

**PERSONAL STRUCTURES**  
**CULTURE·MIND·BECOMING**  
**LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2013**

PALAZZO BEMBO · PALAZZO MORA · PALAZZO MARCELLO

## COLOPHON

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# PERSONAL STRUCTURES

Curated by  
Francesca Crudo  
Sarah Gold  
Carol Rolla  
Valeria Romagnini

# PERSONAL STRUCTURES

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

**The making of PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013**  
In 2002 the Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer initiated the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, an open platform, where artists can present their work and thoughts in exhibitions, symposia and publications.

While exhibiting in Asia, North America and Europe, Rietmeyer met several other artists who were also working with Time, Space and Existence. These encounters made it feel logical to bring these artists together in a try to make the more philosophical topics “en vogue” in the world of contemporary art. Beginning in 1999, Rietmeyer contacted several artists and explained his ideas to create a project with them and in 2002 he had brought together a loose grouping of “young” artists from different parts of the world.

The project title was chosen as a reaction upon the exhibition *Primary Structures* from 1966, of the ‘minimalists’ Donald Judd, Carl Andre and others, who, at that time, were claiming to create ‘non-subjective’ art; art without the “touch” of the artist; non-personal. Rietmeyer however claims his work is subjective, ‘personal’. His Boxes, as well as all other artworks are PERSONAL STRUCTURES.

In 2003 the first book “Personal Structures: Works and Dialogues” was published, containing interviews with 16 artists by the German art-historian Peter Lodermeier and exhibitions were held in Japan, USA, the Netherlands, Austria, Hungary and Germany. The first symposium was organized at the Ludwig Museum in Germany; the project became larger and more complex.

Rietmeyer, who did all of the organization by himself, needed assistance and started looking for a curator.

In February 2005 I, Sarah, met Rene Rietmeyer at the Rotterdam Art Fair. I had just finished my Masters in Art History and I was working as an assistant curator for the Caldic Collection in the Netherlands. Rene gave me a copy of “Personal Structures: Works and Dialogues” and told me to contact him. I was 26 years old at the time and this seemed an interesting opportunity: to be able to organize exhibitions and have the chance to work at an international top level. We started to cooperate.

Rene liked the idea of organizing more symposia, where artists can speak for themselves, and wanted to publish the spoken thoughts in significant publications. We felt that there was a necessity to do so; according to our opinion words from a direct source give a better insight than interpretations of an art historian. So we decided to ask artists whether they would be interested to participate in future symposia which we were to organize.

On 1 July 2006, when Rene and I were on our way to Moordrecht in the Netherlands for an erotic evening, Rene explained to me why Time, Space and Existence are the most fundamental subjects he can think of and that they are essential for his work. Time, Space and Existence not only seem to be the most interesting philosophical subjects of mankind, but probably even long before these topics were discussed under a Greek olive tree, the thoughts about these concepts have been visualized in art works. So,

driving in the car, we decided to continue to organize symposia, to which we would invite artists. Shortly after, one evening whilst sitting in a bathtub, we decided to separate the topics, organizing a symposium about Time in Amsterdam, Space in New York City, and Existence in Tokyo.

We were able to arrange a symposium and exhibition date at the oldest art society in Amsterdam, Arti et Amicitiae. However, to get heard with a group of young artists was not easy. Better would be to ‘glue’ some others to the project who already established a name for themselves. Over the years, Rene had met in Japan a.o. Lawrence Weiner and Joseph Kosuth and both liked the idea to speak about Time.

That winter, 2006-2007 we stayed in Miami Beach, Florida, USA, where at that time Rene had one of his studios. Besides some exhibitions we had organized in Florida, we had to be present at the art fair in Miami, in order to earn extra money to finance our project. The finances would solely have to come out of the sales of Rene’s artworks.

As usual money was scarce, but we started nevertheless, and back in Europe, we had a meeting with Joseph Kosuth in Vienna, Austria. Besides contributing to our Time symposium, Joseph said that he would be interested in coming to Tokyo and speak about Existence. He suggested to organize the symposium in 2008 during Sakura, the cherry blossom time.

But before going to Japan, we had to realise our first symposium in Amsterdam, which was scheduled for 15 and 16 June 2007. One month before that symposium, I, Karlyn, joined into the project—after responding to an ad on the website of Leiden University in the Netherlands, where I was doing a Research Master in Art History at that time. With the upcoming symposium series, Sarah and Rene knew the project would be expanding even more and were therefore looking for an additional curator. It

was 14 May when I met them for the first time and I immediately took my chance to become part of PERSONAL STRUCTURES.

The day of the symposium came. Lawrence Weiner, Roman Opalka, Jo Baer, Henk Peeters, Klaus Honnef... It was very special to bring all these sincere people together and to hear them speak about the passing of time. Now, almost two years after the death of Roman Opalka and the death of Henk Peeters last week, it feels even more special.

After the Amsterdam symposium, we kept in contact while I, Karlyn, finished my studies and went to Italy for three months, to work at the Venice Biennale. I remember well, that one evening in September 2007, the three of us met in Venice. While walking over the quay along the Bridge of Sighs to San Marco square, we spoke about the future. Sarah and I had just visited some Biennale exhibitions together and discussed the possibility of organising our own PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition some day as an official part of the Biennale. At that time, it was just a dream.

All our money went always into our project, the interviews, the symposia; we could only survive because the Belgian collector, Andre Carez, bought a large installation from Rene’s work. In March 2008, we flew to Tokyo together. Google had showed us that in Tokyo the cherry blossom time was most likely to begin in the first week of April, and we were able to get a symposium date scheduled at the Setagaya Art Museum for 2 and 3 April 2008.

We had rented a traditional Japanese house with sliding doors, paper walls and an old Japanese toilet and bath system. Japan was a completely different experience. During the whole period when we were in Japan preparing our symposium, it had been very cold and wet and the trees did not show any sign that they were to blossom soon. Also, for some weeks we had not heard from Joseph Kosuth. I, Sarah, was very happy when on 31 March, my cell phone rang and I heard Joseph saying “I am in Tokyo, let’s

meet". The next day, out of nowhere, the cherry blossoms opened up everywhere: Sakura had started.

The two days of the symposium were unusual. We were unable to understand most of the contributions because our speakers mainly spoke Japanese. Also we noticed that what we consider to be logic is not universal. All the more, we were confirmed that also these—for us often unusual—points of view are very interesting and need to be heard just like other opinions that might be more conform our own point of view.

What we remember most from those two days was Toshikatsu Endo, who represented Existence merely by the sound of his voice and his being—and the lunch breaks with everybody eating sushi in the museum park under the cherry blossoms. In the metro on the way back to our Japanese house, discussing Endo's speech and his interest in Hermann Nitsch, we decided to minimize our own judgements and document artistic achievements regardless our own personal visual taste. To enrich our project also with artists whose works visually seemed very different, but who are clearly concerned with Time, Space and Existence, in their own personal way. Shortly after we would have the first contact with Nitsch.

Broke as usual we went back to the USA. We recovered financially, but in September 2008 the art-world almost came to a financial standstill. Different people advised us that it would be wise to postpone the last symposium and the printing of our book PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME-SPACE-EXISTENCE number 1, but we felt that if we would do that, we might never be able to continue. So, all of us decided not to stop, but spend privately as little money as possible and continue to give this project our best efforts, the maximum of our capabilities.

For meetings with possible speakers for our New York symposium we drove by car from Miami to New York. On the road we discussed more in detail also another facet of PERSONAL STRUCTURES that would run parallel to our exhibitions and symposia: the series of Art

Projects. We wanted to make special edition books of documented Art Projects, to centralize the work and ideas of specific artists; to be involved and learn from the inside what their work is about. We had already started with the On Kawara project, and we were now trying to create projects with Lawrence Weiner, Roman Opalka, Joseph Kosuth, Hermann Nitsch, Hamish Fulton and Lee Ufan.

Our next symposium about SPACE was held on 3 and 4 April 2009 in the New Museum in New York. Although Sarah and Rene were not able to join because the US immigration considered speaking at your own symposium to be work and they had no work permit, with serious contributions from a.o. Richard Tuttle, Keith Sonnier, Peter Halley and Robert Barry, the New York symposium became a great success.

Now we had completed three symposia and had recorded a lot of spoken text. It was time to settle down somewhere in Europe in order to finish our publication. Rene had been invited to participate at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale, therefore we decided to rent in May 2009 an apartment in Venice. Also, we had been asked to organize a small symposium during the opening of the Biennale, we invited a.o. Marina Abramović. Being so closely involved, we learned several aspects of the Venice Biennale.

It took us several months of non-stop work, but in October 2009 we completed the publication PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME-SPACE-EXISTENCE number 1 and it became time for new projects. Rene, Sarah and I had started living together in Venice and the idea of organizing an exhibition as part of the Venice Biennale came to the foreground again. With hundred thousands of visitors, it seemed the right surroundings to pursue our wish to create a more widespread awareness about Time, Space and Existence.

In the years since we had joined PERSONAL STRUCTURES, Sarah and I had, however, never really organized a very large and complex exhibition. The city of Bregenz in Austria gave us the chance 'to learn', and in January 2010 we organized an exhibition

there, presenting 27 artists. It became a wonderful exhibition in a large beautiful Palais and although not many people visited our exhibition, we learned a lot.

After the opening in Bregenz, we drove to the Netherlands and met with Lawrence Weiner for our first PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECT: we stayed 24 hours on his boat Joma in Amsterdam. Having survived the cold and experienced Lawrence, we returned to Venice where we took the first steps toward our own Biennale exhibition: an appointment with Paolo Scibelli, director of Collateral Events at La Biennale. It was a very promising meeting. He gave us all possible support and said: "First, you need a space."

There was this Palazzo which had the potential to fulfil Sarah's and my dreams: a prime location, a beautiful building with a rich history and the potential of an incredible exhibition space: Palazzo Bembo. However, there were some difficult aspects: the rent was very high and the building was in a very bad condition, but nevertheless we loved it.

In May 2010 we went to Naples in Italy for our second Art Project with Hermann Nitsch, in which we were crucified and 'fed' blood. It was an intense week, with many unusual experiences. Immediately after that we needed a break and the three of us drove with our old car to Sicily. There, overlooking the Mediterranean, we decided to continue also privately together, and, although we did not have the money for it, to take the risk and to rent Palazzo Bembo.

But before we could start our Venice project, we got a unique opportunity: our third Art Project with Roman Opalka. We could document a day in his life, while the minutes were ticking away. From Sicily, we drove almost directly through to Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, the house and studio of Opalka, two hours South-West from Paris, France. It was very unique, to watch him paint and to hear him speak his numbers in Polish. To see the emotion in his face and his body, it was very special.

Back in Venice, we started step-by-step the process of securing Palazzo Bembo for our exhibition. By the end of October 2010, the first artist came to see the space: Roman Opalka. The Palazzo was still in a disastrous condition. But Opalka seemed to have 'Venice experience' and said that this was quite 'normal'. Days later, we explained Joseph Kosuth our plans for Venice in his Rome studio. He did not say "yes", but he did not say "no" either. Instead, he suggested to, just in case, reserve a space for him. And after all deadlines had past, Kosuth wrote us "...in any case, do know that I will participate in your show. This is what I've been wanting to tell you." Shortly after, Lee Ufan was to visit Venice. He climbed over scaffolds, slid through narrow hallways, until he chose a 'corner room', which he wanted to cover with white marble split on the floor, combining it with a painting and a 'medium size' stone. And in between, we had to drive to Austria, where we visited Nitsch in Prinzenhof to show him our special edition "HERMANN NITSCH: UNDER MY SKIN" and proposed our idea for PSAP #05 to Arnulf Rainer.

With the upcoming deadline for the Biennale application, the organizational work became more intense. We had no 'Venice experience' yet and there were many new aspects we had to deal with, they all seemed necessary steps in order to get to where we are today. At the end of December 2010, we were 'prepared' for the Biennale, but we needed money urgently. With the help of the collector Andre Carez, Sarah was able to place several of Rene's installations by different collectors. Now, we were financially stable enough to start losing money again on our Palazzo Bembo project.

At the beginning of January 2011, the three of us went to Tenerife for our fifth Art Project. As requested by Arnulf Rainer, we had made photos, on our bed, showing us 'veil dancing' together, naked. After giving Rainer the photos, he had new requests, many more requests, and he did not stop until today. He understood that with the two of us, he could live out all his artistic fantasies. Unfinished into Death.

It had taken eight months of negotiations, until we finally signed the lease contract for Palazzo Bembo in February 2011. Looking back, the way we financed our project was very unusual, we had to do everything necessary and we still wonder how we financially survived this. Fortunately, we also got a lot of support from the artists, especially those who knew our project well and who had already worked with us before, were very generous. Lee Ufan for example allowed us to sell one of his paintings whereby giving his share to our GlobalArtAffairs Foundation. Hermann Nitsch and Arnulf Rainer made editions with us from the art works that came forth out of our Art Projects. The money earned with selling these PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART EDITIONS came also to the benefit of our Foundation.

In the weeks before the opening several artists came to Palazzo Bembo to create their work: Yuko Sakurai arrived from Paris, Judy Millar from New Zealand, SASAKI came from Los Angeles, Toshikatsu Endo from Tokyo, Andrew Putter from Cape Town and Johannes Girardon from New York. They all came to create their individual installations. Rene painted his Boxes in his room and finished just before the arrival of his intellectual 'sparring partner' Joseph Kosuth. Lee Ufan came to place his stone, painting and metal plate and arranged the lighting. Everybody came to Palazzo Bembo: Peter Halley, Arnulf Rainer, herman de vries and Tatsuo Miyajima, all seemingly from different worlds. Encounters between artists who had never met before or had not seen each other for many years. It was beautiful to see our exhibition grow with the active participation of all these artists.

During the exhibition, we were present every day to speak with everybody about PERSONAL STRUCTURES; it was fantastic to see over 70,000 visitors coming to see our exhibition. Ministers, presidents, Trustees from many different museums, such as from the Guggenheim New York, K21 Düsseldorf, the Städel Museum Frankfurt and Fumio Nanjo with the Board members from the Mori Art Museum Tokyo, and many more. Besides the enormous

financial pressure, we had a glorious time: a Palazzo on the Grand Canal by the Rialto bridge, an exhibition with world-class artists and artworks, and wonderful reviews in the press. Particularly special was the day we had organized a brunch for Andre Carez and his friends from Belgium, who had financially rescued us last December. While we were drinking a Bellini on the balcony overlooking the Grand Canal, the collector Gerhard Lenz and Roman Opalka joined us. It would be the last time we would see Roman before he died a few weeks later on 6 August 2011.

In the meantime, we had established a good relationship with the owner of Palazzo Bembo and we had created an excellent operational team, mainly students from the University of Venice, amongst them Davide De Carlo and Valeria Romagnini. With such a great team, a flexible Palazzo owner, a perfect location in Venice and an excellent exhibition space, we decided to continue with 'our' Palazzo.

A large art exhibition in 2013 and 2015 seemed very well possible, but 2012 and 2014 looked much more complicated. It were Manuela Lucà-Dazio and Paolo Scibelli, the two directors from La Biennale who encouraged us to organize also an exhibition during the Architecture Biennale. The idea of including architects in our project had been often thought about, especially in 2009 when we organized our symposium about SPACE in the New Museum in New York.

An exhibition with a similar setup as PERSONAL STRUCTURES was a logical choice: exhibiting architects of many different countries, combining young and upcoming with well-established architects. We also invited the Chinese artist Ying Tianqi, who in his artworks often uses architectural 'ruins' to question subjects such as the passing of time and our relationship to the past. With the help of Valeria Romagnini in the organisation, the exhibition became an interesting cross-over between art and architecture presented by 57 architects, raising all types of questions about time, space and architecture that were also actively discussed in a symposium about Chinese Art and Architecture on 28 August 2012.

With Davide De Carlo and Nicolas D'Oronzio, who had joined in January 2012, now overseeing all works needed at Palazzo Bembo, and them even handling the 'Venice International Performance Art Week' which we hosted in December 2012, we could begin with the organisation of our new Art Biennale exhibition. We started exploring the art world also with the help of Google, looking for artists 'hidden' in 'far away' parts of the world, but who are also sincerely concerned with Time, Space and Existence. With the help of several artists, we managed to find financial support from governmental institutions and all kinds of different sponsors. Since I, Karlyn, had re-started to paint, I wanted to be present in the exhibition as an artist and I would be responsible for the catalogue and the next big book, while Valeria and Sarah would curate the exhibition together with Francesca Crudo and Carol Rolla, who both had joined our Foundation in September 2012. It were tough months for them filled with endless emails and telephone calls, but on 15 December 2012, we handed in our proposal for a new PERSONAL STRUCTURES 2013 exhibition to La Biennale.

Having now some 'Venice experience', we decided that besides organising our own PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition, we would expand our organisation and host five other exhibitions during the 2013 Venice Biennale, with which we hopefully will earn enough money to pay for our own exhibition and publications and whereby we can give many more young people a chance to get involved in the art-world.

In the meantime, we have published our sixth Art Project, with Lee Ufan, and PSAP #07 Ben Vautier and hopefully PSAP #08 Yoko Ono are in the making. From the beginning of our series of Art Projects it was clear to us that we did not want to only publish them in exclusive limited editions. To make our projects available to a larger public, at least an excerpt had to be printed in our next 'Big Red Book': PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, number 2. For this publication again all artists were very supportive: Marina Abramović, Otto Piene, Arata Isozaki, Li Chen

and Carl Andre all gave last-minute interviews, to make sure that this book can be ready and printed before the opening of the Venice Biennale 2013.

We, Rene, Sarah and Karlyn, are living the PERSONAL STRUCTURES project. And like us, like our lives, the project develops, keeps changing. This exhibition is therefore different from our 2011 Venice Biennale exhibition, and of course, if we would have tried harder or if the situation of the past 3 years would have been different, we might have been able to do 'better' or include more artists, but at the moment this is what it is: PERSONAL STRUCTURES at the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, at Palazzo Bembo.



# PERSONAL STRUCTURES THE ARTISTS

Palazzo Bembo

# CHUL HYUN AHN

By Virginia K. Adams

## Clear Your Mind, Contemplate Infinity:

### Chul-Hyun Ahn's Meditation Boxes

Chul-Hyun Ahn combines plywood, cinder block, mirrors and lights in arrangements that focus vision and quiet the mind. The wall pieces are contained within shallow rectangular or square wooden boxes into which Ahn places both a one-way and a two-way mirror that face each other at varying angles, to produce an endless reciprocal reflection of lights installed within the boxes. Drawn to the glowing depths, the viewer experiences the sensation of looking into limitless space that is defined by receding repetitions of the pattern of lights. The floor pieces, encased in cinder block walls about 20 inches high, contain mirrors and lights in configurations that offer the dizzying optical and bodily sensations of gazing into a deep well or tunnel. Ahn uses industrial fluorescent tubes or round incandescent lights. The tubes are either left white or wrapped with colored transparent films to emit an array of primary or secondary colors.

The celebratory era of combining art and technology during the 1920s involved experimentation with human perception and relationships of space and time. Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy, whose theoretical writings and art projects emblemized the period, observed that, "In an industrial age, the distinction between art and non-art, between manual craftsmanship and mechanical technology is no longer an absolute one. Neither painting nor photography, the motion pictures nor light-display can be any longer jealously separated from each other."<sup>1</sup> Interested in examining spatial perception, and understanding that perception involves not only vision, but, also, the experience of movement and light, Moholy-Nagy constructed a series

of Plexiglas "space modulators" through which lights cast shadows onto surrounding walls. The artist's *Light Projection for an Electric Stage* (1922-30) was a motorized modulator comprised of steel, wood and plastic screens that employed light to create moving patterns, thus adding the dimension of time to the viewing experience.

Recent comprehensive exhibitions of light-based art have demonstrated the panoply of ways that artists have used light as a medium since the experiments of the 1920s, and, particularly, since the 1960s. Consider, for example, the neon texts of Joseph Kosuth and Bruce Nauman; laser and light projections onto architectural surfaces and outdoor spaces, such as Andreas Kaufman's *Ortlos* (1996), an image projected onto a gasometer at Oberhausen; Stefan Sous's *UV-A UV-B* (2002), 14 lighted park benches in the Hofgarten in Düsseldorf; and Keith Sonnier's *Ba-O Ba Berlin* (2002), a light installation at the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin.<sup>2</sup>

An art of light and space combined with technology emerged in Los Angeles in the 1960s. Perhaps the most well-known examples are the works of Robert Irwin and James Turrell, who have produced environments from artificial and natural light that envelop viewers and play upon all aspects of the human sensorium. Turrell's *Afrum Proto* series, begun in 1966, employs a quartz halogen projector to project light into a corner, resulting in a cube of light that appears to hover in space. That artist's *Spectral Wedgework* series, including *Milk Run II* (1997), places transparent neon-lighted screens against angled walls, obliterating visual cues that would enable viewers to gauge their positions within the space. Since the early nineties, Olafur

Eliasson has created intermedia environments filled with light, water, air currents and other natural elements, combined with technology, that have profound optical and bodily impact. *Weather project* (2003), installed in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern in London, employed monofrequency lights, projection foil, a haze machine, mirror foil, aluminum and scaffolding.<sup>3</sup> Eliasson has stated: "You see whatever you're looking at, but you also see the way you're seeing."<sup>4</sup>

Ahn's light and mirror constructions present optical illusions that draw on some of the ideas regarding perception and technology that underlie light and space art of earlier decades, yet they capture and confound vision in a unique way. Ahn's geometric arrangements of fluorescent tubes prompt thoughts of the work of installation artist Dan Flavin, whose geometric patterns of white and colored fluorescent tubes reflect into the spaces they occupy and onto the viewer. Ahn's mirrored light boxes evidence some attributes of 1960s minimal art: spare geometry, lack of obvious surface finish, visible electrical connections, and a demand that viewers interact physically with floor pieces by walking around and leaning over to gaze into their depths.

But Ahn's art does not fit comfortably into any of these earlier contexts. Although the artist acknowledges connections to Flavin's light installations, as well as to borrowing some minimalist vocabulary, he arrived at his current praxis from different directions. Trained as a painter in his native Korea, Ahn started by painting geometric images of tubular structures. An interest in adding a third dimension resulted in his combining mirrors with paintings. The combination of mirrors and color then led to Ahn's translation of two-dimensional painting into a three-dimensional art of light, space and technology.

On a deeper level, the artist's combination of lights and mirrors has a more spiritual goal. The illusion of depth that Ahn's constructions present offers an intentional opportunity for meditation. His interest in the practice of meditation includes ideas of endlessness, infinity and emptiness. In fact, notions of the void are reflected in the titles of some of his works: *Infinite Blue*, *Blue Landscape*, *Infinite Red/Purple*, *Well*, *Tunnel*, *Visual Echo Experiment and Emptiness*. In Zen Buddhism, enlightenment,

or finding one's way back to an original divine state, requires relinquishing worldly and external things, including emotions and desires. Meditation is the path to this state: "Through meditation, the individual becomes capable of stopping the flow of thought, of becoming empty of thought and thereby attaining a state of consciousness that enables him to recognize emptiness in all the materialization in which the divine is preserved, Nirvana, the great nothingness."<sup>5</sup>

Meditation is enhanced by reducing visual and mental stimulation. The mental effects of severely reduced visual stimulation have been studied in perceptual psychology, beginning in the 1930s with Gestalt psychology. The *Ganzfeld* (in German, "the entire field") describes the lowest level of visual stimulation, such as the light environments of Robert Irwin and James Turrell.

Chul-Hyun Ahn's works, as well, present visual fields without identifiable imagery or landmarks, but they offer themselves to viewers in a different way and create quite another kind of experience. Ahn's meditation boxes entice viewers to look deeply into framed environments that offer illusions of infinity, invite quiet contemplation, and provide opportunities to forget the world around them.

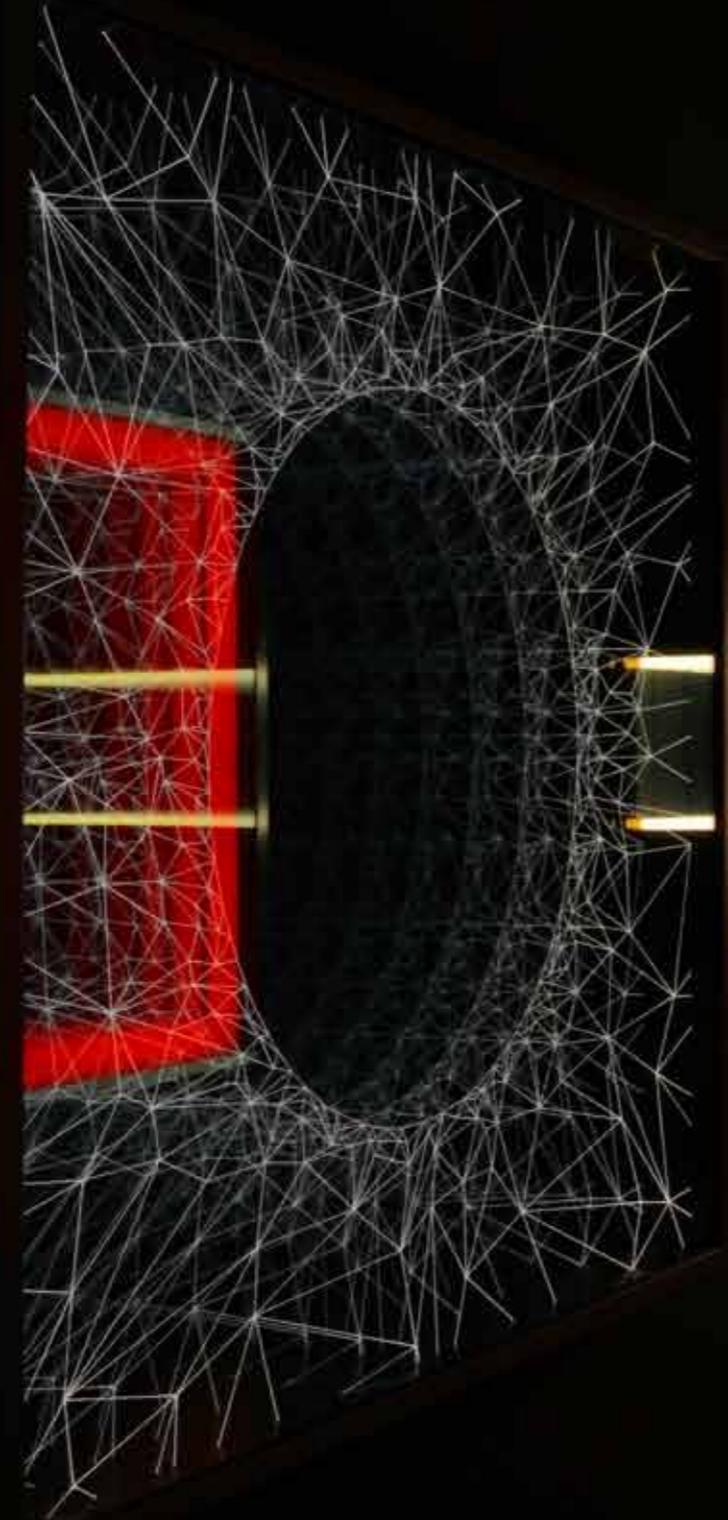
<sup>1</sup> László Moholy-Nagy, *Abstract of an Artist*, in *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist* (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1947), 57.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Christoph Brockhaus, ed., *Stadlicht-Lichtkunst*, exh. cat. (Duisburg: Stiftung Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum-Zentrum Internationaler Skulptur, 2004); and Peter Weibel and Gregor Jansen, ed., *Light Art from Artificial Light: Light as a Medium in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Art*, exh. cat. (Karlsruhe: ZKM/Museum for Contemporary Art, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Madeleine Grynsztejn, (*Y*)our Entanglements: Olafur Eliasson, The Museum, and Consumer Culture, in *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*, ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Olafur Eliasson, *Take Your Time: A Conversation Olafur Eliasson and Robert Irwin*, in Grynsztejn, *Take Your Time*, 55.

<sup>5</sup> Annelie Lütgens, *Spirit-Image-Sound*, in *Japan and the West: The Filled Void*, ed. Annelie Lütgens, Julia Wallner and Anja Westermann, exh. cat. (Wolfsburg: Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2007), 236. See, also, James H. Austin, M.D., *Zen and the Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).



# YOSHITAKA AMANO

By Victoria Lu

## Prophet of New Animamix Art – Yoshitaka Amano

Will Modern Art, as it enters a new century, usher in a new kind of aesthetic movement? In my own search, I have noticed that all over the world, there are artists who seem to be influenced by comics, cartoons and animation and use the distorted figures as tools of their expression. Slowly these artists are forming a new art trend with these figurative languages. Animation and comics are two different words in English, but in contemporary Chinese, they are quite often used together. Hence, I have combined ‘animation’ and ‘comics’ to create *Animamix* as their name for this new development in Contemporary Art. Whether animation or comics, the maturation of this concept and form all took place at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The artist Yoshitaka Amano is one of the most important pioneers in this movement internationally.

Yoshitaka Amano was born in 1952 in Shizuoka City in Japan. He started his career as character designer in 1967 for popular animation films such as *Gatchaman (G-Force)*, *Hutch The Honey Bee* and *The Time Bokan* series. Later, he began his second career as an illustrator for magazines in the early 80's. The many films and books he participated in creating made him immensely popular in Japan, and the characters he created later brought him international recognition. His ever changing role seemed to make him a prophet in the creative art world. Amano took a new position in creating visual concept designs for game software in 1987, and developed the aesthetic of the *Final Fantasy* franchise, making it one of the most successful games of all time. His imagination seemed limitless. Amano even expanded to designing

stages and costumes, creating stained glass art works, and producing limited edition lithographic prints. All of his previous experiences with animation films, book illustrations and prints provided a rich background for Amano to delve into painting. In 1997, he established his own studio in New York, enabling him to continue his creative ventures in many different areas.

One may find that the eccentric beauties or heroes in Amano's artworks are often cross-cultural. These strange, fantastical characters rouse a riotous intersection of reality and virtual reality. The caricatures in Amano's artworks, that look extraterrestrial or prehistoric, have encountered a new reality that exists within the imaginative world. He crosses time zones and borderlines into fictional spaces that results from his abundant science fiction illustrations. The eyes in Amano's paintings are often over exaggerated as if they are looking at the viewers from another world. The emphasized quality of lines is significant for Amano's art works because these are the traces of his hands; this is the evidence of his presence. Like many animators or comic artists, infusing artworks with personal narrations is an important aspect of the work. He is one of the very few *Animamix* artists who enjoy equal fame in the animation and fine art world. Being a fan, artist Takashi Murakami even sources some of his inspiration in Amano's creation, re-interpreting some of his iconic commercial works. Amano is a leading creative power in the new trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a trend that reaches beyond Japan, and he will easily become one of the most influential artists of our time.



## ALICE ANDERSON

ALICE ANDERSON'S TRAVELLING FACTORY invites people to interact with objects and public spaces utilising copper wire. This 'itinerant space' has a social and educative function to transmit memory. Calling on the audience to take part in collective sculptures, this performance lab works as an alternative center: a place establishing connections between people, worlds and communities that questions objects witnessing our time. ALICE ANDERSON'S TRAVELLING FACTORY was founded in September 2012 in London and continues from countries.



## JAN-ERIK ANDERSSON

By Yrjö Haila

Visual artist Jan-Erik Andersson (b. 1954) opens his presentation of the project *Life on a Leaf* on his internet home-page with the following question: "Have you ever wondered why among all these millions of box shaped buildings, you will never see a house shaped like a shoe, a flower or a leaf?" Well, who has? But let's first ask another question that is logically prior to the former one: Why should there be houses shaped like shoes, flowers, or leaves in the first place? Andersson has given his own answer to this question: "An environment in which people live well is also an ecologically good environment". For Andersson, crucial elements in shaping environments for people to live well include imagination and fantasy.

It is difficult not to take the actually existing houses we are surrounded with for granted. But this, exactly, is what Jan-Erik Andersson and his collaborator architect Erkki Pitkäranta advise us not to do. *Life on a Leaf*, the project for a private house and home of the Andersson family that was completed in the city of Turku in the summer of 2009, is a tangible invitation to give a second thought to the house.

Andersson and Pitkäranta established artist-architect duo Rosegarden in the mid-1990s. The house project *Life on a Leaf* was an adventure into the world of shaping urban space. What factors delimit the possibility space of constructing houses of unusual shapes? One set of constraints can be thought of as arising from practical concerns. Second, boxes are easier to construct than houses with more complicated shapes. Also, box-shaped houses are more conveniently filled with the type of furniture we westerners are accustomed to filling our houses with. However, the opposition against the house *Life on a Leaf* was not articulated using such boringly practical terms. At

stake was, as was claimed, a contrast between what is harmonious a priori and what is "irrational".

In fact, nothing less was at issue with the project *Life on a Leaf* than the creation of a new world. Houses not only provide space for inhabitants, they also create inhabitants. This idea gives depth to Andersson's view of the house as iconic space. In contrast to the modernist, abstract concept of space, Andersson and Pitkäranta have used figurative forms in the design such as the floor plan resembling a leaf and windows with the shapes of a leaf, a drop, lips, and heart.

Playfulness and nature had a formative role for the project *Life on a Leaf*. As regards the relationship between the interior of a house and nature outside, Andersson rejects the model offered by modernist houses that nature is an outsider, visible through the windows. Instead, he has brought similes of natural elements inside the house, in the shape of wall supports resembling tree trunks, and ornaments using natural forms. A sound work inside the house reacts to and brings over changes in wind and light taking place outside. A suite of artist colleagues, both Finns and from abroad, participated in designing and realizing ornamental artworks incorporated in the architectural structures of the house.

Creating the house was the core of the doctoral project of Jan-Erik Andersson at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. In the exhibition, Andersson introduces the house with video works and a book. One of the films sums up the building process, the other one presents life in the house through the eyes of Adrian who grew up together with the house.



## AXEL ANKLAM

By Erik Stephan

### **Nature beyond Nature**

Axel Anklam's sculptures are delicate drawings in space. Woven with fine meshes of steel they form nests, spirals, or labyrinths, then again, they are covered with coloured epoxy-membranes. And all of them seem to be sculptural evocations of an inherent, yet comprehensible geometry hidden in nature; surprising, assuring, and convincing us.

This sculptural lyricism that appears to be confirmed by nature itself is achieved in an intense act of balance: in an equilibrium of forces, mass encounters space, thus, creating a concerted interplay of abstract and organic means, open and eventful alike. Axel Anklam invents nature beyond nature. He abstracts the organic and composes architectures of lines and planes.

From these vibrating structures movement evolves credibly, striving for harmony. All this is fragile and open-ended, and, paradoxically, the very absence of any form of reinsuring worldly gravity enables Anklam to create well-balanced, steadfast and credible forms.



## ATELIER MORALES

### Tribute to Monet, a project by Atelier Morales

Our project is a tribute to Claude Monet and his Rouen Cathedral series, which the French impressionist painted from February 1892 to April 1893. This series consists of 20 selected paintings depicting the main façade of the cathedral at different times of the day and year, and reflecting changes in appearance and feelings towards the monument depending on variations of lighting conditions. Monet showed, at his gallery in Paris, an unprecedented experience: the relationships between space, time and existence through art.

Monet named each of his pictures according to the time of day and particular atmosphere surrounding the cathedral such as *A l'aube*, *Effet du matin*, *Plein midi*, *Soleil*, *Plein Soleil*, *Gray time*, *Harmonie brune*, and *Journée*. In this way, the viewer could see and appreciate both the different artists' mood in relation to his subject and the visual conditions transforming that particular space as time was changing.

*Tribute to Monet* expands the Monet experience through actual technologies such as digital photography and three-dimensional prints; it allows the spectator to feel, observe and analyze the urban space, the Pompidou art centre in Paris, as an architectural setting and a mental symbol. The viewer can observe simultaneously the changes of light, atmosphere, actions, and people in the space represented.

We are showing multiple large format images of the same space and buildings at Beaubourg area, taken at 20 overlapping times and periods of the year. The work has an evolving nature, each of its parts is marked with the date and time the photograph was taken; this

allows any image to be replaced by a new one whenever a collector acquires one or more. In other words, new dates and hours of the same image will be constantly filling the voids. Our artistic proposal consists in merging the different times of day in one work, instead of presenting each part on itself.

Monet chose a cathedral for his series, because of its religious significance and architecture in the admired Gothic style, at that time. We have chosen Pompidou art centre, a cultural symbol of communication for millions of people who visit it today. Museums in general have become an essential place for elevating and stabilizing our 21<sup>st</sup> Century existence.

At Palazzo Bembo the viewers will have the impression of travelling through this urban space at different moments in one moment.



# YIFAT BEZALEL

By Laura Gowen

Yifat Bezalel's work is essentially composed of pencil and ink drawings on paper or wood, installation, sculpture and video. Of a remarkable quality, Bezalel's drawings reveal a deep understanding and mastering of *chiaroscuro* and cross-hatching as expressive tools. The work departs from classical drawing and classical motifs, but the multiple layers of superimposed images that it comprises, engenders an abstract and complex image of nature. The disconnected and repeated images create an unreal and illegible space resulting in a sense of vertigo confounding the viewer's perception.

Bezalel approaches the process of drawing by translating intimate feelings into physical images while her chief concern with issues of space, fullness and emptiness become tangible. She manipulates the tension between the paper's white expanse and the delicate rendering of her characters, thus dramatising the fragile sense of self. Fragility and uncertainty are further manifested in Bezalel's manner of displaying her works, pinned simply to the wall or unravelled on the floor, whereas paper chains, stickers, silver touches seem to suggest connections between different worlds. Every drawing is a hybrid of different moments, creating movement and allowing access to parallel worlds and countless possibilities, through practical labouring and emotional presence. In her work Bezalel challenges the traditional divisions between interior and exterior, before and after, strong and fragile, valuable and worthless.

Beyond biographical readings, Bezalel's work tackles the larger questions and notions of time, space, existence, art making, temporality and the philosophical categories of nature and culture.

Her research engages with a deep reflection touching upon political, religious and philosophical aspects.

Children's books had a great influence in the work of Bezalel. The artist remembers being fascinated as a child by stories where heroines died or fell into deep or magical sleep and after a lengthy period of time awoke or were resurrected. Growing older, she found herself drawn more and more not so much into the lives of the heroines before or after their "sleep", but to the sleep or temporary death itself, that elusive period of time that you cannot grasp, similar to the moment of the passage from daylight to twilight, which the artist finds akin to Alice in Wonderland's falling into a hole leading to a parallel world.

*Alice In Wonderland* is a recurring theme that Bezalel has developed in a series of drawings since 2002, featuring reworkings of Tenniel's Alice, disconnected from the stories and placed in alternative landscapes. Her interest in Alice is focused on the fall down the rabbit hole, a place of limbo where 'nothing' has an almost tangible form.

"I have often asked myself what keeps attracting me to those places of death, limboes and 'other worlds' and my tentative answer would be that I grew up and still live in a place where death is always present." (Bezalel, 2011)

The yearning for a pure state of nature is at the centre of Bezalel's work. Works like *Mesira (Transmission)*, showing a classical figure inspired by a Bernini sculpture depicted in a sort of limbo stage, in ecstasy, just before reaching infinity, yearning for something, or *Wild*

*Nobleman*, showing horses running in an attempt to break out of the paper, become representations of a romantic state of mind of natural wildness in a hardly identifiable complex mental space. These are moments of revelation and deep understanding, brief, evanescent, fleeting moments that art allows to preserve for longer.

The artist has been greatly influenced by Jean Jaques Rousseau whose, "meditations on nature and wandering have illuminated the path of my own quest and filled me with a sense of belonging." (Bezalel, 2010)

For *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* Bezalel has conceived a drawing and video installation entitled *Asher Ehey (I Shall Be The One That I Shall Be)*, 2013, based on one of Magritte's famous paintings from his *The Lovers* series (1928) and a documentary photograph entitled *The Guardians* (somewhere in the north of Israel, ca 1938). The latter portrays a couple of anonymous protagonists guarding a settlement in pre-independent Palestine; early Zionists driven by the idealistic vision of Jewish patriotism, and the establishment of a socialist community in the ancestral Jewish land.

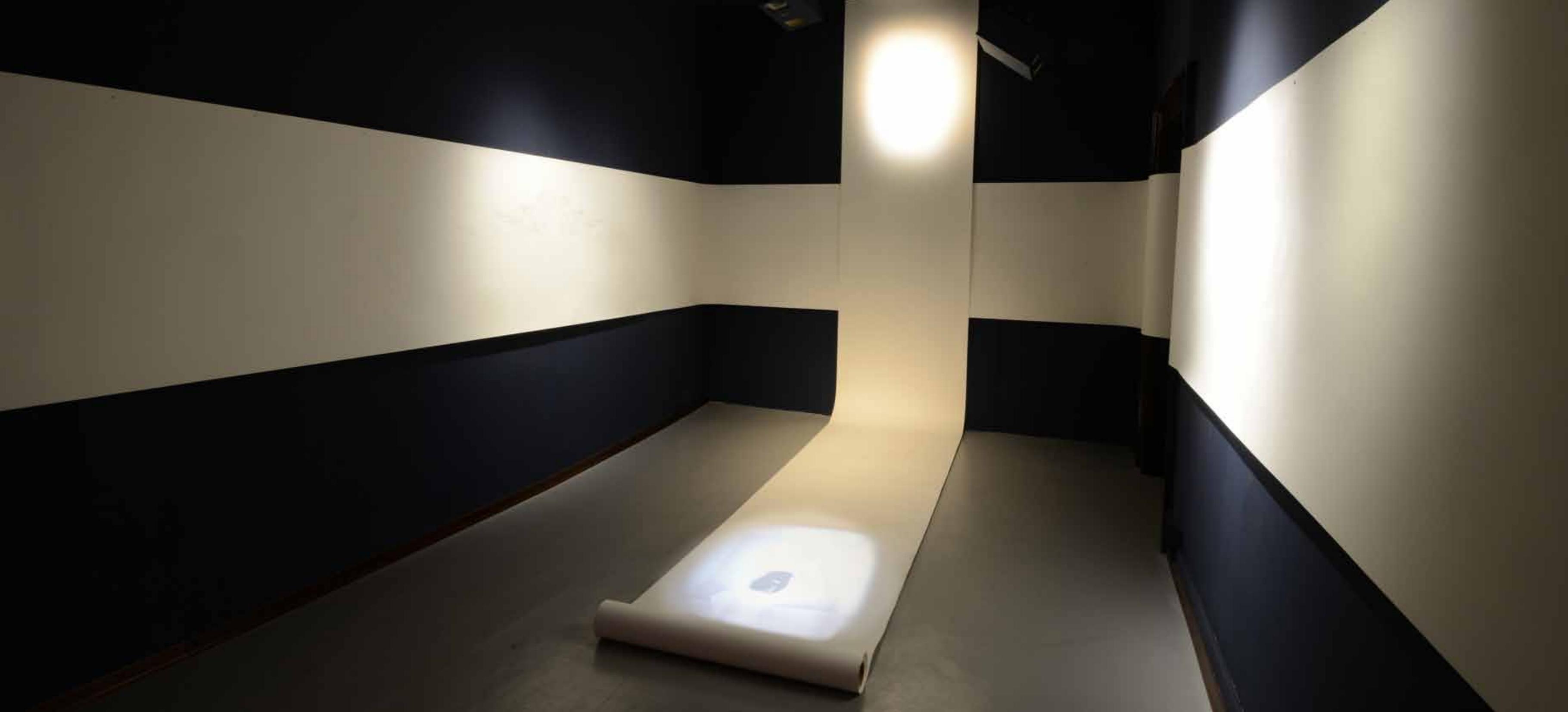
Both couples' heads are covered with fabric. In Magritte's painting, the lovers are intertwined in the surreal intimacy of the kiss in a frozen dynamic; in *The Guardians*, one can figuratively feel the underlying dialogue between the two characters. Beyond the visual similarities, Bezalel creates a deeply intimate place of truth and understanding.

Referring to the romantic notion of war, as so well depicted in classical art, Bezalel explores the influence of post-political romanticism amongst the youngest generations. Through the theme of the lovers and the guardians, she represents the yearning and the pursuit of an illusion, an unattainable goal, a romantic state of mind of natural pureness. Oblique references to historical moments of stasis, such as the period between the two world wars, when *The Lovers* painting was produced by Magritte,

or the period of the first Jewish settlements in Palestine, when *The Guardians* photograph was taken, create symbiotic relations with the unknown empty metaphysical spaces that Bezalel always represents in her installations, moments of deep inspiration, understanding and merging with nature, moments where nothing happens, limboes and parallel worlds inhabited by an elusive feeling of existence.

The impossible love in a non-existing impossible place where people cannot communicate becomes a contradictory reflection of our age of seemingly normal life.

Yifat Bezalel was born in 1975 in Tel Aviv, Israel, and studied at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem. She currently lives and works in Tel-Aviv. Bezalel has extensively exhibited in Israel and, since 2011, she received great recognition in Europe and has been included in major exhibitions such as *Alice in Wonderland* at the Tate Liverpool, traveling to the the MART Rovereto and the Kunsthalle Hamburg as well as the VIDA Museum Borgholm, Sweden (solo) and the MACRO Museum in Rome.



## DJAWID BOROWER

### THE GOD PROJECT: Personal Structures and Beyond

*The GOD project* has the character of an artistic “essay” which integrates painting, plastic and concept. Following the Latin origin of the word, the essay is a “probe”, a “trial”. In line with this, I do not follow a strict methodology, but rather try to approach my subject matter in an experimental way with the means of art. And, as with an essay, for me this is an open, incomplete form of discussion, which does not convey facts but which provides food for thought. In this respect, it is important to me not just to illuminate the topic from one side, but to approach it from many directions beyond the borders of genres and techniques of discourse.

If Wittgenstein said that the limits of language are the limits of our reality, then one must go beyond limits. Art gives us the means through which to do so. And for me, it is the only medium in which one can deal with the classic metaphysical questions, the questions about being and not being, about freedom and destiny, about reality and the absolute. Because, unlike a theoretical text, it does not claim neutrality but rather subjectivity, because it does not try to make objective statements but rather draws its viewpoint from the extremes of our existence, because first and foremost it is not about “truth” but, rather, “beauty”.

This project encompasses several series which, since 1998, have been dealing with metaphysical subjects such as the absolute, temporality, and identity. The latest series is *The Folds of Matter* and *The Fold of the Soul*, inspired by the writings of Gilles Deleuze about Leibniz and the Baroque.

The attempt to picture this inevitably leads to an aestheticization of the concept of God. It is not the truth which counts first and foremost, but rather the “beautiful”. “Truth” is probably the most dangerous term in the history of mankind, especially when used in connection with the term “God”. Art separates these terms from each other. A non-Christian and an atheist can both be touched by Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* or Michelangelo’s frescos in the Sistine Chapel. It is an interesting experiment of thought to imagine how history may have proceeded if only it had been possible for us to reflect upon the divine with the means of art and not with the means of spoken and written language. Certainly more peacefully. Language works with statements which are either right or wrong, true or false, as long as it is not poetry, and therefore doesn’t escape the claim to truth. Whereas art does.

In the course of this endeavor, I felt a need to shape different objects and series to illuminate the topic from various perspectives. The language communicates it in a different way than the image, and the image opens a different portal than sculptural work. One work is more emotional, more expressive and the other more conceptual. Some works draw from past images and metaphors, relating to art historical role models, to imagery of light, for example, or the Baroque. Others have sprung from their own world of imagery. In the resulting tension, in the inhomogeneity, the diversity, I leave every attitude, so to speak, to proclaim one truth. I don’t want to create the one and true image, because I don’t have it. Neither from God, nor from reality, nor from me. There are no answers. Only possibilities. My art is an exploration process.





## FAIZA BUTT

*“My work is a social commentary about the times we live in. The recent turmoil’s in Pakistan as well as my existence as a Pakistani artist in the west are discussed through codes and symbols. I create very labour intensive ‘crafted’ pieces that entice yet strike the conscious of the viewer. I create works by chancing upon potent journalistic images, text, encounters, and experiences, as I conduct my affairs as an artist, a mother, and a woman. I have focused on gender issues since the beginning of my artistic career, and feminist debate remains an issue very close to my heart. My work reflects my varied cross-cultural experiences and is a reflection on the instability and uncertainty of our time.”* —Faiza Butt, 2012

Faiza Butt works with dominant narratives. She has something to say: An artist whose gender, background, beliefs and living a life in the UK is reflected in her works. She invites the viewer to have a discourse with her: As to why cross-cultural challenges should not be alive and well anymore in this day and age.

As an artist Faiza Butt is in a particularly interesting position. A woman, schooled in the West but hailing from the Middle East, she is at the intersection of many different traditions. The way forward for her is; in a way; more difficult than it ever was for an artist, where the conundrums are not purely artistic. Her themes are not only materialist but simultaneously cultural and personal.

Her development as an artist has its roots in Pakistan. As part of the “pioneer” group of graduates from the National College of the Arts (NCA) in Lahore, Pakistan, with mentoring from Prof. Salima Hashmi, artists were encouraged to dwell deeper into the influences surrounding them, rather than make work derivative of western history.

### **My roots, my identity, my existence**

The most prominent strand is identity—specifically the gender issue, which she addresses through the lens of cross-cultural multitudes. In her earlier years as an artist, while still in Pakistan, Faiza focused on her role as a woman and as an artist in that society.

Clearly her role as a mother and wife also inform her work. Her marriage to an English national and role as a mother inspires an autobiographical flavour in her work, as does her youth growing up in a matriarchal family with five sisters.

The socio-political issues in Pakistan still engage Faiza, although she has made London her home for over a decade. Using codes that hold meaning and appeal for a wide range of audiences, she tackles these issues through her “Pakistani lens”.

### **Public misconceptions**

Faiza takes her inspiration from urban or folk repertoire of popular imagery. Hence advertising, cinema promotion and truck art is reflected in her artworks.

As the media turned its attention to the political turmoil in Pakistan, her deeper sense of affiliation with her roots were heightened. As the public face of Pakistan in the west started to come in her way as an individual, Faiza began to use journalistic images to create works pointing to the insidious manipulation and design of propaganda. Faiza challenges the imprint of western public assumptions, instituted by the media. Hence her art does not advocate the rights of certain cultures against others, but rather that the artist needs to look between the layers of our collective conscience.





# GENIA CHEF

By Dimitri Ozerkov

## The New Hagiography of Genia Chef

Genia Chef's project *Dead House* is full of mysticism: in the year of the 400<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the establishment of the Romanov dynasty, he recreates the tragic place of death of the last Russian Tsar Nicholas II and his family. As material, the artist has used photographs from the archive of the investigation file, as well as photos taken by the imprisoned crowned heads themselves.

On the command of Lenin, the entire family was brutally shot in the night between 16 - 17 July 1918, in a house belonging to the engineer Ipatiev, in Yekaterinburg. Based on scanty black-and-white photographs of the interiors, Genia Chef creates a three-dimensional model that allows the viewer, as in a terrible dream, to follow the route in which the doomed went to their deaths: from the living spaces to the basement, the place of execution.

The model-installation of the scene of the crime forms the central object of the exhibition, its magical epicenter. Walls painted in the colors of the residential interiors of the Winter Palace of the early 20th century are decorated with small paintings framed in dark mahogany. On canvasses and also on wood panels are depictions of the unpretentious life of the detained Tsar's family. Nicholas II, the 13-year-old heir to the throne Crown Prince Alexei, the Empress Alexandra, and the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia. All are here. Somewhere behind them, or on the side of the viewer are the royal personal doctor Botkin, the maid Demidova, and the cook Kharitonov.

Genia Chef carefully recreates the images of the old photographs with his wonderful colors: ancient pigments, oils and varnishes skillfully mixed according to Medieval recipes. The meticulous technique of painting is the means to make up the loss: fixing here the events of the Tsar's martyrdom for centuries to come. These oil paintings are destined to survive our time, our knowledge of the terrible massacre, and also the photos that will ultimately decay in the archives.

In the tradition of Russian Orthodox icon painting, much attention is paid to the worship of those who have suffered for the faith, and of the innocent slain. The rare subject Forty Martyrs of Sebaste is well known and respected in Russia. In this country they do not curse the regicides, but ask the innocent slain for remission and pray to Him for salvation and for help. The cult of the brutally murdered Tsarevich Dimitri, the 8-year-old son of Ivan the Terrible, who suffered from epilepsy, has become an important symbol of national unity in the Time of Troubles. In 1606, Prince Dimitri was canonized, and in his name many churches in Russia were built.

Similarly, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Tsar's family, brutally murdered by the Bolsheviks, was secretly venerated, which eventually led to the fact that in Soviet times the family was canonized by the Russian Church Abroad. And in 2000, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church adopted the decision of canonization. After that, on the site of the Ipatiev House in Yekaterinburg, as well as in many cities across the country, there have been erected churches in honor

of the "royal martyrs." And the remains extracted from an abandoned grave were, with all official honors, buried near the remains of Peter I and Catherine II in the Peter and Paul Cathedral of St. Petersburg. Today, people from the whole country bring offerings to the 13-year-old Prince Alexei, who suffered from hemophilia and was shot by the Bolsheviks in the basement in Yekaterinburg.

Genia Chef shows that the worship of the Tsar's relics is not only associated with the traditional Orthodox veneration of icons. The contemporary artist is working with the energies of time and space, carefully directing them and focusing them on new goals.

With his installation, Genia Chef does not, like a shaman, simply awaken the spirits of the Yekaterinburg *Dead House*, but he works on the creation of a new hagiography whose place is in the future. The tragic denouement of the lives of the members of the Tsar's family, the new martyrs, forces us to consider their actions in terms worthy of preservation.

The paintings of Genia Chef are neo-hagiographic images, where the careful meditative technique of execution is the pledge for the faithful transmission of the message, and the preservation of that message for the centuries to come. Here there is no laughter, no mocking, no taunt, so characteristic of contemporary art.

Genia Chef does not strive to be in the headlines with scandalous news. His work is subject to the measured rhythm of the attendant bearing witness to dangerous elemental historical forces. It is in accordance with the continuous historical development of icon painting, with its difficult technic-technological process, which aims at preserving the pre-eternal countenances of its subjects.

In the context of the Venice Biennale, the new iconography of Genia Chef suggests a new direction in art, which many famous artists of our day have missed; a direction in which contemporary art will probably develop tomorrow.

Genia Chef studied at the Polygraphic Institute in Moscow, where he won the First Prize for his Diploma and at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts where he was awarded the Fueger Gold Prize. He has participated at the II Moscow Biennale (2007) and at the International Biennale of Miniature Art in Serbia (2010) where he was awarded the First Prize in the category of painting.

His museum shows include the Frederick Weisman Museum of Art, Minneapolis (USA), the Museum of Modern Art, Ostende (Belgium), Palazzo Forti, Verona (Italy), Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (Germany), Yeshiva University Museum, New York (USA), CU Art Museum, Boulder (USA) and a solo exhibition at the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (2011).





## CHEN PING

By R.A. Suri

### Savagery & Silence

The art of Chen Ping may first resemble abstract colourism, or suggest abstract expressionist tendencies, yet the presence of semi-figurative compositional elements would deny either errant assumption. The variable applications of brushwork and hewn knife-work depict an imaginative mindscape wherein the artist's ultimate quest for emancipation and individual liberty resonate. Chen Ping received an academic formation, lending the later series nuances of traditional schemata—depth and tone: the artist reveals a visual language which resists the facile dichotomy of East/West discourse and associative relegations. The artist ascribes his trajectory with acuity and poignancy, reiterating the claim of abstraction is inapt, alert in a process where the end lies in the brush' moment, he retains an adept employ in the creation of quasi-symbolic figurative elements, essentially, flora and fauna of indigenous legends and myth. The various works could be considered as contingent of post-Modernism: contingent in light of a core orientation towards freedom absent of the libation of either formal or art historical imperatives.

It is, in truth, a challenge to attempt to illustrate with words what appears visually evident on witnessing the artists' canvas. I shall not attempt to deliberate or elaborate upon individual series and the individual works themselves, with the perception that what best demarcates the artist's rather exclusive position and originality lies in the coherency of his individual philosophy in accordance with the emergence of each canvas. There exists inspiration from both Occidental contemporary and Oriental traditional philosophy. A parallel discourse in the mind of the artist is an equation of action

and thought, a principle often ascribed as an extemporal condition. From humanism and ethos of "fluid" movement, herein a kinesis occurs. Narrative ecoes upon the canvas acting as a caustic contest of a visual language impregnate with savagery and silence, ruptures of colour permeate erratic latitudes which render a dynamically imbued visual fore. The more sparing, near vacant, periphery of several works suggest an attention to emphasize the latent force of colour and movement in a polemical consideration. Silence speaks at the peripheral cusp of the canvas, an orchestration of light, line and colour are diffused, interwoven and transfigure subjects: the artist illustrates the Real, essentially denoting neither simplistic reductivism nor sheer abstraction. An errant speculation owing to Occidentalism might otherwise presume.

An essence of mind exists in the artist's natural effluvium, light and colour saturation within the intense brushwork and this essence predominates his creations. In an era where modality and subtext enact further "justification", we observe an artist whose orientation yet qualifies painting as being possible in contemporaneous discourse; a synchronous modality as an emancipation of the act of painting/the self. Intrinsic, a narrative yet exists, substantiated in the random evidence of the semi-figurative images sculpted in time, the moment of the discordant fields of colour mere instances of truths within. This visual language and sense of the errant in the search of emancipation or absolute truth is not unique to the artist alone, yet his continuous extemporal creations are exemplary and void of the fallacious mirror of abstraction. Truth ruptures within the process of creation.



## CANAL CHEONG JAGERROOS

"When I first saw the PERSONAL STRUCTURES theme 'Time, Space and Existence', what came immediately into my mind was:

'Time' is man's invention.

'Space' is man's imagination.

'Existence' is man's obsession.

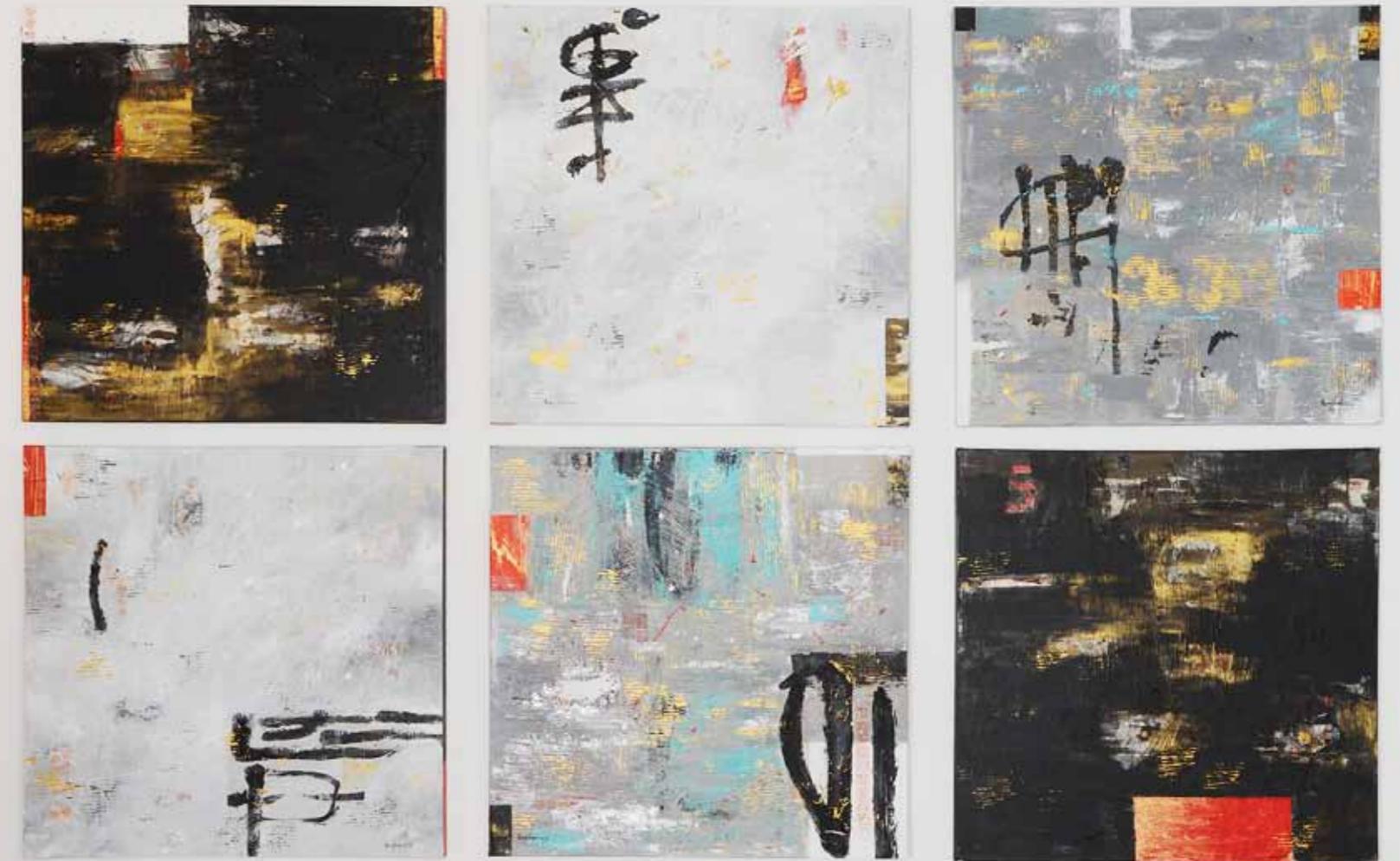
Indeed, this is an intriguing theme for me. My work for this exhibition, a new series of paintings titled *Time, Space and Existence*, will focus on the essence of our being, our need to know and understand how our chaotic society seems to feed off many of us and our huge urge to define the value of our existence in material terms. We are mesmerized and overwhelmed by the commercial world where souls worship and get corrupted by material pursuits.

I wish to dwell upon the absurdity and paradox of man's nature, for we know, deep in the recesses of our soul, that we are also repulsed and ashamed of our material and unholy pursuits. Within the convolution of the interpretation, our egocentric faith is involved, in that we believe there must be a meaning for us to understand. We surrender our logic to the belief that answers do indeed exist, and so, by default, we invent them.

In this series, I reflect on present day social attitudes, with special emphasis on materialism. I refer not only to the materials that invade our physical space, but also, to the space that occupies our mind and imagination. As Picasso once said, "whatever you can imagine is real." Therefore, I question man's obsession with material acquisition and his need to 'materialise' his existence by making a mark during his lifetime!" —Canal Cheong Jagerroos

Canal Cheong Jagerroos who lives and works in Finland, has won international recognition and acclaim for her unique works fusing ancient Chinese motifs and contemporary elements. A Chinese who grew up in an artistic family in Macau, she has enjoyed considerable success over the last twenty years, with over 40 worldwide solo- and group-exhibitions to her credit. Her artworks have been represented in numerous prestigious galleries in Switzerland, France, Italy, UK, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Macau, Hong Kong, Africa, and USA including the Museum of Americas Miami, and the Eduard Vilde Museum. She has been featured in important art publications and over 400 of her artworks can be found in private collections in different countries.

Being an artist with deep roots in Chinese classical painting, Canal's works are inspired by ancient Chinese philosophies, poems and nature. Her works, which typically conjure a lyrical realm of serene harmony and beauty, explore the fragility of life, the balance man searches for, and ultimately, the splendour and magic of an ordinary day. Canal creates a sense of depth on canvas by painting on multiple layers of rice paper with traditional Chinese ink, natural Chinese pigments and acrylic. Her later works are influenced by her extensive cultural experiences, having lived in seven countries in Asia, Africa and Europe in the last 20 years.



## KARLYN DE JONGH

On 1 December 2011, I started an ongoing program: to document my life as time is passing. It is a process of recording the progression of the days that manifest my life: in doing so, I manifest time and also show 'me' at different moments in time—I exist here and now.

My 'days' are represented through painted colour on a surface. With colour, I visualise my emotional relationship to the days lived. The accumulation of these works, the accumulation of painted days states that 'I exist' through time. My paintings look quite simple. With simple brushstrokes and single colours, they are visually not very spectacular. They are direct and unpretentious, saying: at that moment, this is who I am.

My works are placed one next to the other in the linear sequence of lived days. In this way, they manifest the passing of time. It shows the passing of 'physical' time.

I cannot see the 'passing of time' separately from the passing of my life-time: in my life, 'I' am always there. Understanding time additionally as my 'personal' time, allows me to step away from the physical, public or objective length of events—by looking at the clock and counting the hours. My works are not all the same in width. The width of the work and thereby the amount or strength of the painted colour, shows my experience of the event, the day. My day starts and ends according to my rhythm.

I see my existence, 'me', as the accumulation of lived experiences, of experienced moments in time within an uncertain time-span. 'I express myself' means: I visualise my consciously lived experiences

in the most sincere way I can, and am—at least at that moment—very much aware about 'me'.

The way I experience is strongly influenced by my physical state as well as the culture I grew up in. 'Where I am from' has a great impact: visually, I am closer to Mondrian or even the Dutch tulip fields, than to for example Giorgio De Chirico. In addition, I think that also the accumulation of experiences and my consciousness about who I am at this moment and who I want to be has a great effect on how I experience 'today'.

I have taken the day (and not a month or a year) as the time-frame to express myself, because for me it is 'manageable': it is an oversee-able period, which forces me to stay focussed and to take a standstill everyday to realise who I am, where I am and where I am going. A day passes by very quickly and so, there is no time for excuses: if I am unhappy with something, NOW is the moment I can do something about it. NOW is the moment for change. Life passes too quickly.

Of course, the fact that I, Karlyn De Jongh, exist here and now is probably only interesting for a very selected group of people around me. But I hope that—apart from this personal visualisation of time—the fact that I manifest the passing of time in general, will stimulate others to think more consciously about their own life-time.





## SCOTT EADY

By Aaron Lister

### Spit Me: Scott Eady

Scott Eady makes disruptive and troublesome sculpture that confounds expectations of the medium, unsettling the viewing experience through provocation, frustration or rogue humour. The painted bronze sculptures in this exhibition are part of a family of recent 'blob' works which have been variously placed, dropped or roped off in galleries or public spaces. These obdurate blobs offer a kind of full stop, a place where sculpture might confront its own histories, its contested place inside and outside gallery walls, and probe that often tense relationship between audiences and the sculptural object.

One such sculpture appeared half buried in a public lawn outside City Gallery Wellington in 2012, as if it had fallen from the sky. A gag on public sculpture as 'plonk art', dropped into available space without any consideration given to the specifics of site or community, there was also the sense that the sculpture was less debris than a missile which had missed its target of the gallery and its exhibition of contemporary New Zealand sculpture just a few feet away.

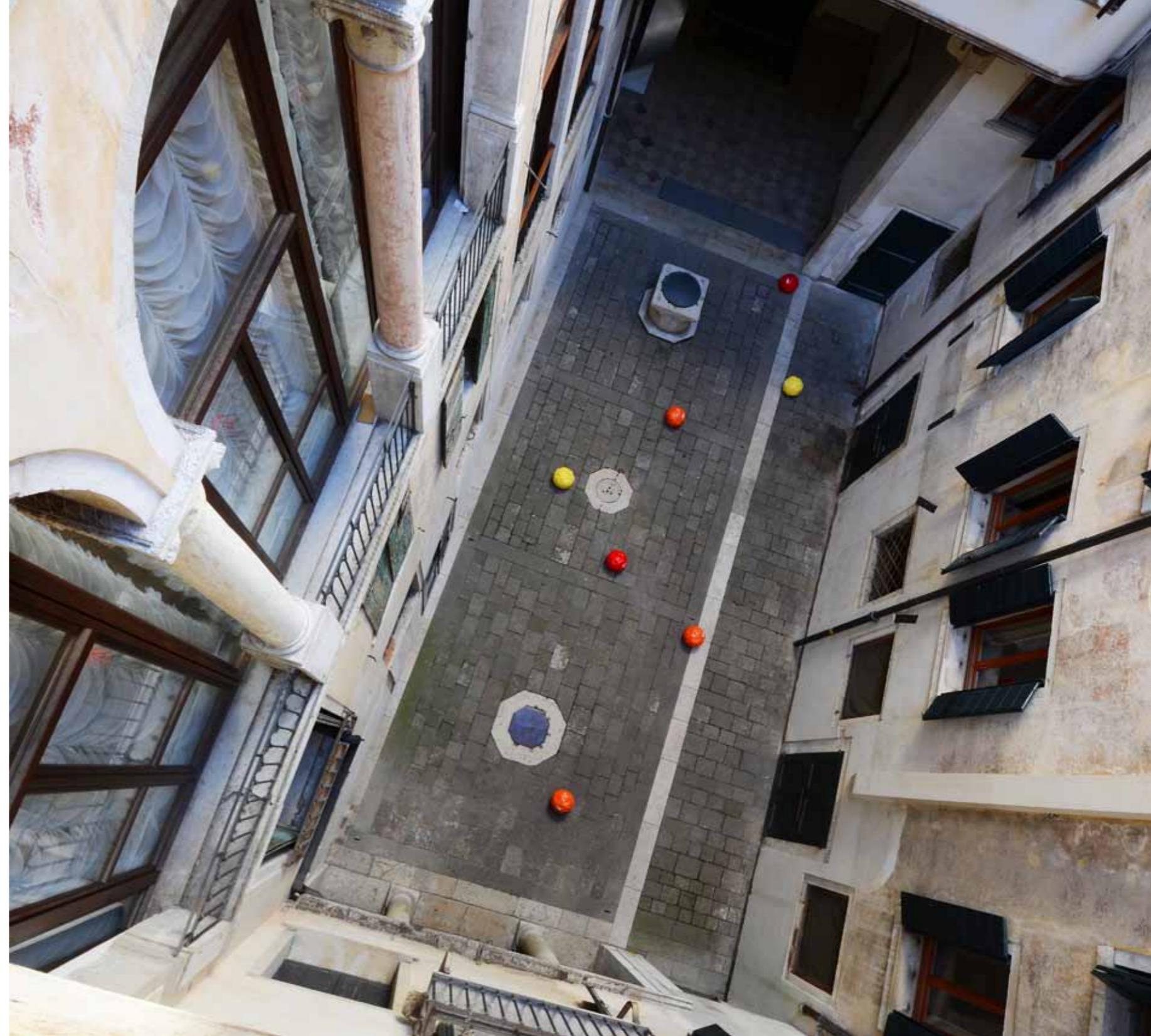
A few months earlier, Eady's work had transformed a local sculpture competition held on an island site into a giant treasure hunt. Visitors fruitlessly scoured the island for *Booty* (2011), guided by a bronze set of cross bones which acted as a cryptic map. Refusing to function as a marker of site or in harmony with the natural surrounds, *Booty* upset and even ridiculed the art as leisure or pleasure seeking pursuit cultivated around such events. The promised reveal in a follow-up exhibition amounted to a giant treasure chest, presumably

dug from the ground following the event. The chest remained locked, preventing further access to any material object. The absence of the sculptural object became something to be lamented, to be hunted for by its frustrated audience.

For this exhibition Eady appears to have lobbed a group of these garishly-coloured sculptures into the courtyard at Palazzo Bembo. This is sculpture treated as rubbish, taking its cue from the colourful blobs of chewing gum left in public spaces all around the world—a universal language of form which the minimalist traditions always lurking in the background of Eady's work can only dream of. A form of public art from rather than for the masses, the guerilla placement of blobs of chewing gum in and around galleries—on the bottom of chairs, inserted into cracks in the wall, or in some reported cases even stuck onto sculptures themselves—here provides a sculptural tradition for Eady to follow, one distinct from the more authorised traditions often kept at arms length from its audience by ropes, barriers and art history.

As much as the physical intervention, it is the gum-spitter's antiauthoritarian messing up of sanctioned experiences that Eady really celebrates here, and which takes on additional resonance as a New Zealand artist expected to put one's best foot forward at a collateral exhibition at the Venice Biennale. It's another example of Eady destabilising sculptural modes and institutional frameworks before the audience even encounter the object, another take on his earlier buried artworks, or the sculpture that falls from the sky.

Eady presents sculpture as prank, often calling on childhood games or tricks. Like these most recent sculptures, *Ivan* (2010) has a solid bronze



core slathered with thick layers of bright paint. While unsettling those fraught battles over the boundaries between painting and sculpture, here this material subterfuge primarily assists in prank-making. A hand-written 'Kick Me' note is stuck onto *Ivan's* seemingly soft and gooey surface, setting a trap for anyone willing or gullible enough to take up its invitation. During exhibition this sign has been repeatedly removed by presumably well-meaning visitors who perhaps felt they were saving a perfectly functioning sculpture from a nasty trick played by its audience, rather than the other way round.

The 'boy's own' nature of Eady's sculptural setups comes from activities carried out alongside or in collaboration with his children. These sculptures spring from family fimo-sculpture making sessions, the resulting blobby, unruly forms upscaled for the adult spaces of the gallery. They turn the modernist tradition of heroic sculpture into child's play, insist on the making of sculpture as an act of resistance to the grown up world, and reinscribe the gallery as playground—as a place of tricks and games, where one can spit balls of gum into a courtyard from the floor above, or kick a sculpture when no one is watching.

*The 100 Bikes Project* liberated its audience from stuffy gallery behaviour in another way, by encouraging the riding of bicycles inside exhibition spaces. A two part work, this project had its first outing at the Dowse Art Museum in Wellington, New Zealand, in 2011, the second a year later at the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea. It seemed to herald a new accessibility and generosity in Eady's practice, a pushing of the obdurate sculptural object into a bright new world of participatory and community-focused installation.

While lauded as a major shift in direction, the project is best considered an extension of Eady's object-based sculptural practice into installation by stealth, a continuation of his ongoing interrogation of the nature and function of contemporary sculpture in the gallery context. The combination of dump-salvaged and beautifully restored bicycles, tricycles and scooters occupied and took over exhibition space. Eady cluttered galleries with sculptural form, presenting objects to be encountered rather than, or as well as,

an invitation to participate. Audience participation was invited, but not necessary to activate the meanings and potential of this project. These possibilities were firstly built into Eady's restoration of these objects, which in conventional sculptural terms, was based around the transformation of material into new form.

Eady's emphasis on making and encounter brought a very sculptural element of risk to this project. The invitation to ride these bikes around the gallery was a provocation made through sculptural form, positing the medium not as something to bump into but as something with which to gleefully bump into other things with. Any participatory element really emerged from an activation of the sculptural possibilities born from that very physical encounter between body and the sculptural object played out in real space and real time. This channelling of the sense of the danger and disorder carried by sculpture invited chaos and mess into the gallery experience under the guise of participation, where it acted unhindered by the raft of protective devices and barriers typically used to regulate the separation of body from object.

If there is a disputed zone between this project and the blob sculptures it is likely patrolled by another work *Ping and Pong* (2010). Twin catapults occupying either sides of the gallery, this sculptural double act invites the audience to load and fire small rubber balls across the space. Participation is again invited but ultimately turned on itself in what quickly becomes a parody of gallery behaviour and encounter. All of those fraught relationships played out in the white cube are encompassed: between audiences sharing space, between audiences and artworks, and the often highly combative relationship between objects brought together in an exhibition and somehow expected to get on and behave. This is also the terrain of *The 100 Bikes project*, of *Ivan* with his plaintive 'Kick me' sign, and *Booty's* buried treasure. It also lurks behind the apparently throwaway gesture of spitting gum-like balls of sculpture into the courtyard of the Palazzo Bembo on the occasion of the Venice Biennale.

*An earlier version of this text was published in Art New Zealand, #141, Autumn 2012.*



## TOSHIKATSU ENDO

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

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

*Sarah Gold: In general your sculptures appear to me very raw, basic and in a way brutal. To me the rough bones and (chainsaw) cuts, and the unpolished wood convey ‘basicness’. To burn, maybe even ‘cremate’ the objects deepen the archaic feeling. Do I see that correct? And if yes, why do you do that? Is there something you would like to ‘achieve’? Do your works have a purpose?*

**Toshikatsu Endo:** I create only exceedingly common, impersonal shapes such as circular rings, cylinders, cubes and coffins. I process these shapes using the most unaesthetic methods. The reason is that I wish to position my creations as far as possible from the aesthetic context of modern sculpture.

Furthermore, my objective is not to finish these shapes; rather, I ultimately aim to destroy and eliminate the shapes. Through destruction and elimination, I seek to reveal the “void” which exists inside the shapes. My actions are spurred by the primitive impulse and passion which exist inside of me.

*Karlyn De Jongh: When I experience you as a person or your work, I have the feeling I am encountering another world. Trying to have a fresh encounter, every time I am being confronted with the fact that I do not understand. I have the impression that this because I am from another culture. At the same time, I feel in many ways connected to your work. What do you think? To what extent is it possible to understand your work when you are not from your culture?*

**TE:** An eternal rift exists between Western culture and Eastern culture. It is difficult to cross the river which divides the two cultures. Furthermore, Chinese culture and Japanese culture are divided by many differences. However, earth, sun, water and fire existed in the beginning stages of all cultures. Within that environment there were men and women, which are living beings of different genders, there was death, and there was the primitive collective. At the very least, we can assume that all cultures share these conditions. However, it is true that many differences have developed during the subsequent growth of culture.

I believe that mutual understanding is not that difficult if we return to these primeval similarities. I create my art by focusing on these primeval similarities. Therefore, my work shouldn't be difficult to understand when viewed based on these presumptions.

*KDJ: When Sarah and I visited Botswana (2012), we spent an entire day at a water hole, watching how different animals came to drink. It was impressive to see, in particular, because of the speed in which these animals were living. It forced me to slow down. I had the feeling that this speed of life suits*



*also us as humans much better than the speed in which we live our lives nowadays. Do you think humans would still be able to survive if they would live in the way that seems to fit 'better' to who they seem to be?*

TE: Currently, everything on the face of the earth is an extension of modernism, which has the characteristic of only being able to accelerate once movement begins. Furthermore, globalization is progressing, the planet is becoming smaller and smaller, and things are heating up rapidly. Savage frontiers have disappeared from the face of the earth. Within such conditions, it is only natural for there to be the desire to return to the slower lifestyle of the past, or even like that of wild animals. However, in all cases, this desire stops at nothing more than a temporary and sentimental nostalgia. Even assuming that we tried to turn back time, such an attempt would instantaneously be entangled in a forward-moving rotation. The possibility of going back has already been stolen from us.

Amidst such conditions, I believe that our only way of coping is to construct a method which is similar to the smooth operation of a circulation system for heating and cooling. I believe that art is a media that is fully capable of fulfilling such a method.

When expressed in a different way, the concepts of heating and cooling can be described as the construction of order and the destruction of order. Death and eroticism arise within the vector of destruction. Also, this destruction releases accumulated passion and depravity. I believe that art possesses such power.

My reference to the past is not because I want to return to the past. I want to make this point perfectly clear. I don't view the past as being superior to the present. I have only a single aim: to place myself within the primordial system of life and language which run from the past to the present.

*SG: Is time an important factor in your work?*

TE: Time in itself is unthinkable. It can be said that everything appears within the function of time and space.

*KDJ: In his book das sein, Nitsch has stated that besides our being, there is no reality. It seems that in your theory and with your work, you would like to go back to a reality that belongs to our past and only still exists in our memory.*

TE: For me, reality exists only here and now. That is fundamental. Based on this assumption, I am interested in past wisdom and the primordial state of the human collective because I want to discover the most simple and powerful mechanism of the human collective. In no way am I trying to return to the past. Instead, within the temporal axis which runs unbrokenly from the past to the present, I am simply trying to reexamine the human existence and expression.

*KDJ: When I was part of Nitsch's performance, I experienced time differently than I normally do: the feeling of duration was missing. How do you experience time when you make your work?*

TE: When I am actually creating something, my experience of time is extremely heightened. I cannot create my work within a selfless state.

*KDJ: When being concentrated in the creation process, burning a wooden structure that you have so carefully created. Do you have the feeling that you change not only the wood, but also yourself?*

TE: Yes, it is very common for my work and for the process of creation to influence and change me personally.

*SG: This year at the 2013 Venice Biennale, you will show your work Untitled (1990). It is a circle made of burnt wood, where the visitor can stand in the centre. When standing in the centre, what do you hope he or she will feel? What would you like people to learn from 'encountering' your work?*

TE: I demand nothing of visitors and have no expectations regarding how they will feel. I think it is fine for each person to experience their own feelings.



## CAROLE FEUERMAN

Through my sculptures I convey my feelings about life and art. It is far easier for me to express my emotions through sculpture than through words. My art touches on a wide variety of personal emotions, centered on the human figure. I portray the inner life of each figure I create in order to capture the passion and sensuality of my subject. In this way, my work speaks to the viewer, evoking both an emotional and an intellectual response.

For the 2013 Venice Biennale, the GlobalArtAffairs Foundation has selected *Quan*, my monumental sculpture made of polished stainless steel and painted bronze, for exhibition at the courtyard of the historic Palazzo Bembo. The sculpture depicts a woman in a yoga position balancing on a fitness ball. I titled the work *Quan* after the Chinese name for the 'goddess of compassion'. The name is short for Gaunshiyin, which means 'observing the sounds (or cries) of the world'. The word *Quan* is also derived from the Chinese words for 'coin' and 'power'. The goddess is traditionally depicted looking or glancing down, symbolizing her watching over the world. In my sculpture, the figure is balanced perfectly on a stainless steel sphere, which is meant to symbolize the world. Her poise and stance represents mental steadiness and emotional stability, calm behavior and judgment—the very things I strive for.

When the viewer stands in front of the sculpture, they can see their own reflection in the sphere as well as the reflection of the surrounding landscape. My art is not meant to be a merely an object. I want the viewer to connect and relate to what stands before them. In the midst of unexpected places, I want to offer the

public the opportunity to pause, even just for a moment, engaged and inspired by what stands before them.

My sculptures exceed the bounds of mere mimicry to become powerful symbols I first exhibited with Duane Hanson and John de Andrea, both pioneers of figurative life-sized and life-like sculptures, although I was a full generation younger than them. For the past four decades, I have sculpted swimmers and bathers with crystal linearity that points to classical beauty, simplicity and tranquillity.

Ever present in my work is the theme of water, an element that unites us all and supports all life. Health, wellness, and balance are also prominent themes within my work. I strive to find the common thread that unites us as people, one and the same. My sculptures may seem like moments frozen in time, but they invite us to consider our physicality and our own stories. In my work, there is a strong emotional tie between subject and object—between the viewer and the viewed—that invites a level of empathy not commonly found in art. The subjects of my swimmers and bathers feel good inside their own skin. In other words, a sound mind, in a sound body.

Thirty years ago, showing healthy, intelligent women was a radical departure in contemporary art. Now, to a new generation of realistic sculptors, it's right in keeping with unprecedented prominence as a key driver of socioeconomic progress. Noted art historian John Spike called it an "awareness of wellness", and the World Health Organization stated that this notion embraces a total package of "physical, mental, and social well being".



## CRISTIANA FIORETTI

By Jacqueline Ceresoli

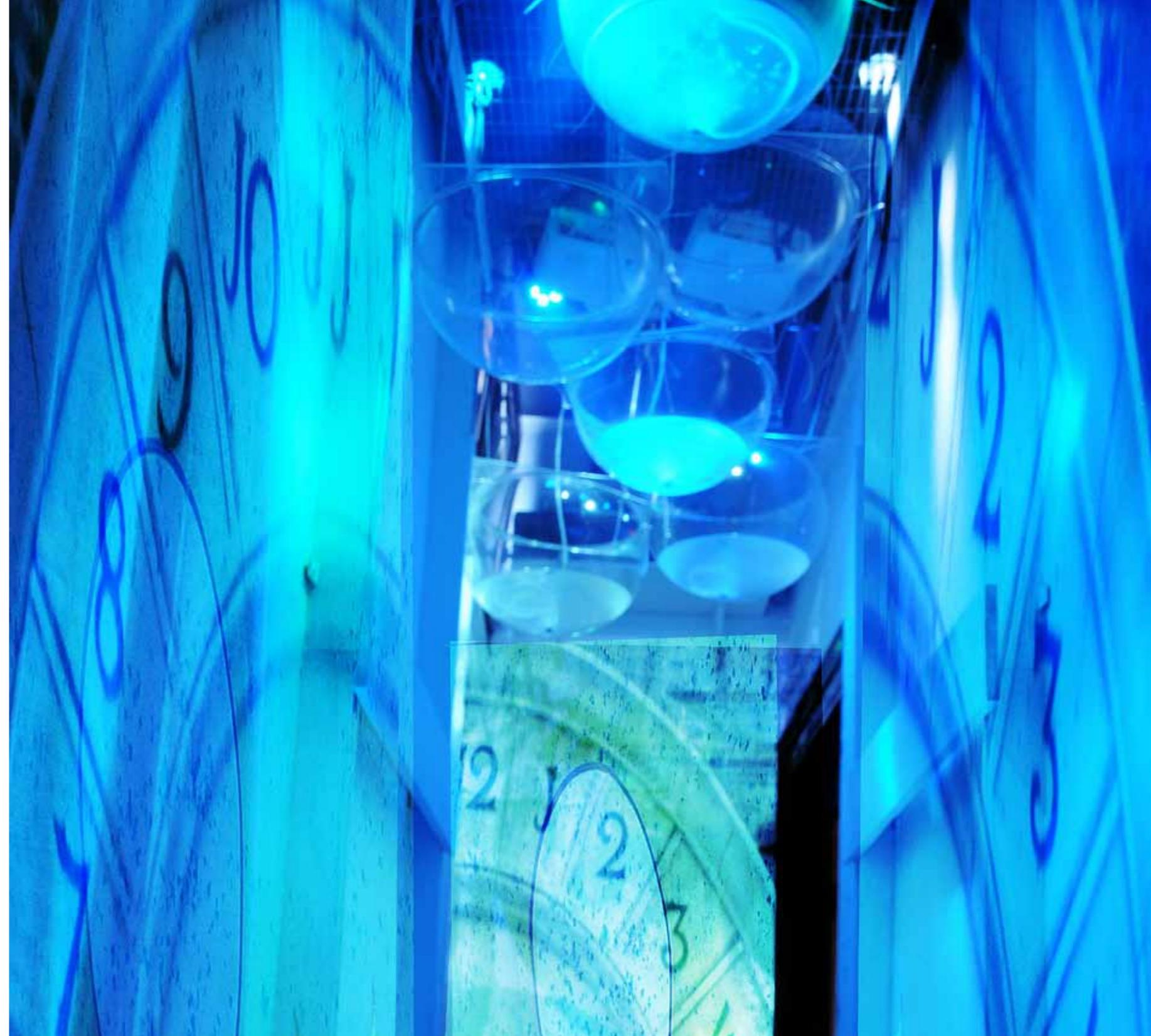
### Sensorial Space by Cristiana Fioretti

In a long and narrow room, apparently small, one plunges into a “blue painted blue” made of sea and sky, halfway between material and immaterial, feeling the breath of the world. Cristiana Fioretti pays homage to Venice, the dream-city floating on the water *par excellence*, with *Sensorial Space*, a multisensorial room that will be featuring projections of her abstract-poetical floor-to-ceiling paintings, nature sounds recorded along the sea shore, water flasks looking like oxygen bubbles turned into evanescent screens in shades of blue, amplifying her liquid, poetical colourful landscapes by the blurred but, at the same time, bright hues that embody the luminosity and clearness of the sea reflections ranging from blue to green, to indigo, up to the reddish shadows of the dusk.

The floor is soft, like a sea sponge, covered by a mirror material that enhances the sinking effect of the installation. Thus the viewers, stepping in it, will melt in the site together with light, colour, sound, dynamic projections and will reflect themselves in the colour palette that scenographically creates an immaterial dimension.

Her threshold—work of the immaterial *invisibility* is a gate towards spirituality, leading to an “infinity” to be dwelled as a *sensorial extension* architecture, devised for altering the Space and Time perception. Blue is the personal visual code of Cristiana Fioretti, who lives and works in Mentone, on the Côte d’Azur washed by the sunlight of Southern France, where Yves Klein patented his *IKB*, *International Klein Blue*, a monochrome made of artificial pigments, synthesizing his spiritual approach to the artistic practice.

Blue is the colour of the sky reflected above the sea: bearing for the Artist an undefined value, it creates an atmosphere that exceeds the limits of the canvas, becoming explorations of a space “*other*” to be experienced with the body. At the heart of her research, in addition to colour, starting from 2010 the main features of her work are light, sound, digital modeling by means of high-tech systems and interactivity. The aim is the materialisation of sensorial, dynamic, fluid dimensions built with structures enlivened by chromatic variations, luminous sparkles, gradual evanescences, as linking points between physic and virtual. In her sensorial box, designed as a kind of aquarium like a fascinating liquid and performance space, simultaneity, mutation, multimedial syncretism become the skin-membrane of her ambient installation. The Artist, through the fusion of colour, light, space and multimediality, where sound plays a fundamental role, gets rid of lyrical abstractism and ventures towards the fourth dimension by using advanced softwares, whose expressive power increases when the viewer walks in the room. These and other devices for a multimedial setting of the space interact with our body, turning her work into a total aesthetical experience, derived by the Vasilij Kandinskij theories: perceptive variables that cancel the borders between organic and artificial, art and science, emotivity and hyper-technology, where bewilderment becomes the work of art.



## DALE FRANK

By Will Gosling-Brown

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” —Napoleon Bonaparte

Dale Frank’s paintings are characterised by an immediacy of process and a tense urgency of vision which are reflected in the finished works. He has invented and mastered methods over several decades. His paint, varnishes of different densities, viscosities and ages, are poured onto the flat plane. In a process over days, motion created by Frank propels the colored varnishes, which together with the forces of gravity and the different rates of drying, create the work. Despite the appearance of serendipity, Frank controls his dynamic and intense process to achieve highly conscious outcomes. The images are literally brought to the surface through calculated action as the varnishes become thicker and more complex, trapping the colours and the evidence of the process under the surface, passages of transparent colour, creating a depth of pictorial space and a three-dimensionality. His application of colour appears liquid, simultaneously heavy and weightless, mobile yet in suspension; the consistency of water.

The ostensible spontaneity of these works belies Frank’s absolute mastery of his medium; dynamic effects of moving paint that seem to run spontaneously across the canvas yet are in fact, calculated, carefully created by hand. The resulting chromatic arrangements are metaphysical universes referring as much to the spirit and to emotions as to physical spaces. Their orifices and framed voids begin to engage the neuroses of the viewer, creating an atmosphere, a beauty of psychological intensity. As Sebastian Smee writes: “Beauty, like all things arbitrary, can be alienating, isolating, befuddling. It takes a particular cold-heartedness to see the uselessness of beauty as it is, and not force explanation upon it. Frank seems to have this

cold-heartedness in spades. It’s true, too, that Frank’s puddles of varnish let through different levels of colored light in ways that can suggest weather-filled atmospheres, deep space, cosmic distances. But in the end, these paintings remain adamantly abstract. The space they articulate is much more psychological than physical. To me, the best of Frank’s varnish paintings capture, as effectively as any paintings I know, the way the mind reels, like an untethered astronaut, before the indifferent, stupendous beauty of the world.” (‘Orange Crush’, February 23, 2008.)

Dale Frank’s paintings are distinguished by their viscous materiality, dazzling colour and layered transparency. As with El Greco’s vast sky opening to a dark viscous universe; as the dark dense field of late Rothko—these are all given currency and urgency in the current painting of Dale Frank, while at the same time opening our eyes to these dark shadows as being full of glorious colour... full of stars. The paintings allude to the awe and wonder of all consuming black holes; powerful magnetic stars and galactic collisions; white holes where matter is ejected and wormholes, gateways that connect points in space and time leading to other dimensions; nebulae where new stars are born; forces of gravity; weightlessness. Eschewing stylistic safety nets, Frank’s paintings insist upon turmoil alone, existing unfettered. The participant, more than a mere viewer, is provided with the climax of the seemingly automatist nature of his working process—it is as if he were tapping into the energies of a collective unconscious: and of the abstract Universe.



## CHRIS FRASER

Light is an agent of connection. Vision alone is beautiful, but so is the way that it draws us into the world. Light bridges distances and allows us to know things outside of our immediate grasp. Though I work with light, it is not my subject. In previous bodies of work, I dealt with the externalization and abstraction of sight through the camera obscura. For *PERSONAL STRUCTURES*, I have transitioned from the mechanics of sight to its physiology.

Vision is tenuous. It relies on factors that are equally mechanical, psychological, and physiological. An imbalance in any one of these categories can disrupt the whole system. Severe disproportions may result in anything from hallucinations to blindness. But most are relatively benign, and some even beautiful. A rainbow is an optical flaw, noise created when the ordinary parameters of vision have been breached. Refraction and reflection generally work to describe a solid world of objects, but these same processes can also create a false impression of matter. Such is the rainbow. As white light exits a drop of water, it is bent at various angles and broken into a spectrum of colors. The rainbow is visible, but not present. It is pure vision masquerading as matter.

All appearances are determined by a relationship between subject, light, and surface. The rainbow is created when the sun is at your back. For the present work, various small lights are arranged between the viewer and a wall of glass microspheres. These tiny beads of silica behave like raindrops, scattering light. By placing the light source in front of the viewer, rather than behind, a halo is created.

All the characteristics associated with the rainbow are still at work here. A straight line can be drawn between your eye, the light, and

the center of the phenomenon. The cliché of chasing rainbows holds true, as the specter moves in step with you. But because the viewer and light source have traded places and the distance between them has collapsed, the behavior of the halo is exaggerated.

No two people see the same thing simultaneously. Under normal circumstances, we might reasonably assume that individuals standing side-by-side will receive the same visual information. But even the slightest deviation in location can alter the appearance of a halo. As you stand parallel to the glass surface, the halo is round. But as you move, it will bend, break, or even invert in relation to you. The phenomenon is yours and yours alone.

Like trying to focus on the person lying next to you in bed, visual truth is tested at the edges of physiology. We always see two discrete pictures—one with the right eye, another with the left. It is through the effort to resolve this disparity that we create a sense of depth. We put faith in this experience because we have a history of verifying it through touch. But in rare cases, we may perceive depth in its physical absence.

The halos I make appear to hover around the light source. But close one eye and the apparition will collapse onto the wall. Due to their proximity, the mind interprets these binocular images as a single, substantial thing. To dismiss this experience as an illusion would be to misunderstand the synthetic nature of vision. While this sense of depth may appear hallucinatory, unverified by touch or instrument, the ability to resolve two distinct images into a whole is in itself very authentic. Vision does not verify or report on the real; it simply translates light into image.



## MARC FROMM

Throughout the examination of our contemporary culture, its characteristics and its qualities, Marc Fromm repeatedly draws upon set pieces of images of past eras and periods. In doing so, reliefs and sculptures with current portraits of the ubiquitous multimedia world, which are carried out in archaic techniques like carving, and in seemingly common iconographies, bring to mind visual languages that were long believed to be outdated. Topics of the mundane everyday life, the iconic essence of contemporary culture and its historical symbolism fascinate and influence him in his work.

Marc Fromm harnesses the effect of the elaborate implementation of the images, which were extracted from the infinite and fast-paced current. Surface-oriented, quick case-clinging that attracts, and is often unmasked as soulless emptiness. This culminates in a clash between traditional appearances and scenes of the digital modernity. The moment our rapid time freezes is reached.

This results in the emergence of current depictions, which remind us of holy figures from the Middle Ages with their specific iconic visual language. Occasionally animals join in, not only as symbols for the human psyche but also as references to the guilt-ridden relationship between man and nature.

In order to interpret and orient oneself in the present, one must know about the past and get to the bottom of human and cultural existence, thinking and feeling. Subtly, Fromm's work thus is about the essential issues time, existence, and transience.

The high-relief was carved exclusively for the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES show at Palazzo Bembo. The glossy golden frame reflects the entire exhibition space. In the lower part of the relief a white sculptural form by Axel Anklam is stretched on the black ground.



## SALLY GABORI

By John McPhee

Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori was born in about 1924 at Mirdidingki on the south side of Bentinck Island the largest island in the South Wellesley Group in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland, in far northern Australia.<sup>1</sup> The island is about twenty kilometres from east to west and about twelve from north to south. The highest point above sea-level is a ten metre sandhill. There is little vegetation except *casuarina* [she-oaks] along the coastal sands and mangroves along the tidal flats. There are numerous salt pans around and across the Island. This inhospitable landscape contrasts with the surrounding sea teeming with fish, turtle, and dugong.

As a young woman Gabori lived a traditional lifestyle on Bentinck Island largely uninfluenced by the encroachment of Europeans. She gathered food, including shellfish from the complex system of stone fish traps her people had built in the shallows around the Island. She was a respected singer of Kaiadilt songs which invariably tell of the close ties her people had with the landscape of the Island.

A severe drought in the early 1940s resulted in the Kaiadilt on nearby Sweers Island being evacuated to the Presbyterian mission on Mornington Island. The remaining Kaiadilt, sixty-three people, including Gabori, then aged about twenty-four, her husband Pat and his three other wives, were moved when a cyclone destroyed the permanent fresh water source on Bentinck Island in 1948. The deculturation of the Kaiadilt and the loss of their language had begun. In the 1970s some Kaiadilt were able to visit Bentinck Island and in 1986 a small settlement was established.

Sally Gabori began painting for the first time in the newly established Mornington Island Arts and Craft centre in 2005.

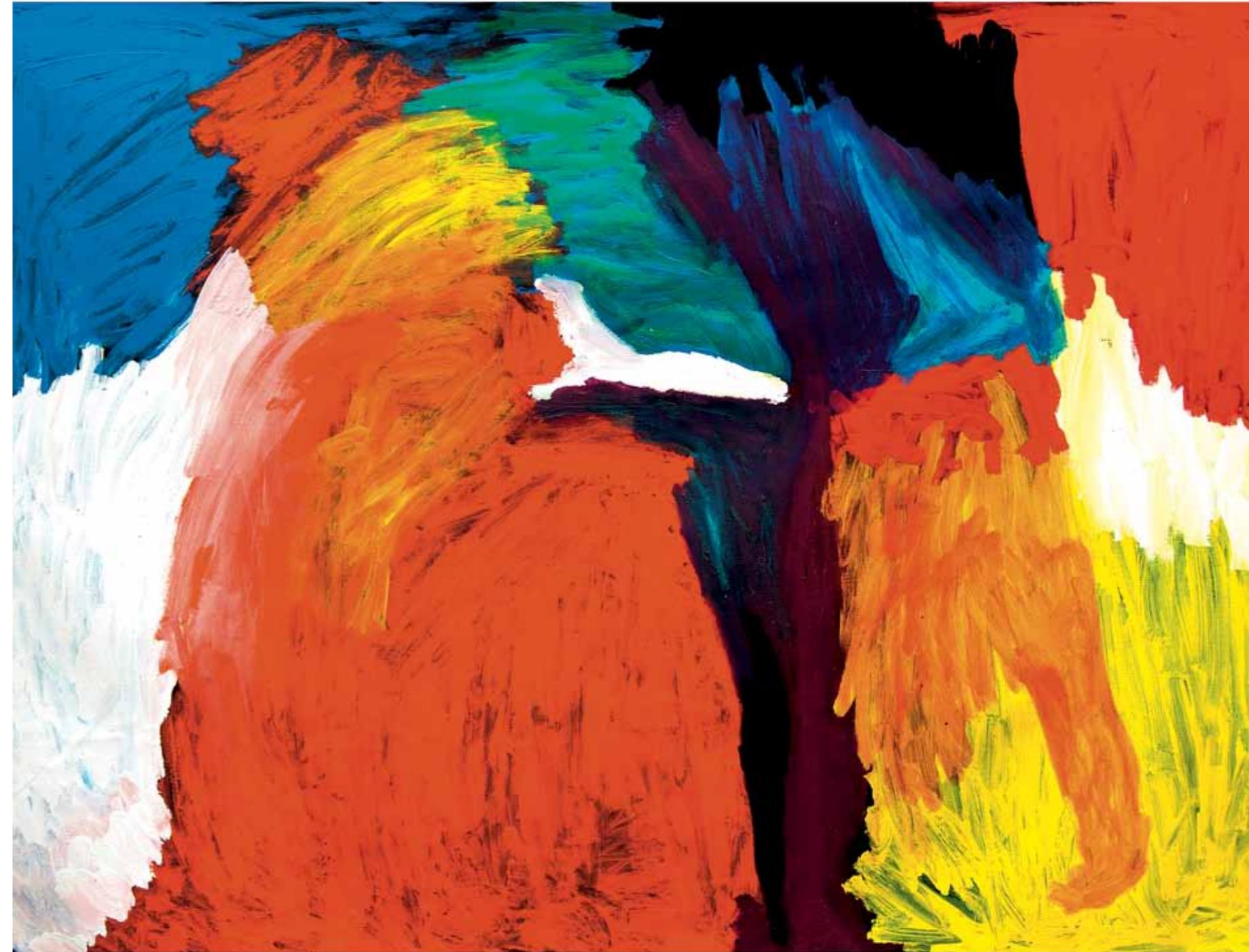
While the Kaiadilt had no known pictorial tradition, Gabori paints to record and pass on her knowledge of traditional legends and history. Her paintings document in great detail aspects of her homeland landscape from which she and other Kaiadilt have long been exiled.

Now in her late eighties Gabori has kept her story and her land alive in her mind's eye and memory. She has a few contemporaries who remember the intricacies of Kayardilt, however, the younger generations have been denied the opportunity to learn their ancestral language. Undoubtedly this linguistic isolation is one of the reasons she adopted painting as a way in which to express herself.

It is unlikely that any European Australian can imagine being only able to speak their language with a handful of others.

Her paintings embody all of the sorrow experienced having been exiled from her homeland, and, when able to return, her delight in the land of her youth, the land of her people. With extraordinary energy and the skill of a great painter she shares the experience of her world with us through her paintings. Every painting expresses her profound love of her landscape. Unable to speak with us, Sally Gabori talks to us through her paintings. Her paintings are some of the most beautiful contemporary Australian landscapes.

1. For more detailed geographical, historical and biographical information see, John McPhee, *Sally Gabori: feeling the landscape*, in *Art Monthly Australia*, May 2012.



## JAKOB GASTEIGER

By Florian Steininger

Jakob Gasteiger's successful impact on the art scene of the nineteen-eighties was marked by a position contrary to the dominant trend of New Painting at the time with its commitment to a personal touch and style. Despite his allegiance to painting in the grand manner and which he still adheres to today, he regarded it more in terms of a conceptual and minimalist idiom: serial productions instead of the stroke of genius in the masterpiece, more "making" instead of "painting". Added to this was the extended spatial-architectural aspect, which liberated the panel picture from its hermetic situation.

These characteristics apply to a great degree to Gasteiger's *Works on Paper*, produced since the nineteen-eighties. They have constantly accompanied his painted works and still do today. His favourite material is carbon paper, torn out of its functional context in the typewriter. At first, he produced serial compositions within the picture square, in the minimalist geometric canon of forms. Subsequently Gasteiger transposed this procedure onto the wall, mainly marking conspicuous zones of the interior space such as protruding wall segments or wall areas bordered by Baroque cornices.

As part of the PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition, he has now adorned a room in the Venetian Palazzo Bembo near the Rialto Bridge with a monumental wall installation using carbon and silk paper. In contrast to earlier examples of his work—mostly structured in a strict grid—the current work appears distinctly more open, more open in terms of the processual markings in its

making. The bonding substance blended with the paint when sticking the paper to the wall, transforming its original black to blue. The colours run down the wall in fine cascades and even wet the ground. Gasteiger deliberately keeps all these traces, lets the work take over as it leaves its own traces. The work's heterogeneity also occurs in the various choices of paper colour. Thus the reddish silk paper generates a fiery atmosphere, in diametric relation to the deep, dark blue and massive black. This dense blackness conveys the impression of extreme heaviness and solidity, optically filling the surrounding space.

*Jakob Gasteiger was born in 1953 in Salzburg, lives in Vienna and in the Weinviertel/Lower Austria.*





# DARRYN GEORGE

By Lara Strongman

## Folder Room<sup>1</sup>

Over the last seven years, Darryn George has extended his painting practice from two dimensions to three. The schema that he applies to panel painting now takes in entire rooms. *Folder Room*, a work made for the Venice Biennale exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES at the Palazzo Bembo, is the latest iteration of a series which began in his hometown of Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2007; a place where, in February 2011, a fatal earthquake killed 185 people and devastated the city. *Folder Room* might be considered a memorial, of sorts; a public aid to private contemplation; at once a marker of loss and a guardian against forgetting.

*Folder Room* is constructed as a giant light box. A soft glow emanates from the ceiling; hidden lights are encased by a white membrane. The walls are reflected briefly in the ceiling; they rise, and disappear into mist. The walls are shiny, intensely reflective, painted deep black. They have the sombre quality, perhaps, of the marble walls of a mausoleum. Their darkness calls upon one of the distinctive traditions of modernist art in New Zealand, the black paintings of Colin McCahon (1919-87) and Ralph Hotere (1931-2013). They contain a similar sense of sadness, drawn from the density of everyday experience. Each large panel features a small red, white and black rectangular device positioned along one edge, like the tab tops of files in a filing cabinet or on a computer desktop. These devices draw your eye around the room, appearing to pulse along the lines between the panels like packets of data firing along fibre optic networks. The impression is one of recessive darkness, cleaved by points of light.

For minimalist paintings, George's works carry a great freight of content. They do this primarily through means of visual association. George looks for ways to reinsert narrative into abstraction and to reinvest modernist forms with new cultural significance. He frequently incorporates the painted word, rotated on its axis, as both a graphic and associative device: words in *te reo Māori*, the Māori language, proliferated in the first of his schemas for a painted room, *Pulse*, installed at Christchurch Art Gallery in 2008. His goal with such works is legibility rather than prescription; the works admit the possibility of incomprehension while gesturing towards potential fields of interpretation. George's characteristic use of red, black, and white, for example, mediates between various fields of cultural resonance: whereas in Europe they are the colours of modernist graphic design, in New Zealand the combination of these colours immediately brings to mind the painted architecture of the *wharehenui*, or Māori meeting house. It is the collision of these registers within the field of the painting that both compels interpretation and ultimately frustrates a single reading: the painting is a net held taut by the tensions of the diverse elements at play within it.

A sense of history as a *taonga* or treasure to be handed on from person to person has been present in George's practice for some time. Many of the visual associations of his works, like those of *Folder Room*, are concerned with the storage and transmission of information. Māori meeting houses recount the history of the place and its people through carvings and paintings. (They represent the earliest of New Zealand's diverse art histories.) Like George's abstracted forms—variously legible as books, bookcases, laptops

and files—*wharehenui* are storehouses of information, databases of local *whakapapa* or ancestry. They are places of contemplation and reflection, of debate and exchange, where the presence of the dead and the weight of history is felt by the living. George's work, as critic Gregory O'Brien notes, acknowledges the forms and symbols of traditional Māori art while remaining 'open to the universe of possibility beyond'<sup>2</sup>; but it may also be seen that it remains open to the universe of possibility contained within Māori cultural practice.

An earlier version of *Folder Room*, *The Lamb's Book of Life (Folder Wall)* (2010-11), was originally conceived as a gigantic exterior painting on vinyl to be stretched across the facade of an eight-storey office building. It was to face the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic Revival cathedral in the centre of Christchurch. Its ecclesiastical context and title (drawn from the Book of Revelations) brought to mind a kind of registry of the saved. However, the work was never realised on that site; a series of catastrophic earthquakes intervened, during which the stone cathedral was ruined and the central city cordoned off from its citizens. George's work was subsequently installed temporarily on the facade of the relatively undamaged City Council building, where it read, amongst cranes and demolition sites, quite differently. It took on the guise of an archive of the city rather than of its citizens; a closed file recording what had been lost rather than those who would be saved.

It is the multivalence of George's work—its ability to generate new readings in new contexts—that gives it power and presence. Highly reflective paintings like *Folder Room* demand the participation of their viewers; you see yourself caught in the act of looking, part of the picture. The reflective surfaces affirm that every approach to the work is unique, a product of the viewer's contemplation of the diverse elements of the painting in the light of personal experience. George compares his reflective surfaces to the inclusion of portrayals of the artist and contemporary onlookers in pre- Renaissance religious painting<sup>3</sup>; a way of making spiritual mysteries relevant to everyday life.

George's conception of painting's role is one of active conversation with the physical world, a mediation between the sacred and the profane; with *Whakapai (Atonement)* (2012), a recent installation at Connell's Bay Sculpture Park on Waiheke Island, he has transformed an ablutions block into a place of contemplation and preparation. George's painted rooms are constructions of quiet power and reflection, providing a memory-architecture within which the viewer might archive and recall items from personal histories of loss. Their invitation to reflect is an essential part of the act of looking.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this text was published as 'Conversations with the World', in *Darryn George*, ed. Deidre Brown, Christchurch: Mihi Publishers, 2010, pp.100-3. Lara Strongman is an art historian and writer based in Christchurch, New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory O'Brien, 'Bro'town Boogie Woogie: The Paintings of Darryn George', in *Darryn George: Maui ki Mohi*, Auckland: Fogarty Hojsgaard Entwistle Galleries, 2005, p12

<sup>3</sup> Darryn George, personal communication, 13 March 2013.



## SELBY GINN

By Din Heagney

### Omnipresent Incarnate

Selby Ginn's shift in sculptural practice, to translating unwanted animal product into an abstracted simulation of human form, troubles any simple taxonomy. The multiplicity of this being's source material—leather waste scraps cut into thousands of squares and woven together—gathers the *materia prima* into a single form by literally weaving the skin of many into one. The (ruptured) skin as a tension-holding surface for the vital internal organs (some might say the soul) has been represented in countless artworks: from early carvings of the flayed god; in religious iconography as the pierced flesh of crucifixion; in the arrow-punctured skin of martyrs; in Goya's nightmarish visions of the cannibalistic Saturn, and especially in his somatic *Disasters of War*, with its contemporary reinterpretation by the Chapman brothers. Each of these artworks function as visual mnemonics for the fatally vulnerable container of life that is our skin. As leather is to skin, so skin is related linguistically to the cut. So it is perhaps not accidental that we term the end result of a flayed animal the hide, for here the form becomes a second skin, a surfaced protection, an epidermal disguise, a 'becoming-animal'. Ginn presents us a new and simultaneously ancient being, recreated from the hide of death to represent myriad life. Through the gathering of animal hides, this heterogeneous being resists its own heritage to reinhabit the human-esque. Its multitudinous colours and textures, created from excoriated hide, present this creature to us as something antediluvian, its reassembled multiplicities of once-was life that lie beyond its outward appearance to become more reflexive of its inward significance.

Ginn's hybrid being, with its pseudo-gladiatorial nature, reveals the precognition of its own fragility, ready to defend itself and its own

nature with a shield made from its own material form. The effect creates a dialogue between the integration of human and nature, where the physical object inhabits this 'meat space of otherness'.

In its primary materialism, Ginn's work converts the surface of another, previously living and (more relevantly) feeling creature into a simulation of our own form; a cyclic conversion from organic source to manufactured pelt, from scrap waste to remanufacture, its endpoint a kind of reverse anthropomorphism.

This shift in perception of skin as object, through art and experience, can be seen in a visceral example of the ornamental body posthumously preserved. Geoff Ostling, a retired history teacher, has agreed to donate his body—extensively tattooed by the artist eX de Medici—to be anatomically flayed for eventual display as a once-was living artwork in the National Gallery of Australia collection.

And so we begin to see a kind of inversion of biological skinning practices and notions of impermanence. In one sense, Ginn's work marks a point in a shifting cycle in how we view ourselves as living beings: the turn in our perception from skin as mere surface and container, to the sensory essence of physical life and love, to the hidden internal aspects of the functional body as machine, even to its potential as a temple for the soul. The parallel in Selby Ginn's 'becoming-animal' lies in this shift of perception: from understanding other creatures as source materials to be used as our secondary skins, to instead considering all life, our own fragile bodies included, as something made from identical *materia prima*, temporary and yet always becoming transcendent.



## DAVID GOLDENBERG

This project homes in on Post Autonomy as a concept that promotes change, the transformation of art, and a work that shows this.

The integrated design for an exhibition joins together a wide range of elements—images, texts, online debates, actions and parts that develop at different speeds—designed to fit into a narrow space roughly divided into two sections.

One section can be seen to be a visualization of the existing state of affairs of art and thinking followed in the next section by possible exit points and solutions. This visualisation takes place through the image of a container port—global circulation of products and art works—and a map of Eurasia linking Venice with Izmir and Baku.

### Section 1

How to identify issues that prevent change and further development in art and thinking, and an edge that art in its current form appears unable to cross? The information that we need in order to be able to understand what is taking place.

### Section 2

To confront this fundamental issue presents very real difficulties and thinking, which in my opinion is unable to be addressed within the circuit of the Eurocentric tradition, which formulates thinking and problems within the boundaries of that tradition. This is not to denigrate contemporary thinking but to point out an obvious problem. Instead, we need to look for an exit point beyond that Eurocentric debate to reformulate art and thinking. It sounds reductive to lay out an argument along these lines, or to delineate

territories in such rigid terms, but current research and feedback from different parts of the World confirms these views.

What I am describing is a trajectory that breaks out of that Eurocentric tradition and barrier, to formulate a new space for art, the space of Post Autonomy through the mental projection of the scheme of “Participating Cultures”. Instead of cultures adopting existing models—tied to Modernism or Soviet Realism—a new model is able to be formulated in collaboration with other cultures. But of course since this is formulated within a Eurocentric tradition, the term and scheme can only function as a form of thought experiment and mental projection that corresponds to similar sounding terms. Nevertheless this is a term that designates a scheme that allows us to mentally project out of the space of a Eurocentric tradition in order to realign cultural power by breaking with the existing circuit.

Expanding the new space of Post Autonomy to designate the space for a new art, along with the new term of Participating Cultures, where “Participating Cultures” becomes the tool to materialize PA and realignment of cultural power, in turn generates imagery and terms to mentally populate and open out the barriers and limits that block developments in art and thinking. If we take the possibility of realigning culture, then we need to identify partners, this describes geographical points and lines that establish a set of spatial geopolitical coordinates, and simultaneously provide us with a route, shift and realignment of cultural power. And this is what we have in our map linking Venice (Europe), Izmir and Baku.



## GOTTHARD GRAUBNER

By Heinz Liesbrock

### Gotthard Graubner: Embodying Color<sup>1</sup>

Gotthard Graubner once remarked that 'not every painted image is painting'<sup>2</sup>. He recently amplified this statement in conversation, saying that the work of an artist who employs no colors might well, in a sense, be painting. Even if color alone is the backbone of Graubner's own practice as a painter—and this is the case in a way that is true of few other artists today—it still takes more than the simple application of pigments for color to make sense as the active agent in the artistic process. Color has to be conceptually integrated to bring its real possibilities, its sensuous power and its spiritual potential into play.

Gotthard Graubner's understanding of color is embedded in his own conception of the artistic picture. This does not apply solely to images painted in colors, but can equally find expression in drawing, in sculpture, and in photography. What is at issue here is a particular intensification of the sensuous appearance of the image, which neither simply replicates the world as we know it, nor offers beguilingly suggestive pieces of illusionism. Graubner's work is focused on the basis of the image, on discovering its real and productive potential. It generates meaning, finds a pictorial language which derives solely from a special expressive potential within itself which is independent of the otherwise global dominance of the word. The viewer is able to respond to images conceived in this pointed fashion with a mode of seeing that is entirely active, that does not simply register facts but responds to them, enabling the viewer to enter into creative communication with the artist's work.

For Graubner the medium that underpins the language of the picture is color. He once formulated the process by which this intimate connection between color and the act of painting produces the special vividness of

his pictures with a mathematical equation: color = concentration into organism = painting.<sup>3</sup> So how does painting emerge from the simple manual application of the pigment, how does the substantial aspect of color, the materiality of the pigment, combine with the artist's concept?

Graubner's painting develops entirely out of the organisation of color. What he is concerned to do, is to work out the true qualities of color in a consistent fashion. He does not understand color simply as a means, as the tool with which to implement a variety of painterly ideas, it is in fact the core of the picture as he conceives it. His aim in this is to explore color, and to go on exploring it until he arrives at the principles that are inherent in it. He addresses color as the peculiar, the factually irreplaceable element in the process of picture-making. What his pictures stress from constantly new perspectives is the richness of color, the infinite variety which defies all attempts to pin it down to one concept.

Graubner is aware that the thematization of color in his pictures fits into a grand tradition in painting that goes back a long way and has become fixed in the history of art with the term Colorism. It is a story that reaches at least as far back as the Italian Renaissance, when the matter of color and line as pictorial alternatives became a controversial topic among painters and critics. In concrete terms the schools of Florence (with Botticelli as its earliest proponent) and Venice confronted one another at that time. It was Venetian painters from Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione and Titian to Tintoretto and latterly Veronese, who with their work effectively asserted the primacy of color over line. Anyone looking at their pictures recognizes that color here no longer serves as an indicator for pictorial units that are clearly defined by lines, but has become



pictorial color, independent of the representation of visible reality—the human figure, the landscape, objects. The painting is wholly determined by color. The individual elements are brought together by their systematic expression in a language of color.

In this it was not only aesthetic considerations—clearly contoured form and its dissolution—that were bound up with the principles of drawing and color in early painting, there were spiritual notions involved too such as reason and emotion or ethics and sensuality. In the centuries that followed the Renaissance we can continue to observe the controversy about the significance of line and color for the constitution of a pictorial language. As protagonists we can take Poussin and Rubens, or later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the programmes of Ingres and Delacroix. In the painting of Delacroix the emphasis on color becomes quite clear. He exaggerates color contrasts in a way that was hitherto unknown, or he breaks down the closed form of local color into a multiplicity of shades that interact with each other. It is not, as Delacroix writes in his journals with a sidelong glance at his opponent Ingres and his predilection for line, ‘cold correctness’ that makes a picture successful; the point is to ‘express something.’

Nevertheless, in the conception of color in Colorism as it has been sketched here, it is not the question of the picture itself that is under discussion. The direct and unquestioned relationship to painting and to the picture as its proper manifestation that was long unquestioned, only breaks down in the course of the nineteenth century. Like many other traditional certainties in the realms of society, philosophy and the natural sciences, in the field of art too everything that had seemed self-evident now comes to an end. The questions artists, above all the painters in their midst, now ask themselves could not be more fundamental. What is the status of the picture as a reality? What is the particular structure that makes it unmistakable, and what significance in this is to be attributed to color and its capacity for expression? What makes color one of the prime vehicles for meaning in painting?

It is the art of Cézanne that addressed these questions that rocked the foundations of painting, and found new solutions which artists have

never since been able to go back on. The aesthetic revolution which Cézanne initiated basically consists in making color totally autonomous; color alone now provides the elements of pictorial language. The taches, the flecks of color in Cézanne’s pictures no longer designate individual elements in the visible world. Now the painter creates a web of colors which is structured by its own systematic internal relationships. These multitudinous, in the last resort unquantifiable, color relationships create a reality which belongs entirely to the picture, and which at the same represents a parallel reality to the sphere of objects. The visible world is not ‘reproduced but represented’ as Cézanne pointed out in his conversations with Gasquet. The picture’s own reality at the same time creates an echo chamber, a ‘harmony parallel to nature’ as the painter once put it in a well-known formulation. In it we encounter nature once again like a reflection.

Graubner’s conception of the picture, and we can now trace its development back for over half a century, is characterized up to the present by an unmistakable vision. Even if a debate with tradition is inherent in his understanding of himself as an artist, he is in his painting an innovator. He lives firmly in his time, and in his art he seeks answers to questions posed by the present. In 1960, soon after completing his studies, he had found the pictorial language on which he is still working variations today. His decision to opt for color as the real source of energy for his pictures meant abandoning the pathos of spontaneity and the gestures of the unconscious with which painting in Germany, Europe, and equally in the USA reacted after 1945 to the obvious ruptures the war had caused in the cultural tradition that had for centuries determined the spiritual self-understanding of nations. Color, as Graubner understands it—but equally for colleagues like Josef Albers, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko and Ad Reinhardt working in the USA at this time—remains free and untouched by this cultural development. It permits a new beginning, the formulation of an artistic language uncontaminated by historical memories of whatever kind. Even where these artists still relate to traditional lines in art history, they go beyond them. Their understanding of color undergoes radical change, it now becomes more objective and at the same time more emphatic. Color brings tidings of

the extraordinary; it appears as a sensuous manifestation of the sublime. Through the materiality of pigment, color is connected directly to the realm of nature and its unmediated vitality, and takes its place beyond political and social history. And yet it is not simply natural, there is also a spiritual dimension alive in it. What makes it attractive to these artists and others is that it has a life of its own, a reality which remains constant in the face of the changing concepts of human consciousness and is able to calmly absorb the fluctuating imaginings of the ego.

Graubner’s approach to color may be described as a search for ways to bring it to life. In this, two aspects stand out. First, it is a matter of the embodiment of color. In the process of picture-making the initially anonymous pigment attains a specific identity. ‘Embodiment’ however also implies that a spiritualization or sublimation of the physical aspect of color takes place. The act of painting can be understood here as an act of conception in the original sense, as the begetting of life. We can view it as a paradigm for that mysterious artistic event, when material that is factually inert—pigment, metal, clay or stone—is transformed in the hands of the artist and so makes a statement, makes sense.

From 1960 on, Graubner developed a form capable of providing answers to his own specific questions. While using absorbent sponges, he realizes that these can not only be used as tools for applying paint, they can become the work itself: an appropriate material for the energy of color to develop in. This “color-space-body” is a layer of absorbent wadding that is stuffed between the stretcher and the canvas. In this way a carrier for paint can be formed, which can absorb it and allow its true qualities to unfold unimpeded. From that point on, Graubner’s painting has developed within the co-ordinates of color, body and space.

The color-space-body with its spatial depth and its flattened round edges responds to the physicality of the viewer. The color-field that has taken shape under the specific conditions of the color-space-body approaches us in a slow, calm movement from the depths and then sinks back again. There is a spiritual dimension to this encounter. We enter, as it were, into the color, we are entirely enveloped by it. This is precisely the situation that Graubner was aiming for with the experi-

mental fog rooms (*Nebelräume*) that he devised around 1968. For these events he devised an intensified state of color that was impenetrable to the eye. This totally engulfs us and presents a special challenge to our faculty of sight: we feel our way ahead, trying to orientate ourselves in space while at the same time registering the intensity of the color directly, as if it were lying on our retinas and weighing down our eyelids.

The color event is effected above all by the splitting the paint into the multiplicity of shades that is produced by the layering of the color material. Color appears here in its full potentiality as active energy. ‘Color is the most relative medium in art’ Josef Albers stated. His words were a concise formulation of a very old experience in painterly practice, namely that color has no fixed reality. On the contrary, the individual shades combine repeatedly with their neighbors in constantly new combinations to form a sensuous and precise, but at the same time quite unstable identity. For Graubner’s painting too it is true that its essence lies in the effect of the color: an effect which takes place in the eye and in the consciousness of the beholder.

Graubner’s art is creative in an all-embracing sense, because it partakes of the life principle. Its basis is a dialogic principle of exchange between the internal reality of feeling and the external reality of the visible world. The language in which this dialogue is conducted is shaped by the grammar of color and its shades.

To explain his artistic intentions Graubner once had recourse to a sentence of Leonardo da Vinci’s: ‘Knowledge begins with feelings.’<sup>4</sup> Knowledge is used here in a broad sense, sensual, emotional, and intellectual. This however also means that knowledge is not static, does not emerge from confrontational positions, but is realized in the unfolding of half-tones, in listening to the movement of phenomena. In these terms Graubner’s pictures too are transitions and transformations. Through them, color finds a face which responds to our gaze.

1 The full text was published in: *Gotthard Graubner. Malerei / Painting* 2010. Richter Verlag, Hilti Art Foundation, Liechtenstein

2 Gotthard Graubner, in: *Gotthard Graubner*, Hamburg Kunsthalle catalogue 1975, p 85

3 Ibid. p. 3.

4 Graubner, Hamburg Kunsthalle, ibid. p. 5.

## KIMBERLEY GUNDLE

By Andrew Lambirth

### Adapting an Idea

Some artists simply provide the paintings or sculptures and leave curators and technicians to install them. Others are prepared to modify and adapt their ideas. Kimberley Gundle talks to Andrew Lambirth about fitting her work to the situation.

*AL: Although you had a core of ideas for this installation, which consisted essentially of mixed media drawings, did you find you wanted to adapt the work when you saw the actual space?*

KG: Yes. It was partly to do with installing it in the space I was allocated, and partly looking at it in relation to the other artists around me. I realized I needed to make something that felt personal and almost cocooned, so that people would stop and give the images the time that they deserved, instead of using my installation as a thoroughfare, as it is a small long space. In order to do that I decided to bring in sound.

*AL: So what you were trying to do was make a self-contained event which would hold people's attention?*

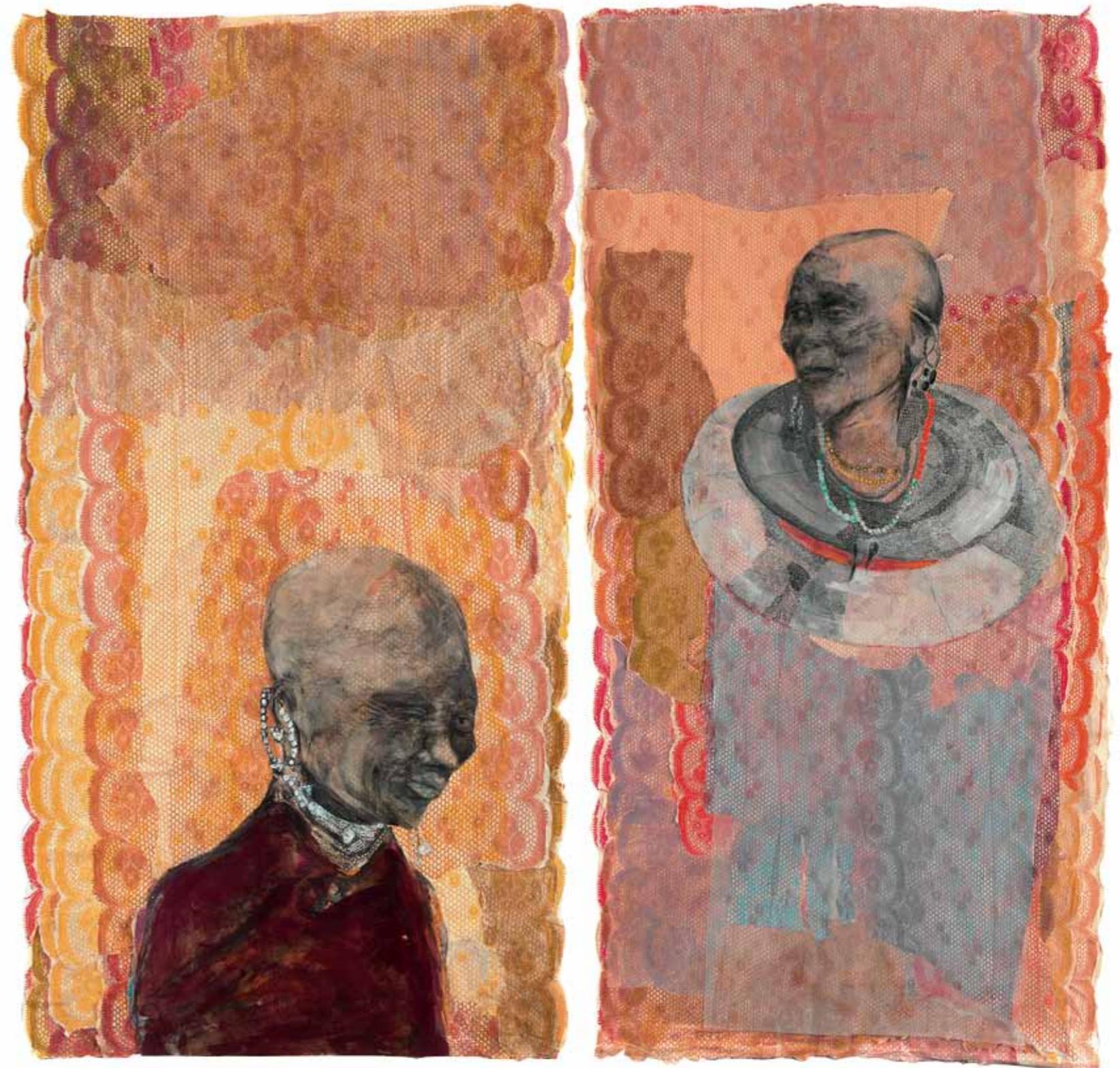
KG: Exactly: an event and an experience. I painted the whole of my space a deep, deep black, including the ceiling and the plinth over the radiator. The floor is plain concrete. Then I placed a 90 cm long low, clear rectangular acrylic container of dried grass brought from Kenya, so that it stood above your waist when you walked in, and gave a scent to the air. When you looked through the grass you saw a ceramic sculpture of a Maasai woman's head. You could see her earrings glittering through the grass. She was set on the plinth. I made the head in Italy, in Faenza, where I do my ceramics. The bead work is shiny and colourful, and I made earrings out of copper and

ceramic, while the woman's face and head are matt and quite broad in treatment—greys and browns with flecks of black—more emotional colour than descriptive colour. I wanted the viewer to get a feeling of the way the women, despite their struggle for life in this harsh environment, still decorate themselves in such an ornate way.

If you approach from the other direction you see a small clump of grass with roots, like a sculpture sitting behind the head; this is to indicate the fragility of the landscape and of the people. I also liked the play of shadow it created, which was quite dramatic. The drawings of the women are hanging along the other side of the space, floating against the black, suspended 10 cms away from the wall, so that as you walk in they move, like cloth. And then you have the sound of the cicadas carrying on and on, gentle and enveloping.

*AL: This is quite a development of the original idea: a much richer realization altogether.*

KG: It's totally a response to the actual space. When I first got there, I had no idea of what I was going to do. I had all these visions and possibilities and I brought different things with me, but I didn't know how I was going to approach it in a way that felt right. I had a week to do it. I'd made the ceramic head already, but I hadn't glazed it. I hadn't even thought about including it until I had spent time feeling the space. But it worked. Although it's a small space, with this strong sense of environment you can see it's not a thoroughfare. The Kenyan grass and the sound of the cicadas channel the outside environment of Africa into the inside spaces. Combined with the spirit of the ceramic head, the space creates its own reality, hosting both the drawings and the viewers.



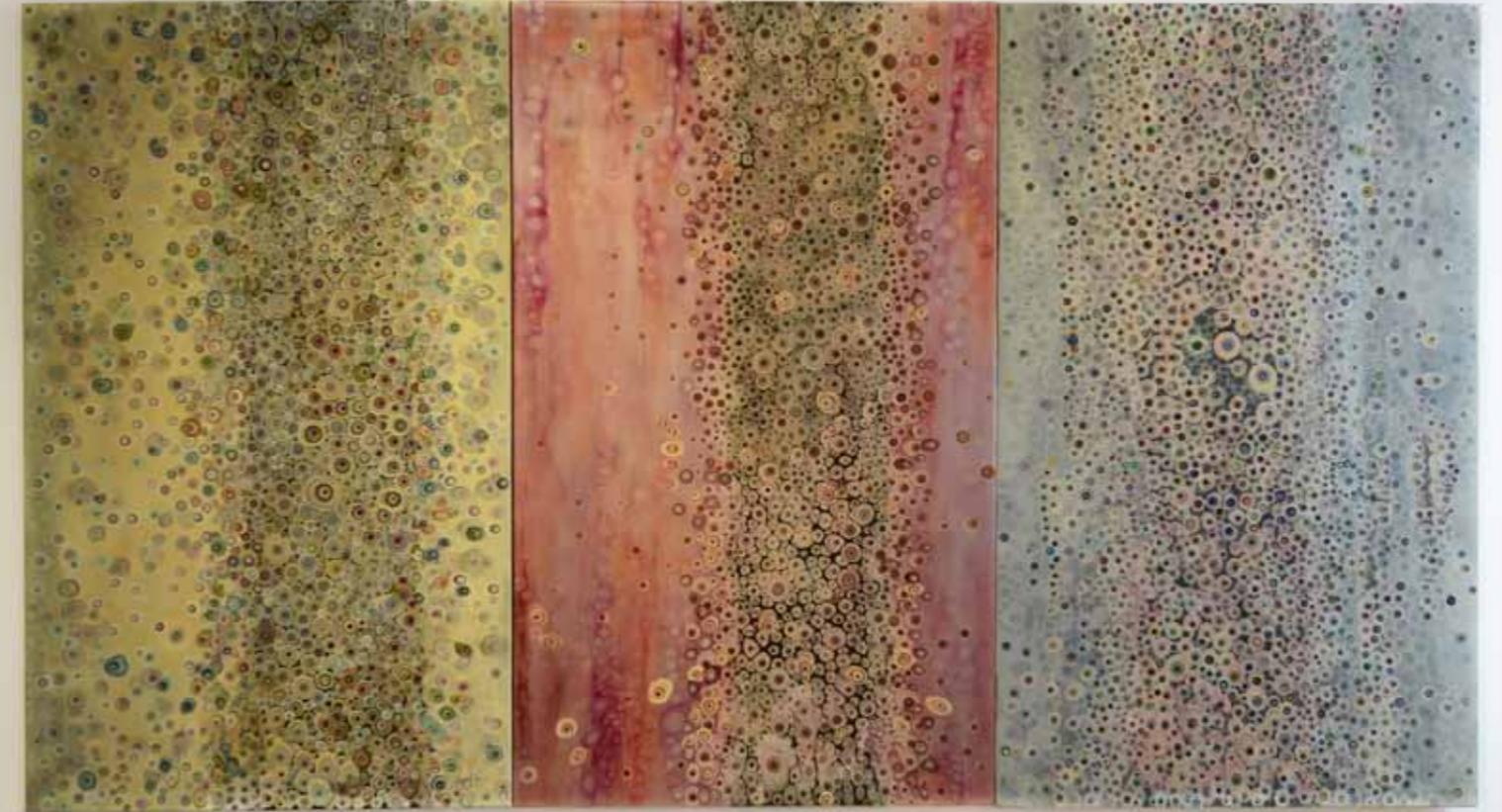
## LAURA GURTON

Laura Gurton's paintings evolve from a refined process that balances chance and control. The artist's method, refined over many years, makes use of both oil paint and resin. Because the interactions of these two media are complex and sometimes difficult to predict, Gurton's way of working requires a deft touch and an acute sense of timing.

The resulting images are composed of multiple layers of translucent glazes, imparting levels of depth and revealing patterns analogous to microscopic cellular forms. With the addition of each layer, these forms begin to overlap, evoking a passage of time. Biomorphous shapes reminiscent of visual information gleaned from x-rays, CT scans, and electron microscopes float across the surface of the artist's canvasses. Gurton states that her work reflects her admiration for all scientific investigations.

In nature, fundamental processes produce forms that are similar, but never identical. Think of the seemingly infinite variety of leaves, for example, or the fact that there are billions of human beings on the earth at this time, no two exactly alike. Gurton's way of applying paint remains constant from painting to painting, and yet, as in nature, great variety is found in her work. This variety can be seen in her choice of colors, the relative density of her signature circular forms in different areas of the compositions, and the overall flow of imagery; some paintings seeming tranquil, others highly energized; some are centered, others a field of imagery edge to edge. Ultimately, beyond her mastery of technique, Gurton's paintings are a highly expressive representation of nature's beauty in its primary elements.

When asked by the Global Arts Affairs Foundation to participate in their exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE at the Venice Biennale, Gurton decided to submit a triptych, a metaphor for those three subjects, explaining "I see my shapes with their concentric circles as a signature for time itself, displaying their growth like the rings in a tree, which comes with age, and when they overlap each other, displaying the passage of time in layers. My shapes exist in space and I am always aware of where they are and how the space affects them; just as in life, where we are and what space is around us, is a vital part of our being. The cellular shapes in the triptych and in all my paintings, echoing naturally occurring shapes, provide the rhythms of life and existence."



## PATRICK HAMILTON

By Christian Viveros-Fauné

### Patrick Hamilton's Aesthetics of Underdevelopment

A collagist in the strictest sense of the term—the word is derived from the French *coller*, meaning “to glue together”—the Chilean artist Patrick Hamilton consistently makes connections between seemingly disparate visual elements of the world around him, often capturing brand new cultural realities even as they originate or develop. An artist with a keen sense for the fetishisms and distortions that accompany global commercialism in the context of underdevelopment, Hamilton borrows, samples, and steals (per both Picasso and Steve Jobs: “good artists copy, great artists steal”) in order to point out the profound differences undermining the homogenizing effects of consumer culture. His method consists of taking images of objects, or sometimes the actual objects themselves, and recontextualizing them to find new meanings. Like John Heartfield and Peter Blake before him, Hamilton often simply matches up the old with the new to arrive at novel if strange visual enigmas. These, in turn, pose important questions about how cultural, social and ultimately economic value is weighed, established and ultimately given.

According to Hamilton himself, the “central issues of his work” are “consumption, violence and spectacle in the context of post-dictatorship Chile.” A description that encompasses what the artist has termed processes of “cultural cosmetization” this artist’s concerns mine the contradictions inherent in Chilean society in particular to get at problems that are characteristic of consumerist societies in general. An exploration of the aesthetics of economic development as well as its converse, the chronic underdevelopment

that has characterized much of the world in modern times, Hamilton centers his visual analysis on elements of popular design, local architecture and product advertising. That he does so partly with a view to the inherent visual qualities of these elements does not mean for a moment that the artist does not also put a special premium on their nature as commercial facades established, often expressly, to mask or hide deeper power relations.



# ANNE HERZBLUTH

By Hajo Schiff

## Beauty in disappearance

In what can perhaps be described as a nomadic life, the artist Anne Herzbluth, who currently resides on a country estate near Kiel (Germany), also spent two years in New Orleans. It was here that she came across the Polaroid remnants from which the light-image-object *Once* is derived. Though this should not perhaps be mentioned at all, despite the strong associations with the secret sorcery of that place, with the destructive force of water so manifest there, and with voodoo magic. In fact, the technical trigger for this individual view of the world, which the artist firmly fostered even as a child, is not as important as the potential for arriving at associations through contemplation.

For Anne Herzbluth, art is akin to a wolf in sheep's clothing—whereby critical content may also lurk underneath the external form. Already in her large wall hangings—made from various smaller works sewn together, she strove towards creating an aesthetically ordered memory landscape from combined media images. The individual image melts away here in the collage, subordinating itself against the ever-difficult effort to grant correlations. Dissolution also shapes her portrayal of people: Faces become increasingly diffuse to begin with, as bodies then blur in the depth of the colour.

This work process is protracted in painting, gradually leading the artist to an abstraction permeated with hidden meaning. With the unearthed photos that form the basis for this work, the material itself has made a contribution, ensuring this disappearance of images once believed invulnerable that Anne Herzbluth is particularly

interested in. In the 3 x 3 photo panels of her light-image-object, she has availed of colour chemistry, yes microbacterial biology, as her aid. On a highly enlarged scale, she shows their corrosive effect on the attempt to preserve family photos. The result is a beauty in decline, turning the mother with her apron and the children in T-shirts on the sofa into pictorial visions somewhere between microcosm and macrocosm. And between the seemingly detailed presence of bodily secretions and those ghostly forms that would become legible from the efflorescences of a neglected historic wall, the newly acquired image becomes a source of irritation, especially here, in Venice.

Anne Herzbluth encourages our desire to look more closely at such schemes, with backlighting and slowly pulsating lighting direction. In times of such omnipresent, fast-paced media, the mere image alone no longer seems attractive enough to warrant any longer time spent allowing it to take effect and venturing intensive exploration. But it is precisely this meditation on imagery that is desired here: Even though its shiny, technoid form is not immediately suggestive of this—in reference to vanitas symbolism, this ninefold quadrate is very closely related to an altar image depicting the vain desires of human strife and life.



## PER HESS

By Natalie Hope O'Donnell

### The lightness of being

Beams of sunlight flood in through the windows of Per Hess's impeccably clean studio, high up in a converted factory with views across the city of Oslo. The snow is finally melting on this March afternoon and spring is in the air. The rays catch two recent paintings on the wall. The pale blue and red lines of the canvas, interspersed with white sections, are almost eclipsed by the bright light; one can barely make out the numbers inscribed on the surface. 'Too much' mutters the artist and draws the blinds. The cold, blue Nordic light is ideal; direct sunlight less so. How will these delicate, subdued paintings fair in a Venetian palazzo with the intense, warm light, captured so sumptuously by Canaletto, pouring through the grand old windows? By filters, is the easy answer, and by recreating the white walls of the studio in the sinking city.

Light and colour have preoccupied Hess throughout his career. His palette is limited to variations on the primary colours, and they are subdued, as he draws on white to provide a surface for light to lift and animate his pale hues, which appear almost celestial. Hess has a near-spiritual relationship with light and colour, and describes how the rays enable his colours to take on lives of their own, how they border on perishing, but are brought back to life by the glow of the sun, so they seem to be 'stepping out of the picture'.

However, it would be erroneous to situate Hess's work merely in the realm of the spiritual, with light as an existential force. There are specific contemporary, references in the work that bring it into immediate dialogue with the real world. Having been politically

engaged earlier in his artistic career, Hess does not venture into the studio as a refuge from everyday life; instead the studio is where actual issues are worked through. It may be a private space, but it relates to the public realm, with its concrete concerns. 'Money' is a term that frequently recurs in Hess's work and becomes an articulation point for juxtapositions that characterise the artist's approach: between the literal and the conceptual. On the one hand, money is treated in a material fashion: money pays the rent, buys the paints, the brushes and the time to retreat to the studio. It is an uncertain investment: works may sell for a fortune, making the artist incredibly rich, but it is, ultimately, an 'unbankable' commodity. As the current financial system is under duress and economies failing under double-dip recessions, money is literally losing its value. On the other hand, there is the idea of money as a belief system. People—and the political category of 'the people'—are gradually relinquishing faith in various austerity measures they are subjected to, and risk, ultimately, losing faith in money as a constructed representation of value, which is constantly highlighted by inflation and spiralling debts.

Hess's interest in the relationship between art, money and capital is expressed in a direct reference to art market value in the two pale blue and red paintings. The numbers on the canvas refer to the sales price of two similar works by Daniel Buren, who is directly invoked in Hess's use of the artist's characteristic stripes. The work sold in 2006 for \$316,841 and the work sold in 2010, fetched \$542,500. They show that the art market operates as a separate and self-contained system of value, ultimately represented by a price tag, despite various



appeals to the higher values of 'art for art's sake'. Hess refrains from passing judgment on this scenario—merely pointing to it—thus leaving space for viewers to construct their own critique—or evade it completely. Alongside this invocation of money as a construct, Hess also approaches money as what he calls 'an abstract belief', likening the experience of money to the experience of art and so forging a link between the aesthetic realm of the artwork and the material world of finance.

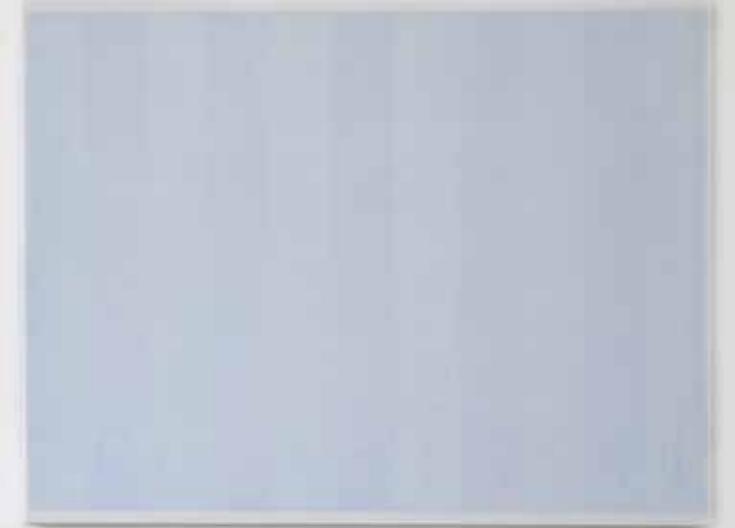
Despite this interest in and engagement with broader notions of value, Hess is first and foremost a painter. As a painter dedicated to his medium since the 1970s, he embraces the self-reflexivity that comes with a discipline that constantly questions itself and its own right to survive. In his famous essay *Modernist Painting* (1965), Clement Greenberg contended that the hallmark of modernist art was 'the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.'<sup>1</sup> In his monochromatic paintings, bearing questions related to colour, Hess approaches this self-referentiality—one might say soul searching—of painting in a refreshingly playful way. Posing questions on the canvas of the monochromes such as 'Is Black Back?' or 'Is Blue True?' Hess references how the history of painting, since the invention of photography, has been characterised by the recurring banal questions—the foremost of which relates to the medium's presumed demise: 'Is painting dead?'

However, these monochromatic and textual works are not quick one-liners, for Hess is a painter who works slowly and meticulously. The colours emerge through a long process of adding layer upon layer until the artist is satisfied with the effect. Asserting that he is 'working, not producing' one could detect a Marxist undertone to his approach. The idea of the painter's 'work' can be juxtaposed the quick images (mass) 'produced' in our digital, visually saturated culture. The paintings also demand something different from the viewer: they require time. They do

not scream in the way that commercially produced imagery does, but insist quietly, yet forcefully. Hess provides a space for interaction between the viewer's perception and the work. The light works upon the surface of the paintings, lifting the colours and creating a vibrant relationship that a mere swift glance would fail to capture. To continue the fiscal vocabulary: the viewer must invest the time, but the returns are then greater, as the paintings grow more forceful with sustained attention.

Born of the private space of the studio and nourished by the artist before they leave the pristine white space of their home, the works now undertake what Daniel Buren described in *The Function of the Studio* (1971) as 'the hazardous passage' from studio to gallery, from Oslo to Venice. With light to sustain them and resuscitate them, the paintings will live on in an almost ethereal realm of aesthetic meaning, where concepts of beauty still hold some currency. Whether they remain immune from the art market's own system of value remains to be seen. At once timely and timeless, they command attention at any rate.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in Gregory ed Battcock, *The new art : a critical anthology*, [1st ed.] ed. (New York: Dutton, 1966).



## HIROFUMI ISOYA

My interests lie in pondering relationships between events and understanding the complexity in which the connections of events weave themselves into. Therefore, while reflecting on these interests, my work tries to foster and facilitate space where my concerns and enquiries can be shared with others.

This photographic work entitled *Land* captures a pair of trainers, which I purchased in a shoe shop that specializes mass produced consumer goods. I wore them for 1000 days. The sole of the shoe became completely worn out and eroded. As poignant as they have morphed to be, I photocopied the image of the shoe's ripped sole, scanned the image and enlarged it to as big as my height.

Small incidents and trifling events that I encountered during the 1000 days in various countries to which the pair of shoes carried me appear and disappear one after another like a series of mirages in the image of the shoe sole. This, in turn, resembles the overview of a cityscape. The image of the shoe has somehow become a reminiscence of events that I experienced over the 1000 days.

A simple act of walking yet over a period of time impresses upon an ordinary pair of shoes with millions of unique experiences. Or one might conversely refer to it as one pair of shoes with a unique character printed on them, making itself stand out of other mass-produced shoes of the same kind.

Such everyday things as walking and having a corporeal presence in the world are closely connected to one's perception and interpretation, as they determine meanings of events and actions,

allowing us to realize even the simplicity of these behaviors. This is something that I treasure and cherish so much that I will continue this journey of investigation, even though to realize the importance of those seemingly insignificant processes consumes my time immensely.



## SAM JINKS

By Mark Feary

### A Moment in Time

It is in the historical freeze of Venezia that creates such an apt context for the work of Australian artist Sam Jinks. The realism employed within his sculptural practice operates to create a situation of stasis, to disarm the viewer into a state of motionlessness as they contemplate the motionless. In presenting scenarios that initially confuse the viewer, who almost invariably perform a double take, the works operate as a kind of seduction of the viewer to approach. The realism is a mechanism to create an intimacy between the viewer and the work, akin in part to the way and the reverence a worshipper would approach a marble statue depicting a saint.

The works encourage a certain voyeurism, an opportunity for intimacy with an object we might project ourselves on to or seek a greater understanding of our humanity from. Upon a sleeping lover, a sick friend, a dying relative, we might scrutinise every inch of the skin, every physical imperfection, every wrinkle without fear of capture. So too might we look upon Jinks' figures with a tenderness and scrutiny that for the most part evades our everyday relationship with others. The works invite us to stare for too long, for our gaze to linger beyond what would normally be acceptable or appropriate. The figures appear to be in a state of coma, not one within which they are in pain, and thus drawing out emotions of sorrow, but in a state of elegant peacefulness. In this instance we are able to look upon the figure with protracted attention, to look upon the figure, and to project upon them, everybody we have ever sought to draw closer to us.

Yet these figures are not presented as exemplars of human physique in a Platonic sense, they are far more vulnerable and

hence, more approachable. They do not attempt to embody idealised notions of strength, valour or physicality, but rather something of the everyday, exhibiting a refreshing ordinariness in the face of society's overwhelming infatuation with perfection. In this sense, what the viewer experiences is a reflection upon the object, rather than an objectification of the form or a comparison with the self. Jinks is able to heighten a tenderness between the viewer and the work through the closure of many of his figures' eyes, eliminating the guilt of our conspicuous contemplation. This gesture emboldens our curiosity through the denial of the sculptures' ability to return our gaze. This provides a moment of privacy, of empowerment, of undisturbed reflection upon the strong or vulnerable before they awake. There is something in the absence of vision that presents these figures as less confrontational, marking them as almost complicit in our perversion. This lack of eye contact presents the figures as more solemn, perhaps even less determinable as an individual person to a degree of being symbolic of every person, as representative of a universalism.

With tender eyes we look upon the sleeping, the near dead and the dead, as Jinks affords us with an opportunity for our voyeurism to take the guise of tender contemplation. The presented works satiate an opportunistic pleasure in scrutinising the naked and vulnerable, as we project ourselves and others onto their dormant bodies. Whether one ascribes upon the figures notions of peacefulness or demise is a matter of perspective, equally of relevance to Sam Jinks' work as to Venezia itself.





## GRZEGORZ KLATKA

Raised in Poland, in the spirit of Eastern European hospitality, I moved to the Czech Republic, where I rarely experienced it. I found out that despite their moral freedom Czechs are very protective of their private homes and reluctant to welcome visitors, while they moved a platform for social gatherings to a neutral and comfortable ground of pubs. The difference between public and private space is that the users of the latter are not verified by a bigger social group. They adopt attitudes according to their habits, even if they might be more difficult to accept by a wider circle. Such images of people can be more real but it can only be experienced by making a connection, or if the observer does not reveal his presence.

An example of intimate space which can be accessed by keeping the distance of a passive observer is the car. A car cabin is a poor substitute of a house, private territory in the public space. In 1949 an advertising brochure announced that Ford is a living room on wheels. Nothing has changed from that time, the only question is: Is there still a "room" open to guests? A car does not help the society to integrate, it rather leads to its fragmentation. It kills a person's ability to sense public moods with instinctive scanning of faces around.

A driver voluntarily trapped in a bubble of glass and steel is characterized by muffled perception, he uses his eyes to evade obstacles, not to observe the reality he is isolated from. Voiceless images pass him by as if on a screen. The bubble has its own world of sounds, smells, even its own microclimate. He crawls through space without moving. He makes no contact with other bubbles'

occupants, even though there are lots of them around. There is no relationship between them. He is a part of the society but he is alone.

For thirteen months I turned my car into a huge mobile digital camera and with its help I looked inside other vehicles. I took pictures by the way, while driving down the streets of Prague as a part of my work. I did not establish any relationship with my characters, exchanged pleasantries or asked for their permission. Some of them I know only from my pictures. In *By the way* my mobile camera gave me a possibility to undisturbedly observe a lonely person in his intimate space.



## MEHDI-GEORGES LAHLOU

By Marie Moignard

Mehdi-Georges Lahlou is the *enfant terrible* of an art that does not exist. Or not yet, since he is in the process of inventing it. How to be an artist of the interstice today, when navigating between north and south, between cultures, between several media, between multiple intertwined notions? “Do not see the problem through the wrong end of the telescope”, is what he seems to (omit to) tell us.

By way of a reinvented surrealism, Mehdi-Georges Lahlou has chosen to show us, as through a keyhole, what we refuse to see, know, or understand. With the dual identity that follows him like a second skin—given his compound name—Mehdi-Georges guides us in his interior world, sprinkled with his wild kid antics. He raises the burlesque to a high art status, playing with the symbols of the Muslim tradition, opposing them to the one, arrogant and showy, of its red stilettos. More than fetishes, these shoes are a kind of “animal totem” for the artist, both cathartic and vector of representation.

In a perpetual, nonsensical prayer, *Sans titre, Paradise* shows a body that blends into the carpet, sucked by the torments of tradition. Standing out from the pattern are four sensuous ends, hands and feet, molded from the artist’s body. They also represent the only limbs allowed to be seen—along with the face—for women wearing the hijab. Guts and heart are rightly absent in this room filled with a strange solemnity, half ludicrous, half icy, raising questions on the presence of the Spirit.

While questioning the field of possibilities forever irreconcilable, he invests his own body as a ground for reflection on the “sexual body”

faced with identities, including religious, and likes to divert the signs of traditional culture to engage in a new ‘Muslim aesthetic.’

His performances, fueled by his early training as a dancer, leave a bittersweet taste in the mouth, and the knowingly caused laughter can quickly turn sour. His stubbornness to achieve the wildest challenges, with a seriousness bordering on insolence, at the same time tries to downplay the thorniest issues raised by his work and to replace them, incognito, at the forefront: the clichés associated with Muslim women, nudity, sexual gender in spirituality, are as many subjects, both sensitive and essential, so rarely treated with such rigor. Because beyond the inevitable provocation rests, at the core, the strength of commitment.

*Quelqu’un m’a dit que le Merveilleux était révolu* (Someone told me that the wonder had passed), he writes, as a disillusioned child, in champagne-colored letters, or on gold paper. Well, not quite, since Mehdi-Georges Lahlou is still looking for it.

*translation by Philippe Dumaine*



# JAMES LAVADOUR

By Meagan Atiyeh

A painter participates in a mythic narrative, bound to the physical rules of material properties, time, and corporeal strength, and to the emotional trials of maintaining the creative posture, of trust, and insight. A great painter makes a practice inside this narrative, not in deference to it.

In his studio, James Lavadour begins large groupings of works at once, as many as 50. They progress in layers. A particular gesture or mix of pigments is applied and then stalked, considered, to either be wiped away or to begin the next. In this multiplicity, a singular choice is deeply interrogated, 50 times over. Each day, the body of paintings responds, amplified in their unison and dissent.

Lavadour has a primal interest in the properties of paint and composition. As a child, he was enamored by drops of food coloring plummeting through a glass of water. He recognized nature in their billowing blue and red. He paints now in the same landscape he has lived in his whole life, looking out to a wheat field bound by the Eastern Oregon mountains that encircle the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The physicality of his painting is tied to this place, through muscle memory of walking the land and through studied mark-making, recorded in sketchbooks, as he practiced a willful state of openness. His goal was to draw without intention, not merely mimic, but become nature, a desire influenced by the improvisation of American jazz and rigor of Indian sitar, and shared by many great painters. Max Beckmann penned Lavadour's talisman of quotes: "If you love nature with all of your heart, new and unimaginable things in art will occur to you. Because art is nothing but a transfiguration of nature."<sup>1</sup>

Lavadour is now three decades into his practice, able to work inside these physical and emotional states for extending periods of time. Where a new series begins *en masse*, the work takes a frantic pace. As the layers build, the grounds beneath push back in increasing complexity. Now 10 panels require the same attention as 50. Some groupings divide, or coalesce to become grids resolved unto themselves. As he works, the narrative begins to fold back to a more personal memory: Today, working with a particular pigment and tool, he will remember encountering the same viscosity or illumination years ago, the lessons of a past painting, as he calls it, "a bookmark in time." In this way, the warm yellows and cool somber shadows of *Tiichum* are evidence of a multiplicity of paintings at once.

There is a phrase that begins nearly everything I think about Lavadour's work: This is how it happened. It is the essence of his narrative, which begins always at the edges of a contemporary thought that has taken a universe of time to exist.

Lavadour is descendant from the Walla Walla tribe of the modern day Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, where he is an enrolled and active tribal member. In 1993, he co-founded Crow's Shadow Institute for the Arts, a not for profit printmaking studio/arts organization.

1. Stephen Lackner, Beckmann, Harry M Abrams, 1977, p. 43



## HELMUT LEMKE

ÜBER DEN HÖRWERT nr.21  
the Surplus Value of Sound no. 21  
Palazzo Bembo, Venice, 2013

LISTEN to what you SEE  
and you'll find  
what you see is SOUND

three days in April 2013  
24 hours

in one room of the Palazzo Bembo  
windows left wide open,  
I noted what I heard.  
my tools limited to pens and pencils  
drawing and writing.

I spent three sessions in this room, listening, recording:

- 1 Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> of April from 2pm – midnight  
Monday 29<sup>th</sup> of April from midnight to 2.30am
- 2 Monday 29<sup>th</sup> of April from 8am to 2pm
- 3 Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> of April from 2.30am to 8am.

Sat, here, I could rarely see any of the sources of the sounds I heard.

I realized that nearly every time I wrote about the source of a sound I was guessing!

A realisation that is liberating and at the same time revealing. Liberating because it enables freedom for improvisation and experimentation—what I do not know I can allow my imagination to 'picture'.

Revealing because it shows how much we depend on visual recognition when deciphering sound.

I imagined 5 components that make up this particular sounding environment:

1. Water sounds
  2. Voices
  3. Sounds related to transport (boats & feet)
- Rare Sounds no I: related to work activities  
Rare Sounds no II: related to birds: feet, feathers, wind, song

The room showed 22 drawings from 24 hours:  
sounds caught on paper

I HOPE YOU CAN see HEAR

Helmut Lemke April/May, Palazzo Bembo, Venice



## ANNA LENZ

No matter where to, since 1960 there was always a camera as companion...

Since our life basically always revolved around art, and my husband, Gerhard Lenz, our family and I are surrounded by art every day, it became the all-pervading theme of my photos. Series arose of encounters with artists in their studios, of many art festivals and cultural trips, above all however, of our jointly organized exhibitions:

For almost forty years we have been presenting our ZERO collection again and again throughout Europe in various museums such as those in Moscow, Warsaw, Madrid, Zagreb, Salzburg and Munich. A total of thirteen times, selected works have been sent on journeys, and I have always recorded unforgettable moments for us with my camera, starting with the joint transportation through the setting-up and hanging of the works to the exhibition's opening.

The motto, PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, refers to aspects playing an important role also for my photographs. They document personal relations, the course of time, processes, places as well as various forms and states of being.

We have friendly contact with almost all the artists represented in our collection. They were always incorporated into our ventures, mostly in large numbers. Through these friendships, the contact to the women supporting these men also intensified, which finally aroused the desire on my part to find out more about them:

For three years, together with the Munich photographer, Roswitha Pross, and the art historian, Ulrike Schmitt, I set out on journeys,

visiting twenty women throughout Europe to talk to them, meeting them in the places where they live and work. With the assistance of Ulrike Honisch, a kaleidoscope of biographical sketches came about that communicate not only a part of art history, but also of the history of the times.

The portrait series show the women in their usual surroundings with numerous mementoes, all telling their stories. The differences in their biographies are mirrored in the photos.

Do you want to find out more about ANTJE VON GRAEVENITZ, CHRISTIANE MEWES-HOLWECK, CHRISTINE UECKER, DANIELLE MORELLET, EDITH TALMAN, ELIZABETH GOLDRING-PIENE, ESSILA PARAISO, FRANZISKA MEGERT, GERTRUD BARTELS, HANNELORE DITZ, KARIN GIRKE, KITTY KEMR, LÉONORE VERHEYEN, MARIE-MADELEINE OPALKA, NANDA VIGO, ROTRAUT KLEIN-MOQUAY, SUSANNE DE VRIES, UTA PEYRER-PRANTL, UTE MACK and VLASTA PRACHATICKÁ ?

Then read the associated exciting, touching life-stories in the book *STARKE FRAUEN FÜR DIE KUNST im Gespräch mit Anna Lenz* (Strong Women for Art—in conversation with Anna Lenz).

About the book:

Anna Lenz (ed.) *STARKE FRAUEN FÜR DIE KUNST im Gespräch mit Anna Lenz*, Munich, Hirmer Verlag, 2013

*Concept and realization: Anna Lenz, Roswitha Pross, Ulrike Honisch, Ulrike Schmitt. Copy-editing: Ulrike Honisch. Translated from the German by Dr Michael Eldred, artefact text & translation, Cologne*

## STRONG WOMEN FOR ART



# LUCE

By Andris Teikmanis & Evelina Vanaga

Evelina Vanaga: The scenario of Luce's *GOD* is grounded in the provocative incitement of spectator inner senses: in the challenging relations between vision, hearing, anticipation, recognition of cultural codes and symbols and personal experience. Artwork also conveys very provoking subtle message that "God is woman".

Andris Teikmanis: As a spectator I am not reflecting about relations between visual and audial messages, my anticipations, and my ability to recognize embedded cods and symbols or my individual experience. I take all these for granted. Seeing is very much a question of habit. It can be difficult to get right away from what we know. We know that according to Judaeo-Christian tradition God was a man. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him". Luce affects its viewer with a rather different message—"God is woman" or, more precisely, "God looks like woman" or, if we take into account deeply embedded native religious experience that is related to various Latvian Mother Deities, Luce's message should be read like this "when God manifest himself (herself) by creating he or she looks like woman".

EV: Luce's *GOD* outlines classic questions of existential subjects: time, space, human nature, body and spirit. Video also indirectly reveals explorations of evolutionary structures and searches of their definitions.

AT: We all are undergoing changes on everyday basis. We are evolving. Our existential conditions, our spatial and temporal settings and our bodily experience are all contributing to our permanent evolution. However, we are not reflecting upon ourselves like about permanently evolving creatures. We are not ready to

admit that we are evolving, recreating and reshaping ourselves; rather, we are more ready to acknowledge it as a result of some external act. Therefore any alterations of us or our mind-sets are being identified as impacts conditioned by some external agents rather than our internal upturn. This is the reason why Luce's images of creation and reshaping are so painful, so uncomfortable.

EV: The visual language of the artwork is tied together with a composition based in a circular motion. There is a circular move between processes: observation -> movement -> reaction -> movement. Undoubtedly, this constellation refers to the history of creation not as a linear process, but as life-cycle continuity.

AT: Our time consciousness is based upon several traditions. The run or passage of time is usually being described using spatial metaphors. However, we don't know how the time actually runs. We have not any specific organs that could immediate feel the time. We could reflect about time only in terms provided by semantic constructions of our language. This is where the art is coming in and becoming more powerful instrument of cognition than the science; and this is where the art also could became most appropriate tool of alteration. Science and technology are providing us with new existential conditions that will affect our nature. Though, only art could domesticate these conditions by habituating us with them, providing us with new experience and transforming us into new human or even transhuman beings of coming XXII century.



## MICHELE MANZINI

### Deceit

In Proust's *matinée* in the home of the Princesse de Guermantes, he understands that a face, a thing, an event are inanimate when they are frozen in a relationship of resemblance and identity with the immanence of reality. Faces, things, and events come alive through mutation, metamorphosis, and transformation.

Proust decides to narrate this change in order to arrive at figures full of the light and shade which make up that truth which cannot be seen in the facts of everyday reality. This is the plane where fiction intersects with reality: the plane of its truth.

In this confluence of two seas, as Corbin has remarked, "the middle world" is made visible, a world in which what usually seems inanimate comes alive.

Right from the start, the term "deceit" was the object of a great dispute with enormous implications for Western thought.

Parmenides was the first to define the term by contrasting tragic knowledge, and thus the language of myths and stories, with philosophical knowledge. For him there were two possible ways for accessing reality: the way of truth of a noetic nature, and another, phenomenal and sensible, way that can be followed only by organizing discussion into a "fictional order" and, therefore, through "deceit" which belongs to poetry, myths, and tales.

My work is made in the conviction that fiction contains a part of the truth which, in some way and in some place, intersects with reality. Only in this process of transfiguration can we grasp the unity of a

human face and push ourselves into the interstices of reality. This is the function of masks which not only hide but reveal.

In Greek tragedy masks were never used to hide the character but to give it a truth that the naked face could not uphold. The truth of a mask always comes up against the truth of the face it covers.



# CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

By Camille Lynch

‘The only way to say what abstract is, is to say what it is not.’

- Ad Reinhardt

The first encounter with a painting by Christopher Martin is a curious one. There is an ambiguity between what is abstract and what is recognizable, and yet in these wide sweeping curves and expressive brushstrokes there is an absence of representation. What is immediately apparent is a rational sense of space, of the balance and harmony in space. These elements have been revered in art since the classical era. Essentially, this is because they are inspired by nature, whether it is in the stem of a plant, the petals of a flower, the scales of a tropical fish or the sky at night. Martin’s abstractions reflect nature, and in turn nature reflects the art that observes its laws. His work is also self-reflexive in that it questions its own conception and basic composition. But the reflexive does not take away, or subtract, from life: the mirror Martin holds up to himself is reflective of nature, and the abstraction adds new dimensions to it. In doing so Martin creates his own visual language.

The technique of reverse glass painting, originally a European tradition called *verre églomisé*, dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Martin takes this late medieval practice, adds modern style, scale and virtuosity and brings it back to life, a contemporary renaissance. Beginning with the foreground, and working backward, Martin coaxes layer upon layer of sheer pigment and water into mimicking effects of heat, wind and water. Each layer of paint balances on the one behind it. Each is secure, like the floors of a building. But they are also precarious, like acrobats standing on each

other’s shoulders. Then at last, sometimes after thirty or more sheer layers of pigment, they fuse together to create something new.

These paintings are brave in size and statement, while remaining sensuously detailed in their execution. Amid a chaos of color and light Martin carves out abstraction to create balance and harmony. Some images are linear: the compositions emphasize the fact that these are panels of color layered over each other. Others place the emphasis more on the curving graphic potential of pigment, the way it twists and spirals. A self-taught artist, Martin uses nature’s color palette as his guide.

Martin: ‘When you observe wood grain, the veining of a marble slab, alternating colors in petrified wood, dunes, rivers, mountains, deserts, cellular formations, they are all inherently poetic and attuned to the laws of abstraction. We are surrounded by these natural masterpieces. If you are drawn to what you see in my work, and the details reveal an orchestration of color that feels as natural as gazing into a forest canopy, then my efforts are a success.’

In 2012, Martin was commissioned to create the largest reverse glass painting in North America; at 120 feet it ran the entire length of the Grandstand Lounge at the Formula One Track in Austin, Texas. Entitled *Velocity*, the work reflects the virtuosity, modernity and speed of a fast paced society and the world’s most prestigious racing event. Both artist and sport echo the fast, free flowing energy that charges through both nature and technology. These more intimate paintings condense and slow down that energy. They allow it to be brought indoors, to invigorate a personal space, to be at home in the balance between what we are and what the artist makes for us.



## HERRE METHORST

*Herre Methorst is a self-made artist and graphic designer, who was born in Zeist, in the Netherlands in 1955. He worked as art director for several advertising agencies before he chose for an independent life. He lived in Africa for a couple of years, where he started drawing. In 2009 he started the project StreetViewArt, traveling around the world with the help of Google Street View and painting what he sees. Each individual painting is part of one big artwork: the World itself.*

'When I was a five year old kid, I often sat in the bay window of our house above the shop, staring outside. Beneath me, the slow street life of the village Zeist in the fifties was going on in full swing. For hours I would look at the passing cars, bicycles and pedestrians crossing the zebra. Because I was so small, the bay window was a huge space from which I could safely observe the even bigger world outside.

Now, fifty years later, I am sitting behind the computer in my studio and draw the world as it appears before my eyes on Google Street View. I move through a world where time has simply stopped. I descend from space to a certain place on earth and virtually walk through strangely familiar streets and colorful worlds; picturesque scenes in villages with exotic names such as Diamantina in Brazil and Bird-in-Hand in Pennsylvania. Busy streets with flashy signs and swarming people in Hong Kong, honking cars in front of a traffic light in New York.

Thanks to modern technology, millions of images unfold in front of my eyes; images that evoke curiosity and stimulate my fantasy. The images appear common at first sight, but scream for interpretation, color and emotion. I take my virtual easel and color the world with my own perceptions and emotions.

What do the little boy in the bay window fifty years ago and the man behind the computer that I am today still have in common? We live in completely different times. Yet, we are, each of us, inextricably connected to our time. My experience then is only one of the experiences that made me the man I am today. But it remains a significant experience to which StreetViewArt can be traced back.

StreetViewArt is my perspective on the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century world that has become ever bigger, more open and transparent through modern technology. My art says something about me and who I am, the way I perceive the world. But it also captures the modern world as it shows itself to us through millions of images and endless pieces of information that reach us through social media, TV, webcams etc. I have no pretensions to change it; I only convey what I see. And by doing that, it automatically becomes my world, my unique, subjective perception of what is going on. I take everyday reality, I add nothing, create nothing new, but I leave out details, I accentuate, I color. I lift everyday life out of its vulgarity and add my fascination. Is it not both awe-inspiring and overwhelming to realize how many people exist in this world? And the greatness of what they have built and created in the course of time? My fascination is not only with the greatness, it is also with the details that I cut out of reality. In the visual world there is space for everyone; there is ugliness and beauty; there is loneliness, but also a sense of community; there is the stressful city and the peaceful country life, all existing at the same time. This world is fascinating in all its grandeur and boredom....as long as you are willing to see it and to take a close look.



## DAVID MIDDLEBROOK

By DeWitt Cheng

The merger of art and life that began a century ago with modernism can be now said to be complete. After forty years of conceptual art, anything that anyone claims as art is art. Within this exhilarating but confusing context, the sculptures of Californian David Middlebrook, exquisitely crafted in the traditional materials of wood, stone and bronze (along with the contemporary addition of polyurethanes)—and no Post-Its, carved tofu or frozen blood!—look decidedly traditional; some viewers might even see them as objects of pure aesthetic delight—which they are, without apology; but they're also, once you look beyond their beauty, time bombs of sociopolitical critique and alternately playful and scathing wit. Middlebrook, who recently retired from teaching (at California State University, San Jose), has had a long career in public art as well, so he's well versed in the trifecta of history, theory and materials. His emergence in the Bay Area's art world as "a thing-maker who thinks" (to employ his term) and his leap to the international stage in Basel last year, and now Venice, are thus no accident.

Middlebrook's compelling synthesis of form and content appeals to mind and eye—and hand, if you consider his seductively tactile metal and stone surfaces (which are sometimes manipulated, in three-dimensional *trompe-l'oeil*, to mimic other materials). The Sacramento art critic, David M. Roth, reviewing Middlebrook's 2011 San Francisco debut at The McLoughlin Gallery, described the artist, somewhat humorously, but I think, fairly, as "a surrealist-leaning naturalist...[whose] gravity-defying displays...focus our attention on greed, heedless consumption, political hubris, and, most of all, the ecological catastrophe that awaits us." He praises

the "eye-fooling patinas" and "visual sleights of hand that convincingly create the illusion of objects floating impossibly in space." I wrote, reviewing that same show, in *Sculpture* magazine, that "Middlebrook's socio-political Surrealism renders palatable a number of unappetizing issues that humanity chooses to push around the agenda plates"—namely, overpopulation, pollution, runaway consumerism, oil addiction, the destruction of the natural world, financial malpractice, political paralysis, and so on—the usual suspects familiar to the reality-based community. In these elegant yet thoughtful works, "technical expertise and virtuosic craftsmanship please (and fool) the eye: art history, political commentary and absurdist humor please (and fool) the brain."

The art critic Suzi Gablik once outlined the logic behind Rene Magritte's Surrealist visual paradoxes. Every painting, she wrote, in her Magritte monograph, was the solution to a problem that the artist had set for himself, the end-product on an initial stimulus; for example, the "problem of the egg," in Magritte's words, was solved in the painting, *Elective Affinities* (1933), by a colossal egg confined within a birdcage. David Middlebrook, too, is a problem-solver, employing his considerable skill set to work through and embody his ideas. He believes that art must delight, entertain, inform, and stimulate thought; the aesthetic appeal of his work makes his "business of criticizing everything" a pleasure to contemplate, helping us confront reality instead of escaping into mazes of aesthetic theory or low-information fun. Middlebrook's memorable, ingenious artifacts do real work in the real world.



## PETER SIMON MÜHLHÄUßER

By Stephen Shaheen

Working in bronze, one of the oldest sculptural media, Peter Simon Mühlhäußer has created *Girls*: a contemporary series of female figures that explores sexuality, ethnicity, identity, male gaze and voyeurism. These six, exquisitely rendered, nearly-life sized figures are so unapologetically—even brashly—charged with provocative possibilities, that their presence becomes an unavoidable confrontation with multiple disquieting readings, and ultimately with ourselves.

Mühlhäußer's art is a specific and dangerous one. The sculptures' lushness is visually aggressive, their existence an accusation. *Abigail*, an African-American girl with hypnotically intricate hair, juts her chest and jaw out at us, perched upon a pile of coal bricks. *Theresa* is enigmatically suspended from cords, exhibiting a bizarre combination of references both to classical sculpture and sexual bondage. These sculptures are not passively aware of their viewers; they engage us unflinchingly. Nor do they allow us a static involvement: we are compelled to move around them to fully appreciate their ample details, elegant passages of hair and skin folds, and the endless sculptural landscapes that comprise each body.

Mühlhäußer's creating such explicit figuration, exercising virtuosity in a world that often considers it irrelevant, choosing controversial subjects and imagery, and treating the completed bronzes with unorthodox finishes are all variables whose downsides could result in harsh failure. It would be easy to understate the risks involved by combining this many uncertainties; consequently, it is impossible to overstate the achievement in pulling it off.

Not the least of these factors is the self-imposed method by which Mühlhäußer sculpts his figures: by hand, almost exclusively out of his head, modeling and posing them in actual size without the use of a maquette. This is a highly idiosyncratic and difficult method by which to realize a sculpture that approximates a credible human being. The refuge of the lesser-skilled is to utilize body casts or digitally scan figures and mechanically realize a form. Making a realistic figure with his own hands immediately sifts Mühlhäußer into a much smaller pool of artists, which shrinks even further if we exclude those who rely on photographs and models.

*Girls*, and their creator, will undoubtedly come under considerable and warranted scrutiny. Viewers will have to decide for themselves: is this merely a cynical effort to shock or dazzle us with a beguiling surface that remains as conceptually vacant as the hollow bronze from which it's made? Or is the void of easily grasped meaning a chamber within which our own projections echo? Any discomfort that provokes the need to analyze the work or artist is also a call to examine the roots of such unease. "Rather than dictate a narrative, these complicated objects present choices," notes sculptor Mark Mennin.

In Mühlhäußer's 2012 catalog, the artist includes a cherished quote from Gustav Mahler: "Tradition is the passing on of the fire, not the worship of the ashes." Like Mahler, Mühlhäußer carries that fire forward, but also plays with it at risk of being burned. In creating *Girls*, he has exploited one of figuration's greatest assets—accessibility—to disarm and even mesmerize us while he flirts with figuration's greatest weaknesses—kitsch and pornography.





## HERMANN NITSCH

### A LIFE IN REVIEW

The harsh criticism leveled at me has made me mute, and I have to ask myself, yet again, why I, of all persons, have to create an art which entails so much suffering, why I need to descend to such depths, being a man who wants to embrace life with all his force.

Artistic work has nothing to do with the trivial notion of an idea. What I want to achieve really is to produce good art. So how and why did I pick up my work? I have always been interested in culture of all epochs, culture has made me the person I am. Religion and philosophy have always intrigued me. I wanted to perceive the advent and disappearance of religions as a history of human awareness in general. I was molded by everything that surrounded me. Buddha, Christ who rose from the dead, Nietzsche, Greek tragedies, Christian mass, Gregorian chants, early polyphony, Gothic cathedrals, Michelangelo's sculptures, El Greco's bright colors, Rembrandt, Tristan's chromatics, Cézanne, van Gogh, Munch, Schiele, Kandinsky and Schönberg, Arnulf Rainer, to name but a few of those who defined me.

At first I did not perceive the value and essence of form, it was something I took for granted. I searched for the expressiveness of art in general. Of course I was fascinated first and foremost by Expressionists. They were my teachers and encouraged me to increase my expressive power more and more, until it reached extreme proportions. Expression is closely linked to pain, suffering, and death (and thus also to aggression, power, and sadomasochism). Expression harbors the inescapable fact of tragedy. What is tragic stirs up our feelings and makes us forget our average existence and old habits.

Form is not committed to morality. On the contrary, form represents a deeper, more anticipatory intention, i.e. that of coming to be. If you attempt to express suffering or tragedy superficially, this effort will smack of artificiality and is no longer supported by form. Expressing tragedy must originate in the necessity to design the form.

I remember being held spellbound by Munch's visions of death and fright, his sickly girl. I had the same feeling when looking at how Schiele explicitly exposed nakedness and sexuality. Trakl conveyed to me the slow and gentle passage towards illness, death, and putrefaction. I was intrigued by van Gogh's obsessive ecstasy of natural mysticism. I was deeply impressed by Schönberg's erotically sadomasochistic music of expectancy or his opera *Moses and Aaron* which anticipated my *Theater of Orgies and Mysteries*. Gottfried Benn, physician and lyricist, dug with both hands into the opened human body and extracted its entrails. All these people had a profound impact on me.

Nietzsche considers cruelty an abundance of life. He called the Greeks a healthy people because they bore the cruelty of Greek tragedy, they needed it to become intoxicated and experience it as a catharsis.

An unconscious need for cruelty gives rise to neuroses. The desire to be cruel can also be triggered by repressions. I discovered psychoanalysis for my theater. I wanted to introduce a psychoanalytical dramaturgy. Abstract Expressionism (Art Informel, Tachisme) stirred up the psyche. Long repressed and stunted emotions, a new sensuality defining us in accordance with our nature awoke us, made us aware of our archaic traits, our predatory instincts, the origins of



myths were exposed. The substance and sensuality of color led to flesh and blood, to the act of opening and gutting animal carcasses, to our showing and touching slimy and moist entrails. Blood splatters. We understood the reason why cruelty and killings had become a part of myths. Annihilating the substance of life, tearing apart the flesh (Dionysus torn apart). Destruction penetrates the flesh, Dionysus encounters the crucified Jesus. The two mythical appearances meet in Resurrection. The Christian god knows finality and transfiguration. The god of wine, tragedy, ebullient life, inebriation, construction, and destruction keeps returning for ever. His redemption comes in an intensely captured moment. The *Theater of Orgies and Mysteries*, based on the psychoanalytical art of Action Painting, articulates liveliness, repressed liveliness, eternal liveliness, the unfathomable depths of nature. Informal Painting delved very deep and produced great complexity. Informal Painting was also interpreted by resorting to Zen Buddhism. The holy moment, the present was experienced in the act of painting. Profoundly sensual feelings made us exist more intensely. The *Theater of Orgies and Mysteries* raises questions about being. Analysis eventually becomes ontology, and finding your own self, going beyond life and death, becomes the program of the *Theater of Orgies and Mysteries*.

In about 1960 I developed a dramaturgical model of abreaction. Freud rejected abreaction because of its compulsion of repetition. He relied instead on word associations letting us glimpse into our unconscious, on word analyses, and confessions. My theater concept uses sensual feelings sounding out great depths. Language is overcome and circumvented. Real sensual feelings are to solve unconscious conflicts, repressions are released. Abreaction occurs within the confines of the theater, and we become aware of it through form, by a factor which is added through art. Abreaction, therefore, is no longer subject to the compulsion of repetition.

The rites of abreactions of the *Theater of Orgies and Mysteries*, i.e. a psychoanalytical dramaturgy, are designed to sound out depths by intensity, by sensual and primal feelings. A psychoanalytical dramaturgy

exposes repressions and releases them. There is an excess of intensity which you do not need to comprehend though notions of evil and cruelty. Utter intensity is experienced, the audience and participants in the play are suddenly wide awake, they are put on the alert, in another state, into a form of being, they become acutely aware that they exist. They experience, they become alive. Pent-up feelings, repressions, lives that have not been lived come to the surface.

The vital energy flowing through our body comes from unfathomable depths, from a source without a bottom that will never run dry, precious liquid gushing from it for ever and ever. If this energy is misused it becomes dangerous, just like all accumulated forces. Without knowing Antonin Artaud's works, I interpreted his theater of cruelty quite literally. Cruelty not aiming at hurting or tormenting somebody, but cruelty acted out in the theater to make people wake up, to counter pseudo-existence with intensity, propelling it towards what is essential. Artaud shows that the notion of cruelty needs to be enlarged so as to include intensity, excess, orgiastic acts. He defines cruelty as an intensive life reminiscent of a whirlwind. He also says that Resurrection is cruel. He does not intend to glorify violence but call upon and exalt life. This statement is true for the entire theater. The representation of violence, tragedy, and cruelty is an act of calling upon life, which is also true for the myth of Christianity born out of Greek tragedy, particularly for the most dramatic story of suffering, the Passion of Christ. Life propels a life not lived, in the form of cruelty, as the desire to live at any cost, into myths. The collective—and mostly unconscious—urge towards abreaction and acting out repressions is presented in the excessive actions of myths and worship.

Our life (our being) takes place between excess and emptiness. Orgiastic experiences determine our lives just as much as a reflective meditative search for our deep self, for emptiness. Our profound nature lies in excess, is defined by ecstasy and catharsis and is acted out just as much by a meditative sublimation of drives and emptiness. Excess equals intensity, and the experience of emptiness, of being unborn is gained by utmost vivacity, alertness, and intensity of being.



What comes to my mind now is Schopenhauer's attitude towards art. His goal and that of the Buddhists was to negate the commitment to life and to lead a life of asceticism to thereby break out of the cycle of volition and be redeemed. A preliminary phase of this consistent negation of the will; according to Schopenhauer, is the performance of art. It frees itself from the dictatorship of the will by placing itself in an objective position, it no longer challenges the will, it just represents it. This is an essential statement about the freedom of art.

In Austria, incidentally, the notion of freedom of art was incorporated in 1982 into a law by a parliamentary decision. Art, however, soon went beyond representing and emulating nature. Following abstract art, Dadaism and Pop Art dealt with real objects, preformed ready-mades were used for paintings, sculptures, environments, and installations. Happenings, Actionism, and performance art staged real events. Art came to be a compression of what existed, a compression of reality. Art came to have an entirely different sphere of influence, an entirely novel scope of action. Art has developed such that literally everything can now become art. Processes of life and growth, political processes, sociological structures—they can all be articulated through art. I am thinking here about Beuys' artistic concept of social plastic art. Art becomes life, life becomes art.

If you want to understand my art, you need to comprehend all my concerns, the entire theory of tragic theater, the representation of tragedy and death. The dramatist wants to express death, killing, suffering, passion, he wants to play with the unconscious urge of aggression, with the pleasure taken by the hunter and the warrior in killing. Dramatists of all times have articulated death, depicting it, capturing it in their plays. The theater and its dramatic catastrophes let us look behind a space devoid of taboos; chaos, the divine and, at the same time, formidable force of nature which cannot be tamed by taboos, shatters us, sends cold shivers running down our spine as we are confronted with the killings of Atrides or Oedipus' blinding following his terrible revelation.

The primordial function of art might well be to exalt life as a celebration, but tragedy still is an integral part of life as well, and certainly

one of art. Form and the principle of artistic compression have extended their sphere of influence to life in general. Highest abstraction and aestheticism are also achieved by technical devices, technology, and technical processes. Scientific language and functional developments are associated with considerable aestheticism. The beauty of weapons and speed devices also relates to this aestheticism. Aestheticism and, more specifically, the form can branch out to all domains. Without wanting to favor or glorify war we can very well talk about its aesthetics. Even though people often choose to ignore this, violence and cruelty have always played a major role in art. As sad as this may sound—war too may be a component of art, just like the sensation of mysticism and exuberant joy of life. Art is now a totality, it has no creative limits anymore. Nevertheless, the responsibility of art and, particularly, of artists has become much greater. When performing art you assume responsibility simply because you cannot hide behind the notion of art, because artistic activity is no longer a guarantee for absolutely good and pure acts, and because art is no moral compulsion. The total freedom of art has lost its "purity", it is no longer an activity transcending categories like good or evil. Artists may practice good art, but in doing so they may do immoral deeds. Practicing art is no guarantee any longer for ethical righteousness. This is just like the Fall of Man. While art may be free, it does not serve the myth of a religion or an ideology anymore. It is free, but it only refers to what is essential, to our existence, and that is how it has lost its innocence.

What is this world, what is performed in this world, what does this world want, this cosmos, this accumulation of unequal universes in infinity? The processes of growing and disappearing occurring in an endless loop can be traced back to, and summarized in, the notion of being, which is the foundation of everything. All things take place because of being. Being is the stage of all actions, all events, of the entire Creation, of all births, all forms of death, destruction, orgies, carnal pleasure, ecstasy, introspection, deliverance, and transfiguration. The world in its entirety and permanent change is, wants to be. Immeasurable forces whose formidable energy can only



be derived from and referred to notions like eternity and infinity. This power is unthinkable, unfathomable, springs incessantly from a ground without a bottom, is a blessing because it preserves and contains everything, yet causes construction and destruction at the same time. These fields of power produce a flow, they create suns and galaxies and make them disappear again.

Twilight of the gods, global conflagrations, collapsing cosmic entities and constructions. The end and a new beginning coincide in excess, in the Big Bang. There is the abyss of nothingness, a void, something which can be considered a contrast to being, but is really a condition of being, its innermost core and germ.

This surge of life is closely related to the catastrophe of death. But these energies triggering the explosion of Creation can also appear in their most sophisticated form—as cultural achievements, in visions of art, religion, and philosophy, and in the mysticism of various religions. I am alluding to the unbloody Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ, to transubstantiation, to the revelation felt by Zen Buddhists, and to the silent contemplation of mystics. Meditation strives for the most profound tranquility, for finding the self, and for emptiness. The salvation of transcendence is often moved with great effort into the realm of transcendence.

Let me also refer to the Isenheim Altar. It presents the most terrible form of suffering, Christ's crucifixion. At the same time, Christ's cosmically triumphant Resurrection is shown. Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, a figure of light, shining in the brightness of all halos and worlds surrounding him, is depicted laughing, in front of the infinite universe. Opposites cause each other. Christ's crucifixion causes his Resurrection. Easter, i.e. the Holy Week, begins with torture and pain, continues with the excess of crucifixion, and ends in unbelievable rejoicing which claims eternity and infinity.

Practicing art means to start a celebration of life. Life has occurred in an extreme fashion, detached from conditions such as pain, pain-free moments are fought for, tragedy and death are overcome, nothing is

repressed but turned into its opposite, a surge of life desperately needed by the individual, life and existence are given a meaning, the mysticism of being is perceived enthusiastically. We are catapulted out of torment, superficiality, and illness and thrown into the realm of liveliness, joy of living, and extremes.

Art, in all its aspects, is a celebration, a festive elevation of being, also and especially the representation of tragedy. It is a celebration because the form combines both suffering and joy, metamorphosing them into a new, superior version of joy to be judged by a different set of values. In times of ascetic religions a transcendental, mythical event and its liturgical performance or its cult-like, ritual version were always the focal point of celebrations. These celebrations of worship were invariably accompanied by a worldly celebration to express a natural joy of life. The *Theater of Orgies and Mysteries* has changed this. Here we celebrate for the sake of celebration. The excess of life becomes mingled with that of art. Transcendence awakens through us, through our ecstatic joy of celebration. The division between immanence and transcendence has been erased because each act is transcendental.

ALL BEING happens for the purpose of experiencing the utter bliss of the moment, the intoxicating sensation of the present. Everything happens for the sake of the never-ending return of brightness, for the sake of awakening of all liveliness on this very day. This moment triumphs over pain, tragedy, death, everything is compressed, all conditions lead to joy. Tragedy and pain, the points of departure, distilled out of necessity, are purified and turned into an existence perceived with all our senses, a mysticism of being, a sublime INSPIRATION.

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Morgenröte - Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurteile*, cited from: Goldmanns Gelbe Taschenbücher, Augsburg 1960, p. 33

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht - Versuch einer Umwertung aller Werte*, cited from: Alfred Korner Verlag, Stuttgart 1996, p. 283





## YOKO ONO

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

*Sarah Gold: Yoko Ono, it is a great honour to be sitting here with you, and to have your work ARISING in our exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES. I think this work is an amazing opportunity for women to express their experiences, and this seems to be confirmed when considering the response that we have gotten already: women from all over the world have been sending letters and emails and also in the exhibition itself women are contributing, by sitting down and writing their stories behind the desk that you placed here in Palazzo Bembo. It seems to help them to express their experiences, to share their stories. And it seems to open doors for other women who did not participate in your work, too.*

Yoko Ono: I am very very happy that my work is presented here in this PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition. I think it is very very important that we reach other women. After I did this, I thought: "Did I forget about men?" But let's do women first, because women are really in trouble for over 2000 years. All that time, there was a male society. So, we just have to hear what women had to go through. I think it is very interesting to hear their stories and did not expect it would open such a big door. Now this door is open! And there are so many women who wanted to say something, they are coming here to Palazzo Bembo. It is a very big thing: it is as if the whole world of women is getting the opportunity to say something.

Some of my work is just asking people for conceptual participation, but many of them ask people to physically participate. This is why it is interesting to me that these women are talking to me and there is a big exchange. I hope that this is going to help the world a little. Interesting is also, I thought we would be needing only about 20 letters from women.

*Karlyn De Jongh: The response has been overwhelming so far. You got many, many more letters! And there is still time until the end of the Biennale for more women to participate.*

YO: Yes! As soon as we opened the website [imaginepowerarising.com], 84 women immediately came with their story. I thought, "What am I going to do?" I am going to treasure each one of them and we are going to make a book out of it as a record of the women's right in our society.

*Karlyn De Jongh: Yoko, in this work ARISING that you are presenting here at the 2013 Venice Biennale, PERSONAL STRUCTURES, you have also asked women to send or give a photo of their eyes. Why do you wish to connect the visual image of the person with their story? And why did you choose to ask only for a photo of their eyes?*

YO: I am so glad that you ask that question. The reason is because many women are in danger of speaking out. We have to protect them. We cannot have a full face, because maybe they will be attacked again. So, I just wanted something from them—a part of the face—so that we can connect with that woman. When I saw some of the eyes, it was remarkable to see how destroyed some of the eyes are. Some of the eyes are really frightened or shocked. The things that these women went through, are visible in their eyes. I think it worked. The fact that we cannot ask them to show their faces nor to spell their full name, is because of how our society is nowadays. That is how much we are threatened and how we are scared. We are human beings, so naturally we are going to be scared and that is all right. We have to protect each other.



SG: Your work is called *ARISING*. What does the title mean to you?

YO: We, women, are now rising together. *ARISING* expresses the rising of our spirits.

KDJ: *ARISING* is now presented in Venice, a city that is visited by tens of thousands of people every day. Why did you choose Venice as the location for showing this work?

YO: It is not about choosing the location. It happened. Many of my works have some kind of strong faith that I did not create. It just came to me and I really appreciate that. I found out that it is very difficult to do something here, with the burning of the silicone female bodies. "Did I make a mistake?", I thought. No! When you see the work and the video, you see that it was totally important that it was done here in Venice.

The sound that you can hear in the video is my voice, from my 1996 record *RISING*. The recording is approximately 14 minutes in length, but it is like that from beginning to end – no editing, nothing. I created that work a long time before this work *ARISING*. It just fits very well.

SG: What was for you the relation between *ARISING* and your record *RISING*? Why do you think the two works fitted so well together?

YO: *RISING* was telling all people that it is time for us to rise and fight for our rights. But in the process of fighting together, Women are still being treated separately in an inhuman way. It weakens the power of men and women all together. I hope *ARISING* will wake up *WOMEN POWER*, and make us, men and women, heal together.

It was very interesting, the way this record was created. I was about to do a recording session with my son and my son's friends. At that time, my son was a teenager. He and his friends were just impossible people. They came to my recording session and I thought, "What am I going to do? Can I trust them in playing my work?" I thought I would just do one harmony and said, "Just play that from beginning to end." It just went "whooom!", like that. No editing, no rehearsal.

I think it is important that I did it, because it is the voice of a woman who went through a lot of pain, which was me. The reason why I created such a vocal – many people disliked it, so I might as well get a credit for it – was because when I was a young girl, my mother told me: "Never go near the servants' room, because they are talking about things you do not want to know." Of course, I wanted to go there! I sneaked up and heard them speak, "Did you know that my aunt just had a baby? And having a baby is a very strange thing, because she was going "whoa, whoa, whoaaa!" I thought, "hmm, this is scary..." and ran back to my room. But I never forgot that.

Later I realised that in society, woman are liked for being pretty and making pretty sounds and singing pretty songs. Those are the ones that sell the most, not someone who sings "whoaaa!". If you cannot sell it, what are you going to do?

I thought, I have to tell the world that women are not just pretty, but they created the human race. We brought the children into this world. And that is a very difficult act. It is not very much spoken about, but giving birth is a very dangerous thing to do. Many women die from it. It is a very important and dangerous thing and we all have to go through it. It is not a pretty and happy thing at all. It is a very important and serious thing! It is even much more powerful than a huge earthquake. Each child that comes into this world is going to influence our society.

So, what are we doing when only showing the pretty side? The reason is that men cannot have babies. They do not want to know that the other sex can do that, in a way it is a competition between the people. They do not want to talk about it, not think about it. Men want to euphemise the situation, saying that it is such a beautiful thing and that women love to do it. Women love to do it? Let them do it! Then men will see that it is not that pleasant.

I learned all that and thought I should at least use some sounds that we, women, make. As soon as I sang, "Whoaaaaa!", the teenagers stopped working and all went into the bathroom.



Because they could not say they wanted to escape, so they just went to the bathroom. When we made the song, John said “did you get that?”, checking if the song was recorded. It was one of the rare moments that it was recorded.

This is the kind of thing that women go through and when you listen to that song, you will understand that it is your emotion. It is your experience that is turned into music.

*KDJ: When we burnt the silicon bodies for your work, we went with a whole group of people to one of the islands in the Venetian Lagoon. There were also many men present. To burn these bodies, was a very strong experience for everybody I think, not only for the women that were there. It seemed to me that also for the men it was a strong experience.*

YO: Yes, it would be unfair to say that men just like pretty voices. They are nobody without the presence of women. When you face them with this, then they start to understand. Now there are also what I call ‘new-age men’: there are many men who are very understanding and they are also suffering because of that understanding. John was one of those men and he always said he felt lonely, because there were not many men around who understood it. He wished there to be a group of men to talk about it, because he felt very very alone. Now there are many new-age men and that is great. When I am in New York and go to Central Park, I see many men pushing a baby car. Now this is a natural thing, nobody is surprised about it. But they do not know that when John did this, nobody did it. No man wanted to be seen with a baby car. I am very very happy that now it is a normal thing. I thank John for being so courageous.

*SG: Do you think that by addressing these themes in your work and at the same time asking people to participate in your works, that you contributed in educating our society?*

YO: Yes, very much so. The more you participate, the more you make this a normal thing. It became normal that women are strong. It is ok to be strong. We were so scared of being strong and we made ourselves small, I made myself small. In China they for example had to make their

feet very small. Women were suffering from it. Every night they cried. That is how bad it was. That is how bad the society was to women.

Now it is getting better and better, but we have to understand: we are not the only ones in a society. We also have to understand the suffering of the opposite sex. They have suffering too, you know. I started to learn about this, when I was reading a lot of books about WWI and WWII, for example. The books described how men’s faces were destroyed and how they lost their limbs. It was a terrible situation that men went through. Men have a different way of dealing with it. They are so macho that they do not want to complain. But we have to understand all the difficult situations that they have, which they cannot speak about because they are macho, but they are very lonely. We women make men lonely in that sense. So, this work ARISING reaches to men as well.

*KDJ: I have the feeling that through the participation, in this work particularly the women, feel really part of it. They can share their thoughts, and maybe even share ‘your’ work. It seems almost as if ‘the group’ is making the work, rather than only you as an individual.*

YO: Yes, this thing—participating and telling your story—is almost like a therapy. They can send in their stories of what they had to go through. It is like a therapy. However, it is better than therapy, because with a psychologist you can talk about your feelings and it is being taped, your personal words are being taped by the psychologist and you have to pay for it. In my work, it is really just about saying it. I feel the power of the people.

*KDJ: What is it that you hope for, for the future?*

YO: Well, for the future, I am always hoping that we are able to create a better society and we are doing it. Some people are skeptical about it, because we still have war. Ok. But you know, the thing is: the world did not collapse. Maybe we are holding up the sky, but at least we are still ok. We do no longer have the luxury to indulge in negative thinking, because the thing is becoming incredibly dangerous and complicated. If we want to survive as a human race, we have to start by being positive. Be positive first and then complain later.



# ROMAN OPALKA

By Ulrike Schmitt

“Like a mountain-climber, stage by stage I climb the rock-face of a high mountain from whose summit I hope to discover an unlimited horizon of endless white. I want to reach this place to stay there forever.”<sup>1</sup>

For almost five decades Opalka followed this path, starting from a black canvas, a tumbler with white paint in his left hand and a brush in the right. “Shaking with excitement in view of the madness of such an undertaking, I dipped the brush into the tumbler, slowly lifted my arm and, with a trembling hand, ... made the 1 as the first sign in the top left-hand corner, right on the edge of the canvas.”<sup>2</sup>

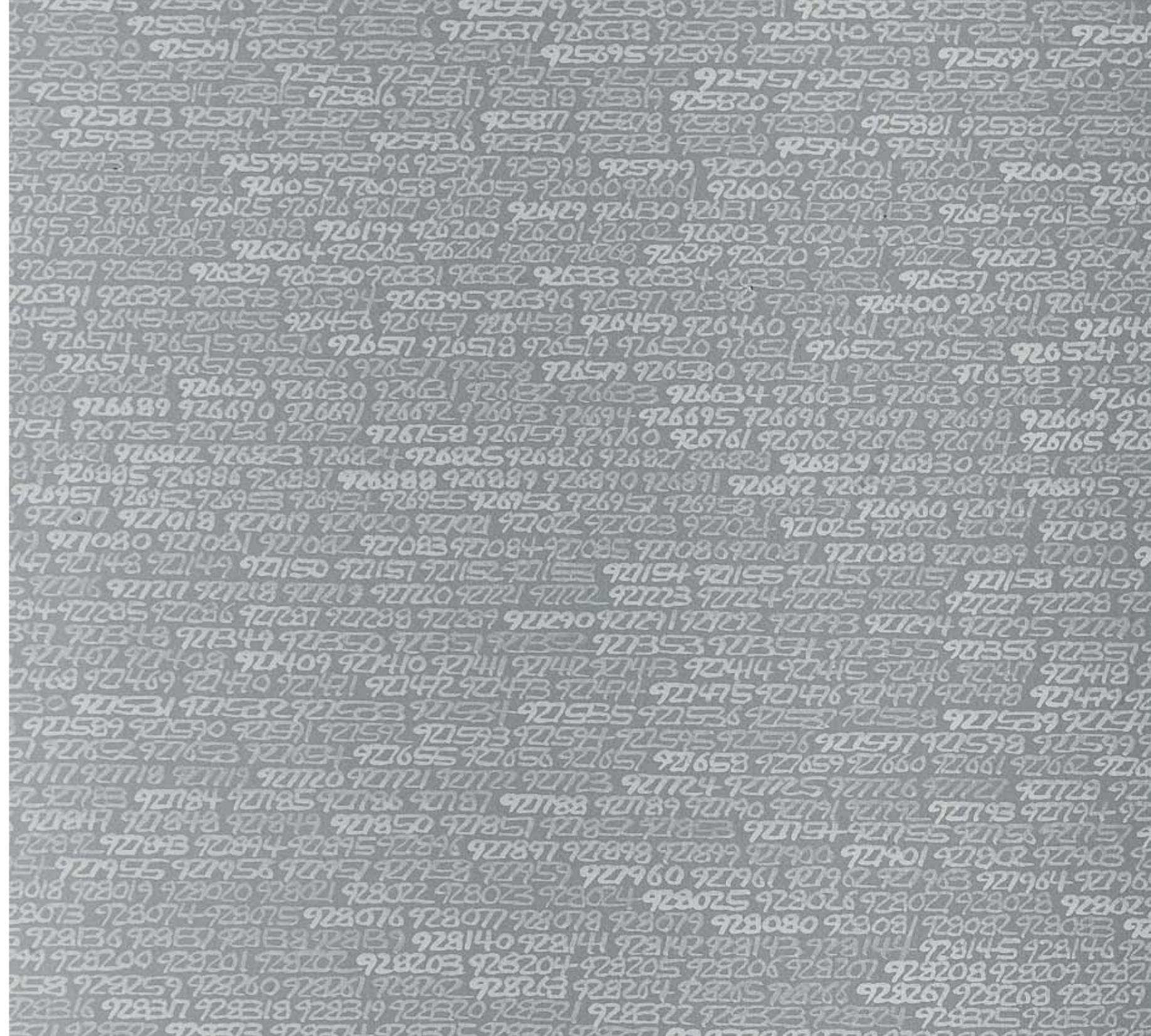
In 1965 Opalka made the decision to devote his life to a single great work: OPALKA 1965/1-?. Vertically, line for line, progressing from left to right and top to bottom, he painted the numbers 1 into infinity. From *détail* to *détail* (thus the title of his individual paintings), he lightened by one per cent of white the grounding of his canvases, which always had the same format of 196 by 135 cm.

Opalka’s works can be viewed in two ways: on the one hand, as a purely aesthetic phenomenon, and on the other, proceeding from the concept in their intellectual dimension. From the first point of view, Opalka’s work shifts into the context of the 1960s when structure and monochromaticity were usual principles for shaping a work: like many other artists, Opalka, too, had the drive to develop something completely new; he, too, considered giving up the painted surface of the object ‘painting’. The rejection of a representative function, of classic principles of composition in the broadest sense, and the associated search for anonymous methods of making a work had led to a completely new painterly language. Most artists restricted themselves to a single or a

few colours which they applied mostly with the aid of a semi-mechanical procedure based on the repetition of uniform movements in which the individual stepped far into the background. The resulting form of organization of the surfaces could be grasped under the concept of ‘structure’ or the principle of ‘seriality’. Whereas a composition is characterized by the difference and hierarchy of elements constituting a static whole, here the individual element does not have any autonomous significance; it is related to its neighbouring element or to the structure in its totality. By dipping the brush uniformly into white paint, the surfaces of Opalka’s paintings differentiate into lighter and increasingly darker elements. The chromatic swelling and fading thus attained lends the works a dynamic, energetic quality. The viewer’s eye jumps between the elements of different lightness so that through the quick transition between the hardly differing structural units, impressions of movement arise. The individual numerals become visually active elements: the numbers—formed, intentionally shaped—here step forth with equal valency next to the painting’s ground, the in-between, silence and standstill. With infinity, finally, a total sublation of thinking in opposites results: there is no longer any limit between the artistic gesture and the painting’s ground; what remains is pure white.

The rhythmization visualized in the painting through which the flow of time is manifested becomes apparent especially through the tape-recordings of Opalka’s voice done in parallel to the paintings’ making: the artist speaks each number he paints in his mother tongue, Polish.

Whereas most artists, initially proceeding from the monochrome surface, found their way back to structuring their paintings, Opalka’s concept presented the opposite path: with each new canvas, he



approached—mind you, purely visually—monochromaticity without changing his way of working. Structure and monochromaticity are thus for Opalka not to be conceived as an intentional artistic positing, but as a consequence of his work, as a consequence of the advancing of time, of his own life-time. As distinct from Yves Klein, for instance, who can be regarded as the main representative of monochrome painting, Opalka's works do not include any metaphysical dimensions, but embody a strong rationality. Viewed close up, each individual numeral can be recognized; from a distance it can scarcely be inked that the colouring of the painting's surface consists of individual numeric elements.

In Opalka's work, as with other artistic concepts of the 1960s, the phenomenon of immateriality plays a decisive role. The painting intended by Opalka does not end where the canvas or the substance shaped by him ceases, but continues effectively beyond the material boundaries. His paintings, too, are not 'end-products', but reveal themselves as a process: each canvas is part of a whole with an indefinite end...

The central theme for Opalka's work is the visualization of time: his work is characterized by a routine carried out with extreme discipline which includes a photographic self-portrait always in the same, exactly defined pose at the end of each of working-day through which the artist attempts to record the physical changes occasioned by time. The bracketing of emotional excitations typical of his way of working is found especially in these photographs. The most dramatic moment, according to Opalka, was the day his father died, since he had to fight against his feelings to "stand up to this terrible shot".<sup>3</sup>

Precisely because Opalka conceived of his artistic work as a task closely tied to his own life-time, even in advanced age and despite ailments, he could not allow any interruption. For him life was defined as the concentrated continuation of the numeric series. Existence found its fulfilment in work on a single great painting, on an art work based on an original inspiration which, however, did not include any potential for creative changes within itself, but was characterized by extreme consistency and calculability.

The course of time precipitates clearly in the paintings: they become fainter and fainter from canvas to canvas; the background and what

Opalka created in tedious, detailed work merge into a unity; the artistic gesture evaporates in infinity. Especially the last paintings mirror in a shocking way the tortures for the artist associated with his ongoing work. In his final period, the numbers put onto the canvas disappear into nothingness; what remains is the apparently monochrome canvas. With this, Opalka had approached his ideal of a last painting "in white in white" that would be attained "at that moment bringing progression to a standstill, leaving existent only the image of the presence of the visible in the invisible".<sup>4</sup>

What do Opalka's paintings want to communicate? The oeuvre is inseparably tied to the his personality, but the strong self-reference revealed is not the primary aim. Opalka's paintings are supposed to stimulate the viewer to call the dimension of time to awareness. "As in a diary, everyone can read the unfolding of his or her own existence in it. The photographs of my face are the image of the life of each individual viewer."<sup>5</sup>

For Opalka, the confrontation with death played a central role since, "to grasp time, you must conceive death as a real dimension of life. The existence of being in itself is not yet everything, but rather, being is only determined by the death it is lacking."<sup>6</sup> His project, as defined by the artist himself, ends in its own incompleteness.<sup>7</sup>

"If the place could be chosen," he himself once said, "each individual would want to die at home; as far as I'm concerned, it is only wise and sensible to refrain from long journeys or, if this isn't possible, at least to keep the canvas on the easel constantly 'open', open like life, ready, through death, to face up to the bet of completion defined by incompleteness". The last painting on which he was working shortly before his death marks the end-point in a contest with time, a contest of his own life-time with infinity.<sup>8</sup>

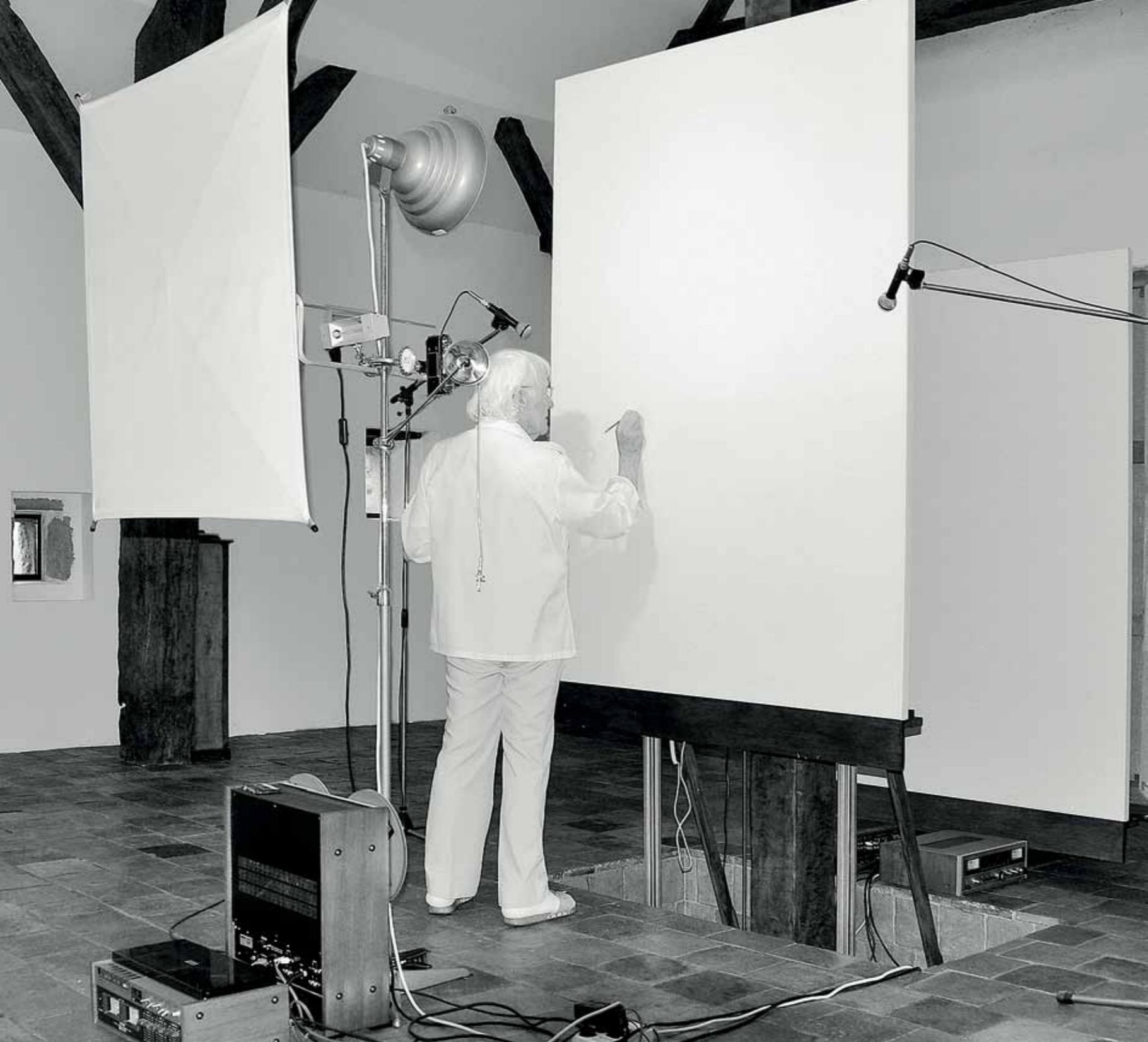
With the number 5 603 153, Opalka's trek into infinity found its completion in August 2011.

*Translated from the German by Dr. Michael Eldred, artefact, Cologne*

1 This quotation comes from Roman Opalka. *Anti-Sisyphos*. Ostfildern 1994, p. 68.

2 Ibid. p. 18. | 3 Ibid. p. 168. | 4 Ibid. p. 7. | 5 Ibid. p. 169. | 6 Ibid. p. 175. | 7 Ibid. p. 68.

| 8 The painting, which in the meantime has been incorporated in the collection of Anna and Gerhard Lenz, shows just how far this marathon led.



# TRINY PRADA

By Claire Leroux-Gacongne

## Before, Now and Then

A life, a car, a collision. A life hanging on by nothing more than a thread. A life sewn back together, tenuous, stubborn, that clings onto its melody line, far removed from the din of the world. Life passes by: a protecting skein of loved faces, a web of resilience stitch by stitch, x-ray picture after x-ray picture, a DNA string which weaves itself together again strand by strand, a canvas of memories which re-emerge feature after feature, the weft and warp of the homeland's tapestries, the molas... Everything which knots and unravels in Triny Prada's art is henceforth connected to life, not only her own but that of others or even of the whole world. Created for the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, *Before, Now and Then* emphasizes once again the fragility of life, but also the vital link between things, between people, nature and mankind.

A triptych of three large panels, which emit light and sound, clad a whole wall on the first floor of Palazzo Bembo. Like a reflection of the majestic palace on the Grand Canal, gelatinous masses palpitate on a Plexiglas base. A frame surrounds them on three sides, the fourth being open to allow the descent of another shape, dependant and connected by a vital stalk from above. At rest, everything is calm and serene, but as the visitor passes by, he or she sets off a sequence of sounds and a cycle of lights.

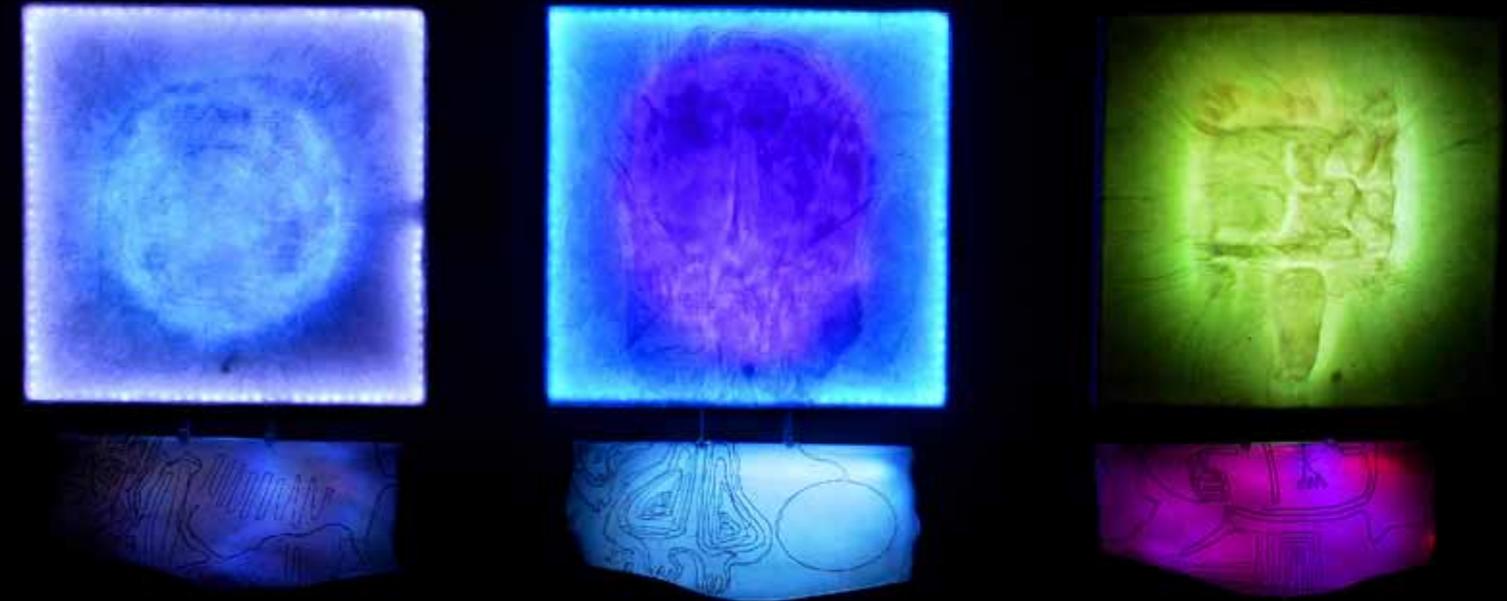
True to her motto: "we are born, we die... in the meantime", Prada questions us about the impact of the decisions and actions of each one of us on the future of our planet, particularly in the life-giving water of the sea. *Before, Now and Then* refers to algae, translucent organic structures with an aquatic glow sprawl in the centre of each

of the frames. These primitive beings witness the premises of life on Earth and our origins.

*Before* immerses us directly into Prada's universe. The primitive ovoid form irradiates the frame with a blue similar to the one to be seen under water when rays of sunlight pierce the surface of the sea. The sound which seeps out is not far removed from that of a sonar plunging in the distance and echoes a response from the past, a heartbeat of life, following a sinuous path suggested by the pattern of threads in the lower part. *Now*. We move on... The threads curve and give birth to a shape, bearing witness to a successful meiosis. Above, the organic structure also swells, the blue darkens and takes on a purplish tint. A bubbling sound of life and water progressively cover the sound of the sonar. In *Then*, the light dims to a dull golden yellow. The sounds become softer bit by bit, to become simple original waves. The matrix becomes hermaphrodite. The threads become sparse and take on a fateful end-of-the-world hue.

It is then that a whole set of questions arises: in the continuum of evolution, how can a protozoan organism give birth to its mechanized and augmented counterpart while there is no need for it? What profound meaning does this reminder of the original environment have within the context of permanent mutation?

Prada is interested in passages as well as links, posing with the same acuity the question of the evolution of the mysteriously drifting algae and the reckless action of man on his ecosystem. She reminds us with this work that we always interfere, deliberately or inadvertently, on this world so much older than us and which may not survive after us.



## QIN CHONG

By Cao Maochao

### **The creating of contemporary art is based on traditions Traditions need appreciation and continuation**

Modern China experienced severe fractions in its cultural traditions. In the 1920s many Chinese artists studied in Europe and influenced the fine arts in China by applying Western techniques. Then, during four decades to follow set ideas ruled artistic creation, the flame of China's cultural heritage was almost extinguished. After 1985 again art tradition was subjected to criticism and abandon. However, beginning of the 90s a new art scene began to rise and some Chinese artists appeared successfully on international stages, using a popular visual language. They lived abroad, as overseas legion of avant-garde art and their works started the debate about "Chinese brand", and— even more important—led to China's art and cultural traditions being re-examined and introspected.

### **Though nomad in the West, Qin feels the pulse of China's culture**

All this explains that Chinese traditional culture contains a strong vitality, even nowadays in multicultural art scenes. This exactly is what Chinese artist Qin Chong is reflecting. He moved to Germany in 1999 and sensibly experienced the differences of East and West; and he knows about the importance of self-consciousness, that an artist has to be aware of his own cultural traditions. Qin Chong's lucid style and sharpness remind himself that inconsistency might put the artist's creative source at risk. We can distinguish in his works that Qin appreciates tradition, that he cares about time. Art critic Yang Xiaoyan says about Qin Chong that his works reveal an intriguing phenomenon: "a subtle conflict between appearance and content. It is exactly such conflict that enables Qin to highlight the sacred sense

of time. You think that time in fact is the underlying theme of his works." The artist himself explains: "tradition and culture are hidden in our simple daily life, they're historical and timeless all the same". Paper, ink, fire—very common in our daily routine—are witnesses to history, they participated in the evolution of civilization. As in Qin Chong's installations 'past-future', 'losing' or 'birthday' the conflict between appearance and content is evident, most of all in the material he uses: fire and paper. Fire, that man took advantage of, was crucial for human civilization. And the invention of paper accelerated the development and transmission of culture. Therefore, in the context of time, both, paper and fire contain the scale of civilization, and render Qin Chong's works in weightiness, depth and content. They force us to rethink about the direction our cultural traditions finally should take while keeping pace with progress. Or in Qin's own words, written in Berlin in 2000: "Nowadays—the rapid development of mankind; news spread as quick as lightning; cultures meet each other; societies in transition like wind and clouds; pressure weighs heavily on people. The world is an interplay of a great many colors. In black, the king of colors, and white, the mother of colors, I search and find my inner balance."





## STEFANUS RADEMEYER

*Hexagrid* embodies my interest in the fields of arts, science and philosophy through the visualization of geometric forms in space, using the mediums of light, glass and mirrors.

For Plato, idealized geometries represent the realm of forms. The visible world was regarded as a reflection of this ideal realm that exists beyond space and time. A fundamental characteristic of human consciousness is the ability to access and intuit this realm of the forms, and mathematical and geometric formulae can be used as a language to describe the nature of these forms.

Notions of consciousness, the transcendent, geometry and symmetry are all woven into a seamless continuum. With the series of works that includes *Hexagrid*, I was interested in creating a visual metaphor that could embody these ideas in a physical sculpture, where light and structure itself would suggest a realm beyond the physical world of appearances, and even perhaps a realm beyond time.

The idea of an absolute geometric space goes as far back as 300 years B.C. when Euclid conceived of an abstract theoretical mathematical model that proposed a 3-dimensional space where each point could be defined by three coordinates, along the x, y and z axis. This is a metric space that is also referred to as Euclidean Topology.

Perspectile projection in painting was used as long as 500 years ago by Perugino, Donatello, and Leonardo da Vinci. The use of vanishing points allowed artists to accurately recreate 3-dimensional space on a 2-dimensional surface. A 'vanishing point' is an optical phenomenon where parallel lines appear to intersect at infinity.

For me, abstraction has a history that is far older than modernist formalism, and is intimately related to consciousness itself, and the human desire to approximate, define, map and translate the world in anthropocentric terms. Elegant languages such as mathematics continue to raise age old questions, such as the relation between the Platonic eternal and the visible world, language and reality, mind and matter.

The design and construction of the sculpture resembles methodologies used in architectural processes. In the initial design phase, research was done with computer software that allowed me to create 3-dimensional geometric vector structures. Digital design gives one the degree of scalability and algorithmic control to explore complex modular geometries. For the translation of these geometries into a sculpture, I experimented with the behaviour of light on reflective surfaces and the potential symmetries within various geometrical structures. The final physical work was created using parallel mirrors and fluorescent lights within a light-box structure.

In this work the sculptural form is defined through an optical illusion. By using the reflective qualities of the mirrors, a 3-dimensional hexagonal grid of light is created. As the viewer's position and distance changes, the various layers of the grid re-aligns in complex symmetrical patterns and the individual components of the design form larger clusters that create the dynamic geometric patterns.



## NICOLA RAE

### Reciprocal Resonances Refracted

The process of making a sonic installation around concepts of 'time' and 'existence' for a 'space' not yet seen was an interesting challenge. Palazzo Bembo has so much past history that this project often seemed rather like an intervention in someone's house or museum, to be adapted to or perhaps resisted.

My art practice involves experimenting with visualized sound frequency projections, often activated through live audience participation. The program *Overtone Analyzer* allows interactive sound generation to become visual mark-making through reciprocal sonic play. The space that was suggested for my installation was a transitional place—a section of corridor that had been closed off during a previous exhibition. This section included two adjoining areas with high ceilings, whose acoustic resonances were discovered through asking for film footage of someone talking while walking into the space. Backing on to my space in another section of the corridor was artist Helmut Lemke, whose work was made by listening with all senses to the sounds that he heard which he then drew on one whole day before the exhibition opened.

The idea of using triangles as a source of sound developed through looking at musical instruments played by Venetians during the Renaissance, when Pietro Bembo inhabited the Palazzo. During the concurrent Ottoman-Venetian wars, triangles were played by invading Turkish soldiers as part of their percussive Janissary music. The Turkish triangles were made of brass and had rings hanging from their lower bars: but my triangles were made by Percussion Plus, a British percussion manufacturer recommended for their resonant tones. Although

not intended to be sonically invasive, there were moments when interactivity reached crescendos of sound that were unusual for the Palazzo.

Audience participation during the four opening nights was memorable, as were the many conversations that took place. A deaf visitor was delighted to be able to see the sounds that she was making and so judge different levels of sound visually. Artists who were also musicians activated the installation in particularly inventive ways. Many children responded uninhibitedly to the prospect of sonic experimentation...as did so many others.

The refraction of the two projector beams was caused by a Perspex cylinder, revolving at two revolutions per minute, which was powered by a mirror ball motor. At regular intervals the Perspex tube refracted the sound visualisations into circular patterns, activating the whole of the inner space. There are aspects of this effect that recall lighthouse beams across water, of which there are many around Venice. Yet this effect was discovered accidentally when experimenting with artist Paul Malone (my husband) in a small mock-up exhibition space within my studio. We tried out a few different refraction ideas yet we both immediately responded to seeing expanding circles of light arcing across the space, due to the refracting effects of the cheapest, extruded acrylic tube that had been roughly sawn.

Collaborative play while having cups of tea and chat, have often produced possibilities. Yet these creative moments would not take place with the same sense of urgency without being invited to take part in exhibition projects: instigating a focus on making work for a particular space and time.



## ARNULF RAINER

By Karlyn De Jongh

*Arnulf Rainer (1929, Baden, Austria). Since the early 1950s, the idea of over-painting has been central to his extensive work. Rainer paints existing over pictures, books, photographs, etc. in order to pose existential questions by means of painting. The following text is an excerpt of an interview with Rainer, conducted in 2012.*

*Karlyn De Jongh: After one year of seeing from close-by how you work and being so directly involved in the process, I think you will never have the feeling to be finished. You will never be satisfied and would always like to continue working.*

Arnulf Rainer: But I am a clown. I am not dead yet, but just like a clown, I am *Unfinished Into Death*. A clown is someone who is funny intentionally. There are clowns who are so good, that I would kneel for them, Charlie Chaplin for example. Every clown has his own style. A circus clown is only a stereotype, so that children will understand. But in this series that I made over the past year with you and Sarah Gold, you and Sarah are the two clowns. Angel-clowns.

*KDJ: You have made a special edition with us, for which you over-worked erotic photos from Sarah and me together. You seem to have always had a tendency towards eroticism.*

AR: Yes. I never really realised that it was uncommon. There were other Austrian artists, such as Rudolf Hausner. They also made a lot of erotic works. According to me it is completely legal. When it inspires me, when it excites me so much that I feel joyful when making my work, then—for me—it is good. Other subjects that do not fascinate me, can be very good, but as an image they are not interesting to me.

*KDJ: It seems that this is generally the case for you: when something does not interest you, you do not have the power to do it; when something interests you, you can still do anything you want.*

AR: Yes, definitely. When it does not interest you, you do not have the power. If I want to become 100-years-old...

*KDJ: Would you like to become 100-years-old?*

AR: When I can work, yes. But when I would just be sitting in a wheelchair and cannot work, then it does not interest me anymore.

*KDJ: For you art is more important than life, isn't it?*

AR: Yes, art is concentrated life. When making art, life is more intense. Also my thoughts are more intense when I am working than on a normal day. It is like when you are in love. Then life is also very intense.

*KDJ: How is the act of painting for you?*

AR: For me, the act of painting itself is erotic. I mean this in a general sense: when I am painting, it does not tickle between my legs; it is an excitement in my head.

*KDJ: Now you are physically in a good condition. However, in the case that you are physically not strong enough anymore to make your work, would it be interesting for you to just come up with a concept and let someone else execute it?*

AR: No. I respect all of that and also understand most of it, but for me the realisation is... In art there should be a certain peace [*Ruhe*] that communicates what is being suggested. It should not only be an idea; it should be direct, including a form or design.



Certainly, it is a limitation of my generation, but in one way or another you have to limit yourself.

The artist is a mystery, also to himself. Even in the relation you have to yourself, there is always a bit of mystery that comes in. It is a game of love from the artist to bring another person in perplexity, by looking him or her in the eyes. There are not only physical love games, but also mental. But people who know my work very well, should not be brought into this state of perplexity. But I am also not looking these people in the eye, only my work does that. And a work is easy to turn away from.

*KDJ: When a work 'speaks' to me, I often find it quite difficult to close my eyes or to walk away from it.*

AR: Yes? But the longer you look at it, the less you see. To grasp an artwork, you have to have a very concentrated gaze. But our brain is not so, that it can keep this way of looking for a long time. That does not work.

*KDJ: How is that for you with your own work?*

AR: I always work in series, one after the other and working again and again over the images. I work as long over them until I think the work has a presence, an intensity. And I make what comes up in my mind. I do often have a concept beforehand, such as with the Angels-series I made of you and Sarah. I drew your love-brawl on these photos. I create that and then when I continue working at another time, I look at these sheets again. In the end I sometimes think it is not good enough yet, that I can do better and then I want to continue in the same series. Like in the series with you, I keep wanting to continue. It is a weakness. But there are also other series that are less intense. I put the sheets away and hope that one day there will be a turning point, that then I know how to make it better or more intense. The older you get, the better you know that you do not have much time anymore that is left over. But that also gives the vitality to continue. When you would become 200 years old, you would end up with a pile of unfinished works.

*KDJ: You have now worked for more than one year on this series with Sarah and me, and it keeps developing. That is a very long time, considering the lifetime that you still have left.*

AR: Yes, yes... The two of you have seduced me. It is very simple. You have seduced me and within the group of admirers of two such young, beautiful women, there is also one that is a little older. He thinks he is at the same level, that he is the same age as you are. Even though I have experienced more defeats and anger, I feel as old as you are.

*KDJ: In my opinion, with the series that you made with Sarah Gold and myself, your work has won a great power again.*

AR: That is a subjective thought. Someone else might have another opinion. In a few 100 years we will see what happens.

*KDJ: What do you yourself think now about this series?*

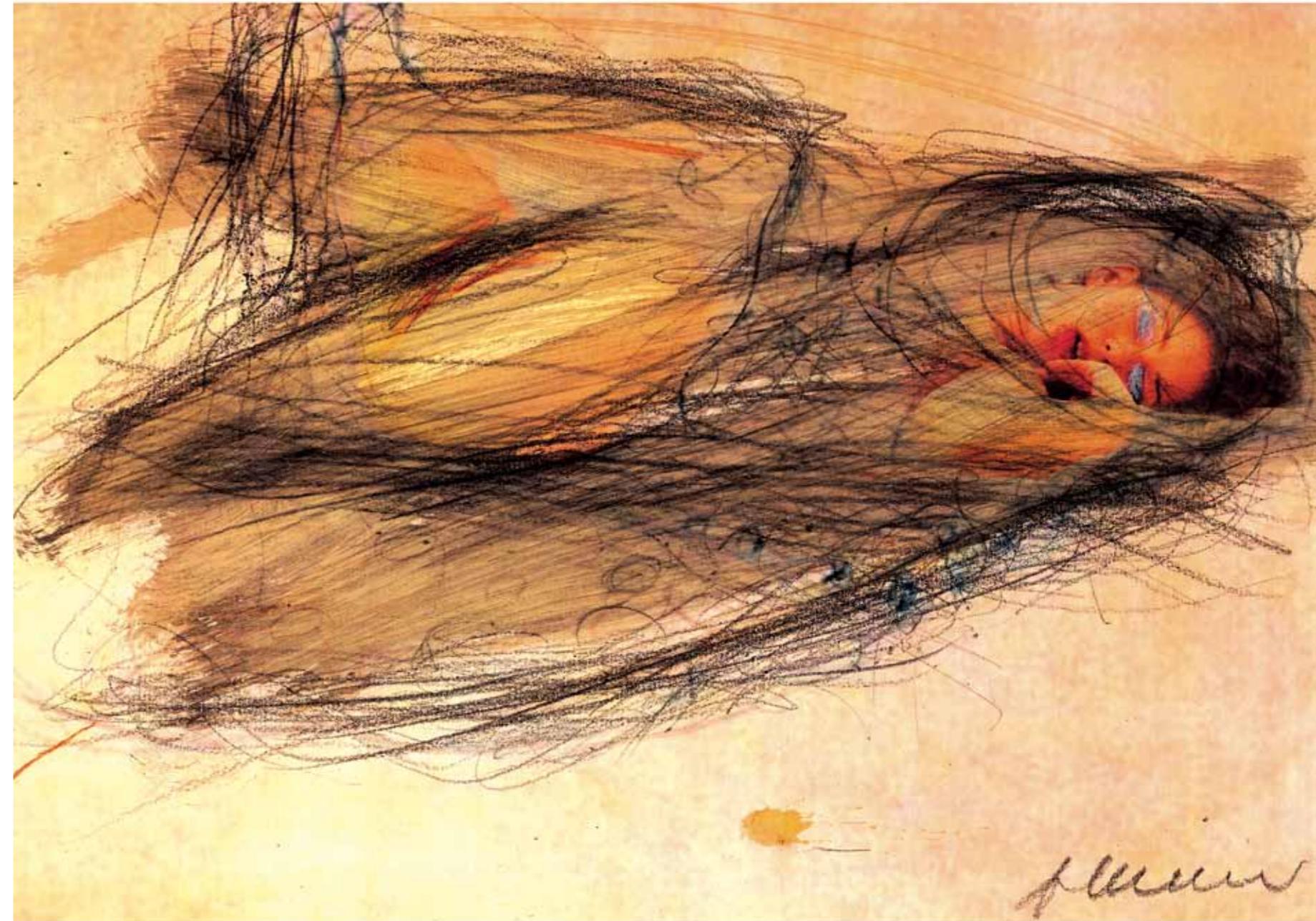
AR: I like these works very much, but as always, I have to see them on the wall in order to judge for myself if they have the same or even more power, as in my other works.

*KDJ: It is probably difficult to explain, but in what lies this power for you? Or is it more a feeling that you have when looking at your work?*

AR: In any case it is a feeling. It has to do with the density of the form [*Formdichtheit*], which is an expression that only art historians can understand. All important painters have this 'form density': every point is related to another point; one place elevates the other. That is also what attracts me in other painters: Van Ruysdael and Vermeer are Gods to me. In their paintings this density is very strong. In comparison to them, I am completely insufficient.

*KDJ: Their work is from a completely different time. Can you compare yourself with them?*

AR: It is definitely a different time. But their works are denser. Their paintings have so much presence because of their form, how the works have been painted.



*KDJ: Do you believe you have painted works that have the strength of a Vermeer?*

AR: No, no... I go on my knees for Vermeer. And also for Rembrandt and Van Ruysdael.

*KDJ: You have been making art for a period of over 50 years. When you look at your oeuvre, what do you consider to be your strongest period?*

AR: There are my dark, black Closed-Paintings [Zumalungen], they have the highest prices at the moment. Secondly, my large crosses, there is a demand for them. But I cannot make these anymore, these big paintings. Physically, I cannot do it anymore. When I would try, they will not be good enough.

*KDJ: You are now 82-years-old. How is the influence of your body on your work?*

AR: For me, my physical condition is an important factor, because everything is working together: my head, my hand, my eyes. The better they are working together, the better the artwork will be.

*KDJ: But in your case that does not mean that you do not work when you are sick, does it?*

AR: The problem is that I want to work; I am ambitious. When I would stop, I would be desperate.

*KDJ: Are you not always desperate about your work?*

AR: No. First of all, when I am done working I am tired. I have to rest and regenerate. Now, for example, I just opened a space dedicated to me and my work in the Pinakothek in Munich, Germany. They came to my studio to select works, but I am always surprised how other people can select the good works out of everything that I make. I cannot do that. I cannot make a selection for an exhibition. When you make an exhibition, one work has to intensify the other.

*KDJ: In the conversations we have had, you have referred quite often to your own death. Is that something that you think about often now, the moment that you yourself will not be there anymore?*

AR: No, only then when I am physically not doing very well. Today I went for a walk. It used to be easy for me, but nowadays it is a lot of trouble. In such a moment, I think about my age, and that always includes my approaching death. One does not know at all what death is.

*KDJ: What do you yourself think it is?*

AR: I do not know. I think it is something completely different from how you imagine it.

*KDJ: Roman Opalka had told us when we visited him in his studio two years ago, that in a way life is infinite, because you yourself do not know that you have died.*

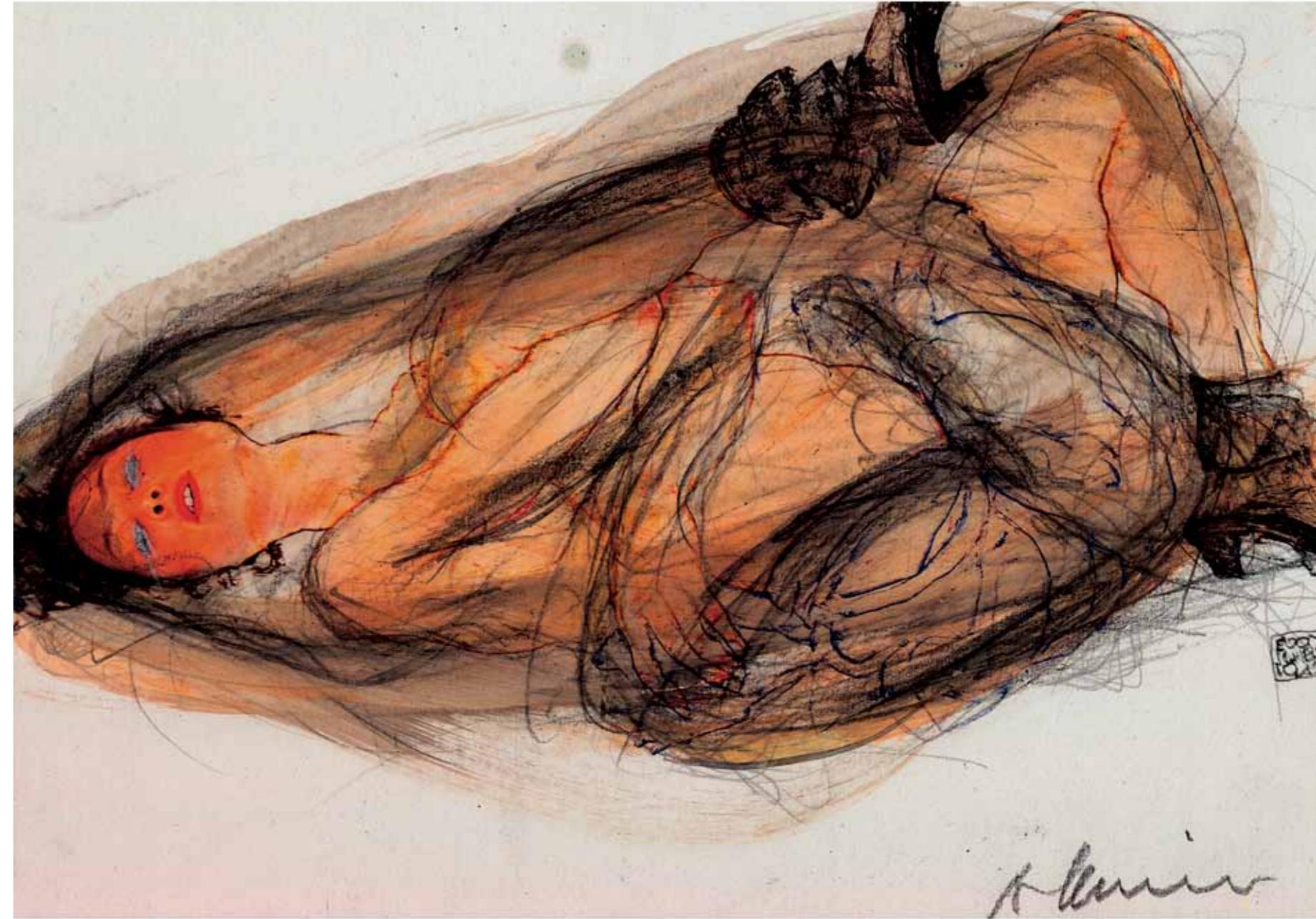
AR: I believe that all these categories—knowing, or to be dead—all these categories are categories of life. They are earthly categories and they do not count anymore. They are not categories anymore. Also the idea that “nothing exists” is an earthly concept. All these concepts lose their substance; they are not ‘reality’ anymore.

*KDJ: Do you feel that you have been able to live a free life?*

AR: For me, most important is the artistic product. Stories of life vanish.

*KDJ: Do you think you will stay in the history of art as one of the most important artists of this time?*

AR: That is a relative thing. For Austria, I will definitely stay. But for Europe or ‘the world’ I do not know. It does not always stay the same. It is something that can change. I have seen how people scolded my work and I carried that, but I have also seen that people were only positive and praised what I created. I have always said that I do not want to think about such measurements. I make my work and want to stay loyal to myself. I try my best. A final judgement—also my own—I do not want to make.





## BOGDAN RAȚA

By Cosmin Năsui

### *Trying to keep life*—artist Bogdan Rața

The title but also the concept of *Trying to keep life* stands for one of the most important artworks of the sculptor Bogdan Rața. Both the concept and the work analyse the relationship of the material body with the spiritual body. Furthermore, it is for the first time in the artist's creation that the natural element water appears in the sculptural dialogue. The concavities of the thoraces and the limbs of the sculpture are especially made to contain water—thus completing the 3-dimensional volume in a particular and spectacular way.

The artwork *Trying to keep life* enters an open interaction with the viewer, invited to literally maintain the life of the sculpture by regularly pouring in water, in order to replace the one that evaporated from the surface and the interior of the physical body of the art object. The masculine body, as if slightly mummified, gives the impression of a singular volume, composed of physical elements both present and absent. These elements are focused on reflecting the surface of the water and, in the same time, on containing the water. The visual effect of the work *Trying to keep life* is that of a mystic body in levitation, somewhere half distance between the floor and a person's height.

The remarkable way of representation and technique used by Rața is a symbolic one, sensible, delicate and rich in details, yet keeping intact the monumental unity. The anatomy science is magnificently used by Rața, with that fine touch of balance between slight exaggerations and subtle physical definitions, in order to deliver the very opposite of a standardized, uniform human body type, characteristic to those models in shop windows.

The art of Bogdan Rața is about the evolution of human nature and the human body adaptation to the current technologic context, actually bringing upfront into discussion the values of concepts like humanism and post-humanism in a post-industrial present of the consumer society.

*Bogdan Rața (1984, Baia Mare, Romania) received his PHD at West University Timisoara, sculpture department, in 2013 and the M.A. at National University of Art Bucharest, sculpture department, Bucharest in 2008.*



## THOMAS RIESS

### Thomas Riess. I am I am not

With his paintings, collages and films Thomas Riess tells stories. The main actor in his narrations is time. It appears in differentiated ways in the various media the artist uses; what they have in common is that they record time in a dynamic moment. Riess' collages turn into living narration. Similar to William Kentridge, his animated films allow us to take part in the development process, illustrating what happens to memories and events in our brains: In numerous photographically documented working steps he superimposes layer after layer on photos, newspaper and magazine clippings, colour layers, and particularly on photographic examinations of his own portrait which he arranges, overlays, reinterprets and then deletes, first partially, then completely. Riess transfers procedures that are anchored in a static medium into a dynamic form again, which can fool our perception. Like in our memories, often only fragments of collaged images remain existent for a certain period of time; they are, to an extent, overlaid by new impressions—in this case collage elements—which sometimes in the beginning even allow the original to shine through, but mostly they cover it, remove it from the context and release it, mixed with new elements, for further associations. He narrates in pictures, by means of association, allowing to follow his creative thinking process, thwarting a reasonable chronological examination of the change process of his own person, but leaving the viewer ample space both for personal interpretation as well as for mental extrapolations within everyone of us. For Riess it is important that the selection of the chronological sequence does not form a constant, but basically an arbitrary sequence of a greater whole. The collage positioned next to the animation film thus constitutes a status quo which is not necessarily subject to finality. Traces of the rhyth-

mic development can be discerned behind the static work. Without the film, an important aspect of the work remains hidden, like many things in the human existence stay beneath the surface, beyond reality and appearances, and (earlier) facets of one's own self remain unknown.

Thomas Riess uses photographic images also in his paintings. Although the subject of his paintings, videos, collages and drawings clearly is, in one way or the other, the human being, his approach is a challenge for the viewers in a conceptual and material way. Especially the paintings made of correction tape and acrylics prompt an examination of one's own perception and its evolution within the development of perpetually new visual media and image qualities, as well as the emotions evoked by his works. The correction tape, usually used to delete something that is assumed to be incorrect by covering it, is here used to make it visible. Its white colour rises from the homogenous black of the painted base and background. The placing of the correction tape onto the base, perceived as an image interference, evokes the idea of an analog satellite image transmission, seemingly antiquated in the age of high-definition. No matter if it is the deep sea diver, the astronaut, an anonymous homeless person or—like here—a person in a protective suit: The figures rather resemble apparitions than physically real persons; they are without any connection to concrete surroundings, thrown back onto themselves. This removal from a causal context also applies to the collages of the artist and the films created during the process of making them. In all the media his originals are placed in a new context by the artistic intervention of drawing or painting and deleted again by overpainting—the human being creates his/her own story(ies) and documents time as his/her constant companion.



## RENE RIETMEYER

By Karlyn De Jongh

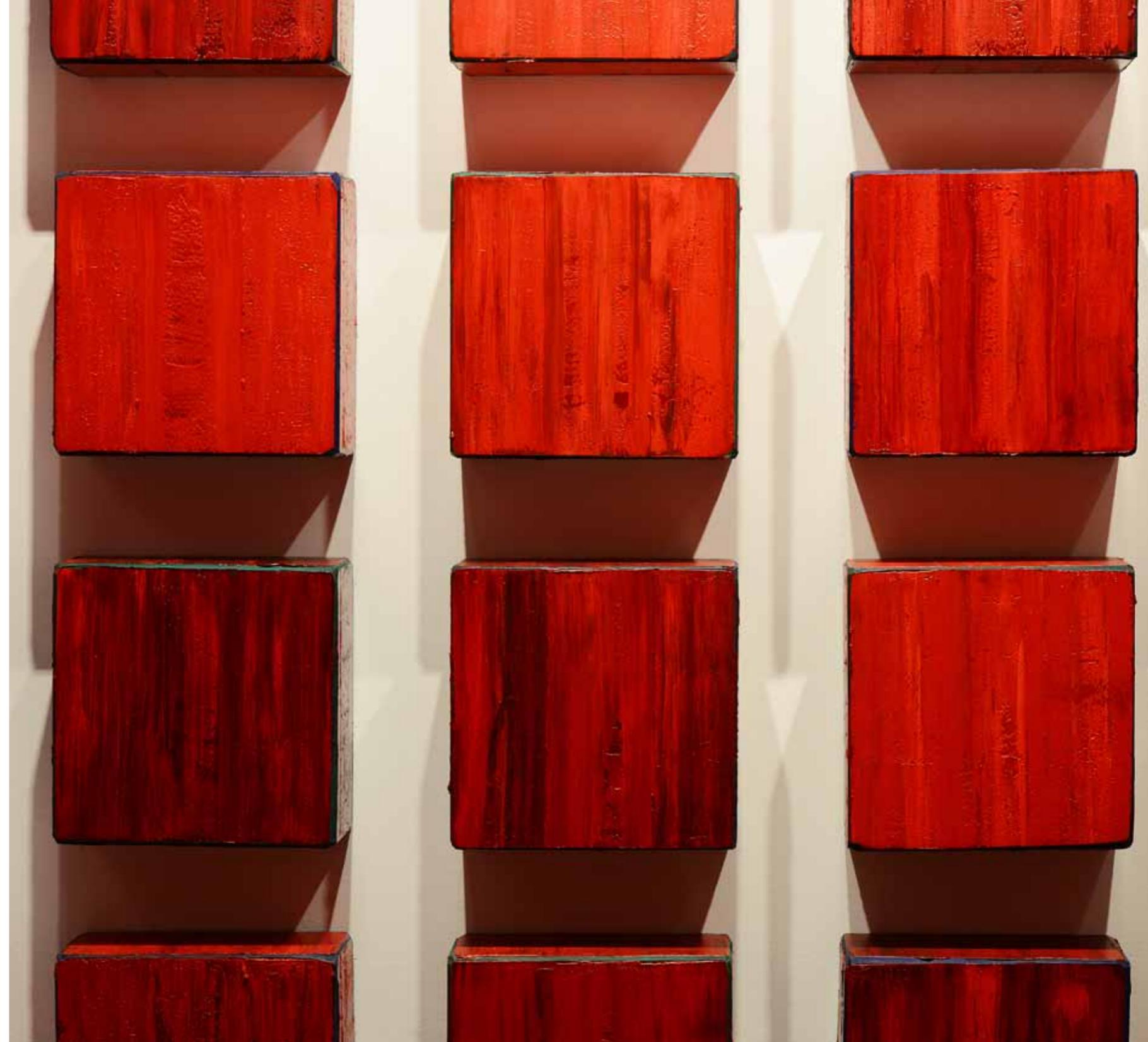
In the history of art, time has seldom been taken as the artistic topic itself. It has been sporadically present for single artists, such as Claude Monet with his series of the Cathedral in Rouen, France, where he painted the façade on different times of the day, or within movements like Futurism, where speed and change were highlighted. Only since several decades, time has become more explicit as a topic in art. In this article, time is addressed by discussing the work and thoughts of Rene Rietmeyer who has taken this concept as a motive in his work. For Rietmeyer time is strongly related to life-time and is concerned with creating an awareness about our own existence within time as an ongoing, continuing entity.<sup>1</sup>

Working with the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, I have organized exhibitions and symposia and publish texts about the concepts time, space and existence together with my colleague Sarah Gold. The project was initiated in 2002 by the Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer, who defined these concepts as essential themes for his own art. Rietmeyer initiated the project to have influence on the developments in contemporary art, by creating something that is larger than the artist himself. PERSONAL STRUCTURES became a platform for artists to communicate and develop themselves and takes shape in the form of exhibitions, symposia and publications. Specifically on the concept 'time', was our symposium in Amsterdam in June 2007—the first out of an ongoing series. In organizing these events, it is our goal to present different artists, from various generations and parts of the world. Each of these artists deals with these concepts in his or her own way, and demonstrates different ways to think about them. To present these opinions

together shows the differences and allows the viewer to compare their stances and create an opinion of his own.

### Rene Rietmeyer: proof of existence

Rene Rietmeyer (\*1957, Netherlands) creates 3-dimensional wall objects. His so-called *Boxes* can be presented single, but more often they are hung in installations of various numbers of items. With his *Boxes*, the artist expresses himself in relation to his surroundings, in a specific time and space. The work is abstract: Rietmeyer presents his relationship to a certain experience in his life in color, material, texture, form, composition, size etc. Visual beauty is not an issue for him. Important is whether these visual elements fit to the experience; it's about the atmosphere they create. Bold, large, firm and powerful is Rietmeyer's impression of Joseph Kosuth when he met him in Rome, Italy, in 2008 and his *Boxes* are consequential. "Whether my works will be attractive or not, depends solely upon the atmosphere they should create. [...] My objects are supposed to mirror my thoughts concerning the subject and thereby, at the same time, also say something about me, regardless whether the result is aesthetically attractive or not."<sup>2</sup> That viewers might consider a work beautiful, when it is possibly not seen as such by Rietmeyer—or the other way around—demonstrates the subjective, personal character of the work. "The emotionality and subjectivity of my concept are an expression of my own existence and personality. I create an atmosphere that mirrors my very personal subjective thoughts about the subject."<sup>3</sup> The *Boxes* 'contain' Rietmeyer's thoughts and express the experience of a specific region or—like in his portrait of Joseph Kosuth—a person he met at a certain place and time. The



artist adds: "That 'same' experience at another moment in time, the creation and execution of the series shortly after or much later, would unavoidably lead to a different result."

As the initiator of the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, Rietmeyer's work is concerned with time, space and existence and does not address time in a direct way. Time is mainly present in his work as (the creation of) an awareness of the passing of time. Rietmeyer emphasizes the subjective character of his work: it is about his thoughts, his emotions, his awareness, the passing of his time and the space that is surrounding him. In the work, Rietmeyer is most concerned with the passing of his own life-time: "Ultimately, my work is nothing other than the proof of my existence." Rietmeyer seems similar to Roman Opalka in this idea that the work is equal to his body, his life. And also for Rietmeyer it is important to create this awareness that time is passing in others. The artist initiated the PERSONAL STRUCTURES project to widen his reach of creating this awareness, and show diversity by giving the spectator the opportunity to not only look at his work, but to that of artists such as Opalka and Miyajima and many others, too. A dialogue with the work is supposed to heighten the spectator's own awareness of his own existence as part of this world, and this counts for the artist himself as well: you have to keep encountering yourself in a fresh way. "[The work] is an encounter with myself, with me as a person, with my past and my reflections."

This awareness about ourselves within time is described by the artist as follows: "In general, awareness seems to be a combination of observation and the conscious reflection upon the observation, with the capability of handling language and language itself, as tools. The capability to be aware seems to be dependent on the development stage of each specific human brain. Partly I educated my brain, but mainly I am just lucky that I am able to be aware of, to observe my own, at least for me, precious existence." Communication with others is very important to Rietmeyer in this respect. According to the artist, it was communication which mainly helped us to develop. He says: "We communicate not only through spoken language and writing, music and gestures, but also through our paintings and objects. Humans express their thoughts in

the paintings and objects they make. These thoughts and the knowledge expressed create an awareness about us as human beings, and the way in which we are able to communicate." In the decisions about the visual appearance of his work, the artist's own emotional and intellectual choices are influenced by knowledge of the past; Rietmeyer let's himself be influenced by an awareness of what others have said about color or shape, for example. Because his work is about the creation of an atmosphere and triggers a dialogue, it is important to know how others respond to certain colors. Although it remains a subjective feeling, most people would pair red with passion and grey with quietness, rather than the other way around. At the symposium TIME (2007), Rietmeyer explains this along his work *Life*: "For these Boxes I choose the color red because it is human and has a strong presence. I chose the size, compact; and I chose the material, ceramic, because ceramic lasts a long time, longer than wood. Within all their formal elements, with all their subjectivity, these ceramic Boxes represent all my thoughts, me as a total entity. These Boxes, *Life*, are proof of my existence. They capture my awareness of the time I could not witness myself as well as my personally experienced Life-Time. And, after I myself have died, each *Life Box* will continue to exist and communicate." Not only the response to color, also the knowledge about how these elements have been used in the past is important. It is also the historical connotation that plays a role. "So when I choose a color, the choice is always a combination of my momentary emotional condition and of the knowledge I gained about human thoughts made in the past. [...] With my consciously taken choices, I express myself and my awareness about human history and the history before humans, my awareness about Time."

#### Expressing the present

Rietmeyer's work is the expression of a moment in time. He says that before making the work, before the actual execution, many decisions regarding the visual appearance have already been made. This is mainly due to the fact that the artist makes the work sometimes months after the experience: there is always a moment between the experience and the visualization of the experience into an object. Because the Boxes depend on emotions and thoughts, the situation in which they were



painted is of great influence. This situation is an accumulation of all the aspects that were present at the specific time and location where the work is made: whether it was hot or cold, his financial situation, or physical state. Rietmeyer says that this situation is momentary: "There is a combination of predetermined choices and the situation during the actual making of the work. This combination is an expression of the present." Rietmeyer reacts in a certain way upon what happens in life. Series, such as the Boxes titled *Miami Beach*, have been made for several years while he had his studio there. Learning new things and knowing more about the area during the passage of time, affected the experience of Miami Beach resulting each time in a new visualization. Rietmeyer's work is a reflection of his experiences. "My knowledge is created by influences, input, from the world around me, in combination with my own intellectual capabilities and is therefore a very personal knowledge. I am aware that my so-called knowledge is very subjective and limited, but it is all I have as a tool in order to act and to create. Staying open and being open, to and for other people, makes sure that I stay flexible, keep learning and have a chance to communicate honest and sincere." Rather than responding to what is happening generally in the world, Rietmeyer focuses on their effects on his own life. Rietmeyer is straightforward about this: "My objects become what they become. Always. Each Box I make is a honest result of me, my existence at that moment in time and space, an object from that specific time in my life."

The focus on his life-time, for Rietmeyer, means an awareness of his position within time. "With this position within time, I mean: knowledge about the thoughts of other artists I communicate with, but also the knowledge about thoughts and works of artists who are already dead. Knowledge about us, mankind, about the world and the space and time we live in. The thoughts standing at the origin of the intellectual decision about how to construct my work come from somewhere. That origin is to be found in the time that has passed." Expressing all these thoughts, means that Rietmeyer not only expresses the time he experienced himself, but also the time he has not witnessed: it is a combination of what he calls "self-experienced" and "non self-experienced time". "All the knowledge I gained from such people who lived before my personal, consciously experienced time, have helped

me in creating my own thoughts about all the formal elements I use to make my works." Referring to others with his work, is not an expression of something romantic or sentimental. Rather Rietmeyer describes it as a realistic awareness of 'time' and the progression of his experiences. That the artist expresses also the time before he was born, demonstrates an awareness of his position in time that seems similar to that of Opalka: Rietmeyer sees his human life as a miniscule part of this ongoing, continuous, linear time line. But unlike Opalka, this infinite time is without a beginning: there is no end, nor is there a beginning of time; time has always been there and will continue to exist.

Although he understands time as being infinite, Rietmeyer focuses mainly on the past: his work is the result of his experience that have happened. According to him, the conscious experiencing of something in the future is utopian and therefore unthinkable as a subject. "We humans perceive time only as a result of memory. If we had no conscious memory, we would not be aware of time at all, we would only see the Now. The result of having memory and the creation of our way of measuring time causes our perception of time to appear as a line."

#### The passing of life-time

For Rietmeyer, it is not only important to be aware of one's position within time, but also about the passing of our own life-time. The awareness of one's position within time, the awareness that we live only a short moment, is a very important part of Rietmeyer's art. The artist states: "An intense consciousness about Time, Space and Existence puts your own existence in a larger perspective, shows you how small you are, makes you realize the importance and beauty of being alive and makes you aware and accept the 'finalness' of death." Rietmeyer told me about this awareness when we were standing together in front of the house of the American artist Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) in Captiva Florida, just a few days after his death. Rietmeyer said that when he once met Rauschenberg, the American told him something that left an impression: when he was younger, Rauschenberg believed that there was not enough world for him to discover. During this conversation with Rietmeyer, conscious of the fact that he would soon die, Rauschenberg said; "I am running out of time."

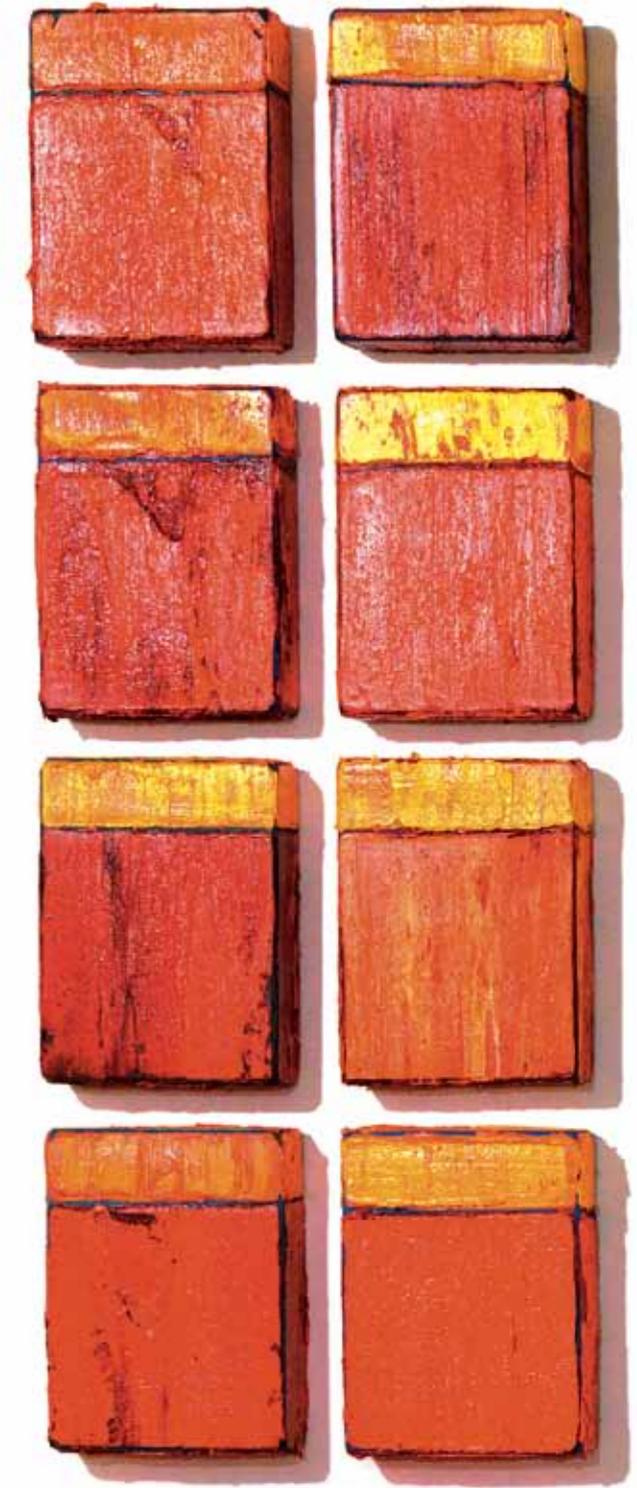
For Rietmeyer the awareness of time is an important factor, which to him is also an awareness of the passing of time. He says that his Boxes not solely transport his emotional and intellectual relationship with the subject. Their message and meaning go beyond that. In short, his message is: "encounter your surroundings as aware, conscious and open-minded as possible. Taking the maximum out of each day." It is this awareness of our own expected life-time, that made Rietmeyer decide "to create the best possible balance between a professional life that is as challenging as possible, experiencing as much as possible in this world, and enjoying a sexual life that is as interesting as possible." He adds: "Time itself does not stop. We just cease to exist."

"Being alive, sensing Life itself, is a fantastic feeling and stimulates many possibilities for activities. Being aware that there actually is no reason for our existence does not exclude that we could, or even should, do something beautiful, something good, with our existence. Life is precious and should not be taken for granted; having encounters with the world, with other living beings can be fantastic, if you are capable of seeing the beauty in the 'otherness'. There is so much to see, so much to experience, life is much, much too short; it is a pity that I will have to die." When I asked Rietmeyer in 2009 about the difference between him and Opalka, he replied with the following: "[...] everybody's understanding of Time will at least slightly differ. I relate to Time naturally mainly in relation to my own life-time, and my thoughts do not differ with Roman's thoughts when it is about the ongoingness of time, and both Roman and I are very aware that our personal life-time will come to an end, but I will die and my life-time really comes to an end, my life-time stops, Roman however, he will die and go into infinity, because he will not hear anybody, including himself, saying, "Roman, you are dead""

1 This article was first printed as *Time in the Art of Roman Opalka, Tatsuo Miyajima and Rene Rietmeyer* in *Kronoscope: Journal for the Research of Time* #10, Canada, 2010. The text printed in this catalogue is an excerpt of this article.

2 Peter Lodermeier, *Personal Structures: Works and Dialogues*, GlobalArtAffairs Publishing, 2003, p. 137.

3 If not otherwise noted, all quotations referred to in this article come from the following publication: Peter Lodermeier, Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold, *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE*, DuMont, Germany, 2009





## YHONNIE SCARCE

Yhonnie Scarce was born in Woomera, South Australia. She belongs to the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples. One of the first contemporary Australian artists to explore the political and aesthetic power of glass, Yhonnie Scarce describes her work as “politically motivated and emotionally driven”.

Yhonnie Scarce’s work explores the oppressive conditions used to subjugate Australian Aboriginal people, and the ensuing effects of colonial rule on contemporary Aboriginal culture. Through research into her family’s experiences, Scarce’s glasswork engages with the issue of containment of Aboriginal people, including the forcible removal of these people from their land. Scarce’s work incorporates her personal histories and research with artifacts from the past, hence highlighting the legacy of issues related to white settlement in dialogue with the present.

Scarce’s blown-glass Indigenous fruits and vegetables such as bush bananas, bush plums and long yams are metaphoric tools to represent Aboriginal people and their treatment over time. The glass is more than a mere material; the glass acts as a lens and a mirror, which both reflects and exposes the tragedies of Australia’s colonisation. Often used to represent the body, the glass has a solid appearance yet is fragile, precious and must be handled with care. Like archaeological objects, Scarce uses her glass works to tell stories and bear witness.

*Blood on the Wattle* featured in PERSONAL STRUCTURES commemorates all who have died as a result of the continually present colonial condition. The work comprises a perspex coffin

holding close to 300 blown glass black bush yams. These Indigenous fruits represent the large and unknown number of Indigenous peoples who have died due to factors of white settlement. Disease, displacement, drugs and alcohol along with massacre, eugenics, violence, deprivation and passive genocide are ways in which Indigenous Australians have died at the hands of European colonisers since 1788. In 2012 Indigenous Australians only make up 2.5% of Australia’s population as they continue to suffer the effects of colonial rule.

The juxtaposition of the perspex coffin and blown glass also bear significance in this work symbolizing the containment of Indigenous peoples as well as the enforcement of western arrangement and ways of life. The work was created to provide a place to mourn and remember those who have died during the colonisation of Australia.



## WILHELM SCHERÜBL

Wilhelm Scherübl examines the natural structures and processes to be found everywhere—self-organised structures of development and transformation, visible in interpersonal networks just as in the cell structure of a plant stem. These processes are finely balanced between order and chaos. The starting-point of Scherübl's reflections is light, which, in the interplay of bright and dark, initiates the dynamism of becoming.

"By 'nature,'" says the philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel, in his essay *The Philosophy of Landscape*, "we mean the endless connection of things, the uninterrupted production and negation of forms, the flowing unity of occurrence that is expressed in the continuity of temporal and spatial existence."

Matter, every kind of material, is constantly in a process of transformation. This is evident everywhere in the cycles of nature, from the changing seasons to the certain end of our corporeal existence. A plant demonstrates this constant becoming; it represents the seasonal cycle, from seedling, to flower, to seed-production, to the formation of new earth from the dead plant material."

All Wilhelm Scherübl's works are concerned with structures and the experience of time. The element of tension in many of his projects lies in the contrast between controlled artistic placing and the uncontrollable influence of time. This transient quality of the sculptures, which change as time progresses, contradicts the aspiration of art to create for eternity. Both the outdoor and the indoor works refer to the constant confrontation between nature and culture; they demonstrate the continuous transformation to

which every form is subjected, and they reflect on the eternal processes of becoming and of passing away. The result is works which, as artistic productions, are vivid, if temporary, illustrations of the classical idea of *vanitas*—reminders of mortality and mutability.



## DMITRY SHORIN

### **I Believe in Angels**

Dmitry Shorin's *I Believe In Angels* is part of an initiative to encourage a renaissance of Russian art worldwide. The sculpture presented here is from a larger series of twelve works that will be fully unveiled this autumn at the global Erarta locations in St. Petersburg, New York, London, Zurich, and Hong Kong.

Well known for his paintings, these sculptures retain Shorin's signature voyeur's gaze, but the reckless *joie de vivre* of his painting practice is now superseded by the seduction of the possibility of flight. Pearly white and delicately detailed, these modern-day angels adorned with airplane wings become mechanized figures. Each figure rests atop a black box, an allusion to the flight records of airplanes while simultaneously grounding the angels firmly to the Earth. Shown engaged in mundane tasks, the ephemeral heroines of this project seem almost frozen, as if the speed of the technology upon which we depend (and whose physical burden the angels support in the form of the heavy airplane wings), has rendered them immobile.

*I Believe in Angels* debates the concept of progress and the limits of the human body in the digital age. According to Shorin, "Man has long coveted the ability to fly, but the faster and farther we travel, the more we must look to the angels for direction. Though ostensibly capable of high-speed travel, my angels are frozen in a moment of daily routine—a contradiction."

As celebrated critic Edward Lucie-Smith has observed "Russia (especially St. Petersburg where Shorin lives and works) is a paradoxical

place, and the artist is no stranger to the paradoxical image." With the sculptures in *I Believe in Angels*, Shorin has subverted the readily apparent apollonian clarity of classical angels by adopting the tropes of Pop Art. Lucie-Smith also states "The so-called 'perestroika' artists, now for the most part out of Russia and settled in the West, relied for much of their impact on a subversion of Soviet codes and symbols. At more than twenty years distance from the collapse of the Soviet state, these symbols have to be regarded as a dead language... They are not immediately relevant to Russian society today. Shorin is one of a generation of younger artists who are struggling to evolve visual codes that are directly related to the Russia they inhabit." Classically beautiful yet overtly hi-tech, Lucie-Smith wonders if Shorin's angels might fly too close to the sun and create a new myth of Icarus—a cautionary tale for the advances of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Russia.

*I Believe in Angels* looks to the future for Russia and Russian art, as well as the continued exploration of beauty and the transcendental power of the feminine. The series revives the concept of womankind's guardianship, and given her jet age angel wings.



## NITIN SHROFF

By Radhika Iyengar

### WATER RITUAL

Born to an Indian father and a Seychellois mother, artist Nitin Shroff currently resides in Southern France. In his piece *Water Ritual*, he uses water as a metaphor to investigate the rich plurality in the meaning of 'home', 'identity' and 'self' in the postcolonial era. Filmed in France and Seychelles, the artist borrows water from a French river near his house and from the Indian Ocean in Seychelles, to pour it ultimately in places such as *Gateway of India* and Thames Estuary.

The simple ritual of collecting water from each homeland is symbolical as he uses it to pool his varied cultural identities together, thereby welding the fissures of his geographic consciousness. The act of dispersing the collected water in another land is the process of connecting with the 'other'. Through the confluence of water from different sources, the artist tries to blur the boundaries between the 'self' (France/Seychelles) and 'other'. Several questions crop up: Will the dispersed water now belong to the new land? Will this water ever find its way back or has it been lost forever? Thus, the definitions of the 'self' and the 'other' begin to complicate and crumble.

Geography forms the linchpin for our cultural identity: the lines drawn on the map define us. In other words, the heritage, religion and the language we inherit is inextricably linked to the land we are born in. So what happens when we, like water, follow its nomadic trajectory, cross geographic boundaries and merge into other lands? We adopt the heritage, religion and language of those lands, while simultaneously clinging onto our origins. This gives birth to the internal schizophrenic divide.

Nitin communicates the complexity of the situation through a montage of visuals. Through the technique of stitching and juxtaposing

two separate landscapes, he underscores his sense of dislocation. The introduction of dual figures reinforces the idea of the fractured self, while the garrulous audio of the water surging and regressing reflects his inner state of restlessness and uncertainty. Moreover, the trauma of displacement is deepened by his religious ambiguity: his father is a Hindu, while his mother is a Christian. The artist therefore, attempts to gain an understanding of his roots (India/Seychelles) by investigating his relationship with the 'other' (France). Through the water ritual, he tries to orchestrate a harmony of his identities and find a cohesive, integrated self.

In conversation with the artist he stated that the act of pouring water is a gesture and reference to the process of painting in his practice and of course to the figure in landscape. A performance piece then, the water ritual is a self-initiated rites of passage of sorts by the artist towards finding himself. The artist has performed similar rituals across India. In 2007, he carried water from France to his land of birth, India and poured it into the sacred waters of the Ganges at Rishikesh. In 2013, he collected the water from Allahabad (where the confluence of Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati takes place) during the hectic *Kumbh Mela*, which is the largest religious congregation in the world. The water ritual was performed at Fort Kochi, home to *Kochi-Muziris Biennale*, the first Indian Biennial, which the artist visited during his last trip to India this year.

An ongoing quest, through the ritual, Nitin hopes to understand the universal truths regarding Nature, Man, Being and Belonging. He intends to journey through Venice and finally draw a closure to the water ritual at Gangotri and *Gateway of India* in Mumbai.



## SUH JEONG MIN

### Memories of Freedom Cries

For the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Suh Jeong Min created a work that is monumental in scale; an assembly of individually rolled Korean Hanji paper. Entitled *Memories of Freedom Cries*, Suh looks at his home Korea with a critique of the political dichotomy and split of a nation between North and South. “As brothers and sisters, we are nothing more but strangers”.

Suh Jeong Min’s work begins from the place where painting ceases to exist. The artist uses paper from the Mulberry tree, that is typically Korean and traditional, secured onto a wooden panel—a relief work which simultaneously pursues an idiosyncratic aesthetic that combines cultural references with unusual formal techniques. The elegant and somewhat imposing work is neither painting nor sculpture, yet has properties of both—it is alive, flowing as if in water or by wind. The artist’s hope of a country that shares the same soul is a theme that many artists in Korea believe in—a wish for a freedom of expression and that of an aesthetic unification.

Suh’s work is not a representation of a single landscape or object but manifestation of nature at the root of landscape, form, or grain of nature: an aesthetic methodology common to the ancient view of nature and logic of the East. Ancient thought about nature involves issues beyond logic and rationality, and is open to diverse interpretation. Suh turns to religion to inspire his work, and quotes Laozi to explain his philosophy:

“Man models himself after Earth. Earth models itself after Heaven. Heaven models itself after Tao. And Tao models itself after Nature.”

*Suh Jeong Min (1962 Jeonnam, Korea) attended the School of Arts at Kyonggi University in Seoul. Solo exhibitions include Inje Art Museum, Gwangju (2000), Jinnam Culture and arts Center, Yeosu (2006), KEPCO Plaza Art Museum (2010) Sa Art Center, Seoul (2010), the National Paper Museum, Seoul (2011).*



## THE ICELANDIC LOVE CORPORATION

By Kaj Martin

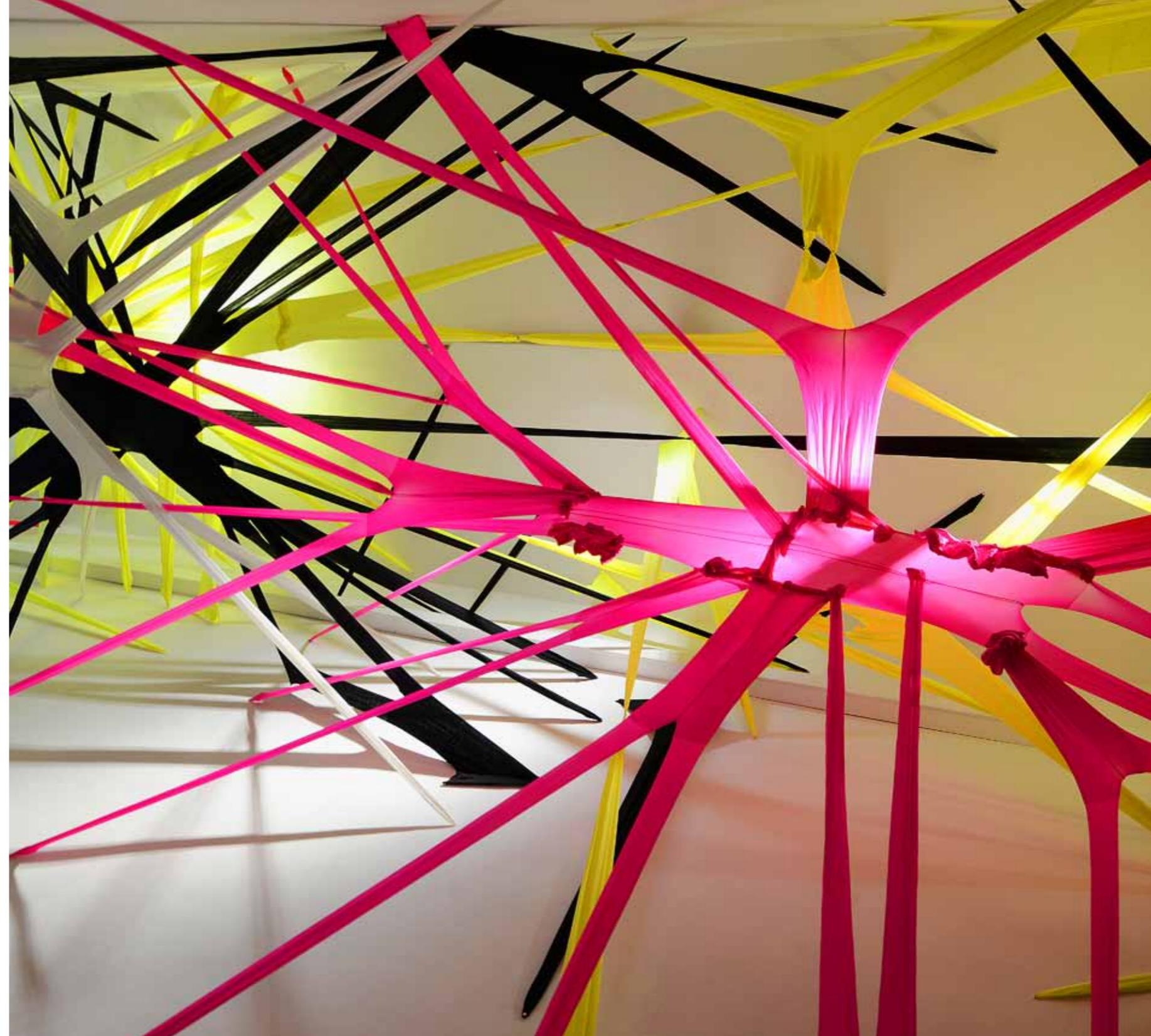
The Icelandic Love Corporation was formed in 1996 by Sigrún Hrólfsdóttir, Jóní Jónsdóttir and Eirún Sigurðardóttir, while they studied together at the Icelandic College of Arts and Crafts in Reykjavik. The main emphasis of the collective is on unique performances but out of these one-off performances more lasting products are born such as installations, sculptures and prints, textiles, photographs and videos. ILC exhibits in traditional exhibition halls as well as in wide open spaces such as the Icelandic landscape. They have also put together editorials for art magazines and designed the imaginative costumes worn by Björk on the cover of her 2007 album *Volta*. ILC's art is multilayered, colourful and extrovert, but also feminist and critical. It is based on absurd humour, and ironic and silly situation comedy. The works comment on everything under the sun: everyday life, womanhood, society, different belief systems, nature and myths.

Trivial and everyday, on the one hand, nylon tights can be electrifying and provoke emotions, for and against. Every now and then the fickle and ever-changing fashion industry puts tights on a pedestal only to knock them down the following day. In some situations tights are necessary commodities, in others quite unmentionable. Tights can be dazzling but also embarrassing, particularly when a ladder runs down a leg. Tights itch, droop and make you sweat. In the mid-1960s tights liberated women from suspenders and stockings. Nowadays, women in customer service and offices all over America rebel against the tyranny of tights. Some men hanker after the lavish stockings of yesteryear and still refer to tights as killjoys. Tights also have a fetishistic dimension: they are intimate—like a

second layer of skin—and touch our most intimate parts. At the height of a skirt comeback tights become valued and revered accessories that feature prominently in editorials.

But in real life, strutting around in nothing but tights is to be avoided. Revealing them is somehow shameful. Women—in art and especially contemporary photography—posing in only bras and thin tights, flashing their knickers, are exposed to the gaze of another and as such represent vulnerability. In some countries, running around barefoot or in socks is considered a very intimate and private thing. Teenagers in ripped nylons, looking straight at the spectator and challenging his gaze, represent rebellion, power and independence. Cotton or woollen tights are connected to girlhood and a kind of innocence, whereas slipping into sheer nylon tights is often a rite of passage into womanhood.

Tights are firmly linked to the female sphere. They also form an essential element in ILCs works. The works pay attention to the specifics and characteristics of nylon as a material and the connotations attached. Through the use of tights as the chief material, topics such as womanliness as well as the male gaze are brought to a head and exaggerated to the point of the grotesque. In some works traditional male and female characteristics are juxtaposed or sounded against each other. The ILC's most recent work *Web* is literally a multi-dimensional structure on an almost monumental scale. It brings to mind larger-than-life, masculine abstract Constructivist sculptures; at the same time it is organic, synthetic and as flexible as a spider's web, continuously changing and full of mystery. Whose turn is it to be held captive by tights?



## MONIKA THIELE

By Hendrik Bündge

The depiction of man is in the centre of the previous Œvres by the artist Monika Thiele (Erfurt, Germany, 1966). For her the important thing about it is not a naturalistic depiction but the intensity of emotions and how to make the different emotional states visible on the surface of the depiction. The two pieces of work shown in PERSONAL STRUCTURES originated in 2005 and 2006 *Monde* (Moons) and *Ein Versprechen* (A Promise) can be named as examples of that.

In the first work the downward gaze does not give any evidence about the emotions of the portrayed person. But due to her hands groping timidly over her shaved head this disturbing moment appears and leaves his viewer behind uncertain. In *Ein Versprechen* the depiction is broken up, divided in two. The confrontation of man and animal, woman and fish in the upper part of the picture strikes one a odd. A red-haired woman holds out a decapitated fish to the viewers. What is this promise that the title of the work recommends to us? And the technique of Monika Thiele wasn't mentioned yet. It is the second time one looks at it that you recognize uneven grids, threads laid side by side and one on top of the other, in different colours and various layers; the projection surface white, soft, nearly transparent organza. These so-called thread-drawings or thread-pictures are produced since 2002. Thiele weaves her subjects onto the picture with needle and thread, sometimes for several months. This lengthy process finds expression in the pictures causing an intense analysis with the subject of man and his portrayal.

Educated in Erfurt, Dresden, Stuttgart and Karlsruhe (Germany) Monika Thiele developed this technique that became her trademark by means

of specially imposed limitations parallel in her drawings: These drawings were created by straight lines, initially drawn with ruler, later without one, anticipating the disturbing ordinariness of things as subject—often women, smoking, eating, combing. Lighting conditions play a special role for the thread-pictures. With lines on top of one another Thiele models her subjects from light and shadow, by reduction and accumulation. Mounted in costly produced frames of acrylic glass the thread-pictures are illuminated from behind. In this way the three-dimensional impression that fetches the weave of different layers of thread into the foreground is emphasised. In darkened rooms the pictures display their full effect. The 2-dimensionality of the picture foundation also affecting drawings and paintings is abolished in favour of a plastic appearance. In her newest works Thiele experiments with this phenomenon. Textile printings, subjects banned beforehand on the picture foundation are combined with subjects of thread. In this way the play between 2- and 3-dimensionality is given priority.

The thread-drawings by Thiele experience another additive through their titles: her great love for literature and her admiration for various writers inspire the often poetic titles for many of her pictures. Stimulated by her reading experience of certain books some works emerge from the immediate effect they had on Thiele. Chinghiz Aitmatov, has to be named here, whose novella *Jamila*, published in 1958 inspired Thiele to a whole series of thread- pictures. It is true that reality comes to light in Monika Thiele's thread-pictures but at the same time the pictures are woven with nightmarish illustrations that have to compete with reality. A virtual mimesis is negated. As a viewer you can thus become a prisoner in the net of Monika Thiele upon first sight.



## MICHELE TOMBOLINI

By Cristina Fiore & Andrea Penzo

A woman in black and white with a cross upon her lips. Nude?... impossible to say. The image doubles, multiplies, and becomes an army of images. A composed figure that moves through space in a restrained yet expressive way, notwithstanding the gagged mouth, somewhat like the images of Nazi propaganda in which everything was burned to the color of black and white dust. This in the XV<sup>th</sup> element of *E luce fu*, a cycle of work that Michele Tombolini for years has dedicated himself to realizing.

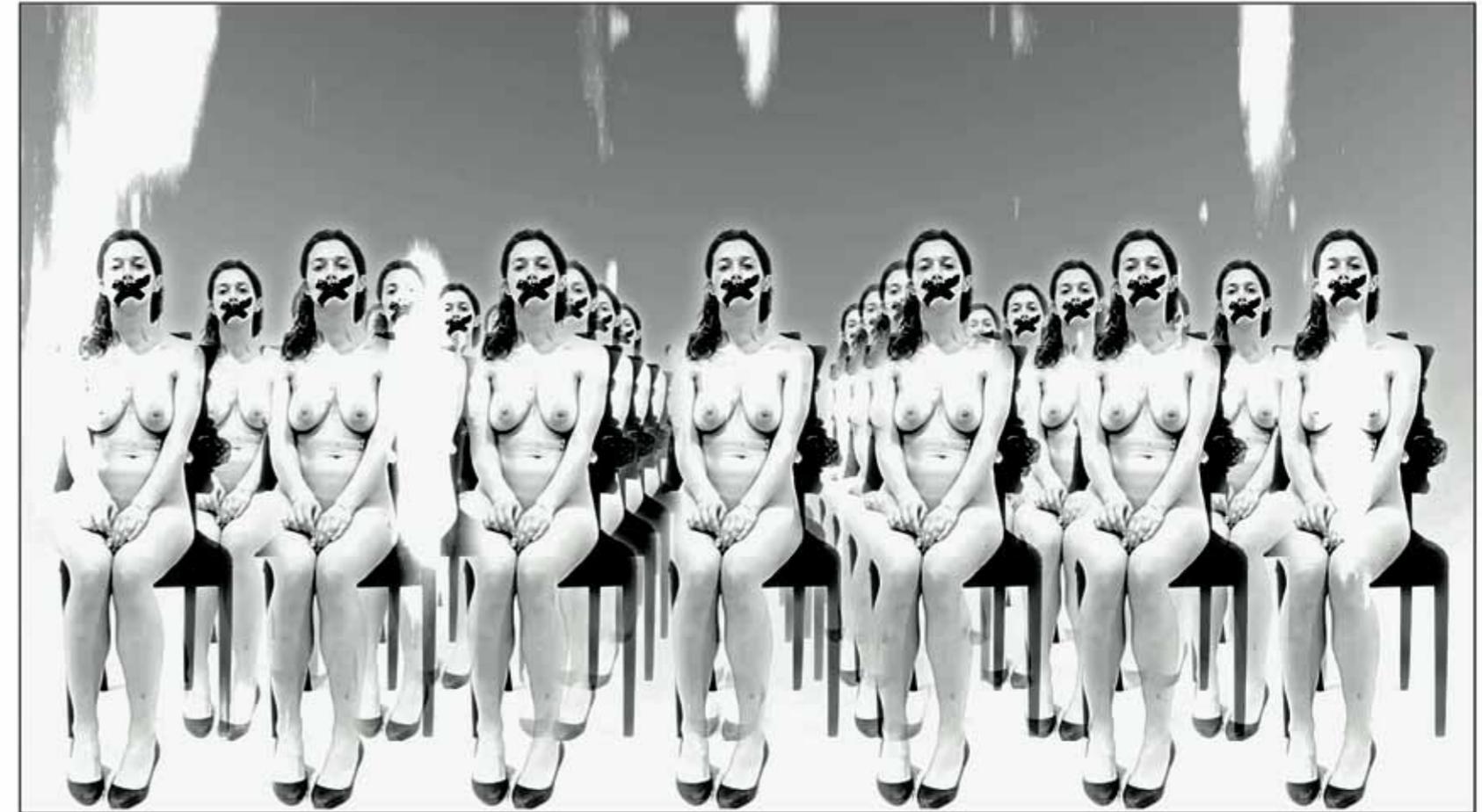
Those who have followed his art have difficulty recognizing him from 2011 onwards. His travels throughout Germany and long visits to Berlin have influenced his work that has distanced itself from that primitivity, chromaticism and expressionism that critics spoke about a few years ago. If in the past his work exclusively represented the inner world of the artist, his more recent work speaks of social problems that by chance, resonate with the historical dramas of the not so long ago 1900s.

The intimate energy that characterizes the artist—always preoccupied with his canvases, sculptures and structures of monumental dimension—collides with a world in crisis, in need of certainties and of stability, a world incapable of lending support to personal initiative or of adding vital momentum to brilliant ideas. In this context, the cycle *E luce fu* is a powerful expression. The series rotates around two important symbols: light and a cross. The biblical phrase, genesis of everything, opens the dichotomy between life and death, a theme present in Tombolini's entire production. The black cycle inaugurated in 2011 reflects on the disappearance of color and the emergence of a dark mood.

Like Heidegger, in Tombolini's work the anguish of death is transformed into praise and the quintessence of life. The "living towards death" theory of the philosopher underlines the opportunity of acknowledging our finitude in order to exalt life and fully enjoy being in this world. The cross/censors speak of the impossibility of discussing death in the world we live in that prefers to ignore it, pretend it doesn't exist, choosing to cautiously mention this most important event, the only one truly capable of giving us back the power of life. Tombolini's subjects are born into the world, living in a time and space that allows them to emerge from an indistinct nothing and to speak only with their muted presence.

These subjects are nearly always women, not so much as a representation of their erotic, maternal feminine side but as a condensation of femininity, that element of awareness—creative and creator that unites women under one author. It is usually they who have who have their mouths censored by a cross: the women in his paintings, in performances and in the video by the artist—the only masculine element in his system of subjects that take form his works.

This new phase of production also signals the substitution of the expressive medium with a concept around which revolve different expressions. The paintings become more three-dimensional with fabric, chains, drapery, tubes and light. Much of the space is dedicated to collage, often through the combination of different materials. The performances become photos that evolve in light-boxes, while the visions dematerialize into videos. Not only is there painting but an assemblage of techniques subordinate to a concept and closed within the power of a biblical phrase.



# ŠTEFAN TÓTH

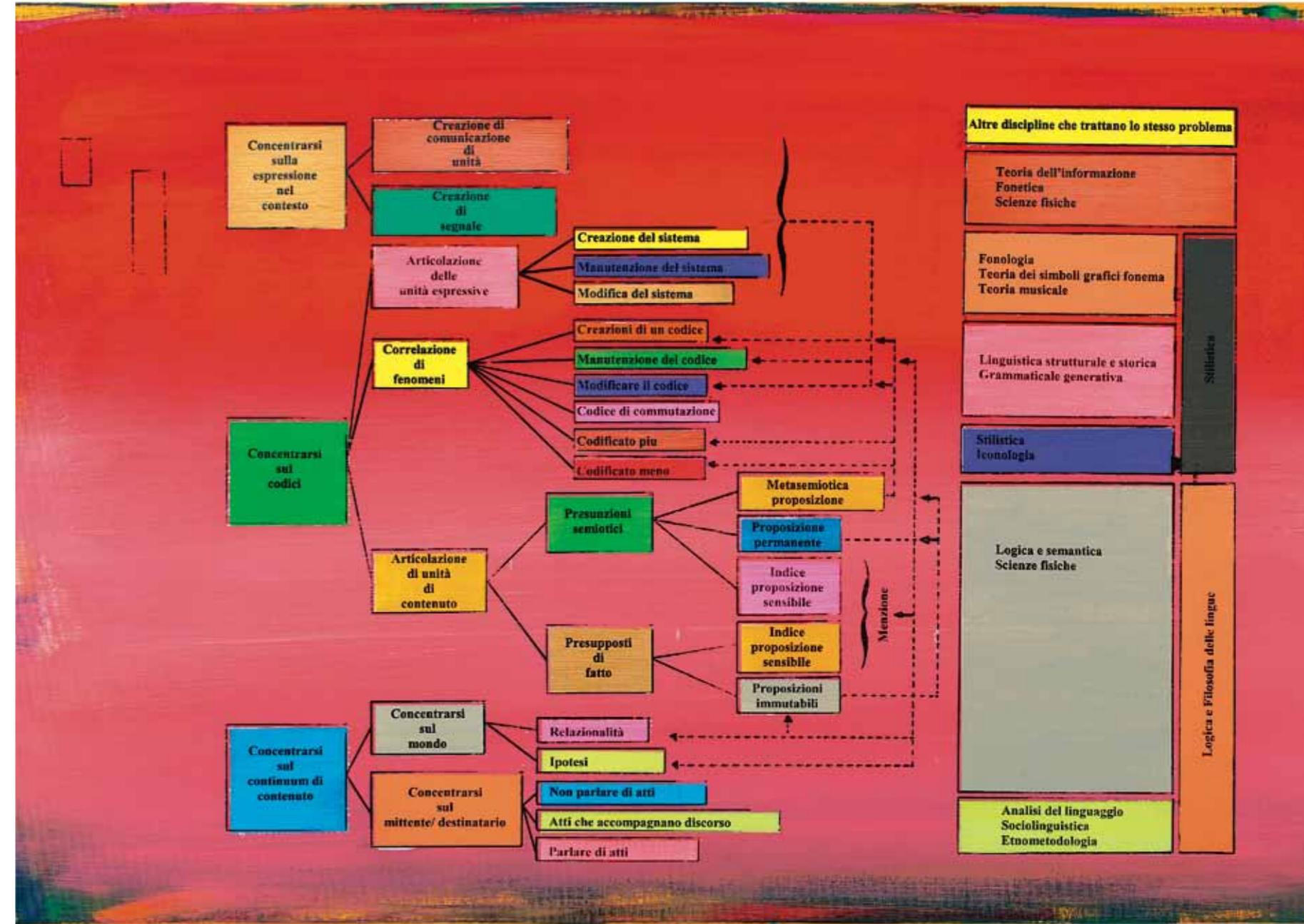
## The Retroactive Renaissance - After Pietro Bembo

The project concept is based on several theoretical possibilities that can be described as: a) theory of context, b) theory of anachronism, c) theory of semiotics, d) theory of history. All these theories have either their theoretical platform (verified by scientific experiments, ed.), or we can accept them as conceptual speculations. However, together it forms a framework for serious discussion about the potential of retroactivity. Can we theorize that as retroactivity and still as the opinion of a work of art? Taking into account the concept of G. Didi-Huberman, then under certain circumstances, yes.

Accept art history as an anachronistic discipline does not result in the same theoretical basis for retroactivity. At the beginning of such effort is the unpleasant surprise that we will never be able to work with the Renaissance through correlation. The connotation is a more accurate method of our efforts to understand the context of the Renaissance.

The project *The Retroactive Renaissance – After Pietro Bembo* accurately reflects the person and work of Pietro Bembo. Especially paintings *Portrait of cardinal Pietro Bembo* and *Portrait of the Bembo's book – Prose della volgar lingua (1525)* have clearly assigned characters referring to the person of Cardinal Bembo. *Portrait of Cardinal Bembo* is stylized to the extreme, because without the text-part nobody would look for probable resemblance to Tiziano's painting from the years 1539-1540. In the visual art, a copy is perceived as study material rather than as an original work. We have the obvious problem with the principles of imitation and therefore, it was intended to override the default Tizian's

portrait of Pietro Bembo. The result is a summarized painting with text that plays the most important role. Text postulates painting. Is this pure portrait painting or a description of her? It is similar with the paintings *Prose della volgar lingua (1525), p.XXX, Part 1* and *Prose della volgar lingua (1525), p.XXX, Part 2*. Both paintings are text notes from the most important Pietro Bembo's literary work, *Prose della volgar lingua (1525)*. Sentences in Italian Renaissance work on the painting as an archaism. Despite everything, it is about contextual paintings that connect Bembo's linguistic work with existing forms of painting. The starting point of the whole project is other work. It is the painting *Portrait of the Bembo's Book – Prose della volgar lingua (1525)*. The largest painting I perceive as "Renaissance Bible", because without Bembo's codification would not be possible to infer contextual components of Renaissance culture. Watching the portrait of Bembo's book means stopping over philosophical reference of Renaissance in person of Pietro Bembo. Residues of the project are *Mental Composition of the Renaissance, Part 1* and *Mental Composition of the Renaissance, Part 2*. These mental maps present psychological consciousness of the Renaissance, which is visualized using pure imagination.



## VALIE EXPORT

By Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold, Carol Rolla & Valeria Romagnini

*Karlyn De Jongh: 'Identity' seems to have been one of the main themes for your art. There are many different explanations of how identity is 'formed' or 'what it consists of,' but it seems one could say there is a part influenced by society and another part 'personal'. Over the years you have become an internationally well-known artist, your works are in the collections of important museums and published in art history books. In a way, you have become a public figure. Did this change have an influence on how you see yourself?*

VALIE EXPORT: Yes, of course, because I feel Identity in all its facets. For me it is also Non-Identity. This is a very important subject for me, it is a very important context of my person vis-à-vis 'other' identities that surround me. In the seventies there was also a rebellion inside me to form my identity myself, to decide myself, evidently, and to form an identity without identity, one that does not belong to the many identities within myself. But identities are shaped by various, different systems, changes. The way I see myself has not changed, for I see my Self always differently.

*KDJ: METANOIA—the work that you will exhibit in this PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition as part of the Venice Biennale 2013—shows a selection of your works over the past 50 years. The films are time-documents, not only of your performances, but of (Austrian) society and of you yourself as a person. What do you think about the way in which you have been able to express 'identity'?*

VE: I believe that I have succeeded in not defining identity unambiguously in my works, because my works also do not have an unambiguous identity. The works consist of roots which are

interlinked, live in each other. Rhizom would be the appropriate concept, they are rhizomatic works, have rhizomatic architectures.

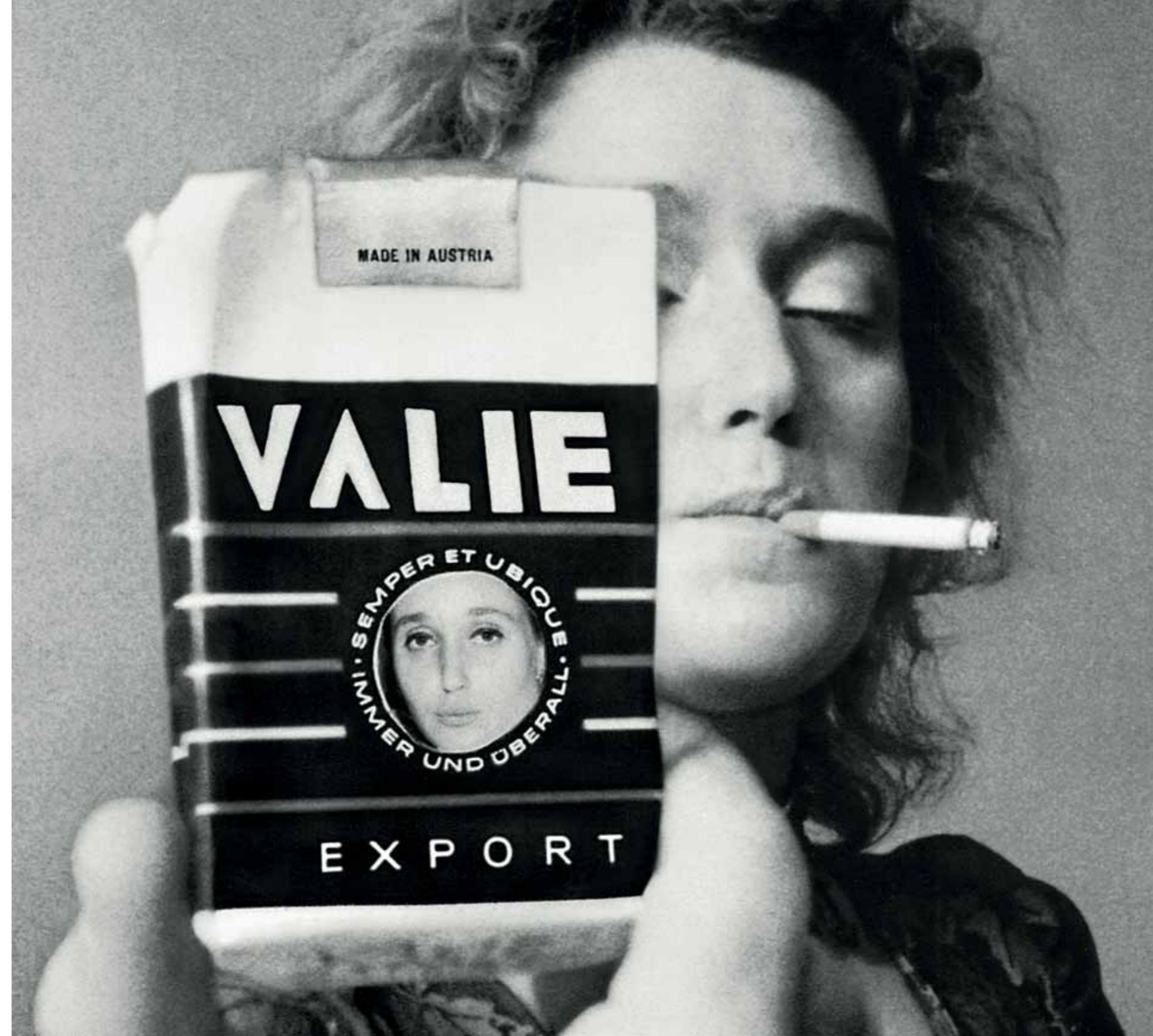
*KDJ: You seem to have always fought for freedom of expression for everybody. I myself, growing up in the Netherlands in the 1980s, I never had to fight for my existence as a woman: men and women were equal; for me 'feminism' was never really an issue. I can imagine that when you have to fight to be able to express yourself, this understanding 'that you are free' comes gradually, taking one step at the time. Is that correct? Was this what you meant when you told me that you see yourself as a product of yourself? To what extent do you think that 'our identity' is moldable or changeable by ourselves?*

VE: Within ourselves we carry structures of identities which have moulded us from the outside. They are strangers to us because they do not meet our desires and needs. There are rights that make the rules, there are barriers that surround and also challenge us to recognize the strangeness within ourselves.

*Sarah Gold: In an interview, you have said that society changes, that you change and that also your works differ from how they used to be. In your opinion, how did your works change over the years? Do you think society has changed—if only a little—because of your works?*

VE: Society changes because I try to move rules, to make rules visible and recognize them. I believe that art is capable to show views and findings that represent a threat.

*KDJ: Besides identity—for as far as it is not part of it—the idea of 'my body within space' seems to have been important to you, understanding*



'space' not only as 'society' but in general. How do you see this relation between body and space?

VE: The body is a space in the space, it embodies the history of mankind.

*Carol Rolla: A work of art may propose an image of protest, violence or subversion, choosing the body as means to deploy your own artistic message implies necessarily to pass on a specific tradition. Do you think that the "beauty" of the female body influences the way how the audience receives your work?*

VE: What is beauty? Youth? Age? My works have been rejected for many years, fought by society and even by art enthusiasts. They accepted and knew the female body only in an artistically conservative tradition, the self-determined expression of the female body in art and society was neither accepted nor understood. The more male eyes fell on the female body or on the representation of the female body, the more the femininity was recognized, the desired and required femininity, not the self-determined femininity. Female representations were mostly determined by male stereotypes, even today they are still determined by male power all over the world—in religions, politics, cultures...

*SG: In 2005, Marina Abramovic performed your „Aktionshose: Genitalpanik“ in the Guggenheim New York. You yourself have said that you do not wish to repeat your performances. But how is that for another performer, in this case Abramovic? Do you think the value of this new performance adds to your work from 1969?*

VE: Yes, I think so, and especially in a very important debate, a very important evaluation. In that year it could not have been performed in an American museum, and earlier in the sixties not even in a European museum. This is the interesting point: does the society change, does the museum change, does the art change?

*Valeria Romagnini: In 2009, you presented your work at the Venice Biennale as a deeper research of the physical characteristics of the human body and you filmed the glottis and the movements of the throat while speaking. It seemed to me that you used here your own body as a sample of the human body in general, trying to understand the rules of the body. How did you*

*experience yourself while your inner parts were being projected on the screens? Which are the thoughts you gained after this kind of research?*

VE: It was not my first look at my glottis, but the thoughts were important for me. It is my real speech, but also the echo of the media—or do the media echo real speech? This touches my discussion of identity and where it can be found, it is always different and of another nature.

*CR: In a previous interview, you said that language constantly comes back in your work. There seems to be a thin line between voice and silence, between what is said and what you are able to say and what you cannot express. Did you ever encounter the limits of your body in trying to express yourself?*

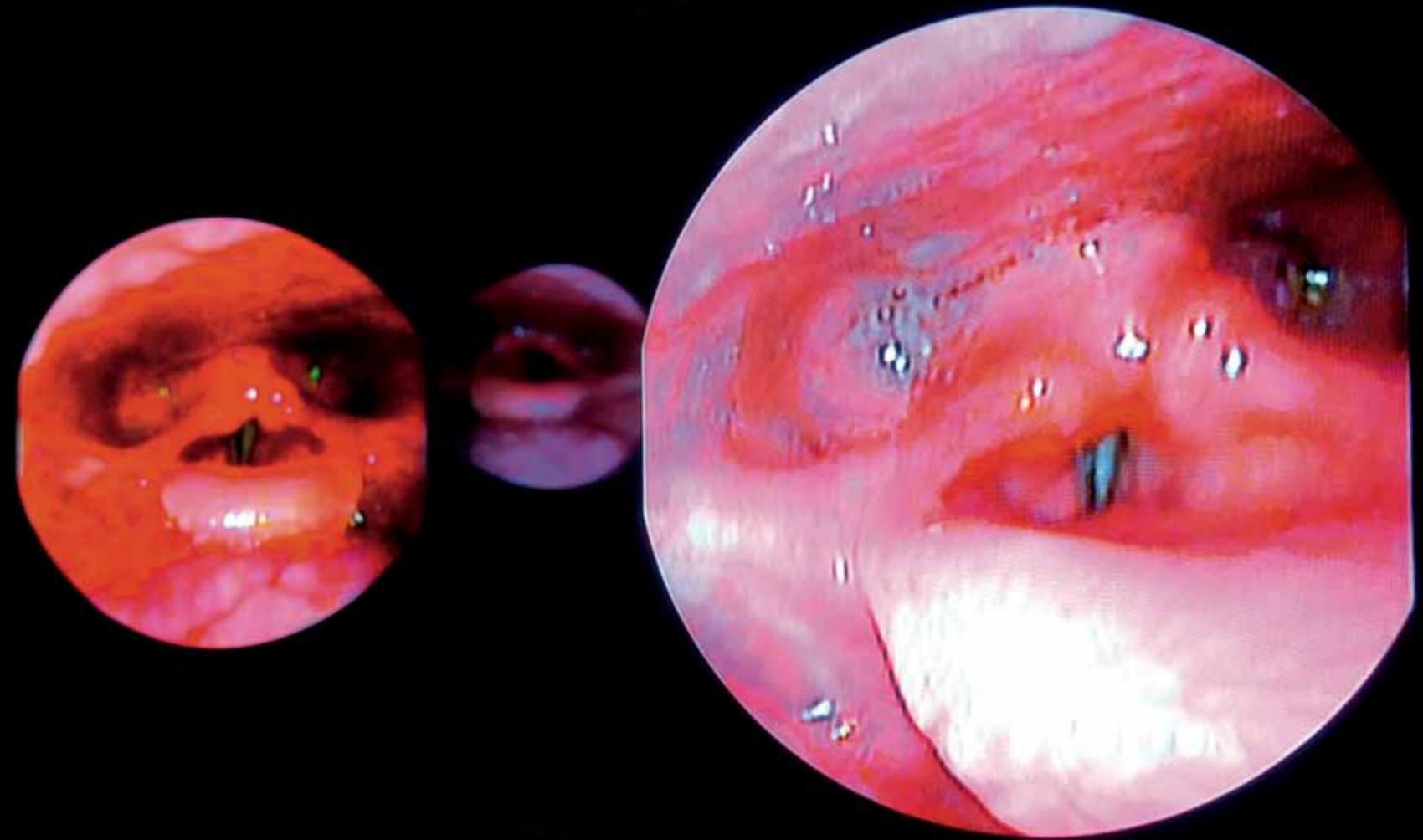
VE: Of course, there are limits of the body, but they are not the only ones. There are limits of consciousness, limits of emotions, limits of knowledge, and these limits are much stronger.

*KDJ: Your recent works seem quite clearly concerned with 'voice'. It seems that you have taken your idea of wanting your voice to be heard, wanting to show 'how society is', in a more indirect way, taking the voice as a metaphor. Why did you distance yourself from a direct approach?*

VE: Art is language, no matter through which medium or condition this language, this art is expressed. For me there is no clarity of linguistic expression, language, speech. That is so interesting about artistic expression, it can articulate the non-verbal.

*KDJ: Good communication does not only require trying to express yourself clearly, but also depends upon the receiver. In an interview with me in 2009, you said that if you would start today, you again would work with gender topics in your art. Does this mean that the world has not changed enough? Have people not listened to you?*

VE: Every discussion about gender provokes, it forces reflection, forces changes, and therefore this discussion will always continue. And because again and again something is changing or has changed or remains rigid, petrified as if embedded in rock, that is why we must speak about it.



## VITALIY & ELENA VASILIEV

By Ricardo Chaves-Fernandes

### Project NEO: Omnia Vanitas

Aesthetic and beauty are two themes that have carried our conceptual discussion since the birth of time. They continue to weigh upon our contemporary consciousness...mutating from our contemporary perspective into how we “see” the future.

Our definitions of aesthetic and beauty can change according to where we live, how we live, what we’ve experienced and how we process this information within ourselves. It is in a sense what makes us who we are or what makes something beautiful. It is quite different from what makes another person or thing beautiful in another’s eyes. We all have our own language for the judgement of aesthetics. It is what makes us human.

Although human beings are basically all the same, we experience distinctly different social relations, we develop different desires, we have different preferences and tastes. These differences form the foundation of our definitions of aesthetic and beauty. They connect within us a deeper introspective of feelings through a constant barrage of emotion, this internal struggle between life and death ultimately leads to the birth and survival of our aesthetic consciousness. It is an intense game that satisfies but one purpose—our insatiable need and unstoppable fight for the survival of beauty.

Believed to be as old as the Stone Age, jewellery and specialty necklaces were used to distinguish tribes, people, different social levels and roles in ancient times.

Later, Egyptian jewellery from as far back as 5000 BC used materials like bones, stones and wood to serve religious and spiritual interests.

Eventually, precious metals and precious stones replaced these earlier materials. The Egyptians used a precious stone bracelet for ceremonies and special occasions. Jewellery has traditionally been passed from and through different cultures, different times and aesthetic evolutions. Interestingly, nowadays when taken in the plural, the term bracelets, is often used as slang for handcuffs.

*Project NEO* from the artists Vitaliy and Elena Vasileva, encourages a strong reflection on the eternal game of survival. It conjures up a cacophony of conflict between mind, body and our definition of beauty. It also examines the inner human being of what we like and how we see it in our own existence.

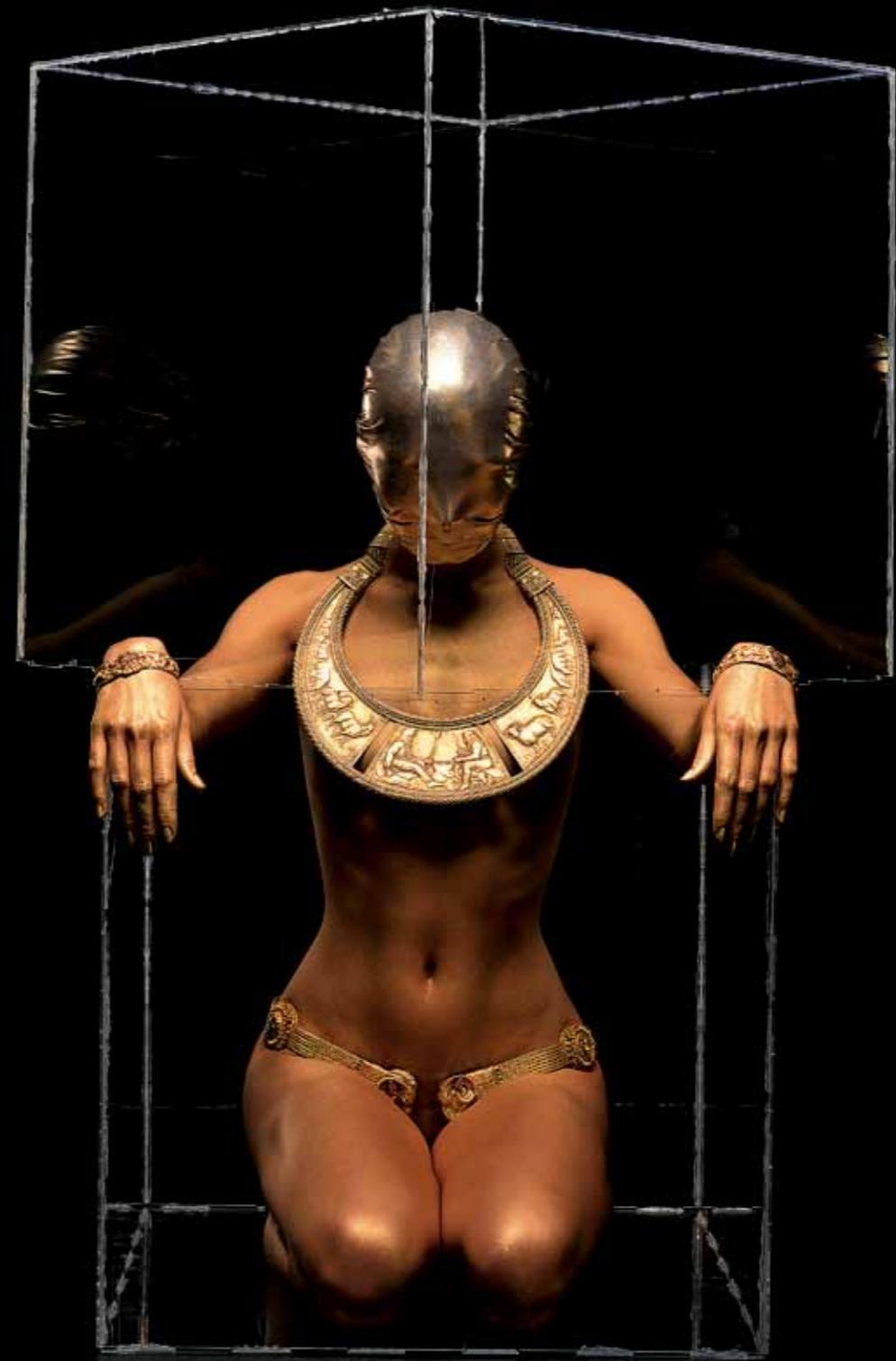
Who are we? How can we survive? How can we keep the beauty that naturally surrounds us and imprisons us at the same time? At the moment we were born we acquire our beauty. Simultaneously, we start a conscious and unconscious fight to keep that same beauty eternally and irrevocably within our mind, bodies and souls.

Precious minerals, gems and stones... Are they stronger than us? Is our search of beauty and perfection inferior to that of the power of nature? Or, are we taking the wrong direction in the search of eternal beauty and life? Will death ultimately free us from the chains of vanity?

Embraced by these unanswered questions we follow life in its constant aesthetic search to avoid death, to achieve evolution—eternal beauty equals eternal life.

*The presentation of Project NEO by Vitaliy and Elena Vasiliev during Venice Biennale 2013 is curated by Anna Milashevych.*





## BEN VAUTIER

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

From 17 - 19 February 2013, Sarah and Karlyn introspected Ben Vautier in Nice, France. Through different performances—round table conversations, body painting, communication through written texts, or by lying together in bed in the 'Ben Room' of their hotel—'Ben' was investigated, openly discussing any topic. The following text is an excerpt of one of these performances, whereby Sarah and Karlyn each hold a mirror in front of their faces and 'introspect' Ben, while he is looking into these mirrors. BEN VAUTIER: INTROSPECTION TRUTH SEX & ART is the documentation of Personal Structures Art Projects #07 and will be published as a limited special edition in 2013.

Sarah Gold: This is introspection on Ben.

Ben Vautier: Introspection... This is a nice word 'introspection'. I'm looking at myself in the mirror and I'm hoping I change, and the more I look at myself, the more I see a stupid old man who is always the same and cannot change. So, art is change, but we cannot change; we are just the same.

Karlyn De Jongh: I think you are too afraid of change. You do not seem to go into reality, you do not act.

BV: I would be a serial killer, if I could change. I would kill humanity.

SG: Why would you kill humanity?

BV: Because all humanity is ego. We cannot get rid off ego.

KDJ: What means ego?

BV: Ego means you cannot get rid off thinking: I, I, I... I want this, I am there, I am here. *Je suis, je suis, je...* Always 'I'.

KDJ: But you are, your work is about that. You are 'I'.

BV: But I do not want to be. That is why I want to become a serial killer.

SG: Are you a jealous person?

BV: I am jealous of other artists, never of women. Not 'never', really... I say I am not jealous, but maybe I am jealous of my wife fucking with someone else, that could be... It excites me, it excites me but at the same time that it excites me, it gives me anguish, both... It goes up and down.

KDJ: So why are you jealous? Is it because you cannot do it yourself?

BV: Because you do not want to do it with me. No, no... It is because I cannot do it myself. I am jealous, because... it's complicated.

SG: Are you afraid?

BV: We are always afraid. Afraid of being oneself, afraid of death, afraid of losing or not being who we want to be, afraid of wanting to be another.

SG: If you have to choose one: art, sex, truth. Which one would you choose?

BV: Truth!

KDJ: What does it mean, 'truth'?

BV: I do not know.

SG: What is the most elementary emotion you have?

BV: Anguish. Not knowing what to do.

KDJ: Not knowing what to do? Or not daring to do?



BV: Not knowing. Anxious. Looking for. Worrying. Thinking of.

SG: Where do you think this comes from?

BV: Survival. Art survival.

KDJ: Is art about your survival?

BV: Yes.

KDJ: Are you fit enough, Ben?

BV: No. Truth is sometimes against survival.

KDJ: Are you afraid? Of yourself?

BV: I am tired. I want to go to sleep. I have been afraid, but not of myself, no. I want to go on, continuing...

SG: Who am 'I'?

BV: I do not know. I'm tired.

KDJ: Who is Ben?

BV: A boring artist, who is looking for something new and does not find it.

KDJ: Is there a difference between I and Ben?

BV: Who is I? Who is behind there? We are all the same in a way. A mirror is... I wonder who discovered the first mirror and what he thought when he saw himself for the first time. He must have said, "what is that?!"

KDJ: I think you are trying to avoid giving an answer.

BV: Yes

KDJ: Why?

BV: I do not know the answers. I am not so clever. I do not know the answer.

KDJ: After fifty years of performance, of making art, can you not give an answer to the question 'what is ego'?

BV: I can show off, that is all. To know 'why' and philosophy is too complicated this morning.

KDJ: If you cannot say now who 'I' is, can you tell us: who is the other?

BV: Who is the other? On a morning like this, I am not a good philosopher. I would love to talk with you about it. The other is always. You cannot be someone else, but another. Marcel Duchamp once said: *c'est le regardeur qui fait le tableau*. This means: the man who looks at the painting, makes the painting. Then: you always need another to exist: a big one to become small; a rich one to be poor; a poor man to be richer; a strong man to be a weak man. You always need another; you cannot be alone. You are beautiful, because there are girls who are—I suppose—less beautiful. You are tall because there are people who are less tall, because there are midgets. In a world full of midgets, maybe one of the midgets would be a giant compared to some small midgets. So, to be another is always to be in comparison with others. And let's say in art, we have those who succeed in bringing something new and those who repeat themselves and are not new enough. We are fighting to try to find newness. We are trying to find something that makes our difference; if I am different from the others, people will say: "I recognize it! That is a Ben!" Or: "I recognize it! That is a Rembrandt!" So to be, to exist, is to be someone in comparison to the others. But maybe today it is interesting for artists to NOT look like another, but to (on purpose) look like everybody. So that is another simple art, too. But then they also cannot get away from being different. When John Cage says: "Everything is music." At the same time he is changing the games, the world's games. In previous times composers had a certain personality. The personality of John Cage was to open up a window in which everything could fall into.

KDJ: So when you see some writing and you know that you have done it before, then the jealousy starts? Or how does it work? I think you have a very strong tendency to prove yourself. You want to prove that you were there first.



BV: That was true. I used to even write texts, but now it's different. Now it is 2013, and I have changed. These days I am pleased when somebody recognizes what I did, and I am less anxious than before. It is not becoming more 'zen', but it is about taking life as it comes. Now, I do not bother as much. But when I was 30 or 40... Now I am 78. I think time has changed me a bit.

*KDJ: But you still talk about it very often. So, that would mean that during your 30s and 40s, you must have been impossible!*

BV: No no, it is that time: *Lu-ci-di-té*. *Lucidité* means... Sometimes you meet people who reject art. I say: "be *lucide*". Do not tell yourself stories! You can say: "I'm not jealous." Others might say: "I don't care. I do this for god. I will pay for others to help humanity. I say: "be *lucide*". Your ego is there. You are in front of the world. You react to the world. To be *lucide*, means to be aware.

*SG: You just mentioned God, do you believe in God?*

BV: Yes, I could believe in God. But I am closer to being an atheist than to believing in God. But still when I look at science and we are talking about the Big Bang, and we are talking about our ego presence, then I think there is an interrogation point.

*KDJ: So you did not throw God away completely? You threw him out of the country, but then you were traveling quite a bit and took him back home?*

BV: He does not look like me and he does not do bad things. He is a kind of... I have some theories... I do not know. I cannot tell you... It is a mystery. But I had to take him away. But there is a mystery in the words 'life', 'survival', 'ego', 'reproduction', 'time', 'space'... and if you put all of these words together and combine ego with time and space, you only get an interrogation point. You do not get an answer. To see time, space, ego, survival... these 'things' exist. But the 'why', the 'when', 'how'... We don't understand them.

*SG: Are you fine with not knowing?*

BV: No! I'm always trying. But you see... When Copernicus said that the world is round. And when Newton said that the world has gravity. And Einstein said the world is time. Then Hawking said something about the black holes and that the universe started many millions of years ago and before that was a Big Bang. Each one has given an explanation. Then came another explanation, and another one. Today we have the explanation of the quantity. The world is full of explanations.

*KDJ: What is your explanation?*

BV: My explanation of the universe is a funny one. [Ben starts drawing] My explanation of the universe is that there was—at the beginning of time—an ejaculation. Just as when I fuck. This ejaculation contains ego, reproduction, survival. Now: what happened before, I do not know. But I feel that the world today is an expansion. The universe expands, the galaxies... This is the ejaculation of ego. Why do I see ego as more important than galaxies? It is because ego contains the explanation of these galaxies. I mean to say that we need the ego of Hawking to say this-and-that about the world, we need the ego of Einstein, we need the ego of Freud, we need the ego of Heidegger, we need the egos of the ones who spend their time explaining things. So what do we have? We have the universe, which is full of explanations. These explanations come from ego, because Einstein was jealous of so-and-so. All these egos are there.

That interests me as a theory. I'm actually trying to find the particle of ego, which I want to be able to scientifically find. And then I will call it '*particule de Ben*' [Ben's particle]. And people will be able to say: "Of course, the *particule de Ben*! *C'est très important!*" And it is all a joke! But somebody will see the particle of love, which is very important too!



## RAPHAEL VELLA

If you still haven't lost the ability to dream of heroic revolutions, then you may know the story of a boy named Ernesto who suffered from vicious attacks of asthma that kept his parents awake all night at his bedside because they feared he would die young. Despite moving house to try to find a better climate for their son, they couldn't escape the acute attacks that would often leave little Ernestito desperately clutching his chest and gasping for air. Nevertheless, the boy didn't die until he was thirty-nine years old, and his death was not caused by his illness. He died of gun-wounds in a Bolivian jungle, his body riddled by the bullets of a semi-automatic rifle. The ailing boy, as you may have already realised, had grown up to become the guerrilla fighter Che Guevara.

Try to erase from your memory Alberto Korda's hugely popular, black-and-white *Guerrillero Heroico* image of El Che, considered by some to be the most famous photograph in the world. Instead, look at one of the old photographs of Ernesto as a child. Peer into the dark eyes of this sick boy; do they make you think of the man's Marxist ideals? Does his inexperienced face remind you of his future battle-cry "hasta la victoria siempre"? Where and how is a future *guerrillero* like El Che incubated?

The children portrayed in *Big Boys* share a handful of characteristics with Ernesto (who happens to be one of them). They are all boys who became internationally renowned in their adult life. Hence, it would be more correct to say that they are all famous men, but they are being shown here at a more vulnerable age—an age more commonly associated with bedtime stories, games with brothers and sisters and

long hours spent in classrooms with teachers and peers. All the charming boys depicted in these drawings make you think of an age of innocence, for that is how childhood is perceived by many people around the world. It may be a myth, but it is an enduring one. We like to think that even the worst individuals amongst us must have lived through a period in their lives when their minds were not burdened by the turmoil of adulthood. Understood retrospectively, infancy is perceived as the great equalizer: if you could delete all political beliefs, conflicts that lead to terrible loss of life, struggles associated with the world of work and so many other daily problems in adult life, you'd be left with the child in each and every one of us.

Yet, we also know that things are never that simple. There are varying cultural and neurodevelopmental factors that contribute to very different results in our lives. If the faces in *Big Boys* all grew to be well-known men, they became famous for distinct, and at times, diametrically opposed, reasons. The drawing of a dark boy with a worried look is accompanied by a quotation about history from one of his adult, political speeches, but few would tell that he is the future Saddam Hussein. The blond baby in another drawing went on to become the most well-known, and possibly, the most loved, pope of the twentieth century. The portrait of a Chinese boy for whom religion would come to represent "poison" is hanging close to that of a Tibetan child who would dedicate his life to religion. Identifying these faces is like a game: it is a matter of guesswork, not easy to predict or determine with complete certainty. It's a bit like life itself.



## ANDRÉ WAGNER

Photographer André Wagner (\*1980 Germany) deals virtuously with his camera and investigates the possibilities of lighting situations. He stages photographs in great detail and creates authentic images that seem to be digitally manipulated, but as he is fascinated by analog photography, he uses medium and large format cameras. In a remarkable way he succeeds in perceiving internal and external phenomena of a situation. Standing in the tradition of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Wagner sees photography as an ideal means of expression, in which he can transfer attitudes and beliefs. His painterly, poetic photos can be seen as a reinvention of traditional genres. This is mainly due to the light-interpretation by means of long-time exposure and the use of various light sources, causing an interaction of associative thought patterns. Each and every moment seems loaded with content, rising above the purely aesthetic message.

—Nicole F. Loeser, Curator, Director of WHITECONCEPTS, Berlin, Germany

India is like a mirror on the world reflecting the deepest thoughts of people who go there (...) His *Reflections of India* (the book was published in 2012) is a beautiful collection of tranquil moments in the utter chaos of daily life, and these moments give us deep insights into the strength of India. It is only possible to feel peace and happiness outside if you have that inside of you. Photography is an art that is quite different in that it only captures what is present in front of your eye—reality as seen by an instrument. However, it is the mind behind the camera that gives us another dimension to reality. André's well trained eye, young and fresh, explores India with sensitivity and respect, and opens doors into the ancient and complex Indian landscape.

—Navneet Raman, Director of Kriti Gallery, Banaras, India

In his work André Wagner plays with the viewing habits and expectations of the viewer. Only in the stepwise analysis of the image content we can solve the puzzle and see the artistic quality of the subject. Playing with the perception of spatial conditions as well as of the conscious subject like in discussions of inner and outer spaces of the real or unreal or even mental spaces is a well-known topos of art history, especially of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (...) When asked which artists inspire him, André Wagner replied, "If art makes you feel, despite staging a reality, then the person behind the art is an interesting person." In order to satisfy his own demand, this is one of the special qualities of artistic creation by André Wagner.

—Thomas Bauer-Friedrich, Curator of Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz - MUSEUM GUNZENHAUSER, Germany

Close to nature, mythological and thoughtful; spiritually and technologically significant sites (...) attract the photographic journeys of André Wagner, and add a new level of meaning to his visually striking images. In fact, the landscape often remains in the background; the light and its presence are in the main role.

—Mindaugas Kavaliauskas, Director of PHOTO KAUNAS Festival, Lithuania

For André Wagner light is the spectacular visual manifestation of energy, therefore by drawing with it, he also "draws" our attention to its importance. Light (referring to energy) and time in this way becomes method and means of creation, which helps the viewer to realize and decode hidden emotions in the setting.

—Dr. Zoltán Somhegyi, Curator of Art Market Budapest, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Szeged, Hungary



## XING XIN

### **Pushing My Car and Galloping in the City: Approximately 30 Miles to the East**

This is the first car in my life, a three-door version SUV left the factory in 2005. The surface is pure yellow, and the inner space is consisted of black and red. I bought it on a second-hand car market in the middle of 2008. I can't tell whether it is Made-in-China or Made-in-Japan. It is not because when I bought it the former owner had already changed the original Chinese car logo on the front into another Japanese car logo, a trademark of another car that is identical in appearance but different in performance than this one. The Chinese manufacturer of this car has used a Japanese production line and pattern die to produce the car domestically and almost identical to a certain brand of Japanese car.

Some day in August 2012, suddenly the car couldn't start. It wasn't the first time for such similar problems. I had faced plenty of problems since I bought it—I couldn't even express it with words. But the summer was too hot for me to deal with yet another problem. Therefore, I left it abandoned on the street until October.

Some other day when I had to take a taxi again, an image suddenly appeared in my head: against the autumn wind, I solitarily pushed the car across the city, all the way to a place somewhere. Therefore, conceived the work <Pushing My Car and Galloping in the City: Approx. 30 Miles to the East>.

From the night on October 12<sup>th</sup> 2012 to the 16<sup>th</sup> before dawn, for 3 days and 4 nights, I manually pushed the car from the site of the incident (on the northwest corner of the city) to the special

maintenance center (on the southeast corner of the city), covering 26.7 miles on foot, and realized the conception of "pushing the car across the city". The experience of car-pushing was mixed with worries and happiness. It gifted me with a lot of feelings that I could never possibly regret it for the rest of my life. However, there was a huge drawback. After 23 miles of my fighting a lone battle, I indeed couldn't carry on to face the last slope alone. In order to reach my ideal destination, I compromised with my original pact of walking to the destination all on my own, and sent for help. Finally, dozens of friends came to help, who I knew and some not, so that the car and myself eventually reached the destination.



## PLAMEN YORDANOV

### Infinity / γίνιηηη: Double Möbius Strip

On one side of a strip of paper is written “the statement on the other side of this paper is true”. On the other side of the paper is written “the statement on the other side of this paper is false”. Now turn the piece of paper into a Möbius strip. What are you left with other than confusion? The paradox is true, in both cases. When you have a Möbius strip, the message written on it is always true. Yet, it is also always false.

The shape of the Möbius strip challenges the widely accepted concept of the sign as a structure that always has two sides. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure compares the sign with a list, or a coin with two sides. Yet, if the list took the form of the Möbius strip the notion of the structure would become problematic.

We encounter two-sided structures everywhere in life and politics. Such structures constitute language, discourse, and all sorts of semiotic systems that allow us to describe the world. That is why the author of Postmodern Condition, Jean-Francois Lyotard finds the paradox of the Möbius strip of great importance. He believes that Möbius strip bears relations to the primordial world, the world which we have lost when we entered the symbolic realm of language, based on structures. The Möbius strip exceeds the discourse of language and all other sorts of utterance.

For Lyotard, the Möbius strip represents the Libidinal band and the unconscious activity that takes place in society. The rational thought, on the other hand, is part of the three dimensional space, which Lyotard calls ‘theatrical volume’. The rational thought can operate

only through structures that, unlike the libidinal band, have two sides. Political and social systems exploit our basic primordial intensities by channeling them into stable structures.

Möbius Band silhouette by Plamen Jordanov has a classical oversized “monumental” notion—not only as mathematical, but also as ontological category. It brings us back to the threshold of the world of politics and languages, to the place where the irrational and rational meet up.

Its dimensions and vertical positioning remind one of the classical concept of sculpture, yet its paradoxical form denies contemplative functions. The band is on the surface but goes underneath, it looks irrational yet it is achieved through rational means. Thus the work brings to the surface some irresolvable contradictions of the world which we inhabit.

Yordanov’s Möbius strip disturbs our perpetual experience of art but also our ‘stable’ relationships with the world.

“The work implicates viewers to confront their own prejudices and assumptions about society and to consider all people first as fellow human beings” —Yordanov says.



## ZERO

### ZERO: 1957 – 1966

Zero— that is a well-known concept in the contemporary art of the post-war period. It involves the notion of light and movement, of moving light, of space, time, dynamics, vibrations and structure. The sparkling sixties provided the fertile soil for the glorious time of Zero. Leading men were the Düsseldorf-based artists Heinz Mack and Otto Piene who founded Zero in 1958, and Günther Uecker who was admitted to the 'inner circle' in 1961.

This 'triumvirate' initiated an enormous number of exhibitions all over the world and organized spectacular performances, often with the participation of like-minded artists. However, Heinz Mack with his *Rotoren* (rotors), Otto Piene with his *Lichtballette* (light ballets) and Günther Uecker with his *Nagelfelder* (nail fields) dominated the scene. (Heiner Stachelhaus)

One of the most important artists' movements of the second half of the 20th century, ZERO keeps winning more and more international interest. After the United States have discovered ZERO, this happened in France in 2013, too.

Now, the Centre Pompidou presents a permanent ZERO room. In the beginning of April, the Grand Palais in Paris opened a marvellous exhibition about Light and Movement, titled DYNAMO, named after an exhibition of Mack and Piene. Also, in the museum Passage de Retz in Paris, there was a remarkable exhibition presenting works from Yves Klein, Tinguely, Arman, Aubertin, Mack, Piene, Uecker und Megert, that were hardly ever shown before.

With a scholarly team, the ZERO Foundation works intensively on the reconstruction of the 1960s and describes the *Zeitgeist* of this era. In addition to the questioning of witnesses of this time, momentarily the viewing of the available materials and their classification, counts to the most important steps within this research.

The works that Kurt Prantl selected for this 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale exhibition at Palazzo Bembo, are dedicated to the two protagonists of the ZERO movement, Heinz Mack and Otto Piene. The Austrian ZERO artist Hans Bischoffshausen is also appropriately represented.

In Fall 2014, the Guggenheim Museum in New York will open a large ZERO exhibition. Otto Piene's "Lichtgeist", which can be seen here in Palazzo Bembo, will be shown in this exhibition. This was confirmed by Tijs Visser, director of the ZERO Foundation.

The Guggenheim Museum exhibition will travel to the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, Germany, and to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Also in Fall 2014, an exhibition of Heinz Mack will open in the Museum Liner in Appenzell, Switzerland. In different ways, this exhibition will be presented in the Museum Moderner Kunst in Klagenfurt, Austria, and in the Leopold-Hoesch-Museum in Düren, Germany.



**HEINZ MACK, born 1931 in Lollar, Hesse, Germany**

His name is inseparably connected with the avant-garde artists' movement ZERO. This movement confronts the observer with completely new and provoking aspects: light, movement, space, time, dynamics, vibration and serial structure instead of the conventional composition. But within the wide range of the artist's work, sculpture has the same importance as the light-filled colours of his painting in which black and white, being the expression of light, are also of great significance.

Furthermore, his drawings, fire installations, photography and works for the public space are highly esteemed. (Kurt Prantl)

**OTTO PIENE, born 1928 in Laasphe, Westphalia, Germany**

Otto Piene is known for his kinetic light works, especially the *Lichtballett* (light ballet) in which the artist tries to combine nature and technology. How logically consistent he deals with the concepts of light, movement and space, can be seen in his completely different *Raster- und Feuerbilder* (grid pictures and fire paintings) with which Piene is experimenting since the sixties, and furthermore in his *Luft- und Lichtplastiken* (air and light sculptures) and in the SKY Events he is creating.

Otto Piene speaks convincingly about his comprehensive love of light: 'Light is the origin of everything that can be seen..., from light emerges the power and magic of a picture, its fullness, its eloquence, its sensuality and its beauty.'

The experiments undertaken by him during his creative processes and his artistic approach have enabled him to gradually develop a clear vision. And his excellent technical skills have helped him to realize his artistic vision. (Ante Globota)

**HANS BISCHOFFSHAUSEN, born 1927 in Feld am See / died 1987 in Villach, Austria**

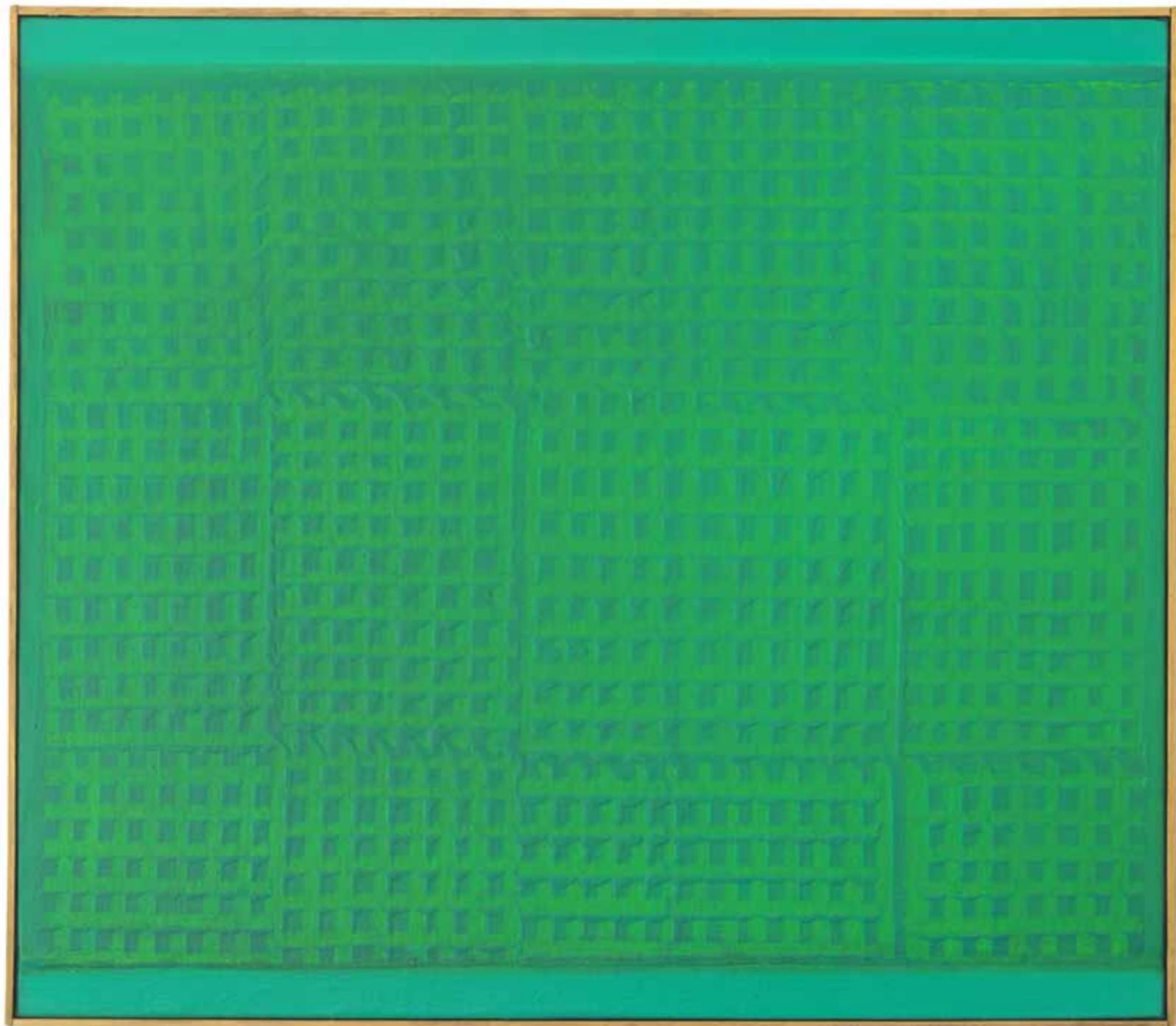
Hans Bischoffshausen is one of the most important and most troublesome representatives of the experimental European avant-garde artists of the fifties and sixties. A nonconformist artist and critic of contemporary culture, he defies the public taste even with his early work which reveals influences of an analytical Cubism. In Carinthia, Hans Bischoffshausen becomes more and more isolated, his life is getting increasingly arduous. He moves to Paris and starts a new, fruitful phase.

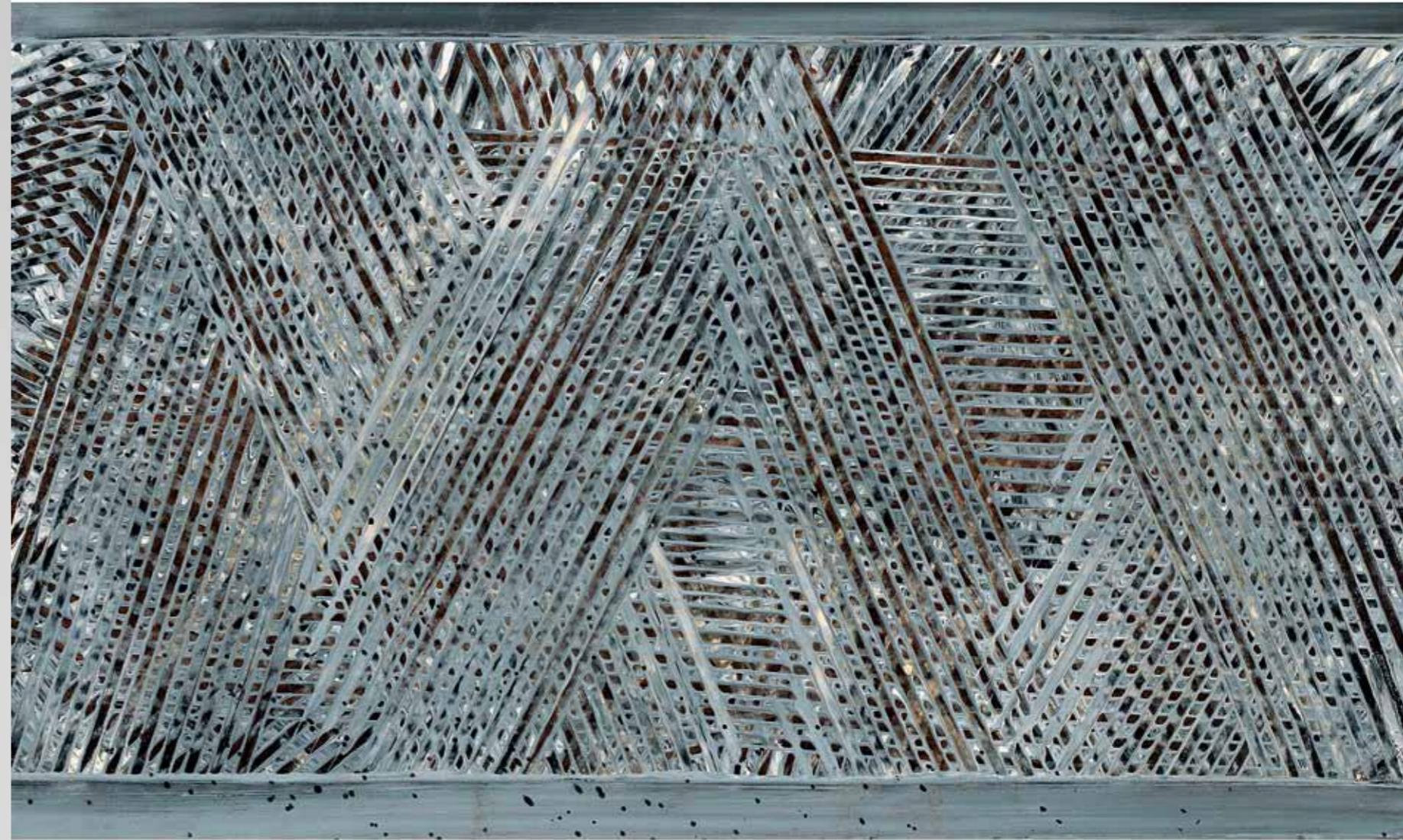
From then on his work is determined by structure, monochromy and reduction. His *Energiefelder* (energy fields), structured white-in-white, are nearing the bounds of visibility. Bischoffshausen becomes a member of the Zero avant-garde.

After his return to Carinthia relief paintings in gold and red are created and, beginning in 1975, he occupies himself with cruciform works. Collages are next, the surface being perforated or charred, the content reduced to essentials. In the beginning of the eighties he returns to the colour white.

Apart from Arnulf Rainer is Hans Bischoffshausen the only Austrian artist who was affiliated with the Zero movement. (Judith Walker)







## ZHANG YU

### **The Individual Experience of Fingerprints and Other Matters**

*Fingerprints are a form of expression, a method of presenting thought*

The expression of Fingerprints does not reside in the fingerprints as such, but in the research and exploration of a method. It is well known that there are, from the angle of world art history, two lines of thought on methodology. One is the research on the creative method of ink and wash of traditional painting within Chinese culture. The other is the road of methodological exploration of Western art from the classical age until modernity, including Realism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Abstraction, Abstract Expressionism and so on.

Methodological research and its explorations relate directly to the effectiveness and meaning of the expression of a work. The meaning expressed by a work thus depends entirely on the objectivity of its creative method. However, the original creation of a method requires a profound cognitive understanding of the world. It is a joint manifestation of thinking and wisdom. The expressive method of Fingerprints is first and foremost a cogitation on, and understanding of Eastern culture, but today this understanding stands on the level of a basic cognitive understanding and accumulation of Eastern and Western culture, and what is obtained at this cognitive level is bestowed by the present era. It is only on this basis that it is possible effectively to explain one's cogitation on and transformation of the latent relationship between everyday experience and the Chan (Zen) Buddhism of the East.

So far, I am more concerned with the expressive semantic reference of the works' expression in itself. On a certain level, the Fingerprint

series is both my expression and my method of expression, but what I have along been particularly concerned with is how to open up the contemporary thinking expressed by Fingerprints. I do not want to talk about Fingerprints just as fingerprints, because the significance of Fingerprints exists behind the fingerprinting performance. Therefore, in recent years, I have on the one hand continued in a sustained way constantly to produce two-dimensional fingerprint works on paper on the basis of the performance of fingerprinting, but on the other hand I have, through the method of fingerprinting performance, explored spatial works that have the character of installations, to present a spatial expression that transcends the fingerprinting performance as such. By this means I have taken a step further to address the question of existence and time, which is of shared concern for the world today, as the experiences, or perhaps rather the personally lived experiences, with which the individual's life as such comes into contact.

Looking at their form of expression, my installation-type Fingerprint works have always highlighted some sense of ritual, and through the thinking about, cognitive understanding of, and conceptions about, ritual significance, they have been transformed into the expressions of thought. Most of my Fingerprints works that have this character or nature of installations, are therefore two- and three-dimensional heterogeneous combinations of performance videos, xuan paper, silk, plastic film and glass. Accordingly, what these works emphasize is neither purely the fingerprinting performance nor the fingerprint traces as such, but, on the other hand, they cannot do without the significance of the fingerprinting performance and of the fingerprint



traces in themselves. They emphasize a cognitive understanding of thinking expressed in the work as a whole.

The rituality of the Fingerprints works is made up of two aspects, both of which have to do with performance, time and space. The first aspect is that the fingerprinting performance of the constantly repeated pressing of the fingerprints themselves works through the direct contact between body and medium, a personally experienced rituality of space and existence—that is, the spiritual demand personally experienced by life itself. The other aspect is the singular structure of the traces of the fingerprinting performance that I mentioned earlier: the rituality of forms and relationships of the integrated structure made by the presentation in space and its surrounding relationships. Neither of the two ritualities formed by these aspects was deliberately designed. They are natural, and totally integrated as a result of the method of expression.

It must be explained that the rituality in my Fingerprints works is not there for the purpose of expression. Of course, nor is the rituality of the expression mere form. Rather, it is a cognitive understanding concerned with thinking. Through the feel of rituality in Fingerprints, I hope to present the core reference of their expression: the process of the performance of fingerprinting and its spiritual presentation.

Until now, in fact, the development of Chinese contemporary art has not yet constructed its own new theoretical hermeneutics. Both from an international perspective and from its own ontological logic, it faces an ultimate choice, or, perhaps, its last opportunity. It is a difficult matter even for the development of Western art history to break out of its own logic and to make new structures, despite the fact that they too are searching for possibilities within all their various cultures. However, the history of Chinese traditional painting, after it peaked between literati (scholar) painting and on to the bi-mo expression of the various masters of recent times, has already come to a dead end. Yet, in the theoretical construction of the art practice and art theory of contemporary art, the unique opportunity is about how to address Chinese contemporary art in the international

perspective of today. This will definitely not be through the Political Pop, Cynical Realism, Gaudy Art, Chinese Essences and Chinese Symbols of the past. The possibility of this new hermeneutics exists in the interstices between Chinese culture and Western culture. It involves a sorting out that rests on a high degree of cognitive understanding of the cultures of China and the West. This round of sorting out will result in the integration of Chinese art history, make it more logical, and also allow China to establish a Chinese contemporary art—and a Chinese hermeneutic system of art theory—that is endowed with both global perspective and cultural context.

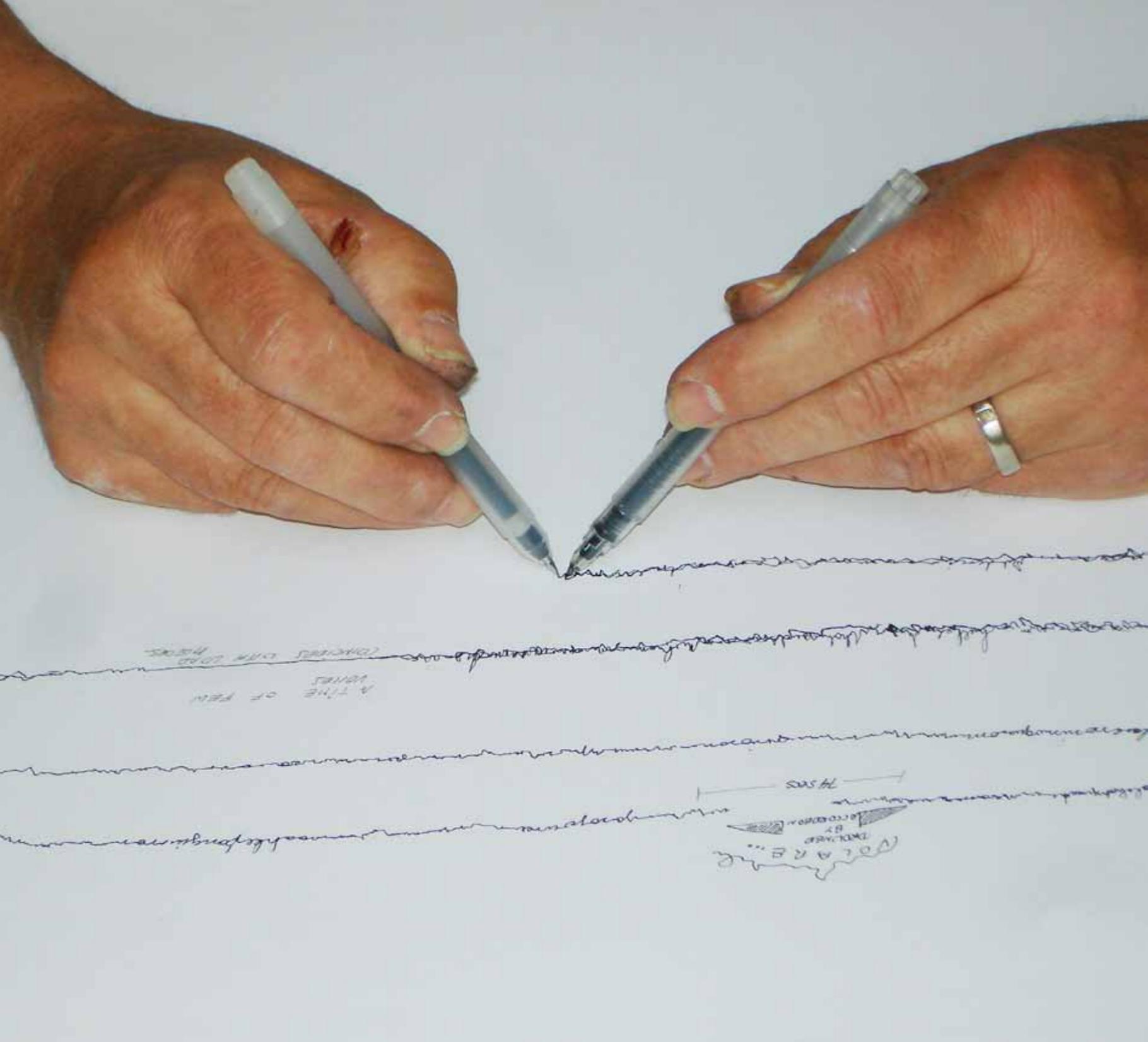
The Fingerprint works are still in development, but what they are constantly opening up goes beyond fingerprinting, and is a thinking about, and cognitive understanding of, this world. The aim, through even more effective new cognitive understanding, is to express my own understanding of and reflection on this world. Again, the expression in Fingerprints that I emphasize does not in the least reside in the fingerprints in themselves, but in the significance of what their expression refers to, and even more in the research and original creation of method. In the same way, as for those traditional Chinese works of ink and wash that have long been acknowledged by history, my view, looking at it today, is that the expression of ink and wash does—likewise—not reside in the physical properties as such of ink and wash, nor in the cultural properties as such of ink and wash, but in the spirituality that emerges from the relationship between the expressive presentation and ink-and-wash. This spirituality originates in that most inspirational place, namely cognitive understanding.

Fingerprints are a kind of expression, and also a method of presenting thought.

*Translated by Wen Zai/AEMcKenzie 2013-03-31*







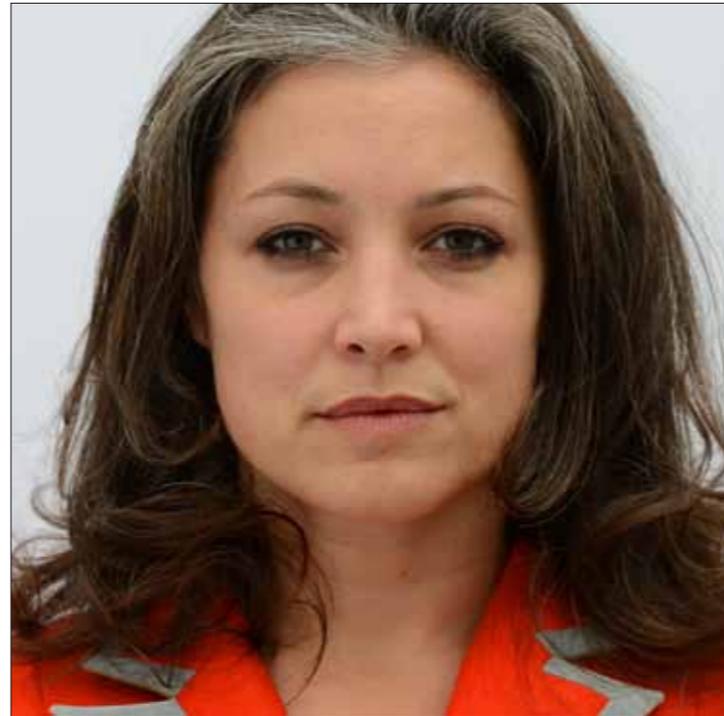
# CURATORS



### **Francesca Crudo**

Francesca Crudo (1988, Italy), independent curator. Received a B.A. in Visual Arts at IUAV University of Venice, Italy. University Education in Visual Arts and Curatorial Studies at NABA, Milan, Italy. Worked at AIR-Artist in Residence: International Program, Milan, Italy. Since 2012, organizing exhibitions with the Global Art Affairs Foundation.

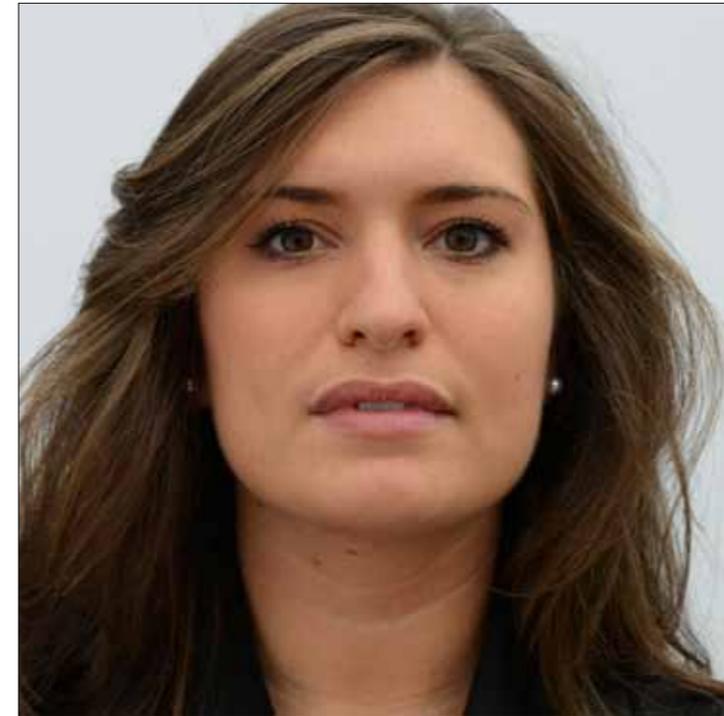
[Photo: Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy, 18 April 2013, 15:55]



### **Sarah Gold**

Sarah Gold (1978, Netherlands), M.A. Art History, independent curator and author. Since 2005 with the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, organizing symposia and exhibitions in a.o. Amsterdam, New York and Tokyo as well as at the 53<sup>rd</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. With the Global Art Affairs Foundation, publishing books and documenting Art Projects.

[Photo: Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy, 8 October 2013, 17:19]



### **Carol Rolla**

Carol Rolla (1986, Italy), independent curator and author. M.A. Visual Arts at IUAV University of Venice, Italy. Study of Aesthetics at Université de Vincennes, Paris, France. Worked at Lia Rumma gallery, Milan, Italy and as a researcher at the American Academy in Rome, New York City. Since 2012, organizing exhibitions with the Global Art Affairs Foundation.

[Photo: Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy, 8 October 2013, 17:19]



### **Valeria Romagnini**

Valeria Romagnini (1987, Italy), independent curator and author. B.A. Cultural Heritage at University of Bari, Italy. M.A. Visual Arts at IUAV University of Venice, Italy. Co-curator of the Norwegian Pavilion 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. Organizer of *Traces of Centuries & Future Steps*, 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale. Since 2011, organizing exhibitions with the Global Art Affairs Foundation.

[Photo: Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy, 8 October 2013, 17:14]



# CULTURE · MIND · BECOMING

Curated by  
Karlyn De Jongh  
Danilo Eccher  
Huang Du  
Yang Shin-Yi

## CULTURE·MIND·BECOMING

### Culture·Mind·Becoming

Culture·Mind·Becoming aims to juxtapose the cultural impact, appropriation, reflection, and reinvention existing in the Chinese culture through the lens of globalization. Fueled by the Industrial Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and with increasing popularity of New Imperialism and Capitalism, Eastern artists, who were unaware of their periphery position in the world, became extensively influenced by Western aesthetic thought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They went on an extensive, voluntary or involuntarily journey of Western studies. Vacillating between Western perspective and traditional thinking, artistic imitation and cultural challenge, they searched to reestablish an evaluation system to identity and reposition themselves in the global context. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, postmodernism from the West began to penetrate the East; while in the beginning of the century the development of Asian art was almost a movement about breaking free from artists' cultural root: inherited aesthetics beliefs were challenged and historical context of art was abandoned in order to embrace new ideologies. Furthermore, global political and economic environment underwent dramatic changes after World War II, resulted in a new power and order structure, which even provoked Asian artists, whose nation faced intricate political and national crisis, to reflect or criticize social circumstances—forming a cultural vessel where artistic experimentation thrived.

As various campaigns, art groups and movement emerged, people began experimenting with and applying audiovisual installations and new media, resulting in a boom in diverse artistic presentations. After year 2000, the internet and innovative technology have facilitated and altered people's lifestyle, but they also have weakened interpersonal

ties. Being “socially alienated” becomes a modernized society's unique character. Therefore, artists tended to base their creations on personal experience and sensation, they neither intend to lead the trend, nor their works display macroscopic historical visions. Individuals have since become the interpreters of their very own perception and claim the right and venue to “represent themselves.”

In a time when artists generally reflect upon individual empiricism as the main body of their artistic practice, and after acquiring and applying their knowledge of Western art, Eastern artists began to learn to appreciate the aesthetics language unique to their native culture. They advocated a return to the “womb of cultural heritage” with fresh perspectives, while making cultural symbols as their main inspiration. Through constant experimentation and evolvement, they bring forward a common ground of unique, creative context. In this “transcultural site” we perceive an inclusiveness where the boundary between language and culture is challenged, and profound cultural memories revisited. Such context has led viewers to probe into the issues of contemporary Chinese cultural scene.

The Chinese artists featured in the exhibition come from multifarious backgrounds, who have been more or less influenced by the Western culture at different points in their lives. Furthermore, living in a complicated society has inspired the artists to redefine and reinvent the common component of their earlier years—the Eastern cultural experience, which manifests itself through multifaceted, rich artistic presentations. The exhibited works are the “self-identification” of artists that derives from their being confident in their own culture, roots, and lifestyle.

The exhibition consists of three different but relevant curatorial concepts: *Re-discover* by independent curator Karlyn De Jongh from the Netherlands, *Ingrandimento* curated by Chinese notable independent curator Huang Du and Yang Shinyi, and *Fang Lijun: A Cautionary Vision*—an exhibition held at Palazzo Marcello and organized by Italian curator Danilo Eccher, current director of Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (GAM) at Turin city in Italy.

### 《文化·精神·生成》

《文化·精神·生成》將多位優秀的華人藝術家作品並置，試圖呈現在全球化語境之下，華人文化所面臨的衝擊、借用、反思與再生成。

在19世紀末工業化革命的推波助瀾下，隨著新帝國主義及資本主義等意識形態的風行與擴張，20世紀初原本毫無自覺處於世界邊緣角色的亞洲藝術家開始受到西方藝術思維的強烈衝擊，並且展開了漫長的、自願或非自願的學習西方進程；在西方觀點與傳統思想、藝術模仿與文化抗爭之間擺盪，他們摸索著重新建構起一套面對世界、評價自我的價值判斷體系。20世紀中期，西方後現代主義思想東漸，且前述的世紀初亞洲藝術發展幾乎是挑戰藝術家原生文化的斷裂運動，固有美學信仰受到嚴重挑戰、藝術歷史脈絡失去延續，因而更容易擁抱新思潮，加上第二次世界大戰之後全球政治、經濟環境劇烈變化、強權秩序重新洗牌，亞洲諸國所面臨的複雜政治情勢及國族處境，更使得此一新興地區成為藝術家挺身反映或批判社會現況、藝術實驗蓬勃發展的培養皿：各式藝術運動迭起、藝術團體與流派亦順應潮流而生，裝置、影

響、新材料被廣泛採用，各種藝術型式百家爭鳴；進入2000年後，網路新科技的發達主導了人們生活型態的變化、也使得人際關係淡薄、社會性互動疏離成為現代社會的特徵，相應地，藝術家們的創作以個人的感受居多，無意引領潮流，作品內也無展現史觀的宏大敘事，個體變成自我理由的詮釋者，都擁有權利爭取認同機會，相對有一個自我的立場。

在這個藝術家普遍以個人的經驗主義為實踐主體的時代中，華人藝術經過對西方藝術的學習和借用後，意識到由故土所蘊釀出來的美學呈現與文化思考最動人，主動由異化的文化位置回歸「本土」、由自身文化的主體中擷取養分，經過不斷的實驗和衍生，他們呈現出一種共享的獨特語境。而這樣的藝術語彙在此「跨文化場域」(the transcultural site)中展現包容性，挑戰語言及文化的分際，探索文化接觸地帶所銘刻的文化記憶，引領讀者反覆思考並深刻地理解當代中華文化圈及其文化內涵。

參展的華人藝術家具有多元背景，並在生命的不同階段曾接受過西方文化不同程度的衝擊，其身處社會的複雜狀態將他們早期經驗中的共通部分—東方文化—強迫重組並再生，在此展中以多元和豐富的方式重新呈現。

在《文化·精神·生成》的大架構下，分別由數位著名策展人策劃了三個概念上具有差異卻又相互關聯的子展覽：荷蘭著名獨立策展人卡琳·德容策劃的「重探」、中國著名獨立策展人黃篤、楊心一策劃的「放大」，以及義大利都靈市立現當代美術館 (GAM: Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin) 館長達尼洛·埃克爾 (Danilo Eccher) 策劃的方力鈞大型個展 —「處境」。



## **CULTURE·MIND·BECOMING RE-DISCOVER**

Curated by Karlyn De Jongh  
Palazzo Mora

## CULTURE·MIND·BECOMING RE-DISCOVER

In discussing the contemporary Eastern arts today, when we limit our consideration to a gaze at the external expressions we fail to see the overall picture; Eastern visual semiotics and imagery, easily to be recognized and reproduced, are purposefully selected in the international arts platforms, to evoke “Eastern Romanticism” expected by the mainstream art scene through these traditional cultural symbols. As contemporary Chinese artists are confronted with challenges from internationalization, they must imbibe, digest and regenerate as they experience the process of learning and borrowing from the Western arts through “complete westernization” or “Chinese knowledge as the body and western learning for practical uses”; yet with the thriving of various schools methods and artistic movements, such unidirectional think had proceeded to a silent hibernation. In recent years, many Asian artists have become conscious of the imperative of rediscovery of their own cultural roots as the deep nutritive sources for their expressions to be authentic, allowing their work to take on a more powerful presence. A personal art creating process is thus the most optimistic venue for an eternal dialogue between globalization and localization, mainstream and eccentric, innovation and tradition, and Western and Eastern. This consciousness relies on continuous experimentation and free expression, and to eventually elicit its own unique vocabulary in an expressive language—this is what we hope to have captured and rediscovered in the curatorial process of this exhibition.

Influenced by a non-linear model of art history development in Eastern culture, as well as the complexity of political and economic environment, the emerging creative collocations of the Spirit of the East do not arise from any single school or group of artists, but rather from independent expressions naturally arising from works, and through the curatorial process evincing their Eastern origins or spirit in the quest for their unique

lifestyle expressions. Among the Chinese artists participating there is a tremendous variety of backgrounds, as well as exposure to challenges from Western arts at varying stages of their professional development. They find themselves in a society fraught with contradictions which confront their earlier periods of exposure to their common foundations in Asian culture, compelling a reconfrontation and renaissance, a *Re-discover* designed to reflect a deep or superficial “form” in their works, to re-explore, analyze, deconstruct and restructure, so that these creators visions, seek to express their own place in a world of globalization. Thus this exhibition, above all, puts this issue onto an international platform, eliciting viewers to consider how to, during the “labor pain” of transformation, appropriate art form and to find a pertinent methodology between Chinese macro cultural structure and micro local personal narration.

This section invites 19 representative contemporary artists from the Chinese cultural scene to exhibit their artwork, including Cai Guoqiang’s work of gunpowder on paper, Zhang Huan’s ash on linen representation, Xu Bing’s white *Phoenix* inspired by Chinese legend, and artists Shang Yang, Chuang Che, Yang Chihung, Ye Yongqing, Zhang Fangbai, Zheng Chongbin, Shen Kelong, Li Chen, Zhang Guolong, Huang Gang, and Qu Qianmei, whose works are imbued with the “Spirit of the East.” For instance, Zhou Chunya’s *Peach Blossoms Series*, Ying Tianqi’s empathy for the fate of historical ruins in China in times of rapid urbanization, and Huang Zhiyang’s work using ink and mineral color on silk, they all demonstrate perfectly what it means to embody “contemporary Eastern characters”. These artists belong to a generation that has personally experienced the beginning and early transformation of a new era in the 30s to the 60s, they not only witnessed the development of Chinese art history, but have contributed to an important chapter in the history.

### 文化·精神·生成

#### 第一區：重探

談起東方文化在當代藝術上的表現，對於僅從外部窺探見樹不見林的觀察者來說，由於東方符號及意象極易被模仿複製且具有視覺上的高度識別度，大量使用此類表現手法、呈現出主流藝壇所期待的「東方情調」的作品在國際藝術平台被刻意呈現，這些傳統文化符號往往成為東方的代名詞。受到當代國際化衝擊的華人藝術家，在吸收、消化、再生成的過程中，曾經歷「全盤西化」、「中學為體，西學為用」等單向對西方藝術學習和借用的時期，但隨著各式流派發展、藝術運動的喧囂此種單向思考已歸於沉寂，近年來，許多東方藝術家逐漸意識到，唯有回歸到自身文化的主體中擷取養分，才能蘊藉累積出更多能量，而自我的藝術創作正是讓全球化與本土化、主流與邊緣、創新與傳統、西方與東方進行一場恆常對話的最佳場域；這樣的意識經過不斷的實驗和自由衍生，衍生出一種獨特語境，而這樣的語境是我們希望能在此展中重新探索並呈現的部分。

受到東方文化藝術史非線性的發展模式、錯雜多樣的政經環境的影響，新型態的東方精神創作語彙，並非源自於單一流派或是特定群體，往往是由獨立創作的個體自然形成，透過作品所展示的是當代東方人的精神追求以及生活狀態的體現。參展的華人藝術家具有多元背景，並在生命的不同階段曾接受過西方文化不同程度的衝擊，其身處社會的複雜狀態將他們早期經驗中的共通部分—東方文化—強迫重組並再生，「重探」詞即是

對此或深或淺表現在創作中的「形式」，進行重新的探索、分析、解構再重構，創作者透過反覆的書寫，在全球化大敘事中嘗試尋找自己的位置。因此本展將這個議題提升到國際平台，希望觀者思索在轉型的陣痛中，窺見創作者如何從東方文化大架構與地方個人的小敘事中，追尋一個恰如其分的傳統。

本展邀請19位中華文化圈當代藝術各個領域的代表性人物參與，包括蔡國強的火藥紙本作品，張洄的香灰畫，徐冰發想自中國傳說的白色鳳凰一對，尚揚、莊喆、楊識宏、葉永青、張方白、鄭重賓、沈克龍、李真、張國龍、黃鋼、瞿倩梅的作品展現新時代中的東方精神。而周春芽艷麗的桃花，應天齊在現代化過程中中國歷史遺跡存廢去留議題的關注之作、黃致陽的水墨礦物彩宣紙作品，均完美闡述了何謂當代東方特色；華慶作品展現線條的力道，韓濤的裝置藝術則暗喻文化支點倒塌。這些藝術家大部分出生於上個世紀三十至六十年代，在變幻的歷史中見證了新中國的成立、變革，同時也親身經歷與見證了中國藝術史的發展，更可以說他們都在其中添了自己濃墨重彩的一筆、為這一頁歷史留下了最值得駐足玩味的註記。

## CAI GUOQIANG

As an adolescent and teenager, Cai Guoqiang witnessed the social effects of the Cultural Revolution first-hand, personally participating in demonstrations and parades himself. He grew up in a setting where explosions were common, whether they were the result of cannon blasts or celebratory fireworks. He also “saw gunpowder used in both good ways and bad, in destruction and reconstruction”. It seems that Cai has channeled his experiences and memories through his numerous gunpowder drawings and explosion events.

Cai’s drawings consist of a wide variety of symbols, narratives, traditional materials such as fengshui (the balance of energy flow), Chinese medicine, shanshui paintings (paintings that depict scenery or natural landscapes), science, flora and fauna, portraiture, and fireworks. Much of his work draws on Maoist/Socialist concepts for content, especially his gunpowder drawings which strongly reflect Mao Zedong’s tenet “destroy nothing, create nothing.” Cai has said: “In some sense, Mao Zedong influenced all artists from our generation with his utopian romance and sentiment.”

Cai’s work, inspired by an interest in traditional Chinese culture and the everyday aspects that defined it, is scholarly and at times politically charged. As a student, Cai made works consisting of stick-figure or abstract patterns in oil and burnt gunpowder, giving him a place in the experimental ferment preceding the ‘85 New Wave. However, Cai moved to Japan in 1986 as the movement was building. Cai initially began working with gunpowder to foster spontaneity and confront the suppressive, controlled artistic tradition and social climate in China. While living in Japan from

1986 to 1995, Cai explored the properties of gunpowder in his drawings, an inquiry that eventually led to his experimentation with explosives on a massive scale and the development of his signature “explosion events”.

Cai Guoqiang (1957, Quanzhou, China) was trained in stage design at the Shanghai Theater Academy from 1981 to 1985. His father, Cai Ruiqin, was a calligrapher and traditional painter who worked in a bookstore. As a result, Cai Guo-Qiang was exposed early on to Western literature as well as traditional Chinese art forms. His work has crossed multiple mediums within art, including drawing, installation, video and performance art. He currently lives and works in New York.



## CHUANG CHE

Chuang Che (1934, Beijing, China) was introduced to art by his father and inherited his daily calligraphy practice. Chuang has his own point of view that calligraphy plays around the transformation of characters, even though variations do exist in different forms but after more than a thousand years of evolution, there is about a standard for practically each of the forms available while it is almost impossible to escape from the standards set by the masters. With that mind, he tried to apply the originality, fundamentals of calligraphy in his attempt to recreate images of landscapes and objects with the use of cursive style of calligraphy.

One major characteristic of Chuang Che's paintings is contributed to the influence of splashing technique found in many of the works in the collection of National Palace Museum, in a sense, he has subtly applied the essence of this unique attribute to western contemporary painting. It was his intention to incorporate brushwork of Chinese painting in the creation process of western painting as an effort to introduce a unique style by merging east and west. From an artistic perspective, the eastern elements pertain to a range of contradictory natures of painting such as concrete and abstract, loose and condense, yin and yang, intense and mild, withered and prosperous. As a painter, Chuang Che pays close attention to brushwork momentum which is considered a critical technique for Chinese painting.

Chuang has greatest strengths in his highly personal use of color. He continuously derives inspiration from the natural world, but his color combinations is not only the stereotypical notion of lush natural colors, leaf-greens, sunny yellows, etc. but also richness from a wide

range of complicated tertiary colors, both dark and light, virtually unnamable in their complexity.

Being essentially an abstract painter, Chuang Che has no hesitation whatsoever in turning his attention toward representational motifs. As he once wrote, a stylistic definition of his work is unnecessary because "it is not important whether one is an abstractionist or not." Instead, "what is important is to look through the form and find the true meaning behind it." As an artist who builds upon tradition within the modern era, Chuang Che has allowed much of his painting to reflect the centrality of nature as the true meaning and source of all art.

Chuang's works have been exhibited widely and housed by museums and private collectors. For those Chinese artists of modern arts who have achieved success in foreign land, they have all displayed unique personal styles plus they have all inadvertently incorporated eastern elements of different degree in their works. In Chuang Che's case, his works are related to the New Chinese landscape painting or more commonly known as the New Chinese painting which extends to more than just landscape to include people and many other subjects such as birds, flowers. There is no restriction set on this path, because the more tolerant it gets, the more it could contain.

Chuang stated that he refrained himself from drawing up limits in light of the overwhelming fusion of east and west. Whether or not this new path is indeed existed which could not be proved at this stage, but the golden rule is that differences will fall into place over time, as to when this could occur, it might be sometime beyond his life time.



## HAN TAO

Han Tao (1979, Laiwu, China) is concerned with social affairs and daily news, and is good at capturing the loving or peculiar moments in life. He also continues to explore and experiment with new ideas. In an era where everyone is trying to escape from the reality, Han Tao is more like a “city hermit”, and this is probably closest to his philosophy.

Han Tao's creation of the *Towers* series is directly connected to his life experiences for his father was the director of a high voltage towers factory, and from his youth Han Tao has enjoyed an inexplicable affinity with “towers”. Later when he moved to Beijing to begin his career, he resided in the Songzhuang artistic district, where his home lays amidst an array of high-voltage towers. It has been said that, it is precisely because of this array of high-voltage towers in the vicinity that this area has been spared from urban renewal with its attendant destruction and redevelopment, as there are no real estate developers willing to develop properties in the pathway or appurtenant to high-voltage magnetic fields. Therefore, life beneath the high-voltage towers has offered Han Tao and the other resident artists a paradoxical “protective umbrella”—a misfortune carrying with it its own blessings of a kind.

Han Tao has created since 1999 as critical expressions of contemporary lifestyle fables, considering politics, technology and the economy as bringing “convenient protective umbrellas” which co-exist with the existential threats, evincing the existential state of the individual citizen in all its frustration and embarrassment, while also expressing the sentiments of Lao Tzu's expression “Misery, alas!—happiness is to be found by its side! Happiness!—misery lurks beneath it! Who knows what either will come to in the end?” that

good deeds and their opposite are subject to transformation so that their end result might be the opposite of the expected, with the right set of conditions good deeds leading to misfortune, or misfortune leading to blessings. Han Tao thus borrowed from the high voltage towers that accompany his real existence, to explore a transformative paradoxical expression of Chinese Buddhist pagodas.

As for *Towers* series, which reflect the experiences of Han Tao from 1999 to 2009 using woodblock printmaking, to express his sense of the real world of “politics, life and death” as reflected in the works representation of “political figures, pine, and fallen people” as a holistic metaphor, displaying the weakness of life amidst the macro-environment in compelling detail, and this creative approach has continued to the present. Moreover, in his works Han Tao has reached a new pinnacle in experimental expressive language: with deep color palettes and brush strokes, intertwined, outstretched, points, grid lines, curves, and staggered eraser lines, all of which express the artist's creative sentiments and attitude. Han Tao thus shares a deep inchoate connection with his period works and the creative semiotic of *Towers*, for example: the desire for effective civil rights, cultural supports against collapses, individual bio-experience and weakness. As a result of this period in his creativity, his recreation of *Towers* surely carries with it a sense of understanding and appreciating the unity of life. Han Tao is a powerful artist, able to use his poetic sense, film, drawing, sculpture, installation and performance art as expressive media to voice his transformative desires.



## HUA QING

Hua Qing (1962, Huaibei, China) resided in many different places with diverse culture, such as Vienna, Yugoslavia, Slovakia, Taiwan, and China. In the 1990s, his life and art experiences in Europe and Asia deepened his understanding of Western and Eastern cultures, and he became more tolerant and adaptable to cultural differences. He created unique art language and symbols with his philosophical perception of human thinking and the ever-changing human society.

Hua Qing's artwork highlights two important sides—man's physical look and subliminal thinking. The animal theme, which is closely connected with the evolution of human beings, is an allegorical symbol of his works. Animal images have a lot in common with human beings' facial characteristics while revealing an underlying masculine wild power. The rational thinking of human beings, as the background suggests, is expressed through mathematical symbols and philosophical sentences, which have been used until now by all courses and fields.

The natural state and rational thinking of animals interweave with each other and form a world different from modern society. What Hua Qing is trying to break through is the expression of human numerology. This is a "non-human" world. Although the human being is the material carrier of "rationality", they have their animal features. To some extent, man is like animal and its primitive attributes cannot be forgotten. This is just the basic instinct of human beings that artists intend to evoke, which is not easy to discipline under civilized constructions. It was born because of "nature" and cannot be controlled by social mechanism, which foreshows the irreversible and unchangeable foreordination of human beings. Hua Qing's works, with sensibility and rationality as well

as both animals attributes and social attributes, forms a forceful conflict and releases the artist's acute feelings and strong emotions in a particular way. His rhetorical questions towards human beings' capabilities of continual improving the advanced society and civilized world indicate his attitude of confronting the laws of nature in man's destiny.

Hua Qing is inspired by the French philosopher Rene Descartes and he wrote down "cogito ergo sum" on a lot of paintings from the series of *The Thinker*. "cogito ergo sum" is, through thinking one can realize his own existence, as well as understanding the world. This is one of the characteristics that human beings distinguish themselves from other animals. One of the artist's ideas for his meditating anthropoid monkeys: they are the future human beings, they have our ways of thinking, and they have powers and vitality that surpass us. In the painting, they look as if they are recollecting their ancestor—which is us—our wisdom, thoughts, technology, and civilization. Because of our effort, they are able to achieve their evolution.

On the basis of his original "anthropoid monkeys", he begins to add the other elements: Rubik's Cube, the statue and other animals. His recent *12 Zodiac Animals* serial sketch works re-interprets the traditional animal signs of the zodiac in a form of wildness, which uses the primitive expressions while the extension forces are maintained. His recent work also includes the most specific and expressive animal theme oil paintings as well as few of his engraving works. He constructed a forgotten and natural human "realistic" world with his great passion and sagacious language, which shows his ultimate concerns of the human destiny.



## HUANG GANG

Significant changes took place as China transitioned from communism and the Cultural Revolution to commercialism and westernization and this is reflected in many of China's contemporary artists. Similarly, this had influenced Huang Gang (1961, Beijing, China) and his artistic expression.

The central thought of Huang Gang's art deals with the use of symbols to express culture, social norms, and history. Although an image can be read in various ways, it fundamentally captures a specific impression of a single moment in time. In Huang Gang's work, his symbols have common cognitive meanings, dictated by the environment during the period of China's Cultural Revolution. The use of "stars" in his work is one such example. Widely associated with many interpretations, however placed in the Chinese context, it draws to a distinct period in history. For someone who is aware and within the sphere of the shared history, it immediately calls to mind the Cultural Revolution. Similarly, his use of the color red or of female soldiers is also an attempt at alluding to this period of history. Furthermore, the usage of symbols allows for there to be exploration of the artist's intention. His choice of using symbols that are synonymous with the Revolution allows for an ambiguity of his ideological standings or political sentiments of that period in Chinese history, leaving the symbols open to interpretation.

In the 1980s, Huang Gang developed an interest in traditional Tibetan culture, which inspired him to incorporate Tibetan methods and motifs in his work. He started his own Tibet classical drawing collection, studies society, religion, philosophy background which

this kind of art produced. He created the Tibet writing series work afterwards, but he is a different artist, he used an unprecedented artistic way to carry on the creation.

He used traditional Tibetan woodcut Buddhist scripture, hand-written Buddhist scriptures and the ancient Tibetan suitcase made by yak fur as devices which combined with mineral pigments, acrylic paints, traditional Chinese lacquer, gold leaf and rice paper to create his installation art. These devices have rich spiritual and cultural connotations; for example, the woodcut Buddhist scriptures are engraved by Tibetan monastery monks with devout heart, mouth chanting text, day after day. This spiritual energy, through the re-creation of Huang Gang, conveys new meanings and still amazes people today.

Upon viewing these works, one sees a novel and profound presentation of both Tibetan ancient culture and modern civilization. However, the strength, passion, and life's absurdity are conveyed through an artistic way and not religious. The artist juxtaposes the differences, contradictions, and conflicts between ancient ideology and modern civilization; and carries out dialogue and interpretation between these subjects through art. He expresses his humanitarian concerns as an artist and establishes a correlation between contemporary people's life and thought. The artist's creative journey is a process of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing of the original culture.

Huang Gang's preoccupation with traditional Chinese and Tibetan culture comes as a response to the rapid socio-economic transformation in China throughout the 1990s.



# HUANG ZHIYANG

Huang Zhiyang (1965, Taipei, Taiwan) believes in the perpetual motion of a fundamental life force within all matter, whether animal, vegetable or mineral, which he tries to render in his 3-dimensional forms and environments. As a painter, he integrates traditional Chinese ink-and-wash painting and the action painting of Western expressionism. Huang Zhiyang's triangular shapes express patterns found on leaves and in microscopic views of bacteria. They are likewise a reference to the texture stroke technique employed in ink landscape paintings and sculptures combining a traditional technique with contemporary aesthetic.

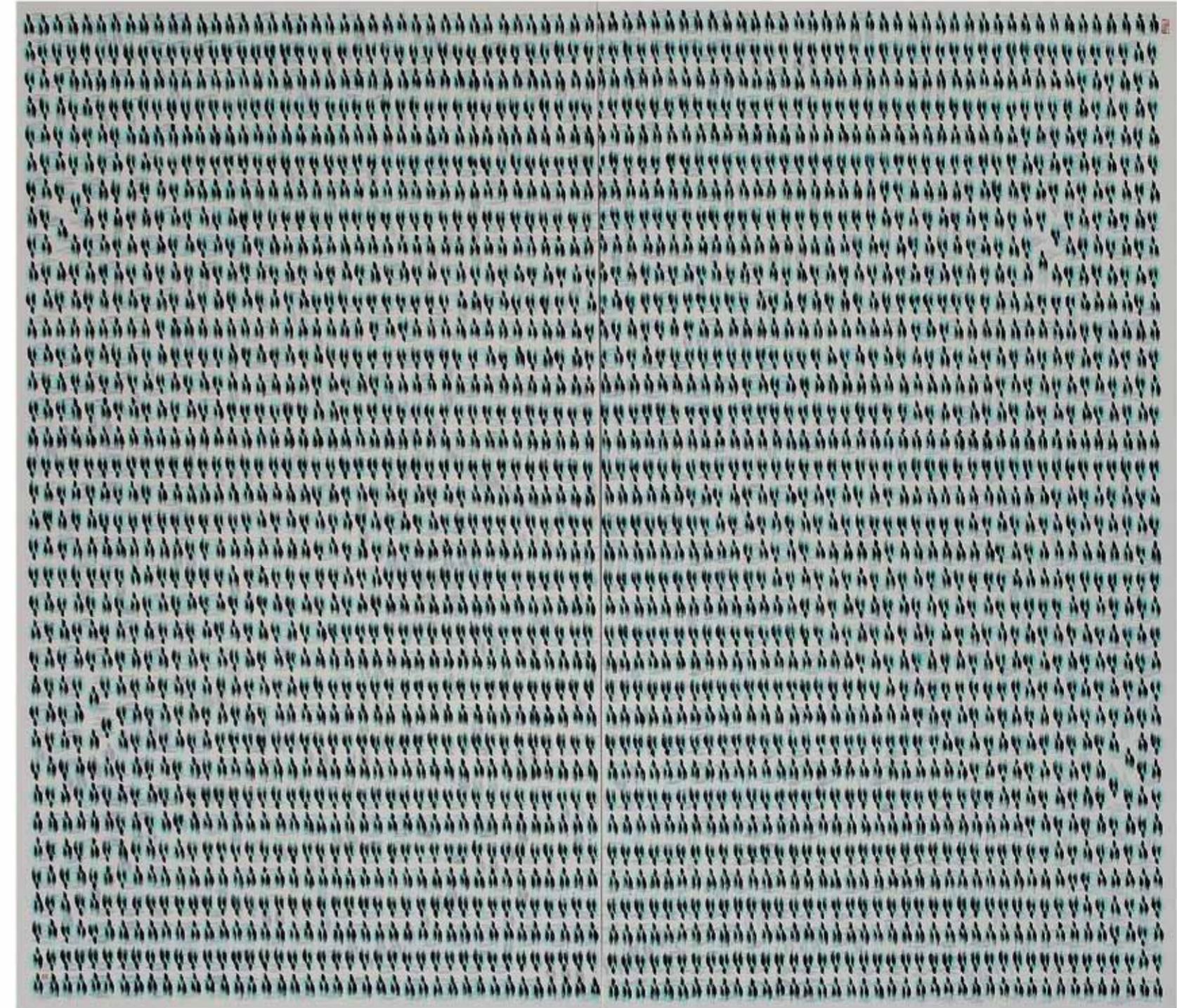
Since the end of the 1980s, the metamorphosed flower theme can be seen from time to time in Huang Zhiyang's use of color; for example, in the *Image Ecosystem* series (1988) and *Flowers Are Not Flowers* series (1992). The manner in which these works are expressed is strongly influenced by the location of his home on Yangmingshan, which is located above the Taipei basin. During that time, his close observation of the local botanical ecosystem enabled him to achieve insights and inspiration for creating his visual images. However, it is interesting to note that although he was inspired by nature, his use of color was the diametric opposite of natural color. Instead, he tends to apply bright colors, which are artificial, almost to the point of deliberately displaying the contrast between natural beauty and the kitsch of artificial colors.

Huang moved to Beijing in 2006, he lived the border of the suburbs and observed this city as a totally outsider. As a newcomer and viewing from the third party perspective, his works are more like the

sideline of current surrounding life in Beijing City then the criticism of society. The feeling of "edging" stimulates his creativity.

Huang once said: "In my view, it's always important to consider matters from the vantage point of a bit of time and distance. Consequently, I tend to view life from the sidelines, deliberately maintaining some distance from the mainstream, seemingly "drifting away" from the main currents of everyday life."

The artist continued: "'Drifting away' for me, usually means questioning my surroundings and the status quo. You could say I've developed an attitude towards life that I adhere to, where I intentionally keep some distance from the mainstream and from what might be considered central to others. For most, contemporary art is widely accepted as integral to everyday life. However, this does not mean that trends in contemporary art can solve all of life's problems nor become part of the mainstream. Most so-called 'Contemporary Art' is no more than a byproduct or phenomenon needed to meet the demands of the marketplace and our endless appetite for the latest consumer products and spectacle. Today, much of 'Contemporary Art' never goes beyond creating faint shadows of societal reality, images so far removed from reality that they often appear fake and vulgar. Unlike "Modern Art" of the past, which sought to depict the heavy weight of reality and flesh-and-blood activities, today's 'Contemporary Art' often lacks meaning and substance; typically conforming to what is popular and superficial in everyday life. So in my view, it is time to find a more appropriate term for what passes these days as 'Contemporary Art.'"



## LI CHEN

By incorporating feelings of self-mindfulness and interpretations of Chinese classics from the Buddhist and Taoist traditions, blended with contemporary thought, Li Chen (1963, Taiwan) relinquished the pursuit of the industrial design arts in the quest for engaging in pure artistic creation, accomplishing a style which has fully liberated itself from the confines of tradition, evincing a remarkably refreshing and natural affect. Li Chen's profound understanding of the human condition, which ripples throughout the rich depth of his Zen works with their spirit of childlike innocence and unambiguous joy. He believes that life involves loss only in consequence of alienation, as the dust of regret silently accumulates in the corners of the soul, and the work aspires to a spiritual arts therapy, uncovering a wealth of joy amidst the simple life's pleasures, innovating a spiritual space through the pieces, as humor embellishes a metaphorical engagement with the world, in the hopes of sharing this consciousness with the viewer as they appreciate the spiritual elements informing these creations.

Li Chen's spiritual sculptures evoke the subtle skill of the textile weaver in supple, almost mylar balloon like textures, eliciting the soft within. He relies on the unique techniques of traditional Chinese ink lacquering together with gold and silver leaf, revealing a light and utterly relaxed sense, animating a miraculous contrast through its "heavy yet light" presence. Li Chen's signature aesthetic void, exudes an exuberantly humane spirit and intimacy. In our unsteady era of uncertainty, Li Chen's works achieve a harmonious sense of presence from impresence, with the Buddhist sense of a necessary absence and the Taoist commitment to instilling one's

vital Qi, replete with the visual semiotic richness of the contemporary arts, to successfully bridge the otherwise alienating cultural distance of the orient and occident, while pulling on the heartstrings with his playful sculpted lullabies.

"Li Chen's sculptures are something of a throwback, leveraging their demonstrable power and energy to drag art all the way back to center stage, where it belongs. A close look at the Li's sculptures reveals the way in which he builds on rather than seeks to deconstruct cultural heritage. In other words, he demonstrates a respect for the spirit of culture rather than satirizing it and gives proper attention to detail and beauty rather than disregarding them. Li is the rare example of a modern artist whose work can be depicted positively. In a contemporary art world filled with works that compete to appeal in terms of beauty, fascination and intrigue, Li Chen's sculptures stand out by remaining faithful to traditional and understatement, though that would have been impossible without their exceptional strength."

—Peng Feng, Curator, Chinese Pavilion, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011



## QU QIANMEI

Qu Qianmei (1956, Ruian, China) moved to Paris, France in 1986, where she experienced the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultural foundations. For her, the essence of her work lies in the relation she has to these two different 'worlds'.

An occasional trip to Tibet has stirred up Qu Qianmei's new creations. For Qu Qianmei, it is not important at all whether she depicts Tibet or not, but the key rests with that it shocked the artist's soul and opened a door to be light and spacious in her paintings. Also her paintings show an epochal connotation; Qu's paintings not only depict some exotic scenery that could be recorded, but also present a spiritual homeland which could heal anxieties of modern people. Concerning her journey to Tibet, Qu Qianmei said: "Lhasa, which is scared, solemn, fathomless, eulogized and worshiped by so many people... There, I found where pure land of soul converts. This piece of place and this patch of blue sky take me in and comprehend me. Heavenly melody and rhythms here knocked my heart and stroke my spirits. I could not help unleashing my emotions since I've already found my direction. Hereof the series of Spirits of Tibet was initiated. Years of accumulation from life and yearn turns into creative enthusiasm and perspiration which integrated with the red earth of plateau and images in my dream broke in all its fury."

After she visited an exhibition of Antoni Tàpies, Qu begins to cling to studies on materials and media and then continues her in-depth exploration in forms of painting through media itself. She also explored abstract paintings' meaning of existence and its innovation as an independent long-standing form. From this perspective, her paintings are elaborative abstract paintings which direct to spiritual demands.

Qu Qianmei's abstract work is based on material transformations and represents her personal experiences and psychological trials that she has undergone through different life's circumstances. She uses things from the real world such as the frame of construction, tire tracks from wheels, debris of ruins, dry trunks, broken rinks and dilapidated projections of plastered stone walls which constitute the starting point of her art.

Art critic Jia Fangzhou has said that compared with her past works, Qianmei's recent development can be called a "qualitative breakthrough expressed in three aspects: long-term overseas accumulation which helped her develop a cultural perspective, her special passion for Antoni Tàpies led her to deeply understand the essence of abstract art and in terms of the relationship between 'Tao' (meaning) and 'Qi' (material), the courses in the China Central Academy of Fine Arts helped her understand and master skills with a variety of materials," said Fangzhou.

In the general appearances of her paintings, the expatiation of special materials, irregular symbols and hidden figures all arouse viewer's curiosity for the logics and conception behind the works. Thickness of the materials directly reinforces thinking power of spectators. Just as you face this work, the imagination is immediately inspired to explore neglected corners. This process of comprehension is more like a kind of "self-discover" rather than simple appreciation, it prompts access to viewer's subconscious mind for emotional and rational dialogue—this is the ultimate goal of Chinese ancient artists who are sensitive to the circumstances and tend to express their feelings through nature.



## SHANG YANG

Shang Yang (1942, Honghu, China) was trained Soviet Realism, however, he was one of the first artists to reject his training after the Cultural Revolution. He started creating mixed media works in the early 1980s. Shang Yang's work tends to use images from traditional Chinese landscape paintings. The images are then screened onto a canvas by a machine. He then distorts the image with graffiti or obtrusive geometrical designs.

Shang Yang has demonstrated an infatuation with the yellow earth plateau remote from southern culture. In the years 1984 to 1985, Shang Yang created a series of oil paintings on Korean paper about the conditions and customs of northern Shaanxi, clearly signaling his change in artistic style.

When facing Shang Yang's artistic works, our first impression is the dislocation of time and space. Hills and clouds are unconsolidated. It is shaping the body of the nature by transplanting, juxtaposing, splicing and composing the segments of the nature rather than describing natural landscape.

On one hand, he uses traditional media: oil on canvas; on the other hand, he creates the combination of pictures in the virtue of digital images. In the process of the artistic creation, he is not only joining the ancient pictures with contemporary optical images, but also linking traditional technique to contemporary anti-technique. It is just by such a mixed expression that Shang Yang creates a visual prospect overstepped from visible objects. When these prospects turn into sequential pictures or giant paintings, they intensively show a kind of trueness in the illusion.

Since 2002, Shang Yang has attempted to collage and print mechanically-reproduced images on his *the Great Landscape*. Shang Yang said: "the Dong Qichang Project explores the idea that the aggressive intervention of contemporary culture has fragmented and flattened the solid traditional Chinese logic of self-sufficiency, harmony and unity."



## SHEN KELONG

Shen Kelong (1964, Nanjing, China) is an artist passionately devoted to exploring new inspirations from traditional culture. Surrounded by various contemporary art trends, he is adamant on the use of lacquer for painting, trying all possibilities of transforming traditional technique into modern art form.

“Getting involved” is a way that Shen Kelong expresses his art, and “contemplation” is a way of lacquer telling history. Learning the calligraphy from childhood, Shen Kelong has the literacy like the ancient *literati*, the dignity in the artistic temperature and refinement in the spiritual character, which make him unique among the contemporary artists and those engaged in the lacquer art. Shen Kelong took the lacquer as the pure art to express, taking the natural lacquer as the main media, and created the lacquer works rich in contemporary art idea.

In recent years Shen Kelong has indulged in the dialogue with tradition, thus bringing about a paradigm shift. In addition to adopting standard cultural images, he revitalizes the metaphor of renovation and restoration implied by the labor of lacquer-painting. He presents to us a series of new works, a small part of which are utensils that reveal the origin of lacquer work. But most of his new works are still lacquer paintings, reflecting his effort to carry forward the contribution of lacquer paintings in the field of “art”.

Lacquer painting has established itself as a genre on the foundation of unique aesthetic appeal of traditional lacquer, thus other coating materials must be excluded. As a traditional Chinese painting genre, lacquer painting must take the aesthetic value of

mainstream ink wash painting as reference, and try to break new ground from there. This method not only rhymes with characteristic styles of traditional Chinese calligraphy and painting, but it also displays unique taste of lacquer.

Shen Kelong’s lacquer works, no matter plane lacquer paintings or solid utensils, contain the rich Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. Mounting the cloth, scraping the ash and the lacquer layer by layer create concave-convex figures and gardens in the picture, and create the touching stories.

Meanwhile inheriting the tradition, Shen Kelong’s works are also added into the mode of composition of the modern painting: all the Buddha statues do not sit in the center of the picture, but show their Buddha’s light in the mist, or overlook the Buddha in the cave across mountain and sea, seeming the wall painting stripped from the cliff mottled and non-existent through 1,000 years, and become immortal.

It is better to say that lacquer is a mirror rather than a material, and in this mirror Shen Kelong sees his own reflection and the transformation of the lacquer since ancient times, and the oriental spirit that finally precipitated through the long river of history. Involvement in the lacquer made Shen Kelong walk in the long process of history and muse in it.





## XU BING

After the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, Xu Bing's work came under scrutiny from the government and received harsh criticism for what was perceived as a critique of the Chinese government. Due to the political pressure and artistic restrictions of the post-Tiananmen period in China, Xu Bing, like many of his contemporaries, moved to the United States in 1990, where he resided until his appointment as vice-president of the Beijing CAFA in 2008.

Xu Bing's (1955, Chongqing, China) art mostly reflects cultural issues which raged during his early life in tumultuous China. Most notably, the cultural and linguistic reforms enacted by the Communist Party in China under Mao Zedong's leadership weigh heavily on modern Chinese artists. Xu Bing in particular plays with the notion of the paradox between the power and fickleness of language, of what it means to be human, and of how our perceptions color our worldview. He plays incessantly with the role, purpose, and reality of language. During Mao's cultural reformations and the reorganization of the standard Chinese language, Xu Bing experienced the constant reformation of words. This constant linguistic change influenced his art: Xu Bing emphasizes the immortality of the essence of language while vividly illustrating the impermanence and capriciousness of words themselves.

Not until 2008 did Xu Bing set aside his post-Maoist reactionary art and invest in other topics. For example, he took on environmental projects such as *Forest Project*, which encouraged the uninterrupted flow of funds from developed countries to Kenya, earmarked for the planting of new trees. Even so, his focus is always on the effect

that environmental issues have on people, such as the villages in Kenya, not necessarily the effects on the landscape or on the political situation.

At the turn of the millennium, a new defining social pattern emerged after the terrorist attacks in the United States on 9/11, 2001. Xu Bing chose to explore the serenity found in the midst of chaos, as illustrated in his work *Where does the Dust Itself Collect?* (2004,2011). For this piece, the artist gathered dust from the aftermath of the collapse of the Twin Towers in New York after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and used it to recreate the gray film that covered Manhattan in the weeks following the attacks. Stenciled in the dust, a Buddhist poem reads, "As there is nothing from the first, where does the dust itself collect?" Using this tragedy as an expression of the human narrative, Xu Bing contemplates the relationship between the material and the spiritual, and he explores "the complicated circumstances created by different world perspectives."





## YANG CHIHUNG

When Yang Chihung (1947, Taoyuan, Taiwan) was 15 years old, he came across a copy of Irving Stone's *Lust For Life*, a biographical work detailing the life of Vincent Van Gogh. This encounter changed the course of his life. It was the origin of a path of artistic discipline which would eventually unfurl into more than 40 years of persistent engagement. The movement of a human hand across a plane surface remains the artist a primal and essential gesture. These impulses to mark a surface reflect a desire to deeply express one's self. Motivated by these ideas and concerns, Yang Chihung's paintings become an investigation in retrospect of the painterly expressions of that older time. By identifying with and assuming those qualities, the artist is able to express his imagination and inner vision.

These visions, often encompassing themes of duality and counterpoint, bring qualities inherent in dialectic. Their collision as arguments or even paradoxes may produce rather beautiful and enduring moments, and this is what Yang Chihung tries to enact or capture on canvas. The end result of this process produces a style unfettered by the trappings of representation or abstraction, or any other qualifications—what interests the artist is a styleless style.

Yang Chihung expressed: "When I witnessed my granddaughter—an eighteen months old toddler—and her first expressions of image making, I was shocked by the phenomenon. It occurred to me that painting was so free, full of surprises, authentic, instinctive and fresh... There were no attendant theories, pretenses, or maneuverings and manipulations of so-called style, it was a purely natural state, like, as we say in Chinese 'floating clouds and flowing waters'. Style

was an afterthought. A return to the past, a return to the existential beginning, painting should simply be as this."

Yang Chihung's works not only express a visually captivating imagery, but also portray deeply evocative emotional landscapes, with an attitude toward experiencing life and exploring the world from the outwardly toward the inward, and as the artist has matured, reaching the sixties, the artistic mastery has become much freer in exploration of virtual, imaginary space, recalling the emotive landscape of youthful innocence, through purely unfettered painting accompanied by the artist's personal style.

"Yang Chihung's paintings are meditations on nature. They explore the psychological and spiritual intersection of nature and humanity by means of a dynamic painterly language. The artist developed this language with equal parts intuition and intervention, expanded the vocabulary of painting as well as the expressive possibility of visual thought" —*David Ebony*

"Throughout Yang's oeuvre, one sees the gestural concision of the ideograph but no trace of ideographs themselves, those inherited slowly evolving forms. Attending closely to the forms of nature, blending perception with memory, Yang is forever starting anew. Each painting draws us into a particular moment. It takes a while to see that he fills a canvas not with images of things observed but with the atmosphere of observation." —*Carter Ratcliff*





## YE YONGQING

Ye Yongqing (1958, Kunming, China) has spent much of his career painting portraits of birds, with jagged, clever lines. In recent years, he has focused on creating colorful collages. But for years he has been better known as a curator, arts events organizer and artist community booster.

Ye's schooling started shortly after the end of the Cultural Revolution, when the second wave of Modernist thought and influence entered China. In the 1980s, Chinese art students and artists were starved of alternatives to Soviet socialist realism and communist propaganda art, and were eager to absorb any material or information they could gain access to. Ye, like many of his peers, sought to emulate Western masters such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Maurice de Vlaminck and was fascinated by Western poetry and literature. On the other hand, he was drawn to the dense woods of Xishuangbanna and the bare red hills of Guishan in his hometown Yunnan, in which he found what he considered "another kind of realism".

Consistently referring to the natural settings and inhabitants of both places, Ye's early works constituted various technical and stylistic experiments inspired by sources ranging from Expressionism to medieval altarpieces. Meanwhile, he consciously shied away from the kind of realism and formalism generally described as "scar painting" and "Native-soil Trend", which were painters from the region who were earning nationwide acclaim at the time.

Ye's *Big Posters* (1991–4) and the series of collages on canvas he made between 1994 and '99 ushered in a period in which his work took on a more socially conscious dimension. His *Big Posters* appropriated the poster format, a remnant of the propaganda approach commonly

employed during the Cultural Revolution, over which he applied scribbles, numbers and large characters on imprinted newspaper, canvases or silk scrolls. His collages of the same period consisted of photographs of his studio, pictures with his friends, letters and exchanges with fellow artists, as well as quotes and texts of a philosophical or aesthetic nature. These collages seem to represent a process of self-examination by which the artist faced his sources of influence and his network of ideas and people, which he described as fragmented but always related.

Following his collages, Ye became completely absorbed in painting birds—usually a singular bird on a large canvas, realized through a meticulous process and attention to detail, yet retaining the appearance of something close to a doodle. These works achieved tremendous popularity on the Chinese art market when he first began making them in 1999, and consequently Ye has produced them steadily for more than ten years. His enormous four-part canvas *Big Bird* (2011), appeared to be a reduction of the complexity of his earlier practice and an abrupt end to the show, leaving one to wonder how Ye's career might have differed without the powerful influence of art-market forces.

Through Ye's distinct stroke, the poetic impression of his birds aims to incorporate dreams and mythologies from the world over. Recreating the immediacy of his sketches, in large sweeping gestures, Ye has developed a style that is both traditional and new. His series of paradoxical structures curve the frames of birds: depicting stillness and movement. The distorted frames create both the image of winged creatures and the expansive connections of mythologies, with birds symbolizing the power of spirit throughout legend, East and West.



## YING TIANQI

Ying Tianqi's (1949, Anhui, China) oil painting collection *Traces of Centuries*, which was started in 2006, was completed this year. Years of research on materials and adept skills acquired from his wood print arts have been exerted into his new creation. With a combination of physical goods collage, broad press and hand painting color, he creates a unique effect that combines both two dimensional and three dimensional spaces. The difference in his works is that Ying expresses the painting style of a modern constructivism, with the use of blocks of matrices of different colors that are arranged or juxtaposed, to show the historical vicissitude of the relentless age. In his *Traces: wooden sculpture series*, small pieces of Huizhou wooden sculptures from Qing Dynasty are set in the center of the huge painting screens. They combine history with a contemporary context, which also enable viewers to imagine beyond space and time. At the same time, the dimension of space and history is also injected into his works.

In an interview with Valeria Iacovelli in 2012, Ying Tianqi says: "If we insist on connecting and touching our histories, then there are two primary paths of such engagement, through books, or by involvement with the material world.

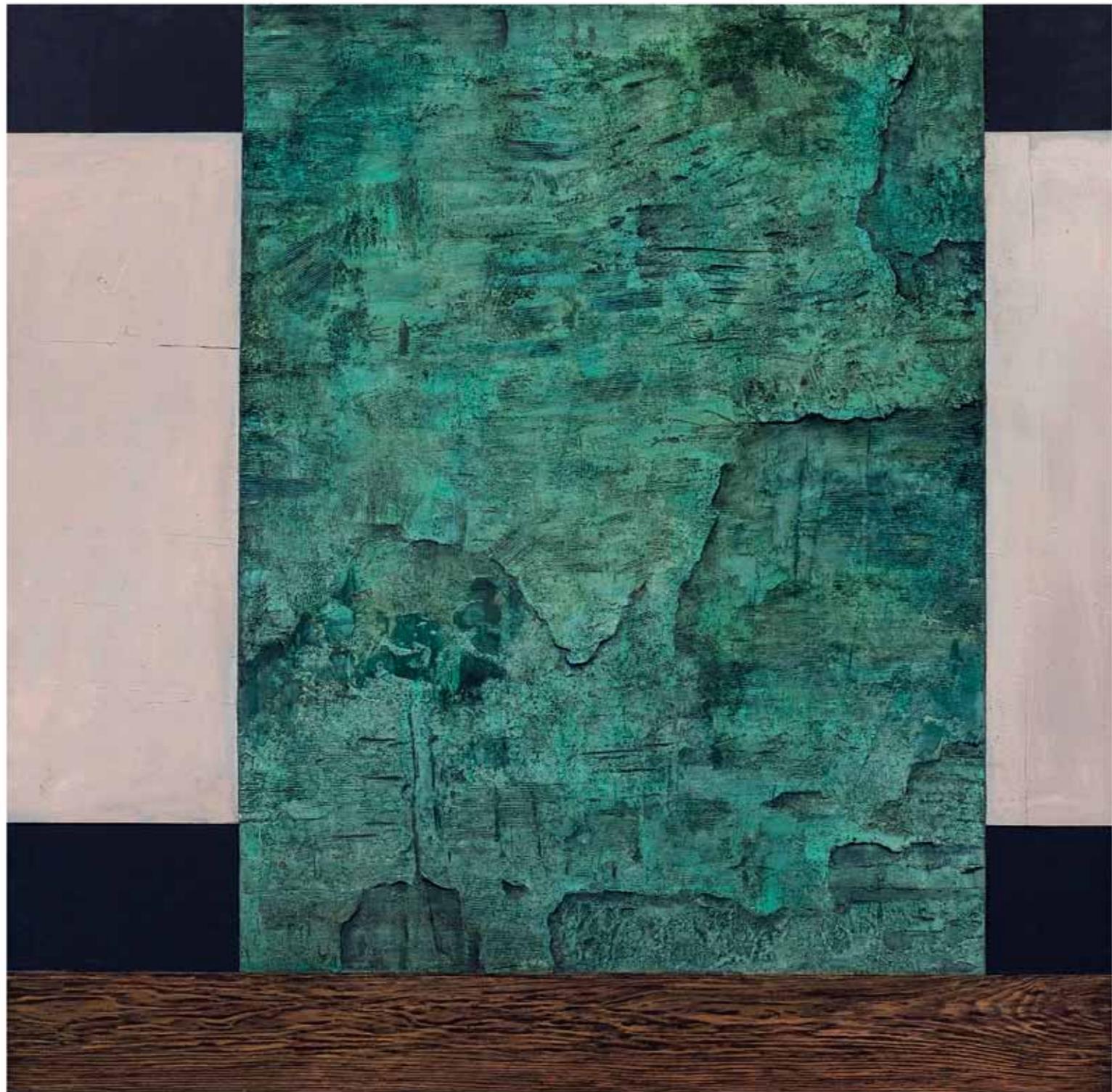
Although both may be rightly deemed to be historical relics, holdings in museum collections pristinely displayed in cases, and the material world existing among us in our everyday lives, remain quite distinct, with the former being conceived of us as largely inanimate relics, while the latter remain a living materiality, so it is that I have selected ancient architecture, the traditional

architecture still lived in by families today and alive in communities to convey the profound humanist message, and relay their deeply emotive sense.

My work has evolved from the entire edifice I began to explore through my early *Xidi Village Series* printmaking, to the structural motifs in *Dreams in Huizhou*, until my recent focus on architectural ruins through wall remnants in *Traces of Centuries*.

The cognitive evolution of my artistic inspiration has progressed from macro to micro observations, as less has become profoundly more, and my thinking has thus expanded."





## ZHANG FANGBAI

The world and words of Zhang Fangbai (1962, Hengyang, China) are very close to his paintings: never a stroke too many, hardly any colors but always a presence of density in both subject matters and expressions. He is a gentleman and a scholar in the best senses of the words. Despite years of true hardship, he has kept his wit, applied his own personal values, to his art, to his paintings and, last but not least, to life itself.

Seeing Zhang's works is the relieving feeling of independence and a *zeitgeist* of his own. No sentimentality, no copying, no vulgarities in the shape of screwing, licking or other examples of liberation. He refused to follow the dying visions of the still active art wizards of the Communist party with their preference for parboiling Soviet social realism with its ecstatic scenes of the happiest people in the steel mill or giggling collective farmers or applauding leaders with more cosmetic surgery. Equally he didn't follow the most prevailing trends amongst the post 1989 generation with its post- pop art and the kitsch school with its roots in Japanese comic strips and this genre's feebleness for cute girls. Zhang Fangbai's paintings are connected to our age when it comes to space, cultural links and circumstances, but at the same time they are, as is the case with all great art, standing above the petty limitations of prejudice, ignorance and lack of imagination. They don't try to pick up a trend that is here today and long forgotten already by tomorrow. They are more demanding and difficult to intellectually register than most of his contemporaries in today's China.

The eagle theme is a classical image not only in Chinese art but also in Japanese and Korean. A great number of artists have used this

impressive bird as an iconographic emblem and in the Western world the energy of the eagle is also a symbol of strength, independence and power. Zhang's birds are believed to be symbols of personal experience interwoven with Chinese history, contemporary life and society: depression, suppression, general and personal defeats and problems. The alienation present in modern society might be related to the way the country is moving both economically and socially.

In recent years, Zhang not only paints but also uses his brush to "sculpt" with. It is a kind of fusion between classical Western painting technique and reliefs. He says "to slow the speed of the brush when it moves over the canvas". With thick layers of painting combined with either horse hair or coconut fibers, he creates the feeling that the images are floating just above the canvas. His use of white color is also particular. It is mostly applied to create volume inside the thick lines of black that outline the shape on object. "These materials makes the hand move slower and gives time for both the mind and the hand to reflect," he explains. And his sketches of solemn black to produce an incise effect of brushwork in his own language of painting. It focuses on the general outlines and borderlines without giving much consideration to specific details and clumpy portrayal. It looks like hasty, elegant brushwork, with spiritual expression being more significant than a specific shape. The images reaching a rhythm, energy and disciplined harmony have led Zhang to the platform where he is with clear and distinct inner ideas.



## ZHANG GUOLONG

Zhang Guolong (1957, Shenyang, China) inquires and interprets the relationship between concept and material, as well as the adaptation of changed material to specific cultural context through his own art practice. Zhang's work starts with concrete materials and he considers them as the carriers of concept and language. Only when the objective materials are subjectively interpreted by Zhang, can their concept and language be embodied and expressed. In selecting and filtering those flowing, fresh materials, Zhang continuously gains his power—through his displacement and interpretation the potential expressive power of those materials is associated with its original state, and thus an unexpected effect is achieved, that is, a different form is produced from the original one.

Zhang insists on being free and independent. Zhang seeks and discovers in natural materials the essence of art—the energy of nature and spirit—so as to bring art back to its simple original state: for one thing, its power in making the energy accord with basic natural materials; for another, its aesthetic meaning concerning life, memory and emotion which is related to human's spiritual world. In many of his works Zhang takes soil as the main medium of his art, for soil is regarded originally and naturally as something alive, something that is growing, moving, changing and fermenting, and as the spirit of the world and the condensation of individual experiences. Since the image of soil is borrowed by the artist and it is not concrete but spiritual and imaginary, the energy hidden in the image is expressed by looking for the spiritual value which accords with him. Zhang succeeds in finding his own methodology by which he reassembles different materials by the way of archaeology and not

only depending on the sense of massiveness and amount (being full, complete, massive and real) characteristic of western art, but also relying on those aesthetic elements of Chinese art such as tranquility, emptiness, vitality, and natural clearness, combines individual memories, historical fragments and pieces of natural scenes together into an organically related image world. Therefore, rather than expressing the consciousness which is grand, historical and heroic, his work reflects such a state as is full of individual memories, is local, sentimental, melancholy, simple and poetic. Full of emotions and images, Zhang's work is created from his own experiences and understanding of the world. And his work leads the audience to imagine freely the power of nature, to feel and understand the harmonious relationship hidden in the work, to inquire the indications of history and to be moved by the imagination of natural poetic state and cultural melancholy.

While it is important for Zhang Guolong to hold an attitude of being skeptical and resistant, it is more important for him to construct his own art language. For an artist does not “destroy” or “subvert” something just for destroying or subverting it, but for the construction of art issues and continuation. Zhang's work is perfectly the practical construction of many such issues—out of reality, imagination and symbols he continuously builds his ideal art world.



## ZHANG HUAN

Zhang Huan (1965, Anyang, China) is a Chinese artist based in Shanghai and New York. He is primarily a performance artist but also makes photographs and sculpture. He began his work as part of a small artistic community, known as the Beijing East Village, located on the margins of the city. The group of friends from art school pioneered this particular brand of performance in China, and Zhang was often reprimanded by officials for the perceived inappropriateness of his actions.

Zhang's performances always involve his body in one way or another, usually naked, occasionally involving masochistic actions. For example, an exhibited photography showed him as "a naked man, his head half-shaved, sitting in a prisonlike space. His skin was wet and covered with flies. His face looked blank but tough, as if he were trying to meditate his way through pain," according to a review in the New York Times.

Zhang involves the body in his sculptures as well. He makes giant copper hands and feet, magnified versions of fragments of broken Buddhist figures that he found in Tibet. By using quasi-religious ritual, he seeks to discover the point at which the spiritual can manifest via the corporeal. He uses simple repetitive gestures, usually regarded as meaningless work-for-work's-sake chores. Buddhism, with its temple music, sculptures and philosophy are a prevalent theme in his work. Zhang Huan's more recent work has consisted of sculptures and paintings that reference the history of his native China, from significant political, intellectual, and religious figures to anonymous portraits and landscape scenes. For his two- and three-dimensional works, Zhang frequently uses both common objects and unusual organic materials, including feathers, cowhides, and for his 2005 sculpture *Donkey*, a taxi-

dermied donkey. Particularly evocative is Zhang's use of incense ash, a material that epitomizes both detritus and religious ritual, with which he paints and sculpts works that are as olfactory as they are visual.

### Ash Paintings Series

While incense ash has long been revered by eastern cultures for its spiritual and medicinal properties, Zhang Huan views this unique and poetic medium as the direct embodiment of a nation's collective memory: the literal debris of the dreams, hopes and remembrances of the millions of people for whom incense-burning is a daily ritual. Sifted into palettes of varying grades from the finest dust to coarse flakes, the ash is applied to large canvases and sculptural busts modeled on the artist's own face. The source imagery for Zhang Huan's ash paintings includes old photographs of family and friends, and the recognizable socialist realist iconography of the Cultural Revolution.

### To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond

The artist invited about forty participants, recent migrants to the city who had come to work in Beijing from other parts of China. They were construction workers, fishermen and laborers, all from the bottom of society. They stood around in the pond and then I walked in it. At first, they stood in a line in the middle to separate the pond into two parts. Then they all walked freely, until the point of the performance arrived, which was to raise the water level. Then they stood still. In the Chinese tradition, fish is the symbol of sex while water is the source of life. This work expresses, in fact, one kind of understanding and explanation of water. That the water in the pond was raised one meter higher is an action of no avail.



## ZHENG CHONGBIN

Like many other contemporary Chinese artists, Zheng Chongbin (1961, Shanghai, China) is bi-cultural, spending his time between China and the U.S. His work reflects influences from both cultures. His work in the ink medium aims to go beyond the merely material: matter both imposes on its own form and also produces a metaphysical dimension. In other words, the work aims to go beyond the merely material.

Zheng Chongbin's recent exhibition of eight ink-on-paper paintings mounted on panel was a *tour de force*, revealing how the techniques of traditional Asian ink painting can have a contemporary relevance. Zheng applies black ink of various consistencies to sheets of Xuan paper (made from sandalwood fiber), which for over 1,000 years has been the preferred support for calligraphic ink painting, owing to the way that it reveals both the flow and the crispness of an artist's brushwork. Like master painters of the Sung and Yuan dynasties, Zheng changes the tempo of his brushwork to create an elegant choreography of shapes that bespeak what ancient scholars referred to as "landscapes of the mind."

The flowing forms of his work clearly allude to distant landscapes shrouded in evanescent atmospherics, and they invite the viewer's imagination to wander into and through them. But the disjunctions between the sheets of paper, coupled with a kind of phosphorescent marbling effect created by judiciously applied white acrylic paint, bring the viewer back to the work's surface.

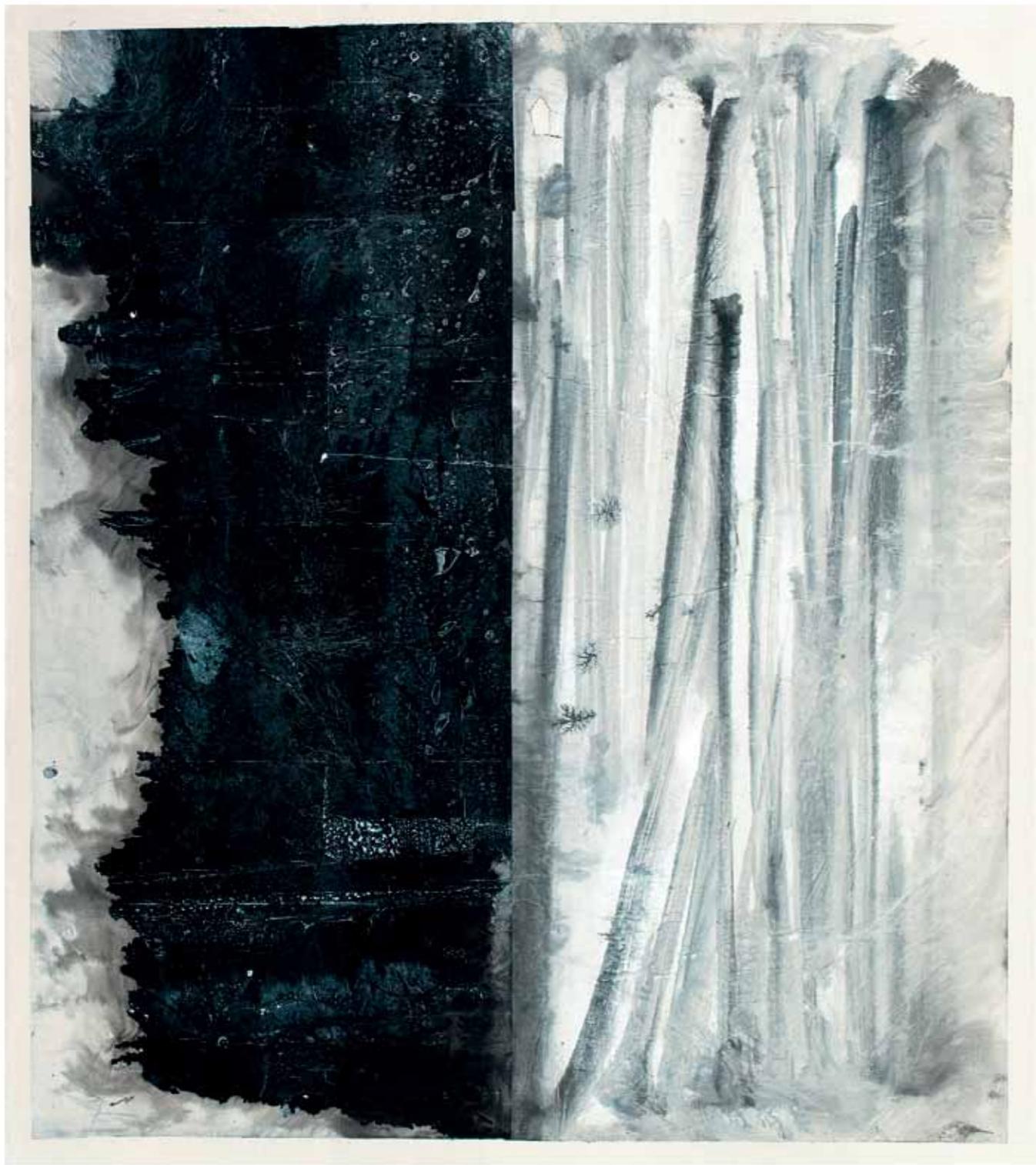
*Tour* (2011) is a panoramic composition at slightly less than 3 by 15 feet, featuring a somewhat more extreme tonal contrast than is

visible in his other works. Through the elegant undulation of forms, the eye travels across zones defined by rich saturations of black ink and to others offering free-flowing, midtone shapes that are a contemporary echo of Sung portrayals of the Yangtze River Gorge, only here there is but a vague allusion to the landscape. Instead, we see an emphasis on the revelation of geomantic energies that ancient Chinese philosophers claimed were at the core of all natural entities.

The artist explains, "I like to treat paper as intermediate material to hold the ink, wash and acrylic and whatever materials I feel like using. I am building something rather than painting. All the materials that I have applied will react and bleach through the paper, and this often creates a sculptural effect. The paper will then pick up or cast all the settlement from underneath. To bring this all alive, water is then applied to the works. I like the feeling of treating painting as an object making process. It allows me to shift away from familiarity and start wondering."

According to *Times* magazine, "Some argue that the stark new direction of Chinese ink painting still draws on the art form's abundant history, abstract expressionist streaks aside. Indeed, ink-basic, cheap and plentiful-seems entirely suited to extravagant experimentation... Zheng Chongbin, who has staged three solo exhibitions this year alone. His particular vocabulary is visceral and abstract. A new piece, *White Ink on Black Ink*, is made up of four panels soaked in blackness. The Tang-dynasty masters may object, but their cries are drowned in a dense, iridescent night."





## ZHOU CHUNYA

Zhou Chunya (1955, Chongqing, China) graduated from the Department of Painting at the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts in 1982. At that time Chinese artists drawn to the lives of ordinary country people—and often rendering them in a hyper-realistic style—became known as the Rural Realists, a movement in which Zhou briefly participated. A trip to Tibet in the mid 1980s engaged Zhou who became a pioneer painter of Tibetan pastoral scenes linking themes of nature and spirituality. Historian and critic Lv Peng describes him as a representative of “The New Generation of Tibetans.” After six years of artistic experimentation, Zhou began in 1988 to take in the exuberant, even frenetic art of the Neo-Expressionists of the 1980s.

Zhou Chunya’s work falls into several distinct periods: That of Rustic Realism, the new Tibetan painters, and Expressionistic canvases that followed his time in Germany. Zhou met the opening up of Chinese art and society, his subsequent, serial exposures to new forms of expression with open arms. He attempted to fuse these radically different elements into a new and synthetic whole that coupled Chinese motifs with emotive expressionism. Artist Ye Yongqing describes Zhou as a man “searching to mix Chinese way of expression with the Western spirit of questioning and revolt.” According to critic Zhan Hao, “You find strokes like Chinese calligraphy in his paintings, look at the details and you’ll be impressed at the smoothness and accuracy of his strokes.”

### Green Dog

“I spread the green to a wider range and ultimately painted a green dog full of visual impact,” Zhou said. Zhou is perhaps most famous

for his *Green Dogs* series. It wasn’t just German Neo-Expressionism that inspired him, but his German shepherd, Heigen. The dog became his chief subject for more than ten years. Zhou describes the green dog as a sort of symbolic self portrait. He interprets the background as a field of uncertainty, loneliness, and distance between people, while the dogs signify a wide variety of emotions. He also stated: “The *Green Dog’s* image and situation project my cultural characters and my circumstance of reality in life.” Sadly, in 1999, Heigen died, possibly poisoned by a neighbor, resulting in the artist’s sorrowful refusal to paint for more than a year. Zhou did return to his favorite subject and recently completed an over-life sized sculpture of the dog with a shiny coat of green industrial paint. Although many artists from Sichuan moved to Beijing to enhance their careers, Zhou chose to stay in Chengdu, citing its tranquility.

### Peach Blossom

Following the death of his dog, Zhou began to paint peach blossoms in appreciation of the value and beauty of life. Watching the flowers blossom in spring, he was deeply moved by their “flirtatious” energy and vigor. This led to a series of peach blossom expressing the primitive desire of human beings and the theme of “sex and emotion.” Bright red, sinuously shaped men embrace pink women, which Zhou heatedly describes: “In a fluid emotion and mood of colors, flows indulgence of primitive and sincere imaginations. It is the total release of human nature against a grand scene, an explosion of gentle violence!” In his fusion of delicate flowers and unbridled human passion, Zhou couples traditionally modest Chinese subjects and modern, more liberal attitudes to sexuality.





# **CULTURE·MIND·BECOMING INGRANDIMENTO**

Curated by Huang Du & Yang Shin-Yi  
Palazzo Mora

# CULTURE·MIND·BECOMING INGRANDIMENTO

By Huang Du & Yang Shin-Yi

CultureMindBecoming at 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, in 2013, refers to the “Encyclopedic Palace” theme of the Biennale along with a response and reply of Chinese social and cultural contributions to the fine arts. If the Encyclopedic Palace covers the full spectrum of realization and analysis of the visual knowledge system, then the contemporary Chinese arts are part of their overall organization, and when we declare the parallel exhibit to be an *Ingrandimento* [Enlargment], we attempt to express something unique among the multicultural diversity of the work, which perfectly matches with the purpose and function of such a global encyclopedia. The exhibit also expresses the value of contemporary Chinese arts: refracting cultural potential and vitality in the process of China’s modernization, and the performance of the individual imagination and creativity of the Chinese artist. Thus, *Ingrandimento* adequately captures the dynamic characteristics of contemporary Chinese fine arts.

*Ingrandimento* refers to the physical sense of a microscope, as well as to enlarging images, voices or functions. It also includes the following subtle layers of signification: 1. In physics it refers to increasing the volume of material, thus referring to the process of enlarging. It also includes the transformation of matter in the natural world. 2. In the sociological sense it includes the expansion of a nation, social progress or an individual’s spiritual state. 3. In terms of the visual arts, it refers to the artist’s subjective imagination, creativity and expressiveness, as the realization of artistic language and concepts.

In accordance with this, *Ingrandimento* can be seen as a method of encompassing the interpretation of matters and their significance. Whether abstract, or utilitarian, it is capable of organizing the subjective

sense of mankind for a transparent release. It exists not only in conjunction with natural law, biological transformation, social activities or international relations, but also with aptly describing cultural progress, artistic renaissance, spiritual diversity, and the balance of human living experiences. Regardless of our language of expression, when looking at our own culture, humanity always relies on the lens of enlargement.

With the range of thought, conceptions, identification, nationhood, variation, and diversity, as cultural values, our exhibition fits within the theme of this 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale of the Encyclopedic Palace. We hope that *Ingrandimento* is conjunct to the Biennale, and broadens and deepens its theme. Thus, the Chinese artists participating in the exhibition shared in a common *lingua franca* of expressive language and conditions to exercise their imagination and creative potential, to create uniquely and characteristically Chinese art works.

Like *Re-Discover*, *Ingrandimento* was conducted at the renowned Palazzo Mora, the former mansion of the aristocracy evoked a brilliant atmosphere, serendipitously capturing each other’s culture through exchange. In this space, the participating artists and their works fully explored the themes, through focusing on space, experience, expressive language, traditions, society, daily life and reality, departing from their sense of their local culture, or a sense of the human spirit, or discovering alternate cultural existences, or the significance of unfettered conceptions, or uplifting the representativeness of traditional aesthetics, reconceiving their personal organization in relation to the collective sense. Thus, *Ingrandimento* does not mean a mere microscopic enlargement of the overall expression of contemporary Chinese

arts, nor does it intend to create its own new descriptive jargon, but to use a little to express a lot, as the means of expressing and realizing the contemporary Chinese artistic aesthetic in its grandest variety.

Therefore, *Ingrandimento* invited 20 artists, including the famed artist Xu Bing who presented his new multimedia *Work On Site*, Zhang Heng with his film *For one more meter in Reservoir height*, along with Hainan’s *Destroying the Travel Agency* team (collaboration of Weng Fen, Wen Wu, and Huang Xuebing), an interventionist regional sociocultural work, the famous Abstractionist painter Mao Lizi, the young painters Su Ke, Yang Fan, Geng Yini, Hou Xiaowei, Li Hua, Liu Zhengyong, Meng Site, and Zhang Kai. Also participating was new works of sculptors Li Jiaxiang and Li Chen’s latest works. The young artist Fan Yaping also had a sculpture installation and paintings, as well as an installation by Huang Xinjian, and photography by Zhang Wei. Each participant presented a micro-scopic lens to realize and interpret aspects of Chinese society whether through the variety of daily living experiences, psychological reactions, cultural traditions or social vibrancy.

2013年第55屆威尼斯雙年展平行展的策展思路以“文化·精神·生成”為主題，它旨在對本屆雙年展主題「百科全書的宮殿」（Encyclopedic Palace）及做出與中國社會和文化相關的藝術問題的思考和回應。如果說「百科全書的宮殿」蘊涵了對視覺知識系統的綜合呈現與分析之意，那麼中國當代藝術作為其整個範疇的組成部分，我們把平行展的主題確定為《文化·精神·生成》，試圖在全球多元文化語境和背景下表達不同的聲音，也正好回應了這種百科全書的功能和意義。它也恰恰證明了中國當代藝術的價值所在：既折射了中國現代化進程中的文化潛能和活力，又表現了中國藝術家個體的想像力與創造力。而「放大」的概念，在微觀上則充分再現了動態的當代中國藝術特徵。

「放大」（義大利文是Ingrandimento，英文是 Enlargement）一詞具有顯微鏡的物理意義，更意指「使圖像、聲音、功能等變大」。它被延展出這樣幾層含義：一、它在物理學上指某一物質的量的增大。它表示一種規模轉化的過程。它也包含自然界中的物質聚變。二、它在社會學上再現了國家的發展、社會的進步及個人信

仰的精神狀態。三、它在視覺藝術上表現了藝術家主觀的想像力、創造力和表現力，是藝術語言與觀念的呈現。

基於以上的認知，「放大」可被理解為一種解讀事物及其內涵的方法論，無論它是抽象的，還是具體的，它都能集中反映人的主觀意識的透明釋放。它不僅存在于自然法則、生物變異、社會運動和國際關係之中，而且也適用於對文化發展、藝術更新、精神異化及人類生活經驗的衡量。無論身處哪種語境，人類都將依照各自的文化參照對放大以及由放大導致的現實變化做出透析。

正是由於2013年第55屆威尼斯雙年展主題「百科全書的宮殿」涉及到與知識、思想、身份、種族、差異、多樣性等相關的文化價值觀，威尼斯雙年展的平行單元——中國當代藝術展的主題「放大」無疑是對雙年展主題的補充、深化和延展。因此，參展的中國藝術家在參照特定的語境和條件下充分彰顯了各自的想像力和創造力，創作出了極具中國獨特性的藝術作品。

平行展「放大」選擇在威尼斯著名的莫拉-卡納雷喬宮（Palazzo Mora）舉行，這個昔日的貴族宮殿散發出的輝煌氣息，恰好烘托出了彼此文化間的對比和交流。在這一空間中，參展藝術家及其作品無不貫穿到主題、空間、經驗、語境、傳統、社會、日常與現實的針對性視覺命題，他們從在地文化出發，或表現人的精神意志，或發現文化的另類存在，或挖掘純粹觀念的意義，或提升傳統美學的當代性，或重塑自我組織的集體形態等等。因此，「放大」並不是要面面俱到地呈現中國當代藝術的整體面貌，也不是要建構一整套的敘事話語，而是要以「以小見大」的方法揭示和呈現中國當代藝術多樣性實踐的真實狀況。

因此，平行展「放大」邀請了19位藝術家參展，既有了著名藝術家徐冰的新錄影《地書》，張洄的行為攝影《為水塘增高一尺》，也有來自海南的「拆了旅行社」小組(翁奮、文武、黃學斌)的介入性地域性社會文化的作品，既有著名畫家毛栗子的抽象畫，也有年輕的畫家蘇軻、楊帆、耿旖旎、侯曉威、李華、劉正勇、孟思特、張凱的繪畫，既有著名雕塑家李象群和李真的最新作品，也有年輕的藝術家范姪萍的雕塑裝置和繪畫與黃心健的裝置及張巍的攝影。他們以不同的微觀視點表現和解讀了動感的中國社會表徵中所蘊藏的各種各樣的日常經驗、心理反應、文化傳統和社會能量。

# CHAILE TRAVEL

HUANG XUEBIN, WEN WU & WENG FEN

## Nomadic Travel—Scene of contemporary art practice from rural areas of Hainan Island, China

Individuals tend to be invisible in this holistic society, as they have fallen victim to the violent force of social structures and relationships. Along with rapid modernization and urbanization, how should we confront emerging social and cultural issues brought by individuals, land and traditional way of life, tourism and real estate development and how can we rejuvenate the impoverished self-expression and imagination in this Society of Spectacle? By focusing on specific features of local issues and breaking the boundary between art and science, *Chaile Travel* attempts to intervene with contemporary life and promote self organization of individuals in an open and experimental group framework. Characterized by diversity and decentration, such an interactive process allows participants to experience a nomadic adventure into uncertainties of future development. Composed as a group of artists, *Chaile Travel* can also be viewed as an independent individual in the complex system of social structures and relationships. By institutionalizing the development of individuals into a new group through self-motivation, *Chaile Travel* assists contemporary artists to enjoy a nomadic entry into the realities of a local society.

## Chaile Travel

Due to the construction of a satellite launch center and a national space flight theme park, villagers at Dongjiao Town of Wenchang nestled in the east coast of Hainan, China are forced to leave the land where their forefathers have lived for generations. On March 13, 2010, *Chaile Travel* was founded in the local Taishan Village as a field art group. Being a piece of art work in itself, *Chaile Travel* is dedicated to

delivering field art experience in different places through travel, visits, interactive discussion and other on-site activities, with the purpose of provoking the reflections of visitors and locals about their social environment. By stepping into the site of social tensions, *Chaile Travel* helps to open up more scenarios for future development, representing a new approach to reflection about the art system. On a non-regular basis, *Chaile Travel* invites Chinese and international travelers and cultural visitors to join a field visit and discussion. Chaile Inn and Chaile Cottage to be hosted by local villagers can provide lodging for 1-3 days, accompanied by local foods such as Hainan Wenchang Chicken Rice, coffee-black tea and Jindui (deep-fried stuffed glutinous rice ball with sesames). As internet connection is available, visitors are required to share their daily reflections and field photos through the web.

It is important to note that the founders of *Chaile Travel* are not a group of artists who are hopelessly nostalgic and against any development or changes. On the contrary, the artists realize the necessity of development as a part of human society that will bring change. However, they wish to create a forum where people are urged to think about the best ways to achieve the desired progress and how to maintain a balance between development and tradition, between natural evolution and human intervention. In an introduction to *Chaile Travel*, the artists state that their goal of founding this interactive art project is to “think over, from the perspective of art, problems and changes that rural tradition is facing in the process of modernization and urbanization.”

A forum that encourages personal experience and intellectual exchange is at the heart of *Chaile Travel* as a contemporary art project. In this undertaking, art is at once a form of communication and a col-



lective endeavour. The art project can be seen both as an indicator of urbanization and an attempt to intervene into its very process. By the spirit of its founding mission, which emphasizes a “thinking process” as an integral component, *Chaile Travel* plans to continue to develop and reinvent itself. It is a flexible project, and any direction seems possible since each time the participants will be different as will be the focus of discussion and reflection as well as the physical interventions (such as the benches) left behind. A possible new development in the near future, according to the organizers, is to build small wooden huts on top of these hills. They will be just huts in primitive conditions without any modern technology, and will be placed far away from each other. These huts will serve as temporary shelter for hikers to stay overnight in solitude, accompanied by nothing but nature, and they will provide an interaction with nature in a friendly way just like the benches. The purpose, like that of *Chaile Travel*, is to create a space where one can experience first hand a rural environment and reflect upon the process of urbanization and its impact upon the future of that location.

Fundamentally, *Chaile Travel* is a project that accentuates the experimental and participative nature of contemporary art and simultaneously inquires into a specific local reality that is part of a massive nationwide movement. To stage such a project in a remote rural village in the southern end of China, far away from the fanfare of the contemporary art headquarters of Beijing, suggests a fresh perspective and points to attractive possibilities. As a political power centre of China, Beijing has all along dominated the flow, both physical and mental, of cultural and artistic currency, and the Beijing-centric mode of cultural interaction has largely shaped the making, thinking, and writing of artistic production in China.

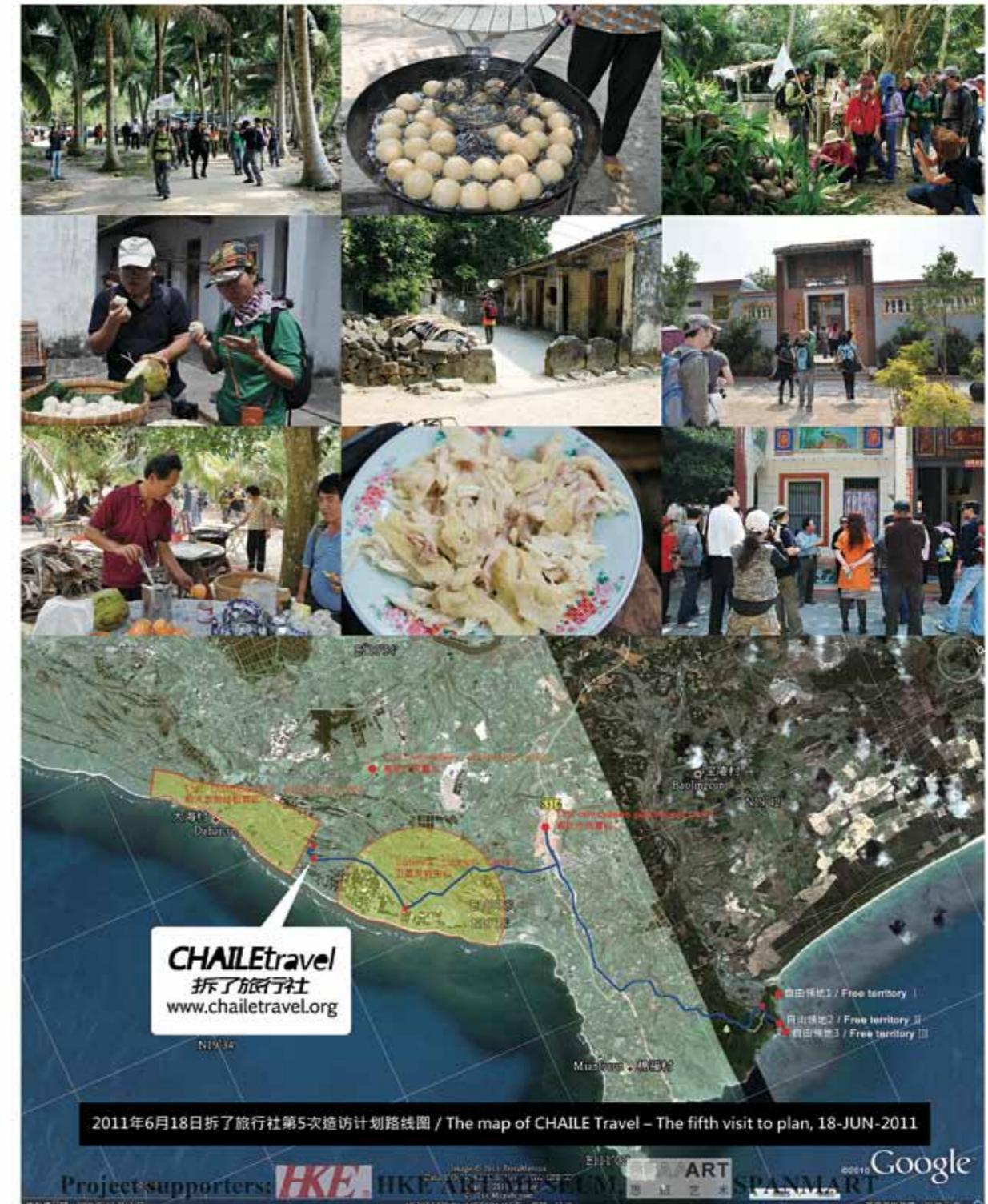
In a contemporary world where the Euro-American centric point of view has long been challenged, one wonders whether this Beijing centrism can possibly be surpassed so that a more diverse landscape of cultural and artistic interactions can be encouraged. *Chaile Travel*, in its effort to bring in people from other parts of China to engage in an artistic discourse that is local specific and away from the center, seems to shed light on the possibility of initiating such a direction.

Weng Fen (1961, Hainan, China) is the coordinator of *Chaile Travel*. Using photography, he has been documenting urban expansion across China, which began with major cities along the southeastern coast and moved towards northern and then central China. Most of Weng Fen’s art responds to the changing living environment and the larger socio-political and economic climate that underlie these changes. Concerned with the potential danger of an overdeveloped Chinese economy in a globalized world and the literal overbuilding of China, he has constructed miniature cities using intact eggshells as the primary material.

In 2007, Weng Fen discovered that the force of rural redevelopment was reaching his ancestral hometown, Taishan village, where many of his relatives still live. At the beginning, the artist’s effort to photograph probably arose from an instinctive need to record his birthplace before its inevitable disappearance. Nonetheless, his initial observation and investigation of the region familiarized Weng Fen with a concrete and problem-driven situation against which *Chaile Travel* would take shape.

Huang Xuebin (1979, Wenchang, China) observed that the education system mass produces objective professionals, who are capable of meeting expectations of society. Social relationship became alienated into an abstract world filled with superficiality. With the universal identification as a consumer, the artist is asking people to distract themselves from life pressure and social class, and start to consider: how to rebuild our own intrinsic value?

Wen Wu (1968, Lanzhou China) reflects on ways of freeing from the past, integrating the present, and projecting into the future. He explains, “Self-deconstructing my own paintings means casting eyes back into my artistic life, cutting my thick-color oil paintings into pieces and attempting to expose the fault line in imagination covered deep under the colors. This allows me to re-deconstruct my completed paintings and bridge the gap in imagination between the painter and the audience. By blending the past with the present, self-deconstruction provides a special experience of entertainment for the audience.”



## FAN ANGEL

Fan Angel's (1979, Shaoyang, China) oil painting, installation and video works have been based on the theme of young girls' growth. She has been devoted to researching the psychology of young girls and developing series of art experience training lessons for children.

Fan Angel's creation always links with the psychological growth of teen-agers. The *First Physiology Period*, *Angel Doll*, *Secret Garden of the Angels* series all focus on young girl's growing problems from different angles. Her students and teen-ager girls that she has met in animation exhibitions and festivals have been the models for her work *Secret Garden of the Angels*. During the communication and conversations between the artist and the girls, the artist has acquired deeper understanding of their heart and then made many practical solutions to their juvenile development.

Maiden growth has been the black case in the field of psychological research; on one hand it is classified into the forbidden area of morality, on the other it is also the main object of male scopophilia. The other side of multiple and open development of today's society is the exposure of erotica to the public: Sex is depicted as secular happiness and juvenile psychology is neglected.

Fan Angel has cruelly uncovered the social curtain over maiden growth through a series of graphic pattern and displayed the truth by detailed actions and postures as evidence. This truth is the shocking and joyful representation of sexual development process. This truth makes the elusive sexual taboo invisible and humiliates male scopophilia to nowhere, and more importantly, it enables the hidden process of growth to be publicized.



## GENG YINI

In her work, Geng Yini (1982, Shenyang, China) realizes the inner serenity and the intimacy within art through continuous painting and creating. Self-discovering and connecting the world are both important processes during Geng's creation, while being "open-minded" and "opinionated" are two conversed qualities to Geng's unceasing improvement.

Geng Yini explains, "As a young artist, I try to build up my personal style and to give more vitality into my paintings. Coming from a north-eastern city of China, my hometown is a traditional Chinese heavy industry city, which was poor, polluted, unenlightened, and people are exhausted from the daily work, like a desert of art. People become boorish, indifferent, and conservative. But luckily, I myself, the new generation with limpid eyes, get to connect and observe the outside world by internet."



## HOU XIAOWEI

My painting to “Ji Jing” simply summarizes my work surface features and internal meaning. The relationship between image I created and the real scene is not objective, but a subjective expression. That is to say, through the form of painting’s language in the creative process, the work forms a visual sense of alienation and psychological sense of distance. With my works, I hope to let the audience feel an aesthetic conception such as Pamuk once wrote: “beauty beauty, in its sorrow!”. Beauty is not isolated and single, but relative, diverse, and unity of the opposites. Therefore, life is beautiful but not without being induced by sadness and depression. So I put this feeling into the picture tone to form a sentimental setting. That is to say, the creation of the means, methods and forms are essentially determined by their emotions.

I have a personal emotional and psychological fluctuation, thus my sad, lonely, troubled state of mind reflects on my works. I want to make this inner loneliness into a so-called “landscape” in creation, to strengthen the sense of melancholy and emptiness, not only for our spiritual comfort, but to escape from the insecure hustle and bustle metropolis. My works often show suburban and indoor sceneries as a metaphor for my own emotional expression, and I hope the viewers can also reflect their own feelings. In my recent creations there are a series of images such as snow groves, frozen small lake, and deserted garden, as if they are fixed in a stagnant time frame. The silence of the scene is empty and fragile, and everything in the picture is both familiar yet unreal, flashing a sense of disappointment, gloomy, and sadness.

My works use real photos as prototypes, but not photo realistic depiction. By depicting the sky, trees, buildings and other indoor scenes, I wanted to show the relationship between concrete and abstract. I hope to capture moments of quiet, memory, structure, atmosphere, color, showing the narrative and abstraction, reminiscent of the history of art and the reality of the familiar elements. I hope my works have multiple layers, that they are absurd and harmonious, strange and family, chaotic and orderly. In order to achieve this, I either redo or abandon (bad) paintings. Therefore, even though the work quantity is not many, each work is the result of tortuous effort as to anticipate the best expression of emotion.

My work into a number of popular sense of form, to create a decorative and diaphragm sensibility of the language and silent indifference work atmosphere, let the loneliness win support among the people, as far as possible, strengthen the effectiveness of vision. When I am in the process of creation, it is often difficult to overcome the self belief challenges, continued with their doubts of the heart. I feel the nature in the picture is a re-creation, memory and fantasy, not to imitate. In my works, the audience can see is not the real objective scene, but after filtering and the psychological distance of the scene, making his works a silent, sad, sad, sad. In this sense, my work is also to the contemporary complex psychological perspective and analysis.

*Hou Xiaowei was born in Shenyang, China, in 1982.*



## HUANG HSIN-CHIEN

Huang Hsin-Chien (1966, Taiwan) has committed himself to apply digital technology in aesthetics and culture, and explore the resonance between humanity and technology.

His early works focused on the integrations between traditional beauties and new media. He used algorithmic computations to analyze and reconstruct Chinese aesthetics, and the resulting works created cultural links through interactions between different audiences. His installation work *Shall We Dance, Shanghai?* made analogy between human movements and the rise and decline of cities.

In recent years, Hsin-Chien began to investigate the possibilities of new media art in public spaces. His public arts transformed citizens' collective memories and creations into physical embodiments in the public spaces. These works collected local community's cultural heritages and memories, and turned themselves into vehicles for citizens' sentiments.

His most recent works are based on his profound understanding on technology and explore the issue that humanity is fractured by technology. For example, the invention of stereoscopic images enables the left and right eyes to see separated images. The continuity of human body and mind are broken by this new way of seeing, and human's cohesive perceptions and cognitions become fragmented and unilateral.



## LI HUA

The recurrent theme in Li Hua's (1984, Changchun, China) artworks is to create an erratic atmosphere by depicting traffic accidents, collapsed houses, or decadence pervading among the woods to reflect the anxiety and roughness in his mind. Hidden under the monotonous colored picture, it is the constrained breath of urban life. Among the pale and dark fissures, symbols are hidden and humans are undergoing reification. By combining visual experience with personal techniques, Li Hua's appeal to a harmonious life is manifested through his portrayal of the accelerating modernization and the loss of a spiritual homeland for humans.

What Li Hua observes is that we have been unceasingly devouring the metropolis we live in. His anxiety comes from the indulgent environmental pollution that will consequently receive punishment from the environment, such as tsunami, hurricanes, earthquakes, mud-rock flows are all the punishments for human beings going against nature.

It is probable that in the future world we live in, more intense clamors will arise, and dull barren lands will emerge. Nature will alarm us with overwhelming noises and extreme ecological stillness. As we are unwilling to perceive that our future generations cannot see the thriving trees and flourishing flowers, but only hear the blaring of traffic. Thus, through art, Li Hua appeals to work on ecology and the environment, leaving a harmonious life.



## LI XIANGQUN

### The Creation Concept of Spiritual Practitioner

If Cixi is still a specific image symbol, then what about Confucius? In my eyes, there isn't a so-called statue of Confucius. Confucius is a kind of historical writing, text of the inheritance by thoughts and theories. My Confucius drifts over and stands in front of us, faceless in the long history of writing. But his beard is a beaded decoration, a pair of very beautiful delicate hands superimposed. The two-meter-high statue, large and small, what he is wearing is just some worked drapery. Light in his eyes is unpredictable; like that will metamorphosis away at any time. It reinforces the symbols of Confucius; multi-image capture from integration is not realistic. Perhaps any concrete image will be a carrier of Confucius is destined vague and specious. I try to do a return to "The Emperor's New Clothes," where the children don't care about anything.

I add a pillow in front of the sculpture after I had done the work, trying to express another meaning. The pillow is used by people to rest when it belongs to a private space. People will totally relax on the pillow, they always rely on it. You will have the feeling of waking up from a deep sleep, and full of hope and disappointment. You don't know what to do and what to tell. I call the kind of thing desires, which means, shows personal desires to everyone and let they comment.

Like Confucius, it should be law-abiding, but the pillow breaks this law-abiding. What I create is to ask a question and raise awareness of that. It doesn't have a clear answer, because when facing this piece different people will have different answers.



## LIU ZHENGYONG

Liu Zhengyong (1979, Zhuzhou, China) focuses on portraits, most of which are sculptured busts. From frustrations to flaming emotion, each figure can be linked with a special background and a unique style. They are immune from reference to others. The body with the constantly simple and natural contour highlights the staunch background without any clear meanings. The outer contour line of the body is removed through the calm strength, all of which is clear and can allow others to feel the expression of humanity. The artist applies wet soil as pigment. To obtain the sufficient tangible depth of substances, he piously and devotedly places materials via pens layers by layers, in order to express the weight in the depth of his heart.

If his works convey the sense of presence like “pain-cheering birth of new spirits”, then they are like an incredible sunshine. The small or big strokes touch the surface of flesh until it trembles. Liu Zhengyong starting from the end of his broad brushes presses the body fresh and alive with the specially-made pigment—sometimes almost pure color. In this way each piece of spots is transformed into a small piece of fresh body. The blood flowing from vessel remains in multiple parts of the body. It is the record of red mark resulting from palpitations of artists living in the moment. Such strength of emotional loads leads to an unparalleled modernity and endows the young man an artistic language that carries meaning beyond time and place.



## MAO LIZI

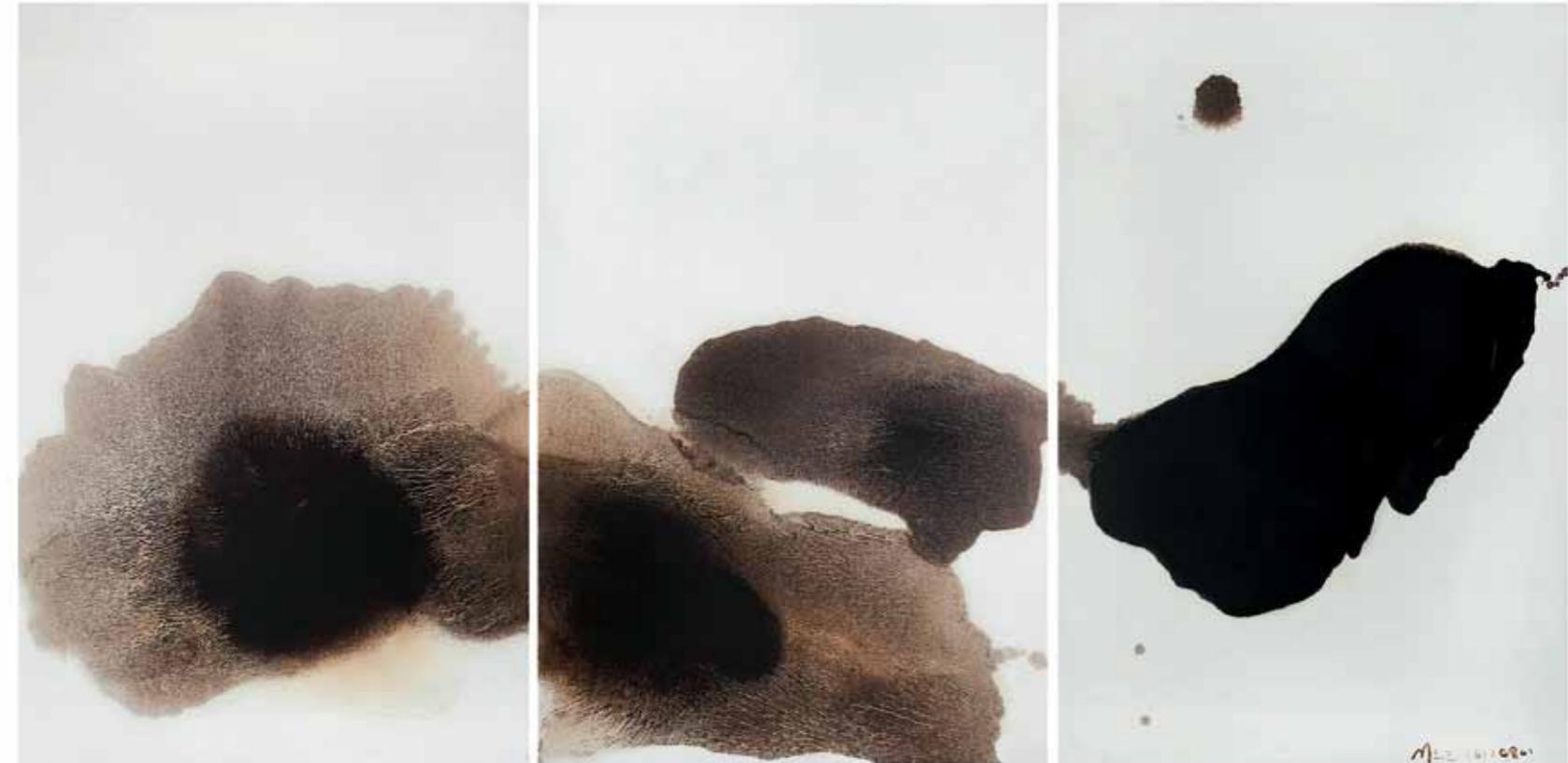
Mao Lizi (1950, Beijing, China) is a founding member of “The Stars Group” in the 70’s and 80’s, which significantly influenced and shaped the Chinese contemporary art development. This artistic movement group has led Chinese painting away from the Cultural Revolution signifier in pursuit of the freedom of creativity. His understanding and feelings about Chinese and Western culture is based on his real life experiences.

Mao’s early works are characterized by a hyperrealist style. His rendition of a wooden door from a Beijing courtyard house is stunningly lifelike, arresting the eye with details like a cigarette butt on the floor and a crack on the wall. His recent endeavors, however, show a different approach to art making through combining abstract elements with real objects. The paint brush and the paint marks it made are both very “real”—we can look at the brushstrokes and paint marks as “traces” left by abstraction, but the paint on the wall and cloth are nonetheless real objects from life, albeit highly symbolic in significance. Mao moves freely between hyperrealism and surrealism. Beneath the casual appeal of his art lies much thought and care in the planning of the works. The vast expanses of blank white gave the compositions ample breathing space. At the same time, adopting the contrasting elements of the virtual and the real, the active and the passive found in Chinese traditional culture infuses his works with a new, interesting flavor and exciting possibilities.

Mao Lizi’s unrestrained paintings manage to maintain the integrity and coherence between accidental and natural, process and result.

He captures exquisitely the scale of pigment’s dark and light, rich and poor, dynamic and static forms on canvas that’s similar to Chinese ink on paper, illustrating the beauty of subtleness, poetic, and movement against the poetic scenery constructed between sense and sensibility, relaxation and tension, control and freedom.

Furthermore, Mao Lizi’s artworks grasp the uncertainty of abstract paintings, and it is this uncertainty, which embodies the essence of contingency, mystique, natural, and unpredictability that the artist continues to find new possibilities that constitute the infinity in abstract paintings. Therefore, the artist has found, in paintings, an unembellished “tranquility” and “placid” realm—a retreat into personal serenity and personal experience. He even goes on to convey the idea of “the nature lives with me in symbiosis, and everything is with me as a whole”.



## MENG SITE

Meng Site (1988, Hunan, China) shows the pattern of different activities of labor workers and white-collar businessman—some are in the office, some are operating machines, while others are taking the bus during holidays. He emphasizes the details of these people's attire in different ways to accentuate the nature of their jobs and the class they belong to. Meng Site shows that the power of ordinary people lies in their position and identity in the social structure.

In this work *Rainbow Hall*, Meng has drawn his materials from a holiday banquet scene. Through subjective removal of the hall's wall environment, the scene of the banquet and top-lights are placed in the same space to achieve a surreal image effect. The artist hopes to use the simple surreal image to convey a dreamlike feeling, a kind of memorial episode. With the development of modern communication technology, the means of communication among people is quite different from before. Such communication ways as internet, computers and mobile phones bring convenience to people's long-distance connection, which also hinder people's face-to-face communication. Virtual social networking makes Meng Site feel the true loneliness, thus promoting him to yearn for the assembling banquet more and more. Staying in the crowd seems to bring the artist a sense of security and warmth. So he tries to alleviate the holiday complex by painting. Depicting these images has the same efficacy with keeping secret diaries.



## SU KE

Su Ke (1987, Sichuan, China) attempts to explore an individual's psychological perception under the influence of social structure. In his creative works, the artist employs a concealing method called the "cataract" (a clouding of the lens inside the eye which leads to a decrease in vision), to interrupt viewers from perceiving the scenes of reality, thus to observe how visuals images are recognized with perception.

In Su Ke's work, images from a visual database of mundane life were randomly selected. These images of scenes of reality were then manipulated to become semi-intimated and defamiliarized. They retained their identifiable characteristics, but at the same time they are interfered and obscured by the materiality of the sponges: the metaphors toward the conspired illusions which are generated from relations of personal experiences are quietly hidden in the interior of the sponges. The excessive restraint for color results his drawings in a unified light grey tone. Su Ke intends to—through significant properties like blurring, temperature, precision, and concealing—suggest a sense of secrecy in the telling.

The interior drawings inside the sponges being his initial stage of working on flat planes, is trying to evoke intuitive determinations towards the form and language of drawing. This determination is absolutely not a secondary interpretation of an image, applying to both the artist and the viewer. In quite a long period of time, people judged a work of drawing from text description based from aspects such as image analysis and sociological analysis. He is more interested in the ways of how visuals recognizes with perception.

In drawing, the role of the different languages functions differently facing with the various psychological needs. In the series of the work *Cataract*, Su Ke's language is an "internal injection", that is, a hinted action of semi-privacy."



## WEN WU

### About Self-deconstruction

Self-deconstruction is the theme I yearn to reflect in my paintings and such a desire has been fermenting over the past years...

### My Past :

During my study in Germany, I, together with many other young artists, were influenced by my supervisor and followed his thick color style. Through learning and painting, I shaped myself and at the same time was shaped, which is a process of self-expression and being expressed. In my twenty years spent in Germany, I was most impressed by the food cutting machine, which I used in my daily life. It is awe-inspiring, as it cuts food into standard pieces and forces out any individuality. Such an eating habit can only be distinguished and judged by our digestive system. As individuals, are we really left with no choices?

### My Present:

As a Chinese born in Lan Zhou, of Shandong ancestry, living in Hainan Island and with an overseas background in Germany, I have experienced diversified linguistic and digestive systems, enabling me to reflect on ways of freeing the past, integrating the present and projecting into the future. Self-deconstructing my own paintings means casting eyes back into my artistic life, cutting my thick-color oil paintings into pieces and attempting to expose the fault line in imagination covered deep under the colors. This allows me to re-deconstruct my completed paintings and bridge the gap in imagination between the painter and the audience. By blending

the past with the present, self-deconstruction provides a special experience of entertainment for the audience.

### My Future:

To be constantly generated by my past + my present...





## YANG FAN

Yang Fan (1981, Shenyang, China), inspired by Google photo search engine, is deeply intrigued by the search terms and results of immense possibilities. Particularly he is interested in the interconnection and complex relationship based on the search engine algorithm. Exhibiting works feature his realistic paintings, which explore the process of “de-constructing” and “re-constructing” conventional definition and naming system in the information age.

### Waterfall

My work *Waterfall*, I painted last year. It references pictures from Internet search. I enter a word in the Google search bar, just randomly I chose the word “waterfall”. Then the screen will show the hundreds of pictures related to this entry. To search through a word picture should be the age of the Internet, the most commonplace things. For me, this seems to let me find interesting connections between a concept and pictures. The randomly entered text that has inadvertently given the significance of this painting, of course, also includes the name, so that such an ordinary picture can turn into a work of art. The process itself is the word (meaning) or a picture of a deconstruction, but also a unique pattern of the age of the Internet.



## ZHANG KAI

Zhang Kai (1985, Jiangsu, China) is fond of classical western painting and especially prefers aestheticism in painting. His works express some kind of feeling of "taking the stage." The paintings mostly depict indoor spaces or indoor scenes, but these spaces or scenes always have an ambiguous relation with real life.

In his earlier works, the spaces are narrow and cramped, giving the viewer a sense of pressure and incarceration. The clear expression of space in perspective always enhances rather than diminishes this feeling, which so isolates the main object of the picture.

In his process of creation, Zhang Kai does not want to see space merely as space, but (in most cases) he expands it into a special scene around the main object. Similarly, Zhang Kai also pays great attention to the specially arranged light sources and their properties, for the scene to keep a certain aspect of realness. However, and more frequently, he tends to consciously avoid reality, bringing the tableau into a surreal, self-sufficient state.

We can also find two symbolic images, cat and rabbit, that appear repeatedly in his works. When asked why, Zhang Kai gives his typical shy smile and said, "Maybe the cat and the rabbit symbolize what I want to express. The cat is a strange animal, sometimes lonely, sometimes elegant, and sometimes mysterious. The rabbit is very cute—I love rabbits very much." This simple answer conveys his attitude towards art: what he chooses is not a popular or expected theme, but the theme he loves and that corresponds to his inner life. His works are not only very lovely and rich in expression, but also because the artist uses a classical realist style of painting. Just the

visual expression and the atmosphere can quickly inspire the viewers' desire to appreciate more of these works. It's easy to see that Zhang Kai tries to personalize the cats and rabbits in his artwork from the very beginning, because in his works, they usually display rich emotions. They are sometimes sad, sometimes gloomy, sometimes elegant and sometimes lonely. Of course, besides the outpouring of emotion, there seems to be another narrative logic hidden in the works, that is, the appeal for a new meaning after appropriation.

Compared with his early works, the new works continue his long-standing style, the depth and the subtle hues of classical paintings are applied in a cartoon vision. "Appropriation," and "self-expression" are also key words in Zhang Kai's art. But his new works go further in atmosphere and emotion. Appropriation is one way of creation that is widely used in contemporary art, it means that "the artist creates the artwork using existing images and styles, and then changes the meaning of the image that is appropriated, and puts it into a new context. It isn't passive, objective and indifferent, but active, subjective and has its own purpose." Employing the idea of "appropriation" from the Western post-modernism, Zhang Kai's artistic creations follow the works of classical masters, and give the original work a new meaning and new context, while inclining to the imagery of "animamix". The deranged time and space in Zhang's works are carefully arranged, his paintings thus provoke viewers to think more about the meanings behind them.



## ZHANG WEI

### Artificial Theater - Profile Portraits of Unknown Women

I spent my childhood growing up in the family compound of a theatre troupe, and as a child I could often see many actors and actresses of various historical and contemporary, Chinese and foreign characters playing on the stage. With China's economic Reform and Open-Door Policy, the theatre had undergone a silent change in an effort to adapt to the socio-cultural and economic development that were taking place—gradually introducing the popular, trendy and foreign contents to the traditional, local and folk culture and art, the mixture and fusion of which presented a beauty that was piebald, absurd and chaotic. Retrospectively, I still hold a deep feeling for this, and I have always cherished an impulse to express such feeling.

In the *Artificial Theater-Profile Portraits of Unknown Women*, I desire to blend more figures of Chinese ordinary people into the character of "Artificial Theatre"—utilizing a more symbolic character to lighten the original actor identity of the character, making the "performance" look more typical and absurd. In terms of expression, I borrowed the Internet game-style personal virtualization, selecting some Chinese and foreign characteristic portraits of women (such as Da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine* and Giovanni Ambrogio de Predis' *Profile Portrait of a Lady*, etc.) as the subjects to be played by the actors. By using computer synthesis technology we reorganized and recomposed the body parts of hundreds of real actors to produce, through artificial swapping, a brand new virtual image by incorporating the minor likenesses to the classic characters, including such details as skin color and hair

of each actor. These images are no longer a carrier of "soul or spirit", but rather a concretized pattern, with a sensation of materialized mutation.

In real life, those yearning for success often end up in despair due to dreams unrealized, while virtual cyber games can bring a sense of success to those under game identities. The whole game begins from the fundamental identity of "human", and it is up to you to install gender and general appearance and determine its personality traits. Like character building in internet games, I exaggeratedly used the identity virtualization in my works. Although the whole process is a hypothesis, it is a real experience in the spiritual dimension.

*Zhang Wei was born in Shanxi, China in 1977. He currently lives and works in Beijing, China.*





# **CULTURE·MIND·BECOMING** **FANG LIJUN: A CAUTIONARY VISION**

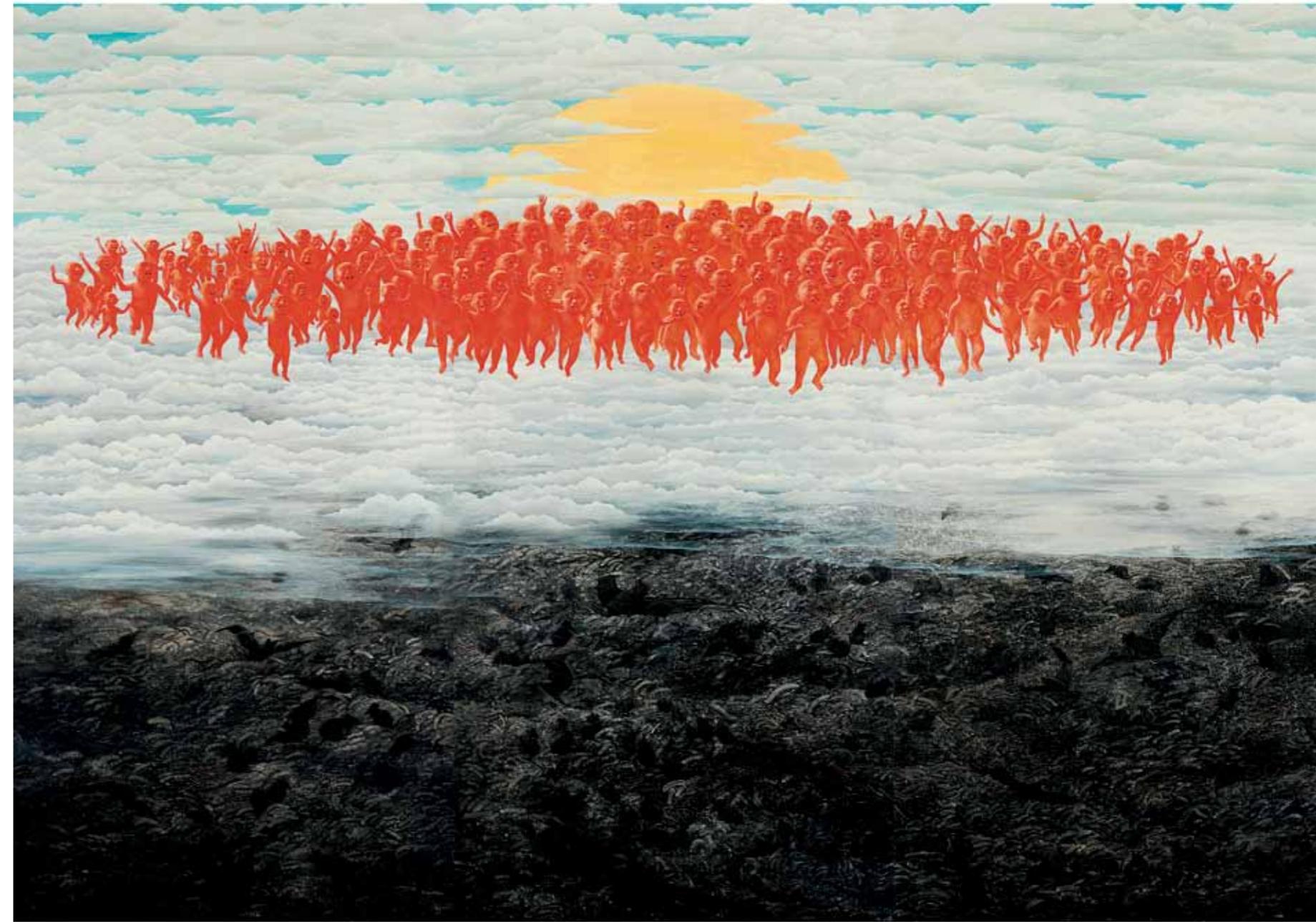
Curated by Danilo Eccher  
Palazzo Marcello

## FANG LIJUN

By Danilo Eccher

“Complexity theory” has taken a leading role in contemporary theoretical physics since the 1960s; but in recent decades, the social, economic and philosophical repercussions of this theory have become even more evident. Indeed nowadays, the process of developing a nonlinear way of thinking, even linguistically, seems more conscious and concrete than it did just a few years ago. The very idea of evolving a complex way of thinking, a development capable of accommodating its “chaotic” content, an apparently disordered proliferation of ideas, can inspire interpretative and analytical practices that are completely unexpected and quite astonishing. Complexity theory interconnects with chaos theory, complex algorithms, quantum physics, and the tumult of new logic and mathematics. In short, this chaotic way of thinking has revolutionized our entire notional approach to knowledge. In theology, this would be like revisiting the suggestions of polytheism, and it is no coincidence that the latest developments in theoretical physics have made anthropological leaps in their analyses of shamanic knowledge. Complexity, not simplicity, is proving to be the authentic path to truth. On an emphatically marginal, but coherent, level, those involved in artistic inquiry also seem interested in this discordant way of thinking. An art historical reinterpretation of aesthetic phenomenology using reductive chronological, social or psychological methodologies does not provide an adequate framework for the analysis of contemporary events but, perhaps, it is also reductive in terms of a complex historical reading. This calls for a different critical and interpretative approach, one that can somehow clear the field of the evolutionary

linearity that places the origin of contemporaneity within the context of the historical avant-garde. This interpretative logic is clearly rooted in Hegelian philosophy, with its spiraling linearity that proceeds through synthesis, and through advances that are coherent and connected, possibly complicated but never complex: there is a growing need for new tools of critical analysis that are able to call into question our current knowledge through an awareness of nonlinearity, of a complex route to knowledge that can no longer reject the truth of chaos. Art, and particularly painting, has moved decisively in this direction in recent years, in the multiple new artistic languages coming out of Asia. This art boasts a millennial iconographic tradition, sophisticated symbolism, an incredibly rich lexicon, a surprising philosophical weight, and a masterful capacity for expression. The absence of the very idea of the avant-garde, which has only recently been introduced through contact with the West, makes Asian art, especially that of China and India, an incredible critical and aesthetic laboratory in which artists can experiment with new interpretative methodologies and new lines of analytical complexity. In this context, the work of Fang Lijun testifies to the complex relationship between one-off and multiple, singularity and quantity, just as, in the algorithm of starlings in flight, the chaotic unpredictability of one bird’s movement triggers an orderly collective of birds that move together in unison. Within the complex model generally established by a Fang Lijun work, the relationships between singularity and multiplicity are blurred with those of size, creating a dissonance between the large surfaces or



dominant figures and the host of minute insects or imperceptible spider webs. Interpreting these works means constantly having to look at them from a distorted, skewed, oblique point of view, in other words, not allowing ourselves to be sucked in by the leading actors, but scanning the surface to find a more subtle, more obscure kind of protagonist, a scenic transparency captured in the minute, or the fragile. These works do not depict radiant epiphanic butterflies, but insects trapped and condemned in invisible spider webs; just as the heroes of other monumental works are not the corpses of revolutions but the ants and other insects that feed on them, which the eye must seek out. But seeking out the Cartesian coordinates in these works, the perfect proportions and the right point of view, is misleading: our vision must become fluid and unstable, glide over the surfaces, caress the images without ever stopping, in other words it must activate a nonlinear gaze, a complex gaze. Solar luminosity and nocturnal tragedy coexist in these works, which liberate bats and mice, cram jubilant crowds of madmen on the edge of the abyss, and enclose newborn babies in claustrophobic bubbles. Fang Lijun does not simply dramatize contradiction; rather than limit himself to the astonishing effect of opposition, his “Cynical Realism” is in reality a narrative about complexity, about the art of chaos that refutes linear interpretation, and that is immersed in an engorgement of languages and meanings. In this way, it is possible to access one of the secrets of an art that is covered by a thousand veils, infinite filters that impede our vision, opaque layers that must not be removed but that instead enrich our vision with surprises and truths. Although our critical gaze is often guided by purity and synthesis, in this case they only confuse and disorientate it, because this type of art cannot give up its ambiguity, or allow the mists that swirl around its narrative to dissipate.

Last year, when I presented Italy's first major solo show on Fang Lijun at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Turin, I wrote the following words: “The art of Fang Lijun contains all the secrets of the East: a sweet, simple figurative style enveloped in a brilliant use of color;

a visionary, childlike fascination with an unattainable world; and a calm, graceful, balanced narrative: but all of this is just the brilliant patina of a style of painting that is able to suggest the contemporary anguish of loss of identity, the obsession of the collective, the presence of disease, pain, sin. It is an art of ambiguity and deceit, of levity and depth, of nightmares and emotions, of cynical fantasies”, an art that demands to be interpreted by the most current categories of complexity.

### 方力鈞作品中的「複雜性理論」

達尼洛·埃克爾[意]：都靈市立美術館館長、藝術批評家及策展人

從1960年代開始，「複雜性理論」(complexity theory)就開始在當代理論物理學界扮演領頭羊的角色，近幾十年來，這一理論在社會、經濟以及哲學領域產生的深遠影響更是日益顯著。實際上，在近段時間，非線性思維的生髮——哪怕是語言學層面上——也比幾年前顯得更具有自知、更為具體。這種想法——複雜的思維方式通過演化而來，這一發展演化過程，可以適應思考自身內容的「混亂性」(chaotic)，即思想的增殖顯然是無序的，——有時能啟發解釋性、分析性的活動，這種活動完全不在人預料之內，並令人甚為吃驚。「複雜性理論」和「混沌理論」(chaos theory)、「複雜演算法」(complex algorithms)、「量子物理」(quantum physics)以及甚囂塵上的新邏輯和數學相互關聯。簡言之，這種混亂的思維方式已經在我們對知識有意識的獲取活動中產生了革命性的影響。在神學層面上，這相當於重溫多神教教義，無獨有偶的是，在理論物理學領域，我們取得的最新進展是對薩滿教知識在人類學意義上的飛躍。通向真理的真正道路是複雜性 (complexity) 而不是簡單性 (simplicity)，這一點正在逐步被證實的過程當中。在某種值得強調的邊緣性——同時亦是連貫的——層面上，那些涉及藝術性追問的人們似乎也對這種紛擾的思維方式



感興趣。用還原年表（reductive chronological）、社會或心理學方法論從藝術史層面去解釋美學現象不能夠提供足夠的框架以分析當代事件；但是，也許在複雜歷史閱讀（complex historical reading）層面，它也是太還原了。我們亟待一種不同的批判及解釋方式，這一方式能以某種方式厘清漸進的線性發展領域——在歷史性的「先鋒」（historical avant-garde）這一語境裡奠定了當代性的基礎。這種解釋性的邏輯無疑植根於黑格爾哲學，其綜合地、螺旋式前進、線性發展，內在的連貫和連續性，可能算是繁複（complicated）卻絕稱不上叢雜（complex）——對於新批判分析方法的需求日益增加，在提出問題時它必須能夠深入我們當前掌握的知識，並意識到其非線性特徵，通過一種複雜的途徑進入知識當中，使其不再排斥真理的混沌性（the truth of chaos）。藝術，特別是繪畫，從近年來在亞洲產生的多元的新藝術語言的發展趨勢來看，正在堅定不移的朝著這一方向發展。這種藝術鼓吹一種千年的肖像傳統（iconographic tradition），深奧的象徵意義，難以置信的豐富辭藻（lexicon），驚人的哲學重量以及嫺熟的表達空間。在先鋒這一概念缺席的情況下——這一概念在近些年和西方的接觸中才被引進——亞洲藝術，特別是中國和印度藝術成為一種不可思議的批判及美學實驗室，藝術家能在其中實驗新的解釋方法和分析複雜性的新途徑。在這一語境下，方力鈞的作品證實了一次性（one-off）和多次性（multiple）、單數（singularity）和總量（quantity）的複雜關係；這好比飛翔的掠鳥的運算方式：一隻鳥的難以預料的混亂飛翔運動觸發群鳥有序的集體運動。在方力鈞作品中基本形成的複雜模式中，單數（singularity）和多數（multiplicity）的關係在尺寸中變得模糊，在碩大表面和主要形體及大量蠕蠕昆蟲或難以發覺的蛛網之間創造出一種不和諧。要解釋這些作品意味著必須不斷地從一種扭曲、偏斜、間接的觀點來看視它們，換句話說，不讓我們被主要角色牽著鼻子走，但卻通過檢視表面，找出更微妙、更模糊的主角；在微小或脆弱當中捕捉到一種風景化的透明。這些作

品並不是在描述一群呈放射形的啟示性的蝴蝶，而是一群困在隱形蛛網中飽受煎熬的昆蟲；就如其他里程碑式作品中的主人公不是革命的遺體，而是螞蟻和其他咬噬這些屍體的昆蟲，這一點必須通過雙眼進行感知。但是尋找這些作品中直角坐標的對應、完美的比例和正確的視角會讓人誤入歧途：我們的視線必須變得流動而非穩定，劃過表像、輕觸圖像絕不停留，換句話說它必須激發一種非線性的凝視、一種複雜的凝視。太陽的光輝和夜晚的悲劇在這些作品中共存，這解放了蝙蝠和老鼠，在深淵邊緣狂歡盛筵的瘋狂人們，以及包裹在幽閉恐懼式氣泡中的新生嬰兒。方力鈞並非簡單的使矛盾顯得戲劇化；與其將自身限制在對立的驚人效果中，他的「玩世現實主義」在事實上卻是關於複雜性的敘事，講述駁倒線性解釋的混亂的藝術，並沉湎於語言和意義的膨脹當中。用這種方式，我們可以接近一種藝術的秘密之一，這種藝術籠罩著千層面紗，無數過濾層妨礙我們的視線，不透明的塗層不能被移除，卻反而以驚喜和真實豐富我們的視線。雖然我們的批判性凝視通常受到純粹性（purity）和綜合性（synthesis）的引導，在這個案例上它們卻只能產生困惑和擾亂方向，因為這種類型的藝術不能放棄其模糊性，或任圍繞其敘事四周的迷霧消散。

去年當我在都靈現代藝術博物館（Galleria d' Arte Moderna）推出方力鈞首次義大利個展時，寫了以下文字：

「方力鈞的藝術包含了所有的東方秘密：在色彩的出色發揮下隱藏的一種親切而簡單的比喻方式；對難以達到的世界一種夢想家式的童真魅力；以及一種平靜、優雅而平衡的敘事；但這一切都只是一種繪畫風格的奪目光彩，而這種風格能夠暗示當代身份迷失的極度痛苦、暗示對集體性的迷戀以及疾病、痛苦和罪惡。這是一種具有模糊性和欺騙性、浮誇和深度、夢魘和情感、玩世不恭的想像的藝術。」這種藝術要求人們在複雜性範疇中加以詮釋，這是最近理論發展的趨勢。





## CURATORS

Karlyn De Jongh

Danilo Eccher

Huang Du

Yang Shin-Yi



### **Karlyn De Jongh**

Karlyn De Jongh (1980, Netherlands), M.A. Philosophy and M.Phil. Art History, artist, independent curator and author. Since 2007 with the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, organizing symposia and exhibitions in a.o. Amsterdam, New York and Tokyo as well as at the 53<sup>rd</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. With Global Art Affairs Foundation, publishing books and documenting Art Projects.

[Photo: Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy, 8 October 2013, 17:21]



### **Danilo Eccher**

Danilo Eccher (1953, Italy), art critic and curator. 1989 to 1995, Artistic director at Galleria Civica d'Arte Contemporanea di Trento, Italy; From 2001-2008, Director of MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Italy and from 2002-2006 co-director of Master Class for Contemporary Art and Architecture Curator in La Sapienza University of Rome, Italy. Since 2009, director of GAM, Turin, Italy.

[Photo: GAM-Torino, Italy, 16 April 2013, 16:34]



### **Huang Du**

Huang Du (1965, Lintong, China), independent curator and critic. From 1988 to 2001, editor and associate professor for a magazine of Fine Arts. Curated exhibitions, a.o. *Post-Material* (2000, Beijing), *Manufacturing in China* (2002, New York), *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Seoul International New Media Art Biennale* (2002, Seoul), the Chinese Pavilions at 50<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale and 26<sup>th</sup> Sao Paulo Biennale.

[Photo: Beijing, China, 23 April 2013, 12:21]



### **Yang Shin-Yi**

Yang Shin-Yi (1971, Taipei, Taiwan), Ph.D. Art History, independent curator and critic. Worked at Museum of Modern Art, NYC, consultant for Asian art at The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, NYC. Foreign Specialist for the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, consultant for Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation. Art Director of Artist Commune in Hong Kong.

[Photo: Beijing, China, 12 April 2013, 15:44]



**CAPTIONS**

## CAPTIONS

6 Palazzo Bembo in Venice, Italy

14 Rene Rietmeyer, *CÔTE D'AZUR*, 2011. Oil paint on wood, 28x21x7 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 28 Boxes

17-18 Chul Hyun Ahn, Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. With from left: *Emptiness*, 2002, Edition of 3 + 1AP, plywood, fluorescent lights, hardware, mirrors, 27 x 96 x 8 inches. *Void*, 2013, Edition of 3 + 1AP, plywood, acrylic, changing LED lights, hardware, mirrors, 77.5 x 61.75 x 6.5 inches. *Mirror Drawing #17*, 2013, Unique, plywood, LED lights, hardware, mirrors, 60 x 42 x 3.625 inches.

21 Yoshitaka Amano, *Deva Loka*, 2008. Automotive paint on aluminum, 240 x 700 x 10cm (7 panels)

23 Alice Anderson, *BIKE*, Alice Anderson's Travelling Factory, 30 performers, copper wire, The Print Room Theatre, London 2013

25 Jan-Erik Andersson, Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. With from left: *Life in the Life on a Leaf house, 2010-13* and *Life on a Leaf Video Kiosk: The construction of the Life on a Leaf house, 2006-09*. HD video on Bluray, duration respectively 30 min and 90 min. Architecture: Rosegarden Art & Architecture: Jan-Erik Andersson & Erkki Pitkäranta

27 Axel Anklam, *flug*, 2006/12. Fiberglass, stainless steel, 130x85x110cm. Base: black Mdf, 65x85x25cm

29 Atelier Morales, *TRIBUTE TO MONET*, november 2012 at 13:08. Photo: Atelier Morales

32-33 Yifat Bezalel, *Asher Eheye (I Shall Be The One That I Shall Be)*, 2013. Installations of video projections and pencil on paper. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

35 Djawid Borower, *Picture of God*, 1999. Oil on canvas, 140 x 210 cm

36-37 Djawid Borower, Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. With from left: *The Folds of Matter and The Folds of the Soul*,

2013. Enamel and resin on canvas, 205x225cm. *The Artist is Present*, 2012. Gold-pigment and mixed media on canvas, 160 x180 cm. *The Folds of Matter and The Folds of the Soul*, 2013. Enamel and resin on canvas, 205x225cm

39 Faiza Butt, *one*, 2013. Ink on polyester film framed, A3 size. Courtesy: the artist

40-41 Faiza Butt, Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. With from left: *Moderate Fantasy violence 1 + 2* (2010), *3 + 4* (2013). Ink on polyester film mounted on light box, 23x33 inches. Courtesy: the artist. Private collection of Mr Faizaan Mustafa Anwar. *Zaveer Zangeer*, 2013. Free standing light installation, 200 x 100 x 22cm. *God's best 4, 5, 6*, 2011. Digital print and ink on polyester film mounted on light box, 252x177cm. Courtesy: the artist

44-45 Genia Chef, *Dead House* (detail), 2013. Video, oil on panel and canvas, 527 x 455 x 358 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

46-47 Genia Chef, *Dead House* (detail), 2013. Video, oil on panel and canvas, 527 x 455 x 358 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

49 Chen Ping, Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. With from left: *Aurora, Red Green Bird, Pink Bird, Beast, Man and Forest, Rainbow, Beast, Man*, 2013. Oil on canvas, 180 x 210 cm each.

51 Canal Cheong Jagerroos, *Personal Structures: 'Time' is man's invention; 'Space' is man's imagination; 'Existence' is man's obsession*, 2013. Mixed media on canvas, 90 x 90 cm each. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

53 Karlyn De Jongh, *4, 5 MAY 2013 and 8-16 MAY 2013 – VENICE* (detail). Oil paint on wood, each work 210cm high, various widths. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

54-55 Karlyn De Jongh, *4, 5 MAY 2013 and 8-16 MAY 2013 – VENICE*. Oil paint on wood, each work 210cm high, various widths. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

57 Scott Eady, *Ivan*, 2010. Bronze, enamel paint and paper, 360mm diameter each. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: RH Gallery, Nelson, New Zealand

59 Scott Eady, *Ivan*, 2010. Bronze, enamel paint and paper, 360mm diameter each. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: RH Gallery, Nelson, New Zealand

61 Toshikatsu Endo, *Untitled*, 1990. Burned wood and copper, 350cmØ. Work as shown during the exhibition Personal Structures Time-Space-Existence at the Kuenstlerhaus Bregenz in Austria, 2010. Courtesy the artist

63 Toshikatsu Endo, *Void (cylindrical) - 2013 (process)*, 2013. Wood, iron, earth, air, fire, h. 204 x 458 x 458 cm. Photo: Toshikatsu Endo

65 Carole Feuerman, *Quan*, 2012. Oil on Resin and Polished Stainless Steel, 66.5 x 60 x 43 inches. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

67 Cristiana Fioretti, *Sensorial Space*, 2013. Light installation (light, water, plexigls, video), 300 x 124 x 374cm

69 Dale Frank, *A petulant tsunami of regrets and broken promises littered her chest drawer*, 2012. Varnish on canvas, 200 x 260 cm

71 Chris Fraser, *Centers*, 2013. Glass microspheres, aluminum, LED Pendants, 172 x 157 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

73 Marc Fromm, *Personal Structures*, 2013. Lime wood relief, oil, gold, 135 x 190 x 12 cm

75 Sally Gabori, *Dibirdibi Country*, 2012. Synthetic polymer paint on linen, 151 x 196 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne.

77 Jakob Gasteiger, *Untitled* (detail), 2013. Carbon and silk paper on wall, 500 x 453 x 470 cm. Courtesy: Jakob Gasteiger

78-79 Jakob Gasteiger, *Untitled*, 2013. Carbon and silk paper on wall, 500 x 453 x 470 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: Jakob Gasteiger

82-83 Darryn George, *Folder Room*, 2013. Automotive paint on MDF Board, lighting, 6290 x 4740 x 3700mm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

85 Selby Ginn, *Omnipresent Incarnate*, 2013. Leather, wire, cotton, wood, 210 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

87 David Goldenberg, *The Transformation of Art*, 2013. Installation, online activities, and activities inside the installation and around Venice, Black and

white photo on self adhesive vinyl, video installation loop, 11 mins, digital photographs, 100 Mdf panels and digital print on self adhesive vinyl, 920 x 120 x 254 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. In collaboration with Ioana Pioaru. Courtesy Glenda Cinquegrana: the Studio

89 Gotthard Graubner, *Sphäre*, 2001. Acrylic on canvas on synthetic wad, 204X204X18 cm. Signed and marked on the back. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg

93 (left) Kimberly Gundle, *NASHA*, 2012. Mixed media on mylar on collaged screenprinted Japanese paper, 150 cm x 80 cm. And: (right) Kimberly Gundle, *ORKEUWA*, 2013. Mixed media on mylar on collaged screenprinted Japanese paper, 120 cm x 89 cm

95 Laura Gurton, *Unknown Species*, Triptych, 2013. Oil, Alkyd, Acrylic on Linen, 60" x 36" x 3'. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

97 Patrick Hamilton, *Buckets*, 2009. Plastic buckets, color coupler prints mounted on Plexiglas, lightbulbs and electrical hardware, each bucket: 15¾ x 14¼ x 14¼ in. (40 x 36.1 x 36.1 cm.). Installation view at 10 Havana Biennial.

99 Anne Herzbluth, *Once*, 2013. Aluminum box, nine lightboxes, PLC control unit, 1330 x 1330 x 110 mm. Photo: Ines Matz-Boomgaarden

101 Per Hess, *Room#5: Installation with subjects*, 2013. Big subjects, Acrylic and varnish on canvas, 85 x 110 x 3,5 cm. Smal subject, Acrylic and varnish on MDF, 51 x 50 x 3,5 cm. Photo: Andrea Rosetti, Prada Foundation. Courtesy: Per Hess ©.

103 Per Hess, *Room#5: Installation with subjects*, 2013. Big subjects, Acrylic and varnish on canvas, 85 x 110 x 3,5 cm. Smal subject, Acrylic and varnish on MDF, 51 x 50 x 3,5 cm. Photo: Andrea Rosetti, Prada Foundation. Courtesy: Per Hess ©.

105 Hirofumi Isoya, *Land*, 2007. Scanned photocopy and Lambda print, Dutch Navy trainers which the artist wore for 1000 days, paint, image size 177.5 (artist's life size) x 123 x 3.4 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: Akihiko Inagaki

107 Sam Jinks, *Tattooed Woman*, 2007. Silicone, paint & human hair, 90 x 40 x 30 cm, edition of 3 + 2AP. Courtesy: the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf

108 Sam Jinks, *The Hanging Man*, 2007. Silicon, paint & human hair, 140 x 50 cm, edition of 3 + 2AP. Courtesy: the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf

109 Sam Jinks, *Untitled*, 2012. Silicone, pigment, resin, human hair, 36 x 36 x 18cm, edition of 3 + 2AP. Courtesy: the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf

111 Grzegorz Klatka, *By the way, #07072804*, 2007. Projection on the screen, about 4 min long. Courtesy: Grzegorz Klatka

113 Mehdi-Georges Lahlou, *No title – Paradise*, 2010. Paraffin, prayer mat, 100 x 70 cm. Courtesy: private collection & Galerie Dix9

115 James Lavadour, *Tiicham*, 2013. Oil on panel, 102" x 152" 2". Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

117 Helmut Lemke, *ÜBER DEN HÖRWERST nr.21: the Surplus Value of Sound no. 21*, 2013. 22 drawings, 420 x 594 mm each. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

119 Anna Lenz, *Strong Women for Art*, 2010-2013. Photographs, each 30x20cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Copyright: Roswitha Pross

121 Luce, *GOD*, 2012. Video, 2.59 min

123 Michele Manzini, *The error and the disenchantment*, 2013. Wood, each 50x50x250cm, (edition of 4 by Morelato)

125 Christopher H Martin, *Aveta*, 2013. Acrylic on Acrylic, 60 x 192 feet. Courtesy: The McLoughlin Gallery

127 Herre Methorst, *StreetViewArt, Ciudad de Mexico-“Isabel la Catolica”*, 2012. Digital art on canvas, 90x120 cm

129 David Middlebrook, *Breath of Fresh Air*, 2011. Ceramic Resin and Bronze, 5'H x 6'W x 3'D. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

131 Peter Simon Mühlhäußer, *Theresa*, 2013. Flesh bronze, 115cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: Peter Simon Mühlhäußer

132 Peter Simon Mühlhäußer, *Theresa*, 2013. Flesh bronze, 115cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: Peter Simon Mühlhäußer

133 Peter Simon Mühlhäußer, *Abigail*, 2013. Flesh bronze, 115cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: Peter Simon Mühlhäußer

135 Hermann Nitsch, *Schüttbild*, 2012. Acrylic on canvas with painting shirt, 200x300cm. 64th painting performance, MART, Rovereto, 2012. Courtesy: Hermann Nitsch. Photo: Box Art Gallery

137 Hermann Nitsch, *stretcher (relict)*, 2012. Stretcher, blood on cotton and wood, approx. 250x250x150cm. Courtesy: Hermann Nitsch. Photo: Peter Böttcher

139 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: Global Art Affairs Foundation.

141 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: Global Art Affairs Foundation.

142-143 Hermann Nitsch. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, at 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. From left: *Schüttbild*, 200x150cm, acrylic and blood on canvas, 63<sup>th</sup> painting performance, Prinzenhof Castle, 2012; *Schüttbild*, 200x300cm, acrylic on canvas with painting shirt, 64<sup>th</sup> painting performance, MART, Rovereto, 2012; *Schüttbild*, 200x150cm, acrylic and blood on canvas, 63<sup>th</sup> painting performance, Prinzenhof Castle, 2012. Front: stretcher, approx. 250x250x150cm, blood on cotton and wood. Courtesy: Hermann Nitsch

145 Yoko Ono, *ARISING*, 2013. Performance

147 Yoko Ono, *ARISING*, 2013. Performance

149 Yoko Ono with her work *ARISING*, 2013. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

151 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965/1–∞, Detail 918554–943954*, Undated. Acrylic on Canvas, 196 x 135 cm. Photo: Baschang & Herrmann, München. Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg

153 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965/1–∞, Detail 3786630–3809138*, circa 1985. Acrylic on Canvas, 196 x 135 cm. Photo: Baschang & Herrmann, München. Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg

154 Roman Opalka painting in his studio on 9 June 2010, at 19:11 o'clock.

155 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965/1–∞, Detail 5255314–5270335*, Undated. Acrylic on Canvas, 196 x 135 cm. Photo: Baschang & Herrmann, München. Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg

157 Triny Prada, *Before, Now & Then*, 2013. Silicone, light, tarlatane, thread, electronic device, 160 cm X 100 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Computer programing and electronic devices: ESIEA, ARNUM: Claire Leroux – Gacogne, Head off ArNum lab's; ESIEA – France. Thomas Bejuit, Loïc Billoët, Emmanuelle Clayes, Claire Leroux, Pierre Schott. Text: Translation from french by Peter Wilson.

159 Qin Chong, *birthday I-IV*, 2002. Paper, 20 x 45 x 45 cm (each). base: white cube 70 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

160 Qin Chong, *ova*, 2012. Paper, sisal cords

161 Qin Chong, *remember*, 2011. Video performance

163 Stefanus Rademeyer, *Hexagrid*, 2008. Mirror, fluorescent light, mahogany, perspex, 2400 x 1000 x 250mm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

165 Nicola Rae, *Reciprocal Resonances Refracted*, 2013. Two projectors, two laptops, 15 triangles and beaters, perspex tube, mirror ball motor. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

167 Arnulf Rainer, *Aktbild*, 2013. From the series: UNFINISHED INTO DEATH, 2011-. Acrylic on paper, 21x29,7cm

169 Arnulf Rainer, *Aktbild*, 2013. From the series: UNFINISHED INTO DEATH, 2011-. Acrylic on paper, 21x29,7cm

171 Arnulf Rainer, *Aktbild*, 2013. From the series: UNFINISHED INTO DEATH, 2011-. Acrylic on paper, 21x29,7cm

172 Arnulf Rainer, *Aktbild*, 2013. From the series: UNFINISHED INTO DEATH, 2011-. Acrylic on paper, 21x29,7cm

173 Arnulf Rainer, *Aktbild*, 2013. From the series: UNFINISHED INTO DEATH, 2011-. Acrylic on paper, 21x29,7cm

175 Bogdan Rața, *Trying to Keep Life*, 2012. Polyester, synthetic resin, fibre, paint, metal, water, 153 x 36,5 x 17 cm

177 Thomas Riess, *suit*, 2013. Correction tape on canvas, 100x300cm

179 Rene Rietmeyer, *HONG KONG DECEMBER 2012*, 2013. Oil paint on wood, 40x40x20 cm each. In this series there have been made a total of 105 Boxes

181 Rene Rietmeyer, *VENEZIA JUNE 2010*, 2010. Murano glass and silver, 48x11x16 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 103 Boxes

183 Rene Rietmeyer, *CÔTE D'AZUR*, 2011. Oil paint on wood, 28x21x7 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 28 Boxes

184-185 Rene Rietmeyer, *HONG KONG DECEMBER 2012*, 2013. Oil paint on wood, 40x40x20 cm each. In this series there have been made a total of 105 Boxes. On the floor: Toshikatsu Endo, *Untitled*, 1990. Burned wood and copper, 350cmØ. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

187 Yhonnie Scarce, *Burial Ground (detail)*, 2012. 225 pieces blown glass, dimensions variable. Courtesy: the artist and dianne tanzer gallery + projects. Photo: Janelle Low

189 Wilhelm Scherübl, *minus aquarell purple*, 2007 and minus aquarell indigo, 2003. Each work aquarell on paper, 100 x 150 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

191 Dmitry Shorin, *I Believe in Angels no. 8*, 2012. Hand-finished polymer coated polyurethane, 131 x 292 x 149cm. Courtesy: Erarta Galleries

193 Nitin Shroff, *Sacred water from the Seychelles, India and Venice*, 2006-13. Three water vials, respectively 5cm, 7cm and 5cm high. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

195 Suh Jeong Min, *Memories of Freedom Cries*, 2013. Triptych Korean Hanji paper on wooden frame, 3 dimensional hung installation. 550 x 377 x 8 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Courtesy: JanKossen Contemporary Gallery. © JanKossen Contemporary gallery and the artist

197 The Icelandic Love Corporation, *The Third Dimension*, 2013. Nylon stockings, 700x154x372 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013.

199 Monika Thiele, *Monde*, 2005. Yarn on Organza, 130 x 160cm

201 Michele Tombolini, *E luce fu xv elemento*, 2012. Video, duration 3:40 minutes. Photo: Francesco Burlando

203 Štefan Tóth, *A Theory of Sign Function*, 2013. Mixed media on canvas, 70x100cm

205 VALIE EXPORT, *VALIE EXPORT - SMART EXPORT*, 1970. Self portrait: transfer identity, Photographic series, b&w photography. © VALIE EXPORT. Photo: Gertrude Wolfschwenger

207 VALIE EXPORT, *glottis: THE PAIN OF UTOPIA*, 2007. Color photography. © VALIE EXPORT. Photo: Giovanni Pancino / Archiv V.E.

209 Vitaly & Elena Vasieliev, *Untitled 01 (Project NEO)*, 2012. C-print Duratrans, aluminium profile debex on acrylic panel, 150 x 100 cm. Number 2 of edition of 5, signed, accompanied by certificates of authenticity.

210 Vitaly & Elena Vasieliev, *Untitled 04 (Project NEO)*, 2012. C-print Duratrans, aluminium profile debex on acrylic panel, 150 x 100 cm. Number 2 of edition of 5, signed, accompanied by certificates of authenticity.

211 Vitaly & Elena Vasieliev, *Untitled 06 (Project NEO)*, 2012. C-print Duratrans, aluminium profile debex on acrylic panel, 150 x 100 cm. Number 2 of edition of 5, signed, accompanied by certificates of authenticity.

213 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art Project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold. Photo: Global Art Affairs Foundation

215 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art Project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold. Photo: Global Art Affairs Foundation

217 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art Project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold. Photo: Global Art Affairs Foundation

219 Raphael Vella, *Big Boys (series)*, 2010-2011. Graphite and mixed media on paper, 65 x 50 cm each drawing. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

221 André Wagner, *coming back from yamuna river*, 2011. From the series: *reflections of india*. Dodeka archival pigment print, 150 x 225 cm (59.1 x 88.6 inches). Courtesy: WHITECONCEPTS Gallery and André Wagner. © André Wagner

223 Xing Xin, *Pushing My Car and Galloping in the City: Approximately 30 Miles to the East*, 12-16 October 2012. Performance. Photo: Zhang Shaojie

225 Plamen Yordanov, *INFINITY*. Stainless steel, acrylic mirrors, el. Motor 3, 22 x 6 x 5 feet. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

227 ZERO, installation view at Palazzo Bembo. With from left: Heinz Mack, *Vibration*, 1957. Synthetic resin on canvas, 89 x 103 cm. Hans Bischoffshausen, *Gebetstafeln*, 1961. Card board, 3 parts, 69 x 25 x 3,7 cm. Heinz Mack, *Japanisches Trias*, 1970. Aluminum, wood, glass, engine, 52,5 x 52,5 x 10 cm. Heinz Mack, *Silbernetzstele*, 1966. Aluminum Plexiglas, 270 x 55 x 10 cm. Otto Piene, *Weisser Lichtgeist*, 1966/2012. Programmed Light Sculpture, Glass, 200 cm.

229 Otto Piene in the ZERO room at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. With: Otto Piene, *Weisser Lichtgeist*, 1966/2012. Programmed Light Sculpture, Glass, 200 cm.

230 Heinz Mack, *ohne Titel*, 1958. Dynamic Structure in Green Resin on nettle, 86 x 95 cm

231 From left to right: Günther Uecker with Cylinder, Uli Pohl, ?, Otto Piene, Heinz Mack, ?, Christian Megert, ?, 1988 or 1989. Photo: Manfred Tischer, Düsseldorf Archiv-Nr. 936

232 Hans Bischoffshausen, *Relief Energiefeld*, ca. 1962-1966. Oil and cellular cement on canvas, 65 x 85 cm

233 Heinz Mack, *Untitled*, 1957. Resin on hardboard, 34 x 57,5 cm

235 Zhang Yu, *Fingerprints - Conception and Form*, 2013. Xuan paper, Silk, Monitor, 450x730cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

237 Zhang Yu, *Diffused Fingerprints*, 2010. Behavior, glass, nail polish

238-239 Zhang Yu, *Fingerprints - Conception and Form*, 2013. Xuan paper, Silk, Monitor, 450x730cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

242 Helmut Lemke, *ÜBER DEN HÖRWERST nr.21: the Surplus Value of Sound no. 21*, 2013. Lemke drawing voices. Drawing, 420 x 594 mm

244 Palazzo Mora, garden entrance, in Venice, Italy

248 Zhang Huan, *To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond*, 1997. Performance.

253 Cai Guoqiang, *Deer and Pine Tree*, 2012. Gunpowder on Paper, 200 x 300 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

255 Chuang Che, *Green Rock and Splendid Cloud*, 2010. Oil on Canvas, 127x336cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Collection of Chang, Chin-Hsiang and Hsia, Hsiao-Yun

257 Han Tao, *Rainbow Tower*, 2013. Wooden Structure and LED Lights, 70x70x700cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

259 Hua Qing, *Line Sketching Practice-No.2*, 2011. Oil on Canvas, 280x280cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

261 Huang Gang, *First Snow*, 2011. Mixed Media, 190x122cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

263 Huang Zhiyang, *Three Marks Formation-No.0901*, 2009. Ink, Mineral Color on Silk, 220 x 248 cm

265 Li Chen, *Soul Guardians-Lord of Wind*, 2008. Bronze, 66 x 99 x 127cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

267 Qu Qianmei, *Golden Mean*, 2011. Mixed Media, 261x262. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

269 Shang Yang, *The Dong Qichang Project-No.31*, 2010. Mixed Media, 218 x 506cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

271 Shen Kelong, *Rhapsody-Indistinct*, 2008. Wood, Chinese Lacquer, 180x240 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Collection of Song, Xuesong

272 Shen Kelong, *Rhapsody-Indistinct*, 2008. Wood, Chinese Lacquer, 180x240 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Collection of Song, Xuesong.

273 Shen Kelong, *Rhapsody-No.2*, 2011. Wood and Chinese Lacquer, 180x160 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Collection of Song, Xuesong

275 Xu Bing, *1<sup>st</sup> Class, Tobacco Project 3: Richmond*, 2011. Installation at Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1600x900cm

276 Xu Bing, *Background Story 12*, 2013, Palace Museum, 60x430 cm

277 Xu Bing, *Phoenix*, 2013. Installation, Polyamide, 182x57x175cm

279 Yang Chihung, *Sudden Surprise*, 2013. Acrylic on Canvas, 112 x 162 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Collection of Tom, Sun

280 Yang Chihung, *One Thousand Years*, 2012. Acrylic on Canvas, 200 x 200 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013. Collection of Tom, Sun

281 Yang Chihung, *Wind and Cloud*, 2012. Acrylic on Canvas, 200x200cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

283 Ye Yongqing, *Painting a Bird*, 2012. Acrylic on Canvas, 150 x 200 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

285 Ying Tianqi, *Vital Spirit No.3*, 2013. Mixed Media, 150x170cm.

286 Ying Tianqi, *Dark Green*, 2012. Mixed Media, 122x122cm.

287 Ying Tianqi, *Nirvana*, 2011. Mixed Media, 122x188cm. Collection of Jack, Huang

289 Zhang Fangbai, *Standing Alone-No.2*, 2007. Mixed Media, 250 x 300 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

291 Zhang Guolong, *Angle-No.10*, 2011. Mixed Media, 280x400cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

293 Zhang Huan, *Military Training on the Sea No.2*, 2007. Incense ash on linen, 300 x 160 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

295 Zheng Chongbin, *Five Definitions*, 2012. Ink, Acrylic on Paper, 285 x 289 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

296 Zheng Chongbin, *Mirror*, 2012. Ink, Acrylic on Paper, 168x148cm

297 Zheng Chongbin, *Slanted Line*, 2012. Ink, Acrylic on Paper, 178x122cm

299 Zhou Chunya, *Peach Blossoms Series-Flower Blooms, Flower Fades, Year After Year*, 2009. Oil on Canvas, 200x150cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

300 Zhang Wei, *The Unknown Woman's Portrait Series-No.3*, 2012. Photograph, 100x100cm

305 CHAILE Travel, *Nomadic Travel*, 2007-2013. Variable Size. Performance Art. Installation view in the garden of Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

307 CHAILE Travel, *Nomadic Travel*, 2007-2013. Variable Size. Performance Art

309 Fan Angel, *Secret Garden-No.2*, 2009. Oil on Canvas, 128x166cm

311 Geng Yini, *The Fault*, 2013. Oil on Canvas, 180x120cm

313 Hou Xiaowei, *The Deserted Yard-No.2*, 2010. Oil on Canvas, 150x200cm

315 Huang Hsin-Chien, *Vox Capsule*, 2009. Lucite with Eroded Stainless Steel Embodiments, 26.5 x 43 x 15 cm

317 Li Hua, *The Slices of Journey Cities-No.1*, 2012. Oil on Canvas, 120x450cm

319 Li Xiangqun, *Spiritual Practitioner*, 2012. White Copper, 500x200x200 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

321 Liu Zhengyong, *The Pain of A Country*, 2012. Oil on Canvas, 240x210 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

323 Mao Lizi, *Lotus-20110801*, 2011. Oil on Canvas, 195x130x3 cm

325 Meng Site, *Rainbow Hall*, 2012. Oil on Canvas, 105x147 cm

327 Su Ke, *Cataract-No.35*, 2012. Ink, Sponge, 50x80cm

329 Wen Wu, *Self-Separation*, 2012. Oil on canvas, 170 x 230 cm, 2 sets. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

330 Wen Wu, *Kim Jong-un No.1*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

331 Wen Wu, *Kim Jong-un No.2*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

333 Yang Fan, *Waterfall*, 2011. Oil on Canvas, 160x120cm

335 Zhang Kai, *Leave My World Here*, 2011. Oil on Canvas, 100x100cm

337 Zhang Wei, *The Unknown Woman's Portrait Series*, 2012. Photograph, each 100x100 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Mora, 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013

338 Palazzo Marcello in Venice, Italy

341 Fang Lijun, *2011 Autumn*, 2011. Oil on Canvas, 400x525 cm

343 Fang Lijun, *2011*, 2011. Oil on Canvas, 180x250 cm

345 Fang Lijun, *2007.5.1*, 2007. Oil on Canvas, 140x180 cm

346 Fang Lijun, *2012.12*, 2013. Oil on Canvas, 200x250 cm

350 Palazzo Mora in Venice, Italy

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