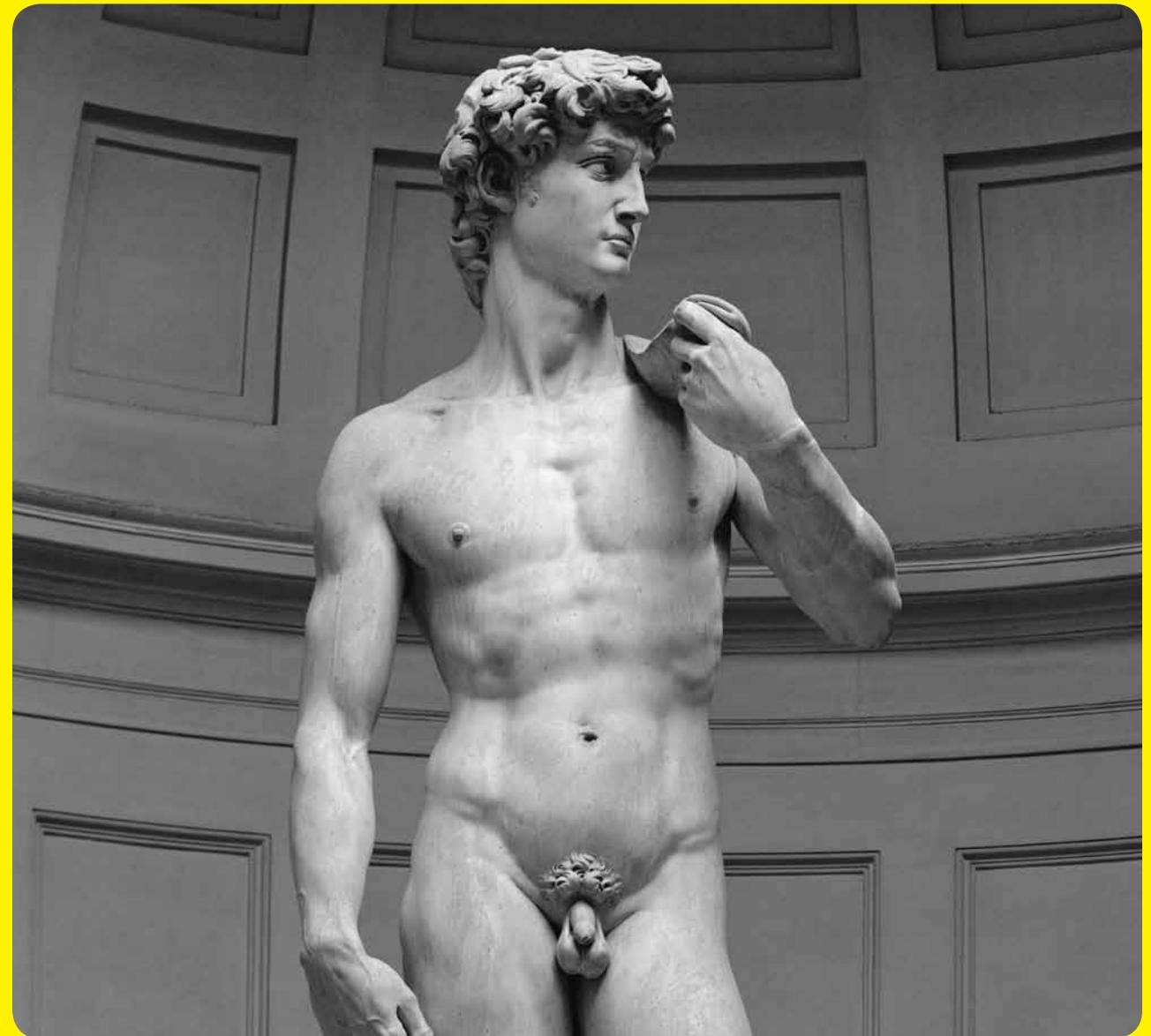


THE EXHIBITIONIST
NO. 3 / JOURNAL ON EXHIBITION MAKING / JANUARY 2011

OVERTURE
CURATORS' FAVORITES
BACK IN THE DAY
ASSESSMENTS
TYOLOGIES
ATTITUDE
REAR MIRROR
ENDNOTE

USD 15
EUR 10
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THE EXHIBITIONIST



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JANUARY 2011



Michelangelo
David, 1501–4
Marble
204 in. (518.2 cm) high
Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence

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Dedicated to the memory of
Claude Chabrol (1930-2010)

OVERTURE

★

Jens Hoffmann

Jean-Luc Godard's first feature film, *À bout de souffle* (Breathless), released in March of 1960, was more than a critical and commercial success; it was the beginning of what became known as the Nouvelle Vague, a radical and unique movement in which cinema profoundly challenged its own conventions. As Godard once put it: "We stormed into cinema like a bunch of cavemen into the Versailles of Louis XV."

Among the primary characteristics of the Nouvelle Vague was a highly polemical and rhetorical style, a result of the directors' interest in contemporary literature and film criticism. Almost all of the major protagonists of the movement served as editors of the influential film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Beyond transforming the conventions of cinema, the Nouvelle Vague directors established film as the medium of the moment, and themselves as the most avant-garde contemporary group working in that medium.

The Exhibitionist takes *Cahiers du Cinéma* as a starting point, a source of inspiration. Our admiration for the Nouvelle Vague directors is not only about the films they actually made (which succeeded to varying degrees in actually breaking with tradition) but also about their commitment to talking about film in their own language, to working in their own style, to avoid succumbing to the forces of convention, and to their championing of intellectualism and criticality. Above all *The Exhibitionist* follows their example in embracing the theory of the author. To those (including those curators) who regard exhibition making as a somehow outdated way to present art, we insist otherwise. The exhibition is the medium of the moment, and we have barely begun to scratch the surface of its potential.

The exhibition, as a creative medium, establishes and cultivates a specific nexus between individuals and objects. The curator is the author of this nexus, selecting and installing the artworks, which as a group offer a larger argument than any one work could make by itself. In other words, the exhibition mirrors the subjectivity of the individual curator, just as each artwork mirrors the subjectivity of the artist who made it, and the Nouvelle Vague films mirrored the subjectivity of their directors.

The cover of this issue, depicting Michelangelo's iconic sculpture of David, speaks about the struggle against a seemingly impossible challenge. Its deployment here is, I admit, deliberately a bit Duchampian and tongue-in-cheek, but its symbolism is meant seriously. Unlike so many artists who depicted David with Goliath's head in his hand, Michelangelo chose to show him in the moment just before the fight. His face is tense, fierce, his eyebrows furrowed,

yet his body seems relaxed. Strength and determination balance with sophistication and elegance—all characteristics that *The Exhibitionist* would like to claim for itself. In our case the struggle is to establish exhibition making as a cultural praxis with its own discourse, to claim curating as creative authorship, to overcome the suspicion and even hostility with which it is sometimes viewed, and to break through the conventions of the medium.

There are, of course, fundamental differences between filmmaking and exhibition making. The exhibition assumes an aesthetic experience that is individual, happening in the mind of the viewer, whereas cinema assumes a communal experience of reception. This premise of the individual art viewer/consumer complements the Western emphasis on the individual. As the art historian and curator Dorothea von Hantelmann recently pointed out, the reason for the success and social significance of the exhibition might not be the art it presents, but rather the fact that it ritually establishes and enacts an important set of values that were and still are fundamental to Western societies. The German sociologist Gerhard Schulze argues that one identifying characteristic of Western societies is that individuals make choices not out of necessity or purposefulness, but according to aesthetic preferences. The curator selecting works for an exhibition is also making individual aesthetic choices, which offers perhaps a further argument for curating being the profession of the moment.

One of the most successful exhibitions of the past year, if not the past decade, was Massimiliano Gioni's 8th Gwangju Biennale, entitled *10000 Lives*. It is discussed in depth in the ASSESSMENTS section of this issue by Tobias Berger, Doryun Chong, Carol Yinghua Lu, and Stéphanie Moisdon. Never before have I seen an exhibition on such a vast scale that was so precisely selected and installed, yet simultaneously so full of unexpected juxtapositions and surprising choices. It thoroughly reflected the curator's clear and vigorous subjectivity. While Gioni has always (perhaps naively) dismissed the idea of the curator as author, his biennial, like many of his other exhibitions, clearly operated in an authorial mode.

The Exhibitionist generally focuses on the discussion of group exhibitions, although we are also interested in other formats, and in the TYPOLOGIES section Jessica Morgan, Elisabeth Sussman, and the co-directors of the gallery Triple Candie all examine the concept of the retrospective solo show. In REAR MIRROR, Kathrin Rhomberg talks about her 6th Berlin Biennial, *Was draussen wartet* (What Is Waiting Out There, 2010) and Jane Alison reflects on *The Surreal House* (2010). CURATORS' FAVORITES features three very different curators on three equally diverse exhibitions: What, How & for Whom/WHW (a Zagreb-based curatorial collective) revisits *Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s* (1982), Victoria Noorthoorn (an independent curator from Buenos Aires) talks about *Chambres d'Amis* (1986), and Apsara DiQuinzio (a museum curator based in San Francisco) looks at *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964–1977* (2001). ATTITUDE, a section reserved for an opinion piece by one of our editorial board members, features Maria Lind, former director of Bard College's Center for Curatorial Studies, who comes to terms with the highly controversial topic of curatorial education. Finally, BACK IN THE DAY, this time authored by Lars Bang Larsen, focuses on the unusual (especially for its time) exhibition dedicated to the French singer Johnny Hallyday that took place in 1979 at the CAPC in Bordeaux, France.

CURATORS' FAVORITES



Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s installation view, Municipal Gallery of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia, 1982, showing work by Boris Bučan

CORNERSTONE UNDER THE GRASS: INNOVATIONS IN CROATIAN ART IN THE 1970s

What, How & for Whom/WHW

"Failure, mishap, and defeat cannot be excluded from the agenda of those who are dissatisfied with the inventory of the past and the present, but everyone tends to fall differently—depending on his or her previous direction."

—Radoslav Putar, *New Tendencies 1*, 1961

There are many reasons why we have chosen to write on *Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s*, an exhibition that took place at the Municipal Gallery of Contemporary Art (now the Museum of Contemporary Art / MSU) in Zagreb in 1982.¹ It was part of a series, begun in the 1970s, of large group exhibitions presenting local Conceptual art and various avant-garde tendencies. This particular show summed up its titular

decade, a decade marked by the legacy of artistic experimentation in the 1960s as well as emerging tendencies of the 1980s, in particular the cut represented by the emergence of the New Painting.

Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s included a series of artistic approaches that we tend to link to the phenomenon of New Artistic Practice. The term was coined in the 1970s as a collective name for activities that represented a radical turn, utilizing a strategic deployment of the media and a particularly critical kind of social and artistic engagement. Thus, within the Yugoslav and Croatian art scene, it is possible to trace a distinct artistic line starting in the late 1960s that sought an alternative means for the production and presentation of artworks, redefining the



Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s installation view, Municipal Gallery of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia, 1982, showing work by Mladen Stilinović

status of art and modes of mediation between artist and audience. It questioned the “autonomy” of the system of museums and galleries as well as the traditional role and operation of social institutions, inaugurating a participatory, collectivist model.

From today’s perspective, *Innovations* can be seen as a rare and valuable effort to evaluate the legacy of the progressive wave of cultural and artistic production of the 1970s. In that sense, the exhibition has retained its position as the institutional culmination of that wave, as well as a sort of intersection and turning point for it. The 1970s are rightfully considered a cornerstone in the history of Yugoslav and Croatian art in terms of international exhibitions, art collecting, and the art market. Despite that, due to the insufficient engagement of central local cultural institutions during the last decade, the reception and evaluation of the decade’s legacy has been difficult for the generation that began its work in the specific political context of the late 1990s (and to which we four happen to belong).

One of the curators of *Innovations*, Davor Matičević, accurately stated in his foreword to the exhibition catalogue: “The artistic achievements of the scene have become a value which, due to the lack of museums and publications, has no possibility of being transmitted, although the milieu itself is aware of it. These artistic and intellectual experiences remain for future generations in the form of, and on the level of, oral tradition.”² Again, in recent years, the first impulses for reinterpreting and reinventing past experiences have come not from major cultural

institutions but from various artistic positions and smaller-scale organizations. The right to claim that legacy, to re-actualize it and influence its readings, has been a crucial challenge for our generation.

Innovations summed up a rich artistic period and, along with its catalogue, has served as a somewhat phantomlike source of information and inspiration for later generations. Although none of the four of us actually saw the exhibition itself in 1982, we regularly consult the catalogue as a rare repository of information on the activities of local artists in the 1970s. Artists such as Sanja Iveković and Mladen Stilinović, who have been active since those times and with whom we have collaborated often, remain a source of inspiration as we seek to achieve and outline a more autonomous and political mode of cultural production. Additionally, as a curatorial collective, we consider the phenomenon of coming together into groups or self-organized collectives an important cultural legacy of the 1970s.

“Is it possible to establish the characteristics, or even specificities and authenticities, of a particular time and space?” This question, raised by Matičević, opens the catalogue and sums up the key questions at hand. The catalogue makes clear that the exhibition had a strong curatorial voice even though, paradoxically, the curators are never named (as was customary during those years). We know only from conversations with their colleagues and from contemporaneous



Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s installation view, Municipal Gallery of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia, 1982

press articles that the curators were MSU curators Matičević and Marijan Susovski.

Two of their MSU colleagues—both very active in the wider art scene of the 1970s—also worked on the catalogue and contributed significant critical texts. Dimitrije Bašičević was a distinguished curator, art theoretician, and artist belonging to a somewhat older generation; his artworks were also exhibited under his pseudonym, Mangelos. Želimir Koščević managed an experimental program at the Students’ Centre Gallery in Zagreb from 1966 until 1980 and in *Innovations* he introduced a number of young, progressive artists whose work had been supported by that institution.

Innovations presented 50 artists spanning three generations: those who had begun their activities in the 1950s, such as Ivan Picelj, a member of Exat 51 (an art group active in Zagreb between 1950 and 1956); those whose work opened up new spaces for artistic activity in the 1960s, such as the Gorgona group (active from 1956 to 1966); and the youngest generation, whose work was related to the art of the 1970s. This last included the aforementioned Sanja Iveković and Mladen Stilinović as well as Goran Trbuljak, Vlado Martek, Vlasta Delimar, and Braco Dimitrijević. The exhibition was also structured so as to deconstruct the idea of the decade, indicating that a decade may begin earlier and end later than its calendar definition; thus the show included some authors who had been active since the 1960s and indirectly influenced the art of the 1970s. The Gorgona group, for example, radically challenged the idea of modernist art

and the role of the artist as advocating the idea of anti-art or no-art, as well as the activity of the international movement and the manifestation of the New Tendencies (active from 1961 to 1973), whose main center was Zagreb.³

As stated in the catalogue, the exhibition did not claim to be exhaustive or neutral in its position and interpretation. It did not merely present individual seminal artworks but sought to offer a résumé of the cultural and artistic moment from a specific viewpoint. Susovski classified the exhibition and the catalogue into seven thematic (non-chronological) categories: 1. objects, interventions, ambiances; 2. formulating an ethical position as the principle of artistic activity; 3. meta-semiotic research on reality; 4. video; 5. performances; 6. alternative forms of art; and 7. elementary procedures in constructing an artwork, primary and analytical painting and sculpture.

Even though the exhibition discussed the national corpus, the context and framework encompassed a broader Yugoslav cultural space. It was the result of many years of collaboration between two important institutions in the region: the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade and the MSU in Zagreb. Most of the artists had had important exhibitions in Belgrade at events such as *April Encounters*, or at the Students’ Centre Gallery in Belgrade. In their texts, the authors expressed appreciation for the production realized during the 1970s in smaller-scale institutions such as student and youth organizations and independent, self-managed spaces.⁴ From today’s perspective, another significant aspect of

the show relates to the curators' use of the term "innovation," which is crucial even in the title. Rather than referring to the use of new media (video, installations, and performances) typical of the decade, it was more about conceptual innovation and a specific kind of social engagement, often charged with progressively oriented leftism.

How did the local milieu react to an exhibition that clearly stated, through its choice of artists and its catalogue, a refusal to follow the prevailing practice of "neutral" surveys or to present the national scene in its totality? There were numerous positive press reviews, especially in Ljubljana and Belgrade, but the public of Zagreb was divided. The exhibition was criticized as lacking a clear profile in following a particular line of art, of not offering a "universal" cross-section, of neglecting artistic currents associated with figuration and hyperrealism, and of a conservative approach that overemphasized distinct, traditional art genres. The conservative reception is succinctly expressed in the remark that the show offered "a historical turn, whereby the marginal has become central and the central was pushed to the margins,"⁵ echoing the parallel and conflicting narratives that have defined the local art scene through the present day. Another press review, however, stated: "Obstinate pessimists of the traditional hue must have realized through this exhibition that they can no longer reject what the young forces are doing without proper argumentation."⁶

What is the status of the exhibition today? What questions does it raise? In spite of its relevance to, and numerous resonances with, the present, it shares the destiny of many other important exhibitions that redefined the field and introduced innovative methods of presenting and contextualizing art, in that it failed to become part of the broader collective memory, or to affect the functions of central art institutions. Radoslav Putar, a local art historian whose work was related to the New Tendencies movement, wrote as early as the 1950s about artistic and exhibition-related phenomena as cornerstones or turning points that mark the ends of certain phases and beginnings of new ones, even if their significance is ignored in the local context at the time. *Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s* was one of those cornerstones. "Sizable, incredibly important, and yet covered with the grass of oblivion

and unacknowledged."⁷ Putar was writing about some forgotten phenomenon of modernism, but his words apply just as well to *Innovations*. To be sure, we may also "blame" the transient nature of exhibitions as such, but still, only recently have there been some attempts within the ex-Yugoslav context at directly evaluating the legacy of the important ones and finding a place for them in the present moment. And as we mentioned already, this initiative mostly comes from various non-institutional and autonomous research groups: artists, self-organized collectives, and micro-institutions.

The example we have analyzed here questions the very core of responsibility claimed by public art institutions and exhibitions: What can an exhibition do, or not do, at a particular historical moment? What is the role of museums in generating discourses and contexts in art? The time to re-actualize these questions and reevaluate the idea of the exhibition is more propitious than ever, now that the long-awaited new MSU building has finally been inaugurated. And the topical issues still appear to be the following: What kinds of art institutions do we really need? What should the mode of cultural production be, and who should be the recipients?

Notes

1. Hereafter: Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb (MSU).
2. Davor Matičević, introduction to *Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s* (Zagreb: GSU, 1982): 7.
3. *New Tendencies* was an international artistic and theoretical movement and manifestation established in Zagreb in 1961. It encompassed a wide range of artistic tendencies in the 1960s and 1970s, from neo-Dada to neo-Constructivist and kinetic art as well as a theory of information that advocated research-based procedures, teamwork, and a synthesis of art, theory, and technology. It formed a substantial aspect of MSU's institutional support and platform. From 1961 to 1973 the museum organized five editions of international group exhibitions called *New Tendencies*.
4. For example Radna zajednica umjetnika, Podroom, MAj 75, and Haustor.
5. Josip Škunca: "Sporne Inovacije" ("Controversial Innovations"), *Vjesnik*, April 2, 1982.
6. A. L. "Inovacije u hrvatskoj umjetnosti sedamdesetih godina: Rezime novog" ("Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s: Reviewing the Old"), *Večernji list*, March 23, 1982.
7. Radoslav Putar, "Međaši pod travom I, marginalije uz eksponate na izložbi 'Salon 54'" ("Cornerstones Under the Grass I, Marginalia on the Exhibits at Salon 54") in *Croatian Art Criticism of the 1950s: Selected Essays* (Zagreb: Croatian Art Historians' Association): 187.



Joseph Kosuth
Zero and Not, 1986
Installation in private home

ON CHAMBRES D'AMIS

Victoria Noorthoorn

In the novel *Glosa* (1988) by Juan José Saer, two characters talk for more than 200 pages about a party they've never been to but which will, in many ways, affect the whole course of their lives. Echoing this approach, I will write here about *Chambres d'Amis*, an exhibition I've never seen, but which has haunted me for the past 15 years to such an extent that today I feel I have visited the show and know every single detail about it. I first heard about *Chambres d'Amis* in New York in the mid-1990s, and immediately ventured into the Museum of Modern Art's library in search of its generous catalogue. Its 367 pages, mostly devoted to the artists' projects, allow the reader to venture into what might have been the experience of this show. What follows is a series of reflections born of my infatuation with an exhibition that has stirred my imagination more than many shows I have actually attended.

Curator Jan Hoet's few and very clear decisions in the construction of *Chambres d'Amis* had myriad consequences that allowed this exhibition to become a platform not only for the visibility of the art at stake, but also for each

artist's practice, and specifically for his or her mode of operating in dialogue with that most intimate social sphere, the family. Despite its fundamental expansiveness and mobility, the exhibition as a whole never fully escaped the territory of the exhibition format. It challenged the frontiers of that territory while never abandoning a loyalty toward it.

The exhibition took place in Europe during the summer of 1986. For the duration of the show, Hoet, then the director of the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst in Ghent, Belgium, closed the museum's doors, but not its ticket booth. Visitors would buy a ticket to the exhibition, and in exchange they received a map of the city and a bike for the day. They were invited to ring the bells of 54 family homes in Ghent, homes that had been generously opened up to the 51 participating artists. The artists' task, Hoet indicated, was "to transform these spaces—within the limits imposed by the owners or occupiers—into something which can be identified as art."¹ The press commented, "This medieval town in west Belgium is a curious sight these days. Armed with

Norbert Radermacher
Bell, 1986
 Installation in private home



city maps, tourists are freely entering private homes, poking around without any complaint from the owners.”²

For *Chambres d’Amis*, the artists conceived works of tremendous variety. With subtle humor, Milan Grygar relocated irregular musical scores onto the walls of Wim De Raedt and Hilde Clement’s living room, also the site of the presentation of the remnants of two beautiful performances of Grygar’s refined acoustic drawings (one enacted by the artist himself, the other by a mechanical hen). Joseph Kosuth contributed a work that covered the walls of a neurologist’s office, and also covered an entire home with a text on error by Sigmund Freud, which he had crossed out and rendered illegible. Luciano Fabro used white cut-out sheets to pay homage to the arrival of a newborn baby at his host’s home. Dan Graham constructed a children’s pavilion over an exterior path connecting the two parts of the home of architect Dirk Defraeije–De Boodt. And in six homes, Jef Geys placed doors leading nowhere bearing slogans from the French Revolution translated into various languages.

Chambres d’Amis did it all at once.

1. It subverted the limits of a certain exhibition typology (the museum exhibition) while activating a historical typology (the exhibition in domestic space), bringing the two together—and thus rendering them, in a way, senseless—by combining the contexts of the private and the public. Rather than making vivid through confrontation the particularities and typical functions of each kind of

space, *Chambres d’Amis* created a synthesis: a new, unclassifiable object that could even be regarded as absurd, and (why not?) satirical.

2. It tested the limits of the museum’s social insertion in Ghent. To what extent is true engagement possible, and what are the limits of that engagement? What are the social bonds that art may, in fact, enable? The institution reached out to the people, asking them to open their doors not only to an artistic experience but also to the public. More than 50 hosts and hostesses in Ghent accepted the challenge and, in dialogue with their guest artists, decided upon the spaces and elements of their homes that would be subject to intervention and determined the dynamics of the encounters with the public.

3. *Chambres d’Amis* tested the ability of the museum to dissolve itself, and its authority, into the fabric of the city. It also allowed for the institution to reinvent itself, to look at itself anew from a shifted perspective. *Chambres d’Amis* did this without betraying the continuity of the institution. It took experimentation to the limit of institutional practice by allowing the museum to close its doors as part of its practice. And it did so by raising, not sacrificing, the stakes of artistic production.

4. *Chambres d’Amis* ran all possible risks. There was no way of predicting its outcome. At a time when institutions increasingly defend themselves from the risks of art, *Chambres d’Amis* is an example of what can happen when an institution trusts both artists and the power of art,

rather than starting with an analysis of the dangers posed by both.

5. The exhibition even ran the risk of total dissolution. That is, even if the exhibition proposed a clear design for its development and dynamics, the rules of the exhibition proper were subverted by a number of artists and, in turn, the exhibition expanded its own framework. *Chambres d’Amis* included works conceived before the exhibition, such as Maria Nordman’s proposal to create a “perennial guesthouse” continuously open to passersby. It also included works situated on the frontiers of the public sphere by artists such as Philip van Isacker, who placed four ephemeral sand pyramids in alleys and yards with almost no public circulation; these works had totally disintegrated by the end of the exhibition. Norbert Radermacher placed bells on the rooftop of each home involved in the exhibition, thus setting up an urban concert. Daniel Buren went even further and proposed a counter-move: the creation of a bedroom inside the museum that was identical to the bedroom of his hosts, Annick and Anton Herbert, thereby turning the museum itself into a *chambre d’un ami*. He pushed the limits of the strategy of mobility that was at the core of the show: In his work, the museum had ventured beyond its physical location only to find itself back on its own site, but reinvented and reconceived through the lens of domesticity.

6. Hoet’s curatorial gesture focused on the exhibition’s operative system rather than its concept or theme. It thus left the territories of artistic creation and the imagination free and unfettered. Hoet gave the artists complete freedom of choice beyond inevitable considerations related to location and budget.

7. The various risks taken by Hoet never jeopardized his commitment to having each artist produce a new, site-specific project that would reflect the premises of this particular exhibition, materializing in the particular home of a particular host in a particular city at a particular time.

8. *Chambres d’Amis* formulated no hypothesis on how the experiment would subsequently affect the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst and its practices, nor, for that matter, the museum

exhibition format. The exhibition chose instead a methodology by which the artistic process itself would indicate to the curator the curatorial steps to be taken as a result of the artistic processes themselves, and not vice versa.

9. To that end, the exhibition included a great variety of artists working in diverse disciplines, poetics, and perspectives. Its strength lay in the diversity of their imaginative responses to the invitation.

In closing, I would like to quote a few lines from Hoet’s text in the catalogue, where he reminds us of art’s incommensurability—that is, of the ways in which art will always show a path beyond, even beyond all exhibition formats. He writes:

Chambres d’Amis: It swarms out of the museum to all the corners of town in order to reflect on its own problems. The museum’s outing is far from a brash, forced attempt to integrate art, far from an invasion, far from a blind plunge into everyday life. On the contrary, *Chambres d’Amis* wants to start a cautious, lucid flirt, to indulge a while in an adventure, the consequences of which it cannot or will not foresee. It consciously wants to create a zone beyond itself, where it is no longer lord and master.³

And,

For a period of three months, the museum loses its complacent position of authority to become a metaphor only, a metaphor of everything which is left aside, forgotten, turned away, or even damned—a metaphor of that quiet, (today more than ever) forgotten place, an almost inaccessible place: the place of Mystery.

The museum could be a place for everything which has (as yet) not found its place, a sort of “non-lieu,” or, as Paolini recently remarked, an “eternally provisional, not yet inhabited space,” where one can only dream of that other, final Space which everyone is longing for, but which none can reach because it draws its beauty from its elusiveness.⁴

Chambres d'Amis has been, all in all, a continual source of inspiration and has proved a clear reference every time I've had to work on a major project with a group of artists inside and outside of the museum's walls. I have always been drawn in by its openness, generosity, and challenging nature, and by the ways in which it radically questioned the given.

Notes

1. Jan Hoet, "Chambres d'Amis: A Museum Ventures Out" in *Chambres d'Amis* (Ghent: Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst, 1986): 341.
2. Raf Casert, "Belgium Opens Its Doors to Art Lovers," *Newsday*, August 30, 1986, 7.
3. Hoet, 346.
4. Hoet, 350.

Anthony McCall
Line Describing a Cone
[still during the 24th minute],
1973/2001
16-millimeter film



ILLUMINATIONS

Apsara DiQuinzio

My experience of visiting *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964–1977* was bound up as much in the revelation of witnessing for the first time seminal moving image installations made for a gallery context as it was in the experience of encountering these works in New York just a month after the traumatic events of September 11, 2001. That this exhibition should be associated with the post-9/11 landscape of Manhattan may seem somewhat strange on the surface, given that the show had been in the making for numerous years prior and its dates slotted into an institutional calendar well in advance. In my mind, however, extricating the two is impossible, particularly because the works on

view so uncannily resonated with the cultural landscape that was taking shape outside the museum's darkened, labyrinthine galleries.

Into the Light was the first exhibition to examine the emergence of projected installations of the 1960s and 1970s and to recognize the important ways in which these works transformed the gallery into a perceptual, participatory field that the viewer had to actively negotiate in space and time. In essence it was a reclamation project that attempted to contextualize a new phenomenological art form. Significantly, the exhibition demonstrated how the dark, immersive space of the cinema (the black box) became unfolded into the white cube gallery of the modern

museum, creating an alternate type of experience wherein the viewer was understood as a sentient agent in the domain of art.

Occurring at the Whitney Museum of American Art from October 18, 2001, to January 27, 2002, *Into the Light* was curated by Chrissie Iles, who built upon the foundational work of John Hanhardt (in full disclosure I worked at that institution for four years beginning in fall 2002). The exhibition brought together and restaged 19 formative installations that were new discoveries for those of us who had not been around to witness them in their original contexts. Most of the works assembled hadn't been presented since their initial display in the 1960s and 1970s. Pieces such as Robert Morris's *Finch College Project* (1969/2001), Gary Hill's *Hole in the Wall* (1974/2001), and Joan Jonas's *Mirage* (1976/2001) had to be re-created specifically in order to be displayed, while others required reconfiguration for an exhibition setting. Anthony McCall's 16mm "solid light film" *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), for instance, had only been shown theatrically prior to the exhibition.¹ Its inclusion in the show necessitated that McCall restructure it for continuous projection in a gallery, an aspect that enabled visitors to engage with it according to a duration they themselves determined, not one prescribed by the precise start and finish of a screening. Spectators were encouraged to move into the projector's light beam and interact with it. McCall's emblematic restaging of the piece (enhanced with fog) turned light and time into plastic elements, highlighting the material properties of ephemeral media and demonstrating their sculptural qualities. For McCall specifically, the exhibition had a marked impact on his career. Up until then his work had been widely under-recognized; its reconsideration in this context inspired him to resume the artistic practice he had ceased in 1979 and spurred numerous solo exhibitions devoted to his work thereafter.

Encompassing video, film, slides, performance, drawing, and holography, *Into the Light* brought greater visibility to the origins of projected image installations that had remained largely invisible since the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, it helped viewers make the important link between first-generation innovators working in the United States and the generations that followed. Since the 1990s, a profusion of artists have adopted methods of projection, taking its

myriad, mutating forms in new directions. Indeed, it is now a flourishing aspect of contemporary art practice, more the norm than the exception, as is the emphasis on creating participatory experiences that activate the viewer's awareness.

The exhibition also seems to have spawned a number of subsequent shows that continued to explore various related aspects of the projected image. Just two years later the subject was examined with a broader international lens when *X Screen (The Expanded Screen): Actions and Installations of the Sixties and Seventies* opened at Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna. *SlideShow: Projected Images in Contemporary Art*, presented at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 2005, narrowed the focus to the subcategory of slide projections. Opening at the Hamburger Bahnhof in 2006, *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection, Films, Videos and Installations from 1963 to 2005* brought the consideration of projected image installations into the present, showing historic and more recent examples alongside each other in thematic groupings. There were others too. Yet even as the subject has flourished, the media it features have become increasingly obsolete. So much so that one cannot help but wonder about the prospect of mounting future exhibitions of similar scale and complexity, particularly with so many film projections.

On record *Into the Light* was groundbreaking, but for this viewer it was revelatory in its ability to articulate and mirror the dramatic cultural transformations that had just begun to unfold directly outside the exhibition space, reinforcing that the cultural and material hybridity these artists sought to capture in their immersive environments was palpable. To the extent that the circumstances leading to 9/11 were a result of the overdetermined distance between opposing perceptions of disparate cultures, many of the projected installations in the exhibition were about creating an awareness of that very perceptual distance. Consider, for example, Vito Acconci's penetrating mixed-media work *Other Voices for a Second Sight* (1974). Made just a year before the Vietnam War ended, its psychological explorations were conceived for a wartime context. The installation is divided into three separate architectural spaces. Upon entering the first room, which resembles a recording studio, one hears Acconci's low, grumbling voice relating a monologue on a reel-to-reel tape recorder.



Vito Acconci
Other Voices for a Second Sight, 1974/2001
 Three-room installation with Super-8 film,
 slide projections, audio tape, wood,
 plastic, acoustical board, audio equipment,
 red light, and swivel chair

Looking through a horizontal aperture into the adjacent room to the right, a dark, secret space comes to life with video and slide projections of Acconci's hovering body, while another recording of the artist's quickened voice enunciates social and political concerns of the Marxist revolutionaries Che Guevara, Abbie Hoffman, Leon Trotsky, Mao Zedong, and others, notably the Black Panther George Jackson, whose words could have been eerily mistaken for those of the then-President, George W. Bush:

This is George ... We must accept this: The USA will be brought to its knees ... George ... George speaking ... We must accept this: the closing off of the city ... Barbed wire ... Smoke curling black against the daylight sky ... The smell of cordite ... House-to-house searches ... Doors being kicked down ... The commonness of death ... I am George ... George here ... We must accept all that revolution implies: repression, prisons, funerals ...²

To hear these guerilla rallying cries reverberating throughout a dimly lit gallery at that time brought the outside world crashing into the museum, a jolting reminder of present conflicts even as it expressed the passions of a different moment. Numerous examples of this sudden collapsing of the museum space and the world beyond it existed throughout the exhibition. Another occurred in Keith Sonnier's *Channel Mix* from 1972, one of the earliest live-feed television video sculptures, also made during the media frenzy of

the Vietnam War (for Harald Szeemann's *Documenta 5*). In this critical work, live-feed television broadcasts are projected onto either side of the gallery. When entering the space, the projected images envelop a live image of the viewer's own body, inserting her into the mix of streaming daily television programming and forcing her to discern her own position and likeness in relation to the images proliferating in the media culture around her.

Presented in the context of the heavily mediated world of fall 2001, in the frenzied climate that might now be considered the crowning moment of global spectacle, the exhibition instructively reaffirmed the viewer's subjective position in the real-time, "here and now" experience of the gallery, highlighting the fact that the collective need for critical engagement with our immediate environment had never been greater. Moreover, the contemplative, cavernous spaces of the museum, inhabited by soothing light generated by moving image installations, afforded an edifying refuge from the burgeoning theater of war being rehearsed in practically every public space in the city. After watching the same gratuitous barrage of news broadcasts repeated ad infinitum for more than a month, walking into a gallery and encountering two monitors displaying Yoko Ono's *Sky TV* (1966) and William Anastasi's *Free Will* (1968)—closed-circuit projections of seemingly static live images of the clear blue sky above the museum and the banal black-and-white emptiness of one gallery corner—was a beautiful and affecting reprieve, even if the latter was intended as a cynical statement on war.



Keith Sonnier
Channel Mix, 1972/2001
 Two split-screen negative/positive
 projections with sound
 Collection of the Neues Museum—
 Staatliches Museum für Kunst
 und Design, Nuremberg, Germany

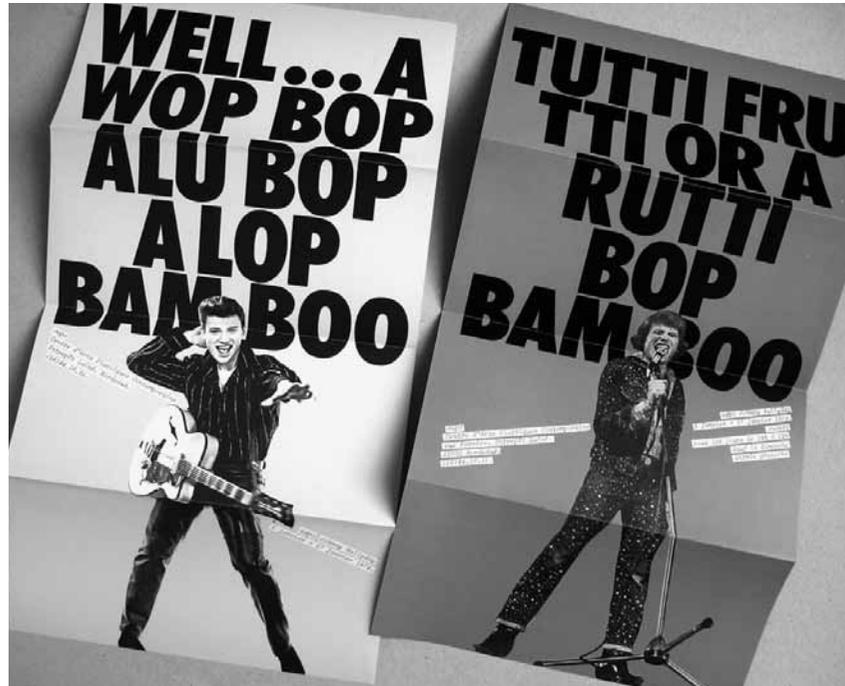
In addition, the vertiginous nature (on both the psychological and physical levels) of many of the works in the exhibition echoed the dizzying mass-media landscape outside. Bruce Nauman's installation of four 16mm film projections in *Spinning Spheres* (1970) seemed to signal a world destabilized and spinning out of control. A similar spiraling movement was generated in the installations by Dennis Oppenheim, Simone Forti, Dan Graham, and Robert Morris, inducing visitors to locate their bearings in a darkened space, not only with their eyes but with their entire bodies. These pieces about decentered subjects seemed to speak to the decentering of a first-world empire.

Looking back at *Into the Light* nearly 10 years later, it is hard to know what to make of the connection between the exhibition and its chance surroundings. The conflation seems less odd, however, when one considers the period that the works in the exhibition span—1964 to 1977—also a cataclysmic time in American history. In a public lecture delivered as part of the exhibition, Robert Morris invoked this poignant juxtaposition in order to question what the space of the museum could bring to the social body his work sought to convene inside it, particularly for the more "wounded, anxious, and distracted" audience of 2001 (his work, mind you, was made for an audience of 1969).³ For me the exhibition space provided a much-needed interruption from media spectacles, thus fostering the conditions for critical reflection on what had just happened and why. At the same time it incited close observation of the events transpiring in

the world at large. And certainly a sign of an impactful, prescient exhibition is its ability to have a much greater meaning and life than its author could ever possibly have intended. That it could simultaneously help to explicate its contingent environment made it all the more illuminating.

Notes

1. Anthony McCall, "Line Describing a Cone and Related Films," *October* 103 (winter 2003): 44–45.
2. The entire script for Acconci's multipartite recording can be found in Vito Acconci, "Other Voices for a Second Sight," *October* 103 (winter 2003): 63–103.
3. The transcript of Morris's lecture was later reprinted in Robert Morris, "Solecisms of Sight: Spectacular Speculations," *October* 103 (winter 2003): 40.



Michel Aphenbero
Leaflets designed for *Expo Johnny Hallyday*, C.A.P.C.,
Bordeaux, France, 1979

BACK IN THE DAY
★
**BOP! EWOP!
REVISITING EXPO
JOHNNY HALLYDAY**

Lars Bang Larsen

In November 1978, Jean-Louis Froment, director of the art center C.A.P.C. in Bordeaux, began a letter to Johnny Hallyday: “Monsieur, I don’t know if you are aware of the exhibition that we are preparing, and of which you are the subject?” The letter addressed the singer as “a societal catalyst” for a sonic and visual history that “belongs to the ‘history at large’ across which social movements—the fashions, the changes, the traditions—inscribe themselves. Through your public work you embody many of these mirrors.”¹ The “we” in the letter refers to Froment and the artist and graphic designer Michel Aphenbero; the two of them conceived of the project in an unbridled moment. *Expo Johnny Hallyday*, which opened in January 1979, was their ambiguous homage to the icon.

At the time, Hallyday had been in show business in France for 20 years. He was perceived as a legend, a cultural phenomenon. But he was, at that time, an unlikely subject for an exhibition. The high/low divide was still the institutional order of the day, and the performer in question wasn’t Bob Dylan or some other anti-establishment rock ‘n’ roller ripe for subcultural re-appropriation. In the bigger picture, the idea of youth as a class had faded since May 1968, with youth culture becoming politically defused in the process. In terms of theory, new models for aesthetic analysis were unavailable, or didn’t yet resonate in France (Aphenbero and Froment were unfamiliar with cultural studies). It was the aftermath of punk, and not yet the 1980s.

Hallyday himself was a chimerical sign, strange and Frenchy. He had appeared in the postwar era, when the national self-esteem grew as France became a nuclear state, and yet everything about him was traced from readily available Americana. Still, if Hallyday was not authentic, he was at least a *national* simulacrum and hence one with historical depth in an American century. Elvis cannibalized by French DNA. In the words of Véronique Mortaigne: “Behind the screen of his blue eyes, Hallyday hides a French unconscious.”²

1. Johnny Hallyday didn’t respond to Froment’s letter. One month after the exhibition, Hallyday played a gig in Bordeaux. Aphenbero met him in a restaurant after the show and presented him with the exhibition’s idea. Hallyday replied, “If I’d known, I’d have lent you more things.”

2. Véronique Mortaigne, *JH, le roi cache* (Paris: Don Quichotte, 2009).

3. Quoted from the photo called "Les signes de Johnny" in Jean Marie Perier's magazine *Salut les Copains* (1965).

4. *Starstory*: "Une première mondiale: Johnny entre au musée [sic] comme la Joconde et Picasso," from the archive of Aphenbero (issue and page numbers unknown).

In Aphenbero and Froment's exhibition architecture, the show spread out in six galleries in the old colonial storage building that is the C.A.P.C. Following a rock chronology, the display started out with the early 1960s. Galleries one and two were done up in the spirit of Golf Drouot, Paris's legendary first rock 'n' roll venue. Installed on the backdrop of lemon-colored walls and washed in yellow lighting were jukeboxes and pinball machines (five balls for 20 centimes), electric guitars (also at the audience's disposition) and the sacred Scopitone, a TV jukebox that appeared in the early 1960s in bars and fun fairs, bringing with it films of rockers from the U.K. and the U.S.

Gallery three presented the signs of Johnny. The rock photographer Jean Marie Perier loaned a fan photo of Hallyday to the exhibition, which was placed inside a vitrine that reconstructed the items in the picture in a 1:1 diorama: among other fetish objects, a Harley Davidson ("for Johnny's love of speed"), a poster of James Dean ("always his idol"), and *le Coca-Cola* ("his preferred drink").³ Also included in gallery three was a heap of potatoes. "Johnny loves mashed potatoes!"

Gallery four focused on *les yé-yé*, a francophone version of "yeah yeah" and the term for the youth culture formed around early-1960s rock 'n' roll music and fashion. Johnny's entire discography was displayed on the walls, painted in tricolore. On the floor, a "carpet" consisting of covers from news journals and the tabloids, featuring stories about Johnny the flamboyant media avatar.

Gallery five: mythologies. Inside large panels with spangled frames hung posters designed by Aphenbero. They depicted themes from Hallyday's life—*la californie*, *l'armée*, *le mariage*, and *le flip* (referring to a suicide attempt)—dryly punctuated by rock 'n' roll onomatopoeia: "bop," "ewop," "tutti fruit." In the middle of the room, vitrines with stage costumes loaned to the exhibition by the most prominent Paris fan club. A smoke machine produced club atmosphere.

Gallery six. All walls in silver lamé, shimmering under strobes and lasers. A display of gold records, courtesy Hallyday's record company. Twenty-four monitors showed the legendary 1976 concert at Palais des Sports. A total of 32 large Plexiglas panels marked off the perimeter of the galleries, presenting collages with Hallyday effects: posters, album covers, records. On the opening day, sports cars and motorbikes—models similar to those owned by Johnny—were parked outside the C.A.P.C.⁴

In short: everything about Johnny Hallyday in an art institution without art and, to be sure, sans Johnny himself. The exhibition came with neither theory nor commentary—not even a press release. Just the invitation card, on the front of which the star of the show hovered with garishly yellow hair. According to the teen magazine *Starstory*—exulting that Johnny was now "comme la Joconde et Picasso"—the exhibition attracted during its first three days

Expo Johnny Hallyday installation view (gallery three), C.A.P.C., Bordeaux, France, 1979



more than 6,000 visitors from all over France and Hallyday's international fan bases.

As one newspaper wrote of the exhibition: "Ici, on ne démythifie pas."⁵ Had Roland Barthes dared to tread on this terrain, he might have found that Hallyday was part of the same sanguine national mythology as wine and *bifteck*. Indeed, the myth came to life independently of the man that it supposedly designated. The rock anthems playing in the C.A.P.C. echoed in the silence of a mausoleum never to be occupied by the individual at the center of the cult that it emulated. A pure architecture bereft of its essence, and therefore all the more evocative.

Froment and Aphenbero's deadpan staging seemed to follow Pop art orthodoxy. But they were manipulating a sign that was not only over-identified in popular culture, but already incongruous. Hallyday was a sign so overripe that it could only turn into a hieroglyph. As in Marcel Broodthaers's fake museologies, *Expo Johnny Hallyday* produced a displacement—between cultural value and the sign, and between the institution and its object—that was further dynamized by the exhibition's own spectacle. Frédéric Edelmann, a *Le Monde* journalist, pondered the ironic surfaces of the unlikely exhibition: "Is it about art, about pop music? About sociology or some other ingredients?"⁶

Brian O'Doherty, writing in his seminal book *Inside the White Cube* a few years earlier, would have called this Hallyday shrine a "gesture": a use of the exhibition space as artistic material that "is not art, perhaps, but art-like and thus has a meta-life around and about art."⁷ The same process of abstraction was extended to the course that Aphenbero and Froment staked out, and which was indifferent to the museum space as a hierarchic, transparent site. A

5. Jean-Claude Loiseau, "Un musée pour Johnny," *Le Point*, January 22, 1979.

6. *Le Monde*, January 11, 1979.

7. Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (London: Lapis Press, 1986): 70.



Expo Johnny Hallyday installation view (gallery five), C.A.P.C., Bordeaux, France, 1979

8. Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).

9. O'Doherty, 105–6.

curatorial gesture, then, that was expressive of a cultural schism that had not yet been institutionally articulated.

With this in mind, the joke was on the C.A.P.C. as much as on Hallyday. *Expo Johnny Hallyday* deliberately turned the C.A.P.C. into that “attraction of considerable importance” of which Umberto Eco wrote so scathingly, using the example of the American wax museum.⁸ But this shock treatment of real inauthenticity was delivered to the white cube in order to augment its possible number of relations to a reality ready for archaeologies of popular culture.

Were Froment and Aphenbero successful, then, in their attempt at reorienting the art institution toward visual culture? The gesture's power consists in the fact that it can be done only once. As an ambush on the white cube it works by dint of its explosive, unique character. But this is also its risk, because the knowledge that is being gestured at lies in the future. O'Doherty writes that the gesture is *instinctive*; it does not “proceed from full knowledge of what provokes it.”⁹ Because it depends on future readers who are capable of imparting as-yet-unavailable knowledge, it is easily misread or forgotten.

Critical response in the specialized media remained absent. To Edelman, one of the few commentators to engage with *Expo Johnny Hallyday* as a

curatorial statement, the exhibition's rigorous iconographic layout permitted a richness of signification, allowing for many readings that “don't uselessly deflower the idol, and never break the spectacle.” The exhibition was seductive yet treacherous, “a formidable machination that inveigles the public: The most phlegmatic start dancing, the most excited leave with their arms hanging, and the intellectuals lose their Latin. . . . The theme? For some it will be media history, for others an epic of French rock, for others again about memories, and for too many it will be a party.¹⁰

Aphenbero and Froment disregarded artistic agency as something invested in artworks, and worked instead directly on material traces from culture at large. No doubt the free curatorial scope also drew from fan culture; in the mid-1960s, Aphenbero had been in charge of a small-town Buddy Holly fan club. This fact alone distinguishes the exhibition from Pop art's class conflict between the high-cultural art object and its low-cultural source. In other words: Of course *Expo Johnny Hallyday* was about reconstructing and superimposing images, and of course appropriation always operates with a degree of cynicism. But at the same time the exhibition crossed lives and went through the nervous system of curators and audiences as much as through the hyperreality of exalted signs.¹¹ Unlike Pop art's waning of affect, the stance of Aphenbero and Froment was conveyed by ambiguous sympathy that found subjective and historical depth for its enactment of estrangement.

Expo Johnny Hallyday addressed the French unconscious that lurks behind Johnny's blue eyes, giving it a new visuality and institutional reach, making it speak in new tongues—Anglo-French hybrids, bop, ewop, *yé-yé*. . . . As Aphenbero puts it, “What a pity that Jacques Lacan didn't write the liner notes for Little Richard's first LP, *Tutti Frutti*, in 1956! It's almost the same time that Lacan concluded that the unconscious is structured like a language.”¹²

May the French unconscious stay Tutti Frutti.

10. *Le Monde*, op. cit.

11. The exhibition also presaged Appropriation art: Ashley Bickerton's work *Seascape: Floating Costume to Drift for Eternity III (Elvis Suit)* (1992) comes to mind. A kind of life raft with large yellow pontoons and a glass frame holding a Las Vegas-era Elvis costume, it is as inscrutable as *Expo Johnny Hallyday*.

12. Michel Aphenbero in an email to me, November 2010. I thank him for his assistance in the writing of this essay.

ASSESSMENTS

★

10000 LIVES

THE 8TH
GWANGJU
BIENNALEIF THESE
PICTURES
COULD TALK

Doryun Chong

The first and sure thing I can say about the 8th edition of the Gwangju Biennale is that it chose an idea that was not groundbreaking but nonetheless timeless without appearing hackneyed. This was particularly so because the artistic director, Massimiliano Gioni, cleverly derived his theme, *10000 Lives*, from an important local reference point: the epic poem *Maninbo* (literally, “A Report of Ten Thousand People”) by the celebrated poet Ko Un. The poet began this work while he was imprisoned for his participation in the 1980 pro-democracy uprising in Gwangju and did not complete it until 2010. Comprising more than 30 volumes, it provided a perfect inspirational ploy for this sprawling exhibition.

Gioni astutely explains in his catalogue essay that the number 10,000 (*man*) in Korean doesn’t denote an exact number, but rather an abstract, extremely large number, even infinity. Perhaps encouraged by the great number in the title and by the mind-boggling number of works featured in the exhibition, the biennale flaunted other various statistics before the opening and after the closing. For instance, the communiqué emailed out upon the closing read: “[The biennale featured] 134 artists and thousands of artworks and cultural artifacts from 30 countries throughout the world. . . . During its 66-day run, the biennale welcomed 491,697 paying visitors . . . placing *10000 Lives* among the most visited exhibitions and biennials in the world.” (The practice of invoking numbers as the ur-indicator of success isn’t exclusive to this biennale.)

The numbers game felt regrettably misplaced, however; considering how this tightly laid-out show was supposed to be about human life, portraiture, and representation in all their complexities. Its visible aspiration to be all-encompassing was given credence by the words of Régis Debray, upon which the curatorial essay heavily leans. Paraphrasing Debray, Gioni writes, “After all, the history of art—and the history of images—could most simply be described as a history of people looking at people, of eyes staring at bodies. It is through images that the species impresses its memory onto the individual and the individual practices being part of the species.”¹ This grandiose declaration was parsed out in interlocking sections such as: photographic representation and the construction of the self; technologies of vision; image reception and consumption; images and mythologization; and idols, icons, and fetishes. These were shown in a masterfully orchestrated line of movement in the Biennale Hall, the main venue, while two adjacent off-sites housed smaller groupings of works around the topics of images and memories, and self-portraiture.

I write “masterfully orchestrated line of movement” because *10000 Lives* was quite possibly the most effectively choreographed exhibition I’ve ever witnessed. The completely guided viewing pathway of predominantly two-dimensional works, in particular photography and video—through the two cavernous buildings of the Biennale Hall felt almost cinematic, as if one was taking a promenade on an imagined filmstrip. There were sure stunners, some already renowned, others obscure. To cite just a few examples: Peter Fischli and David Weiss’s *Visible World* (1986–2001), consisting of 3,000 photos on a 92-foot-long light table; documentary filmmaker Wu Wenguang’s ongoing *Chinese Villagers’ Documentary Project*, shot by the subjects themselves and shown on dozens of monitors simultaneously;

and Shinro Ohtake’s *Scrapbooks*, a jaw-dropping compendium of more than 60 volumes of detritus collages-cum-automatic drawings begun in 1977 and continuing to date. All of these were shown with an elegance that is rare in our age of biennale spectacularism. There were also some fascinating juxtapositions. Walker Evans’s famous photographs from *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, displayed as a disorienting mirror to Sherrie Levine’s *After Walker Evans 1–22* (1981), left many wondering if and why this hasn’t been done before. The “scientific” photos by Harold Edgerton and Eliot Porter may have lost their novelty value quite a while ago, but here they looked interesting again next to the alternately wrenching and heartwarming *Untitled* video by Artur Zmijewski, in which blind subjects make and talk about art.

The overwhelming two-dimensionality of the works posed a problem for the occasional sculptures, which often appeared out of place, whereas two live embodiments worked auspiciously well. Near the beginning of the exhibition path was Sanja Iveković’s new version of *The Rohrbach Living Memorial* (2005). Viewers fell silent as they encountered a group of women of all ages dressed in black, standing or seated on a low riser and quietly humming. The original work commemorated the Roma victims of the Holocaust; this reenactment was refashioned to honor those who died in the Gwangju Uprising of May 1980. Near the end, Tino Sehgal’s first claim to fame, *Instead of allowing some thing to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things* (2000) functioned well as an operative rejoinder to Iveković’s work. What is sculpture to do when it is caught between two-dimensional figuration and flesh-and-blood embodiment? I don’t have an answer yet.

The indisputable standout of the show, for many, was the album of 62 black-and-white studio portraits of a certain Ye Jinglu. The series shows

a man aging gracefully and at times humorously, embodying a host of personae through the turbulent years of early-20th-century China. This group of images by a non-artist straightforwardly captures one individual's desire to record life and the passage of time, and it found a comfortable place in the exhibition, whereas other works posed serious disturbances: for instance the Rent Collection Courtyard Collective's monumental realist group sculpture of oppressed Chinese peasants, originally created in 1965; Byungsoo Choi's banner portrait of Han-yeol Lee, the South Korean college student killed by a tear gas canister shot by riot police during a demonstration in Seoul in 1987; and the notorious photos taken between 1975 and 1979 of prisoners of Tuol Sleng Prison in Cambodia, who were eventually executed by the Khmer Rouge regime. The first two cases brought up the critical topic of figuration in milieus of ideological struggle and agit-prop. Rubbing shoulders with artworks by the likes of Thomas Hirschhorn, Katharina Fritsch, and Carl Andre, their specificity vis-à-vis the history of national ideological transformation could not help being diluted and obscured, which was certainly unfair to all those involved. The Cambodian images literally have blood on them, and testifying as they do to the potential for abysmal human brutality, it was distressing to see them subsumed into a museological, art-centric exploration of the "power of images." They override any intellectual or aesthetic, even ethical, exercise.²

The Gwangju Biennale, from its inception in 1995, has suffered from two afflictions—notorious disorganization, and the general perception of Gwangju as off the beaten path, geographically and culturally. This edition may have overcome both. The installation was meticulous, and many international professionals were present. Despite its chronic problems, this biennale has

always had a tendency toward ambivalence, not only in terms of its large scale and selection of notable curators, but also in the discourses it chooses to tackle. It has either essayed to address grandly globalist topics or attempted Asia-centric positions challenging the entrenched Eurocentrism of the art world, both not unproblematically. Gioni's conceptual scheme hit a right note between these two approaches, departing from a blind regionalism while at the same time presenting an even grander universal humanism. Where the seam came apart was precisely the meeting points of the clichéd yet still unresolved binary of local and global. That is, the universal contention about image, figure, and representation could not adequately answer the abovementioned disturbances, which originated from close to the site of the exhibition—within the country or from the broader region—and their inclusions in the cinematic flow threatened to unravel the apparent good intentions behind the whole endeavor.

Notes

1. Massimiliano Gioni, "10000 Lives" in *10000 Lives: Gwangju Biennale 2010* (Gwangju, South Korea: Gwangju Biennale Foundation, 2010): 433.

2. For a close analysis of these images, and an exhibition of them at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, see Thierry de Duve, "Art in the Face of Radical Evil," *October* 125 (summer 2008), 3–23. Chris Wiley's text about these photographs in the exhibition guide reads: "The concern that such images will be viewed as art and that their historical context will be obscured is largely misplaced: Although they are documents of the Khmer Rouge's brutal campaign of genocide, the images radiate a potent sense of their subjects' suffering in the face of unspeakable injustice. In spite of their original purpose, these images stand as testimony to the lives and the deaths of these prisoners, and have become poignant, though inadvertent, memorials." (80) I find this justification lamentably unconvincing.

SIGHTLINES

Stéphanie Moisdon

Visiting the latest Gwangju Biennale, which was curated by artistic director Massimiliano Gioni with a mastery that commands respect, I thought to myself that, in the face of so many "solved" questions, my generation surely must have got things wrong somewhere. The not-so-distant earlier time of amateurism, of dubious experimentation, of play, of impossible rules and illegible projections, is definitively over. Before, we were just illegitimate adventurers, "managers of immaturity" (in the words of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster) who saw art as a seedy place of abduction and busied ourselves, most often in small collectives, referring the spectacle back to its image, its machinery, its reveries, its flimsiness.

All of these practices have been discounted, discredited, or simply relegated to the back shelves of 20th-century found objects and fetishes as art has entered the sphere of the culture industry, of the worldwide tourist industry. The retrospective exhibition on the 1990s, *theanyspacewhatever*, at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2008 was a manifest example of this. If many curators still use methods from the 1970s to the 1990s as reference points, it is quite often only to take stock of them, synthesize them, compile them as if for a portfolio or catalogue raisonné, as if they were just so many fashions and trends.

When Gioni explicitly pays a vast tribute to Mike Kelley's *The Uncanny* (1993), or when he alludes, here and there, to the obsessive and profoundly heterogeneous exhibitions of Harald Szeemann (including, for instance, Szeemann's collections of objects from

folk and traditional cultures), it is not so much because Gioni is himself haunted by strangeness, restlessness, and difference, but rather because he is so led by an awareness of his mission as mediator, transmitter, and translator. Thus what we see of *The Uncanny*, an unauthorized reconstruction of Kelly's original exploration of the eponymous Freudian concept, is no longer on the order of an experience in the flesh, unique and untranslatable, but rather the reconstituted landscape of its remains, the digital trace of the experience, the image of an image. And it is precisely the image, in its relationship to human existence (the title of Gioni's presentation, *10000 Lives*, is borrowed from a volume of poems by the Korean author Ko Un, a hero of the 1980 South Korean democratic uprising), that serves as a vague, infinite thematic and basis for his project.

By putting back into circulation this question of the image—already exhausted by many theoretical and semiotic studies and exhibitions in the 1990s—Gioni in fact echoes the great heroic narratives of the Dadaist iconoclastic furies, the avant-garde cinema, and the appropriationists (to whom he dedicates one room), but without measuring the degree to which this history is already behind us. Nobody can be unaware that the creative, subversive mechanisms of revival and (dis)possession belong by now to the ordered and catalogued time of the second half of the 20th century. The Gwangju Biennale does not confront us with objects that are unusual, inalienable, "monstrous," but rather allows us to circulate with ease through "soft," historicized forms drained of blood and devoured from within in order to be made accessible. Vampirism is, in fact, one of the serious, political subjects of our moment; it joins up with the obsession of our age: eternal youth, impossible renewal.

This edition of the Gwangju Biennale—impeccably mounted, subtly

articulated to avoid the usual protocols, which often come down to a more or less scholarly performance of services and manipulation of statistics, names, and geopolitical representations—fully meets the goal of the organizers since its founding in 1995 to become the "Asian Documenta." It conveys an impression of "incontestable" mastery (which is, moreover, globally uncontested by those who have seen it), consensus, scholarship, and balance.

From the start, the intentions are clear. The exhibition sets its sights on the museum format, refusing to reproduce everything the practice of the "biennial" genre implies in terms of confusion, manipulation, forced analogies, arbitrary logic of inclusion, and erosion of meaning. While Gioni inevitably makes room for the usual rankings among dominant figures (Jeff Koons, Bruce Nauman, Maurizio Cattelan), "emerging" artists (Cyprien Gaillard, Danh Vo, Haegue Yang), legends (Gustav Metzger, Jean Fautrier, James Lee Bayers), and locals (Hye-Jeong Cho, Eye Glass Shop, Lee Jung), he also allots a great deal of space to unknowns, loners, and eccentrics who don't fit into any of the current categories (Mike Disfarmer, E. J. Bellocq). Nor does he forget the market, whose rules and laws he knows with rare virtuosity.

In a way, Gioni has learned some lessons from past experiences: He realizes that what we now expect from him as an expert is not the asking of questions, but the taking of all answers seriously, as if they were all born free and equal. He knows that behind the occasional hostility to contemporary art—the exhausting polemics about the proliferation of biennials and their standardizing effects, the excesses of the market, and the star system of the curators—there lies a hidden demand for curatorial mastery. A hysterical demand for a master to rule over. The curator is expected to prove his or her authority, to speak the truth. Not so much because

we need a new truth, but because we need someone to devote himself to saying it, so everyone else can be excused from doing so.

What is no longer tolerated nowadays is that curators, heirs to the critical tradition, should talk about exhibitions in their own language. As Roland Barthes so perfectly demonstrated, the mirrored word is always subject to particular vigilance on the part of institutions. In art, criticism must be strictly "held in check," policed. To create a second stage of writing in response to the first stage that is the artwork is to open the field to unforeseeable correspondences, an endless game of mirrors, and this "breakaway" is now suspect. The reproach normally leveled at this critical approach—now embodied in the curator—is not so much that it is "new" but that it is a fully "critical" force. That is, it redistributes the roles of creator and commentator and thereby undermines the order of language. The result is that complexity and uncertainty have become very rare.

In this new order, which can be seen either as a dead end or, on the contrary, as a new path from which we might perhaps someday draw less melancholy lessons, I have a final thought, drawn from Jean-François Lyotard and his *Les Immatériaux*, whose "disarranged" spectacle we all liked so much. Presented in 1985, it was an experimental exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, which dared to conceptualize the institution and the postmodern condition by hampering it, and which dared to pose questions without any answers. In the entrance hall, an Egyptian bas-relief showing a goddess offering a sign of life was presented together with a sonar sound. The question then was: "Humans once received life and meaning; the soul. And they had to give it back whole and perfected. Is there anything today for which they are *destined*?"

Translated from the French by Stephen Sartarelli.

GWANGJU IKEA

Tobias Berger

The Surrealist André Breton and his artist friends loved playing Exquisite Corpse, a game in which somebody draws something on the first part of a piece of paper, folds the paper to almost hide what they've drawn, then the next person adds to the picture starting with those very limited connection points. The result is often a multibodied hybrid that could have sprung straight out of a dream. The connection points are crucial. Even if they do not unveil anything about the first artist's intentions, they do still define a lot of the subsequent picture: where to start, what color to use. Even the physical area folded over gives some indication of how to continue. The players have the luxury of being able to do no wrong.

Related to Exquisite Corpse is Chinese Whispers, or Telephone. In this game one person whispers a word or sentence to their neighbor, who repeats it to the next person, and so on. The final outcome can be extremely different from the origin.

Exquisite Corpse and Chinese Whispers both involve a linear narrative, one bit of information leading to the next, but with disruptions and obfuscations in the flow. The evolution of the pictures or words is a source of amusement, but it can tell us much about the (un)intentional development of histories, stories, and rumors. Ruptures allow the unconscious to emerge. A simple exercise becomes surprisingly revealing; it also speaks volumes about what makes art, and life in general, so interesting. There is no single rational argument. History and interpretations are freely sprawling. The next (mis)step

cannot be foreseen.

The 8th Gwangju Biennale, *10000 Lives*, was a bit like this: a long sequence of works, like a necklace of beads or pearls, one leading to the next in a way that was frequently revelatory. The press materials declared the thousands of artworks and artifacts by 134 artists hailing from 30 countries “a sprawling investigation of the relationships that bind people to images and images to people. The exhibition is configured as a temporary museum that brings together artworks and cultural artifacts to examine our obsession with images.”

But the architectural design of the space—despite the fact that it was made especially for the biennale—seemed anything but conducive to a “sprawling investigation.” Like an IKEA store, it was constructed as a long maze with only one possible pathway through, throwing into stark relief the connections between each work and the work following. This was almost certainly intentional, to make the connections obvious and easy to understand, and it was hard not to feel pleased, even triumphant, while perceiving one connection after the next, working one's way along the necklace. But such an easy experience of art perhaps does the different topics and narratives, not to mention the artists and their works, a disservice. Somewhat like how it is always much more enlightening to consider an artist such as Joseph Beuys if you know *why* he used felt, butter, and copper. Visitors left having gained a feeling of insider knowledge but without much awareness of important, sometimes difficult-to-communicate matters concerning charisma, individual feelings, or the often-cited aura. These issues, often related to the unconscious, are what give art an additional value that in the end makes the difference between good works and great works.

The exhibition really was outstanding, filled with exciting works, many by “artist's artists” or perhaps “cura-

tor's artists”—that is to say, artists that professionals somehow know about and admire despite the fact that they are rarely exhibited in public institutions and are not commercially viable to dealers. Personally encountering the works of Stan Vanderbeek, Seungtaek Lee, Emma Kunz, and Tehching Hsieh made the exhibition a real treat, as did strange discoveries such as *Silver Wheel* (1955), a bicycle parts commercial by Jikken Kobo / Experimental Workshop (Shozo Kitadai, Kiyoji Otsuji, Katsuhiko Yamaguchi). There were wonderful, beautifully challenging sculptures by Heague Young made out of electronic and other household parts, rather esoteric works by the alternative practitioner Emma Kunz, and works by the super-political Gustav Metzger. Even if the connections between them sometimes felt too forced, too linear, the exhibition was still rich and multilayered.

We live in a hyperlinked world. I can't help thinking about hypertext and the early days of the Internet as I rethink this too-stringent but important biennial. I felt like I was playing my own game of Exquisite Corpse—something we all do almost every day online, moving from one thing to the next, related thing. I am specifically reminded of the American video pioneer Douglas Davis and his piece *The World's First Collaborative Sentence*, which he claims is the first-ever work made especially for the Internet. He created it for the 1994 show *InterActions 1967–1981* at Lehman College Art Gallery in New York, and it was later donated to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (it can be viewed at artport.whitney.org/collection/davis/Sentence/sentence1.html).

The piece is pretty self-explanatory: Viewers/participants are encouraged to add to the existing “sentence” in any manner they like. Somewhere in the first paragraph we find an allusion to earlier literary nonlinear thinking:

James Joyce's greatgrandchildren
or some kind of gertrude

stein
stein
stein

One of the last entries, written in very, very big letters is:

Hello! Here is kwang ju korea
Biennale my name is o chang jun
Welcome to Kwang ju

Gwangju (or Kwangju, as the biennale was called in the beginning) has always been a place where experiments could happen. It was one of the first truly international biennials in Asia, and it still has an important place among the many newer biennials. From the first edition, in 1995, until today, the Gwangju Biennale has also had the distinction of presenting strong curatorial visions that speak to the most pressing cultural issues of the moment. This installment was no exception.

THE CURATOR AS ARTIST

Carol Yinghua Lu

The 8th Gwangju Biennale evoked the distinct quality of exhibition making that was championed by Jens Hoffmann in his Endnote for the second issue of this journal. Hoffmann stressed the importance for the curator to claim his power as author (a core value of *The Exhibitionist*), and artistic director Massimiliano Gioni certainly did that. Drawing from an amazing range of materials and resources, from non-art imagery and cultural objects to what we narrowly define as art and even past exhibitions, Gioni provided a tightly

scripted experience with *10000 Lives*, a broad-minded title for an exhibition with such a methodically prescribed narrative about how images both constitute and represent our reality.

All of the works, in particular those drawn from outside of contemporary art—documentary photography, advertising photography and film, cultural relics, folk art, and popular objects—relied heavily on the context in which they were presented to contribute to the narrative of the exhibition. Many of these references were unfamiliar to contemporary eyes, beginning with the earliest work from 1901, a series of annual studio self-portraits by Ye Jinglu (he continued the series through 1968). It was thus necessary to read the (well-written and informative) labels, which were present all through the exhibition and cleverly manipulated how we viewed each project, allowing little latitude for speculation or alternative interpretation. The labels were so crucial to understanding the show that the works were, one could almost say, just half the story.

I participated in a panel with Gioni in April 2010 in Seoul on the topic of art and capital, and Gioni gave a content-intensive presentation citing a great number of artworks, again drawing broadly from international and archival sources. Besides admiring the extent of his research and information, it was a refreshing experience to look at the subject at hand from Gioni's very specific perspective. Some works he cited were self-evident in their addressing of capital, and others might have seemed far-fetched, yet he brought it all together to shed a surprising new light on both the works and the theme. It was a transfixing roller coaster ride, with Gioni the skillful storyteller relating numerous accounts of art in its myriad relationships to capital and power. The same strong mind was clearly at work in the 8th Gwangju Biennale, with perhaps even greater precision, discipline, and

inventiveness evident in the selection and organization of the artworks.

Less than halfway through the exhibition, on the second floor of the main building, visitors encountered Gioni's reenactment of *The Uncanny*, an exhibition curated by Mike Kelley in 1993. The original show (which had already been resurrected by Kelley himself once at Tate Liverpool in 2004), featured mannequins mixed with other three-dimensional representations of human bodies and animals from diverse cultural contexts and historical eras: pagan figurines, religious statues, medical dolls, anatomical waxworks, ventriloquist dummies, sex dolls, and stuffed animals. Also present were photographic illustrations of artworks, objects, and events that were relevant but not available for the presentation. By juxtaposing these items, Kelly removed their usual categorical differences in value, status, and treatment and united them under Sigmund Freud's notion of the “uncanny” to induce an unfamiliar and eerie feeling, something immaterial yet specific enough for all to grasp. Gioni's resurrection of *The Uncanny* could be considered an opening quote for the entire script of the biennial. Like Kelley, Gioni was authoring his own story through uninhibited and imaginative references to historic, national, political, social, cultural, and artistic domains outside of his immediate geographic and cultural proximity. Anything, it seemed, could serve as a potential reference.

The phrasing of the label for this particular work is important: “The following galleries are inspired by Mike Kelley's now-legendary 1993 exhibition entitled *The Uncanny*. . . . This is a partial, unauthorized reconstruction—a tribute to Kelley's extraordinary show, re-created from the few publicly available photographs of the 1993 installation. Changes, variations, and elements of creative reinterpretation have been introduced, stretching the borders of

the original exhibition to include new artworks as well as artists and cultural objects from Asia.” The fact that the Gwangju Biennale’s re-creation of *The Uncanny* was an unauthorized reconstruction gives crucial insight into Gioni’s understanding of curatorship. By leaving the original author out of the picture and refusing the usual requirement of his permission and participation, especially before introducing “changes, variations, and elements of creative reinterpretation,” Gioni declared himself the author-artist, freely imposing himself on the artist’s original intention. By giving each artwork in his show a clear and definite reading and context steered toward his intent, Gioni made his mark on these works, making them communicate his own understanding of the complex relationship images carry within human life, representation, interaction, documentation, memory, evidence of existence, and life even after disappearance and death.

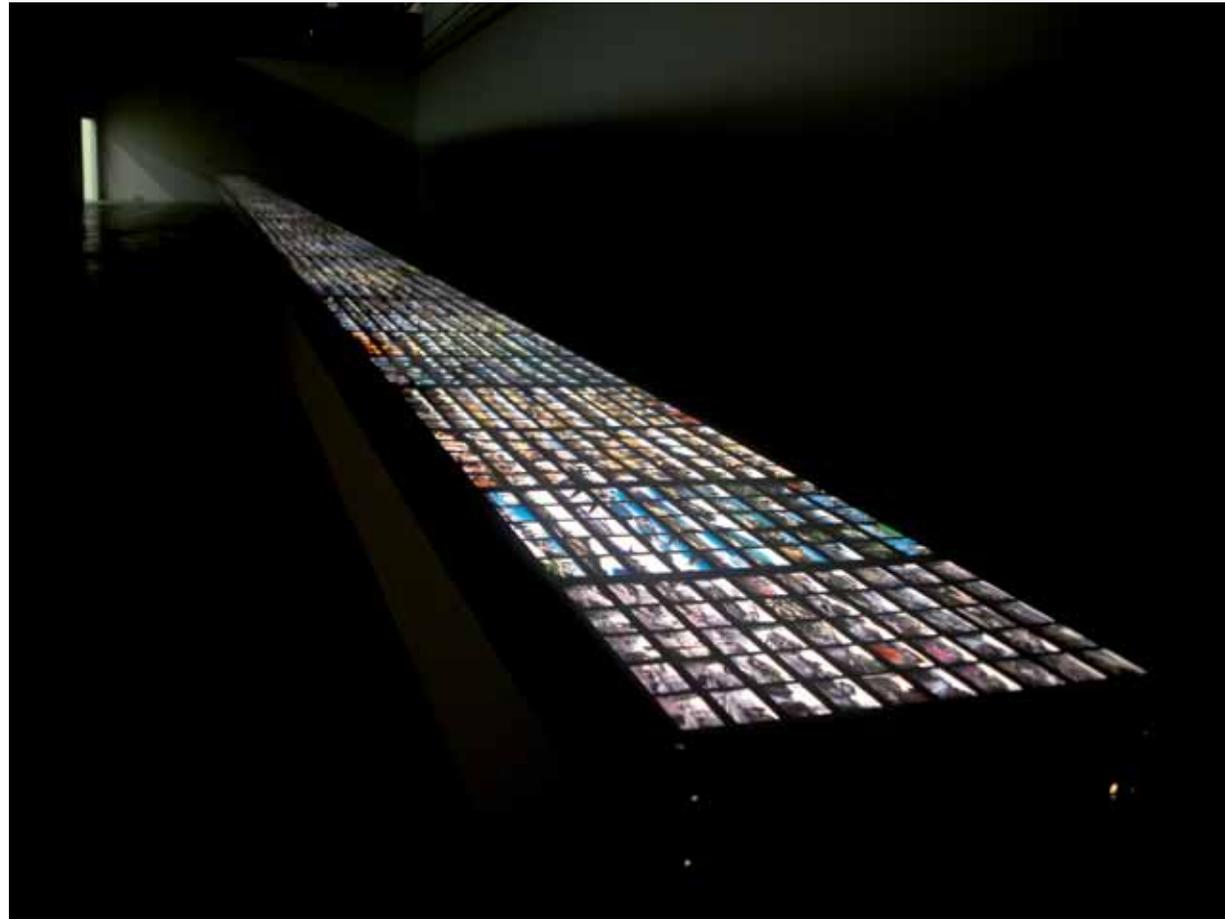
Gioni’s curatorial style can seem imposing, almost dictatorial. Its emergence and visibility in the art world echoes a certain wider political temperament arising following the world’s disillusion with neo-liberalism in the wake of the current economic crisis. People have realized that absolute economic and political freedom is perhaps not the ultimate answer to the world’s problems, and that elements of intervention, control, and mediation administered from a higher level are necessary to maintain order and prosperity on this planet. These ideas can be applied to the arts and to reality at large, and Gioni acts on just such a principle.

The catalogue of the 8th Gwangju Biennale counteracts, in a way, the strictly organized order of where and how each work should be situated and seen. Page after page of images appear in no particular sequence, each accompanied only by the title and the artist’s name. The blurbs on the artists and works are all together at the very end. It is like a

big picture book, full of stories of life and humanity all lumped together. The recent debates concerning globalization and contemporaneity that have generated projects of self-definition and reexamination of modernist art history in Eastern and Western Europe (such as Hans Belting and Peter Weibel’s *Global Art and the Museum* undertaking, and the long-term collaborative project *Former West*) seem to have a new possibility here. After all, what defines contemporaneity isn’t necessarily artistic, cultural, social, geographical, historic, or related to national connections, but perhaps something more pertinent and long-lasting, such as humanity.



Sanja Iveković
On the Barricades, 2010
Performance



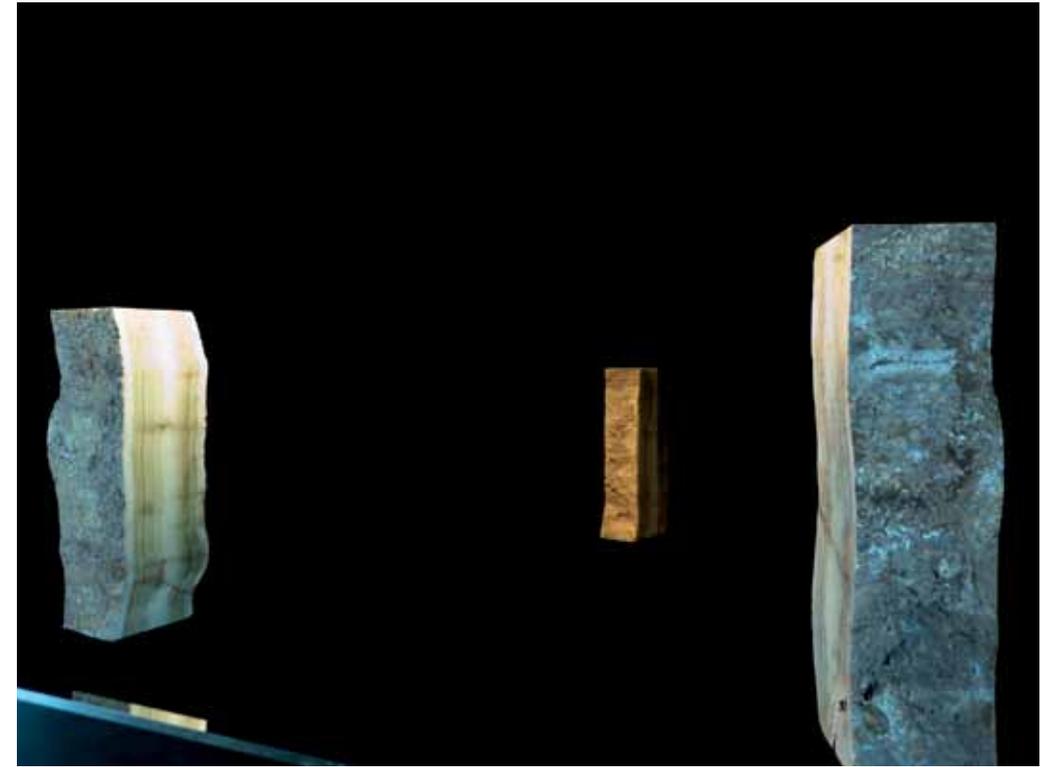
Peter Fischli and David Weiss
Visible World, 1986–2001
 Light table and 3,000 photographs
 32 5/8 x 1,104 3/8 x 27 1/8 in.
 (82.9 x 2,805.1 x 68.9 cm)



Stan Vanderbeek
Found Forms, 1969/2010
 16-millimeter film transfers,
 video projection, and slide projection



Zhao Shutong, Wang Guanyi,
and the Rent Collection
Courtyard Collective
Rent Collection Courtyard, 1974–78
103 copper-plated fiberglass
sculptures



top left:
Gustav Metzger
Selections from the
series *Historic
Photographs*, 1994–
present
Mixed media

top right:
James Lee Byars
*The Figure of Question
Is in the Room, The
Figure of the First Totally
Interrogative Philosophy,*
and *The Figure of the
Spherical Text*, 1987
Onyx
65 x 23 5/8 x 17 1/4 in.
(165 x 60 x 43.8 cm)
each



bottom left:
Emma Kunz
21 works, undated
Mixed media on
paper

bottom right:
Ye Jinglu
Photographic album,
1901–68
62 photographs
collected by Tong
Bingxue



Reconstruction of Mike Kelley's 1993 installation *The Uncanny*, showing anatomical models, training mannequins, and other medical tools

TYPOLOGIES



THE RETROSPECTIVE

DEAD OR ALIVE

Jessica Morgan

The brief for this essay was to look back at two retrospective exhibitions I have curated of established artists—one of whom was dead at the time of the exhibition and the other very much alive. What differences can be discerned between the two curatorial approaches? How was each experience shaped by my relationship to the artist's work?

As it turns out, some dead artists are perhaps more dead than others. By the time of Martin Kippenberger's retrospective at Tate Modern in 2006 (unassumingly titled *Kippenberger: Through Puberty to Success*), the artist had been in the grave for almost a decade, and yet his presence could not have been more palpable. Reincarnated, it seemed, in the form of various collectors, writers, artist-assistants, and friends (as well as a large coterie of those less informed but equally endowed with righteous and entitled insight), Kippenberger's hydra-like persona was well matched by his various "presences" on Earth who took it upon themselves to speak (via ouija board?) about the *only right way* to curate his work. It took quite some self-control to silence the voices when I began researching the exhibition back in 2004.

How then to approach Kippenberger's work for exhibition? To single out "signature" works for special analysis did not make sense given the systemic nature of his practice. To isolate

his practice as a painter flies in the face of his own acknowledgment of the possible redundancy of the medium, while to view him only as a postmodern practitioner of "inauthentic" appropriation obscures his performative creativity. So it seemed best to let Kippenberger curate the exhibition himself (especially given his half-life presence) and by and large each room (at Tate in any case) made reference to exhibitions, forms of display, taxonomies, and bodies of work that had been devised by the artist during his prolific career as an "exhibitionist."¹

Remarkably, though perhaps this is true of any great artist, the essential concerns were clearly discernible in each body of work. For example the provocative gesture of the *Lieber Maler, Maler Mir* series that opened the exhibition, for which Kippenberger hired the sign painter known as Werner to paint images Kippenberger selected, was a gesture clearly intended as a deflating riposte to the then-current reigning stars of the German art world, the Mülheimer Freiheit and the Junge Wilde and their painterly expressionism. This early series would be less significant if the artist had not continued, in his unpredictable fashion, to consistently question prevailing artistic trends with equally acute but complex verve; it contains many of the concepts and preoccupations that reappeared in his work for the next 25 years.



Kippenberger: *Through Puberty to Success*
installation view, Tate Modern, London, 2006

Kippenberger the *Selbstdarsteller* (“self performer,” a term coined by Diedrich Diederichsen) appears in four of the 12 paintings in roles that were repeated in subsequent years: as the drinking buddy off on a bar crawl, seen from behind outside a Düsseldorf hangout; as the sophisticated tourist seated ironically on a thrown-out couch on a New York street corner; as the would-be film star (like “Helmut Berger on a good day,” he once said) posed in front of a Berlin tourist stand, next to posters referring to the then-fashionable kitsch of Eastern European culture; and finally and most mysteriously clutching a sausage-like rubber ring as the sad clown, already physically in decline with a hunched back at just 28, but nevertheless wearing the Picasso-inspired outfit of white underpants that accentuates his manhood. The *Lieber Maler, Maler Mir* series also introduces many other favorite topics (aside from himself) via thinly veiled references to Germany’s uneasy attempts at appraising its recent past, a critique of the petit bourgeois and their hypocritical gestures, the equal treatment of commodities, kitsch, and culture, the ridiculing of minor celebrities, the presence of his own and other artist’s work, and of course not least the act of hiring someone else to produce the work in the first place.

In comparison to Kippenberger, John Baldessari is an unmistakably living presence, and one of the many pleasures of spending time with him over the four years of exhibition research and realization was being able to ask him questions firsthand. There is, however, no “right” way to show Baldessari (despite the artist’s tongue-in-cheek title *Wrong* for a badly composed photograph). Unlike Kippenberger, Baldessari has never expressed much interest in curating his exhibitions; each of his many surveys and retrospectives has borne the marks of its respective curator in design and checklist. Even Baldessari’s solo gallery shows have typically been characterized more by the desire to show a body of new work than by a need to position the show in the framework of a history or culture of exhibition making, whereas each and every display of Kippenberger’s work during his life entailed a self-conscious attitude toward the construct of the show itself. Ironically, then, Baldessari’s influence on the concept of his exhibition was far less present than that of Kippenberger, whose voice was curatorially audible even from the grave.



John Baldessari: *Pure Beauty* installation view,
Tate Modern, London, 2009

As with Kippenberger, however, Baldessari poses the daunting curatorial prospect of familiarizing oneself with his prolific production. Kippenberger’s estate is now being meticulously organized by Galerie Gisela Capitain, but it was sometimes difficult a few years ago to locate images and information given the artist’s peripatetic moves, shifts in galleries, and lack of a well-organized personal archive. Baldessari, meanwhile, has made the archive part of his work for some time, and now his expert studio staff maintains this impressive body of material. In addition to carefully preserved folders containing original reference materials, images, contact sheets, and so forth for each work made, there is also a card file begun by Baldessari in the 1960s and abandoned in 2000, each typed card indicating a work made, as well as an online archive.

Baldessari has said, “Something I flirt with a lot that is very difficult for me—emotionally difficult—is working with a single image in a single frame. I am interested in when two images abut each other. It’s like when two words collide and some new word in some new meaning comes out of it.”² From the curator’s perspective, it becomes apparent during the process of researching Baldessari’s work for an exhibition that this process of syntactical combination (one thing after another or next to another) not only exists within each work but characterizes his output as a whole. In fact one could take this even further and say that Baldessari’s entire oeuvre is an ongoing series, as the beginning of a new series is almost always evident in the final stages of the one that preceded it. Curatorially, this tendency poses a problem

of where to make a cut in the sequence of works, given the impossibility of representing each and every stage of each and every series. What can be left out or omitted from this process of “one thing next to another”? Ultimately the exhibition (*John Baldessari: Pure Beauty*, which opened at Tate Modern in late 2009 and then traveled internationally) was an attempt to maintain a sense of this connectivity and the manner in which Baldessari has so uniquely maintained the pace in his work for now more than 50 years.

To attempt a conclusion: There seems, perhaps unsurprisingly, to be less of a difference between curating dead and living artists than there is between their individual approaches and work. While one situation offers the possibility to converse directly with the artist, the lessons learned may be no more revealing than a careful review of a body of work and its past display through relatively silent documentation. In both of these two particular cases, though—and I doubt I will say this too often in my career—I could have happily started work on another, entirely different exhibition of the same artist’s work immediately after the conclusion of the first.

Notes

1. For those unaware, the title of this journal derives from the display of countless Kippenberger self-portraits and ephemera in a Hamburg storefront window in 1976–77, with a banner bearing the title “Einer von Euch” (The Exhibitionist).

2. John Baldessari, Ann Goldstein, and Christopher Williams, “The Things We Sweep Under the Rug” in *John Baldessari: Life’s Balance, Works 1984–2004*, ed. Peter Pakesch (Cologne: Walther König, 2005): 88.

SOME THOUGHTS ON MAKING RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

Elisabeth Sussman

I have found myself drawn (maybe “driven” is the better word) to the creation of monographic exhibitions. *Paul Thek: Diver* (which I co-organized with Lynn Zelevansky) is the most recent example. (It opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in October 2010 and will travel to the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles.) Certain artists, like Thek, fascinate me. This fascination nearly always emerges during the making of the exhibition and is not completely apparent in the beginning. At the outset, an artist’s work may simply attract me as an appropriate choice, in a particular context and time, for an exhibition and catalogue. But obsession takes over in the making of the show. Close study and research invariably lead me further and further into the complexities and mysteries in the work, into the various ways the work has been fabricated, exhibited, received. Along the way I discover beacon characteristics that were not there at the start. And, invariably, although my focus has been on the one artist, the thorough attention to the artist that an exhibition demands causes my perception of a whole swath of art history to be transformed, rejigged, changed.

I have worked on monographic exhibitions of artists who were living—Rosemarie Trockel, Mike Kelley, Nan Goldin, and William Eggleston for instance—and artists who have died. In the second category, in addition to Thek, there have been Eva Hesse, Diane Arbus, and Gordon Matta-Clark. I believe that monographic exhibitions that engage the participation of the living artist will be ultimately immensely valuable as future primary sources for histories of art. With living artists, I have always had the advantage of the artist’s availability and guidance. With access to the artist’s collections and archives as well as to the galleries that represent him or her, works (both obscure and well known) can

be located and reassembled. The exhibition itself will be captured in installation photos. The curator will have access to firsthand information about intentions, work processes, and installation strategies. And all or some of this will be preserved in catalogues, online databases, and museum archives.

This brings me to Thek. More than many artists, Thek had to be curatorially reimagined, since many of his works were ephemeral and he had by choice led a nomadic life, largely untethered to institutions or galleries. Numerous important pieces no longer existed. The so-called *Dead Hippy* of 1967, a cast of the artist’s body as a corpse, has disappeared, and only fragments remain of his *Processions* installations, changing versions of which he created four times in Europe in the 1970s. The *Processions* were immersive environments composed of sand floors, temporary structures covered in newspaper, taxidermied animals (swans, deer, dogs, rabbits), tree branches, and other fortuitously found objects. They were prophetic and magical, and today they are known only through photographs in mostly out-of-print catalogues. Thek, a near anomaly in his own time, was what I would call a skeptical believer. His installation practice stemmed from a combination of disdain for the growing market orientation of art, his own religious beliefs, and a concomitant belief in an art of immediate, sensual presence.

Paul Thek, as we suggested when we chose the title of the exhibition, *Diver*, was a lone swimmer in a huge ocean. His oeuvre could be plunged into, but most curators in the United States had hesitated because the remains of his career seemed so scattered, fragmentary, and (when they still existed) exceedingly fragile. Although he continued to make work until his death in 1988, his great ensemble works were gone, several early pieces that survived were impossibly delicate, and many works had ended



Paul Thek: Diver installation view,
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York, 2010



Paul Thek: *Diver* installation views,
Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York, 2010

up in European collections. Yet we went ahead, and as with other monographic exhibitions, the methodology was direct, dictated by the necessities of the artist.

It started with the reading of Thek's writings and interviews with people who had known him. No curatorial work, of course, is transparent; the curator is an author, responsible for a particular point of view, and each foray into a monographic study is also, hopefully, a revelation about its presenter(s). Lynn Zelevansky and I had to find our own Thek. Our dilemma was whether to reproduce what was lost, either by reconstruction or by photographic documentation, or to let what remained speak for itself and let the exhibition somehow acknowledge what was lost, perhaps via a poetic installation that would evoke Thek's way of working. We decided on the latter, but only after reading extensively Thek's own writings. He was painfully aware of ephemerality, and though he wished for posterity and fame and enlightened museum support, he knew that much of his work could never survive him. We were greatly helped by the extensive archival collection of interviews and letters assembled by a fellow curator in Holland, Roland Groenenboom, a decade earlier.

The Thek exhibition that Lynn Zelevansky and I have organized is haunted, we hope, by the ghosts of what has been lost. As Thek would have preferred, the galleries are lit very minimally. We are of course in a different museum age today, bound by issues of security (pedestals) that certainly reduce the immediacy that the pieces were intended to have, and did achieve, at the time of their making. But the works are still extraordinary and compelling: meat pieces; body casts (known as the *Fishman*); miniature, folkish mice and artifacts; and casual, colorful, often funny as well as poignant paintings on newspaper. These are grouped and clustered in eccentric arrangements that mimic Thek's own installations of his work during his lifetime. His journals are open to reveal his often laconic, sometimes contemplative, writings.

And, most poignantly, Thek himself is present in the galleries, captured in extraordinary video and photography: a screen test by Andy Warhol, a series of Peter Hujar photographs of the artist in his studio working on the casts of his own body, and a video by Cindy Lubar of the 1973 installation at the Kunstmuseum Lucerne.

We made this media imagery prominent by projecting it at larger-than-life scale.

This experience has rekindled my interest in the potentials of one-person shows, the prolonged exposure of curators to particular bodies of work, and the expressive depths that a spectator can come to in an absorption of one career. My involvement with Thek has led me to the

knowledge that, though long repressed, his presence, jouissance, eccentricity, and melancholy must now interrupt our standard history of the art of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. That his legacy is as essential as that of Pop, Minimal, post-Minimal, and Conceptual art has been proven by the reference and recuperation of much traceable to Thek in recent art.

THE UNAUTHORIZED RETROSPECTIVE

Shelly Bancroft and Peter Nesbett

In October 1985, during a roundtable discussion with the curator Jean-Christophe Ammann and three other artists, Anselm Kiefer challenged Joseph Beuys on the subject of control. Beuys claimed that through language he could direct the meaning of his work; Kiefer countered that only after an artist's death can anyone understand the true spectrum of his or her intent. Beuys died three months later.

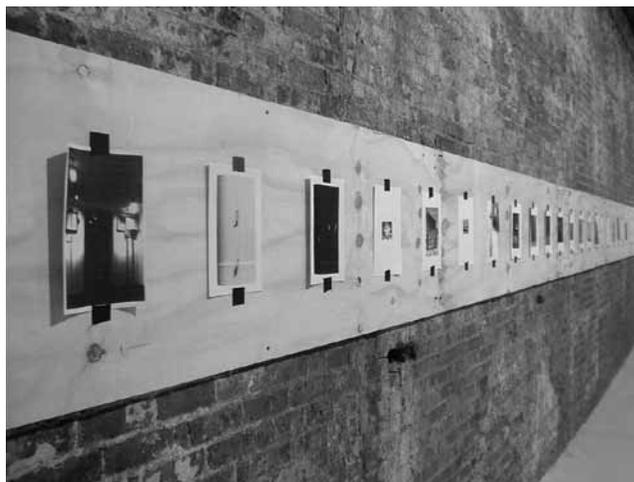
Beuys is legendary for his self-mythologizing. While the story of his capture by nomadic tribesmen on the snowy Crimean front and their wrapping of his body in fat and felt has been discredited by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and others, it still enshrouds his work like a thick fog. Faithful collaborators—art historians, curators, designers, photographers—worked with Beuys to protect and propagate this and other stories, shaping how his work was seen and understood both during his life and since his death. Even today, Beuys exerts influence through his guardians, including his widow, Eva Beuys, who has been seeking to halt the creation of a Beuys Center at the Museum Schloss Moyland Foundation in Germany, claiming that the institution has been improperly caring for and presenting his legacy.

Legally, artists—even after they die—have the right to control how their work is both exhibited and published. If they want, they can refuse to have it made public at all, even when it is owned by others. For curators with a critical bent, this presents a considerable challenge, especially at the level of the retrospective, the

most massive and comprehensive of solo show types. Without an artist's (or an agent's) consent, a retrospective is an impossible task; with consent, it can't be anything but hagiographic. And yet, this issue aside, the retrospective offers the potential for a deep, sustained, critical engagement with an oeuvre—a kind of engagement that is unmatched by any other exhibition typology. Is there a way around this obstacle?

At Triple Candie in Harlem, we've made a specialty out of retrospectives, in particular unauthorized retrospectives. Though we started in 2001 as a more or less conventional nonprofit in an unconventional neighborhood, we have spent the past five years curating and producing exhibitions that are about art but largely devoid of it, using instead art surrogates such as props, posters, re-creations, artifacts, and ephemera. Our goal has been to pioneer a new form of critical-curatorial activity in a city—New York—where the market reigns supreme and alternative art spaces are too frequently indistinguishable from their commercial peers. Our curatorial philosophy turns the idea of "alternative" on its head. We've abandoned artists completely and targeted "the institution of the artist" as our subject. The retrospective, being the most biographical and (usually) uncritical kind of exhibition, has provided, quite naturally, the perfect form for our critique.

Our first artless and artist-less exhibition was an exhaustive retrospective of the work of David Hammons, the enigmatic, Harlem-based



David Hammons: *The Unauthorized Retrospective* installation view, Triple Candie, Harlem, New York, 2006

right:
Cady Noland *Approximately: Sculptures and Editions, 1984–1999* installation view, Triple Candie, Harlem, New York, 2006

far right:
Maurizio Cattelan Is Dead: Life and Work, 1960–2009 installation view, Triple Candie, Harlem, New York, 2009

prankster whose oeuvre has been difficult to grasp largely because he has resisted institutional, monographic treatment since the early 1990s. *David Hammons: The Unauthorized Retrospective* (2006) was a celebration of his inarguably important career, but it was also a mischievous challenge to an artist whose work and professional choices at times seem frustratingly paradoxical, if not completely hypocritical.

The retrospective consisted of more than 100 photocopies and downloaded images affixed—in chronological order by each piece's original creation date—with black gaffer's tape to untreated plywood panels. Many were so badly degenerated that they were indecipherable. One photocopy picturing an oval rock topped with hair shavings, for instance, could easily have been misunderstood as an image of an abstract painting. Retrospectives generally clarify and elucidate; they enhance our understanding of an artist's oeuvre on both a macro and a micro level. This show, appropriately, kept Hammons's work tantalizingly just out of reach.

Cady Noland Approximately: Sculptures and Editions, 1984–1999 (2006), presented just two months later, was the first retrospective of the work of an equally influential artist. For this show, we incorrectly remade 13 of Noland's sculptures (including her edition for Parkett) and exhibited them in uncomfortably close quarters at one end of our vast warehouse space. The show was meant to reverse the slow slide into obscurity of Noland's legacy by partially filling the widening void with highly staged, theatrical substitutes. But the experience we offered was not simply

ersatz; it was just plain *wrong*. A visitor without firsthand knowledge of Noland's real work might easily have been misled, since the objects on view looked like sculptures, if not exactly like Noland's. Therein lay the deceit and the danger, and probably the reason why the show ignited such furor among critics (Jerry Saltz, writing then in the *Village Voice*, said that Cady Noland should find a lawyer and "get medieval" on Triple Candie) and curators (Lynne Cooke, then of Dia Art Foundation, cornered Peter in the gallery and repeatedly asked, "Why would you do this to Cady?!"). Noland herself never saw the show (Hammons didn't see his, either), though both responded in their own ways: Noland with a letter to the *New York Times*, and Hammons with a clown bean-bag-toss game left anonymously on our doorstep.

Retrospectives are emblematic of a curatorial culture that is boosterish and eulogistic. The strengths and weaknesses of a body of work, or a career, are rarely if ever addressed explicitly, in part because most artists and their agents wouldn't allow it, and a museum would not—could not—be seen as unfriendly to artists. Working with surrogates has provided us a degree of freedom that would otherwise be impossible. We can curate shows on any subject we please, without permission, at a fraction of the cost. And we have been able to interject an editorial, often critical but also ambivalent, mindset into one of the least critical of exhibition genres.

Last year, we laid to rest the body of Maurizio Cattelan, a trickster not unlike Hammons. *Maurizio Cattelan Is Dead: Life and Work,*



1960–2009 was the first retrospective of his work. The show aligned the meteoric rise of Cattelan's career in the early 1990s with the art market's growth and expansion, presenting him as the poster child of a particular historic moment. The show's opening sequence consisted of a closed casket festooned with flowers in front of a gray, tomblike wall. Behind the wall, the story unfolded. Strung along a painted timeline were reproductions, re-creations (both accurate and not-so-accurate), props, extensive biographical notes, critical commentary on individual projects (by us, the curator and critic Francesco Bonami, and others), sales records, and the artist's changing ranking in the ArtReview Power 100 (which, incidentally, has declined since 2006). Within the history of curatorial practice, the show *looked* like a Group Material project and yet it *read* like nothing of the kind. It was funny, myopic, and of little real consequence in and of itself except to those with a vested interest in the artist's work. Nancy Spector, who is curating Cattelan's retrospective at the Guggenheim in 2011, visited. So did Cattelan himself—unexpectedly—with a writer in tow whom he treated to a guided tour of his life. Several weeks later, he generously arranged for us to ship it off to the DESTI Foundation in Athens.

Despite Cattelan's embracing of the project, it is worth underscoring the fact that none of these shows were simply about their artist subjects; all had larger aspirations. Among curators, however, they also fulfilled a whispered desire. Haven't we all secretly wished that the artist whose show we were organizing was dead? Even artists, deep in their hearts, understand this. At



one point in their conversation, Beuys conceded to Kiefer, "Perhaps it's true that a dead artist is better than a living one."

ATTITUDE

★

GREENHOUSE TOMATOES AND OUTDOOR TOMATOES

Maria Lind

Along with biennials, curating programs have multiplied at an increasing rate over the last two decades. Ever since the International Curatorial Training Program started in 1987 at Le Magasin in Grenoble (allegedly the pioneer in this regard), there has been a growing demand, from students as well as from university administrations, for curatorial education. The phenomena of biennials and curating programs are linked to globalization in general and to the rise of one of its representatives in particular: the independent curator. Also part of the mix is the tendency in contemporary art toward celebrity culture. Art now has some of the allure that “the modern” had in the immediate postwar period. Like “the modern” back then, “contemporary art” is today profoundly “of our time,” even *beyond* art: something current, attractive, desirable. The curator, in turn, has become the image of the glamorous entrepreneur, albeit often with intellectual and artistic varnish rather than profound capabilities.

Existing curating programs range from vocational training at Le Magasin and the more creative version at London’s Goldsmiths College (part of its MFA program) to the Royal College of Art’s institutionally- and research-oriented Curating Contemporary Art (established in London in 1992) and the academically rooted program (established in 1995) at Bard College’s Center for Curatorial Studies, where I served as the director from 2008 to 2010. De Appel’s Curatorial Training Program in Amsterdam, founded in 1994, is known for its practical approach and focus on networking. Some of this pragmatic orientation is shared by the Graduate Program in Curatorial

Practice at California College of the Arts in San Francisco (established in 2002), which also emphasizes an expanded notion of what curating is. There are also new programs in many other parts of the world, for example Seoul, Zurich, Stockholm, and Mexico City. A relatively new and different addition is the Cultures of the Curatorial, a postgraduate part-time program at the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig.

The specific curricula of these programs give more or less clear evidence of the personal interests of the founders and current directors, be they curators, art historians, or even academics without any working experience with art, let alone curating. They reveal a range of approaches to how curating in general, and the role of the curator in particular, is currently understood. My writing of this text is based both on older observations regarding curatorial education and new developments within curating and on my recent experience running the graduate program and teaching at CCS Bard. CCS Bard is part of a private liberal-arts college, with tuition fees in excess of \$33,000 per year, which means it is necessarily part and parcel of an educational system where commodification of knowledge, and of relationships between students and faculty, are pronounced. Especially when tuition is high and financial aid is limited, unless the students are independently wealthy there is a need for quick return on investment to pay back student loans. Actually, regardless of tuition, curating programs are popular among students and thus considered economically viable—even cash cows—by college and university administrations. Within an economized education system, a popular program is not simply an asset, but a necessity.

Perhaps it is here that we can begin a trek toward understanding the functions and effects of curating programs: as one of the most significant additions in the past 20 years to the system of art. And yet it seems as if the interesting and productive moment of these programs as we know them is over. Casual but poignant critiques of the programs say that they stimulate careerism and instrumental approaches to art, that they fuel a kind of professionalization that easily borders on producing narcissistic “apparatchiks,” whether institutionally employed or independent. We produce a steady stream of young people who are eager to become Curators with a capital “C,” even though some of the programs state that they encourage their students to engage with culture at large, with writing or scholarship. The lure of the capital C is stronger than many other educational ambitions. All of these comments and concerns correspond well with my experience.

One of the outcomes of curating programs involves therefore problematic expectations and projections, which are particularly visible in applications: The crass reality does not match the rhetoric when (for instance) the job market for curators is saturated. Even more questionable is the function of the programs as part-incubators, part-greenhouses. As incubators they not only

pamper the students, but also put tremendous effort into sustaining those who otherwise wouldn’t make it. And the greenhouse effect is a speedy process of growth, producing broilers but at a cost, creating a sense of false security. Just as there are limits to how fast you can learn a language or furniture carpentry in an educational setting, the same certainly goes for curating. Think also of the difference between greenhouse tomatoes and outdoor tomatoes.

So what comes out of the curating programs, besides the flow of aspiring Curators with a capital C? There are two distinct tendencies among curating students as well as among younger curators in general, both of which create concern. They have been palpable since the turn of the millennium, and each of them conveys relevant aspects. Nevertheless they worry me, because art (on the one hand) and a context beyond the peer group (on the other hand) have become harder and harder to discern. The first tendency is interwoven with the idea of the curator as auteur, a figure with a recognizable signature. This tendency typically manifests itself in the shape of thematic group exhibitions with belabored or even forced curatorial concepts, where the art is more illustrative than center stage. Or in projects where established structures and formats are self-reflexively problematized and reshaped, again with art being added to the ideas. We can call this first tendency “the curatorial pirouettes.” Like ballet pirouettes, they involve an impressive movement carried out with virtuosity, creating a certain show-off effect but not too much else.

The second tendency aims at avoiding and sometimes challenging classical notions of authorship by focusing on collaboration, and placing art at the center. This mainly implies collaboration between the curator and one or more artists who together develop a new project. A laudable ambition here is often to make new work come about and to facilitate the needs of the artists. At the end of the day, however, the collaboration paradoxically enough often generates a “superauthor” with two heads instead of one, an artist head and a curator head. And questions can be raised concerning the power game involved: Can artists, particularly emerging artists, afford to decline an invitation “to collaborate” with curators? This is quite an audacious and sometimes intrusive offer, especially if the partners have not worked together before, which is often the case with curating students. As an offer it is distinctly different from being invited to contribute work to an exhibition or to make a new project. And as a tendency it turns out to be more artist-centric than art-centric. I like to think of this as the “over-collaboration” within curating: collaboration for the sake of collaboration.

It is hard not to wonder where art is in this—in what looks like curating’s own formalism. Where are the artists, outside of the collaborations? And where is the surrounding reality? What kind of contact surfaces do the programs—the directors, faculty, and students—want art to have with the rest of the world? How do we discuss how art can and should be mediated?

Neither of these two tendencies within curating shows particular interest in the rest of the world—that is, in an exchange *around* art with other parties beyond the curators' peer groups. The notion and phenomenon of mediation has receded to an ever-more-distant background, leaving the educational legacy of the public museum behind. To avoid excessive didacticism is probably wise, but to throw the baby out with the bathwater is not. It is one thing if artists are not primarily concerned with how a work becomes public and is contextualized, but if the curators aren't either, then art has been painted into a corner where it is hard to reach, and barely visible.

This is a rather gloomy picture, sharing some features with studio art education. Parallel to the gloom, however, are of course brighter sides, such as excellent students, some of whom go on to become great curators. There are undoubtedly a variety of interesting and thought-provoking projects, interests, and approaches being produced through the programs. At times the programs also constitute lively and critical milieus. So I do think that there is still some potential in them. But this potential is contingent upon insisting on a fundamental discussion about the places and functions of art in society today and about what curating can, and should, entail. And on the ability of the programs to restructure.

One way to think about this problem, and to try to reinstate art and its possibilities, could be to move away from the curator as a person, and a position, and to concentrate more on the method and the effects of the work of curators. This can be described as “the curatorial,” a way of working that means combining artworks—which today certainly can be extremely multifarious—with questions, places, people, et cetera, in precise ways. In doing this the curatorial shares something with editing, but with more diverse materials. The curatorial relates to curating, the craft or technical modality itself, in ways that are similar to how “the political” and “politics” are described by Chantal Mouffe. Whereas politics is what politicians are doing, that which gets reported in the news, Mouffe argues that “the political” is tied to a potential that goes beyond the already known and accepted. The curatorial is not friends with consensus and status quo; rather it is both a horizon and a form of agency, and to some degree it is a qualitative term.

In light of this, the fact that the job opportunities for traditional curators are scarce might not be such a bad thing—apart from the broken dreams of many students of the curating programs, and debts being paid with salaries from sources other than curatorial positions. The productive prospects lie not in more classical curators but in people working “curatorially” as educators, press officers, editors, fundraisers, researchers, et cetera. These are overlooked areas, ripe for change and full of curatorial possibilities, where “the curatorial” is a viral presence, a methodology that can be employed by almost anyone within the field of art. At best, curating programs, like almost

any education, can offer students the chance to develop a methodology, a discourse, and a network. The methodology is about finding and testing ways of working; the discourse means languages with which to talk about work; and the network indicates participation in a community of people with shared interests, mainly fellow students, as opposed to “networking” meaning the annoying behavior of careerists seeking contacts.

Needless to say, we do not need more curating programs as we currently know them. Furthermore, many of the existing ones are ready for transformation, some even ready for closure. Among the three interesting paths ahead that I can discern, two speak to re-forming the programs and one skips the programs altogether. A pressing issue now is the need for studies in the histories and practices of curating, as a subcategory of (for example) art history, visual culture studies, or ethnography. Whereas contemporary curating is the object of a wave of new publications, the histories and practices of curating are desperately under-researched. As a result the wheel is being reinvented again and again, inside as well as outside the programs. To turn to studies and scholarship in the histories and practices of curating is one way of changing the programs, leaving hands-on curating behind while promoting a curatorial attitude within the studies and scholarship. Another way forward is to focus on the curatorial as a methodology, which would mean a radical shift in direction for almost all programs. This would be a more systemic approach where for instance most functions within an institution or other organization would be the object of curatorial scrutiny and practical work. Having access to a “microsystem,” the programs that are connected to exhibiting institutions would, thanks to their variety of activities, have an advantage in this regard, being able to utilize all parts in the education.

For the rest: Encourage young people who have an engagement with, and passion for, art; and initiate (and in other ways work on) curated projects, whether alone or together with others. Self-organized or as part of structures. At the same time these people, and in the long run art itself, will benefit from thorough studies in almost any subject, as long as the studies are thorough: art history, literature, philosophy, political science, et cetera. In addition to this hands-on method: shorter courses from one week to a month, preferably recurring, for those who have already worked with curating or who have worked curatorially for at least three to five years. These courses could be academic and credited, or not. They would veer toward “discourse” and “network,” in other words toward analysis and discussions around art, context, and curating as well as the opportunity to do so with colleagues, under focused and otherwise conducive circumstances. Because there is an undeniable hunger for knowledge and debate around issues of curating. The existing curating programs, most of them on the MA level, tend to be better at providing discourse and network. Although they claim to offer solid enough support to develop

a substantial practical methodology, which is essential to curating, they are rarely, if ever, able to do so. Without this strong core of hands-on experience we are fooling not only the students, but also ourselves.

REAR MIRROR



BACK IN THE SURREAL HOUSE

Jane Alison

In the two years or thereabouts that it took to realize *The Surreal House* at Barbican Art Gallery in London, people kept asking me one perfectly understandable but worryingly disarming question: What is a “surreal house”? What I should have said, had I been brave enough, was, “Wait and see.” For the project was in itself an act of building, or, perhaps, given its underpinning in the world of the oneiric, conjuring and bringing into the light my very own *maison surréaliste*. Therein, with its coming into being, would be the answer to this seemingly most vexing question. And now as I write this, I realize that you the reader (if you weren’t, dare I say it, fortunate enough to see the exhibition) will be asking exactly the same question. The installation images included here, though evocative and descriptive, can hardly replace the experience of being there. To truly understand *The Surreal House* you need to *dwell*.

Although my own background is in art, I have over the years become fascinated with the question of how to effectively exhibit architecture. I imagined that *The Surreal House*—a name that was there from the beginning—would be the perfect vehicle for an exhibition rich with curatorial possibilities, both multidisciplinary and cross-generational. At its core would be Surrealist ideas centered on house and home, but given the clear and pervasive influence of Surrealism on contemporary art, there would also be the potential to draw in a richly diverse array of works, all informing one another.

STILL WAITING

Kathrin Rhomberg

One of modernism’s most fiercely contested arenas of discourse concerned the stance that the arts should adopt toward reality. Even today, some see art’s destiny as an autonomous immersion in self-reference, whereas for others the measure of an artwork’s relevance is its unconditional world reference, its addressing of reality. The focus of the 6th Berlin Biennale, *Was draussen wartet* (What Is Waiting Out There, 2010) was precisely this unconditional turn to reality. The biennale presented itself as a sort of “counterplan” [*Gegen-Anordnung*] to the self-referential trends that have dominated the Western art world, art market, and media in the last years: beauty, pathos, escapism, the primacy of form, the revolt against the present, and an attendant retrospective gaze.

At the heart of the 6th Berlin Biennale lay interventionist artistic thought that did not document reality but rather produced it: by poetically, performatively, and fictionally appropriating it, and also by radically fusing fiction and authentic observation. Instead of uncoupling from reality, instead of art for art’s sake, and unlike the re-politicization of the 1990s, the biennale addressed the immediacy of everyday life by entering into a complicity with our everyday realities.

As the character Keserú observes in Imre Kertész’s novel *Liquidation* (2003), the turn to reality at present is necessarily a fractured one, since reality is recently affected by profound changes: “So this is the reality, of which Keserú no longer had a very high opinion. Reality for Keserú had

Jane Alison

I aimed to highlight the centrality of the house within Surrealist thinking and imagery as well as to explore the significance of architecture for Surrealism and vice versa. Incredibly, both had hitherto received scant attention, certainly in exhibition-making terms. Two of the most influential architects working today, Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi, have looked to Surrealism to invigorate both their own work and architectural practice more generally. Why, then, I wondered, do most architects seem to find the whole idea of Surrealism problematic? It was my hope—somewhat ambitiously—that *The Surreal House* might prompt architects to look again at what Surrealism (and art more broadly) had to offer.

The exhibition must be, I thought, a truly memorable experience: a house from a dream, a house you wouldn't be able to forget, a house furnished with the very best works by a range of artists, architects, and filmmakers who are or were in some way touched by Surrealism. I greatly welcomed having ready ears to test out ideas and verify that I was on the right track. Mary Ann Caws, Krzysztof Fijalkowski, Dagmar Weston, Ramona Fotiade, and Dalibor Vesely provided invaluable feedback. I believe that being a professional curator outside of academia was in this case both necessary and desirable; it prevented me from being overly swayed by those whose specialty is Surrealist research.

I confess that holding together such an expansive subject, making the whole intelligible, was a hugely demanding task. Surrealism has a following for sure, but the summer is a difficult period for any gallery, and I'd embarked on the project with a less-than-ideal timeframe. I also found out how inordinately difficult it is to borrow key works by the likes of Salvador Dalí and Alberto Giacometti—the former too precious, the latter too fragile. And, as with any exhibition at the Barbican, we start from a position of having nothing concrete to offer—no loans to barter—only the worth of the idea itself to persuade lenders to part with their treasured possessions.

Rather than being an all-too-predictable pastiche—walls covered floor-to-ceiling in 1930s-era paintings of dubious quality, or reconstructed Duchampian special effects—I felt that this exhibition should be bold, surprising, and relevant to today. Taking a cue from André Breton's apartment at 42 Rue Fontaine, I set about carefully

orchestrating works in dialogue around key themes: Theatre of the Domestic, Panic Space, Haunted House, Femme Maison, L'Amour Fou, The Mother, Home for Birds, Portable House, Vertigo of the Modern, Divine Concrete, and Convulsive Architecture. For me, the "surreal house" is, essentially, the "other" house within Modernism—the house that runs counter to the purely functional, sanitized house advocated by Le Corbusier and others of his generation. My task as curator was to convey this convincingly—to make *The Surreal House* as vital, plausible, and memorable as possible.

It struck me at the outset that the Barbican is itself a bit like a house, albeit a rather strange one: a grand central staircase leading to an upstairs corridor with rooms fanning out around a vast central void. Like the boarding houses in Louis Aragon's *Passage de l'Opera* (1926), perhaps? Our major trump card is being able to create installations that can be viewed from above *and* across. The side bays, by contrast,

Marcel Duchamp
Fresh Widow, 1920, replica 1964
Mixed media
31 x 21 x 3 7/8 in. (78.7 x 53.3 x 9.8 cm)
Tate, London, purchased with assistance from
the National Lottery through the Heritage
Lottery Fund 1997

Marcel Duchamp
Prière de toucher, 1947
Rubber foam, velvet, and glass
16 1/2 x 13 3/8 x 2 3/4 in. (41.9 x 34.6 x 7 cm)
Collection Maeght, Paris

Kathrin
Rhomberg

become a problematic concept, and even worse, a problematic state. A state, Keserú profoundly felt, that was entirely lacking in reality. If ever compelled to use the word, he always immediately added "the so-called reality." The divide between the world one is speaking of and the world that actually *is* has grown since the 1990s. There is no reality that does not also come under suspicion of being mere illusion or staging. Certain events of recent years have provided rich nourishment for distrusting reality. The terrorist attacks of 9/11, the *casus belli* of fictive weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and most recently the global financial crisis all demonstrate the unreality of what pretends to be reality.

The artistic works in the exhibition opposed this phenomenon of derealization with striking aesthetic, social, and political ideas and images. Some works attacked the distanced, pleasure-oriented Western gaze; others were speculative, visionary, or poetic. But their focus was always on the life we live and are familiar with, and the works invariably established a connection to our present and its realities. In this, the biennale's contemporary artistic stances had much in common with Adolph Menzel's works of the second half of the 19th century, and a selection of Menzel's drawings and gouaches were simultaneously on view at Berlin's Alte Nationalgalerie, making the connection explicit.² Menzel, like the biennale's artists, was not interested in imitat-



Petrit Halilaj
*The places I'm looking for, my dear,
are utopian places, they are boring and I
don't know how to make them real*, 2010
Mixed media

Jane Alison

allow for intimate displays that complement something more bravura in the main space. With *The Surreal House* I was intent on playing to the building's strengths.

Although I have come to appreciate that even the most functional of modernist buildings can have a surreal side, the Barbican required some help. Alongside the exhibition architects, Kevin Carmody and Andy Groarke of Carmody Groarke, with whom I formed a precious working partnership, I too became an architect—more specifically, a curator-architect. What a privileged position to be in!

A suitably surreal architectural intervention was essential to create the necessary play of scale, of light and dark, of sound and silence, of compression and expansion. I imagined that the visitor would be taken on a journey through a labyrinth of chambers in which passages, apertures, and thresholds became of the utmost importance. Art imagines the house. Film performs the house. Architecture builds the house. Each discipline would be held in a delicate balance. The dwelling would be addressed not just as interior space but as a shell, and (as the Surrealists would have had it) an *object house*.

We considered at length whether the whole gallery should constitute the house, or whether the house should be as if inserted into the space? In the end the “house” appropriately blurred distinctions between inside and out. The lower level was orchestrated as a complex interior space, while the upper level, with its eight discrete bays, was given over to more intimate “conversations” between art and architecture.

I was especially aware that the “uncanny” or psychologically charged interior was, in exhibition terms, a well-trodden path—for instance David Lomas's excellent *Subversive Spaces* (2009) at the Whitworth Art Galley in Manchester. The inclusion of architecture was crucial in differentiating *The Surreal House* from such precedents. To further set it apart from Lomas's show, the Surrealism in this house would embrace play, humor, *l'amour fou*, and, above all, poetry. The abject nature of Gregor Schneider's work, as found in Lomas's show, could have no place here. I had in mind something altogether more poetic, having been particularly impressed by the two wonderful Venice shows *Artempo* (2007) and *Infinitum* (2009). Although these shows succeeded largely due to the unique context of the Palazzo Fortuny, I was struck by how successfully they presented works of such different types and periods. The experience of being there was everything.

How then to go about selecting work for *The Surreal House*? Clearly it was essential to start with key first-generation Surrealist artists and those in their orbit. The net was deliberately cast wide to include Duchamp (for the central importance of architecture within his work) and other lesser-known figures such as Georges Malkine, whose oeuvre was again especially pertinent to the theme. Another pivotal figure had to be Salvador Dalí, for whom architecture was a guiding preoccupation. Le Corbusier's *Villa Savoye* (1929) was a contested point of reference: Was it or was it not in any way surreal? Set alongside André Breton's *Wunderkammer* atelier, the nerve center of Surrealism, Freud's own Vienna apartment, Giacometti's cage-like structures, Joseph Cornell's boxes . . . all else followed.

On the lower level, rather than re-creating whole rooms in a literal way, the house would present a topsy-turvy, Alice in Wonderland experience. One of the very first works that came to mind was Rebecca Horn's *Concert for Anarchy* (1990), a piece that I have long admired. This poltergeist piano would be the principal ghost presiding over the house. With a definite mind of its own, it charmed visitors with its crazed orchestral maneuvers. Seen from the balcony level, the keys—which spewed out suddenly, to the shock of those below—seemed, while retracted, like a row of gleaming white teeth. Giacometti's splendid plaster chandelier, *Lustre* (1948); Sarah Lucas's bed, *Au Naturel* (1994); Kabakov's *Toilet in the Corner* (1991/2008); and Edward Kienholz's antiquated drawing room, *The Wait*



Rebecca Horn
Concert for Anarchy, 1990
Painted wood, metal, and electronic components
59 x 41 3/4 x 61 1/4 in. (149.9 x 106 x 155.6 cm)
Tate, London, purchased with assistance from the
Art Fund and the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1999

Kathrin
Rhomberg

Adrian Lohmüller
Das Haus bleibt still (The House Remains Still), 2010
Water, containers, copper pipes, salt block, camping stove, and bedding

ing external reality but rather in creating it under the conditions of, and by means of, art.

Understanding Menzel's time can help us better understand our present. It was also an era of crises and profound social upheavals. Industrialization and growing capitalism engendered social dislocations and antagonisms: between socioeconomic classes, and between urban and rural populations. It is no accident that the concept of “alienation” dates from this time, and that again today it is being increasingly invoked to characterize our crisis-ridden present and its uncoupling from reality. Menzel's artistic response to alienation was to bodily empathize with the reality his depictions represented. By means of this bodily empathy he created a link to the world, and made imaginable and visible a reality under the surface of what is visually perceptible. This, too, was reflected in the works in the biennale.

Although the exhibition of Menzel drawings could be viewed as contradicting the critique of a retrospective gaze, the motivation was to set up a discursive framework that would reflect, from an art-historical perspective, the reality issue and its relevance to the here and now. The intent was to enable us to experience the present more fully and to break with ingrained habits of art viewing. There are basic issues that art committed to its age must continually confront anew: visibility, and what art can make visible; the relation of contemporary art to the present; how, given the wealth and power of images constantly produced by media and advertising today, reality and a critical view of its underlying conditions may still be produced; and how art can contribute to our self-positioning with respect to ourselves and the world, so that we are more present in the world.

An exhibition that opposes the prevailing trend of escapism and insists on connections to reality must be uncompromising in its own presentation. In both the artworks and the exhibition design, principles of concentration and simplicity applied, permitting architectural intervention only where absolutely essential. Blank spaces and reduction characterized all aspects of the presentation—in terms of the number of artistic stances offered, the exhibition design and graphics, and the theoretical mediation in the supporting program.

Blank spaces occur as well in Menzel's drawings. These blanks or omissions are where imagination, empathy, and critical reflection can unfold. The 6th Berlin Biennale thus espoused a “counter-plan” to current

Jane Alison

(1964–65), complete with a taxidermied cat and an old lady made out of various animal bones and jam jars, added to the domestic theater. Two Jan Švankmajer films, *Down to the Cellar* (1982) and *Jabberwocky* (1971), provided the all-important cellar and the nightmarish nursery. Mary Ann Caws had the wonderful idea that Duchamp's *Prière de toucher* (1947) could be the doorbell! What a moment of genius! A room devoted to the haunted house included only Maurizio Cattelan's disturbing *Charlie Don't Surf* (1997), Edward Hopper's iconic *House by a Railroad* (1925), and a wonderful, little-known photograph *The Repulsive Bed* (1941) by Clarence John Laughlin.

Delighting in destruction as well as construction, Buster Keaton's *Steamboat Bill Jr.* (1927), with Keaton narrowly surviving the iconic collapsing house, was the perfect opener. Twinned with Marcel Duchamp's roughly contemporaneous *Fresh Widow* (1920), the scene was set. Upon crossing the extremely narrow threshold, the visitor entered an entirely black room, with Robert Longo's drawings of Freud's Vienna apartment and Rachel Whiteread's *Untitled Black Bath* (1996) as a centerpiece. Designed to signal that the *maison surréaliste* was no ordinary dwelling, I feel that this was one of the most successful spaces in the exhibition. At the heart of the house was an homage to Louise Bourgeois's *Femme Maison*. The Electric Palace, a cinema space, showed Jean Cocteau's

Le Belle et La Bête (1946) and Jacques Tati's *Mon Oncle* (1958) around the clock. The Freud Museum, which had a new director, agreed to lend Freud's curiously phallic, curiously anthropomorphic consulting room chair, which proved the final touch to bring the house to ghostly life.

Proceeding to the upper level, we had transformed our usually grand staircase into a claustrophobic space lit only by bare lightbulbs. The architects were truly getting into the spirit of the house! Emerging at the top of the stairs, visitors were met by Horn's piano, now seen face-on, and Dalí's masterpiece *Sleep* (ca. 1937). I delighted in the play of the piano—suspended and thereby curiously castellated—seen alongside Dalí's dreaming head—itself like a grand piano on ridiculously spindly legs. And what a joy to be able to look at the Dalí in relative isolation! For me, this was the emblematic image of the whole exhibition, a painting that had transformed my hitherto slightly jaundiced view of Dalí. The image depicted the essence of a surreal house—a cavernous cranium, home to the unconscious domain of the ir-

rational. Around the corner from the Dalí I included a film of Koolhaas and OMA's jaw-droppingly surreal Villa Dall'Ava (1985–91) in Paris, which perches on 16 giraffe-leg-thin pilotis. Next, perhaps my favorite moment in the whole exhibition, one I was drawn to again and again: the pairing of Giorgio de Chirico's *The Evil Genius of a King* (1914–15) with Jean Luc Godard's film *Le Mépris* (1963). The latter includes a clip of Curzio Malaparte's Casa Malaparte (1938–42), a perfect exemplar of a surreal house, and a lingering shot of Brigitte Bardot and Jack Palance kissing in the window added the necessary *amour fou*. Elsewhere on the upper level, a meditative calm pervaded rooms that expanded variously on themes related to the erotic, the womb, the box, the ruin, and the cut. The penultimate room, with the theme of Blasted Architecture, brought together Duchamp's *Bottle Rack* (1914/64), Man Ray's *Objet mathématique* (1934–36), Elsa von Freytag Loringhoven's *Limbswish* (1917–18), Coop Himmelbl(1)au's *Villa Rosa* (1967), and Paul Thek's *Uncle Tom's Cabin with the Tower of Babel* (1976). Picking up again on the Keaton film from the beginning, the somewhat bleak endnote was the final scene of Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* (1986), in which the protagonist burns down his hauntingly beautiful *dacha* in an attempt to save the world from nuclear annihilation.

What I think *The Surreal House* came to reveal and ultimately celebrate was that most slippery of Surrealist ideas, the “marvellous,” defined by the Surrealists as that which turns the world upside down, making the irrational real. Underpinning the whole project was the idea that *the house* was a reflection of the sentient and injured body—a body traumatized by war and informed by psychoanalysis.



Louise Bourgeois
No Exit, 1989
Wood, painted metal, and rubber
82 1/2 x 84 x 96 in. (209.6 x 213.4 x 243.8 cm)
Fondation Louis Vuitton pour la Création, Paris

Kathrin
Rhomberg

6th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art
installation view, Berlin, 2010,
showing works by Adolph Menzel at
the Alte Nationalgalerie

art-world trends of overproduction, overabundance, and overwhelmingness, and, like the works themselves, allowed the artistic impulse only as much space as was necessary to make reality visible. The principle of blank spaces and reduction aimed at creating an imaginary and reflexive space for art and its viewers. This space was not bound to the idea of the white cube or the black box, which aspire to *exclude* everyday life and the world. The 6th Berlin Biennale aspired to comprehend the world, to refer viewers back to the world and what is waiting outside.

Is it possible that the exhibition, with this turn toward the reality of art not as an end in itself but as a means of appropriating reality, could address a crisis? Perhaps more historical distance is necessary. The strong reactions to reality as the focus and purpose of art (agreement on the part of some, and vehement rejection on the part of some others), as well as to the exhibition itself, lead one to believe that the biennale touched on something that bears further investigation. This includes not only the question of the relationship between art and reality, but also reflection on new exhibition models that oppose our contemporary logic of exploitation and consumption, and in so doing create a space for reflection and action that is required for art to develop its own unique potential.

Translated from the German by Christopher Jenkin-Jones

Notes

1. Luisa Ziaja and Nora Sternfeld, *Fotografie und Wahrheit* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2010): 23.
2. The exhibition of Menzel's works was curated by Michael Fried.



ENDNOTE



Tara McDowell

While preparing this issue of *The Exhibitionist*, an e-flux appeared in my inbox with this announcement: “In its 66 day run, *10,000 Lives*: The 8th Gwangju Biennale—organized by the Gwangju Biennale Foundation and Directed by Massimiliano Gioni—has welcomed 491,697 paying visitors. If you missed it, you can now download the entire short guide, photographic documentation and watch the entire show online.” Below this were links to the three aforementioned documentary components: a PDF of the exhibition’s short guide, which included an introduction by the curator, a map of the exhibition, and short descriptions of each artist’s work; the organizers’ online dropbox of hundreds of images of individual pieces as installed in the exhibition; and, most interestingly, YouTube videos providing a virtual tour of each of the biennale’s main spaces.

The digital sharing of the biennale experience was prompted by the organizers’ recognition that “Gwangju is not exactly around the corner,” and thus many interested parties had probably missed the exhibition. Such a practical reality is echoed in the Curators’ Favorites section of this issue, in which two of the three exhibitions selected were never seen by the curators writing about them. For WHW, *Innovations in Croatian Art in the 1970s* has become a “phantomlike source of information,” and Victoria Noorthoorn writes of being “haunted” by *Chambres d’Amis*. What does it mean to be so profoundly impacted by a project that one has never actually experienced?

A four-by-six-inch screen-resolution YouTube video of course pales in comparison with

the immediacy of personally visiting a show, and the catalogue may retain its place of prominence as the official document of an exhibition. But the Gwangju Biennale’s impulse to share documentation of its undertaking with the world seems right, and utterly of our time. The show’s focus on the circulation and collisions of images is also of our time, and so lends itself well to the infinite afterlife—phantomlike or ghostly—of its reproduced traces.

We are in a moment in which there is an urgency to writing a history of exhibitions, but the methods for writing these histories are not yet congealed, or even all out on the table. Writing this history—what to include, how to include it—should occur in dialogue with another uncertain, shifting terrain: how to document current exhibitions. Memory tends to be more spatial than temporal, as Proust and others have shown us, and mnemonic devices are often imagistic. Could the documentation of an exhibition somehow write back in the temporal aspect of memory, even in all its fits and starts? Could video serve this purpose? I imagine an embodied video tour that moves through a space, giving future curatorial archaeologists some sense of how its argument unfolded in time and space. Having such documents on hand for posterity would likely alter how we remember exhibitions—for those of us who walked through them and for those of us who didn’t. But in the face of new technologies capable of thoroughly documenting an exhibition and bringing it into our homes (or onto our laptops), it will be crucial to allow misrecognition and myth—so fundamental to our memories of art unseen—to persist and retain value.

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