. For me it was easiest with the Germans, because I could speak directly with the people, the Germans hardly spoke French. In Düsseldorf Alfred Schmela, the gallery owner, was very important. He began to exhibit Yves Klein, Manzoni, Castellani, etc. And then there was Udo Kultermann, the director at that time of the museum in Leverkusen. He was always up to date; in those days he made the exhibition *Monochrome Painting* in 1960. The Dutch did not participate in that exhibition, but many Italians did. The notion of what was behind it at the time always changes. Naturally the epoch does not change, but the opinions about it change constantly. History functions that way. It always changes; each day one sees it differently again.

PL: That means one must interpret history again and again, from a changing temporal perspective.

HP: Yes, and that was important for us: we wanted to have influence on the creating of our new society. We really thought a new society would come; the revolution is not so far away, we thought. In that post-war period most of us were members of the communist party, and we thought: Now it will start! I was also in that party, up until the very end. [1989 the CPN entered an alliance with GroenLinks (GreenLeft) and was dissolved in 1991].

PL: I am interested in the connection between your work and the topic of existence, because I think, after the Second World War, when there still was no functioning art enterprise, if you decide to become an artist in such a situation, you must make an existential draft nevertheless, you must focus all power in one direction, without knowing whether everything will work out.

HP: Yes, you risk a lot. Therefore most of us still had another occupation. You had to make money. Armando worked as an editor at a newspaper, Jan Schoonhoven worked at the post office, and I taught art history at the academy. We had to earn something, because selling art was very difficult. No, to be able to live from our art, that hope we did not have. Today already young artists directly begin having exhibitions in order to make the press. I think it should not be done like that. You should begin with something different than the goal of success or influence. Art must face the society hostilely; you must want to change something and therefore you should have another opinion. Art develops through resistance. Even if some of us later earned well, commerce was nevertheless for us a completely uninteresting side of it. We wanted something of that to be seen, of what we were searching for, what we meant.

PL: I recently met with Wolfgang Laib. He told me: "I am still of the opinion—and this may sound horribly naive: Art changes the world." This impulse to be able to change society through art, how long did that last for you?

HP: (Whispers) Up to today! Laib is right, but it takes a long time, it does not go so fast. But it always continues, there is still so much that we do not understand, so much we do not know. That has to be discovered nevertheless. That is how I see art: as something that moves,

not as something static. And art has never been like that. In the whole history of art it always was about development, there has always been change, always something new.

PL: What role does humor and irony play in your work?

HP: A very large role. Without them one could not live at all. Relativating and ironizing are an important part of art. If I am annoyed about something, humor is the best solution to put the annoyance right.

PL: What annoys you in art, in the realm of art or in our society?

HP: Not being free. The fact that there are always powers, which suppress us. We must always take care to show that: that there is suppression. Those are our enemies. People who abuse their power, yes, they are my enemies. Therefore we also began intellectually with Marx and Engels, with the theory of the struggle of the classes. It still exists; unfortunately the suppressed ones no longer easily understand that they are suppressed. Think of George Bush: that people let themselves be suppressed in such a way, that they hardly have an opinion of their own anymore. It is not the question whether the opinion is correct, but we must nevertheless always have the freedom to express another opinion and with that be able to show that everything can be seen relatively. It bothers me, if that is not possible. And that does not really exist anyway, because there are always the ones who possess and the ones without possession. And I stand at the side of the ones without possession; I have to think of them: which possibilities are there to change this?

PL: In the 1950s and 60s, was Sartre important for you then? After all, Sartre was the philosopher of personal freedom, the freedom in the existential life plan.

HP: Oh yes, of course Sartre played a large role. And what came philosophically after that in France, likewise had a large influence. For example, what Michel Foucault wrote about the structures of power, is still important to me. And in Germany the Frankfurt school—Horkheimer, Adorno etc.—that always interests me, even if I am not so up to date any longer with philosophy.

PL: If you say, you are on the side of the suppressed ones, the ones without possessions, is that at all readable in your work, or is that also only perceivable for an intellectual elite?

HP: I always tried to have a distance in between. We do not always have to identify ourselves with our own ideas in the work; the work does not always address that. The problem is also: I never liked political art. That anyhow is not the way it goes. Art has a completely different voice and completely different possibilities than politics has. The politicians also never understand anything about art, that hardly interests these people.

PL: Do you know the phenomenon that you are surprised by your own art, that you do not understand your own work, or that only with large time delay you can see what you have been making there?

HP: I can only say that the meaning of my work always changes, also for me. I always see my work differently. The objects remain the same, but my opinion about them changes. From the ZERO works I hardly saw anything in the 90s; those are all gone. I have almost no old works anymore. And in the long run I destroyed also too much.

PL: Destroyed? Really? Were you too self-critical there?

HP: Yes. That also simply became too much. That is the big problem: it multiplies. Each day I have a new idea. As soon as I open my eyes, I think: „Hm, again a good idea", but there one must be very careful. If something comes out of it, you ask yourself: where do you go with it?

PL: After the École de Paris in the post-war period New York was the center of the art world. What meaning did American art have for you?

HP: Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman were the most important for me. Pop art amused me. That is nevertheless a beautiful critical attitude, not being against it, but to participate. But the Americans had a very big influence in the museums. Amsterdam was totally influenced by America in the 60s and 70s. Giant formats, giant prices and nevertheless well sold.

PL: Was it important for your existence as an artist to be part of a larger group? Usually as an artist you find it important to differ from others, to have an unmistakable identity.

HP: The group was the only possibility to realize something. For the exhibitions, transport, insurance, etc. you needed money. From the museums there hardly came any support. Thus we had to do that by ourselves, and together with three or four friends you could create more than you could alone. Later you could see that what had appeared to be a group, was in fact completely different artists. And it should also be like that, we were completely different humans, but we nevertheless had a connection in our art, at least in the 60s, after that this developed in a completely different way.

PL: Could you at least convert a little of what you had as hopes and utopias into society, into the institutions?

HP: I do not see that. I saw it in the 60s and 70s in art education. Then, there was a fast development, then we had success, we saw new things, new ideas, but later, in the 90s that changed again completely. Then they made traditional paintings again. But that also passes. What surely changes, is the way of creation, in design in the last century Bauhaus had a big influence. But with pictures… I am still mostly interested in what one calls the 'new media'. It began with photography, with film and video and nowadays it also continues with computer art. In this sense there is still something to discover. If the media change, new ideas show up as well. For example, with the Venice Biennale (2007) you again see many new things, that have something exciting after all. And you also see that no longer happens very much in painting.

PL: We have—more indirectly—dealt with the topics time and existence. How about space, was that a topic for you?

HP: Space always plays a role, but a topic? What has always been a topic for me was contact, touch. It is that, with which we begins, when we come into the world, we discover the world by touch. I thought, there was the beginning. That is always important in my work: that one can touch it. That is also why the materials are so important. I discovered that only late, and now I am trying to build a philosophy around it. I ask myself, where this side in me comes from. Touching itself is something very important, also the cowskins have to do with that.

PL: The skins are ambivalent for me, on the one hand funny and ironic, on the other side they are somewhat tragic too, because, in order to make this work possible, in the end an animal must die for it.

HP: There is still another side to it, but only very few know it (whispering): I am vegetarian. And every time I look at a cow, I think: Oh, what is your purpose here in life? To eat and to be eaten! When we see how cows are kept, also pigs or chickens, there are thousands on top of each other, they no longer get to come outside.

PL: Perhaps we could return to the subject of the artist's existence one more time: to be an artist is a completely different kind of occupation than, let's say being a civil servant or being a secretary. You do these jobs for a while, and then you retire. But you are usually an artist for your whole life, until you die.

HP: And here we have only spoken about half of my occupation. I am not only an artist, I am also a psychologist. I also studied it in Leiden, and I worked in psychiatry there. Today I still work as a psychologist, for an association for sexual reform. We were founded over birth control. It began like that, then offices were established for consultation about sexual problems, and now we have well over 7,000 inquiries per year over the Internet. It is mostly children and young people, who contact us there. And the most beautiful thing is: most of them have Arab names. I think that is very important, because that will become the next revolution. Those young people begin to think about such things. They have very practical problems, of course: they don't ask philosophical questions; they want to know how it is with prevention, etc.

PL: Is there a connection between your art and your work in psychology?

HP: Yes, the liberation. As it is possible in art, it is also possible in life. If you are suppressed… These children are all suppressed, and we are as well! There is always a system or a Pope standing behind it—and they suppress our freedom. To convince the people that they must free themselves, that is in art as well: you must free yourself from what others prescribe for you. You must question things. Sexuality also begins with that. Sex is not only there to put new children into the world, it is also a possibility to connect with people. I consider that to be a very important possibility.

PL: According to Sigmund Freud, Eros and Thanatos belong together. Has death been a topic for you?

HP: That will come (laughs). In art? No. I think, it will continue always, even if I am not any longer present. It is a continuous development.

PL: Do you think about what will become out of your work later?

HP: Something will always remain. The works remain. You use them again and again, as an explanation of new thoughts—I hope. You always do something with them, whatever they do. In this sense, I never die. I find that is the pleasant thing in art, that in this sense you can never die.

PL: John Cage once said that he left so many tracks in the world by his works that, even if it wanted to, he could not extinguish them any more.

HP: Yes, but I have no fear of that. No. It is of course not far away: I am 82. But I still run along and work in the studio, whenever I have a desire for it. Yes, after all you live each day. Often you think, also at my age, it does not have so much to do with the personality. It does not have disadvantages that you are old. If you live each day consciously, then that is exactly the same as if you are 20 years old. 20 or 80 does not make such a big difference. I noticed that also, when I spoke with the students, worked with students at the academy: I did not feel like an old person. I understand the problems, which people have nowadays, even if they are not my problems.

JOSEPH MARIONI

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer

Marioni studio, New York, USA, 12 March 2008

Joseph Marioni (1943 in Cincinnati OH, USA) studied art in Cincinnati and San Francisco. He says that 1970 was the point when he found his identity as a painter and his work became independent from his student work. He is well known for his journeys into layers of color, light, and space. In the 80s he was part of the loosely-defined group of American and European painters called 'Radical Painting'. The intensity of his paintings provides a strong experience of light and color for the viewer, making Joseph Marioni a major force in the world of color-based painting. Lives and works in New York City, USA.*

Peter Lodermeyer: Time, space and existence are probably not the main subjects for you as a painter. Would you agree with a statement that your main themes are light and color?

Joseph Marioni: I would say the main theme is light, but light and color exist in time and space and they're inseparable as a subject, painting is light and color. Color is the perception of a specific wavelength of light. So, the perception involves the duration of time of seeing a specific light—which is moving extremely fast. One of the great scientific accomplishments at the end of the 20th century was the ability to slow down light, which they accomplished by passing light through a medium that was nearly at zero degrees in temperature, it slowed the speed of light down to about 20 miles an hour or, as they say, the speed of a bicycle. This is a phenomenon that could potentially allow us to come to understand what in fact light actually is. But as a painter, my interest in light has to do with what is currently the most unfashionable aspect of the art world—which is never spoken of—but that even now at the end of late industrialization, the dominant metaphor for the human spirit is light. So that the tradition of painting being involved with light—since painting is the articulation of color on a flat plain— you could present an argument that painting is the medium of the human spirit. Because light is dematerialized, and the pigment is a substance that captures that dematerialized phenomenon—and at its very essence, at the very core of the medium, it is the play of light. So I'm involved in that tradition, and I'm attempting to actualize, to create before us, the actual presence of the light phenomenon itself. So, while the structure of painting involves the articulation of color on a flat plain, that merely describes the playing field. The game is light.

PL: You are interested in the temporal aspect of color, light, and perception. But time is also present in the process of painting. When I look at your paintings, they are not static color fields. The colors always 'flow', evoking the notion of movement. This would indicate they have to do with time and with change in time. How important is this process and the visibility of this process for the viewer?

JM: Well, for the viewer, the process of making the painting I don't find very interesting.

PL: Why not?

JM: Not for me or for the viewer. The understanding of how it is made, the understanding of the process—this is something that is interesting, but it isn't really of much greater substance. The transitional element involved in the painting, the element of time, is that my paintings involve a visual transition. And it is a transition of the light. So if you look at my paintings and study them, you'll see that the paintings as objects possess within them a visual transition that is usually a transition from warm to cool. It has the material transition of going from the weight of the material—that material flowing down the surface and going with gravity—and the material becoming dematerialized. So it goes from the material to dematerialized light, and you see that in the vertical seeing. You see it in the thickness of the paint at the bottom of the painting, the materiality of it, the drips, the revealing of the raw canvas—all of that material world close to the ground. As the eye moves up to the upper part of the painting, the paint becomes dematerialized. It becomes almost an atmosphere going up—a painting atmosphere. So it goes from color to light. It goes from material to the dematerialized. And in those transitions, since the game is the play of light, the transition is usually a temperature transition, from warm to cool. If you look at my yellow paintings, for example, you will see that there is a transition from red to green within the yellow painting. So the painting is a moment of transition. I'm looking for the breadth of the color experience within its transition between two colors. Yellow exists between red and green in the transition of light, and the painting is that moment within it. So the time element is not the time it takes me to make it. The time element is the transition of the light within the painting. There is also the time element in the perception of the depth of the painting too, because I work with transparent layers of color. I am a glaze painter like Vermeer—not like Rembrandt, who used glazes to close light. Vermeer used glazes to build light. So I build light, and that means that there is a transition element in the actual time of the painting. If you photograph my paintings, for example, under artificial light, the fixed wavelength of the artificial light will give you a fixed color. But in the natural light, the daylight, which changes its temperature—the temperature of the painting at noon is different from the temperature of the painting at 6:00—because the color is warmer. So there is the time element in the perception. The painting has within it the time element of its transition from warm to cool, and then the painting in the atmosphere of the day has the transitional time element as well.

PL: It is an interesting fact that colors do not exist by themselves. This is a product of our optical and cerebral system interacting with light.

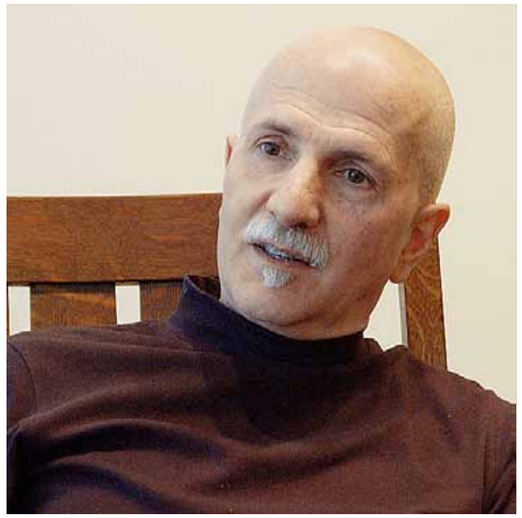
JM: A function of the brain.

PL: Yes, is this aspect important for you as a painter?

JM: It's important to know and to understand it, but it is not the basis for making the paintings. This is not a science experiment. I am not doing brain research. I am not making optical-based paintings that have that kind of scientific effect on the eye. So the conditions of how we perceive color, of course, are important. But the circumstance in which it is placed will change the color. If you take a warm painting and put it in cool light, the painting will turn gray. Now this is not a phenomenon of the eye, not seeing the color is the fact of what the chemistry of the pigment is doing with the natural light. There's no ideal circumstance; there's no primary, no purity of the circumstance. I'm working within a general frame of reference that there is an archetype to the primary colors of the painter's palette, and that within that archetype, we have a general frame of reference within the atmosphere of the day. So wherever you place the painting will depend on what light it captures in the air, and then subsequently, what light we see within the painting. The exactness of the color is not the point at all—this is not a science project.

PL: I remember the opening speech that gallery owner Rolf Hengesbach gave at your solo exhibition in Cologne last year. He talked about the democratic character of your painting. And then, a few minutes later, I talked with you about the art world today, and you said, "There are not so many people anymore who understand what my painting is about. So, maybe it's elitist." I thought a lot about that contradiction: democratic on the one hand and elitist on the other.

JM: I don't see that as a contradiction. At the present time, I believe that the art world in general has become involved in the politics of the bourgeoisie, that the bourgeois had taken over the art world. And by this, I mean that pop culture—the culture of everyday life—is what dominates the art world, and that traditionally, this was not the case. Art was always an elitist activity, supported by the upper class, and traditionally, the upper class was also the educated class. Well, within a democracy such as we have now, while there are more educated people, more literate people in the world now, this does not necessarily mean that they are—in terms of specific art forms—more cultured, or more aware, or more conscious. What I practice is an art form that has a very long history. Painting has a 40,000-year history. And so, there is within that, particularly within modern times, an understanding of what it really is about. We have the advantage of the invention of the camera—painters do? I point out to people that the invention of the camera has done for the art of painting what the invention of the printing press did for writing. It has in some regards liberated the painter from historic obligations to record and document history. The camera has also allowed the rise of the middle class to possess pictures, which—prior to the camera, who owned pictures?—Only the elite rich. Prior to the printing press who owned books?—Only the elite rich. The middle class got educated. They acquired books; now everybody who has a driver's license walks around with a picture in their wallet. So, now pictures are accessible to everybody, and painters have been liberated to pursue what really is the art of painting—not what is the social function of picture making. We've been liberated in this sense, and that has allowed questions to be asked that are difficult, that involve a very specific practice. And this isn't something the general public is interested in, primarily in the United States, because the art world is now being run by Hollywood. It started when the American art market supplanted the concept of a master with the idea of a star. Hollywood is putting the most money into the art world and Hollywood is in the entertainment business; it is show business. And so they expect and want their art to be entertaining; and what I do does not involve entertainment. It's not a function of pop culture. It doesn't come out of advertisement and it doesn't come out of entertainment. In that regard, yes, it is elitist. And I tell young painters who contact me, particularly under the age of 30—I'm 65, and between me and the 30-year-olds, there's an entire generation that fundamentally has no interest in painting whatsoever. They grew up sitting passively in front of television. There is a younger generation that is now interested in painting, because they are the generation that grew up on the computer. They are becoming aware of the fact that there is a difference between the medium of entertainment and the art form of painting. When they contact me now, and ask me questions—and a lot of them have to do with the issue of elitism—I tell them that basically, in the bigger picture of things, the practice of painting as a high art is an elitist activity, and that they need to come to terms with that, and move on. Because if they think that they're going to go out in the world and compete with pop culture, they're setting themselves up for failure. I am not in competition with the Jeff Koons and the Michael Jacksons of the world. I am involved in issues that have consequence to the basic value structure of culture itself, as to whether or not it has any historic and long-term consequence, and whether or not it fulfills a need other than economic. So the question of the commodification of art, of producing art within a democracy, are questions that, when I say to people that painting is not a language and therefore, it has no meaning, usually, particularly with intellectuals—you see the hair stand up on the back of their neck, and they just bristle at this sort of thing. And I must quickly sort of stroke them and calm them, like I would do with my dog when he'd get excited, and say, "While, it is true that it has no



meaning, it doesn't mean that it doesn't have value." So the activity that we're engaged in is an activity that has value to culture, but that's different than the commodification of language.

PL: Does painting have an existential value for you?

JM: Yes, of course. It does—as everybody who practices anything puts a value to it. But its value to me is not particularly its value to the viewer, and is not its value to the culture at large. We are passing through an era, which I call a mannerist form of modernism. There is within the practice of the visual arts actually not a postmodernism, there is only this mannerist form of modernism, which is the exaggerated self-expression of the artists themselves. What is a postmodern mathematics? And so we have a whole generation of artists whose main art form is labeled 'mixed media.' They do not practice a discipline of any specific art form, and they want to be able to be as diversified as possible. All of these are very good economic and 'globalization' reasons for doing things, but they do not produce art of greater depth. They actually produce rather a shallow form of art, and it is really involved in the culture of entertainment—I hate to use the word 'narcissistic,' but there is that aspect of the mannerist form of modern art that's going on out there. So, while it has personal meaning to me, that personal meaning is not to be put up on the wall and say, "That's what its value is," this is to mislead the viewer into thinking that's what they're supposed to be looking for.

PL: You mentioned the intellectuals always being shocked when you say that a painting has no meaning. We live in a meaning culture, not in a presence culture. Are you familiar with the book by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht on presence effects and meaning effects, Production of Presence: What Meaning cannot conve*?*

JM: No.

PL: For me it has been very helpful for understanding some basic issues in art. In particular, Gumbrecht's concept of 'presence effects' is very helpful. We always ask: What does it mean? What is it about? What does it stand for? As if we were not able to trust, feel or experience mere presence. Our culture doesn't 'produce' presence. I think the color and light embodied in a painting create something like a presence effect. I can face it and experience it, without giving it a meaning and asking what it is about—at least for a moment, before I start asking questions again like what is it, what's is its value, and so on. Is your art about the presence of your painting, as an object in time and space, standing in front of you when you face it?

JM: Basically yes, that's what distinguishes it from virtual reality. Language is not sense-specific. Painting as an art form is sense-specific: without the eyes you can't make a painting. If you consider when Beethoven and Goya both went deaf because of lead poisoning, Beethoven could continue to compose music because he had a musical language in his head. But imagine if they had both gone blind. Goya could not have continued to paint, because painting is sense-specific, it requires the eye. And particularly, it requires the perception of color because color is so sense-specific to the eye. It doesn't translate into touch. Put one of my small paintings in the hand of a blind person, he can tell you what size it is; he can tell you that it's a flat object, and how it hangs on the wall, and which side has paint, and even which way is up and down. But one thing that he can't tell you is what color it is. So that's the actual presence, the seeing of that color—in America, the distinction is between the virtual and the actual. Globalization is running on virtual reality, and virtual time as well. And so, I think that one of the things that are occurring is that we're getting to the point where we're beginning to have some kind of sense of the danger of all of life being only a virtual reality. In capitalist America, which is entertainment-driven, this kind of commodification of art as a piece of real estate has reached the level of aesthetic pollution. We are now producing art that is equivalent to the fast-food industry in terms of its ability to nourish us spiritually. It is nothing but momentary entertainment. And part of that has to do with the fact that it's not actually there. Just like a lot of fast food doesn't actually have any food value in it. We go through the exercise of eating it. It passes through us, but it's making us, it's making this culture, obese. And the American art market—with its billions of dollars that it puts into the art market—is making art obese. The art world is so polluted with junk art at the present time that it's hard for anything of quality and value to acquire even a momentary recognition. So the presence of the object, the real artistic value, exists in the actual object, not in its virtual reality. And I always ask art historians, when I go listen to their lectures, how many of the paintings that they show, with slides, have they actually seen. For the past 100-and-some-odd years, art historians have been developing their ideas about art history from looking at reproductions. And the consequence of that is they're looking for what subject matter translates into another language. The reproductions do not show the materiality of the object, so they compare a Picasso painting to an African wooden sculpture. It doesn't show the scale of the objects, so you don't know if the painting is two feet and the sculpture is two inches. And it doesn't have its own light. What it has is that subject matter, the figure. And art history has really become a function of picture history, and the history of painting is an entirely different thing.

PL: I agree. That's why art historians always ask for the meaning of a work of art. So it is all about iconography, about iconology because you can translate that into written words. Classical art history is "logocentric", as Derrida would put it.

JM: I'm quite surprised in talking to art historians how little they know about material: how little they understand about paint, what the function of paint is, what the process is. This is a relatively new phenomenon to the 20th century. Art historians often ask me a lot of technical questions about the materiality. I find this rather uninteresting. It's just part of the technique. It's one of the things, to become a master, you have to transcend the material and technique. But it took me a long time to come to understand that it is because they have no relationship to material. They never studied material. Two or three years ago, I was having lunch with an art historian in Basel and I asked him what he was working on. He said that he was trying to figure out the problem of all the brush strokes in Barnett Newman's painting, his vertical small strokes in relationship to the long zips from top to bottom—that sort of thing. I said, "Do you realize that all those marks, those strokes that you see in the painting were not there when Barnett Newman painted it? These are a function of pentimento: after the past 50 or 60 years, the paint has thinned, it becomes transparent. All of these brush strokes that you see, he did not see. It was a solid field." He sat there for, like, five minutes, not saying a word, pondering this. It was like the great Greek exclamation, "Eureka!" And while he sat there mute, I began to think, "You're an art historian. Why don't you know this?"

PL: That's absolutely true. In a normal art historian's course of studies nobody teaches us about these things. You have to find it out by yourself, by visiting artists and talking to them, visiting their studios.

JM: It's not taught in art schools now. You go to the schools and what they're teaching is what they call 'concept,' you talk to the students and what they're doing is narrating a story, they put together an assemblage of mixed media in which they have assigned meaning, to each one of the 14 different materials that are in their object. But they have no material sense. They develop no intimate relationship with any material whatsoever. They just assign that meaning to them—and that's it! Well, they could write out their narrative just as well, as far as I'm concerned, because I look at it and begin to think, "What is the relationship between peacocks and video tape and this music that's being played?" because it becomes about the relationships of the elements as opposed to the intrinsic value of the elements. And it's very similar if you go to a McDonald's. It really is about the relationship of mayonnaise and mustard and bread and ketchup and everything else that's on those sandwiches; and the actual beef is the smallest part of the sandwich. It's an unfortunate problem that the art world is facing, but it's a momentary problem and it has not to do with the development of any specific form. What it means is that the practice of a medium-specific art form just doesn't get much public attention. And so you have to come to terms with that and move on.

PL: You started your career as a painter in the 70s.

JM: 1970.

PL: This was exactly the time when painting was considered an old-fashioned art form.

JM: It was going out of favor.

PL: Your decision to move on as a painter—was it like an existential decision, an existential choice, as Sartre would say? How was it for you? What was the reason you decided "I'm a painter. That's what I want to do"?

JM: Well, it really comes down to kind of a compulsion. You just have to do it. This is who I am, this is my identity. I got some very good advice when I first came to New York in 1972, from some people who told me that to have a career in the art world, you could

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look around and see what was fashionable, and if red fire engines are the current thing that is fashionable, then you paint red fire engines. But this will last for maybe five years, and your life as a public artist will be over. And then the fashion will change to blue-birds or whatever, and then you will have to change your art—so that you are in a progression of keeping up with the trends. The other thing you can do is you can develop and do what it is that you do, and try to build a career around that. This takes 30 years, but in the end you may accomplish something. So, it was very clear to me early on that this was what I wanted to do—this was who I am and what I did. I had to do it anyway for my well-being. It really wasn't much of a choice for me, I just happened to be practicing an art form in a time in which there was no public interest in it.

PL: What is for you the most significant change in the art world that happened since that time?

JM: I think now it really is more the problem of globalization. I point out to people that in this age of globalization—which is good for economics, it's good for uniting nations, it's good for civil rights, and it's good for human rights. But the way it's being presented, at this level, it's really not good for art. It's not good for aesthetics. Because if I were to go to China now, and the Chinese would say, "As a visiting guest, we have special treat for you, tonight we're going to take you to an American restaurant", I could fully expect to go to a McDonald's because their concept of American cuisine in a global market would be exactly that. Equally, what would their concept be of American art? They're going to buy into the iconography of brand naming and this does not produce quality art—it never has. It doesn't function that way. You can't mass-market art, but Hollywood and entertainment are based on mass marketing. It is our second largest export in United States. Our first largest export by dollars is airplanes; our second largest export is pop culture. That means rock 'n' roll, movies, television—all of that. So the world understands American capitalism in terms of culture as pop culture. The question that faces globalization is whether or not there is a genuine, aesthetic dialogue between us and them, whoever 'them' is. It's not about the exchange of products. It's "Is there a common aesthetic dialogue?", and I would argue that the common aesthetic dialogue in painting is based in a relationship to the materials. What we have common in the world is the earth and the sun, and for painting, the sun is God.

PL: What did Minimal Art and Conceptual Art mean for you as a painter in the 70s? Was it a challenge? Was it like the opposite to painting?

JM: I never approached it as a challenge. I never approached it as an opposition. I never approached it as "us and them," because Minimal Art has its aesthetic value. No question about that. In 1972, at Documenta, Bob Ryman and Brice Marden were included as 'minimal and conceptual artists', not as painters. So that was merely an artistic statement. The real problem was the encroachment of pop culture into the art world, where we see the eventual development with the Guggenheim showing motorcycles—beautifully designed motorcycles. My objection is not that this was a beautiful exhibition of motorcycles that attracted 400,000 people into the museum. My objection was that the director of the museum did it on the back of Mondrian. If the Guggenheim had wanted to set up a museum for the presentation of pop culture and fashion, that should have been a separate institution. The Guggenheim is founded on early modernist painters like Kandinsky, Mondrian and those sorts of people. So that in the 60s and 70s, I never viewed minimal art as an opposition; it was a different aesthetic value that had something to learn from it. In that sense, it wasn't the enemy. Pop culture was the enemy. And since that time, what we've seen is the exercise of the old adage that you don't make the bourgeois cultured by making the culture bourgeois.

PL: What, in your opinion, is the social relevance of painting? And how do you envision the future of painting under the given circumstances—globalization, pop culture…?

JM: It's really hard to say because there are two aspects to it, the short-term and long-term. In the short term, we're going through a whole transition—the end of industrialization, the beginning of globalization. These transitions take 100 years or so. Painting has the advantage in that the transition that it's gone through—it has now completed its transition; the invention of the camera was 150-some odd years ago. And it takes that amount of time for any form to make a major transition, as evidenced by the period from late Gothic into the Renaissance. It took about 150 years before you saw pure Renaissance painting that didn't have, and wasn't indebted to, medieval iconography. Painting as a particular art form has completed its transition from the pictorial representation to concrete actualization. We're now capable of making major statements that are statements about painting, and are not involved in still making pictures. So the art form is a little ahead of the culture. The culture is going through a transition in which globalization has been happening now for the past 25 years, but it may take another 75 years for it to really become a global world. I think we're at the point in which painting as a practice, as an art form, has truly become an independent art form, independent of the local politics of the time that it lives in. Pop culture is dependent on the politics of the time. So it really is now up to the individual painters. What will survive? 100 years ago, you saw the collapse of the French salons; when Bouguereau died in 1905, the salons died with him; the end of the Pre-Raphaelites; the end of Victorian Romanticism. You saw the art world sort of waxing and waning in different directions. What emerges in the beginning of the 20th century and after its first decade or so, was a handful of really strong individuals. No more movements, no more groups, no more social salons that were producing dialogues about art. And we're in a phase where that could happen again, one would hope. There are some great painters out there that people don't even know about because there's no public venue for them. The museums themselves have to come to terms with their function in society. The museum used to be the temple for the contemplation of the aesthetic value of art. Museums have abdicated that responsibility. They've given up their responsibility art historically, in terms of connoisseurship, in terms of educating the public—they are now artificially lit coliseums of entertainment.

PL: Let's come back to your painting. Colors always have an emotional value. What does it mean for your painting?

JM: That's very personal. You know, if I say to you, "I like red," well, I like red.

PL: I don't really mean "liking a color" here. I am asking the question in a much deeper sense. I remember a very good conversation I had with the German painter Ulrich Wellmann. He told me that his father died early (when he was twelve), and then he said something that caught me entirely by surprise: "After my father's death, I felt protected by color."

JM: I understand that completely. I've used the term that I feel 'nourished' by color. Like when I really feel bad, I like to go and just look at color. It feeds my soul. It nourishes me somehow, which is why in the realization that painting is out of fashion, it's going to be hard to make a living as a painter these days, nonetheless I must do it for my mental health, psychologically, on all levels. It just feeds me, and I understand Uli's statement completely. Because you have to understand that our own unique vision is a sanctuary. A sanctuary was traditionally the place in which you could go and be protected from the power and the politics of the external world. You were given sanctuary, a place of rest. And in terms of the painting that I'm doing, when you're visually engaged in the painting itself, when your whole being is immersed in a relationship with the actuality of the object on the wall, you're living within the sanctuary of your own seeing. And so, when Uli says he felt protected, and I say that color nourishes me, that degree of seeing, free from the politics of pop culture, free from the agendas of the art world—which are enormous—you're in a sanctuary, you are protected. The impositions of the outside world are not accessible within this work of art. And so, of course, it's 'condemned', just like the Church condemns people's sexual practices, because if they can get into your mind, in your bedroom, they own you. They don't want you in a space they can't get into. So the art world in general has condemned this kind of painting for the last 30 or 40 years because it's not marketable. It doesn't reproduce. In the same way that the Catholic Church condemns any form of sex that's not involved in reproduction. Catholicism and capitalism have the same attitude towards art, it is to be used to serve their agenda. So, in that way, yes—I don't use the word 'emotional' but I also don't generally talk about or say what its personal meaning is to me, because that will be different for you. And I don't want to give you that baggage, to send you off on that trail. Rothko did that, and look at the problems it set up for him.

PL: Does painting color hold something akin to a metaphysical quality?

JM: It's very dangerous territory to discuss, without clearly defining all the terms in that—what you mean by it, what I think it means, all of that. It is dangerous enough just to use the word 'spiritual' nowadays in the art world. I don't have a problem saying that the value of art has to do with the spiritual health of society. I don't have a problem with saying that. But given the hostility towards that in the art world, because the art world is so much about commodification and real estate—I'm not interested in publicly debating that, it's a waste of time. And the idea that color has a metaphysical value is for a separate discussion.

PL: I remember, it was in the 80s, when your wrote a manifesto together with Gunter Umberg…

JM: Yes, *Outside the Cartouche*.

PL: One of the statements there was "metaphysics is dead."

JM: That, of course, was me coming as an American with a whole symbolic approach in dialogue with a European with a metaphoric approach, and the weight of the issue of the sublime in art—which was sort of heaped on the painters and was becoming the developmental theme in sculpture. It really was a statement that the issue of the sublime in metaphysics is really dead as subject for a painter. Not that it's literally dead—I mean, obviously it's been going on and on. You always have to take into consideration the time in which statements are made. The Realist Manifesto of Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner (1920) rejected sentimental-

ity—you have to understand that the Russian artists had a direct line to Paris. What they were rejecting is the Victorian Romanticism, the Pre-Raphaelite sentimentality, which was going on in the salons of Paris at that time. I, too, reject sentimentality in art because I find it insipid—but you have to understand that when they made that statement that's what it was in reference to.

PL: In your opinion, what has been the most significant change over time? When you look back on the last 30 or 40 years of your career as a painter, what has been the biggest change?

JM: In terms of my own work? As I point out to people when they see earlier work, from 30 years ago or so, I say to them that of course you would expect—and this is a criticism I have of some of my colleagues—that they have been painting for 30 and 40 years, and I expect to see in their work 40 years of life experience. So in terms of my own work, I tell people, "Well, if you look at my early work, how a 30-year-old man dealt with the world is a lot different from how a 60-year-old man deals with the world." And hopefully over this period of time, I've acquired what could be called some transparent insight. A 35-year-old man deals with the world much more physically. The world is a physical confrontation. It's a challenge. He's out in the world to conquer the world, to take over the world. This means that the paintings are much more aggressive objects in terms of the presentation, the frontality. And they're particularly closed, they're opaque—they are paint on a surface. Now the paintings are built of transparent layers of color. You look into the painting. I am looking for the internal light of the painting. Formerly, the paintings were objects in a lit room. Now the paintings have their own internal light. So the evolution of the painting, the transition of my work in general, has been the transition of maturing. And I always point out to people that in the history of painting, there have been no child prodigy painters. Painting is an art form that matures with the painter; and if the painter doesn't mature, the work doesn't mature. We wouldn't expect to look at the early work of Rembrandt and the late work of Rembrandt, and it be exactly the same because he went through an evolutionary development. So I would hope that this is in my work, and that my view in terms of my own work is beginning to acquire some larger insight that only comes from that practice of the specific form over decades of time, in which I've acquired an intimate relationship to specific materials. I say I paint the paintings with my mind—and by that, I mean I paint it with the knowledge of what the paint will and will not do. I don't make the paint do something it doesn't or it won't do, which goes contrary against its nature. I've been trying to establish some rapport, and I think all the great paintings, all the masterpieces of the world are this relationship between the subject of the work of art, and the intimate relationship of the artist to the materials that he's making the work of art with. So the element of time is how I have changed, and also the element of time is that, the art world is changing.

PL: How about the place where you live and where you work? Does it have an influence on you?

JM: Well, if it doesn't, it's a science project (laughs). It has to have an influence on me. I produce a work of art that can only be produced in an open, free, democratic society. And the relationship of what I do to our democracy, which is based on our Constitution, which has that word 'unalienable' in it—which means the rights of one individual cannot be transferred to another. Each person has an integrity and autonomy of its own being. I apply this simple logic to painting

PL: That's the democratic character of your work I mentioned before.

JM: Apply that to a work of art—does a work of art have its own integrity, and does it have an autonomy? Meaning, is it complete and whole within itself, and is it self-motivated? Does what it says to you come from the object itself, or does somebody have to stand there, and tell you what it means? Can you get it from the work of art, or do you have to read the label on the wall? Abraham Lincoln said we are a government of the people, for the people, and by the people; applied to a work of art it would be a painting of its material, for its material and by its material. Does the painting have an integrity? Is it an object in and of itself with its own boundaries, and its own rules and regulations? And does that integrity have an autonomy? Does it act from its own integrity? Painting is motivated by light. Our Constitution does not tell us how to act; it doesn't tell us how to behave. It gives broad parameters on how to resolve conflicts within our democracy, but not how to function within our democracy. In a similar way, the disciplined practice of a specific art form will not tell you how to make a painting, but it would tell you whether or not the painting had an integrity and an autonomy of its own being. And that is not something that our culture wants to have to deal with. Because it means that when you're in the presence of the object, you've got to establish a relationship with it. We're in a time where we're just kind of getting over sitting passively in front of TVs. And we're getting over that due to the remote control and the typewriter in front of the computer. It's becoming interactive. So that we have an entire generation of people out there now who do not watch television—they only look at the computer, and the computer is interactive. So they are beginning to become active again. For me, people are becoming active again—and that means they may want to go look at a work of art and actually engage it, as opposed to have it entertain them. And so I take this as, you know, that we are now coming out of this mannerist period.

PL: Is this, in a way, a political statement you are making?

JM: That's for another conversation over a bottle of wine (laughs). Because, you know, you can argue that everything you do is political… whether you are active… it gets into issues with what is political and what is not. I know people argue that, of course, this can be interpreted as a political statement. But I'm not doing it as a political statement. I would never discuss it publicly. It's one of those things…

DAN GRAHAM

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer

Dan Graham studio, New York, USA, 15 March 2008

Dan Graham (1942 in Urbana, IL, USA). Graham uses a wide range of media in order to focus on the relationship between his artwork and the viewer. That applies in particular to his pavilions.*

Peter Lodermeyer: Let's talk about time, space and existence.

Dan Graham: In other words, you are talking about Heidegger.

PL: For example, we can talk about Heidegger…

DG: I don't know anything about Heidegger but when I was 14, I read Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. And that's where the 'mirror stage' comes from. I think Lawrence Weiner is still an existentialist. Lawrence Weiner and I really disagree. He thinks everything is about the immediate present, which is a cliché. Maybe I believed that in the middle 60s, but then I really disagreed with that idea enormously. I think this is a kind of fake utopia from the early 60s, and I was much more influenced by Walter Benjamin's idea of reconstructing the just-past. For me, all my work is time-based. I think my work is trying to get away from minimal art's idea of the instantaneous present time and is very involved in a kind of Baroque idea of time.

PL: I think the crucial works in this context are the Time Delay *installations.*

DG: Well, the time delay actually comes from Bruce Nauman doing similar work, and Bruce Nauman was influenced by Anna Halprin's dance group and he was influenced by Steve Reich, and Steve Reich was totally influenced by Terry Riley. And I think we were all influenced then by marijuana, to be honest. I think the idea of an extended present time, which was both inside your head and also in the architecture, really came a lot from marijuana, but also from music. And I think people were getting away from the time row. Actually, I gave Sol LeWitt a magazine called *Die Reihe*, which means 'the row', time row. It was about serial music. I was very influenced by Michel Butor, who was very involved also in that idea of serialization in music and writing. There was a kind of this utopia that Lawrence Weiner still talks about, about being in touch with instant present time and the idea of presence, which I think I was interested in when I was doing my magazine page pieces (1965). But I guess more than anything, I was influenced by music, first by rock 'n' roll. I used to listen to the rock group The Kinks. I think more interesting for me, in terms of my work and the time-delay pieces, was the performance work I did before that. I did a piece called *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1977) in which there's a mirror behind me, and the audience sees the mirror and I'd begin by speaking only about myself as they would see me. And then I spoke about myself and I talked about the audience. Of course the audience would see itself in the mirror, which is instantaneous present time—in other words, Renaissance-perspective, present time. But when you speak though, that would be continuous. So it would be a little like phenomenology and behaviorism together. But also, it was a continuous movement, in a flowing time. So it was actually contrasting phenomenological, flowing, present time with instantaneous time. And I think in the first video of *Time Delay Rooms*, you can see the mirror, which is instantaneous present time, and then of course the time delay gets a feedback loop. And I think we were very influenced, even before music, in the idea of the feedback loop, which comes actually from cybernetics. I think I was influenced by reading a magazine called *Radical Software*, about the use of video, which included time delays, and also the idea of having feedback. So I think cybernetics, which had a feedback loop, was very important. And of course I wanted to make a feedback loop between the consciousness of the performer and the audience seeing themselves being seen.

PL: So, I guess you would agree with the idea of Jacques Derrida that the pure, instant present doesn't exist in the strictest sense?

DG: I never read Derrida. I don't like these French philosophers, because, first of all, French philosophy is totally involved with Saussure, and for me, Saussure is all logical—boring and logical. I'm trying to break out of the logic. More important for me was Russian formalist criticism like Viktor Shklovsky. Of course that influenced Bertolt Brecht, I think. To me, the French are just taking from German philosophers pretty much. Of course, I never read the German philosophers, but I was actually reading some of the sources like Ernst Mach. That has really influenced my idea of the visual field in my films. And a huge influence on me—I think maybe on Lawrence also—was science fiction novels. For me it was Philip K. Dick and also Michael Moorcock and Brian Aldiss. Brian Aldiss was an English science fiction writer. He wrote a book called *Cryptozoic!* which was about time going backwards. All these time paradoxes were very important. Of course some were drug-related, but it also has a little bit to do with the idea of schizophrenia. To me the great person who dealt with schizophrenia was Gregory Bateson. I was hugely influenced by Gregory Bateson. I think he was very, very influential to video artists because they quoted him. But some of these ideas really come from a reassessment of a theory of physics. I think Heisenberg's uncertainty principle had a huge influence. But we were not scholars; we were just reading these things in paperback novels, and very quickly at that. I think science fiction writers were dealing with these ideas in the 60s because there are basically complex ideas that came about in the 60s. And I really broke with the instantaneous present time. I think Walter Benjamin's just-past resurrected is important, and with my Dia Foundation piece—you know the rooftop piece in the Dia Foundation (1991)—I tried to do a 1970s alternative space / 1980s corporate atrium. I didn't want to go into a neo-60s, which people are into, but I wanted to give you the just-past. And in this I totally disagree with Lawrence, who's held on to this idea. Lawrence is basically still doing what everybody was doing in the mid-60s, the ideas of phenomenology. Maybe there was a kind of utopia about the present, certainly Herbert Marcuse had this idea. And Marcuse, I think, took a lot from Wilhelm Reich. He debates Wilhelm Reich, but it's very similar. And I think this idea, which was an answer to Walter Benjamin—that we shouldn't try to go back into history and right the wrongs of the past, that we should just exist in the here and now, the present. I think this is a radical idea and had a lot to do with hedonism. Maybe Lawrence is a hedonist. But what I liked about Walter Benjamin basically is… I started working in Europe, all my first exhibitions were there, and I got very involved in different overlays of different times. In the 80s, when I was working in all these gardens in France—most of the exhibition spaces were in gardens—I was interested in the overlay in different historical periods. Of course this is the whole debate between historicism and the resurrection of the past. More and more, I became involved with Walter Benjamin's idea of the just-past.

PL: You have talked a lot about influences on your work, influences from outside, from reading books, from theory, from philosophy, music, and so on. But what have your ideas about the structure of time to do with your personal experience and your own existential life?

DG: I think it has a lot to do with the fact that in the 70s art was about the community. My performances were very involved with dealing with a very small art community. Joseph Beuys was very important, and maybe it was a reaction against Joseph Beuys. He was the artist as politician, the artist as a shaman, guru. And my interest was much more kind of subverting that idea, and having the spectators and their perceptual processes more important than me as a performer. But also, at the time we did the performances in these very small alternative spaces, everybody was doing rock 'n' roll. So it was a small communal thing about music. And I think when I first did video work, which was in Nova Scotia College (Halifax, Canada, 1970-71), everything I did was about the learning process. In other words, there were little demonstrations, for instance *Two Consciousness Projection(s)* (1972), kind of a feminist piece. I think for me, being a teacher… You see, I was never a student. Unlike Lawrence, I didn't go to art school. I didn't go to university. He hates teaching, he's against it, but for me, teaching is very important. It had a lot to do with the sense of myself in relation to other people. And also I had to break with minimal art, because I had a gallery and I showed minimal art, and that became object-like. So I became more involved with people like Bruce Nauman and Steve Reich, where the time process played a role. I guess spending a lot of time in Munich—my girlfriend was from Munich—I got very involved in Rococo and the Baroque. For me, the most interesting Rococo church is actually in Prague. It's up on a hill. It's called St. Nicholas. Another person who was involved in Rococo in a different way was Jeff Koons.

PL: By the way, I wrote an essay on Jeff Koons: Rococo and Post-Modernism. *He was living in Munich for a while and was very much influenced by the Bavarian Rococo.*

DG: I was also very influenced by my dealer in Munich, Rüdiger Schöttle, who was very involved in gardens. He told me all about Nymphenburg and Amalienburg. Of course the Rococo designer was Francois de Cuvilliés, who was actually from Belgium. He was a dwarf. A lot of this interest in time comes from the fact that artists in the 60s were trying to break down Renaissance-perspective. Smithson wanted to be a mannerist. He was interested in mannerism, maybe because of his gay background. Actually, I like the idea of spectators seeing things in a continuous passing time, seeing images of themselves. So in my pavilions if there is a curve, you can actually see your body move, other people's bodies move, also the sky is always changing. And of course the idea of light… I was very influenced by Dan Flavin, who was influenced by both Bierstadt and Caspar David Friedrich. I think as we experience light, it's instantaneous, but not completely instantaneous. Because if it's after a landscape, it's always moving.

PL: Is the way you use mirrors something like a critique of Jacques Lacan's 'mirror stage'?

DG: Oh no, actually, I only read a bad translation of Lacan when he first appeared. And I discovered where it was really coming from when I read Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Lacan's mirror stage comes directly from Sartre. I think we're very concerned as children with the moment we have the sense of ourselves as an ego, wanting to be seen by other people as we see the other people. Lacan picked that from Sartre, maybe intuitively.[1] I read that when I was 14. I think it always influenced me because Sartre always mixes subject and object, the relation between subject and object. And that was my critique—not of Lacan, but of minimal art in a way. See, I showed Sol LeWitt, I was very close to minimal art. But my critique came from that, through perceptual ideas, probably from Sartre, but also very much from the new art from San Francisco, like Bruce Nauman and Steve Reich.

PL: Does your criticism also turn against the positivism in minimal art?

DG: Well, it's not positivistic. Actually, everybody is different in minimal art. Don Judd wanted to be like A. J. Ayer, who was a positivist. Sol LeWitt's art comes from de Chirico. De Chirico and Giacometti were his heroes. Carl Andre took from Agnes Martin and Brancusi's bases. Robert Morris actually ripped off Duchamp pretty much. So they all had a different background than I did. Of course, minimal art became a formula. On the other hand, it was involved with architecture, which is so important for me. I was interested in the city plan itself. In other words, *Homes for America* was about city plans. When

Sol LeWitt showed in my gallery, we had a favorite writer, Michel Butor, who also influenced Aldo Rossi. But maybe I like things that are hybrid, that are halfway between one thing and the other at the same time. In other words, I wasn't really so much against minimal art; it's simply that it was so influenced by this phenomenological idea of the subject. That was my critique.

PL: That is exactly what I'm interested in—that is why the project I'm involved in is called Personal Structures. It's like a criticism of this primary structure idea…

DG: Well, as critics talk about it—because minimal art didn't itself begin that way. In fact, the thing about Sol LeWitt that people don't realize is his work is extremely humorous. Sol told me that his grids were jungle gyms for his cats. And Flavin had a very nasty sense of humor, extremely nasty. I talked with art critic Benjamin Buchloh about how important humor is in my work, and he said he didn't realize that. Of course *Homes for America* (1966) was a 'fake think piece'. There is a kind of deadpan humor. For Jewish artists like me and Sol and Bob Mangold, Lichtenstein was very important. Also Gerhard Richter said he was so much a fan of Roy Lichtenstein that, when he saw him on the street, he was afraid to introduce himself. Whereas Buchloh said that Lichtenstein was a conservative. Quite the opposite: he gave a lot of money for left causes. He shows fascism in the media, in a kind of deadpan humorous way. Maybe Jewish people have to be ironic and humorous rather than direct.

PL: That's something I anyway wanted to ask you about—you have often mentioned your Jewishness, and you made a few pavilions in the form of the Star of David.

DG: One I did in Austria (Schloss Buchberg, 1991). When I was asked to do this, Austria had Kurt Waldheim as president who had been a Nazi. But then I saw Arnulf Rainer's paintings and I realized Austrian artists are involved with blood and the cross. So I thought, why shouldn't I humorously do in Austria a water pavilion where you could walk on the water? That'd be good—water and the Jewish star. It's actually a way of dealing with the situation. And it wasn't consciously being Jewish. I just thought Austria had an interesting problem. They were, as we used to say, 'in denial' about their Nazi past. But I think I was very influenced then actually by non-Jewish artists. I think I was influenced by Claes Oldenburg's monuments, which are parodies.

PL: To come back to the pavilions: you said once that even the aesthetic principle of your pavilions is based on the time-delay installation.

DG: Well, the time delays became impossible to do because everything went digital. They were analog. Actually, the first pavilion I did was *Public Space/Two Audiences* at the 1976 Venice Biennale. I was actually in Berlin then, on a grant, on a DAAD. In Venice, I was in this big show called *Ambiente* about artists who dealt with space in an overall way, like Kounellis or Lissitzky. And I realized I shouldn't do anything technical, because the Italians could never figure it out. So I shouldn't do a video piece because they're not very good technically, the Italians. So I came up with *Public Space/Two Audiences*. Actually, I've done a video piece between two showcase windows. So the Venice piece actually is like a showcase window. There are two audiences—there's a mirror on one side, it's divided by this thick

glass. And I thought—maybe I didn't really consciously know this—Venice Biennale is like a show, every country's pavilion is a showcase for one of their major artists. So here, the spectators themselves are inside the showcase window, looking at themselves. Then I criticized that work. I said it worked because of the white cube, but if I took away the white wall, there would be a window. So then I produced 10 models two years later at Oxford Museum of Modern Art, which were like pavilions. I showed those as architecture models.

PL: You said before that you are interested in hybrids or in-between structures, that you like to do works that are 'in between'. It's as if your work were somewhere in between sculpture and architecture.

DG: Well, when I did my first conceptual art, it was magazine pages, which is a hybrid—and of course, those first architecture models that I did as well. I guess I was the first artist to do architecture models as art. I'd seen a show of architecture models by the *New York Five* at the Leo Castelli Gallery. I thought what you could do with models is you could have propaganda to get things built, and also fantasy things like *Alteration to a Suburban House* (1978). People had never bought that work, they didn't even know I did it. Thomas Schütte, who I had as a student briefly when he was a student of Gerhard Richter's, has taken the idea and sold lots of them. It's becoming a cliché. But for me it was really a critique of my Venice Biennale piece. The pavilions were actually done later: one in Illinois, Argonne National Laboratory (1981) and one in Kassel at the Documenta (1982). It's also a way of making a show. I was living in England then, I had young architecture students make the models. The reason my work doesn't sell is because I didn't have an art background. So unlike Thomas Schütte, I can't make them into beautiful sculpture-like objects.

PL: You said once that you don't like sculpture. Is this true?

DG: I don't like my work being called sculpture. I do love…—I know who I love now, I've changed my mind—I love Alexander Calder,

because his work is playful. Also it's very contemporary. And Carl Andre calls his work sculpture, but I really like his work. I also discovered Medardo Rosso, the Italian artist. So look, since I never went to art school, I'm now getting very fascinated by art. When I travel, I can go to museums and see wonderful things. So of course, now I'm appreciating sculpture. But I really love Calder.

PL: I was completely amazed when I read that some of your favorite painters are John Martin and John Constable.

DG: Particularly Martin. I wrote an article on John Martin. I don't know if you've seen my video *Rock my Religion*. It's about Patti Smith. It's a one-hour video. It begins with the Apocalypse, John Martin paintings, but I cut them out of my final video. John Martin was like the first science fiction painter.

PL: Are you still interested in rock music? Is rock 'n' roll still alive?

DG: Well, I think I'm getting more involved in Country and Western. Bob Dylan, when he tours, he tours with Merle Haggard who used to tour with Johnny Cash. I've also done a rock 'n' roll puppet show, *Don't Trust Anyone Over Thirty*. I like the idea of historical periods, so I like the period when hippies and rock stars moved the country. So this rock 'n' roll puppet show is based on that period. I wrote a lot of articles about rock 'n' roll, maybe 10 of them which will be published fairly soon. I first wanted to be a writer and I read all these great people like Leslie Fiedler, these literary critics. And of course rock 'n' roll writing is succeeding—it comes after literary criticism.

PL: Your work is very much about society and community. What, in your opinion, is the biggest change— when you look back from the 60s up to today—what has been the biggest change in Western societies?

DG: I think the biggest change is the fact that everybody is traveling around the world. Artists are in a kind of an import situation. People don't understand that there are some great Chinese artists who never come to the West, because the West doesn't really understand Chinese art. For me, travels were very important. Everybody's going against the 80s and 90s because it was very corporate, and my work is against corporate culture. Well, now they have kind of a fantasy about the 60s. And I think Lawrence is very well liked because he's like the genuine 60s person. America, in the 80s and 90s, had actually merged with Japan, and now the world has merged with China in many ways. For me, the most important trip I took was to India. That was about 30 years ago. It was a Pan-American Round-the-World trip and I went to Delhi and I saw Jantar Mantar, which is the observatory that influenced Louis Kahn and Brancusi.

PL: Did it have influence on your work as well?

DG: I don't think it had a specific influence on the work. But I know the biggest influences I have from the past… When I gave Sol LeWitt his first show at John Daniels Gallery, he made a trip to St. Petersburg and Istanbul, and he told me being in Istanbul changed his life. And I think for me, Islamic architecture and drawings are very important. Maybe it's interesting because I've read about the period of Jewish culture in Spain. Jewish culture comes directly out of Islamic culture in Spain. And of course the Arabs there translated philosophy and medicine. And actually the Cabala begins in Spain with a woman warrior goddess, more powerful than God the Father, obviously based on India's Kali. Of course I love Hindu culture because the women are so sexy, the goddesses. It's actually my favorite religion. (Laughs)

PL: I understand. It's very sensual.

DG: Yes, of course everybody loves the Elephant God, Ganesh. It's interesting because, the Indians who live in America have higher education and more money than Jewish people. So in many ways, the biggest connection to me actually has been architecture. It's not India, it's the architects of Japan. I love Itsuko Hasegawa, a woman architect. But I'm an architectural tourist. I think most of my work has a lot to do with passion and hobbies, and my real hobby now is architecture. I don't want to be an architect like Vito Acconci, I just love looking at architecture and having the great architects as my friends. In other words, architects really want to be artists and artists want to be architects. I just want to be able to see architecture because architects can't. They're in their office and they go through books to look for ideas. They have no chance to actually enjoy themselves.

PL: Did you ever believe that art can change society?

DG: When I was doing my early video work, I certainly did, because it was very communitarian. I believe I was really, from the very beginning, a feminist. Maybe because I read Margaret Mead when I was 13. Also, I see art as closer to anthropology than sociology. My problem is we've become sociological whereas I prefer anthropology. And I think I can change society through humor. What I like about showing in Germany is every show, like the Documenta, has a kind of sociological, philosophical theme, which I think is a little ridiculous, but it's so educational and you can play with this. So I like playing with that idea without being overly serious.

PL: It seems clouds are important in your work. Your pavilions are often placed in a way that you can see the clouds mirrored. Why do you like clouds?

DG: Well, I think, again, it's the influence of Flavin because Flavin's and Ed Ruscha's favorite artist was Albert Bierstadt from the Hudson River School. I like Frederic Edwin Church. So I think it has to do with the interest in luminism in the 19th century. I can't psychoanalyze myself but I really think it's astrological. I think as an Aries I like being up in the sky. I remember in the film *Triumph of the Will*, Hitler comes in an airplane through the sky. I don't see myself as Hitler, but I can see that moment of exhilaration when I'm in the airplane. (Laughs)

PL: You often made works for public space. How do you see public space? Is it mainly a place for you where communication goes on? What I very often notice is that public space is also a space where violence takes place. Not long ago I saw your little pavilion in Düsseldorf, in the park next to the museum K21. It had been quite vandalized.

DG: That's very unusual, that normally doesn't happen. Think of my model for a *Skateboard Pavilion* (1989). Maybe I'm becoming interested in impressionism. What I like is work where you can lie down outside, there's a photo opportunity for parents and a fun house for children. And of course I really love Georges Seurat who shows the working class entertainment moments, when they go to the circus. I'm doing a lot of things in France for socialist mayors. The socialist-green mayor of Paris has done a tramway around the edge of the

city, which has low fares for people of the working class and old people, and every station gets a work of art. I've done a work of art there, a project. Also, in the 80s, when I had shows like Munster Sculpture show or all these in chateaus and gardens in Brittany and elsewhere in France, people would take a car trip with their children, and camp out in nature reserves and look at art on Sundays. So it has more to do with the fact that I didn't have a very happy childhood, but it's more about normal people who look at art. And of course, I think, since the 80s and 90s, the education program and the whole idea of art as education, as entertainment, has become important. To me, public space has a lot to do with this merge of education and entertainment. I think maybe if the piece is very isolated as in Düsseldorf you have that problem. At night, people go to parks for violence or to pick up gay partners, things like that. My work is not involved with that kind of situations. In other words, it's more heterosexual than gay. (Laughs) But it's interesting that people really like Judd's work to have sex in. My work is much more about after you've had a child. And it's also for teenagers just lying down, for instance, my design for showing video where you can lie down on the floor. It's more for kind of gentle leisure. But I need the sun. So at night, my work doesn't work at all.

PL: Do you think there is such a thing as progress in art?

DG: I guess we gave up the idea of progress a long time ago. Art deals in different periods with different things. My work is a kind of humorous subversion of corporate architecture and culture. Among my favorite artists, two of them deal with the idea of entertainment—and Disney. I love Ceal Floyer enormously. She lives in Berlin, she's an English woman artist, about 40. And I love Paul McCarthy, I think his work really has to do with dealing with Disney in certain ways.

PL: Would you agree that Marcel Duchamp is the most overestimated…

DG: Of course! You see, in New York we hated Duchamp and we loved Russian constructivism—Flavin comes from Russian constructivism. Duchamp is a game player. He is elitist. He had great friends, though. His friend Francis Picabia was absolutely wonderful. He loved Friedrich Kiesler, the architect, who was absolutely wonderful. I think he was—well, we shouldn't say this against him, but he was a gigolo. And also the idea of playing chess with a naked woman—I don't think you can do both at the same time. (Laughs) I think the critics don't really understand how unimportant he was. He was important actually for Bruce Nauman because Bruce saw a show he did in Pasadena, when he had a big show there. Morris just takes his ideas. But I think for people in New York, we never liked the guy. I have to tell you who my favorite artists are in Europe: Sigmar Polke and Fischli/Weiss.

PL: Thank you so much for your time.

DG: But we can't end on this anti-Duchamp note. Actually, I never really appreciated Beuys, but I think Matthew Barney has taken a lot from Beuys. Or maybe I underestimated Beuys. I didn't like him at first. Or maybe I didn't understand the context. Well, as he became a political artist, it became a little self-serving. I think that the secret is that everybody begins at a certain point. I began as almost a hippie, then I was almost a punk. When I was in (the art magazine) *Parkett* I asked John Miller's daughter who was 13 years old, to do an article. We did a fax interview. She said, "Dan, you're in your second childhood. What's it like to be a child?" So, I think I'm in my third childhood. I don't want to be a teenager anymore, but I think many artists my age just want to be teenagers. But I prefer not to be a teenager although I do a lot of work that is for teenagers.

1 Interviewer's remark: Although Jacques Lacan only published his article about the mirror stage in 1949, (*Revue française de psychanalyse* 4, S. 449-455), nevertheless he introduced this concept in 1936 already at the 14th International Congress for Psycholanalysis in Marienbad. Sartre, who published his major work *L'Être et le néant* in 1943, may thus certainly have been acquainted with this.

LEE UFAN 李禹煥

Interview with Peter Lodermeyer

25 May 2008

Lee Ufan (1936 in Seoul, Korea) has lived in Japan since 1956. His interest in philosophy is manifest in the concentrated nature of his work. His concept of art reflects the importance of encounters with people, nature and all kinds of incidents. Lee Ufan is critical about the prevalent eurocentric modern ideas. He lives and works in Kamakura, Japan, and Paris, France.*

Peter Lodermeyer: If your art is about restricting the self and making an encounter with the outside world possible, why is it not enough to merely experience nature? What exactly is it that makes art 'necessary'?

Lee Ufan: I am not an egocentric person, neither a naturalist. You, in your position, must know that for humans it is impossible to become a part of nature in the absolute. Humans and nature are connected, but are not identical. I believe that art has a mediating role, for example, to mediate between humans and nature. This is my aim in art. It seems that you look at art through words (language), but for me, art is a stronger metaphor for mediation than words.

Lee Ufan 李禹煥: 私はエゴ主義者でないのと同じく、自然主義者でもない。あなたの立場からして、人間が完全に自然に身を置くことなど出来ないことを知っているはずだ。人間と自然は、繋がっているが、同一ではない。私の考えでは、アートは媒介的なもので、例えば人間と自然を仲介する。私はそういうアートを目指す。あなたは、言葉からアートを見ている節があるが、アートは言葉より媒介性の強いメタフォアだ。

PL: Obviously, emptiness is one of the crucial subjects in your work. It is probably at the same time the most mistakable one. When referring to painting you call it 'yohaku', when referring to sculpture you call it a "place of nothingness because it suggests metaphysical transcendence." [Lee Ufan, The Art of Encounter *[AE], London 2004, p. 191] Why do you want to give it a metaphysical, transcendent quality? In my opinion it makes it ambiguous, open to all kinds of religious, or even 'esoteric', interpretations.*

LU: I have never been interested in nothingness and emptiness within western metaphysics. It is because they come from ontology. My words 'encounter' (出会い) and 'unfilled space' [yohaku] (余白) are the concepts of relations with oneself and others, inside and outside. It is a phenomenon from specific circumstances, not just from an idea. If you can feel the metaphysical transcendence from my work, your sensitivity is excellent.

LU: 私は、西洋形而上学における無や虚に興味を示したことはない。それらは、存在論の産物であるからだ。私の「出会い」や「余白」という言葉は、自己と他、内と外などの関係概念であり、具体的な出来事の現象であって、イデーではない。もしあなたが、私の作品から形而上学的な超越を感じたなら、あなたの感性は素晴らしい。

PL: What is the precise point where your concept of emptiness differs from Buddhist thinking (you once called it "le Bouddhist vide" [the Buddhist void] "trop idéal" [too ideal])?

LU: Even though I am not a Buddhist, I think Buddhism seems to have more importance in 'Ku' (空) emptiness, rather than 'Mu' (無) nothingness. I take 'nothingness' as an asymmetric zone, which occurs through the 'encounters' of incidents, rather than as an idea.

LU: 私は仏教信者ではないが、仏教では無より空を重要視しているようだ。私は無をイデーとしてではなく「出会い」の出来事による非対称のzoneと把えている。

PL: I really like your essay on the word 'oriental'. It is touching to read how you suffer from certain 'orientalist' clichés people use to label your work. Has this changed over the years? Do you think that people are more capable now of seeing your work without having these stereotypes in mind?

LU: The word 'oriental' has an ambiguity about it. Anyway, it does not have a very positive image. Although even now there are colonialists who look at me as an Asian and therefore pigeonhole me as 'oriental', more and more people see me as an individual, as Lee Ufan.

LU: オリエンタルという言葉は、今や二重的で両義的だ。いずれにしてもあまり肯定的なイメージではない。ところで今でも私をアジア人と知り、「オリエンタル」と決め付けたがるコロニアリストもいるが、Lee Ufan のパーソナルなものに見る人がもっと多い。

PL: What quality of your work shows most clearly that it is NOT just 'oriental' / Asian / Japanese / Korean?

LU: I was born and raised in Asia, so it is natural to have an Asian sensibility in my work. But I have developed a unique way of expression with some specific aspects of contemporary art, such as how I conceptually formulate my work, how I combine materials, and finally, how I bring these aspects together. Although you seem to look at my work as 'Asian', 'Japanese' and 'Korean', could you give me the names of some 'Asian', 'Japanese', and 'Korean' artists who make work that is similar to mine?

LU: 私はアジアで生まれ育ったのでそこの空気が漂うことは当然だ。しかし私のイシュウ(Issue)の立て方やマテリアルの使い方、組み合わせや構成などは、きわめて私流儀であり、まさに具体的な現代美術の問題から出発したものである。ところであなたは私の作品を、「アジア的」、「日本的」「韓国的」に見ているようだが、私の作品に似た「アジア的」「日本的」「韓国的」な作家を挙げて欲しい。

PL: What quality of your work then shows most clearly that it is NOT just European / American?

LU: I say it again: my work is Lee Ufan. It is not meant to be 'European' or 'American'. But of course, on the surface, it is possible to find similarities in other artists of my generation since we share the same era.

LU: 再度言うが、私の作品はLeeUfan的であって「ヨーロッパ的」「アメリカ的」という根拠は薄い。もちろん何処にも、同時代性として表面的に似たものはありうる。

PL: There are, however, also stereotypes with respect to European thinking that I often notice when reading texts from or talking with intellectuals from Asia or the Near East. I'm always told that European thinking is based and focused on the ego. As if there were not a strong criticism of egological theories that started at the latest with Nietzsche and then went on via Heidegger and culminated in different post-structuralist and deconstructivist philosophies. Do you think that European philosophy and Asian thinking are entering into a closer dialogue today?

LU: It is impossible to form the world from a Eurocentric point of view any longer. I have always criticized modernism and searched for more common ground, for a broader horizon. It is important to head toward that direction. The intellectuals should attempt to search for common terms by researching differences in regions, histories and religions.

LU: ヨーロッパ中心主義で世界を構成することはもはや無理だ。私はずっと近代主義を批判し、もっと広い共通項の地平を探そうとしている。そういう方向を向かっていることが重要だ。知識人とは、地域や歴史や宗教の違いを知りつつ共通点を探しながら対治を試みるものではないか。

PL: You called yourself the "Man in the Middle" (AE, 17) and talked about your "tumble wheel life" between the cultures. I think this sounds extremely important for understanding your art. I would like to learn more about your "tumble wheel life."

LU: There is no time to explain my life here. In experiencing the difficulties of belonging as well as transitioning from one society to the other, I feel that I have learned the philosophy of human relations to be somewhere in the middle.

LU: ここで人生の活をする余裕はない。ただ私はあちらにもこちらにも一方に属することの難しさで、関係の哲学を身に着けたようだ。

PL: More and more people on this planet live (sometimes voluntarily, but mostly involuntarily) a "tumble wheel life" between the cultures. Even normal Western life contains some aspects of it because, in a pluralistic society, every day we must switch between completely different 'cultures', i.e. ways of thinking, discourses, and so on. How do you see the relevance of your work in relation to the sociological changes in our globalized world?

LU: I think that art today is in the realm between civilization and culture. For that reason, contemporary art, being open to multiple directions, does not endorse any specific meaning. By seeing my work directly, many people express the wonder and freshness of an original experience through perceiving its tension and openness.

LU: 今日の芸術は、文明と文化の狭間にあるものだと思う。だから現代美術は多様なコードで開かれていて、特定な意味を押し付けない。私の作品に接して、その緊張と開放の不思議さ新鮮さに共感を示す人は以外と多い。

PL: I think this middle position is a strategic advantage for making works at the 'margins' of art (similar to the Margins of Philosophy by Jacques Derrida, the Algerian-born, Jewish, French philosopher). I think there are similarities between his deconstructivist opening of the structure of concepts and your approach to art. So, I wonder why you have been so critical towards him in your essay on Words and Silence (AE, 134 f).

LU: Probably because of translation problems, you misunderstood what I meant with 'unfilled space' [yohaku] My 'unfilled space' is neither the idea of blankness nor the concept of nothing. It indicates a zone, a place in which events echo with one another through combinations and contradictions of the stimuli of existence and non-existence, the self and the other, inside and outside, visible and invisible. I have learned a lot from Jacques Derrida about deconstruction and his concept of difference. However, these concepts accept neither the nuances in between things or in between words nor those outside of things and words. Basically, it is western 'literature-centric 'thinking. But histories and cultures also exist among people who are not literate.

LU: 多分翻訳の問題で、あなたは私の「余白」を誤解している。私の「余白」は空白でも単なる無のようなイデーでもない。在ることと無いこと、自己と他、内と外の見えるものと見えないもののような矛盾するものを刺激的に組み合わせることによって響きあう出来事のzone、placeを指している。ところで私はデリダの脱構築や、ズレの概念から多くを学んだ。しかし彼らは物と物、言葉と言葉の間やその外を認めない。彼は基本的に西洋書物中心主義者だ。文学を持たない人たちにも歴史や文化はあるのだ。

PL: In my Personal Structures book (2003) I emphasized a way of making art that is like a dialogue between the artist and the material s/he works with. In my opinion, that kind of attitude towards making art is related to a certain view of subjectivity as in Peter V. Zima's concept of a 'dialogical subjectivity': "dialogical subjectivity is oriented towards alterity. It lives on despite all the distortions the dialogue entails, from its other, and also from its opposite." I have the feeling this is pretty close to your concept of art. I would like to talk with you about that.

LU: Materials can be like slaves or friends, depending on how you treat them. The subjective, self-aware person will know what materials mean for them. I do not deny subjectivity, but that is only a part of myself. For me it is important to have dialogues through my physical existence, in order to connect inside and outside. Then you have the possibility to communicate with others, as in the encounter between Beuys and a coyote, in which the acceptance of one with the other is bodily mediated before one asserts one's own position.

LU:　素材は見方によって奴隷であったり同士であったり、他者であったりする。主観主義者にとって素材が何であるか、あなたは知っているはずだ。私は主観は否定しないが、それは私のごく一部にすぎない。私は内と外をつなぐ身体的存在であることによって、他者と対活が可能なのだ。ボイスとコヨーテとの出会いのように、自己主張以前に身体を仲介して他と認め合うことが大切だ。

PL: Your sculptures made of stones and iron plates could easily be interpreted as a peaceful encounter between man-made and natural environments. Would you agree with such kinds of metaphorical 'ecological' interpretations?

LU: There are people who unconditionally want to imagine the Asian garden in my sculptures, because they are combinations of stones and steel plates, but if you look carefully at them, this way of thinking is not correct. It is impossible to connect them without first knowing the concepts of both the artist and contemporary art. And they are not easy to understand, because they consist of specific sites and are developed with various motifs, with the clashing of different elements such as discord, revolt, response, affinity, coexistence, silence, etc. I am not a metaphysical person, but if I have been perceived as such, perhaps such an aspect exists in me. Although you show that you are allergic to the history of metaphysics in philosophy and transcendentalism, even if one is not a westerner or a religious person (generally, Asians are not well versed in metaphysics), these concepts exist in ordinary meaning. If we deny them completely, art does not exist. Let me make it clear, in principal I am neither an environmentalist nor a pacifist, but I have serious interest in environment and peace. And I am not interested in god, but rather in the universe as the origin of imagination.

LU: 私の彫刻が、石と鉄板の組み合わせということで、無条件でアジアの庭を想像したがる人もいるが、よく見ればそのような見方は無理と思う。まず石と鉄板を結び付けるのは、作者と現代美術のコンゼプトなしには、不可能だ。それに異った要素のぶつかり合い、反発、応答、親和、同居、沈黙など、様々なモチーフが特定な場を形成しながら展開されており、解りやすいものではない。私は形而上学的な人間ではないが、そう受け取られるなら、そのような要素があるのかもしれない。それにしてもあなたは、哲学史上の形而上学や超越にアレルギーをあらわにするが、西洋人や宗教者でなくても(通常アジア人は形而上学を知らないとされる)普通の意味で、そのような要素はいくらでもある。それを全否定しては芸術は成り立たない。断っておくが、私は環境主義者や平和主義者ではないが、環境や平和には非常に関心を持っている。そして神には関心はないが、宇宙こそが想像の根源である。

PL: Do you think art has (or should have) an ethical impact on the viewer?

LU: Due to the restrained 'image' in my work, many people seem to feel a strong sense of ethics. When I create work, I try to be humble in my expression and to strictly improve my concepts and bodily actions. And particularly, this process is facilitated through self-reflection and by limiting the influence of my ego.

LU:　多くの人が私の作品の抑制的なイメージに、強い倫理性を感じているようだ。私は制作においてもコンセプトや身体行為を厳しく磨き、謙虚な表現を心がけている。特にエゴーの限定を強いる部分で反省力を伴うに違いない。

PL: I see your art in the context of the world-wide changes of the concept of 'art' in the 1960s, also its critical and political potential. What do you think about the political attitude of your work today?

LU: I like this question. Although my work at first glance seems to have harmony, when it is observed more closely, anxiety and peace co-exist. It is in constant flux along with the elements of relations. It is not about how you think of politics; art itself is politics.

LU:　この質問には同意する。私の作品は一見調和が取れているようで、よく見れば、不安と平和が同居している危いものである。それは絶えず可変性の途上にある、関係の出来事であるからだ。政治をどう考えるかではなく、アート自体が政治なのだ。

PL: How did making art change your individual existence over the years?

LU: I have learned patience, and I started to accept other artists that are different from me. As I realized I cannot do everything, I started to feel that the world was getting closer to me.

LU:　忍耐と断念を学び、私と違う作家たちを認めるようになった。私は多くのことが出来ないことを知るほどに世界が身近に寄ってきた。

PL: How important are memories from your early childhood for your work? (I think of the impressing 'story' about the evaporating rocks in AE, 213).

LU: Memories can build the foundations of imagination. But memories are not something that can be trusted, and only reality exists.

LU:　記憶は想像力に根拠を与えてくれることがある。しかし記憶は信用出来るものではなく、ただリアリティーがあるだけの場合が多い。

PL: How important is traveling and experiencing yourself for you, and what influence does it have on your work?

LU: I have learned the variety and diversity of the world through traveling and I refined my strength, my capacity for solitude and my art. I have reached a point where I am convinced of the possibility of my work to exist beyond regions and eras.

LU:　私は旅を通して、世界の広さと多様性を知り、孤独とアートの力を磨いた。そして地域や時代を超えて成立する、作品の可能性を確信するに至った。

PL: To be perceived as art, your works need the context of the art world (museums, galleries, publications, and so on). How do you deal with the contradictions between your concept of art and the structure of the art world / art market?

LU: Art maintains its vitality by coming and going continuously between the context of the art world and beyond this structure. In my work, there are also many elements that exist outside of the context of art. By the way, the contemporary art market completely ignores the context of art and commercializes it in the name of art. I have no solution for this. No matter how stoic my work is and how much meaning it has outside of the art context, it is relentlessly made into the tools of a moneymaking game because of my reputation. In this hopeless situation, I must make my work myself, as well as control its production, exhibition and sale as much as possible. I do not like my work to be used for the advertisement of big companies, but sometimes such a situation is difficult to reject. I hope that, over the long run, the political message of my work will be recognized.

LU:　アートは絶えずアートの文脈と、その外を往来することによって生命力を維持している。私の作品にもアートの外の要素が多く含まれている。ところで今日のアート市場は、アートの文脈をまったく無視して、なんでもアートの名で商品化している。私には処方策がない。私の作品が、いくら禁欲的な性格を持とうが、アートの文脈の外の要素を持とうが、私のわずかな名声で容赦なくマネーゲームの道具にされてしまう。絶望的だが、せいぜい自分の仕事を厳しく徹底化し、制作、発表、販売を可能な限り制限するほかない。大企業の宣伝には使われたくないが、難しい時もある。長い目で私の作品の政治性から顧みられることを希望する。

PL: You said that works of art which communicate with the heart "have a contradictory aspect; they express a desire for death as well as life." I would like to learn more about that contradictory desire.

LU: Modernism hides extinction and death, by putting value on existence and production. I would like to express in my work the limits of creation, to give value to 'not-making-art', and to think about life and death.

LU: 近代は生産すること、存在することを全面化することによって、消滅すること死ぬことを隠蔽した。作ることを限定すること、作らぬことにも価値を与えること、生と死を共に考えること、それをアートで示したい。

PL: I have mainly asked questions related to existence here. Space and time are also crucial subjects of your work I would like to ask you some more questions about. So, I sincerely hope there will be an opportunity to meet you soon.

LU: When I was young I was influenced by solipsism from Kant to Heidegger, but I have never been an ontologist.

LU: 若いときは、カントからハイテンガーに至る独我論の影響も受けたが、私は決して存在論者ではない。

Post Scriptum:

LU: Your questions constantly indicate the colonial point of view of modern anthropocentrism. I believe this is based on solipsistic ontology. Therefore, my position will not be easy to be understood, because it doesn't depend on either strong subjectivity or objectivity, but it is ambiguous. Inevitably, because my answers always carry the importance in double meanings and contradiction, I must have irritated you. But, I would like you to understand that this kind of point of view can also exist.

LU: あなたの質問は、一貫して近代的な人間中心主義のコロニアルな立場から出ている。それは、独我論(solipsism)的な存在論に基づくものと思う。だから私のような強固とした主観に依らず、といって客観的ともいえない半端な立場は理解されにくい。当然私の答えは、絶えず両義性と矛盾さを大事にするものなので、あなたを苛立たせるに違いない。しかしこういう立場もあることだけは、知ってもらいたい。

CARL ANDRE

Interview with Peter Lodermeyer

Konrad Fischer Gallery, Düsseldorf, Germany,
20 June 2008

*Carl Andre (*1935, Quincy, MA, USA) is one of the leading representatives of Minimal Art. His radical sculpture and poetry have fundamentally shifted the definitions and boundaries of art. Typical for his sculptures since the early sixties are prefabricated elements, such as bricks, metal plates or wood beams, arranged in geometric shapes and mostly displayed on the floor. From 1960 to 1964, Andre worked as a shunter for the Pennsylvania Railroad, an experience which was to influence his work as well as his self-image as a working artist. Carl Andre lives and works in New York City.*

Dear Mr. Andre,

Thank you so much for your interest in the project *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence* and your willingness to answer 5 interview questions in written form.

Here are the questions:

TIME

#1: The only way we can 'perceive' time is change. For the public, the most obvious change in an artistic career is success. I like what seems to me to be your honest and heartfelt statement about Konrad Fischer, that without him, your "life as an artist would have ended long ago." Today, your work is shown in all important museums all over the world and is part of art history. What impact has this change from an unknown, ambitious artist to a 'classic' had on you artistically and personally?

SPACE

#2: A few weeks ago, I listened to a young artist from Vienna give a lecture with the interesting title: *All I don't know about space*. As a sculptor, you worked with space for more than 4 decades. What are the most important things you have learned about space and what do you still not know about it?

EXISTENCE

#3: In the Author's Statement of the publication *Cuts. 1959-2004* (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2005), James Meyer writes on the "antihumanist thrust" of your work as well as your "anti-anthropocentric" practice (p. 17). One of his arguments is that your art exists in the room with us but does not exist for us. Do you agree with him? Is it possible at all that art is not for us? In an interview with Barbara Tuchman you said once "Man is the measure of all things" (*Cuts*, p. 231). This is the classical statement of antique humanism (Protagoras). What are your thoughts about the relation of art and (anti-) humanism, art and (anti-)anthropocentrism?

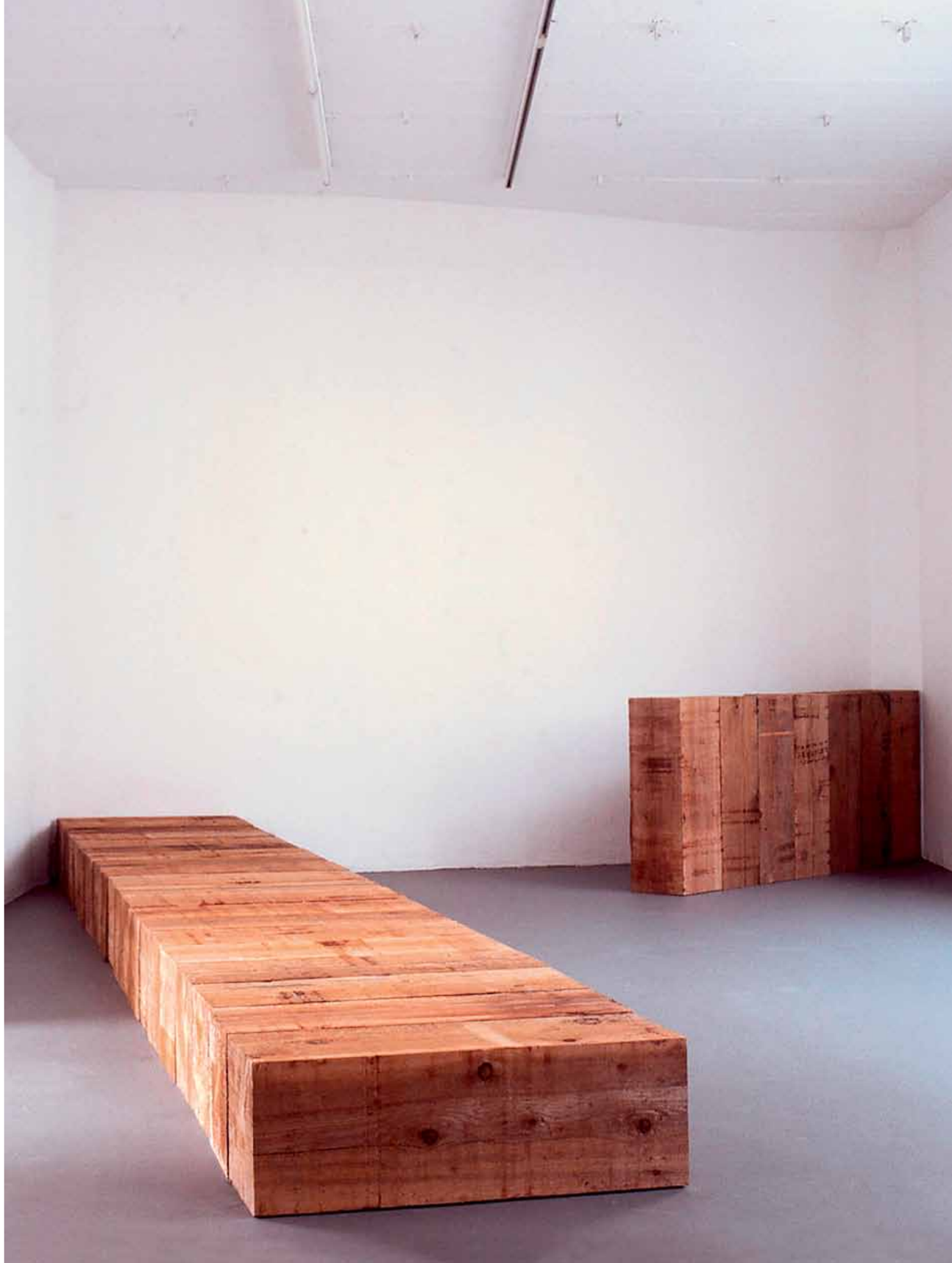
#4: In 1979, you called your quest to develop an art "utterly free of human associations" "absurd", but, at the same time, you claimed that it has been exactly the "absurd impossibility of that quest which made my work possible." (*Cuts*, p. 291). It seems that contradictions and absurdity can be an extremely fruitful source for an artistic oeuvre. Absurdity is a keyword of existentialist philosophers: they talk about the absurdity of life, death, and existence as a fact we as human beings have to deal with. What are your thoughts concerning absurdity as an artistic as well as existential precondition?

#5: Another contradiction is that your work, on the one hand, is considered one of the most advanced positions in contemporary sculpture and, on the other hand, as you put it in 1982, it is "intensely conservative in that its form can be traced back to the earliest Neolithic structures" (*Cuts*, p. 174). You also claimed that the "earliest experiences" from your childhood "are the quarry of my art." Is there any progress in art? Or is (good and relevant) art always just about the anthropological basics, about the earliest personal as well as generic experiences?

Thank you very much in advance for devoting your time and efforts to answer these questions. I greatly look forward to hearing what you have to say and also to meeting you at your opening in Düsseldorf.

My very best regards,

Peter Lodermeyer



1. I CERTAINLY WAS UNKNOWN BUT I HAVE HAD ONLY THE AMBITION TO MAKE THE BEST WORK POSSIBLE. I HAVE NEVER ASPIRED TO BE FAMOUS. FAME BELONGS TO OTHER PEOPLE, NOT TO ONE'S SELF.
2. I THINK THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SPACE & A LIFE-SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT. AN ASTRONAUT WHO FALLS OUT OF HIS CAPSULE STILL IS IN SPACE BUT HAS LOST HIS LIFE-SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT.
3. LIFE IS WHAT MAKES ART POSSIBLE. NEITHER GOD NOR NATURE IS INTERESTED IN ART OR MAKING ART. ART IS SOLELY A HUMAN ACTIVITY.
4. ART IS NEITHER ABSURD NOR RATIONAL. ART IS THE ARTIST'S ATTEMPT TO LEAVE SOME EVIDENCE OF THE ARTIST'S EXISTENCE.
5. HENRY MOORE SAID THAT ART-MAKING IS THE RECAPITULATION OF OUR EARLIEST EXPERIENCES. THE ARTIST MERELY CONTINUES AN ACTIVITY WHICH EVERY CHILD PRACTICES AT SOME TIME OR OTHER.

@ carl andre
DÜSSELDORF
20 JUN 2008

P.S.: BRANCUSI ONCE SAID THAT ALL PEOPLE TRY THEIR HANDS AT MAKING ART AT ONE TIME OR OTHER BUT FEW KNOW WHICH OF THEIR WORKS ARE ART.

MAX COLE

Interview with Karlyn De Jongh

Ruby NY, USA, July 2008

The paintings of Max Cole (Kansas, USA, 1937) consist of parallel horizontal and small vertical lines and give an impression of purity and focus. Stripped from compository elements and color, Cole's work is a search for content; content which she describes with the word 'infinity'. The content of the work is that what exceeds the physicality of the painting. Cole finds this in a process of being lived: her art is an internal endeavor towards the ultimate mystery.

Max Cole is the first artist I ever interviewed. It started in Miami, FL, USA: we decided to contact her. It was Friday afternoon 6 June 2008, and I set my time at 3 o'clock: then I had to call her. I was very nervous. A friendly, melodious voice picked up the phone, "Hello?" I asked, "Am I speaking with the artist Max Cole?" "You are", was the answer. Even though my speech was well prepared, I did not need it: after hearing the word 'sincere', she immediately agreed to give the interview. Max Cole wanted a written interview, via email. So, about a month later, I sent her an email with my questions.

About two weeks after that I got a reply: I was at the house of Peter Lodermeyer in Bonn, Germany. We just came back from France, for Peter's interview with Roman Opalka. I opened my email. And there they were: her answers! I was so happy, I could not read the text.

Fortunately, Max Cole was also happy with the result and she invited me over to her house in Ruby NY. It took a few months before we could meet, but it was finally possible on 5 April 2009, one day after the symposium Space *in the New Museum. With Yuko Sakurai, I took the Greyhound bus from Port Authority Bus Terminal in Manhattan to Kingston NY, which was the closest we could get to her by public transportation. Max Cole picked us up. We spent the whole day at her house. She showed us her studio and cooked us a very nice dinner. Late in the evening, we took the last bus back to New York.*

Karlyn De Jongh: At several moments throughout your career you mentioned that integrity is very important to you. What do you mean by integrity and why is it important to you?

Max Cole: By integrity, I mean an uncompromising stance in my work in relation to outside factors such as art world trends, movements or politics. My work is an internal endeavor and as such it must remain free of such external influences. On a recent panel discussion at a museum exhibition, the question was raised as to whether an artist should take into consideration the viewer while creating the work and I was amazed at the number of artists who agreed they should. For me this becomes art by consensus and flies in the face of my belief that art is a solitary pursuit.

KDJ: In 2000 you stated that a work has no reason to exist when content is absent. How do you understand content? Is there a presence of time, space or existence in your work?

MC: Well, without content one is left with decoration, craft or entertainment. Content is that elusive quality of transcendence which is the essence of art and is apprehended intuitively. Simply stated it is the quality by which a work lives or doesn't live. I have no interest in art that doesn't live.

As to the question of time and existence, my work exists through a process of being lived, it being comprised of innumerable individual handmade marks which require total emersion and concentration, time, existence and the work becoming fused. There is no other way to produce the work except for a depth of engagement requiring the abandonment of self and this process opens the door to infinity enabling reach outside the physical. For me art must transcend the material.

KDJ: The titles of your work seem to refer to places in nature and to natural phenomena. However, in an interview with Kim Wauson you mentioned that you do not paint landscapes. How does your work relate to the titles you give them? What do the titles of your work stand for?

MC: The titles of my work are not a key to understanding the work but are rather a means of identification of a specific painting. My works are abstract. I have chosen words with personal meaning to me or sometimes places with personal meaning but they have no direct relation to the painting and are not a factor in the creation of the work. Over the years, I have used several different approaches to titles, the first of which were apparent nonsensical mathematical equations containing codes for physical qualities of the work which made no mathematical sense whatsoever and I abandoned it because I tired of explaining it. Another system was based on horse racing and whichever horse won the feature race on the day I finished a painting became the title of the painting. I of course could

choose from winning horses from several different racetracks. Racehorses have wonderful names.

KDJ: You have claimed to eliminate form and color in your paintings. Line seems a primary element for you. How do you see your use of form language? How is the relation between your form language and the content of your work?

MC: In order to find my direction, I set out to clarify my thinking about the formal structures of painting which all artists are taught in the course of art studies. Soon after school, I made a decision to virtually eliminate color as a prominent factor in my exploration because for me it holds an intrinsic load of psychological cues tied to emotion. Ego with it's emotional components and need for control must be set aside because it is a barrier to the abandonment of self which is necessary to the working process. Further, emotion clouds all efforts toward transcendence.

I made a decision to work with line because it is the most abstract of elements existing as it does as a record of motion. I stripped my work of traditional compositional factors abandoning design principals because I have no interest in ordering the picture plane in the usual sense. However, another kind of composition exists in my paintings involving interplay between lines and the tension of depth. I adopted a horizontally elongated rectangular format as structure on which to work. I chose this format because it is not static as is a square and there becomes tension between the horizontal movement and the vertical mark which comprise my work. Again, there exists tension between the vertical and the horizontal because one cannot exist without the other. These focused elements allow me the clarity to pursue my continuing quest for content and are not a limitation of any kind.

KDJ: When you say that you work with line for its abstraction, for its existence as a record of motion, and for the tension of depth that it creates, how does your use of line stand in relation to time, space or existence?

MC: Line can record a small gesture or can theoretically extent to infinity. Within my work, the small vertical lines record intense concentration and I believe that the energy of the action of making a line is imbedded in the resulting mark. The accumulation of such marks become a vibrant field of energy. The working process and existence merge and there is no separation between life and work and the ultimate natural force of existence.

KDJ: You just mentioned infinity. What do you mean with infinity, or endlessness, and why is it so important for you? Do you understand it solely in relation to time or does infinity have a spatial meaning for you as well?

MC: In the normal course of things, I pay very little attention to the passage of time and indeed usually even have to check to see whether it is day or night or even what day of the week it is. The question is often asked how long it takes me to make a painting. It is completely irrelevant because I have put time aside as any valid measurement of anything, even the measurement of a lifetime. Infinity is quite another consideration because a lifetime is physically limited and infinity proceeds into an unknowable dimension.

The transcendence of art goes beyond the physicality of the work and in that way sometimes touches infinity. Whatever these considerations are, it is the means by which I find peace.

KDJ: During the Personal Structures *symposium about time in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Roman Opalka told me about infinity and explained that his work addressed the infinity of time in relation to the awareness of the end of his life, or human life in general. How do you think about your existence in relation to infinity?*

MC: I think I have addressed part of this question above. I have always had great respect for the work of Roman Opalka and see in him a kindred spirit. Like him, my work flows from one painting to the next with change coming about gradually over the course of a lifetime through the natural evolution of the working process. It is a state of being.

KDJ: You have mentioned your works as a search for essence. What is this essence? How does your understanding of essence relate to time, space or existence? Have you noticed any differences or changes in your search for and understanding of essence over the years?

MC: Essence is the transcendent quality of life and it is the ultimate mystery. Glimpses of it exist when a painting lives and is the quality that I have spent my life continually searching for. I don't believe that it is necessary to understand or quantify it. The search is enough.

KDJ: Earlier, you used the concepts 'abstraction' and 'transcendence' and spoke about their importance in relation to your work. At the same time, your paintings are a result of personal decisions. How do your personal decisions stand in relation to your ideas of abstraction and transcendence? Do you see abstraction and transcendence in a mathematical or in a philosophical way? Is there a difference between abstraction, transcendence and essence?

MC: I see abstraction as idea and the intellect and transcendence as a philosophical consideration which can only be apprehended by intuition. Both are essential. My personal working decisions have been the means of cutting through the layers of unnecessary clutter of existence in order to arrive at clarity.

KDJ: In an interview in 2000 you have said that personal humility and harmony with nature are part of the philosophy of your father and grandfather and that their philosophy is important to you. How has their philosophy affected your existence and how is it present in your work?

MC: The paternal side of my heritage was American Indian and the philosophy has many similarities to Zen. The way of being in the world I learned as a child has formed the foundation of my existence and is present in every aspect of my life. It is quiet but should not be mistaken for passive because there is much strength there. I am self-reliant and do not romanticize either my heritage or the making of art.

KDJ: Privacy seems very important to you. How is that reflected in your workspace? How does your studio space stand in relation to your work? Comparing the moments when you are painting to those when you are not painting, do you experience your working space differently? Do you ever loose track of the space surrounding you?

MC: Privacy is indeed very important to me as is solitude. I have never had studio assistants and very few people have ever been in my workspace because it is very private. The first time I allowed photos of my workspace was in the monograph published by Charta in 2000. I have always hidden paintings which are not finished because I want no input from anybody else, even passive input. My studio has usually been divided into two parts… a work space which is utter chaos because I pay no attention to keeping the environment orderly while I am working and a clean space where I hang paintings as I finish them so that I can live with them without the distraction of my work environment and where I have always allowed people.

I cannot work if there are distractions and find that I must be completely centered in order to lose myself in the work, otherwise I cannot find contact with the painting. It is necessary to have very long uninterrupted work periods consisting of weeks in which I am out of touch with people. My friends understand that I disappear for long periods.

KDJ: You have said that a certain risk is necessary for making good art and have also spoken about loosing yourself during painting. What is risk for you and what do you mean with 'loosing yourself'?

MC: Painting is not an automatic process in which one goes through a given predetermined process and at the end has a painting which is accepted. That is the recipe for mediocrity which I do not believe has a place in art. Each painting begins as an undetermined entity and I push the limits of possibility during the course of working on the painting. Sometimes I push too far and the painting fails at which point I destroy the work. It is a necessary aspect of painting and I learn from it. It is also possible to produce a technically excellent painting which does not breathe. This happens when I continue working when I am unable to open myself to make contact with the painting. These works are also destroyed because they should not exist.

Loosing myself means that I put my ego aside completely, lay myself completely bare and continue with the painting with no separation between myself and the work. It is a difficult thing to surrender control. It is my work process and my preferred state of existence.

KDJ: Above you mentioned that for you there is no separation between art and life. How is this impossibility to separate art and life related to the putting aside of your ego? How would you describe your existence in that respect?

MC: Well, I am not a psychologist and ego and emotion has its place, but not while I am making art where it gets in the way. I am secure in my self and don't have the need to lead with ego in art or in most other aspects of life. I rely on intellect and soul and take things as they come.

KDJ: Is there a link between the idea of loosing yourself and your experience of time during painting?

MC: Most definitely. Time disappears as a factor. It is the reason I need large periods of unstructured time in order to work. In our society, this is a most difficult thing to obtain and only possible with a reclusive lifestyle. I spent 25 years basically living as a hermit in Manhattan which took enormous effort. I have lived in the country for the past five years and it is considerably easier. Space, existence and time are inseparable.

KDJ: You have described your experience of painting as meditative, but also as a battle. How can it be meditative and a battle at the same time? How do you experience the actual making of your work?

MC: Since I am not making automatic art in that I am frequently reaching into unpredictable ground there are sometimes difficulties in resolving unforeseen problems and that sometimes involves struggle. And so I work my way through to resolution. I would be very alarmed if everything always proceeded smoothly because that would mean that I am no longer reaching but merely walking through the process. The act of painting must be vital if the finished work is to have life. When a painting is finished and it is fully resolved there is no trace of struggle.

KDJ: Nowadays, your paintings are smaller than they used to be and you have addressed this development to your physical abilities. Roman Opalka said he continues painting until he can no longer stand proud in front of his canvas. How do you experience getting older? Does it affect your work? How do you see this decrease in scale in relation to the process of making your work?

MC: The only major change is that I have made the decision to only make paintings which I can handle by myself because I intend never to have studio assistants. I no longer have the physical strength to lift 14-foot paintings unaided. Since scale is really a rather insignificant factor, and I have no real need to make such heroic paintings, this makes little appreciable difference to my work and doesn't amount to a limitation. Along with Roman Opalka, I will continue to make art until I die. One of the beautiful aspects of becoming older is that I waste no energy on things that are insignificant.

KDJ: After a lifetime of painting, is it still difficult to lay yourself bare? Why? Are you afraid of the viewer or of yourself or your paintings?

MC: In order to lay yourself bare, all aspects of your existence must be in balance and you are very vulnerable. It is extremely private and requires courage because control must be surrendered. I have already stated that the viewer has no part in this process because solitude is essential. Fear plays no role at all in my working process and very little in my existence except for the alarms directed at self preservation such as impending danger like avoiding being hit by a car.

ROMAN OPALKA

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer

Roman Opalka house & studio, Beaumont sur Sarthe, France, 30 July 2008

Roman Opalka (1931 in Abbeville, France). In 1965, at his studio in Warsaw, Poland, Opalka began a conceptual work, painting the numbers from 1 to infinity. Since than he has been working on this concept, each of his paintings being a „detail" of the overall work and having the same title* 1965 / 1 – ∞. *This work addresses profound questions about the nature of time and human existence. Lives in Beaumont sur Sarthe, France.*

Peter Lodermeyer: In Amsterdam you mentioned your earlier 'hourglass' pictures, the so-called Chronomes.

Roman Opalka: I painted these pictures from 1959 to 1963 that were supposed to be like hourglasses, sand glasses. That was the idea. But the hourglass has something inherent to it that you don't know where the beginning is, the sort of Big Bang. You can't measure or determine it. You can do this with numbers, however. My number 1 is the Big Bang. Here is where all the dynamics exert their power, like the number of a birth date. But when you state your birth date, "born on 27 August 1931", it is information for the administration, but in a philosophical sense it is incorrect. I was "born" the moment my father and my mother united. And this point in time may not be measured even today since body processes are so complex, and in a certain sense, so phenomenal that we may not measure them. And this is the way it is with my hourglass pictures. I stopped doing them after three years because I kept asking myself when I should stop with the picture and when it was finished. And anyhow, what does it begin with? If you want to make time manifest, of course, you have to face these questions. It is interesting that in 1964, shortly before I painted my first detail, a certain signal was heard in the cosmos. And they said it could have been the echo of the beginning of the universe.

PL: The cosmic microwave background radiation. But when did your work begin, when you painted the 1 or back in Warsaw when you were waiting for your wife and the idea first occurred to you for the concept?

RO: To stay with the picture, the love began back then in the café, but the realization of this love only came after around 7 months. So, the 1 would be the realization of it. I already mentioned this in Amsterdam: I could have died at the moment I had a real emotion, because I already knew what this concept was the beginning of. I knew it would continue throughout my entire life. If you paint a little number like this, the 1, then you have an emotion, you just can't imagine it. After a few weeks I developed a heart problem because the tension was so unbelievably strong. Not only because it was so good, but because of the sacrifice it meant I would have to make a life long for this work. That was the problem. I was in the hospital a whole month with irregular heartbeats. That was scary. After a month, I returned—and continued, up to this day. Art requires intelligence, but not necessarily more than what it takes emotionally, physically, and mentally. Leonardo da Vinci said it and he was right: "*L'arte e una cosa mentale*." This is fantastic. This sentence speaks a thousand volumes.

PL: A very banal question: Could you tell me what the last number you painted was?

RO: I don't remember the last digits, but I am somewhere in the area of 5 million 506 thousand. It wouldn't be good for my health if I were such a 'numbers monster'.

PL: You have often said that art is as crazy as life. There are people who see a mistake or craziness in your concept because you now paint white on white and therefore, the numbers may no longer be read, or may hardly be deciphered anymore.

RO: That is really dumb, because this is precisely the goal. Such an objection is like one schoolchildren made. I am also well known here in France. In art class at school the pupils heard there was this painter, Roman Opalka, who paints a concept and has now reached the stage of white on white. Whereupon one pupil said very nicely: Someone should just say once to him that there would be no point to such thing. Paradoxically, this pupil understood everything because this nonsense is present in my work in an ingenious way, sorry. You need to understand that this nonsense has never been expressed so strongly in the history of art. Historically, this powerfulness that carries my pictures has never been there before. Why? Because each *Detail* contains my entire concept. Just as I see you as a whole when you visit me, and not the details of what you have experienced, of course, but I see time on you. That is universal and that is time.

PL: In Amsterdam we spoke about the meaning of art lying precisely in making the absurdity of life bearable.

RO: Yes, precisely.

PL: Basically, this is a completely existentialist definition of art.

RO: Today, in the western world there is the notion that religion no longer makes any sense. We still have to save something in art which was metaphysics or spirituality up to now—but I do not like that word, it's nonsense, and you can use it to mean anything.

PL: But you can use the word 'religious'. Would you say that art has somehow taken on the legacy of religion?

RO: Yes, that's right. For people who ask how man came to a notion of God at all. We have never met him and will never meet him. But at the same time we never know as much as we think we know. The world is also not at all as clear as the atheists always tell us it is. That is why I do not say I am an atheist. I say I am agnostic, because I just don't know.

PL: We could also find religious elements in your work.

RO: Traces, if you want…

PL: For example, your being on the road to brightness, to light. We could easily attribute this enlightenment a religious meaning or interpret it as a kind of metaphysics of light.

RO: That is correct, but there is also another aspect. Are you familiar with Raymond Moody?

PL: The American psychologist who described near-death experiences?[1]

RO: Yes, he describes the phenomenon of death, what happens in our head when we die. The doctor at the hospital explains that the heart has stopped beating, etc. This is not quite true, because so many phenomena are still going on in your mind. There is still an immense world happening in this short period of time and you have unbelievable visions, and that is a chemical phenomenon. Moody, I read this several years ago, describes the period of death as a black tunnel. It is interesting that this is nearly my concept. First you are in this black tunnel and then you slowly approach the light. This is like my work. So you could interpret that with this almost-religious part of Raymond Moody. But you can say that this is purely coincidental. While we are at it: My decision consisted of making time manifest with the dynamics of a progression of numbers. And that would be everything. I also said: No interviews anymore, there's no use! But that was wrong because I thought people would understand after all. This was not the case. I had to tell about my life or my work—which in my case is almost the same thing—I had to be a 'missionary' for my work, just to keep on the subject of religion here.

PL: We could continue with it, of course. For example, concerning the photographs, you make of your face. With these photos, we are not dealing with something autobiographical, but with something universally valid. This form of portrayal, the straightforward view with a neutral facial expression, displays of course a strong Christian influence and corresponds with the pattern used in the icon portrayals of Christ.

RO: You could say that. You know, Malevich was perhaps more Christian than I am, although he was a Bolshevik. Here at the back of the studio a figure of Christ hangs, have you seen it? Do you know why I bought it? You see, the wood has been split open. That is such a powerful piece of sculpture, the pain is so well-portrayed. But it was only time that did this. Earlier this was just a very banal, primitive Christ made by a very simple sculptor. Concerning my photos, many people see narcissism in it, but it only seems like this. The concept of the photos has a universal aspect. I do not tell about my life, I make *life* manifest. On the first pictures I still wore various types of clothing, shirts, sweaters, etc. but then I understood that this was rubbish. On the contact prints the differences were not so evident, but on the prints you saw it, of course. Then I started always choosing the same type of shirt and the same haircut. I always cut my hair myself, the few I still have. And something

else: you see a necklace on the pictures. I bought it in Venice as a young man. I wanted to have a small detail for my wife, like a wedding ring. Normally I no longer wear it. I only put it on for my work.

PL: Another Christian element is the octagon. Lately you have been displaying your work in octagons. Your work is about time and existence, of course, but with the octagons you also create a spatial reference.

RO: The octagon is probably based on architecture from Christian times, this being a very strong architecture for meditation, a form people reached through their religious questions.

PL: The octagon is a typical floor plan of baptismal churches and baptistries.

RO: My octagon as an installation form is the answer to the question: What will happen to my exhibitions after my death. I have come to the conclusion that I do not want any exhibitions, except in octagons. Several curators and gallery owners had tried—luckily, only tried, I was able to intervene in time—to do the installations themselves. Horrible! In my case the installation is also a work. Hence, the octagon.

PL: How did you reach the form of the octagon? Why does it have to be precisely eight corners in space?

RO: The number eight is—perhaps randomly, perhaps enigmatically—connected with my numbers. At some point you reach the number two twice = 22, then 333, 4444, 55555, 666666, etc. Seven times the number seven is something I may yet reach. But then comes eight times eight = 88888888. And that is the answer to your question: eight times the number eight goes beyond a person's lifespan, this would take several generations. My work has reached this set of problems by chance. Like I said, I did not want to have any aspects of religious interpretations, but with such number encounters you end up with interesting stories. The octagon measures 8 meters outside, the walls are 50 cm thick. And there is a moat so that people do not touch the walls and this is where the light comes from, partially also from above. You do not see the lamps.

PL: What role does room space play in your works?

RO: It is unbelievably important. For example, when hanging the photographs, I take my height as a reference. It used to be 177 cm, and now it is only 170 (laughing). Because space is so important I like to do the hanging myself. For a group exhibition it doesn't matter. But for a solo exhibition it is something different. In my case by the way, you can already do a solo exhibition with a single picture because, as I said, each *Detail* contains the entire concept. I have to see the room and look how you can make a good installation inside. The entire room is included because due to the recording the room is filled with my voice. If I build an octagon, then I take into consideration that the voice must come from the moat. It is also essential that all of the dimensions are extremely precise. In Saint-Étienne I have accomplished what is up to now the best Opalka exhibition.[2] There was an octagon in the middle and there were 120 photographs in the enormously large room. An exhibition like this would not have been possible in the Centre Pompidou.

PL: In the exhibition in Saint-Étienne there was a great deal of space between the photographs. Why all this empty space?

RO: These photographs had been chosen as stages in my life. I have already made several thousand photographs, and of course, only a few were acceptable, in the beginning maybe one or two percent, now more. I cannot say for sure, but it is about 25 percent that work. The distances in the room are part of the concept. That is also the answer to the question people always ask, whether I would like an exhibition in which all 230 details are shown along with the photographs. No, this would be impossible. It won't do, and I can't do it. There are no rooms large enough. My ideal installation would be once to show the octagon as seen on a large scale:

one *Detail* in Holland, one in Belgium, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo, etc. This would be an installation in the sense of 'propaganda'. I used to work for propaganda back then in Poland after the art academy. It is a propaganda principle to think about how a work can become well known. There is nothing bad about it.

PL: Let's talk about philosophy. I read that originally you had planned to study philosophy.

RO: The reason I did not study philosophy was: during the Stalin era it was only possible in Lublin and only for priests. In Poland religion has always had a stronghold despite ideological problems with the Party. Polish history has always had a lot to do with the Church. You could always take up a certain oppositional stand in the Church. This is also how it was with *Solidarność* [*Solidarity*], these were not only believers, there were also people who used the Church to hide. So you could study philosophy but only with the intention of becoming a priest. That was too much for me.

PL: The one philosopher in the 20th century who dealt most intensively with the theme of existence was Martin Heidegger. Heidegger also plays a significant role for you.

RO: Of course. Heidegger, in my opinion, was the one who reflected over this matter of existence most thoroughly. Heidegger receives much criticism due to the Nazi era, but he is nevertheless assuredly the greatest philosopher of the 20th century, no question about that, much more important than Jean-Paul Sartre. He was much deeper and more metaphysical. And this metaphysical thing about Heidegger is what I really like.

PL: But you criticized his notion of existence as a 'Being-toward-death'. What is wrong with that?

RO: I never said that.

PL: In an interview with Heinz-Norbert Jocks.[3]

RO: Hmm, maybe that was a misunderstanding because my German isn't so good. No, actually I think very highly of Heidegger—this is Opalka: Being-toward-death. That is my work. It is almost a definition of Heidegger. Heidegger is always on my bedside table, almost like religious literature. I treasure him greatly. Of course, there is that story with the Nazis. I always thought that was the one thing, and the philosophy is another thing. His *Feldweg*, his walk on the path through the field, that is like my work. I walk further into the landscape, the horizon goes on, with me… This is almost like what I do in my work.

PL: Another thing you said in the Interview with Heinz-Norbert Jocks was, "Death is a gift".[4] *How are we supposed to understand this?*

RO: Can you imagine what our existence would be like without the knowledge that we will have to die? Without knowing this, we cannot live a real life. We would not really be there. Because time is death. Death is the foundation of time. Only by knowing that we will die is there an emotion towards life. Without it, life would be monotony without a goal. But this way it is a case of: "I am here, fantastic!", or "I am still alive," or ,"I am already tired of living, I want to commit suicide." That is also part of it, death as a solution for a person who commits suicide. It is a wonderful chance, the fact that we have death. This is not good news, of course, but an important aspect for delving into deeper issues about our existence. I find it a stroke of genius, death.

PL: Just an aside to Sartre. Sartre, you said before, is not as deep as Heidegger. Sartre suppressed thoughts of death. He said death did not interest him. It was simply not an issue for him.

RO: Yes, exactly. And for me and my own concept, what applies is that this concept without death would be stupid, a gag, nothing more.

PL: Another philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, once said aesthetics and ethics were in principle the same thing. I would also claim this for your work. You can only do such work if there is a certain ethics to back it up, a way of life. You have often referred to 'sacrifice'.

RO: Yes, for mankind, a gift. This sounds naïve or melodramatic. Certainly you can say, life makes no sense, but if you only establish yourself in history with such sentences, then we can all shoot ourselves right away. We are all damned to eternity is what I often say. At the moment when we ask the question concerning death, when we think deeper about it: We know that we will die, but we can never know *that* we have died. Thus, we are damned to eternity. The feeling for time at the moment of death is a complex thermodynamic phenomenon, it lasts only a few seconds, but it is long and complex as a phenomenon in our heads. In this respect, I return to Heidegger again: Being toward death.

PL: Over the many years you have been working as an artist, what have you learned about existence that was only made available to experience as a result of the work itself and the working process?

RO: I have to pay you a compliment here. Only rarely has anyone asked me such good questions. Like I said, when I paint numbers, it is like a stroll, like Heidegger on his path through the fields. And then you have the chance, the freedom, to ask interesting questions. Not that I always have philosophical questions when I paint. From time to time there is this moment when I can ask such questions because I am in the midst of realizing this program. Never before has a person had so much time to face such questions. And that is precisely the program, this path, this process, to paint the numbers. Never has a person ever been so free. The pharaohs maybe, they were very powerful and they had the pyramids. In a certain respect what I paint is also a pyramid. This is a freedom that perhaps not even a philosopher may create for himself. I do not need that. This is why at the beginning I also had no desire for interpretation, this was supposed to be self-evident.

PL: This matter of freedom is something most people will probably not understand.

RO: They see the exact opposite. "You are a slave of your concept". My answer to them would be: "You are a slave of your existence". Like Sartre was.

PL: Was there ever a point in your life where you would have liked to break out of the concept, where you thought it would have to be different, would have to be broken up, would have to take a different direction?

RO: No, the concept or program just came about. Then I was in the hospital. If you are in the hospital as a young person, it is a

good opportunity to think about your life. And I thought about existence and of course, about art. I was already in it so deeply, I was unable to say: Now I will assume another profession. I did already have the feeling that art no longer made any sense. Today we see it very clearly. I was the precursor of this problem. I was not the first, Cézanne already said it, Malevich, Rodchenko. It is easy to state it. But how can we make it into a work? There is this sacrifice I referred to, this sacrifice to the monument of nonsense. That was the chance to paint another work. It was a tragedy maybe, as a poet or philosopher I could have perhaps done something else, but I was into painting. I didn't want to leave it. It was my obsession. I wanted to save painting. I did save it but as the last moment of the history of painting. I mean, the picture has a right to be. This issue also has a philosophical aspect: Why should I make a picture? Does a picture still make any sense? Maybe it doesn't at all, just like all of history. But this monument to nonsense has never been witnessed before. Often you don't see this from the outside because people do not take the time to really understand the concept. People no longer have any time to think. The critics are in hurry, have to write something fast about Kosuth, Richter, Opalka… I have to say as well: You cannot accept everything in art, I am almost of the opinion: When there is Opalka, then there is nothing else. I could imagine that you think this is almost pathological to think like that, but if you accept something like my work, then you can no longer esteem other living artists of today so highly. This is like taking a shower, it is over and done with, the end. This is the completion of the history called painting.

PL: Why should an 'end' like this not be the condition for a new beginning?

RO: After such a shower? Maybe, but not right away. Perhaps after a while people will understand it and my work will present a new opportunity, just like monochromy was my chance.

PL: But young painters also have this obsession for painting. Every artist has to start somewhere, it is not a point you choose, you start where you have to start, depending upon the respective place you are at in your existence.

RO: Yes, but young painters have reached a tragic point in history. Of course, you can say the entire avant-garde makes no sense for us, we will go our own way. Fortunately, this is what they think. But concepts like mine belong in a historical line from Rodchenko, Malevich, etc. It comes from these surroundings. I am still able to consider myself as the last avant-garde that has the right to say this because such a concept has never been presented before. I am a concept painter. There are so many possibilities for being a concept artist, it is easier to be an artist now than ever before in history. But everyone these days is intelligent. There are thousands of universities throughout the world today. In Poland there are at least ten art academies. This may be a tragedy for the people. They could try it but the chances are very slim. Not because they do not have talent. History has simply gone very far with these pointed issues concerning the meaning of art.

1 Raymond Moody, *Life after Life,* San Francisco 1975.
2 Roman Opalka. *Octogone,* Musee d'Art Moderne Saint-Étienne Métropole, 18 May—23 June 2006.
3 "According to Heidegger each person is in the world to die. I, on the other hand, manifest life, by living as well as painting the emotion of existence." Roman Opalka, Die Irreversibilität der Zeit und die Ewigkeit. Ein Gespräch mit Heinz-Norbert Jocks, in: *Kunstforum International*, Band 150 April –June 2000, pp. 170-181, quote p. 175.
4 Ibid., p. 173.

ANTONY GORMLEY

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Gormley studio, London, UK, 13 August 2008

*Antony Gormley (*1950, UK) makes 3-dimensional works that deal directly with the presence of his own body. Gormley's own body is the point of departure to discuss the human body in general, which he understands as a place of memory and transformation. Most of his early works are based on the process of casting his own body; in these works Gormley's body functions as subject, tool and material. His more recent works deal with the body in a more abstract or indirect way and are concerned with the human condition. These large scale works explore the collective body and the relationship between self and other.*

Karlyn De Jongh: In an interview with Declan McGonagle, you have spoken about a transcendental or utopian reading of your work as being 'too easy.' What do you mean here by 'too easy?' How do you understand a transcendental reading? And how do you read your work?

Antony Gormley: Religious art and specifically Christian images of the crucifixion are icons of suffering which promise escape. I think we've evolved from that position of needing idols that give us succour. My works are instruments for spatial awareness. When I say 'spatial awareness,' I don't just mean space out there; I mean a reconciliation of spatial proprioception with space at large. Sometimes I use scale, as in the Lelystad project in Flevoland, Netherlands, or with *Field* (1990), to open up a certain reflexivity in the viewer. This has nothing to do with the old economies.

KDJ: Do you think transcendence is always religious?

AG: That's certainly the way that it's conventionally understood. If we are thinking about transcendence in terms of displacement, I'm much more comfortable with the term. I'm interested in disorientation. One of the functions of using scale is a certain disorientation. But I have to say that I'm interested in those very deep relationships to image like the one that Gombrich mentions where we find it difficult to push a needle into the eyes of a portrait; the persistence of the attributes of power that we unconsciously give to the image.

There's no question that the *Angel of the North* (1995/98) plays with a very atavistic and totemic idea of the image. At the same time, I would say that there are levels of irony involved in it. Not irony for its own sake, but simply irony in order to detach it from anything transcendental: the fact that this is an angel that will never fly and it's made out of 200 tons of steel; an angel of a very material kind. The *Angel* is a good example of something that tries to refigure the notion of transcendence. The work is produced, like the iron castings using industrial production; it's a very long way from the 'incense and angels' association.

KDJ: You just mentioned E.H. Gombrich. In a conversation with him, you stated that in your work you "re-invent the body from the inside, from the point of view of existence." Would you explain what you mean with this 're-inventing,' and what do you mean with 'existence'?

AG: The second question is the most important. The classical image of the male sculptor is somebody who does a lot. I try to do very little. I am not acting on the world; I'm staying with it at its moment of origination. Why should I act, as if this kind of determinism is the only way for sculpture to have a call on our attention? Can we start with being itself as the primary focus? Why act on a material that is outside of my own sense of being when the material question that I face everyday is embodiment?

We can leave aside the questionable notions of 'I,' 'me' and 'mine,' and instead ask: In this dual condition of being—both material and conscious—what do I, as a conscious mind, have to deal with? It is the materiality of the body. Can I as a sculptor deal with this as my first material? I think of myself as a sculptor, working from the core condition of embodiment. I'm not making another body; I'm starting with my own, the only bit of the material world that I inhabit. To that extent, I'm working from the other side of appearance. I'm not trying to make a copy; I'm not trying to reproduce an image. The work comes as a byproduct of a moment of being taken out of the stream of duration in which all conscious beings are living.

KDJ: Many of your works are casts of your own body. Casting is a process of adding rather than taking material away. How do you see the multiplicity of the casts you make of your body? How do you understand the casts in relation to your own existence? Are they extensions of yourself?

AG: It's a trace. You could say there's desperation as a result of being uncertain about the continuity of time. But it's also an abstraction.

By continually remaking the primary condition of being, remaking the body that I didn't choose but I arrived with, the question of what that body is, is multiplied into something that is no longer mine.

KDJ: That you arrived with a body, does that mean you don't see your sculptures as you?

AG: No. But my body isn't mine, either. It's a temporary tenancy. So, yes, I'm in this body at the moment, but I could be out of it as much as I'm out of any of those iron ones out there. But I think it's a mistake to be saying 'my body.' We call it 'my body' like we call it 'my house' or 'my city'; that's a convention, not a truth.

KDJ: Is that the reason why you want to and also can incorporate the viewer, why a viewer can be the subject in your work?

AG: It's good to hear that you, as a woman, suggest it is so possible. Some women have problems with the fact that this is a penis-loaded body. My reply is that the way I'm using it has little to do with heroism or the norms of maleness. In fact, the work questions gender determinism.

KDJ: If you cannot speak of 'your' body but only about 'a' body, does it really matter whether it is a male or a female body?

AG: There's a very early work that I will never sell, called *Seeing and Believing* (1988). It's a pregnant male body, a body without breasts that is pregnant. There's a hole at the navel, you could say that this work deals with the notion of indwelling; that is, the idea that the body is itself the first form of architecture, the first shelter, and that all bodies come out of other bodies, it is the material condition from which we look out or we reach out through our perceptual bridges to the wider world; a receptive state.

I would say the work is very quiet. It's not demonstrative even though there may be many of them. If you go to Rotterdam now, you'll see that there are 21 sculptures standing on top of buildings, on the edge, between the earth and the sky, 4 others on the roads, asking where the mind might fit in a material world, or where the human project might fit. *Time Horizon* will be an installation of 100 figures at 2,000 meters above sea level in the Alps, stretching over 150 square kilometers; a much bigger *Field*, where the work will literally disappear. We might start getting them up there this winter in order to benefit from the snow and winch them up on sledges: they weigh 630 kilos each.

I made a number of these installations 'at the edge'; in the sea, on the skyline of the city, and now in the mountains. They're all asking the same question: "Where does this thing that we call a human body belong?" Maybe it doesn't belong anywhere.

KDJ: How does your abstract notion of the body stand in relation to its physicality, to its being here-and-now? What importance does the physicality of your body have for you?

AG: You need the physicality of your own body to see it. I think that's the point. If we go back to the first question, we could think that they are singular objects, like the piece that I'm making for Lelystad, Netherlands. But increasingly, the work is becoming a field phenomenon. Like the works you saw down in my studio, dissolving from a body defined by skin and a mass into a field phenomenon. Or simply through the multiplication of elements, through which you make a field phenomenon. In both you have to look around. If you look at this bubble matrix cloud—you have to really look around it. You need to use your own existence as the necessary register. The body that really counts is the body that has the mind in it. So in the end, the viewer does the work—and it may be more than 50 percent. Duchamp's 50 percent may not be enough.

KDJ: You have described your work with the concept of 'space' and you just mentioned the body as a first form of architecture. In reference to your work, what do you mean with these concepts of 'space' and 'architecture'? How would you explain 'space' and 'architecture' in relation to 'body'?

AG: This is such a big question. Take for instance the Newton/Leibniz debate about space as the container of all things; as an almost god-like conditionality. Leibniz suggests that this space is not a basis, but simply the relation between objects. We don't need to think about the ultimate conditionality, but infinity is the thing that gives sculpture its authority; the position of an object or group of objects has a relation not only with all other objects, terrestrial and celestial, but with everything that lies beyond the perceptual horizon.

I think the biggest challenge that I've faced for the whole of my working practice is how you reconcile imaginative space that is grounded in the body with space at large. In very simple early works, like *Full Bowl* (1977-78), there's a void in the core. You get a sense of indeterminacy with the edge of this mass of bowls that could go on forever. It suggests that there's a relationship between an intimate and an extending void. . .

The same is true of the relationship between the space that we enter when we close our eyes and space at large. When I am awake

with my eyes closed and ask the question "Where am I now?" I am somewhere but the world as a visual object is not here. This space of consciousness is contained in a physical space. Those two spaces somehow have to be reconciled. The latest attempt that I've made to reconcile them is *Blind Light* (2007), where you get the same sensation but within light. If you went outside in the garden and closed your eyes in the middle of a starless night, you would be in a darkness inside a darkness. If you worked on it, it could be brought into some harmonic relationship. With *Blind Light* you walk across a threshold into a room with 7,000 lumens of bright daylight but you can't see anything. You can't even see your hands or your feet. You're awake, you're conscious, you're in space, but the space no longer has any coordinates. This is the closest I've come to a physical reconciliation of these two spatial realities.

KDJ: When I first came across your work, I thought the relation between the viewer and your sculpture was in a way a hermeneutical one. But it has nothing to do with hermeneutics, has it?

AG: No, it's the opposite of hermeneutics. All the art that interests me aspires to subvert the symbolic order. Our ability to read the world, to read objects, to put a name to a form, is so developed that you could say we don't see anymore. We are blinded by our own vision, by our ability to ascribe quality, name, and function to everything that surrounds us.

This is what I understand by hermeneutics: our ability to turn physical material, perceptual reality, into symbolic understanding. I think for me *Blind Light* was an attempt to escape from that condition. You probably know more about hermeneutics than I do.

KDJ: The concepts of time, space and existence have been mentioned by you from a very early stage in your career. In your Slade Statement *of 1979, for instance, you speak about time and say: 'To act in time and be acted on by time.'*

AG: That was a very long time ago. But it's still not bad.

KDJ: I am interested to know how time is presented in your work. How do you understand this relation between your artistic acts and the influence of time?

AG: Well, because every work starts ontologically from this moment of lived time; a living body in a real time; in a particular space. The results of that ontology are then exposed. So you could say it's a matter of biological time, industrial time and sidereal time. You make something that starts with this lived moment of human time, you translate it into an object that is made in industrial time—in other words, the time of mass-production. You then expose that to sidereal time by, for instance, putting these things into the liminal position of the beach, where it disappears entirely from view every 12 hours because it's covered in sea. And then it re-emerges, and through this rhythm its material condition changes.

So what is happening to an object reminds us of having to be timely, but also of getting older; the wearing out, the falling off. Time is a substance through which we experience space, and it's very active. I think this is something that I share with Olafur Eliasson. Take the general theory of relativity: we are only just beginning to really live space-time in terms of being able to physically understand that time is a dimension of space and space is a dimension of time. Or the fact that something like cyberspace collapses space, and that we can talk to people at the same time, whether they're in Beijing or Los Angeles. So the old idea about bodily locomotion as defining the duration between points has disappeared. This is why sculpture in its ability to make places becomes so important.

KDJ: You have mentioned your work as being ahistorical, but on the other hand, you say that time is actively present in your work. How do these aspects go together?

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AG: I mean that I'm not a painter of daily life. I'm not an artist who wants to reflect this time in a mirroring manner. I'm very interested in time, but I don't want my work to derive its value from where it sits in some historical continuum. It's not my ambition. I would like the work to be useable as an instrument now and in the future. In a way, I'm trying to make an astrolabe that will function for as long as consciousness is around. I'm not interested in making an instrument that is going to be obsolete in five years because somebody's invented a new chip. And I am not interested in making pictures of now but in engaging your now.

I'm intensely interested in history as a resource for the future that we might imagine. But that doesn't mean to say that I want to refer to it directly. It's very important that I'm familiar with it. We live in a time of the present-ness of history like no other. In a way, this puts a certain burden on us to make things that can have a dialogue with the depth of history. I'm basically telling you that I'm never going to be a fashionable artist—and I feel very lucky.

KDJ: Rather than mirroring it, would you say that your work is a product of this time?

AG: Yes, completely. You can't escape that. But I'm not illustrating it.

KDJ: You have spoken about the current state of art and mentioned that you think art nowadays should have a residue of art history, but also be approachable for someone whose visual world is mainly articulated by television commercials, etc. In what way do your works reflect on both these worlds? Do your works demonstrate a certain truth about contemporary existence?

AG: I don't have to do anything about it; to bear witness you have to acknowledge your condition. I'm living now, and the tools that I use—and I use them all—are physically and mentally different from the tools that my parents used or my children will use. Every room in this studio has a relatively modern computer. We have programs and we're investing in software that allows me to use digital technology at its most advanced. Even though it's taken us 4 years to make, the work I'm making for Holland represents the very forefront of what's possible in engineering terms. In all those ways I am absolutely of my time.

In a 1986 statement I say that I want the work to be "free from history." You have to see that statement in the context of the 1980s when there was a lot of work being made that made very conscious reference to art history. It was art about art, and that is what I was trying to escape from.

KDJ: Earlier you mentioned the question of where the human body belongs and that it may not belong anywhere. How is this question of belonging related to the locations where you present your work? How important is location and the history of a location for you? Does a location affect your work?

AG: Completely. I try to start with the place. A body comes into it even if the body isn't figured. Take for instance *Another Place* (1997)—the 100 works on the beach. It's interesting that even though that has now found a permanent site on the banks of the Mersey outside Liverpool it absolutely came out of the Wattenmeer. I wouldn't have made it without that really extraordinary place: the mouth of the River Elbe where the sea comes in over seven kilometers. The quality of light and the way that the sky is reflected in the earth conveys a feeling of being at the edge, and yet at the same time of being in the 'now.' It is not sublime and romantic in the traditional sense at all because of the big container ships that continually cross the horizon; the same as at Crosby Beach.

Anyway, I'm always juggling the moving place of embodiment and a particular place. There may be anxiety about the displacement of art from the structures of higher values. Some consider it a loss, but I think of it as freedom. We no longer need the frames, the plinth, the institution. Isn't that the most wonderful thing to make something that simply can be? Whether it stands or lies or sits or falls, it's just a thing that exists and endures in space and time, in darkness and in light, in rain and in shine: a thing in the world, really in the world. It needs no excuse; it needs no mediation; it needs no protection. For me, to be given a place is an amazing thing. If somebody says, "Here is a room, here is a field, here is a mountain, here is a city. Make something for it," my heart leaps!

KDJ: Has your love for these locations in the open air anything to do with the natural circumstances?

AG: A space outside is at the top of my list of sites. To allow an object to be without shelter, to make something that shares the condition of a tree or a mountain, is a great inspiration. The condition of a museum takes the object out of its context, out of where it's working, where it has a life, and puts it where it can be read. And the function of the museum is to catalogue and conserve objects that have ceased to have a life. If the museum and the ability of objects to be categorized and read becomes the matrix by which things are given value, we have lost our faith in the potential of art to affect life and even of the idea that human beings can have some part in evolution.

This is what worries me about our project—the human project—at the moment. Talking about hermeneutics, we are so involved in our ability to turn the object into a symbol that we no longer live directly. The power of art to break through the symbolic order, the inexorable process of things becoming words is its most critical function. I believe that dumb objects can catalyze our lives and allow us to sense existence more intensely.

KDJ: How would you describe the presence of your work in that respect? Does it confront an awareness of being, existing?

AG: I think so. 'That thing exists; therefore, so do I.' The only excuse for that sculpture existing is that it reinforces the existence of the receiver. I would say that the work is empty; it has little symbolic function, no narrative function. Its only power is, in a sense, what it makes the subject reflect or project. And the subject is always in the viewer. How these things work on place is that they are a form of acupuncture. They are simply a way of making place count. What's already there is the thing that matters. I think that they are a reversal of the old obsession with figures and grounds; these repeated body forms are essentially void grounds, the place where somebody once was, and anybody could be. The work inverts the figure-ground relationship: the ground becomes the figure, and the figure becomes place or space; a void space where the viewer by implication could be one with himself.

Anyway, that's my proposal. Whether it works is another matter. It's interesting because I think people were very resistant to the work 20 years ago. Mind you the work has changed a bit: it's gone from boxes to masses. But I think people's reactions, people's ability to use the work for spatial awareness, seem better now. Maybe it's just because I have been doing it for longer. Or maybe the work is more direct now. Or maybe it's because the lead pieces were so distant. The reactions of people to the *Field* works suggest that people are really inhabiting the space that the work activates in a reflexive way.

KDJ: Would you say that your recent work is, in a way, more approachable for people than what you did 20 years ago?

AG: Maybe. The old work was extremely fanatic. I said: 'This is the box that contains the mold that contains the space that contained the person,' and people thought: 'This is a bad statue: cold, clumsy and dummy-like.' I sympathize but I couldn't think of any better way of doing it at the time.

KDJ: Why do you think they were seen as clumsy?

AG: Because they are. I mean, that's part of the way they are. They are muffled or there's some sense of their being suffocated. You're given a surface but the surface is not revealing. What is hidden is not coming through. In the pieces here outside the studio you can see everything from the cling film to the way the metal is poured; it's much more direct. Rather than implying this displaced place where a body once was, they now reveal it as a mass. It's still a space, but it's been translated to a mass. I still like the lead works. But I recognize that they didn't work directly.

KDJ: One last question. In your monograph published by Phaidon, you have selected a text by St. Augustine: two parts of his Confessions that both discuss memory. How do you understand memory in relation to your work? If you think about the importance St. Augustine's words have for you and that they are written in 400 AD, what is your approach to history? And the religious aspects of the text, did these affect you?

AG: I was brought up Catholic. St. Augustine's relationship with his mother is very interesting; not unlike mine. I think he's an extraordinary figure. He's an early Rolling Stone who found religion rather than drugs. His writing is unbelievably beautiful and potent. He asks that big question: How is it that the mind is too strait to contain itself? Tibetans talk about the sky-nature of mind, the suggestion that consciousness has the potential of infinite extension. And yet, here we are, in this house of a body that is very finite. But for Augustine, consciousness in memory is an infinite mansion of many chambers. He recognizes the fact that we can go to times that are also places. If we dwell there, we can recover more potently than when we're there in real time. Our ability to return to this many-roomed mansion of memory is also the root from which we can extend, in our thinking, to other places where we have never been.

I think of art as always being a communication with that which has not happened, a communication with those that will never meet—and maybe even not with human beings. I think some of the most beautiful things that human beings have ever made are not about communication between us, but a need to communicate something that is in a way unconceivable, impalpable, ineffable and incommensurable—that lies on the other side of our perceptual horizon.

KRIS MARTIN

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Martin studio, Ghent, Belgium, 12 November 2008

*For Kris Martin (*1972, Belgium) time is the primary motive in his art practice. Martin sees himself as an observer; his work is conceptual. Convinced that material can carry thoughts, he uses well-known or everyday objects in a defamiliarizing way. With these 'little gestures' he tries to infect the brain of his audience: he attempts to show something in a way that you have never seen before and change your attitude towards the object. Open for many interpretations, Martin's work generates an emptiness, a space to reflect on the complexity of life.*

Karlyn De Jongh: In your work you make references towards time and seem to encourage the viewer to reflect on what time means to him. Why is the reflection on time important to you?

Kris Martin: Time is important, because it is so difficult to deal with. For that reason time is an important motive throughout my work. Rather than a subject, it is a motive: something that is ongoing and returns each time I create a work.

There are several definitions of time. So far, the most interesting one that I have come across is a definition by St. Augustine: "if you ask me what time is I do not know, but if you do not ask me I know exactly what it is." In visual arts time is problematic: it is a dimension that is hard to represent; time becomes frozen. Everything is time and time is everything, but you cannot grasp what it is. Time is fluid; it constantly escapes. To give a visual piece a notion of time is a big challenge and that is why I am doing it.

KDJ: You live in this beautiful, historical city of Ghent, Belgium. Does the fact that you are surrounded by history affect your work?

KM: Absolutely. Living in an old city has a great influence: when I go out the door, I am amidst history. Although I cannot say how, the notion of time and the constant contact with time must affect my work in great extend. It is just a coincidence that I was born and raised here. Would I have been raised in Los Angeles, I am sure my notion of time would be different. My environment determines a large part of what I am doing.

I am generally very attracted to matter. Material has the fantastic ability to carry thoughts, feelings and also time. It survives us. Matter itself has no meaning, but you can give it meaning and that is fantastic. Sometimes I make work with found objects. Recently, for instance, I found a canon ball that was projected during the Napoleonic war, here in Flanders, Belgium. We do not know which canon projected it. What we do know is that this canon ball was…boom!… fired from a canon. Years later at a flea market I was holding it in my hand. The canon ball is here-and-now; I could not make it any better.

I should have a good reason for making an intervention on an object, to change something. It is about choices, generally. Putting this object in another context is not about dis-placement—we have seen that. Simply in my hands it became art. Not that I am a wizard, but I did have the thought that the canon ball is here-and-now. It is a silly idea, but it does infect your brain. And that is exactly what I am trying to do: infecting a brain. You see something in a way that you never saw it before; afterward you cannot help seeing it in another way.

KDJ: Many of your works seem to be based on the idea of continuation after your own death. For example, the work 100 Years *(2004) goes beyond our physical time.*

KM: Everyone puts a stamp on life. The stamp you place on life is to show 'I was here'. This is one of the clichés I touch upon. Of course I am ambitious, but at the same time I try to see my existence as something relative. I am 99% certain that in 100 years I will be totally forgotten. In 2104 I will not be there, but ten bombs explode which indicate my existence: Martin existed. There is a chance of 1% that people did take care of the work and then it will be happening: Martin's bombs are exploding. The work plays with time and mortality. I enjoy flirting with clichés.

KDJ: Your work also references icons of art and literary history.

KM: Yes, I like doing that. I don't pretend to make anything new; I make work that is particular: I am an individual. You do things in a particular way for you are you; I do it as well. There are classical themes in art history, such as a skull, that every artist should create. It reveals a lot about yourself, about your time, about how you look at death… You can read a lot from an image. *Still Alive* (2005) is the first skull in art history that is made of a living person.

Formerly, death was a condition for making the skull visible; now, it is simply done by a scanner. Nobody touched the skull, but it is a skull and it is definitely mine.

KDJ: You want your work to live beyond your death, but at the same time you have made works that are self-destructive, such as Vase *(2005) and* 100 Years. *These works show a continuation that seems finite.*

KM: I am a product of my time. I prefer to be formally boring and interesting in terms of content, rather than vice versa. Sometimes my work is self-destructive, but maybe that is a part of me. But it is also about creating: when something breaks it might be the condition for something else. It may be the condition for creation in general. Every time I smash a vase and glue the pieces back together, it is turning into something else. It is not a beautiful vase anymore, but something different. The original form is taken away and replaced by thoughts.

KDJ: The continuation of something through repetition and slight changes seems to question its end. For example, in End Points *(2004) you removed final full stops from a number of books. These open ends put classics, such as Dostoyevsky's* The Idiot *in a new perspective. How do you understand this change? What do you think happens to these classics? How do you look at the end? Can you speak of an end?*

KM: I often wonder about that. It depends on your perspective, of course. If you see life as linear then you can speak of a beginning and an end. If you imagine it is circular, then you are part of a continuity. Because of our mortality, we constantly deal with the end. But: the end could also be a condition for a beginning. The work *End Points* is in fact ongoing: when I read a book that is important to me, I cut out its endpoint and fix it on a sheet of paper. The piece indicates the very importance of literature in general: a good book changes you after reading. The end is a condition to reflect. Only after you have gone through the story, it starts; it starts after the full stop.

KDJ: When it starts only after you are finished reading, would you say these full stops are both end and beginning at the same time?

KM: Yes, after the full stop you may have thoughts that you never had before. Having these thoughts means that the book changed you: you are not the same person you were before reading. It is these slight differences that I try to provoke. Not more than that, though: I am quite realistic.

With my work I try to give a certain emptiness: a space to look or think. At the beginning of my career, I made a picture of an empty box which I had found on the street. It was a sort of terrarium. I showed nothing, on purpose, but people were looking at the picture without being bored. The viewer was able to fill in—or not—something for him or herself. I captured this ability and use it in my work. It is not out of humbleness that I claim not to make more than 50% of my work; the other 50% is fulfilled by the viewer. In that way, the object lives its life. It is impossible to complete something. An open end can be a beginning.

KDJ: How do you see the future for your art?

KM: Better and better… I grow older. I am now 35. A man of 35 is not able to say things that are as interesting as the words of a 70-year-old. The 70-year-old has seen more of life. That I see my future positively also has to do with content. The pieces I made eight years ago—when I started making art—are much weaker. I am proud of them, because they are made by a mind of twenty-something. But I do hope that when I am 45-years-old I will have the same opinion.

KDJ: You often use the title Mandi*, followed by a number. The addition of 'III' or 'VIII' to Mandi seems to indicate a sequence or series. How do you understand these numbers? How does the number stand in relation to the name Mandi?*

KM: I force myself to give every piece a title: 'untitled' is too easy. It is sometimes difficult to name a work: the title may be too loaded, it can change your focus, or it makes you think differently about the piece. I don't want that. One of the titles that I use is Mandi. Mandi is in fact a greeting which I learned by coincidence in Friuli, a region in the north of Italy. I was there to make the flip board (*Mandi III*, 2003). In the evening I went to a pub. Everyone who left said "mandi". Someone told me its meaning: 'man' comes from 'mano' and 'di' from 'dio'; in the hand of God. It is like a farewell, you use it when you don't know whether you will see each other again. I thought it was beautiful. Mandi: there is a destination, there is a time, but you give it out of your hands. It is a red line throughout my work. Whether it is the flip board or another piece, Mandi covers the content.

KDJ: You have mentioned that the flip board does not show information, but to me it does: the absence of information on the flip board is information, too.

KM: Yes, I am sure. That is the gap I show. Within this gap you can fill in something of yourself. That is in fact the best example of my attitude towards the audience. In this piece it is very clear that I need your imagination, your time and effort to reflect. I don't give much; I just give a frame. I dare to touch the big questions of life, because I don't oppose you to think in a certain direction.

To create a work is a big responsibility. It is a decision. If I decide that the pen I have here is a piece, people will consider it to be a piece. When the pen is sold, I praise myself lucky, but the pen will haunt me later. One day someone will come up to me to ask what it is about. If I cannot explain the 'work' at that very moment, I am in trouble. When do you decide something is a piece? This is a great responsibility. On the other hand, you need the work to be made in a spontaneous way. The responsibility and the need to be spontaneous are in fact in a constant fight. You constantly need to think and re-think your attitude. It is only attitude. I never have the feeling I make something. I always have the perception of something happening through me; I feel as if I am a medium. I am not a writer and I am not a text. I am a pen and I act like a pen. The only thing I can do is make images.

KDJ: You see your position as an artist mainly as a medium. Does that mean you have the same importance as the material you work with?

KM: Yes. I am just observing, taking something, and giving back. Maybe in a different form or a different context, maybe with other connotations, but that is all. I am an observer. I don't have the feeling I make something. It is more about discovering and choosing things: you have one million objects and you extract one. Therefore, I am really happy with an *object trouvé* or a ready made, because I don't have to touch it, it is like the canon ball I told you about.

KDJ: One could say that you touch these objects with your thoughts.

KM: Yes, with my mind. Absolutely. That is what I try to do. Something happens between people which is provoked by my little gesture. I will show you one piece that is about religion: *Idiot IV* (2007). The piece is very important to me as it shows a lot about my religious feeling. The cross seems to close its eyes. It is as if it is saying: "I don't want to see it anymore. Give me a break, I am just human." The piece is shocking: I use an icon. It is far more difficult to use this icon than the *Laocoön*. I mean, billions of times people did something with crosses. And it still happens in contemporary art. This simple gesture of closing its eyes makes the cross a key piece. Is there a god? You are left deciding for yourself whether there is a God or not.

KDJ: If one does not know that you are a religious person, this piece could also be about disbelief or the death of God. It seems the work is open for contradictory interpretations.

KM: Yes, absolutely. Maybe Nietzsche would have loved it. I am fine with that. Both interpretations are good. Normally, images do not work in so many directions. That is what I am trying to force myself to do: to make an image that could work in many, many directions. The complexity is dealing with the complexity. Allowing it and not making it easier by simply focusing on your own little opinion.

KDJ: We have now discussed several aspects of time, such as the time of history, the time of the artwork, lifetime, the time on the clock, etc. Are they all the same for you or would you say they are different?

KM: Maybe it is all the same. We try to understand time and capture it, but it simply is not possible. As a consequence time is so interesting and so beautiful. Everything that we can control becomes uninteresting; the things we cannot control are still the most beautiful ones. You cannot control sunset, but everyone likes it. With time, it is the same. Everything is time and we are just part of it, I think. I am a product of my time.

HERMANN NITSCH

Conversation with Peter Lodermeyer

Prinzendorf castle, Austria, 18 December 2008

*Hermann Nitsch (*1938 in Vienna, Austria). In 1957, Nitsch conceived of the idea of a six-day play called 'Orgien Mysterien Theater'. Between 1962 and 2009 he staged more than 120 performances ('actions'). His work deals with archetypal themes such as birth and death, and addresses the excessive beauty and intensification of human existence. He lives in in Prinzendorf, Austria.*

hermann nitsch: what is your own stand on philosophy?

peter lodermeyer: i studied philosophy and have been influenced very much by kant, nietzsche and heidegger, my most important philosophical cornerstones. in addition i have devoted a lot of time to derrida and so-called post-structuralism.

hn: these have been my teachers and my guidelines as well, although as to Heidegger in particular, even though i greatly esteem him, i do not feel slavishly attached to him. for example, i have an entirely different notion of being than he does, and what is more, he does not hold the market on being, so many philosophers from antiquity until now have thought about being, and future philosophers will also be dealing with being. we need only think of nicolai hartmann, who has grappled with it just as intensively as heidegger. but this is not a criticism in any way. i value him greatly, though I do not condone his political aberrations. i see it like this: there is this person, who has something like a lens you can look into distant galaxies with, and then he cannot even perceive his own political situation from close-up at all, so that he then careens into his mistake.

pl: nietzsche above all is a very important figure for your work…

hn: that is actually the great, central religious experience.

pl: you call it 'religious'?

hn: i call it religious, since this affirmation of being that took place with him is a religious one, and it is actually still not perceived as such by the general public. and time and again: when i refer to philosophers, I do not wish to be their exegete nor have i become their slave. but nietzsche was a tremendous turning point. and if you compare schopenhauer with nietzsche, schopenhauer completes an old period in time, if brilliantly and with genius at that, but nietzsche constructs a new one. the way nietzsche deals with will, for example: schopenhauer wants the negation of the world or the will, certainly very well-versed in the teachings of buddha, and nietzsche says: yes! yes! yes! to this will and calls it the 'will to power'—whether we can still accept this after fascism is another question, but we understand what he means.

pl: and this affirmation of being stands central to your notion of art?

hn: yes, it is at the core of my notion of art. and my art is meant as a glorification of being. this affirmation of being is something entirely wonderful for me. and it should be included much more often in contemporary thought and in our practical actions. yet we still have a more or less christian set of ethics or an ethics in which things that are untenable in christian ethics are simply continued. but nietzsche's wholehearted affirmation of being, even stronger than it was in antiquity, is a grandiose and seminal philosophical experience for me.

pl: when did this breakthrough towards the unreserved affirmation of being take place in your own biography?

hn: i was not even 20 yet at the time. prior to this i had read a lot of schopenhauer, a lot about mysticism in all religions, about hinduism, buddhism, taoism, and had actually turned very much away from the world. but i read nietzsche at the same time, more or less rejecting him because i found him to be a heretic or someone who provokes by saying something that was untrue. i can still remember, it was in august, one day shortly before my 20th birthday. the weather was gorgeous, the first apples had ripened, the plums, and everything was still green. at the time i was living on the outskirts of the city, and i looked across the expanse, the orchards and the fields—and i thought: "this is supposed to be bearing a guilt? this magnificent beauty and joy of life and expression of life revealing itself out there before my eyes?" immediately there was a transformation and a goethe-like view of the world came about, namely that it is nothing but striving for a goal or absolute fulfillment. and all at once, the boundary between transcendence and immanence was cast down. years later, however, i ridded myself of this, and now see it as sort of a coming full circle, in which all of creation takes place perpetually. the goal is actually eternity, endlessness, borne out by permanent repetition, nietzsche's eternal return of the same, only not so slavishly conceived because this would be so terrible, he really believed that everything we experience will take place in exactly this form again. i was, and am, unable to believe this.

pl: I think we do nietzsche injustice if we nail him to this one thought. it seems to me that we are dealing with an ethical imperative: live in a way that you can want everything to return eternally.

hn: yes, maybe, that is a nice statement: "and all desire wills eternity". this is really the case. just when you are experiencing very intensively, then the will is there in the experience that it might never end, that it always repeat itself, like the seasons, everything might always come again. and then the unbelievable cosmic dimensions, everything will someday collapse on itself, destroy itself—and come back.

pl: whereby in cosmology both models exist, that of the death from complete cold, of the complete standstill, and more recently again, a theory that is rather cyclical.

hn: yes, the big bang, about which those of a revolutionary spirit believe that it is not a one-time event, but rather one that is everlasting, and then also the fact that in our world so many things permeate one another, not as a linear succession, but enmeshing into one another. just think of quantum physics, the new cosmology is highly interesting, above all because it works along the lines of archetypal models. i have also studied c.g. jung and he means very, very much to me. it is not right that he simply gets filed away. he means much more to me than the structuralists. the interesting thing is that notions such as the 'big bang' or 'black holes' are mythologems, which scientists more or less understand with scientific means. as philosophy persons we can learn a lot from this and yet, do not remain stuck fast in science.

pl: back to Nietzsche. i am very interested in your understanding of nietzsche because it seems ambivalent to me. you call your art 'theater', and refer to it as 'orgies mysteries theater'. nietzsche is someone, who was initially an enthusiastic follower, but then an opponent of richard wagner and in this context, he also rejected in particular the term theater. For him, theater was "always only beneath art."

hn: yes, you see, my theater is ultimately the abolition of the theater. there is an eternal desire for the gesamtkunstwerk, the overall work of art. perhaps skriabin was the most successful in his attempt at this, but with wagner it is confused by addition. you have the marvelous tristan text and then you more or less add music to it, whereby depending on the conductor you have, already great artistic adaptations of it have come about . for my concept of the gesamtkunstwerk what happens first is, and i am not alone in this, it applies to the entire international performance/happening/actionism-movement: we offer real happenings. at a happening it is already the case that nothing is acted out in mimicry any longer, but something real takes place. with my theater as well, which deals so much with myths and what art means, real events are staged that may be experienced with all five of our senses. a powerful difference to the old art! if you take a rilke poem or a george poem, you always have the memory of the smell of a flower, of a taste, a room temperature, a tactile experience, a visual experience. thus, by means of the word, which is so to speak, the symbol of what you have experienced, you have to summon to your memory something that once was. with my work, this is not the case. with my work everything actually happens. you taste it, you smell it, you look at it, you feel it. there is no medial detour any longer. the happening itself is what is decisive. i always say when i rehearse with my people, or when i explain the theory of my theater: nothing is play-acted here anymore, no one here is king lear, no one is hamlet, no one is faust. due to the score or the play script, it is that person himself, who has certain sensual experiences. this is extremely important, and it goes very far—earlier on i made much use of depth psychology and even today i am looking for the so-called 'basic excess'. this is an excessive experience that actually continually lurks within us. i would go so far as to say the excessive experience is then perhaps in the sexual act, that it has a connection there—but also in this big bang. there is a need within us to experience ourselves excessively to the point of self-destruction. whereby self destruction in turn has something to do with the dionysian return or resurrection. you have no need of a stage, no audience space, no stage set. if I look up, the stars light the sky for me, the cosmos, and it becomes visible in some way. and the cosmos does not play-act any theater with me. it plays itself as it happens. and in this respect, it is the breakthrough to a completely new concept of theater, which consists of my putting the happening in the place of the theater. the event is no longer a parable, it is! and i would like for my fellow participants in the happening to experience themselves in the context of the whole. i would like to construct a play that glorifies our existence, altogether comparable to a religious service.

pl: i am trying to understand in what relationship your art stands to myth. you once said something i found surprising, namely that you were concerned with a 'de-mythologization' and a 'de-symbolization'. normally your work is perceived as a 're-mythologization', if not a 're-paganization', as sort of a neo-paganism.

hn: that would be completely wrong. what is more, i have always emphatically rejected the contention that, for example, i perform ancient cult rites. i would have to use freud and jung in my arguments here, describing myth as the collective space of mankind. From this you can find the key to many causes. the coming to grips with myth in my work is more a de-mythologization than it is the opposite. but nevertheless we can only set about de-mythologizing, if we study the nature of the myth. not de-mythologization in the way that bultmann understood it, i don't know, but that just remains theology, that is too little for me. it's like this: if you look at something intensely, it suddenly pales. and i say all the time: with my theater i want to understand and narrate the history of consciousness. and i can't do this without myth. and it is also simply wrong that all the movements that differentiate themselves from one another, really differentiate themselves from one another and fail to deal with what they want to overcome.

pl: so you would see your work as a de-mythologization and not as a return to something fashioned like…

hn: maybe it is both at the same time. but it is not a return to paganism, i am not interested in that. something completely new must be built up.

pl: paganism is a cliché that keeps occurring in the critiques of your work.

hn: yeah, and that is complete nonsense.

pl: there have always been all kinds of criticisms of your work, ranging from the dumbest insults to intelligent and well-informed objections. has there ever been any critical approach that became so seminal for you that it led to a change in the concept of the work?

hn: i don't think i am capable of it. for that i am too stubborn. but there is no criticism that isn't somehow legitimate. it only depends on the ammunition used. i could certainly imagine writing a book where I criticize myself as radically as possible.

pl: i would love to read it.

hn: i wrote an essay in a book where many of my friends had written about me on the occasion of my 70th birthday. and there, under a pseudonym, i wrote an article about myself. i plan to write a book about my work some day, seen from a third-party position. so, under these conditions i could envision totally refuting myself (laughs). this is a phenomenon of consciousness or a creative phenomenon, which has emanated from me for fifty years now, and that can be reflected upon as well.

pl: what is the situation concerning the meaning of the relics of your happenings? are these as important as the process that led to their creation?

hn: first of all the process is vastly important, the process is actually everything. this lasts, say, a week, beginning at some point and ending at some point. within this period of time it has taken place. then there are the documentations, photographs, videos (i reject films, because they would mean a return to the picture frame stage). the decisive thing is then this event within time.

pl: what notion of time is fundamental to your work?

hn: my notion of time is not at all original, i have to admit, but nothing better has come up yet: i think that there is no such thing as time! time doesn't exist. there is only a temporal sense. here something begins and there something ends. be it a sunrise or a soccer match or a life. there are, as you well know, the pre-socratic philosophers with their notion that everything is in flux, panta rhei. there are simply two notions of the world: the one is that everything is in motion and that in reality no beginning and no end may be determined. just take a look at our fathers and grandfathers, this is then continued into the organic, the inorganic, up to the question of why is there anything at all and not nothing instead? and there is this cosmic belief for me—and here i must speak of 'faith'—it is there when i see that 'everything flows' and that also the dissolution of the individual is a form of flowing. that the individual was formed and is dissolved again. everything flows—there is no beginning. the mystics of the great religions are familiar with this as well, or even the almighty god was there eternally, is there eternally, and will be there eternally. And if you do not speak about god, then creation is eternally there, will take place eternally. i am a great opponent of the notion of the afterlife, but you can express it much more simply. i do not believe in the end. i do not believe in the beginning. i was always there and will always be there. and this is also something very, very important to me. this is a difference in the act of consciousness—whether I take a walk and understand that everything is in flux and that I am an integral part of it, or whether I merely think about the financial crisis and everything that is simply finite. i understand it a little bit differently than medieval mysticism, where the temporal is rejected in favor of the supernatural. the temporal is not the earthly, the temporal is, to a certain extent, the wrong approach.

pl: what concrete consequences does this notion of time have for your orgies mysteries theater? will there be performances after you die, for example?

hn: yes. the scores have been constructed so that any artistically-gifted person, in this case a director or conductor, will be in a position to reconstruct this again. with greek tragedy we do not really know how everything was exactly. we only have fragments, but still, even two thousand years later we can still perform them. and i would like my theater to be performed absolutely.

pl: would that then be carried out through an act of authorization, that certain people would be authorized for the performance?

hn: above all things i would not make it available to regular stage direction theater. stage direction theater has been a disaster for mankind. we fought for this new theater—and then they took the culinary part of it out again.

pl: you mean, they took the effects of the senses out of it…

hn: i strongly oppose it, have suffered greatly under it. only a very few have stood by me. they have stolen and stolen and stolen from me there. in salzburg I have repeatedly taught at the summer academy. my students said, down there in the theater, they show the battles of shakespeare, or whoever, with innards, flesh, and blood. they set off little baby revolutions there. and all has been domesticated and become very comfortable.

pl: your orgies mysteries theater must be a unit if it is to survive as an art form. hence the strict scores, the particular form. i am sure that your happenings trigger tremendous emotional forces in the actors, these have to be controlled or channeled.

hn: yes, if the action is not controlled, then what you have is a disgusting pig-pen that also has nothing to do with the dionysian.

pl: has there ever been a moment in your many performances where you thought the situation would tip, where there was a danger of things getting out of hand?

hn: almost never. once, in london, for example, the people followed my instructions to touch everything, squeeze out the grapes, etc., but then they destroyed nearly the entire structure i had set up. i had to hit the brakes, but that was, in turn, good, since it taught me once again how i have to master the situation when something like that happens, which is what I had always wished for and had never happened at other events because the people were too prude, for example. and then: it needs to be unbelievably fresh. like with painting. if you paint a picture closed with colors, it suffocates. like with brahms, or so it seems to me, when everything is so excessively overloaded and overlayered. then it turns dirty and unappetizing. also with a sort of orgy there always has to be a freshness about it. for example, clothes are changed continually, like with a cook who has to ensure that his food always arrives at the table fresh. the danger is always there but my scores should help to prevent this. people always reproach me by saying "ok, where is the dionysian part then? where is the spontaneity if there are such exact scores?" but the scores are there precisely to find the aleatory quality and to deal with chance.

pl: i have found a quote by peter gorsen from a review in 1998, in which he refers to nietzsche, saying in this sense essentially that your vision of the world is not acceptable for a humanistic-christian view of mankind.

hn: i am neither a humanist nor a christian although there are many christian symbols that fascinate me: the fact of love, the eucharist, which is something unbelievable, the mass as a gesamtkunstwerk, the overall work of art, as a continuation of greek tragedy and a precursor of what i do with modern theater. i do not embrace an anthropocentric notion of the world. i could certainly imagine that this creation might still produce something else. it doesn't have to be the idea of nietzsche's superman, but what he thought was certainly not insignificant. it is too confining for me to think of mankind only in an anthropological sense. although someone like max scheler has already come up with wonderful formulations. but it is too much whining for me. i do not always want to moralize or to be in a moral straight-jacket. i really don't want to be asocial, but nevertheless, always this social whining. this corset should not be put on the great philosophy of freedom. but that does not mean that i am not for an absolutely fair distribution of goods. i am familiar with gorsen's article and was very pleased about it. i can't quote him in detail right now, but he is completely right with it.

pl: which is what i wanted to get to: gorsen very clearly shows the front between you and christianity. are there only effects of repulsion or are there perhaps many more channels that go back and forth between the two fronts?

hn: maybe he is thinking more along the lines of nietzsche's thoughts. the world of christian symbols has always fascinated me. during guided tours at my museum in mistelbach people always ask me "why these christian symbols"? i was raised in this world. i consider myself to be an archeologist of religion, a phenomenologist of religion, and comparative religious science has a lot to do with my work. and very simply, these are the symbols that have made possible the entrance into the mine of my archeology of religion. And when i tell people that, usually they understand. and the christian symbols have also grown out of pagan symbols, and have been taken over from other religions. In my opinion christianity has come to prevail because there is a common denominator, from totemism to values taken over from greek tragedy and god knows what all. the monstrance is in reality actually also a symbol of the sun. and there is also the opportunity in christianity then to delve into the other, the precursor, the archaic. for example, the formula of 'death and resurrection', the formula has been adopted from initiation cults. i am already much too far away from christianity that i could be so humorless not to make use of christian symbols. the passion is so moving and harrowing that it goes far beyond christianity. this again touches upon greek tragedy and so on. so, i do not understand it at all when people are always attacking me from that side.

pl: when i think about what 'picture' from your performances has had the most lasting effect on me, the one that was for me the most thought-stimulating, then it is the scene with the actors with long poles with swords attached, who close in on one actor and all but place the swords at his chest. when did you include this 'picture' in your o.m. theater?

hn: relatively late. it goes way back and has to do with my opera experiences. i wanted to stage parsival. for political reasons this never came to fruition. and i thought, okay, then make your own parsival. that was in 2004, this two-day play here with the spears. also in a very usable version for the burgtheater in 2005 i made use of the spears. so it is relatively new. and it may certainly be viewed as a concession to the practice of the theater, where the spear and lance, including parsival, always play a major role in the theater. or also take painting, just think of velasquez's *the surrender of breda* or the quattrocento painters, with uccello. i grappled with this a lot, and even built up an extra group, half of them dancers, half of them actors. this is something late, but i do not wish to ever relinquish it, i will certainly continue to use it as a highlight in my theater.

pl: i thought the image was so strong because it is a collective group that sacrifices an individual symbolically. and what fascinates me is the precision or the care taken in stopping it. what kind of a motive is behind it, this (non-)sacrificing by the collective?

hn: you see, i would have to really go into detail now. i have a friend who has been lending his body to me for years as a passive actor. there is a text i wrote in which i confess the extent that an urge to kill exists in all of us and that we deal with it rightly or wrongly. here i would say: wrongly. this stems from the time when we were hunters and gatherers, out stalking animals, a wild boar for example, and then we brought it to bay and killed it or else were killed ourselves. and then there is certainly an urge to overcome and a killing experience we must deal with. i always then supply this somewhat kitschy

parable: you have face this killing experience with something more intense, and that would be love. i refer now to the altruistic notion of love, and i wrote about my friend: now he lies there before me—and now the moment arrives… i do not kill him! he is not cut up now and sacrificed. the act only goes so far as it is allowed to go.

pl: you convey this very strongly and that reminds me of the author rené girard, who has analyzed all of history and also mythology concerning the motif of the sacrificing of the individual, almost obsessively. but he does this with the twist that christ, through his self-sacrifice, has done away with this sacrificial logic, thus effecting cultural progress. how may we understand the motif of relinquishing the sacrifice in your case?

hn: it exists already in the old testament with abraham and isaac.

pl: yes, but the sacrifice is transferred to the animal.

hn: but that is already, after all, a process of sublimination. and in the celebration of the eucharist it is totally spiritualized, unbloody, though it continues to take place nevertheless. suffering, too, always continues to take place. i do not know whether christians today are still raised in this way but they used to say that christ died his redemptive death with each mass each time anew. hofmannsthal wrote something nice, the 'make-believe conversations'. the origin of poetry is comparable with the slaughter of a lamb, which also stands for something, for human sacrifice and so on. and poetry, the word then stands for the slaughter.

pl: you spent the first years of your life in the midst of the war and your father was killed in action during the war. and at the time something like real slaughter and killing was in the air. that had to be overcome somehow. could it be that some early childhood experiences play a role in your work?

hn: i am somewhat unsure about such sorts of self-interpretations, but of course, i have to admit that i experienced these bombing attacks as a four-, five-, and six-year-old child. first we always heard the 'cuckoo' in the radio and then we would go down to the air-raid shelter. people would be sitting there and praying. you never knew whether you were going to get out again alive. and then the attacks came and they kept saying, and this was macabre, but maybe it was also calming: as long as you can still hear the bombs, nothing will happen. you don't hear the bomb that kills you. and then we would crawl out, everything was black, clouds of smoke, the factories… that was in floridsdorf. my mother was crazy not to have fled with me to the countryside. and then it was macabre, that then suddenly a house would be half-torn down. that was surreal. back then i already understood that this civilization we have is extinguishable and may be called into question and that to a certain extent still can be. and this is where my relinquishment of language comes from. it was, as bad as it sounds, a mistrust of language. i have always said that i want my audience to actually experience with their senses. a word can never yell like a bleeding wound. today, of course, things are quite different, but i have these roots in me and still plan to do my work with these experiences. but back then… the russians raped the women. that did leave its mark behind on a sensitive person. naturally today, you can interpret everything the way you need or want to, but i am also a child of expressionism. expression was everything.

pl: your work is, of course, very strongly rooted culturally in the viennese modern, that is to say, in a specifically austrian context. it is very strongly rooted in catholicism. but can we understand this if we come from a different cultural background, from asia or africa, for example? have you ever done performances in asia?

hn: unfortunately, no. but now comes something people often have a hard time believing, although those who know me know that it is true: form is everything for me! and this is why i am sure that a person from asia or from other cultures would also be able to understand my work via the form. i have no desire to make ugly art. my entire life has been dedicated to beauty, even if this was and still is being achieved via such bloody portrayals.

pl: you turned 70 recently, have received two museums: this means you have certainly recently had an occasion to look back. when you reflect upon these long years of work with some good 120 performances, what is the strongest impression over all this time?

hn: i would actually do everything over again exactly the way i have done it. which does not mean that i have not made many mistakes. but in general, i would love to experience it all again. all of the scandals and so on, they weren't so bad.

pl: you mention mistakes. would you care to tell me what, in your opinion, your biggest mistake was?

hn: well (long pause), it is not a mistake, but only becoming a saint or only a… guru is such a stupid word, but to wholly devote your self to existence, to life, with a very deep, glowing, priestly seriousness… but this is not a mistake. i chose this path and i would choose it again. and otherwise: i believe my work comes across as very wagnerian, very braggardly and pompous, and perhaps i should have been more of a reclusive artist who only grappled with sounds. i don't know.

pl: but most likely, you don't have much of a choice. this is a very existential thing.

hn: yes, i believe you do not have a choice. it's just the way it is. you are very simply like this and like this…

pl: in the time you have left is there still a goal you still really want to accomplish in your work?

hn: i should intensify it even more. not with an actual goal, since the work is a given. i will realize it with even more testamentary character, so that it can go on without me some day.

HERMANN NITSCH

Gespräch mit Peter Lodermeyer

Schloss Prinzendorf, Österreich, 18. Dezember 2008

*Hermann Nitsch (*1938 in Wien, Österreich). 1957 konzipierte Nitsch die Idee eines sechstägigen "Orgien Mysterien Theaters". Seit 1962 gab es mehr als 120 Aktionen als Annäherungen an dieses Gesamtkunstwerk. Ziel von Nitschs Arbeit ist die "Existenzsteigerung", das exzessive Erleben der Schönheit des Seins. Nitsch lebt im Schloss Prinzendorf, Österreich.*

hermann nitsch: was haben sie als eigene philosophische position?

peter lodermeyer: ich habe philosophie studiert und komme sehr stark aus der richtung: kant – nietzsche – heidegger, das sind meine wichtigsten philosophischen eckpunkte. zudem habe ich mich sehr viel auch mit derrida beschäftigt und dem so genannten poststrukturalismus.

hn: das sind auch meine lehrmeister und meine linien, obwohl ich gerade heidegger, auch wenn ich ihn sehr verehre, in keiner weise sklavisch verbunden bin. ich habe zum beispiel einen ganz anderen seinsbegriff als er, außerdem hat er ja das sein nicht gepachtet. es haben sich so viele philosophen von der antike bis zur gegenwart mit dem sein auseinandergesetzt und es werden sich zukünftige philosophen mit dem sein auseinandersetzen. man denke nur an nicolai hartmann, der sich genauso radikal damit beschäftigt hat wie heidegger. aber das ist überhaupt keine kritik. ich schätze ihn sehr, aber mache nicht mit bei seinen politischen verirrungen. das sehe ich so: da ist ein mensch, der quasi ein objektiv hat, mit dem man ferne galaxien sehen kann, und dann kann er mit diesem objektiv die nahe politische situation überhaupt nicht wahrnehmen, sodass er dann in seinen irrtum hineinschlittert.

pl: vor allem nietzsche ist natürlich eine wichtige figur für ihre arbeit…

hn: das ist eigentlich das große, zentrale religiöse erlebnis.

pl: „religiös" nennen sie das?

hn: ich nenne es religiös, denn diese daseinsbejahung, die er vollzogen hat, ist eine religiöse und wird eigentlich als solche von der allgemeinheit noch immer nicht richtig wahrgenommen. und immer wieder: wenn ich mich auf philosophen berufe, dann möchte ich nicht deren exeget sein und bin ihnen nicht vollkommen verfallen. aber nietzsche war eine ungeheuerliche wende. und wenn sie schopenhauer und nietzsche vergleichen: schopenhauer schließt eine alte periode ab, wenn auch genial und großartig, aber nietzsche baut eine neue auf. wie nietzsche etwa mit dem willen umgeht: schopenhauer will, dass die welt oder der wille verneint wird, durch buddha sicher sehr belehrt, und nietzsche sagt: ja! ja! ja! zu diesem willen. das heißt dann „wille zur macht" - ob das nach dem faschismus noch zu verdauen ist, ist eine andere frage. aber man weiß, was er meint.

pl: diese daseinsbejahung steht im zentrum ihrer kunstanschauung?

hn: ja, sie steht im kern meiner kunstanschauung. und meine kunst soll eine verherrlichung des daseins sein. diese daseinsbejahung ist für mich etwas ganz großartiges. und die sollte viel mehr im zeitgemäßen denken und im praktischen handeln vollzogen werden. dabei haben wir doch immer noch eine mehr oder weniger christliche ethik oder eine ethik, in der das unbrauchbare der christlichen ethik fortgepflanzt wird. aber diese rückhaltlose bejahung des daseins bei nietzsche, stärker noch als sie in der antike da war, das ist für mich ein ganz großes philosophisches erlebnis.

pl: wann ereignete sich in ihrer biografie der durchbruch zu dieser rückhaltlosen daseinsbejahung?

hn: ich war damals gerade noch nicht 20 jahre alt. vorher hatte ich mich viel mit schopenhauer beschäftigt, viel mit der mystik aller religionen, mit hinduismus, buddhismus, taoismus, und war eigentlich sehr weltabgewandt orientiert. aber ich habe zu gleicher zeit nietzsche gelesen und ihn immer mehr oder weniger abgelehnt, immer als ketzer empfunden oder als jemanden, der provoziert und etwas sagt, was nicht stimmt. ich kann mich noch erinnern, es war im august, an einem tag kurz vor meinem 20. geburtstag. es war wunderschönes wetter, die ersten äpfelchen reif geworden, die pflaumen, es war noch alles grün. ich habe damals am stadtrand gewohnt, habe über die fluren gesehen, die obstgärten und felder— und dachte: „das alles soll austragung einer schuld sein? diese ungeheuerliche schönheit und lebensfreude und lebensverwirklichung, die sich da draußen vor meinen augen offenlegt? das kann nicht sein!" das ist sofort umgeschlagen, und ein goethehaftes weltbild ist entstanden, dass das ein einziges streben ist, im hinblick auf ein ziel oder eine absolute erfüllung. und sofort war die grenze zwischen transzendenz und immanenz umgeworfen. das habe ich dann aber jahre später abgelegt und sehe das jetzt eher als eine kreisbewegung, in der sich die ganze schöpfung immer ereignet. das ziel ist eigentlich ewigkeit, unendlichkeit, ausgetragen durch eine permanente wiederholung, nietzsches wiederkehr des gleichen, aber nicht so sklavisch gedacht. denn das ist ja furchtbar, der hat das ja wirklich geglaubt, dass alles, was wir erleben, genauso in dieser form wieder sich ereignet. das konnte und kann ich und will ich nicht glauben.

pl: ich denke, dass man nietzsche unrecht tut, wenn man ihn auf diesen gedanken festnagelt. mir scheint, dass es ein ethischer imperativ ist: lebe so, dass du wollen kannst, dass alles ewig wiederkehrt.

hn: ja vielleicht, das ist doch ein schöner satz: „und alle lust will ewigkeit". das ist doch auch wirklich so. gerade wenn du ganz intensiv erlebst, dann ist doch der wille im erlebnis da, dass das nie mehr aufhört, dass sich das immer wiederholt, wie die jahreszeiten, alles kommt immer wieder. und dann die ungeheuerlichen kosmischen ausmaße, das wird alles einmal in sich zusammensinken, sich zerstören - und wird wiederkommen.

pl: wobei es ja in der kosmologie beide modelle gibt, das des totalen kältetodes, des völligen stillstandes, und neuerdings wieder eine eher zyklische theorie.

hn: ja, der big bang, von dem die revolutionären geister glauben, dass das nicht ein einmaliges ereignis ist, sondern ein immerwährendes. und dann auch die tatsache, dass sich in unserer welt so viele dinge gegenseitig durchdringen, nicht als lineares nacheinander, sondern als ein ineinander. denken sie an die quantenphysik. die neue kosmologie ist hochinteressant, vor allem auch, weil sie gemäß archetypischer modelle arbeitet. ich habe mich ja auch mit c. g. jung beschäftigt, und er bedeutet mir sehr viel. der wird ja auch zu unrecht ad acta gelegt. mir bedeutet er viel mehr als die strukturalisten. das interessante ist, dass vorstellungen wie der „big bang" oder „schwarze löcher" mythologeme sind, die die wissenschaftler mehr oder weniger nachvollziehen mit ihren wissenschaftlichen mitteln. da kann man als philosophierender mensch sehr viel lernen und bleibt doch nicht in der wissenschaftlichkeit kleben.

pl: zurück zu nietzsche. mich interessiert sehr ihr nietzsche-verständnis, weil mir das ambivalent erscheint. sie bezeichnen ihre kunst als „theater", als „orgien mysterien theater". nietzsche ist jemand, der erst ein begeisterter anhänger, dann ein gegner richard wagners war und in diesem zusammenhang insbesondere auch den begriff des theaters abgelehnt hat. theater war für ihn „immer nur ein unterhalb der kunst".

hn: ja, sehen sie, mein theater ist ja letzten endes die aufhebung des theaters. es gibt ja den ewigen wunsch nach dem gesamtkunstwerk. der ist vielleicht bei skrjabin am weitesten gediehen, aber bei wagner durch die addition verwirrt. da ist der wunderbare tristantext, und der wird dann mehr oder weniger addiert mit musik, wobei je nach dirigent schon große künstlerische durchdringungen entstanden sind. bei meinem begriff des gesamtkunstwerks passiert zunächst mal folgendes, und da stehe ich nicht allein, das gilt für die ganze internationale performance/happening/aktionismusbewegung: dass wir reale geschehnisse anbieten. beim happening ist es bereits so, dass nichts mehr nachgespielt wird, sondern ein reales geschehen stattfindet. auch bei meinem theater, das sich so viel mit mythen und dem, was kunst bedeutet, beschäftigt, werden reale geschehnisse inszeniert, die über alle fünf sinne erfahrbar werden. ein gewaltiger unterschied zur alten kunst! wenn sie ein rilke-gedicht nehmen oder ein george-gedicht, haben sie immer die erinnerung an einen blütenduft, an einen geschmack, eine zimmertemperatur, ein tasterlebnis, ein visuelles erlebnis. also, sie müssen sich durch das wort, das quasi das symbol des erlebten ist, in erinnerung rufen, was einmal war. bei mir ist das nicht so. bei mir geschieht alles tatsächlich. da wird geschmeckt, da wird gerochen, da wird geschaut, da wird getastet. es gibt keinen medialen umweg mehr. das geschehen selbst ist das entscheidende. ich sage das immer wieder, wenn ich mit meinen leuten probe oder wenn ich die theorie meines theaters vortrage: hier wird nichts mehr gespielt, hier ist niemand der könig lear, niemand der hamlet, niemand der faust. er selbst ist es, der, durch die partitur oder das spiel angewiesen, gewisse sinnliche erlebnisse erfährt. das ist sehr wichtig, und das geht sehr weit—ich habe mich früher sehr viel der tiefenpsychologie bedient und auch heute noch suche ich den sogenannten „grundexzess". das ist ein exzessives erlebnis, was in uns eigentlich dauernd lauert. ich will so weit gehen, zu sagen, das exzessive erlebnis ist dann vielleicht im geschlechtsakt, dass es da eine verbindung hat—aber auch in diesem big bang. es ist ein bedürfnis in uns, uns exzessiv zu erleben, bis zur selbstvernichtung. wobei selbstvernichtung ja auch wieder mit der dionysischen wiederkehr oder auferstehung zu tun hat. man braucht auch keine bühne, keinen zuschauerraum, kein bühnenbild. wenn ich da hinaufschaue, leuchtet mir der bestirnte himmel, der kosmos, und wird in irgendeiner weise anschaubar. und der kosmos spielt mir kein theater vor. er spielt mir sein sich-ereignen vor. und insofern ist da der durchbruch zu einem vollkommen neuen theaterbegriff gegeben, der darin besteht, dass ich das ereignis selbst an die stelle des theaters setze. das ereignis ist kein gleichnis mehr, sondern es ist! und ich möchte, dass meine spielteilnehmer sich selbst in zusammenhang mit dem ganzen erleben. ich möchte ein spiel konstruieren, das unser dasein verherrlicht, durchaus einem gottesdienst vergleichbar.

pl: ich versuche zu verstehen, in welchem verhältnis ihre kunst zum mythos steht. sie sagten einmal etwas, was mich sehr überrascht hat, nämlich dass es ihnen auch um „entmythologisierung" gehe und um „entsymbolisierung". üblicherweise wird ihre arbeit als „remythologisierung", wenn nicht gar „repaganisierung", als eine art neuheidentum wahrgenommen.

hn: das wäre ganz falsch. darüber hinaus habe ich mich auch immer unglaublich gewehrt gegen die behauptung, dass ich zum beispiel alte kulte nachvollzöge. da müsste man jetzt durchaus mit freud und mit jung argumentieren, den mythos als kollektivtraum der menschheit beschreiben. von daher kann man viele ursachen entschlüsseln. die auseinandersetzung mit dem mythos ist bei mir mehr eine entmythologisierung als das gegenteil. aber trotzdem kann man entmythologisierung nur betreiben, indem man sich mit dem wesen des mythos auseinandersetzt. nicht so wie die entmythologisierung bei bultmannn, ich weiß nicht, das bleibt halt doch theologie. das ist mir zu wenig. es ist so: wenn man etwas intensiv anschaut, wird's plötzlich blass. und ich sage immer wieder: ich möchte mit meinem theater die geschichte des bewusstseins nach-

vollziehen, nacherzählen. und das kann ich ohne den mythos nicht. es ist auch einfach falsch, dass die ganzen bewegungen, die sich voneinander absetzen, sich wirklich voneinander absetzen und sich nicht mit dem, was sie überwinden wollen, auseinandersetzen.

pl: sie würden also ihre arbeit als eine entmythologisierung sehen und nicht als eine rückführung in eine wie auch immer geartete…

hn: vielleicht beides gleichzeitig. aber nicht rückführung zum heidentum, das interessiert mich nicht. es muss etwas ganz neues aufgebaut werden.

pl: das heidentum ist ja auch ein klischee, das in der kritik an ihrer arbeit immer wieder auftaucht.

hn: ja, und das ist vollkommener blödsinn.

pl: es gab ja immer wieder alle arten von kritik an ihnen, von den dümmsten beleidigungen bis hin zu intelligenten und wohlinformierten einwänden. gab es irgendeinen kritischen ansatz, der für sie wichtig geworden ist und dazu geführt hat, an der konzeption der arbeit etwas zu ändern?

hn: ich glaube, dessen bin ich nicht fähig. dazu bin ich zu stur. aber es gibt keine kritik, die nicht irgendwo auch recht hat. es kommt nur darauf an, mit welchen geschossen man da wirft. ich könnte mir durchaus vorstellen, dass ich ein buch schreibe, in dem ich mich selbst, so radikal es möglich ist, selber kritisiere.

pl: das würde ich gerne lesen.

hn: ich habe einen aufsatz geschrieben in einem buch, in dem viele freunde anlässlich meines 70. geburtstags über mich geschrieben haben. und dort habe ich unter pseudonym einen aufsatz über mich selber geschrieben. ich habe vor, einmal ein buch über mein werk zu schreiben, aus der position eines dritten heraus. also, unter diesen umständen könnte ich mir vorstellen, mich total zu widerlegen [lacht]. das ist ja ein bewusstseinsphänomen oder ein schöpferisches phänomen, das sich jetzt fünfzig jahre aus mir herausgezogen hat, und auch das kann man doch einmal reflektieren.

pl: wie steht es mit der bedeutung der relikte ihrer aktionen? sind diese gleich wichtig wie der prozess, der zu ihrer entstehung führte?

hn: zuerst einmal ist der prozess unendlich wichtig, der prozess ist eigentlich alles. das dauert zum beispiel eine woche, das fängt irgendwo an und hört irgendwo auf. innerhalb dieser zeit hat es sich ereignet. dann gibt es die dokumentationen, auf fotografischem weg, auf dem weg des videos (filme lehne ich ab, weil das eine rückkehr zur guckkastenbühne bedeutet). das entscheidende ist dann doch dieses ereignis in der zeit.

pl: welcher zeitbegriff liegt ihrer arbeit zugrunde?

hn: mein zeitbegriff ist überhaupt nicht originell, das muss ich zugeben, aber es ist noch nichts besseres erschienen: ich denke, dass es die zeit nicht gibt! die zeit gibt es nicht, es gibt nur den zeitlichen sinn. da beginnt etwas und da hört etwas auf. ob das der sonnenaufgang ist oder ein fußballmatch oder ein leben. da gibt es, das kennen sie ja alles, die vorsokratiker, die vorstellung, dass alles fließt, panta rhei. es gibt halt zwei auffassungen von der welt: die eine ist die, dass sich immer alles bewegt und dass eigentlich kein anfangen und kein aufhören feststellbar ist. schauen wir uns nur mal unsere väter und großväter an, das setzt sich dann fort ins organische, ins anorganische, bis hin zu der frage: warum ist überhaupt etwas und nicht vielmehr nichts? und da ist für mich dieser kosmische glaube – und jetzt muss ich von „glauben" sprechen –, der ist gegeben, wenn ich sehe, dass „alles fließt" und dass auch die individuumsauflösung eine form des fließens ist. dass das individuum geformt wurde und wieder aufgelöst wird. alles fließt – da gibt es keinen anfang. auch die mystiker der großen religionen kennen das, oder schon der liebe gott war ewig da, ist ewig da und wird ewig da sein. und wenn man nicht über gott spricht, dann ist die schöpfung ewig da, wird sich ewig ereignen. ich bin ein großer gegner des jenseitsbegriffs, aber man kann das viel einfacher sagen. ich glaube nicht an das ende. ich glaube nicht an den anfang. ich war immer schon da und werde immer da sein. und das ist mir auch etwas sehr, sehr wichtiges. das ist ein unterschied im bewusstseinsakt – ob ich einen spaziergang mache und begreife, dass das ganze fließt und dass ich dem innigst angehöre. oder ob ich nur über die finanzkrise nachdenke und alles, was eben endlich ist. ein bisschen anders verstanden als die mittelalterliche mystik, wo das zeitliche abgelehnt wird zugunsten des überirdischen. das zeitliche ist nicht das irdische, das zeitliche ist bis zu einem gewissen grad das falsche denken.

pl: welche konkreten folgen hat dieser zeitbegriff nun für ihr orgien mysterien theater? wird es zum beispiel aktionen nach ihrem tode geben?

hn: ja. die partituren sind so gebaut, dass jeder künstlerisch begabte mensch, in diesem fall regisseur oder dirigent, dazu in der lage ist, das wieder zu rekonstruieren. bei der griechischen tragödie wissen wir ja nicht, wie das wirklich alles war. da hat man nur fragmente, aber immerhin, auch nach mehr als zweitausend jahren kann man sie noch aufführen. und ich möchte, dass man mein theater absolut aufführen kann.

pl: wäre das dann so, dass das über den akt einer autorisierung geht, dass bestimmte menschen autorisiert werden zur aufführung?

hn: vor allem werde ich es nicht dem regietheater freigeben. das regietheater ist ein großes unheil, das die menschheit getroffen hat. wir haben um dieses neue theater gekämpft – und die haben auch wieder das kulinarische daraus weggeraubt.

pl: also, die sensationseffekte daraus genommen…

hn: ich bin ein großer gegner davon, habe sehr darunter gelitten. nur die wenigsten haben sich auf mich berufen. ich bin da bestohlen worden bis zum gehtnichtmehr. ich habe immer wieder in salzburg an der sommerakademie unterrichtet. da haben meine studenten gesagt, da unten in dem theater, da sind die schlachten von shakespeare, was weiß ich, gedärme, fleisch und blut. kleine revolutiönchen haben die da gemacht. das ist dann alles domestiziert und gemütlich geworden…

pl: ihr o. m. theater muss ja eine einheit sein, wenn es als kunstform bestand haben soll. daher die strengen partituren, die formgebung. ich bin mir sicher, dass ihre aktionen bei den darstellern ungeheure emotionale kräfte freisetzen, die müssen ja auch gebändigt oder kanalisiert werden.

hn: ja. wenn die aktion nicht gebändigt wird, dann ist es ein unappetitlicher saustall, der auch mit dem dionysischen nichts zu tun hat.

pl: gab es in einer ihrer vielen aktionen einen moment, wo es umzuschlagen drohte, wo die gefahr bestand, dass es außer kontrolle gerät?

hn: fast nie. einmal in london haben zum beispiel die leute die anweisung befolgt, alles anzugreifen, die trauben auszuquetschen usw. aber die haben mir dann fast das ganze gefüge, das ich mir hergerichtet hatte, zerstört. ich musste da bremsen. aber das war wieder gut, denn das hat mich wieder gelehrt, wie ich dessen herr werden muss, wenn so etwas passiert, was ich mir ja immer gewünscht hatte und was in anderen veranstaltungen nicht passiert ist, weil die leute zu prüde waren zum beispiel. und dann: es muss alles unglaublich frisch sein. wie bei der malerei. wenn man ein bild so zumalt, erstickt es. so wie mir's bei brahms vorkommt, wenn er alles zu sehr überlagert und überschichtet. dann wird's schmutzig und unappetitlich. auch bei einer art orgie muss immer eine frische sein. so werden zum beispiel die kleider permanent gewechselt. das ist wie bei einem koch, der dafür sorgen muss, dass seine speisen immer frisch auf den tisch kommen. die gefahr ist immer gegeben, aber meine partituren sollen ja auch dazu beitragen, dass so etwas nicht passiert. man wirft mir dann immer wieder vor: „ja, wo ist denn da das dionysische? wo ist die spontaneität, wenn es so genaue partituren gibt?" aber die partituren sind genau dazu da, die aleatorik zu finden und mit dem zufall umzugehen.

pl: ich habe ein zitat von peter gorsen aus einer besprechung von 1998 gefunden, in dem er sich auf nietzsche bezieht und sinngemäß sagt, dass ihre weltanschauung unannehmbar sei für ein humanistisch-christliches menschenbild.

hn: ich bin weder ein humanist noch ein christ, obwohl mich viele christliche symbole sehr faszinieren: die tatsache der liebe, die eucharistie, die etwas unglaubliches ist, die messe als gesamtkunstwerk, als fortsetzung der griechischen tragödie und vorwegnahme dessen, was ich da mit modernem theater anstelle. ich huldige nicht einem anthropozentrischen weltbild. es ist durchaus vorstellbar, dass diese schöpfung noch etwas anderes hervorbringt. es muss ja nicht gerade die idee des übermenschen von nietzsche sein, aber so uninteressant ist es nicht, was er da gedacht hat. mir ist das zu eng, nur im anthropologischen sinne an den menschen zu denken. obwohl so ein max scheler schon großartige formulierungen hat. aber es ist mir zu wehleidig, ich will nicht immer nur moralisieren oder in der zwangsjacke der moral stecken. also, ich möchte überhaupt nicht asozial sein, aber trotzdem, immer wieder diese soziale wehleidigkeit. dieses korsett dürfte man der großen freiheitlichen philosophie nicht anlegen. was aber nicht heißt, dass ich nicht für eine absolut gerechte verteilung der güter bin. ich kenne gorsens artikel und habe mich sehr darüber gefreut. ich weiß ihn jetzt nicht detailliert zu zitieren, aber damit hat er vollkommen recht.

pl: worauf ich hinauswollte: gorsen macht sehr stark eine frontstellung zwischen ihnen und dem christentum auf. gibt es da nur abstoßungseffekte oder gibt es nicht doch viel mehr kanäle, die dazwischen vermittelnd stehen?

hn: er denkt da vielleicht mehr mit nietzsches gedanken. die symbolwelt des christentums hat mich immer fasziniert. bei führungen in meinem museum in mistelbach fragt man mich immer wieder danach, wieso diese christlichen symbole? ich bin in dieser welt erzogen worden. ich halte mich für einen religionsarchäologen, einen religionsphänomenologen. die vergleichende religionswissenschaft hat sehr viel mit meiner arbeit zu tun. und das sind halt die symbole, die mir den einstieg ermöglicht haben in das bergwerk meiner religionsarchäologie. und wenn ich das den leuten sage, begreifen sie es meistens. und die christlichen symbole sind ja auch aus paganen herausgewachsen, von anderen religionen übernommen worden. das christentum hat sich auch deshalb,

glaube ich, so durchgesetzt, weil es einen gemeinsamen nenner gibt, vom totemismus bis über werte der griechischen tragödie und weiß gott was alles. die monstranz ist ja eigentlich auch ein sonnensymbol. und da ist auch im christentum schon die möglichkeit gegeben, in das andere, das vorhergehende, ins archaische abzusteigen. zum beispiel die formel „tod und auferstehung", die formel ist den initiationskulten entlehnt. ich bin schon viel zu weit vom christentum entfernt, als dass ich die humorlosigkeit haben müsste, mich gewisser christlicher symbole nicht zu bedienen. die passion ist so etwas erschütterndes und ergreifendes, das geht weit über das christentum hinaus. das berührt auch wieder die griechische tragödie und so weiter. also, ich verstehe das gar nicht, wenn man mich von der seite her immer wieder angreift.

pl: wenn ich mir überlege, welches „bild" aus ihren aktionen bei mir am stärksten nachwirkt und meine gedanken anregt, dann ist es die szene mit den akteuren, die mit langen stangen, auf denen jeweils ein schwert befestigt ist, auf einen akteur zukommen, ihm die schwerter beinahe auf die brust setzen. wann kam dieses „bild" in ihr o. m. theater?

hn: relativ spät. das hat eine längere vorgeschichte, die mit meinen opernerfahrungen zu tun hat. ich wollte den parsifal inszenieren. das ist aus politischen gründen nicht zustande gekommen. da habe ich mir gedacht, nun gut, dann machst du dir deinen eigenen parsifal. das war 2004 dieses zweitagespiel hier mit den speeren. und auch in einer sehr brauchbaren variante für das burgtheater 2005 habe ich die speere eingesetzt. also, das ist relativ neu. und durchaus sogar eine konzession an die theaterpraxis. speer und lanze inklusive parsifal spielen ja immer eine große rolle im theater. oder auch in der malerei, denken sie nur an velazquez' „die übergabe von breda" oder bei den quattrocento-malern, bei uccello. ich habe mich sehr damit befasst, sogar extra eine gruppe aufgebaut, halb mit tänzern, halb mit schauspielern. das ist etwas spätes, aber das will ich nie mehr hergeben, ich werde es in meinem theater sicher immer wieder aufleuchten lassen.

pl: ich fand dieses bild deswegen so stark, weil es ja ein kollektiv ist, das einen einzelnen symbolisch opfert. und was mich fasziniert, ist die präzision oder fürsorglichkeit, mit der dann gestoppt wird. was steckt da an motivik dahinter, bei dieser (nicht-)opferung durch das kollektiv.

hn: sehen sie, da müsste man jetzt auch wieder weiter ausholen. ich habe einen freund, der mir viele jahre lang seinen körper geborgt hat als passivakteur. es gibt einen text von mir, in dem ich durchaus bekenne, wie weit es tötungswünsche in uns gibt und wir damit richtig oder unrichtig umgehen. hier würde ich sagen: unrichtig. das kommt aus der zeit, in der wir jäger und sammler waren, tieren nachgejagt sind, einem wildschwein zum beispiel, dann hat man es gestellt, und man hat es getötet oder ist selbst getötet worden. und dann gibt es sicher eine überwindungswollust und ein tötungserlebnis, mit dem wir fertig werden müssen. ich sage dann immer dieses etwas kitschige gleichnis: man muss dann gegen dieses tötungserlebnis etwas noch intensiveres setzen, und das wäre dann die liebe. ich meine jetzt den altruistischen begriff der liebe. und da habe ich geschrieben über meinen freund: jetzt liegt er da vor mir – und jetzt kommt der moment… ich bringe ihn nicht um! er wird jetzt nicht aufgeschnitten und geopfert. die aktion geht nur so weit, wie sie gehen darf.

pl: das kommt sehr stark herüber und das hat mich erinnert an den autor rené girard, der die ganze geschichte und auch die mythologie auf dieses motiv der opferung eines einzelnen durch das kollektiv hin durchleuchtet, beinahe obsessiv. dies dann mit der wendung, dass christus durch sein selbstopfer diese opferlogik aufgehoben und damit einen kulturfortschritt bewirkt hat. wie ist das motiv des verzichts auf die opferung bei ihnen zu verstehen?

hn: das gibt es ja schon im alten testament. bei abraham und isaak.

pl: ja, aber da wird die opferung auf das tier übertragen.

hn: aber das ist immerhin schon ein sublimierungsvorgang. und in der eucharistie ist es ganz vergeistigt, unblutig, findet aber trotzdem immer wieder statt, das leiden findet auch immer wieder statt. ich weiß nicht, ob die heutigen christen noch so erzogen sind, aber früher hat es geheißen, dass christus jedes mal bei der messe neu seinen erlösungstod für uns stirbt. von hofmannsthal gibt es eine schöne sache, die „erfundenen gespräche". der ursprung der dichtung ist mit der schlachtung eines lammes zu vergleichen, das ja auch für etwas steht, für das menschenopfer und so weiter. und die dichtung, das wort steht dann für die schlachtung.

pl: sie haben ihre ersten jahre mitten im krieg verbracht, und ihr vater ist auch im krieg gefallen. und damals war ja so was wie ein richtiges schlachten und töten im raum. das musste ja irgendwie überwunden werden. könnte da etwas aus den frühen kindheitserlebnissen hineinspielen in ihre arbeit?

hn: ich habe zu diesen selbstinterpretationen ein etwas unsicheres verhältnis. aber ich muss natürlich schon zugeben, dass ich diese bombenangriffe als vier-, fünf-, sechsjähriges kind erlebt habe. da war immer erst vom radio her der „kuckuck", dann sind wir runtergegangen in den luftschutzkeller. da saßen die leute und haben gebetet. man hat ja nie gewusst, ob man da je wieder herauskommt. dann kamen die angriffe und es wurde immer gesagt, und das war makaber, aber vielleicht sogar beruhigend: solange man die bomben noch hört, passiert gar nichts, diejenige, die einen tötet, die hört man nicht. und dann sind wir rausgekrochen, alles war schwarz, rauchwolken, die fabriken… das war in floridsdorf. meine mutter war wahnsinnig, dass sie nicht mit mir auf's land gezogen ist. und dann das makabre, dass dann plötzlich so ein haus halb abgerissen war. das war surreal. ich habe damals schon kapiert, dass diese unsere zivilisation auslöschbar und in frage stellbar ist, und das bis zu einem gewissen grad noch immer. und von daher auch mein verlassen der sprache. es war, so furchtbar das klingt, ein misstrauen gegenüber der sprache entstanden. ich habe immer gesagt, ich will, dass meine zuschauer tatsächlich sinnlich erleben. ein wort kann nie so brüllen wie eine blutende wunde. heute ist natürlich vieles anders, aber ich habe diese wurzeln in mir und habe weiterhin vor, mit diesen erfahrungen meine arbeit zu machen. aber damals… die russen haben die frauen vergewaltigt, das hat bei einem sensiblen menschen schon was hinterlassen. heute kann man das natürlich alles interpretieren, wie man es braucht oder wie man es haben will, aber ich bin schon auch ein kind des expressionismus. ausdruck war alles.

pl: ihre arbeit ist natürlich kulturell sehr stark verwurzelt in der wiener moderne, d. h. in einem spezifisch österreichischen kontext, sie ist sehr stark verwurzelt im katholizismus. aber ist das verstehbar, wenn man aus einem anderen kulturellen hintergrund kommt, aus asien oder afrika zum beispiel? haben sie jemals aktionen in asien gemacht?

hn: leider nein. aber jetzt kommt etwas, das nimmt man mir ja oft gar nicht gerne ab, aber wer mich kennt, weiß, dass das so ist: die form ist für mich alles! und von daher bin ich mir sicher, dass man auch als asiate oder wenn man aus einer anderen kultur kommt, meine arbeit über die form verstehen kann. ich möchte keine unschöne kunst machen. mein ganzes leben weihte ich der schönheit, auch wenn es über so blutige darstellungen ging und noch geht.

pl: sie sind ja vor kurzem 70 geworden, haben zwei museen bekommen. das heißt, sie haben sicherlich in letzter zeit auch viel rückschau gehalten. was ist, wenn sie auf diese langen jahre ihrer arbeit mit gut 120 aktionen zurückdenken, der stärkste eindruck über die zeit hinweg?

hn: ich würde eigentlich alles noch einmal so machen, wie ich es gemacht habe. was nicht heißt, dass ich nicht viele fehler gemacht habe. aber aufs große gesehen, würde ich das gerne alles noch einmal erleben wollen. die ganzen skandale und so weiter, die sind nicht so schlimm.

pl: sie sprechen von fehlern. würden sie mir sagen wollen, was ihres erachtens der größte fehler war?

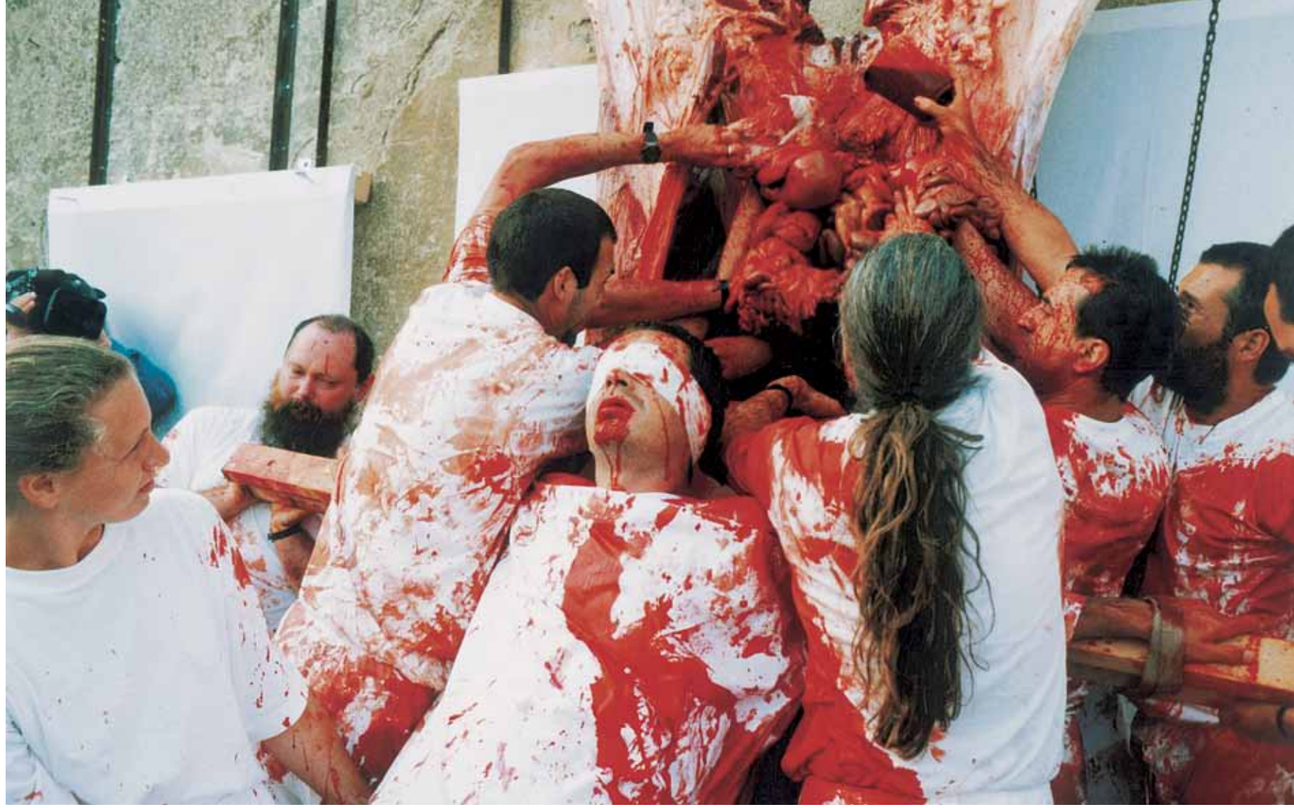
hn: na ja (lange pause), das ist ja auch kein fehler, aber nur ein heiliger zu werden oder nur ein… guru ist so ein blödes wort, aber sich ganz der existenz, dem leben hinzugeben mit einem ganz tiefen, funkelnden, priesterlichen ernst… aber das ist kein fehler. ich habe diesen weg gewählt und ich würde ihn noch einmal wählen. außerdem: ich glaube mein werk gebärdet sich sehr wagnerisch, sehr angeberisch und protzig, und vielleicht hätte ich eher ein zurückgezogener künstler werden sollen, der sich nur mit klängen beschäftigt. weiß ich nicht.

pl: aber da hat man doch wahrscheinlich gar keine wahl, das ist doch eine ganz existenzielle sache.

hn: ja, ich glaube, da hat man keine wahl. das ist halt so. du bist halt der und der…

pl: gibt es für die ihnen noch verbleibende zeit ein ziel, das sie mit ihrer arbeit unbedingt noch verwirklichen wollen?

hn: ich sollte sie noch mehr intensivieren. ein richtiges ziel nicht, denn die arbeit ist gegeben. ich werde sie mit noch mehr testamentarischem charakter realisieren, damit sie irgendwann ohne mich weitergehen kann.



LEE UFAN 李禹煥

Conversation between Lee Ufan, Karlyn De Jongh & Peter Lodermeyer

Lee Ufan studio, Paris, France, 16 January 2009

Lee Ufan (1936 in Seoul, Korea) has lived in Japan since 1956. In the late 1960s and 1970s, he was the spokesman of the important* Mono-ha *['school of things'] movement. Encounters are crucial in his works that address relationships between the elements that make up the works and between the works, the space that surrounds them, and the viewer. Lee Ufan lives and works in Kamakura, Japan, and Paris, France.*

Peter Lodermeyer: Karlyn De Jongh and I would like to talk with you about what you call 'the encounter with otherness'. I think that language difficulties play a great role in the encounter with otherness, and therefore we have brought with us as translator the artist Yuko Sakurai. For me, 'the encounter with otherness', is an interesting subject: we both speak to each other now in a language that is not our own native language. This means that we always have to find words that do not really express what we want to say. One could generalize it and say that this always happens in communication because everybody uses words in his or her personal way.

Lee Ufan: In the western world, the perception of an 'encounter' is originally defined as communication with God; it is like a correspondence, but I do not want to start with such a difficult and complicated subject. I would like to approach this discussion simply as a talk about an encounter in a very normal way, such as when people meet other people, or when we see the moon, or when you meet a beautiful woman, or an encounter with an incident. In fact, it starts with facing each other, which is simultaneously a passive and active encounter. In a sense, this concept is not necessarily about verbal communication. Also it is not about the differences in meaning between East and West. I want to start from usual things, like meeting people, seeing a beautiful flower or seeing an incident.

I was born in Korea and went to Japan when I was nineteen years old. I have lived in Japan for a long time now. I've walked around in many different countries, but wherever I am, I am a foreigner, all the time. I am a stranger, and due to this, my ability to communicate is disrupted: this in turn brings discomfort, and leads to misunderstandings. I have lived under these circumstances for a long time: that is 'encounter' for me. That's the reason why for me an encounter, as in *Waiting for Godot* [by Samuel Beckett], does not exist: these thoughts are nonsense. For me, our meeting here is also an encounter. Encounter is dealing with others; it is a very simple thing.

Lee Ufan 李禹煥: もともと、出会いというのは、西洋ではたぶん、神との交流というか、触れ合い（correspondence）みたいなことを言ってたんだと思います。それを、難しい話から出発しないで、僕は極めて普通に、人が人と会うとか、人が月を見てきれいだとか、彼女を見てきれいだとか、何か事件にあってびっくりしたとか、そういう次元から僕は考えたいのです。つまり向うとこから始まる、受動と能動の出会いということです。しかしこれは、コミュニケーションとは異なる出来事です。また東洋と、西洋が違うという意味ではなく、極めて普通に考える。誰でも人に出会ったり、きれいな花に出会ったり、あるいは大変な事件にぶつかったりする、そういうことから出発したいのです。

僕は、韓国で生まれ、19歳の時に日本に行ったんです。日本に長い間住んでいます。いろんな国を歩いているのですが、どこの国に行っても僕は、外国人なんです。つまり異邦人なんです。だから、コミュニケーションも上手く出来ないし、いろんな違和感が出来たり、誤解を呼んだり、そういう物の中で生きてきた、そういうものが、出会いなんです。だから、出会いが存在しない、「ゴトーを待ちながら」(サムエル・ベッケト著)、そういう考えは、ナンセンスで、こういう出会いも出会いなのです。だから、出会いとは他者との関係を出会いと言う、非常に簡単なことです。

Karlyn De Jongh: Do you mean that you want the viewer to experience your work in a more direct and pure way, without too much knowledge up front?

LU: Meaning and knowledge are just tools, that is all. 'Encounter' starts in the very moment of contact at a location—this is most important. The 'tools' are needed later on, so that is why it is sometimes disturbing to experience the encounter. 'Encounter' is not only related to art, but also to exchanging greetings, looking at a stone, watching the sun, experiencing an incident, etc. These things are outside of myself. It starts from the outside and then I am going to expand my own inside. To look at modern art needs knowledge. We require knowledge of history to understand classical art. If we do not know about Christianity and Greek mythology, we cannot understand western art. When I just look at the painting itself, I cannot understand it at all, it requires a broad depth of prior knowledge. Modern art also has many rules and artists are creating works by using those rules. I want to be different from those rules; I want to be free. This is why I want to have reactions from African, American, European and Asian people encountering my work like, "Wow, what is it?" The meaning does not matter, but I want to have these fresh moments; they are very important for me.

LU: 意味や知識，それは道具にすぎない。出会いとは、初めて見たその現場が大切です。道具は後で必要であって経験のためには邪魔になることもある。これは絵に関らず、普通、はじめましてとか、挨拶をしたり、石ころを見たり、あるいは太陽を見たり、事件にぶつかる、そういうところから始まる。だから、外の自分のことなんです。そこから出発し、自分の内側を膨らませて行くのです。

モダンアートの場合は、見るために知識が必要です。元々の、クラシックアートは知識が必要です。例えば、キリスト教とか、ギリシャ神話等を理解しないと、西洋アートは解らないわけでしょ。これは、本当の知識がないと、パッと見たって全然解らない。モダンアートもいろんな約束事があって、今日、アーティストはそういうことを利用して作品作っているけれど、出来るだけそういう約束事と違う、もっとフリーでやりたい。だから僕の絵を、アフリカの人、アメリカの人、ヨーロッパの人が見ても、アジアの人が見ても、その意味はともかくとして、ワー、これはなんだろうという、そういうぶつかり合いが出てくる、新鮮な場面が出てくる、そのことが大事だと思っています。

PL: When I look at your sculpture that, for instance, consists of a stone and a plate of steel; it is seemingly simple. On the other hand, once you become aware of the situation it becomes complex. In a way there is an encounter between the steel plate and the stone, but when you look at it there is an encounter between me, as a viewer, and the artwork; it becomes even more complex. At the same time, the surrounding space counts and there is an encounter with it too.

LU: Simple and complex exist at the same time. This is the character of the encounter, the 'intermediate section'. It is not just an encounter with my work; I have an encounter with the world. Iron and even steel have existed since ancient times, but a steel plate is made in an industrial society. A stone is not man-made. Stones lay around anywhere by mountains and rivers. Whether you are from Africa, from Paris, or from America, everybody knows; stones are from nature, and a steel plate is industrial. I have thought about what the viewers can feel and see. I try to make the viewer feel the combination of things, those made by our industrial society and those that are from nature.

I don't make just massive objects; I create space: 'Ba'. All my works involve space and time; these are precisely my subject matter. Normally, in modern art, the work is the object itself. My art is not a painting and not a sculpture. I don't make just objects, I create space: 'Ba' and 'being there'. What is going to happen with the stone and the steel plate, what I can feel with them being together, that is very important.

LU: もちろん単純と複雑は同時にあります。それが中間項、媒介項の性格です。作品と出会うのではなく、それを見ながら世界と出会うのです。鉄そのものは、古代からあるけれも， 鉄板は、産業社会が作ったものなんです。石は人間が作ってないものなんです。石は、どこでも転がっているものです、山やそこら辺でも。アフリカの人、パリの人、アメリカの人であろうが、誰でも、石は自然なも、

鉄板は、産業社会が作ったものと知っているのです。僕には、産業社会の作ったものと、自然の中にあるものを、これを組み合わせることによって、何が見えるのか、そういう試みを感じさせることができるのか。こういうことをやっているんです。

僕は、塊となったオブジェを作るのではなくて、その一つの場を作る。僕の作品は全て、場の問題、空間や、時間、それはまさしく僕の問題であるのです。普通、モダンアートは、作品はほとんどオブジェクトなんです。ところが僕の絵画も彫刻も、オブジェクトを作ることではなく、場を作ることなんです。その場に居合わせることなんです。この石と鉄板がどうなるのか、そういう場に居合わせることで、何か自分も一緒にワーと感じられるはずなんです。それが大事なんです。

PL: In one of your texts you mentioned that there should be some strangeness in a work of art and especially in sculpture. What do you mean by 'strangeness'?

LU: There exist unknown characteristics outside of myself and the community. This, in fact, is 'Otherness'. Humans want to perceive and understand this with all the knowledge gained from Modernism. But in reality, you feel a distortion, a gap between knowledge and reality. You see the separation in between the m and you start becoming aware of the unknown. For example, we can understand a stone with knowledge, by analyzing it. But when you see a stone, you do not know at all; we often have the feeling "what is that?" It is like this meeting with you: now I know something about you, but still I do not 'know' you. This is not simply "I do not know"; rather, this is an unknown character. An unknown character always invites me to learn more about things in one or another way. The unknown part has not been set from the beginning. If somebody asks me where the unknown part is, it does not exist anywhere, because it comes from the relations you experienced. We can understand tomorrow as a mental construct, but the truth of how tomorrow will actually take place is ever elusive. We can construct information from knowledge about tomorrow, but we do not know it until it happens in real life. Constantly being with the world that is unknown means that there are a lot of variables. It happens outside of myself: that's why I can only understand the inside of myself, but because of that which exists outside of me, there is the unknown.

LU:　未知性というのは、自分、共同体の外のことです。つまり他者のことです。人間は、このモダニズムの中では全てを知識で見ようとする。ところが、知識と現実がずれていく、分離するこの分離する中で、未知性がが出てくるんです。例えば、石は、知識としては、これは分析すれば全部解るんです。知識としては、解っていても、石を見るとやっぱり解らない。これは何だろう、そういう解らない部分が沢山ある。こうやって会っていても予備知識を持っていても、よく解らない、これが、未知性なんです。これはこうだろうか、ああだろうか。それは、たえず知ることを誘う、いろんなものを持っています。自然であっても人間であっても、未知性というのは、もともと在るのではありません。その未知性がどこにあるのかと聞かれても、どこにあるものでもない。それはある関係の中で出てくることなんです。僕たちは、明日のことは知識としては、解るけども、実際は解らないんです。

つまり、外の外部性を持っているということなんです。明日はどうなるか、知識としては、情報としては組み立てられる、でも、実際はわからない。絶えず変数だらけ、世界と共にあること、それが未知性です。それは、自分の外のことだから、だから、自分の内側のことは、解るんだけど、外のことだから未知なんです。

PL: What I find interesting is what you said about the body as interface between 'me and the outside world'. The otherness starts with the body because it is something we never can understand completely. There is a strong physical presence in your work. Can you tell me a bit more about the importance of the body in making your work and in receiving it?

LU: The meaning of 'body' is perceived differently in the Asian and the Western world. In English, the word 'body' simply means 'flesh and blood', but in Japanese, Korean and Chinese it has a more extensive meaning. The body itself is not just 'myself', it includes the relations with the outside. In its contact with the outside, the body becomes something 'in the middle', or 'in between'. So, when you use your body as a channel, contact with the outside goes well. It does not go well when you want to contact your surroundings only with knowledge.

When I make a painting, I use my body as a channel, so I paint with my body. That I paint with my body means that it contains not only my knowledge, it contains much more. It is very important that the body contains more things than just knowledge. I think, Peter, you do not fully understand my meaning. The body is influenced by its relations with its surroundings: I do not completely 'own' it just by myself. I paint my relation to the outside naturally through this intermediate connection. My body is not mine, and my body is not just inside or outside, it is in between. This is very important.

LU: この英語のボディーとアジアで言う身体というのは、若干違います。英語のボディーというと、肉体だけを示すのですが、日本語、韓国語、中国語では、肉体だけではなく、身体そのものが自分のものではなく、外との関連的なものを含むのです。外との関連で、中間で固まっているのが身体なんです。だから、身体を媒介にすると外との関連が上手くいく、知識だけでコンタクトしようとしても上手くいかない。

僕は絵を描くとき、身体を媒介とする、身体で描くわけです。身体で描くと僕の知識だけが入るのではなくて、知識以外のものを、吸い込んでくれる、これは重要なことです。

ペーターにはわからないと思うんだけども、身体は自分の関りのあるものであっても自分のものではない、自分の関りである、この中間項を通して描くと外との関連が出来やすい。身体とは、僕のものじゃない。内側や外側でもなく、その間なんです、それが重要なんです。間の関連性が、大変重要です。

KDJ: If you control everything, it seems difficult to have an encounter, because in that case nothing seems to come back to you. Do you need the openness for an encounter to take place?

LU: Each time I give an answer, I ask myself; "should I do this, or should I do that?" When I make a painting, I also have small encounters: a feeling of subtlety, questions and other things come up. It seems that you con-

fuse ‘encounter’ with ‘pure continuity’. ‘Encounter’ is non-continuous: always changing. It is important that it is a passive and active thing. That is the reason why I want to paint a multitude of seemingly the same paintings, endlessly. For me, perfection does not exist, nor does a work that can be controlled one hundred percent. I cannot know what will happen at the moment I start working in a certain location.

LU:　答える瞬間瞬間にこうかな、ああかなという、小さな出会いとか、小さなことで解ってくることや、疑問や様々なことが絶えず描くときに出てくるのです。あなたは出会いを純粋持続と錯覚しているようだ。出会いは非連続のものであり、絶えず変わる。そして受動と能動であることを忘れてはならない。だから同じ絵を無限に何枚も描きたくなるのもその理由からです。だから、完璧とか、あるいは100%コントロールすることはできないということはそういうことなんです。絶えずその現場で何が起こるかわからないのです。

PL: What do you think about the concept of ‘time’? I think an encounter is always something that happens in a certain moment. You can’t hold onto it; if you tried to, it would completely change the situation. There is a moment and then a next moment and the next… Is this your notion of time?

LU: ‘Ticking’ time, next and next and next…; this is the nature of time. Is it like one continuous line, or does it break up by each tick? The theory of time is a very difficult subject. Henri Bergson has spoken about ‘homogeneous time’ and ‘duration’. As memory, we remember things in our brain which we have done before and we continue on from there. But this continuity will change as new experiences intermingle with stored memories. I do not know if it continues in purity. Time in memory and time as continuity change through new situations, and they overlap each other. Time has two faces. The first is time as a finite measurement, or ‘clock time’; very matter-of-fact, or physical. The second is time as memory, as human based experiences. The two do not exist individually, sometimes they go together and sometimes they separate, all the while influencing each other.

LU:　時間の示す、次は次はというものは、一つの連続性を持つのか、それぞれ断ち切れているのか。時間論としては、大変難しいところです。でも、その中でハンリ・ベルクソンのような人は、純粋持続を言っています。記憶として、頭の中で、前やったこととの持続があるわけです。でもその持続は、新しい経験を得ることで、かたちを変えるのです。だから純粋に持続することがあるかは解らないけれど、Timeはメモリーの中のTimeと、そこで絶えずTimeというものが、記憶としての持続性ということと、それに刺激を与える現場性というものがダブっていることだと思います。

時間は二つの顔を持っています。一つは時計の時間、極めて物理的な時間。もう一つは、経験をベースにした人間の記憶の時間。この二つは、絶えず別々ではなく、付いたり離れたり刺激し合ったりするものだと思うのです。そこに想像力の働きがある。

KDJ: Do you see your work as site-specific?

LU: My work is decided in relation to a particular location, and in relation to the space. Normally fine spaces exist everywhere, be they a mountain, a riverside, a gallery, a home, etc. But this is very complex, and raises many difficult questions. That is why the way my work relates to the space in which it will be presented is the most important aspect I consider. But the truth is, anywhere is fine. I do not place my completed work on the spot; my work is made ready through its relation with the space where I want to place it. The relation itself is infinite.

LU:　絶えず現場との関係、そのスペースとの関係、この関係で僕の仕事が決まって行くのです。元々は、どこでもいいはずなんです、山でも川岸でも、画廊でも、個人の家でも。でも、とても複雑で、たくさんの問題を抱えている。だから、一番大事なのは、絶えずその発表する場との関係で、作品をどうするかが少しずつ変わって行くことです。でも本当は、どこでもいいはずなんです、僕は場との関係で作品が出来上がっていくのであって、出来上がった作品をそこに置くということではありません。だから、関係こそが無限なのです。

PL: In the interview we made before, you said something that I found very interesting. You said that modern times have forgotten about the death of the artwork, but that you think carefully about the life and death of the artwork. What are your thoughts about the life and death of the artwork?

LU: In modern society, many things get shut off: to exist, to talk, to see, etc. A conflict between life and death without a relationship to existence: such are the characteristics of modern ontology. We call this anthropocentrism. In the Universe, there constantly is birth and death, appearing and disappearing; we all live under these circumstances. These things are always happening in my life as well. Death is nothingness: untellable, invisible; but there is no doubt that it has a relationship with ordinary life and therefore it lives within me. Because we think about death in our life, we can have an awareness of infinity. Death is not opposite from Life, it is a facet of life, helping us to understand a fragment of infinity.

LU:　近代は、存在すること、語ること、見ることの他は、皆、シャットアウトしました。そこで生と死を存在と無のように対立させるのは、モダンオントロジーの　特徴です。これを人間中心主義といいますね。宇宙では絶えずいろんなものが生まれたり、死んだり、現れたり消えたりしているように我々は、日常そのような現状の最中にいるのです。いつも自分の中にも起こっていることです。死は無であるとか、語ることができないとか、見えないとされますが、しかしそれは、間違いなく日常、自分と共にあり関係していることです。死を含むことで無限を喚起することが出来るのです。死は生の反対概念ではなく、生を補完する無限の破片なのです。

PL: When you speak about the life and death of an artwork, I think about the fact that the work of art can change, paintings in particular. I can imagine that in 100 or 200 years the white of your paintings will be yellowish or the surfaces cracked. Are these changes that you accept, or would you then say the artwork is destroyed?

LU: I have two answers for that. One is that the work has a social responsibility. For this reason, I try to make strong work that lasts. Second and more importantly, I do not mind so much that my works will slowly break down and ‘die’. Man is always trying to ensure that human-made things exist, or ‘live on’ forever. But, nature always works to break them down and return them to their original elements. Thus we could say nature and humans are fighting. I have a social responsibility and that is why I should be firm about my work, but, no matter how much we take care of it, it will be break up and disappear someday. I am going to die and when I die, my work will also die. Between humans and nature there exists a kind of fight.

LU:　これは、二つ答えがあります。一つは、もちろん作品というのは社会的責任があります。その責任があるから、あまり壊れないようにとか、長持ちするようにしっかり作ります。もう一つ言いたい事は、長い意味では、いずれ作品も自然に帰るというか、死ぬ。人間が作ったものをしっかり永久に保存しようと頑張る。ところが自然は、元々の自然の破片に戻そうと、そういう力と関わる。だから自然と人間とが戦う。社会的責任があるという点では、しっかり作らなければならないと思います。どんなに頑張っても所詮、それは無くなってしまいます。自分が死ぬということは、作品も死ぬことなんです。人間と、自然との間の、戦いがあるんです。

KDJ: When you say that an artwork can die and the work is about an encounter, when would you say the work is dead? Is it dead when it cannot ‘speak’ anymore, when the encounter is no longer possible anymore?

LU: First of all, I was born in Asia and I received an Asian education. Asians have words like ‘everything is transient’ (諸行無常). Asia is a monsoon region: we have a lot of rain, and for that reason everything erodes quickly. We are very conscious of erosion. With art it is the same. We create wonderful things in our life, but it is just for a moment; it does not have a guarantee of continuance. Artists are greedy, and we are always trying to preserve as much as possible, but this has limits and eventually comes to an end. Westerners made buildings with stones, like pyramids, to prevent them from collapsing. When you think of ‘eternity’, your image for this concept is unending. In Japanese culture, ‘everything is transient’ (諸行無常): made from soil and wood; everything will break down. We see infinity as something slowly disappearing. You see infinity as the existence of things going on forever, but we see infinity as the disappearing of things.

LU: それはまず一に僕のアジアで生まれ得た教育によって、アジア人というのは「諸行無常」とかいろいろ言っているです。アジア人は、モンスーン地方だから、物が例えば植物が沢山育っても、雨が多いから、すぐ腐ってなくなってしまう、物はみんな無くなるという意識があります。絵についても同じです。どんなに素晴らしいものをやっても、一瞬であって、それが持続するとは限らない。芸術家は、欲張りだから、出来るだけ持続させようとすることはあるけれど、それは限度があって、そのうち無くなる。

西洋の人は、石で壊れないように作っていく、ピラミッドのようにね。永遠を考えるとき、永遠を壊れない中に見ようとする。日本では、諸行無常のように、土や木で作って、これがみんな壊れていく、スーッと無くなって行くことに無限を見る。本当に違うことなんです。そちらはあることに永遠を考えるけれど、こちらは、所詮なくなることに永遠を考える。

PL: I have a question about the Japanese art movement Mono-ha in the 60s, in particular concerning Nobuo Sekine and his famous work, Mother Earth. Why do you think it was so important for Japanese artists at that time? For many artists it was the starting point. Was it a starting point for you as well, or did you, at that time, already have your concept about art?

LU: Nobuo Sekine is my friend. His work has changed over time, but around the time he made Mother Earth, people did not show any interest in his work and our art. I wrote many times about that work. I tried very hard to explain it. I brought up questions about the meaning of the work, and by doing so, Mother Earth became well known, as did our names. That work also shows both sides: the ‘creating’ and ‘non-creating’ part. In fact, the work was just soil dug out from a hole and then put beside the hole in the ground: that was all. After the exhibition, the soil was put back into the hole, and the work disappeared. We knew from the beginning, that it would not be permanently exhibited, just for a short period of time. There was existence and non-existence, creation and non-creation, we could see both aspects. It was a very important work.

LU: 関根　信夫は、僕の友人です。だんだん彼は、仕事が変わって行きました。その当時、「Mother　Earth」のような作品を作っていたときには、あまりみんなが関心を持たなかったんですね。

僕は、その作品について書き、意味をいろいろ問うことをしたのですが、それにより、だんだんとその作品が有名になり、僕たちの名前が少しづつ出るようになったんです。あの作品も、作ることと、作らないこと、両方を見せるような仕事だった。つまり大地を掘って、横に置いただけです。だから展覧会の機会が過ぎたらそれを埋めてなくしてしまいました。それは初めからわかっていたことです。永久に保存するのではなくて、それは一回きりのもの。作品が在ったか、無かったかもわからない。そういうあることと、ないこと、作ることと作らないこと、その両面が見えることで、あれは、すごく大事な仕事だと思います。

KDJ: Soon I will interview Giuseppe Penone. I have noticed that your work seems to display similarities to his and I believe the two of you are good friends. What do you think makes your art different from that of Penone?

LU: Giuseppe Penone is an artist from Italy. On the surface we are totally different, but we have a common theme in our work. His metaphor is in the use of wood: through the very use of wood itself he gives a message. The object itself is not so important in his work. When I see his work, I can see the forest and ordinary trees. I can link the outside world, such as the woods, to his work. Similarly when you see a stone in my work you can link it with stones from outside in nature. Thus, we have similarities in the point of recalling the relation with the outside world. Richard Long uses stone, Richard Serra uses steel plates, we use the same materials, but we went different ways.

LU: ジョセフ・ペノーネというイタリーのアーティストです。表面的には作品は全然違うんですが、共通項があります。彼のメタファーは、木を利用することなんです、木を利用して、様々なメッセージを示すんですけれど、オブジェクトが重要なんではなく彼の作品を見ると、森だとか、周辺の木を見ることができ、彼の作品を通して、外の木やいろんな物をリンクさせることの出来る考えやヒントになっている。僕の仕事の場合も石を見ると、外にある石とか、外との関連を想起させるという点で、大変似ている。リチャード・ロングという人も石を使うとか、リチャード・セラが、鉄板を使うとか、いろいろ同じものを使うけれと、同じ素材を使うといった面で親しくなっていますが、実際向いてる方向は、お互い違います。

KDJ: I think Penone is also about encounter, but he seems to use touch as the primary means to connect with the 'other'. For you the encounter seems to be more about a visual or conceptual encounter. Or would you say an encounter for you is also about touching an object?

LU: Many people want to touch my works. I am fine when people touch the stone and steel plate works but I am not pleased when people touch my paintings, because of dirt. For me it is important to create the feeling of wanting to touch. Actually, Penone has thought a great deal about the sense of touch; he uses wood to communicate sensations that question what has happened. That is not of primary importance for me. A kind of metamorphosis or a metaphor, that which excites the imagination; that is important to me.

LU: 僕の作品は、絵画も彫刻も触りたがる人が多いんですよ、鉄板や石の場合は触ってもいい。絵画の場合は触られると汚れるので困る場合があるんですけれども、触りたくなるということが大事なんです。ペノーネは、実際タッチングについてすごく良く考えているんですけれども、実際木を使うので、どうなっているんだろう、

いろいろ覗いたり、触れてみたくなるようなことがあるんだけれども、そういうことが僕に大事なんではなくて、一種のメタモル・フォーゼというかメタファーとして、いろいろな想像を掻き立てるということが大事なんです。

PL: In our first interview we talked about Jacques Derrida. You said that on the one hand you were very interested in his philosophy, but that, on the other hand, you think that he covers everything up with words. What's wrong with that?

LU: I think, Jacques Derrida is a fantastic philosopher, but I felt he was living in the 'sea of words' (language). According to him, only words are acceptable, so without writing, things do not exist. He tried to perceive everything through words, and that is not such a good thing.

I'll give an example: Buddha showed his disciple a lotus flower, then his disciple smiled. By seeing his smile, Buddha saw that he understood. That kind of communication also exists. They did not use any words; they understood each other without words; they could connect.

LU: ジャック・デリダは素晴らしい哲学者だと思うけれど、あまりにも彼は言葉の海に住んでいるようなもので、言葉以外はだめだ、だから語られていないものは存在しない。彼は言葉だけで全部を見ようとする。それはちょっと困る。

仏陀は、自分の弟子に、蓮の花を見せる、そうすると、弟子はにやっと笑ったんですね、にやっと笑っただけで、こいつはお互いをわかっているんだな。そういう、コミュニケーションもあるんです。それは、言葉では何も言っていない、それは何もいっていないんだけども、わかることが出来る。通づることが出来る。

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI

Conversation between Christian Boltanski, Peter Lodermeyer & Karlyn De Jongh

l'Hôtel, Paris, France, 19 January 2009

Christian Boltanski (1944 in Paris, France). His installations of found objects and anonymous photos are focused on the themes of time, death, memory and loss. Lives and works in Paris.*

Peter Lodermeyer: Just a few weeks ago I met with Hermann Nitsch. His concern is certainly with existence. I think yours is, too, but in a different way; the two of you seem to live in parallel universes. Nitsch is about the amplification or celebration of existence; your work is mainly about death and mortality, which might be just the flipside of the same thing.

Christian Boltanski: It is very difficult with these subjects. In French we call them *bateaux*: they are such large questions that it is impossible to answer them. There is a joke, which goes like this: "I have an answer, do you have a question?" There are very few subjects in art as well as in life and philosophy. One is what it means to die; the other is what it means to be born. They have been the same since the beginning of art. In my work I do not try to answer these questions; I try to find the question. It is true that this is something very strange. I believe in uniqueness: everybody is unique. To be unique is to be important, but after two generations people have completely forgotten about you. Our life is strange, because it is important and, at the same time, very fragile.

PL: Those are, of course, philosophical questions. Did you ever try to find answers in philosophy?

CB: Philosophy is different from what I try to do. I am not a philosopher; I have never read a book of philosophy. I try to tell a little story. I tell you this story without words, only with sensations: images, sounds. These little stories raise questions. On the one hand you could say there is no answer to these questions; on the other hand there are many answers.

Last summer I made a piece in the Cluny Abbey in France. There were chairs everywhere, about 20 of them. When you would sit on a chair, it spoke to you. The chair said: "What have you done with your life?", "Who are your friends?". They were all very heavy questions; each chair had its own question. Outside the abbey in the village, there was an old truck on which the word 'answers' was written. A large speaker gave stupid answers in a low voice: "Life is under your feet", "Sausages are the beginning of the world". Totally stupid. Thousands of answers. What I wanted to say is that, to each question you may have, there are many answers. Each person can take the answer he wants and each answer is equal. The answers can help us to survive, but they are not the truth.

PL: Is this what art is about for you? A means for dealing better with our existence?

CB: For me art is about raising questions and about giving emotions. Art is like a machine, like a car: everything inside has to be useful. It does not have to be beautiful; every aspect must work. The machine does not produce anything; it produces a question.

PL: To make the machine work, you have to have a certain formalism. In your case I think you use quite minimalist characteristics: repetition or boxes, like Donald Judd. You do it in a completely different way: Judd tried to empty them, but you seem to fill these boxes with emotions.

CB: Well, we are all born in a time. It may sound awful, but it is true that the time in which you are born is more important than you are yourself. It is possible to recognize an artist from the 18th century and one of the 20th century: you can even see a difference of twenty years. More important than the artist is the time in which he lives. I was born in a minimalist time. In my art I present a sentimental minimalism. If you take a biscuit box it is a Donald Judd piece, but it is also a biscuit box and everybody in my generation knows it. You put treasures and small objects inside. It is also something in which you can put ashes: at the same time it is a minimal and a sentimental object. There are two big families of artists: those making work about life and those making work about art. I myself am more about life. But of course there is always a connection between the two families: each time you make something it is a formal work.

PL: The day before yesterday we went together to the Centre Pompidou where we saw your installation La vie impossible de C.B. (2001). Looking at it, I felt I was dealing with someone who tried to get rid of his past, of past memories or emotions.

CB: There are two things you can do with your love letters: either you put them in the garbage or in your drawer. To look at them is sometimes heavy. In a way it was a good thing to make that piece: it is my whole life. To be an artist is marvelous: if you are sad for example, you show the sadness and are no longer sad. We play to be sad. In a way I put all these letters—which are my life—away by making the piece. When you die, people will find photos but perhaps also a train ticket and they don't know which one of the two is more important. After death, things that were once so important are suddenly nothing. That is strange: all these objects are important for me or for you alone; for others they are nothing. I used to go to the flea market to buy old agendas. They contain written things, which Jones, for instance, should not forget. Now Jones is dead and nobody knows. All the things that were once important to us are now sold on the street.

PL: When we die, our body and possessions turn into empty objects.

CB: At the beginning of my career I worked on something I called 'the small memory'. I know where to buy the best pizza in Paris, I know some jokes, but all of that is going to disappear. All these small memories are going to die with us.

Karlyn De Jongh: You have spoken about the anonymity of people's names after their death. During your life you have become a well-known artist and your work is presented in many collections worldwide. Also the jokes you refer to have been written down in books. Do you believe you will be forgotten and become anonymous? What will happen to your artworks in this respect?

CB: It shows that one of the reasons to be an artist is to survive. On the other hand it is a part of myself that is going to survive. The only way to fight against the fact of dying is transmission. One of the things that touches me is that in your face you have a lot of dead people: you have the mouth of your great grandmother, the nose of your uncle. All these people are without names, nobody can remember them, but in your face—and I think also in your spirit—they are there. You are a puzzle of dead people. These people who do not have a name anymore, they are in us. I have no children and my only way to make the transmission is by my work.

It becomes more and more difficult to make the transmission. Time goes by so quickly. When you were an artist before, you could say to the young artists: you must do it like this. Now it goes so quickly you can't say anything. In the traditional society the fact of dying was not so terrible, it was a part of life. In the country, when the father died the son took over the farm. Most important was to continue the line. There was a celebration: people came together and marriages were arranged. Now, we have nothing to make the transmission with and the fact of dying is therefore more terrible. Now, we refuse the fact of dying. We try to forget it.

PL: You have been working with these subjects of death and mortality for a long time. How has that changed your world view?

CB: I think it did not change. I have very few ideas and have been repeating the same thing for so long. What did change is that for a long time the work was about the death of others; now it is about my death. That is because of my age. When you are old, you play with the fact that you are going to die. I am working on a project at the moment. I know a man who is setting up a foundation in Tasmania, Australia. He came to Paris to buy some of my pieces. He is very

rich and won his fortune by gambling in the casino. He says he never lost. I told him I wanted to play with him. I am selling my life to this man. In French we call it *viager* [life annuity]: when you are old and sell your house, the man who buys it pays you every month until you die. It could either be a good business or a bad one. I sell him my life in *viager*. In my studio there will be these video surveillance cameras. They will be shown directly in a cave in Tasmania: people can see my life in that cave, but that is fine because nobody ever goes to Tasmania. The good price is eight years: if I die in two years he is a winner; if I die in ten years, he lost. I hope he is going to loose, but until now he never has. It was funny to play with this man, because in a way it is stronger than chance: it is like playing chess with the devil. He can kill me. You never know, it can end in three years.

Another project I am working on at the moment is on an island in Japan. I am going to make a library of heartbeats. I want to collect millions. I have created a machine to tape these heartbeats. The machine is going to travel and tape heartbeats in many countries. It is a permanent piece. In a few years it will be possible to go to that island and ask for the heartbeat of Mrs. Smith; there will be millions of hearts of dead people. At the moment I am interested in creating these pieces that are so far away that nobody can see them. It is possible to go there, but it is a long trip.

KDJ: You have described yourself as a 20th century artist, rather than one from the 21st century. Since you feel so strongly a part of the 20th century, how do you experience living and creating work in the 21st century? Do you feel that a part of you has died or that you belong to the past in this identification with the 20th century?

CB: I don't believe so much in the idea of progress. There is for sure not much progress in art and I am uncertain whether there is progress in life: the big questions are always there and they are always the same.

The only difference with the 21st century is that in the 20th there was the post-human problem. What is dangerous now is the idea of post-human: to try to escape the facts that we are going to die, that we need to kill to eat. At the same time it is very difficult to be against that. It is dangerous because it is possible that we are going to create two kinds of people: some will be very handsome

and smart and get to be 100 years old; others are going to die at 50 and are very stupid and ugly. The prize is never for everybody. For that reason an artist today can be human and not post-human. Nothing has changed.

I am from this time. Formally, I was an artist from the 20th century. An artist now is not better than he was 50 years ago. My way of speaking is a way of speaking from the 20th century. If I had been born 20 years before, I would have been an abstract painter: it is very difficult to escape your time.

PL: I agree with you that there is no real progress in art, but the means are changing all the time. For example, your work is very much related to photography and a certain way of using photography, but that is changing too: Think of digital photography. I have read in the newspaper that in the near future passports might no longer have a photo, but a video display. The whole aesthetics of the everyday is changing.

CB: Yes, sure. I am reading at the same time Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* [*Die Leiden des jungen Werther*] and Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* [*Fragments d'un discours amoureux*]. They are in the same spirit, but they do not use the same words. The same counts for me. The big story of my life is the question of the Nazis and the communists. That is the time of the 20th century.

KDJ: You just mentioned Roland Barthes. Barthes has spoken about the "return of the dead" which is there in every photograph. The photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially, he says. What is for you the relationship between a photograph and death? How do you yourself relate to the photographs?

CB: For me it is like what Roland Barthes said: each time you make a photo, one second later it is something of the past, something that is dead. For that reason it is always very difficult to look at someone in a photograph: either that person has totally changed or is dead. In either one of these cases the person is not the same. A long time ago I made a piece for the Lisson Gallery in London, UK. There is a school right in front of the gallery. I became the photographer for this school. It was possible for the parents to buy the photo for about 5 Euros. The same photos were exhibited in the gallery, for a high price. The idea was that when I make a photo in the school I am useful; in the gallery it was an artwork. Two years ago, I worked with people of the same school. We tried to find the children that were portrayed in these photos. Two of them were dead, ten had totally disappeared, we found about thirty and they looked totally different. Children of 12 or 15 are full of hope. And when you see them 40 years later—they are workers, sad, living an unhappy life—it's totally different. It shows that each time you take a photo you are going to speak about the fact of dying. But you also preserve something. If I were to place my glasses in a display case in a museum, my glasses would survive me. They are, however, no longer glasses: glasses are something to look through. Each time you try to preserve, you kill. That is always the problem of life.

PL: You said that what you want to do is to create emotions. Seeing your work for me is an emotional experience. Do you get reactions from people who have seen your work?

CB: I want that and have that. I know it is stupid: in French we have the expression to make a movie *grand publique*, that is really bad. As a joke, I always said I am a *grand publique* artist: I can touch a lot of people. It is not good, I am not proud of it, but it is a fact and I do want it. The reason I often work outside of the museum is because it is easier to touch people. When you are in a museum, people know it is art and they are not so touched; in everyday life it is more moving.

KDJ: How does that relate to the projects you are working on now on the Japanese island and in Tasmania? These places are far away and not easy to reach.

CB: There are two ways to make the transmission: one is by the relic, the object; the other—as in the Japanese project—through knowledge. But who cares? It is important that people know the story. It is like the beginning of a novel: there is an island in the Japanese sea with millions of heartbeats. Sometimes I want the reality of things; other times it is the beginning of a novel. For me the transmission through knowledge is more important than the transmission by relics. In my work and life there are a lot of stories. You can tell these stories: it is not only to see them in my work; it is about knowing the stories. To know the stories is perhaps more important than to see the work.

PL: Does your art have a religious dimension to it?

CB: I am not religious, but I am sure that art and religion are very close. I am also sure that the first time you see art is when you go to a temple and see a priest do this [makes a hand movement]: he tries to say something that is impossible to say because language is lacking. It is the same with relics. Art has become the new relic. A small city with three Van Goghs is going to be rich, because people want to see them. Also everything around artists is religious. When you make art you ask questions and that is the same in religion.

Everybody always says that religion is like a lock and you try to find the key. When I use formal things I search for a language that everybody knows; religion is a language that everybody knows.

PL: Gerhard Richter once came up with this famous statement: "Art is the highest form of hope". Would you agree?

CB: It is what I said before about the transmission: we are in a line, there were people before us and there will be people after us. We try to do things for people that come after us; the same counts for art. That is the main difference between me and my cat. My cat cannot understand that there was a cat before her and that there will be one after her and that she has to do something for the cats that are to come. Humans understand that. This means there is hope. The real hope for me is that in a few years you and I are dead and that there will be another artist and other art historians who are going to speak in our place. It is not going to be us—that would be impossible—but it is going to be like us. Everything goes on. That is something very optimistic, you know.

KDJ: We have spoken about the stories, but have not yet touched upon the theater aspect of your work. You have said that "art is not at all reality, it's a representation of reality, like a theater." What do you mean with this 'representation of reality'? What is the importance of theater for you?

CB: For me there is a big difference between visual arts and music or theater: one is art of the space, the other of time. I try to mix these two kinds of art. When I make a retrospective of what I call painting or when I make a spectacle, people can stay 5 minutes or two hours and they are not in front of something; they are in something. You can come and go as you wish. In a way they are part of the work. When you use a video, you can use it with space or with time. In the case of space, you move around with the video; in the case of time, you are like a sculpture. With the same medium you can make a sculpture and you can make cinema. The medium is not so important. What is important is art of the space and art of the time.

KDJ: In your art you make references to your childhood, but in interviews you have indicated that these stories are made up, that they are not real. In these interviews you have spoken about what is—supposedly—your real childhood. What does this theatrical aspect say about your existence? How does it relate to the stories you show about your life? Does the theater become reality after your death?

CB: The more you work, the more you become your art. As a joke, I always say that at the end of his life Giacometti looked like a Giacometti and Francis Bacon looked like a Francis Bacon and I look more and more like a biscuit box—and that is also true. The success of an artist is to tend physically towards his own art. In any case, we are only our art. For some artists, like Joseph Beuys or Gilbert & George, the life was so important that they themselves became an art piece. In the interview I do not speak about the awful sausage I ate before I saw you, or that I had another appointment. What I tell you is the artistic discourse. But that is not the real discourse, it is part of it but it is not the real discourse. It is like that for each artist and for each person.

What was also important for me in the theater is that you work a lot, you perform for a night or three and afterwards everything is destroyed. There is only the memory of the people that have seen the theater play. For example, I am going to do something in the Grand Palais in one year. When they asked me I agreed, on the condition that everything would be destroyed afterward. I don't want to sell anything from that exhibition. About 50 or 60% of my work is destroyed after the show. For me that is very important and that has also something to do with the transmission. My work will only exist in the memory of the people who have seen it.

PETER HALLEY

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Halley studio, New York, USA, 19 February 2009

*Peter Halley (*1953, New York, USA) paints colourful, geometric works depicting the relationships between what he calls 'prisons' and 'cells'—icons that reflect the increasing geometricization of social space. Since 1980, Halley has been living and working in New York City.*

KDJ: At first sight your works may seem mostly related to space, but I feel the concepts of 'time' and 'existence' are appropriate too. How do you yourself understand your work in reference to these concepts of time, space and existence?

PH: I think visual art probably most directly addresses the issue of space. Time becomes more elusive, and existence even more so. Certainly from the 50s to the 70s, the themes of time, space, and existence were central existentialist questions, and almost defined what art was trying to address. That has changed greatly. With the rise of post-structuralism around 1980, the issue of existence has been pushed to the side. Everything is seen as mediated and essentially unknowable—as if the philosophical existential questions are unapproachable.

KDJ: How do you feel that relates to your own work?

PH: To some extent I adhere to that point of view. But it probably constitutes a reduced mission for art. If the arts only address questions of social practice, are they capable of approaching such questions?

On the other hand, my work does present a very basic existential conundrum. In the early eighties, I painted plain, simple, square prisons. In these works, the square was no longer an idealist form, but rather a confining space. I was interested in the idea of isolation. When I first came to New York, I felt the isolation of living in an apartment—it was a singular, individual existence. I imagined being in a box stacked up with many other boxes. I was also very interested in the late paintings of Phillip Guston, with their existentialist gloom.

Afterwards, there was a transformation in my point of view. The more I thought about my situation, I realized that I wasn't so isolated, that I was tied in with others—not through an experience of shared public space, but rather through all kinds of media—such as the telephone or television, and later the internet. The space of my work became premised on the idea that the way we live is characterized by physical isolation, but that we are reconnected through technology. Technology and economics create these channels of communication in ways that we do not choose. I pictured this by painting bands that I call 'conduits', that connect the prisons and cells.

I also became very interested in Baudrillard in the mid-eighties. I saw him as a writer who was really struggling to describe the hermetic world and the mindset that the social forces in our era have created.

KDJ: If you cannot get outside of those human conditions—do you experience that as a prison?

PH: Yes, that condition can be seen as imprisoning. Fredric Jameson wrote a book in 1972 called *The Prison-House of Language*. Within the linguistic model, language is the only thing we know to be real. Language doesn't allow us to get passed itself to reach issues of existence.

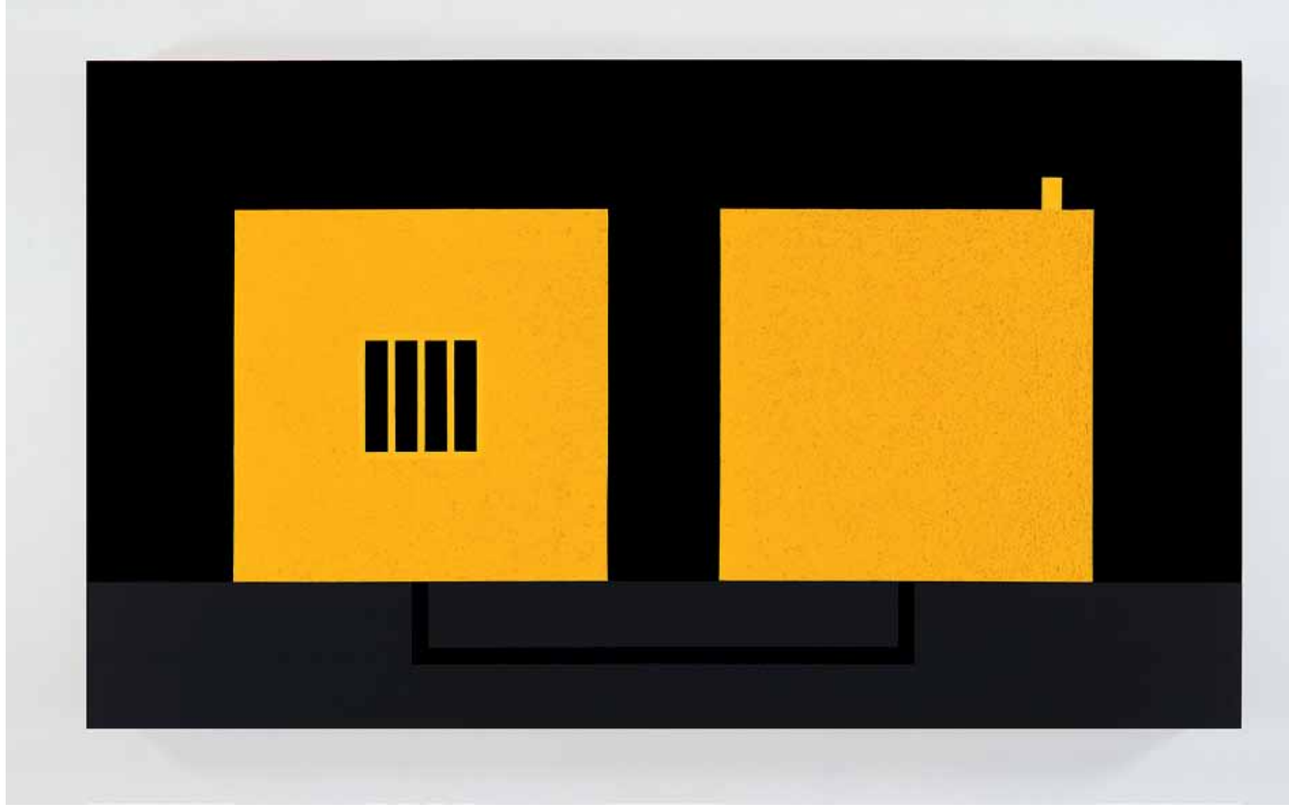
KDJ: Are the conduits connecting prisons and cells related to the connectivity between individuals?

PH: The connectivity between people is the basis of the pleasure of life to me. I am not the kind of artist who is interested in the so-called natural world.

KDJ: That you are not interested in the 'natural world', does that have something to do with the fluorescent colors you use in your paintings?

PH: That's right. I believe that there really was a crisis about the idea of nature in the 80s. It began earlier than that, especially with Warhol, but in the art world of the 80s, it was in full swing. Until then, nature was seen as the absolute, essential referent. But as our landscape itself has becomes more and more artificial, and communication becomes more dependant on technology, the relevance of a natural referent obviously disappears. All of a sudden, artists were challenging the idea that, in a media-saturated society, nature could be seen as a meaningful referent. It was happening in work that is much different than mine. For example, Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman were all about challenging essentialism.

KDJ: Even though you are American, it seems these European existential questions are important to you. How do you yourself see life in relation to death?



PH: I've observed that one big difference between European and American art seems to be the influence of Heidegger. Until very recently, European artists never threw overboard these existential questions. Heidegger talked about life as preparing for the inevitability of death. That existential question is central. In the US, by the 60s the reality of death has just disappeared. Think of plastic surgery and the whole cult of youth—people do not really acknowledge that they are going to die. Warhol straddled the question very poignantly. On the one hand, he glamorized death with his paintings of car crashes and Marilyn Monroe. On the other hand, he used his camera and tape to make an undying record of every incident in his life.

KDJ: Warhol once did a portrait of you. Do you feel related to him or do you feel your work is related to his?

PH: I do. I mean—I grew up in New York. He was really an idol to me when I was young. But his legacy has certainly been taken up by wide variety of artists. One generation after another seems to focus on different aspects of his work. In my case, I relate to his strategies of repetition and his ideas about emotion. I think that Warhol really did see himself as a conduit, an entity through which other people's creativity and psyches flowed. I'm kind of oriented that way myself. Publishing Index Magazine for ten years was very much like that—putting people together and listening to their ideas.

I absorbed a similar viewpoint from the German sociologist, Norbert Elias. His great book is called *The Civilizing Process*. It's a social history of the West from the middle ages until the end of the aristocratic era. In the preface to this book—and he is writing in the 1930s—he argues that consciousness doesn't reside in the individual, but rather in the group, and that there is no consciousness unless there is a group. It seems he was arguing against the individualization of the psyche that is the emphasized by Freud. I think that all this relates to the issue of existence—if consciousness resides in the group, where does existence reside?

KDJ: How do you see Elias' ideas in relation to your prisons and the isolation you spoke of earlier?

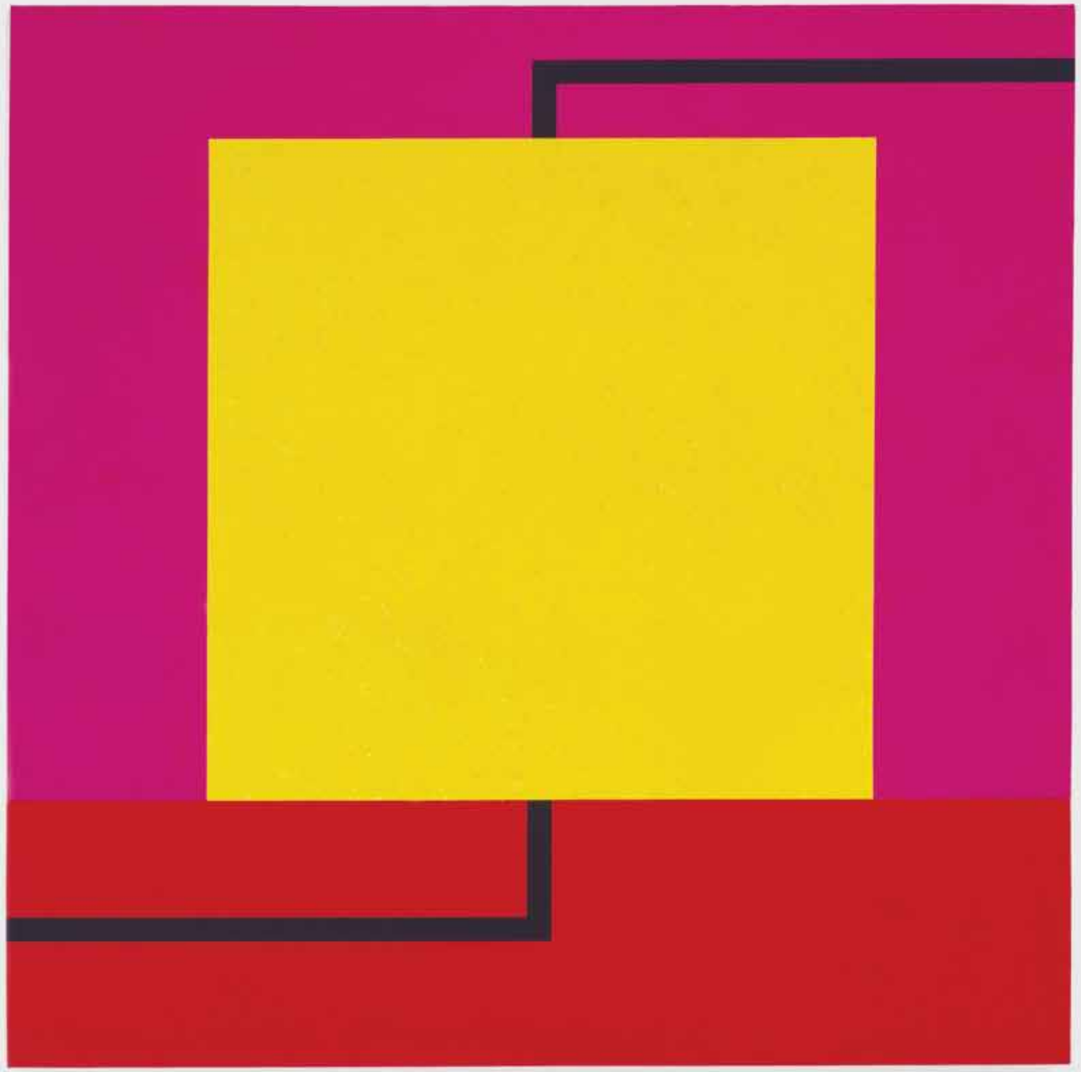
PH: The prisons and cells are definitely isolated containers. But what interests me is their interconnection. Obviously, I'm not saying the same thing as Elias, but as an artist, one takes in all of these viewpoints.

KDJ: So, for you it is more about what is in-between, between people, between these isolated containers?

PH: As a human being, feels of isolation or alienation, awareness of my interior state of mind, and my relationship to the world around me all come into it. I often think of the paintings as a conversation between being connected and not being connected.

KDJ: Is the connection also between the viewer and the painting?

PH: That is such a complicated question. It has been my experience that any reading of the work relating to what I have to say is rare. More often people get it in a kind of intuitive way. It is really only professional critics and writers who examine the work as we are doing now.



When my work first came on the scene, it was not uncommon for people to talk about these issues. Now that my work has entered the system, it is mostly judged aesthetically. The conversation mostly resolves around whether it is a good Peter Halley or a bad Peter Halley. It can be frustrating.

I think of my work as diaristic. I like to follow the change in the paintings over the course of time. It's a little crazy—I really use only three or four symbolic forms, and variations in the color. The fact that I've been rearranging these forms and reworking them for a period of over twenty-five years is interesting. When I look back, I can often see personal and political reasons for why the configurations changed.

KDJ: The approach to materials in your work seems close to Minimalism. Is that right?

PH: As a young artist, I felt that both Minimalism and Pop Art reflected a really democratic approach to art making. Artists had embraced commercial materials and techniques. It did not require any special skills to make a Donald Judd or an Andy Warhol. That was very important to me. It had to do with making art accessible—not just the viewing but the making of art. You and I, or anybody we know could take some bricks and make art with it. It was not a question of training or special genius or anything like that. My own work still depends on techniques that do not require a unique hand or special facture.

KDJ: You even use special paints—Day-glo and Roll-a-tex. Why do you use these materials?

PH: I use Day-glo because of the luminosity: they really are brighter than artist's pigments. That ties into what I just said about the democratic attitude, about how to make something. If you use Day-Glo paint, it's not so hard to make the color bright—it's not the result of a expertise or finesse or anything like that. There has always been a lot of humor in my work. Warhol and the Pop generation were trying to reconsider the idea of what is easy and what is difficult. Why make it hard, when you can make it easy? That attitude resulted in real innovation.

At the same time, I could never accept the hermetic self-referential claims of Minimalism. Donald Judd, for example, said that the forms in his work didn't refer to anything, that they were in effect signifiers without signifieds. In the 80s, with the influence of Roland Barthes and others, the issue of the signifier all of a sudden became opened up again. A lot of my early work is the result of questioning Minimalism and re-opening Minimalist signifiers to point to society, to social space, etc. All of a sudden, squares could become prisons. To some extend this reconsideration of representation was the experience of a lot of artists of my generation.

KDJ: A few weeks ago I was in Paris where I saw one of your recent works. Because of the fluorescent colors, it is difficult to look at your paintings. The color dazzles your eyes. I was thinking about this in relation to what you once said, that you share with Henri Matisse "a desire to integrate the formal aspects of a picture and its symbolic content."

PH: With artists like Rothko and Newman and the painters and sculptors of the 60s, light was very much part of the conversation. I grew up with the notion that paintings create light, that picturing light was really important. As my work developed, I wanted to make paintings that created light, not natural light, but an artificial light. One usually thinks of a divine or sublime force as dazzling. So, if it's artificial light that dazzles, it's a little perverse in a way that I like.

KDJ: You work with a number of assistants in your studio. What effect does it have on your paintings to have other people work on them?

PH: It's true, nowadays I only work a little bit on the actual paintings. But the techniques and the way of painting them are mine.

This question of execution also touches on issues of mortality and existence. Sol Lewitt, for example, doesn't physically have to be around to make the work. His wall pieces can be remade long into the future after his death. Of course, classical music is like that as well. I often wondered if that was a part of Lewitt's thinking.

KDJ: Is that something you are considering yourself, to have your work made after your own death?

PH: No, not literally. But, I am invested in the notion that my work does not depend on gesture and touch. It's produced by the mind, not the body. As such, it's an idealist enterprise.

I do think that people make works of art because they are going to die, and because the works of art that they make will presumably stick around. You can trace the development of that idea in European history. Christian immortality shifted into gaining immortality through fame.

KDJ: In your essay, The Frozen Land*, you wrote about art's ability to stop time. Do you see time as a human construction?*

PH: I was always aware of Bergson's ideas about human segmentation of the natural fluidity time. I'm also interested in how truth is based on a moment in time in both traditional Western chiaroscuro painting and in photography. The portrayal in a chiaroscuro portrait and a photograph is essentially based on how things appear at one single moment. Then, with the symbolist generation in the late 1800s, truth became associated with the idea of 'essence'—that truth was not momentary, but based on a distillation of prolonged study and observation. Somebody like Matisse really did believe that he could portray someone as they were, outside of time.

KDJ: You have stated that in your work you "try to avoid any pre-1945 influences", but in this conversation you have referred several times to pre-1945 ideas that influenced you. What kind of influences does this statement refer to? How does this idea reflect your ideas of history and nostalgia?

PH: Jose Ortega y Gasset once said that to think is to exaggerate. I made that statement about influence in a specific context. In the 80s, Neo-Expressionism was so tied to a nostalgic vision of the early twentieth-century modernism. I was trying to bring the conversation back to a dialogue about contemporary issues.

KDJ: You refer a lot to other people's ideas and seem to speak about your own work indirectly. Why do you do this? Does that mean that the historical context is very important to your work? Is art for you mainly about a dialogue?

PH: I've always thought of myself as having a very fluid ego-boundary. In many ways, I think of my creativity as a conduit through which the ideas of different people flow. I identify particularly with Warhol in this regard.

KDJ: Prisons can be understood as spaces for isolation and contemplation or reflection. How does your idea of prisons or cells relate to Foucault?

PH: First of all, as a young artist thirty years ago, the ideas I encountered in post-structuralism were already familiar to me from the work of Warhol and Robert Smithson. I don't think critical writing invents or discovers what is going on as much as it defines current issues in rigorous academic language.

That said, what Foucault emphasized for me is that we should interrogate our own culture—that we cannot really understand anything beyond our own cultural experience. Foucault brings to an end the West's romance with anthropology and non-Western culture, which was so prevalent from the beginning of the colonial era though the 1970s.

Foucault is so meticulous about his sources. He digs into the archive, delving into all sorts of forgotten records and documents. And the only truth for him is what has been recorded in these documents. That's one important thing. The other is his embrace of his own subjectivity, his opposition to objectivity, and his self-awareness that everything he writes comes from his own psychology. He pretty much states that his own subjective interior reality becomes the basis for his understanding of history.

KDJ: How do you see that in relation in your own work? Do you see your work as personal?

PH: I think the idea of the personal is sort of crippling. The art that has influenced me—whether it be Warhol, Rothko, Robert Smithson or others—really de-emphasized the personal. But when Neo-Expressionism came along in the early 80s, it glorified the personal stance of the artists involved to such an extent that they were seen as heroic. The heroic artist is really a political issue. It devalues the worth of ordinary people who are not artists.

KDJ: Does the personal not play a role for you in your work? For example, your paintings can clearly be seen as the work of Peter Halley. Is it therefore not something personal?

PH: In our world, a successful creative work is individuated. If someone says about my work, "This looks like Frank Stella" they would be de-valuing my work, because it was not sufficiently individuated as Peter Halley. In the modern era, there is a tremendous value put on this individuation, which was not true in the pre-modern era.

I'm also interested in how a lot of artists are working with the personalization of consumer culture. Like, choosing between a Prada and a Louis Vuitton handbag is said to give you personal identity. All these little consumer choices have become more and more important to the way people personally define themselves, in defining how one person is distinct from the next. So, I guess in my experience, the personal has been corrupted and has sort of disappeared.

KDJ: In 1984 you defined the concept of space as "a digital field in which are situated 'cells' with simulated stucco texture from which flow irradiated 'conduits'." Taking this definition into account, you have spoken about numerous variations of space, such as social space, cellular space, simulated space, and geometric space. How—if at all—do they differ?

PH: In the early 80s, I decided that the space we live in is defined by compartments connected by predetermined pathways. I still believe that this is the dominant space in our society. In the 1990s, I started working with flowchart diagrams taken from psychology and computer science textbooks, which defined space in absolutely the same kind of way. My conclusion has been that this space was in fact first codified by structuralism in the early twentieth century. It is a way of connecting and organizing things—first categorizing and then creating connections between them.

It seemed very exciting to me to work with this paradigm. I don't think anybody has ever agreed with me about its importance. In the 90s, I felt that computerization was only intensifying this paradigm, because in the binary pathways of the digital world, it is really the only way you can do things. I felt that I was able to go back and forth between the mental space of the flowchart and physical space we live in—they were almost the same.

I also felt that the structural features of this space were almost hidden. One night in the early 80s, I found myself in a New York office building with an artist who was doing a project there. The building had a marble lobby—and of course there weren't any water pipes or electric lines visible anywhere. But when we went down to the basement, all these connections were exposed right there on the walls and ceiling. It made a big impression on me that these functional connectors are always hidden. It seemed to me that it was a worthwhile enterprise to foreground this issue in my work.

To conclude, I would also emphasize that the space I'm interested in is human space, the space that humans construct. That also comes from what I understand about Foucault—that there is a limit to our understanding—what we can understand is limited to what we do as humans.

KDJ: Would you say your paintings are spaces themselves?

PH: Yes. I think of them as very thin low-relief. I like to emphasize textural signifiers like the Roll-a-Tex surfaces and the thickness of the stretchers. I'm interested in anthropometric signifiers as well — for the most part, I try to make paintings in which you can imagine a human being fitting inside the cell or prison.

I get a lot of criticism for the fact that my work does not change much. But these decisions about what to paint were arrived at after a number of years. My subject matter feels essential to me. There are a few artists who really challenge the idea that change is a positive thing—like Agnes Martin, or maybe even more so Carl Andre, who has said that he didn't want his work to change, that the time we live is so short that doing one thing is enough.

VITO ACCONCI

Conversation between Vito Acconci, Karlyn De Jongh & Peter Lodermeyer

Vito Acconci studio, Brooklyn, USA, 29 March 2009

Vito Acconci (1940 in the Bronx, NY, USA) was a pioneer of performance art ('Body Art') in the 1970s. Since the 80s the artist has been focusing on architecture that integrates public and private space.*

Peter Lodermeyer: To begin with, I would like to discuss with you about your proposal for the new World Trade Center. Many intellectuals and historians claim that 9/11 was the end of the simulation theory of the 80s and 90s, the end of the theory of the 'disappearance' of space.

Vito Acconci: Disappearance in the sense of…?

PL: In the sense that space seemed to 'disappear' because of telecommunication, high-speed transportation, and in particular, virtual space.

VA: Virtual space is still a kind of space. It is not a physical space, but I am not sure what the World Trade Center had to do with that.

PL: We have gotten away from the fact that things happen in time, space and a real place. We had forgotten about that, because of our fascination with virtual space. I think the realization that 9/11 was a real thing, not just a simulation, effected a turn in cultural studies. Some people actually refer to a 'spatial turn'.

VA: Do you think that's really true, though? I mean: just because a terrorist attack is rare in the United States, it is not rare everywhere else in the world. So, these things were happening before. I don't think, I really don't think I can possibly agree. Terrorist attacks in Israel and Palestine have been going on the entire time. So I don't know why the World Trade Center, just because we had never experienced it in the United States… But we are not the world; the rest of the world is there.

PL: The World Trade Center was a symbol for our way of life, for globalization, for the globalized economy. What I would like to ask you is: what did it change here in the States in general and did it change something in your work or in your notion of space and architecture?

VA: No, not that I am so conscious of. The only change was that there was this notion of 'this is real' whereas the United States had been kind of spoiled until then: we didn't have attacks like that. But I don't know if anything changed. For a lot of us here, for people in my generation, when the World Trade Center went up, we were horrified by it. It went up in 1973 at a time when the US was finally admitting that they had lost in Vietnam. The way I and a lot of people from my generation saw the World Trade Center was as this American arrogance. This was an American attempt to look big even though they had obviously lost a war—obviously should not have been in that war. A lot of us said, "I hope it falls down". Of course, we did not take into consideration that when a building falls down, people are in it. So, we wanted it to fall down as a symbol, not as a destruction of real bodies and real people. How it changed work of mine? I am not sure. It is not that clear to me.

PL: What kind of statement was your proposal for the new World Trade Center? Why did you propose a building that is full of holes, so it looks like Swiss cheese?

VA: Yeah, as a proposal based on the fact that buildings nowadays are going to be exploded anyway. Maybe nowadays buildings should come already exploded; they should come pre-exploded. The building is like an urban camouflage. If a building comes already with holes, a terrorist may come flying above. When he looks down, he will think, "we don't have to bother about this building: it has already been bothered." But: it has another part. Once there were holes in a building and tunnels from one side to the other; now there are tunnels from down to up. Now there are tunnels through the building, the rest of the city can come inside. Parks can come inside; street venders can come inside the building. For our work, what we usually try to do is instead of observing this convention of a building that can be built a few stories higher; they have a so-called 'public space' outside. Our attempt is, I don't think public space exists that way. Public space exists as a mix of the public and private. We knew that this would never be built, but our attempt was to… I think, any system can only grow, be alive, when it mixes with other systems. For us, the concern is always that things are not just private or just public.

Karlyn De Jongh: You started as a poet and have expressed yourself in many ways. Language—whether written, spoken, or body language—seems very important to you. Would you say the mix you just spoke about is a kind of conversation between public and private?

VA: Language is important for me, but I don't know if it is important for everyone. I don't think it is about conversation; it is more about being in the same place. No matter what problems New York has, for me the great thing about this city is this mix. It is the fact of a mix of colors: you walk down the street and really don't know what nationality a person is. That's probably here more than anywhere else. That's what a city should be. A city should be a mix of people. It's not necessary that they are talking; it is just that they are in the same place. The habits of one culture are starting to slip inside the habits of another culture. It does not have to be as conscious as a conversation; it is more a part of everyday life. The thing is: it probably takes time.

The people of my generation—who were very affected by the Vietnam War—thought it would be possible for a revolution to happen in the United States. Maybe the notion of a revolution isn't as great as we thought. Maybe a revolution makes a new power structure. Then there has to be another revolution and another one. Also I don't know if things happen in a so-called public space. I think things happen over the telephone, through the Internet, in back alleys, in city streets, not so much in plazas. Well, the United States has no plazas. They really don't. The only public spaces in the United States are corporation plazas and they are just there for the corporation to get more space. Plazas were incredibly important in the past: they were places where people met and discussed; I am not sure whether that is true now. Now, it seems as if a plaza is a convenient place for a city to get a large number of people together, so they can have a surveillance system. It's almost like you know what it is people are doing when they are all in that place. You don't know what they are doing in alleys, what they are doing in back streets. So, I don't know whether a plaza is a viable revolution notion.

PL: You mentioned a couple of times that architecture, as we know it is more or less a totalitarian activity.

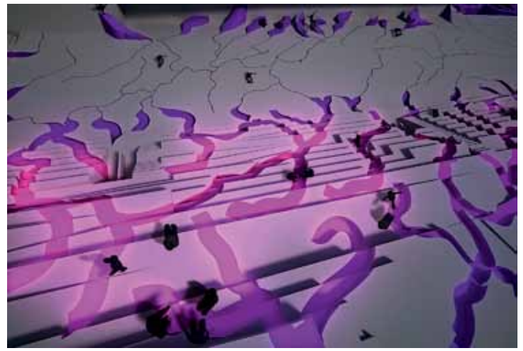
VA: It doesn't have to be that way, but it is.

PL: You would like to have your architectural work viewed as liberation.

VA: But I think the only way it can really do that is if the architecture is changeable and if it is changeable by people. I think that is starting to happen. I don't know if people really know how to do it yet, but more and more a building will be formed by its users. Hopefully the shape will always be different according to its users. I don't know exactly how that will happen yet, but there are things like these so-called 'smart buildings', where things can change just by sensors. That's only the beginning.

PL: When this happens—that architecture is changeable—it will be the start of a completely new kind of architectural aesthetics as well. Your buildings often look like organic 'flows' in space.

VA: Yeah, but there are so many buildings now that are like that. It may look organic, but it is more from computer thinking. Strangely, the computer is maybe the thing most opposite to nature. Can people build the way nature builds? I don't think they should. I mean: birds and animals can build certain ways; we can get hints from that but I don't think we need to replicate it.

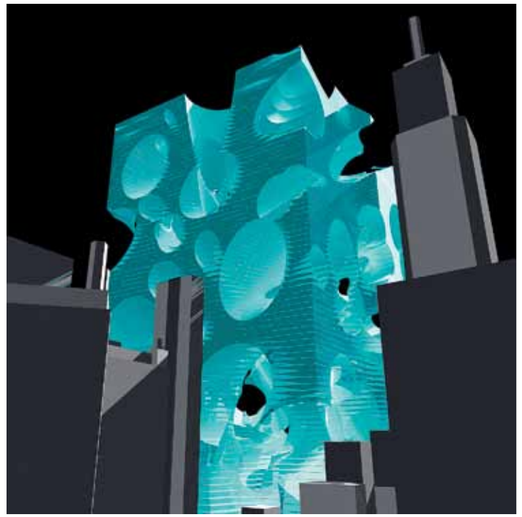


PL: Can you explain to us a little more about the mingling between the private and the public? It would be interesting to learn what, in your opinion, public space could or should be.

VA: I don't know if I know. I guess my hope is that if these mixes of different nationalities and different classes. It is much harder to mix different classes than it is to mix nationalities, I mean there are still places in New York where poor people cannot live. Those separations are there. They are there because the people who are in a privileged class want to keep the privilege. Maybe what interests me in New York is that, even if people of privileged classes think this way it's just not so easy to avoid the others. Maybe just the presence of these others will eventually mix… I don't know. Will a privileged class ever be dissolved? I don't know if I can say that. I would like it to be, but I don't know if that can really happen. I don't know what changes a financial crisis such as the one going on now can make.

KDJ: You have described the public space first and foremost as a physical space—or even a physical place. Is it for you more about a location than about space in general? How do you see this physicality?

VA: The way I have been thinking about space is physical. I think that is a mistake; I think it has to be some kind of mix of physical and virtual space. There is a project being built soon in Indianapolis, in the mid-west of the United States. It does have a physical place. The site is a street in Indianapolis that goes through a building. We did not have to pick this site, but we picked it because we thought there was not really a big budget for this project. By picking this site we forced ourselves to think more about the virtual than we usually do. The project works as follows: when the street goes through the ground floor of this building, the tunnel is actually a volume of color. At different times of day the color changes. We are not sure about the colors yet, but let's say it is blue in the morning, purple in the afternoon, and pink at night. When people walk or cycle through the building, around them is this massive structure that holds thousands of different LED lights. As people walk through, each person activates a sensor that turns on lights around them. So, in a way they are causing the lights. It's almost as if they have a swarm of fireflies around them. They act as lights, but they also start to intermix: if I have activated one cluster of lights, you have activated another, as I come to you and you to me, they start to mix.



For us it may have been a first attempt to make a space that will always be different, depending on how people will be using it. I think that is a very, very small start: it has to be more than light, but it gave us a chance. We are thinking about it a lot. It is easy to do it by people activating light or sound. What we would really like is if a person comes into a room and there is nothing, but if he wants to sit down he leans against the wall and the wall starts to depress and make a seat for this person. If the person no longer wants to sit, he gets up and the seat turns back into a wall. Something like that. It should not be that a place is here and a person is there; it should be more that the place and the person start to intermingle. And I am sure it is going to happen. I hope we get a chance to do it, but I have the feeling it will be someone younger than I.

PL: That's a very utopian and poetic notion of space.

VA: It's the thing that is most important. It's the thing I want most from work or something: change. Can I say that all change is good? I don't think that I can legitimately say that. But all changes at least change. At least, it is a possibility of something else. The only way the present can make sense is if there is some anticipation of or hope for or wish for some kind of future. And it is this anticipation of the future that probably shapes the present. Why would you want to do something if there is no future? You want to do something, because maybe there is a chance to possibly shape the future. Not necessarily the way I said. Why from the beginning did I want to do work? What I wanted to do at one time was poetry, then at another time it was art, then at another time closer to this time is design and architecture. When I was a teenager I realized that I came upon so many things, no matter whether they were literature or music, things that I could say that changed my life. I would love stuff of mine to have that affect on other people. Not that people imitate what you do, but that there is something else. I know in the mid-70s I first heard the Sex Pistols and the Ramones. It seemed like the whole atmosphere of the time had changed. But, you know, it doesn't last forever. And then in the early 90s I first heard Tricky or Moby or more recently when I first heard more electronic music—which I heard a long time ago in the 60s but that was a different version.

I don't know if you can ever really be inside your time. You probably don't understand the time until it is over. You can sum it up easier when it is over. It was easier to talk about the 60s when it was 1968, 1969, 1970. Maybe one way to get a sense of the time is by its music. It's a little difficult because pop music is so different from what real musicians are doing. Whereas in the 60s it was very different, you know. It may seem strange now, but in the 60s people—including me—would wait for the next Beatles song as if we were really going to learn something new. Or we waited for the next Godard movie. There were really some people we thought had some kind of 'in': they were getting the time more than the rest of us. I don't know where I was going with this… Sorry.

PL: Not at all, your diversion was extremely interesting. But let's talk now about museums. You have written very critically about museums, calling them prisons, and remarking that art is in a way frustrating. If you had the opportunity to build a museum yourself…

VA: Immediately! What we would do, I am not exactly sure, I hope we would do something that reacts to all the bad thoughts I had about museums. But I am not sure if I can, you know. This started a long time ago, for me. And it wasn't just me; there were a lot of people of my generation who wondered about it. Museums have changed since then. We wondered about why museums have no windows. Is art as fragile as all that? The thing is: art probably is as fragile as all that; art does have to be kind of protected. That is probably why my art became what it should have been a long time ago.

I want people to be participants and inhabitants. I don't know if art can do that so easily, but design and architecture automatically do that: you are inside a building, you hold a product in your hand, you hold a cup, you are wearing clothes. It seems that is the space I really want. A lot of things I said about museums make sense for me; I don't think they necessarily make sense for others. There probably is some reason that there are these spaces that rebuild a culture, that display a culture. But they are outside of everyday life. And I think they probably have to be. It's just that for me, I am not so interested in that kind of space. I am not so interested in the condition of art that the viewer is here and the art is there. So, the viewer is always in a position of some kind of desire and hence frustration. There are always these 'do not touch' signs—there are, of course, reasons for those signs. At the same time, such a sign is saying that art may be more expensive than people. If everybody touches it, the thing disappears.

KDJ: Why is this tactile experience for you so important in reference to art?

VA: I wonder now if it should be as important as it was. For me it came from the 60s. You mentioned the importance of language, but the importance of language in the 60s was finding oneself: all my work was doing what the culture was doing; everybody was trying to find themselves. Maybe I, together with some other people, made it more obvious, but it was just what the culture at large was doing.

There were a number of sociologists that were important to me at that time: Irving Goffman and a person named Edward Hall. Hall wrote *The Hidden Dimension* and *The Silent Language*. The latter was about spatial relations. I bought a lot of books at that time about how people communicate and how close they are, where their hands are in relation to other people. There was a psychiatrist at that time, R.D. Laing, who was important: he wrote about 'you and me'. The work of Hall struck me. He said there are four different kinds of distances. A so-called public distance with a speaker and an audience. There is a social distance, when people are approximately three meters away from each other and both can see the whole other person—in the case of being in the US this distance allows you to see whether the other person is carrying a gun; you can check if you are safe. When the same two people are suddenly a few millimeters away from each other, sight doesn't count anymore. Sight blurs; you start to resort to other senses—you start to resort to hearing, to smell, possibly to taste. Around that time, I started to think that maybe the visual is a way to control. Maybe the only way to possibly learn something is when you can't use that visual anymore: then you can't control. Even in language, when you talk about something you grope towards an idea, as if you are trying to feel the idea out.

I wonder sometimes if I would think as much the way that I do if I hadn't been born in New York and grew up in this city. This became clear to me in the 70s when I went to Chicago for the first time. I realized—and it was a startling thing—that you could see buildings in Chicago. That isn't such a strange thing, but for someone coming from New York it was: in New York you rarely see buildings; you see buildings in Manhattan when you are in Brooklyn. You are always in the presence of buildings, but everything is in close-up. I learned a lot from being in close-up rather than from being in panorama. There are advantages to each: panorama or vista give you a chance to consider; close-up doesn't. So, you probably need both. The proximity of things in New York is so important to the work I did, I think. I don't think that ever really stopped. It's not so easy for me to give an overall view.

I always try to let my students think about what happens when you are too close. Think about a space that is so close that you cannot even see it. What happens? Things like that have shaped not only my thoughts, but also the way I worked. I hope I can think; the only way I know I can think is when I do some projects. They are a way to prove your thinking. Or writing.

PL: Each kind of space creates phantasms or fantasies or dreams. Do you dream about space at night?

VA: I very rarely remember dreams. In my life there are three, four, five dreams that I clearly remember. And they were mostly from a long time ago. No, I don't think I dream about space. I do think I have walking daydreams about space. I think about "what if it wasn't like that?" But they are passing thoughts. You always think that things can be different. Many people have said to me this American phrase—but like a lot of other things in America it possibly started to concur the world—"If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Things are always a little bit different, but you never know whether it will get better. I think that notion of 'what if' is always important to me.

When we make spaces, we try to think whether we can make space for people who don't mind a second chance to get to be children. Children go through space differently. We hope sometimes that we don't make space. When we make things that are real failures, these are things that are immediately seen: 'this is a seat', 'this is a table', 'this is a shelf'. For me it is more important to make spaces that allow you to think 'this could be a shelf', 'this could be a table'. It gives people a chance to find something for themselves. To get back to the public plaza: I always like it if a public plaza has seats. It's interesting to see that if there are plenty of seats available, some people prefer

to sit on the steps. This is the first act of rebellion. It's like: the seat tells you to sit down—I am going to find some place else. And it gets in the way: you cannot climb up and down those steps so easily, because a person is sitting there. At the same time it's like 'wow, this person decided to do something on his or her own'.

PL: What is or what was the most surprising or unexpected thing you found out about space?

VA: That's a really good question. I don't know if I know the answer to that… I am not having an immediate answer. Sometimes I have mixed feelings about people using a space. When some people are using a space, they are using it by almost tearing it apart. I have very mixed feelings about that. I guess, the thing that surprises me about this—I don't know whether it surprises me about space or about people—is that using something is often so close to destroying something. Maybe I haven't known how to consider that enough. I have to admit it makes a lot of sense. People are always stopped; they are stopped from doing a lot of things. If they have a chance to do something—even if it means tearing it apart—it is understandable, but I don't know what to do with that. Yes, I want people to be free, but people have been so used to standing in lines, to being suppressed, that when they have a chance to do something, they will do something even if it means to destroy it. I don't know whether it is surprising, but it is something I don't know how to deal with.

I have very mixed feelings sometimes about spaces. Sometimes I wonder if something wasn't there and now you put something there; of course people are going to be using it, at least for a while. In other words: I would love public space to be more than just a place to sit down. Sometimes I think: 'if we would have placed a couple of folding chairs there, would it have been the same thing?' I don't know. The most surprising thing sometimes is to see how people use our spaces. Sometimes I see people smiling when they use our spaces, so maybe they get something that we had in mind. At the same time: I can see what people do, but I don't know what they are thinking. Maybe something is happening as you are using it. This is not necessarily a surprise, but I don't know what people want. I want people to want some kind of change in what they usually do. But I really don't think most people want that. People want exactly the opposite. So often I ask myself: what am I doing?

PL: This is precisely the question I want to ask you. You said architecture is mostly like a prison. Why are we doing this? Why are we constantly building prisons? The obvious answer would seem to be: because we actually want to live in a prison.

VA: The ultimate problem is that you cannot get out of a prison. But at the same time, you don't have any responsibility of your own once you're in it. It's very comfortable: you get food every day… I never felt that way. I always wanted to find ways to surprise myself. I want to keep alive, but 'keeping alive' to me means to think at least one little thing I haven't thought before or maybe it's the same thing, but twisted a little bit. Maybe most people have too many problems to think of that. I am always worried about money, but never in the way some people are really worried about money. I am spoiled, you know. So, everything I say about space and about a second chance comes from a privileged way of living. There are people who don't have any place to be, let alone to turn it upside down. You only have the luxury to turn something upside down when you have it.

KDJ: Two weeks ago I was in Graz, Austria, where I saw the café you designed in the Mur River. The café is a functional space. If this piece were not used anymore, what meaning would the piece have for you then? When the use value of your pieces disappears, do they—in a way—die?

VA: If they are not used anymore, yes. Then they would be like these museum pieces. They would be like artifacts of a past culture. Once a space is in a place for a number of years, why would it be used? I am giving a messy answer; I don't know how to give a more neat one.

PL: I really like the title of a work you did in 1997 for the Whitney Museum, Tonight we escape from New York.

VA: I stole it. I stole it from a John Carpenter movie called *Escape from New York*. I wanted to make it more immediate. I steal from everything.

PL: Do you sometimes have daydreams about escaping? What do you think about space and escapism? What is the relation between the two?

VA: Ideally I would love to do a space… Maybe that is why I am thinking more about the possibilities of virtual space being combined with a physical space. Maybe that's a way you can have a space that is so physical that you might find yourself trapped in that space. But maybe if you can mix it with the other… Maybe for me the physical and the virtual are a way to mix present and future. The problems I have with virtual space—and I don't think it's because I am the wrong generation—is that I don't know how to pay incredible attention to it. After a while, when I see a stream of images, it all looks the same to me. I don't know if a younger generation grasps virtual images faster in the middle of the stream or is it more that they don't care about the tension. I realize a lot of things have happened since…

We didn't use computers in the studio until relatively late, till 1997. Since getting them, we have become so committed to computers, sometimes too much in the sense that we don't make physical models as much as we did before. With computers it's easy to show yourself almost any kind of space. Because it is not real. People who know computers better than I do have said that the computer is only a tool. I want to believe it is more than a tool. I want to believe it has a mind of its own. Maybe 'mind' is the wrong word, maybe that's only in analogue. But it seems that if there is so much information available, if there are so many processes, it is a kind of mind. I keep thinking that maybe we have to find a way, not so much to tell the computer what to do, but to work WITH the computer and to feel the computer out and treat it almost like a pet. But if you command it—if you commanded me or I commanded you—you want to say no. It does not work that way. Some of the things we are doing with computers, I have no idea of what you really ask. Sometimes, if I want to think badly of computation methods, I think it's just giving patterns or forms. Sometimes I think that if we use the computer to get to these forms, maybe the forms can in turn find some kind of subject matter or content. I think it's really important to use the instrument of our time. But I can't say I totally believe everything it does. I do want to try it out, however.

If there are things I don't understand, I really don't understand them. I can understand fantasy, but I can understand science fiction better than fantasy. Science fiction is a possible future. So, I would love our stuff to at least approach science fiction. I don't want it to approach fantasy. I need to see some consequences of what I do. Maybe change is important to me, but I don't understand change unless I see some consequences or effect of change—even if it's as minor as adding a new book to my bookshelves.

I love this particular time, but I tend to like the times I am in. That doesn't mean I reject the times I was in before, but they are not there anymore. Now with the 21st century there are so many possibilities because of the computer. There are many possibilities to be at different places at the same time. I realize that there are certain things that were important to me, that aren't so important to me anymore. It's still important to me to have books. But is it still so important to read all those books? I am not sure. Sometimes I wonder if having a book becomes a sort of substitute. As long as I can see the titles, the table of contents and the index. Those are the important parts; I don't need the body of the book until something clicks and I can go and find it.

KDJ: We have been talking about public space. Do you think there is also something like public time?

VA: I once wrote an essay called *A Public Space and A Private Time*. That was done in 1990. It began with a paragraph about there not being anymore public time, because of cheaply available wristwatches. It used to be so in New York—in particular when passing banks—that you could look into a window and see a clock. There would be clocks on the streets. Suddenly there aren't so many anymore. It seemed that time became private: time became something you wore on your wrist. To me that was a sign to the becoming private of public space. Whatever the computer is and how many possibilities it has, it also is a kind of introduction of privacy: you can have everything on your laptop. I realize some change here in the studio: when we were making physical models we spent more time together; people gathered around to talk about a model. And we used to play music a lot. Now people have headphones. We still talk, but you are sort of in a private enclosure. I am not saying we should go back to some other time, but I think we should find what we could do with that. There are all these private capsules. Once in a while these capsules bump into one another. Maybe they intermingle and become private again, but maybe they have taken something over from the other private capsules. If they intermingle enough it may not be that bad, but maybe that's the new publicness. I think maybe that is why the new publicness is almost like particles rather than surfaces or…

I am not sure as to what I am saying yet. But I think there is private time. But I don't know how to define that exactly. I have never worn headphones on the street. That seems weird to me. That is another great thing in New York: I can walk down a street that I have known for years and years and suddenly there is a building I hadn't recognized before. It's not that it's a new building; it's just that New York

has so much incident that you probably cannot pay attention to it all at the same time. There always seems to be something new. And I like the idea of gathering things on the street. Something that is very important to me in life is movies. It's not that movies aren't important to me, but it's hard to watch a movie from beginning to end; the notion of watching a movie on a DVD is great for me: I can see parts and I can see it in any order I want. It's easy to do that with a movie, but if you could do that with a space… going into a space, leaning against the wall. You can do that with a movie: you can make your own version of it. I don't know if a person making movies is as fond of the DVD as anyone else, because it can be twisted. I always wondered, wouldn't it be great if you could walk down the street and a movie is being projected on buildings, so you can see the buildings, but you can also see the movie?

I keep coming back to the idea of mix. I think that is the kind of keynote to the 21st century. I think the closest thing to architecture is music: both of them make a kind of atmosphere, they make an ambiance. With both music and architecture you can be doing something else—you are always in the middle of architecture: you'd better be doing something else! But you can also be doing something else while listening to music. So, both have the notion of multi-attention. I think multi-attention is probably the keynote of the 21st century: you have to be able to pay attention to more than one thing at the same time. Maybe that can be the making of a new person. I hope we can do the kind of work that helps that new person to develop. I don't know if we can; I can think of so many architects that are more important than we are. And especially younger—I am jealous of younger architects.

PL: Is deconstructivist architecture important to you?

VA: It certainly was. I think in the mid-80s, mid-90s stuff of mine was probably something like that too. Once people started to get more used to using the computer what once were angles started to be fluid. Is one necessarily better than the other? The possibility of fluidity allows a kind of malleability. That interest in fluidity was all part of something else: a branch of mathematics called topology. A topological geometry is very different than a Euclidian geometry: something can be a sphere, but if you push it in and pull it out, it's still a sphere. So there is malleability. The ways of getting inside and outside aren't so important anymore. Someone once explained me very beautifully what a topological space is: if you take a so-called topological space and put an ant—an animal without wings—in what seems to be the inside, that ant—without being able to fly—goes from inside to outside, and vice versa. That's an interesting thing. It makes you think that public and private aren't so simply separable as all that. Maybe one can become the other. At the same time everything has its faults. The problem with topological space is: if it is such a self-enclosed space, how do you ever get outside? So it has a problem. I think this is something we talked about way at the beginning: if you can't get outside, if the system is closed, I think the system dies. There has to be an input of something else.

I didn't really get to private time; the closest I could come is music on headphones. Maybe the possibility of private time is kind of interesting, because you have something so private to you. Maybe

your sense of breathing becomes different. The notion of a capsule is kind of interesting. At the same time it is sort of horrifying because it's so private. The idea of capsules being able to absorb other capsules… This will not be a future that I will be alive for, but I wonder if the future will be a place where… I wonder why somebody like George W. Bush could be possible—not just Bush. Why are there so many countries making these immigration laws more and more difficult? It's the idea of keeping outsiders out. It's as if somewhere there is this consciousness or fear that you really can't keep outsiders out. Eventually maybe there is this fear that there aren't going to be any national boundaries; there aren't going to be any countries. That maybe people will take their own homes with them and be able to go anywhere and people are so afraid of that. It might be. There is a gym on every corner and it's not just a gym, it has a window so you can see people exercising so you can get jealous that you don't have a body like that. Or you can want their body. It's a very weird thing. It might be a particularly American thing, though, I am not sure. Maybe people have the fear that sooner or later the body is going to be a very different thing. That it will be a combination of the physical and the virtual. People are always afraid to see the old way go: they are used to the old way. The idea to keep something out is probably based on the notion of fear, that we are not going to be as we are now. But I think it is kind of exciting. Of course, this is total guesswork on my part. We probably won't be able to prove it, because it is not the immediate future. So, this mix of virtual and physical is so dowering that you kind of take it for granted.

PL: So, we are becoming more and more hybrid.

VA: Yes, and hybrid is a great thing. But hybrid has no purity and some people love that.

MARCIA HAFIF

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Marcia Hafif studio, New York, USA, 30 March 2009

Marcia Hafif (1929, Pomona, CA, USA) has been painting monochrome paintings since 1972. With her essay* Beginning Again *from 1978 she had a great influence on the development of painting. Hafif sees time, space and existence as inherent in any artwork; her understanding of these concepts stay closely related to the monochrome painting as object and is concrete and physical.*

Karlyn De Jongh: Your work seems to centralize the process of painting and the exploration of material and methods; your work seems to be very practical. When I contacted you about an interview for Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence *you said that these concepts are inherent in any artwork. How do you understand the inherentness of time, space and existence in your work?*

Marcia Hafif: The themes your publication takes up are big. Thinking of one, the concept of time, I find that even in practice it has many meanings, and beyond that it has been the subject of much philosophical thought.

Also with space: it is physical space that is important to me: the actual location of the work; the way the work is installed in a given place. I think about space in a very concrete way. Is my work practical? I have to work with materials to accomplish anything. At a certain moment I may have finished what I am working on, and begin to think about what I will do next. Toward that end I can make notes, but with only thought I do not find anything until I begin to work with materials.

In my work, time has a concrete meaning. Making the pencil drawings, for example, occupies real time. When I began them in 1972, I made a notation on the back of each drawing of the time involved in making it: I soon ceased doing that, but time remained central to the act of making the drawings, as it still is.

KDJ: You have been making monochrome paintings since 1972. Has this concrete understanding or meaning of time changed over the years?

MH: Not very much. In many earlier paintings, I used a small brush, small brush marks, moving systematically from the top left corner down and to the bottom right in a process similar to what I used in the pencil drawings. A certain time was necessary since I could not stop working until the painting was covered. For years I painted them in a similar way. Recently though I use a larger brush with a more liquid paint, it is still the same vertical brush stroke. It is covering the surface in a certain methodical way that takes a certain time.

KDJ: There seems to be a difference for you between the time on the clock—the one you need to have in order to make the work—and the time that you feel and about which you judge when deciding whether it's a good moment to work. It seems a combination. Is that right? How do you experience time during the creation of your work?

MH: Yes, that's right. I can't work if I don't have the right combination of available time and light and energy. And I need to be alone. It is a ritual. It is like finding time to go into a church, but it is not a church, it is the place I have made, it is my plan for the way I will work.

One question of time is the way to measure it. Clock time cannot be changed for us, but one's perception of time does. One feels time as long or short in everything. A day can seem endless or can speed by, but it's still a day. Time in art: making art, the viewing of art, these times are subjective and far beyond my capacity to control. When paintings are installed in a space, they remain there for a certain time, but I cannot prescribe a viewing time.

KDJ: Your work is quiet and contemplative. You even used the word 'meditative' to describe it. Could you describe this meditative act of painting? Do you 'empty' your mind while doing it? Or do you become fully aware of your surroundings? Do you see this meditative quality in relation to Taoism and Zen, as has been mentioned once?

MH: A notion I remember from Zen is that peeling a potato has the same value as painting a painting or participating in any other activity—in the simple activity of peeling a potato, one can be aware. Painting is a kind of practice for remaining in that state of empty mind with awareness.

KDJ: The final appearance of the painting seems to be seen by you as a result, rather than a predetermined effect. On the other hand, you have mentioned that your work has to relate directly to the viewer and you adjust the position of your work so that the viewer can have this direct contact. How do these things relate to one another? Is your work to be experienced for a public or by yourself? When you show your work in a gallery, what is it that you want to show the viewer?

MH: It is partly each in a way: result and effect. Again I have to have an idea of what it is I am going to do: I can't change the plan along the way. But I don't know exactly what the painting will look like when I am finished. That is what keeps me painting. I think "I will work like this, in order to see what happens." The paintings, predetermined, if you like, will become elements in an installation, I will place them in an eventual space in such a way that they relate to each other, they will create a different perspective view depending on the position of the viewer, and function as an experience that I will be pleased with and will want to share with a viewer. I intend this for the viewer as well as myself.

KDJ: After all these years of painting monochrome paintings, are you still surprised about what happens, about what the outcome is?

MH: Well, I can guess when I start, but I never know absolutely what the result will be. The series of these paintings, for example, I began in California. To begin I just thought 'blue'. I then invented a way to work with blue. Each begins with a different dark blue color, and each is covered with a mixture of white, a process called 'scumble.' Scumble is a technique of laying a white surface over a dark color. In the end you see the dark blue only as a thin line around the edge of the canvas.

KDJ: You want to continue working on these paintings because you planned them in a series? You need to continue with the experiment?

MH: I have a plan for finishing these that is still to come.

KDJ: Your work seems to be a research of the field of painting and you have said that the process of working is quite objective. Is painting for you mainly an experimenting?

MH: There is an element of experiment, that's true. At the same time, when I begin, I do know approximately what will happen, but if I could completely foresee the result, I would not continue. In fact, I began with monochrome painting, because after painting and exhibiting my work for ten years there was a certain moment when I felt I had either done everything, used every way of putting colors together, or seen it somewhere. I did not know and could not find any way that still surprised me about putting colors together.

I started with the pencil drawings on paper and soon went to a single color on canvas. Not in the sense of radicality nor in any political or aggressive way. Covering that whole surface with one color felt like a big step: not many painters had done that. It is true that there is a history of monochrome painting going back to the Russians—the 1920s with Rodchenko. Later Ryman often did, though it was pursued in Europe much more often than in the US. Some artists in the 60s and 70s painted most of the front surface with one color, but rarely the whole.

Painting the whole surface one color was different: with only one color, space is changed. Imagine what would happen if I just put a dot or my name here on the surface of the painting, the color would be pushed back into the distance. Right now there is nothing here creating two distances. The base color stays forward; it stays right here where we are.

KDJ: The paint is applied on the front surface of the canvas and not the edges. How do you see this surface? Is it for you a flat picture plane? You have said that the work is unframed in order to allow "verification of the kind of object it is." What kind of objects are your paintings? Why do you feel it is necessary to verify what kind of object it is? What do your paintings mean to you personally?

MH: I see the painting as an object with a flat front surface. Granted, it's a certain kind of object, a special object: it is a painting. It is painted and uses the materials of painting. Being stretched it retains the illusion of a 3-dimensional object, while actually being hollow. I do not paint the edges because I like to see the history of the materials. With these 'Scumble' paintings you see a trace of the underlying intense color on the outside edge.

I do not want to hide anything, and I do not want to create more of an illusion than is inherently there. I like to make visible the type of canvas used or traces of underpainting: I like to see all the elements of the painting. Most important for me is the perception of the color blue.

KDJ: In your French and Italian series you seem to react on the location or surroundings of where you painted these works: you used local colors and also the material was influenced by the location or space in which you made the work. How does space, whether it is a studio space or country, influence your work? How do you see this relation your paintings have to a place or space?

MH: I could call it interaction or reaction. It is provoked; the stimulus of it comes from a certain space together with some elements that inspires an act. In Germany I was using local enamel paint, and having seen so many red cars on the streets I focused on the red I could find in the shops.

During the time I have been working as a painter the gallery space has become neutral, empty. Galleries and museums, which are the predominant places one can show work, have insisted on white walls, and, in reaction, I plan paintings for that kind of space. My paintings refer to European painting and the history of its exhibition. If the walls were not smooth and white, I would make another kind of work, in fact I have.

KDJ: What is it that you look for in a space? Is it in this case also about the color of the walls? What if the gallery space would be blue, would your body of work be entirely different?

MH: I always look for some contrast to the wall. But actually there are many ways to react to a blue wall; I could put blue paintings on a blue wall in which case they would almost disappear, depending on elements of color and size. I react to what is there and I work with that—or against it at times. For certain projects I have painted entire walls.

KDJ: A few years ago you started painting two colors on a canvas. How do you understand these paintings in relation to your monochrome work? Would you still call this a monochrome painting, even when it's cut and there are two different colors?

MH: When I look at those works from a little distance, I think I see two monochromes coming together while each is in some way

not whole—or square. I see them as if they stand in front of each other, which is why I call their installation *Lateral Shift*.

KDJ: You have spoken about the display of your work. You have mentioned that a monochrome painting is best seen alone, not in the company of other paintings. Here in your studio I mainly see series of paintings. How does this isolation relate to the series you create? How do you see your series? Do you see them as a whole or can you take elements out of it?

MH: I think there are many different ways to install monochrome paintings, all related to wall and room space. The best way to see one of them is to isolate it on a wall that has enough space around that one is aware of the wall together with the painting. With monochrome painting there is no frame, no frame that prevents one from expanding focus beyond the painting.

The paintings in series are installed together as one painting relating to the wall(s), the space. Seen from the side, one is aware of the one-point perspective they create in the space as they are placed at the same height and equidistant.

KDJ: Do you think the viewer of your work needs to know a lot about material or about painting to understand it?

MH: No, no, I don't think so. Maybe knowing adds a dimension. Since there does not seem to be much present in the paintings, I am asked about the materials, and I often find myself explaining how the paintings are made.

KDJ: "There does not seem *to be much present." What is there for you?*

MH: In the case of these larger paintings one issue is size. A small painting is seen one-to-one; you are equal in a certain way. The large paintings are human size, one has a different physical feeling approaching that, or those, paintings. One is aware of the presence of an entity, larger or smaller, one specific color or another, perhaps face-to-face with the viewer, a certain experience is created.

KDJ: What elements make a good painting for you?

MH: I look first for the intention of the artist. I like the painting to be well made. Materials should be chosen in a meaningful way, size, proportion. At a certain point I felt that the square is right, although I have worked with vertical canvases and occasionally with the horizontal. A painting can be any color; any color can make a good painting. I guess, in a certain way, I prefer certain colors to others. It is not any of these elements that make the 'good' painting, but perhaps an effective combination.

KDJ: In 1978 you published the essay Beginning Again. *In that essay you sketch the time in which you started: painting was no longer relevant; you felt you had to go back to the basic question of what painting is. After a lifetime of painting, do you feel you—at least for yourself—found an answer to your questions or have a clearer idea of what painting is? Do you feel you found an answer to your starting question of what painting is?*

MH: I had been presenting monochrome paintings and thinking through that essay for five years before I published it in 1978. I think it was more about what painting could be at that time. It was the early 70s. At that time painting was more generally in question. Minimalists said painting was out because it's only illusion, they were working with real space. But I had been painting for quite some years and was deeply involved in it. From childhood I liked the tubes of paint; I liked the material of paint. I wanted to find a way to continue, to see where painting could go. That's when I began the pencil drawings and came to painting of one color on one surface. I read books about the materials of painting and recipes for making egg tempera and for making oil paint. My intention was to explore all these material aspects of painting, but to make them the subject.

KDJ: In this essay you write about the time in which you started and you mention the work of other artists. Is your work in that sense a product of the time in which you started monochrome painting?

MH: I was intrigued by other artist's work that seemed to have taken a route similar to mine. As I mentioned before, I was already painting in the 60s. I was living in Rome, Italy, during that decade. Returning home, I had a chance to start again in conversation with work being done in the US and in Europe. This was just after the rise of American Minimalism.

KDJ: Your visual language seems comparable with Minimalism, but you have always tried to free yourself from that movement. Rather your work is personal and you have spoken about it with the term 'synthetic', which seems to indicate experience and personal presence.

MH: When I mentioned synthesis at the end of *Beginning Again*, my thought was that during the 70s I, as well as many other artists, had worked with painting in an analytical way, and that now it would be possible to use that analysis to proceed with painting, which could be personal or otherwise.

KDJ: You have mentioned that over the years your attitude towards your own work has shifted from a critical to a personal one. Do you still have the attitude of looking from the outside inward? How does your recent work relate to the ideas of Jacques Derrida?

MH: In the mid-70s I read *Of Grammatology* and some other works of Derrida. I can't say that I understand his ideas, but certain ones, such as the concept of being 'under erasure' seemed to speak to discussion in the art world about painting. I found painting to be 'under erasure' in the sense that it had become no longer acceptable and yet was still there. It was crossed out, but not erased. In another of his books I was interested in the focus on the periphery (the parergon) rather than the center: paying attention to the columns in the painting or the frame, and so on, that are not usually central. In a way that is what I am doing: paying attention to the paint and the color, which historically is not the central subject; I am making it into a subject. I was also touched by the title *The Truth in Painting*.

KDJ: Do you yourself consider painting to be true or to have a truth?

MH: I can never say I have found the ultimate of anything. What keeps me working is a search for a better painting. Will it be perfect? Probably not. But maybe the next painting will be 'better.' I don't think one can find an absolute truth in painting. There is the truth of the particular painting: this is a painting using cobalt violet and white, painted on canvas, by this artist, at this time. I don't think the truth exists beyond that, I think it's right there in the physicality. There and in the subjective experience of perceiving the work in specific situation.

KDJ: How will your work continue? Do you feel you will reach an end to your experiments? Will new artists have to "begin again" or can someone take over the baton?

MH: My paintings are the result of a process. I make a plan, carry that out, a personal, sometimes idiosyncratic process, the paintings are what happens through doing that. They are the end of that moment, but not the end of painting, certainly not for anyone else.

My first monochrome exhibition was in Genova in 1973. People asked me if this meant the end of painting. But that question had been raised in 1920 with Rodchenko and his red, yellow and blue paintings. For me it wasn't the end, but rather the beginning of the exploration I had embarked on. I am sure one could continue indefinitely though I will at some time be finished.

JORINDE VOIGT

Interview with Peter Lodermeyer

April - August 2009

Jorinde Voigt (1977 in Frankfurt, Germany). Her work consists mainly of diagram-like drawings transposing auditive and spatial/temporal experiences of complex systems of algorithms. Lives in Berlin, Germany.*

Peter Lodermeyer: I like the photographs on your website where we see you working on the floor, lying on top of the drawing paper. These photos clearly show that your work is a physical matter, as opposed to the initial impression we might get (and one many people do have) that it is 'brainy' or 'scientific'. How important is the physical aspect of drawing for you?

Jorinde Voigt: The physical effort I make arises out of necessity. For example, when drawing a line across two meters of paper you have to move, naturally. Otherwise you can't manage it. Or the table at my disposal is too small for the drawing's format, and then I draw on the floor. I always write on the paper from all directions, whatever its format, since for the most part I work on models of thought, which are subjected to rotation or other kinds of movement anyway. So the reasons are more pragmatic in nature.

PL: Drawing as a way of developing a matrix of world- and self-experience—do you consider this a possible initial approach to your work?

JV: It certainly would not be wrong.

PL: We can read that your system of notation began with notes you made in a hotel room in Jakarta in 2003. They were partially drawn on graph paper, and recorded detonations, for example, elements that often occur in your later work. What is it all about? Was this a key when attempting something like a self-affirmation in the here and now?

JV: The notations were not done in the hotel room, but in little street cafés in the city. The detonations cited in this drawing refer to actual terrorist attacks thought to have been carried out by the Islamist organization Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). The day before I did the drawing a bomb had exploded in the inner city of Denpasar, which is where the notation (Bomb Explosion Yesterday) comes from. Since it was a very powerful event, its impact was still very much present the next day, and it therefore became part of the notation. The immediate present was so heavily influenced by it that it was a part of the situation. Back then, the approach was to examine the frequency of events that determine a specific cultural situation. This was more or less copying reality. But it was done while keeping in mind with what density and in what rhythm things happen around us. As a result, the repetition of the individual parts bore reference to reality alone. The notation (C4-Detonation) in later years does not refer to a concrete event, but to the deconstruction of buildings in general; it is written as a Countdown or Count-up, generally serving as an element with which to create balance in some drawings that are largely constructive in character.

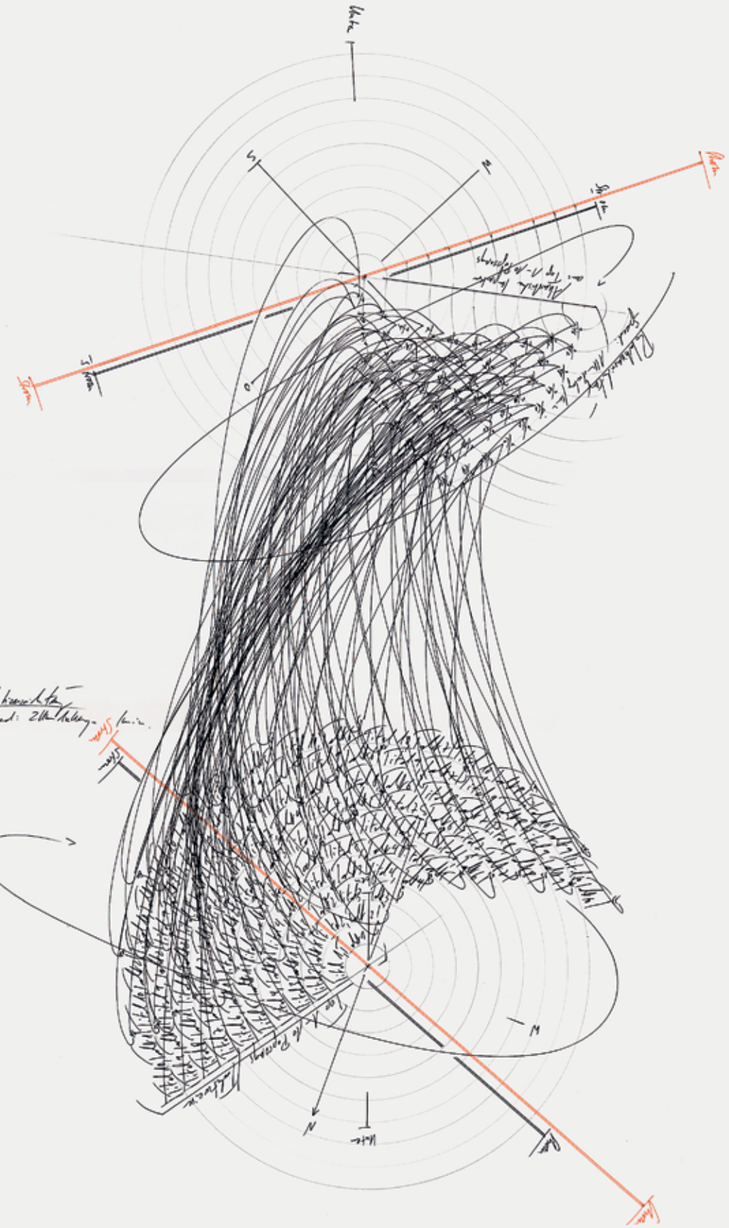
PL: I think that your works, which are highly repetitive in parts, display the character of 'exercise' or 'practice'. You yourself once compared them to competitive sports. How does the feedback between you and your work function? What is the existential yield from such 'work on the self'?

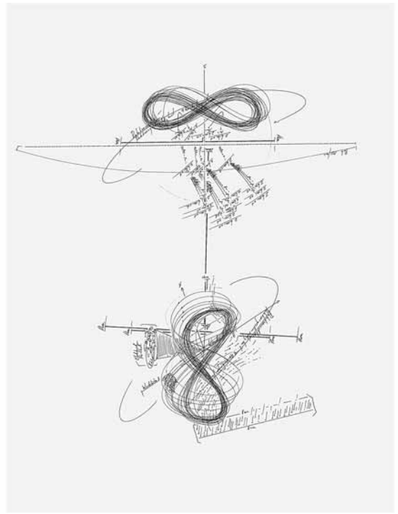
JV: The quote about competitive sports is incorrect. It was something the author at the *Tagesspiegel* made up.[1] The repetitive parts of the working process stay within limits. When a structure needs to be repeated often, because otherwise its character would not be visible, that is just what I do. At most, this heightens your concentration. But since I deal a lot with algorithms that produce an endless structure, of course I have to do a kind of follow-up work. But this is not as boring as you would think, since the algorithm only prescribes what is connected to what, but not how this is to be done. That means half of the process is spontaneous invention.

PL: What significance do the algorithms have? Are they self-applied rules or are they stimuli that come from the 'outside', i.e. from the cultural material, the fragments of reality, which you integrate into your work?

JV: The algorithms are self-applied rules. I develop an algorithm from my observation of a phenomenon, its structure, its 'character'. After all, the algorithm forms the subsequent framework for the text and the directions in which it progresses, etc. Various aspects are inherent to it, such as whether or not something develops from within itself (whether it is static or dynamic), whether it becomes smaller or larger, increases or decreases, whether it triggers a second or a third thing, etc., whether it integrates effects from the outside or if it is autonomous, and so on.

PL: Drawings by Hanne Darboven—whose art we both admire—were often criticized and accused of being mere 'busywork'. In an interview she once expressly professed to the 'secondary virtues' of diligence, order and discipline, but she added that her works "were full of responsibility". Can you relate to this concept of responsibility with respect to your work?





JV: This touches on its irreversible nature. When I draw, I cannot correct it, at least not the long stretches. This means you are directly concerned with irreversible processes. Because of this, you are acutely aware of your responsibility at every moment. You realize that what you are in the process of writing will always be a part of your future and final work. I believe it is important that the thought model can be retraced logically, both for me and for others: this is why I also feel a responsibility to do not do just anything, but to use my time and the time of others responsibly, coming to an arrangement which makes sense in itself and allows us to conquer new realms of thought. If it is to result in a cohesive field, it can always only build upon something that already exists, and then progress in small steps. It is precisely when portraying spaces of possibility that juxtapose diverse variations of the Now as a departure point, i.e., depicting a space where the Now can reveal its range of possibilities, that it takes a while to get all of this written down. But it is also the only possibility to get rid of the linearity of your own time. And this happens, at the latest, when viewing the result. Nevertheless, you have to pass through each individual moment. With such projects, your life-time is identical to the time it takes to record it. Most certainly.

PL: Can you explain in more detail what these spaces of possibility are all about, especially what you mean when you talk about the "only possibility to get rid of the linearity of your own time"? Are you aiming to enter into a different relationship with time when you draw?

JV: It has never been an intention, but it is often a discovery while dealing with models of time. You automatically reach a place that touches more dimensions than those we are accustomed to dealing with. This develops of its own accord. Perhaps an inherent logic is revealed here.

PL: In an article dating from 2008, Andrew Cannon cited a parallel between your work and the dreamtime of the Aborigines and, using a term coined by anthropologist W.H. Stanner, called it 'everywhen'. Do you agree with this analogy?

JV: 'Everywhen' is certainly an interesting concept of time. But I am far from committing myself to any definition of time as adequate. And I am unable to relate to the 'dream' part of it. After all, my working method is only possible when absolutely wide-awake. Thought is a more than three-dimensional moment of constant retrospection and discovery. But there is entropy and nothing exists outside of this. All matter is subjected to successive change (and in my experience, the immaterial does not exist without being linked to something material). This means that things have an inherent direction. It is a kind of movement, of development from one state to the next, and the loss or gain of characteristics in connection with this. In this sense, there is something akin to a clear before and after, or a chain of events, which may not be randomly interchanged.

PL: In an earlier interview you once said: "the space that I imagine when drawing a score is very similar to the one I imagine when listening to or making music." Could you elaborate on this space of the imagination and its musical pendant?

JV: Well, it is the view to the inside…

PL: Does this view have something to do with self-exploration, with positioning yourself in an existential context?

JV: It has to do with exploring what is 'conceivable' for you personally. It is more a contemplation of your own possibilities of thought, letting your imagination take flight, to put it more simply.

PL: What is the relationship between space/time structures and music in your work? What kind of musical experiences are important to you here?

JV: The most important thing about musical experience is how the overall intellectual, as well as emotional spectrum may be communicated by connecting it to a rhythmic or inherently proportionate structure, and what tremendous fun and joy this can create. The aspect of collective perception is also highly interesting. A pop-song, for example, can be an element for storing collective and private emotions, as well as the (historical) situation.

PL: In the same conversation you said that your concern when drawing/writing was with "the 'existence' during the drawing process". This existence interests me; this thought process which creates its own visual material in the process of writing/drawing. What is the essential motivation here?

JV: It is almost a synchronization of thought and action. The drawing itself, ultimately, delineates a thought process. The concept for a drawing defines the axes along which something is considered. The writing process itself has certain degrees of freedom, such as in what direction, with what momentum, with what intensity I write it. What it looks like then depends on the moment, what kind of mood you are in, how you spontaneously decide to do it. Afterwards it is always part of the result. There is nothing neutral about it, because each moment, as long as you are alive, is subject to these shifts in energy: it is only real, therefore, when you let it be part of the consideration. Anything else would be a lie. On the one hand, each spontaneous curve is specific, individual, but it also stands for every possible spontaneous curve that you could have drawn. That is the most important aspect about it.

PL: Back to the subject of music: the composer Helmut Lachenmann once referred to music and listening to music as an "existential experience". As he sees it, listening to demanding music means "to change, to discover yourself anew in your changeability." Would you care to comment on this description with respect to your own works?

JV: That is the underlying reason for my work: to explore what is imaginable and the way that perception functions. The discoveries you make in this process change you a lot, of course. At any rate, they change me.

PL: I would like to hear more about that. That is the point where the execution has an effect on the executor. I am interested in those feedback effects.

JV: The effect is that you constantly challenge yourself to rethink everything and try it out again. Actually, it is like working on one idea after another; and when you are trying them out, of course, new ideas arise that you want to pursue.

PL: In your works there are frequently 'dual' or rather relational, structures. This seems to be essential to me, and it makes your work different from fairly 'monadic' conceptual statements such as those made by Roman Opalka or On Kawara. Can you address the importance of this duality?

JV: The fundamental, relational concepts for thought models which I use to develop systems are borrowed from the structure of my environment. I do not exist in isolation; I move within a social environment, share in ideas developed by others, and deal with pre-existing systems that I live in, reject, repeat, create, or consolidate. A singular, isolated system does not exist in a non-pathologically conceived environment. It only exists in a religious context or in totalitarian systems.

PL: One element strikingly related to time in your work is the repetitive, rhythmic aspect with recourse to frequencies and repetition loops. What is the significance of this for the production and perception of your works?

JV: This is the most basic structure of all. Everything that is alive, and my attention is directed towards that—I am also alive myself—is subject to rhythms. That is the only reason it remains alive.

PL: Tell us more about this 'vitalism' in your work. Of course, this is what brings us to the key theme of the link between art and life…

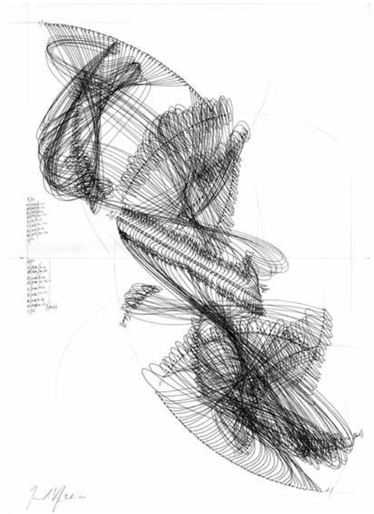
JV: The most fundamental, age-old question each day is what this actually is—what happens to us every day, what we see, and what surrounds us. We try to understand the underlying structures behind all this. That requires experimental setups. Extracting aspects, letting situations run like 'machines'; playing around with all this in order to discover the possibilities. I always assume that any existing concrete situation is only a variation.

PL: You once said that elements of your work taken from the real world were put through "highly absurd moments" by subjecting them to formal declensions, permutations, etc. Especially in French existentialism, absurdity is a designation of existential world experience. What value does the absurd element have in your work?

JV: It functions something like liberation from the structures within which things are normally portrayed. In my work a situation always leads from the known relationship of the parameters to a shift or vice versa. That is to say, the absurdity occurs logically in small steps.

PL: Is absurdity only another word for freedom, then?

JV: No—it's playing with things.



PL: Your drawings have mostly been done in series and feature systemic changes of conditions. Do the scientific trends of the last decades such as system theory, complexity research, self-organization, or bionics provide an intellectual background to your work?

JV: Existing theories are not directly reflected in my work, except perhaps when I use the Fibonacci sequence and its translation into duration, temporal and spatial distance as well as quantity during the notation of a *2-kissing-each-other* action. But the themes you mentioned in the question all interest me greatly.

PL: The elements of real experience repeatedly used in your drawings are quantifiable or measurable conditions or relationships such as temperatures, wind directions, periods of time, etc. With the exception of 2-kissing-each-other, *none of the elements appear to indicate emotional states directly. Why is there this preponderance of 'objectively' describable, 'neutral' components?*

JV: As I always use designations that signify the full range of connotations (pop-song, eagle, electricity, 2-kissing-each-other, temperature progression, black BMWs, angle of view, C4-detonation, etc.), I do not perceive this as being so neutral at all. I also looked at this question of emotionality, of how an element could be developed from it, but I believe it is already formulated in the making of the work, since it is impossible to be unemotional.

1 Jens Hinrichsen, Fieberkurve, in: *Tagesspiegel*, June 29, 2007: "The draughtswoman needs to keep track of things, however. She may not mess up any curve, or otherwise the page is ruined. Jorinde Voigt points to an especially delicate weave of threads in the entry area of the gallery: 'I drew on this work eleven hours a day for six weeks. This is like competitive sports.'" (http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/Jorinde-Voigt-Ausstellung;art772,2330942)

NELLEKE BELTJENS

Interview with Peter Lodermeyer

May - September 2009

Nelleke Beltjens (1974, the Netherlands). Lives in Bozeman MT, USA.*

Peter Lodermeyer: For years you made minimalist sculptures. Since 2005 you have been busy with complex drawings. Are the drawings related to your earlier work? Why did your concern change so drastically?

Nelleke Beltjens: How can I keep making minimalist sculptures when life is so extremely complex? Even the seemingly simplest 'thing' is complex, and feeling it all is even more complex. Life is complex and not 'set'. My sculptural work is heavy. Placed on the ground, it sits there, endures, takes up space. When you take a look at my sculptural works over time, you can see that over the years my work has gotten lighter, literally in weight, and visually. The forms have become 'softer' over time, less straight, more curved, from hugging the floor heavily to just touching the ground on one spot where the curve meets the floor, from black steel to white plaster, etc., from 'rigid' geometry towards more and more (subtle) complexities in form. The next step (in 2005) was taking it all off the floor (except for a few important sculptural pieces), and I started to draw large scale with simple means: an ink pen. First, there were heavily dense black ink drawings (the *Complex* series), and then followed drawings created with half vertical lines in color (half of the line visible, the other half of the line absent or elsewhere). The latter is a method I am still working with at the present day. It has been a process of years to reach this point, and every step has been necessary. I never try to change. It happens, at some point I simply 'have' to. It's a necessity, and I will always go with that. I believe in not forcing work. I believe in change, and going with it. I change, life changes, and so my work changes. My concerns change. Life feels different than some years ago, I feel the complexity of being alive very strongly and intensely, and creating minimal sculptures is at the moment not possible for me. The act of putting work down (literally on the floor) does not fit, either. Too grounded. I am much more interested in the ineffable, in the unconscious, in the invisible, the 'nothing', space, the untouchable, the 'negative'. In what is there 'beyond' the things. Perhaps sculpture is too much of a positive, even though the placement of my sculptural work, and the space between the works has always been as big a part of the work as the sculptures themselves. Drawing is what I need to do now. It fits the time, it fits me. Maybe it is more an intuitive thing than a conscious decision. Whether my drawings are related to my earlier work? Hm, … I think so, yet it is not so obvious perhaps for people that don't have the whole overview. I think both have a simplicity and a complexity to them, yet with the sculptures the simplicity is more in the foreground and with the drawings the complexity. Both are related to music/sound. In both, the space between the positives (lines, or sculptures) is extremely important. Repetition is present in all my work.

PL: Your first drawing series called Complex *looks like a dramatic breakthrough to new formal possibilities, rather: the existential necessity to force your way out of a certain formalism. Was it something like that? Did you feel caught or trapped in a rigid formal system before?*

NB: No, I never felt caught or trapped, but I do think I 'freed', and even surprised, myself in a certain sense by a very much unplanned and free way of drawing on a large scale. Am I contradicting myself here? Ultimately I always want to free myself as much as possible, but I know that part of existence means living with limitations. Living on this planet presents limitation, but of course, also a great number of possibilities. Trying to go beyond these limitations, though, is something I am interested in, and I think that can only happen in the invisible. My *Complex* series surely felt like an opening for new possibilities, rather than a continuation. I knew something had happened and that there was no going back. I always want to learn, renew myself, grow in the widest sense of the word, and sometimes it happens subtly and other times more drastically. The trigger (whatever the trigger is) for change is not that important, the change is important, and whether one dares to change. It was later (about two years after the *Complex* series) that I really felt I could not make the 'minimalist' sculptural work anymore. I even stopped in the middle of some sculptural works; they are still in my studio half done. This doesn't mean I will never make sculptures anymore. It means that it would surely be a different kind of work. I don't know what it would be, and I don't need to know. I just know what work I need to make at the present moment, and I believe that is all that counts. The *Complex* series is, I think, the most 'dramatic' work I have made. The work was a necessity; an important moment that aimed me in a different direction. I became less material-interested and more interested in the non-palpable, and in an ungrasp-

able intricacy. I am practicing life, and my own work is a great 'guide' while everything is in continuous movement. It already feels like such a different world now than, say, 5 years or so ago. It feels like consequences are rising above the surface rapidly…

PL: As a sculptor, you dealt with actual space. In your drawings, however, space is mainly a matter of imagination. Are you not interested anymore in working with the possibilities of real space?

NB: There is always a great amount of negative space in my recent drawings. The space makes the drawn part free and floating, being able to 'breath', it holds as much information as the drawn part. It 'feeds' the drawn part. For the past three years I have been drawing in blue or green. Each color changes the negative space differently. The imaginary space in my work is a mind space, and has no set limitations. This idea of limitlessness, the ongoing, is significant. How far can you go, what 'out there' can you reach? What levels of imaginary space can you touch? The material world is limited. I want to know what I cannot know, and 'write' 'it' down. It is out there in the negative. Every drawing is a discovery. I am still interested as well in the possibilities of actual space. I work in series, and my works together in a space become installations that change the actual space. Each work sits in actual space, like we exist in actual space, every 'thing' exists in actual space. Not that the idea of space in the largest sense is really graspable anyway. My largest drawings now are 140 x 225 cm (55" x 88.5"). I still have the wish to create larger works of about 4 x 3.5 meters (ca, 13' x 11.5') or draw directly on the wall. Hopefully to take the viewer in as the ocean can do. Freely but powerfull.

PL: Your notion of space is greatly influenced by the experience of the empty, open American landscapes. Why has this been so influential and how is it related to the specific qualities of your drawings?

NB: Once experienced is always experienced. Experiencing the vast open, the limitless, the empty, the 'nothing' has been extremely informative. My idea of empty space changed. It isn't empty. Space gave me a sense of free; art should be free. I realized I could find everything in the 'nothing', how you carry all the information inside yourself, and how important it is to be open. It is all already there. Since 2007 I have been living in Montana. There is lots of space and open landscape in Montana. Because of the 'nothing' I am aware of the complexities of life even more. It's like feeling everything at once, and through absence it arrives. The idea of openness and intricacy is present in my drawings: open line structures, uncountable lines, tiny spaces between the lines, and lots of negative space. Through the absence (negative space) that, which is present exists.

PL: The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan said once that the "core of our being does not coincide with the ego". Do you agree?

NB: Yes, I do. I am very interested in what's beyond the ego. The ego is problematic. The very core of the 'subject' (I know and am aware that one can interpret 'subject' in different ways) can not be the ego. It would be depressing if this were the case. The ego creates constructions. The ego is what I want to surpass in my work. In a way I want to surpass myself, surpass the 'small me'. Getting completely into my work (which doesn't always happen, of course) makes me work within regions 'unknown', or more unconscious. I feel like this is where the true information sprouts. Repetition is important for me, and letting it happen without forcing it in a direction. I think the 'will' should cease. I believe in intuition, but also in the power of thought. The very core of me is not the ego, the very core of my work should not be coming out of the ego.

PL: I asked the Lacan question because I think that the fact that your drawings consist of a presence/absence structure is much more than just an aesthetic decision. To me, it rather seems to be a self-exploration, which tries to get in touch with deep, unconscious layers of subjectivity. Please tell me about the 'game of presence and absence' in your work.

NB: Interesting that you call it a game. I would never call it that.

PL: People like Freud and Lacan called it a "game" or an "interplay".

NB: It surely is much more than just an aesthetic decision. It is in the absence, the 'nothing', the invisible, where everything lies (in the absence of the ego, to come back to your previous question). It is the absence that creates the presence. When there is no presence of something visible we call it absence, but within the nonappearance there can be a strong presence. So, maybe the absence is the actual (real) presence. In my work every little line is followed up by space, or the absence of a line. The following up of little vertical lines next to each other creates a seemingly horizontal line from a distance. Nothing is solid. There is another idea of absence in the work. All the little lines you can see are half lines. I draw off of the edges of little rectangle papers that I use as tools. Half of each placed line stays on this 'tool paper' and is thus absent in the drawing. The fact that half of the work is not present and exists in another form elsewhere is extremely important. The potential to be whole is there. Moreover: during the working process, part of the work is always covered up by the 'tool paper', and thus it is unseen while drawing, only to be revealed again later.

PL: Let's talk about the specific qualities of the lines in your drawing. In classical art theory the line stood for the notion or definition of things. 'Line' meant mainly outline, contour. In your case the 'line' is an open, rhythmical structure.

NB: It's an open structure that relates to basic existential things. There is movement, a structure and rhythm in everything. Breathing in and out, life and death (being there, being not there), the heartbeat, there is always a positive and a negative in everything in our existence. My lines do not define something specific, do not provide a conclusion or solution. I am interested in 'breaking things open', rather than putting on a label.

PL: Why do you want your drawings to show an 'ungraspable' quality?

NB: I am interested in the 'ungraspable', in what is present, but not when you focus on just one side, or when you want to grasp it as a solid phenomenon. I am interested in moments that you can't hold, but are powerfully there. Like dreams that you can't forcefully recall, but they 'fly' by at unexpected moments or in certain states of mind (for me it happens a lot when I am drawing; dreams that I dreamt even years ago flow by in split seconds). Once you try, though, to bring them to mind, they cease. It's a flow. Talking about flow… I am fascinated by water. Water has many ineffable qualities and it is so powerful. It has also to do with the fact that life is ungraspable. We can't hold it, and it is always in movement, in change. We can't step outside of ourselves and look at the whole. We can never see the whole, we can't even see ourselves. Only in the mirror or on images. So, it is never possible to see the 'whole picture'. With my drawings, you can see 'soft' cloudlike shapes from a distance, yet the closer you come, the more intricate it all gets, and the more difficult it becomes to focus at once on everything that is happening, and grasp the whole. You can never see all parts at once, and 'understand' it.

PL: You mentioned that music is essential for the process of making your drawings. Why and in which way?

NB: Music is invisible, (can be) so powerful and direct. It can fill a room, and change everything, while nothing visual has changed. Music is abstract, can reach regions unknown, and create strong feelings. It can change you. Music/sound can give information otherwise unreachable. I am mostly interested in classical (especially piano) music, contemporary or New Music, and Free Jazz. Music feeds me, and feeds my work. I can't imagine a life without music, or making work without music. It is a necessity, like making work is a necessity for me. My work teaches me. It is ahead of me in a way. It brings me to the next step, a 'higher' level, makes me grow. I wish to apply how I work, what comes out in my work, or what I learn in my work to daily life in a manner as well as I do it in my work. In my work I find my true potential. The music of my preference is layered, and can be highly complex. It only exists in a presence/absence structure. It is there and not there. The absence is necessary for it's presence. I never try to vehemently 'translate' sounds into lines. I am not interested in translation or imitation. It is the underlying structure or absence/presence following each other up that goes into my work. Music also takes me to a state in which work can come out without the 'will'. It moves me, and makes me move my lines over the paper in a certain rhythm with a specific momentum.

PL: Do the structures of your drawings have an emotional impact on the viewer because we 'recognize' in them—on a completely abstract level—some basic structures of our existence as humans?

NB: Perhaps you can say 'recognize', yet, I hope it to be a recognition from within and not directly of something previously seen in the outside world (I don't want the work to reference something specific, but I know at times it does remind one of things seen before, and that's fine as long as that is relegated to the background again, and as long as it doesn't stop there). I am interested in what I don't know, in what I can't understand/grasp totally with the mind, with thinking, but is there. The work should open up something, something that is there, yet not really touched upon. I also hope the viewer gets more out of it than only an emotional reaction, but something deeper, more profound. I like people to be touched by the work. I am interested in recognition without having the 'thing' recognized as existing in matter. So, to come back to your question: there can be some kind of recognition, on a completely abstract level, of structures (I believe in the way music/sound can give 'recognition' as well) that touches upon a level that I hope goes beyond mere emotion.

PL: What does it mean? What kind of level are you talking about?

NB: Not a solely emotional, nor a purely intellectual level. A transcending level. Art as an entrance into regions where thoughts only can't reach. Where thinking doesn't bring the 'answer' or desired information. A level where one feels free (and where there is no ego). Ideally where the viewer doesn't view the work but *is* the work, where there is no separation. Like the dancer should not dance the dance, but be the dance, and the artist should not draw his/her drawing but become the drawing while drawing. Where separation ceases. Something not easy to realize, and not forcible—but possible.

TEHCHING HSIEH

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Hsieh's apartment, Brooklyn, USA, 6 May 2009

Tehching Hsieh (1950 in Taiwan) is a performance artist. Hsieh came to the USA in 1974 and stayed there as an illegal immigrant for fourteen years, until he was granted amnesty in 1998. Mostly during this period, Hsieh made his performances: five One Year Performances and a Thirteen Year Plan, in which he didn't show his work until the Millennium. The long duration of the performances centralizes Time as the main theme of Hsieh's work; Time, which he divides in art time and life time.*

Karlyn De Jongh: I approached you to speak at our New York symposium about SPACE in the New Museum, but you didn't want to and told me your work is not so much about space. I had the feeling that some of the limitations or restrictions you put on yourself are spatial limitations, such as with the year you stayed outside, or the year you stayed in a cage. Are these spatial limitations not important? Or is time 'simply' of more relevance to you?

Tehching Hsieh: My work is about time. There is an element of space in my work, but it is secondary. My future retrospective will use space to present time and its document. I will transform one-year of time into a one-year space. I have six pieces of works that took 18 years in total. These 18 years of time will be transformed into 18 one-year spaces, each space being 40 by 40 feet. These spaces are art time; the gaps between the spaces are the intervals between my performances, which I call life time. There will be a linear installation built up on a piece of land; the total length is 849 feet.

It is a concretized way of measuring time: the years and days will be calculated by measurements. All the documents will be installed into the spaces chronologically, the fifth *One Year Performance, No Art*, and the *Thirteen Year Plan*, will have 14 empty spaces, except for the routine statements and posters. The audience will experience the whole body of work with their own experiences and imagination while walking through the 18 one-year spaces.

KDJ: Because of the alternation between art time and life time, your life seems fragmented. Roman Opalka, for example, tries to show the ongoingness of time. You show a more stuttering movement of time in years. How do you understand the movement of time? Is time infinite for you?

TH: I don't blur art and life. If you want to compare two artists' works, you need to focus on the works themselves; if you want to compare artists' lives, you can put their art time and life time together. But now you are using my art time and life time to compare with only Opalka's artwork, which is perhaps a misunderstanding. Opalka paints numbers from 1 to infinity, but he doesn't do it 24 hours a day, continually. If you counted the hours he paints numbers as art time, the time he does other things as life time, you will find his life is 'fragmented' too, so is every other artist's life.

Using life to measure time, sure time is infinite. Time is beyond my understanding, I just pass time. When life is reduced to its minimum, time emerges. That's how I transform this concept and experience into artworks.

KDJ: In your book Out of Now *you have mentioned, "instead of a practicing artist, I was a thinking artist." How do you see that in relation to art time and life time? What makes the difference between thinking and going in life and thinking and doing art?*

TH: When I said in *Out of Now* that I was a thinking artist, it pointed to the 4 years before my first *One Year Performance, Cage Piece*. I was struggling on the bottom line as an illegal immigrant, confronting culture shock and had no idea how to start doing art works, except for thinking. From the *Cage Piece*, I became a practicing artist, and thinking is part of the practice.

KDJ: Nowadays your presence in the art world exists in the form of objects that are left from the performances. Your work is exhibited in MoMA and Guggenheim at the moment and you recently published Out of Now, a large book about your work. When these objects are displayed, do you feel the performances live again? Did it continue to exist after the year was over? How do you see this existence?

TH: I did Cage Piece 30 years ago and *Time Clock Piece* 29 years ago. MoMA and the Guggenheim provide good spaces to present them. The book has my voice, also the voices from a community of artists and writers who share impressive thoughts. As an artist who has lived through the works, yes the works are still happening inside me. When an audience sees the works, when each individual builds up a communication and a personal relation with the works, the works have their own lives, not in museums, not in

books, but in people's minds. If an artwork is powerful and has the value of communicating with the present time, it will live through generations; otherwise, history will clean it out.

KDJ: You also seem to have taken care that there is evidence that remains: a certain validation that the performance actually happened, is that right?

TH: Of course. I used legal language in the paperwork of my performances. I also had a lawyer and witnesses. You do it sincerely, and to see how far you can get.

KDJ: How did you look at these fixed periods of time? What does duration mean to you?

TH: The time of One Year is an important concept in my work. One year is the unit of the human calculation of life, it is also a circle of the earth around the sun. I didn't use more than one year even if I could have made it for a longer time. I didn't try to be superman, my work is not about heroism. For me duration is continuity of life, full of cycles, repetitions, or rhythms.

KDJ: Is time for you about the experience of time? Or is it about how it is moving on the clock?

TH: Time is more about the experience of life for me. Talking about time is like wandering in chaos. We can only get a sense of time through our limited lives. Life to me is consuming time until I die.

KDJ: Many of your performances must have been a physical challenge. Was your experience of time influenced by your physical condition?

TH: When I did the works, the timing was right for me, not only physically, but psychologically. My will, the reality, every element fits into that current time. The will is the most important.

KDJ: You must have a very strong will power to continue. How did you deal with these situations on a daily basis?

TH: In that year of the *Cage Piece*, although there was no sunshine or a clock in the space, I managed to divide the time into days: I recorded time by scratching one line on the wall each day. Thinking helped me pass time, and I passed time one day by another. In order to make the cage bigger in my mind, I treated the corner with my bed as 'home', and the other three corners as 'outside'. Every day I took a walk 'outside' then went 'home'. In the *Outdoor Piece*, on the contrary, I reduced the city to my home: Chinatown became my kitchen, the Hudson River the bathroom, some parks, dry swimming pools and parking lots were my bedrooms. You make yourself believe that you have routines in daily life, although the closest bathroom is half a mile away and your bedroom is never safe.

KDJ: Did you create a 'home' in the Rope Piece *you did with Linda Montano in 1983-1984 as well? Even though you were tied up to the other person, did you find a place for yourself?*

TH: We did this piece in Hudson Street in my studio. We were in the same room at the same time all the time, there was no privacy. I had homes in the streets in Outdoor Piece as I still kept my privacy, but in the *Rope Piece*, 'home' was a luxury. I could only struggle for the value of my view.

KDJ: Is your art also about survival? You put certain limits upon yourself and created difficult situations that are in a way like prisons. Do you feel you had to survive these difficult situations?

TH: My works are not directly related to survival. But the works had to be done, and I had to come back to normal life afterward. Difficulty is not what I want to emphasize, but to do a clear piece, you have to face it. The limitations in the *Cage Piece* make the piece clear: when a living situation is reduced to its minimum, time is the only element I confront. From outside, you cannot see anything. I stayed inside the cage, the struggle I had was inside me, it was a chaos, what was left was thinking—the only means I could use to survive.

KDJ: Your work seems closely related to that of On Kawara. Especially the maps on which you indicated your walk in New York each day in the year 1981-1982 and the 'dates' you made in your Thirteen Year Plan. Do you feel influenced by him?

TH: I knew about On Kawara's work after I did the first One Year Performance, and I respect his work. On Kawara, Roman Opalka and I are all interested in time, in using limited lives to experience time, so there must be some intersection.

My work is performance; I created one kind of art form, lived within and passed time, the process of passing time itself is the artwork; there are similarities between the ways I document the performances and the ways conceptual artists document the concepts, but for me documentation is only a trace of the work.

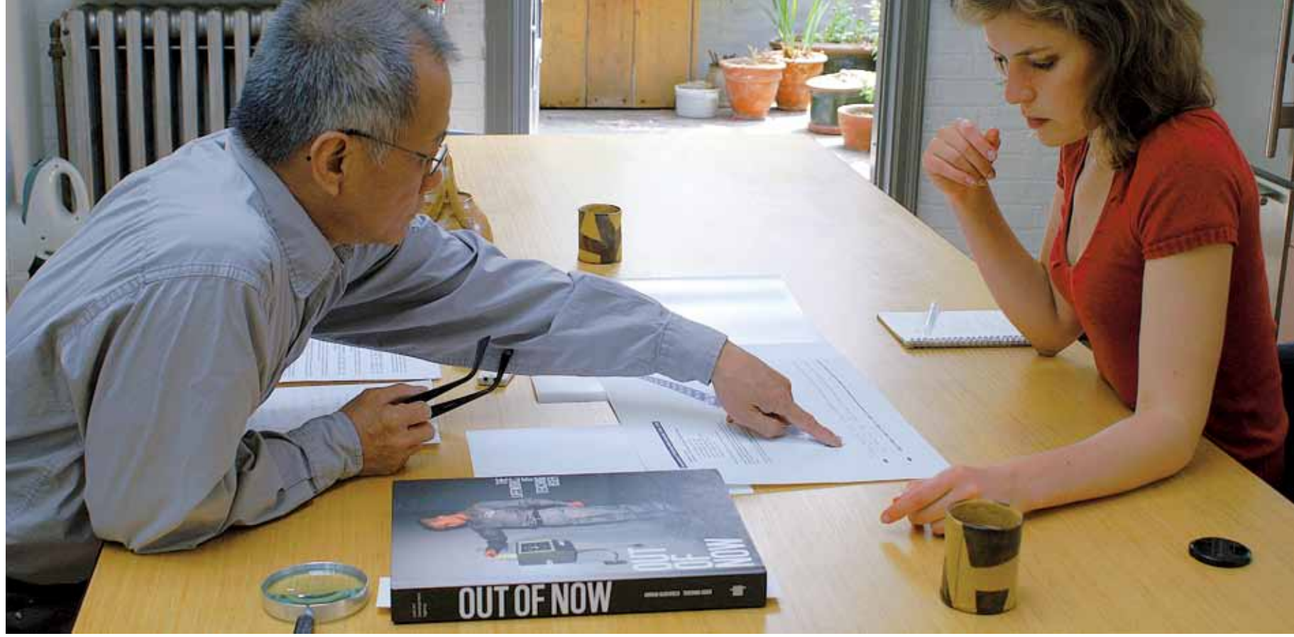
KDJ: In 1985-1986 you did a performance in which you isolated yourself from art: "I just go in life." From that 1985-1986 performance there is no documentation, but you did mention it in your publication, with a blank page. You don't seem to be making performances at the moment. What are you doing nowadays? How do your present activities relate to your performances? How does your not doing art at present differ from your performance in 1985-1986?

TH: *One Year Performance 1985-1986*, informally called *No Art Piece*, is an artwork, in which I just go in life without reading art, seeing art or talking about art. Now I don't do art anymore, I'm doing life without other limitations. I do presentations and exhibitions.

KDJ: One of the aspects that seem present in many of your performances is isolation: for the duration of the performances you have often been isolated from people or from being inside or from art. Why is isolation so important to you? Do you feel like an outsider?

TH: For a thinking artist, being isolated is important: it keeps your mind clear. My reality brings isolation to my life strongly, which also fits into my character. I feel comfortable with being an outsider. But of course there is communication: I communicate with people through my work.

KDJ: You have said that social encounter would destroy the work. But: Performances often include a public or audience for whom the performance is performed; the audience is often seen as essential. Your work is very private and was open to visitors once a month or at least on a limited basis. How does that relate to your wish to touch people with your work and how to the exhibition of your work nowadays in museums?



TH: During the performances, in order to keep my life simple and to concentrate on the work, I couldn't socialize too much. But it was only in the *Cage Piece* that I could not talk with people, because it is a wholly isolated piece. Audience is important: the work needs its witnesses. Meanwhile the quality of isolation in the work needs to be kept. Opening 19 days to the public in the *Cage Piece* is the balance I found. The communication between the work and its audience happened silently during the piece, and the communication is still happening. Showing the documentation in MoMA 30 years after is not against the concept of the work, it is a totally different issue. The performance is finished, I'm separated from it, and the communication continues.

KDJ: How do you look back at your performances? Is there for you a difference between the performance and the traces of that performance?

TH: The time of the performance is past, what is left is a trace: it carries part of the message of the work. The document could be seen as another piece of art, but it cannot restore art, it is not identical with the performance. Through the document, people will need to go back to art itself; the work has its own life and will grow by itself.

KDJ: On the announcements of your works you state the location where the performance takes place. Some took place on Hudson Street, one in New York City. For the Thirteen Year Plan, you noted earth. Is location important to you?

TH: It is necessary to let people know where the performances happened, like to mention a place of birth. I did most of my works in New York City: a site of high civilization. I'm alienated from the city, yet the city still embraces this alienation.

KDJ: You were born on 31 December. In most cultures that is the change from the old to the new year. Did that influence you?

TH: I don't really celebrate birthdays. To me every day is the same. But my last piece, the *Thirteen Year Plan*, starts from my 36th birthday and finishes on my 49th birthday, in this way the piece reaches the Millennium; the *Rope Piece* starts from July 4th, 1983, Independence Day in the USA, and ends on Independence Day 1984; the *Outdoor Piece* starts at the first Saturday of fall, it has a rhythm of four seasons.

KDJ: Has your understanding of time changed since you stopped doing the performances?

TH: My understanding of time is that life is a life sentence, life is passing time, life is freethinking. Doing art or not, I'm passing time, this is the same.

KDJ: If you say it's just about passing time, it seems as if you mean that your own life has no value. It is as if you needed the struggle for survival to give your life importance for yourself.

TH: I may be pessimistic, but I'm surely not masochistic, I do enjoy life. If passing time had no value, yet the person is still alive and still passing time, then passing time itself is the value; just as you are waiting for Godot, the one who will never come, yet you are still there waiting, that's the value.

KDJ: How do you look at death? Is it a freedom for you?

TH: I don't look for freedom in death. I don't have a belief in an afterlife, and I prefer life rather than death. We are all afraid of death, but death is part of life, it makes life complicated and interesting.

ON KAWARA

By Karlyn De Jongh

Unanswered Questions to On Kawara

On Kawara (* 1933, Japan) has been making artworks that address time, space and existence since the early 1960s. Unlike the other artists in this publication, On Kawara is presented here through questions. The questions provide information about the artist's life and work. I have been collecting these questions for a period of two years. It turned into a separate project called *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara*, and resulted in a collection of questions posed by 79 people who know the artist or his work very well.[1]

The project started in April 2007. We wanted to include On Kawara in this publication. But, how to accomplish this? On Kawara seemed to have never published any personal written statements. He gives no public speeches or interviews. We, from our end, didn't want an art historian to write about his work; we wanted to get closer to On Kawara. Rene Rietmeyer suggested we ask people who know On Kawara personally—or at least know his work—to submit a question and then, when all had been gathered, to try to hand them over to On Kawara. We decided that, in the expected event he would not answer them, we would publish these questions in this book as: *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara*.[2]

Klaus Honnef, the German art critic and writer who in 1971 received twenty telegrams from On Kawara, *I am still alive*, was the first person to ask a question. It was 7 May 2007; he asked On Kawara: "Do you still remember me?" From the very beginning the project intrigued me; *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara* became my project.

At first, the idea to collect questions for On Kawara was very abstract to me. I knew about his work: the date paintings, the telegrams, the series *I met*, and the postcards *I got up*, *One Million Years*… But I had no clue concerning just who On Kawara is. What is his work actually about? I started doing my homework: To whom did he send his telegrams? Who received postcards? Who did he meet? Who wrote about him? Which museums have his works in their collection? What galleries handle his work? I came up with a long list of people from all over the world—Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America—and I started contacting them.

It took me quite some time to find the right way to approach all these people and also to mature as a person in order to have the courage speak with them and convince them to think of a question and send it on to me: these are all people who had a strong relation to On Kawara for many years. I had just finished my studies in philosophy and art history in the Netherlands. This was art in praxis.

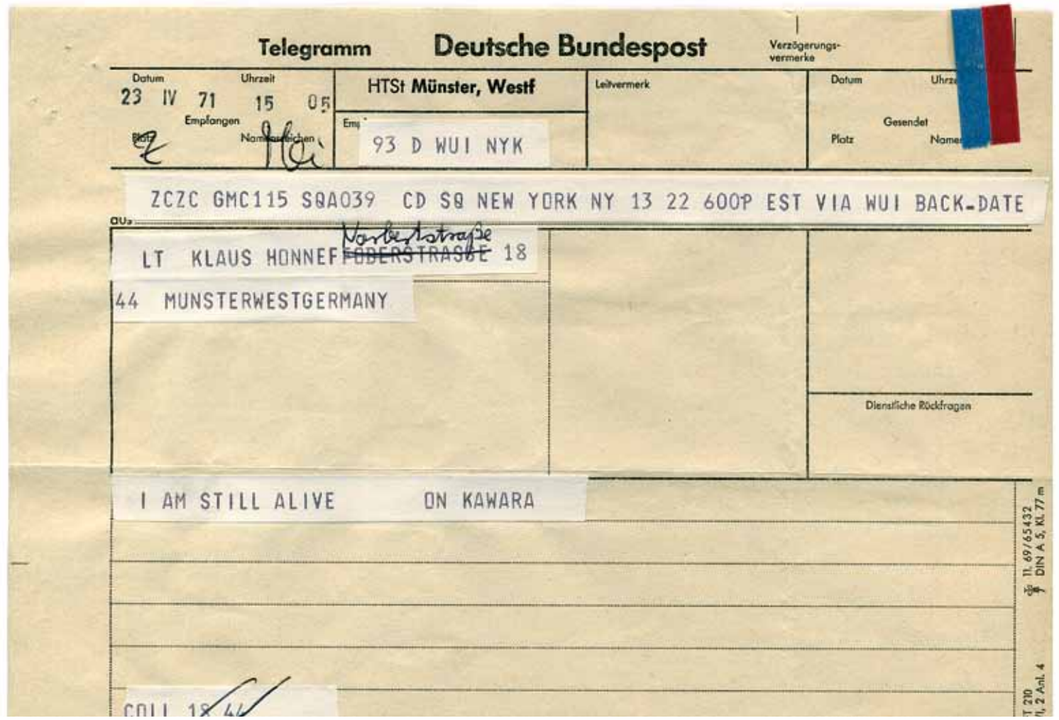
Ten months after Klaus Honnef's question, I collected my first question. Now the project had really started for me. I was in Tokyo, Japan, at that time for the organization of our symposium Existence. I visited the gallery 360°. With the help of the artist Yuko Sakurai, I was able to communicate with its owner, Toshiyuki Nemoto, who gave me a question—in Japanese—on the spot. I was thrilled!

In general people's reactions were very different: some were enthusiastic, others neutral, yet others were even angry, and—for whatever reason—from many people I received no reply at all. But over the course of the year that followed I did manage to collect a total of 78 questions. I received them from many different people, such as Fumio Nanjo, Paula Cooper, Giuseppe Panza and Lawrence Weiner. Others, such as Kasper König and Franck Gautherot, did not want to give a question and sent me a statement instead.

I had promised Rene Rietmeyer the last question. It was 1 May 2009, almost exactly two years after the first question from Klaus Honnef. I was in New York, USA: the time was right to make an attempt to contact On Kawara. Rietmeyer sent me his question: "Could you have done anything to get more satisfaction out of your own existence?"

I knew from Thomas Rieger, Assistant Director at the Konrad Fischer Gallery, that On Kawara lives on Greene Street; it was the only information I had. Going to On Kawara's apartment was the only possibility for me to get in contact with him. During that week, I went to On Kawara's apartment several times: he was not at home. On my last day in New York, it was Thursday 7 May 2009, I had to do it; it was my last chance. I went to Greene Street, holding the questions in my hand. As I approached his apartment block, an older Japanese man and woman crossed the street. They were accompanied by a younger man who was carrying suitcases. They got into a car and drove away. I am sure it was On Kawara; I missed him. The questions to On Kawara remain unanswered—to this point in time.

1 In October 2009, *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara* was published as a special edition with a sound DVD, on which I present the questions to On Kawara in New York.
2 I have chosen not to edit the questions and leave them for what they are.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LT KLAUS HONNEF ~~FÜDERSTRASSE~~ Nordstraße 18

44 MUNSTERWESTGERMANY

Dienstliche Rückfragen

I AM STILL ALIVE ON KAWARA

COLL 18 44

Gr. 11. 69/65432 DIN A 5, Kl. 77 m

T 210 1, 2 Anl. 4

May 9, 2007: **Do you still remember me?**
Klaus Honnef—Author, Art critic and curator, Bonn, Germany

March 15, 2008: あなたが続けている、アートワークの、デートペインティングについて、一つの質問があります。時々、青と赤のペインティングがありますが、これはどのような理由があるのでしょうか。
Toshiyuki Nemoto—Gallerist, Gallery 360°, Tokyo, Japan

April 23, 2008: デートペインティングは明確なコンセプトで、ビジュアル的にも美しいと感じます。描かれる日付、キャンバスの大きさと地色、文字の書体および色は、どのように決定されるのでしょうか。
Saburo Ota—Artist, Tsuyama, Japan

April 25, 2008: **You have spent several important periods of time during your life in Mexico, do you recognize any specific influences in your work taken from this context?**
Tobias Ostrander—Curator of Contemporary Art, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico

April 30, 2008: **What time is it on the moon?**
Jonathan Monk—Artist, Berlin, Germany

May 8, 2008: **Q : Do you think it is possible for other artist to take over your ongoing continuous artwork after your death? Is it possible Is there any possibility that you let somebody to take over the Date Painting for continuing it after your death? What is the reason why it is yes and no?**
Heartbeat-Sasaki—Artist, Tokyo, Japan

May 12, 2008: **How do you think that moving from an era of the postcard to one of the Internet is shaping interpersonal communication in contemporary society?**
Jeanne Marie Kusina—Associate Professor, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, USA

May 20, 2008: **Where do we go from here?**
Ute Meta Bauer—Associate Professor, MIT, Cambridge, USA

May 22, 2008: **Mr. On Kawara, What day is today?**
Gregor Jansen—Director, Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, Germany

May 29, 2008: **If the validity of time is reduced to the man-made construct that is the date, is our existence annulled if a day is undocumented?**
William Wells—Director, Townhouse Gallery of Contemporary Art, Cairo, Egypt

June 2, 2008: **What is time for you?**
Fumio Nanjo—Director, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan

June 6, 2008: **Do you wear a black suit?**
Stefan Brüggemann—Artist, Mexico City, Mexico

June 8, 2008: **Does time exist?**
Klaus Ottmann—Independent Curator, New York, USA

June 19, 2008: **Mr. On Kawara, How do you prepare yourself for the end of life?**
David Neuman—Founding Director, Magasin 3 & Professor, Stockholm Univeristy, Stockholm, Sweden

July 9, 2008: **What means exposing time?**
Jean-Marc Avrilla—Director, l'Espace de l'Art Concret, Mouans-Sartoux, France

July 10, 2008: **What and how was the transition from the early paintings to the Time Space Existence work?**
Paula Cooper—Director, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, USA

July 28, 2008: **Which day is today?**
Bartomeu Marí—Director, MACBA, Barcelona, Spain

July 30, 2008: **How is it possible that there are often two date paintings of one day?**
Roman Opalka—Artist, Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France

August 29, 2008: **since On Kawara has never agreed to be interviewed I would not like to ask him, knowing that he would answer it privately most likely but not publicly.**
Kasper König—Director, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany

September 2, 2008: **When will you call me?**
Joseph Kosuth—Artist, Rome, Italy

September 8, 2008: **dear karlijn, there won't be any questions to be asked to on kawara who is known (and respected) for not answering any questions or any interview. so by knowing that, why should i ask him a question (in a public space) by knowing he won't answer. of course if you insist you can eventually publish this as a contribution (!!!) (this including too.) regards franck gautherot**
Franck Gautherot—Co-Director, Le Consortium, Dijon, France

September 8, 2008: **Are we still alive after we cease to exist physically in this world?**
Paul H. Marks—Associate Professor of Surgery, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

September 9, 2008: **How does a date refer to an event and how can a date exist beyond the designated event?**
Pedro Lapa—Director, Museu do Chiado, Lisbon, Portugal

September 11, 2008: **Would you like to come to Iceland again and fish salmon?**
Pétur Arason—Collector, Reykjavík, Iceland

September 11, 2008: **Is death simply a mistake?**
Andreas Bee—Curator, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany

September 12, 2008: **On Kawara, are you still alive?**
Gunnar Kvaran—Director, AF MoMA, Oslo, Norway

September 16, 2008: **No, I have no question. For me, a question is only possible if there is an answer. The answers of On Kawara are in his work, not in his words. I have to work to ask a question. I do it by writing.**
Michel Assenmaker—Professor, Uccle, Belgium

September 18, 2008: **A Japanese student, born in the same region as you, once told me that On Kawara probably is not your real name. If that is right, what is your real name?**
Johan Pas—Art historian, Antwerp, Belgium

September 19, 2008: **Dear On Kawara, You quietly insisted that I put my note pad away when we met for the first and only time. It was February 3, 1996 in the Lucky Strike Bar in lower Manhattan. The attention you demanded I gladly gave, until exhaustion overcame me. Reluctantly I asked you to halt the non-stop, multi-hour recitation of noteworthy insights I was shoving into the long term storage compartment of my brain. Although the expanse of your discourse exceeded my grasp, I remember many of your statements about numerology, geometry, cosmology, and this—you said that since babies come into the world crying, the elderly should go out of the world laughing. At age 76, are you preparing to laugh?**
Linda Weintraub—Author & publisher, Rhinebeck, USA

September 30, 2008: **I COLLECTED SEVERAL WORKS BY ON KAWARA SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 50'S. HAVING SEEN IN JAPAN THE CULTURE OF THE ZEN, OF THE BUDDHISM, WHICH I LIKE VERY MUCH. I HAVE THE FEELING ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF A STRONG, BUT HIDDEN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORK BY ON KAWARA. I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IF MY INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT.**
Giuseppe Panza—Collector, Massagno, Switzerland

October 7, 2008: **If the world was finally to flood, would you prefer to live on a boat or on a mountain top?**
David FitzGerald—Director, Kerlin Gallery, Dublin, Ireland

October 7, 2008: **Do you believe that individual numbers have idiosyncratic powers? Also, I wonder if you are interested in poems that allude obliquely to counting, or dates, or numbers? Here is one by Emily Dickinson:**

YOU'VE seen balloons set, haven't you?
So stately they ascend
It is as swans discarded you
For duties diamond.

Their liquid feet go softly out
Upon a sea of blond;
They spurn the air as't were to mean
For creatures so renowned.

Their ribbons just beyond the eye,
They struggle some for breath,
And yet the crowd applauds below;
They would not encore death.

The gilded creature strains and spins,
Trips frantic in a tree,
Tears open her imperial veins
And tumbles in the sea.

The crowd retire with an oath
The dust in streets goes down,
And clerks in counting-rooms observe,
'T was only a balloon.

Jennifer Higgie—Editor, Frieze Magazine, London, UK

October 7, 2008: **What reason do you have for painting the same decade two or three times?**
Pierre Huber—Founding Director, Art & Public, Geneva, Switzerland

October 9, 2008: **What has your work taught you about survival?**
Kathryn Chiong—Art historian, Columbia University, New York, USA

October 9, 2008: **Voilà?**
Thierry Davila—Conservator, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland

October 10, 2008: **Do you see in your work any conscious or unconscious relation to the idea of time in Martin Heidegger's Sein und Zeit?**
Jörg Johnen—Director, Johnen Galerie, Berlin, Germany

October 13, 2008: 自らルールを決めて、一生を通じてその自前のリチュアルを遂行するあなたの制作方法には、瞑想的な行に通じる側面があると考えます。その「心を調える」「魂を鎮める」効果を、たとえば写経や作務のような、手の仕事、身体的な作業を伴うタスクの遂行と類比的に考えることは的はずれでしょうか？また、あえてローマン・タイプに限定し、日本や香港での制作に漢字ではなくエスペラントを用いるのは、あくまで「沈黙者」としてその生身の存在をパブリックから隠してしまう徹底した方法意識と結びついていると解釈してよいのでしょうか？
Kikuko Toyama—Professor, Saitama University, Saitama, Japan

October 14, 2008: **What is his most memorable date painting?**
Lisa Reuben—Specialist Contemporary Art, Sotheby's, London, UK

October 15, 2008: **How do you think the temporality in your One Million Years cds is transformed when it is being produced, repackaged and sold in the galleries?**
Teo Rofan—Curator, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore

October 18, 2008: **Where is home and how do I get there?**
Mattijs Visser—Curator, Düsseldorf, Germany

October 20, 2008: **In more than one way your works are dated, beyond the evident fact that they bear dates. The materials of which they are made show the marks of age, or use now obsolete technologies. There is also the fact that the typography, the colors, the formats, betray, in all their pretended neutrality, a certain period style. How much of this did you envision when you made the works? How does time then affect their effect?**
Natalia Majluf Brahim—Director, Museo de Arte de Lima, Lima, Peru

October 28, 2008: **Dear On, Can you tell me about your unrealised projects?**
Hans Ulrich Obrist—Co-Director, Serpentine Gallery, London, UK

October 28, 2008: **DEAR ON KAWARA IS THIS DAY DIFFERENT THAN ALL OTHER DAYS?**
Lawrence Weiner—Artist, New York, USA

October 29, 2008: **If you would be On Kawara, 20 years old, and look at the body of work that you have done the last 50 years, and you would (naturally) be attracted to it, what would you see as a possible practice for you as a young artist in order to build onto this work, without repeating it?**
Nikola Dietrich—Curator, Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Switzerland

October 30, 2008: **Which role do time and place play in the presentation of your work? How must your work under no circumstances be presented?**
Edelbert Köb—Director, Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation, Vienna, Austria

November 1, 2008: **Will there still be art in one million years?**
Peter Lodermeyer—Art Historian, Bonn, Germany

November 3, 2008: **How do you choose colours?**
Jochem Hendricks—Artist, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

November 10, 2008: **KNOWING THAT THE ARTIST WILL NOT ANSWER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS THERE'S STILL ONE DETAIL THAT OCCUPIES ME: WHY STOPPED THE ARTIST INSERTING NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS IN THE CARDBOARD BOXES OF HIS DATE PAINTINGS?**
Thomas Rieger—Assistant Director, Konrad Fischer Gallery, Düsseldorf, Germany

November 12, 2008: **What's the time?**
Kris Martin—Artist, Ghent, Belgium

November 17, 2008: **HOW BIG IS INFINITY?**
Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir—Art Critic & Cultural Editor, Morgunblaðið, Reykjavík, Iceland

December 28, 2008: **I want to read a veiled On Kawara's Autobiography. Is there any possibility for writing and publishing the Autobiography?**
Fumihiko Tanifuji—Curator, Fukuyama Museum of Art, Fukuyama, Japan

January 2, 2009: **I'm not a religious person and I'm not obsessed with death, but since I saw your large exhibition at the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg I've had this question in my mind: What does an artist like this think about death?**
José Miranda Justo—Artist & Professor, University of Lisbon, Faculty of Humanities, Lisbon, Portugal

January 5, 2009: **Just what is it that makes your todays paintings so different, so appealing ? ***
*** In memory of a conversation with On Kawara about This is tomorrow exhibition (and Richard Hamilton), continuing on Alberto Giacometti and coming to Conscience (Kawara/Giacometti) show-project, at Le Consortium, Dijon, 1990.**
Xavier Douroux—Co-Director, Le Consortium, Dijon, France

January 6, 2009: 現代とはいかなる時代か？
Takefumi Matsui—Professor, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan

January 8, 2009: **Is consciousness blinking, between painting and dating?**
René Denizot—Director, École nationale supérieure d'arts Paris-Cergy, Cergy, France

January 8, 2009: **I would like to ask On Kawara why he does not like being photographed.**
Rüdiger Schöttle—Director, Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich, Germany

January 12, 2009: **When exactly is now?**
Sheena Wagstaff—Chief Curator, Tate Modern, London, UK

January 16, 2009: **Dear On Kawara, Do you think the meaning of your work will change essentially after your death?**
Daniel Marzona—Director, Konrad Fischer Gallery, Berlin, Germany

January 16, 2009: なぜ、数字を用いるのでようか。数字にこだわるのは、数字に信仰があると私は考えるのですが、温さんはどう思われますか。
Lee Ufan—Artist, Paris, France

January 18, 2009: **Of the present generation of young artists active in the international art scene, which one do you consider your heir?**
Isabel Soares Alves—Collection Coordinator, Berardo Collection, Lisbon, Portugal

January 23, 2009: **What is left to do?**
Gregory Burke—Director, The Power Plant, Toronto, Canada

January 27, 2009: **Do you find that the idea or possibility of making a date painting continues to nourish you every day, even if the idea often doesn't result in a material work?**
Margot Heller—Director, South London Gallery, London, UK

January 27, 2009: 温さんの作品は、ミニマル的表現方法を使ってご自身の痕跡を残されていらっしゃいますが、私には、大変温かみ、親しみ、繊細さを感じます。どんなところから発生し作品へと結びついたのでしょうか？根源、思想を教えていただけますか？
Yuko Sakurai—Artist, Paris, France

January 30, 2009: **What's with the ionized air in the Kawara room at DIA Beacon?**
John Baldessari—Artist, Santa Monica, USA

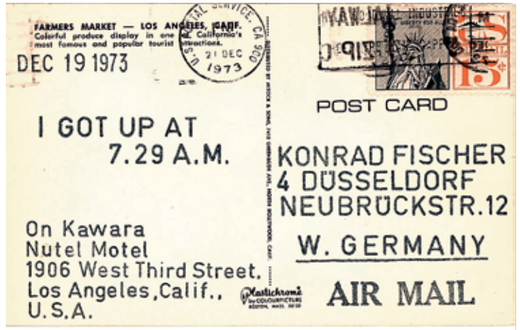
January 31, 2009: **Is or was the painting Title (1965) in the collection of the National Gallery of Art a political statement about the Vietnam War, and if so, what?**
Harry Cooper—Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Art, Washington, USA

February 5, 2009: **Is there an answer?**
Manuel J. Borja-Villel—Director, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain

February 12, 2009: **Can the intimacy in scale and materials of the early works ever be refound?**
Sean Rainbird—Director, Staatgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany

February 14, 2009: **On, I worked with you on a show at Yvon Lambert. On the walls, you displayed the pages: I went, I met, one postcard: I got up at…, one date painting, one telegram I am still alive. You placed catalogues from previous exhibitions in vitrines along the windows. Did you consider these groupings as a form of documentation or did the groupings open up something that you had not foreseen?**
Lucien Terras—Director, D'Amelio Terras, New York, USA

February 15, 2009: **dear Karlijn, thanks for contacting me about your project 'Questions to On Kawara'. I have been thinking about your request and found that I am actually very much in peace with having no question to On. His work is so precise and conceptual, so**



open and true, honest and pure. No question, unless many questions. best regards and good wishes for your project, Christian
Christian Scheidemann—Director, Contemporary Conservation, New York, USA

February 16, 2009: **1 What were your thoughts on Fluxus back in the 60s? 2 You don't show up to your openings. Does that signify that you are one of the audience? 3 What do you think is the difference between Ikon and Trace/ Document?**
Yuko Hasegawa—Chief Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan

February 23, 2009: **Dear On Kawara, it is stated that you do not wish to leave any personal trace of your existence. I, however see your works as a proof of your existence and after your death your works proof that you once existed. Do I see that wrong?**
Sarah Gold—Independent Curator, Miami, USA

February 24, 2009: **How are you today?**
Candida Höfer—Artist, Cologne, Germany

March 15, 2009: **I have always been fascinated by the date paintings, because I thought it was impossible to represent acceptably the temporal measurement of a day in art, except with cinema. When On Kawara just painted a date, it was so simple & so great. And being able to translate chronology; passing time with a single image, in the most traditional medium, easel painting really blew my mind. Does he think of himself as a painter? Is the colour of the monochrome background different in each painting?**
Robert Vifian—Chef, Paris, France

March 18, 2009: **Dear On, What exactly was the content of the chapter of your life being erased when you were robbed in Stockholm in connection with your exhibition at Moderna Museet in the beginning of the 1980's.**
Olle Granath—Permanent secretary, Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm, Sweden

March 18, 2009: **Are you still alive?**
Paul Schimmel—Chief Curator, LA MoCA, Los Angeles, USA

March 25, 2009: **For the last several weeks, I am trying to find time to think about the question I would like to ask you. I am constantly engaged in different kinds of meetings and conversations concerning the moving into and opening of the new Museum building. The Museum has been built for the last five years and now, finally, we are entering the last stage, but there are still so many unanswered questions and a lot of work to do. Therefore I am preoccupied with thoughts about problems concerning the new Museum, and my question to You is motivated by the telegrams you have been sending during the year 1973 to our Museum (City Gallery then). The date on one of the telegrams is May, 18. Did you know this was the International Museum Day? Rene Block wrote that your contemporaries „learn a lot about the time we live in from your work, but that we don't learn anything about your attitude towards it." Nevertheless, I am interested in your attitude towards museums. What do you think about a mission and a role of a contemporary art museum today? In your opinion, what should a museum be? Is there any point in getting up and going to work at one of the contemporary art museums? Why do we need them? Museums.**
Snježana Pintarić—Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia

April 7, 2009: **When did you got up?**
Georg Kargl—Gallerist, Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria

April 9, 2009: **Dear On Kawara, Why do you not answer my question?**
Luca Beatrice—Art Critic & curator, Venice, Italy

May 1, 2009: **Could you have done anything to get more satisfaction out of your own existence?**
Rene Rietmeyer—Artist, Miami, USA

TATSUO MIYAJIMA　宮島達男

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Lisson Gallery, London, UK, 26 May 2009

Since the 1980s, Tatsuo Miyajima (1957, Tokyo, Japan) makes works that address time. They are usually made with LEDs of numbers that count from 1 to 9 or from 9 to 1; zero is not shown. Time is important for Miyajima to discuss what he calls 'The Life', which is ongoing, combining life and death and concerning nature—humans, animals, stones. These aspects of 'The Life' are visible in Miyajima's three central concepts: 1. keep changing; 2. continue forever; 3. connect with everything. Also important to him is the concept 'Art in You', holding the viewer a mirror and inviting him to contemplate about 'The Life'. Miyajima lives and works in Ibaraki, Japan.*

Karlyn De Jongh: At the beginning of your career as an artist you made performances addressing the concept of 'existence'; now your work seems to focus more on time. Why did you make this shift? How are time and existence related to each other? Are there fundamental differences for you between the two concepts?

Tatsuo Miyajima: Existence and time are connected with 'The Life' as keywords. There is no difference between either of them. Both come from 'The Life' and without 'The Life' , both do not exist. And I think at the beginning of my career as an artist I stood for 'The Life' . Before that, from 1982 to around 1985, I focused mainly on 'Existence', and I expressed it through performance works. With a consciousness towards 'The Life', after 1987 I came up with three concepts; from 1988 to 1995 I focused on 'Time' to explain it. Why I did not explain 'The Life' directly is because at the beginning of my performance period, I just did not have a clear mind for it, and until 1995 I was just too immature to use words and also too inexperienced to explain it. Like many others before me have also done, it means that it is easier to explain 'Time' as a concept than 'The Life' . But recently I have started to work, trying to explain 'The Life' directly.

Tatsuo Miyajima 宮島達男: 存在と時間は、「命」というキーワードで結ばれる。両者に違いはなく、共に「命」から発するものであり、「命」がなければ両者は無いも等しいからである。また、私は作家活動の初期から、「命」のことを標榜してきたように思う。それを1982年から1985年ごろまでは主に「存在」にフォーカスし、パフォーマンスでそれを表現してきた。そして、1987年以降、3つのコンセプトを発表したときには、明確に「命」を意識していたが、1988年から1995年ごろまでは、それを「時間」ということにフォーカスして説明していた。なぜ「命」として説明しなかったかについては、初期のパフォーマンスの頃は、それが明確でなかったからであり、1995年までは、それを説明するための経験も言葉も未熟だったからに他ならない。したがって、多くの人々がそうしたように、「時間」という概念で説明するほうが易しかった。しかし、現在では、直接「命」と説明するに至っている。

KDJ: 'The Life' is a central concept for you and your art practice. 'The Life' is a translation from the Japanese 'Inochi'. How do you understand 'Inochi'?

TM: When I translate in English 'Inochi' 「命」, I add 'the' with 'life'; I use 'The Life' . The meaning of 'The Life' which I am using is bigger than the usual sense. For example, there are my Inochi and your Inochi, and there are the animals' Inochi as well. Those are common to all and comprise a generic name we call 'The Life' . In the Eastern world we say we widely receive nature, animals (and this includes human beings), and take 'The Life' as a totality. Therefore, 'The Life' is also for individuality, but I think we have a larger meaning. It is more like the universe. That is the theory of 'The Life' , I think. 'The Life' does not have the meaning of individuality. I think it is a wider and deeper theory that I refer to. So, when we talk about 'The Life', I refer to all. When I talk about 'The Life', I am referring to everything that has life. That's why it is the same as an ecological scheme, the life of humans, the life of trees and plants and the life of animals. I always take into consideration that they are in a relationship.

TM:　英語で訳すときには「命」はTheを付けて、「The Life」を使っている。命と言うのは通常の意味よりもう少し大きい概念で言っています。例えば、私の命とあなたの命がありますが、動物の命というのも在りますよね。これら、すべてに共通し、それらを総称して「命」と言っています。東洋においては、自然や動物、人間も含めて、大きく括り、トータルに考えて、「命」と言っているんです。ですから、個別の命のことでもあるんですが、もっと大きな意味の宇宙観のような概念が「命」だと思います。命というのは、個別のものではなくてもう少し広くて深い概念を指します。命と言ったときに生を持つ全てを指しているんです。ですから、生態系と一緒で、人間の命と、草木の命、動物の命は、必ず関係を持っていると捕らえています。

KDJ: You have formulated three basic themes for your art: 1. keep changing; 2. continue forever; 3. connect with everything. You formulated these concepts some years ago. Are the three concepts not themselves temporal? Why are there three concepts?

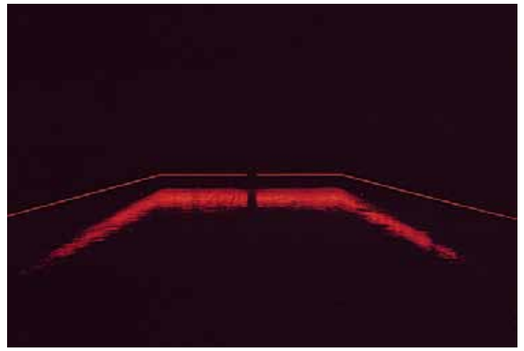
TM: Everything keeps changing, life keeps changing… This one is not easy to explain. Even 'keep changing' is constantly changing. It also has a link with 'continue forever'. The meaning of forever in Western theory is 'permanent'. In fact, the thoughts they have for it is that forever is unchanged, but my concept of forever is, that as a matter of fact, even the stages themselves of my concept of forever change.

First of all, the three concepts are an aim at art for myself. The reason why I create works is to aspire. In fact, as I mentioned before, those three concepts indicate 'The Life'. 'The Life' is a very wide, deep and free theme. So by having matured, I feel like expanding more and more and going deeper, rather than restricting myself to this theme. 'Continue forever' and 'Keep changing' do not join together in Eastern theory. 'Eternalness' in the Western world uses 'permanent' in its meaning. It means, that in the Western world the thought is that a fixed shape does not change eternally. But in the Eastern world the thought is that a 'shape keeps changing by movement and that continues forever'. For example, in the theory of '輪廻 (Samsara)' it is 'The Life' that keeps changing its appearance and this process of changing continues to stay connected to life and that lasts forever. This movement is eternal. 'Permanent', we use it, but one day we humans, or life, will die out. 'Changing by movement' does not die out.

TM:　すべての物は常に変化をしているんです。生も常に変化しているんです。説明するのはこれは難しい。Keep changing というのは、常に変化していることを肯定的に捉えることなんですね。例えば、Continue forever とリンクしているのですが、西洋の概念でいうForeverというのは、Permanent と言う意味合いなんで、「不変」つまり変わらないということが、Forever－永遠性、という考え方をするんですが、僕が考えているのは、変化していく状態そのものが、実は永遠性なんだ。という考え方です。まず、3つのコンセプトは私自身のアートの目標である。そのような作品を目指して作っている。結局、先にも述べたが、この3つは「命」のことを指している。「命」はとても広く深く自由なテーマであるので、私を縛るどころか、益々芳醇な広がりと深さを持っている。そして、「永遠性」と「変化し続ける」は東洋的な概念において矛盾しない。西洋でいう「永遠性」は「パーマネント」（不変）の意味で使われる。つまり、「固定したカタチが永遠に変わらない」という考え方だ。しかし、東洋では「変化し続ける運動の様態が永遠に続く」概念なのである。例えば、「輪廻」という概念は、「命」が姿を変えながら、永遠に繰り返し現れることを指している。この運動が永遠性なのである。「パーマネント」（不変）と言っても、いつかは滅びるが、「変化していく運動」は滅びる事がないのである。

KDJ: How are time and life related to each other? How do you see your concept 'continue forever' in relation to 'Inochi'?

TM: What continues forever changes 'The Life', which is, to be born and to die. Those changes and the process of changing, continue forever. 'The Life' is forever, changing all the time, also death and



come again, to be reborn. But to the world, 'The Life' appears the same. They have different faces, but 'The Life' is the same.

TM: はい、Continue forever というのは、命が変化していく、生まれて、死んでいくという、そういう変化のことなんですが、その変化していくことが、永遠に続くという意味合いです。

KDJ: Another important aspect of your work is 'Art in You'. You have indicated that this concept states that art does not exist independently, but that it is "generated by each visitor." The idea that the viewer finishes the artwork is derived from Marcel Duchamp. Your statement seems to indicate that art is already inside the viewer. How does your statement relate to that of Duchamp?

TM: What Duchamp was talking about is the materialistic side in his work. I think, being a physical work itself indicates that it may transform by audiences and accidental associations. The audience stays as observer, as looking at the work. It looks like the audience exists for the artworks. My concept 'Art in You' is that the work uses a mirror, which projects the inside of the body of the audience and they, the audience, discover the art inside of themselves. They notice 'the Art' which they had already in them. My artwork is the device for the audience to take notice of 'their Art'. Otherwise, without having any background knowledge of it, we will not be moved by seeing artwork coming from a completely different culture, language or religion. That's why, in my case, an artwork is exciting for the audience.

TM:　デユシャンが言っているのはアート作品の物質的な面、つまりフィジカルな作品そのものが観客や偶然の働きかけによって変容することを指すのではないかと思われる。しかし、それでも観客はあくまで作品を見る傍観者で有り続ける。いわば、観客（人）は作品のために存在するようなものである。私の考え「Art　in You」は、作品は観客の内面を映しだす鏡であって、観客は自分の内側のアート的なるものを発見する。もともと持っていた「アート」に気づくのである。作品とは、観客の「アート」を気づかせる装置なのである。そうでなければ、文化圏や言語、宗教が全く異なる人間の作った作品を、何の予備知識もなしで、感動できることは、とうていできない。したがって、私の場合、作品は観客（人）のために存在するのである。

KDJ: In an interview with James Lingwood you say that you "became an artist to communicate to people", but also that you do not wish to "attract attention." How do you understand this communication when you do not want to attract attention? How does this relate to your statement that art is already in the viewer? Do you try to release or activate what is already present?

TM: 'Attract attention' points to trying to become famous. In this Modern society, being well-known means, the art has a connection with the market economy and has an economical value, then you are famous. I do not need that. Even if I am not well known, I can communicate with many people. Ordinary people can communicate with each other without the concept of 'fame'. That is my aspiration for being an artist.

TM:「注目される」こととは、有名になることを指している。現代社会で有名になるということは、市場経済と結びつき経済的な価値があって初めて有名になること。私はそんなものは、いらないと思っている。たとえ、有名でなくても多くの人と実りあるコミュニケーションができる。普通の人々、民衆はそうしている。そのようなアーテイスト像が、私のあこがれるイメージである。

KDJ: In 1995 you held a performance at Greenwich, UK, in which 45 people from different countries were counting in their native language. There was a moment of silence for each zero. You have indicated that you use numbers because of their universality: people from all parts of the world understand numbers. However, you have also indicated that zero is not understood in the same way all over the world: there is a difference between the Western zero and the Japanese 'Ku'. Also other numbers have a strong connotation, such as 3 and 7 in Christianity. When numbers have such strong connotations, can you say that numbers are universal? The moment of silence in your performance at Greenwich, the zero, seemed to be the same for everyone. How does the silence relate to the different possible interpretations of zero? How does your work communicate to people who are not familiar with Japanese culture? When they understand the zero in the Western sense, do you see that as a mis-communication?

TM: I talk about the numbers, 'movement of numeration', 'time as changing', which we possibly can describe as an international language. I am trying to achieve 'The Life' , being alive and keep running. To show this content, I needed the 'movement of numeration'. As a contrast to life, 'death' is 'stopping'. So, I do not care so much about the functioning of each number as symbol in each specific culture. Zero has the meaning of 'death' using the contradiction to 'life', which appears in 'The Life' as a total. In the Eastern theory, 'life' and 'death' together become 'The Life'. So, I cannot take out only 'death' (only zero). That does not make any sense. That is why, like you said, if I would only focus on the moment of silence, it would come down to having no character, it may look all the same. But if you look at the 'silence' (death), and connect that with the 'counting voice' (life) as a set, human nature will be highlighted.

TM: 数字は、単純に「数えるという運動」「変化するという時間」を記述することが可能な国際言語である。私が目指している、「命」は生きて動いている。このことを示す為に「数えるという運動」が必要だった。そして、その対比としての「死」は「止まって」いるのである。だから、数字ひとつひとつの、それぞれの文化圏でのシンボルとしての機能はあまり気にしていない。また、ゼロは「死」を意味するが、「生」との対比によって「命」全体を表現する。東洋的な概念では、「生」と「死」はセットで「生命」を形づくるからだ。だから、「死」だけ(ゼロだけ)を取り出すことには何の意味もない。したがって、あなたが言うように、沈黙の時間だけに注目すれば、それは結局、個性のない、同じものに見えてしまうのである。しかし、「数える声」(生)とのセットで「沈黙」(死)を見るとき、それぞれの個性が浮き彫りになるだろう。

KDJ: One of the reasons for stopping the performances at the start of your career was that you considered them not to be always accessible for the audience. In your recent works you invite the viewer to participate directly, such as in your Pile Up Life *project (2008), for which people can participate through your website. How do you look at these technical developments in relation to your idea to connect with everything?*

TM: The reason why I stopped doing the performances is because, as you mentioned, it was not easy to access the audience. Because, although I announced the date, time and specific location for it, nobody came to see the performances. Also, after finishing my performance, it does not leave any trace. Therefore, the audience could not easily see my performance. It was self-justified on the part of the creator. As a concept 'Art in You' connects with the audience. I created a system that allows people at any time to look by themselves and leave their traces, because of my website system, the audience can easily join the project. It is also easy to see the points, which are very different from the past. So, the concept of my performance includes that the audience joins my project, brings out the art from the audience, which is the practice of 'Art in You'.

TM: 初期におけるパフォーマンスをやめた理由は、あなたが言う通り、観客が見やすいものではなかったという点だった。なぜなら、何日の何時から特定の場所でパフォーマンスをすると予告しても、誰も見にくることはできなかった。しかも、それは一瞬にして終わり、跡形もなく消え去ってしまいます。したがって、観客はパフォーマンスは見ることが容易でなかったのである。それは作る側の独善であった。最近の観客参加は、「Art in You」がコンセプトである。それは、形が残り、見ようと思えばいつでも見る事ができる形式をとっているので、観客は参加しやすいし、また、見ることが容易だという点がそれ依然と大きく違う。つまり、最近のパフォーマンスは観客参加のためのものであり、観客のアクションの受け皿、観客のアートを引き出す「Art in You」の実践であるのだ。

KDJ: Can counting from 1 to 9 demonstrate time? Is time directly related to numbers?

TM: It is the machine, which keeps counting like flowing in order from 1 to 9 and 9 to 1. The numbers show 'counting' and they 'enumerate', which is definitely the movement of time. Counting rather gives you the feeling of 'the passage of time', a 'rhythm by counting speed' and because each counting speed is different, it evokes 'life'.

TM: 流れるように順番に1-9、9-1へと感とし続ける機械である。この数字が「カウントする」「数える」という動きはもちろん時間を表すが、むしろ、それは、数えることによる「時間の流れ」「数えるスピードによるリズム」などを感じさせ、それぞれの、カウンテイングは皆そのスピードが違うことから、個性的なひとつの「生命」を想起させる。

KDJ: 1,000 Real Life Project—Deathclock *(2003) is a countdown till death. The work presents many different temporalities: the lifetime, the countdown till death, the speed of counting, the ongoingness of the project, etc. These temporalities work at different speeds. The speed of counting is different for each person, but also the length of the countdown till death is different for each person. To what degree is time personal? To what degree does time exist without human awareness?*

TM: 'Time' is definitely a personal thing. The Time concept in which time goes by equally, just began in Greenwich in 1884 as the conceptual interpretation of a new modernism. It is based on the universe and an impersonal general theory. Essentially, 'Time' is the same as an individual's death. It should be very personal. Individual death exists in an infinite variety of distinctions. One is not the same as others.

TM:「時間」は徹底的に個人的なものである。平等に流れていく時間の概念は、1884年のグリニッジから始まったにすぎない新しいモダニズムの発想から出発している。そして、それは、ユニバーサルを基調にした、没個性的な概念である。本来「時間」は、個人の死と同じ、個性的なものである。個人の死は千差万別。ひとつとして同じものはない。

KDJ: Another Japanese artist whose work addresses time is On Kawara. He has created I Am Still Alive *telegrams that manifest his existence. Also you have made a relation between time and life: "there is no absolute length of time, only a personal rhythm. Time is life." If time and life are the same, does your work manifest your existence? What is the importance of your own existence within time? Do you think your life is ongoing?*

TM: My work is not trying to express myself. The machine was made to awaken 'The Life' in the audience. So, I think, for each audience my works can be seen in a completely different way.

TM: 私の作品は、私自身を表現しようとしているのではない。見る人(観客)の「命」を呼び覚ますために作られる装置なのだ。だから、見る人によって、その作品は全く違う見え方がするであろう。

KDJ: Many of your works are made with the use of LEDs. Some people might be put off by the often technical appearance of your work, do you see this as a downside of your choice of medium? Why did you choose

this medium to represent time? Is it technically possible to continue forever? What about your physical limitations? How do you see the ongoingness of your work in relation to your own physicality?

TM: LED is a relatively long glow material. But, of course, there is limited lifetime. But in the certificate of my artwork, I allow for the replacement of the parts anytime. In fact, to replace the parts (changing) encourages things to keep changing forever, to be reborn. The artist, I myself, I am not immortal. So, after my death,

I would like to be taken into eternity by the replacement of the parts. For that point, 'technology' is a useful material. Because, even if there only is a schematic diagram left, that system could keep the eternity by the replacement of the parts.

TM: LEDは比較的長く光り続ける物質である。しかし、やはり有限な寿命がある。しかし、私は作品証明書で明らかなように、何度でも部品を換えることを許している。つまり、部品を交換すること（変化させること）で永遠に生まれ変わる事を奨励している。作者である私自身も不老不死ではない。だから、私の死後も、作品は部品を換える事で永遠性を獲得してもらいたいのだ。その点、「テクノロジー」は有益な素材である。なぜならば、回路図さえ残っていれば、部品交換でその機能を永遠に維持できるからである。

KDJ: The zero in your work is often not spoken out loud, or shown. Did you ever show zero?

TM: I used zero only once in the work *Empty Sets*, but for others I do not show zero.

TM: 一度だけ、ゼロを使った「空集合」という作品を作ったのですが、それ以外はゼロは表示しません。

KDJ: The Japanese word for the number zero is 'Rei'. It seems however that you take the zero as 'Ku', which has a much broader meaning and is not necessarily first and foremost, a number. What does the silence or invisibility of the zero mean to you? How does the zero relate to the other numbers and what is its place in your understanding of time?

TM: Zero in the Western world implicates nothingness. I do not show zero, because zero has two meanings: one is vast quantity and the other one is nothingness. The meaning of vast quantity is: possibility, or, there is a tremendous mass we cannot see but is there, we cannot see but there are many. Zero was born approximately 5000 years ago. It had both the meaning of nothingness and potential, but by traveling to the West, it became only: nothing. What stays now is, when I move the zero to the right by using the decimal point, I endlessly get closer to minus, but when I move the zero endlessly without the decimal point, it becomes plus, I increase limitlessly. I use zero like this, this is zero from both sides. The original meaning has both meanings, which are the nothing and the plus.

TM: 西洋でのゼロは、何も無いという意味合いなのですが、なぜ僕がゼロを表示しないかと言うと、ゼロには莫大な量と、何もないという、二つの意味がある。 莫大な量と言うのは、可能性というか、見えないんだけど、ものすごい質量がある、見えないけれども、沢山あるということ。 ゼロというのは、約5千年前に、始まったといわれているのですが、その時点では、莫大な量と、何もないという、両方の意味を持っていたのですが、西洋に伝わって行く過程において、何もないという意味だけが、辿りついたんです。今も少し残っているのは、小数点で表すときにゼロを右にすると、限りなくマイナスになっていくんだけど、これを限りなくこうするとプラス、限りなく増大に向かって行く。こういう使い方なんですね。これがゼロの両方の側面なんです。オリジナルの意味は両方の意味を持つ。

KDJ: Is zero in movement too? Is it 'something' that changes itself as well?

TM: For example, when I express 'life', I use 'Ku'. For example, above a line is a visible area—you can see, this is life, this is The Life, and under the line is death. Over the straight line there is a waved line, the recurrence again and again—this is being born. This keeps repeating: it is a cycle. At this point, 'The Life' is invisible, but there is so much potential. Also, it can be possible for the next life. Therefore, it is called 'Ku'. Originally in Sanskrit it is called 'Shunya', which translates to the Chinese word 'Ku'. 'Shunya' is the original meaning of zero. So, the original zero had this meaning, but by traveling to the Western world, zero transported only the meaning of nothingness.

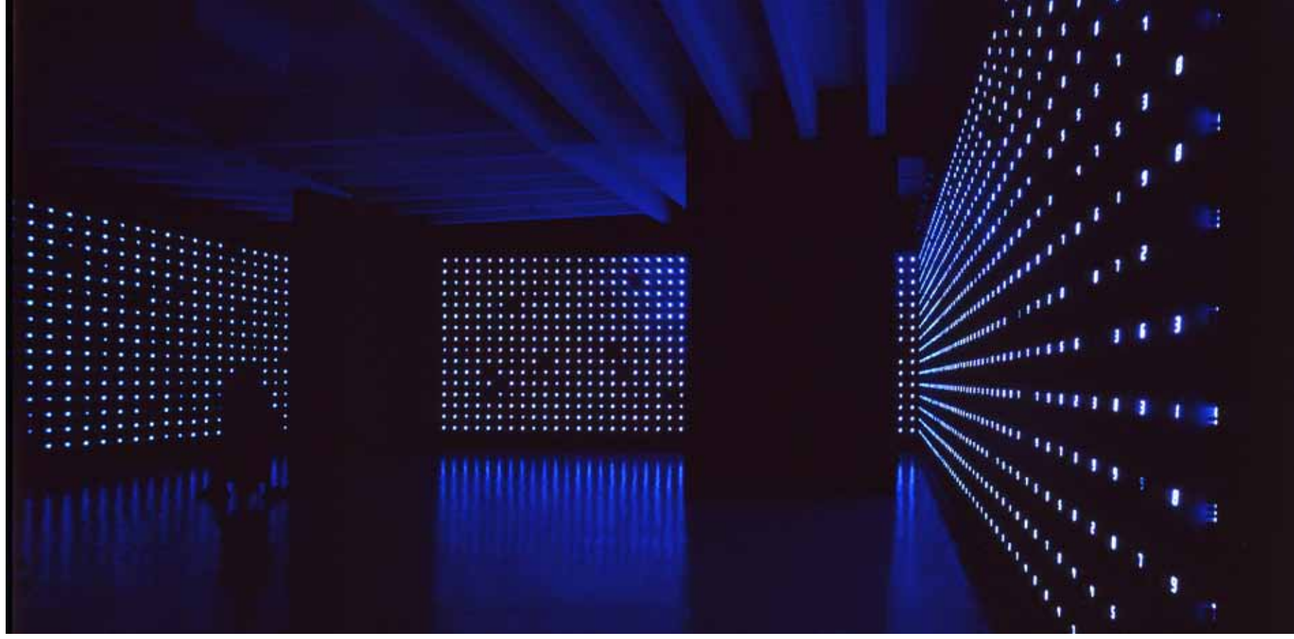
TM: 例えば、生命という表していくときに、空という言葉が使われるんです。例えば、ここが視覚的領域、そして目に見えるもの、生命であり、これがThe life, 死ぬときが死（death）、これがもう一回帰ってきて、誕生（Born）。これを繰り返す、サイクル。ここのときには目に見えないんだけど、可能性が莫大にある。来世への可能性を持っているわけです。だからこれを称して、空というんです。元々は、サンスクリット語でシーニャというのを漢訳して「空」という言った。シーニャというのが元々のゼロの意味なんです。元々のゼロは、こういった意味があって、 西洋の方に渡ってゼロは、何もないナッシングということにしかならなかった。

KDJ: By lighting different lines, all digital numbers can be made out of the number 8. When zero is shown, the LED still slightly shows the number 8. With regard to your holistic worldview, how does the number 8 relate to the other numbers displayed by the LED? How do darkness and light relate to each other? What is the relation between light and time?

TM: The number 8 is digitally constructed with seven parts (lines). By putting these seven parts on and off, all the numbers appear. In fact, the number 8 contains all numbers. It shows one is many, many is one. One human is the same person, but the human character changes many times (many). But it is just one human life (one). 'The Life' is one form (one). That one life changes many times (many). The number 8 contains all these images.

TM: 8の字は、デジタルな7つのパート（線）から構成される。この7つを点けたり消したりすることで、すべての数字が表記できます。つまり、8字はすべての数字を含むのです。これは、一は多を、多は一を表すということである。人間も同じ姿でありながら、さまざまに変化（多）する。しかし形態はひとつ（一）である。命は一つ（一）の形。それが変化（多）する。そいうイメージを8字に持っている。

KDJ: You have described time as counting. Counting seems to have the connotation of someone who is counting the numbers. I rather have the feeling that your work is about time as the following or changing of numbers or as a sequence of numbers. What do you mean with counting? Is it important to have a human involved in counting from 1 to 9?



TM: I use the numbers to express change. What I express with this method is movement and change. Everybody understands changing, that is very important. The counting is 1, 2, 3,… it goes up in order. But, for example, when the numbers move like this 1, 5, 10,… I feel they are 'jumping' rather than changing. For me, changing means that I can predict the next step, to which the numbers change. Everybody thinks, "Ah, this is moving and changing", everybody understands the form. That system became counting. So, with 5, 10, 15,… I don't feel it continues changing, I get the impression that it is becoming something else. One other thing that I explained before, is to emphasize the deleting of the zero. For example, 9, 8, 7,… the numbers go down in order. Zero will arrive naturally by prediction. At the moment the zero should come, it gets dark (no number). So, you can come up with the thought why there are no zeros. There, you can think about zero. So, the numbers go down in order and go up in order, that is very important and, in fact, that is my expression to let the audience consciously experience 'Ku'.

TM: 数字 を使ってチェンジしていく、この方法を使って表現していることは、動いていること、変化していることを表現したかったんです。変化していくことが、誰でもわかる。そこが重要だったんですね。カウンティングというのは、1・2・3と順番に上がって行きますよね。それが例えば1・5・10みたいな変化だと、変化というよりは、「飛んでる」という感じなんですよ。変化というのはある程度予測が出来て、それで姿が変わっていく、そういう誰もが、あっこれは動いて変化しているんだな、誰でもわかる形、そこでカウンティングだったんです。だから5・10・15では、変化し続けるというよりは何か違うものになっているという感じを受ける。

もう一つは、先ほど言ったゼロというものを消していくことを強調していくために、例えば9・8・7と言うように順番に降りたときには、ゼロが当然来るはずだということを予測して、そこで暗くなる。だからゼロはなぜないのという話になりますよね。そこでゼロについて考えることができる。だから数字が順番に降りていく、上がっていくという事は、とても重要で、実は空ということを意識させるための表現なんです。

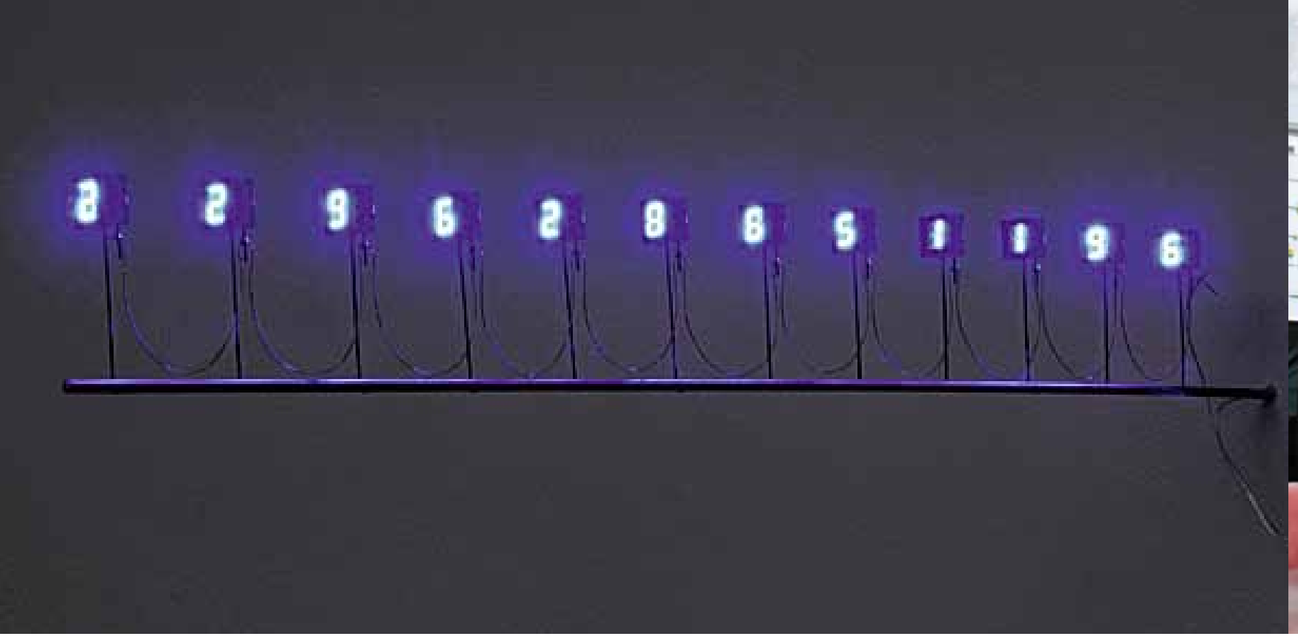
KDJ: Returning to 'Inochi' and 'Ku', would this mean that counting back from 9 to 1 is a preparation for death? And counting from 1 to 9 is comparable to aging or becoming older?

TM: Yes, so always repeating: this is life, this is death; visible and invisible. So in total, this is 'The Life'.

TM: はい、だから、これが生きているとき、これが死んでいるときですね。目に見えるもの、見えないもの、全体で、命（The Life）なんです。

KDJ: In your work you sometimes use mirrored surfaces. You have indicated that the mirror is a metaphor for 'En'. 'En' is the Buddhist concept of 'relationship' that states that a human being cannot exist independently. When looking at your work the viewer sees his own reflection in the mirror. When you yourself look in that mirror and see your reflection, what does that say about the relation you have to yourself? Does time also have an 'in-between' character? How does the mirror affect the space, which is duplicated through its surface? What is the nature of this duplicated space?

TM: The mirror reflects the audience itself as being physically present, 'Life', in present time. At the same time, they look at the counting LED work, time, 'Life'. In fact, the 'Life' of the audience, can be seen as part of the work, and it lives as the time of the artwork. The audience is evoked by the movement of 'Life', of themselves, by the artwork. To recognize it, I use a mirror. And also they find out that space itself is reflected in the mirror, which has been created by 'The Life', by them. 'Time', 'Space' and also art, those are created by human 'Life' and that is 'The Life' itself.



TM: その上で、鏡は観客自身の今のフィジカルな「生」を映し出す。そして、同時にカウンテイングされるLEDの作品の「命」の時間を見る。つまり、観客の「生」は作品の一部として見え、その作品の時間として生きるのである。そして、観客はこのとき、作品そのものではなく、作品によって喚起された自身の「生」の運動に気づくのである。これに気づくために、鏡が使用されるのである。また、映し出されるスペース（空間）も実は、観客の「生命」が生み出していることに気づくのである。「時間」と「空間」そして、アートも人間の「生命」が生み出すもの、「命」そのものなのである。

KDJ: Another thing that is important to you is the concept of 'Art in You'. This seems to be something that you direct to the viewer of your work: You have spoken in that respect about a mirrored surface for the reflection upon the viewer's life. How does this concept relate to yourself? Do you reflect upon your own life through art? Is art a mirror for yourself as well, or are you an artist presenting this mirror to your public?

TM: In my work, the artwork itself is the mirror. The viewer encounters emotion, surprise and touch through my work. In fact, it is a device to discover myself. In the process of making the work, I have an encounter with my base and I discover myself. I mean, by the creation of the mirror effect, I am able to see myself.

TM: アートワークそのものが実はミラーと考えているんです。見る人が、作品を通して、自分の中の感性や驚きや感動に出会う。つまり、自分自身を発見していく装置 なんですね。作者の場合も一緒で、作品を作ることによって自分を発見していくんです。作品を作りながら、根源の自分に出会う、自分自身を発見していく。つまり作ることで、自身が見えるミラーのような働きをするんです。

KDJ: Because you work with light, the spaces in which your work is presented are often dark, creating a strong spatial experience. Also other locations you selected for the presentation of your work point to an awareness of the space, such as Revive Time *(1995), presented in the Urakai River in Nagasaki, Japan, or* Luna *(1994), on the Faret Tachikawa Tower in Tokyo. To what extent does your work address the space in which it is presented and what meaning does its darkness have for you as opposed to the light of time? How does this strong spatial experience reflect your holistic way of understanding the world?*

TM: The 'nature of space' means that site is a very important factor for presenting my artwork. My artwork is very site-specific. It seems that time and space are separate things for you, but I do not think like that. It is evident by the 'Chaos theory', 'theory of relativity' and 'uncertainty principle'. Everything is transforming in relation with all sides. As a factor, one thing is important: time and space can constantly change their appearance to the audience. In keeping with this thought, 'Space' has a strong relationship with 'time of numeration' and 'audience' and all have an influence on each other. So, that is why it is obvious that 'Space' is part of my work.

TM: 「場所性」つまりサイトは、作品を存在させるためのとても重要なファクターである。私の作品はとてもサイト・スペスフィックなものである。時間と空間は別々なものとして理解されているが、私はそう思わない。両者関係しながら変容することは、相対性理論や不確定性理論、カオス理論によって明らかだ。そして重要なことは、時間と空間は、常に観測者というファクターによって変容しうるものだという点である。そうして考えたとき、「空間」は「数えるという時間」と「観客という人」にとって、とても関係が深く、影響しあうものであるから、「空間」を作品の一部として捉えるのはあたりまえなことだと考える。

KDJ: You have said that the spiral is "the closest symbol we have of a landscape of time." You have also indicated that blue is an important color for its circular form. How does that relate to the spiral form of time? Why is the spiral, and not the circle, the best way of representing the landscape of time? When you use the word 'landscape' to speak about time, does that mean you understand time as something spatial or is it just a metaphor?

TM: The theory of time has been explained by line and circle for a long time. A spiral can be understood as the shape containing both, keeping forward on a line while drawing a circle. I am not focusing on expressing the shape of time. This is not what I want. I am trying to present a model of new time (a model of new life) by using the old form of time. The straight line, the circle and spiral, these are the forms of the LED counting system I am using. They are continuing, always changing on-again, off-again, so naturally that the shape itself does not occur. The color I am using has a different symbolic meaning, depending on each cultural region. Therefore, I do not use color symbolically. To always leave it free to the imagination of all different people, I am trying to use many different colors. For me, the color I am using shows the difference of the character of the lights.

TM: 時間の概念は古くから直線と円で示されてきた。そして、螺線は、その両方を兼ね備えた形として把握される。-円を描きながら線上に進む-。私は、時間の形を示すことが目的ではない。そうではなくて、古くからある時間の形態を援用しながら、新しい時間のモデル（新しい命のモデル）を提示しようとしている。私の用いるLEDのカウンテイングによって直線、円、螺線、面の形態はくっついたり離れたり常に変容し続けるから、おのずとその形態を無化する。

また、使用する色は文化圏によってそのシンボルの意味が全く違う。だから、私はそれを、特定の何かのシンボルとして使用するのではなく、さまざまな人々にとって、常に自由に想像できるように、なるべく多くの色を使用してきた。色は私にとっては、光の性質の違いを表すために使用している。

KDJ: Your Revive Time Kaki Tree Project *(1996-) touches upon the bombing of Nagasaki, Japan, on 9 August 1945. A kaki tree survived the bombing and because of its survival the tree seems to have become a symbol. On the website of this project, it is mentioned that there are three things important in this project: to revive the conscience of peace, to revive an awareness of how to live, and to revive art. All three things seem to imply a living together with others. How important is co-existence for you? By pointing to co-existence, does the project not already give an answer to the question of how to live? The reviving of time seems to be done by memorizing the past and the kaki tree seems to be a symbol for that past. How important is history for you? Do your other works have this symbolic quality as well?*

TM: Art exists for humans. I think it does not exist for anyone else. 'Indicating the coexistence' and 'living with coexistence', between them there are big differences. The first one is the concept, the second one is the real. My art activity is for humans and it always wants to be realistic. My work also does not indicate 'Time', 'Space' and 'The Life'; my works try to live with 'Time', 'Space' and 'The Life'. For this reason, also for my Kaki tree project, it is not enough to give the answer. My work starts from the answer. My project is an act to give people the opportunity to think about how to live their life. History is important for thinking about the present time, about how to live life now. Otherwise, it becomes dead history.

TM: アートは、人間のために存在する。それ以外のためには存在できないと思っている。そして人間のためと考えれば、他者との共存は人類的課題であるだろう。「共存を示す」ことと「共存して生きる」ことは、雲泥の差がある。前者は観念であり、後者は現実である。私のアート行為は、人間に対し、常に現実であろうとする。作品も「時間」や「空間」、そして「命」を示そうとするのではなく、それらを生きようとする。だから、柿の木における行為も、答えを出して足りるのではなく、答えから始まるのである。人間にどのように生きるかを考え行動してもらうためにプロジェクトはあり、作品があるのだと考えている。歴史は今をどのように生きるかを考えるために重要である。そうでなければ、死んだ歴史になってしまうからだ。

KDJ: You have been working with the concept of 'time' for twenty years. Do you believe people's position towards time has changed during that period? Has your position changed towards time?

TM: I do not think that I myself, in creating my artworks, have changed in twenty years time. I can say I can see it more clearly than before. I think it has changed the consciousness of time for people. But, I would not say that time got better. Actually, the conflict is not over, we cannot solve poverty. Nothing is solved by changing the consciousness for time. Nothing has changed since the end of the 19th century. For twenty years I have been saying the same thing. I would like to transport thoughts into the future. I have to keep saying the most important things. I will continue to keep saying them in the future. 'The Life' is precious.

TM:　私は20年間、制作をつづけて変わってきたとは思っていない。むしろ、よりハッキリしてきたと言っていいだろう。人々の時間意識は変わってきただろう。しかし、より善くなってきているとは言い難い。現に、紛争は終わっていないし、貧困は解決できていない。自然は破壊され、子どもの命は軽んじられている。時間意識が変わったところで何も解決しない。それは、19世紀末と変わっていない。私は20年間、同じことを言い続けている。それは、未来に伝えたいことがあるからだ。大切なことは言い続けなければならない。今後も、私は伝え続けるであろう。かけがえのない「命」に関することをだ。

KDJ: Earlier we spoke about 'Art in You' and that you want to leave a space open for the public to reflect in. To me, however, it seems that you have a very clear idea of what you want to say and you seem very specific about the meaning of your works. How do you see the ideas you present?

TM: Japanese art used to be called a copy of Western art. For my art, I wanted to challenge something in the world. The most important thing is one's own originality, identity. Therefore I searched for my own roots. I discovered my originality through the Japanese culture and Eastern theory. I started to study from there. By doing that, I noticed that it is interesting that we lead a westernized life. My typical Japanese culture and my Eastern theory, combined with the Western culture all live within me. These things have become the very natural way of living our life. That is why we do not feel any discomfort from it.

My starting point was in 1989, I had an exhibition called *Against nature*. I met Thomas Sokolovsky, a curator from New York, who had come to Japan to search for young Japanese artists. He asked me a lot of questions and what I thought with common sense about things. I felt a gap between our cultures, I had a difficult time to explain them. That experience was my beginning. In my exhibition he saw the picture of the old temple from Kyoto. It showed a pagoda, an old stone stairway and some maple trees and behind the pagoda were mountains. The photo really was Kyoto and the subject was 'against nature', so art and artificiality were important subjects. But he just thought: the mountain is nature and the stone stairway is artificial. When he looked at the photo, he separated between natural and artificial (mountain, the road approaching a shrine, pagoda, plants and trees etc). My point of view is that all these things are seen together, are nature in total. We see it as very natural scenery, so I felt my very different way of thinking. As I mentioned before, everything connects together with everything. For example, the man-made 'artificial' building will be eroded by wind, water and rain. That is a very beautiful natural process. Nature and man-made things are different, but we call them nature.

TM:　はい、日本のアートは、西洋のコピーといわれていて、世界で何か一緒に戦おうとしたときに、自分のオリジナリティーが一番の勝負のポイントになりますから、そのときに、自分のオリジナルはなんだといったときに、自分のルーツを辿っていくんですね。そのときに、日本のカルチャーだとか、東洋の思想だとか、そいうところに自分のオリジナルなところを発見していくんですね。そういうことから、勉強し始めたんです。おもしろいことに、僕らはウエストナイズされている生活をしているんだけれども、実は感覚としては、日本的な文化とか東洋的な思想とか、今も、ウエスタンカルチャーの中で、生きづかせているというか、そういうふうなことがごくあたりまえに、生きているわけです。だから、こういうことに対して何の違和感もないんです。ところが説明しょうとしても、なかなかできない。

私のきっかけは、89年「アゲンストネーチャー」(against nature)という展覧会があって、トーマス・ソコロフスキーというキューレーターが、ニューヨークから日本に来て、日本の若いアーティストのリサーチをしていて、そのときすごい、質問をしてきて、当たり前だと思っていたことが、当たり前ではなくて、カルチャーギャップがあって彼らたちにどうやって説明したらいいのか、それがきっかけになりました。

そのときに一番面白かったのが、写真を見ていて、京都あたりの古いお寺の、五重塔、古びた石段があって、ちょっと楓なんかがこうあって, 向こうの方に山がこうあて、いかにも京都という写真があって、アゲンストネーチャーですから、アートとアートフィシャリティーということがとても問題がになってたんですけど、彼らは、山はネイチャーだ。石段はアートフィシャルだ。彼らはネイチャーと、アートフィシャルとを分けて、見るのですが(山、参道、五重塔、草木)、僕らの印象は、これら全てはトータルで、ネーチャー。とても自然な風景として捕らえるわけです。それがとても違ったんですね。先ほどもいった、あらゆるものとの関係を結ぶ、リレーションシップ、例えばアートフィシャルで建てられたものでも、風とか水とか雨とかによって浸食されていて、これが古びてくるんですね。それがとてもネーチャフルなんですよ。この階段も人が踏んでいくことで、風とか雨で、ちょっとかけてきたり、ボロッとしてくるんで、ほとんど自然になっちゃうんですね。そういう自然と人が作り上げるものが、自然と考えていたのですが、彼らは違っていたんですね。

OTTO PIENE

Conversation between Otto Piene, Karlyn De Jongh & Peter Lodermeyer

Piene studio, Düsseldorf, Germany, 30 May 2009

*Otto Piene (*1928, Germany). In 1957, he and Heinz Mack founded the ZERO movement. Piene who is famous for his smoke and fire paintings created new art forms like* Light Ballet *and* Sky Art. *He lives in Cambridge, MA, USA, and in Düsseldorf, Germany.*

Peter Lodermeyer: ZERO is mostly attributed as having something utopian in character. I read a statement Karl Ruhrberg, former director of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, once made about you, that you are zuweilen ein moralisierender Weltverbesserer *[from time to time a moralizing do-gooder]. What would you say to this? Is this something that hurts or does it say something about your personality?*

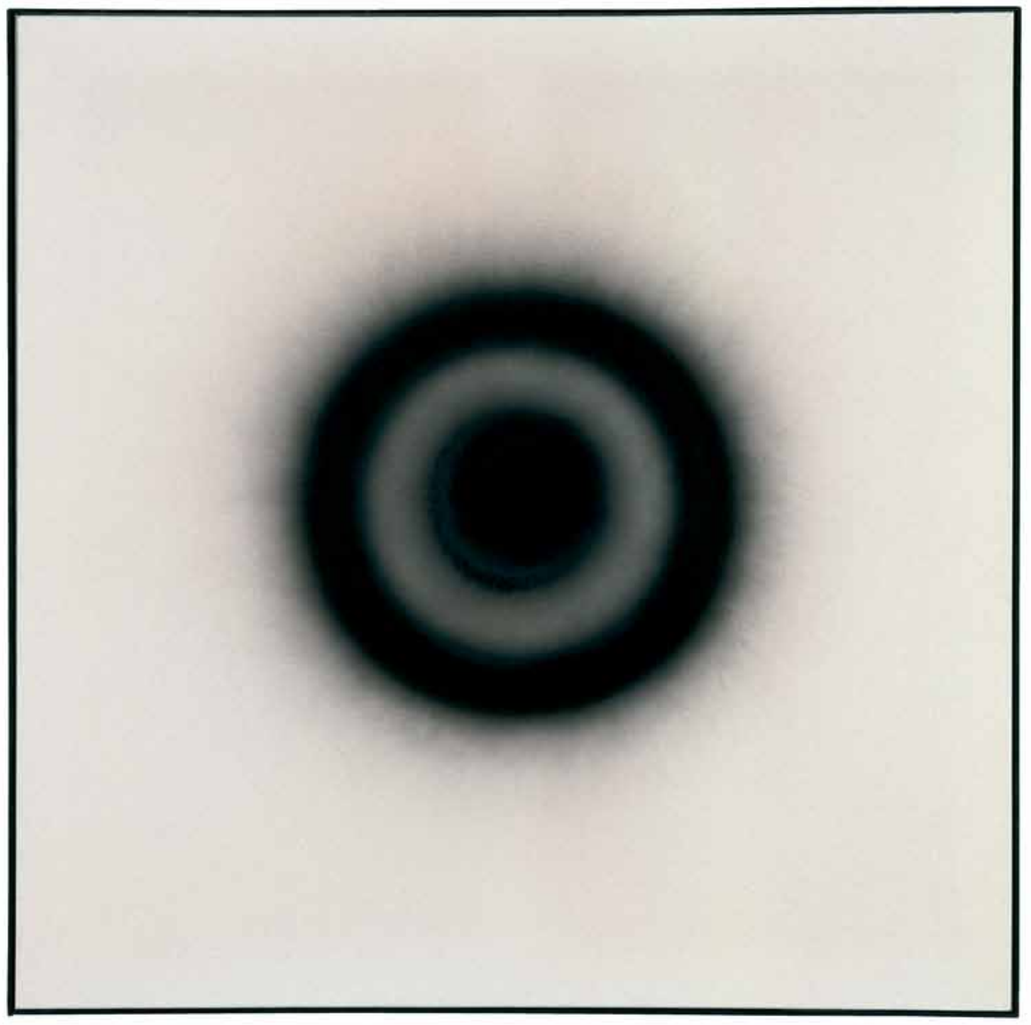
Otto Piene: Ruhrberg has spoken a lot of nonsense in his life, but was absolutely right in this case. The question is: How far does the term extend? And is the term really appropriate for the role of the artist, in assessing what the world is currently like and how the artist can or cannot contribute to changing it? That is, in a sense, all he could possibly mean. And I'm not against that.

PL: Does art have something to do with morality?

OP: It always does, in a platonic sense. It is the old platonic, or platonian, dictum that the beautiful is also the true and the just, an ideal which lives on to this day. All these artists who do PC-art and who are involved in criticism of whatever political system or the social system altogether, all act along the lines of this old human ideal. Essentially, my view was not different from that, either. Except that: it is so general, it implies so much, and it means so much that it is very difficult to pin it down to paragraphs of that constitution of whatever we are talking about as a standard of human life. So, what Ruhrberg was saying is that I see ethical problems for artists as well as for everybody else. The others are somewhat more aware of them, and they try to act or work accordingly. The artist is a social creature. And if the artist is a social creature, it translates his or her convictions into the work. That's just fine. And it would be okay if more artists would do it and be less materialistic—which is also a moral statement.

PL: Light is a very important issue for you, as well as for Heinz Mack. I know it is always dangerous to compare artists to each other, but when I look at the works of Heinz Mack, I have the feeling Mack always tries to make them immaterial, light, clean. In your work I notice there is dialectic, an ambivalence, especially with the fire paintings, because there is light and darkness; there is also a destructive element. Fire purifies and at the same time it destroys. I see a different quality in the way you deal with light and also with darkness. Is it simply poor psychology to assume that it has something to do with the fact that you are three years older than Heinz Mack? You had a different existential experience in the final phase of the war: you had to serve as an 'anti-aircraft-support'.

OP: Yes, I belong to the Flakhelfer-Generation, like Karlheinz Stockhausen, for instance, or Günter Grass. It is true. Well, a very simple comment on that is that I was born in 1928. Uecker joined Heinz Mack and me actually four years later. He came from East Germany and was not one of the founders of group ZERO: he joined. Uecker was born in 1930 and Heinz Mack in 1931. Mack and I became instant friends when I changed from Munich to Düsseldorf, to the academy in Düsseldorf, and we've done many things together. We also studied philosophy together. The one difference is that he was always in a hurry. He finished his philosophical pursuits three years earlier than I did. I just took my time to study philosophy and I think that was a good thing to do. Mack looks at light and uses it very much in a situation of reflection, you know, those physical reflections. Light gets reflected by shiny surfaces of various materials, most of the time solid materials, such as metals. So, that was actually the origin of ZERO. I use light increasingly in a physical sense, as 'light', as the 'immaterial' substance, because it is not really immaterial. But that is the common way of describing light: it is immaterial; certainly it is not solid material. And I used light increasingly. Its most important characteristics are described in a 'popular' way as an immaterial carrier of messages, of lighting, of illumination. The more interesting part, of course, is that light also becomes kind of the overall medium of the technological means, which initially hardly existed. But then it became more and more part of the media in art. So, in addition to originally making objects such as paintings, I increasingly made rooms, made spaces, events, *Sky Art*, and all of that. These were mostly made possible by the use of light and its capacity of filling entire rooms, traveling long distances and carrying messages over long distances in a way, which is not reserved for art and the practice of art and the pursuit of traditional art vocabulary. So, I made light rooms, I made a light ballet, and light in architecture and increas-



ingly *Sky Art*, which is somewhat different from using heavy metal, heavy material carriers, but not precluding the use of materials, heavy materials as an architecture. Initially, particularly my friend Heinz Mack criticized the use of artificial light. I mean, he was very naïve and didn't know what he was doing. For the first two or three years he criticized the use of light in the form of electric light. And from there on it changed. However, he has always been on the kind of material side of light, except when it takes on a lot of dimensions as he did in his desert project quite clearly and quite sympathetically in a film. Anyway, our belief in the encompassing energy of light was strongly shared, or strongly enough. That became the basis for forming and practicing the ideals of group ZERO. So, as of 1956-1957, we moved towards thinking together and working together. The result was group ZERO and the idea of making a magazine. And more important yet, *the Abendausstellungen*, the night exhibitions that were really the nucleus of the ZERO group and forming and attracting groups of people beyond the studio.

Karlyn de Jongh: In philosophy light is often related to truth. You just mentioned Plato. His allegory of the cave is about moving closer to the light of the sun, about seeing the truth about things. Is light for you a metaphor for truth? Are your light sculptures about truth as well? How do you understand truth?

OP: Well, of course you know, truth is such an amoeba. If there is another way of rationalizing something you say it is in service of the truth. As a young artist, I had quite a few artist friends, students as well as architects, and I noticed very soon that whenever the architects didn't know how to rationalize or how to explain something, why something was this and not that way, then they would say, "That is the truth!" I ran into that again and for decades I had a position as a professor at the department of architecture at the School of Architecture and Planning at MIT, and they did the same thing. My fellow professor said, "The architects said this has to be like this and this has to go that way, and this has to be balanced with another volume there, and that will be located there." Somebody asked, "Why is that?" He would say: "That's the truth. That is the architectural truth that we serve, etc. etc." Regarding truth at the same time as a kind of moral coincidence principle. So, here are your platonic values pursued two thousand years after Plato. It's still there. I never have been a real student of Plato. And I have never been a real Plato follower. But as a basis for discussion he is fabulous to kind of investigate how values work nowadays in the context of art and 'Kunst', art science, technology. The common laws, they still work very well as kind of measuring sticks, as values to refer for communication, for sorting things out. It is really very handy. So, there is the truth.

PL: Space is a very important issue for ZERO. Space doesn't simply mean a gallery space or a museum space, or public space, but rather, fundamental space itself. Even outer space. You became famous for Sky Art*, so that means that art flies in space, goes up to the sky. Once again, does it have something to do with your experience at the end of the war? At that time you were a young boy, and space was a dangerous thing. What came from space, the airplanes, could bring death and destruction. Is* Sky Art *something like a reaction to that early experience?*

OP: Well, I don't think it is a reaction. It preserves a sensitivity, for the contrast between light and space, day and night, light and darkness and day and night, definitely developed a dimension that… yes, during World War II. The bright sky was the most dangerous time and the darkest night was the safer time. In certain ways the values were reversed. It certainly has something to do with what I experienced and had done and how I worked during and after the war.

PL: Was creating Sky Art *something along the lines of reversing the values again, making the sky and the space friendly and peaceful?*

OP: I think, first of all, to be directed towards the sky is not a bad thing, but to experience the sky as a battlefield was new. It came with the excitement of watching fliers and flying machines and shooting into the sky, which is a pretty scary, and at the same time somewhat exhilarating, activity. Although it is very scary, the light rays of the Flak were absolutely fascinating. It's like drawing in space. Except you can hardly see it because you are incredibly rattled by this overwhelming noise of the guns, so it is a combined experience that is definitely multi-sensory, and while it is happening you don't really have time to notice it or register it, but it somehow remains somewhere and comes out later when there is time to think about it. That's part of the experience of my generation but not all experience and not all my values come from being exposed to the war. And that's quite all right.

KDJ: At the beginning of ZERO you spoke about the "re-harmonization of man, nature and technology." It seemed to be at the core of ZERO. How did you understand this and how do you feel about this after fifty years? What do you think you've achieved?

OP: Well, to put it roughly, I have kind of found and promoted *Sky Art*. And *Sky Art* is nature: it is happening in nature and it is motivated by the desire to get closer to nature and work with nature and to benefit from the grand assets of nature. It is also difficult. I mean, art—like banking—is very much about safety: museums are the safest places in the world, safer than bank offices. In that respect, art isn't much better than business: looking for safety and security. But if you really go into nature and work with nature and confront nature, then it becomes quite difficult. It becomes quite a challenge—though a beautiful and really exciting one. And nature will always become stronger compared with what we can do. The challenge remains and *Sky Art* is something that is really, very exhilarating—if it works. It can be something very, very challenging if it doesn't quite work the way it is supposed to.

PL: Let's talk about your notion of time. You are in your eighties now. You've been working as an artist for more than fifty years. Unfortunately our time on earth is limited. It is unavoidable to think about death. I asked Hermann Nitsch, for example, what he thinks about time. He gave me a clear statement: "Time doesn't exist. I was always there and will always be there." What do you think about time?

OP: Well, when I think about time I think about the medium of music. So, time is good. And time is space and space is time. I don't have to say too many basic or revolutionary things about time, except that I do believe that time goes on as far as we can think. We can't really think without time or think beyond time. But time is also the element of kinetic art, of light art. Light Art performances, for instance, are an articulation of time. And time becomes visible in light. And in that respect it is very tangible, it is with us all the time. Time is with us all the time. And in that respect as light is… Underneath it all, light is material and as time becomes visible in light, time also becomes material. In that respect it is less frightening to think about time and thinking of time that is the element that also becomes tangible in death. So, they are very close and they are very, somewhat frighteningly, conjoined. But beyond that, of course people think about how long they live, if they live long. Even if you have lived long already, you still think life is forever, or you act as is life is forever. And there is very little we can do about that. Working with fire is also something that brings out the thought and feeling of death: if it doesn't work well, things burn up, *kaputt*. It functions along the borders of what lives and what dies. How things go together, it is not that simple. You know, fire is one of the elements that constitutes life, so it is a constant dance between things that live and things that die, things that come and things that go. They are what human feelings, values and initiatives have been about forever. I guess art is very much motivated by thoughts of death. Because art is something that people do so that they have something that stays. And among the greatest maniacs are those people who want to make things stay: the architects. It all has to do with making something that will last. If it's good then it will also be beautiful, but it lasts. Nowadays, we can easily preserve things. In that respect we can come closer to eternity and further away from death than people have ever been before. It works wonderfully: people live longer. They live twice as long as they lived a hundred years ago. Just imagine what would happen if that continues. So: have no fear, by the time your number comes up, people will indeed possibly live forever.

PL: We definitely live in interesting times. The last 20 or 30 years were not exactly times where utopian thinking was en vogue, but do you think that it left a blank, that we need in our late modern societies to think more along utopian dimensions again? And in conjunction with this question: I have the feeling that ZERO utopian thought and optimism come back to art when I look at works by Olafur Eliasson, for instance. There I see something akin to a revival of ZERO ideas and subjects…

OP: I don't know the man. But yes, I agree. Utopia is really what drives lots and lots of things. Without utopia there is no life. Because utopia is related to the future and the future is what draws us along. So, utopia is as natural as blood. This is really one of the things that motivates and motorizes people, and sometimes utopia is also beautiful and it is great fun to project. Nietzsche once said: "Man is the animal that can make promises." That is the basis of utopia.

PL: You were one of the first artists to deal with ecology. What do you think about our situation today? The first interview I did for this project was with Hamish Fulton and we talked about existence. He said: "Existence then would come into something that, in recent years, has to do with the state of the planet." And in his opinion, the state of our planet is tenuous, the ecological problems are huge. What do you think about that? Do you believe we can solve those problems with technology?

OP: I did the first large-scale sky event in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The industry in that city was heavy; the air was polluted. The ecology movement raised questions about how that could be different. That was in 1970, so it was quite a while ago. If you go to Pittsburgh now, the air above the city is clean. You could say that the ecology movement wasn't totally utopian, it has really created something good. Needless to say, the ZERO artists argued strongly in the service of ecology and re-harmonization of human labor, human effort, human toil, and the benefits to humans, and amongst those were the cleaning up of industry and of the air, and so on. It was part of ZERO argumentation and values, hence this obsession with the clean image, the clean picture, the white picture or canvas. In a certain way, this is an expression of purity. And purity is an expression of the longing for a better world, a cleaner world, for a world that is in harmony with the creation and whatever else we can quote in this context.

TERESA MARGOLLES

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Campo St. Maria Formosa, Venice, Italy, 5 June 2009

*Teresa Margolles (*1963, Mexico) creates works about death; "What else could we talk about?" For years, she worked in a morgue in Mexico City, where the corpses of the, mostly drug-related, killings came in on a daily basis. Recently, she replaced the morgue to work directly in the locations where the killings take place.*

Karlyn De Jongh: We are now here at the Campo St. Maria Formosa in Venice, Italy. You prefer to do the interview outside of the Palazzo Rota Ivancich, where you are representing Mexico at the Venice Biennale. Why is it important for you to keep a quiet atmosphere in the pavilion?

Teresa Margolles: Because I am not going to interrupt. I am the protagonist, therefore I am not going to interrupt the silence of the people that have been murdered.

Teresa Margolles: Porque no voy a entorpecer porque yo tengo el protagonismo ahora no voy a entorpecer el silencio de las personas que han sido asesinadas.

KDJ: In your exhibition you show the performance Pulizie *(Cleaning, 2009). The performance takes place at least once a day, but often the space is empty as well. How do you see this alternation between the liveliness of the performance and the emptiness of the exhibition space at other times? Do the emptiness of the space and the liveliness of the performance have anything to do with the dead people who were washed with the water that is used to clean the floors of the pavilion? The act of cleaning can be seen as a ritual. How does the act of cleaning relate to the corpses for you?*

TM: Perhaps it is even simpler than that. They kill; the only thing that we are doing is wipe away the blood. I do not think about that binomially, about that Yin-Yang. I do not think along those lines. What I do think about, is the idea of the family. A family that has been shattered, that is dysfunctional, because of the murder of one of its members. Or about a friendship that has been cut off by the murder of a friend. That is what I think about. I am not talking about esoteric things, but about reality. What happens when the chair of this table is empty, because the person murdered has left?

TM: Como los… son mucho mas simples en esto. Trabajo con la… y las realidades. Están matando lo único que estamos haciendo es trapeando con la sangre. Ese binomio, ese ying-yang no lo pienso. En esos términos no. Pero si pienso mas bien en la idea de la familia. Una familia que es disgregada (?) que es disfuncional, por el asesinato de un miembro de la familia. O una amistad que es cortada por un asesinato de un amigo. Esto es lo que pienso. No estoy hablando de cosas esotéricas si no de la realidad. Lo que sucede cuando la silla de la mesa esta vacía cuando el asesinado surgió.

KDJ: In your work you seem to discuss the reality of Mexico. You seem to want to give the viewer a certain space and time to experience and to think about that. I think that is why we are sitting here, that you want to give the viewer something. I was wondering about how do you see your profession? Why do you do what you do? What is your motivation?

TM: I say that I am an artist. I did not study visual arts. This is not an occupation that you study. It is something that I do. That is the way that I do it. About my motivation… I do not know, life itself, the streets… I really do not know. It is very psychological. It is like a psychological question. Perhaps in the end it is related to a job. The further away that my image and I are from a reading, the better it is. I do not have to be there. No, I am not writing my biography there. Yes, I am narrating a part of the history of Mexico. No, I am not narrating my life. For that reason, I would like to ask you why you are talking about me. We would like to talk about the pieces, am I right?

TM: Yo se dice ser artista. Yo no he estudiado artes visuales y no es un oficio de que estudies. Es algo que ejerzo. Pues así lo ejerzo. Pues mi motivación… pues no sé la vida. Las calles… no sé. Es que es muy psicológico. Es como preguntas psicológicas. Pues no sé. Creo que finalmente dentro de un trabajo. Entre mas lejano que esté mi imagen y yo de un trabajo la lectura es mejor. Yo no tengo que aparecer porque no me están…no estoy haciendo mi biografía allí. Si estoy contando una parte de la historia de México. No estoy contando mi vida. Por eso le pregunta porque esta hablando de mi. ¿Queremos hablar sobre las piezas, creo no?

KDJ: For your exhibition in the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, Germany, you chose the title Muerte sin fin*, a title inspired by a poem by José Gorostiza. Octavio Paz commented on this with "Other*

experiences, other deaths await us." What do you think Octavio Paz means by this? Does it suit to your way of thinking about life and your way of thinking about death?

TM: It depends on what life, it depends on what death, and it depends on what sort of respect. Are we talking about a natural death or about an assassination? Of a life process or of a death process? About what type of respect? Respect for the body? Because, with a murder, there is also the question which corpses have been murdered. How are we going to handle that murdered corpse? That is what we are talking about. I believe that that is the real question.

I am not talking about countless deaths. I am talking about only one death: the one by assassination. I am not talking about the other deaths. I am talking about that death: about the body, the corpse, the tragedy of the corpse. Perhaps, I am thinking that we should return a dead body. Murder has become such a commonplace that it does not disturb us anymore. We should return to the tragedy of it, to re-do the tragedy of each corpse. Instead of making a number out of it, we should make a tragedy. And so on with every corpse that has been. That was the tragedy of Mexico.

TM: Así depende de que vida, y depende de que muerte y depende de que respeto. Hablamos de que una muerte natural o de un asesinato. De proceso de vida o de proceso de muerto. ¿Y que respeto? ¿Respeto a que cuerpo? Porque dentro del asesinato también hay… ¿Que cuerpos han asesinato? También hay un… ¿Como vamos a tratar ese cuerpo asesinado? Así que estamos hablando también de eso. Así que esta es la pregunta.

Yo no estoy hablando de muertes incontables, solamente hablo de una. La de los asesinatos. No de las otras muertes, hablo de esta muerte. Ya lo mas del cuerpo, del cadáver, de la tragedia del cadáver. Quizás estoy pensando de que deberíamos devolver un cuerpo muerto, un asesinado se ha vuelto tan común de que ya molesta, de que deberíamos devolver a la tragedia. Hacer realmente la tragedia de cada muerto. En vez de un volver un numero lo deberíamos volver a la tragedia. Y hacerlo cada muerto que fue, fue una verdadera tragedia en México.

KDJ: How do you look toward your own death?

TM: Why are you asking me that? I do not matter in this story. When I die, my body will not belong to me anymore. It will belong to my family, they will do with me what they want. But if I could decide, I would like to be cremated in a collective crematory, and after that I want to be placed in a common grave. In particular, in one of the crematories of the UNAM [National Autonomous University of Mexico] where the bodies that were used by the university students are burned like the dogs of the veterinaries, and other corpses. The point is that my ashes will get mixed with the ashes of others, with the ones of dogs and other corpses. My eyes get transformed into a dog, and they do with the ashes whatever they want. I get mixed with everything: everything that is left behind by science; all those bodies that have been manipulated by veterinaries and physicians, bodies that are manipulated like the dogs from the streets, the people from the streets. But the day I die, my body will not belong to me anymore. The rest. I am atheistic.

TM: ¿Porque me pregunta a mi? Dile que no importo en esto. Cuando yo me muera el cuerpo no me pertenece. Le pertenece a tu familia lo que han contigo lo que quieran. Pero si pudiera decidir, me gustaría que me metieran a una fosa común y después quemarme en un crematorio común. Específicamente en el crematorio de la UNAM donde creman los cuerpos que trabajaron los universitarios como los perros de los veterinarios y otros cadáveres. Y que me ceniza se mezclara con los demás, con la de los perros y una con los otros. Que mis ojos se conviertan en un perro, y que con las cenizas hagan lo que quieran. Que me mezcle entre todo y entre todo lo que la ciencia deja. Todos esos cuerpos manipulados por veterinarios, y médicos. Cuerpos manipulados cuales son perros de la calle, gente de la calle. Pero cuando me muera ya, mi cuerpo no me pertenece. El resto. Yo soy atea.

KDJ: In Vaporización *(Vaporisation, 2001) there is a water cycle, the process of water evaporating, then becoming drops of water, which are then again turned into air. The natural cycle of the water demonstrates similarities with the life cycle of animals and plants in biology. How does the constant flow of water-into-air-into-water reflect your ideas of life? Does the volatibility of this circulation mean anything to you?*

TM: I do not have the truth. When I die, the man with the long beard up there, will be telling me, "What did you do, you moron?" I hope not, but eternal life would be horrendous. I believe that human beings live just enough. Our existence is fabricated in such a way that we die at the right moment. A life with an end. Because there is an end. Eternal life seems to me the worst torture. Life is very well done. The human being has been made very well. That is, when we are talking about natural life, and not when we are talking about murder. About natural life.

TM: A lo mejor me equivoco, pero espero que no haya. Pero yo no tengo la verdad. Porque si cuando yo muera este el de las barbas allá arriba diciéndome ¿Qué hiciste cabrona?". Espero que no pero la vide eterna seria espantosa. Creo el ser humano vive lo justo porque es tan listo y se fabrico todo su existencia que se tiene que morir al momento justo… Que fue tan inteligente que así como consiguo muebles así también consiguo una vida corta o larga, pero una vida con fin. Porque hay un fin. La vida eterna me parecía la peor tortura. Porque la vida es muy bien hecha. Se lo fabrico muy bien el ser humano. Cuando hablamos de la vida natural y no estamos hablando del asesinato. De la vida natural.

KDJ: For many people death is seen as something horrific or scary, but the corpses in your work seem to appear very poetic and beautiful. You just mentioned earlier that death is like a tragedy, which has also something beautiful. Is beauty important in your work?

TM: An adolescent murdered in the street can be beautiful. If you think that is beauty, then that is the beauty of it. Beauty could be a broken life, like when people tell me, "your work is beautiful." The beauty can be in a bloody bullet, or in a dagger in someone's back. If you see it in terms of beauty, then this can be beautiful.

TM: La belleza puede ser un adolescente asesinado en la calle. Esa es la belleza. Si piensas que eso es belleza, la belleza puede ser una vida trancada. Cuando me dicen "Que bella es tu obra." La belleza que pueda tener una puta ballazo o un cuchillazo por la espalda. Si lo ves bello, esto puede ser belleza.

KDJ: But is this beauty important in your work, maybe as an attraction for the viewer? Or does it affect the viewer's contemplation of the work? That it may make it easier to be confronted with the killings?

TM: I am part of the public, too. I did not know what was going to happen. The experience here in Venice, was to avoid protagonism. A piece of work cannot be made alone, and also not with money. It is made with dialogue. I make this, and that is the reason why I am here.

TM: So soy también publico. Yo no sé que iba a pasar. La experiencia de aquí fue evitar el protagonismo. Un trabajo no se hace solo y no se hace ni con dinero. Se hace con dialogo. Yo hago esto y esta es la razón por la cual estoy aquí.

KDJ: The two works Bandiera *(Flag, 2009)—a piece of fabric impregnated with blood collected from execution sites—and* ¿De que otra cosa podraimos hablar? Embajada *(What else could we talk about? Embassy, 2009)—an intervention on the American pavilion in the Giardini—seem to be political statements or have a political feel to them. Is the showing of death in your works for you a political act?*

TM: No, it is not political. I am more inclined towards the social. Overall, I am more interested in social issues than in political issues. For my flag, the thing that I used as a flag, is not more than a rag. This rag gives dignity to the corpses, with the blood that it absorbed. It gave dignity to the dead bodies that were in that place in Mexico. That dignity, the flag as part of the dead bodies—must be outside. We are capable of substituting the mast, where a flag should have stood. The piece came to be about the dignity of the place where a flag should have been placed. That it is a flag, does not mean it is only a flag: it is the divinity towards those corpses. But I am not talking about a nation; we are talking about the people who died, not about a nation.

TM: No, no es político. Yo voy mas hacia lo social. Sobre todo me interesa mas lo social que lo político. Para mi la bandera, la que puse como bandera no es mas que un trapo. Un trapo que le dio dignidad a los muertos, la sangre que absorbo. Le dio dignidad a los muertos los que están adentro. Esa dignidad—la bandera pieza de muertos—tiene que estar hacia fuera. Capaces de sustituir el mástil donde tendría que ir una bandera, pero no estamos hablando de una nación. La dignidad que donde tendría que estar una bandera, este trabajo se convirtió. No es una bandera solamente ocupo el espacio de una bandera porque es la divinidad hacia esos muertos, pero no estamos hablando de una nación. Estamos hablando de personas asesinadas no de una nación.

["What else could we talk about?"]

GIUSEPPE PENONE

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Giuseppe Penone studio, Turin, Italy, 12 June 2009

Giuseppe Penone (1947, Italy) creates objects and drawings addressing man's relation with nature. He was part of the* Arte Povera *movement.*

Karlyn De Jongh: Your work seems to have a poetic rather than a conceptual feel to it. Your work does, however, touch upon the concepts of 'time' and 'existence'. How do you see the relation between this poetic feel and the concepts your work addresses? Would you say your work is conceptual?

Giuseppe Penone: When you produce a work that touches your existence it becomes conceptual and poetical. A work of art that touches one's existence is itself poetic and conceptual, because life *is* something extraordinary and moving—or it would not be life. Poetry shares this revealing and surprising characteristic; a poetical conception of reality is part of existence. The word 'conceptual' can be used to mean the rationalization of the emotions, to rationalize our amazement towards existence itself. The work of art is complete when it conjugates, it puts these two things into relation. If an artwork were only conceptual, it would fall into dogmatic fact; if it is only poetical and therefore not rational, it would be life, pure emotion. Since art is language, by its very nature it must relate the concept with the idea of poetry.

Giuseppe Penone: Un lavoro che tocca la tua esistenza è per forza poetico e concettuale; perché la vita è qualcosa di estremamente straordinario e emozionante, altrimenti non sarebbe vita. La poesia ha questo carattere della sorpresa, della scoperta e quindi la concezione poetica della realtà, è esistenza. Concettuale si può usare nel senso di razionalizzare le emozioni, di rendere razionale la concezione della meraviglia dell'esistenza. Il lavoro dell'arte coniuga, mette in relazione le due cose altrimenti sarebbe incompleto. Se è solo concettuale è un fatto dogmatico, se è solo poetico e non razionalizzato è vita, è pura emozione. L'arte è linguaggio e quindi per essere tale deve per forza relazionare il concetto con l'idea della poesia.

KDJ: So, for you a good artwork is a combination of a poetic and conceptual character?

GP: Yes. The poetic and conceptual are two elements that must live together, otherwise the work remains incomplete. When looking at an artwork, the conceptual aspect may be less evident than the emotional one, however, this varies according the artist. If these two components are missing, the work itself will lack linguistic strength, and above all, I think that it will not last the test of time. The artwork may actually function as a work of art, but only for a limited period of time. On the other hand, if the artwork is able to move people, although this emotional response is difficult to rationalize, this is actually the aspect that keeps the work alive through time.

GP: Si, sono due elementi che devono vivere insieme altrimenti il lavoro è incompleto. Può essere che a volte guardando un'opera l'aspetto concettuale sia meno evidente di quello emozionale e poi comunque dipende da artista a artista. Però se non ci sono queste due componenti nel lavoro, il lavoro non ha una forza di linguaggio, e soprattutto credo non ha una durata nel tempo. Magari funziona, ma solo per un periodo storico limitato. Se invece è un lavoro che ha la possibilità di emozionare le persone, anche se questa emozione può essere non facilmente razionalizzata, essa dà al lavoro un respiro nel tempo. Vive e dura nel tempo.

KDJ: Why is it important to you that the work continues to live for a long period of time?

GP: It is important for a simple reason. Because any work of art—whether it is a painting, a sculpture, or an installation—occupies a distinct space in a very specific location. In order to understand a work of art, it is necessary to go into the artwork's space, to get physically closer to it, and this requires time. The work must therefore include the possibility of lasting through time in order to allow people to see and understand it. If the work does not last through time, it can live as a memory, yet the work's documentation is always incomplete, it can never replace the work itself. A photograph of a work is simply an image on a piece of paper. In contrast, raw materials such as wood, stone and paint have a certain 'quality' to them, intrinsic to the material itself. This quality can only be experienced directly and can't be mediated through filmic or photographic representation. Time is therefore an important element in art. We always make distinctions between contemporary art, modern art and so forth; we tend to create historical distinctions in art. Yet when we show a contemporary artwork close to older historical work, both works are contemporary experiences for a viewer. For a child, who lacks any concept of time, both artworks appear as contemporary and present. Perception itself is therefore tied to the present and vision includes a cancellation of historical time. This further implies that these distinctions are necessary for art history, in order to understand the occurrence of things but are unnecessary for the appreciation of the artworks. In Venice, for example, ancient and modern elements co-exist: in Piazza San Marco 12th and 13th century components live alongside 19th century constructions. We view these elements together in a single perceptual experience. The puzzle of time and the distinction between contemporary and historical works stand as a problem of categorization related to the history of art, but it does not mean it represents an actual and real problem.

GP: E' importante per una ragione molto semplice. Qualsiasi lavoro d'arte sia esso di pittura, scultura, installazione, occupa uno spazio determinato in un luogo molto preciso. Per capire l'opera bisogna andare nello spazio e avvicinarsi all'opera anche fisicamente, per questo c'è bisogno di tempo. L'opera deve avere la possibilità di durare nel tempo per permettere alle persone di vederla e capirla. Se non c'è la durata dell'opera, ci può essere un ricordo, una documentazione, ma la documentazione è sempre incompleta, non può mai supplire l'opera in sé. Un materiale fotografato è solo un'immagine su un pezzo di carta, mentre un materiale come il legno, la pietra, la pittura hanno una loro "qualità" di materia, che si può' percepire solo con il contatto diretto e non mediato dal supporto filmico o fotografico. Il tempo è quindi una componente molto importante nell'arte. Noi facciamo sempre una distinzione tra arte contemporanea, arte moderna e così via, tendiamo a creare delle distinzioni storiche nell'arte, ma quando si espone un'opera di oggi vicino ad una del passato le due opere sono contemporanee allo sguardo. Per un bimbo che guarda e non ha la conoscenza storica, le due opere sono contemporanee, quindi c'è una contemporaneità dello sguardo e un annullamento del tempo. Questo significa che queste distinzioni sono necessarie per la storia dell'arte, per capire come si sono svolte le cose, ma non sono necessarie per l'apprezzamento delle opere. Per esempio a Venezia convivono cose molto antiche e altre più recenti; a Piazza san Marco ci sono elementi che sono antichi, del 1100-1200 altri costruiti nell'1800, e quando si guarda, tutto è contemporaneo, tutto convive in un'unica percezione. Quindi il problema del tempo e della distinzione tra contemporaneo e antico è un problema di classificazione legato alla storia dell'arte, ma non è un problema reale.

KDJ: For your friend Lee Ufan time seems to be infinite. Do you believe that time goes on forever?

GP: No, time isn't infinite, because we have a point of view, which is very, very limited. What I think and what we really can't understand, this is what is sure. And all the history of what we have, especially in scientific terms, makes no sense. Because in science they believed that the world is flat and then later that the earth is round. It changes. And each new way of thinking means that the old way of thinking has no value. In art it is the case that an old work still maintains its value today. This is because it is not about a problem of understanding the reality in terms of physics or science, but in terms of life or what is a reaction to reality. For that reason, an old work can be interesting and astonishing now. It's like when you go to Venice, you have to go and see Bellini. He is much more interesting than the pavilions.

GP: No, il tempo non è infinito perchè il nostro punto di vista è molto limitato. La cosa di cui sono sicuro è che possiamo capire troppo poco. La storia della conoscenza umana, specialmente in termini scientifici, ha poco senso perchè ogni nuova scoperta diventa un valore che cancella il valore precedente. Per l'arte è diverso succede che una vecchia opera mantenga il suo valore oggi. Questo perchè è una comprensione della realtà legata ai sentimenti e alla condizione umana.

KDJ: The senses play an important role in your work. You have said that "touch is the direct relation of the body with reality. One can be more precise in one's understanding of what surrounds us." It is often claimed that the senses deceive us: a straight stick in water looks bent. To what extent do you think the senses show reality? Is touch for you the common way of experiencing the world?

GP: My work is based on simple elements and it is above all a sculptural practice. My work is not a work on representation: it is a work related to materials. This work evolved from a concept during the 1960s, at a time in which many social, artistic and poetical values were questioned, as well as conceptions of reality that stemmed out of 1800 and prior to that. The debate surrounding values, and the craving to understand the new world view after the war, lead to an absolute reduction of values and a desire to begin from the most elementary and basic forms. During those years, artists dealt with this in different ways. Minimal Art also did this, starting from the essential form of things and starting to build on these. I began by focusing on 'touch' and 'sight' in an elementary way, starting from the idea that when you actually touch something, you leave an image—not a cultural image but an animal kind of image. This is an image that anyone can leave; it is only the elaboration of this image, which brings meaning to the image itself and thereby becomes a work of art. On its own and in itself this initial image belongs to everyone, not to the artist. It is an animal image, automatic. Breath is analogous: when you breathe you release a different volume of air, which is itself a sculpture. The meaning of sculpture is exactly this: to introduce a form with space. Breathing therefore is creating sculpture automatically. I use breath as an example to further underline the elementary aspect of this gesture. My work stems from these considerations, simple things and actions, such as the act of touching, opening the eyes and by defining the body itself as a sculpture.

GP: Il mio lavoro è basato su degli elementi semplici ed è un lavoro soprattutto di scultura, il mio non è un lavoro di rappresentazione, è un lavoro di materiali. E' un lavoro nato come concetto negli anni '60, in un momento in cui venivano messi in discussione dei valori sociali, poetici e d artistici, comunque di concezione della realtà, che avevano le loro radici nel 1800 e in tempi precedenti. Questa ridiscussione dei valori e la necessità di capire meglio la realtà che si stava creando nel dopoguerra ha portato all'azzeramento dei valori e alla necessità di ripartire da forme molto semplici: gli artisti in quegli anni hanno fatto questo in modi diversi. Anche la Minimal Art ha fatto questo, ha reso le forme molto semplici e ha cominciato a costruire da queste semplificazioni. Io l'ho fatto partendo dal toccare e vedere in modo elementare; quando tu tocchi una cosa lasci un'immagine, che non è un'immagine culturale, ma animale. E' un'immagine che possono las-

ciare tutti, poi l'elaborazione di questa immagine fa si che l'immagine diventi significativa e possa diventare opera d'arte. Ma di per sé quella è un'immagine di tutti, non è dell'artista. E'un'immagine animale e automatica. La stessa cosa è il respiro; quando tu respiri, immetti nell'ambiente un volume d'aria diverso e questo volume è già una scultura. Il senso della scultura è quello: creare una forma all'interno di uno spazio. Quindi il respirare è creare scultura in modo automatico. Faccio questo esempio del respiro anche per chiarire meglio l'idea dell'elementarità dell'azione. A partire da queste riflessioni io ho costruito il mio lavoro, basandolo su cose semplici, come il toccare, chiudere gli occhi e avere la definizione del corpo come scultura.

KDJ: The art world is mostly a sight driven world. What does touch mean in this respect? Are people allowed to touch your work when it is exhibited? Or do you understand touch in a much broader perspective, and is looking also a touching with the eyes?

GP: There are artworks that can be touched and others that had better not be touched, but this is not the point. I do not make a work that is expected to be a tactile experience for others. The work starts from MY tactile experience, which others may repeat in an analogous but not obligatory way on my work. It is not a work made for public interaction, it is not intended to create an action-reaction dynamic with the public. I am skeptical towards works that need public involvement in order to exist. I believe that a work of art is the documentation of an action, an action that provokes many emotions, including the act of touching, but it is not made with that aim.

GP: Ci sono lavori che possono essere toccati e altri è meglio di no, ma questo non è il punto. Io non faccio un lavoro che deve essere un'esperienza tattile per gli altri. Il lavoro parte dalla MIA esperienza tattile, che poi altre persone possono ripetere in modo analogo, ma non obbligatoriamente sul mio lavoro. Non è un lavoro fatto per far interagire il pubblico, non è fatto per creare una azione-reazione del pubblico. Io sono scettico verso tutte le opere che hanno bisogno di coinvolgere l'azione del pubblico per la loro esistenza. Io credo che l'opera sia la documentazione di un'azione, che provoca tante emozioni, anche il desiderio del toccare, ma non è fatta con quello scopo.

KDJ: Do you think the viewer of your work is able to understand what your work is about by merely looking at it?

GP: Yes, I do think so.

GP: Io penso di si.

KDJ: But is touch the most important of the senses for you?

GP: Reality is based on many aspects. To touch is very important for sculpture, because by touching the work you can understand the medium, you can define space and the volume of the object, but it is above all a way to verify its form. I mean that if I were to ask you what distance there is between you and the wall, you could only give me an approximate measurement. Because in order to understand the actual distance you have to cover it physically. The same thing stands for materials: when you see a shiny object, it could be a solid or a fluid; in order to verify the material you must touch it. This demonstrates that sight is deceptive, it is a convention. First of all a child learns to touch, then to see. When you need to verify something, it is necessary to touch it, sight isn't enough. The sense of touch is very important. With touching there is a greater adhesion to the truth in comparison with seeing.

GP: La concezione della realtà è basata su tanti aspetti. Il toccare in generale nella scultura è molto importante perché serve per capire la materia, per definire lo spazio e il volume dell'oggetto, ma è soprattutto un modo per verificare la forma. Se io ti chiedo qual è la distanza tra te e il muro tu puoi dare una misura approssimativa, per capire la vera distanza tu la devi percorrere. La stessa cosa vale per i materiali: quando vedi una cosa luccicare potrebbe essere un solido o un fluido, per verificare il materiale lo devi toccare. Questo per dire che la vista è ingannevole, è una convenzione. Per prima cosa il bimbo impara a toccare, poi a vedere. Quando si ha bisogno di verificare qualcosa, occorre toccarla, non basta la vista. Il senso del tatto è molto importante. Con il toccare c'è un'aderenza maggiore alla realtà rispetto che con il vedere.

KDJ: One of your most famous works is Rovesciare I Pro-pri Occhi *(To Reverse One's Eyes, 1970) in which you are portrayed wearing mirror-like contact lenses. I was wondering, when reversing your eyes, are you better able to understand what surrounds you or to experience it? How do these two spaces of inside and outside relate to one another? Are thought and thing indistinguishable?*

GP: This work is about the way of encapsulating vision. When you see, you do it through the eyes but also through the brain. When an artist makes a work of art, the work of art itself is the result of life experiences and of all the things that the artist has seen in his life.

Therefore, to interrupt the flow of images that enter the mind by projecting them eternally with the use of a mirror, is analogous to retransmitting the work. In other words: rather than receiving images, elaborating them and then produce the work. This last process enables the artwork to be communicated immediately without mediation. Furthermore by reflecting these images, the body defines itself as a volume and therefore becomes sculpture. This is the underlining idea throughout my work. Regarding your question: obviously not… when I was wearing the lenses my perception was reduced, and I couldn't see properly since I was looking through a small hole. The idea was to make a clear distinction between my body and the space surrounding me.

GP: Questo lavoro è stato fatto come chiusura dello sguardo. Quando vedi, lo spazio della vista èquello del cervello. L'opera è il frutto di un'esperienza di vita e di ciò che in questa vita si è visto. Quindi interrompere questo flusso di immagini che entrano nella mente e riproiettarlo con uno specchio all'esterno è come ritrasmettere l'opera. Anziché ricevere le immagini, rielaborarle e poi fare l'opera, in questo modo tu ritrasmetti immediatamente l'opera. Inoltre riflettendo le immagini, il corpo si definisce come volume e quindi diventa scultura. Questa è l'idea di fondo del lavoro. Quando avevo le lenti sugli occhi la mia percezione era ridotta e non potevo vedere. L'idea era di creare una divisione netta tra il mio corpo e lo spazio che mi circondava.

KDJ: I was wondering if you see yourself and your works as identical? Are your works an extension of yourself, or do you understand them more as an analogy?

GP: The concept of identity is used to define an array of things that in turn are needed to define a person, starting from someone's personality to their nationality, to their cultural development. A work of art can express a number of things… I mean, in order for your Japanese friend to write in Japanese she needs to learn 20.000 ideograms. These ideograms shape the mind very differently from yours, which has been educated to use only 20-25 characters. These two different modes of apprehending shape our thought. She will have a different way of thinking compared to you and me. When she transmits something, when she produces an artwork, the motivations that impel her to produce, will differ from ours. The completed work may be similar, but the motivations can't be the same. The discussions surrounding the words of 'identity' and 'analogy' are complex since their definitions can easily be confused. The word 'analogy' is an abstract word. There can't be a work that is perfectly analogous to another work or to the artist's, the maker's experience. There is always a strong difference. However, these are very abstract concepts and are not very useful for practical ends. When I make a work I try and make sure it reflects my way of thinking, my identity. Since I know that the more my work expresses an identity which differs from the rest, the more the work will be interesting, because it reveals an aspect which is neither obvious or known. It is also true that there are a number of artists that make works with which many people can identify themselves. This increases the distribution of the work, precisely because people are able to recognize themselves in the work.

GP: L' identità è l' insieme di cose che servono a definire una persona, dal carattere alla nazionalità, alla formazione culturale. La tua amica giapponese per scrivere in giapponese deve imparare 20.000 ideogrammi, che formano la mente in modo molto diverso dalla tua, dove la scrittura è basata solo su 20-25 caratteri. Questi due apprendimenti formano il modo di pensare. Lei avrà un modo di pensare diverso dal tuo e dal mio. Quando farà un'opera le motivazioni che la spingeranno a farla saranno diverse dalle nostre, poi l'opera potrà risultare anche simile, ma le motivazioni non possono essere uguali. La discussione su queste parole identità, analogia, poi alla fine si possono anche confondere, si possono creare delle equivalenze. Analogia è una parola astratta. Non ci può essere un'opera perfettamente analoga al vissuto della persona che l'ha prodotta o analoga ad un'altra opera. C'è sempre qualcosa di estremamente diverso. Comunque sono concetti molto astratti e che ai fini pratici dell'opera servono poco. Io quando faccio un'opera cerco che questa rifletta il mio modo di pensare, la mia identità, perché credo che più l'opera esprime un'identità diversa dalle esistenti, più l'opera può risultare interessante, perché rivela un aspetto che non è ovvio e conosciuto. Ma è anche vero che ci sono artisti che fanno opere nelle quali tantissimi si possono identificare e in questo modo l'opera viene diffusa più facilmente, perché le persone si riconoscono nell'opera.

KDJ: Why is it important to you that many people understand your work?

GP: It is important and at the same time it is not. Clearly when one makes a work that is recognized by others the work has an immediate diffusion… However, its content is also quickly exhausted. In order to last the test of time an artwork must have a certain visual immediacy and simplicity also in order to belong to you, however, there must be other levels of interpretation—why it has been made, how and by whom. In order to pull a series of parallel interpretations, which get amplified according to the cultural context, different levels of sensitivity of the public understand. This point of view entails that the works on view must also to some degree be appropriated by those who view the work, but the work must also be surprising. If it doesn't surprise, it cannot communicate a message. An Italian poet once said: "the aim of the poet is to induce awe." The end of poetry is to create surprise. By creating surprise, things get remembered: to see someone for the first time is also a physical pleasure, one that stays with you. This is an element within the artwork's mechanism. Duchamp creates surprise

by utilizing a banal industrial element just by placing it in a different context. On appearance the form of this object remains the same. The surprise is in the relocation in an unconventional place.

GP: E' importante e nello stesso tempo no. E' chiaro che quando tu fai un'opera nella quale tutti si riconoscono, questa ha una diffusione immediata, però si esaurisce anche subito il contenuto di quest'opera. Un'opera per avere una sua durata nel tempo deve avere una facilità di immagine, deve essere semplice, così te ne puoi appropriare. Ma devono esserci anche altri livelli di lettura, in questo modo trascini una serie di letture parallele, che si amplificano a seconda della cultura, sensibilità e capacità delle persone che guardano l'opera. L'opera deve permettere alle persone che la guardano di appropiarsene, ma deve anche sorprenderle. La sorpresa si può creare in tanti modi, questo è un meccanismo dell'opera. La sorpresa aiuta a riflettere. Il Cavalier Marino un poeta italiano barocco diceva: "E' del poeta il fin la meraviglia", finalità del poeta è creare stupore. Quando si crea stupore le cose vengono ricordate, la scoperta di qualcosa che non hai mai visto è un piacere fisico, ti rimane. Questo è un elemento costitutivo dell'opera. Duchamp crea sorpresa usando un banale strumento industriale solo ponendolo in un contesto diverso. Apparentemente la forma è la stessa però c'è la sorpresa di dislocarlo in uno spazio non conforme.

KDJ: At the beginning of your career as an artist you worked with nature within nature. You are now working with nature outside of nature. However, it seems that the spaces where you exhibit your work are still important to you. For example, the exhibition of your work at the 2007 Biennale was as a creation of a space within another space. How important is the space or location in which you present your work?

GP: There are different possibilities and it's clear that to have the possibility to create a space is a source of great satisfaction, since it gives you the impression that one is expressing oneself in a complete way. However, the work should be able to express its contents even on its own. The contents of the work of art shown during Biennial 2007 can also be understood in another space, even though this may cause a different reaction to the work. If we consider that when we enter a space that has been created by an artist, we enter its totality and consequently we are fully invested in it, one is actually inside the work. From a psychological perspective one endures the work. When the work is an autonomous thing itself, one does not endure it, rather one appropriates the work. If you organize a show of drawings, people go to see them and are actively part of them. If we take another kind of scenario, however, like the exhibition at the Biennial 2007, the viewer is more passive, one tends to endure feelings. These two things are very different; I think one should be able to produce both results.

GP: E' chiaro che avere la possibilità di creare uno spazio offre grande soddisfazione, perché hai l'impressione di esprimerti in modo completo, però l'opera dovrebbe avere dei contenuti anche se separata dallo spazio. Si possono capire i contenuti di quel lavoro della Biennale 2007 anche in un altro spazio, anche se ci possono essere reazioni diverse. Una considerazione che si può fare è che quando tu entri in uno spazio elaborato dall'artista in modo totale, coinvolgente, tu sei all'interno dell'opera. Psicologicamente tu subisci l'opera. Quando l'opera è separata dallo spazio, tu non la subisci, ti appropri dell'opera. Se si fa una mostra di disegni, la gente va a vederli ed è parte attiva, nell'altro caso (quello della Biennale) sei più passivo, subisci delle sensazioni. Sono due cose molto diverse, secondo me bisogna poter fare le due cose.

KDJ: For the work you presented at the Biennale di Venezia 2007, you covered the bark of trees with leather. The cow skin took the shape of the bark. You have described skin as "a boundary, a border or dividing point". Between what is skin a boundary? How do you view this in-between space? How does the leather represent our own skin when it touches the surface of an object?

GP: This is a problem that concerns sculpture in a primary way, since when you touch a surface your hand takes the form of the surface you touch. If the surface is in relief, your skin reflects that relief; furthermore there is always a space between your body and the surface touched. The leather covered log is an attempt to show this. By following the surface of the log with your hand one discovers the form and by covering this same surface with leather, which is similar to human skin, there is an attempt to relate matter with the act of touching. The log becomes animal itself, the intension was to emphasize a fundamental aspect of sculpture, in other words: to distinguish between perception of the form through touch.

GP: Questo è un problema basilare della scultura Quando tocchi la superficie succede che la tua mano prende la forma della superficie che tocchi. Se la superficie ha un rilievo, la tua pelle si adatta al rilievo, ma esiste sempre uno spazio tra il tuo corpo e la superficie toccata. Il tronco ricoperto di cuoio era un po' questo. Percorrendo la superficie del tronco con la mano se ne scopre la forma; coprendolo col cuoio significa far aderire questa materia, analoga alla pelle umana, alla superficie toccata. Il tronco diventa animale lui stesso, l'intenzione era quella di sottolineare un aspetto fondamentale della scultura, ovvero la percezione della forma attraverso il tatto.

KDJ: In an interview with Ida Gianelli you described a tree as the substance of your work and compared its character with that of clay, which is a material that lends itself to being shaped and molded. In the same interview you say that you "feel an endless sense of wonder" when observing a tree. What do you mean with that 'wonder', does it have something to do with the philosophical wonder?

GP: I have spoken about the tree and its similarities with clay, because in my first works I modified the growth of the tree with a very simple gesture, by merely touching the surface of the bark. Sculpture has often enough used clay, since it can be molded, on which an action can register in the imprint. A tree also does this: it records the traces of the elements surrounding it, it grows fluidly, it too can be molded through time. It is in these works that I introduced the notion of time. In this case it was the matter's time, which became sculpture. It was not me making the sculpture; it was the sculpture creating itself. This is the meaning or relation between earth and tree.

The tree triggers a number of reflections on its own nature, and when we think of a tree as sculpture—or better still: as a sculpture in its own right—its being actually records its actions through its own matter, it records its own life. It is as if our own bodies contained all our life experiences. The tree has this characteristic, if there is an element or object obstructing the tree's access to light, it

will consequently modify its positioning and if the obtrusive element is then removed, the tree will change its direction of growth. Form or shape has its own memory, something that can synthesize the very idea of sculpture. This is how I have used form in my work, not in a symbolic sense, but by focusing on what it is as matter and the ability to imagine about its existence, something that has been very important for the development of my artistic research. It is therefore linked to my ability to think. I don't know if this is of any philosophical value, but it does have value for the making of my work. The tree's necessity to change its shape is important to me, as the necessity to change forms in sculpture: why do we have to produce new forms if they aren't necessary? My work is not dealing with the creation of new forms, but aims to utilize and show already existing forms. Not to create new forms, but to use existing ones in a new way. My work attempts to understand and reflect on reality, rather than an imposition on and modification of reality.

GP: Io ho parlato dell'albero come creta perché nei miei primi lavori ho modificato la crescita dell'albero con un gesto molto semplice toccando la superficie del tronco. In scultura si è spesso usata la creta perché plasmabile, il contatto registra l'impronta. L'albero fa la stessa cosa: registra la presenza degli elementi che gli sono attorno perché nella sua crescita è un fluido, quindi è un materiale plasmabile. Io in questi lavori introducevo il tempo. In questo caso era il tempo della materia che diventava scultura, non ero io che facevo la scultura, la scultura si creava da sola. Questo il senso e la relazione tra la terra e l'albero.

Guardando l'albero si possono fare molte riflessioni sulla sua natura. Considero l'albero come una scultura, uno scultore di sè stesso, è un essere che registra nella sua materia le sue azioni, il suo vissuto. E' come se noi nel nostro corpo avessimo tutte le esperienze fatte nella vita. L'albero ha questa caratteristica. Se un elemento gli impedisce di avere la luce, lui modifica la sua crescita , se poi la barriera viene rimossa, lui cambia ancora . C'è una memoria nella sua forma e diventa un elemento che può sintetizzare l'idea di scultura. Io l'ho utilizzato in questo modo, non l'ho usato in senso simbolico, ma per cosa è come materia e l' immaginare sulla sua esistenza è stato molto importante per lo sviluppo del mio lavoro. In questo senso è un qualcosa legato alla mia capacità di pensare. Non so se questo ha un valore filosofico, ma ha valore per la creazione del mio lavoro. Per me la necessità dell'albero di cambiare forma è come produrre forma in scultura; ogni nuova forma deve avere una neccessità profonda. Il mio lavoro non è tanto quello di creare e inventare forme, ma quello di indicare delle forme già esistenti. Non creare qualcosa che non c'è, ma indicarlo con le forme che si vedono ogni giorno. Un lavoro di comprensione della realtà, più che di imposizione e mutamento.

KDJ: You choose your materials very carefully. You seem to see the importance of a specific type of material and you choose it for its character. Is that correct?

GP: Yes, if the work at hand is concerned with the invention of forms any material can be used. However, each material has a different quality. Understanding the material's quality is primary, and only then it is possible to know if one can work on its form. The first thing to do is have knowledge of the medium. A material such as wax, not unlike water, is extraordinary. A gesture in water cancels itself out. A while back, news emerged that water has a memory, this has now been proved false. Water, like wax, is an element that does not leave traces.

Wax is an elastic medium, used for bronze molding. It is both solid and fluid, opaque and transparent. Generally a very interesting material. In sculpture it is used for the 'lost wax' process: the wax becomes the volume of the bronze, it then melts and is replaced by the bronze. This quality makes it a particularly valuable substance for sculpture, other than the fact that it is a medium that has been in existence since the beginning of time. Speaking about media, there are many technological materials, but a material like clay, terracotta, is a material that existed also a million years ago, that exists today and will exist in the future. While a technological material is already in the past, it is always old. Wax, earth, clay, stone, and wood are materials that have a past, present and a future. A computer is a material from the past, always surpassed, a product that has gone through a series of processes, highly structured and always requires a new elaboration. It is a material destined to disappear. Since an artwork must last through time, the best thing to do, is to use materials that last and have qualities as persistence and duration.

GP: Si, se il lavoro è solo l' invenzione di forme puoi usare qualsiasi materiale, ma ogni materiale ha un carattere diverso. Prima bisogna capire il carattere del materiale e forse dopo potrai fare la forma. La prima cosa da fare è capire la materia. La cera, per esempio, è un materiale straordinario, un po' come l'acqua. Nell'acqua fai un gesto e questo si cancella. In un blocco di cera si possono sovrapporre tante impronte, e queste forme sono contenute nella materia . E' una materia molto plastica , usata per la fusione in bronzo. E' una materia tra il solido e il fluido, tra l'opaco e il trasparente. Un materiale molto interessante. In scultura l'uso principale è per la fusione a cera persa: la cera è il volume che sarà bronzo, essa viene bruciata e nel vuoto così creato entra il bronzo. Questo la rende particolarmente importante per la scultura, oltre al fatto che è una materia che esiste da sempre. Materiali come la creta, la terracotta esistevano anche milioni di anni fa, esistono oggi ed esisteranno in futuro, mentre un materiale tecnologico è già nel passato, è sempre vecchio. La cera, la terra, la creta, la pietra, il legno erano, sono e saranno. Un computer è un materiale del passato, sempre sorpassato, perché è un prodotto già elaborato e c'è già una sua nuova elaborazione, è un materiale destinato a scomparire. Dato che l'opera d'arte deve durare nel tempo, più si usano materiali che hanno persistenza e durevolezza, meglio è.

KDJ: Many of your works seem very time consuming to make, such as your fingerprint drawings or the carving of the tree. What does the creation process and the time it consumes mean to you? How do touch and time relate to each other?

GP: Some works of art can be produced quickly while others cannot. There are works that are time consuming and others that are not. It is not an *a priori* choice; I am happy when I can do a work with a single gesture, but if the work needs time, that is also fine: I'm happy regardless. Today I think it's a contradiction in terms doing a work that demands a long time to be produced, given the speed with which things are produced in the contemporary world. The choice to take time for a work, to produce it slowly, is a conscious choice, which shows a certain attitude towards things and life generally. When I was making the imprint works, it was during a time when the art world was focusing on faster, new technologies, such as video as an art format and film.

The idea of taking a simple piece of paper and make a simple gesture on it, such as to produce an imprint and to make a line drawing of it, was a sort of gesture of reflection. It was a meditative action, and a way of distinguishing myself from other ways of thinking that I feel are more akin to technology and the production system. I wanted to find a slower pace again in order to concentrate, and find it in a material, and in a—even banal—trace in matter itself. The filmic image with its lighting and movement is fascinating. However, if you think of it, a graphite pencil line or trace is even more extraordinary. It's difficult to understand but there is something fascinating in this black sign on paper, which in reality is simply 'dirt', and which can become the most precious thing if it is 'organized' in a certain way. A drawing can be worth more than a work made in gold, it is extraordinary how a simple black trace of graphite can have a greater value for man than precious material. It is a value linked to intelligence, not to the material value. This is what fascinates me about drawing.

GP: Alcuni lavori sono molto rapidi da fare, altri no. Ci sono delle opere che richiedono tempo altre che non lo richiedono. Non è una scelta a priori; sono contento quando posso fare un'opera con un gesto, però se l'opera ha bisogno di tempo va bene lo stesso. Credo però che fare oggi un'opera che richiede molto tempo per essere fatta è un po' un controsenso rispetto al tempo rapido nel quale viviamo, dove tutto è molto veloce. Fare opere lente può diventare una presa di coscienza e di vero rapporto con le cose, con la vita. Quando ho fatto i disegni delle impronte era un momento in cui c'era grande attenzione verso il video, le immagini tecnologiche e rapide. L'idea di prendere un pezzo di carta e fare una cosa così semplice come l'impronta e poi di disegnarne le linee, per me aveva un senso di riflessione, di meditazione. Era in contrasto con un modo di pensare basato sulla produzione e velocità. Volevo ritrovare lentezza e concentrazione, costruite su un segno di materia, apparentemente banale. L'immagine di un film, con la luce, il movimento è affascinante, ma un segno di grafite è straordinario. E' più difficile da capire però c'è qualcosa di affascinante in questo segno nero sulla carta, che in realtà è "sporco", ma se "organizzato" in un certo modo diventa la cosa più preziosa. Un disegno può valere molto di più di un pezzo d'oro, è incredibile come un segno nero, una semplice traccia di grafite ha un valore per l'uomo a volte superiore a quello di molti materiali rari. E' un valore di intelligenza non di materia. Questa è la mia fascinazione per il disegno.

KDJ: At the beginning of your career you made several performances with trees that revolved around an interaction between you and the tree. The effect of your performances on the tree is only visible after time; the tree needs a certain time to make its reaction to your work visible. Continuer a crescere tranne che in quel punto *(It will continue to grow except at that point, 1968) focuses on the idea of your effect on the life of the tree. The tree will eventually grow around the addition you made. How do you understand the effect you have on the tree? How do you see this slowness in the tree's reaction? To what extent does nature care a straw for us?*

GP: No, the work *was* the action of the tree. It was not a performance, it was an action in order to provoke the possibility of sculpture, but the sculpture constructed itself independently and it is constructing itself with the passing of time. It is the life of the tree that constructs the work, therefore the problem was overturned. In sculpture normally there is a fast action and the object becomes the sculpture. In this case the action of the man has greater weight than the material. In the other case it was the material that creates the sculpture. The man was the medium that provoked the sculpture, the man represents the gesture, the one who fixed the gesture, the contrary with respect to traditional sculpture. Usually you do a gesture and the material fixes it. In my work, I fix my action in a form (in this case the print of the hand), but it is the tree with its life that gives form to the sculpture. I have turned this concept upside down.

GP: No no, il lavoro era l'azione dell'albero. Non era una performance era un'azione per provocare la scultura, ma la scultura si costruiva autonomamente e nel tempo. E' la vita dell'albero stesso che costruisce l'opera, quindi il problema, era ribaltato. Nella scultura normalmente c'è un'azione rapida e l'oggetto diventa la scultura, ha maggior peso l'azione dell'uomo rispetto alla materia. Nell'altro caso è la materia stessa che provoca la scultura, il contrario della scultura tradizionale. Generalmente tu fai un gesto e il materiale fissa il gesto, io invece ho fissato la mia azione, nel tempo è l'albero con la sua vita a dare forma alla scultura.

KDJ: Did you ever return to places where you did a performance and look at what time has done to it?

GP: The works I spoke about are made in 68, the trees have now been cut, but there are other works that go on for twenty years: they make themselves; the process continues. On occasion my gestures disappear into a material, such as wood for example, or sinking in water or in clay.

GP: I lavori di cui ho parlato sono lavori fatti sugli alberi nel '68 e che sono stati poi tagliati , ma ci sono altre opere che "si stanno facendo", che vanno avanti da vent'anni, poco per volta. I miei gesti spariscono nella materia del legno, sprofondano come nell'acqua o nella creta.

KDJ: You have made several works in which you peel off the years of a tree, going back to its 'original' state, such as 10-Meter Tree *(1989). With these works you seem to show the tree has a life. What do you do to their existence when turning these trees into artworks? When nature has a life of its own and records what happens, how do you feel about using natural materials in your work?*

GP: Maybe I have already answered this question when I mentioned materials, about the difference between materials that live in the present and materials that live in the past. An artificial material, above all, has the possibility to express itself with technology, becomes a possibility limited in time, that ages quickly. The possibility to use materials that have always been used by man as a means of expression, probably allows the work to have a longer life. The use of natural materials (stone, wood) is a duration guarantee. Another reason why I use these materials is that they have a memory of nature that technological ones don't have.

GP: Forse ho già risposto a questa domanda quando ho parlato dei materiali preesistenti, che hanno una presenza. La differenza tra materiali presenti e del passato. Un materiale inventato, tecnologico e la possibilità di esprimersi con la tecnologia, diventa una possibilità limitata nel tempo che invecchia rapidamente. Usare dei materiali che sono sempre stati usati dall'uomo come mezzo di espressione probabilmente permette all'opera di avere una vita più lunga. L'uso dei materiali naturali (pietra, legno) è una garanzia di durata. Un'altra ragione per cui uso questi materiali è che essi hanno un ricordo della natura molto maggiore rispetto a quelli tecnologici.

KDJ: The tree manifests happenings in nature. By looking at the rings of the tree, you seem to be able to go back in time. How do you understand your artworks in this respect? Do you see them as traces? What traces do you yourself leave behind?

GP: To discover, inside of the mass of the wood, the form of the tree is an action of sculpture. But when I made this work I had already made the work of the growth of the trees, and when these were modified according to my action. I had thought that inside of the tree I could have found again my gesture. I have transferred this idea on a wooden block and I have thought that I could find the form of the tree inside of the wood, but when I made this work in 1968-69 I used industrial beams. Therefore the idea was to discover, inside of a material and form, its lost characteristics. Wood=material; wood=forest. I wanted to find inside of the material 'wood', its forest. For me it was a gesture of imagination on this material and a way in order to think of an aspect of the material that is sometimes taken for granted. When I made this work I discovered things about the life of the tree: every tree has its history, has its individuality. Many small things can be understood through observation: damage provoked from lightning, the action of an animal, of man, of snow. Many small things that are part of the existence of this being. We can say that it can be a metaphor for the existence of man, but it is only a mental transposition. My work doesn't have an aim; I don't want to add other meanings. I use the tree like a material, not like a symbolic element.

GP: Ma ritrovare, riscoprire all'interno della massa del legno la forma dell'albero è un'azione di scultura. Questa opera l'ho fatta dopo il lavoro sulla crescita degli alberi, questi si modificavano a seconda della mia azione e ho pensato che all'interno degli alberi avrei potuto ritrovare i miei gesti e ho trasferito questa idea su un blocco di legno. Ho pensato che avrei potuto ritrovare la forma dell'albero all'interno del legno, ho fatto questo lavoro nel 69 su dei travi industriali. L'idea per me era di riscoprire, all'interno di un materiale la forma che lo aveva generato. Legno=materia = bosco=foresta. Io volevo ritrovare all'interno del materiale legno, la sua foresta. Per me era un gesto di immaginazione un modo per pensare ad un aspetto nascosto del materiale. Con questo lavoro si scoprono cose sulla vita dell'albero, ogni albero ha una sua storia, una sua individualità. Si possono capire tanti piccoli eventi, un danno provocato da un fulmine, l'azione di un animale, dell'uomo, la neve. Tante piccole cose che hanno fatto parte dell'esistenza di questo essere. In questo senso ci può essere una metafora con l'esistenza dell'uomo, ma è una trasposizione mentale. La realtà del lavoro è fine a sé e a me è sufficiente questo valore, non voglio aggiungere altro. Uso l'albero come una materia, non come elemento simbolico.

KDJ: In an interview with Catherine de Zegher you discuss your fingerprint drawings. You say that the sheets of paper are an extension of your skin in space. How do you understand this extension? How do you see this in relation to your body of work? Are all your works extensions of your skin? Is the skin an intermediate, as it is the only place where inside and outside can touch? What about the permeable character of the skin?

GP: The exhibition in New York you are mentioning… if you think of all the things that you touch throughout your existence, you could cover an enormous surface. To indicate this extension of one's own existence seems to me to be something connected to making art. Then there is yet another thing linked to touch: When you touch something, you leave traces that are continuously cancelled, removed, since these marks are considered dirty. We spend most of our existence cancelling our traces, yet we actually affirm our existence through and by these traces. This situation is contradictory, in my opinion. To reflect upon this is meaningful, also since art is the affirmation of its own existence through images. If you observe the lines that make up the pattern of one's skin, you notice that the surface is similar to that of the tree, of the waves of water, of the veins within stone. The drawing made connecting the lines of the print until forming a circle continuing in the space, is an expansion model that corresponds to when you touch a water surface with a finger and have the propagation of the waves, or the growth of the tree, or the propagation of the sound. The intention was to represent a print with this idea of propagation, linking it to the concept of extension of all the things touched during our existence.

GP: Questa mostra che citi, è stata fatta a New York. Se tu pensi a tutte le cose che tocchi nella tua esistenza copri una superficie enorme, indicare questa estensione della propria esistenza mi sembra qualcosa di collegato al fare arte. Quando si tocca si lasciano delle impronte che vengono continuamente cancellate, rimosse perché considerate sporco. Noi passiamo gran parte dell'esistenza a cancellare le nostre impronte quando in realtà l'affermazione della nostra esistenza sono le impronte. Questa è una contraddizione e mi sembra significativo pensarci perchè l'arte è affermazione della propria esistenza attraverso le immagini. Se poi osservi le linee della pelle delle dita, queste assomigliano agli anelli dell'albero, alle onde dell'acqua, alle venature della pietra. Il disegno fatto unendo insieme le linee dell'impronta fino a formare un cerchio continuato nello spazio, è un modello di espansione. Se con un dito tocchi una superficie d'acqua hai la propagazione delle onde che sono simili alla crescita dell'albero, alla propagazione del suono. L'intenzione era di rappresentare un'impronta con all'interno questa idea di propagazione, legandola al concetto di estensione di tutte le cose toccate durante l'esistenza.

KDJ: At the Konrad Fischer galerie you showed your work Essere fiume *(To be a river, 1981) in which you took a stone and returned it to the mountain it came from. You made a replica of that stone. How do you compare your artistic practice with that of nature or with the influence of time on nature? Are you a catalyst? How does this relate to your ideas about indicating what is already existent? How do you see your own existence?*

GP: This work *Essere Fiume* derives from knowledge of sculptural work on stone. When you carve a stone you produce a certain action, when you hit the stone upon the surface of the water, or against another stone, this action smoothes the stone. All these actions are similar to those which occur in the river, my intention was therefore to repeat the action of the river, or to underscore the action of the river, which is analogous to that of the sculptor when he works with the stone, I made this work reproducing the stone of a river with the technique of stone sculpting. Making stone sculptures is therefore like being the river, it is a bit like following the rules of nature. I identify with a natural force like that of the river, an identification with a natural element, like the river or the trees. In this work I made two identical stones. If I exhibit a stone made by me, this does not have any cultural value, but if I made a head, a face, it would be considered sculpture. But if you make a stone this remains a stone, especially if it is made realistically. By placing the two stones side by side, the language of the sculpture is created. There is a double thing. A single stone made by me does not have any meaning. From a philosophical and ideal perspective a perfect work would be to put the stone made by the artist in the river: not in the gallery, but in nature. This situation becomes universal and my action becomes like that of the river. Art is a language and therefore imperfect. The perfect work of art re-enters into logic and therefore it is not language.

What I mean is that art is like a language. If you produce a stone, which is very well done, this is the perfect object. Since it is in relation with the other things of the universe. But it is a stone. You cannot understand that it is done by a man. But art is to try to affirm your identity with other people. So, it is a kind of communication; it's a language. So it is not perfect, it is never perfect.

GP: Questo lavoro Essere Fiume *nasce dalla conoscenza del lavoro di scultura sulla pietra. Quando tu scolpisci una pietra produci dei colpi, la pietra si leviga attraverso l'acqua o l'azione di un'altra pietra. Tutte queste azioni sono molto simili a quelle che accadono nel fiume. La mia intenzione era quella di mettere in evidenza che l'azione del fiume è analoga a quella dello scultore quando lavora con la pietra. Riproducendo la pietra di un fiume io ripeto l'azione del fiume. Facendo la scultura in pietra si*

diventa un po' come il fiume, si segue una logica che è quella della natura e c'è un'identità con una forza naturale come quella del fiume. Questo lavoro è composto da due pietre. Se io espongo la pietra fatta da me, questa non assume valore di cultura. Una testa, un volto di pietra è da tutti considerato scultura. Ma se fai una pietra di pietra questa rimane una pietra, soprattutto se ben realizzata. Rifare la pietra del fiume da un punto di vista filosofico è sufficiente e non occorre esporla. E' un'azione assoluta. Ma l'arte è un linguaggio, quindi imperfetto. L'opera d'arte perfetta rientra nella logica e quindi non è linguaggio.

KDJ: Do you then communicate through nature or through natural objects? Do you use nature to communicate?

GP: It is more that if you communicate with human products, it is easier. Because you already have a definition for this. You know that it is a man-made product, so it changes the sense of this form perhaps. If you do something that is related to nature, it is confusing to distinguish between what is the man-made product and what is the product of nature. So your action becomes something that is related to the system of life and the universe. We always think that man is not nature, that he is something outside of nature. But: man is nature. And all his actions become nature. But the value of art has to do with something that you can recognize that is done by man. And in this respect, I think there is an interesting question. If I do a tree, I do the whole tree, you cannot see it was a seed before. It is a tree. It is not a sculpture. For it to be a sculpture, I need the base. I didn't carve the whole tree… So it became a sculpture. If I do the perfect work, I just have to do the form of the tree. This is the perfect work. But I don't work perfectly. Because if I do make a perfect work, it is not a sculpture and then people can't understand it. So it is very limited.

Our capacity to understand reality is really very, very limited. You can recognize a body or face, something that is similar to your body, you can recognize doubles, twins. Things that are twins you can recog-

nize very well. You can recognize geometric forms, and you are astonished by geometry, for example. The astonishment that we have when we see a crystal in nature is as if nature cannot do this form. It is extraordinary to see the perfection in geometric form. It is as if in geometric form there is something that is human. So, the possibility to do something that is understood by other people is really limited. I speak about sculpture, when you do painting the problem is different. Take the convention of painting. The painting is a square and that is already a product of man. For that reason Malevich can do a white painting. And it is for that reason alone.

GP: E' più facile comunicare con delle idee o dei prodotti già elaborati dall'uomo perchè di loro abbiamo una definizione. Usare dei prodotti umani permette di situare l'opera in un contesto già definito e si può in tal caso cambiarne facilmente il senso e la forma. Se invece fai qualcosa partendo dalla natura, per esempio una pietra di pietra, si può creare una confusione sul fatto che sia un prodotto umano o naturale. La tua azione diventa qualcosa che entra visibilmente nel sistema vitale dell'universo ma non facilmente ascrivibile all'uomo. Spesso pensiamo all'uomo come a qualcosa di diverso o al di sopra della natura. Ma l'uomo è natura e tutte le sue azioni diventano natura. L'arte è linguaggio e deve essere riconoscibile come prodotto dell'uomo. A questo proposito credo che ci sia una questione interessante. Se io da un trave estraggo interamente l' albero che lo ha formato , non si capisce che prima era un trave perchè ne ho cancellato la forma. E' un albero, non è una scultura. Per essere una scultura ha bisogno della base, per questo io non scavo l'intero trave, solo così diventa scultura. Per fare il lavoro in modo perfetto dovrei fare solo la forma dell'albero. Questo è il lavoro perfetto. Ma l'opera per essere scultura deve essere imperfetta. Solo così si può capire l'opera.

La nostra capacità di capire la realtà è veramente molto limitata. Possiamo riconoscere le forme che ricordano l'uomo , possiamo capire se due cose sono gemelle, riconosciamo facilmente le forme geometriche e ne siamo stupiti. Lo stupore che abbiamo quando vediamo un cristallo in natura è dato dal fatto che non la crediamo capace di forme così perfette. Come se una forma geometrica fosse solo un prodotto dell'uomo. La possibilità di fare qualcosa che sia comprensibile per gli altri è molto limitata. Parlo della scultura, per la pittura il problema è diverso. La pittura è convenzionale e inscritta su una superficie generalmente geometrica ed è visibilmente un prodotto dell'uomo. Per questa ragione Malewich ha potuto fare il suo quadro bianco su bianco.

KDJ: You have been working for about forty years as an artist. Do you feel there is something you learned about nature or do you have the feeling you don't understand it?

GP: To learn… I think it is necessary to learn. What you learn is that man is like, or is less important than, a stone. This is perhaps what you learn, because a stone is still there. You have a stone after a thousand years: it is there. But your life is very limited. And afterwards… perhaps you become a stone… So, the stone is more important than the man, in a way. Because the value of man is unlike the value of nature, to affirm this existence. But it is completely crazy. When you think about it, your life is one moment, a very little moment. And also art, if you do art to affirm your identity, if you think in terms of philosophical ideas, it is stupid, completely stupid to make art… But it is fantastic to have a good life. And to take pleasure from what you can do in your life. This moment of your life is the real, good thing that you can learn. You can take pleasure in making art, it is true. It is something that is related to the sexual activity, you know. You do a drawing because you're having pleasure: you think, you imagine… this is like love.

GP: Imparare… Credo che sia neccessario imparare. Cosa si impara è che l'uomo è come una pietra o meno importante di essa. E' questo che si può imparare, perchè la pietra è ancora quà, anche dopo mille anni. Ma la nostra vita è molto limitata e con il tempo, forse, diventiamo pietra o parte di essa. Così la pietra, in un certo senso è più importante dell'uomo. L'uomo rovescia i valori della natura per affermare la sua esistenza. Ma questo è completamente insensato: la vita è un attimo, un piccolo attimo. E anche voler affermare la propria identità attraverso l'arte, se si pensa in questi termini, è stupido. Completamente stupido fare arte… ma è fantastico avere un'esistenza intensa e prendere piacere da ciò che puoi fare nella vita. Si può avere piacere facendo arte, è vero. E' qualcosa che è simile all'attività sessuale. Anche facendo un disegno si può trarre piacere: si pensa, si immagina, si contempla…

KDJ: When you started your career you were part of the Arte Povera *movement. How do you feel about, in a way, writing art history with that movement? Are you happy that something stays?*

GP: I think it was a way to think differently. It was just this, because the reality was changed in relation to all what was in the years before the war. So it was a very different reality. And what I understood as an artist was that the reality was changing and that was to affirm the changing reality. Change was the beginning of the idea of the global identity of the world. Each part of the world was like a village; it was very easy to travel quickly from one part to the next. Also it was this idea that you can have a relationship with people who were not close. Also, if you think about the artists of the 60s, there were a lot of artists making very simple forms. This was not so innocent. It was also the idea of doing a work that could easily be understood, by very different people. So it was not a product of a specific culture, but a product that was more open or in a kind of culture. And the use of the natural element, I believe, was also part of this thinking. Now it is different. It is like one culture that wants to impose upon another culture. It is another kind of colonialisation. But at the time there was no such idea. The idea was to respect each culture. It was to do a work that can be understood and be related to. I believe this was probably a utopian view of reality. Basically, this was the idea.

GP: In quegli anni si affermava un nuovo modo di pensare molto diverso perchè la realtà era cambiata rispetto agli anni prima della guerra. Cosa ho capito come artista era che bisognava affermare questa realtà mutata. Il cambiamento era dovuto ad un'idea di identità globale del mondo, un mondo come un villaggio. In quegli anni iniziava ad essere molto facile viaggiare rapidamente da una parte all'altra del mondo ed avere relazioni con popolazioni lontane. Se si pensa a quegli anni si nota come le opere avevano forme molto semplici. C'era l'idea di fare un lavoro che fosse facilmente comprensibile da persone molto diverse fra loro. Non un'opera che fosse il prodotto di una cultura specifica ma che avesse dei contenuti condivisi. L'uso degli elementi naturali era parte di questo pensiero. Ora è diverso, è come se si volesse imporre una sola cultura alle altre. Ma in quegli anni non c'era questa idea, probabilmente era una visione utopica della realtà, ma l'arte si nutre di utopie.

HEINZ MACK

Interview with Peter Lodermeyer

July 2009

*Heinz Mack (*1931 in Lollar, Germany), founded the artist group ZERO together with Otto Piene in 1957. Light and Space stand at the center of his work that encompasses a huge range of artistic media. Mack is particularly well-known for his various light works, amongst others his light installations in the desert. He lives and works in Mönchengladbach, Germany, and in Ibiza, Spain.*

Peter Lodermeyer: You once said: "Anyone wanting to deny me the right to perceive and preserve beauty puts my entire existence as an artist into question." In your opinion what is the reason for the extensive discrediting of beauty in contemporary art?

Heinz Mack: To me, it seems easier to say 'who' the reason is than answer 'what'. It was and still is most likely the artists themselves who take any judgment of their art as being beautiful as negative criticism; after all they have not left anything out in sabotaging beauty's primacy, Picasso at the forefront, although paradoxically his 'classical' period still produced triumphs of the old ideal. Or think of his synthetic cubism, where he achieved a pre-stabilizing harmony in a stringent picture architecture, enriched by the conscious use of a painterly culture of color that remains unparalleled. Ultimately he called everything he had achieved into question, and thus, traditional beauty itself, precisely by daring the most extreme deformations in his search for a new, entirely different aesthetic mastery of his bold experiments. Take the portrait of his favorite daughter Paloma, for example; it shows a child distorted by horrible contortions and dissonant warps heretofore unknown, as if the child had been the victim of a bad accident. But, hold on: with respect to the spectrum of colors he used, it is full of careful, painterly tenderness. What a contradiction of feelings! No doubt, it is a very 'beautiful' painting!

For more than a year now, it has been obvious that the self-proclaimed art critics have not been able to get around using 'disturbing' as their favorite word. Art works that do not display disturbing qualities have little chance of high regard because perhaps they are 'only' beautiful, or even have a decorative attractiveness about them, and thereby enter the danger zone of either not receiving attention at all, or else being subjected to the scathing criticism of always the same art critics. Granted, they make a few exceptions, showing mild tolerance vis-a-vis the late cut-outs of Matisse, for example, or admitting that Malevich's suprematism is at once decorative and beautiful, not to mention Rothko's icons of color that do not yet contain the shadows of his depressions. Or are we to believe that the artist himself even felt his luminous fields of color as being too beautiful? But 'what' is the cause for the discrediting of beauty? One aspect occurs to me: the phenomenon of decadence at the end of great cultural epochs, when values lose their relevance. The hedonism of our western world, described by Seneca 2000 years ago in surprisingly modern terms, already cloaks itself in an entirely idiosyncratic cult of beauty. The 'lifestyle' accompanying this, subjecting itself to a designer dictum down to its most minute details, is an aggressive, manipulated, and commercialized offer for anyone who even declares so-called beauties of nature to be in need of improvement. Against such a processed and artificial designer world, art stands fairly helpless, its ideas partially being reflected in it. Paradoxically, this applies especially at the point where art degrades itself by entering the former's level of triviality (see Duchamp and the consequences of his art). Whatever contradicts this deeply late-bourgeois lifestyle sphere—and many artists feel the need to aspire to this—is judged 'disturbing' by art criticism. The perception and devaluation of the concept of 'beauty' that goes along with this is not questioned, however, due to the lack of intellectual efforts made with respect to conceptual thought.

PL: Is beauty a vital necessity for you?

HM: Yes, it is! Like daylight, water and bread.

PL: In your case, the existential meaning of beauty is essentially coupled with light. Have you ever had something like a key experience, which would explain your enthusiasm for light?

HM: I cannot come up with an epiphany of sunlight the way my favorite mystics—namely Plotinus and al-Ghazali—describe it. Though it was not spiritual, for that, however, there was an all the more real experience I had as a 12-year-old during the war. After the clattering salvos of anti-aircraft shells and the thuds of the air bomb detonations had silenced, we had left our air-raid shelter, lit by a single candle, emerging to see the city lit up by the fires and the will o' the wisp searchlights of the air defense: an inferno! Being accustomed to only living in darkened rooms, this night sky aglow with fire raging to the horizon was my first, deep experience with light. Even in my student days at the academy I did a charcoal drawing out of a purely graphical interest, which—this only came out many years later 'by accident'—looks very similar to a photograph of the burning city of Krefeld [a picture of this may be found in *Zeichnungen—Pastelle—Tuschen 1950-2000*, B. Kühlen Verlag, Mönchengladbach, Germany, 2001]. Then a wholly different 'existential' meaning was the often-cited experience I had when I accidentally stepped on a shiny piece of aluminum foil that was laying on a rough sisal rug, so that I pressed the woven structure of the rug into the metal. When I held the resulting metal relief against the light I did not so much see the imprint of the metal, but rather an immaterial, oscillating relief of shimmering light that seemed to float above the metal. I called it a 'light relief'. This was something that proved to have consequences for my work.

PL: The old differentiation between natural and artificial beauty seems to me to no longer apply considering the technical innovations for viewing nature. With the aid of electron microscopes, advanced telescopes and particle accelerators, etc. breathtaking natural structures have come to light. Could it not be that, in terms of revealing beauty, art is hopelessly inferior to a technically produced image?

HM: Inferior? Often enough, "yes". Hopeless? "No"! During the Renaissance a philosopher said: "ars sine scientia non ars est: scientia sine ars non scientia est". In fact—and perhaps a bit enviously—I am fascinated by computer-generated images of phenomena we are otherwise unable to see with the naked eye; this is why visual grids from the physics of nature, transformed using scanning electron microscopy, have an astonishing similarity to my early grid drawings. Likewise, I am impressed by images from astrophysics that use computer animation, and finally, there is the deep-sea research that discovered extremely beautiful fauna in the depths, where at times true kinetic light miracles occur. And really breathtaking are visual animations of the millions and millions of nerve-and-synapse connections in our brain! Sometimes I am surprised by how we consider these miracles as self-evident and how unreflected we are about them, without even having an inkling of how these 'images' come about.

PL: You are not only enthusiastic about light, but also about space. Scientific research of micro- and macro-spaces has brought forth fundamentally new knowledge in the past decades. What significance does the knowledge from astrophysics, or respectively, particle physics, have on the intellectual background of your work?

HM: This is a question I have been dealing with for a long time! It is hardly possible to describe this set of problems in a short answer. The notion of the world from a standpoint of central perspective, a highly idiosyncratic achievement of the west, unknown in the Orient and the Far East, is no longer sufficient on its own for an understanding of a world, at least not since Einstein's theory of the curved space, although it still serves as an orientation. What is more: the concept of 'form', understood in the Greek sense of eidos, as an immediate, image-like, self-contained entity, as a clearly delineated, phenomenologically describable internal and external form, surrounded by surface and space, defined through mass and coordinates, filled with light, shadow, and colors…; this topos of artistic form, with its tradition handed down over thousands of years, was succeeded in the 20th century by something that due to its radicalism may not really be referred to as a successor. In place of 'form', we now find—in my art as well—structure as a diagram of a process, as a field of oscillation energy, visual, optic energy. In the grid, in the structure, the individual element stands for the whole, and vice versa. The structure stands as representative—almost like an excerpt—of an endless succession of elements connected with one another, whose rhythm displays an intrinsic logic and stringency. In the art of the ornament, and here especially in the non-objective, abstract arabesque of Islamic art, the principle of the structure is a given. Today the natural sciences and non-objective art come together in the grid. Thus, the illusionistic picture space in painting, even if this has been rendered abstractly, has become completely obsolete. And concerning sculpture, instead of mass and its gravity, there is now energy by means of movement and light, which transforms the matter into an immaterial phenomenon. In painting it is the colors that are the carrier and the medium for energy, for radiation energy!

PL: Do you believe that it would change culture and society if we were to really internalize and consistently implement the revolutionary knowledge coming from the natural sciences over the past hundred years? If so, in what manner?

HM: The changes have already occurred and continue to take place, only they are not perceived by the masses due to a lack of education and interest. People using a cell phone or a PC today have as good as no notion of what is happening with it technically. The more complex, intelligent, and differentiated the natural sciences and technology, but also works of art, are, the more a simpler approach becomes widespread even in the media—possibly as a naïve protective reflex against intellectual authority. It is interesting that a large portion of today's art production is an Eldorado for those who have not received a calling or are late-bloomers, whose dilettante and infantile art seeks and also finds recognition with an audacity that is not always naïve. In my opinion there is cause to worry about a growing indifference of broad sections of the population regarding existential questions that concern the conditio humana of the future. Natural scientists, scholars, theologians and even artists of rank remain relatively isolated with their scarcely estimable potential of knowledge and ideas.

PL: There has always been a strong utopian element exerting an effect in your work. At the latest since the failure of socialist hopes for the future, utopias have—to put it mildly—received bad press. What consequences has the loss of utopian potential had, in your opinion, first for society, and then for art?

HM: There is a book I edited containing essential aspects of my oeuvre I called *Utopie und Wirklichkeit* (Utopia and Reality). In a brilliant essay Wieland Schmied claims that I "would have failed as a utopian, though on a very high level." Ben Gurion, the Israeli statesman, once said that utopians were the true realists. There are many artists without utopias, but it is the exceptions, which count. Leonardo da Vinci, the innovative engineer of genius, who also painted an angel of the Annunciation, anticipated technical developments that were only implemented centuries later. He was a visionary, an enlightened man! Our fact-oriented world with its predilection for purpose-driv-

en developments often explains its limited successes with monetary arguments; the deeper reason for not wanting to go beyond limits results from a deeply conservative, bourgeois need for security. This mentality is, by itself, especially foreign to artists, so to speak, due to their natures. At present I do not recognize any utopian potential, either in society or in art, but it is present in the natural sciences, however, for example in neurology, in nano- and gene research, as well as in nuclear physics. In short: this is where people are dreaming with their eyes open; and utopias have the chance of becoming reality! Is it possible that people in Germany will recognize these chances? Certainly they will express their fears by asking: Isn't that all very dangerous? Let's turn to the National Institute for Risk Assessment!

*PL: With utopian thought the future is always the primary time-horizon. The art historian Wolfgang Ullrich has coined the term "*Zukunftsvergessenheit*" (future-forgetfulness) for our contemporary culture. Not even trivial culture (film, for example) supplies viable collective images of the future anymore. Paradoxically, as the technologically most-advanced entertainment media, numerous computer games often develop alarmingly pre-modern, even archaic fantasy worlds. Are we no longer fit and willing for the future? Does today's society lack fantasy?*

HM: I lack the fantasy to imagine a world without fantasy—on the other hand contemporary society is apparently scarcely disposed to giving fantasy a chance, unless it is on a more or less infantile basis. This is revealed in the area of games and toys that address themselves more and more to adults, especially in the area of the media, if not even in art, film, tourism, etc. Technical innovations, such as sophisticated and complex computer programs, have their share in the reservoir of fantasy; but the latter concept, in terms of cultural history, is bound to a highly-romantic notion and conveys a great sense of freedom, the way it is expressed in the game—in Schiller's sense. Today's bourgeois society displays a high need for entertainment it is unable to generate for itself, but it likes to take over from that exclusive upper-ten-percent section that has the time, boredom, money, and also the fantasy to devise such games. It is a wholly other question as to what extent artists themselves are willing to apply their fantasy in the entertainment sector.

PL: You once said that your art was not motivated by theories, but by ideas. What utopian idea would you like to make reality if you had a wish to be granted (independent of the question of its practical feasibility)?

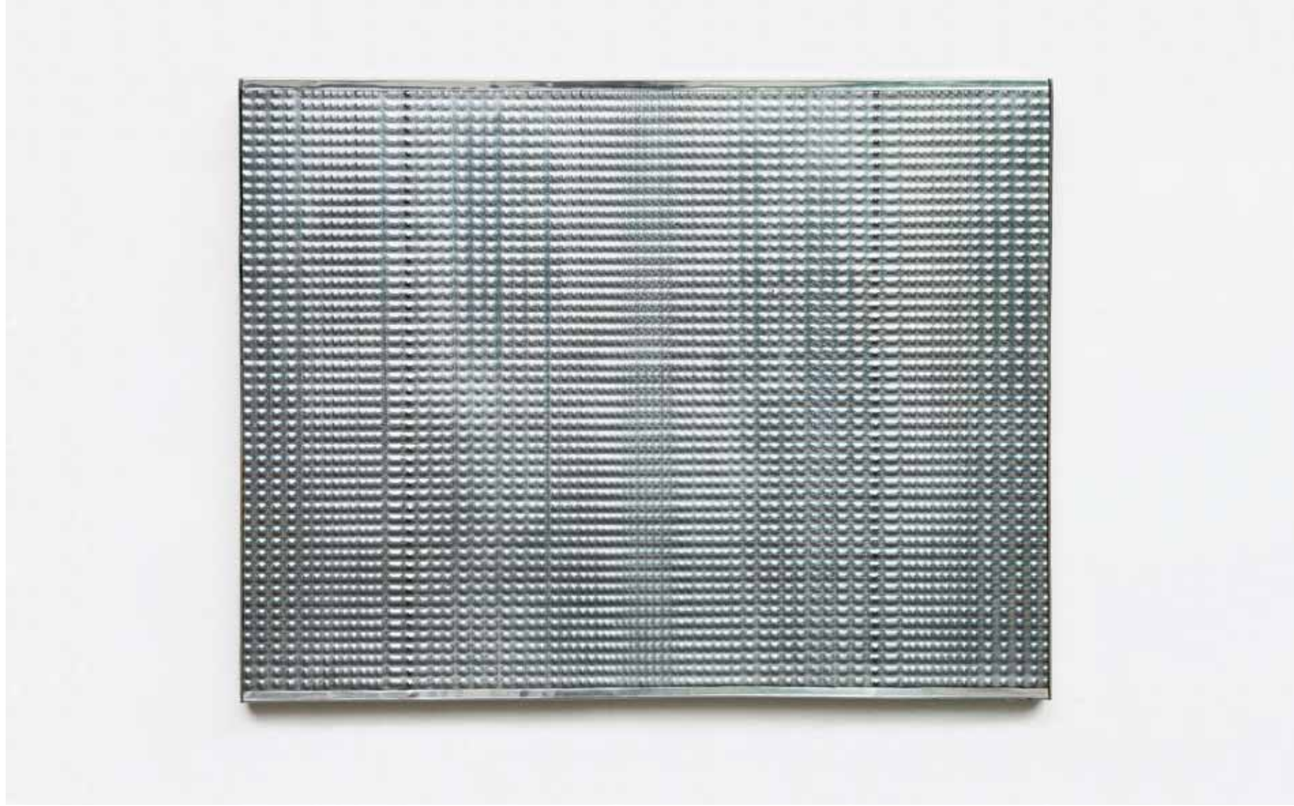
HM: This question has a charm of its own, and I can only answer it very frivolously—without committing myself—let alone speak of the moral implications, since it would not be possible without Eros to explain my notions of a paradise during my lifetime and on earth. In short: I have a notion of what my paradise on earth would be like for a single day (and a single night). And I can name the requirements for this: two years of conceptual and programmatic preparation, cooperation with and support from generous patrons and mega-investors, by the MOMA and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Research Center in Jülich and MIT in Boston, support and cooperation from the UNESCO, the World Bank, the Emirates, the Vatican, Siemens, Sony, and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. So much for the beginning! The event location would be: the edge of the Ténéré-Desert in Africa. A paradise on earth that we could enter here during our own lifetime—that would be my wish, since I do not believe in a paradise after I die.

PL: There is no utopian thought without hope for a 'New Man'. Do you believe in man enough that he could develop beyond himself?

HM: In my opinion, Raymond Kurzweil, one of the pioneers of futurology in the USA, has already anticipated this 'New Man' for the 20th and 21st century. His ideas, his arguments are scientifically-based and have a highly-speculative potential that appears to have developed from firm territory and, aware of the risk, goes beyond the bounds of rationality normally attributed to the 'Old Man'. The *Übermensch* [Superman] that Nietzsche propagated (falsely and fatefully understood by the Nazis) was an intellectual and cultural utopia and the call for liberating human potential from the four world religions, in the sense that all the life energies that are positively inherent to man may be enhanced to their highest level of realization that there is no need for religion, making man's mortality seem all the more tragic (this is my opinion). Present research, especially in neurology, does not hesitate—in the sense of Raymond Kurzweil's predictions—to implant computer chips into the human brain—whereby the actual and truly sensational challenge would be to connect material and mechanics with organic material, the synapses. My philosophical world view thus confronts the contradictio in adjecto, that dead matter (the computer chip) and a million-fold complex system of nerves and synapses in our brain, referred to as mind and spirit (if not soul), are connected with each other (in whatever way this would be accomplished?!). Testing in this respect (first on animals) is already underway! The old duality of matter and mind is thus called into question after 2000 years of western philosophy! As far as I can tell, art is the only realm where man grows beyond his limits and achieves the right and the chance to be happy without causing someone else's unhappiness at the same time. It is a realm where mind and matter supplement each other!

PL: In a Belgian department store a short time ago I saw a black relief that I am sure I would have assumed was a piece of ZERO art, had I seen it in a museum. But it was a life-sized scanner placed at the exit so that an alarm would go off if unpaid goods left the building. What do you think of the fact that ZERO aesthetics have reached everyday design in the meantime?

HM: It was and still is in keeping with the goals of a ZERO aesthetics to unfold its scope of influence within our urban civil society, since the ideas embraced by it have their own dynamics, and thus, have not been and may not be manipulated or steered. In fact, ZERO has exerted a great influence. The 1968 generation was also possessed of a spirit where they felt there would have to be a new beginning. ZERO was ten years ahead of them! We wanted to be as close as possible to life and did not shy away from displaying multiples and light sculptures in all the display windows of the Düsseldorf Kaufhof Department Store, offering them for sale at affordable prices. A far cry from elite consciousness, our spiritual and sensually-vivid motivation was very cosmopolitan, affirmative to the world around us, filled with a desire to share our enthusiasm stimulated by our expectations for the future with as many people as possible. Our public actions, only called 'Happenings' at a later date, were always



fantastically attended! By the way, although ZERO revered the Bauhaus ideology, it still refused to become its successor. What is more, from the onset we also kept a clear distance from design, whose orientation to mercantile practice stood opposite to our ideas.

PL: Is the art world, the way it is today, still the context where questions about the creation of our environment emphasizing beauty and the sublime may be formulated? If no, what would an alternative be?

HM: At the moment, the art world, the way I see it, and the way it has staged itself as 'mainstream', apparently does not display any explicit interest in artistically-inspired, aesthetic criteria that could be attributed to the heretofore traditional concepts of 'beauty' and 'the sublime', although a more recent phenomenology of aesthetic perception does exist, departing from the works of Yves Klein, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko. Instead, more than ever it is the trivial that triumphs in 'low art', as well as in our environment befallen with graffiti artists, whose most prominent representatives are welcomed meanwhile in today's auction temples, after Duchamp's *Urinal* or Manzoni's preserved *merde* have already achieved cult status, i.e., are considered 'sublime' owing to their—in commercial terms—astronomically high esteem they are held in, namely the record prices they achieve. These are the new 'criteria', which now determine the aura of a work of art. Our environment is, among other things, a highly complex, chaotic, regulated conglomeration of dead as well as live stock of all kinds and from all areas of life, whereby art probably plays the smallest role here. What would the alternative be? I do not know; I recommend we remain wary of it! The religious is also not necessarily the sublime, and the sublime is not by itself the religious. The painter Gerhard Richter has referred to art as the 'substitute' of the religion that is on its way out. Josef Beuys, the Catholic shaman, would have viewed this differently, interpreting this, so to speak, magically. The 'sublime' that Barnett Newman paid his artistic tribute to in New York, was for him, as he told me personally, a specifically western category of thought and feeling, which if at all, was hardly understood in the United States. André Malraux, on the other hand, knew what he was talking about. I was there when he attributed to the 'sublime' the highest cultural value to be found at the latest in Romanesque architecture and in sacred Gothic sculpture, obviously taking into account the religiously motivated portion of it. In the face of a high level of western culture spanning a period of 2000 years, the very busy cultural scene of our days seems to no longer have any notion of what legacy it has taken on—in a sort of amnesia it suppresses its heritage or rejects it as soon as it becomes conscious of it. As for the rest, our urban environment, as well as the rural one, are no longer interested in any deeper cultural creation and identity that would be more than merely serving as an alibi-function. The multi-cultural diversity exhausts and loses itself in an interchangeable arbitrariness, accompanied by assimilations that no one wanted. Globalization and regionalization fight and supplement each other—you can't have more contradiction than this. What follows from this is that all notions of beauty and the sublime have become obsolete, corrupt and are up for discussion, both in terms of cultural sociology as well as in terms of aesthetics, as a philosophical discipline.

PL: Your work repeatedly displays elements that may be described in metaphysical or religious terms. This applies especially to the metaphysics of light. You have even designated the staging of light as your "actual theological theme". Are you a modern Neo-Platonist, longing for a dissolution of all material into the immateriality of light?

HM: I wouldn't go that far; I have no religious or even mythical abilities, and anything esoteric or occult is not for me. I am interested, however, in religious and philosophical issues. These prompted me to study philosophy, since I, too, fail to find sufficient answers in the four great religions, though philosophy does not provide them, either. Now, light is not only a physical phenomenon, about which good old Einstein said that the "question about what light is would accompany him to the end of his life". But even a Neo-Platonist like Plotinus intuitively came very close to an understanding of the immateriality of light: That fascinates me. He recognized in light the highest level of consciousness, where all questions dissolve themselves, so to speak, in light. This one, pure light is for him, ultimately, God. None of the epistemologists or ontologists have gone so far as to state that consciousness is transformed into revelation. If it is an essential criterion of all art creation that the artist must overcome his material, or respectively, must be able to make an intellectual statement using this material, then this process of immaterialization is clearly a metaphysical process. What is more, for me as an artist the essential thing is that I use light in my work as an 'immaterial material' by materializing light, so to speak, giving it a form of visual energy. With this I stand in the tradition of the marble torsi on Delos, the painting of Georges de la Tour, and the light requisites of László Moholy-Nagy.

PL: I find it fascinating that the inventor of the word 'to photograph' was an ascetic hermit, a certain Philotheos[1], who exposed himself to the desert light (!) so long that he had a feeling that God wrote into him with light ('photographed'). I must ask you in all seriousness, have you ever had mystical experiences of light and space?

HM: In all seriousness, I will answer: No, if you mean the experiences as being of a mystical nature. But more than once I have had experiences with light and space whose existential intensity was overwhelming. To cite only one of many examples I could mention here my careless and irresponsible venturing alone into an abandoned underground marble quarry on the island of Paros; while crawling on all fours through an extremely narrow shaft, I dropped my flashlight, and it went out, leaving me in total darkness for what seemed like an eternity; I felt as if I had been buried alive. What happened then, I wrote down in a text I never published. I only want to tell you here that later I thought that those weak beams of daylight were a hallucination at first, until, step by step, I got close to the exit of the cave through a long, steep shaft, above which the full sunlight of the summer sun in Greece blinded me painfully. This gradual transition from absolute darkness to the highest intensity of light our earth can offer, moved me deeply in terms of the experience of light, space and time.

PL: What was your most striking experience in the desert and the Arctic of what you once referred to as the "colossal dimension of time and space"?

HM: This is an ultimate question I am unable to answer in this form, since the sum of my experiences may scarcely be translated into language. What was incomparable as an experience is the isolated feeling the body got in the boundless, dangerous natural spaces, is the lack of all coordinates of space and time, is the void that spreads into the consciousness, is the life energy you must summon so that you do not just give up, is the sublime and untouched landscape space resting in itself, its quiet, its speechlessness, its being as far away as possible from one of the mega-cities, these man-made deserts. Whether or not I have ever felt lonelier in New York or Tokyo than in the African Ténéré, which means roughly the 'desert of all deserts'? I have no answer for myself, except that the Ténéré is much more beautiful. To have crossed it fills me—I confess—with pride.

PL: A lot of time has passed since your ZERO years. How has your thought changed over the years? Have you become more self-critical, more skeptical? How have you dealt with criticism?

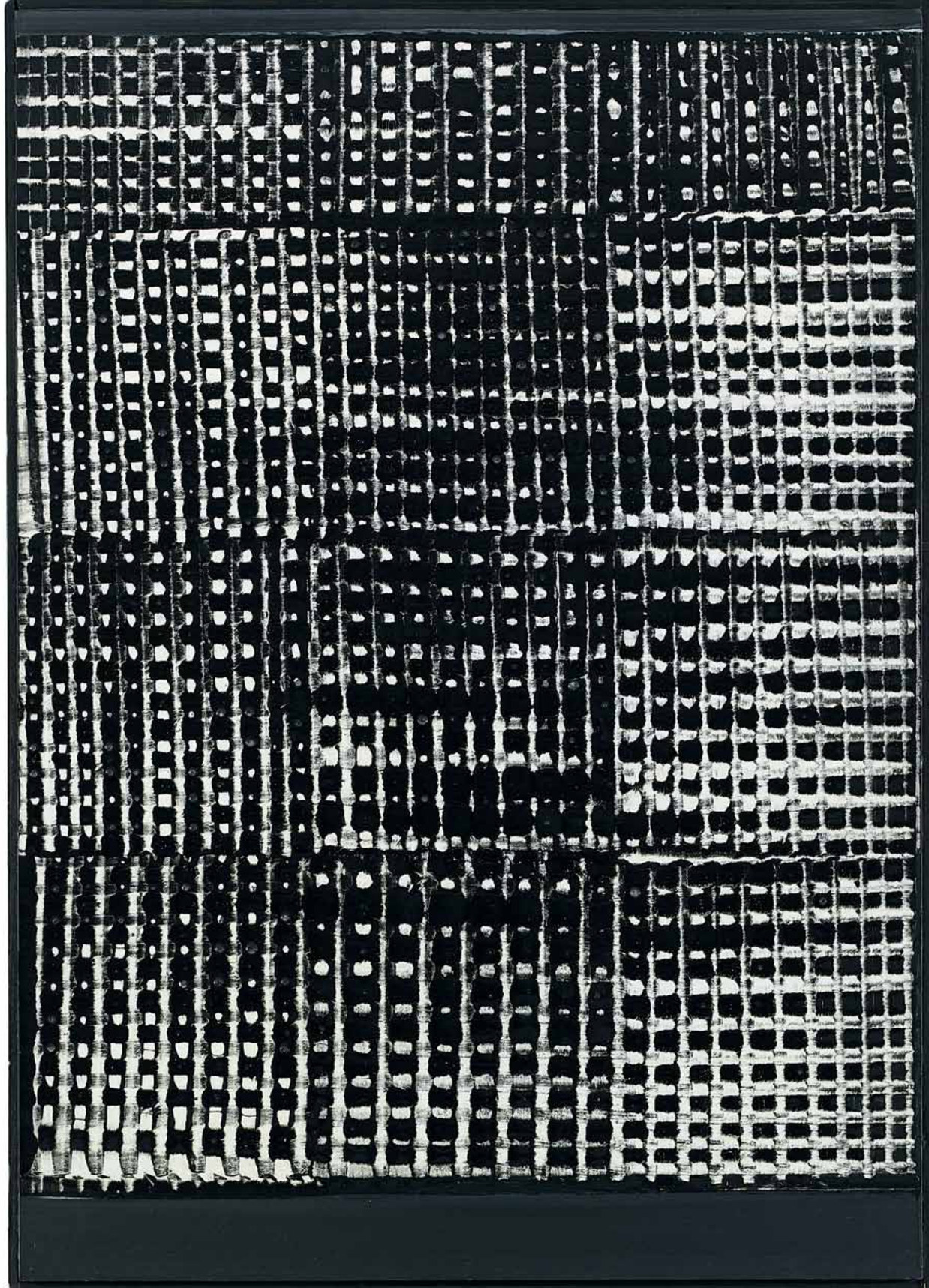
HM: ZERO is half a century old or young, depending on how you look at it. Thanks not only to the ZERO-Foundation, which has now become an institution, the question "What was ZERO?" has become the focus of scientific research. Reputable museums are putting together exhibitions, books are being published, collections being expanded. What art history is is being reanimated but not really revitalized. These are things I can follow without getting upset. Whether that is a sign of age or not, I really have become more self-critical and skeptical; doubts concerning my own actions probably stay with me on a deeper level now—these are probably also the agens for the decision I make time and again for making a new attempt to leave sure ground in hopes of entering new territory. This all happens on its own, with a self-confidence no longer fathomable, something that has to confirm itself. As far as criticism goes, I am first and foremost, my own critic. Criticism from the outside makes me angry or hurts me if it thoughtlessly hits its mark. To put it mildly, there is room for improvement at the intellectual level of the self-proclaimed critics.

PL: The death that awaits us all is the absolute boundary of space, time, and existence. Is art a tried and tested means against the fear of death? If so, why?

HM: At present, neither my intellectual nor my physical condition makes me feel a need to confront myself with death. More likely it will be death that confronts me. Until then, I will follow the 'carpe diem' by doing my daily work as an artist—to repeat myself here: daily! The dictum that people often like to quote: "vita brevis, ars longa" certainly does not make dying more comfortable. I have to assume, however, that my art will survive me. Among other things, this is what motivates me day by day, to do what I feel responsible for.

This statement will have to suffice for an interview.

1 Georges Didi-Huberman, Der Erfinder des Wortes "photographieren", in: G.D.-H., *Phasmes*, Cologne 2001, pp. 55-63.



HEINZ MACK

Interview mit Peter Lodermeyer

Juli 2009

*Heinz Mack (*1931 in Lollar, Deutschland), gründete 1957 zusammen mit Otto Piene die Künstlergruppe ZERO. Licht und Raum sind seine zentralen Themen, die er in vielfältigsten Medien bearbeitet. Berühmt wurde Mack insbesondere mit unterschiedlichen Lichtarbeiten wie etwa seinen Lichtinstallationen in der Wüste. Lebt in Mönchengladbach, Deutschland, und auf Ibiza, Spanien.*

Peter Lodermeyer: Sie sagten einmal: „Wer mir das Recht nehmen will, das Schöne noch wahrzunehmen und es zu bewahren, stellt meine gesamte künstlerische Existenz in Frage." Was ist Ihres Erachtens die Ursache für die weitgehende Diskreditierung des Schönen in der zeitgenössischen Kunst?

Heinz Mack: „Wer" die Ursache ist, scheint mir leichter zu beantworten als die Frage nach dem „Was".

Es waren und sind wohl die Künstler selbst, welche das Urteil, ihre Werke seien sehr schön, als negative Kritik empfinden; schließlich haben sie nichts unversucht gelassen, das Primat der Schönheit zu sabotieren, allen voran Picasso, obwohl paradoxerweise seine „klassische" Periode dem alten Ideal noch Triumphe beschert hat. Oder denken Sie an seinen synthetischen Kubismus, in dem er eine prästabilisierende Harmonie der strengen Bildarchitektur erreicht, bereichert durch eine bewusst eingesetzte malerische Farbkultur, die nicht ihresgleichen kennt. Schließlich stellt gerade er das Erreichte, und damit das traditionell Schöne selbst in Frage, indem er die extremsten Deformationen wagt, auf der Suche nach einer neuen, ganz anderen ästhetischen Beherrschung seiner kühnen Experimente. Nehmen Sie das Portrait seiner Lieblingstochter Paloma; es zeigt ein von schrecklichen Verrenkungen und dissonanten Verzerrungen entstelltes Kind, als wäre es Opfer eines schweren Unfalls. Aber, aber: was die Farbpalette betrifft, so ist sie voller behutsamer malerischer Zärtlichkeit, welcher Widerspruch der Gefühle! Zweifellos ein sehr „schönes" Bild!

Nun lässt sich seit über einem Jahr nicht mehr übersehen, dass die Lieblingsvokabel „verstörend" für die selbsternannten Kunstkritiker unverzichtbar geworden ist. Kunstwerke, die nicht verstörende Qualitäten zeigen, haben wenig Aussicht gewürdigt zu werden, weil sie möglicherweise „nur" schön sind oder gar den Reiz des Dekorativen haben, womit sie sich in die Gefahrenzone begeben, entweder gar nicht beachtet oder sich dem vernichtenden Kunsturteil der immergleichen Kunstkritiker ausgesetzt zu sehen. Zwar macht man Ausnahmen, zeigt z. B. milde Toleranz gegenüber den Scherenschnitten des alten Matisse, gesteht, dass der suprematistische Malewitsch dekorativ und schön zugleich ist, ganz zu schweigen von jenen Farb-Ikonen Rothkos, über die noch nicht der Schatten seiner Depressionen liegt. Oder sollte dieser gar seine leuchtenden Farbfelder selbst zu schön gefunden haben?! Aber „was" ist die Ursache der Diskreditierung des Schönen? Ein Aspekt drängt sich mir auf: das Phänomen der Dekadenz am Ende großer Kulturepochen, wenn Werte korrumpiert werden. Der Hedonismus unserer westlichen Welt, den vor nunmehr 2000 Jahren schon Seneca höchst aktuell beschrieben hat, kleidet sich in einen ganz eigenen Schönheitskult. Der damit einhergehende „Lifestyle", der bis in die Details sich einem Designer-Diktat unterwirft, ist ein aggressives, manipuliertes und kommerzialisiertes Angebot an Jedermann, das selbst die sogenannten Naturschönheiten noch als korrekturbedürftig erklärt. Gegenüber einer solch aufbereiteten artifiziellen Designerwelt ist die Kunst, deren Ideen sich zum Teil in dieser Welt wiederfinden, ziemlich machtlos. Paradoxerweise besonders da, wo sie sich selbst degradiert, indem sie deren Trivialebene betritt (siehe Duchamp und die Folgen). Was immer dieser zutiefst spätbürgerlichen Lifestyle-Sphäre widerspricht – und dazu fühlen sich nicht wenige Künstler berufen -, wird von der Kunstkritik als „verstörend" eingestuft. Die damit einhergehende Empfindung und Korrumpierbarkeit des Begriffs „Schönheit" wird aber nicht hinterfragt, mangels intellektueller Anstrengung bezüglich begrifflichen Denkens.

PL: Ist Schönheit für Sie lebensnotwendig?

HM: Ja, ist sie! So wie Tageslicht, Wasser und Brot.

PL: Die existenzielle Bedeutung des Schönen ist in Ihrem Fall ganz wesentlich an das Licht gekoppelt. Gibt es für Ihren Licht-Enthusiasmus so etwas wie ein Schlüsselerlebnis?

HM: Mit einer Epiphanie des Sonnenlichts, wie sie meine Favoriten unter den Mystikern beschreiben – das sind Plotin und al-Ghazali -, kann ich nicht aufwarten. Überhaupt nicht spirituell, dafür umso realer war mein Erlebnis als 12-Jähriger während des Krieges. Nachdem die ratternden Geschosssalven der Flugabwehr-Geschütze und die dumpfen Detonationen der Fliegerbomben verstummt waren, verließen wir den von einer einzigen Kerze beleuchteten Luftschutzkeller, um die lichterloh brennende, von den Irrlichtern der Flugscheinwerfer erhellte Stadt zu sehen: ein Inferno! Gewohnt, nur in verdunkelten Räumen zu leben, war die bis zum Horizont reichende Feuersbrunst unter einem rot glühenden Nachthimmel mein erstes, sich tief einprägendes „Lichterlebnis". Noch zur Studienzeit an der Akademie entstand eine Kohlezeichnung aus rein graphischem Interesse, die – wie sich viel später „zufällig" herausstellte – einem Foto der brennenden Stadt Krefeld sehr ähnlich sieht (abgebildet in „Zeichnungen – Pastelle – Tuschen 1950-2000, B. Kühlen Verlag, Mönchengladbach 2001). Eine ganz andere „existenzielle" Bedeutung hatte dann das viel zitierte Erlebnis, als ich aus Versehen auf eine glänzende Aluminiumfolie getreten war, die auf einem groben Sisalteppich lag, sodass sich die gewebte Struktur im Metall abdrückte. Als ich das so entstandene Metallrelief gegen das Licht hielt, sah ich nicht so sehr die Metallprägung als vielmehr ein immaterielles, vibrierendes Relief aus flirrendem Licht, das über dem Metall zu schweben schien. Ich gab ihm den Namen „Lichtrelief". Das sollte für meine Arbeit Folgen haben!

PL: Die alte Unterscheidung zwischen dem Naturschönen und dem Kunstschönen scheint mir angesichts der technischen Neuerungen der Naturbeobachtung hinfällig. Mithilfe von Elektronenmikroskopen, Hochleistungsteleskopen, Teilchenbeschleunigern usw. sind atemberaubende Naturstrukturen zum Vorschein getreten. Ist nicht die Kunst, was das Sichtbarmachen von Schönheit angeht, dem technisch erzeugten Bild hoffnungslos unterlegen?

HM: Unterlegen? Oft genug „ja". Hoffnungslos? „Nein"! Zur Zeit der Renaissance formulierte ein Philosoph: „ars sine scientia non ars est; scientia sine ars non scientia est". In der Tat faszinieren mich – Eifersucht nicht ausgeschlossen – computergenerierte Bilder von Phänomenen, die unsere natürlichen Augen eigentlich gar nicht sehen können; so haben visuelle Raster aus dem Naturbereich der Physik, mittels Rasterelektronenmikroskopie transformiert, eine erstaunliche Ähnlichkeit mit meinen frühen Raster-Zeichnungen. Ebenso beeindrucken mich die mittels Computeranimation erstellten Bilder aus der Astrophysik, und schließlich entdeckt die Tiefseeforschung eine extrem schöne Tiefseefauna, in der teilweise wahre kinetische Lichtwunder leben. Geradezu atemberaubend sind visuelle Animationen der millionenfachen Vernetzung von Nervenbahnen und dazugehörigen Synapsen in unserem Gehirn! Manchmal wundere ich mich, wie selbstverständlich und oft unreflektiert wir diese Wunder zur Kenntnis nehmen, ohne zu ahnen, wie von ihnen „Bilder" entstehen.

PL: Sie sind nicht nur ein Enthusiast des Lichts, sondern auch des Raumes. Die wissenschaftliche Erforschung sowohl der Mikro- als auch der Makroräume hat in den letzten Jahrzehnten grundlegend neue Erkenntnisse gebracht. Welche Bedeutung hatte die Erkenntnis aus Astro- bzw. Teilchenphysik für den geistigen Hintergrund Ihrer Arbeit?

HM: Diese Frage beschäftigt mich seit langer Zeit! Kaum möglich, diesen Problemkreis in Kürze zu umschreiben. Das zentralperspektivische Weltbild, eine höchst eigentümliche Errungenschaft des Abendlandes, welche der Orient und der ferne Osten nicht kannten, reicht spätestens seit Einsteins gekrümmtem Raum nicht mehr allein zum Weltverständnis aus, wenn auch zur Orientierung. Ferner: der Begriff der „Form", verstanden im griechischen Sinn von eidos, als unmittelbare, bildhafte, in sich geschlossene Einheit, als klar begrenzte, phänomenologisch umschreibbare Binnen- und Außenform, umgeben von Fläche und Raum, definiert durch Maße und Koordinaten, erfüllt von Licht, Schatten und Farben…; dieser Topos der künstlerischen Form, über Jahrtausende tradiert, hat im 20. Jahrhundert eine Nachfolge gefunden, deren Radikalität ganz eigentlich nicht Nachfolge genannt werden kann. An die Stelle der „Form" tritt nun – auch in meiner Kunst – die Struktur als Diagramm eines Prozesses, als Schwingungsfeld von Energie, von visueller, optischer Energie. Im Rasterfeld, in der Struktur, steht das einzelne Element für das Ganze und umgekehrt. Die Struktur steht stellvertretend – quasi als Ausschnitt – für eine unendliche Abfolge von miteinander vernetzten Elementen, deren Rhythmus eine ihr eigene Logik und Stringenz zeigt. In der Kunst des Ornaments, und hier besonders in der gegenstandslosen, abstrakten Arabeske der islamischen Kunst, ist das Prinzip der Struktur vorgegeben worden. Im Raster begegnen sich heute Naturwissenschaft und gegenstandlose Kunst. Damit ist der illusionistische Bildraum in der Malerei, selbst wenn er abstrakt möbliert wird, vollkommen obsolet geworden. Und in der Skulptur tritt an die Stelle von Masse und deren Gravität nun die Energie mittels Bewegung und Licht, welche die Materie in eine immaterielle Erscheinungsweise transformieren. In der Malerei sind es die Farben als Träger und Medium für Energie, für Strahlungsenergie!

PL: Glauben Sie, dass es Kultur und Gesellschaft verändern würde, wenn wir die revolutionären naturwissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisse der letzten hundert Jahre wirklich verinnerlichen und konsequent nachvollziehen würden? Wenn ja, in welcher Weise?

HM: Die Veränderungen haben ja stattgefunden und finden weiterhin statt, nur werden sie von der Masse mangels Bildung und Interesse nicht wahrgenommen. Wer heute ein „Handy" oder einen PC benutzt, hat so gut wie keine Vorstellung, was sich da technisch ereignet. Je komplexer, intelligenter, differenzierter Naturwissenschaften und Technik, aber auch Kunstwerke sind, desto mehr breitet sich selbst in den Medien eine Simplifizierung der Annäherung aus – möglicherweise eine naive Schutzfunktion gegenüber intellektueller Autorität. Interessanterweise ist ein Großteil heutiger Kunstproduktion ein Eldorado für Nicht- oder Spätberufene, deren Dilettantismus und Infantilismus mit einer nicht immer naiven Dreistigkeit Anspruch auf Beachtung sucht und auch findet. Besorgniserregend ist aus meiner Sicht eine wachsende Indifferenz weiter Bevölkerungskreise gegenüber existenziellen Fragen, welche die „conditio humana" der Zukunft betreffen. Naturwissenschaftler, Geisteswissenschaftler, Theologen und auch Künstler von Rang bleiben da mit einem kaum abschätzbaren Potenzial an Erkenntnissen und Ideen relativ isoliert.

PL: In Ihrer Arbeit war stets ein starkes utopisches Element wirksam. Spätestens seit dem Scheitern sozialistischer Zukunftshoffnungen haben Utopien – gelinde gesagt – eine schlechte Presse. Welche Folgen hat Ihres Erachtens der Verlust an utopischen Potenzialen erstens für die Gesellschaft und zweitens für die Kunst?

HM: Einem von mir redigierten Buch mit wesentlichen Aspekten meines Œuvres habe ich den Titel „Utopie und Wirklichkeit" gegeben. In einem glänzenden Essay bescheinigt mir Wieland

Schmied, dass ich „als Utopist gescheitert wäre, allerdings auf hohem Niveau." Ben Gurion, Staatsbürger Israels, hat gesagt, die Utopisten seien die wahren Realisten. Künstler ohne Utopien sind zahlreich; aber es sind die Ausnahmen, die zählen. Leonardo da Vinci, der innovative geniale Ingenieur, der auch einen Engel der Verkündigung malte, antizipierte technische Entwicklungen, die erst Jahrhunderte später realisiert wurden. Er war ein Hellseher, ein Lichtseher! Unsere an Tatsachen orientierte Welt, welche zweckbestimmte Entwicklungen präferiert, begründet ihre begrenzten Erfolge oft mit monetären Argumenten; der tiefere Grund, Grenzen nicht überschreiten zu wollen, resultiert aus einem zutiefst konservativen, bürgerlichen Sicherheitsbedürfnis. Künstlern ist diese Mentalität eo ipso, quasi von Natur aus, besonders fremd. Gegenwärtig erkenne ich keine utopischen Potenziale, weder in der Gesellschaft, noch in der Kunst, wohl aber in den Naturwissenschaften, z. B. in der Neurologie, in der Nano- und Genforschung, sowie in der Atomphysik. Kurzum: hier werden Träume mit sehr wachen Augen geträumt; sie haben als Utopien die Chance, Realität zu werden! Ob die Menschen in Deutschland diese Chancen erkennen werden? Mit Sicherheit werden sie ihre Ängste in die Frage kleiden: Ist das nicht alles sehr gefährlich? Man wende sich an das Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung!

PL: Für utopisches Denken ist stets die Zukunft der primäre Zeithorizont. Der Kunsthistoriker Wolfgang Ullrich hat für unsere gegenwärtige Kultur den Begriff der „Zukunftsvergessenheit" geprägt. Nicht einmal in der Trivialkultur (z. B. im Film) gibt es mehr tragfähige kollektive Bilder der Zukunft. Paradoxerweise entwerfen zahlreiche Computerspiele als die technologisch avanciertesten Unterhaltungsmedien erschreckend oft vormoderne, ja archaische Fantasy-Welten. Sind wir nicht mehr zukunftstauglich und -willig? Fehlt unserer heutigen Gesellschaft Phantasie?

HM: Mir fehlt die Phantasie, um mir eine Welt ohne Phantasie vorzustellen; – andererseits zeigt die gegenwärtige Gesellschaft offensichtlich wenig Neigung, der Phantasie eine Chance zu geben, es sei denn auf mehr oder weniger infantiler Basis. Das zeigt sich im Bereich der Gesellschaftsspiele und Spielsachen, die sich immer mehr auch an Erwachsene wenden, insbesondere im Bereich der Medien, wenn nicht gar auch in der Kunst, im Film, im Tourismus etc. Die technischen Innovationen, wie z. B. raffinierte, komplexe Computerprogramme, haben ihren Anteil am Reservoir der Phantasie; aber letzterer Begriff bleibt doch kulturgeschichtlich hochromantisch besetzt und assoziiert ein Hochgefühl an Freiheit, wie sie im Spiel – im Sinne Schillers – zum Ausdruck kommt. Heute zeigt die bürgerliche Gesellschaft eine hohes Maß an Unterhaltungsbedürfnis, das sie selbst nicht zu kreieren vermag, aber gerne von jener exklusiven „upper-ten society" übernimmt, die Zeit, Langeweile, Geld und auch Phantasie besitzt, um sich solche Spiele auszudenken. Eine Frage für sich ist, inwieweit selbst Künstler bereit sind, ihre Phantasie als Unterhaltungsangebot einzusetzen.

PL: Sie sagten einmal, Ihre Kunst sei nicht durch Theorien, sondern durch Ideen motiviert. Welche utopische Idee würden Sie umsetzten wollen, wenn Sie einen Wunsch frei hätten (ganz unabhängig von der praktischen Realisierbarkeit)?

HM: Diese Frage hat ihren eigenen Charme, und ihre Beantwortung ist mir nur sehr leichtsinnig möglich – ohne alle Verbindlichkeit -, ganz zu schweigen von moralischen Implikationen, da es ohne Eros nicht möglich ist, meine Vorstellung von einem Paradies zur Lebzeit und also auf Erden zu erläutern. Kurzum: ich habe eine Vorstellung davon, wie für einen einzigen Tag (und eine einzige Nacht) mein Paradies auf Erden aussehen könnte. Und ich weiß Voraussetzungen zu benennen: zwei Jahre konzeptionelle und programmatische Vorbereitung, Mitarbeit und Unterstützung durch großzügige Mäzene und Megainvestoren, durch das MOMA und Guggenheim Museum in New York, durch das Forschungszentrum in Jülich und das MIT in Boston, Unterstützung und Mitarbeit der UNESCO, der Welthandelsbank, der Emirate, des Vatikans, von Siemens, Sony und den Berliner Symphonikern. Soviel für den Anfang! Standort der Veranstaltung: am Rande der Ténéré-Wüste, Afrika. Das Paradies auf Erden, zur Lebzeit betretbar, das wäre mein Wunsch, da ich nicht an ein Paradies nach meinem Tod glaube.

PL: Es gibt kein utopisches Denken ohne die Hoffnung auf einen „Neuen Menschen". Trauen Sie dem Menschen zu, sich über sich selbst hinaus zu entwickeln?

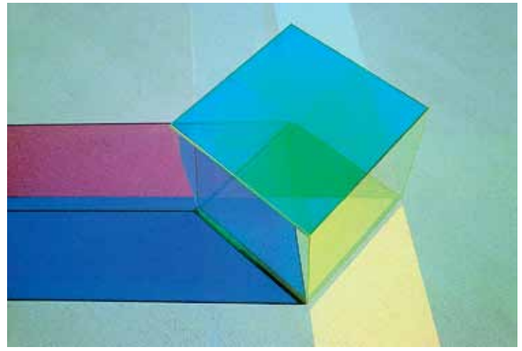
HM: Raymond Kurzweil, einer der Pioniere der Zukunftsforschung in den USA, hat meines Erachtens diesen „Neuen Menschen" für das 20ste und 21ste Jahrhundert antizipiert. Seine Ideen, seine Argumente haben fundierten wissenschaftlichen Anspruch und hohes spekulatives Potenzial, das sich von gesichertem Terrain aus zu entwickeln scheint und risikobewusst Grenzen einer Rationalität überschreitet, die noch dem „Alten Menschen" zugeordnet wird. Der „Übermensch", den Nietzsche gefordert hat (von den Nazis falsch und folgenschwer verstanden), war eine geistes- und kulturgeschichtliche Utopie und der Appell, das humane Potenzial von den vier Weltreligionen zu befreien, in dem Sinne, dass alle im Menschen positiv angelegten Lebensenergien zu ihrer höchsten Verwirklichung gesteigert werden, keiner Religion bedürfen und seine endliche Sterblichkeit um so tragischer erscheinen lassen (soweit meine eigene Sicht). Die gegenwärtige Forschung, insbesondere die Neurologie, zögert – im Sinne der Vorhersagen von Raymond Kurzweil – nicht, Computerchips in das menschliche Gehirn zu implantieren – womit die Verbindung von Materie und Mechanik mit organischem Material, den Synapsen, die eigentlich wahrhaft sensationelle Herausforderung wäre. Mein philosophisches Weltbild ist damit der contradictio in adjecto konfrontiert, dass tote Materie (der Computerchip) und ein millionenfaches komplexes Nerven- und Synapsensystem in unserem Gehirn, stellvertretend Geist genannt (wenn nicht gar Seele), miteinander verbunden werden (wie auch immer?!). Die diesbezüglichen Versuche (zunächst an Tieren) finden ja statt! Die alte Dualität von Materie und Geist steht damit nach 2000 Jahren abendländischer Philosophie zur Disposition! Soweit ich es erkennen kann, ist die Kunst die einzige Sphäre, in welcher der Mensch über sich hinauswächst und das Recht und die Chance erwirkt, glücklich zu sein, ohne damit gleichzeitig das Unglück anderer zu bewirken. Eine Sphäre, in der Materie und Geist sich ergänzen!

PL: In einem belgischen Kaufhaus sah ich vor kurzem ein schwarzes Relief, das ich, wäre es mir in einem Museum begegnet, sicher für ein ZERO-Kunstwerk gehalten hätte. Es war jedoch ein mannshoher Scanner, der an der Ausgangstüre steht und Alarm schlägt, wenn unbezahlte Ware das Haus verlässt. Wie denken Sie darüber, dass die ZERO-Ästhetik mittlerweile ins Alltagsdesign eingedrungen ist?

HM: Es war und ist noch immer im Sinne einer ZERO-Ästhetik, dass sie in unserer urbanen Zivilgesellschaft ihre Wirkungsgeschichte entfaltet, zumal die von ihr getragenen Ideen ihre Eigendynamik haben, also nicht manipulierbar oder steuerbar waren und sind. In der Tat hat ZERO großen Einfluss gehabt, die 68er Generation war ja auch von dem gefühlten Geist beseelt, dass ein neuer Anfang gemacht werden musste. ZERO war zehn Jahre schon vorausgegangen! Wir wollten dem Leben so nahe wie möglich sein und scheuten uns nicht, multiplizierte Objekte und Lichtskulpturen in allen Schaufenstern des Düsseldorfer „Kaufhof" auszustellen und zu sozialen Preisen zum Verkauf anzubieten. Fern aller elitären Bewusstseinslage, war unsere spirituelle und sinnlich-vitale Motivation sehr weltoffen, weltbejahend, erfüllt von dem Wunsch, unsere von Zukunftserwartungen stimulierte Begeisterung mit möglichst vielen Menschen zu teilen. Unsere öffentlichen Aktionen, die man erst später „Happenings" nannte, hatten stets phantastischen Zulauf! Im Übrigen hatte ZERO zwar hohe Achtung vor der Bauhaus-Ideologie, lehnte es aber ab, deren Nachfolge anzutreten. Auch nahmen wir von Anfang an klare Distanz zum Design ein, dessen merkantile Praxisnähe unseren Ideen entgegenstand.

PL: Ist die Kunstwelt, wie sie sich heute darstellt, überhaupt noch der Kontext, in dem sich Fragen einer auf Schönheit und Erhabenheit bedachten Gestaltung unserer Umwelt formulieren lassen? Falls nein, was wäre die Alternative?

HM: Die Kunstwelt, wie sie sich mir darstellt, und wie sie sich als „Mainstream" selbst inszeniert, zeigt zur Zeit offensichtlich keinerlei explizites Interesse an künstlerisch inspirierten, ästhetischen Kriterien, welche man den Begriffen „Schönheit" und „Erhabenheit" traditionell bisher noch zuzuordnen wusste, obwohl eine neuere Phänomenologie der ästhetischen Wahrnehmung durchaus existiert, ausgehend von den Werken Yves Kleins, Barnett Newmans oder Mark Rothkos. Stattdessen triumphiert mehr als zuvor das Triviale in „low art" wie aber auch in unserer von Graffiti-Künstlern heimgesuchten Umwelt, deren prominenteste Vertreter inzwischen in den heutigen Auktionstempeln willkommen sind, nachdem Duchamps



„Pissoir" oder Manzonis „merde"-Konserve bereits Kultstatus, sprich: „Erhabenheit" zugesprochen wird, dank astronomischer merkantiler Wertschätzung, sprich: Rekordpreise – sie sind die neuen „Kriterien", sie bestimmen nun die „Aura" eines Kunstwerks. Unsere Umwelt ist unter anderem ein hochkomplexes, chaotisches, reglementiertes Konglomerat von totem wie auch lebendigem Inventar aller Art und aus allen Lebensbereichen, woran die Kunst den vermutlich kleinsten Anteil hat. Was wäre die Alternative? Ich weiß es nicht; es empfiehlt sich, sich dessen bewusst zu sein! Das Religiöse ist auch nicht notwendigerweise das Erhabene, und das Erhabene ist nicht eo ipso das Religiöse. Der Maler Gerhard Richter hat die Kunst als stellvertretenden „Ersatz" der sich verabschiedenden Religion bezeichnet. Josef Beuys, katholischer Schamane, hätte das anders gesehen, quasi magischer interpretiert. Das „Erhabene", das „Sublime", dem Barnett Newman in New York seinen künstlerischen Tribut gezollt hat, war für ihn, wie er mir persönlich erklärt hat, eine spezifisch abendländische Kategorie des Denkens und Empfindens, die in den Vereinigten Staaten schwerlich, wenn überhaupt, verstanden wurde. André Malraux dagegen wusste, wovon er in meiner Gegenwart sprach, wenn er dem „Erhabenen", spätestens in der romanischen Architektur und in der gotischen Sakralskulptur, den höchsten kulturhistorischen Stellenwert einräumte, selbstredend den motivierten religiösen Anteil nicht außer Acht lassend. Im Angesicht einer abendländischen Hochkultur, die einen 2000jährigen Zeitraum umfasst, hat die sehr beschäftigte Kulturszene unserer Tage scheinbar keine Vorstellung mehr, welches Erbe sie angetreten hat; – in einer Art Amnesie verdrängt sie ihr Erbe oder schlägt es aus, sobald sie sich dessen bewusst wird. Im Übrigen ist unsere großstädtische Umwelt, ebenso wie die ländliche, nicht mehr an einer tieferen kulturellen Gestaltung und Identität interessiert, die mehr als eine Alibifunktion zu erfüllen hätte. Die multikulturelle Vielfalt erschöpft und verliert sich in einer austauschbaren Beliebigkeit, begleitet von Assimilationen, die keiner wollte. Globalisierung und Regionalisierung widerstreiten und ergänzen sich, – widersprüchlicher geht es nicht. Fazit ist: Alle Vorstellungen von Schönheit und Erhabenheit sind obsolet, korrumpiert und stehen, sowohl kultursoziologisch als auch bezogen auf die Ästhetik, als philosophische Disziplin, zur Diskussion.

PL: Ihre Arbeit weist immer wieder Elemente auf, die metaphysisch oder religiös besetzbar sind, insbesondere gilt das für die Lichtmetaphysik.

Sie haben sogar die Lichtdramaturgie als Ihr „eigentlich theologisches Thema" bezeichnet. Sind sie ein moderner Neoplatoniker, der sich nach einer Auflösung alles Materiellen in die Immaterialität des Lichts sehnt?

HM: So weit möchte ich nicht gehen; ich habe keine religiösen oder gar mythischen Fähigkeiten und alles Esoterische und Okkulte ist mir wesensfremd. Mich interessieren aber religiöse und philosophische Fragen, sie haben mich bewogen, Philosophie zu studieren, denn auch ich finde in den vier großen Religionen nicht auf alle Fragen hinreichende Antworten, die allerdings auch die Philosophie nicht offeriert. Nun ist das Licht nicht nur ein physikalisches Phänomen, von dem der alte Einstein sagte, dass ihn die „Frage, was Licht sei, bis ans Ende seines Lebens begleiten würde". Dem Verständnis der Immaterialität des Lichts kam aber auch ein Neoplatoniker wie Plotin intuitiv sehr nahe; das fasziniert mich. Im Licht erkannte er die höchste Stufe des Bewusstseins, auf der sich alle Fragen quasi in Licht auflösen. Dieses eine, reine Licht ist für ihn letztlich Gott. So weit sind alle Erkenntnistheoretiker und Ontologen nicht gegangen, dass Bewusstsein sich in Offenbarung transformiert. Wenn es zu einem wesentlichen Kriterium allen Kunstschaffens gehört, dass der Künstler sein Material überwindet, beziehungsweise es ihm gelingen muss, mittels der Materie eine geistige Aussage zu machen, dann ist dieser Prozess der Immaterialisation eindeutig ein metaphysischer Prozess. Für mich als Künstler gilt nun darüber hinaus, dass ich Licht als „immaterielles Material" in meiner Arbeit einsetzte, indem ich das Licht quasi materialisiere, ihm eine Form der visuellen Energie gebe. Damit stehe ich in der Tradition der marmornen Torsi auf Delos, der Malerei von Georges de la Tour, der Lichtrequisiten von László Moholy-Nagy.

PL: Ich finde es faszinierend, dass der Erfinder des Wortes „photographieren" ein asketischer Eremit war[1], der sich dem Licht der Wüste (!) so lange aussetzte, bis er das Gefühl hatte, dass Gott sich mit Licht in ihn einschreibt („photographiert"). Ganz im Ernst gefragt: Kennen Sie mystische Licht- und Raumerfahrungen?

HM: Ganz im Ernst geantwortet: Nein, wenn die Erfahrungen mystischer Natur sein sollen. Aber ich habe nicht nur einmal Licht- und Raumerfahrungen gemacht, deren existenzielle Intensität überwältigend war. Stellvertretend erwähne ich hier meinen abenteuerlich leichtsinnigen Alleingang in einem verlassenen unterirdischen Marmor-Steinbruch auf Paros; als mir – auf allen Vieren kriechend – in einem denkbar engen Stollen die Taschenlampe aus der Hand glitt, verlöschte und mich für eine Ewigkeit totale Dunkelheit umgab; da fühlte ich mich quasi lebendig begraben. Was dann geschah, habe ich in einem unveröffentlichten Text festgehalten. Hier sei nur darauf hingewiesen, dass ich später die ersten schwachen Spuren von Tageslicht zunächst als Halluzination einschätzte, bis ich mich dann Schritt für Schritt durch einen langen steilen Schacht dem Ausgang der Höhle näherte, über dem das volle Licht einer griechischen Sommersonne mich schmerzhaft blendete. Dieser allmähliche kontinuierliche Übergang von absoluter Dunkelheit zur höchsten Lichtintensität, welche unsere Erde bieten kann, hat mich in Bezug auf Licht-, Raum- und Zeiterfahrung tief berührt.

PL: Was war für Sie das frappierendste Erlebnis in der, wie Sie es einst nannten, „ungeheuren Dimension von Zeit und Raum" in der Wüste und in der Arktis?

HM: Eine ultimative Frage, die ich so nicht beantworten kann, denn die Summe meiner Erfahrungen lässt sich kaum in Sprache übersetzen. Was als Erlebnis unvergleichlich war, ist das isolierte Körpergefühl, welches mich in diesen unbegrenzten, lebensgefährlichen Naturräumen erfasste, ist das Fehlen aller Raum- und Zeitkoordinaten, ist die Leere, die sich ins Bewusstsein ausbreitet, ist die Lebensenergie, welche man aufbringen muss, um sich nicht aufzugeben, ist die Erhabenheit und Unberührtheit eines Landschaftsraums, der ganz in sich ruht, ist seine Stille, seine Sprachlosigkeit, ist seine größtmögliche Entfernung zu einer der Megastädte, dieser von Menschen gemachten Wüsten. Ob ich mich in New York oder Tokio einsamer gefühlt habe als in der afrikanischen Ténéré, was soviel heißt wie die „Wüste aller Wüsten"? Ich habe keine Antwort für mich, außer, dass die Ténéré viel schöner ist. Sie durchquert zu haben, erfüllt mich – ich gestehe es – mit Stolz.

PL: Seit Ihren ZERO-Jahren ist viel Zeit vergangen. Wie hat sich ihr Denken über die Jahre verändert? Sind Sie selbstkritischer, skeptischer geworden? Wie sind Sie mit Kritik umgegangen?

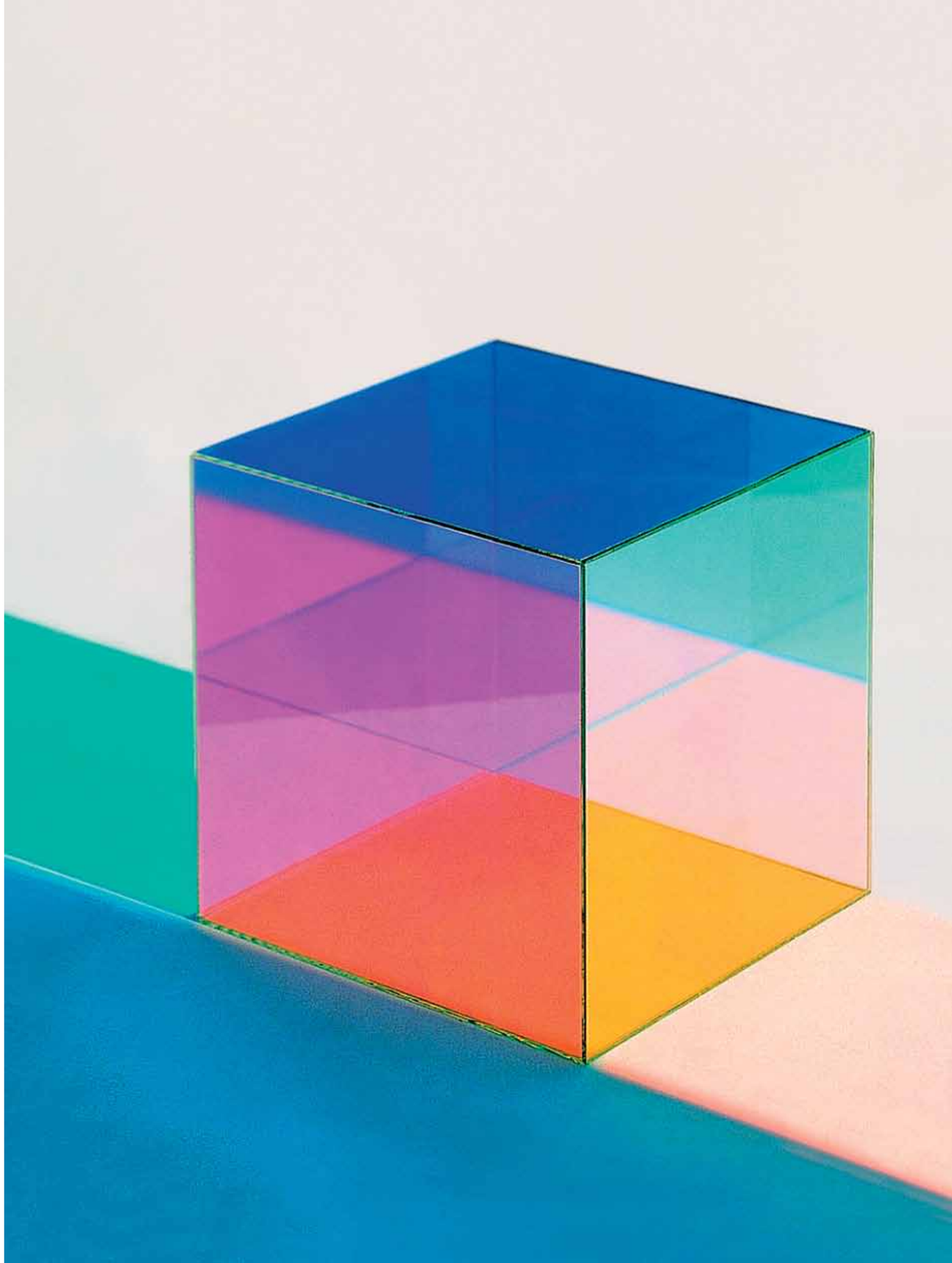
HM: ZERO ist ein halbes Jahrhundert alt oder jung, entsprechend der jeweiligen Blickwinkel. Nicht nur dank der nun institutionalisierten ZERO-Foundation wird die Frage: Was war ZERO? in den Focus der wissenschaftlichen Forschung geraten. Namhafte Museen bereiten Ausstellungen vor, Bücher werden publiziert, Sammlungen werden erweitert. Was Kunstgeschichte ist, lässt sich reanimieren, aber nicht eigentlich revitalisieren. Das kann ich mit Gelassenheit begleiten. Ob Alterserscheinung oder nicht, ich bin in der Tat selbstkritischer und auch skeptischer geworden; Zweifel am eigenen Tun begleiten mich vielleicht tiefgehender – sie sind wohl auch das „Agens" für den immer wieder selbst gewählten Entschluss, einen neuen Versuch zu machen, gesichertes Terrain aufzugeben, in der Erwartung Neuland zu entdecken. Das alles geht seinen Weg von selbst, mit einem nicht mehr kündbaren Selbstbewusstsein, das sich selbst bestätigen muss. Was die Kritik angeht, ich bin zuerst und zuletzt mein eigener Kritiker. Kritik, die von außen kommt, empört oder verletzt mich, wenn sie leichtfertig und zielsicher daherkommt. Das intellektuelle Niveau der selbsternannten Kritiker ist – gelinde gesagt – steigerungswürdig.

PL: Der Tod, der uns allen bevorsteht, ist die absolute Grenze von Raum, Zeit und Existenz. Ist die Kunst ein probates Mittel gegen die Angst vor dem Tod? Wenn ja, warum?

HM: Noch fordern mich weder meine geistigen noch meine physischen Verhältnisse auf, mich dem Tod zu konfrontieren. Wahrscheinlich ist er es, der sich mir konfrontiert. Bis es so weit kommt, folge ich dem „carpe diem", indem ich täglich meiner Arbeit als Künstler nachgehe, – um es zu wiederholen: täglich! Das gern und viel zitierte: „vita brevis, ars longa" macht das Sterben ganz sicherlich nicht komfortabler. Ich muss aber davon ausgehen, dass meine Kunst mich überlebt. Das ist unter anderem das, was mich täglich motiviert, für das ich mich verantwortlich fühle.

Diese Aussage muss für ein Interview genügen.

1 Ein gewisser Philotheos, vgl. Georges Didi-Huberman, Der Erfinder des Wortes „photographieren", in: ders., *Phasmes*, Köln 2001, S. 55-63.



YUKO SAKURAI

Interview with Peter Lodermeyer

July - August 2009

Yuko Sakurai (1970 in Tsuyama, Japan). Her work addresses traveling as an existential experience. Consequently she lives in various places in Europe and the USA.*

Peter Lodermeyer: Traveling is a way of experiencing time and space intensively. It is of crucial importance for your work. What does traveling mean to you and how does it have an impact on your art works?

Yuko Sakurai: Traveling makes me alive, makes me flexible, makes me happy, makes me stronger by connecting with people, and makes me feel enriched by encountering nature. Traveling strengthens my emotions, stimulates all my senses, teaches me even about food origins from place to place, and shows me other ways of life by getting closer to different cultures. It is not easy to observe myself if I always live in the same place and environment that I like or know well already. One thing I want to tell you is I do care about my own home base, for it gives me self-consciousness and self-awareness. While I want to gain as much information as possible from the outside world by traveling, I also need to return to my home base every once in a while. It might be because I am very emotional. I just cannot handle receiving so much information from being on the way over a long period of time. Eventually, I like to go back to my home base, and digest all my emotions from the experiences gained by traveling and which formed part of my consciousness. If I remember correctly, Hamish Fulton said that when you start traveling, you start feeling yourself to be smaller and smaller, and then the world becomes bigger and bigger. I think that those are beautiful words. So, traveling has a strong impact on my work. By traveling I get my own freedom and I can express myself in a more direct way. The emotions that come out by traveling I express in my work. I want to tell you one thing: I create my work with only positive thoughts. I like to share my emotions and thoughts in a positive direction.

PL: What do you mean by this? Are 'negative' thoughts—anger, disappointment, boredom etc.—not important parts of our human existence as well and worth being dealt with in an artistic way?

YS: Positive expression means warm thoughts. All experiences are very important in life, that's why I really need traveling, although I hit the wall many times when trying out new things. I get disappointed by not succeeding. But when I work, I see disappointment from a different point of view, and try out to find a good solution even from these disappointments. I feel sadness, loneliness, disappointment, no matter if they are mine or other persons' emotions. I want to use these feelings and experiences to find a better direction in my life and also in my art. I don't say that negative experiences and emotions are not important. I do not hide them; I want to deal with them. I want to change and learn by experiencing these negative things; when they become art, these feelings switch to the positive.

PL: Does it mean that art has an ethical dimension for you? Is there something like a utopian element in your work?

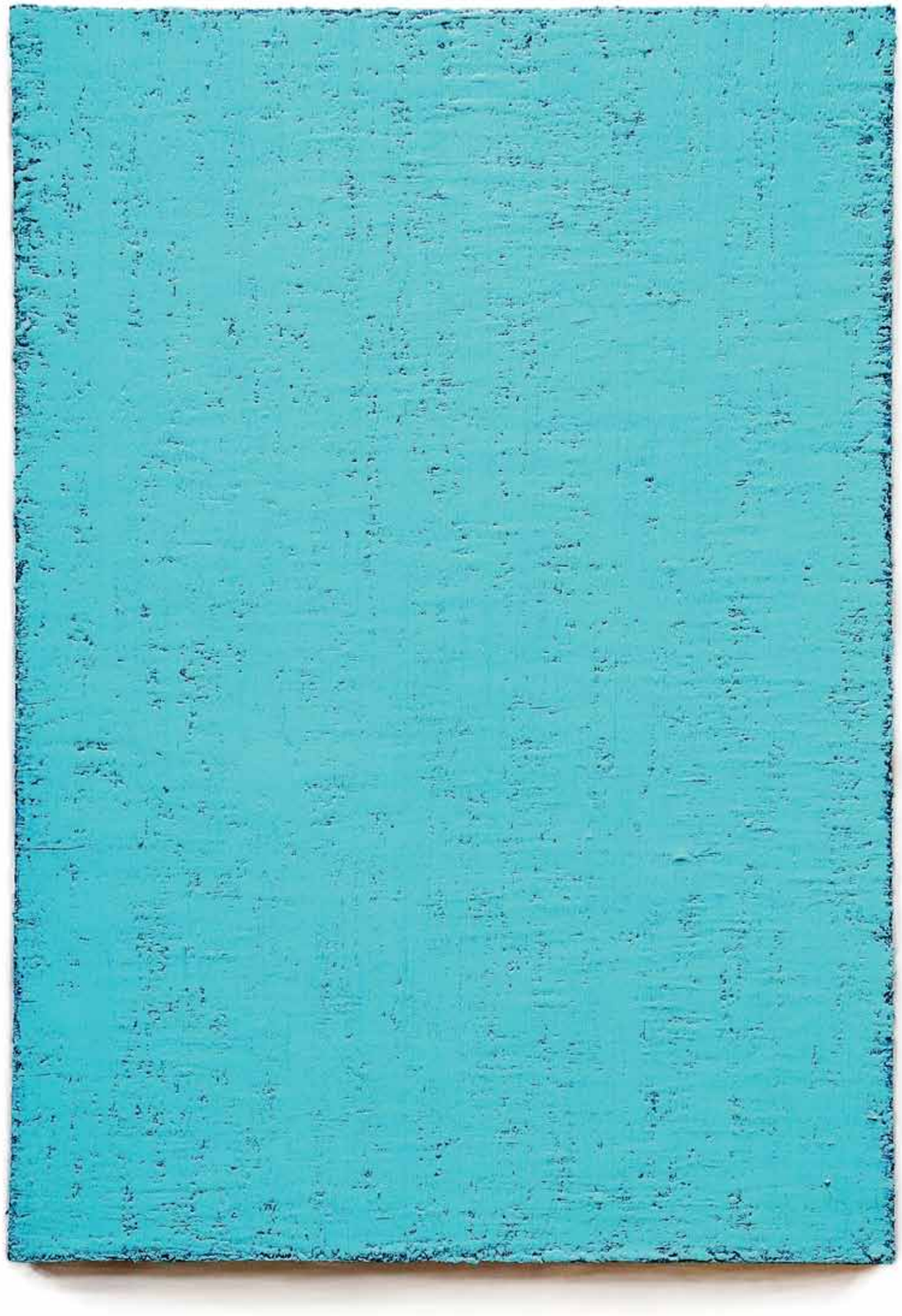
YS: I don't think that I have an ethical dimension in my art. Ethical and moral principles are important to our lives, our society, our culture. Depending on the culture where you grew up, the ethics can be different. I do care about them, but I do not use them in art. Of course when I express myself, it means that the art contains my own philosophy, my own ethical thoughts, but I do not take it as a subject matter. Therefore, I do not have any utopian theory in my work. I am not a dreamer. Through my art, I would like to share my thoughts with people. I don't wish to teach viewers or try to educate them through my art.

PL: Even a bad, kitschy flower still life can be an honest expression of the painter's personality. Honesty and authenticity don't say anything about quality. That's why I have problems with the concept of self-expression.

YS: Honesty and authenticity are connected with one's own personality and identity. If art can contain a person's identity, own personality and skills, it carries an extra quality. The reason why a kitschy painting doesn't look appealing is just because there is no personality and no thought in the work. Self-expression does not mean being egocentric, because I have a relation with my environment, my surrounding in space, and this is important for me.

PL: Your works refer to places you visited. So, they are strongly related to memories. What kinds of memories play a role for making your works?

YS: It's not necessarily about memories. Sometimes I make art like a diary. Then I chose themes from my daily life and surroundings in certain places to express my existence and my awareness. Tsuyama, Heusden and Miami are places where I have lived; these places influenced my life and art. Although I do not live in Japan, Tsuyama is still my par-



ents' hometown. When I go back to Japan, I always visit Tsuyama. My roots are there, and after some time I miss Japanese tradition and culture and feel that I need to experience the original Japanese essence again. This is like recharging my battery, that's why I go back there. When I come back to Europe, I make *Tsuyama* works. *Tsuyama*, *Heusden* and *Miami* are my ground works. With them I do create a relationship with these areas. My memories are passion, excitement and fascination. My emotions come from feeling the water, feeling the earth, from the sense of touching, the atmosphere of the sky and the sun. I can feel the essence of a place with all my senses. When I can reach the source of a river, or a high mountain, a place where not many people have been, an area where local people live or a deep forest with no one, that's fascinating. I feel existence by just being there. When I was in Miami, for example, I was lucky to stay by the beach, facing east on the Atlantic Ocean. Every day during the sunrise, I could experience the differences in color of sky, clouds and waves. I tried to pay attention to these colors. For three months I rarely missed seeing any sunrise. That was an extraordinary time experience. I always told myself that it might be the last chance to have such a beautiful sunrise view for myself. From these days I made *69th Collins Avenue 55 days sunrise*. Sometimes I made work from cities such as Brussels, Ghent, Cologne and Paris. These are memories from my encounters with people there, who influenced me. I do not write of my experiences in a notebook. I only express them in my work to keep remembering.

PL: Going back to the elementary experiences of nature is important to you. On the other hand, everyone is aware that our relation to nature has gotten more and more out of balance. Ecological damages as seen in the climate change are the most obvious results. Could you imagine that such problems could also become a theme in your work?

YS: I do not think that I will use these kinds of problems as subjects in my work, but they can influence me. If possible, I would like to experience what can happen in the world and in real life. If I have the chance, I love to see the cutting edge of historical change. I went to the Rhone Glacier in Switzerland in 2005, I walked through a tunnel of ice and could see the melting ice and feel the cold water drops on me. Millions of years disappeared second by second when I got those water drops on my body. I had the chance to walk over an 'accumulation' of time—I was on top of Rhone Glacier and I sat there for some time. Time impacted me strongly, in that it directly touched my body and I still remember it very well. This bodily experience of passing and connecting with time was beautiful but sad at the same time. A few months later I made 3 works called *Rhone Gletscher* about that experience.

PL: Is making work for you a way to bring a structure into your life? Would you say that making art is an existential necessity for you? Roman Opalka told me in Amsterdam that art has the purpose of making the absurdity of life bearable. Would you agree with him?

YS: I would not say that art brings just a structure in my life, because it connects with all senses and all kinds of emotions; I put all this in my art. For me, it is not only the actual act of making art that is important or a necessity in my life, my life is completely attached to art. I cannot imagine my life without art. So, I totally agree with Roman Opalka. Lee Ufan once told me "art is like a drug". I also agree with Lee Ufan. I am deeply connected with art and it goes deeper and wider without end.

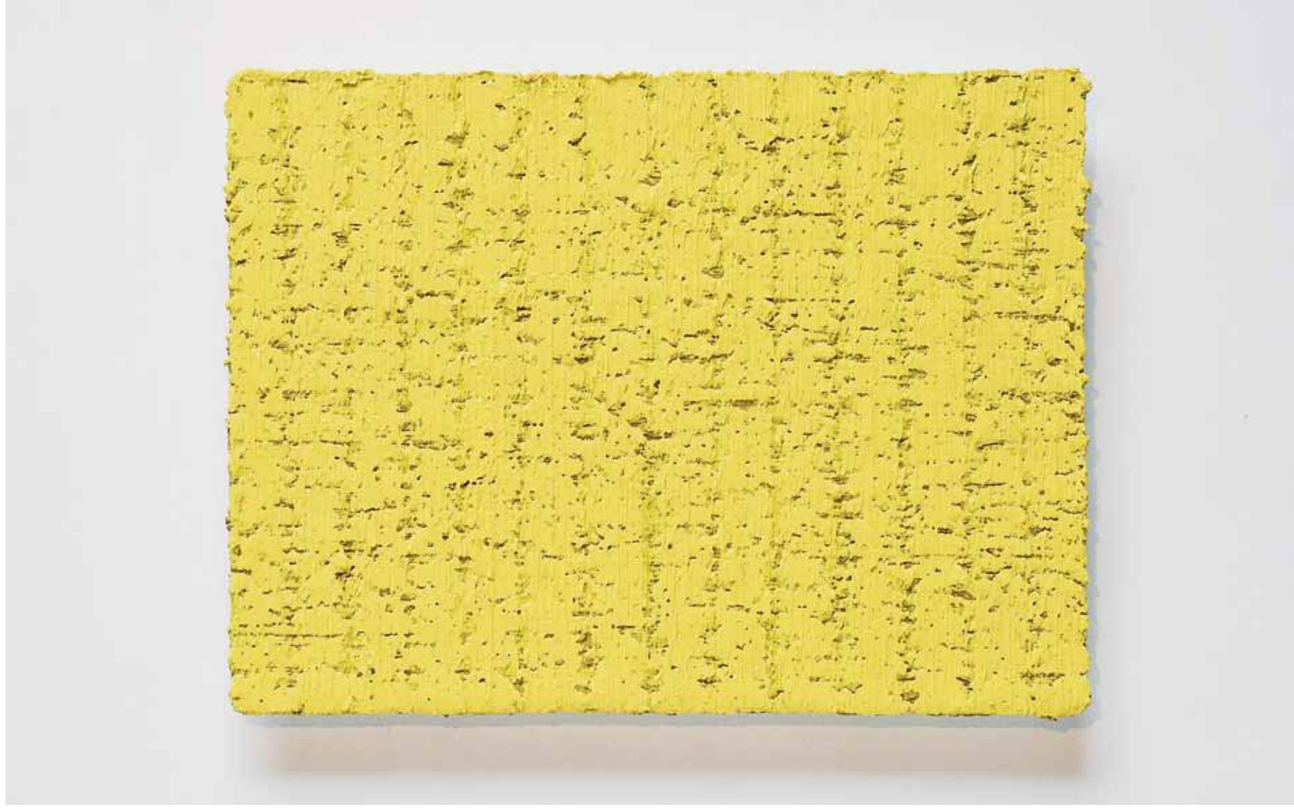
PL: Let's talk about space in a more narrow sense, the spatial character of your objects. An important part of perceiving them is to touch their surfaces and feel their textures. The viewers are literally invited to touch them. Could you tell me something about the interplay between the visual and the tactile experience of your objects?

YS: I want to share with the viewers both the visual and the tactile experience of my work. I would like the viewers to experience my feelings and my thoughts through my work. I create my own space within my work and I would like the people to get into that space. But space does not have limits or rules to be experienced. It depends on the person, how she/he wants to be in that space. I want the viewer to get the feeling of touching my work, but I do not want to force him/her to do so. When somebody touches it, it seems that this person gets an extra impression of me. I get the feeling that this person takes a step closer to knowing me. It is strange to say, but in a way I create a part of myself. When the viewer is interested in my work and wants to touch it, I feel that I have a closer contact with the viewer. I know that there are some people that respect an artwork very much, and for that reason would not touch it. I want to break this thought if I can… and give the viewers the freedom to feel art in a different way. And I don't want any framing around my work, not even with my paper work. Framing the work feels like putting it in a cage. When you look at my work from a distance, you can get the atmosphere from my experience of color and shape, and might see some texture. But when you come closer, you start seeing more details, texture and different color layers. You can get an in-depth experience when coming closer to my work. The material, the construction part, the paint and the surface are most important. All together, they create a harmony as an object.

PL: Language is of existential importance. For many years you have been living far from Japan, in many different cultural contexts as well as foreign languages. Is this a difficulty for making your work or, on the contrary, rather its precondition?

YS: Language is an important way to communicate, and it gives us information from the outside world. I understand that because of my lack of other languages, I can miss many things. But I think that exactly because of that all my senses get stronger. Within my limits, I try to communicate with people and to understand their culture. From my past 10 years of experience, I am not afraid of jumping into a place without knowing the language. It also means that I can have a bigger adventure when traveling. If you know the language, you can move faster and wiser around the world, and make fewer mistakes. Without knowing the language I can start feeling my way around and getting nuances of a place. The lack of language does not allow me to get too much information about that place, but it allows me to get more emotions. This might be a personal way of seeing and feeling. These are my direct emotions and feelings that I put in my work.

PL: It's interesting that your art sort of works as a compensation for a 'lack' of language. To be able to communicate with your works, it's necessary that there is a minimum of understanding for the content of your work on the side of the viewer. Do you think that there are elements in your paintings/objects that are more or less 'understandable' for everyone, no matter what cultural background they have?



YS: I know that I do have 'communication' with the viewer through my work. But I do not use the word 'understandable'. Because I give information about my work through its title; this is just an indication. I use the original language for my title, which is the name of a place somewhere in the world. So, if you do not have any idea about the Japanese place, 'Naoshima' is just a strange word. I hope that the viewers 'think' when they look at my work and try to get the essence of it. This is also part of 'communication'. Of course if the cultural background is different, the impression of seeing my work might be totally different; but this can also be a beautiful part of 'communication'. If a person thinks of my work and wants to know it, this will make the person get closer to my 'language'.

PL: You work with oil paint on wood, classical means of painting. But your work is not about painting, it's not an investigation about the possibilities of painting today. It refers to places and travels and is more influenced by people like Hamish Fulton than by painters (with perhaps one exception: Robert Ryman). Why are you working with oil paint on wood panels and not with 'documentary' media like, say, photography or video?

YS: I started my works in a natural way. I felt comfortable using oil paint: its consistency is similar to some materials that I used in my previous profession, when I was a French Patissier; I used butter, cream and chocolate daily. I think that using oil paint is much easier. I want to become really good in using oil paint as a material. I like wood as a natural material. I can even construct the panels by myself. I like to make the entire work from the beginning to the end. That's why I also feel that I am not only a painter. I do the cutting and polishing, and all these processes are part of my work as well. Even the backside of my works, I treat well. This is my idea about three-dimensional expression. I never had the desire to become a good draughtsman in the classic sense, and I have never had the thought to be a painter. I use oil paint as a material in order to express myself. Until now, I have mainly been using oil on wood, but I am open to try out different materials, I am just not good in jumping from A to B.

PL: Your work communicates mainly through color and surface texture. What are the most important characteristics of these two elements? Is there something like a 'grammar' of color and texture in your work?

YS: Each color has its own character. Colors contain different feelings, but it does not mean that I use the same color tone every time for the same emotion. Most of the time I have a certain direction for using colors. When I am very passionate with high emotions, I mostly use red. For peacefulness, calmness and quietness I take white, for happiness and warmth I use the yellow direction, blue for magnificence and continuity. The textures also have very different emotional qualities. There are different ways of making textures: thin surfaces, thick surfaces, layers, with lines, without lines, the use of brushes or palette knifes… Visual expression is mainly just by color and texture. It's very limited. But that's why it is so interesting to do. It's always challenging to try to find out where my limits are. Working in a 'minimal' way allows me to try to find my maximum freedom for creating my own space. But I am not a monochrome painter. I create depth in my work, even with thin layers. My works contains a lot of information about me.

ERWIN THORN

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Erwin Thorn studio, Vienna, Austria, 2 July 2009

Erwin Thorn (1930, Austria) has mainly made works in the 1950s and 60s, works are related to the ZERO movement. For many different reasons there was a 40 year period of silence around Thorn. Since 2008 his old works received attention again through Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria.*

Erwin Thorn: Everything here in my studio is full of work. All of them are early works, from the 1950s and 60s. Then some time ago, Georg Kargl came and started to restore many pieces.

Karlyn De Jongh: Columns seem very important to you. They are a form you use quite often. When you make such a column, what does that mean? Is it an art historical reference? Is it erotic? Do you want to demonstrate power?

ET: For me the column is a very traditional symbol of power, maybe the most traditional, that has been able to hold on for thousands of years. That applies to different cultures, not only the Hellenistic one. It concerns patriarchates. For me it is also a penis, a phallus symbol, although this is not very clear in our culture. But it is present everywhere, for example, in architecture.

KDJ: When you exhibit it, is the work about claiming a position or place?

ET: It is the exact opposite. For me, it is an ironic language. It was, for me, important to show 'power' in various ways.

KDJ: Is all power ironic to you or only when you yourself make a column?

ET: I communicate something. Essentially, something like that has a position-relatedness. It only becomes clear to me now that I haven't spoken this way about my work in 20, 30 years. Only in the 60s, when these works were made, was there some small discussion—but no discourse—about my art. At that time, the flow of information was very limited. I lived in surroundings that I observed here. I slipped into the visual arts, I have to say. At first I worked with graphics and at fairs. I came in contact with artists and found my way to position myself within the art world. But one is also frightened in doing that. Art was always taken very seriously here. That irritated me. I used the word 'Teutonic' for this. In Austria we live in a baroque culture, and in one way or another that is not articulated in contemporary art. I wanted an answer to the 'Art Informel', which means something like 'no form'. Part of my work is a reaction to that. I wanted something kitschy and baroque. Because I was fearful, I made a shadow. That was a clear order, an order principle. My works are made like that: they are lightened from two angles; I colored the shadow. I am telling you this, because I was always a bit ironic and wanted to keep a distance from these big artists: I played around.

KDJ: You use materials that can have a sexual connotation, such as fake fur. Is this a correct assumption? Why is that important for you? How is your art related to sex?

ET: No, it's not sex, but eroticism. That is something that is important for me generally, in the sense of a tactile challenge. A texture that asks to be touched. This I would very much like to grasp.

My position towards my pieces is intuitive and deliberated. I am searching order and ruptures as a kind of an anticlimax. There are formal expectations. Formally, we are used to expect something paradigmatically, a known, morphological language. But suddenly a foreign substance, a new language, is in there.

KDJ: Last month I was in Düsseldorf for the opening of the ZERO Foundation. Your works have often been brought in relation with the ZERO movement, but from your side, I have learned that when you made your work in the late 50s and early 60s you had never heard of ZERO.

ET: I didn't know anything, and that is also my mistake. I did not have the instruments to provide me with information. But also at the Academy of Applied Arts where I studied in the 50s, you could get only very little information on the international art scene. It wasn't like today, when everybody can get information from anywhere. The ZERO movement was the first to receive me with open arms. That I never experienced in Vienna.

These works were made end of the 50s, beginning of the 60s. At that time I became acquainted with the Italian ZERO movement. That was in 1963/64. It happened in Italy; I had never had contact with the Germans. My Japanese neighbor, an artist, asked me to join him on a trip as he didn't dare to drive the whole way alone. He had rented a small van we took to Milan, Italy, where he had an

exhibition. He had told me a bit about ZERO and so I decided to take a few works with me. That's how it happened. I met Castellani and I exhibited with Fontana and others. I hadn't known anything about these people before; I experienced that only when I was there. I thought it was fantastic! It was a like-mindedness.

KDJ: Except maybe for this time in the early 60s, it seems you have always been a kind of outsider to the art world. Do you consider yourself to be an artist?

ET: I have never called myself an artist. This word never came out of my mouth. Art takes itself so seriously that is for me really something repulsive. I have few contacts with other artists. This did not come about completely voluntarily, only halfway. Luckily I was able to work as a teacher at the Academy in the 80s.

The whole thing as it takes place now is very strange to me. Maybe it has something to do with the society. I was born in 1930 and in 1938 we were lucky to be able to flee to Israel. In the kibbutz where I lived for some time there was a completely different society compared to Austria. There the social life in the sense of intensive discussions was important and there was a very vivid exchange about daily life. I do not know if this has something to do with existence, one of the topics of your book. I have difficulties to understand the concept of existence. Time and space, the two other topics are very clear to me as you also can see in my works with the light and the shadows.

I lived in Israel for 15 years. I went to Europe in 1953. I didn't want to go to Austria, I wanted to go to France, but I didn't succeed in that. But it is my fault that it didn't work out. Maybe I don't have the capacity to make it work… You couldn't travel anywhere without a visa at that time. In Austria I could live, because I had an Austrian passport that I used which gave me the possibility to earn money. Later on I got scholarships to the Netherlands, and to London, UK. Although I wasn't able to meet the right people, it was an important time for me.

KDJ: For the past 30 years you have not been producing many new works. What did you think when Georg Kargl approached you for an exhibition? Were you surprised?

ET: Yes, actually I was. It is an ambivalent thing for me. The interest in things I did so many years ago is vivid, but not in things I am doing now. Kargl approached me already ten years ago. I did not know him, but he knew me. Ten years ago I declined, because I couldn't show him anything. All my pieces were in a basement, dusty and dirty and practically not visible. I had been renting that basement since the 60s from the city council. My wife is a historian and maybe therefore occupied with the idea that things can get lost. She arranged a new warehouse for me. That happened two weeks before Kargl called me again to ask if he could see something. Then I said "yes", and Kargl immediately took things with him for restoration.

KDJ: It seems you yourself are not so careful with your work. I see here a piece that is used as a table and that has coffee stains on it. Henk Peeters from the Dutch ZERO group (NUL) once, one Monday morning, gave everything to the garbage man. Have you thrown away many things?

ET: Yes. I threw away a lot. For me, it was such a relief.

KDJ: In an article that appeared in connection with your exhibition at the Georg Kargl Gallery last year it says that there has been a revaluation of art-historiography and that nowadays your work is contemporary again. What do you think about that?

ET: For me that was a very ambivalent thing. Large parts of my works originated in another time and had a specific cultural and political impact which today, I suppose, are no longer readable to the viewer and are considered in an aesthetic way only.

KDJ: In your talk for the opening there, you mentioned that objects speak to the identity of the viewer. What do you mean by that? How do you see that in relation to the presence your works have at the moment?

ET: For me the process of making is important, not only for me, but for the viewer too. Take for example the shadow, which is important to all of my works. Strictly speaking, the wall is integrated in these works, that is: the shadow can be into the surface of the work, but can also continue on the wall. The experience with the shadow helped me further. I discovered it through my white pieces. I think that with these pieces I invite the viewer not to be part of a work, but part of a process. That not only the object is present, but that the whole process of making it is comprehensible. The viewer always has to work, that is clear, but maybe only in a metaphorical way.

For me metaphors are very important. I wondered about where the event happens: is that in the outlying area? Or is that in the center? The frame is for me important, as it is in the old paintings, I myself integrated the frame sometimes in my work, they are not two objects. Generally the frame is a nomination of the object; it is an isolating of oneself from other objects. The frame is important in a metaphorical way too: It fits perfectly to our culture. The frame is more important than the object itself. The first frame for an object is the artist, and then come the galleries, the museums and so on.

KDJ: It seems you take a lot of pleasure in talking about your life and work, but at the same time you are skeptical about the attention you have received from the art world.

ET: There is a very beautiful sentence by Beckett. I cannot say it very well, because his language is carried by music, but it goes something like this: "Fail and fail again, fail again and again." Later he ends with "Fail better." I always understood that as a *bon mot*. In reality this is exactly what concerns my position. If I make money with these works now, that helps me of course, but strictly speaking, I couldn't care less. What is interesting to me is what crystallizes from it all, what occupies me today. I am curious. When one makes a work, one learns a lot during the process. When the works are finished, it is only sentiment. But I have to tell you that this is not fully correct, because at the exhibition in Georg Kargl Fine Arts I got resonance and response from young people, too, and I liked that a lot. But I also wondered how these young people read my work. I always grasped my work in a very narrow temporal context. I told you I took a position, meaning the situation in which these things came into being.

KDJ: Certain objects you made seem to belong to a specific place. You have made a few works that have to be placed in a corner, such as one of your columns. Other works seem to belong to a ceiling or

around a door or window. Is the position of the work something you choose beforehand?

ET: Yes, I choose it beforehand. To position of objects in the space is not neutral and vice versa, the space itself is defined by these decisions.

KDJ: You have spoken about the change of place. Does the position or placement of your work influence it? Is placing important to you?

ET: Definitely. Choosing a corner means defining the space in the diagonal, besides that the character of the object is changing the traditional hierarchies of the space as I mentioned before.

KDJ: A few of your works are called Nothing. *I thought about that in relation to Existence, although you have said that existence is something you don't understand. Are you a nihilist?*

ET: I meant that ironically. Maybe I have something nihilistic about me.

KDJ: You have said that there is a difference between the way you clarified your work in the 60s and the way you are doing that now. Time plays a role in that. It seems that your opinion about your work already changes sooner in the process, after you have finished a work. Do you loose interest in your work after they are finished?

ET: I never used to hang any works of mine in my studio. Only works were there that I was still working on, although I did hang my latest pieces in my house. They still interested me and I did that to see what they would look like outside of the studio context.

Maybe it was also to see if the works would assert themselves. This is exactly like a piece that gets transferred to other spaces. I am getting to the point where I hang works of mine that are older in a space that I don't know. That is actually interesting.

KDJ: You have mentioned before that you are a curious person and that this shows in your work. You stated that your work is something playful for you. How do you understand your work?

ET: They have changed a lot and differ a lot from each other. There is such a lot of intuitiveness involved. There are different situations and I am curious and pursue them. That gives me pleasure. I am curious about what will become of it. My art is definitely play, absolutely. It is a pleasure. It is a privilege to be able to be occupied with something like that, providing one can live from it.

KDJ: Is life for you also play? Or do you see that differently?

ET: I would rather see it as playful. But there are aspects that come into your life that occupy you completely, such as diseases. When these things happen, play vanishes. When someone is as nihilistic as I am, he sees life as a play. I have an animalistic unconcernedness.

KDJ: What does death mean to you?

ET: Then it is over. I don't see it as something tragic.

Post Scriptum [Erwin Thorn]: You have to think of one thing. I have now learned a lot about what happened earlier. It allows me to contemplate the pieces again. It is an experience and experiences are good. As a young person I didn't know what to do with myself. The only thing I knew was that I am visually oriented. When I reflect upon my work again, I think about things that happened years ago and that is not uninteresting. When the works were made I could not talk with anyone like we are talking now, but this history misses a direction. This course plays a role in the way I speak now; 30 years ago I would not have been able to articulate these works this way. But strictly speaking, these things aren't important to me. I don't learn anything from them anymore; they don't generate new experiences. It is just sentiment.

LOUISE BOURGEOIS

Interview with Sarah Gold

6 July 2009

Louise Bourgeois (1911, Paris, France) is one of the oldest living artists at this point in time. She is probably most well known for her spider structures, titled* Maman. *Her very personal work focuses mainly on relationships. She lives and works in New York City, USA.*

Sarah Gold: If you could make any shape and use any material within any possible space, what would you create?

Louise Bourgeois: I would create the drawing I have just completed. They are two people together, naked, and looking at each other.

SG: I am 31, hopefully still at the beginning of my life, you are 97, what should I know about Time, Space and Existence?

LB: All these concepts are terrifically important and indispensible because of their properties and the way they relate to sculpture, but they have to relate to flesh and blood, to people.

SG: So many people took so much out of you and your artwork. What do you hope that you have been able to give to the world?

LB: This is not for me to say. I'm working for myself and if anyone can get something out of that, I'm pleased.

SG: Your artworks already existed long before I was born, as long as I can think you have been present in my life. What can I hope for, from you for my future?

LB: More work, I still feel I have a lot to say.

SG: Looking back on the time you have seen passing by, was your own existence mainly, shaped, characterized, by: fear, joy, anger, will to create…what was it that characterized your life?

LB: Fear and will are inseparable in the making of my work.

SG: Picasso said: "Age has forced us to give it up, but the desire remains! It's the same with making love. We don't do it anymore, but the desire is still with us!" Which desires have remained with you, without being able to fulfill?

LB: To make more people like me.

SG: You once said that "A woman has no peace as an artist until she proves over and over that she won't be eliminated." As an artist who has proven that she cannot be eliminated anymore, do you have found peace as an artist and as a woman?

LB: Yes.

SG: You once said: "Some of us are so obsessed with the past that we die of it… It is that the past for certain people has such a hold and such a beauty… Everyday you have to abandon your past or accept it and then if you can't you become a sculptor." Did you ever regret that you have not been able to let go of the past?

LB: I hold onto the past because it is a tool in the present. The past resides in the work, but I'm exclusively interested in the here and the now and even tomorrow.

SG: Could you have done anything in your life, in your art, to get more satisfaction out of your own existence?

LB: No.

SG: On June 30, 1972, Picasso faced the terror that consumed him and made a drawing of it. It was his last self-portrait. The next day the art historian Pierre Daix came to visit him. "I made a drawing yesterday," he told him. "I think I have touched on something there… It is not like anything ever done." "It was a face of frozen anguish and primordial horror held next to the mask that he had worn for so long and that had fooled so many. It was the horror he had painted and the anguish he had caused and which, in his own anguish, he continued to cause. Picasso died on April 8, 1973."

Have not all your works in a sense been self portraits and are you prepared to make that last statement about your own existence?

LB: My works are portraits of a relationship.

XING XIN

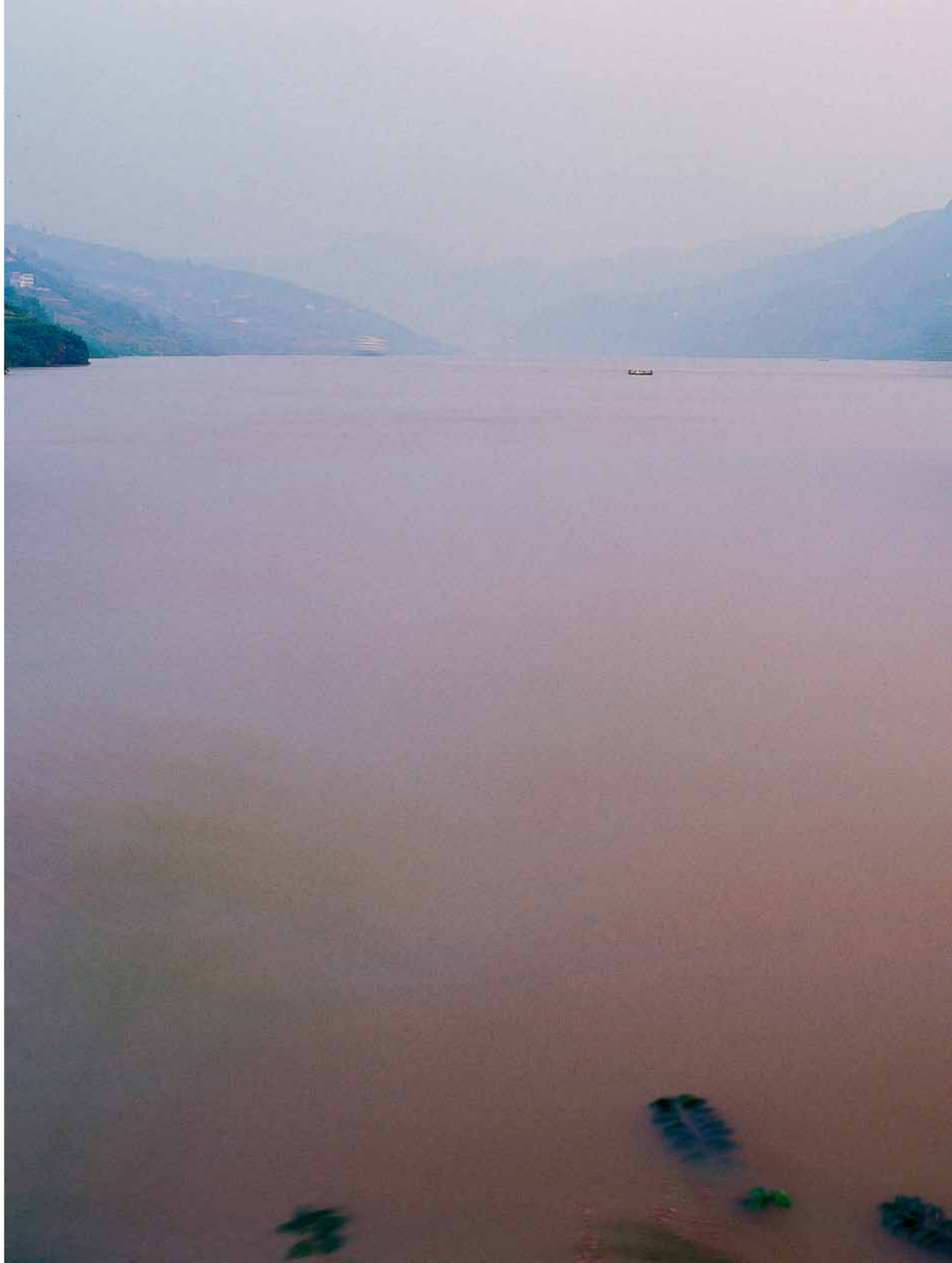
Conversation with Sarah Gold

Murano, Venice, Italy, 8 July 2009

*Xing Xin (*1981, Chongqing, China) is a performance artist. His work expresses his feelings about his own existence.*

Sarah Gold: When I see your performances, you are often in a cage and another time you are alone, traveling outside on the river. Where do you see the differences between your work and the performances from Tehching Hsieh, for example in relation to his One Year Performance 1978–1979 (Cage Piece) *and the* One Year Performance 1981–1982 (Outdoor Piece)*?*

Xing Xin: Actually, my works are not necessarily in a cage, and those performances of mine that you refer to were created in the last three years. Before that, my works were more interactive performances, focusing more on performativity itself. Most artists in the many Live Art Activities I used to participate in those years, created their work in this way. Compared to my works from the last three years, in none of those previous works did I ever accomplish total exclusion and the expression of my emotions simultaneously. The continuation of this kind of feeling makes me ever more aware of it. Or maybe it is just because I did not like the way they were created anymore. After complex considerations, my way of creating gradually came into being. Regarding the differences between the performances of Tehching Hsieh's and mine, I think we can only put it this way: It is impossible for me to thoroughly interpret his work without having similar personal experiences, taking into account his historical, social and family circumstances of that time. Besides, I've never met him in person, I only know him and his works from several documentations, and I believe that each of his performances, *One Year Performance 1978–1979 (Cage Piece)* and the *One Year Performance 1981–1982 (Outdoor Piece)* have a very strong impression and deep meditation within them. Therefore, I might have to explain more of my meditations, thoughts, before, during, and after my performances, in order to make this picture clearer. Like most artists, my creations and expressions have their origin in my own reflections and thoughts about the world and society, as well as in the feedback I get. I usually try my best to present my creations in the form I'm most comfortable with. I've tried to create in forms of painting, sculpture, installation, photography, video and performance. However, I'm most satisfied by the form where I can integrate myself into my works and be present in them as a whole. I believe that that form exists side by side with the content. My works from the last three years are just like a series of games, and I played them by the rules I had made before the performance. For example, in my performance, *Cage Work*, *Kids of Workers*, I sealed myself in an iron cage, which I hardly fit into. And then, I started to cut the iron bars with one saw blade after another. Finally, it took me 19 and a half hours to cut out an exit to set myself free. But before all this took place, I was very clear that it was more about a piece of art rather than just a performance itself. So I not only considered the concept the action itself delivers, but also how to make full use of the living space in order to more accurately convey my emotions. For this reason, I chose a big tree full of flowers to hang my cage on, and with many more flowers around it. These purple and golden flowers, together with the tender green leaves, suffused the scene with a feeling of melancholy and happiness. In another case, in my work *Send Xing Xin under Escort*, I had myself sealed in another iron cage where there was only enough room for me to lie down in. After that, the cage was packed, picked up by a shipping company, and then the shipping company, without knowing that there was a living person inside, sent it from one city to another, as a delivery. The whole process took 3 days (almost 70 hours), and I was sent to Beijing, 1400 kilometers away from my starting point. Usually, there is only one solution to each of my 'games', that is, only if I finished the whole designed process with my persistence would the performance come to an appropriate ending. For example, only if an exit was cut out from the cage was I able to get out; only if the delivery was sent to the destination was I able to be set free. In my work *Free and Easy Wandering*, I designed a 'day-dream' in which I lay on a bed and drifted gently down the Yangtze River from dawn to dusk, wandering between heaven and earth. Since ancient times, it has been impossible for water vehicles without any power system to sail on the river during the night. Therefore, the work started at dawn, and spontaneously ended at dusk. The origins of several of these pieces are all in my thinking of and associations with something, or else in incidents that happened in my daily life. The contents of the works are no more than the sums of



my repressed emotions. It is through the performances that I finally am able to cast them off. The philosophical, aesthetical and social significances of my works have built up a substantial kind of satisfaction that balances my body and soul.

SG: Part of your performances is often that you cannot escape from a very small space. Only after serious effort are you able to free yourself. What is for you the meaning of this space you are freeing yourself from?

XX: One of the most obvious characteristics of this series of work is that in the performance I always deliberately design a space. Concerning the meanings of the space, from my initial point of view, it is the dislocation of the ideology I was immersed in that formed an area, whose borders were often obscure—once my mind entered this area, my emotions became repressed. Therefore, freeing becomes the only way to get out of there.

SG: When you free yourself from that very small space, do you not have the feeling that nothing changes, except that the space around you became larger? Or did something else change?

XX: Usually, I don't mean to change anything other than myself. When I finished a piece of work, I felt released. Maybe it is partially because I have to devote a lot of energy to it. I always overtax myself, and at those moments, my mind goes blank. Meanwhile, the vanity brought about by the work arises and makes me extraordinarily comfortable. Nevertheless, this kind of pleasant feeling mostly doesn't last longer than several days, or sometimes a few months. As soon as it has decreased to a certain level, a new releasing point comes up spontaneously.

SG: For me your performances deal with your own existence. You are the single child of Chinese parents, living in the west of China. How does your existence reflect on your work and has it changed by the performances you do? Were you able to change someone else's existence?

XX: It is true that my existence has a great impact upon my creations, as my works are actually the externalization of the feelings about my own existence. Today, I carefully reviewed all of my works again for these questions. I found out that in recent years, my works have always been about my own memories of growing up and an abreaction to the problems that had bothered me for so long. And each time when I was about to abreact, I would question myself over and over again, "Why am I doing this!?" Simultaneously, these endless reflections and questions provided me with a plan of how to spend my tomorrow. I regard this plan as the most important reflection that my creations cast upon my own existence. The world is extremely massive, but no matter how massive it is, in different degrees, people have quantified it. In my opinion, each and every individual's existence on earth has impact on the people who live around him or her, and furthermore, on the whole society of human beings, it just varies in degrees. So I believe that my creations have unquestionably changed, or have had an impact upon, someone's existence.

SG: Your work Free and Easy Wandering *where you are sitting on a bed floating down the Yangtze River, seems to be far more poetic than your other performances. What exactly did you want to do there?*

XX: My plan was: At dawn, I would lie on the bed and drift along with the Yangtze River. My bed and I would be at the mercy of the wind and waves until dusk approached. That's all. The origin of the idea came in the summer of 2007. I went swimming in the Yangtze River with my father. Because we lived along the Yangtze River, my father was especially fond of swimming in the river with several friends at dawn, almost every day. He had loved swimming since he was young, and when I was a little boy, I was often fastened to a swimming ring and taken for a dip with him. However, this experience, in the summer of 2007, marked the first time that I had swum in the Yangtze River for over ten years, it impressed me a lot: The river was more than one kilometer wide [nearly a mile] and I followed my father, swimming into the middle of the Yangtze almost at one go. The water in the river is flowing, so it is a very different feeling from swimming in swimming pools, lakes or seas. Even if you stand still, the water will bring you forward in a certain direction. When I myself floated in the water on the river, I felt that my body was so light and easy. Watching the scenes on both sides of the river moving inch by inch, becoming smaller and smaller, and finally out of my sight, I was so moved. Even now there's a kind of excitement beyond description, deep in my heart. However, maybe because of the difference in temperature between the inside and outside of the river, added to overexerting myself, I fell ill after that. So for nearly a year after that, I was not able to revive that feeling. I often spoke with my friends about this experience and my feelings, and they all regarded it very much as a dream. Moreover, we were always told that many people drowned in the river, so very few men dare to really swim in it. All of these thoughts came into my mind, and I was inspired with an idea of a 'day-dream'. Eventually, I brought my bed with me and set out on this journey.

SG: Your performance at the 53rd Venice Biennale is often interpreted as a political statement about the one child policy in China. How do your performances relate to that one child policy?

XX: Well, I think it is not a bad thing that some viewers regard the work *The Black Box* as a kind of political statement, because it would be definitely a tragedy if there are no people willing to see or taste your artwork after it is carried out. But I would like to emphasize on the starting point of my work, as I mentioned above, it is derived from my personal experiences and feelings, and I will cast off those unhappy or uncomfortable experiences and feelings in the way I prefer. Concerning *The Black Box*, the work itself is far more important for me than whether it is in keeping with my political statement. This piece of artwork originated from a policy that was carried out by our government in a specific period and which also affected me a lot. I understand very well the significance of the 'One Child Policy' in the political and economic development of our country at that time and even now. We have to admit that, with the 'needs of development', all concepts have to be adjusted simultaneously. Therefore, the problems that I now have strong feelings about might also be in great need of reviewing policy decisions. However, here I have to emphasize that I have never thought about involving myself in a political discussion, because what I am pursuing is a kind of pure and peaceful life, and politics for me is far too speedy as well as noisy. As an illustration: when the preparation work of *The Black Box* was about to finish, we were told that our Chairman was visiting Italy, and he was coming to Venice where we were. He was invited to visit the exhibition where my work would be exhibited, that was on 7 July 2009. The visit of our Chairman is undoubtedly a fortunate chance, but the main curator of my exhibition suggested that I start my performance right then, that is, on 8 July. He was very eager to make my work known to our leaders, and it would have been a very effective promotion for the work. But I declined the offer. Because to me it was very clear that if I started my performance during our Chairman's visit to Italy, which was from 7 to 9 July, the creation itself would instantly have become a political protest rather than an art project. Finally, I started my work on 13 July. I am very sure that I just want to do something called Art.

SG: About this performance at the 53rd Venice Biennale you have said: "Maybe because of the loneliness in my deep heart, I want to tell something. Or maybe because I am the only child, I want to show off my uniqueness." Could you explain to me more about these words, the project you did and your thoughts?

XX: I like lying in bed alone and staring blankly into space, seeing movies alone, shopping alone, going to the supermarket alone and working alone… 'Being alone' makes me comfortable, especially when I am staring blankly in bed. I hate anyone who breaks into my view and attempts to peek into my existence. It's just like a sudden prick with a pin on a rising balloon in the air. However, in those endless peaceful nights, 'loneliness' still hits those who enjoy being alone. Usually at that moment I need a listener for my 'story of being a loner'. I attribute this kind of feeling and way of life to being the only child of my family. Although I am sure that I am very exclusive, unique, indispensable to the world, and nobody understands me, I believe a sense of satisfaction a large necessity for reaching the balance of both physical and mental health. So I am eager to show off my inspirations and ideas, so that I can achieve my satisfaction. The idea of *The Black Box* started two years ago. One day, when I was doing some cleaning in my house, I found by coincidence several textbooks from my time at elementary school. Seeing the clumsy handwriting on the books made me feel both familiar and strange, it reminded me of my childhood. When I was a child, as soon as I touched the textbooks, I got bored and tired. In class, I was always just sitting there and staring blankly. When it came to reviewing time at night, I usually wasted time in procrastination until I was told to go to sleep. It has been very difficult for me to study and acquire knowledge. Yet, now I can fully understand why we have to study, as well as why I hated accepting education at that time. These memories and meditations inspired me to learn again all I had to learn while growing up. Later on, because very few of my own textbooks

remained due to becoming outdated, I began to collect textbooks here and there. Usually, there is more despair than hope in a process of searching for something. However, at the same time, the artwork becomes enriched, the project is constantly making progress, with connections and conversations among many different people. For the collection of the whole set of the textbooks, at least over hundred friends were asked to take part. For the past two years, I have asked for help from all of my friends who might possibly have the books, I also told them why I was collecting the books. Amongst them, there were my classmates from primary school, teachers in secondary school, and friends from university. I also went to second-hand book markets and recycling stands for waste paper. And I posted a lot on the internet in search of the books. Nevertheless, one month before my performance, I had only found about 70% of the whole set of textbooks. As planned, the performance would only be carried out when we had found the whole set of books. Despite all, in the process of finding the books, a word from a friend of mine changed my mind. He said: "What you are looking for is memory, but the truth of memory might just be something elusive or delusive." All of a sudden, I found out that my intention was no more than to present a work and express my feelings. Besides the textbooks, I also designed an iron box for this work. It was a new element that I added, half a year before my performance started. Originally it was not planned to be performed in this way. In the last three years, I have been using the same element of the 'iron cage' to enrich my works. Now it seems that each of the 'iron cages' in the past three years was an experiment or a covering material for this work.

SG: Marina Abramović told me that the direct relation with the spectators is very important for her. You often have no direct contact with spectators at all. Do you do your performances mainly for yourself or are they always a present for us, in the form of film and photo?

XX: First of all, admittedly, I do my performances generally for myself. Usually, I don't design them to have direct contact or interaction with spectators, but occasionally there might be exceptions. However, I take my spectators' psychological changes while they are watching the performance into consideration as much as possible; or rather let them communicate with my work in a way that is both physical and psychological. This kind of communication is rather advantaged and unidirectional. I intend to have my audience influenced and emotionalized by the live performance in order to inspire their active thinking. In most cases, I perform as if there were no other people around me, while having the idea that "someone is looking at me". It is just like a lady in a dazzling evening gown walking down the red carpet at a banquet. Actually, I do wish that there would be more people who could see my work at the time it is done so that they would be able to experience the atmosphere I created in person, which is absolutely different from viewing the videos or photos afterwards. However, there are also several performances that do not really allow for a big audience. For example, in *Send Xing Xin under Escort*, if there were many spectators following the consignment, it would not have been consigning anymore. This question makes me see that maybe it is just my 'egoism' that has formed my character of creating.

SG: In your performance Free and Easy Wandering *you set a precise time frame. Why did you do that in this instance and why did you leave the timeframe of your other performances often related to a task, which had to be fulfilled?*

XX: Actually in my opinion, the setting of the timeframes in the *Drifting (Free and Easy Wandering)* and the *Consigning (Send Xing Xin under Escort)* share great similarities in the mentality of their design. To put it precisely, that is, from spot A to spot B, a living creature passively accepts a shift in space as time goes by. Elaborately comparing the characters of these two performances, we can see: 1. Passive limitations—in *Consigning*, the limitation was created by a sealed iron box, while in *Drifting* it was designed as the wooden bed without power system, meaning that it drifted at the mercy of the river. 2. Timeframe settings—in *Consigning*, I set two exact locations for the beginning and end of the performance, and the span of time was determined by the distance. For *Drifting*, I randomly picked a spot, close to my place, to start the performance, and with the help of the 'time cycle' in nature, the destination came up. Therefore, this time the distance was determined by the span of time. 3. Space shift: In both of the performances, the subjects were moved passively from one place to another with the help of external forces as time went by. From my perspective, 'time' is an unavoidable element for live art, so there full use of its representability must be made. Therefore, 'time' has always been plainly visible in almost all of my works.

SG: Do you measure your lifetime in tasks and not in minutes or days as I do? What is time to you?

XX: Concerning the measurements of my lifetime, I am not quite sure whether or not we share the same understanding. Usually I spontaneously do some thinking when I am working, or creating. Once I begin my thinking, I plan, and I thirst for its presentation in a perfect manner. So I spare every effort to work for it at any cost, including time. However, other times, I will be so obsessed by something intriguing that I even forget to work for a long period. I know life is temporal; as I have calculated before, approximately, there are only 30,000 days available in one's lifetime. Therefore, I always question myself: how important are these so-called artworks to my life? And it is precisely by this questioning that I constantly discover their significance to me.

SG: You told me that sometimes you would like to repeat your performance. Is the location where you do your performance of importance to you? Why exactly did you choose certain locations as for example in Free and Easy Wandering *floating on the Yangtze river from Chongqing Fuling to Fengdu and in* Send Xing Xin under Escort *being caged and boxed in, driving in a truck from Sichuan to Beijing?*

XX: Yes, the location of my performance is of great importance to me. Just as time is always carefully scheduled in my work, I have also carefully analyzed the location. In my work, location actually means space, and different spaces will express different feelings, especially certain geographical or cultural significant spaces convey powerful information. Therefore, in order to better express my ideas, I have to know, grasp and make full use of the available information. For example, in the *Free and Easy Wandering*, the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, which are located in Chongqing, are to me like the swimming pool downstairs at my place, because I have spent 20 springs and autumns playing in the water there. Therefore, I harbor very deep feelings for this river. It has borne many cultures, and since ancient times it has inspired countless poets and men of letters, thoughts and feelings. Then, if the river is used properly as a material in my performance, my work will most likely be better understood by the viewers. However, in *Send Xing Xin under Escort*, I sent myself from Chengdu to Beijing. Regarding these two places, I would like to say, Chengdu is the place where I live, I have been living alone in Chengdu for about 8 years, while my parents live in Chongqing. And Beijing is the capital of our country, where the 'soul' of our nation lies. I think to analyze it this way offers a better understanding of how necessary and interrelated the choice of the location to an art piece itself is.

幸鑫

与Sarah Gold 的对话

玻璃岛，威尼斯，意大利，2009年7月8日

幸鑫（重庆，中国，1981）是一位行为艺术家。他的作品表达了他对自身存在的感受。

Sarah Gold: 当我看到你的作品时，我发现你总是在笼子里，另有一次，你很孤单地在江上飘着。你认为你的作品和谢德庆的不同之处在哪里？例如说，对比于他的作品“一年表演1978-1979（笼子）”和“一年表演1981-1982（室外）”？

Xing Xin: 其实我的作品不都是在笼子里，你看到的这几件作品是我最近三年所创作的，三年前我做得更多的是表演性较强的互动作品。因为那几年我参加了很多现场艺术节，艺术节上大家都那样创作作品。相比近三年，之前的每一次创作，我都觉得没能完全宣泄出自己当时的情绪。那意犹未尽的感觉让我觉得越来越乏味（也许只因为我不太适合那样的创作方式）。经过不断的琢磨，慢慢地，我的创作方式就演变成了现在这个样子。

关于我与谢德庆先生作品的不同之处，我想只能这样来阐述。我无法站在与他接近的历史、社会、家庭背景下来仔细分析他的作品。我也没有见过他本人，所以我只是通过一些文献简单地感受了他和他的作品。对于他的“一年表演1978-1979（笼子）”和“一年表演1981-1982（室外）”相信每个观者都有很深的感触和认识。所以，对于你提出的问题我需要做的是更多地讲述我创作作品前后的思考。

我的创作和大多数人一样都是根据自身对世界、对社会的认知和世界、社会反馈给我的信息形成的感受进行表达的。对于创作的表现形式，我通常都会尽量地寻求自己觉得最舒服的方式。我尝试过绘画、雕塑、装置、照片、影像、行为表演等形式进行创作，但最让我觉得愉悦的还是将自身融进作品让其一同被呈现的这种形式。我认为形式是并存于所表达的内容的。

我近三年的作品就像一个个游戏，我每次都顺着自己事先设定好的规则去玩。就如：我的第一个“铁笼子作品”《工人的孩子》，我把自己焊死在一个只能蜷缩的铁笼子里，而后用一块铁锯条花了一天一夜的时间（19个半小时）才把自己弄出来。而在那之前，因为我定位我是在创作作品，所以我考虑的还不光是这个行动本身传达出的观念，我还考虑了如何借用现场空间更准确的来传达情绪。我的现场选择在了一棵开满鲜花的树上，树周围也萦绕的是花。这些紫红的花、金黄的花、嫩绿的树叶，使那压抑、忧郁痛并快乐着。又如：《押运幸鑫》我让人将我密封在一个只能平躺的铁笼子里，装入包装箱内，在快递公司不知道的情况下把我等同于一件货物由一个城市发送到另外一个城市。整个过程花去了3天的时间（约70个小时），我被运送到了1400公里以外的地方。

通常我所设定的“游戏”几乎只有一个解，就是当我用毅力坚持完所设计的过程后会理所应当地恰好得到一个使作品结束的理由。就像铁笼不被锯开我将不能出来，货物不被运送到指定地点我将一直被封存在包装箱内。还有“漂流”这件作品（《逍遥游》），我的设计是我躺在床上“做一个白日梦”，从天亮到天黑随波而逐，遨游天地。大家都知道，自古，没有动力或是动力不足的水上运载工具在夜晚是不可能航行的。所以，天亮作品开始，天黑作品自然就结束。

关于这几件作品想法的由来都只是日子过到某一天忽然由一件事儿或事物引发了联想与思考。而作品表现的内容都只是压抑了我很久的情绪的总和。我通过实施作品我把它们释放了出来。而作品所形成的哲学、美学、及社会学等意义对我来说又正好构成了一种满足感让我的身心得以平衡。

SG: 你的一部分行为作品通常是这样的，你将自己封闭在一个逃不开的狭小的空间内，只有当你通过某种努力才能释放你自己。对你而言，这些你得以释放的空间意味着什么?

XX: 这一系列作品的一大特点就是我故意在其作品中设计了一个空间，关于它的意义，落实到我的思考出发点上，那就是我所理解的意识形态与所处的意识形态的错位构成了一个区域，这个区域的边界又时常很模糊。一旦我的精神进入这个区域，情绪就变得压抑。释放，也就成了走出那里的唯一方式。

SG: 当你从这些狭小的空间中被释放出来的时候，你是否有这样的感受，什么都不曾改变，只是你身处的空间变大了。还是你认为有些东西改变了呢?

XX: 除了自己，通常我都没有想要去改变一些什么。当我完成一件作品后，我会感觉轻松，可能参杂有我的每件作品都需要花去很多体力的因素把。我将自己的一切精力都耗尽，那一刻人就变得空白了。与此同时，作品所带来的虚荣感又填了进来，这让我特别舒服。但是这感觉不会维持太久，有时几天，有时几个月，当这快感消退到一定程度，新的可释放的点便顺理出现了。

SG: 对我而言，你的行为作品与你自身的存在息息相关。你生活在中国的西部，是家中的独生子。你的存在状态是如何影响你的创作的?你的作品会反过来改变你的存在吗?你能改变其他人的存在吗?

XX: 我的生存状态对我创作的影响是肯定的。因为我的创作都是我关于我对生存状态感受的外化。今天，面对你的这些问题使我又一次仔细地翻读了自己的作品。我发现，近几年的这些创作都是关于对自己成长的回忆和那些困扰已久的问题的宣泄。我清楚地记得每一次宣泄前我都反复质问自己——为什么要这么做！这周而复始的反思与追问同时让我对明天应该如何度过做出了计划。这计划应该就是我的作品对我存在最大的改变吧。世界说大的确很大，但再大也还是被人们不同程度地量化了。我认为地球上的每一个人的存在都会对周围的人乃至整个人类社会造成影响或说改变，只是程度的深浅问题。所以，我觉得我的创作必定影响和改变了一些人的存在。

SG:　在你的作品《逍遥游》中，你休憩于一张床上顺着长江漂流而下，这似乎相对于你的其他作品要诗意许多。你当时在那里具体想要做些什么呢?

XX: 我当时的计划是：黎明时分，“我”躺在床上，漂于长江之中。我与床任着水的摆布逐流直至夜幕，作品结束。

这个想法是这样由来的。07年的夏天，我陪父亲到长江中游泳，（我们家就住在江边，父亲特别喜欢每天黄昏约上几个朋友到江里泡一泡。他自小就那样。）那次是我自十岁以后的十几年来第一次在江中游泳，不过我小时候是常被绑在一个游泳圈上和父亲一起浸在这江里的。那次的戏水使我印象非常深刻:足有一公里多宽的江面，我跟着他们一口气游到了它的中央。江里的水是流动的，这和湖、海或是游泳池里的水感觉是不一样的，即使你一动不动，它也能载着你朝着一个方向前进。我浮在水面上，身体是那样的轻盈、自如。看着两岸的场景缓缓的移动，并越来越小，最后消失在视野里，我的心里有种直到现在都不能用言语形容的激动。当时也许是我在水里消耗了太多能量，水里水外又有温差，那天结束后，我病了。所以之后的一年里我都没能再次重温那感觉。我常将那次的经历和感受告诉我的朋友，他们都觉得这像是一个梦，因为江中常传出淹死人的故事，所以没有几个人敢在江中驰骋。这些正好启发了我关于“白日梦”的想法。所以，最终我带上了我的床，让它和我一起做了这次旅行。

SG: 你在威尼斯双年展上发表的作品（《黑匣子》）常被误读为是对于中国独生政策的一种政治立场。你是如何看待你的作品与独生政策的联系的?

XX: 我的这件名为《黑匣子》的作品被部分观者看作是一种政治立场我觉得也蛮好，因为一件作品做出来没人愿意去看、去品味那将是很可悲的事儿。但我想强调，作为我的创作，出发点就如我在之前的访谈里也提到的，我是从个人经验和感受出发进行思考的，让我不舒服的事情和感受我便以我喜爱的方式宣泄出来。对于《黑匣子》，是否在肯定我的政治立场对我而言完全没有作品本生对我重要。

这件作品是由于我们国家在一个特定时期实行的政治策略作用到我身上使其产生的。我很能理解这个政策对于当时乃至今天整个国家政治、经济发展的意义。不得不承认，随着“发展的需要”一切事物和观念也都必须随即调整。那么，今天我的这个强烈的感受所针对的问题也许同样需要政治的决策。这里我又必须强调，作为我本人，其实没有想过要主动去参与政治的讨论，因为我热爱的是静静的随意生活。而政治对我来说节奏太快、太过喧闹了。这里我想以一个实例来证明这一点：在我的这件《黑匣子》作品准备工作临近尾声的时候，我们国家的领导人碰巧对意大利进行访问，并且来到了威尼斯，还正好受邀参观了我的作品即将展出的这个展览馆（意大利的一个特色官方展馆），这天是2009年7月7日。领导人的到访只是个偶然，但随即策划人就建议我马上开始作品（也就是7月8日），他说他很有信心让我的作品被我们国的领导人所了解到，那将是很好的推广。这个要求被我当即拒绝了。我清楚，我如果7月8号乃至9号开始作品（领导人对这个国家的访问期为7、8、9号），那这次创作将不再是艺术之旅，而会成为一次政治性的示威。（最后，我的作品是13号正式开始实施的。）我很肯定，我只是想做点能被称作艺术的东西而已。

SG: 关于你在威尼斯双年展上发表的作品（《黑匣子》），你曾今有过这样的表述“我想也许是因为内心的孤独使我渴望向人述说些什么，也许因为‘独生’我想标榜‘我’的与众不同。”你能详细解释一下这些文字和你的作品以及你的想法吗?

XX: 我喜欢一个人发呆、一个人看电影、一个人逛商场、一个人去超市、一个人工作……“一个人”让我觉得轻松。特别是发呆的时候，我讨厌任何人进入我的视线并试图窥视我的存在，那感觉就像一个正在空中上升着的气球一下被针扎爆了。不过，那一个又一个平静的夜晚，“孤独”还是每每能袭击到那享受孤独的人。通常这样的时候我都需要有人能倾听我讲“我一个人的故事”。我把这样的感受和生活方式归结为我的“独生”使然。虽然，我肯定我是唯一的、与众不同的，是这个世界不可或缺的，且没有人能懂我。但我又认为，满足感是人不可或缺，能使人心理和生理达到平衡、协调的必要条件。所以我渴望把我的感悟拿出来炫耀，以求得到满足。

关于《黑匣子》这件作品，想法是产生于两年前。那天，我在家里收拾屋子，偶然发现了几本小学时的课本。翻看着书里的字迹，那陌生与熟悉交织的感觉勾起了我儿时的记忆：小时候我一看到课本就会觉得疲倦，一上课就发呆，夜晚的备课就磨蹭盼着睡觉。读书学知识对我来说一直是件很难的事情。不过现在我完全能理解为什么必须学习。但我也明白了我为什么会抵触受教育。这些回忆和感悟使我立即就产生了一个想法：我要把成年以前所应该学习的知识重温一遍。随后，我开始四处收集课本。（因为年代久远，我自己的课本已所剩无几。）这个寻觅的过程常是失望多过期望。但和不同的人接触、聊天使得这件作品很快地被丰富了起来，计划也得到了不断地深入。这部书至少牵动了上百个朋友为之忙碌。两年的时间，我向我觉得有可能的所有朋友寻求帮助，并告诉他们我为什么找这些书。其中有我的小学同学、中学老师、大学校友，我去过旧书市场，废纸收购站，还在网络上大肆发出帖搜寻。不过直到作品开始实施前的一个月，我也只找到了这一系列书当中的百分之七十。我一直认为我会找齐所有的书，然后实施这件作品，但寻书过程中一个朋友的话让我改变了决定。他说：“你寻找的是记忆，记忆的真实也许只是虚幻。”这让我反应过来，我只是要做一件表达我感情的作品而已。除了课本，这件作品里还用到了一个铁箱，这个铁箱是作品开始实施的半年前加入的元素（之前这件作品不是计划这样实施的），最近的3年里我都用同样的元素“铁笼子”来丰富我的作品。现在看来，这三年里的每一个“铁笼子”都像是在为这件作品做实验与作铺垫。

SG: 玛丽娜·阿布拉莫维奇告诉我说，观众对她很重要。而在你的作品中，你通常与观众几乎没有直接的交流。你做作品主要是为了你自己吗，还是当作品以影像或者图片的形式出现的时候才是对于观者的礼物?

XX:　首先，我想肯定的回答，我做作品总的来说是为了我自己。通常，我不会设计观众与作品进行直接的互动（偶尔也有例外）。但我会竟可能地考虑当观众在看到作品时将发生的心理变化，或是说让作品和他们产生视觉和心理上的交流，这个交流很强势，具有单向性。我设想观众被现场所感染、情绪化，这样能激发观众的主动

思考。大多数时候我都以目无旁人的状态实施着我的作品，但我的内心是装着一个念头的，“有人正看着你。”这就如同一个女人穿着夺目的晚装走在宴会的红地毯上。我挺想有很多人能在现场观看我实施作品，身临其境的感受我所营造的气场，这绝对与之后观赏影像、图片不一样。不过我之前的好几件作品，都是无法接纳太多人到现场观看的。就比如“托运”（《押运幸鑫》），如果运输的过程中不时有观众随行观看，那么“托运”就将变成“护送”。你的这个问题使我发现，这也许正是由于“自我”，造就了我的这一创作特点。

SG: 在你的作品《逍遥游》中，你设定了一个明确的时间期限。为什么你在这个作品中设定了这样一个期限，而又为什么你在其他作品中通常将时间期限的设定与某个你必须完成的任务联系在一起?

XX:　其实对于“漂流”（《逍遥游》）里期限的设定，在我看来是和“托运”（《押运幸鑫》）这件作品有着类似的设计思路。简单的描述就是，从A点到B点，生命体被动的随着时间的流逝接受着空间的转移。详细比对两件作品的特点那将能看出：

1.　被动的限制——“托运”使用了一个由焊接封死出口的铁笼子制造了一个限制，而“漂流”设计的是无动力的木床被流动的水所承载与摆布。

2.　时间的设定——“托运”是主观设计了两个具体的地点开始和结束作品，时间长度由距离所决定。而“漂流”是在我的住地附近随意选择了地点入水开始作品，并由自然界的“时间轮回”配合决定了结束作品的地点。时间决定了距离。

3.　空间的转移——在两件作品中，主体都是随着时间的流逝凭借外力的作用被动的在空间中移动。我认为，“时间”对于现场艺术来说是一个不可回避的元素，那么就必须使其发挥最大的表现力。所以，在我的作品中几乎都能明显地看到“时间”。

SG: 你是否与我一样，以完成的事情的多少而不是流逝的分秒数或者天数来衡量自己的生命？对你而言，时间意味着什么?

XX: 关于衡量时间对生命的意义，我也不确定是否与你有一样的认识或异同。通常在工作（创作）的时候我是不自觉地进行思考的。而开始了思考与计划我又渴望它能被完美地呈现，所以我尽一切地可能去付出努力，并不惜时间。但又有时候，我会被其它我认为有趣的事或物所吸引而长时间地忘记要去工作。我知道生命是很短暂的，我计算过人的一生只有约3万天可以使用。所以我时常质问自己，这些所谓的作品对我的生命有多重要。而也正是这些质问，让我不断地发现创作对我的意义。

SG: 你曾经告诉我说有的时候你会重复做你的作品，那么实施作品的地点对于你而言是否很重要？而具体又是出于何种原因让你选择了这些特定的地点，例如在作品《逍遥游》中，你选择了在重庆顺着长江从涪陵漂流到了丰都；又如在作品《押运幸鑫》中，你被打包装箱，由货运汽车从四川成都托运到了北京?

XX: 是的，实施作品的地点对我来说很重要，就如时间在我作品里是会被我仔细地计划一样，地点同样会被我用心地分析。因为地点在我作品中即空间，不同的空间会给人不同的感受，特别是具有地标、文化等意义的空间会传达出强烈的信息。所以，为了更好地表达想法，就必须了解、把握和利用好这些信息。如《逍遥游》里重庆的长江（长江中下游段），在我看来她就好似我家楼下的游泳池，我人生的前20个春秋都曾在水里嬉戏。因此，我对她有着深厚的感情。同时她本身承载着很多文化。自古，此水域激起过众多文人骚客的感慨。那么，如果把这个材料运用得当，作品将获得被观者所深刻解读的可能。而《押运幸鑫》中我把自己从四川成都运到北京，我是这样来考虑这两个地点的，四川成都是我的居住地（近8年我一直独自生活在成都，我的父母生活在重庆）。而北京是我祖国的首都，国家的“灵魂”所在地。我想，这样解析便不难看出作品实施地点的选择对作品本生来说都是必要的且拥有着内在联系。

SG: 谢德庆在本书的采访中曾提到：“虽然艺术不能使我的生活状况好转，但艺术却让我的心理状态越变越好”。你同意他的说法吗？如若不同意，能否解释一下你的想法?

XX: 我同意他的说法。“艺术让我的心理状态越变越好。”

GOTTFRIED HONEGGER

Conversation with Sarah Gold

Honegger studio, Zürich, Switzerland, 17 July 2009

*Gottfried Honegger (*1917, Zurich, Switzerland) painter, sculptor and printmaker. Influenced by Zurich Concrete Art and by contemporary American painting he creates abstract works from 1950 onwards. He especially developed as an artist during his stay in New York in the late 1950s; by living in New York he got the courage to go into the unknown, into the personal. In 1960 he moved to Paris and focused on painting, where he found in this cultural-historical climate, that Art is the language of a time. Later, whilst living in the south of France, he also discovered color. For Gottfried Honegger, Art is a social necessity. He publishes books in which he illustrates the different sides of humanity; within his art work he only wants to express 'Beauty'.*

Sarah Gold: You just turned 92 and in your life you have seen many changes in society. Many social systems have become victims of a development in which the quest for economic success has become ever more important. Many artists pursue this goal. Where is there light on the horizon? Is there hope? What do we need to do?

Gottfried Honegger: Well, the problem or risk at my age is that we compare the present with the past, and that is always wrong. In my time, I had the Nazis, the Holocaust and so on. So, the old people who say: the olden days were good—No! The question is, what has changed in the attitude to life? I do not mean the values between the One and the Other, but the attitude towards life. This is something that changes in the continuum. It is also very important again that we do not make value judgments. I find it tragic that old people say: When we were young, everything was much better. We worked without getting a wage, we did not have sex twice every night, and so on. With that we achieve nothing. Essential is that we must consider how this animal, this human, has changed. What are today the fruits of the tree you once planted? Point. It is up to you if you say that you like Giotto better than Honegger, but that is a rating, which is very personal and has nothing to do with the history of the human. You see, you have to be careful that you do not pass judgments. Things never remain stable. They cannot and should not, either. Things have to change so that you—you're sixty years younger than I am—can carry and bear the fruits, which need you and match your time. So, as for art, the first principle is: It is not the artist who defines the art; it is the society that defines the art. Take Roman Opalka and put him into the 17th century, then he will paint just like everyone did in the 17th century. This means that the society determines it. I will give you an example. We lived for ten years in the south of France. In the south of France my work suddenly took on color. Then I thought, "that is all kitsch. What I am doing?" No, it was the sea, it was the palm trees, the smell was different, the people were different, the food was different, life was different. Now, I return with these colorful images again to the north—and what do I do first? These colorful images. Now, after being back for two years, I notice that my work has nothing to do with Zurich. Zurich determines that I must change myself again. This all means, that of course the single individual is important, but crucial is, in what time and where you are born. In Mexico, in Tokyo, or Zurich, that determines everything. Art is just a reflection of a time and the mirror of a society. Time is in Mexico the same as in Zurich, but the society is different, and therefore art is different. Now, the fundamental danger in art today is that this variety of societies is becoming one global society. Personally, this feels like a loss. Look at the men and women today who have the same fashion in Manhattan as in Zurich, Tokyo and Johannesburg. That means, on the one hand, we win because we can communicate globally, and, on the other hand, we pay a price for it. We are losing the identity of the individual regions. That is the key issue of our time today. Whether Roman Opalka is a good or a bad painter is a question of detail, but basically in the global world, we lose the regional character.

The world has also been demystified. Recently, I saw on a cover of a magazine the vagina of a woman, to show that women nowadays shave their pubic hair. This is an idea that we did not have. In my time we hardly knew what a vagina was, and that was only 60-70 years ago. We just should not make one mistake, and the one of judging everything so moralistically. Nothing in the world is perfect, not the sun, nor the stars, and we know that nothing is eternal. We know that the sun and the earth will die.

SG: In an interview I did with Louise Bourgeois, she said: "I'm working for myself and if anyone can get something out of that, I'm pleased." As far as I know, in your opinion art should be in service of society and art is the visualization of thoughts that should be shared with all viewers. What do you show us through your art?

GH: Yes, this is a well-known saying: "I do it for myself." That is nonsense, because then she does not have to do any shows anymore. Art is information. Information requires someone who receives the information. It is a form of megalomania among artists. The artist cult in the last 100 years has led so far that the artist has lost control and also lost the meaning of life. We are chroniclers, Van Gogh, Cézanne, Leonardo da Vinci. When Da Vinci writes a diary, he does not write it only for himself but also to be read. Otherwise there would be no point in writing it. When Louise Bourgeois says that she paints just for herself, then she may do so without an audience and throw it away when she is done. No, she just wants to be interviewed by you, and so do others. If you had not done it, she would be offended. Art is information, it is the only information we have which contains the entire society, so no bank, no bakery. Art encompasses everything. It is the oldest institution we have. Before the written word was the image—already in the cave.

This means that art is an existential necessity: without art, we have no history. We would not know how the Greeks and how the Egyptians, etc. were. And yet, something much more important: our brain thinks only in pictures. You dream in pictures; memories are images. Images can be scary: you see a man, he makes you afraid; pictures can give joy. In other words, images determine your consciousness. People with no pictures have no consciousness, they have only experiences. Recently, I talked to a blind man here in the street and I asked him what his consciousness is in relation to Zurich. He said that he has none. He was born and raised here. People have told him about Zurich, but he has no idea.

Our brain thinks in pictures. Pictures can lie, tell the truth, they can be beautiful or ugly. Some of these pictures that you see during the course of your life are stored, memorized in the brain. If these pictures are bad, from television, advertising, Internet, etc., then the program in your brain is bad. Then also your awareness and your actions will be bad. Nowadays, when adults condemn children because they vandalize, steal, throw away cans, etc., we are guilty, not the children. We have set up institutions without consideration, without thinking what will be the impact in fifty years? There was a great philosopher, Marshall McLuhan, who said: "The medium is the message", not the content. When people turn on a television, they will not be able to turn it off, they become more lonely, more anonymous. It is absolutely wrong, what this very nice lady, Louise says. Art is information, whether she likes it or not. Information that may be stupid, or good, which can be beautiful, etc., but it is information.

SG: And what would you like to tell us with your art?

GH: I have personally decided that beauty brings more than a political message. I have two options, I can depict Che Guevara and say, he changed the world and told us to kill—or we are one society. Today, if I ask a twelve-year-old, "Who is Che Guevara?", he will not know. So, all political information, which we have given or give, may be understood by art historians when they look it up in books, but we, the audience, do not know anymore. The audience does not even know anything about *Guernica* by Picasso, though *Guernica* is a beautiful picture, it is immortal.

Be it Roman, Greek, Renaissance, or Baroque, what holds us captive today is the aesthetics, and that takes place in the brain. And that is not dependent on a time or a moral message, but upon mental processes, emotional processes, and especially very individual processes. Aesthetics, for me, is something like the Sermon on the Mount. Beautiful people exude security. You are beautiful, but you may lie just as well, be unfaithful, steal; nevertheless in a way it is the beautiful human that gives some kind of security. A beautiful city gives security, an identity, such as Venice. Venice is a corrupt city. It does not get more corrupt, but there they have something like pride, that they are alive. That is my political message: 'the beauty'.

SG: You once said the high number of visitors to museums like the Louvre or the Musee d'Orsay showed that people are looking for Art, that they need Art. Do you believe that Art offers an existential orientation that other social systems (religion, politics etc.) often no longer are able to offer?

GH: The difference between Art and the political parties as well as religion is above all that Art primary addresses the original property of humans, all humans make art in one way or another. Small children already start very early with scribbling, unfortunately in schools that is then often cut off, but art is an existential question, religion is a moral question, that is a big difference. Art contains, carries, all the information we need to live, namely identity. For example, you live in Venice and then go into a coffee shop and there hangs a painting by Van Gogh and then you tell yourself, that is a Dutchman, and then, there is suddenly homeland because, there you were born. So this is information about your identity. I experience the richness of the human being, and with nothing else but Art, and then, Art does not mean only paintings, but also literature, theater, music, ballet, etc., all that together is then the culture... painting is probably put in first because it has more time, a play has to succeed every evening, a painting you can hang and find it good after 3 years, so a painting has time... but all together Art gives an idea of who we humans are, the evil and the good.

SG: The evolution of mankind is directly linked to the development of the way we express ourselves pictorially. Our society is reflected in our art, whether in a cave painting, a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci or a painting by Mondrian. Today, however, art provides an overall impression, which seems to be a rather sad reflection of society. Is this due to the art, the market orientation of the artists, galleries and museums? Or is it the society itself, and do the artists simply show it like it is?

GH: When today this Englishman puts a shark into water, then, for me, that is evil and he even asks millions of pounds for it! This makes everything visible, we have to be informed to get the picture. We need to paint the devil on the wall, so that we can understand him. We have an idea of the artist, which is, of course, idealized. I noticed in New York that there are also artists who are no saints. This idealization distorts the picture. Among the artists there are just as many stupid people, corrupt people, etc., as in all areas of humanity. We have to be realistic: man is just man. There are times when man is a bit nicer and less corrupt. Humans are fragile beings, and you have good and bad ones, but the vast majority is actually good.

SG: It seems impossible to eliminate your own ego, to eliminate your own past from your work. Your mother, your father, the place where you grew up, your culture, all that is an influence. I also wonder whether religion plays a role in your art. Where is generally the place of religion in art? In what aspects is your work an expression of your own existence?

GH: I have two souls in my chest. My father is from Zurich, a worker, a bricklayer, a trade unionist, a socialist. My mother was a waitress. We have been poor, we were very poor. My mother is from the Engadine in Switzerland, a daughter of a farmer—poor, but cultured. She spoke Romansh, a Latin language, and my father German, a Germanic language, and I speak both languages. Above all, I spoke Romansh. I grew up with my grandparents because my parents had no time for me. These farmers still had folk art, something we have not even spoken about yet. It is a great tragedy today, that the folk art is gone. My socks, my grandmother had made for me. My sweater was made by my aunt. I would, for example, never throw away a sweater from my aunt, never. There was something from my aunt around me. I would have never worn a sweater from another aunt, with whom I had a very different relationship. The sweater you are wearing, you do not care if it was made in China or in Italy. I had respect for everything and found everything beautiful. The chair was carved by my grandfather. We had no electricity, no gas, no telephone, no TV, nothing like that. In the evening we sat outside the house at dusk and then my grandfather or my grandmother told the servants and me fairy tales.

That is to say, the whole village was created by its residents, man and woman, from the sweater up to the house and the food, I knew it all, because in Engardin where I lived, the cows lived inside the house and at night when I lay in bed, I heard the chains of the cows and then overcame me such a wonderful homeland feeling, the connection with the animals and I even loved specific cows. It was a very different world, but also it largely was an aesthetical world. Where is the proletarian world going, not to an aesthetical world but a moral world, and in these two worlds, I grew up. And I had many long years trouble to construct a symbiosis of these two.

We are a product of thousands of coincidences, from your mother, your father, grandmother, grandfather, and from much further back. Where my father comes from, Zurich, there you had Zwingli, the reformer, and he said: stand up straight at a right angle, 2 +2 = 4, and then all is good in the world. The painters here, Max Bill, Paul Lohse, Camille Gräser, all of these Zurich Concrete painters have made art at a right angle—and I also. But only very briefly, and then I sinned here in Zurich and also made art not at a right angle, and today not at all anymore. I live in the city of Zwingli, and if Zwingli were to see me or Bill, he would come back from the grave and say, "Well, he does not get into our Alliance." This means that to be able to do my work, I had to find myself in the two. And today I have combined them in my work. The skeleton of my images is 2 + 2 = 4, the external form is 2 + 2 = 5. So, I reconcile these two elements.

SG: What is the beauty in your art? Is it a quest for aesthetic harmony, or another form of beauty, for example striving for a unity of matter, mind and spirit? Do you have the feeling that you ever came close to this beauty?

GH: Well, to the first part I would say "yes". If I have come close? I came near, but I did not achieve it. I did not have the courage in the crucial years. No, I have to say it like this: In the beginning, I probably did not have the faith, that art has the importance that it has for me today. I never expected that people would pay for it. In the beginning, I did not even sign my work, because I thought no one would ever buy it. I will give you an example. I was good friends with Mark Rothko and for a long time I did not understand his view on life. He never had an exhibition with another artist. All shows he had, the few, he installed the works himself. He protected himself, above all,

and only within that protection could he achieve this number One, which he has achieved. Since the society was not up to it and did not respond sufficiently, it meant his suicide. He would have had no reason, but he said to me, "I lost my work here."

He had the feeling: "I have failed." I will give you another example. He got a big commission for the Seagram Building in Manhattan, 40 meters, 4 x 10 meters. That was for a so-called rest area. Mies van der Rohe wanted a space where New Yorkers can go, after they have been shopping, to rest. Then came the day when the paintings were finished. The clients came to see it in the studio of Rothko, which Rothko had specially rented for this job. When the plan was taken out, Rothko saw that the plan had little tables and he asked what the tables are for. The daughter of Seagram said, "Oh, mister, I forgot to tell you, we decided to provide coffee, they can make their own coffee." Rothko responded: "In my room, I do not accept coffee." I did not understand. Now you also see what I have not achieved: I did not understand. This was not all. In the second meeting Truman, former president of America, the Chairman of the Board, was present and he said if Rothko did not accept this and withdrew his pictures: "Nobody will ever see your paintings." Then Rothko said: "If my art has a reason to be, somebody will build a wall around my art." This is a spiritual climax of an inner pillar, which he had. He took out the check, 50,000 dollars, I was there, and Rothko gave it back. "Do not pay me."

Later, I had an exhibition at the Galerie Denise René in Paris. Then a man came up to me and said that these pictures were so great, so calm, so contemplative. They were building a rest area in the Renault factory, and would I make something for that? Of course, I was excited and said: "Yes, I will." Then I worked six months on it and, when I needed the plan of the room, I saw a few small tables. Then I had to tell them, I cannot do it. I did not want to tell them that, but I had to because of Rothko, I was too close to him. I mean, if he had seen it, he would have said to me: "Ah, you made it. My God, you are lousy." Therefore, I canceled. At Rothko's level there was also Mondrian. Mondrian knew that he was the One. He had this enormous confidence. I have read letters he wrote in Paris at Seuphor; that, when he came to New York, he had abandoned the black lines and only made the spots, Boogie Woogie, and those things. And then he writes, "Now I'm one step further, I do not need the lines any more, because they are not painting, but drawing." Not an aesthetic question, but simply what can I leave out, so the essential is left over.

Mondrian was as a figure who could do that, and the tragic counterexample is Léger, who was also an abstract painter, a cubist, and then joined the Communist Party. Then he became figurative, because communism demanded that. He had never had this pillar, sort of like on my level. In art it is like this. Above there are those artists and just below are the Honeggers, so that the top can be carried.

SG: Cézanne and artists like Ellsworth Kelly took their forms, their geometry, directly from the nature experienced in their immediate surroundings. Can we find in your work, which generally is seen as Concrete Art, also a starting point from nature, or is it purely mathematical in origin?

GH: Well, my work has no relationship to nature at all. There are these two options, either I take it from the outside or I take it from the inside. I painted landscapes for a few years, etc., but fairly quickly then omitted the figurative. I wanted and still want to reach your emotions and not your consciousness. I do not want you to say, a "beautiful sunset" or a "wonderful, great group of people." I wanted to strip everything away that could take away from the emotion. If I paint this phone, even if I paint like Rembrandt, you will say later, that was the phone of 2009, and it takes something away from the pure emotions. I think that people today need the naked truth, the naked love, the naked beauty. This we lose more and more within the consumer society, with all the ugly architecture that we have. It is my fight, I have no other words for it, the more pure I feel something as beauty, the better it is.

Sometimes I have experiences during exhibitions. Recently, I was in a small town in Switzerland. They had organized an exhibition of my works there. I went to the opening and stood in a room of 15 small sculptures from a certain period, which I find some of the best I have ever done. People stood around it as in a botanical garden, amazed, look, look there, but oh, it is beautiful. They did not seek support in any sense, but only in feeling and I believe these phenomena we know, as with love between woman and man.

Even the purest attempt to explain why I have been living with my wife for forty years, everything would be wrong. As I say, it is purely emotional, indefinable and about which one cannot really talk at all. What should I tell you, I love you? I love you madly? I love you forever! I can also say more, but you do not know what I really feel. On a form I can say, this is about one meter in diameter, but on a color? I do not know how you see the color red, no idea. Or my wife, once I had made a green painting, and then she said: "How can you paint green?" I did not understand, I thought it was beautiful, and now after forty years, half of our household is green.

SG: Do you see the geometric arrangement, the mathematical structure of your work, as something like a universal language that will help your work to communicate?

GH: Yes, not only my work, all of nature. It is as if you have an injury here, a cut that heals and you see nothing anymore. I will give you a somewhat exaggerated example: everything is made out of bricks of certain sizes. Growth only occurs when there are bricks. They can be hexagonal, they can have one hundred edges, but they are bricks. I can explain it in another way. Once you were a cell, with 23 chromosomes from the father and 23 chromosomes from the mother. This cell had the characteristics to reproduce like crazy, for example, cells for the finger. Then there is a cell that says, here we stop growing.

I met a biologist in London who studies only the question: Why do things stop here and not there? This means, that the whole universe is built on a mathematical system, even the air. We know that the colors are waves and waves are systems. Only, like I told you in the beginning, there is nothing in nature, or in our lives, or in the universe that is 100%. It is 99, 89, 42, depending if it is growing together well, or better. Everything is a bit incomplete.

SG: The works you have made lately seem to merge much more with their surrounding than your previous works. Does this 'consideration of the totality' [Gesamtheitsdenken] *also mean that you see yourself more and more as part of a larger whole? Can you say something about how this has developed? Or has it simply arisen over the course of years?*

GH: It is about the total work of art, the architecture is now part of my work. The difference between the idea in art and me is: I do not have ideas. I make a work of art and then I say I would rather make it like that. In this way one artwork determines the next one, and this is a process, not an idea. This is also a drama today among the young people, that they have ideas, because trade and commerce are ideas. I have no ideas. I always make a circle, square and triangle. These are the three basic forms, which we have in nature, which we have everywhere. And with which I work, from which everything arises. It is funny, the word 'creativity'—I would like to rename it for myself as 'creative observation', which is what I do. I have hundreds of sketches and then I study them. When I take this away and I do this so, then I have a whole different story. The process, and I think it is like this, should determine our lives, not ideas. Life should determine what you are now and what you do, and then comes the next and the next, then it becomes organic.

SG: At your age, you know that in a foreseeable future you will die. All we will have left are the memories of you, your art, and some books. Many people think that your art says everything that is important to you. What cannot be said with art, what should we hear from you verbally, which is important so that we can find our ways back to "love, tolerance, participation and responsibility"? Or if 'everything' is already in your art, where and how do I see that?

GH: That is a very good question, because I have not thought of it. It is like this: there is my intimate, private area, and there is the public area. That is one thing, and I consider what I will give to the public and what I do not want to give the public, even though I know that in fact the public would be more interested in the thing I do not give compared with what I do give. I do not want to sound emotional or dramatic, but art for me is a life of suffering. You cannot visualize society without carrying the downsides. Then there are decisions you have to make as an artist. So, the whole thing is 'life' and I say about one half of that is drama, misery, death and the other half is beauty, life and gain. It is never divided exactly like this, but these two halves, an artist does live with more awareness than someone who works at a bank. The artist is a chronicler of society, he must listen to both. When you look at the works of Van Gogh, they always surprise you, again and again. His self-portraits and his pictures, which actually have nothing critical, his self-portraits show a ruined man within himself, incredible, the forlornness. I protect my work from that, because I want to show the beautiful. In the past, I sometimes showed both sides, which still annoys me today. I wish that when you live with my work, it will exert a positive impulse in daily life. Because of that, I have a bad relationship towards museums. I think art has to be lived. I am very much concerned with public art. I believe I have made forty public works in Europe.

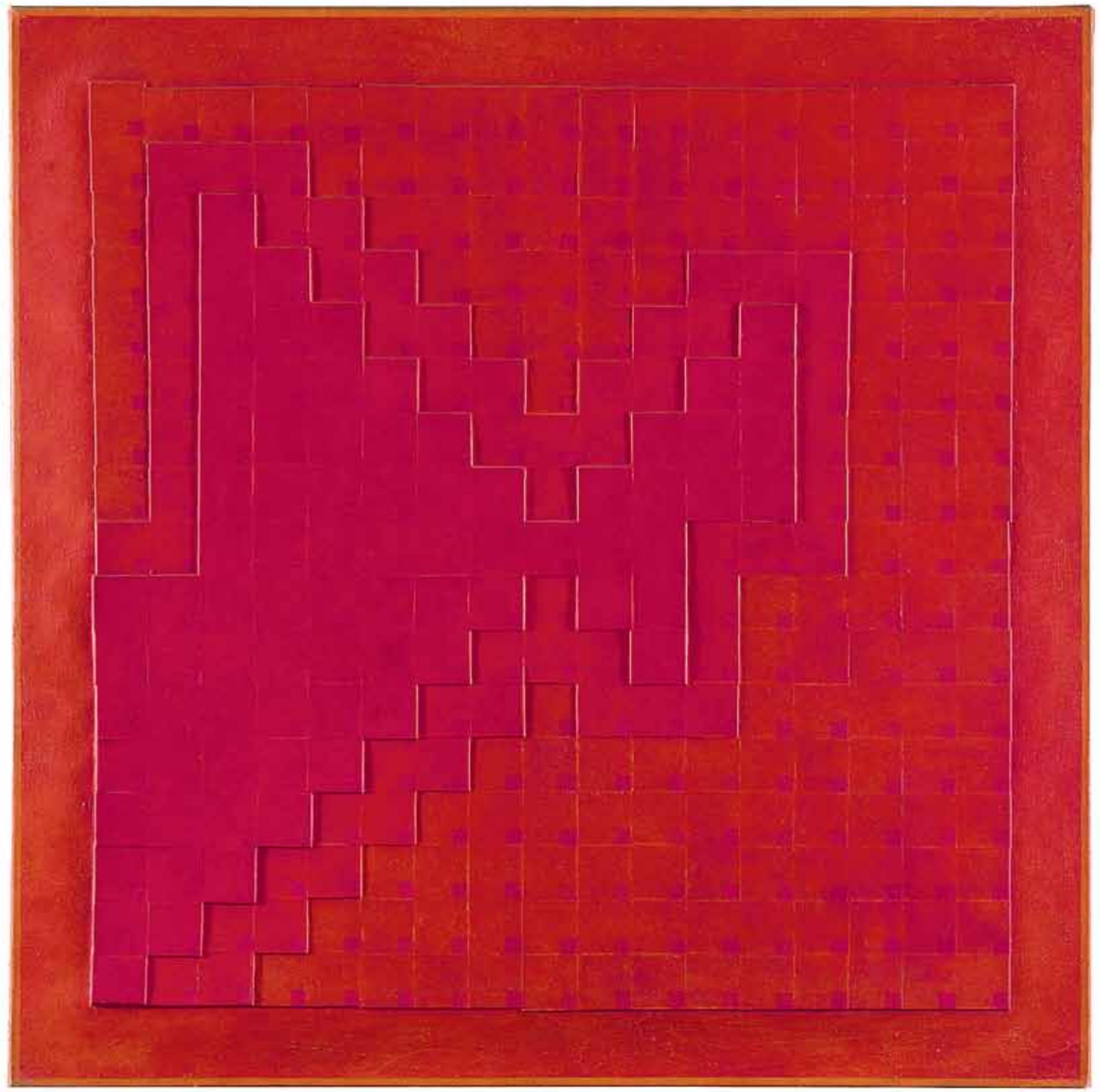
If there is an artwork and you walk by it every day—and I have tried this—and you do not like it and after two years I take it away, then you would be startled and say, "no, no, it needs to stay!" It takes time, like it took fifty years for the work of Van Gogh. We have forgotten that for art, we need time. It is wrong when people say that art is ahead of society. No, art is in society. The society is behind its time. It does not live in the reality, but is actually nostalgic, the whole society.

SG: In your work have you tried to tell and give us, the society, something? Are you now, after more than seventy years of work, content with what you have accomplished, or do you think you have not had enough time?

GH: I had enough time, but I had too little character. In the beginning, I did not experience the importance of art as such. So, I did many different things. I have done everything and now I regret that enormously. In art, it happens in the first half of your life, not in the second. In the second part, it becomes more mature, but not new, only richer. But I have missed it, I've missed it.

SG: Are you nevertheless still happy with what you have accomplished?

GH: Yes, I am satisfied. No, more than that, I am grateful that destiny has given me the opportunity to live it. You have to imagine, I was art director in a huge company in New York. I was responsible for 400 employees, I had to do the advertising for the whole of South and North America and besides that I painted. It was Sam Francis, who said, "It's over." He bought my first picture and he said "It's over, you're an artist. You go to the consul and let him write in your passport: Artist." Not until I was 48 did I have the courage and before that I squandered the opportunity. The time of the development I missed. But I'm not bitter.



VALIE EXPORT

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh

Café Sperl, Vienna, Austria, 27 July 2009

VALIE EXPORT (1940, Austria) is a performance and video artist. Her often provocative works address the body and have a feministic undertone. VALIE EXPORT attained prominence in the 1960s and 70s, when—in search for sexual freedom—she did performances in the streets of Vienna. Later on in her career, the focus of her art developed towards a more general representation of the body, and the voice in particular.*

Karlyn De Jongh: At the start of your career, you seem to have been working on acquiring a space, a position or territory, for women. Do you feel you have acquired this space? If you started making art now, today, would it still be gender oriented?

VALIE EXPORT: When I started working as an artist, I didn't only want to create a space for women; I worked with feminist ideas. On the one hand that was in an artistic, political and social way. That was what interested me. Yes, if I started today, I would work with gender topics again. It is, of course, still an important topic for me; it is still something that is present in my work, but in different ways. Feminism still extends throughout my work.

KDJ: When you started making art, video as a medium was yet untouched by history and seems to have been interesting for many female artists for that very reason. At the same time, art often seems to be a reaction to history or is seen within time. It seems there is a correlation between starting with a blank page and being dependent on this history.

VE: Video as a medium was very new at that time; that medium had never existed before. Because of that, it couldn't have been dominated by men, also not by traditional, conservative art history, in the same way as painting or other mediums were. With video one was able to perceive one's own body through the camera. The camera can perceive and shape, carry out and direct perception itself. And it can do this directly and then immediately repeat that. The real and the image of an event—and of the body as well—were very contemporary at that time, also in movements such as Body Art.

KDJ: Your name VALIE EXPORT is like a brand name and gives the association of a product being promoted. In many of your performances you yourself are present. In these cases it seems as if the art product and you as the performer are the same.

VE: Yes, that's right. But I am present as a subject, as an artistic subject. It's correct that the name VALIE EXPORT is a brand name, but one cannot say that I am a product, but perhaps rather a product of myself, an object and subject of myself: there is a difference there. I see VALIE EXPORT as my name; from my name or the identity of my name, I made a product. I myself am not to be seen as a product. It is just the name I use as an artist. I don't see myself as a product, but I am of course a product.

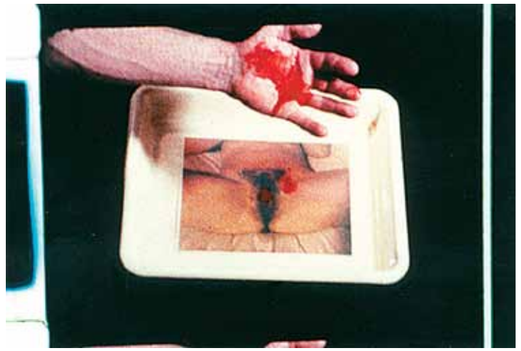
KDJ: With your works about the voice, language seems to be an important theme in your work. In that respect, you could get the idea that your early work was about creating a platform to speak up and that your recent work is more about speaking or language itself. Why is language so important to you? How do you see this change?

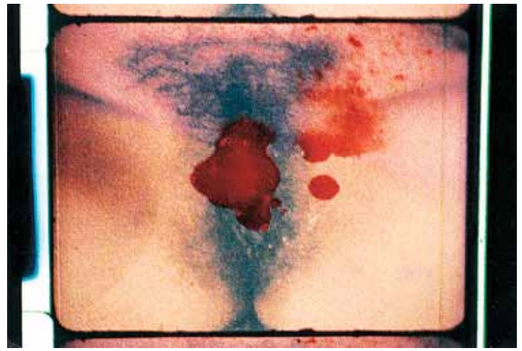
VE: One can see the whole line of my work with the body at its center, in my center, in my artistic center. They are all body pieces, body performances. Through the years I have been working with the voice, with language in different ways. Language returns all the time.

I didn't create a platform for women: women have always spoken, they have always had a voice. But to agree on the voice, that is something different. One considered it, but did not hear it. I brought this to attention, that the female voice is just as present. There are different rules and constructions for why women don't get heard or they get misunderstood or turned away. For me, it wasn't about a platform; it was more about research or an analysis. It was an analysis of the voice, of language and in particular in relationship with myself as a female artist and how I express that artistically.

KDJ: Your work Body Sign Action *is a tattoo of a garter on your thigh. A tattoo stays on your body: you still have it; it's there all the time, also in your personal life. Marina Abamović told me that she has given her life for art, her personal life always had to suffer for art. How far do you want to go for art?*

VE: I am an artist and that is my passion. But of course I have other passions that are just as important to me as art. I am not a martyr for art; I don't give up everything for art. That would not be a good thing to do: otherwise I would not be able to develop myself. Art is my passion and I want to express myself in new ways with new mediums or develop the ones I am working with. But I have other





passions, too… The way I am, the way my identity is… I don't have just one; I have more than one identity. These are all contained in one personality. The different identities communicate with each other and have their own languages and their own voices.

KDJ: You have said that you don't believe in the aging of the body, that it is also a place for feelings, intellect, and experience. You are now 69 years old. In your art your own body is less present than when you were younger. How do you look at your body now?

VE: I still understand the body that way, of course. Clearly, the body is linked to many other things. For me personally, there is a discrepancy between on the one hand aging itself and on the other hand that one's thoughts and feelings do not give in to age. I always make my own challenges and let myself be challenged. There are no differences there. The body has a lot to do with emotions and with the intellect and that is something that stays. It is one process, one thing. Or fate has to take over…

KDJ: Some of your works have a sexual connotation. Your TAPP- und TASTKINO*, for example, might have been erotic or arousing for some viewers. You have mentioned that you wanted to create a more open-minded sexual atmosphere. Besides the desire to be provocative, were these performances a sexual experience for you yourself as well?*

VE: When sexuality or eroticism are the topics, then it belongs to the artwork. It is part of the provocation to point to sexuality. That was also the case when I used to do my body performances naked. In the context that is shown during the body performance, the connotation of this sexuality is a completely different one; it's not the same as one would usually understand by sexuality. That is actually very interesting to me: it is something sexual, but it has a different connotation; there is a shift.

KDJ: Is this sexuality something that shifts away from you to the viewer?

VE: It may be something that shifts towards the viewer, but it doesn't get away from me. Those are two different things. For me it's the very same sexuality, but it's just shifted into the perception of the work. At the moment of the performance it's not there for me. Open sexuality was a very important theme for me. I don't have to clarify that…

KDJ: I can imagine that your performances in the 70s had a different effect on most men than they had on most women. For most men the experience of looking at your work, at your partly naked body, must have been sexual; for most women it may have been a stimulus to think about their position as woman in society. How do you see that?

VE: Yes, there is a very big difference there. Men have a different position towards the female body. There are two positions there. For women it's different: they see another female body and connect that very strongly to their own body as they are of the same sex. But one cannot just speak of two sexes; there are three: also the transsexuals. For this third sex the experience is probably more ambivalent.

KDJ: You have said that art can be used as an instrument of power. What do you mean by that? Was that what you were looking for and why you were provoking, to have—more—power?

VE: With art one can change certain things. One cannot prevent wars, or anything like that. Otherwise it would be a too utopian thought. But one can make a film about violence and terror. With what one expresses in this film, one has power; one has power when one shows a message. When one doesn't have power, one cannot change anything. Art is so powerful that it can bring up sensations, but it cannot change the world. Or can art change the world perhaps? With art or through art one can sensitize. Because of that, art is very dangerous: art can destroy.

KDJ: You have mentioned several times that you were impressed by Constructivism for their use of space. To me, it seems that your work is more about existence or the space of the (female) body. What does space mean in your work?

VE: Space is feminism. Space also implicates time; one has to be able to live through time as well as through space. That space and time are equal always interested me most about it: it has to do with movement. It is about the movement of objects, the movement of subjects as well as of artistic forms, content and movement in itself. Movement is very important; it's a line that continues forever. This line does not have just one dimension. One cannot know a certain goal or aim. Development is non-linear: it is about different movements that go in different directions, up or down or they stop and continue from another point. It's not a straight line; it's just that.

WALTERCIO CALDAS

Interview with Sarah Gold

August 2009

The work of Waltercio Caldas (1946, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) is precise and geometric, but equally ethereal and personal. All materials he uses have their own specific character in order to start a dialogue with space. Caldas lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.*

Sarah Gold: After having seen several of your works, reading texts people have written about you, interviews you have given and even hearing you speak, why is that, that I, as a young Dutch art historian, still have the feeling that I do not understand your work? Is it because I am not from Brazil, do I just lack knowledge? Must I educate myself somehow?

Waltercio Caldas: You talk about so many issues at a time and all are necessary for the apprehension of a work of art. Note that I used the word 'apprehension' instead of 'understanding' because I think the use of the word 'understand' is not proper in this case, when the subject is art works. First, because art is also a kind of knowledge, an experience of something always unknown, something immune to the grasp of the intellect solely: such an approach needs imagination, sensibility and risk and, as we know, these things differ from person to person. And second, because we should be aware of the great distance between art works and the interpretations about them. When a work of art is turned into a 'subject', the subject itself becomes the matter, the subject replaces the work—and that seems to be our case here.

In matters like these, for instance, being Dutch would not put me in a better condition to fully understand the paintings of Van Gogh or Mondrian; that would require a more complex kind of effort. Even sensibility is not enough. In fact, we are saturated with art interpretations, as some artists begin their discourse with the famous and pretentious saying "my work is about…" and the audience, accepting this, passively supporting a version proposed by artists and critics, seems to prefer the ease of a concept, instead of the challenge presented by the works themselves. Today—I say this in good humor, but worried—the public seems to be more conceptual than the artists. Let me remind you of a quote by Paul Valéry: "Seeing is forgetting the name of the things one sees."

And that leads to a new issue: all the questions you put to me are based mostly on photo reproductions of my sculptures, and these objects are conceived to be physical experiences, 3-dimensional objects concerned with weight, material, transparence, presence and many other features. Should we ask: Is it possible to speak properly of sculptures that have been reduced to 'representations'? Can the problematic distance between art objects and their images be misevaluated here? And what is more, can we speak of reproductions as if they were art works?

SG: You stated "I think it would be impossible for me to do my work outside of Brazil" and "I think that Minimalism could only ever have come from a Protestant country, Catholicism is much more baroque". In which aspects is your work a reflection of your own existence as an artist who lives in Brazil?

WC: I mean that some local cultural conditions can be found in the works of artists and are not clearly perceived by foreigners at first sight. Some aspects of my work are hardly seen if you ignore the context of their appearances. The presence, in my sculptures, of an 'intimate horizon', for example, deals with Brazil's vast territory and sea, both as imaginary topics. Obsessions, I could say. An art critic from the fifties, Mario Pedrosa, once said that we Brazilians are "condemned to be moderns". This predestination was naturally assumed by us as a strange novelty to work with since the twenties. An important artistic movement for us, the *Week of Modern Art*, which took place in 1922, two years before the French Surrealism movement.

When I was young, I could follow—as everybody here did at the time—the construction of our extremely modern capital, Brasília, "a futuristic city designed for a country of the future", as they used to say. The year was 1955 and the fantastic architecture of the city's buildings and the innovative urban proposals of Niemeyer and Lucio Costa preceded in twenty years the appearance of minimalism. I could then understand the remarkable differences between synthesis and reduction, which are sometimes mistaken as one. Malevich, in his early suprematist efforts, gave us a good example of a synthetic and essential approach to paintings and he did so without 'reducing' anything. In the fifties, in Rio de Janeiro, the neoconcrete movement of Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Ivan Serpa and others began to showcase its works as João Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim started to sing their first Bossa Nova songs. This new cultural context was beginning to prove itself rich, despite the fact that we

did not realize it clearly at the time. Surprising things happen to ideas when confronted with new adverse situations, and this seems to be the health of any culture. What I mean is that there are as many modern arts as there are ways of perceiving modern art. Each country deals with the universal through their unique peculiarities. Today, this vertigo is made much more complex due to the contemporary global art scene. Perhaps we are beginning to share the same misunderstandings everywhere.

SG: The space a work is placed in has an influence on the materials you use to create that specific work. Materials seem to be used not for their specific qualities, but rather for their usefulness, still the most important for you seems to be the relationship between the materials themselves. How do you see the different material properties, the different emotional values of the materials you use in the context of their "usefulness"?

WC: There is no such a thing as "usefulness" regarding materials of works of art. What is there are suitable materials related to the demands of each artist. We cannot think about 'utility' regarding objects created specifically to generate unexpected sensations and ultimately new situations. These objects end up finding their own ways of being and creating most of their own conditions to exist, broadening, as they do, new paths for possibilities. Art objects are—or should be—inaugural objects, and despite being connected by a subjective series of an artist's choices, each new object changes the pattern of the artist's work dramatically. In my work, I use as many materials as each new sculpture requires, and the relationship between the materials is always more important than the materials themselves. Nevertheless, the materials are chosen for their special qualities and properties. Mirrors are chosen for their reflectiveness, stones for their weight and density, a cotton piece for its absorbency, etc. Let me say here that the emotional and sensible qualities of each one of these materials in my sculptures also depends on the imagination of each viewer, of course. After all, one of the premises of art objects is that their materials always suggest much more than they seem to be.

SG: All materials you use have their own specific characters; they cannot simply be just 'matter' you use in order to start a dialogue with space. What is that 'precise relationship' you are trying to create, and how do you want to achieve that?

WC: You know, all these questions remind me of a quote, I think it was by Matisse, that goes: "Art criticism is to art as ornithologists are to birds". I wonder if anybody realizes how hard it is for the artists to explain (or even describe) their work in a medium that's not the one they chose to originally express themselves in. Today, artists are constantly and gently requested to make efforts in ornithology. And they try—some really try—to imagine the bird's flight from the point of view of… a cage. This all turns out to be redundant, and, I dare say, mostly useless. I'll make myself clear: Santos Dumont, the Brazilian inventor, while trying to achieve flight for the first time, realized that he could not reproduce the action of the wings of a bird. But he could develop a machine, an entirely new device moved by a motor. In 1906, after many tries he finally succeeded. I see a metaphor here. This story is a lesson of how ideas change in the process to became real things and how strong the dialogue between space and matter can be. To define 'techné', the word they used for art, the Greeks said that its function was 'to wake up matter from its dream'. I can't think of a better image for creation.

SG: What is the purpose for the use of color in your works; do these colors transport emotion for you and what is their relation to space?

WC: All materials and all parts of artworks should call for emotion and reflection. I use colors as if they were another kind of material. Sometimes I use even art history as a material for my sculptures. See the *Venice* series (1997), for example. I do not simply apply ink to a surface; I try to emphasize the amalgam of color, shape and all the parts of an object until they all become one. In reality, I am looking for a certain kind of reciprocity between all the components of an object, color included. Erik Satie, when writing about Stravinsky, said the Russian composer was "making vibrate the phonic transparences." He knew what he was saying. He knew the deep relationship between air, vibration and transparence that makes music possible. In my sculptures, drawings and objects I do something similar. Let me give you another example: When Cézanne said that every painted green on a canvas has a bit of blue because there is air between the tree and the eyes of the painter, he was dealing with space in a pictorial sense. Colors, when applied, can be as transparent as we want. But explanations about colors will be always opaque.

SG: Your objects use space and are surrounded by space. You aim to create objects whereby all the features of the object have the same value and become objects that are equal to the space they occupy. How is this possible, and have you ever achieved this goal?

WC: When I say 'objects', I also mean the amount of energy generated by their own presence in space, and when you question me about 'objects surrounded by space', I am sure you understood my aims but can we speak of such matters seeing these works only by photo reproductions? How is it possible? The very same physical qualities that justify the presence of any object in space are not there anymore when the object is turned into a written subject, a thesis. Whether written or spoken, words introduce a new and strange element in the discussion of these objects, the art objects, or any other representation. As you know, artists do not relate with their subjects as the scientists do. 'Science does not inhabit its subjects', as Maurice Merleau-Ponty once said. Artists, for better or worse, don't need to prove the efficacy of their efforts except by adding new possibilities to a dynamic hypothesis through the works. By the way, if artists were to have any goal, this goal should be to improve on the quality of the unknown.

SG: The objects you create, the installations you make, all try to include the space that surrounds them as well in order to include the space they occupy. Why do you want to create this relationship? What is space to you and how is your work connected to time?

WC: It seems important now to mention the horizon, or the idea of horizon in a country like Brazil. We are surrounded, from the West by the jungle and from the East by the ocean. Both of these boundaries are, in a sense, imaginary, distant and indefinite places without precise outlines. This kind of panorama is unique, meaningful and very inspiring. The horizon line, the line that does not exist after all, is always present in my sculptures in many different ways. The poetical meanings suggested by those endless places have always interested me. When I think of a metaphor for my work, the abyss always comes to my mind and the horizon is a promise of what's to come.

SG: What do you mean when you speak about "the specific moment of an object", and "I do not want to reduce anything", and "reduction is kind of a moralistic approach to matter and shape"? Could you please elaborate on these statements and how are these thoughts related?

WC: Once more we stumble upon the difference between reduction and synthesis. To me, the 'reduction to essentials', a concept often used by minimalists, sounds like a useful procedure only for a society of excess. We never deal (at least in the art and culture of Brazil) with the idea of excess. Here, we have to produce both the artwork and the condition for the artwork at the same time. It is a double effort, a double challenge. The art scene and our art history are brand new and powerful but mostly unknown to specialized people, as you said before. But this is not exactly bad, our autonomy is remarkable. People have gotten to know contemporary Brazilian artists only recently and we are doing fine. The disturbing fact is that most of the international public does not know what we have done before, the art that was made in Brazil by previous generations, and they ignore the context that shaped our art into what it is now. We can say, with good humor (another one of our cultural characteristics), that we were formerly unknown but now we get the chance to be misunderstood.

SG: What do you want each individual viewer to understand through your work about Time-Space and what about Existence?

WC: Well, this is a question with no limits. Questions like these deserve limitless answers and my skills are limited. All I know is that the viewer, with his curiosity and his imagination only, is always alone in front of an artwork. I would begin by saying that all artworks share a common feature: they appear to us for the first time without names or titles, with no definitions or explanations of any kind. They simply appear and, for a brief moment, confirm the fact that we don't know anything about them. Happily, we do not recognize an object immediately. We have time to see them before thinking about it. Not classified by culture or by knowledge yet, the works begin by creating their own possibility to exist. This very moment, this blank period, the brief time when the works are nameless, this is the real moment for the artworks, the health of their future. In moments like these our imagination flows from one doubt to another, recognition fails and time dares to stop. But suddenly, reduced to a name, to a place, to an authorship, and dated, these objects, paintings, drawings and sculptures will be shaped by culture and become part of some meaningful system, an "ism" maybe. Surviving this "meanings' disease" is a hard task today. My goal, my most desired "impossible mission" is to keep these objects as long as possible in a state of nameless existence: this moment before all names.

LIAM GILLICK

Interview with Karlyn De Jongh

8 August 2009

Liam Gillick (1964, UK) practices various art forms—sculpture, public projects, written text, design—addressing the time and space in which we live. By presenting different, alternative situations, he raises the question 'what if?'*

Karlyn De Jongh: You have said you were interested in the idea of thinking as a form of resistance. What do you mean with 'resistance'? How do you see it in relation to your work? Do you think your work evokes this resistance?

Liam Gillick: It is actually a reference to Adorno. My use of it refers to his complicated relationship with the events of 1968 and his sense that direct action might merely strengthen the power structure of the State. It is a complicated idea in relation to direct political action, but of course points forwards to an endless potential while at the same time seeming connected psychologically to the notion of not 'breaking' under pressure—retaining a degree of autonomy from the rest of society. Of course this idea, while powerful, cannot account for spontaneous response to oppression. I originally referenced the notion rather ironically, but there are aspects of his thinking in this regard that I do find appealing, particularly his assertion that art has the potential to offer concrete alternative visions. Thinking as a form of resistance is almost a truism. Obviously thinking cannot be analysed externally as easily as an action. My use of the term is really in order to direct attention towards what is not visible or immediately apparent in the work. It is a way of suggesting that the gap between intentions and results is what interests me. But also it is an activated use of the idea in order to challenge rather more cartoonish ideas of how art finds a point of contention with the culture industry in general. It suggests that not everything is apparent in the work and is intended to challenge certain understandings of transparency in art.

KDJ: Your installation for the Biennale di Venezia presents kitchen cupboards based on a 1920s design by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. The cupboards reflect a certain history; this history seems to speak through the presence of these cupboards. To what extent is your art a signifier, that it points to something?

LG: Nothing about the installation in Venice was directly linked to any design by Schütte-Lihotzky. She became a subject of thought and intention rather than a source of concrete structures or references. I thought about her a lot and spent some time in the replica of the Frankfurt Kitchen that is installed at the MAK in Vienna. I was more thinking of her entire life as an alternative biography—another history of the 20th century in German speaking countries that is poorly represented outside. I was careful not to create an appropriation or a re-design of her work. Instead I shifted the normal terms from which I approach reductive formalism. I gave the structures a more direct reference point than they might normally have and turned the textual component that often exists in the work into speech. I did this in response to the unique circumstances of "representing" Germany in Venice. I decided it was necessary to be more precise in my reference points and more direct in my speech. Initially I was worried about some form of tabloid explosion between German and British yellow press in relation to my work in Venice, but in the end it was the middle-brow German feuilletons that were the most skeptical. Generally their critique was a non-critique. Some of it was actually quite disturbing in its desperate defence of an indefensible building. I found it interesting that people who don't think much about art or who are linked with a neo-nationalist defence of other neo-expressionist or allegorical kitsch found the work weak or referenced Ikea in a negative way. I think this was extremely revealing, politically. Weakness and even Ikea are not synonyms for bad art where I come from but they propose a different hierarchy of quality and status.

KDJ: In your work you seem to use various elements of other situations to tell your own story. This reminded me of what Derrida says about 'quoting'. Has his philosophy been an influence on you? What do you actually do when you are quoting other people or times in your work?

LG: Yes, very much so. Although I read most of it so long ago that I need to start again—but whenever I do start reading again I get caught in the same spiralling set of references and potentials that slowed down my reading in the first place and sent me off to try and work. It is interesting that you mention Derrida because hardly anyone does in relation to my work. But I think you can see the evidence of his influence on an unformed and non-academic mind throughout my praxis. Although I am not really thinking of things in terms of quotation, more some sense of revision or reengagement with terms of engagement. The notion of quotation to me is a little too passive when we are thinking about art. If anything, I try and avoid quotation as much as possible. I work parallel to existing structures. I try and find the small gaps and interfaces between ideology and form and create new zones of potential understanding. At other times, I operate in deliberately passive way, using the work as a backdrop for other activities. I am interested in the relationship between difference and a desire for the collective. All operating under the umbrella of a desire to operate in the increasing gap between the trajectory of modernism (critical consciousness) and modernity (the flow of technologies, demographics and social structures).

KDJ: In your text installations the text is often double and mirrored. Also, there is often no space between the 'words'. Do words have meaning to you? Or are you mainly concerned with their visual appearance?

LG: I cannot separate the two. Words don't have as much significance to me in aural terms. The doubling and mirroring are a way to attach the work to what are historically thought of as design signifiers—treating a space graphically rather than as an idealised zone. Making use of the text within a self-conscious structure where you are forced to relate the words to the layout and vice-versa. The words slip under the regime of design and vice-versa. Words deployed in this way become signs, instructions, suggestions and most importantly corrective tools to reposition the status of the more mute formal presentations.

KDJ: For your Guggenheim exhibition you made several objects with words, showing what is going on at a certain location: there seems to be a mix between art and function; the objects become alienated from their 'common' connotation. You have mentioned that art has a pragmatic function. What is this pragmatic function? Do you think this in-between space is the best place for art to fulfil its function?

LG: Yes, I do think it is the space for art to fulfil its function. I am currently reading Žižek's book *The Parallax View* which could be a handbook for people who find it necessary to operate in such a gap. I think that the Guggenheim work was a qualified success because I think the functional and non-functional aspects of the work were shown to be equivalent. But that work was also intended to have something of a secondary role and would have functioned better in a more 'full' context. The work was given too much priority in the context of the Guggenheim exhibition and had to fight against the text works of Douglas Gordon and vice versa. My mistake was to underestimate the way a museum such as the Guggenheim would treat all the work as work—I was hoping it could slip under the radar and be absorbed alongside the other art, rather than as art alone. The pragmatic function of art is its potential to be a set of material facts that counters and at least troubles the pragmatic function of other social set-ups. It has the potential to operate as a series of positive signifiers and as collapsed misleading endpoints simultaneously, which of course is another specific kind of signification. All this happens "in relation to something or someone". It is this quality of art in relation to other things in the world that gives it pragmatic potential.

KDJ: You have mentioned that an "object has the potential to allow you to spring off with a series of ideas." The question 'What if?' seems to be central in your work. In art the concern is also about the realisation of something in material, to make something visible. This realization seems to be a step further than the question 'What if?' Does the visual or material aspect of the work matter to you?

LG: Yes, very much. It's essential. However, just as conceptual art was not about nothing, then my work is not only about something. The "What if?" was only one aspect of my work over the last twenty years. It was very much connected to trying to understand the tensions that exist around notions of projection. The way speculative projection is used by Capital. I never intended the work to be a direct illustration of this, but rather wanted to use art to create new sequences of intellectual development. So I deliberately muddle the moment of significance. Sometimes it resides in the object or text as a starting point. More often I am interested in setting up a sequence of parallels that cannot be resolved in order to question normative processes of development. The 'what if' is not in my possession, it is a speculative terrain. I was interested in the battle between planning and speculation and the way that speculation won, at least temporarily. It is now interesting that the organised right wing backlash against Obama in the US deploys the accusation that he is both a socialist and a Nazi. This is because he is trying to implement a degree of planning beyond speculation. Speculation is very appealing to people who feel that things can only get better. Planning has been denounced as the route to bad public housing projects and Stalinist excess. Of course I am often trying to suggest that speculation is nothing more than a rapacious form of planning.

KDJ: Your work seems to have a strong social character. In your book Erasmus is Late *you have said you focus on the potential of the 'other'. A few years ago in the Netherlands there was a slogan from the Dutch government saying, "*De maatschappij, dat ben jij*" [the society, that's you yourself]. The slogan was there to create an awareness of the responsibilities one has for his or her own actions and therefore for living together with other people. How do you see the relation between the self and the other? How do you see your own position in this? Do you feel you as an artist have a responsibility towards society?*

LG: I think the use of language in this case was very cultural-specific. This phrase was clearly designed to appeal to a particular sense of history and I read it as being an attempt to resolve multi-culturalism with the historical sense of Dutch social identification related to notions of individual responsibility. I would have preferred a phrase like, "You are part of society therefore you have specific obligations and desires that cannot be resolved and are in a constant state of anxiety because of this." But I don't think that would have gone very far as a political propaganda tool. We find that the relationship between the self and the other is at the interface of the two. Notions of the self and the other are clear and can be described. But we find a 'real' sense of these things only at their border. It is the negotiation of this border between self and other that I find productive and interesting. Artists are citizens along with everyone else. Therefore they have the same political obligations. But they also have an obligation to be political, which is different to being subjected to the political. Artists operate within a terrain of critique which suggests a sense of responsibility towards society. However, the nature of this responsibility cannot only be described as good, productive or responsible. In fact the history of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde suggest

that one key responsibility of an artist is to question, agitate and disrupt what might otherwise seems to be a consensus model of society.

KDJ: The installation that is part of your play Mirrored Image: A 'VOLVO' Bar *(2008) has the character of theatrical property. This character of theatrical property questions the character of your other works and the position of the viewer looking at them. What position do art objects have for you? How do you see its relation to the viewer? Is there an improvised theatre going on between artwork and viewer?*

LG: I am extremely interested in the idea of work functioning as a backdrop or a setting for some action. In Munich this was conveyed literally. My work occasionally requires an activation of the ideas that underscore it, bringing the base level notions to the fore. If I make claims towards the potential functionality of the work then sometimes it is necessary to deploy the work as a background towards a developed text. In Munich the physical component of the work functioned as an obstruction and a support simultaneously. It could be moved around and used as a specific 'anyplace' that could function as a multiple setting and a set of formal irritations simultaneously. If this mirrors some theatrical tropes then that's what I was doing. However the whole thing was closer to forms of avant-garde theatre than taking a trip to see a play. The actors involved were key here. It was their commitment to making use of the structure that was essential and allowed me to step back from the work and take responsibility for it simultaneously.

KDJ: Theatre or play also has the connotation of not being real, being an illusion. How do you see this in relation to the possible worlds addressed in your work?

LG: This notion of the real in relation to illusion can be illustrated in this way: thinking about the notion of the real and realism versus illusion and the illusionary. We all know the difference between the real and the realism when we think about art. Realism as a concept is linked to a certain desperate commitment to representational art. The real in an artwork however can be any object or structure that can be recognised as an 'other than art' while at the same time being the desire of certain artists to use art to create a more real real. Illusion and the illusionary are much harder to take apart. Both realist and socially engaged practice can deploy illusions to their own ends. To an extent all art, regardless of intention and politics is involved with the presentation of an illusion. The illusionary on the other hand defines only a subset of illusion. It defines a zone of work that plays on the senses in order to deliberately disorientate the viewer or user of the work. What theatre has in common with art is the fact that the real is deployed as a device that reminds the viewer that they are experiencing a construction. Within my own work there is a necessity to be aware of the points at which the real, the illusionary and the narrated meet and to find a way to operate within the border zones between these states. My interest in possible worlds is not limited to certain specific projects but includes all moments where the work is deployed in the world. The notion of possible worlds includes the apparently 'real' world.

KDJ: You have said that objects can have an effect on the space. Do they affect time as well?

LG: Not in the same way. Objects affect time as a challenge whereas they affect space in a complementary way. Meaning that objects shift in significance in relation to time and can alter time perception and time use. If we merely consider art objects in relation to space, we cannot account for enough. It is not a question of whether I choose to affect space or time with an object. All objects from a potato to a Titian affect both space and time perceptually. The question is to what extent does the artist want to consciously play with such relationships? I often use notionally spatial strategies to question time and time based techniques to rethink space. I learnt this from Philippe Parreno.

KDJ: You are interested in the pre-production and post-production of artworks. The post-production time seems to have the possibility to extend itself, while the pre-production time seems fixed. How do you see this? And how do you understand the time of the artwork?

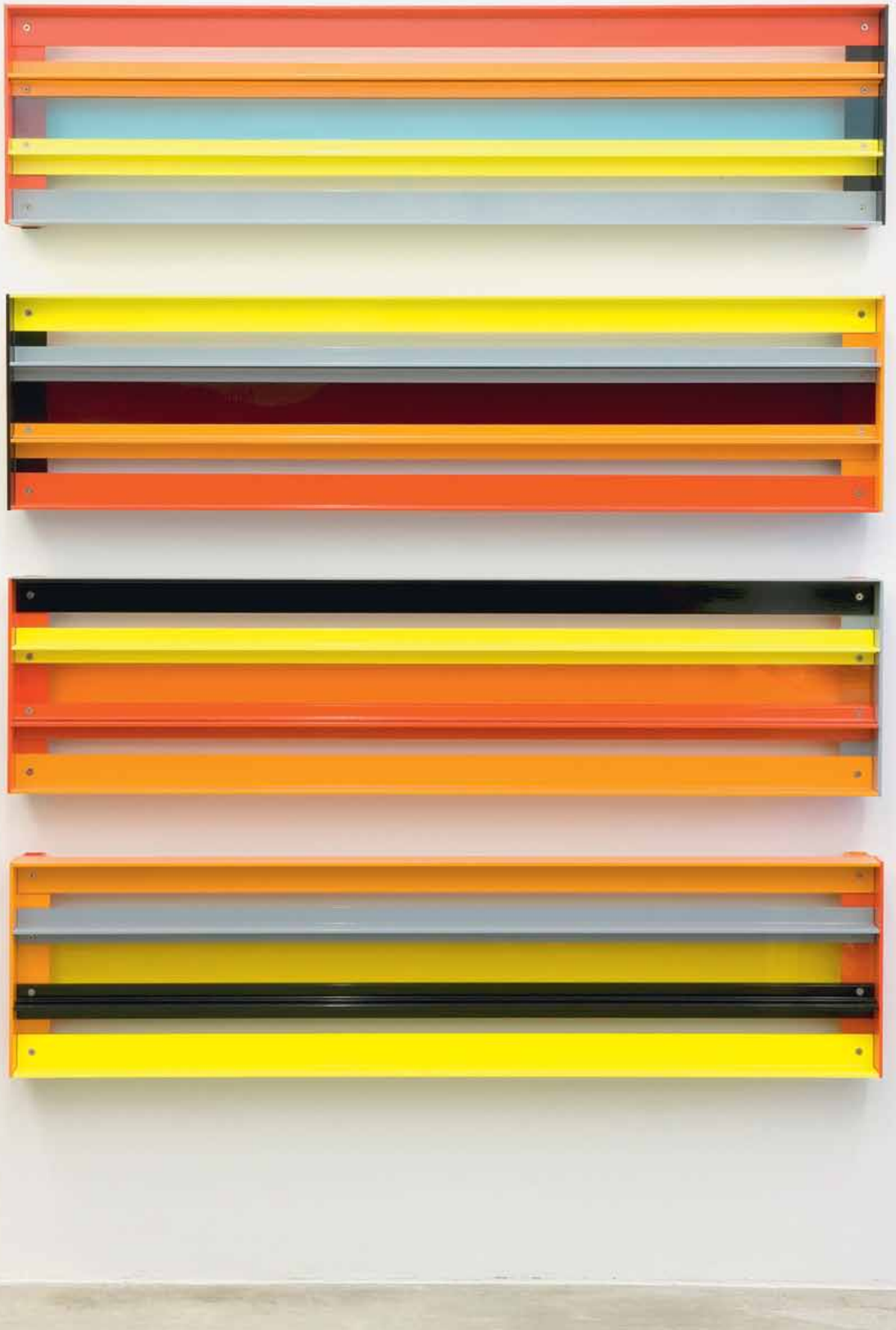
LG: In some ways by deploying these terms that are familiar from cinema I am attempting to suggest that they both have a limit. I am attempting to restrict the degree to which we might accept that art projects forward in time. The post-production must be seen in this case as something akin to editing or re-processing of an idea or a series of art moments—objects or effects. Pre-production in turn can be extended infinitely into the procedure of a work. I use both terms constantly in order to try and evade or shift the moment of significance in the work. There is very little in my work about turning something into something else. Instead I want to shift states. This is in order to challenge accepted hierarchies and question notions of quality without giving up the potential for work to be good or interesting at many moments under many conditions for completely different reasons.

KDJ: You have spoken about parallel history, parallel present, and parallel future. Do the terms 'past', 'present', and 'future' have meaning to you? Thinking about parallel temporalities, can time for you be divided into 'past', 'present', and 'future'?

LG: No, not in a truly useful way. It is much more interesting and productive for me to think of these parallels as having the potential of slippage so that, instead of the classical notion of temporal slippage that we might connect to the idea of past, present and future, we are rather dealing with a sequence of sliding idea constructions. These parallel idea strata can be thought as a series of parallel 'idea sets', 'social sets' or some other 'set' that can slip and slide against each other. There is slippage in this model between temporal moments—past, present and future. There are moments when a past brushes up with and troubles a future or a present meets a simultaneous reality—or parallel present.

KDJ: From several possible aspects of time, the future seems to be your main focus. It even seems you have a goal for a better world, a utopia. What does this perfect world look like for you?

LG: I remain sceptical about the way the word Utopia is used. I have a pragmatic relationship to how visions of the future are constructed. Most of my work focuses on historical constructions or an analysis of material conditions. I am not so interested in proposing a future vision as I am in deconstructing our understanding of what constitutes a better way in the first place.



ANN HAMILTON

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

10 August 2009

Ann Hamilton (1956, Ohio, USA) makes large-scale multimedia installations. Her works are a response to the space in which they are made. Partly a sensory response, the work is informed by the history of the site and its sociopolitical and geographic context.*

Karlyn De Jongh: Most museums and gallery spaces follow the characteristics of the 'white cube', a space that is supposed to be 'neutral'. You seem to do the opposite with your installations. What is it that you focus on? Are the historical or existential elements important to you?

Ann Hamilton: I am interested in making work that finds its form as it meets the edge of an existing space. Although I have worked in 'white cube' situations, the projects I can sink my teeth into are the ones in which I am responding to something that has a different production history. In this country, that has often been a disused industrial space re-imagined as a cultural place. I am always responding simultaneously to different aspects of a site. One obvious consideration is the social history. I am interested in how its narrative yields social tensions which I can work with abstractly and which in turn structure the material relations which come to form the project. I also respond in a visceral manner to the qualities of architecture and the presence of light. When I look through most of my earlier projects, those with natural light are the most alive for me. Recognizing this has made me more aware of the ways in which a thing is made animate by the changing daylight that comes in from the outside. The work is in dialogue with the world that you know is in that light.

I also respond strongly to volume and am very attracted to spaces with a vertical or horizontal extension. There is something that happens when you cross the threshold into a space and sense its volume in relation to the felt volume of your interior corpus. Your volume and its relationship to the architectural volume is part of what is engaged in the projects. In most cases, my response is to amplify or emphasize the volumetric expansiveness in concert and tension with some of the issues that come forward from previous histories, both of the specific building and the geographic area and my own work.

KDJ: I saw your work Human Carriage *in the exhibition* The Third Mind *at the Guggenheim museum in New York last April. The exhibition highlighted art that—in one way or another—has a connection with Asia. Your work was made especially for this exhibition, for the site at the Guggenheim museum. It seemed to me that Asia was like a space or site that is absent and present at the same time. How do you see the representation of, or the connection with Asia in this work?*

AH: I was thinking about the process of transmission, about the forms through which cultural knowledge is transmitted and travels to another cultural context. In this specific piece, I was exploring how a work might enact that process. It is through translation and circulation of texts from one language to another that an influence begins to move through another culture. There is no real tracing of or accounting for the routes these texts take, for the ways in which they are read or misread as they pass from reader to reader. My decision to use books reconstituted from sliced cross-sections of multiple volumes made physical alignments between disparate books and meanings. These meetings or alignments of texts are for me a demonstration of what happens when one line of writing rubs up in arbitrary juxtaposition to another. The story of transmission is in part an accounting of these arbitrary meetings, their amplifications and influences.

The books are used as counterweights in the installation which rims the rotunda's parapet walls with a slender pipe to create a pathway, from the upper end of the museum's ramp to the entrance below, for the descent of a wheeled carriage with two suspended Tibetan cymbal bells. The bells ring intermittently as the carriage descends and traverses the entire length of Frank Lloyd Wright's spiral, the sound both everywhere and nowhere at once, until it comes to rest at the bottom of the rotunda, where it triggers the drop of one of the bundles of these reconstructed books. The sound of the bells is never the same; they never go down in exactly the same manner. In the exchange of weight for weightlessness, and sound for the silence of reading, is the Asian influence. Just as the experience of a book is not made from a single page, this installation is not any of its singular elements but the relationship of its parts as it travels through space and changes in time. Like the sound of the bells in the museum, cultural influence travels and dissipates making it difficult to isolate the exact moment of transmission.

Sarah Gold: You work with installations. Do you have any specific reasons why you work in installation and not with painting or objects?

AH: You cannot be outside an installation. It insists on a relationship that is interior. To walk in, is to be implicated in its relations, and everything about the way that I work is relational. The contingencies of live-time constitute the installation; the sound changes, the temperature changes, the light changes, even if the material components stay more or less the same. While the changes might be nuanced and small, the animation of the unfolding of time makes up the work as much as a description of its material elements. Installation is immersive. In entering, the engagement is different than one you have with an object, which you always stand proximate to but outside of. My interest in the ongoing changes over the life of a piece is also what makes the work a challenge. Ultimately everything becomes more or less temporary. It is an ongoing quandary for me, what or how things get preserved, or whether they have an ongoing life—questions of time being active, but also suspended.

KDJ: So, to be incorporated in a piece of yours, that is also about time or about your presence. It is about this presence here and now.

AH: Yes, it is about embodied experience and knowledge and the contingencies of here and now.

KDJ: In your work there is also often the presence of a human. You yourself have been present in your installations as well. Do you assume the position of the attendant? What is for you your own, or this human's relation to your work and to the space?

AH: It is different in different projects. The attendants are both participants and witnesses; they are both inside and outside the piece. In a way, the tension of watching and being watched is probably parallel to the tensions that exist for someone entering into the piece. You are in the space, but you are not 'of' it. The experience or psychology of that dual position is something that keeps it from being completely immersive. In some cases, such as in *Human Carriage*, the attendant has an ongoing repetitive task. Audra Wolowiec, who was largely taking care of it over the several months of the exhibition, keeps the system functioning and animate with movement. She becomes the timekeeper, the clock. She is a figure in the work that allows the work to have an 'ongoingness.' In order to have the bell go down, you either need to have a very elaborate mechanical system or a person. One question for me is: how the experience of the work is different for the museum visitor than for the person who is the attendant in it? Is there any way that the experience that unfolds and accumulates over time for the attendant might be experienced by someone who comes in for a shorter duration and purpose? There are different qualities of interiority; there are different inhabitations of the work depending on how long you are there and what the engagement is. I do think it is largely about cultivating attention, and attention can be momentary or of a longer duration.

I make work for the experiences that it affords, the embodied experiences of being in the work. That is as much the work as the description of the elements. When I am in it I come to understand the work in a way that I would not otherwise. I understand it from the inside. The work creates a structure that allows me to spend time observing what happens, allowing a space in which I can become aware of the very small nuances and shifts within its live ongoing time. As much as the attendant is engaged in a task that makes something live or animates the elements, he or she is also the register of all the time of the piece and

the changes within it. I do not have a meditation practice, but I think that my making can cultivate some form of meditative awareness. Like many, I have a life that feels incredibly fragmented; there is never enough time in the day. Inside the work there is a flow that my life outside of it does not have. In the piece, there is an ongoing present. But every moment in that 'ongoingness' is different. The work tunes you in to very subtle differences and changes that occur moment-to-moment.

KDJ: How do you see your installations in relation to performance art? A few weeks ago Sarah and I spoke with Marina Abramović, who seemed to describe the same certain presence that for her was necessary to make a good performance piece. The times that you were yourself present in an installation, did you consider them to be performance pieces?

AH: They are performative, but I do not see them as performances. When I was first making work, I was always thinking about how the energy of making something and the immersive engagement with material comes forward into the public life of the piece by continuing that activity in some way. My hope is that the person who is there, engaged in an activity, is not more or less than the other elements. The components of a work are held in relation, but the figure of the attendant is not necessarily dominant. Perhaps this is true for *Human Carriage* where the live figure of Audra's presence was balanced by the movement and animation of the bells which rung inside the wheeled figure of moving cloth as it descended the rotunda's spiral.

SG: You have spoken about physical, conceptual and poetic space. What do these three words mean to you? How do you experience them?

AH: It is how they are woven together. The way I think about this is not that each of the categories is separate. How it is physically, becomes the way it is poetically and describes what it is conceptually. It is the relation between those things that make the work. I could never extricate each one separately.

KDJ: A few months ago I was with Marcia Hafif for an interview. Her paintings are very much about the material and she told me her understanding of space and time is very concrete. You also attribute a lot of importance to the materials that you use. How do you understand space in relation to the material you use? Is space for you something very concrete as well?

AH: When I consider materials, I think about their tactile qualities and their social production or history of use and the metaphoric world which draws on this history. Any material carries the literature of that history with it, whether it is obvious or not. For example, if you are using animal hair, animal hair grows on a cellular level from the inside to the outside; it actually constitutes and carries a history of the body with it. Even though you may not see these things, they are present nevertheless; they are in and of the material. The materials I use, or I am drawn to, are those that have some density of history and carry some cultural understanding of that past. A space has a history in a similar way that material does, but I also respond to the presence of a place.

It is like a 'felt knowledge'. When I visit a space, I walk or circle around; I try to walk it into my body. What I am trying to do is sense something that is there in what it already is but is not necessarily obvious or present to experience. Through the making, I amplify and make more present qualities that I might observe or sense. Then in making work, those observations become very strong elements in my consideration of the space. It is like reading. If you read a book, you cannot point to one line and say: that is the book. The amount of time that it takes to read the book is also the book. One can think of space in similar terms. I am thinking about how you move through the space and how your body turns, turns in, or is turned by the space. I am always thinking about rhythms and weights of movement.

KDJ: I was wondering about the cultural understanding of the material you mentioned. That also depends on the location, does it not? Your understanding of a certain material may be completely different from how they understand that same material in Japan.

AH: I think that is true, but I am also talking about things that are constituted not only socially, but also physically. Some of my work is engaged with the history of use; it is specific to a context. Because my work is abstract to a certain level, there is a relationship between its abstractness and its specificity that is part of its poetic. My hope is that while associations will necessarily be individual, the broader category that materials exist in can have a level of abstraction that does not limit the experience to that narrative

SG: You stated that your work has become more minimalistic, although it seems to be more labor-intensive. What does minimalistic mean to you? Does that mean your work loses its subjectivity or your signature?

AH: No, certainly the piece in the Guggenheim was labor-intensive, but I have not done a work where the labor is so transparently present for a long time. Several years ago I began to move towards working with sound, light and voice, work more temporary and ephemeral in form. However, there is a way of thinking by knowing and touching materials that I cannot approximate or touch with these other forms. For me, as the work responds to different situations it becomes more material, or less so, depending on my experience of the site. We need both tactile, concrete, visceral experience and experiences that form in sound and air and light and their different forms of knowledge. Hearing is how we touch at a distance. It is how they come together in changing constellations and circumstances that form a work.

KDJ: In an interview with Lynne Cooke about your work at the Biennale you mentioned that "no matter how much you think you're making a new work, what rises out of it are continuing concerns." To what extend are your works then specific for a site?

AH: We have our ongoing interests, sensibilities and forms. Every condition draws them forward into different focus and then slowly, over time, you do change, hopefully. Every situation allows you to look at these complexities of form and sensibility differently. It is simple to say that the relationship between the word and the body is an ongoing structure in the work, but the whole substance of our life is bound up in an understanding of and an occupation with both of those forms. Each opportunity to make new work draws its questions forward differently. What you hope as an artist is that one's understanding of the complexity deepens.

SG: You say that you are interested in "huge amounts of volume and what happens to your experience of your own body, and how you walk around the space… It is very much a live response to a space". What exactly do you want the viewer to experience through your work?

AH: I want people to feel possibility in themselves, to be fully present, to occupy an imaginative space. Perhaps the experience of an artwork can allow us to wedge open a door, to fall open, to occupy a place in ourselves that other kinds of situations do not allow, but of course there is always the possibility that the opposite is true.

SG: There is also often a historical context in your work. What role does time actually play in your installations?

AH: Like the way I was describing a book, every piece is all the time of its making. It is the history of conversation. It is the actual time and experience of it being public and everything that goes into the process of its production. When I think about the totality of a work it incorporates all of that time. When we make things, we constitute and bring them forward because they are embodied in this time and space. They partake in histories and forms of knowledge from the past as well. It is the awareness that we are always living simultaneously, not only in the next, but in the past centuries as well. We carry that history; we are 17th century as much as we are 21st century. I do think that there is species-memory, cultural-memory and individual memory, which are always moving through us, layering and interacting, to form an understanding of our experience.

RENE RIETMEYER

Interview with Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold & Peter Lodermeyer

Rietmeyer apartment, Venice, Italy
August - September 2009

Rene Rietmeyer (1957 in the Netherlands). In his work Rietmeyer addresses the awareness of time, space and existence by means of his variable installations of Boxes.*

Sarah Gold: Since 1997 your body of work consists mainly of "Boxes". Why do you make Boxes? Could you explain the concept of your work?

Rene Rietmeyer: My works, my Boxes, do not simply reproduce visual representational images of a subject. The emotionality and subjectivity of my concept are an expression of my own existence and personality. I create an atmosphere that mirrors my very personal subjective thoughts about the subject.

My Boxes create an atmosphere. They transport my emotional and intellectual relationship with the subject using form, color, texture, composition and a conscious choice of the material. Whether my work is visually attractive or not is not relevant. My objects mirror my thoughts concerning life and thereby, at the same time, also say something about me, my life, regardless whether the result is aesthetically attractive or not.

My work is therefore more than just an abstract reproduction of perceptions; it includes my reflections, my existence as a human being, as well. The dialogue with my own works heightens also my own awareness of my existence as part of this world. It is an encounter with myself, with me as a person, with my past and my reflections. My work is nothing other than the proof of my existence. Not much different than the 30,000-year-old handprint of the painter in the Chauvet cave in France.

Peter Lodermeyer: You stated that already in 2000, during our very first interview. Why is it important at all to provide proof of your own existence? For whom? For what reason?

RR: I never said that it is important to provide prove of my own existence, not for me, not for anybody else and it is not even important to prove anything for any reason. I simply acknowledge that my works are a proof of my existence, nothing more, but also nothing less.

SG: You seem to have always lived an unusual and interesting life, and you are seemingly much more occupied with existence than other people in general. Where does this awareness about life come from? What does your own existence mean to you?

RR: In general, awareness seems to be a combination of observation and the conscious reflection upon the observation, with the capability of handling language and language itself, as tools. The capability to be aware seems to be dependent on the development stage of each specific human brain. Partly I educated my brain, but mainly I am just lucky that I am able to be aware of, to observe my own, at least for me, precious existence.

Karlyn De Jongh: If your work is, as you say, ultimately the proof of your existence, to what extent can people know you through your work? And—conversely—to what extent can people know your work through you?

RR: That statement has not much to do with how people can know me through my work or vice versa. However, having an encounter with me or my work will give of course a better insight into the other entity, be it my work or me. My work and I are so close to each other, the similarities are obvious, therefore, if you encounter my work, you can sense me, you have me.

KDJ: When you say that your works are a 'proof', what do you mean? Do you want to say, "I was here"? Is it possible to prove your existence? Why do you want that?

RR: I never said that "I want that", I only stated that, since my work carries so much of me inside, my work as an existing entity therefore proves that I exist, and after I am dead, it proves that I once existed. That is not even a question, that is very obvious. And, I do not create my works in order to say "I was here". They do that by themselves, without being made for that particular reason, they do that just by existing.

KDJ: What does the proof-character of your work say about time? Are you looking at your work from a future perspective?

RR: The proof-character of my work says nothing about time, but as much as I am looking at my works in the present, I look at my work from a future perspective. It must be interesting for the people who are close to me now to encounter my work when I am dead.

KDJ: You have said that you make your boxes primarily for yourself. But when your boxes are 'proofs', it seems you require another person to prove it to. Is not the other then of great importance?

RR: It is interesting to communicate with another person through my work, but that does not mean that the other is "of great importance", or that I require another person to prove anything to. When I look at the works I made, I look into my past, into the life I lived. Even for me, myself, they are the proof that I, at those times in history, existed. The works I make are also not made to 'prove' anything, they are just an expression of my thoughts about my existence in relation to my surrounding.

KDJ: The concepts 'time', 'space', and 'existence' are important to you. You often speak about an awareness or consciousness towards them. Why is it so important to you to be aware of these concepts? To be aware of your time, your existence, your space, is that about an awareness of the verge of life and death?

RR: An intense consciousness about Time, Space and Existence puts your own existence in a larger perspective, shows you how small you are, makes you realize the importance and beauty of being alive and makes you aware and accept the 'finalness' of death.

KDJ: Now, because of this publication, you have not been able to paint for some time. How do you look at these interim moments? What do they say about your existence, your life?

RR: I really like creating my works, my Boxes, I have experienced many beautiful years in my studio. But, the scale in which I would like to communicate with other people does seem to need also other forms of being present. Therefore I had decided to initiate and give some of my lifetime to this project. But it was not only giving, there is a lot to learn, I gained knowledge and had, especially with you and Sarah, many beautiful experiences, all together, an enrichment for my life that has influence. I myself am looking forward to my new series of Boxes.

KDJ: In your speech for the symposium about Existence, you say, "There is no reason why we exist." At the same time, you seem to be a very driven person and want to make something out of your life. You have even often told me that you want to live as long as possible. And that, if it would be possible, you want to live forever. What does life mean to you?

RR: Being alive, sensing Life itself, is a fantastic feeling and stimulates many possibilities for activities. Being aware that there actually is no reason for our existence does not exclude that we could, or even should, do something beautiful, something good, with our existence. Life is precious and should not be taken for granted; having encounters with the world, with other living beings can be fantastic, if you are capable of seeing the beauty in the 'otherness'. There is so much to see, so much to experience, life is much, much too short; it is a pity that I will have to die.

KDJ: You posed the last question in my project Unanswered Questions to On Kawara. *You asked: "Could you have done anything to get more satisfaction out of your own existence?" Why is this an important question? What is your own answer to this question?*

RR: I think everybody should ask that question to him or herself over and over again, and then have a good look into the reality of your own existence. If you are really satisfied, fine, if you know you could have, should have, then, if still possible, take the consequences and do it. And, yes, although I am living an interesting life, I could still do several things to get more satisfaction out of my own existence and I am trying hard to make that happen in reality.

KDJ: There are three things you often mention as the most important things in life and that you have to take care of: work, traveling and sex. You said you did not want to speak about sex in this interview. Why is that, when it is so essential for your existence? Is that too personal?

RR: I always stated that I like my life to contain an interesting professional life, traveling and experiencing many countries and cultures, and an interesting sexual life. Because I, together with my partner, often have erotic encounters with other women, my sexual life seems to be different than that from many other people, and although my sexual life is an important part of my existence and NO question is too personal for me, I thought it would be better in this interview to focus more on other aspects.

KDJ: You seem to have an openness towards other people. At the same time, you often claim to speak from your own knowledge. What is so particular about this knowledge when you are so influenced by the world around you?

RR: My knowledge is created by influences, input, from the world around me, in combination with my own intellectual capabilities and is therefore a very personal knowledge. I am aware that my so-called knowledge is very subjective and limited, but it is all I have as a tool in order to act and to create. Staying open and being open, to and for other people, makes sure that I stay flexible, keep learning and have a chance to communicate honest and sincere.

SG: Staying flexible as a person has been always an important factor for you. Is that one of the reasons that you lived and worked in so many different countries? How does the moving from different locations add to your personal and professional life? Has it ever been a negative experience? Also, how do you translate these experiences into your work?

RR: I always thought that, if one stays living in mainly one specific place, it seems unavoidable that one looses, or does not gain, real flexibility and understanding for humans from other cultures. I therefore created my own nomadic way of living and my professional life expresses that. I never had any negative experiences in that sense, I would rather refer to some experiences as being challenging experiences; therefore my work mainly has an optimistic feel to it.

KDJ: You have a flexibility in your installations and adjust to situations and other people all the time; you seem like a chameleon. Can you speak about 'you'? Do you require that flexibility from the other person too?

RR: If you want to achieve certain goals, while working in many different countries and with people from many different cultures, that requires that one adjusts to their 'being', I cannot expect from the other the same. That may seem like a chameleon-like behavior, but that means for sure that I do not have to give up, or even loose, my own identity. Adjustment, being flexible, is part of me and is therefore also part of my installations.

KDJ: Roman Opalka made a big impression on you. It seems to me that your understanding of time is a little different than his and that you take time in the sense of 'your time', how time relates to you, your life-time. Is that correct? How do you see 'your time' in relation to the ongoing time Opalka addresses with his work? Is this ongoingness of time an issue for you as well?

RR: I like Roman Opalka as a human and I respect his thoughts and his work, but everybody's understanding of Time will at least slightly differ. I relate to Time naturally mainly in relation to my own life-time, and my thoughts do not differ with Roman's thoughts when it is about the ongoingness of time, and both Roman and I are very aware that our personal life-time will come to an end, but I will die and my life-time really comes to an end, my life-time stops, Roman however, he will die and go into infinity, because he will not hear anybody, including himself, saying, "Roman, you are dead".

KDJ: You always put a lot of stress on the importance of communication: art for example, is communication for you. It seems you want to transport the message, no matter how. How important is the meaning of the message in relation to the form? Can you put beauty aside?

RR: In an interview called *Existence*, which I gave in 2000 I stated that my works "express my existence as a person and they do just that. They do not want to be objective, pleasant, beautiful or ugly. No, they are as they are." I have repeated my thoughts several times since then and I have not changed them until today. And yes, I do want to transport a message, no matter how. The meaning in my message I find so important that I am trying to communicate it not only through art, but also in writing.

KDJ: It seems important for you to 'spread' your works and your thoughts. Why is that? Why do you want to communicate your existence, your thoughts?

RR: In all the parts of the world where I have been, I meet people who are not happy with the way they are living their lives. I cannot change their circumstances, but I can have influence on the way they think, and that change in the way one thinks can either make you satisfied with your current situation or may give you the strength or the knowledge to change your life.

SG: You say that you "construct" your Boxes. What is the actual construction of your work? Is that the intellectual aspect, or is it the manual labor, the making and the painting of the object?

RR: My Boxes result from the combination of many elements, from the original subject experience until the final manual handling. I like to call this combining from parts "constructing", because it is much more than just painting the surface of an object.

SG: Your works, although they always have a box-shaped form, vary with each different series. What do you want to express by the different sizes and shapes of your Boxes?

RR: With the conscious choice of size and shape you can express many thoughts and emotions, similar to what one can do with color, material, etc. If you meet Joseph Kosuth, you can only come to the conclusion that he represents a strong block shape, and not too small; and staying in Ireland, Ballingskelligs, seduced me to the only time I used a curved shape. Go there and you will feel it.

SG: Not only your Boxes itself, also the installations of your work vary in size. In addition also the spacing between the Boxes can differ a lot. Does your work mean to interact with the space it is placed in? Are there set rules for how your work has to be presented? Or is the owner of your work 'allowed' to interact and place your work to his or her personal taste?

RR: When my Boxes are placed in a space, the interaction with the space is of great importance. The size of my installations and the space in between the Boxes always depend upon the space they are placed within. There are no pre-set rules. It all depends upon each specific space. Preferably I myself have the main influence upon displaying my work, but on occasion other people have proven to have refreshing thoughts about how to place one of my installations.

KDJ: Your boxes are a reaction to a space or place, such as your Venezia *boxes are a reaction to Venice. When you exhibit these works*

somewhere else in the world, does that have an effect? How do the places where you exhibit your boxes, or the provenance, relate to the 'original' place or experience?

RR: My works and what I have put in them stay the same, whenever and wherever my works are, it is just the way in which they are perceived that changes by time or location. The relation between the place where my works are exhibited and the place, which was the origin of the creating of these works are of no importance in order to observe my works.

SG: Is there a meaning or 'message' you want to transport to the person who encounters your work? And if so, what would you like to transfer or communicate?

RR: At first glance it may seem that my Boxes solely transport my emotional and intellectual relationship with the subject, but the message and their meaning go beyond that. Spoken in a few words, the message is; encounter your surroundings as aware, conscious and open-minded as possible, and the meaning; I, Rene Rietmeyer, at the moment of the creating of this specific object, lived, each Box is a sign of: there has been a person, living a life.

SG: When you look at your works, which are like personal-time-documents, how has your work changed through the passage of time?

RR: From the content point of view, my work has not changed at all, only the subjects and I myself have changed and that has influenced the visual appearance of my work. At this point in time however, I am not capable of making conclusions about what these differences in visual appearance mean, in regard to my own personal development through the passage of time.

PL: Is the desire to leave something behind for posterity—works of art that will 'survive' you, not just a variation of the old fashioned 19th century concept of the artist's search for posthumous fame? I have never understood this. When Van Gogh died he didn't know that he would become famous. For him it just didn't make any difference. Why not just accept the temporality of our lives and our art works as well and only work for the here and now?

RR: My work is not about the desire to leave something behind for posterity. If my work is about 'desire' at all, it is the desire to communicate. To communicate with the people whom I do not personally encounter while I am alive, but also after I died. I do not like the acknowledgement that my life will come to an end, but of course I had no other choice than to accept that, and with that, I accept the temporality of my words and art work as well, but that does not stop me from liking it, that people will encounter me through my works after I died, I am sure Van Gogh liked that, too. I can only witness events as long as I am alive. Therefore I do not care about posthumous fame, and I work for the here and now, but already now I am pleased that people will think about what I had to say after I am dead. Fortunately I am not dead yet.

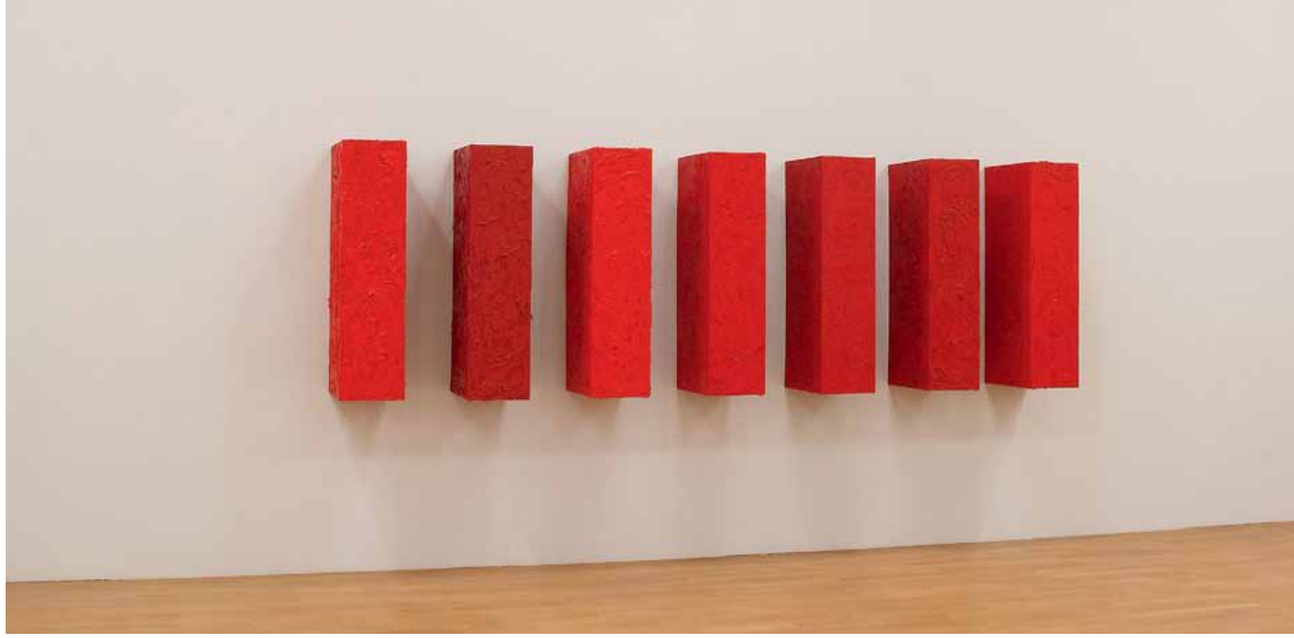
PL: According to the German Foundation of the World Population (DSW), there are currently more than 6.81 billion people living on this planet, with a growth rate of 227.030 people daily. In light of these numbers I have my doubts about the importance of producing something lasting, and about the concept of 'self-expression' as well. Is 'self-expression' a luxury product?

RR: I am very well aware that I cannot reach many people and that I can reach people only for a very, very short moment, as well as I am aware about the relativity of the importance of what I am doing, including my art work as well as my project *Time · Space · Existence*, but there is nothing wrong about wanting at least to reach a few people. And, yes, fortunately I am in the position to not need constantly to be occupied with surviving. I can survive with little and therefore, I do have the luxury to spend time with 'self-expression'. But having a healthy ego does not mean that I consider myself or my works very important, but my works and this project do enriches the lives of those people they reach.

SG: You once stated in an interview that your work gets influenced by your physical and mental condition, which depends upon a lot of factors, for example, if you have just had sex or not. Do you feel, now you are getting older, the changes? Mentally—physically? How do you see your own existence in relation to your work today compared to the time that has passed?

RR: I must admit, now being 51, it feels as if I do not have the same physical power anymore as 10 years ago. I am hoping that when I again can return more often to my studio, instead of working much too much at the computer, that my physical strength will at least return close to what it was. Unfortunately, time is not my friend, although mentally I feel myself still getting stronger. I wonder when that will change. My own existence in relation to my work has not changed anything, I still feel very comfortable with my thoughts and the outcome, I still respect my own work. I can look in the mirror at any time.

PL: When we looked at our portrait photos for the publication, both of us realized that we have really grown older. Do you allow your works to grow older, too? Are they getting better over time?



RR: Looking in the mirror and seeing the decay which is coming over my body and slowly also over my brain, is something I cannot stop. I therefore accept and see the beauty in that decay. Same as when I look at the works of art I made years ago. They are growing older too and, perhaps, because they are not in the stage of decay yet, getting 'better', and that is beautiful to see. In addition, although knowing that many of my works will survive me long after my death, if I live long enough, I think that I will also witness and be able to enjoy seeing my own works slowly fall apart.

PL: I think a lot about the concept of encounter that stands central to the work of Lee Ufan. Our Time · Space · Existence *project is in a way very much about encounters, too. Is there any particular encounter from the time we spent working on this book, which has been so impressive that you could imagine it might have impact on your future work?*

RR: More or less everything I encounter has influence, and, yes, there were several events which have an above average influence on me and therefore on my work. The several meetings with Roman Opalka, the confrontation with the person Toshikatsu Endo and his words, the straight discussions with Joseph Kosuth and the pleasure of working with Karlyn De Jongh, all these encounters will for sure have indirectly an impact on my future work.

PL: In hindsight it seems almost like our interview in the first Personal Structures *book (2003) had already formed the nucleus of* Time · Space · Existence. *There we talked about On Kawara and Roman Opalka and the awareness of time. What about the awareness of space? Is there a crucial experience you have had with space?*

RR: I did not have any specific crucial experience with space, its importance for me and my consciousness about it, have slowly grown over the last 15 years. The more you are occupied with a subject matter, the more you learn about it and are able to create an opinion about it, the more you are aware of your thoughts about it. Being occupied with the project *Time · Space · Existence* has additionally intensified these subjects' influence on me, as a person and in my work.

PL: You talk often about the emotional perception of your artworks. The new media the young generation grows up with today will sooner or later change our visual culture. Computer game manufacturers advertise by supposedly adding 'emotional depth' to their games. Do you think that artworks (paintings / objects) can compete with these media in the future in terms of aesthetic and emotional experience?

RR: The apple and the pear do not compete with each other, I make apples and I like them. In this particular case you mention, there has been created a new fruit, but it still is not a competition. They co-exist.

PL: Have you ever had the wish to transcend time, space and existence with art? Can you understand that Ad Reinhardt's ideal was to create "a pure, abstract, non-objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless […] painting"?

RR: Being able to transcend time, space and existence with art is wishful thinking by some artists. I am not capable of doing that and therefore do not wish to do so. Ad Reinhardt's ideal is not achievable, at that time it might have looked as if it was, although I do hope he did not mean all he said so literally.

PL: The end of this book contains statements contributed by different people on the subject time, space and existence, which were not to exceed 40 words in length. Could you now, at the end of the Time · Space · Existence *book project, only a few days before the printing process starts, give us a 40-word-statement concerning what you have learned in all this time about these three themes?*

RR: There seem to be as many different thoughts about Time-Space-Existence as there are different humans, there are no answers, just personal opinions, and these opinions seem to enrich people's lives.

ARNULF RAINER

Interview with Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold & Peter Lodermeyer

27 August 2009

Arnulf Rainer (1929 in Baden, Austria). Since the early 1950s, the idea of over-painting has been central to his extensive work. Rainer paints over pictures, books, photographs, etc. in order to pose existential questions by means of painting. Lives in Vienna, Austria.*

Karlyn De Jongh: Using the pseudonym Jaroslav Bukow you once stated: "the act of painting determines the work." When you paint it seems that you need a lot of energy. In this context you have spoken of rage and anger. This year you will turn 80 years old. What is your act of painting like now? Can you still summon the same fight and controversy? How do you go on working?

Arnulf Rainer: By strategies of slowness, by a row of works done at the same time. The brain recuperates by always forming the works differently. The change in physiognomies then has a refreshing effect.

Sarah Gold: In 1949 you discovered the 'filling', in 1950 the 'over-filling', in 1951 the 'cutting-down' and reworking of a picture, and in 1954 the 'over-painting of your works'. I read that these strategies helped you to overcome the dilemma you found yourself in over and over again while you worked. What did you feel or do you still feel to be, your dilemma?

AR: That I become exhausted more quickly, particularly in terms of attentiveness. The convergence between hand, eye and visual longing does not always match up. Especially when you can't concentrate enough anymore.

KDJ: You have mentioned: "I will show what is still a problem for me." How does this problem relate to the dilemma you referred to? What are the 'problems' nowadays—after more than 50 years of overpainting? Why is it important for you to show these problems? How is this related to the embarrassment that caused you to destroy many of your works?

AR: I no longer destroy works, but rework them several times, many times. The problems do not end because of this, however.

KDJ: Concerning your early works you have claimed that you do not understand them. Does it matter to you that you do not understand them? How do you see this in relation to your 'problem'?

AR: You can only understand images by comparing them with thousands of other images in your mind. An understanding via concepts only leads to misunderstandings. Thus, I also still always have to look at images more, and not study the aesthetics.

Peter Lodermeyer: Werner Hofmann once summarized your art as follows: "Rainer needs the wounds that he wants to heal. Whenever he covers one up, he tears another open—that, in short, sums up his whole artistic development." That was in 1981, 28 years ago. Has something changed since then? Did you ever reach the point where it was just about healing the wounds and ultimately reconciling yourself?

AR: Not as far as I know. A conclusion does not exist. You only get interrupted again and again.

KDJ: In an article from 1970 you wrote: "Normal life [except for art] gives me nothing and does not interest me." What does art mean to you? What does art give you? Is being an artist the most important thing in your life?

AR: Of course. Life, as it appears, is a pale reflection of art, of artistic creation.

PL: In 1971 you stated that "for 24 hours a day, my principal occupation consists working as an artist, discussing with myself, and thinking about money that is to be spent. Earlier on I also did what others consider to be living." Can art compensate for a life not lived—or has life reported back at some point to claim its right?

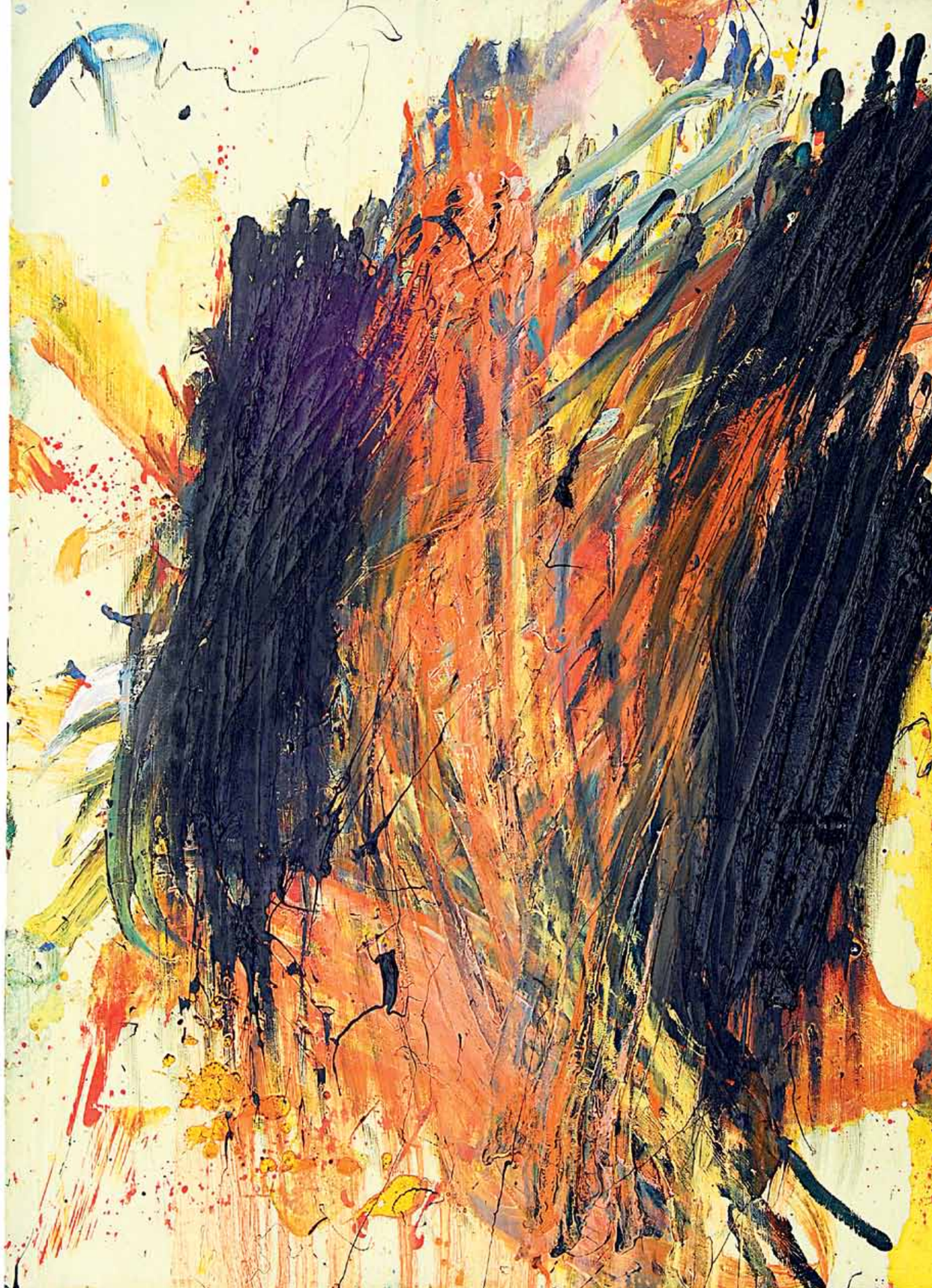
AR: Yes, when I am able to fall asleep well.

SG: You regard art as something that should broaden us as human beings. What would you like for people to learn, see, feel, sense… from you or your art?

AR: That people compare my paintings with the many others and in doing so, experience other paintings, or mine, in a new way.

KDJ: Death has always been an important theme for you. You have made several portraits of people as they take their last breath. You are now 80 years old. How do you look at your own death? When you die, do you want someone to take your picture at that moment?

AR: I would have to hold the camera myself. That, however, is not possible.



KDJ: Because of the continual overpainting it seems that your works are in motion, as if they change in time. One could say that your works live. Does that mean that your own death will be the death of your works?

AR: I don't know. But it is a known fact that artworks change through the reflection of other works.

KDJ: The overpainting of your own or other people's works of art can look like destruction or deconstruction. However, this is not so much a destruction as a completion. How do you understand death and dying in relation to this act of completion?

AR: Annoyingly enough, you always get interrupted.

PL: There is a lot of death and the cross in your oeuvre. For a Christian it is not the cross, but the resurrection that is the last word. In your work, is there a painterly equivalent for the resurrected Christ—or is art also ultimately comfortless in a metaphysical sense?

AR: The ascension of the work is also a resurrection.

PL: Your painting is characterized by a persistent delving into the layered depths we usually shy away from: death, delirium, illness, the psychic and physical remains of our evolutionary legacy… What were the most surprising and the most important things you found in your artistic 'delving into the depths'?

AR: You do not get enough air to breathe, and become dazed so you are unable to notice anything else.

PL: For me the strongest series of your overpaintings, which comes close to the pain threshold for viewing (or exceeds it), are the death masks and faces in death. What was it for you—an exercise in dying, a method for becoming more familiar with death or maybe even for obtaining a certain freedom from it or from being touched by it?

AR: Observing death masks, we can allow ourselves to be affected by their relaxed expression. This, however, did not function so well with me.

SG: Is there life after death or does death really mean death?

AR: Neither the one nor the other. These are earthly terms. They do not apply.

KDJ: Your works seem to be in a constant state of development; they continue to grow. Is this something that can go on and on or will you end it at some point? In your opinion, does the painting itself also develop? Or is the overpainting itself the development?

AR: One flees from one insufficiency to the next. Centrifugal force is how it is referred to in physics.

KDJ: For your overpaintings time is very important: you paint over an image several times, generally applying one new brushstroke per month over an indefinite period of time. How do you see time as a factor in the making of your work? Why is it important for you to paint over your works in different phases?

AR: We repeatedly look at a picture in new ways. Above all we discover its weaknesses.

KDJ: It seems that you have often forgotten what is beneath your overpaintings. Does it matter which image functions as an image carrier? To what extent is the image carrier of your overpaintings important?

AR: You can forget it; but somehow I have it stored inside me.

KDJ: Some of your works have almost been completely overpainted. These works have an air of monochrome paintings about them. How do you regard these works? Is a completely overpainted image what you aim for? Is there such a thing as a successful work for you?

AR: I don't know. The transformation suffices, step by step, until you no longer know how to proceed and land in a quandary.

SG: You made a statement in 1952 about "painting in order to leave painting". Has the meaning of these words changed over time?

AR: Obviously. I have not been able to leave it yet.

SG: Since around the mid-1990s you have had a rather gentle style of overpainting, which is more transparent, brighter and lighter than before. Could you explain this?

AR: You can see it on and through the paintings. I cannot "explain" anything.

KDJ: You have overpainted reproductions of paintings by other artists you admire, for example portraits by Rembrandt and Goya. How do you see this in relation to art and art history? Is this a renewal of these works by other artists? Or is it about quotation for you? Or perhaps you view it an improvement? How do you as an artist stand with regard to these other painters?

AR: An 'improvement' is out of the question. I love and admire the great painters of art history. During the overpainting I communicate with them.

PL: I have always understood your works as an effort to test artistically whether there are still points of connection to shattered contents after the cultural and religious catastrophe of the Nazi Era and World War II. Has art accepted the legacy of religion?

AR: Art and religion are twins. Siamese. Thus, they argue repeatedly, because they cannot always understand each other.

PL: Your painting has turned the classical definition of painting upside down and presented itself as something eminently corporeal. Do you see your works as an endpoint or final chord in painting or—conversely—as an opening for further explorations?

AR: The corporeal is the neural, and only the neural may become art.

KDJ: Of your paintings you have said that you wish for things without weaknesses. How do you understand that in respect to the life of the artwork? Is that about surviving? Is this also about a certain resistance?

AR: I have no idea. At present, I am unable to think in terms of millions of years.

SG: To quote you: "Since I have been drawing, I have been constantly plagued by a displeasure about everything I produce". Has over the years this displeased feeling sometimes turned into pleasure?

AR: It was not *Unvergnügen* [displeasure], but *Ungenügen* [insufficiency]. This also has a metaphysical dimension and that plagues me.

PL: Because your work is strongly geared towards psychic layers, and excessively so to the corporeal, it presupposes a cultural attitude. I wonder if it is still understood by our western society with its heretofore unknown level of spoiledness, and which is less and less held together by cultural values, but rather by contents of mass media? Has your existential painting become homeless, 'exotic' in such a changed context?

AR: Possibly. But this is known to be fascinating and attractive.

KDJ: You are a collector yourself and have also sometimes bought back your own works. I have learned that you regret the sale of several of your pictures stating that you sold them too quickly. Why this regret? What is the influence of the collector for the development of your works?

AR: Collectors are competitors, or rather the artists cause them to become competitors. In a certain way the artist creates the collector.

KDJ: I have read that you have difficulties looking at your own retrospectives, and that you would prefer to overpaint your old works again. Next week the opening of the Arnulf-Rainer-Museum in Baden will take place. What do you expect you will feel as you walk through this museum and look at your own oeuvre? Will you bring a brush?

AR: No, I will not bring one along. But I do hope I will understand relationships and discover things that I had forgotten back then or have forgotten today.

PL: Because of the public insults you experienced in the 50s you have assumed a certain distance from society—'autism' and 'self communication' are the terms you use for your isolated situation in society. How, for you, does the Arnulf-Rainer-Museum present itself before such a background? What does 'musealisation' mean for your work?

AR: Musealisation means to make comparisons possible, but also to make each individuality visible.

PL: In 1990 you remarked that art is a means for people to broaden themselves. You connect this broadening with problems and effort. To a large extent, art today is regarded as something having to do with prestige, glamour and entertainment. Do you believe that art has a future as means for developing what is human?

AR: These categories you listed have always been there and will continue to be there.

SG: You once said: "I have never been capable of contact with anyone, which is why the communication with myself has been the most important self-contact for me. From this self-communication I then developed a lot of things later." Could it be that precisely because you are not very sociable, your work has become based so strongly on communication?

AR: I am unable to answer this question.

PL: As a schoolboy you were sent off to an elite Nazi school for four years in Traiskirchen. There is something you related to Brigitte Schwaiger, which I find remarkable. They indirectly drilled into you there the notion of "art as a mission obligated towards passion." How is that meant and how has this early experience affected your work?

AR: Only indirectly. Above all in the fact that I learned to hate continuously living together with the class and discovered my possibilities for breaking out of the situation. The quote you mention was meant to be ironic.

PL: Along the same lines: Anselm Kiefer said in 2008: "You only ever portray what you experienced in childhood. There is nothing else. All of the material that you use, and this applies to writers as well, comes from childhood, when the brain was formed. Even if I took a trip to the moon, I would find analogies to my childhood there." Would you agree with this statement?

AR: No, what shaped me was what I already experienced before my birth, namely, (art) history and evolution, respectively.

ARNULF RAINER

Interview mit Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold & Peter Lodermeyer

27. August 2009

Arnulf Rainer (1929 in Baden, Österreich). Seit den frühen 50er Jahren steht die Idee der Übermalung im Zentrum seines umfangreichen Werks. Rainer übermalt Bilder sowie Bücher, Fotos usw., um sich durch die Malerei existenziellen Fragen zu stellen. Lebt in Wien, Österreich.*

Karlyn De Jongh: Unter dem Pseudonym Jaroslav Bukow haben Sie gesagt: „Der Malakt determiniert das Werk." Wenn Sie malen, scheint es, dass Sie viel Energie brauchen; Sie haben in diesem Kontext von Wut und Zorn gesprochen. Dieses Jahr werden Sie 80. Wie ist Ihr Malakt jetzt? Können Sie noch immer den gleichen Kampf und Streit aufbringen? Wie können Sie noch weiter arbeiten?

Arnulf Rainer: Durch Strategien der Langsamkeit, durch eine Reihe von Bildern gleichzeitig. Das Gehirn erholt sich durch die permanent andere Formierung der Bilder. Der Wechsel der Physiognomien wirkt dann erfrischend.

Sarah Gold: 1949 entdeckten Sie für sich die „Anfüllung", 1950 die „Überfüllung", 1951 die „Zerkleinerung" und permanente Überarbeitung und 1954 die „Übermalung." Ich habe gelesen, dass diese Strategien Ihnen aus dem Dilemma halfen, in dem Sie sich immer wieder bei Ihrer Arbeit befanden. Was empfanden oder empfinden Sie noch immer als Ihr Dilemma?

AR: Dass ich schneller erschöpft bin, vor allem bezüglich der Vigilanz. Die Konvergenz zwischen Hand, Auge und visueller Sehnsucht ist nicht immer ein Treffer, vor allem wenn man nicht mehr genügend Konzentration aufbringt.

KDJ: Sie haben einmal erzählt: „Ich werde das zeigen, was mir selbst noch ein Problem ist." Wie verhält sich dieses Problem zu dem Dilemma, von dem Sie gesprochen haben? Was sind heute – nach mehr als 50 Jahren Übermalungen – noch Ihre „Probleme"? Warum ist es für Sie wichtig, diese Probleme zu zeigen? Wie verhält sich das zu der Scham, die der Grund war für die Vernichtung vieler Ihrer Bilder?

AR: Ich vernichte keine Bilder mehr, sondern überarbeite sie mehrmals, vielmals. Die Probleme hören dadurch aber nicht auf.

KDJ: Sie haben von Ihren alten Bildern gesagt, dass Sie sie nicht verstehen. Wie wichtig ist dieses Nichtverstehen für Sie? Wie sehen Sie das im Verhältnis zu Ihrem „Problem"?

AR: Bilder verstehen kann man nur durch Vergleiche mit Tausenden anderer Bilder im Kopf. Ein Verstehen über Begrifflichkeiten bringt nur Missverständlichkeiten. Ich muss also immer noch mehr Bilder betrachten und nicht die Ästhetik studieren.

Peter Lodermeyer: Werner Hofmann hat Ihre Kunst einmal so zusammengefasst: „Rainer braucht die Wunde, die er heilen möchte. Wann immer er eine zudeckt, reißt er eine andere auf – das ist, auf eine Formel gebracht, sein ganzer künstlerischer Werdegang." Das war 1981, vor 28 Jahren. Hat sich seither etwas verändert? Sind Sie irgendwann an den Punkt gekommen, wo es nur noch darum ging, die Wunden zu schließen und mit sich selbst zu einem versöhnlichen Abschluss zu kommen?

AR: So viel ich weiß nicht. Abschluss gibt es keinen. Man wird nur immer wieder unterbrochen.

KDJ: In einem Text von 1970 haben Sie geschrieben: „Das übliche Leben [außer der Kunst] gibt mir nichts und interessiert mich nicht." Was bedeutet die Kunst für Sie? Was gibt Ihnen die Kunst? Ist das Künstler-Sein das Wichtigste in Ihrem Leben?

AR: Natürlich. Das Leben, so wie es erscheint, ist ein matter Abglanz der Kunst, des künstlerischen Gestaltens.

PL: 1971 sagten Sie einmal: „Meine Hauptbeschäftigung besteht aus täglich 24 Stunden künstlerischer Arbeit, Selbstgesprächen und Nachdenken über Geldausgaben. Früher habe ich auch noch das getan, was andere unter Leben verstehen." Kann die Kunst für nicht gelebtes Leben entschädigen – oder hat sich das „Leben" irgendwann zurückgemeldet und sein Recht eingefordert?

AR: Ja, wenn ich gut einschlafen kann.

SG: Sie betrachten Kunst als etwas, das den Menschen erweitern soll. Was hätten Sie gerne, was der Mensch von Ihnen oder Ihrer Kunst lernt, sieht, fühlt, spürt…?

AR: Dass der Mensch meine Bilder mit den vielen anderen vergleicht und andere (oder meine) dadurch neu sieht.

KDJ: Der Tod war für Sie immer ein wichtiges Thema. Sie haben manche Portraits gemacht, worauf Personen ihren letzten Atemzug tun. Sie sind jetzt 80 Jahre alt. Wie sehen Sie den eigenen Tod? Wenn Sie sterben, möchten Sie von diesem Moment ein Foto machen lassen?

AR: Ich müsste dabei selbst die Kamera halten. Das ist aber nicht möglich.

KDJ: Wegen des kontinuierlichen Übermalens scheint es, dass Ihre Arbeiten in Bewegung sind, da sie sich mit der Zeit verändern. Mann könnte sagen, dass die Arbeiten leben. Bedeutet das, dass Ihr eigener Tod der Tod Ihrer Arbeiten sein wird?

AR: Weiß ich nicht. Aber Kunstwerke verändern sich bekanntlich durch den Widerschein anderer Werke.

KDJ: Das Übermalen von eigenen Arbeiten oder anderen Kunstwerken kann aussehen wie Destruktion oder Dekonstruktion. Es scheint aber keine Destruktion zu sein, sondern ein Vervollkommnen. Wie verstehen Sie Tod und Sterben im Verhältnis zum Vervollkommnen?

AR: Man wird ärgerlicherweise immer unterbrochen.

PL: Es gibt viel Tod und Kreuz und Nacht in Ihrem Œuvre. Für einen Christen ist nicht das Kreuz, sondern die Auferstehung das letzte Wort. Gibt es in Ihrer Arbeit ein malerisches Äquivalent für den Auferstandenen – oder ist auch die Kunst letztendlich metaphysisch trostlos?

AR: Die Himmelfahrt des Werks ist auch eine Auferstehung.

PL: Ihre Malerei ist durch ein beständiges Hinabtauchen in Tiefenschichten gekennzeichnet, vor denen man gewöhnlich zurückschreckt: Tod, Wahn, Krankheit, psychische und physische Restformen unseres evolutionären Erbes… Was waren die überraschendsten, was die wichtigsten Fundstücke bei diesen künstlerischen „Tauchfahrten"?

AR: Man bekommt keine Atemluft, wird benommen und merkt sich deshalb nichts mehr.

PL: Die für mich stärkste Serie Ihrer Übermalungen, bis nah an die Schmerzgrenze des Hinschauens (oder darüber hinaus), sind die Totenmasken und Totengesichter. Was ist das für Sie gewesen – eine Einübung ins Sterben, eine Methode, sich mit dem Tod vertrauter zu machen oder vielleicht sogar sich eine gewisse Freiheit davon, eine Unberührbarkeit zu erwerben?

AR: Bei der Betrachtung von Totenmasken können wir uns von ihrer Entspanntheit anstecken lassen. Das funktionierte bei mir aber nicht so gut.

SG: Gibt es ein Leben nach dem Tod oder bedeutet der Tod wirklich Tod?

AR: Weder noch. Das sind irdische Begriffe, die zählen nicht.

KDJ: Ihre Arbeiten scheinen in einer konstanten Phase von Entwicklung zu sein; sie wachsen weiter. Kann das immer weiter gehen oder gibt es für Sie einen Endpunkt? Gibt es für Sie auch eine Entwicklung im Malen selbst? Oder ist das Übermalen selbst die Entwicklung?

AR: Man flieht von einem Ungenügen zum nächsten. Fluchtkraft heißt das in der Physik.

KDJ: Für das Übermalen ist die Zeit sehr wichtig: Sie übermalen ein Bild verschiedene Male mit durchschnittlich einem neuen Pinselstrich pro Monat über eine unbestimmte Zeitspanne. Wie sehen Sie die Zeit als Faktor beim Machen Ihrer Arbeiten? Warum ist es für Sie wichtig, die Arbeiten in verschiedenen Phasen zu übermalen?

AR: Man sieht ein Bild immer wieder neu. Vor allem entdeckt man seine Schwächen.

KDJ: Es scheint, dass Sie manchmal vergessen haben, was sich unter den Übermalungen befindet. Macht es einen Unterschied, welches Bild als Bildträger dient? Inwieweit ist der Bildträger Ihrer Übermalungen wichtig?

AR: Man kann es vergessen, irgendwie ist es bei mir aber gespeichert.

KDJ: Manche von Ihren Arbeiten sind fast total übermalt. Sie haben damit etwas von monochromen Malereien. Wie sehen Sie diese Bilder? Ist ein komplett übermaltes Bild das Ziel? Gibt es für Sie gelungene Bilder?

AR: Weiß ich nicht. Es genügt die Verwandlung, Schritt für Schritt, bis man nicht mehr weiter weiß und in der Verlegenheit landet.

SG: Ihr Statement 1952 war „Malerei, um die Malerei zu verlassen". Hat sich die Bedeutung dieser Worte im Verlauf der Zeit geändert?

AR: Scheinbar. Ich habe mich noch nicht lossagen können.

SG: Sie haben seit ungefähr Mitte der 90er-Jahre einen eher sanften Stil von Übermalung, der transparenter, heller und leichter ist als früher. Könnten Sie dies erläutern?

AR: Das sieht man auf und durch die Bilder. „Erläutern" kann ich nichts.

KDJ: Sie haben Reproduktionen von Malereien anderer Künstler übermalt, die Sie bewundern, zum Beispiel Portraits von Rembrandt und Goya. Wie sehen Sie das im Verhältnis zur Kunst und Kunstgeschichte? Ist das eine Erneuerung dieser Arbeiten anderer Künstler? Oder ist das für Sie ein Zitieren? Oder ein Verbessern? Wie verhalten Sie sich als Künstler zu diesen anderen Malern?

AR: Von „Verbessern" kann nicht die Rede sein. Ich liebe und bewundere die großen Maler der Kunstgeschichte. Beim Übermalen kommuniziere ich mit ihnen.

PL: Ich habe Ihre Malerei immer als einen Versuch verstanden, nach der kulturellen und religiösen Katastrophe der Nazizeit und des Zweiten Weltkriegs künstlerisch zu erproben, ob es noch Anknüpfungspunkte an die zertrümmerten Gehalte gibt. Hat die Kunst das Erbe der Religion angetreten?

AR: Kunst und Religion, das sind Zwillinge. Siamesische. Deswegen streiten sie öfters, weil sie sich nicht immer verstehen können.

PL: Ihre Malerei hat die klassische Definition von Malerei auf den Kopf gestellt und sich als etwas eminent Körperliches präsentiert. Sehen Sie Ihre Arbeit als einen Endpunkt, einen Schlussakkord in der Malerei oder – im Gegenteil – als eine Öffnung für weitere Erkundungen?

AR: Das Körperliche ist das Neurale, und nur das Neurale kann zur Kunst werden.

KDJ: Von Ihren Arbeiten haben Sie gesagt, dass Sie sich Dinge ohne Schwächen wünschen. Wie verstehen Sie das im Verhältnis zum Leben der Kunstwerke? Ist das ein Überleben? Geht es hier auch um eine bestimmte Resistenz?

AR: Keine Ahnung. In Millionen Jahren kann ich derzeit nicht denken.

SG: Nach Ihren eigenen Worten „Seit ich zeichne, plagt mich ein Unvergnügen über alles, was ich produziere." Ist aus diesem Unvergnügen mit den Jahren manchmal auch ein Vergnügen geworden?

AR: Es heißt (bzw. hieß) nicht Unvergnügen, sondern Ungenügen. Das hat auch eine metaphysische Dimension und plagt mich.

PL: Ihre stark auf psychische Tiefenschichten und exzessiv ins Körperliche zielenden Arbeiten setzen eine kulturelle Einstellung voraus, von der ich mich frage, ob sie in unserer immer weniger von kulturellen Werten, sondern von den Inhalten der Massenmedien zusammengehaltenen westlichen Gesellschaften mit ihrem nie dagewesenen Verwöhnungsniveau noch verstanden wird. Wird Ihre existenzielle Malerei kulturell heimatlos, „exotisch" in solch einem veränderten Kontext?

AR: Möglich. Aber das hat bekanntlich Faszination und Anziehungskraft.

KDJ: Sie sind selbst Sammler und haben auch manchmal eigene Bilder zurückgekauft. Wie ich verstanden habe, bedauern Sie den Verkauf mancher Bilder und haben gemeint, sie zu schnell verkauft zu haben. Warum dieses Bedauern? Was ist die Position oder der Einfluss der Sammler für die Entwicklung ihrer Arbeiten?

AR: Sammler sind Konkurrenten bzw. werden es durch die Künstler. Der Künstler erzeugt gewissermaßen den Sammler.

KDJ: Ich habe gelesen, dass Sie Schwierigkeiten haben, Ihre eigene Retrospektiven anzuschauen und am liebsten alte Arbeiten wieder übermalen. Nächste Woche wird in Baden ein Arnulf-Rainer-Museum eröffnet. Welche Erfahrung erwarten Sie davon, durch dieses Museum zu gehen und das eigene Œuvre anzuschauen? Bringen Sie Pinsel mit?

AR: Nein, ich bringe keine mit. Aber ich hoffe Zusammenhänge zu begreifen und zu entdecken, was ich damals oder auch heute alles vergessen habe.

PL: Von ihren Publikumsbeschimpfungen in den 50er-Jahren an ist Ihnen eine gewisse Gesellschaftsferne eigen – „Autismus" und „Selbstkommunikation" sind Ihre eigenen Stichworte zur Ihrer isolierten Situation in der Gesellschaft. Wie stellt sich vor diesem Hintergrund dieses Arnulf-Rainer-Museum für Sie dar? Was bedeutet „Musealisierung" für Ihr Werk?

AR: Musealisierung heißt Vergleichbarkeit schaffen, aber auch jede Einzigartigkeit sichtbar machen.

PL: 1990 sagten sie, Kunst sei ein Mittel für den Menschen, „sich zu erweitern." Sie bringen diese Erweiterung mit Mühe und Anstrengung in Verbindung. Heute sieht man Kunst weitgehend als etwas an, was mit Prestige, Glamour und Unterhaltung zu tun hat. Glauben Sie, dass Kunst als Mittel der Entfaltung des Menschlichen eine Zukunft hat?

AR: Diese aufgezählten Kategorien waren schon immer da und sie werden auch bleiben.

SG: Sie haben mal gesagt: „Ich war nie kontaktfähig zu irgend jemandem, also war das Selbstgespräch der wichtigste Selbstkontakt für mich. Aus der Eigenkommunikation habe ich dann vieles entwickelt." Wäre es möglich, dass gerade durch Ihre nicht ausgeprägte Kontaktfreudigkeit eine so stark auf Kommunikation basierende Arbeit hervorgekommen sind?

AR: Diese Frage kann ich nicht beantworten.

PL: Sie wurden als Schüler vier Jahre lang auf eine Eliteschule der Nazis, die Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt in Traiskirchen, geschickt. Ihre Aussage gegenüber Brigitte Schwaiger, dort habe man ihnen indirekt „Kunst als eine zur Leidenschaft verpflichtende Mission" eingeimpft, finde ich bemerkenswert. Wie ist das gemeint – und wie hat diese frühe Erfahrung sich auf Ihre Arbeit ausgewirkt?

AR: Nur indirekt. Vor allem darin, dass ich das dauernde Zusammenleben in der Klasse hassen lernte und meine Ausbruchsmöglichkeiten entdeckte. Das Zitat, das Sie anführen, war selbstironisch gemeint.

PL: Damit zusammenhängend: Anselm Kiefer hat 2008 gesagt: „Man stellt immer nur das dar, was man in seiner Jugend erlebt hat. Es gibt nichts anderes. Das ganze Material auch von Schriftstellern ist in der Kindheit entstanden, als sich das Hirn gebildet hat. Selbst wenn ich auf den Mond fahren würde, würde ich dort ein Analogon zu meiner Kindheit finden." Würden Sie diese Aussage unterschreiben?

AR: Nein, mich prägte, was ich schon vor meiner Geburt erlebte, nämlich (Kunst-)Geschichte bzw. Evolution.

ESSAYS

JOSEPH KOSUTH

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NO EXIT

I suspect that we have not yet gotten rid of God, since we still have faith in grammar.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Men fight and lose that battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes, turns out to be not what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.

William Morris

I. TO REMIND

Insofar as its public reception was concerned, Conceptual Art was defined at birth in relation to formalism and, by critics like Lucy Lippard, in the language of Minimalism. The strategic reason (from my point of view at that time) for emphasizing dematerialization and anti-objectness was the immediate necessity to break away from the formalist terms of time, that is, from an aestheticized art philosophically conceived of in terms of shapes and colors employed for the good of 'superior taste'. By removing the formalist defined 'experience', it seemed obvious (our heuristic point went) that the condition of art would have to be looked for elsewhere. In this regard, what we initiated was a kind of readymade by negation. This removal, or cancellation, was really a defetishizing of the Duchampian readymade in the form of (both figuratively and, in my case, literally) of an ergative photograph of our inherited horizon of artistic meaning, and the simultaneous act of its positive negation.

We have seen how much such heuristic devices became identified (as in *product* identification) with individual artists, as a kind of mutant 'style'. It is as though the social event of that initial cultural rupture fixed a conversation, as a product of a time, into the shadow cast by its reified moment. As artists, we had a choice: to resist this misidentification, or to readdress this celebration as *part* of the process. These two possibilities, of course, defined the struggle of the enterprise at that time as much as it would over the years define the limits and historical location of such work.

But to understand the present relevance of Conceptual art, it must first be *separated* from such work, which should be seen as post-Minimalism. Those artists who chose the latter, it can be seen since, have fairly consistently made work that neither evolved in relation to cultural or social change in the world, nor engendered much enrichment of our understanding of art (save what particular members of the critical establishment gleaned from the production of others and applied to them). By and large, such work continues to be basically stuck in a '60s frozen moment, with the *gesture* of that initial act representing a sole philosophical moment of practice. The replication of basically that same act over a 20-year period, however—whether or not it is a betrayal of original aims—certainly eclipses whatever those original aims were, offering up instead the empty meaning of an ossified 'style'.

The context of Minimalism, in the mid '60s, was that moment when the two major forces in American art, Pop art and formalism, were just beginning to reach full stride. Pop art, because of unprecedented public interest and support, and formalism, due to an equally unprecedented hegemony in the art-historical/critical complex and its vast institutional support system, seemed to be part of a power horizon detached from the social and cultural unrest taking place in society. In such a context, Minimalism arrived as the beginning of the end of Modernist 'avant-garde' art movements. But that should not diminish for a minute the force and clarity with which that rupture made its debut. While Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried were shoring up their minions and extolling an art that naturalized the prevailing institutions (inside of art and out), the Minimalists presented objects (*not*, at least *then*, 'sculptures'), which were *outside* the space of institutionalized pictorial fictions, *and in the world*.

It was precisely this world, which contextualized and provided meaning for *things* (even theoretical 'things') used as art, and, furthermore, dealt with the effect of such meanings *on the world*, which gave rise to work such as mine. From my point of view at the time, Minimalism—as important as it was to us—still functioned as sculpture (and we now see it *became* sculpture), which meant that its dispute with formalism could be trivialized as one of taste (just a cooler one). Though Minimalism created the context in which it could emerge, Conceptual art, to be understood, must be defined in terms of a *difference*. Post-Minimalism took the formalist, and Modernist, concern with the limits of materials and techniques, used Conceptual art's strategic device of negating that concern, and institutionalized this practice as a negative formalism. This provided the Modernist agenda with a revitalized 'avant-garde' face without letting go of the premise that the repository of central artistic concern was still in the object, if only in its absence. In this regard, post-Minimalism's primary concern is with a radicalization of alternative *materials* rather than alternative *meanings*. But it is issues of meaning—the process of signification- that defines Conceptual art and has made it relevant to recent art practice. The substantial import of such work, it would seem to me, has been the radical revaluation of how an artwork works, thereby telling us something of how culture itself works: how meanings can change even if materials don't.

With the subsequent 'opacity' of the traditional language of art (painting and sculpture) in the sixties, the objects (paintings or sculptures) themselves began to lose 'believability' (the language was losing its transparency). One was always in a position of being 'outside' the work and never 'inside'. With that began, through the sixties, an increased shift of locus from the 'unbelievable' object to what was believable and real: the context. Objects or forms employed became more articulations of context than simply and dumbly objects of perception in themselves.[1]

"(Notes) on an Anthropologized Art", 1974

II. TO PROPOSE: THE 'MADE-READY' AND THE READYMADE

A.

It says no medium is pure. It is. . . the art of *bricolage*, of throwing disparate things together. It asserts that there can no longer be the isolated work of originality or genius that extends the possibilities of a medium. There can be no such originality; one cannot initiate one's work from oneself[2].

In the discussion of recent art, commentary like that immediately above is not atypical. The presumption in such a comment is, of course, that traditional 'primitive construction' techniques of auratic art are basic to art production—despite the fact than an alternative practice (in the form of the readymade) has existed for over sixty years.

But the reason we must reject such a traditional practice is because it masks, within the aged baggage of a 'symbolic' value system, the *actual* signifying structure from which meaning is generated. There is no 'hidden' meaning in the metaphysical sense that the interpretive needs of an auratic art suggests. Rather, it is a *layering* of levels of meaning and *the relations between them* that subvert the banal reading of 'goal-seeking' elements of mass culture, and make possible 'original' work from such a *bricolage*. Indeed, it is only in the constructive appropriation—what I'll call here the *'made-ready'* that the process of art is accountable and demystification is possible. The cultural system—with its visible social anchors—is part of analyzable given, not removed from criticism through incorporation into an auratic, heroic cosmology.

Practitioners of the 'made-ready' are not guilty of the apocalyptic program of which they are accused. Obviously, what one person sees as the end, another sees as the beginning. So, first, it must be recognized that such appropriation is another *practice* of art—a practice that by its nature subverts, redirects, or negates theoretical assertions (or anything else) initiated elsewhere.

Second, one must recognize the formalist bias in statements such as, "In reducing themselves to their most primitive elements they would have exhausted all possibility of further innovation; no further advance would be possible,"[3] which locates the meaning of art *in* 'elements' rather than in the signifying dynamic inherent in the relations *between* elements and between them and the world.

Artistic activity consists of cultural fluency. When one talks of the artist as an anthropologist one is talking of acquiring the kinds of tools that the anthropologist has acquired—insofar as the anthropologist is concerned with trying to obtain fluency in another culture. But the artist attempts to obtain fluency in his own *culture. For the artist, obtaining cultural fluency is a dialectical process which, simply put, consists of attempting to affect the culture while he is simultaneously learning from (and seeking the acceptance of) that same culture which is affecting him… Now what may be interesting about the artist-as-anthropologist is that the artist's activity is not* outside, *but a mapping of an internalizing cultural activity in his* own *society. The artist-as-anthropologist may be able to accomplish what the anthropologist has always failed at.*

A non-static 'depiction' of art's (and thereby culture's) operational infrastructure is the aim of an anthropologized art.[4]

"The Artist as Anthropologist," 1975

My initial reasons in the sixties for attempting to use language as a model for art (in 'theory' as well as introducing it as a 'formal' mate-

rial in art practice) stemmed from my understanding of the collapse of the traditional languages of art into that larger, increasingly organized, meaning system which is the modernist culture of late capitalism. Traditional languages of art are controlled zones where specialized, fetishized markets are allowed to follow their own circular paths displaying 'freedom' safely out of the way of those mechanisms of organized meaning—which is varying ways amount to the increased institutionalization of everyday life. Conceptual art, as a critical practice, finds itself directly *embedded in that realm of organized meaning; but historical understanding means that the work begins to understand itself; it becomes critical of those very processes of organized meaning in the act of criticizing itself. The point made in the sixties about "breaking out of the traditional frame of painting and sculpture" and the kind of work necessitated by such a break—seeing what art 'means' outside of such traditional language, provided the possibility of seeing how art acquires meaning. Conceptual art then seemed to take two forms, either it evolved into a stylistic paradigm competitive with, while extending, traditional art, or it withdrew into theory. This paper, then, speaks from my critical, and intimate, relationship with both.*[5]

Within the Context, 1977

I have focused, then (both in my work and in texts like those cited above), on the development of an art that is truly an alternative practice. We have no need for the isolated avant-garde *gesture,* which by necessity must feed off a traditional support and become its unwilling collaborator. Nor, for that matter, do we need the practice of artists who, having the right political message, nonetheless parasitically use the given *forms* of art, be they borrowed from an alternative practice or not, as though they were transcendent categories just waiting to be filled with the 'correct' content.[6]

Fundamentally, both perpetuate a conservative idea of art's potential. What separates Conceptual art from both is the understanding that artistic practice locates itself directly in the signifying process and that the use of elements in an art proposition (be they objects, quotations, fragments, photographs, contexts, texts, *or whatever*) functions not for aesthetic purposes (although like anything in the world, a proposition can also *be* aesthetic), but rather as simply the constructive elements of a *test* of the cultural code.

The 'made-ready' and the tradition of the readymade have shown us what the process of art is; the path of that showing has meant the development, through its self-reflection, to the critical location of an ideological self-knowledge; this alternative tradition sees art, simply put, as a *questioning* process. The various scattered agendas of formalism survive, finally, with only themselves—object and project—offered up in production; art, there, is seen as an *answering* process, satisfying society's system of commodity need.

B. A PRELIMINARY MAP FOR ZERO & NOT

We have a cluster of contingencies: a text, which represents an order of arbitrary forms, which make a systemic sense (believable while they teach belief). The words are meaningful, contingently, in relation to the sentence, and the sentence to the paragraph. The paragraph, from The Psychopathology of Everyday Life *by Sigmund Freud is meaningful in relation to the exegesis of Freud's work. The use of Freud's work, in this context, is contingent on understanding its use by the 'author' of* ZERO & NOT *(beginning with* Cathexis *in 1981) as a kind of conceptual 'architecture'—a readymade order that, while anchored to the world, provides, as a theoretical object, a dynamic system. This text, though, is also just a device: a surface, a skin. There is another syntax, also anchored to the world, which is the architecture of rooms, which also orders this work. While the order remains there, the gaps and omissions (the entrances, exits, views in and out—that which puts the work in the world) rather than disrupt the order clarifies and qualifies the room (the world) and art (that which is Not, but within this order, is). The cluster of 'arbitrary' orders has also a 'made' order, which unifies it, beyond the unification given to it by the architecture of the room(s) itself. It begins with a counting off of the paragraphs, repeated until the walls are full; and that cancellation which constructs as it erases, suggesting 'one thing' (a field of language itself) present, while removed. Not just absence presented, it is language reduced to words, making the texture of reading itself an arrival at language, an arrival which constructs other orders, ones that blind as they make themselves visible. The numbers separate the paragraphs as they unify the work. This provides the field in which the colorcoding systematically underscores, repeatedly, the fragments that make up the unitary paragraph, a made up order, which constructs (or deconstructs) the paragraph differently than the other order (of the world), which make the paragraph with sentences. And differently, too, than that order which made rooms out of windows, doors, changing ceilings, and those walls, which presume the lives, which will be lived within them.*[7]

Artist's statement, Chambre d'Amis *catalogue, 1986*

The use of Sigmund Freud's theoretical work as a 'made-ready'—from my *Cathexis*, 1981, through *Modus Operandi*, a 1987 series of exhibitions in the United States and Europe—has permitted me to employ various strategies (and, for my problematic, risks) while continuing with the committed agenda outlined above. The theoretical object—the system of thinking of Sigmund Freud—was chosen not only for its rich generative complexity, for its use within a variety of discourses, and for the uncharitable impact of its practical implication, but also because of its internalization in society and in that culture which forms, and dialectically describes, both.

The pervasive influence of Freud continues to generate an effect on our reading of numerous cultural codes. We know where it locates itself; we can't say where it doesn't. 'Looking for meaning' in a Freudian context, out of context, provides a certain self-reflexivity in an *art* context about that process itself.

Beyond any instrumentalized sense of a 'made-ready' stands a prior 'made-ready': my own history. This means, to some extent, that we begin with a psychologically organized approach, a 'target' ethnology. There are frames of references and like any other artist who has worked for over 20 years, I must account for my own work always, if only partially. Therefore, some of the bricolage of my practice negates by positively including reused fragments of prior work—out of context but reframed—so that one 'text' is cancelling itself in another. In this way, individual 'works' maintain equal weight, and cancel with finality, the psychologized ordering of auratic work and its unknowable suggested metaphysics. My use of Freudian 'cosmography' as a made-ready has a dual role. First, it provides a larger signifying structure, which can locate specific art propositions, and a theoretical context, which is non-assertive (a negated theoretical presence rather than a 'to-be' interpreted lack). In other words, it provides a 'made-ready' conceptual architecture. But these houses don't close; there is no 'inside' or 'outside'. Second, this Freudian cosmography functions as a 'meaning-active' material for the construction of works; the setting up and the cancelling out: a negated presence and a positive absence.

C.

Such texts, as art, initially demystify themselves: they reorganize the nature of the relationship between the 'viewer' and the work. Rather than isolating the viewer as individual faced with an enigma ('abstract' art) or projecting him/her into another fictional space ('realism') such work connects the viewer/reader on the level of culture through the language of the text while *they deny the viewer /reader the habituated narrative or pragmatic/instrumental role and meaning for the text. Once connected with the text, the viewer, as reader, is active and part of the meaning-making process. By being inside looking out, the viewer/reader looks for meaning* within relationships, *relationships established within and between social and historical contexts.*[8]

"Text/Context," 1979

*When viewed 'normally' the fictive space of the painting permits the viewer an entrance to a credible world; it is the power of the order and rationally of that world which forces the viewer to accept the painting (*and *its world) on its own terms. Those 'terms' cannot be read because they are left unseen: the world, and the art which presents it, is presented as 'natural' and unproblematic. Turning the image 'upside-down' stops that monologue; one no longer has a 'window to another world', one has an object, an artifact, composed of parts and located here in this world.*

One experiences this as an event*, and as such it is an act, which locates and includes the viewer. As an event it is happening now (in the real time of that viewer) because the viewer, as a reader, experiences the language of the construction of what is seen. That cancellation of habituated experience which makes the language visible also forces the viewer/reader to realize their own subjective role in the meaning-making process.*[9]

"Notes on Cathexis*,"1981*

The 'equal weight' that I referred to in section B can describe as well the relationship between the viewer/reader and the artist/author, and their joined moment as the collaboration of signification. The dialectical spin of such signification is the final construction, which remakes and re-forms the 'made-ready', creating a dynamic constellation; signifying as it constructs itself within those cultural codes that punctuate the interface of meaning between the viewer/reader and the artist/author. The construction of the participating viewer/reader is not simply the completed and final work, no more than the act of reading, or viewing, is the act of possession.

The practice of the 'made-ready' has clarified, within its constructions, how *specific* elements (or forms) used within art, as within language, are by large and arbitrary; the sense can only be understood in the systemic whole. And it is such a systemic whole that not only makes possible the production of further meaning, but joins the viewer/reader and the artist/author within a *social* whole as well.

1 Joseph Kosuth, "(Notes) on an Anthropologized Art". [1974, reprinted in: Joseph Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After. Collected Writings, 1966-1990*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts / London 1996, pp. 95-101; quote: p. 98-99].
2 John Rajchmann, "Postmodernism in a Nominalist Frame", in *Flash Art*, no. 137 [November—December 1987], pp. 50-51.
3 Ibid., p.51.
4 Joseph Kosuth, "The artist as Anthropologist". [1975, reprinted in: *Art after Philosophy and After*, pp. 107-128; quote: pp. 120-121].
5 Joseph Kosuth, *Within the Context: Modernism and Critical Practice.* [1977, reprinted in: *Art after Philosophy and After*, pp. 153-167; quote: p. 161].
6 "As a practice such work denies the philosophical implications and political character of culture; it assumes a separation between form and content, theory and practice. Work, which presupposes the possibility of political content within a 'given' cultural form, is taking an idealist position; the implication is that politics is located as content, and forms are neutral, perhaps transcendental. Philosophically, as a politics of culture, they are agreeing with the formalists: the actual practice of art is apolitical, it only waits for the artist to become politicized." Kosuth, "Text/Context". [1979, reprinted in: *Art after Philosophy and After*, pp. 179-182; quote: p. 181].
7 Joseph Kosuth, "A Preliminary Map for *Zero & Not*". [1986, reprinted in: *Art after Philosophy and After*, pp. 221-222; quote: pp. 221-222].
8 Joseph Kosuth, "Text/Context". S. footnote 6, quote: p. 180.
9 Joseph Kosuth, "Notes on *Cathexis*". [1981/1982, reprinted in: *Art after Philosophy and After*, pp. 199-202; quote: p. 201].

THOMAS PIHL

*Thomas Pihl (*1964 in Bergen, Norway). The focus of Pihl's paintings and sculptures is his critical dialogue with the mass production of 'aesthetics' in our everyday culture. Lives in Bergen and in New York City.*

As a producer in the visual field, I want to discuss Time, Space and Existence in light of the Visual.

Current culture has developed a vast and sophisticated visual machinery of production. This omnipresent mass of visual activity—a 'sign of our time'—is a phenomenon that has not occurred before. What we experience is unique and gives urgent information about Time, Space and Existence. I use the word 'visual' to designate the knowledge humans have gathered to efficiently introduce and grasp retinal attention concerning their activities, ideas and presence in a competitive world. I mean all kinds of abstract material as color, form, line and vast surface treatments artists and contemporary industry have invented. With a growing understanding of the potency of cultured visual knowledge, it has been vitally important for mass culture to dispose over this powerful insight. Never before has so much labor been invested by designers and artists to understand and seize these visual tools. There is a large industry involved in the attempt to comprehend the 'cultured visual' impact on the human mind. We now have apparatuses and systems to more and more accurately measure the influence of visual material on our senses. This research is being conducted in studios and laboratories. The knowledge is distilled to enhance the influence of a visual phenomenon or spectacle—mostly to stimulate and persuade desires. As much as the knowledge is used to open our eyes, it is equally active and effective in disguising critical information. We have created the ultimate tool of manipulation and we are addicted to it.

With the extreme and unrealistic expansion of the global economy—that led to the financial crisis and the exhaustion of our natural resources—the competitive development of visual knowledge has entered a manic state: the hyper visual.

One aspect of a hyper state—whatever field it is in, for instance, economics—is that it still appears to function much as we are accustomed to. However an understanding of a lurking fragility and possible collapse is surfacing, both in our consciousnesses and in reality.

It is becoming more and more crucial to understand and control the hyper visual because of the power it exerts. A hyper condition may not only be identified in terms of the over developed efficiency it operates on, but also by the tremendous energy it consumes to keep it functional. The amount of power invested for preventing the opposite of a breakdown—and even a further expansion of the economy with the visual as a propelling source—has no realistic relation to the outcome of the investment. Entering a hyper level, it is always a matter of time before it exhausts itself. The success of the hyper visual is due to the eye's extraordinary proficiency as an unguarded door to our minds, and its free access to economical resources. To give one example: With the gene technology available today, one can produce a salmon that looks like a full-grown specimen, though in fact it is not. A foreign gene speeds up the growth. A sibling to this full grown-looking fish—a fish without the inserted gene—is too small and not suitable for the market. The consumer becomes a victim of misreading. Of course this particular phenomenon is an interconnection of several dilemmas, but first and foremost, it is about the visual manipulation of the eye, and how we read or misread visual information in relation to ethical structures.

It's not news that culture and power go hand in hand. The inherent characteristics and dynamics of abstract visual vocabularies are the focus of my work. My aim is to communicate to the viewer how essential and concentrated the impact of abstract visual features might be, and how in contemporary culture it affects our lives: I am interested in how efficiently it seeps beneath our skins—independent of the quality. Visual vocabularies create moods or atmospheres, and it is difficult to define their impact—it is like the gene I described earlier where the experience is complicated to track, articulate and make us conscious of. This is how the phenomena are related to ethics and power and why we are drawn to them.

Visual research is currently at the highest level of sophistication ever in human history. This is due to the fierce competition in mass production and politics. Due to how powerful it is, the amount of resources poured into this field is enormous. We have knowledge about, and consume more, abstract visual information than ever before. The visual—now the hyper visual—has always fascinated us. This is where cultured beauty surfaces and thrives. This is where beauty and beast coexist, might blend, and even appear identical.

TIME

Time is a measuring system invented by humans. Therefore time will end with us. The sun will continue to rise and set, and inner clocks in other species will continue to run. But time will end with us. The end of time has been predicted throughout history.

For the first time in the human saga we are observing and experiencing indications that our activities and behaviors are critically related to time. Culture at large—as it exists now—has a new timeframe. We have created a culture of production that essentially sinks into all corners and structures of global space and natural life. The effects can be measured in structures from the atomic to the global. This is a crisis that has now entered the contemporary time zone.

This new time frame is, however, veiled. Thus, we do not yet fully experience this new condition of time. We are still functioning out of habit with an old, but obsolete time perception. Seemingly still functional rhythms in nature and human manipulation of current data produce a time related denial.

Now, we organize and choose time, and the time quality, for the coming generations. The contemporary consumption of energy and natural resources will ultimately have an effect on the human experience of time in the future. The omnipresent visual industry takes command of crucial information and impacts how future generations time will be dictated to by survival. Life spans are already impacted now, and will continue to be so in the future. Time as existence changes place with time as extended existence.

The visual industry persists in hiding and softening the signs of the new contemporary time frame. The hyper visual culture is an effective tool. The size of the comfort industry grows proportionately to the urgency we are creating. We choose the comfortable the more pressing a situation develops into. Creativity as manipulation is operating at its maximum capacity and we are now experiencing time as loss. The scale of this time emergency is universal.

A bankruptcy of an economical structure is a reality long before the moment it shuts down. Denial, the culture of manipulation and comfort, is the force continuing to keep it afloat. Time is then experienced as delay. The time we are experiencing at this moment, is delayed time. What are we in the midst of right now time-wise? We may ask if our perception systems are capable of recording the condition of a situation in its right time. The hyper visual exhaustion of our perception system prohibits consciousness.

The efficiency of our internal adrenaline system gives us individual abilities for dealing with time—catastrophic time is the ultimate time constraint. The amount of awareness and concentration the human construction may establish under extreme time limitations is a resource not yet set in motion. We have thousands of years of experience that the natural systems and rhythms work and change within their own time cycles—behind us: Time as past. This long-standing perception of time is changing even as we speak. Time as urgency is an escalating contemporary time characteristic. This new time is a resource as well as a threat. This is a serious dilemma.

In the quest for saving the current economic system as being the most viable—two successful time based economical ideas were introduced. The idea of planned obsolescence was a lucrative time founded invention. We plan our productions to fail and die with time. This destructive idea is of course meant to generate larger consumption. This again is due to the ever-increasing need for energy and power contemporary culture craves in order to generate surplus value. The other one was the invention of credit and credit cards. This generated an extraordinary monetary flow drawn from the future. If we focus on the outcome of these time-oriented inventions we may question our human capabilities. We also have to review what we define as success.

Time as a valuable commodity is a matter of connection to the current economy and the social realm. Each individual experience of time and the awareness of our limited lifespan reflect time as a value as well. Time becomes a matter of priority and conflict between this individual human understanding of time, and the societies' constant call for our time as producers and consumers.

We have incorporated into our bodies an internal feeling and understanding of time. This internal time zone is cultured by society but it is also purely individual. A healthy ninety-year-old man said to me yesterday, 'I have plenty of time'. He placed time in a multi qualitative perspective: Time as fluidity and time as something extraordinarily faceted. We are all faced with time—time as the now—but we experience it just as differently. This man has lived much longer than I have and he might outlive me. Time is relative, and when time is limited—to define this time limitation as endlessness—changes the perception of it.

This summer I inherited a portrait—a drawing—of a woman I once knew very well. I thought about the specific time the portrait was executed—from the first line on the piece of paper to the moment it was finished. There was a date, and there was time invested. A complicated web of thoughts, feelings, artistic and corporal concentration, sounds and smells and expectations existed within this defined creative time frame. The portrait is a recording of time—a recording of a complex specific moment. But the drawing is a portrait of lifespans as well. The woman's life time of course, but the artist's and the viewer's as well. The portrait is a portrait of time. We know we are in the midst of a countdown. A lifespan and its time are defined by death.

In my work I do not record time—but there is a time aspect involved in producing art. One aspect is similar to the portrait of the woman: An artistic process operates as a recording device of the actual production moment. More crucial to me is the time aspect of viewing. My paintings' reductive characteristics challenge the viewer to experience seeing as a heightened experience, by devoting time. My intention is to create a visual situation that generates immediacy and delay. Viewing the work is dependent on the time frame between the two. I think of the painting as a complex meeting point between past and future observations. I do not date my work when it is finished in the studio, but when it is first shown to the viewer in a public space. That is the moment it is finished and when it starts.

SPACE

As a producer of visual material I have observed that a product—in addition to the obvious space the (art) object was planned to inhabit—occupies an additional space: A space not accessible by the eye. Observing the excess paint I washed out in the sink, I realized that this lost material was not only waste. This was unconscious material entering unconscious space. I was alarmed that my creative practice was leaking. It was like losing critical material to the creative process and my understanding of the consequences of being a producer. I was involved in creating a loss of crucial data and ideas that had importance for the creative process. The work was bleeding into other spaces out of my control and my practice was losing responsibility and vitality.

This problematic, unconscious space is not unidentified or mysterious. On the contrary we are finally starting to address the fact that all the deposits resulting from our cultural activities are entering and affecting spaces crucial to life. This is a reality permeating all the way down into molecular space and changing it—even at the level of atomic space as well.

For my own work I started to collect spatial material related to my practice. For several years I collected all production surpluses. This means things like disposable gloves, drop cloths, paper towels, excess paint, paint containers, etc. It soon dawned on me, this real occupation of space—and spatial economy—was something my practice as a two-dimensional artist was responsible for. The material coexisted with the intended product—the paintings—even though it had been removed from the art works' close proximity.

This accumulated material I then redefined as art supplies for sculpture. I wanted the material to occupy space—as artwork. The volume is defined by the amount of spatial material involved. I wanted the sculptural structure to be defined by its own mass. The surface of the sculptures is intended to mimic consumer aesthetics and convey artistic beauty at the same time. This surface prohibits the viewer from seeing the amalgam of the internal structure. The intention is, though, that a slight feeling of its inner complexity be communicated.

Contemporary production exceedingly occupies visible space. The products we bring into the world and its various spaces—fulfill a complexity of needs. The hyper visual culture maps unconscious human desires and produces objects that visually trigger the wish to own it. The production and consumption of cultural objects occupy space in our search for individual fulfillment.

The psychology of hoarding is interesting in the context of space. This disorder—as we define it—is identified by the 'patients" lack of ability to throw anything away. Their living spaces are filled up with objects defined by our culture as having no or limited 'value'—like mountains of old newspapers. Several of these patients have died of avalanches of piled material tipping over.

Hoarders' collections are mappings of spatial material that have entered into their space and ownership. The collection is also a visual testimony of the space a human being occupies in a lifetime. In our culture we define this psychology as a disorder. But it's also evidence of a human being's entire cultural consumption and a cultural footprint. This colossal occupation of a living space is more or less equal for all who live in capitalist economies. However, most people channel this entire mass to spaces out of the visual field—to other spaces—and define their behavior as functional and healthy within the existing culture.

Hoarders are often considered as having creative, intelligent minds and are largely very well educated. The complexity of their interaction with cultural material can be traced to a complex understanding of the objects. Hoarders' collections are a physical visualization—of one human being's entire cultural usage of space. I think the various dilemmas this phenomenon demonstrates is how culture fueled by the hyper visual industry produces vast and complex volumes—physically and metaphorically.

My paintings—*Prearticulation*—occupy compressed space. I float the pigment grain in a slab of acrylic medium. Light streams into this space filled with acrylic and pigment. Light—natural or synthetic—rotates around the grain of color and bounces back to the viewer's eye. Although the compressed space is limited—it simulates vastness. The painting's visual impact is not unlike a video or a computer screen. The spatial components in the paintings are a merging of real space in three dimensions and manipulated space. Natural light blends with and confuses the layout of illusionist light. I am interested in this light and spatial confusion in order to create a perspective of uncertainty. My intention is to include, in a seemingly recognizable outline of beauty and comfort, a complete lack of spatial foundation.

Plastic fragments polluting the ocean is an example of natural space being affected by and filled with residues of visual production. Plastic in nature breaks down to tiny pellets. In the ocean this material is found in certain areas to occupy as much space as the natural mass of plankton. Scientists argue that we have reached a peak and that the problem cannot be fixed. Because the plastic has undergone visual treatment in the form of a color, animals 'misread' the material as food. The chemicals in the plastic will ultimately be embedded in the organic tissues. This is also an example of how natural and cultural space are merging, turning into an indistinguishable spatial 'soup'—in this case by material from visual production. Every single pellet occupying these spaces has a connection to a product designed to serve modern culture and its economical parameters.

I am specifically interested in spaces that are occupied by our culture in places where we cannot see the impact of the occupation. These peripheral spaces challenge us to be aware of the fringes of our psychological patterns, ethical structures and our denials.

EXISTENCE

To exist as a human being is a continuous process of learning. The human mind—our extended intelligence—continually investigates life and life forces. Knowledge becomes understanding and understanding grows into wisdom. The process extracts the essence of life observations. This is Existence as becoming.

We culture the human capacity—in mind and body—for understanding our place in the universe in an attempt to make meaning out of it. Due to our success as a species we have developed this far beyond the survival instinct. The natural growth of the human struc-

ture combined with a more cultured and specialized choice of skill later in life—is existence as a becoming. Existence is a complicated synthesis of natural, cultural and individual components coming together. Existence hovers between insight and blindness. The quality of this maturation, and the extent we are able to accomplish this, is our particular existence. Be it good or bad. This mental and social practice of humans is individual according to talent and fate, nutrition (literally and metaphorically), where you were born, your sex, nationality, psychology, religion, economy and your lifespan.

If we think of existence as a process of investigating life, creativity comes to mind. The creative force is comparable to a pathfinder in understanding existence, and therefore, it is crucial. The capacity of creativity is extraordinary. The extended complexity of a creative mind, or creative occupation bears inherent potential for individuals to generate tools for their existence. Creativity pursues the fringes of human capacity. It is an investigation into the veiled desires and frustrations at the periphery of our abilities. This is where an understanding of the fragility of these processes is refined and where the quality of uncertainty is celebrated.

Creativity as a motor for existence is not entirely utilized if one does not include death: The end of our existence generates more than anything: awe. Awe is crucial for awakening the human senses to aim for the limits of their faculties. To observe and respect life powers with awe embraces existence for developing a self in balance with the ego. Awe produces a consideration to what exists beyond our self and generating respect for it.

We as no other generation before us have access to information and therefore the most sophisticated instruments ever to contribute to the culture our existence. As visual producers, our work is located in the creative field. However, in light of the mass visual—the current culture of flooding the senses and thought processes in humans, existence towards becoming is—in its entire complexity—endangered. Visual material is used not only to heighten the understanding of a given phenomenon. The reverse also applies—it is instrumentalized to hide and confuse the path towards achieving as complete a picture as possible.

Ethical structures in contemporary social building and behaviors are the target of the hyper visual culture. The visual comfort culture and convenience industry is extraordinarily effective, and our deep instinct to avoid pain is targeted. We then lose the ability to accept and transmit pain as a vital motor in our development as human beings. In this process we lose the ability to identify and empathize with anguish when we encounter it. The hyper visual mirror is effectively protecting us from the painful. This is confusing our ability to locate the balance between destructive and constructive forces and bewilder existence as ethics. The question arises: Is my place in the world, and the degree that I 'stand out and glow' considered in terms of how it affects my path? To be aware of the quality the footprints left by our existence is a complex process of observation and consideration.

With the enormous stream of information and technology we currently have available instruments better than ever for understanding our place in and our impact on the world. We can observe and trace the smallest particles ever examined and measure and detect the slightest residues in an organic tissue. We persistently equip and extend our senses so that the horizon in the quest for information is constantly moved closer. We have created an extraordinary opportunity for developing our beings and culture to the utmost.

We have simultaneously developed a large culture to veil and distract information from the immediacy of our senses. This is to promote and portray contemporary cultural production as viable and sound. What you consciously sense and record is then not the entirety of your experience. Information is filtered and not available to you. Your access to good judgment has been reduced in favor of producing a desired reaction or movement in the consumer. We have, as a result, developed visual dyslexia. Our senses are in constant danger of becoming dulled and washed out by uniform aesthetics presented to us as value. The hyper visual is exceedingly addictive. The target is the individual and we are promised a self with value and esteem. Are we as visual producers responsible for developing the opposite—an epidemic of self-absorption?

We are cut off from access to the entire ethical structures of activities and products. And we do not want to know about this. We have been cultured to communicate such manipulation with precision ourselves. We have no idea whether we are nurtured or threatened. We do not any longer know if we are nurturing or threatening. But we are fiercely fighting for our positions that we have created for our own good. We have developed symptoms of serious narcissism. The extent our picture and products are produced and reproduced is a measure of success. Existence towards becoming has been thrown into a deep crisis.

Our human capacity to invent sound and creative answers to all the questions and dilemmas surfacing faces serious challenge. We have created a situation that is extremely demanding. It will be interesting to see if we are able to create a culture of minds that opens up to create a future that seriously considers all cultural production in relation to the entire complexity of value and ethics: Time, Space and Existence as the human life force.

HANNE DARBOVEN

By Klaus Honnef

January and February 1996

Hanne Darboven (1941 Munich - 2009 Hamburg, Germany) was well known for her drawings and installations documenting time and existence.

(This is a slightly corrected version of an article by Klaus Honnef that appeared in: Hanne Darboven. "Soll und Haben" und "Welttheater '79". *Herausgegeben von der Ausstellungsgesellschaft für Zeitgenössische Kunst Zollverein mbH und der Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur e.V. Bonn. Mit Textbeiträgen von Prof. Dr. Dieter Ronte, Prof. Klaus Honnef, Ulrich Ströher, Walter Smerling, Bonn 1996.)*

A New Kind of History Painting.
Remarks on Hanne Darboven's *Theater of the World 1979* and her Artistic Position

In contemporary art Hanne Darboven occupies a unique position in every respect. Outwardly already her works go beyond the customary dimensions. Thousands of drawings, sometimes more, as well as terse testimonies to the cultural history of the trivial, sometimes also photographic reproductions, are composed to become finished works. But neither do the drawings correspond to customary standards. They are rather similar to literary or musical notes, whereby frequently numbers, sometimes written in digits, sometimes in words or at face value take the place of written language. The numbers are ordered according to a certain system. The system runs in a spiral movement and always collapses to its base again at the end of a century. It is oriented to a customary calendar. A mathematical operation provides a formal 'set of rules', namely the formation of the cross sums of the numbers of the days and months as well as the end numbers of the years that are treated separately. Knowledge of the numbers system, however, is not decisive for the re-cognition of Hanne Darboven's aesthetics. The artist is not a mystic of numbers. The numeric system only imparts aesthetic structure to the artistic work. It is within this aesthetic structure, however, that the 'essential part' of the artistic work takes place.

In addition, the work of the artist is unique in contemporary art mainly because it is aimed at providing insight into the relationships between the world and existence. Each of the, for the most part, extensive and complex works embodies something of the subjective experience of life, and at the same time it constitutes the successful attempt to wrest from our seemingly senseless time on earth a meaning otherwise hidden from our superficial view. Although the artist's personal experience forms the foundation of her artistic practice, Hanne Darboven's work extends far beyond the individual horizon of subjective reflection. The empirical alongside the imagined is reflected in her work, clearly and directly, connected by a mixture of free association and montage-like construction. To a certain extent, Hanne Darboven breathes new life into what was formerly the leading discipline of art: the traditional genre of history painting. However, this is accomplished with unusual means and without recourse to the tradition of art. What had been mistakenly considered to be a contribution to Concept Art in the form of diagrams on graph paper in the second half of the 1960s has long since developed into a powerful 'panorama' of sensually tangible world-embodiment and world-interpretation. Granted, at first the artist's works seem to be as vastly incalculable and impenetrable as the cosmos the viewer was born into, but thanks to both the visual sense as well as intellectual insight, the core that 'holds together the world' of Hanne Darboven reveals itself upon careful 'reading'. The body and the mind of the viewer are captivated in equal measure. And the conclusiveness of her aesthetic principles is not lastly a result of the convincing transposition into film and musical forms.

But Hanne Darboven certainly has no intention of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an overall work of art. In the suggestiveness the work exudes in its optical as well as its acoustical versions we may always recognize its continuously rational appearance. The references of the parts to the whole are clearly visible, the structure of the work being clear and transparent, even when the scope of some of the works goes beyond familiar proportions of art. Somehow, on a metaphorical level the crystalline structure of the works consisting of hundreds and thousands of carefully written pages remind us of the delicate buildings of gothic cathedrals, emanations of a vision soaring to the heavens, while the trivial objects the artist has placed inside are reminiscent of secularized, and what is more, travestied monuments of an indwelling guiding spirit. Hanne Darboven has created her own universe, a world, however, which is only the one step of aesthetic penetration away from the empirical reality of our everyday experience.

Showing just how comprehensive her grasp on the world of everyday experience is, a magnificent piece like the *Theater of the World 1979* unfolds these qualities in exemplary form. Its title already plays upon Baroque thought, but through artistic hyperbole and seen from the perspective of the viewer, the Renaissance and Mannerism as well have taken their looks at the world of everyday life. Shakespeare's stage amassed together the entire spectrum of human thought and actions as if in a focusing mirror. And in splendid Renaissance paintings, the gods, heroes, and saints accomplished exemplary ideals—recommended for immediate imitation. "In referring to the notion of art in the Italian Renaissance, I have in mind the Albertian definition of the picture: a framed surface or pane situated at a certain distance from a viewer who looks through it at a second or substitute world. In the Renaissance this world was a stage on which human figures performed significant actions based on the texts of the poets. It is a narrative art. And the ubiquitous doctrine ut pictura poesis was invoked in order to explain and legitimize images

through their relationship to prior and hallowed texts." (Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, Chicago 1983, p. XIX).

Without a doubt, the *Theater of the World 1979* stands in this tradition, though without wanting to legitimize itself by means of sanctioned texts. Hanne Darboven is an artist of the Modern. Her artistic work, too, has been shaped by a break with tradition achieved through avant-gardist determination. Nevertheless, elements of tradition continue to be present in her work, if only sometimes in an indirect way, but they are still effective as well. Committed to an expressly modern aesthetics in terms of method and execution, Hanne Darboven has never repudiated the spirit of the artistic tradition of the West. Granted, the difference between her intellectual attitude and the view of the artists of earlier epochs is significant. She regards the inner forces of the world neither from the perspective of the audience nor from the position of an Archimedean point distant from earth, but rather includes her own consciousness, subjective thought, and feelings, even in a certain sense her own physical nature, into the view, and thus into her practical work as an artist.

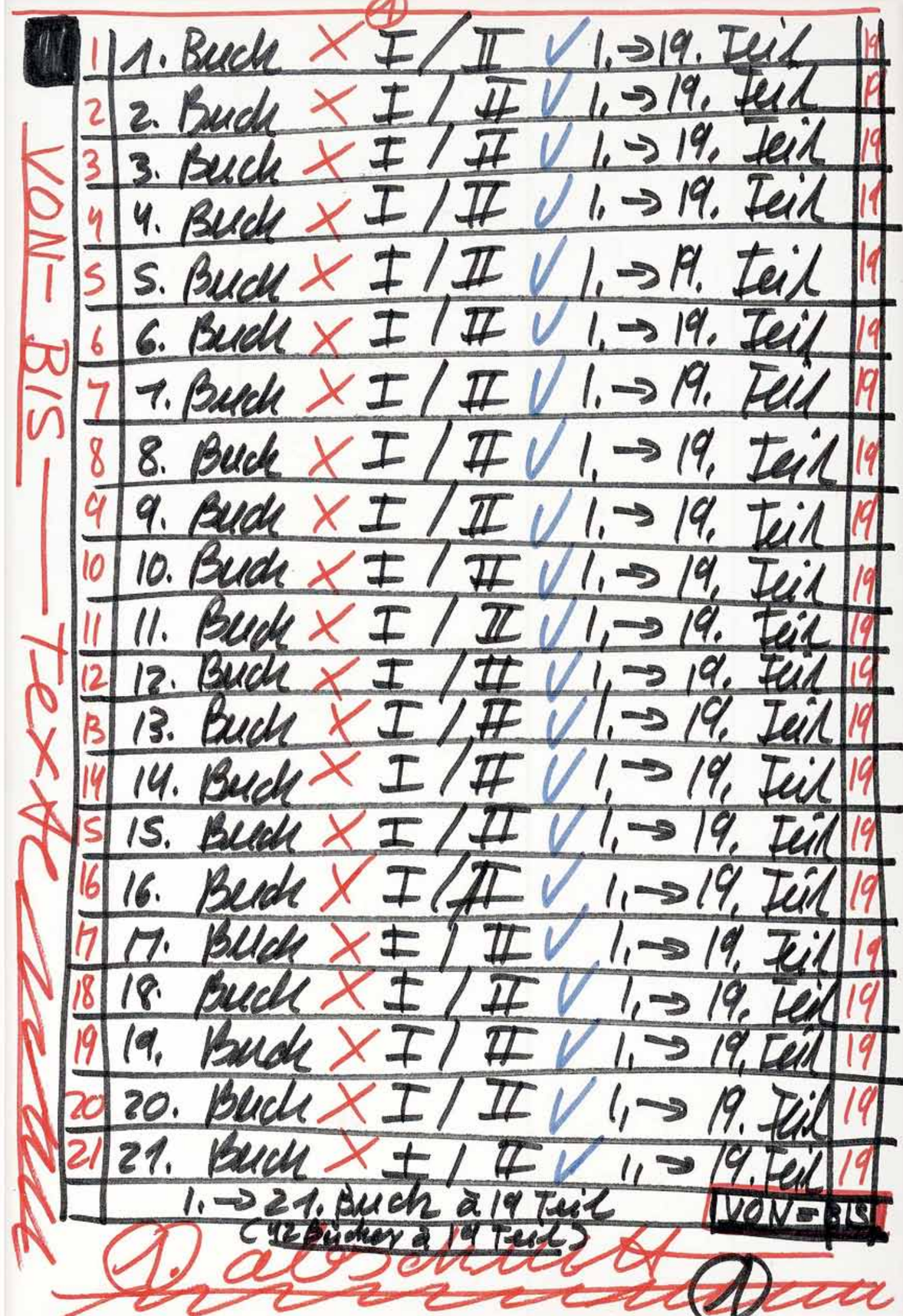
In this connection a hint provided by Otto E. Rössler is of particular interest. At a podium discussion in 1992 on the occasion of an exhibition of works by Hanne Darboven, he mentioned a lecture Werner Heisenberg had held, in which the great physicists touched upon the so-called 'Endo-Question', the Inner-Question: "Heisenberg was of the opinion that because of quantum mechanics a revolution would take place in science since it had become a theme here for the first time that the observer himself is a part of the system he is observing. This horrifying self-reflectivity was then taken up by the mathematician Gödel, and it also plays a role for the Turing-machine in computer science. It poses a challenge that, granted, everyone is talking about, but no one deals with directly…" (Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka, *Hanne Darboven*, Stuttgart 1994, p. 56.)

In the light of such intellectual premises, the artistic world of Hanne Darboven always turns out to necessarily be a world of her viewers, just as conversely their world is inevitably also the world of the artist. "… I believe that all contemplation of art is a misunderstanding, and not only in the area of the fine arts. What good does it do if an elite section of the population concerns itself with art, and nothing is done for the others so that they could understand what it is all about? Even Kant's maxim 'Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature' remains merely paper because no one conveys what it means." (quoted after Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka, op. cit., p. 55). In just as many leaves as the year 1979 had days (plus a cover leaf), including the continually repeated stage instructions "The curtain rises" and "The curtain falls" at the lower edge of the right and left side of the pages, a piece of the 'Theater of the World' unfolds before our eyes at the highest artistic level—gripping, convincing, understandable, and perfectly directed. Deep black alternates with a white that lights it up, painterly and graphic elements determine the rhythm of the optical drama, while the photographic reproductions of punched tin toys and the various dates of the calendar, numerically summarized or written out in full, form the 'cast' of the performance. The artist alienates the play with distance in a dual sense: On the one hand she reduces the vivid events to the terseness of a graphic demonstration. On the other hand she projects it to the stereotypical succession of popular tin figures. By making them perform in the nuanced form of black-and-white photographic reproductions printed in gray she has added a further means of alienation.

What the tin figures have to do with the world-historical events of 1979 is something that remains open for the time being. Most of the events have anyway fallen victim to our oblivion. Nevertheless, the toys crystallize, or rather personify, the forces that grow into historical events. Forces so banal that you can scarcely connect them with the concept of historical events: The relationship between man and nature, between people themselves, such as people of different skin color and race, and the false appearance of an image of the world art also likes to propagate: the many idyllic things—with garden gnomes and Indians, the longing for untouched nature, which by being touched will be immediately exposed to destruction—and in general a longing for life without conflicts and contradictions. "The curtain rises"—"The curtain falls", the actual *Theater of the World 1979* is only unique and out-of-the-ordinary as a conglomeration of data—and in addition it is a panorama of what people find to constitute reality. Hanne Darboven opens the visual field of the viewer. She cites the elementary things otherwise suppressed by the agitated mass media. Against this entertaining and consumer-oriented theater of the world the artist lodges her protest.

It is no coincidence that the *Theater of the World 1979* is one of Hanne Darboven's clearest and visually most convincing works. She herself published an edition of the work, an additional hint to her artistic intention. In comparison to some of her other works with clear examples that spark our irritation through the apparent monotony of what is always the same, the *Theater of the World 1979* distinguishes itself with an astonishing diversity, although the scene does not change. To the left on each page there is the closed curtain in two uniform, rectangular surfaces colored black, divided by a white bar; and in turn divided by a white bar in immediate proximity there is the open curtain with likewise two uniform black triangles which progress at acute angles to the right and left, opening our view to a stage starkly lit in white. This, too, forms a triangle, and in the triangle, both of the black triangles of the curtain are contained in terms of their surface measurements.

In contrast to this, the protagonists of the *Theater of the World 1979* appear in various forms, be it people, animals or genres, just as the calendar constructions of the various forms appear in varying reproductions, though respectively, each may be rationally experienced. The notion of aesthetics that becomes visible in the works of Hanne Darboven is not only the impetus of artistic action, but also its obvious compelling expression. An aesthetics of function cleared of superfluous decoration and self-indulgent arabesques. A work of the Modern! The focus is on the essential, on what is concrete in things and events, not on their seductive reflection. This is also why the artist's predilection for preservation is dedicated to the incidental and peripheral, the trivial and the toys. For it exudes the kind of childish and naïve poetry that seems so contrary to the crystal clear poetry of the rational, and perhaps this is why it has claimed its place in Hanne Darboven's artistic oeuvre.



SOL LEWITT

By Peter Lodermeyer

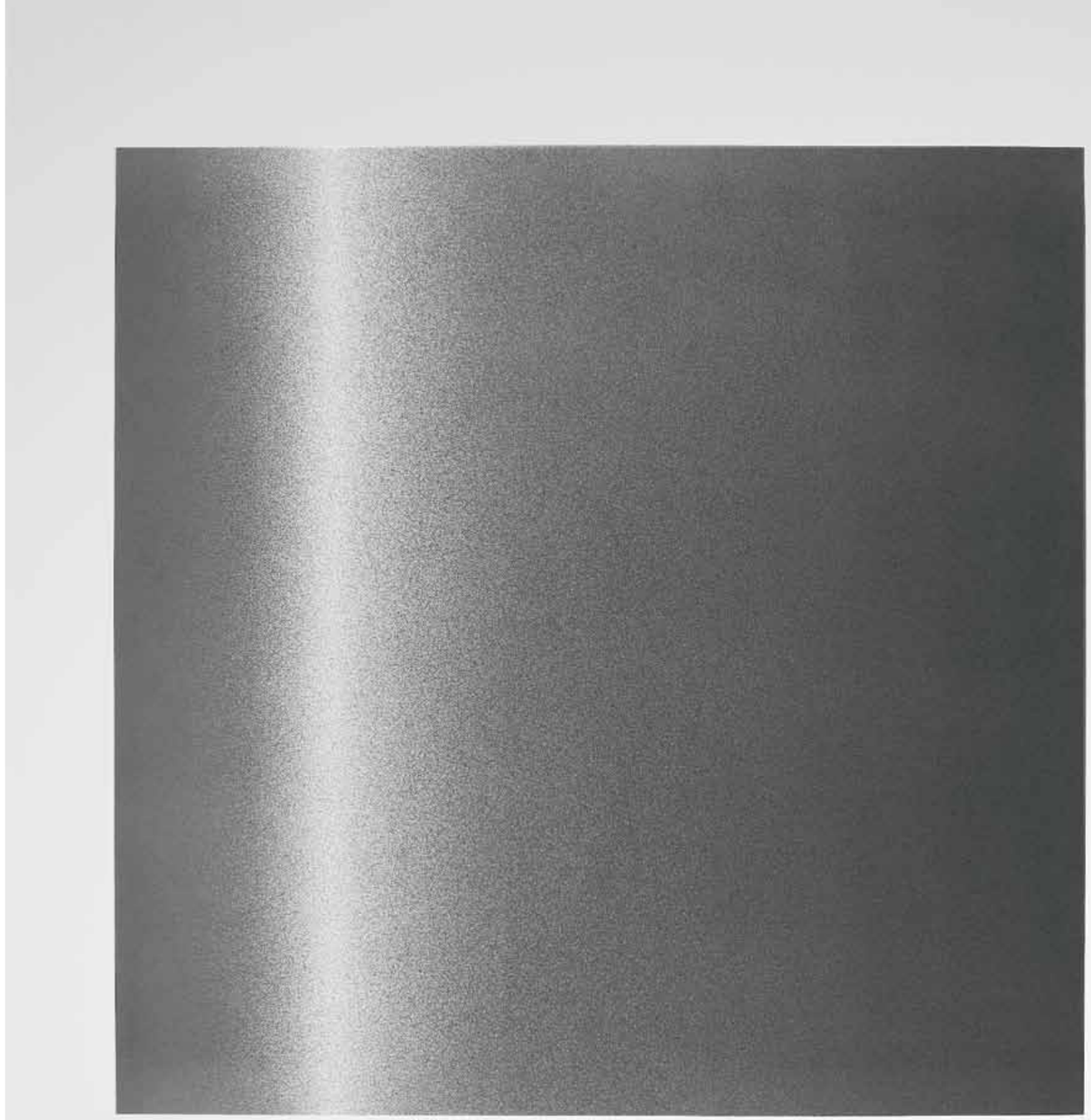
The book project *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence* began with an interview I conducted with Hamish Fulton at his studio near Canterbury on 27 March 2007. During the ferry ride back from England from Dover to Calais we, that is Rene Rietmeyer, Yuko Sakurai, Sarah Gold, and I, euphoric at the launch of a long and difficult project that had finally become reality after so arduously preparing our thoughts, the topic of conversation came to what artist I would like to interview next. "Sol LeWitt," I said, not hesitating. For a long time I had never even known what the man Sol LeWitt looked like, until one day I saw a very bad video of him talking about Eva Hesse. He did not look like how I envisioned an artist would look (I was still a student at the time). I thought that was interesting. I fell in love with Sol LeWitt's wall drawings when by chance I found in a (miserable) book about conceptual art his wonderfully complicated instructions for how to generate geometric forms: "A RECTANGLE WHOSE LEFT AND RIGHT SIDES ARE TWO THIRDS AS LONG AS ITS TOP AND BOTTOM SIDES AND WHOSE LEFT SIDE IS LOCATED WHERE A LINE DRAWN FROM A POINT HALFWAY BETWEEN THE MIDPOINT OF THE TOPSIDE OF THE SQUARE", etc., etc.[1] Right away I constructed this rectangle on the wall for myself, trusting in what the critic Peter Schjeldahl once wrote: "Wall drawings are sold or collected by issuing rights for how to do them. (However, I do not believe that the police are going to break down your door should you decide to make a plagiarized copy for your bedroom)."[2]

I was also excited about Rosalind Krauss's essay, *LeWitt in Progress*, which I quoted in my first *Personal Structures* book.[3] I found the parallel she set between LeWitt and Samuel Beckett plausible, and it seemed to me so wholly convincing that for her LeWitt's structures were not an expression of rationalism, not an indication of a transcendental subject, no act resulting from a pure spirit. The irrational, obsessive, or even most aptly: the wonderful mixture of the rational and the irrational in his works was precisely the thing that made them so attractive. In the fifth of his *Sentences on Conceptual Art* of 1969, he himself put it succinctly, "Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically."[4]

Unlike the customary ways of reading his works, I do not see in his structures the postmodern vanishing of the subject, but precisely here the hand of the subject of Sol LeWitt. Subjectivity is not banned from his work, but approached differently, defined anew, researched by taking detours, whatever… I would have asked Sol LeWitt about this "whatever". The point of departure would have been the paradox that Nicholas Baume expressed in a catalogue essay: "Perhaps the ultimate paradox is that it is through the negation of subjectivity that LeWitt reaffirms the creative role of the artist."[5] Would Sol LeWitt have agreed with this? I would also have asked him about his relationship to music, not only to Philipp Glass and Minimal Music, but also about music in general. I would have also referred to his being Jewish, asking him whether it has had an impact on his art, whether his type of formal reduction had 'anything' to do with the Jewish commandment of not making graven images. I would have wanted to know what was autobiographical about his photographic work *Autobiography* from 1980. I liked it that I could peruse LeWitt's bookshelves there (if indeed these were his bookshelves). And indeed you could find books by Samuel Beckett there. And by Nabokov. And in strange order or disorder there stood Herbert Marcuse's *Negations* next to Richard Brautigan's novel *The Abortion*. When I see the title of a book on a shelf I cannot resist trying to imagine what the owner was like. And what about the humor and self-irony in his works? I later heard from Dan Graham that Sol LeWitt's cats loved to climb around on his first sculptures. In addition, I would have wanted to ask Sol LeWitt about his relationship to art history, recalling a quote I had once read many years ago, but never managed to track down again. It was something like: wall drawings should be good enough to hold their own in front of Giotto's frescoes.

What I did not know aboard that ferry to Calais on 27 March 2007: Sol LeWitt was already terminally ill at this point in time. He died only 12 days later, on 8 April. There had not been enough time to contact him. He did not know that I wanted to interview him. He was unaware of my existence as we had never met. He was unable to agree to or decline being present in this book. We cannot think about existence without considering death. We cannot ponder space and time without bearing in mind that sometimes spatial distances may not be bridged because time is the determining factor here and that sometimes you arrive just in time and sometimes you are too late. With the death of Sol LeWitt, it has become very clear to all of us involved in the project *Time · Space · Existence* once more that the themes of this book are something inevitable and real, no 'mere' theories, no academic musings… and if only for this reason, I sincerely believe that Sol LeWitt must be included in this book.

1 Sol LeWitt, "The Location of Six Geometric Figures", 1974, illustration in: *Sol LeWitt. A Retrospective.* Edited and with an Introduction by Gary Garrells, New Haven and London, 2000, p. 200.
2 Peter Schjeldahl, Sol LeWitt, Wandzeichnungen, in: the same, *Poesie der Teilnahme. Kritiken 1980-1994*, Dresden / Basel 1997, p. 70-75. quote p. 71.
3 Rosalind E. Krauss, LeWitt in Progress, in: the same, *The Originality of the Avant-Gard and other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge MA / London 1986, p. 245-258. Peter Lodermeyer, *Personal Structures. Works and Dialogues*, New York 2003, p. 11.
4 Quoted here after *Sol LeWitt. A Retrospective* [footnote 1], p. 371.
5 Nicholas Baume, The Music of Forgetting, in: Sol LeWitt: *Incomplete Open Cubes*. Edited by Nicholas Baume, with essays by Nicholas Baume, Jonathan Flatley, and Pamele M. Lee. Cambridge, Massachusetts / London 2001, p. 20-31, quote p. 31.



TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE
STATEMENTS

STATEMENTS

Statements collected by Sarah Gold

18 July 2007 - 2 October 2009

While we were working on this project we met many people with all kinds of different backgrounds and nationalities. Some of them, who especially supported us, I have asked to write a brief personal statement about their understanding of time, space and existence. Starting-point for this endeavor was the LIFE *Box that Rene Rietmeyer created at the beginning of our* Time · Space · Existence *project. The Boxes represent his thoughts and ideas on life. They are made of ceramic with a variety of red glazes and are diverse, like our lives are. To have an encounter with a* LIFE *Box means to encounter your own life, to become truly aware and conscious of your own existence.*

Wadgassen - Germany, 18 July 2007

Zeit ist das Mass des Lebens, das die Schöpfung jedem Einzelnen individuell zugedacht hat. Vom ersten Lebenszeichen an bis zum letzten Atemzug ist es die Spanne, über die der Mensch verfügt, um Positives zu vollbringen oder sie nutzlos zu vergeuden.

Rüdiger Maul *1940, German, Owner - AC Press

Vancouver - Canada, 20 October 2007

Time is the invisible, impassive force which marches inexorably towards eternity. Man, alone, has the power to reverse it to make memories; render it motionless in a moment of passion, in a work of art; and project it into the future with his limitless imagination.

Valerie Laxton *1937, Britsch-Canadian , Art-Collector

Kalmthout - Belgium, 29 October 2007

Ik wou dat ik een vulkaan was en de hele dag rookte en de mensen zouden zeggen; kijk hij werkt……..

Jaap Meeldijk *1949, Dutch, Hedonist

New York City - USA, 23 January 2008

Our life is but a fragile flower, a drop of dew in the morning.

Franklin Riehlman *1953, United Statesman,

art dealer - Franklin Riehlman Fine Art

Venice - Italy, 31 March 2008

Tempo, spazio, esistenza: tre concetti strettamente connessi all'uomo e al suo essere-nel-mondo. Il rapporto dell'esistenza rispetto al tempo e allo spazio ci consente di entrare nella storia e di autodeterminarci come enti esistenti rispetto ad un prima e ad un dopo, tra un lasso di tempo segnato dalla nascita e dalla morte. L'opera d'arte, in certi termini, rivela l'essenza dell'essere, cioè il senso dell'esistenza.

Adriano Berengo *1947, Italian, President of Berengo Studio 1989

Biberach - Germany, 7 April 2008

no time, no space, it's hard to exist-

in Oberschwaben nimmt man sich Zeit, für Menschen, Gespräche, Ideen- barocker Überschwang in Kirchen und Klöstern existiert neben den strengen Linien moderne Architektur- der ländliche Raum bietet Künstlern Inspiration und Rückzugsmöglichkeit.

Uli Lang *1955, German, Galerie Uli Lang

Schilde - Belgium , 14 June 2009

I HAVE BEEN TORTURING MY BRAIN (EXISTENCE) DURING QUITE SOME MINUTES (TIME) IN MY 75M3 STUDY (SPACE) ON HOW TO GIVE A CLEAR PERSONAL STATEMENT ON "TIME - SPACE - EXISTENCE" IN 40 WORDS = I CANNOT DO IT

André Carez *1952, Belgian,

CEO (Chief Entertainment Officer) Ilomar Holding NV

Stuttgart - Germany, 15 June 2009

"Es entspricht einem Bedürfnis nach Sicherheit, Koordinaten für die Existenz zu haben; deshalb ordnen wir alles, was wir sehen oder uns vorstellen einer Zeit- und einer Raumachse zu. Nur auf dieser sicheren Basis vermögen wir Veränderungen zu denken und uns Neuem zu stellen."

Rainer Held *1952, German, Lawyer

New York City - USA, 21 June 2009

The axis turns. Change can be faster, slower, but time is continuous. The present moves into the past, the growing past - subjective: one's point of view. A durationless instant - a mother's touch - she's gone.The axis turns… on itself.

Carol Stone, American

Vienna - Austria, 26 June 2009

1. Es gibt keine Zeit ohne Existenz. 2. Zeit wird durch unsere Existenz definiert. 3. Raum ist Gleichzeitigkeit und damit die Gestalt unseres Bewußtseins.

Djawid C. Borower *1958, German, Artist

Amsterdam - The Netherlands ,1 July 2009

"alles is overal, maar het milieu selecteert"

"all is everywhere, but the environment creates its chances"

-herman de vries -

Antoinette de Stigter *1941, Dutch, Gallery Owner - Art Affairs

Frankfurt - Germany, 7 July 2009

Ein guter Tag dauert genauso lange wie ein schlechter Tag - 24 Stunden - und die gehen immer vorüber. Jeder meiner Tage unterscheidet sich durch Wahrnehmung, Gedanken, Mitgefühl und Handeln. Jeder meiner Tage ist einmalig, unwiderruflich und so wertvoll. Jeder meiner Tage ist eine Chance glücklich zu sein. Jeder meiner Tage will mich meinem Lebensziel näher bringen.

Andreas Carlone *1966, German, Investmentbanking

Frankfurt - Germany, 8 July 2009

„Leben ist Existenz plus Geist" Raum erlaubt es Energie, körperlich zu werden. Zeit erlaubt es Körpern, sich zu bewegen. Raum und Zeit sind der Rahmen unserer Existenz, in der Körper entstehen, zueinander in Beziehung treten, ihre Position ändern und sich auch selbst wandeln. Wird diese Existenz um Geist ergänzt, so entsteht Leben. Erst der Geist ermöglicht das Erkennen dieser Beziehungen und ihrer Veränderungen. Er ist zugleich Motor für Neues und wirkt damit schöpferisch.

Dr. Stephan Gündisch *1969, German, Lawyer and Accounant

New York City - USA, 8 July 2009

As members of the art world we must count ourselves fortunate, we are able to lead a charmed life. Not only are we surrounded by the beautiful creations of past, present, and future masters, we are also able to travel the globe, enjoy great food & great wine, and connect with art-minded people wherever our travels lead us. Whether we are visiting a museum, browsing in a gallery, or simply sitting alone on a park bench, we know that art is all around us and all we will ever need to feel at home and at peace with the world.

Dominic Taglialatella, American, Art Dealer

boca raton - usa, 10 July 2009

the more time we waste filling space with trinkets + trivial matters the less chance we have of discovering what it even means to exist

alex zimmerman *1971, american,

jewelry (trinket) artist - somnium design

Stuttgart - Germany, 16 July 2009

Bedingungslose Liebe von, zu und zwischen Menschen als Antriebsmotor unserer Existenz? Wie groß wäre diese Kraft! Wir wirken in unserer Begrenztheit des Menschseins in Raum und Zeit und nutzen dabei nur ein Bruchteil dieser Kraftquelle: der Liebe.

Susanne Gstattenbauer and Markus Nels, *1968, German

The Netherlands, 31 July 2009

L'art n'est pas une affaire sérieuse
L'art est une affaire sérieuse
L'art n'est pas une affaire
L'art est une affaire
L'art n'est pas
L'art naît
-Seuphor-

Majke Hüsstege *1965, Dutch, Gallery-owner

's-Hertogenbosch - The Netherlands, 5 August 2009

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 Wie niet weg is, is gezien.

Christien Bakx *1953, Dutch, Antiquarian Bookseller - Luïscius

Vienna - Austria, 8 August 2009

It is a great pleasure for me having the opportunity to provide a small support to "Time - Space - Existence". This ambitious project will give us more insight about change of times and its influence on us human beings beyond the every day's discussions on economic and technological change.

Susanne and Edik Plätzer *1973 and *1967, Austrian and German, Entrepreneurs

Breda - The Netherlands, 11 August 2009

maak van elke dag een mooie dag want deze dag komt nooit meer terug

Rene Küchler *1959, Dutch, Publisher - high profile uitgeverij bv

Paeonian Springs, Virginia - USA, 16 August 2009

Time plus space defines the existence of a work of art as a material object which we experience rationally or abstractly (such as feeling emotion.) It is the abstract experience that moves us.

Charles Houston *1949, American, Real estate investments

Miami, Florida - USA, 17 August 2009

Without existence there would be no time and space. Existence is the beginning and the end.

Erin Cohen, Rita & Joel Cohen *1979, American, Graphic Designer - PIL Creative Group

Miami, Florida - USA, 19 August 2009

Art exists because of one word - perception. Art is viewed and therefore perceived to exist, that is how it is defined. It is the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and ephemeral reaction to art - the perception that it IS art - that defines its existence. Then time validates that perception.

Tamar Erdberg ***0, American, Art dealer - Adamar Fine Arts

Vienna - Austria, 28 August 2009

Kunst ist manchmal unerklärlich, wird zur Quelle und zum Ziel unseres Denkens und geht bis in die Bereiche des Metaphysischen und Transzendentalen. Gute Kunst besteht ewig, ist grenzenlos in Raum und Ausdehnung und führt uns in eine höhere Ebene des Bewußtseins.

Thomas F. Mark *1951, (Austrian) European,

director artmark gallery Vienna

Berlin - Germany, 29 August 2009

vom gestern in's morgen. das heute unserer existenz ist ein bestaendiger uebergang. es liegt in uns, wieviel gestern wir als heute, wieviel vergangenes wir noch als gegenwart anerkennen. zeit duerfte rueckwerts gehen, dort, wo sie eine rolle spielt. tut sie aber nicht. unsere exitstenz ist daher auf ein bestandiges vor-

waerts gerichtet. fast schon atemlos, und kaum zu beeinflussen. vielleicht durch kunst. eine hoffnung?
Michael Schultz *1951, German, Galerie Michael Schultz - Berlin, Seoul, Beijing

Chicago, Illinois - USA, 2 September 2009
Time, space, and existence: three realities, infinite in scope, that converge in a spiritual representation through these works. This bold project is the evolution of "personal structures" to the boundless manifestation of our universe and the eternal.
Eric G. Johnson *1951, American,
President/CEO Baldwin Richardson Foods Co.

San Juan - Puerto Rico, 2 September 2009
Creo que no existen diferencias entre el pasado y el futuro; que solo hay una existencia. Aunque convincente, la separación entre el pasado, el presente y el futuro es solo una ilusión. El tiempo es meramente una orientación en el espacio. Asi que celebremos nuestra eternidad llenando nuestras vidas de amor, arte y belleza….. ¡No hay nada más!
Clara Elena de Jesus *1963, USA, Dentist/Endodontist

Vienna - Austria, 3 September 2009
Ich habe Raum, Zeit und Existenz in jeder Form überschritten. Das heißt ich dehne mich in alle Richtungen aus, halte keine Termine und bin trotzdem dieser Existenz auf der Spur, obwohl metastasengleich sich kein Ort sicher festmachen lässt, das Vorhandene in der Zeit des Lebens voranzutreiben.
Georg Kargl *1955 - ?, Austrian, Gallerist - Georg Kargl Fine Arts

Venice - Italy, 5 September 2009
Nie wiadomo , kiedy i gdzie zaczyna się Sztuka. Nagle stajemy się twórcami i tylko przypadek, a możne przeznaczenie, decyduje o tym czy zostaniemy zrozumiani, bo odkryć możemy się tylko sami. A oto ci którzy, maja nadzieje ze zostaną zrozumiani: Bettina W, Victoria W, Georg N, David B, Sławek P, Słupicki, Armin O, itd.
Wojtek Jan Wiltos *1959, Polish, Gynecologist

Cleveland, Ohio - USA, 7 September 2009
Time-Space-Existence are all both limiting and limitless and thus play on the dualities, tension, and yin yang contrast of the universe and life itself. These concepts are continually evolving through our own personal perception and define us, yet at the same time create a structure that simultaneously confronts and obscures, is above and beyond us as individuals, and puts us within a collective continuum that never ends.
Steve Hartman *1965, American, Owner - Contessa Gallery

Vienna - Austria, 9 September 2009
It should be the aspiration of mankind to act, to think and to live without adding significance to space and time, but rather to the exclusive immersion in the own existence.
Peter Bogner *1963, Austrian, Director Künstlerhaus Vienna

New York City - USA, 9 September 2009
Существование, или бытие, объединяет пространство и время в разных отношениях. Создание в первую очередь - это заполнение пространства объектом, движением, словом или мыслью. Жизнь любой единицы существования начинается с замысла, продолжается все время, пока единица существует материально, и, часто, продолжает жить в памяти последующих. И так как любую единицу существования можно прировнять к искусству, то последнее априори подверждает, что единство бытия, пространства и времени универсально, и само искусство является необходимым связующим компонентом.
Ksenia Shikhmacheva *1981, Russian, Student

The Hague - The Netherlands, 14 September 2009
Can we exist without time?
Would we be lost in space?
No future, no past
Now, always forever
Never too early, never too late
just always being
hopefully with the ones we love
Guus Berting *1978, Dutch, Curator - Art Consolidated B.V.

Bonaire Netherlands Antilles, 15 September 2009
El tiempo nos proporciona espacio en nuestra vida diaria. Conseguimos espacio buscando cuidadosamente un término medio con el tiempo disponible. Optimizamos la existencia creando espacio y tiempo en nuestra vida. Despues…… más espacio y tiempo en nuestra próxima existencia.
Luz Carime Crooij-Orobio and Hans Crooij *1975 and *1955, Colombian and Dutch, Insurance broker

Salzburg - Austria, 16 September 2009
I see myself in our time (TIME) like a Dr. for collectors and people, they have so much to do with all the money they make, to help them to survive in our world (SPACE). Therefore my existence (EXISTENCE) is very necessary.
Rudolf Budja *1968, Austrian, owner, Rudolf Budja Gallery

Saarlouis - Germany, 17 September 2009
Es war 1998 in Miami Beach, als ich den Künstler Rene Rietmeyer traf. Sowohl von seiner Kunst - damals farbenfrohe Florida-inspirierte Werke - wie auch von seiner bedingungslosen Hingabe für zeitgenössische Kunst und junge Künstler war ich zutiefst beeindruckt. In der Folge ließ mich die aktuelle nicht-gegenständliche Kunst nicht mehr los und ich verstehe jetzt was Sammlerleidenschaft bedeutet. Die Freundschaft mit Künstlern und ein Leben von Kunstwerken umgeben möchte ich nicht mehr missen.
Hans Werner Morsch *1953, German, Surgeon

Kerbach - France, 18 September 2009
Zeit ist zum Luxusgut geworden. Wir aber haben den freien Willen die gewohnten Zwänge unserer Gesellschaft zu lieben oder zu hassen. Die Sehnsucht der Menschen aus der Masse und Norm rauszuragen wird grösser. Somit hat die individuelle kreative Exsistenz Zukunft.
Heidi Henkel *1959, German, Trend 21 gmbh

Summerville, South Carolina - USA, 21 September 2009
TIME IS UNIQUE TO EACH INDIVIDUALS EXISTENCE IN THEIR OCCUPIED SPACE, WHICH IS IN CONSTANT FLUX AS IS TIME AND THEIR EXISTENCE.
Ed & Doris Benzenberg, American/Venezualan, Benzenberg Cabinets

Antwerp - Belgium, 22 September 2009
I need the things for inspiration not for possessing
je voudrais m'orienter dans le temps et dans l'espace
Pieter Ceulen *1955, Dutch, Entrepreneur

Key Biscayne, Florida – USA, 22 September 2009
La vie est trop courte pour ne pas la vivre pleinement, trop longue pour être triste, trop fragile pour jouer avec… si belle!
Francoise Dreuil *1963, French/American, Entrepreneur

Lustenau – Austria, 23 September 2009
"DER SOZIALE AUFTRAG DER KUNST IST ES, SCHÖNHEIT UND ÄSTHETIK ZU VERMITTELN". Hässlichkeiten entnehmen wir aktuellst aus den Medien wie Fernsehen oder Presse. Deshalb kann ich auf diese Art der Darstellung in der Kunst verzichten.
Kurt Prantl *1942, Austrian, Geschäftsführer der Galerie am Lindenplatz, Vaduz, Fürstentum Liechtenstein

Leiden - The Netherlands, 23 September 2009
Mijn TIJD is de tijd van mijn verleden en de tijd van mijn toekomst. Tegenwoordige tijd bestaat niet. Mijn RUIMTE is beperkt tot mijn zintuiglijke waarneming, zij is onbeperkt voor mijn gedachten. Mijn BESTAAN staat vast: cogito ergo sum.
Erich Püschel *1942, German, linguist

Tokyo - Japan, 24 September 2009
私の友人桜井由子さんが、自分の「存在」を作品として形に残し、自分探しの旅を続けていらっしゃる事に心から声援を送りたいと思います。
Chizuko Kato *1948, Japanese, English teacher

Venice - Italy, 2 October 2009
Il mio tempo è sfuggente, avido, frenetico, vorticoso e nevrotico, io vorrei un tempo lento, per la riflessione, per il pensiero, per gustare gli attimi, un tempo per stare in solitudine.Vorrei uno spazio mio, da sentire familiare, da chiamare casa; ma oggi non si può: bisogna essere flessibili e senza radici. Ma non c'è spazio senza ricordi, senza memoria, non c'è spazio senza affezione e personalizzazione, c'è solo il nulla. L'esistenza mi appare caotica, confusa, instabile, incerta, plurale, globale, indeterminata…ma perché non può essere tranquilla, semplice e sicura? (riflessioni di una 27enne)
Francesca Giubilei *1982, Italian, curator

INFORMATION ABOUT THE IMAGES

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6 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Counter Void S-1*, 2003, neon, plastic, stainless steel, IC controller, 232x167x60cm (91x66x24"). Courtesy: Tatsuo Miyajima and Lisson Gallery, London, UK.

8 Roman Opalka, Rene Rietmeyer and Sarah Gold at the exhibition of Roman Opalka, 27 June 2006, Musée d' Art Moderne, St. Etienne, France.

9 Peter Lodermeyer, Hamish Fulton, Rene Rietmeyer and Sarah Gold at the studio of Hamish Fulton, 27 March 2007, Canterbury, UK.

9 Sanna Marander, Joseph Kosuth, Rene Rietmeyer and Sarah Gold at Georg Kargl Fine Arts, 27 April 2007, Vienna, Austria.

10 Karlyn De Jongh, Rene Rietmeyer, Roman Opalka and Sarah Gold during the Symposium at Arti et Amicitiae, 15 June 2007 Amsterdam, Netherlands.

10 Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold and Joseph Kosuth during the Symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

11 Yuko Sakurai, Karlyn De Jongh, Keith Sonnier and Peter Lodermeyer during the Symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA.

11 Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh, Marina Abramović, Peter Lodermeyer and Rene Rietmeyer during the Symposium at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

12 Lee Ufan, *Dialogue*, 2007, oil on canvas, 227x182cm (89x72"). Courtesy: PaceWildenstein, New York, USA.

22 Klaus Honnef, Karlyn De Jongh, Rene Rietmeyer, Roman Opalka, Sarah Gold, Peter Lodermeyer, Michel Baudson and Yuko Sakurai during the Symposium at Arti et Amicitiae, 15 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

24 Peter Lodermeyer at Arti et Amicitiae, 15 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

27 Thomas Pihl, *Prearticulation*, 2006, 122x153cm (48x60"), acrylic on canvas.

28 Rene Rietmeyer at Arti et Amicitiae, 15 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

29 Rene Rietmeyer, "*Portrait of Joseph Kosuth, Roma, September 2008*". In this series there have been made a total of 72 Boxes, all Boxes are made from several variations of white and red oil paint on wood, each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible, each Box 25x25x19cm (10x10x8").

30 Rene Rietmeyer, "*USA, Flamingo, January, 2003*". In this series there have been made a total of 32 Boxes, all Boxes are made from red oil paint on wood, each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible, each Box 18x15x15cm (7x6x6").

31 Rene Rietmeyer adjusting his installation of Boxes at Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Work: "*Germany, Saarland, April 2001*". In this series there have been made a total of 107 Boxes, all Boxes are made from several variations of red oil paint on 6mm steel, each Box approximately 20x20x21cm (8x8x8.5").

32 Klaus Honnef at Arti et Amicitiae, 15 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

33 On Kawara, "*I GOT UP*", 1973, postcard. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

35 On Kawara, "*I AM STILL ALIVE*", 1971, telegram. Courtesy: Klaus Honnef, Germany.

36 On Kawara, *Date Painting, (MAY 18.1995)*, oil on canvas. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

37 Klaus Honnef, Karlyn De Jongh, Rene Rietmeyer, Roman Opalka and Sarah Gold at Arti et Amicitiae, 15 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

38 Michel Baudson with Roman Opalka during the symposium at Arti et Amicitiae, 15 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

40 Roman Opalka, 3.18pm, 15 June 2007, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

41 Roman Opalka, 3.19pm, 15 June 2007, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

41 Roman Opalka, 3.20pm, 15 June 2007, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

42 Roman Opalka, 3.21pm, 15 June 2007, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

42 Roman Opalka, 3.22pm, 15 June 2007, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

43 Roman Opalka, 3.23pm, 15 June 2007, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

43 Roman Opalka, 3.27pm, 15 June 2007, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

44 Jo Baer during the Symposium at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

45 Jo Baer, *Untitled, (Green Stripe)*, 1969, 91.5x99.5cm (36x39"). Courtesy: Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria.

45 Jo Baer, *Untitled, (Brown Stripe)*, 1969, 91.5x99.5cm (36x39"). Courtesy: Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria,

46 Henk Peeters during the symposium at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

47 Henk Peeters, *Red glove*, 1963-1999, housekeeping glove on canvas, 40x40cm (16x16"). Courtesy: Galerie De Zaal, Delft, Netherlands.

47 Henk Peeters, *Alie-4*, 1999, cow skin on frame, 30x30 cm (12x12"). Courtesy: Galerie De Zaal, Delft, Netherlands.

48 Kitty ZijlmansandHenk Peeters during her speech at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

49 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Counter Void S-1*, 2003, neon, plastic, stainless steel, IC controller, 232x167x60cm (91x66x24"). Courtesy: Tatsuo Miyajima and Lisson Gallery, London, UK.

50 View of the Exhibition *Personal Structures: Time* at Arti et Amicitiae, June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Works by: Roman Opalka, Rene Rietmeyer, Hamish Fulton, Yuko Sakurai, On Kawara, Richard Long and Carl Andre.

51 On Kawara, *Date Painting*, oil on canvas. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

52 Johan Pas at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

53 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974, 322 Humhrey Street_Englewood_ new jersey. Courtesy: Jane Crawford, the estate of Gordon Matta-Clark

55 Johan Pas at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

57 Gordon Matta-Clark, *Office Baroque*, 1977, photo collage with 3 Cibachromes 175x105cm (69x41"). Courtesy: MuHKA Collection, Antwerp, Belgium.

58 Lawrence Weiner at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

59 Lawrence Weiner, *Untitled*, this work has been made in June 2007 on the occasion of the Symposium at Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

60 Lawrence Weiner during the symposium at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

61 Lawrence Weiner, *Helipath*, Villa di Versegnis, Italy, 1990. Courtesy: Marzona Collection and Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

62 Lawrence Weiner, *OVER AGAIN BEFORE PASSÉ ENCORE AVANT*, 2000, Description for the execution of the work.

63 Rene Rietmeyer, Peter Lodermeyer and Lawrence Weiner during his presentation at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

65 Rene Rietmeyer, Jannet de Goede, Johan Pas, Henk Peeters, Yuko Sakurai, Sarah Gold, Lawrence Weiner, Thomas Pihl and Nelleke Beltjens during the panel discussion at Arti et Amicitiae, 16 June 2007, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

66 Yuko Sakurai, Karlyn De Jongh, Keith Sonnier and Peter Lodermeyer during the symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA. Work by Keith Sonnier.

68 Robert Barry during the symposium at the New Museum, 3 April 2009, New York, USA.

69 Robert Barry, *Installation view at Yvon Lambert (detail)*. 2009. Courtesy: Robert Barry and Yvon Lambert, France - USA.

70 Robert Barry, *Untitled*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 178x178cm (70x70") Courtesy: Robert Barry and Yvon Lambert, France - USA.

70 Robert Barry, *Untitled*, 2009, oil on canvas, 178x178cm (70x70") Courtesy: Robert Barry and Yvon Lambert, France - USA.

71 Robert Barry during the symposium at the New Museum, 3 April 2009, New York, USA.

71 Robert Barry, *Word list*, 2009, acrylic paint on wall. Courtesy: Robert Barry and Yvon Lambert, France - USA.

72 Karlyn De Jongh, Robert Barry and Peter Lodermeyer during the symposium at the New Museum, 3 April 2009, New York, USA.

73 Robert Barry, *Red Cross*, 2008, installation view Yvon Lambert (detail), 2009, cast acrylic, dimensions variable 12 words, each letter 2.5cm (1") high, each letter approximately 30 cm (12") wide. Courtesy: Robert Barry and Yvon Lambert, France – USA.

74 Jessica Stockholder and Peter Lodermeyer during the symposium at the New Museum, 3 April 2009, New York, USA.

75 Jessica Stockholder, *Sam Ran Over Sand*. Courtesy: Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York, USA.

76 Rene Rietmeyer, 3.54 pm, 28 April, 2009, Heusden, Netherlands.

77 Rene Rietmeyer, "*Miami Beach, March and September 2006*", oil on canvas on wood, each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible, each Box 20x23x18cm (8x8x7"). Courtesy: collection Mr. and Mrs. Levy, Palm Beach, USA.

78 Rene Rietmeyer, "*Houston, May 2002*". In this series there have been made a total of 120 Boxes, all Boxes are made from several variations of blue oil paint on canvas on wood, each Box approximately 28x28x14cm (11x11x6"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible.

79 Rene Rietmeyer, "*Praha, February 2006*". In this series there have been made a total of 50 Boxes, all Boxes are made from several variations of yellow oil paint on wood, each Box approximately 25x17.5x17.5cm (10x7x7"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible.

80 Peter Lodermeyer at the New Museum, 3 April 2009, New York, USA.

83 Keith Sonnier, *Mirror Act Set*, 1970, mixed media, 2 units, 215x215cm (84x84").

84 Tom Hatton and Marcia Kocot during the symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA.

87 Kocot & Hatton, *Untitled, (The Color of Blue series, sd15Nov.08, floating square)*, 2008, oil paint & oil stick on linen over birch panel, 61x61cm (24x24"). Courtesy: of Larry Becker Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, USA. Collection of Barbara and Larry Gross, Merion Station, USA.

88 Peter Halley and Karlyn De Jongh during the symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA.

89 Peter Halley, *The Carbon Copy*, 2008, acrylic, day-glo acrylic, and Roll-a-Tex on canvas, 191x178cm (75 x70").

90 Richard Tuttle during the symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA.

92 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on air, B11*, 2008, cotton with Rit dyes, grommets, string, thread, 58x316cm (22.8 x124.5"), 2 panels overall installed. Courtesy: Pace Wildenstein, New York, USA.

93 Karlyn De Jongh, Richard Tuttle and Peter Lodermeyer during the symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA.

94 Keith Sonnier and Peter Lodermeyer during the symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA.

95 Keith Sonnier, *Lichtweg/Lightway*, 1989-1992, Permanent indoor installation, neon, glass, mirror, aluminum in 1000 meter walkway, Munich International Airport, Germany. Commissioned by the City of Munich. Architect: Busso von Busse & Partner, Germany.

96 Keith Sonnier during the symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA.

96 Keith Sonnier, *Send Receive Satellite Network*, 1976, satellite hook-up between artists in New York and San Francisco, USA.

97 Yuko Sakurai, Karlyn De Jongh and Keith Sonnier during the symposium at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA.

98 Keith Sonnier, *DIS-PLAY II*, 1970, foam rubber, fluorescent powder, strobe light, black light, neon, glass, Size variable.

99 Keith Sonnier, *Lichtweg/Lightway*, 1989-1992, Permanent indoor installation, neon, glass, mirror, aluminum in 1000 meter walkway, Munich International Airport, Germany. Commissioned by the City of Munich. Architect: Busso von Busse & Partner, Germany.

100 Sanna Marander, Sarah Gold, Joseph Kosuth, Peter Lodermeyer, Rene Rietmeyer, Tomoji Ogawa, Karlyn De Jongh, Akiko, Heartbeat Sasaki and several Japanese during the sushi lunch break of the Symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

102 Saburo Ota during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

103 Saburo Ota, *Date Stamps, 5 July 1985 to 12 October 1985*, 切手、消印, 1985, 27.9x23.2cm (11.1x9.2").

104 Saburo Ota, 鄒 麗栄 *(Zou LiRing), Japan visit 1983, 6th group Nov.-Dec.,* 高世復 *(Gao ShiFu), Japan visit 1981, 2nd group Feb.-Mar.*, both: 1995, laser printing on paper, 29.1x15.7cm (11.5x6.2").

104 Saburo Ota, detail of "*Stamp-Map of Japan and Korea*", 1990年制作.

105 Saburo Ota, "*Stamp-Map of Japan and Korea*", "切手と消印によるインスタレーション", 340×590cm (134x232"), 1990年制作.

106 Peter Lodermeyer during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

109 On Kawara, *I AM STILL ALIVE*, 1971, 2 telegrams. Courtesy: Klaus Honnef, Germany.

110 Rene Rietmeyer and Sanna Marander during the film-presentation by Sanna Marander, at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

111 Sanna Marander, *Footnotes*, 2008.

112 Sanna Marander, *Footnotes*, 2008.

113 Sanna Marander, *Footnotes*, 2008.

114 Toshikatsu Endo during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

115 Toshikatsu Endo, *Water Erosion*, 1978, water, earth, air, sun, 200cm (79"), (7 holes), Tokorozawa open air sculpture exhibition 1978, Japan.

115 Toshikatsu Endo, *Untitled, (event 1982 Tochigi city, Japan)* water, earth, air, sun, 800cm (315").

116 Toshikatsu Endo, *Untitled*, 1983, wood, water, tar, 350-420cm (138-165"), Copenhagen, Danmark.

117 Toshikatsu Endo, *Epitaph*, 1990, wood, tar, fire, air, earth, sun, 410x300cm (161x118"), Sayama city, Japan.

118 Rene Rietmeyer and Toshikatsu Endo at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

120 Toshikatsu Endo, *Fountain*, 1991, wood, tar, fire, 75x130cm (29.5x 51"), by location the situation changes, Okazaki city, Japan.

121 Toshikatsu Endo, *Fountain*, 1991, wood, tar, fire, 75x130cm (29.5x 51"), by location the situation changes, Okazaki city,1999, Japan.

123 Toshikatsu Endo, *Untitled (circle of born)*, 1987, cow bones, 400cm, (157.5") Paris suburb, France.

125 Toshikatsu Endo, *Allegory-2*, 1985, wood, water, fire, tar, 300x65x60cm (118x26x24"), gallery Yo – Tokyo, Japan.

126 Toshikatsu Endo during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

127 Toshikatsu Endo, *Allegory* Ⅲ, wooden boat, 1988, wood, water, tar (fire), earth, air, sun 400x85x70cm (157.5x33.5x28").

127 Toshikatsu Endo, *Allegory* Ⅲ, wooden boat, 1988, wood, water, tar (fire), earth, air, sun 400x85x70cm (157.5x33.5x28").

128 Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold, Toshikatsu Endo and Yuko Sakurai at Toshikatsu Endo's studio, 22 March 2008, Sayama city, Japan.

131 Toshikatsu Endo, *Trieb-Stone garden*, 2008, stone, fire, water, 100x1500x300cm (40x591x118"), Mizunami city, Gihu, Japan

132 Toshikatsu Endo during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

134 Toshikatsu Endo, *Untitled (circle of born)*, 1987, cow bones, fire, 400cm (157.5") Paris suburb, France.

135 Toshikatsu Endo, *Untitled (circle of born)*, 1987, cow bones, fire, 400cm (157.5"), Paris suburb, France.

136 Masao Okabe with Naoko Ezure, during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

137 Masao Okabe, *The Platform Of The Old Ujina Station, Hiroshima, 1984/1945/2003 (final)*, total 68 pieces each 38x55cm (15x22"), frottage, paper, pencil, 2004/5/05, Hiroshima-shi, Minami-ku, Ujina station, Japan.

138 Yuko Sakurai during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 3 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

139 Yuko Sakurai, *Saikawa*, 2005, oil on wood, 62x36x5cm (24x14x2").

141 Sanae Nakasone, Chizuko Kato, Saburo Ota, Sarah Gold, Rene Rietmeyer, Peter Lodermeyer, and several Japanese during the Sushi Lunch break of the Symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 3 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

142 Yuko Sakurai during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 3 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

143 Yuko Sakurai, *Hall in Tirol #1*, 2006, oil on wood, 86x60x3.5cm (34x24x1.5").

145 Yuko Sakurai, *la route vers la Bretagne*, 2004, oil on wood, 120x220x10cm (47x87x4"). Courtesy: Ludwig Museum, Germany.

146 Rene Rietmeyer during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 3 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

147 Rene Rietmeyer at his studio in Netherlands in 2000. Installation title: "*Brabant, March 2000*". Courtesy: Caldic Collectie, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

148 Rene Rietmeyer, "*Brabant, March 2000*". In this series there have been made a total of 105 Boxes, all Boxes are made from several variations of blue-green oil paint on wood, each Box approximately 25x25x15cm (10x10x6"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible.

149 Rene Rietmeyer, "*Portrait of Callum Innes and Edinburgh, October 2004*", oil on wood, in this series there have been made a total of 60 Boxes. All Boxes are made from several variations blue-purple over red oil paint on wood, each Box approximately 19x19x14cm (7.5x7.5x5.5"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible.

150 Joseph Kosuth

151 Joseph Kosuth, '*Sei locazioni di significato*', 2000, (detail), included in the exhibition L'assenza invadente del divino, Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome, Italy, 2000, Courtesy: the artist

152 Joseph Kosuth, '*Clocks – One and Five*', 1965. The Tate Gallery, London, England, UK

153 Joseph Kosuth, '*One and Three Chairs*', 1965, included in the exhibition *Information*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA, 2000.

154 Joseph Kosuth, '*The Language of Equilibrium / Il Linguaggio dell'Equilibrio*', 2007. Isola di San Lazzaro degli Armeni, Venice, Italy. Venice Bienniale 52. International Art. Exhibition Collateral Events. Installation view. Courtesy: Lia Rumma Gallery, Milan, Italy.

155 Joseph Kosuth, '*The Second Investigation (A.A.I.A.I.)*', 1968 [Class IV: Matter, I Matter in Genenral, Billboard; Portales, New Mexico, 1969]

157 Rene Rietmeyer, Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold, Joseph Kosuth and Yuko Sakurai during the symposium at the Setagaya Art Museum, 3 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

158 Joseph Kosuth, *'At Last I Believed I Understood (Madrid) / Al Fin Créi Entender (Madrid)'*, 2008, La Casa Encendida, Madrid, Spain, Installation view. Courtesy: the artist

159 Karlyn De Jongh and Heartbeat Sasaki during his performance at the Setagaya Art Museum, 3 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

160 Heartbeat Sasaki during his performance at the Setagaya Art Museum, 3 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan. The heartbeat is from Peter Lodermeyer.

161 Heartbeat Sasaki, *Heartbeat from Peter Lodermeyer*, 16.12 -16.46 h, 3 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan. (The heartbeat has been erased after the performance)

162 Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh, Marina Abramović, Peter Lodermeyer and Rene Rietmeyer during the symposium at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

164 Peter Lodermeyer during the symposium at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

165 On Kawara, *I GOT UP*, 1973, postcard. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

167 On Kawara, *Date Painting, (MAY 18.1995)*, oil on canvas. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

168 Rene Rietmeyer during the symposium at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

169 Inez Piso and an installation by Rene Rietmeyer, 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 10 July 2009. Installation title: "*Venezia, September 2007*". In this series there have been made a total of 100 Boxes, all Boxes are made from several variations of blue Murano Glass and silver-nitrate, each Box approximately 42x12x16cm (17x5x6"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible. Courtesy: Adriano Berengo, Italy.

170 Rene Rietmeyer, "*Paris, March 2003*". In this series there have been made a total of 33 Boxes. All Boxes are made from several variations of red oil paint on canvas on wood. Each Box approximately 28x28x14cm (11x11x6"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible.

171 Rene Rietmeyer, "*Portrait of Bram Bogart, Belgium, September 1999*". In this series there have been made a total of 63 Boxes. All Boxes are made from several variations of red and green oil paint on wood, each Box approximately 19x20x12cm (7.5x8x5"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible.

172 Marina Abramović during the symposium at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

173 Marina Abramović, *Balkan Barogue*, performance-installation (detail), 47th Biennale di Venezia, June 1997, Italy.

175 Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh, Marina Abramović, Peter Lodermeyer and Rene Rietmeyer during the symposium at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

176 Marina Abramović at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

178 Sarah Gold, Peter Lodermeyer, Karlyn De Jongh, and an installation by Dan Graham at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy. Work title: Sagitarian Girls, 2008. Courtesy: Adriano Berengo, Venice, and Francesca Minini, Milano, Italy.

180 Peter Lodermeyer and Hamish Fulton at the studio of Hamish Fulton, 27 March 2007, Canterbury, UK.

183 Hamish Fulton, *Rain Drop*, 2006, vinyl wall text, as installed: 315x183cm (123x72"). Courtesy: of Hamish Fulton, England; Texas Gallery, Houston USA and Christine Burgin Gallery, New York, USA.

185 Peter Lodermeyer, Hamish Fulton and Sarah Gold at the studio of Hamish Fulton, 27 March 2007, Canterbury, UK.

187 Hamish Fulton, *Rock Fall Echo Dust (from Fourteen Works)*, 1982 – 1989, offset lithograph, edition of 35, 104x90,4cm (41x34.6"). Courtesy: Barbara Krakow Gallery, USA.

189 Hamish Fulton, *Wilderness Future, Geronimo Homeland*, 2006, vinyl wall text, as installed: 84x381cm (33 x 150") and 257x335cm (101x132"). Courtesy: of Hamish Fulton, England; Texas Gallery, Houston USA and Christine Burgin Gallery, New York, USA.

190 Bram Bogart, Rene Rietmeyer, Sarah Gold and Peter Lodermeyer in the kitchen of Bram and Leni Bogart, 10 May 2007, Kortenbos, Belgium.

191 Bram Bogart, *Rozerouge*, 2007, Mixed Media, 142x140cm (56x55"). Courtesy: Bernard Jacobson Gallery

191 The living room of the house of Bram and Leni Bogart, 10 May 2007, Kortenbos, Belgium.

192 Peter Lodermeyer and Wolfgang Laib at the house of Wolfgang Laib, 6 August 2007, Biberach, Germany.

193 Peter Lodermeyer encounters a work by Wolfgang Laib, *Rice Houses*, 19 September 2007, Kunstmuseum Kolumba, Cologne, Germany.

195 Wolfgang laib, *Ohne Ort, ohne Zeit, ohne Körper (Without Place, without Time, without Body)*, 2004 , Wax Chamber in a hillside near the artist's studio, 350x80-115x1300 cm (138x31.5 -45x512").

196 Peter Lodermeyer and Wolfgang Laib at the house of Wolfgang Laib, 6 August 2007, Biberach, Germany.

197 Wolfgang Laib, *Ohne Zeit – Ohne Ort – Ohne Körper (Without Time-Without Place-Without Body)*, detail from large version, 2007, app. 3600 rice and 5 hazelnut pollen, app. 700x1000cm (274x392"). Installation view Konrad Fischer Galerie Düsseldorf 2007. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie.

198 Wolfgang Laib, *Reishäuser (Rice Houses)*, 2006, installation view and courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

199 Peter Lodermeyer and Wolfgang Laib at the house of Wolfgang Laib, 6 August 2007, Biberach, Germany.

200 Ulrich Rückriem and Peter Lodermeyer at the studio of Ulrich Rückriem, 19 September 2007, Cologne, Germany.

202 Ulrich Rückriem, *Anroechter Dolomit Keil*, 2009, Anroechter Dolomit Stone, 180x90x[26-44]cm (71x35x[10x17.5]") Courtesy: Gallery Bernier / Eliades, Athens, Greece.

203 Peter Lodermeyer and Ulrich Rückriem at the studio of Ulrich Rückriem, 19 September 2007, Cologne, Germany.

204 Henk Peeters and Peter Lodermeyer in the kitchen of Henk and Truus Peeters, 26 November 2007, Hall, Netherlands.

205 Henk Peeters, *L' origine du monde (prototype)*, 1999 (date design 1965), foam and metal wire on fiberboard, 25x18,5x10,5cm (10x7.5x4").

207 Peter Lodermeyer, Sarah Gold, Truus and Henk Peeters in the kitchen of Henk and Truus Peeters, 26 November 2007, Hall, Netherlands.

208 Peter Lodermeyer and Joseph Marioni at the apartment of Joseph Marioni, 12 March 2008, New York, USA.

210 Joseph Marioni at his apartment, 12 March 2008, New York, USA.

211 Peter Lodermeyer and a painting by Joseph Marioni, 19 September 2007, Kunstmuseum Kolumba, Cologne, Germany.

213 Peter Lodermeyer and Joseph Marioni at the apartment of Joseph Marioni, 12 March 2008, New York, USA.

215 Joseph Marioni, *Red Painting*, 2006, acrylic and linen on stretcher, 81x66cm (32x26"). Courtesy: Hengesbach Gallery, Berlin.

216 Peter Lodermeyer and Dan Graham at the apartment of Dan Graham, 15 March 2008, New York, USA.

218 Sarah Gold and Sophia Thomassen, in dialogue with a work by Dan Graham, *Triangular Solid with Circular insert*, 1989, two-way mirror, steel, 230x230x230 cm (90.6x90.6x90.6"), 20 August 2009, Guggenheim-Venice, Italy. Courtesy: Peggy Guggenheim Collection and Galleria Massimo Minini, Brescia, Italy.

219 Dan Graham at the apartment of Dan Graham, 15 March 2008, New York, USA.

221 Peter Lodermeyer and Dan Graham at the apartment of Dan Graham, 9 April 2008, New York, USA.

222 Peter Lodermeyer and Lee Ufan in the studio apartment of Lee Ufan , 16 January 2009, Paris, France.

225 Lee Ufan, *Relatum-Residence*, 1988, iron plate and stone plates. Courtesy: Lee Ufan and Lisson Gallery, London, UK.

227 Carl Andre, *20 Cedar Slant 20º*, 1990, 20 Western red cedar units, 30x30x30cm (12x12x12") each, 30x90x600cm (12x36x236") overall + 7 Cedar Slant, 1990, 7 Western red cedar units, 90x30x30cm (36x12x12") each, 90x30x21cm (36x12x8.5") overall. Installation view Konrad Fischer Galerie Düsseldorf, Germany, 1990. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany

228 Carl Andre, *Outer Piece*, 1983, 63 gas-beton blocks, 20x20x75cm (8x8x30") each, 75x210x685cm (30x82x270") overall. Installation view Konrad Fischer Galerie Düsseldorf, Germany, 2009. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

229 Carl Andre, facsimile of the handwritten answers to the questions of Peter Lodermeyer by Carl Andre, 20 June 2008.

230 Karlyn De Jongh and Max Cole at her studio, 5 April 2009, Ruby, NY, USA.

231 Max Cole, *Ashanti (detail)*, 2006. Acrylic on linen, 132.1x157.5cm (52x62")

231 Max Cole, *Cats Eye (detail)*, 2006. Acrylic on linen, 132.1x157.5cm (52x62")

232 Max Cole at her studio, 5 April 2009, Ruby, NY, USA.

232 Max Cole, *Turpin (detail)*, 2007, acrylic on linen, 40.6x 48.3cm (16x19").

233 Karlyn De Jongh and Max Cole at the studio of Max Cole, 5 April 2009, Ruby, NY, USA.

234 Peter Lodermeyer, Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh and Roman Opalka at the Studio of Roman Opalka, 30 July 2008, Beaumont, France.

235 Roman Opalka, *1965/1–∞, Detail 893147–918553, (detail)*, undated, acryl on linen, 196x135cm (77x53") Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg, Austria.

236 Roman Opalka, Rene Rietmeyer and Sarah Gold in the Octagon from Roman Opalka, at the exhibition of Roman Opalka, 27 June 2006, Musée d' Art Moderne, St. Etienne, France.

237 Roman Opalka, Rene Rietmeyer and Sarah Gold in the Octagon from Roman Opalka, at the exhibition of Roman Opalka, 27 June 2006, Musée d' Art Moderne, St. Etienne, France.

237 Roman Opalka at his exhibition, 27 June 2006, Musée d' Art Moderne, St. Etienne, France.

239 Peter Lodermeyer, Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh and Roman Opalka at the Studio of Roman Opalka, 30 July 2008, Beaumont, France.

240 Roman Opalka in front of his painting at the Exhibition *Personal Structures: Time* at Arti et Amicitiae, 15 June 2007 Amsterdam, Netherlands. Work: *1965/1–∞,: Detail 2910060-2932295*, undated, acryl on linen, 196x135cm (77x53") Courtesy: Caldic Collectie, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

241 Roman Opalka, *1965/1–∞, Detail*, undated, acryl on linen, 196x135cm (77x53") Courtesy: Caldic Collectie, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

242 Antony Gormley and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Antony Gormley, 13 August 2008, London, UK.

243 Antony Gormley, *Full Bowl*, 1977-78, Lead, 6x17x17cm (2.5x6.5x6.5") Courtesy: the artist & Jay Jopling/White Cube, London, UK.

244 Antony Gormley at his studio, 13 August 2008, London, UK.

245 Antony Gormley, *Seeing and believing*, 1988, Lead, fiberglass, plaster, 192x155x38 cm (76x61x15").

245 Antony Gormley, *Sense*, 1991, concrete, 74.5x62.5x60cm (30x25x24").

246 Antony Gormley and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Antony Gormley, 13 August 2008, London, UK.

248 Karlyn De Jongh and Kris Martin at the studio of Kris Martin, 12 November 2008, Ghent, Belgium.

249 Kris Martin, *Vase*, 2005, Chinese porcelain, 225cm (89"). Courtesy: Sies+Hoeke, Düsseldorf, collection Gabi and Wilhelm Schuermann, Germany.

250 Kris Martin, *Ad Huc*, 2008, cannonball, unique piece, Ø 14cm (5.5"), Courtesy: Sies+Hoeke, Düsseldorf, collection Laing and Kathleen Brown, Canada.

251 Karlyn De Jongh and Kris Martin at the studio of Kris Martin, 12 November 2008, Ghent, Belgium.

252 Hermann Nitsch in his kitchen, 18 December 2008, Prinzendorf, Austria.

255 Hermann Nitsch, *Aktion Burgtheater*, 2005, Vienna, Austria.

257 Hermann Nitsch, *Aktion*, 1998, Austria.

258 Hermann Nitsch in his kitchen, 18 December 2008, Prinzendorf, Austria.

261 Hermann Nitsch and Peter Lodermeyer in the kitchen of Hermann Nitsch, 18 December 2008, Prinzendorf, Austria.

263 Hermann Nitsch, *Aktion*, 1998, Austria.

264 Peter Lodermeyer and Lee Ufan in the studio apartment of Lee Ufan, 16 January 2009, Paris, France.

265 Lee Ufan and Karlyn De Jongh in the studio apartment of Lee Ufan, 16 January 2009, Paris, France.

266 Yuko Sakurai, Peter Lodermeyer and Lee Ufan in the studio apartment of Lee Ufan, 16 January 2009, Paris, France.

267 Lee Ufan, *Dialogue*, 2007, oil on canvas, 227x182 cm (89.5x71.5"). Courtesy: Pace Wildenstein, New York, USA.

269 Peter Lodermeyer, Lee Ufan and Karlyn De Jongh in the studio apartment of Lee Ufan, 16 January 2009, Paris, France.

270 Lee Ufan, *Relatum-silence b*, 2008, steel plate, 279,4x226,1cm (120x 89"), stone, 81,3x86,4x91,4cm (32x34x36"). Courtesy: Pace Wildenstein, New York, USA.

271 Lee Ufan during the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 5 June 2009, Italy.

272 Christian Boltanski, Karlyn De Jongh and Peter Lodermeyer in l' Hôtel , 19 January 2009, Paris, France.

273 Christian Boltanski, *Die juedische Schule (Berlin 1939)*, 1992, lithography on transparent paper, mounted on grey cardboard with masking tape (from the portfolio "*The Frozen Leopard*"), edition: 60, 60x80cm (24x32") Courtesy: Galerie Bernd Klueser, Germany.

274 Christian Boltanski in l' Hôtel , 19 January 2009, Paris, France.

275 Christian Boltanski, Karlyn De Jongh and Peter Lodermeyer in l' Hôtel , 19 January 2009, Paris, France.

276 Peter Halley and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Peter Halley, 19 February 2009, New York, USA.

277 Peter Halley, "*Yellow Cell with Conduit*", 1985, acrylic, Day-Glo acrylic, and Roll-a-Tex on canvas, 163x183cm (64x72").

279 Peter Halley and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Peter Halley, 19 February 2009, New York, USA.

280 Peter Halley at his studio, 19 February 2009, New York, USA.

281 "Peter Halley and Alessandro Mendini", 2008, Installation View, Galleria Massimo Minini, Brescia, Italy.

282 Peter Lodermeyer, Vito Acconci and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Vito Acconci, 29 March 2009, Brooklyn, NY, USA.

283 Vito Acconci, *project 2009, part of an amphitheater for the concert hall in Stavanger*, Norway. Courtesy: Acconci Studio.

284 Vito Acconci, *NEW WORLD TRADE CENTER*, 2002. Courtesy: Acconci Studio.

285 Vito Acconci, Karlyn De Jongh and Peter Lodermeyer at the studio of Vito Acconci, 29 March 2009, Brooklyn, NY, USA.

287 Vito Acconci, *MUR ISLAND (The Murinsel)*, 2003, a floating exhibition and performance space, situated in the middle of the Mur River in Graz, Austria. Courtesy: Acconci Studio.

288 Vito Acconci: *MUR ISLAND (The Murinsel)*, 2003, a floating exhibition and performance space, situated in the middle of the Mur River in Graz, Austria. Courtesy: Acconci Studio.

289 Vito Acconci at his studio, 29 March 2009, Brooklyn, NY, USA.

290 Marcia Hafif and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio apartment from Marcia Hafif, 30 March 2009, New York, USA.

292 Exhibition of works by Marcia Hafif at Larry Becker Contemporary Art, 1 July 2009, Philadelphia, USA.

293 Marcia Hafif and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio apartment from Marcia Hafif, 30 March 2009, New York, USA.

294 Jorinde Voigt and Peter Lodermeyer at the Watermill Brooklyn Gallery, 2 April 2009, Brooklyn, NY, USA.

295 Jorinde Voigt, *Matrix-Studie 46*, 2008, ink, pencil on paper, 77 x 57cm (30.5x23"). Courtesy: Galerie Christian Lethert.

296 Jorinde Voigt, *Matrix-Studie 17*, 2008, ink, pencil on paper, 77x57cm (30x22"). Courtesy: Galerie Christian Lethert.

297 Jorinde Voigt, *o.T. (Algorithmus Adlerflug, 2 x 50 Adler, Crash)*, 2007, ink and pencil on paper, 51x36cm (20x14"). Courtesy: Galerie Christian Lethert, Germany and Collection Fahrnbach, Germany.

298 Nelleke Beltjens and Peter Lodermeyer at Galerie Christian Lethert, 13 March 2009, Cologne, Germany. Courtesy: Galerie Christian Lethert.

299 Nelleke Beltjens, *(In) Possibilities #8*, 2009, ink pen on paper, 42x30cm (17x12"). Courtesy: Galerie Christian Lethert.

300 Nelleke Beltjens and Peter Lodermeyer at the studio of Nelleke Beltjens, 9 July 2009, Ghent, Belgium.

302 Tehching Hsieh and Karlyn De Jongh at the apartment of Tehching Hsieh, 6 May 2009, Brooklyn, NY, USA.

303 Tehching Hsieh, *ONE YEAR PERFORMANCE, 1981-1982*, Life Images in Winter.

305 Tehching Hsieh and Karlyn De Jongh at the apartment of Tehching Hsieh, 6 May 2009, Brooklyn, NY, USA.

307 On Kawara, *I AM STILL ALIVE*, 1971, telegram. Courtesy: Klaus Honnef, Germany.

311 On Kawara, *I GOT UP*, Dec 19 1973, postcard. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

312 Karlyn De Jongh and Tatsuo Miyajima at Lisson Gallery, 26 May 2009, London, UK.

313 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Death of Time*,1990-92, LED, IC, electric wire, aluminum panel, 1180x1380x450cm (installation). Collection of Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art. Courtesy: Scai The Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan.

314 Tatsuo Miyajima, "*Counter Void*", 2003, neon, glass, IC, aluminum, electric wire 5 x 50 m (installation) / 1 unit : 3.2x2.2m x 6 figures. Collection of TV Asahi, Tokyo, Japan. Courtesy: Scai The Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan.

315 Tatsuo Miyajima at Lisson Gallery, 26 May 2009, London, UK.

317 Tatsuo Miyajima, "*MEGA DEATH*", 1999, LED, IC, electric wire, sensor, etc, 4.5x15.3x15.3m (15X50X50'), installation. Installation view at the Japan Pavilion, The 48th Venice Biennale. Courtesy: the Japan Foundation and Scai The Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan.

318 Tatsuo Miyajima, *C.F. Protrusensitive – no 3*, 2007, 12 LEDs. Courtesy: Tatsuo Miyajima and Lisson Gallery, London, UK.

319 Karlyn De Jongh and Tatsuo Miyajima at Lisson Gallery, 26 May 2009, London, UK.

321 Tatsuo Miyajima, "*HOTO*", 2008, 549x208cm (216x82"), LED, electric wire, stainless steel, iron frame, installation view at Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito. Courtesy: Scai The Bathhouse, Tokyo, Japan.

322 Otto Piene and Peter Lodermeyer at the openings party of the ZERO Foundation, 27 May 2009, Dusseldorf, Germany.

323 Otto Piene, *Rauchbild (Smoke painting)*, 1961, oil paint and smoke on linen, 111x111cm (44x44"). Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg, Austria.

324 Otto Piene, Karlyn De Jongh and Peter Lodermeyer at the studio of Otto Piene, 30 May 2009, Dusseldorf, Germany.

326 Karlyn De Jongh and Teresa Margolles at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 5 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

327 Teresa Margolles, *What Else Could We Talk About? Cleaning*, 2009. Cleaning of the exhibition floors with a mixture of water and blood from murdered people in Mexico. The action took place at least once a day during the extent of the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy.

328 Teresa Margolles, *Los Herederos - The Heirs XI, (31-10-2008, Sinaola, Mexico)*, 2009, Pintura de Sangre, various liquids on canvas, secured and desinfected; with sound. Courtesy: Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich, Switzerland.

329 Karlyn De Jongh and Teresa Margolles at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 5 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

330 Giuseppe Penone and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Giuseppe Penone, 12 June 2009, Turin, Italy.

332 Giuseppe Penone and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Giuseppe Penone, 12 June 2009, Turin, Italy.

335 Giuseppe Penone, *Soffio 7 (Breath 7)*, 1978, terracotta, 16x72x65cm (66x29x25"). Collection Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Toyota, Japan.

336 Giuseppe Penone at his studio, 12 June 2009, Turin, Italy.

339 Karlyn De Jongh and Giuseppe Penone at the studio of Giuseppe Penone, 12 June 2009, Turin, Italy.

341 Giuseppe Penone, *Tra scorza e scorza (Between bark and bark)*, 2003-2007, bronze, ash tree, 1030x430x280cm (404x170x110"), permanent installation, Giardino delle sculture fluide (Fluid Sculptures Garden), Reggia di Venaria Reale – Torino, Italy. Work realized with the participation of Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, with the support of Compagnia di San Paolo and Regione Piemonte, Italy.

342 Heinz Mack and Peter Lodermeyer at the openings party of the ZERO Foundation, 27 May 2009, Dusseldorf, Germany.

345 Heinz Mack, *Ohne Titel, lichtrelief*, 1967, aluminumfoil, wood, 76x100cm (30x39"). Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg, Austria.

347 Heinz Mack, "*Dynamische Struktur Schwarz-Weiss*", 1959, Synthetic resin on plywood, oil-acrylic, 96x68cm (38x27"), Courtesy: Galerie c.art, Prantl & Boch, Austria.

348 Heinz Mack and Peter Lodermeyer at the openings party of the ZERO Foundation, 27 May 2009, Dusseldorf, Germany.

350 Heinz Mack and Karlyn De Jongh at the openings party of the ZERO Foundation, 27 May 2009, Dusseldorf, Germany.

351 Heinz Mack, *Licht-Raum-Farbe (Light-Space-Color)*, 2003, glass, 30x30x30cm 12x12x12").

353 Heinz Mack, *Licht-Raum-Farbe (Light-Space-Color)*, 2003, glass, 30x30x30cm (12x12x12").

354 Peter Lodermeyer and Yuko Sakurai during the opening of the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 5 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

355 Yuko Sakurai, *Naoshima*, 2007, oil on wood, 86x61x4cm (34x24x1.5").

357 Yuko Sakurai, *Land van Heusden*, 2006, 34x46x3cm (14x18x1").

358 Erwin Thorn and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Erwin Thorn, 2 July 2009, Vienna, Austria.

359 Erwin Thorn, *Send us Spray to colour the Mythos away*, 1970, 216x200x188cm (85x78x74"). Courtesy: Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria

361 Erwin Thorn and Karlyn De Jongh at the studio of Erwin Thorn, 2 July 2009, Vienna, Austria.

362 Louise Bourgeois, 2003, (detail of the original photo).

363 Louise Bourgeois, *MAMAN*, 1999, Bronze, stainless steel and marble, 927x892x1024cm (365 x 351 x 403"). Installed in Schlosspark Wendlinghausen in Dörentrup , Germany in 2004.

364 Sarah Gold and Xing Xin at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 8 July 2009, Venice, Italy.

365 Xing Xin during his performance, *Free-Easy Wondering*《逍遥游》, Yangzte River, Chongqing, 6 October 2008, China.

366 Xing Xin at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 3 July 2009, Venice, Italy.

367 Xing Xin during his performance, *Free-Easy Wondering*《逍遥游》, Yangzte River, Chongqing, 6 October 2008, China.

368 Xing Xin during his performance, *Kids of Workers*,《工人的孩子》, 10 November 2007, Chendu, China.

368 Xing Xin during his performance, *Send Xing Xin under Escort*,《押运幸鑫》, 22-25 October 2008, Beijing, China.

369 Sarah Gold and Xing Xin at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 8 July 2009, Venice, Italy.

370 Sarah Gold and Xing Xin, 幸鑫,at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 8 July 2009, Venice, Italy. 玻璃岛，威尼斯，意大利，2009年7月8日.

371 幸鑫, Xing Xin, during his performance, *The Black Box*, with curator庄楷, Zhuang Kai, (Cara), and the captain on the boat, at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, July 2009, Venice, Italy. 威尼斯，意大利，2009年7月. The performance "The Black Box" by Xing Xin, 幸鑫, for the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 2009, was curated by Zhuang Kai (Cara), 庄楷.

373 幸鑫. Xing Xin, during his performance in "*The Black Box*", at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, July 2009, Venice, Italy. 威尼斯，意大利，2009年7月. The performance "*The Black Box*", by Xing Xin, 幸鑫, for the 53. Biennale di Venezia 2009, was curated by Zhuang Kai (Cara), 庄楷.

374 Gottfried Honegger and Sarah Gold at the studio of Gottfried Honegger, 17 July 2009, Zurich, Switzerland.

375 Gottfried Honegger, "*C.142*", 2003, metal, 91x75cm (36x30"). Courtesy: Galerie am Lindenplatz, Vaduz, FL. Private collection: Dornbirn, Austria

377 Gottfried Honegger and Sarah Gold at the studio of Gottfried Honegger, 17 July 2009, Zurich, Switzerland.

378 Gottfried Honegger at his studio, 17 July 2009, Zurich, Switzerland.

379 Gottfried Honegger, "*C 1349*", 2001, Aluminium lackiert, 100x100cm (39X39") Courtesy: Galerie am Lindenplatz, Vaduz, FL.

381 Gottfried Honegger, *communicatif*, 1960, Relief, cardboard collage, oil on linen, 99x99cm (39x39") Courtesy: Galerie am Lindenplatz, Vaduz, F.

382 Karlyn De Jongh and VALIE EXPORT at Cafe Sperl, Vienna, Austria, 27 July 2009.

383 VALIE EXPORT, *Mann & Frau & Animal*, 1973, 16mm, s/w, Farbe und Ton 12' Film Stills, Courtesy: Charim Galerie, Vienna, Austria.

384 Waltercio Caldas, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

385 Waltercio Caldas, "*Other Place*", 2007.

386 Waltercio Caldas, "*Omkring*" (Around), 1994, Leirfjord, Norway.

388 Karlyn De Jongh and Liam Gillick at the opening of the 53rd Biennale Di Venezia, Italy, 4 June 2009.

391 Liam Gillick, *Developmental*, 2008, Courtesy: Casey Kaplan, New York.

392 Ann Hamilton, *Reflection (12.15)*, 2000, part of a set of twelve Iris prints (edition of 10), 119x86cm (47x34"), installation at the Venice Biennale 1999. Courtesy: Ann Hamilton Studio.

393 Ann Hamilton, *Reflection (12.25 and 12.30)*, 2000, part of a set of twelve Iris prints (edition of 10), 119x86cm (47x34"), installation at the Venice Biennale 1999. Courtesy: Ann Hamilton Studio.

394 Ann Hamilton, *Reflection (12.30 and 12.35)*, 2000, part of a set of twelve Iris prints (edition of 10), 119x86cm (47x34"), installation at the Venice Biennale 1999. Courtesy: Ann Hamilton Studio.

395 Ann Hamilton, *Reflection (12.40 and 12.45)*, 2000, part of a set of twelve Iris prints (edition of 10), 119x86cm (47x34"), installation at the Venice Biennale 1999. Courtesy: Ann Hamilton Studio.

396 Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh, Peter Lodermeyer and Rene Rietmeyer in his appartment, 17 September 2009, Murano, Venezia, Italy.

397 Rene Rietmeyer, "*USA, Siesta Key, May 2008*". In this series there have been made a total of 92 Boxes. All Boxes are made from several variations red oil paint on wood. Each Box approximately 18x18x13 cm (7.3x7.3x5.3"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible.

399 Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh, Peter Lodermeyer and Rene Rietmeyer in his appartment, 17 September 2009, Murano, Venezia, Italy.

400 Rene Rietmeyer, Venice, Murano, 17 September 2009, 1.10 pm.

401 Rene Rietmeyer, *"Shark Valley, May 2001"*. In this series there have been made a total of 10 Boxes. All Boxes are made from several variations red oil paint on wood. Each Box approximately 120x30x50 cm (47x12x20"), each installation varies in size and may contain any number of Boxes possible. Installation view, March 2005, Ludwig Museum, Germany.

402 Karlyn De Jongh and Arnulf Rainer at the apartment of Arnulf Rainer, 13 August 2009, Vienna, Austria.

403 Arnulf Rainer, *Hand- und Fingermalerei, (Hand and finger painting)*, 1983, oil on wood, 105x77cm (42x30").

405 Karlyn De Jongh and Arnulf Rainer at the apartment of Arnulf Rainer, 13 August 2009, Vienna, Austria.

406 Arnulf Rainer, *Dunkelkreuz*, 1998, oil on wood with application, 200x122cm (78x48"). Courtesy: Galerie Lelong, Paris, France.

407 Karlyn De Jongh and Arnulf Rainer at the apartment of Arnulf Rainer, 13 August 2009, Vienna, Austria.

408 Arnulf Rainer at his apartment in Vienna, Austria, 13 August 2009.

409 Arnulf Rainer, *Uebermalung*, 1958-60, oil on canvas, 178x79cm (71x31"). Courtesy: Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria. Private collection.

410 Arnulf Rainer, *Ohne Titel, Serie Body Poses*, 1970 – 75, mixed media on photo, 50x60cm (20x24"). Courtesy: Galerie Lelong, Paris, France.

411 Arnulf Rainer, *Totenmaske Chopin (Death Mask Chopin)*, 1978/79, Oil on plaster, 32x20x16cm (13x8x5"). Courtesy: Galerie Lelong, Paris, France.

412 Thomas Pihl, *Untitled sculpture no 6*, 2008, mixed media (art waste products), high 40x50x40cm 16x20x16").

418 Thomas Pihl in front of one of his paintings during his exhibition in Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2007.

421 Thomas Pihl, *Untitled sculpture no 18*, 2008, mixed media (art waste products), 35x47x37cm (14x19x14").

422 Thomas Pihl, *Prearticulation no 4*, 2006, 122x153cm (48x60"), Acrylic on canvas.

425 Hanne Darboven, *Untitled (Detail)*, 1973, 1 of 9 sheets with felt pen on paper, 29,5x21cm (12x8") each. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany.

427 Sol Lewitt, "*Wall Drawing # 1243 Scribbles 2*", graphite, August 2007, 244x244 cm (8x8 feet) first drawn by: Chip Allen, Takeshi Arita, Andrew Colbert, Sarah Heinemann, John Hogan, Gabriel Hurier, Sara Krugman, Roland Lusk, Anthony Sansotta, Michael Benjamin Vedder. First installation: Pace Wildenstein, New York, USA. Courtesy: Pace Wildenstein, New York, USA.

428 Rene Rietmeyer: "*LIFE*" #32, 2007, ceramic and glace, 16x16x21cm (5.3x5.3x8.3").

433 Rene Rietmeyer: "*LIFE*", 2007, installation of 5 Boxes, ceramic and glace, each 16x16x21cm (5.3x5.3x8.3").

434 Keith Sonnier, *Tunnel of tears for Unna*, 2002, neon and argon, permanent neon installation in underground tunnel. Commissioned by the Zentrum für Internationale Lichtkunst, Unna, Germany.

442 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Counter Void S-1*, 2003, neon, plastic, stainless steel, IC controller, 232x167x60cm (91x66x24"). Courtesy: Tatsuo Miyajima and Lisson Gallery, London, UK.

444 Peter Lodermeyer, Italy, Venice, Murano, 17 September 2009, 1.06 pm.

445 Karlyn De Jongh, Italy, Venice, Murano, 17 September 2009, 1.11 pm.

445 Sarah Gold, Italy, Venice, Murano, 17 September 2009, 1.10 pm.

BIOGRAPHIES

Peter Lodermeyer
Karlyn De Jongh
Sarah Gold

Peter Lodermeyer

Peter Lodermeyer (* 1962 in Ottweiler, Germany), art historian, art critic and author. Study of art history, philosophy and German literature. Received M.A. (1992) and Ph.D. (1997) in art history from the University of Bonn, Germany. Since 1999, publishing a large number of books, scholarly articles, artist interviews, catalogues, book reviews and essays, on a variety of aspects of contemporary art. Since 2003 involved in the project *Personal Structures*. Became a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) in 2008.

The academic, scientific discourse on art, as important as I still find it today, reveals a great lack: it manages very well without contact to living artists, and even gets by without a direct encounter with works of art. Having completed a classical regimen of studies in art history, meeting Rene Rietmeyer in 1998 was a major impetus that caused me to become intensely involved with contemporary art and the structures bound to this. The studio visits and the interviews with the artists I made in connection with our first *Personal Structures* book in 2003, were thus a decisive new experience. Since that time I have met numerous artists, gallery owners, curators, collectors, authors—both inside and outside of this project—getting to know their specific problems and points of view, and making many friends in the art world.

My encounters in connection with *Time · Space · Existence* have been very special indeed, since I have now been able to meet artists I already admired or found fascinating during my studies (this includes Carl Andre, Wolfgang Laib, and Hermann Nitsch, to name only a few), experiencing them from a perspective that no book or theoretical discourse had ever conveyed. Increasingly, I have come to appreciate the importance of personal encounters with artists—this is one of the most important things I have learned from the project *Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence* in its long journey via Amsterdam, Tokyo, New York, Venice, and many interim stations along the way.

Karlyn De Jongh

Karlyn De Jongh (* 1980, Netherlands), independent curator and author. Study of Fine Arts in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, Netherlands. Received M.A. in Philosophy and M.Phil. in Art History and Theory at the Universities of Leiden, Netherlands and Santa Barbara, CA, USA. Since 2007, working with the project *Personal Structures*.

It was on 14 May 2007 that I became acquainted with *Personal Structures*. In preparation for what would come after my studies, I took a course in 'How to apply for a job?'. I handed in my CV for correction, and a week later, it came back together with a printed email from Sarah Gold, who was looking for a Curator for the Time symposium in Amsterdam. I gave it a shot and called her up; the next day—it was Monday morning, around 10am—we met at the train station in Den Bosch, Netherlands. We drove to Heusden, where we met Rene Rietmeyer. They took the time to explain *Personal Structures* to me, eight hours to be precise. The project *Time · Space · Existence* was in its beginning stage; the plans sounded like fairytale stories. But when they asked if I wanted to work with them, I said, "yes." I helped organizing the Amsterdam symposium on Time. After that, we kept in contact while I finished my studies and went to Venice, Italy, for three months to work at the Biennale. During that time I started my project *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara*, which was planned to become part of this publication. Back from Venice, in December 2007, Sarah and Rene asked me to come to Miami FL, where they were attending the art fairs. On their balcony, looking out at the Atlantic Ocean, they now asked me if I wanted to work with them full time and become part of the team. Again I said, "yes."

We have traveled a lot together, for example, to Tokyo, New York, and Venice, where we organized the *Time · Space · Existence* symposia. But I really found my way when I did my first interview with Max Cole. I liked it a lot. The second one came along, this time live: Antony Gormley. It grew from there.

Sarah Gold

Sarah Gold (* 1978, Netherlands), independent curator and author. University education in Germany (Heidelberg) and received her M.A. degree in Art History from the University of Leiden, Netherlands. Worked as an assistant curator at the Caldic Collection in the Netherlands and is engaged in the project *Personal Structures* since 2005.

In February 2005, I met Rene Rietmeyer, the initiator of the project *Personal Structures* at the Art Rotterdam. I knew his work, because he is represented in the Caldic Collection and although he seemed a bit unusual at first, I really liked his project. I still remember taking the train from Leiden to Den Bosch, in order to discuss a future cooperation; it was Sunday, the 13th of March 2005. Rene Rietmeyer picked me up at the station. His car, the man himself, his life, it all smelled like Art. He offered me the opportunity to work at a fantastic level in the art world, something I had never dreamt of. Since that encounter, I have worked as an independent curator, in close cooperation with *Personal Structures*. I have helped to organize exhibitions and symposia in Europe, USA and Japan and assisted in placing artwork in private collections.

Rene Rietmeyer and I developed in 2006 the concept for the project *Personal Structures Time · Space · Existence*. The first symposium was to be held in Amsterdam in June 2007. We realized that we needed assistance, so I sent a job offer to my former university. Many students reacted, among them one promising young woman, Karlyn De Jongh. We asked her to join us, kept in touch after the event and since January 2008 we have been working together permanently as equal partners, it has become a very special relationship.

Now, more than three years later, *Personal Structures Time · Space · Existence*, Edition One, is a fact. It has been a beautiful and at times painful experience, with many interesting events such as, my interview with Louise Bourgeois, which have enriched my life tremendously. I am looking forward to the future.

To be continued…