

**PERSONAL STRUCTURES**  
**TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE**



# PERSONAL STRUCTURES TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE

WITH THE PERSONAL PARTICIPATION OF THE FOLLOWING ARTISTS:

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ · ALPEROA · CARL ANDRE · DEGANG WANG · BBB JOHANNES DEIMLING  
HERMAN DE VRIES · TOSHIKATSU ENDO · VALIE EXPORT · JAKOB GASTEIGER · JOHANNES GIRARDONI  
ANTONY GORMLEY · PETER HALLEY · ARATA ISOZAKI · JOSEPH KOSUTH · JANNIS KOUNELLIS  
MELISSA KRETSCHMER · LEE UFAN · LI CHEN · HEINZ MACK · JUDY MILLAR · TATSUO MIYAJIMA  
FRANÇOIS MORELLET · WANDA MORETTI · BORIS NIESLONY · HERMANN NITSCH · YOKO ONO  
ROMAN OPALKA · OTTO PIENE · THOMAS PIHL · MIRIAM PRANTL · ANDREW PUTTER · ARNULF RAINER  
RENE RIETMEYER · YUKO SAKURAI · SASAKI · BEN VAUTIER · VESTANDPAGE · WEEKS & WHITFORD  
LAWRENCE WEINER · YING TIANQI · XING XIN · ZIERLE & CARTER

WITH THE PERSONAL PARTICIPATION OF THE FOLLOWING AUTHORS:

KARLYN DE JONGH · SARAH GOLD · CAROL ROLLA · VALERIA ROMAGNINI · ANNA LENZ · WANG LIN  
FANG ZHENNING

## COLOPHON

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## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>9</b>	MIRIAM PRANTL	216	<b>PERSONAL STRUCTURES</b>	
<b>PERSONAL STRUCTURES</b>		ANDREW PUTTER	218	<b>VENICE BIENNALE 2013</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>ART PROJECTS</b>	<b>17</b>	ARNULF RAINER	220	KARLYN DE JONGH	302
LAWRENCE WEINER	18	RENE RIETMEYER	228	TOSHIKATSU ENDO	306
HERMANN NITSCH	38	YUKO SAKURAI	240	VALIE EXPORT	318
ROMAN OPALKA	62	SASAKI	244	JAKOB GASTEIGER	324
ON KAWARA	84	LAWRENCE WEINER	246	GOTTHARD GRAUBNER	330
ARNULF RAINER	94	XING XIN	250	HEINZ MACK	332
LEE UFAN	118	<b>SYMPOSIUM</b>		HERMANN NITSCH	340
BEN VAUTIER	140	<b>CHINESE ART &amp;</b>		YOKO ONO	344
<b>PERSONAL STRUCTURES</b>		<b>ARCHITECTURE TODAY</b>	<b>255</b>	ROMAN OPALKA	350
<b>VENICE BIENNALE 2011</b>	<b>151</b>	YING TIANQI	256	OTTO PIENE	352
MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ	152	WANG LIN	262	ARNULF RAINER	360
CARL ANDRE	160	ARATA ISOZAKI	264	RENE RIETMEYER	372
HERMAN DE VRIES	166	DEGANG WANG	272	BEN VAUTIER	382
TOSHIKATSU ENDO	170	FANG ZHENNING	278	<b>IN ADDITION</b>	<b>385</b>
JOHANNES GIRARDONI	174	<b>VENICE PERFORMANCE</b>		ANTONY GORMLEY	386
PETER HALLEY	178	<b>ART WEEK</b>	<b>281</b>	TIME IN	
JOSEPH KOSUTH	182	YOKO ONO	282	CONTEMPORARY ART	390
MELISSA KRETSCHMER	188	BORIS NIESLONY	283	ANNA LENZ	406
LEE UFAN	190	WANDA MORETTI	284	JANNIS KOUNELLIS	408
JUDY MILLAR	194	VALIE EXPORT	285	LI CHEN	414
TATSUO MIYAJIMA	198	BBB JOHANNES DEIMLING	286	<b>CAPTIONS</b>	<b>419</b>
FRANÇOIS MORELLET	202	ALPEROA	287	<b>BIOGRAPHIES</b>	<b>427</b>
HERMANN NITSCH	210	VESTANDPAGE	288		
ROMAN OPALKA	212	WEEKS & WHITFORD	292		
THOMAS PIHL	214	ZIERLE & CARTER	296		



# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold



**The making of PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, 2**  
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

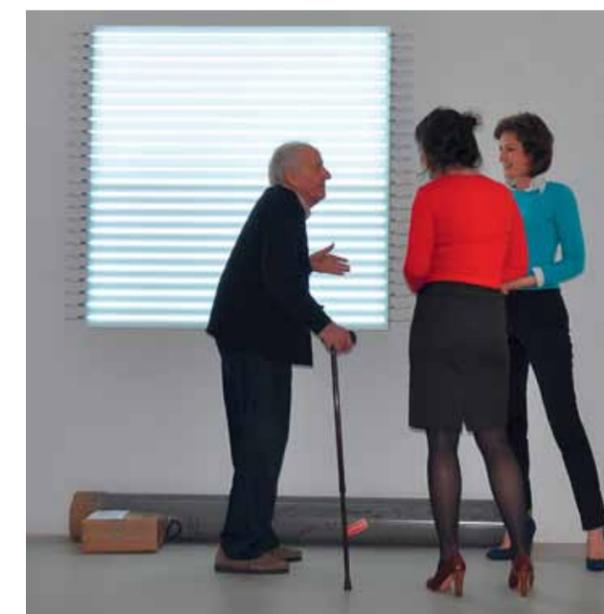


work at the Venice Biennale. I remember well, that one evening in September 2007, the three of us met in Venice. While walking over the quay along the Bridge of Sighs to San Marco square, we spoke about the future. Sarah and I had just visited some Biennale exhibitions together and discussed the possibility 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.

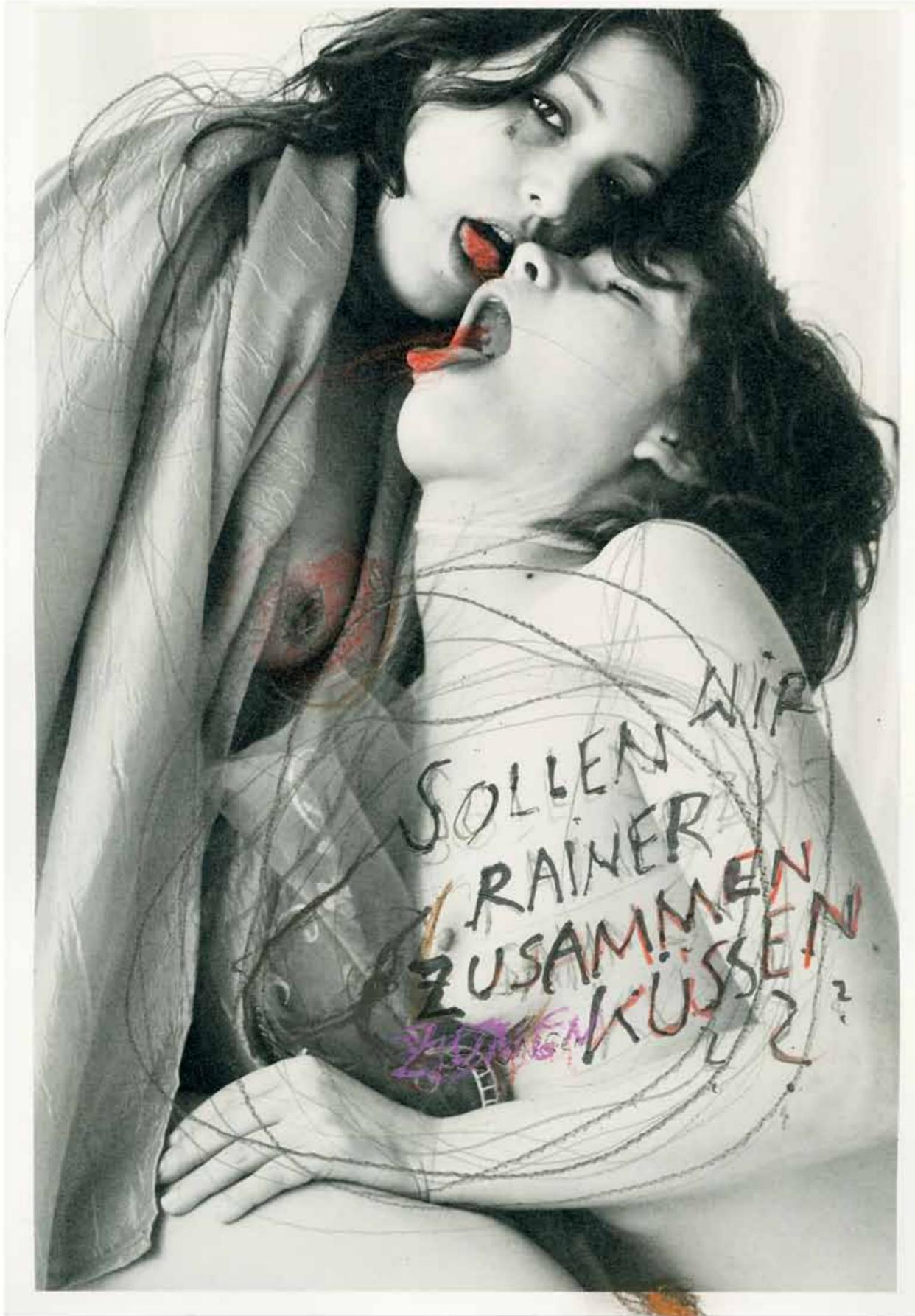
Having now some 'Venice experience', we decided that besides organising our own PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition, we would expand our organisation and host five other exhibitions during the 2013 Venice Biennale, with which we hopefully will earn enough money to pay for our own exhibition and publications 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'. 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 book is therefore different from our 2009 publication, 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 include more artists—such as Georg Baselitz—, more encounters and better interviews, but at the moment this is what it is: PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, number 2!

# ART PROJECTS



# LAWRENCE WEINER

## SKIMMING THE WATER [MÉNAGE À QUATRE]

PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS #01

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

Weiner's houseboat *Joma*, Amsterdam, Netherlands,  
26 - 27 January 2010



*On one of the coldest days in the Netherlands that winter (2010), Karlyn, Sarah and Sophia visit Lawrence on his houseboat Joma. The four spend 24 hours together. Lawrence, Karlyn and Sarah have met each other a few times on different occasions; Sophia is new. The 24 hours are set up to be formed into an artist book. Even though the eventual outcome is uncertain, the four players know that the focus will be on Lawrence.*

*LAWRENCE WEINER: SKIMMING THE WATER [MÉNAGE À QUATRE] has been published as a limited edition. The edition comprises 250 copies of which 50 DeLuxe, numbered from 1 to 50, and 50 DeLuxe hors commerce, numbered from I to L. The 150 Standard copies are numbered from 51 to 200. Each item of this limited edition consists of a book and a CD in a case, housed together in a cassette. The DeLuxe edition is signed by the artist and additionally contains an aluminum stencil. The following text is an excerpt of the 24 hours and starts in the morning of 27 January 2010.*

[The sound of coffee being ground and people brushing their teeth. Karlyn changes the batteries of her recording systems. Lawrence is making coffee. Sarah, Sophia and Karlyn are at the table and have a talk in Dutch. Lawrence comes to the table with coffee mugs.]

LW: Does anyone have milk in their coffee?

KDJ: Yes, please.

SG: Yes, if you have some milk.

LW: It will not be the greatest coffee, but it will be coffee at least.

SG: It sounded and smelled very nice, with the ground beans.

LW: The only way to make coffee beans possible to use, is to grind them.

[Lawrence chuckles. Then he puts coffee on the table.]

LW: I never had these beans.

[Lawrence pours the coffee into the mugs. Then he goes back to the kitchen.]

LW: I am only used to making coffee for two people.

KDJ: Then it's very difficult to do it for four.

LW: Especially, when everything is only made for two.

[Lawrence returns to the table.]

LW: So, we did not freeze to death.

KDJ: No, we are still alive.

LW: It's amazing. I should put some clothes on.

[Sarah pours milk in the cups. Lawrence starts rolling a cigarette. Lawrence asks Karlyn to take out one of the statements he gave the day before and change it into another.]

KDJ: Yesterday evening you told us that you start each day with questions. What kind of questions do you start with? What are the questions you're thinking about at the moment, this morning?

LW: With Lisbon I have this problem of adaptation. About what do we do when we deal with materials, in order to be able to understand them or use them? And I start to figure out essentially a way that I can tell myself about adaptation. That's where some of the drawings come from. Those are the questions. They are really not very profound.

[Lawrence starts coughing.]

LW: They're really not very profound. Or what to wear that day.

KDJ: Well, that can be a very important question. But, is adaptation an important issue for you?

LW: Yeah, I did that whole body of work years ago. Then I found out about *ALTERED TO SUIT*, because things essentially are altered to suit. And the whole concept of the level of adaptation, what the interactions with either the expectations or the society are, are extremely important to me.



KDJ: But also your work seems to be adaptation: you seem to adapt to the space in which you...

LW: No, that's the installation. Let's try to keep it straight. Let's not worry about consecutive things. The whole point is, that it's just means to place it in the public. It has very little to do with the work itself. Its nature allows it to install it on a wall. Again, if you're going to install it on a wall, you might as well try to get it right. It's true. Our society, it tells us we should put on clothing, also the weather, then you might as well just get it right. And that's all it is. And then you realize that what you do has political implications, there's social implications and there's other things. And you try to deal with it. That's not to me a problem. This part of the job, it's not an easy part. It's supposed to look simple, but in fact that's something else. That's part of the job and you can't complain about it. You didn't snore, by the way.

SG: Thank you.

LW: Why 'thank you'? What's wrong with it?

SG: I'm happy. I've had this snoring complex ever since.

LW: I started to burp at some point. And then I had this incredible vision of: "Oh my god, in the middle of the night she is going to wake up and I am going to fart." Then this social pressure.

[All laughing.]

LW: "Gee, I'm going to fart and I will never have her in my bed again."

[All laughing.]

LW: I mean, the adaptation of how you essentially are going to put materials together. Because it's not haphazard, I wish it were. And I have a problem: I am pleased with the things I end up showing, or else I wouldn't show them. I mean if I have a show, I don't have to do it, I could also cancel. But I don't like moving them from one place to the other and I haven't, there was a point in the adaptation to put it in one show, but it wasn't made for a show, really. It was made because I had the opportunity of the show. There is a difference. I've been very upfront about it with everybody, that it's made special for them. It's special because they ask me to make something for something. And I would use the materials of what's around. So, if it's in a coal mining area, I might try to be interested in coal or steam or whatever they use to make the machines work. But that's not really site-specific.

SG: Where do you think your interest in material comes from?

LW: The same as everybody else's. I have to walk across the earth. If they would have given me the opportunity to fly, I might've been interested in air. Which is immaterial too. I have no idea where it comes from. Do you? You're supposed to insight me.

[Lawrence points to Sarah:]

LW: She is supposed to make it possible for me to continue making art.

[Then to Karlyn:]

LW: She is supposed to make it possible for me to continue the things I might just get away with being able to exist.

[And to Sophia:]

LW: And you are supposed to make everybody feel that without you they couldn't do it. Is that true? Isn't that the way everybody basically functions?

[Lawrence lights his cigarette.]

LW: I felt we were very old people last night, didn't you?

KDJ: In what sense? Because we went to bed early, or what?

LW: No, because we were sleeping in one place and you were sleeping in another place.

KDJ: If you would've had the choice, would you rather had us all together in the same bed?

LW: I had no thought, I honestly didn't as a matter of fact. I was just really a little embarrassed that it was not more comfortable for you. And I didn't know how to arrange it. But essentially? I hate to say it, but when she falls asleep, she's the same as you.

[All laughing.]

LW: It's just another nice, warm body. Let's be honest about life.

[Sophia, Lawrence and Karlyn are laughing.]

LW: Ah, you don't like that.

SG: Oh no, I totally agree. I know what you mean.

LW: There is a pleasure principle in working together, but there is no titillation, is there? The titillation is for people outside: free zone is free zone. You know, free zones are quite normal.

SG: What is a free zone exactly?

LW: Free zones are when there's a little bit of electricity between people. That's really quite normal. It ceased being normal, when people became very professional. When affection became a commodity within the art world. Friendship became a commodity. You used to work together with people you didn't even like, it didn't matter. And vice versa. I have to put some clothes on.

[Lawrence puffs his cigarette.]

LW: Don't ever put on weight, you don't know what to do with yourself.

[Lawrence takes another puff.]

LW: Life is really odd.

KDJ: You have said that a number of times...

LW: Yeah, I'm feeling it very odd lately. I feel like a distance. It's because they did a show and a public talk, and I have to get on the plane to do the same thing next week. It's the dedication to the children's project. And the kites.

KDJ: It's going to be a three-dimensional, public installation, isn't it?

LW: It's a public piece, it's permanent. And it's really rather large and it's very low, it's only a meter high [3.3 feet]. And there is a tower, you can see it from the tower. How are we doing with the coffee? I will make some more, just let me finish my cigarette.

[Lawrence finishes his coffee.]

KDJ: So, mainly the questions that you have are related to your next show?



LW: Well, yesterday you asked me about spending all this time talking about myself. When you then find yourself in the middle of the night, no matter how many people are in the bed, you end up feeling alone. It's about things I do not really have; I don't know what to think. That's why I said that life is odd. I don't quite know where I fit into it.

KDJ: Do you feel lonely sometimes?

LW: Working? Yeah. Surprisingly, there have been periods when you feel less lonely. When you feel that what you are doing well, you know it's going to work, then it's making some change to somebody, but you don't feel that much of a mosh around you. It's about a mosh really. I don't have a lot of fears and things, so it's not about *angst* [fear] or anything. *Willem is niet bang* [William is not afraid] that's the strangest song in the whole world. *Hup, daar is Willem met de waterpomptang... want Willem is niet bang.* [Hey, there is William with the pipe wrench, 'cause William is not afraid] living on a boat, you understand what they have to be afraid of.

[All laughing.]

KDJ: Do you feel lonely also, when you're alone, working? Or is it more the loneliness that you feel when you are...

LW: It is when you stop working. It's when you reach others. Also: there is a change to one's relationship to the world. I am objectified. I am an object. I always politically say: "You are supposed to be an object, not the subject and ta-da-ta-da-da." But you are a person and you have a subjective reality.

KDJ: When do you feel you became an object?

LW: That's been my problem somewhere in the 70s. I didn't do it. I never said I was. But in the 70s, something I did, crossed the line. Once that crossed that line, you can't even feel that you are a polite person and that everything will be fine. It all changes. It's going to take me a couple of minutes to wake up. I'm sorry.

SG: No problem.

LW: I mean, to find you something to eat. I'm not a big breakfast person. That's the advantage of smoking.

[All laughing.]

LW: I will make fresh coffee and I will cover this body, more or less.

[And after a short pause:]

LW: Thank heaven it's not a video camera.

KDJ: Yes, we are happy about that too, I guess.

LW: Oh, I don't know. You are really speedy this morning. You are like me: you don't wear that much, so it's not that big a problem.

[To Sarah:]

LW: And you are just a pro.

[And to Sophia:]

LW: You I just can't figure out.

[All laughing.]

LW: I'm serious. I feel like that Mormon television program. The poor guy: he is not that much of a pig as he is supposed to be, because he spends his time figuring out what the hell is going on in the other person's head. I do like that part of that where he goes to his friend who is a doctor and says: "I can't see." And the doctor says: "You can't take that much Viagra."

[All laughing.]

LW: Have you ever taken it?

SG: Yes.

LW: Did you like it?

SG: Yes.

LW: I had one pill once in my life and it never did anything, so I never took it again, because I know two people who were loosing their sight. Really, like clouding over and things like that.

KDJ: That's terrible.

LW: I think their relationship would have been terrible if they hadn't, so, everybody's got their own problems.

[Lawrence lights his cigarette.]

LW: The problem is that our society has reached a point where, in fact, that's the problem with art. We begin to use our desire for things, because we feel so completely out of it, so completely not related. I am relating it to something that has to do with people. There is a desire, but there is no way to figure out what it's supposed to feel like or look like, so of course, it's never really satisfying.

[Lawrence takes a sip of coffee.]

LW: That after a while it won't be there anymore, you are more intellectually interested than physically. That's interesting with art. Art has become this problem where it's much more about the intellectual necessity, then it's more a social necessity. It's this *vergadering* [conference] thing, where people have to say something that has to do with something. It's so much easier when you say: "Let's talk about time." Or talk about green. And say you're talking about art, what are you talking about? And talking about yourself: the kind of work that I make, you cannot really think much about yourself. You have to step aside and you have to do it all totally synthetic, because the work doesn't allow for your personal feelings to come into it. It really doesn't.

KDJ: You mean, specifically your feelings?

LW: Yes, mine. That's all I know. I don't know how other people work. Or why.

KDJ: What I understood yesterday, is that you do want certain people to react upon it.

LW: I want anybody to react upon it. But then you are a human being: there are certain people that you prefer if they would react upon it. But it's anybody. As I said, I am really happy when some hunter comes in with his family to the museum, only because they feel they should go to a museum. And then they find themselves perplexed by something. Anybody's work. And they say: "Oh, I get it." That's a luck, a pleasure principle.

[Lawrence puffs his cigarette.]

LW: It leaves you in these strange states.

KDJ: What do you mean with 'these strange states'?

LW: It's this state where you find something and have to find out how to make my own work relate to me. Because you find yourself that day thinking in other terms and you don't really want to be somewhere. But it got you there and now what do you do?

KDJ: Is it some sort of feeling of alienation from the work that you do?

LW: Each time it's finally finished, yeah. I have to re-adapt to how am I going to let it function. Because of course, you want to let it function. Because you made it for other people to function with. You have to decide what you are going to change in your attitude and things like that.

KDJ: Is it for you easier with the work you made in the 70s?

LW: I don't remember. Honestly and truly. This is what the problem was when I was writing to you, that I don't know what we are supposed to be discussing: I don't really remember how I felt in the 70s and the 80s. I remember what happened to me. I remember a lousy hotel or a good hotel, and I remember I felt fine when I went to install. But I don't remember the impetus at that moment. I am very outer directed as a human being. The world changes so radically, that I don't know.

KDJ: Does that mean you have feelings about the work that you do at this very moment?

LW: No, I have feelings when it's finished. I don't really have feelings before it's finished, because otherwise I will be altering it to suit.

[All laughing.]

LW: It's true. Whatever I will be doing, it will be a point in the adaptation of what has fallen into place. I know that sounds very pretentious. It's not that it's automatic, but you really do have to follow what you're doing straight through and give it its dignity and then say: "No, I reject it." So basically, you have to throw the whole project away and start again, if you really cannot accept it. Or you find yourself doing something that you realize will be used against what your core beliefs are. And we all have core beliefs. You didn't realize it at the time, because it wasn't something you wanted, it's just that the material itself led to it.

KDJ: What are your core beliefs?

LW: That the work can be used to propound certain things. That's the political thing. That's the responsibility of the artist. And it's a legitimate responsibility. That the work will not be used in a manner that you probably don't approve of.

KDJ: Do you feel more responsible when you make work for a specific group of people, like now with the children project?

LW: No, it's always the same. I don't have a nicy, nicy thing about children. I just find it sort of interesting to talk to them. Not in any depth. I don't look to children to make you feel good: you can always feel good, because children are always a pain in the ass. So, when you are nice to them, you can always feel good about yourself anyhow. It's a win win situation: you are nice to them, they feel a little bit better about themselves. It's a win win and if you are going to make a big fuss



out if it, you are looking for credit. You're not supposed to get rewarded for doing the right thing. And you have to believe, that maybe you're going to get punished for doing the wrong thing. You have to keep it within some sort of reason. No, don't make a big thing out of the fact that I make editions for children. It's another part of the society, but don't expect anything or else you're going to end up with that expectation that bourgeois parents have, that the child becomes a reflection of you. That one, I know, ain't fair. And it probably ain't a good idea. And I am going to make some more coffee, before we all die.

[Lawrence goes to the kitchen to make more coffee. Sound of coffee beans being ground. Karlyn joins Lawrence in the kitchen to brush her teeth.]

LW: That's a good idea.

KDJ: I think so too.

LW: I can get away with it, because I smell of cigarettes anyhow. So, it doesn't matter.

[All laughing. Sound of Karlyn brushing her teeth. Sophia and Sarah pack one of the sleeping bags. Karlyn also comes to help to collect all their things and prepare to have everything packed for when they have to leave at 12 am. Lawrence comes back to the table.]

LW: One more cigarette and I will get dressed.

[Lawrence rolls his cigarette.]

PUSHED  
AS IF

& LEFT AS IS

LW: That was very odd. Wasn't it strange to be married to somebody dressed up like Elvis Presley?

[Lawrence chuckles.]

LW: In Las Vegas? Didn't you think it was like Las Vegas when you were waking up? What if I cut myself in two?

KDJ: I am happy.

LW: I am so pleased. That's good. Yeah, me too. But...

[Lawrence sighs.]

LW: I don't know about tomorrow.

[All laughing. Water is being poured into the glasses.]

LW: At least we know she doesn't snore.

[They make jokes.]

LW: This thing about fear and trembling and *angst* as if that was the problem, I don't mean to be populist about this, that's why I'm so reluctant sometimes and why I can make jokes: don't you think it's just as difficult for anybody who does anything?

KDJ: Probably.

LW: Probably. I have no way of knowing; it's just that you sort of take it for granted that you might just be the same thing. So, they make such a big deal about it for artists, but it's part of the reason why you get paid.

STASIS  
AS TO  
VECTOR

ALL IN DUE COURSE

[Lawrence lights his cigarette.]

LW: It's used to be a joke to explain to children why you don't want to be bothered or explain to someone what is going on. It is invariably a problem of making things, that there is essentially not the fear of failure, but the fear of not being able to engage.

KDJ: Do you mean that as in 'being excluded'?

LW: No, not to be able to engage. You see alienation as a problem, but that's because you haven't made that decision to try to make art. Once you have made that decision, you're very much like a diagnostic doctor. Not to make a silly analogy, but you have absolutely no idea what you're going to find when you go into something. Artists used to feel

very romantic and probably still do, I do as well. If you really carry what you're thinking, you can go mad in terms of the society: you don't fit in anymore. But I don't mean not fitting in as not being appreciated. It's not easy to not be appreciated. I mean, I've been a lucky person: I started a conversation and there were people to talk to. An awful lot of people started conversations as artists and nobody will talk to them. They get a little *subsidie* [subsidy] and they really are serious, but nobody wants to have a conversation. So I think what happened was, and that's where that term conceptual art and where it all came in, that there were people intelligent enough to realize that the profession was going to leave them left out sometimes. And in order to cover that, they began today to talk things to death. They began

to rationalize things to death. That's the same reason why you start conferences, you will be sure that there will be somebody around to talk to. It's a hard one, isn't it? I don't think it was a good idea. I think, it's still one of those funny things where artists are supposed to take the risk, that what they do will engage the conversation and what they have to say about it.

[Lawrence puffs his cigarette.]

LW: I wish, if I hadn't had this interaction, this political activity as a child, I wish I were closer sometimes to the artists who really don't talk. You never see them in public; they never go out. The problem is that they then become gurus. I don't want to be a guru. I don't know how to balance it. I like engaging in a conversation about things, like the four of us. But I don't like engaging in a conversation about me. Not because I'm a private person, because I really don't have a fucking idea of what I'm thinking today. I don't know how I feel now about this. You asked me about this evaluation, but you have no idea what you're supposed to say.

KDJ: But that could also be something. If you don't know what to say, you don't know what to say. That's also fine.

LW: You do know what to say, but you don't know how to phrase it. That's the problem. And that's the problem about installation. That's right back into the circle of the first question. Installation is: you do know what to say; you don't know what syntax to put it in. You have a political syntax you would like to hold to. You believe grammar means something. You also have an interaction syntax. And you may think that your relationship to the rest of the world means something. It goes on and on like that, doesn't it?

[Lawrence puffs his cigarette.]

LW: Those are all questions. But they are all questions you have to ask every day.

KDJ: Are they questions that for you require an answer, or is it just what keeps you going?

LW: They require an answer every day or every two days, but let's not dramatize all of this. But in fact: let's not demean it. This existential quest that artists have of finding a place for the work within the world for a dialogue. One has a tendency to overinflate it. But don't demean it. It's a balance thing. I don't feel I'm against the world, that I'm fighting the world. But I do feel that I'm in a situation where, if I don't get it right, the conversation will stop. And then you have to waste all this time to start the conversation again. And it wastes a lot of time. And it has nothing to do with this advancement of age and all of that stuff that you have less time. You really don't notice that, you really don't think that. If you have been in a relationship, you can always relate it to that: every intellectual is in a relationship with society. Where everything can get on your nerves that day and yet you know you only have three days together before the other one has to get on the plane. You end up schlepping around, while all you wanted was three or four hours for yourself. And when you're by yourself, all you can think about is this other thing. So, you have no idea of where you are or what you're doing. Why shouldn't that be the same problem for an artist? It's not about outside things that happen, it's about your own mentality and your own problem.

KDJ: Is that also the romanticism you were talking about?

LW: I think romanticism is when you decide you are an intellectual. It is a very romantic decision. I shall existentially be responsible for the decisions I make. Bullshit. But we really want to believe it, don't we?

[All laughing.]

LW: You don't get the whole full implications. That's what everybody thinks about everybody else. They don't get the whole full implications. You don't understand. It's not that you don't understand that he or she doesn't understand you. It's that they don't understand the full implications and yes, they are very good at what they do. But they don't get the rest of it. You have to believe that in order for you to do all the little bullshit you have to do, from the taxes to the forms to the other things. It's true. That's what I meant: it's all part of the human condition. That's why I really do believe that making art is one of the things that really should be integrated in our society. There has to be somebody who can ask questions. And not be the bitch. And still keep asking questions. It's a strange balance.

KDJ: You have said that your work is without metaphor. What do you mean with that exactly?

LW: That it doesn't mean anything other than that. That even if I know how to use it for something, I am not supposed to impose it on somebody else. Because that takes away the richness of the work. That's the Caspar David Friedrich thing from before: it doesn't matter what the work looks like, it's a matter of what the work portends. Portends not what the work pretends or what it acts like, what it says will happen. Once you will accept that existential responsibility, in fact, I really feel I have been saying the same things for 40 years and it's bothering me.

[Lawrence tells an anecdote about a friend of his.]

LW: You really, not romantically, think that if you do it well, it'll make you a better person. I don't think my work is going to make anybody else a better person. It's just going to make them aware of the responsibility for the wrong choices they are making. That's different, that's the anger part of it. I don't believe that I can change somebody's life. What I'm going to do is to confront them with the decisions they are making, concerning even their relationship to an ashtray. It doesn't much matter.

KDJ: Do you feel that has got something to do with ethics?

[Lawrence lights his cigarette.]

KDJ: With the feeling of good or bad?

LW: I'm not a religious person, as I said. I am not going to spend any time deciding whether there is a godhead or not. But do remember what the Jesuits always believed: ethica and aesthetica is the same word. "She walks with grace through the day." Ethica and aesthetica is the same word for a group of people who do believe in God.

[Lawrence takes a sip of his coffee.]

LW: There is no double meaning. You can say ethics, you can say aesthetics. It's the same word.

KDJ: Do you think your work is aesthetic?

TIME IN RELATION TO WHAT  
AT THE WORST  
A PLACE IN THE SUN.  
SLAM BAM  
THANK YOU MAM  
OR MAY ACCORD OF WHAT THE SUN IS.  
WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF WHOSE THE SUN IS.  
A NEED FOR AN ACCORD OF THE PARADOX OF A TIMES  
TIME  
GENTLEMAN  
PLEASE

IF & WHEN A LIFETIME IS SO PRECIOUS  
WHY IS IT READILY AVAILABLE TO ALL  
PERHAPS.  
IT IS THE SAVING GAME!

WHY ARE WE SO JEALOUS OF ENTROPY

ANTI ET AMICITIAE  
A DAMN. TIME PARCEL.

LW: Oh, of course it's aesthetic. It's not in dialogue with dead people. It tries not to waste the time. You know, if somebody has figured out the cure for something, and it's working, move on. You might get an insight and make a better cure, but just move on. And if you have to give credit to somebody because he got it right, that's fine, isn't it? But if you base that what you're doing only on the fact that they got it right, I don't see the relationship. That's the major problem we are having with contemporary philosophy. You can't keep making things just to get credit. And in order to get the credit you have to associate it with something else, you will end up being the Japanese De Kooning. Which still means that you do make a very decent painting that makes sense, but it doesn't tell anybody anything they didn't know before.

[Lawrence lights his cigarette.]

KDJ: Is that the morality that you are looking for? Did you want to give people the opportunity to think new things or to learn more?

LW: Maybe, for them to take... Everybody is in a different situation, and if you're paying attention, maybe to give them the tools that what they make could be more useful to you. Maybe it's not altruistic. Don't you think that if one can figure out this XX, XY, correctly, it would make your daily life a little bit more amusing? So, it's not about altruism, is it? That is at this point, what I'm caught in between. I'm desperately trying to figure out what the essence of a line is. What does somebody mean when they say: "Draws like a man, draws like a girl." What do they mean exactly, when you are not sure what you are supposed to be meaning. You have a synthetic thing you tell yourself every day what you want to be, but that has nothing to do with what you are.

KDJ: Isn't it because you are in a certain way, that you make the things you make?

LW: That's for you to figure out, not for me. If I'm having difficulties, I know I'm very complicated to be around. If I find myself with really imponderable things, where I can't get an answer, but I am working towards it, I find the reactions of other people much nicer and you're really basically functioning better.

[Lawrence sips his coffee.]

LW: Or so it feels to me.

[The sound of a boat through the water.]

LW: Some boat going through the water.

SG: An icebreaker.

LW: No, somebody trying to get to work and not wanting to use their tram card, so they are taking the boat. Or they have to get their boat to a shipyard or something.

[Lawrence tells anecdotes about the boat and a car crash in California.]

SG: Do you still have problems because of your car crash?

LW: Yeah, here.

[Lawrence points to his throat.]

LW: I had to teach myself how to talk again. I had to do the whole thing and we didn't have any money for physiotherapy. I remember that two weeks later I had to be on a plane to Zurich and the woman next to me had a mirror. I asked if I could borrow it. And

I remember sitting there figuring out how the hell to put words together. It worked.

SG: You don't notice anything.

LW: You hear it because I talk a lot from back here.

[Lawrence points to his throat again.]

LW: Rather than from up front. Everybody has problems with everything: if you had a skiing accident, you walk differently.

KDJ: It is remarkable that someone who is so involved with language...

LW: What has language got to do with speaking?

KDJ: Maybe nothing...

LW: You're falling back into that pattern, that each thing has its own specifics. It doesn't. That's why it's so strange to make sculpture that can be told to somebody, without losing anything. "This on top of that" physically is language. You are showing somebody a sign. Speaking it, writing it, it's all the same, isn't it? It is not any different. We are repressed by it. And the thing that troubles me about smoking so much is that I have always been troubled that my voice has gotten so deep. Because it's a mistake that there is an authority there. I don't know where that came societally.

[Lawrence shows his notebook and tells an anecdote about the effect of a voice and using his voice in public.]

LW: It should carry. But in our society everything is read in a different way. We will never get rid of that, there is nothing you can do. I am so tired of subjective art. And yet, in order to make what you make, you basically have to be subjective with yourself. We've been talking for a day, and we haven't been able to determine that difference between making something, showing something and being something.

KDJ: For you they are three different things.

LW: For me, yes, they are three different things. And I think in reality they are three different things.

[Lawrence takes a sip of coffee.]

LW: I cannot get it together this morning. We didn't drink a lot and it wasn't very strong dope. It was good though, because everybody got a little bit of sleep because of it. We got warmer though afterwards. Did you notice?

KDJ: I did.

LW: How genuinely odd. One began to appreciate the little corner of the blanket. It's been years and years and years since we were this cold on the boat. It's a remembrance of what it used to be like. Because it used to be really awful. For the last couple of years, maybe the climate was different. It's been so comfortable on the boat.

[They continue to speak about the cold in Holland.]

KDJ: Lawrence, can I ask you for the evaluation part?

LW: Why do you ask me if you are going to fucking do it anyway?

[All laughing.]

LW: I just love this.

IL SALE DEL MARE  
MISTO AL SALE DELLA TERRA

THE SALT OF THE SEA  
MINGLED WITH THE SALT OF THE EARTH



SG: Just trying to be polite.

LW: We all went to Las Vegas, we all came back. We got our certificate, leave it be! You don't have to keep asking.

[All laughing.]

LW: May I brush my teeth? Darling my feet are cold, I am so sorry.

KDJ: You may not be able to put it in one way, but could you give an answer or three? What did you think of the whole 22 hours, so far?

LW: My god, is it 22 hours? Do we only have two hours for *opruimen* [cleaning up] and get it together? I don't know how you put the couch back. There must be a way.

[Lawrence takes a deep breath.]

LW: Let's put it positively first. For me, from my standpoint, because of having made these shows and because of lifestyle difficulties and things, it took me a little out of domesticity for a while. It took me out of the stream of life. Yes, so it cleared my head a little bit. And I realized that a lot of the questions I've been asking myself probably are unnecessary. But it brought up other questions about inter-relationships and it put you back in a situation about what is now a common conversation about what constitutes commune, how do you constitute commune, it's all an attempt to develop a commune, either synthetic or why it's needed I have no idea, but it is. On that level it was okay. I don't know what you can get out of this.

Maybe it's best to take out the *bon mots*. We were all trying so hard to be comfortable with each other, that we were not paying so much attention to form. It would be like a performing group or a rock 'n roll group that comes together for jamming. That's not a performance and once you put things in a book it's a performance. You do have an obligation to make that performance as professional, as dramatic, as interesting for other people. But we got too comfortable. That's the point. That's an interesting thing about this responsibility thing. Everybody wants to have fun when they're working. But if you get too comfortable, you're forgetting that you're making this synthetic thing that's going to have to exist without people knowing that you were at that moment comfortable. The jazz is a good example: if you look at jazz musicians getting stoned together, they are just playing. Especially when they are totally different, it's really charming, but it ain't music. Music is something that when it's given, that when it's on a scratchy cassette and somebody hears it, it has the real function: it does something, it is something. That's what I thought about. That maybe it isn't that possible to be comfortable and work. There was no real discomfort. The only discomfort was the physical thing which we all have to deal with: the cold and, thank heaven, not the dark, because we fixed the light. That was my obsession: that it was just going to be so heavy because the light wasn't working.

[Lawrence chuckles.]

LW: But the light was fine. It's a very nice space here to work. That was what I was thinking of as well. It was worth the difficulty of somebody finding another place to sleep and everything else not to get interfered with it, because you're in the middle of the city. You're in the middle of the city, but you're also floating in shag. It has its own magic, in a way. Other than that, I don't have many thoughts. Do you?

[Lawrence points to Sophia and says:]

LW: You can't blame her for everything.

[All laughing.]

LW: It's easy, but you can't do it.

KDJ: Before I answer your question... The idea of this project was to talk honestly and get as much information out of you in these 24 hours, with the four of us in one room. When we make a book out of this, is that uninteresting for you to read? Why doesn't it work for you when it is too comfortable?

LW: Not that it doesn't work.

[Lawrence looks at the computer.]

LW: I don't know what you got on there. It will be a lot of work on your part, but you are supposed to be an intellectual. You are supposed to go through all the crap around it and find the three words or the three sentences. That was what I was going to suggest: that the size of the book is not the question. Somebody opens it up, they find a conversation that went on that has some meaning. I use the word *stevig* [solid], but that's dignity to me. *Stevigheid* [solidity] is a nice dignity, because it is false: you pulled yourself together to walk down the street. That's more *stevigheid* than anything else. It's not really strength, you pulled it together and gave the other people the dignity that you are do-

ing a performance. That's important to me. As we were talking, I began to realize that personally I am very tired of reading all this stuff that's trying to humanize somebody. In fact: artists and intellectuals are not human. They are human, but they are not human in the sense that they are normal. They have to put it together in some way that it carries that nobody has to know how it happened, but the people can use it. I kept thinking in terms of performance, more than I did in terms of content. As I said, I'm not frightened of content; I basically know that all the bad thoughts I thought, I said out loud. Somewhere along the line. That's the advantage of being a public person for 40 years.

[Karlyn's phone rings. She puts it away.]

LW: You can answer.

KDJ: No, no. I have one hour and 43 minutes with you and I'm going to take them.

[All laughing.]

LW: Well, I'm going to put some clothes on. While we talk, if nobody minds. You can phrase it: it takes me three minutes to put on a pair of stockings. I am just as cold with clothes on as I am without. So, it makes absolutely no difference to me.

[All laughing.]

LW: I don't like sleeping with things on.

[Lawrence starts telling about sleeping naked being in the Arctic and his next film.]

LW: I don't have all that much to say. My work only works with a receiver. I can make beautiful things all day, but as long as they don't react with somebody, they are not functioning as art.

KDJ: What do you feel you do when you are directing? You just said that you feel like an object, but when you are directing...

LW: That's different, that's synthetic. Then everybody comes together, like we did here, and we make an accord of how we are going to function. They can argue, they can talk, everybody has the conversation. But once the red light goes on you don't lose yourself by letting somebody else be the director, somebody be the actor and another be the soundman. When the red light goes off again, they will say: "What the hell did you do that for?"

[All laughing.]

LW: But no questions during it. Because you have accepted it. In the ideal world of cinema, as it should be in the ideal world of art, you accord people roles. And one person is in charge of putting it together. There can only be one chef. But there have to be four or five good sous-chefs. Then it's no longer a hierarchy, is it? Everybody has taken on a role. That's not what you're born into or who you are: you've taken on a role.

[Lawrence pauses.]

LW: It's nice, because if you take on the role and you fulfill it, your project roles. You get a role. And every once in a while in the last 22 1/2 hours there has been a role. Or: I think there has been. I really don't know. And we didn't have to be self-conscious about anything physical, because we were not being filmed. The video is really a terror. Film is not really such a terror because it's expensive and so



complicated to get on that each thing becomes totally synthetic. With video there is the tendency that it doesn't matter because it doesn't cost anything. You all let it go. I don't like "Oh, let it go." I would really much rather prefer to put in three solid hours working on something and get it over with than when you would have this wonderful life of creativity that goes on and on and on. That's not my nature. I don't mind: there is a point and you damn well do it.

[Lawrence decides not to take a shower and just put clothes on.]

KDJ: Do you shower every day, usually?

LW: Yeah. Even: you talked about the hitchhiking, I washed. I am one of those people who has to get their head wet for some reason. And it's funny, because I don't have hair on the top of my head. It's not about that. You clean yourself off in some way. Everybody has their own little ritual.

KDJ: Since when do you have your beard?

LW: It's genetic. I don't know. A long time. I don't know why or not why, but it is. That's fine. Also I don't like that male thing that you get up in the morning and that there is this ritual. There is no ritual, there is just a matter of occasion. That's it, it's just there. That's why people have long hair: they don't have to think about it. That is no longer part of the whole *geist* [spirit]. They don't participate in some certain gender ritual. You just get up in the morning and get clean: you just brush your teeth and you're fine, I think. We don't know why we do certain things. To make things out of it is really always rather silly.

KDJ: But you do seem to care a lot about what you look like.

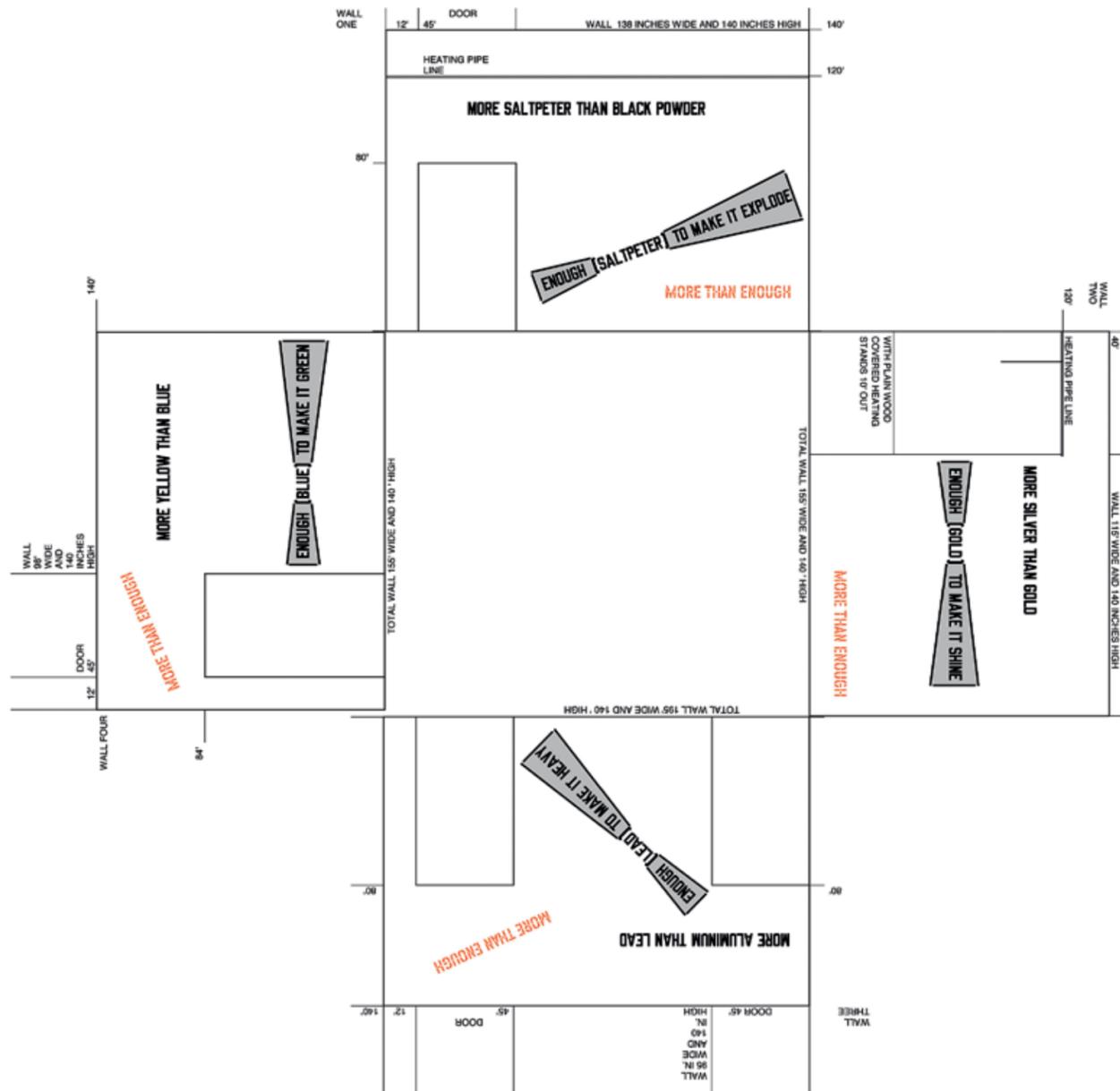
LW: Doesn't everybody? But that's far more about what you put on than what you are. Except for my getting a belly now, which I really don't know what to do with.

[All laughing.]

LW: I'm 68, what can I do? That comes with choices. You can take time off from working and do the gym. But you can't do both. And being a little dissatisfied with things is not such a bad thing.

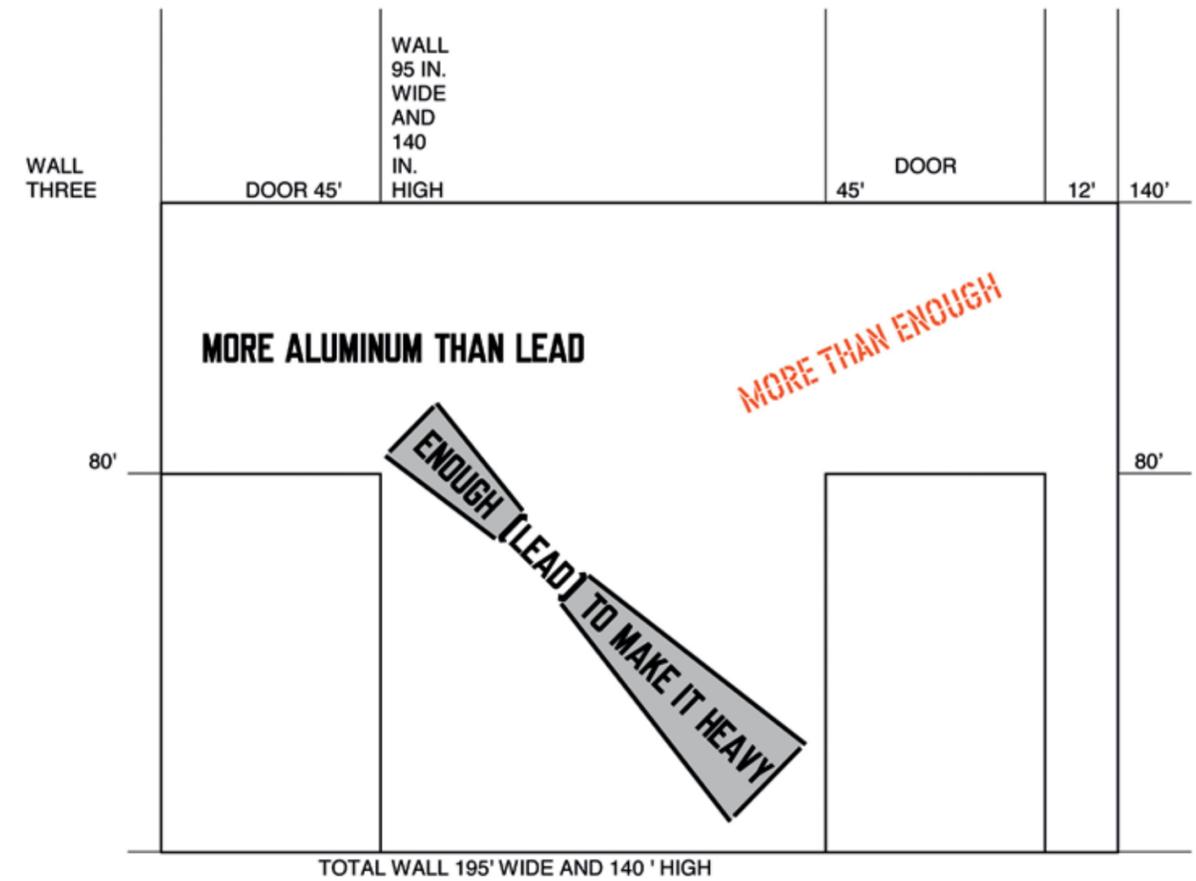
KDJ: Is dissatisfaction something that keeps you going?

LW: Again there is this thing between aspire and desire. I really don't know. The more I get to the point where I am supposed to have a distance, the less distance I seem to have. So that's an interesting thing. They say: "Well, you're looking at an artist." And they have been a public person for 30 years, that's a long time. And they are upset about sometimes being objectified, because they are a person too. And nobody takes it into consideration but they have feelings too, or fears or anxieties. And yet, instead of wisdom, what you get the more you work in the world is more and more lack of distance rather than distance. The distance in your mind is more and more read as cynicism. I think nobody really wants to intentionally become cynical. They become cynical and that's the one thing you have to be very, very careful of. That, on a personal level, is the major danger of being a lucky artist. That you can function in the world is that you have a tendency, just because you're tired, to let yourself become cynical. That you have to fight against. Unless you are a



ROOM E23 WALL #3

## LAWRENCE WEINER



**LETTERS ARE ALL APPROXIMATELY 6 INCHES TALL  
MIRRORED SILVER VINYL WITH MATTE BLACK & MATTE RED VINYL  
RED: PANTONE 032 C OR AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE**

good person and I guess I am not a good person. I'm just as tempted by all the things that make life a little bit easier. You really have to: "Hey, hey." Maybe you can do that better than anybody in the whole world, but what do you pay? What do you get upset about? Just do it, it'll be fine. The minute that happens, once or twice, I watched people I had great respect for that I've lost interest in, it's true. You get the feeling that you are able to do something that somebody else has not yet shown that they can do. It's not an answer; it still has to be exactly how it is supposed to be, or else you really fuck yourself and you fuck the whole world over. You have not fulfilled your responsibility. I much rather make a bad work, than a cynical work. And I have made bad works, and that later "Oh my God." I've changed them in the works book, the Green book. You

notice, I show where the changes occur over time, because after the 70s it was no longer necessary to say: "In relation to." The relation became another sculptural gesture. But I used to show people the relation, the context that they are having put it into its place. It was an attempt to communicate. But it has entered the culture. The few people who don't accept that it has entered the culture, and not know that they have the right to reject it, you can't worry about them all the time.

KDJ: So this placing, if you can call it that, became less important to you over the years?

LW: No, placing became more important. But the explanation I began to realize, putting it in the context that was taking away the

possibilities for other people. They had to put it in that context. Putting it in that context in the 70s, it had a reason. It doesn't have a reason in 2010. Anybody who doesn't know they are looking at art: that is really and truly their problem. And their fault. It's the same as people saying: "Well, that's not music." But of course it's music, you don't want to dance to it.

KDJ: Yes, that's a different story.

LW: That's a totally different story. In the 70s we used to believe that we were reaching the public that had no way to know what we have been lucky enough to find out and see and be in. Bullshit. I am more socially minded now. I basically give people the dignity and when

they fuck up, they fuck up. So therefore you change your work and you change the presentation, but you don't change the essence. The essence is still that relation from human beings to objects. Now, if you will excuse me for five minutes.

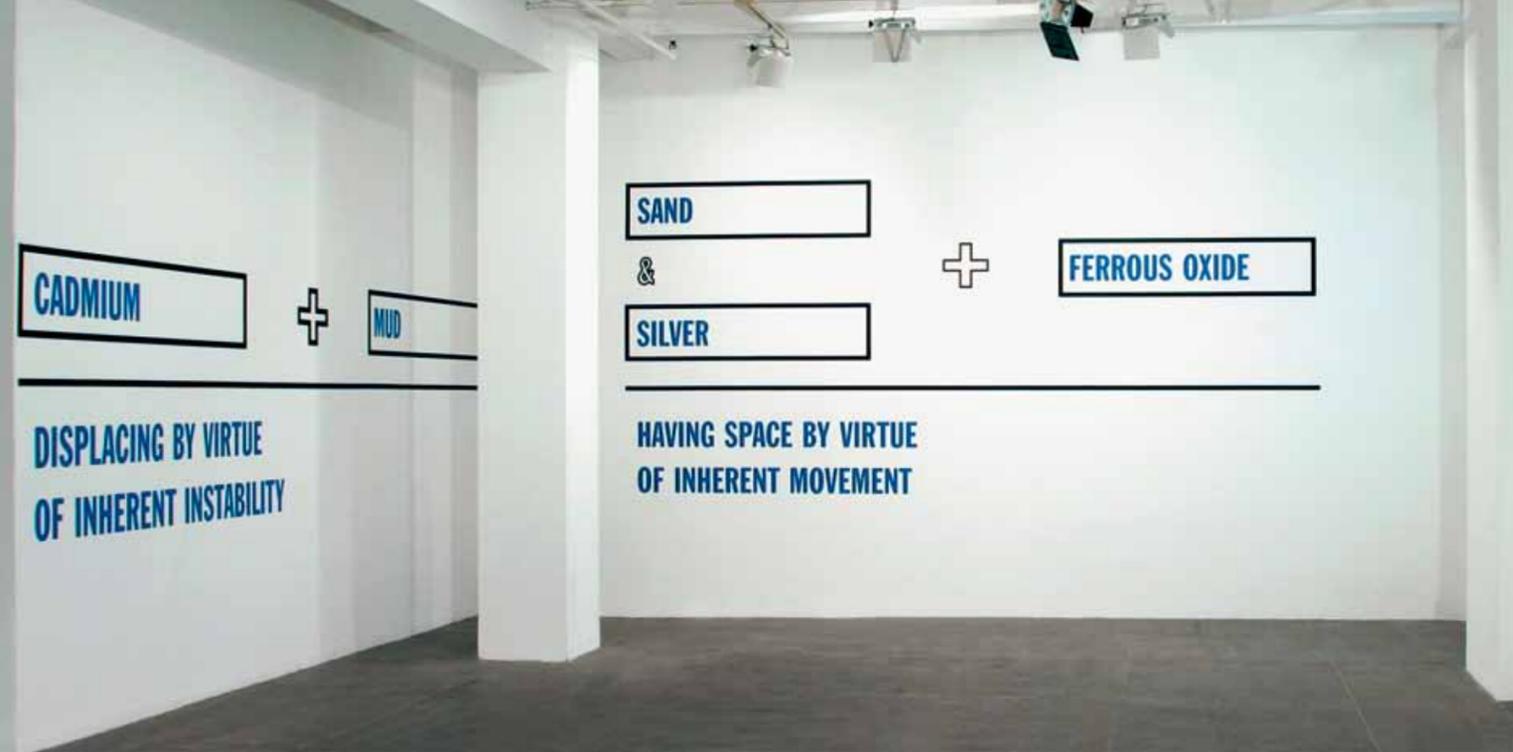
KDJ: Sure, sure.

[Lawrence gets up from the table.]

LW: I also feel absolutely insane having slept in underpants.

[All laughing.]

LW: It's this social pressure.



[All laughing. Lawrence goes to his bedroom. Karlyn, Sarah and Sophia talk in Dutch about how things are going this morning. Then they start doing the dishes and pack the rest of their stuff. Lawrence comes back and signs the books Karlyn and Sarah brought. Then he starts looking for things he can give the women as a present.]

KDJ: You made about 70 artists books, didn't you?

LW: I have no idea and you know what? It's a good idea that I don't know how many I did. I believe in making books and things.

[Lawrence puts his presents on the table.]

LW: What you are getting now is not such a big deal, it's just what I've been able to find on the boat.

SG: A few weeks ago, Karlyn and I were in a bar in Venice and all of a sudden Karlyn was like: "Hey, there's a Lawrence Weiner."

LW: On the mirror.

KDJ: Exactly!

LW: That was part of my deal: I would participate if they would just let me put that thing, which we installed without any explanation. And it worked.

KDJ: We were actually just discussing this project with you and then suddenly I saw that mirror.

SG: Nobody knew, but we knew.

LW: They know it was there. That's really sufficient, isn't it? Look, as I said, I got an ego like anybody else.

[Lawrence is looking for more things. Karlyn and Sarah admire the presents they have gotten. Lawrence returns with a DVD. They talk about the film and continue to speak about relationships.]

KDJ: Lawrence, you just said that the relationship of human beings to objects was already important for you from the beginning of your career...

LW: That's pretty obvious. I always think that's the way people think. That's terribly profound. In fact, what the fuck is making a painting and putting it on the wall? It's a relation of human beings to objects.

KDJ: But you have also said that you yourself are an object.

LW: No, sometimes I feel, I'm being treated like an object.

[Lawrence gets some vitamin C.]

LW: I feel that sometimes people forget that I might have... People talk about me in the third person in front of me. And they have for the last 30 years. I find that extremely rude.

[Lawrence walks away from the table and then returns.]

LW: I feel sometimes that I am seen as an object. That gets to you sometimes.

[Lawrence takes the *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* book.]

LW: Is this for me, by the way?

SG: Yes.

KDJ: Yes, that's for you.

[Lawrence picks up the book, flips some pages and sees the interview with Hamish Fulton. He then starts an anecdote about being with Hamish Fulton on a tour in Japan.]

LW: I have some trouble with my leg.

KDJ: You seem to be working standing, isn't that difficult with your leg?

LW: I have to move around. So, I have to have a place where I can walk. Here I go out upon the deck.

[Lawrence coughs.]

LW: Sometimes I don't go on the land for a whole two days. It's all about motion. It's all about drawing. Which is really rather interesting, that the work is so outside of what people think it is. In fact it's really all about

drawing. If you can draw it, if you can put it together, then the work falls into place. Otherwise: how is the work going to get its grace? It's then going to rely on maciage, if you don't do it that way. You can't have things rely on maciage. If you look at it from the fashion world: after a while it's going to be a little cakey. And that wasn't the point. It's a non-understanding of what goes on. You can do it from the essence correctly, then you don't have to worry about all this stuff that you have to hang on in order to make it work.

KDJ: You just said that you have the feeling you've been repeating the same thing for the past 40 years.

LW: You see, I hear it and it drives me... I want to turn off the bed. That sounds crazy.

[Lawrence walks away to the bedroom and says:]

LW: It drives me absolutely, completely bonkers.

SG: I did turn off the electric blanket.

LW: Oh, you did?

[Lawrence is in the bedroom. Karlyn asks Sarah in Dutch about her experience with the electric blanket. Lawrence returns to the table.]

LW: Well, I must say we have survived sort of well. Obviously, we have been trying to take care of each other's needs.

[Lawrence looks at the poster he has just given as a present.]

LW: I like that poster a lot. And I just happened to find some on board.

KDJ: Why do you like it so much?

LW: I love the way it works.

[Sarah points to something on the poster.]

SG: You often have these...

LW: That means something. It's a vector point. It's a vector that accepts the fact that you move from A to B. But there is something in between. You don't have to make a big fuss about it. You just have to use it as language. It's simple, but I love simple posters.

[They continue to speak about working together with other people.]

KDJ: Why does this *volgens mij* [according to me] bother you so much?

LW: I don't know why they do, but it is so fucking boring. You say: "Is that green?" *Nou, volgens mij is het een beetje groen, maar ook een beetje blauw* [Well, according to me it is a little green, but a little blue as well]. *Volgens mij*: it is or it isn't. It's actually somebody telling you that what they are saying, is the way it is. It's one of those conventions that people use, that allows them to be very pompous. It's a trick. It's like: "I don't know much about that, but..." I don't think we need all these tricks. Or maybe somebody else does, but the four of us don't need it because we all are who we are. Now I got dressed and now I'm cold.

[Sarah asks about an artwork hanging above the table. Lawrence lights a cigarette and tells about the work and anecdotes about the artist. Then the conversation returns to relationships.]

LW: Do you know what it's like, again being an object, where everywhere you go, people are asking you and they push the other person out of the way? And in fact, all you've gone out for is to



buy cheese. Your life just takes over. It makes the relationship almost impossible. It makes it harder and harder and harder. Each succeeding day you get more objectified into the culture. You asked for honesty. And it makes interpersonal relations impossible. You cannot really relate to somebody. I'm not a particularly heavy sort of person. I have my quirks about being possessive, just the same as everybody else has. But in fact, I'm not. And you cannot have any relationship with anybody, because you overwhelm them. But you don't. It's a societal thing that does. And I find that a bit difficult sometimes, quite frankly. One can't even play, because by the virtue of the society one person is in another position. And it's not a necessity. You wanted to know what one got from the 24 hours? That it's a relief for me that we were able, even though we were constantly talking about me, to deal with ourselves without having to 'ass kiss', without all that stuff. For real: everybody is who they are, and they are what they are and it's not going to change. That's the way life is. That's why maybe I am more aware of being an object. Otherwise it really doesn't bother me. But really, it makes interpersonal relationships so difficult.

KDJ: You do seem to have a lot of friends. You do seem to have good relationships with other artists, friendships that go back a long time.

LW: Yes, but they do things that interest me. Why shouldn't I? And also a lot of it is professional. It's just affectionate professional. And I don't see why professionally you cannot be affectionate.

KDJ: Do you then consider these people as friends?

LW: I don't know anything. You know, I've been in the art world for so long. It's the only world I know. That's what I was trying to explain to you: I'm not the kind of person to ask. I've been doing this since I'm 18. That's weird, that's very kinky. I mean really out there with 18. It took me a year and a half to get it out there. I don't have any other concept of the world. I don't get it. I really am the *idiot savant*. Not quotable. I don't know. You ask a strange question. I like artists. A student is the person who's chosen the profession you've chosen. Why wouldn't you like them? Even if they are trying to knock you off the chair, so they can get on the chair or on top of the table. That's all part of the job. All that old-fashioned stuff, if you look at the rhetoric from the 70s, my positioning: it's a gunfighter, you can sit and have a drink or play poker, but if you get up, it's about who is faster, that lives. It's the job you chose. So, you can feel badly about somebody losing it, but you can't really take responsibility for it. For it is part of the job. If you want it not to be part of the job, then you have to change the job.

KDJ: How long do you want to continue making art? Until the day you die?

LW: I don't even think it's a question, what else would I do? I could go and sit on the beach or to the Caribbean and be a famous artist and being on the beach for a couple of years. As long as that lasts. But I don't think it will be very interesting. I have a need to make art. But it is not a compulsion. It is the only way I can judge my relationship to the rest of the world. Otherwise, I don't have any sense of what my relationship to the world is. I don't know what you do in the morning, but even this morning I was lying on the bed and I was just trying to think of how to finish up what you needed and that I really didn't like the idea that even the people I am enthusiastic about... I would appreciate it if you would just say: "I have a friend." You can change that,

that's editorially allowed. I am sort of socially polite: I'm not going to say what I'm thinking, not about other people. Unless they've crossed the line. If somebody rapes someone, then I'm going to talk out loud. I really don't feel I have to be apologetic for them.

KDJ: If you say something like that, I do feel that you have a very strong ethics...

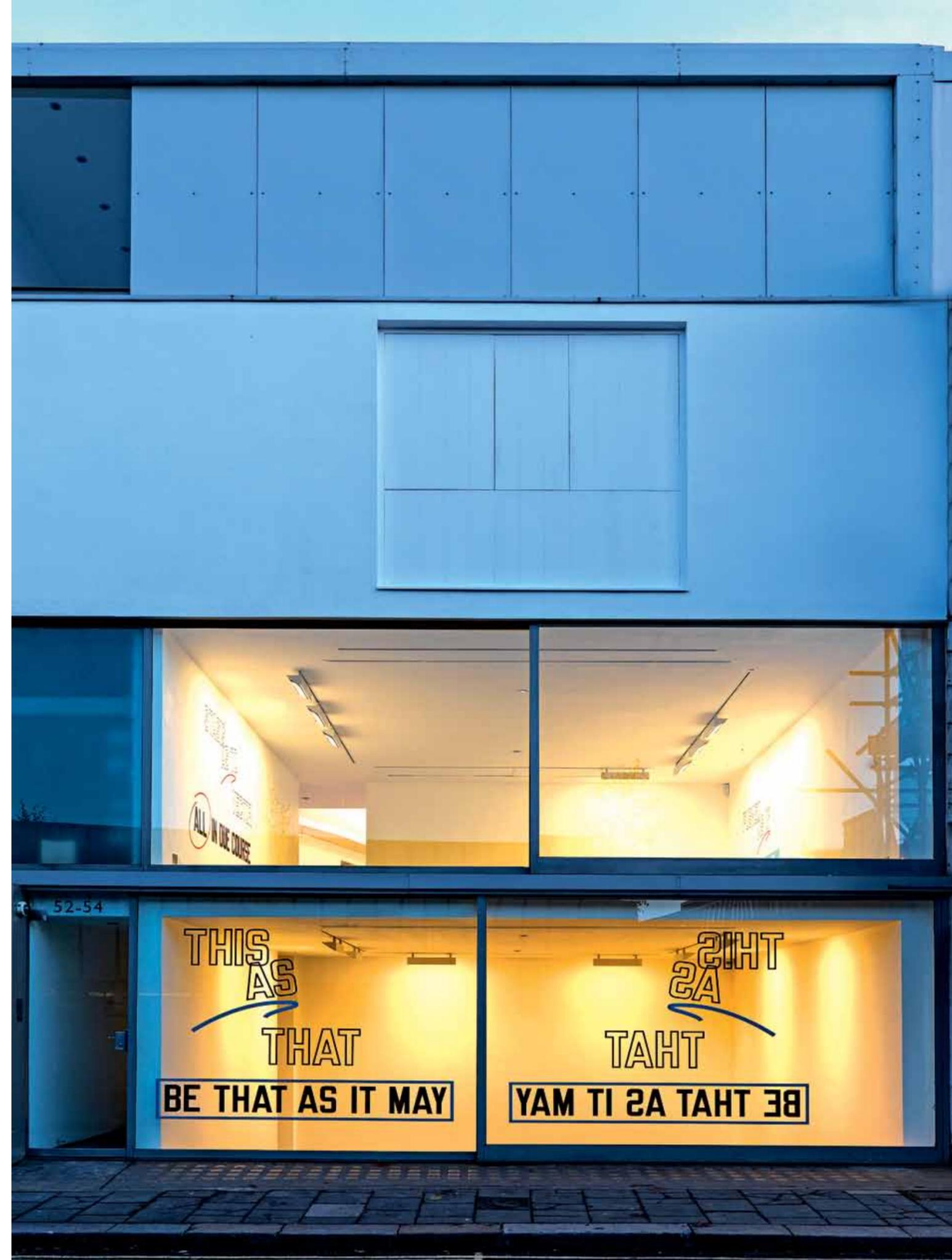
LW: Obviously, I have the same desires as other people. But I have trained myself over the years not to do it. The concept of 'concubinage' is really rather a pleasant prospect. It genuinely is. Basically, you think it. But it's like I said: you really are not supposed to eat babies. So, essentially you don't. But you're not going to run around preaching that you're not supposed to eat babies. And you're certainly not going to get any credit for doing that. It doesn't mean you haven't thought about it. Underneath this polite demeanor, there is a seething mass. You have no idea about God knows what. I am very serious. We are human beings in a society. You make your choices and you basically make them because you think they are the right choice. And you just don't do things. Some things are a no-no. That's about crossing the line. And why cross the line when basically you can *zorg voor jezelf* [take care of yourself] in a manner that's reasonable. Why cross the line? Just because you can?

KDJ: Yesterday you have mentioned three 'no's', are these the no-no's? Racism, Fascism and Sexism?

LW: That pretty much covers everything, doesn't it? Yeah, you can't have concubinage without sexism. Where you really and truly don't think, but it works. And racism is racism. Like I said, you lose your freedom with racism: you can't say that you don't like something. Why would you give up your freedom? Basically you give everybody the same dignity, when you say: "You've made the wrong choice." "Your lifestyle really sucks." That's not racism. That's just 'your lifestyle really sucks', in relation to me. I don't want it. Fascism is something else: that's organized religion, that's the state, that's people telling you that there are 'givens', and they are forever. And you are not supposed to question them. That's about heresy. That's why I did all these seminars on heresy. Where this heresy comes into the art world, it's really true: you can be a heretic. In fact, you cannot not be heretic. If you want to be, if you aspire to be somebody, that's heresy. If you reject what they are supposing, that's heresy. It's the same thing. It's the contentions that we've been given, because of Aristotle, pro and con. It doesn't leave anything open, but we live in a world of cell phones and computers. That explains to you every day in their existence that there is a minimum for right answers. Minimum. And that's the start of the whole conversation. We live in a world where simultaneous reality is a political necessity to understand.

[Lawrence tells about his piece on the Spui in Amsterdam.]

LW: Art is supposed to do that. Art is supposed to bring these material facts, that people have these heavy, heavy beliefs. And in fact, if they would turn around they would just look at the wall. A dry-wall that has been built somewhere in the field. All of their beliefs don't make any sense. Their physical world belies their emotional and religious world. That's what art is about. That's what the whole thing is about. It's about asking a question by showing a fact. Not by asking a question. Because otherwise it's just *volgens mij*. "I had an insight. Oh, I had a realization." It's not about that. Art is about putting the stuff itself right out there. I think; *volgens mij*.



# HERMANN NITSCH UNDER MY SKIN

PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS #02

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

Museo Hermann Nitsch, Napoli, Italy, 23 May 2010



*In May 2010, Karlyn and Sarah were 'crucified' in Hermann Nitsch's 130th Aktion, in Naples, Italy. In the week before the actual event, they took part in the rehearsals and met Nitsch every day to talk with him about experiencing life and his Orgien Mysterien Theater. On the day of the Aktion, Karlyn and Sarah were blindfolded, naked, bound to their crosses, to feel, hear, taste and smell all that was happening to them in the Museo Hermann Nitsch.*

*HERMANN NITSCH: UNDER MY SKIN has been published as a limited edition. The edition comprises 250 copies of which 50 DeLuxe, numbered from 1 to 50, and 50 DeLuxe hors commerce, numbered from 1 to L. The 150 Standard copies are numbered from 51 to 200. Each item of this limited edition consists of a book and a DVD of the 130th Aktion by Hermann Nitsch in a case, housed together in a cassette. The DeLuxe edition is signed by the artist and additionally contains a piece of bloodstained cloth originating from the 130th Aktion of the Orgien Mysterien Theater. The following text is an excerpt of one of the conversations Sarah and Karlyn had with Nitsch, during their time in Naples, Italy.*

*Karlyn De Jongh: For me, being part of your Aktion is also a sexual experience. When I was 15 years old, I already had strong thoughts about your Aktion, and also yesterday evening I masturbated while thinking about it.*

Hermann Nitsch: Now I have to put something forward, there definitely is a Pan-theism and a Pan-sexuality or Pan-eroticism. For me, everything is erotic, every moment, every flower. Therefore, something like e.g. Otto Mühl makes, that I do not need at all. If people criticize me that far too few erotic things occur in my work, then people do not understand the handwriting. So, there is not only a Pan-theism, but also a Pan-erotic. This is something I have always known; therefore, your behavior does not surprise me.

*Sarah Gold: Now it is up to us to report how we experience this week with you and as a bonus, we hope that we get to hear from you how*

*you experience it. Because, after all the literature that is written about you and all the thoughts we have, we believe there is even much more inside of Nitsch.*

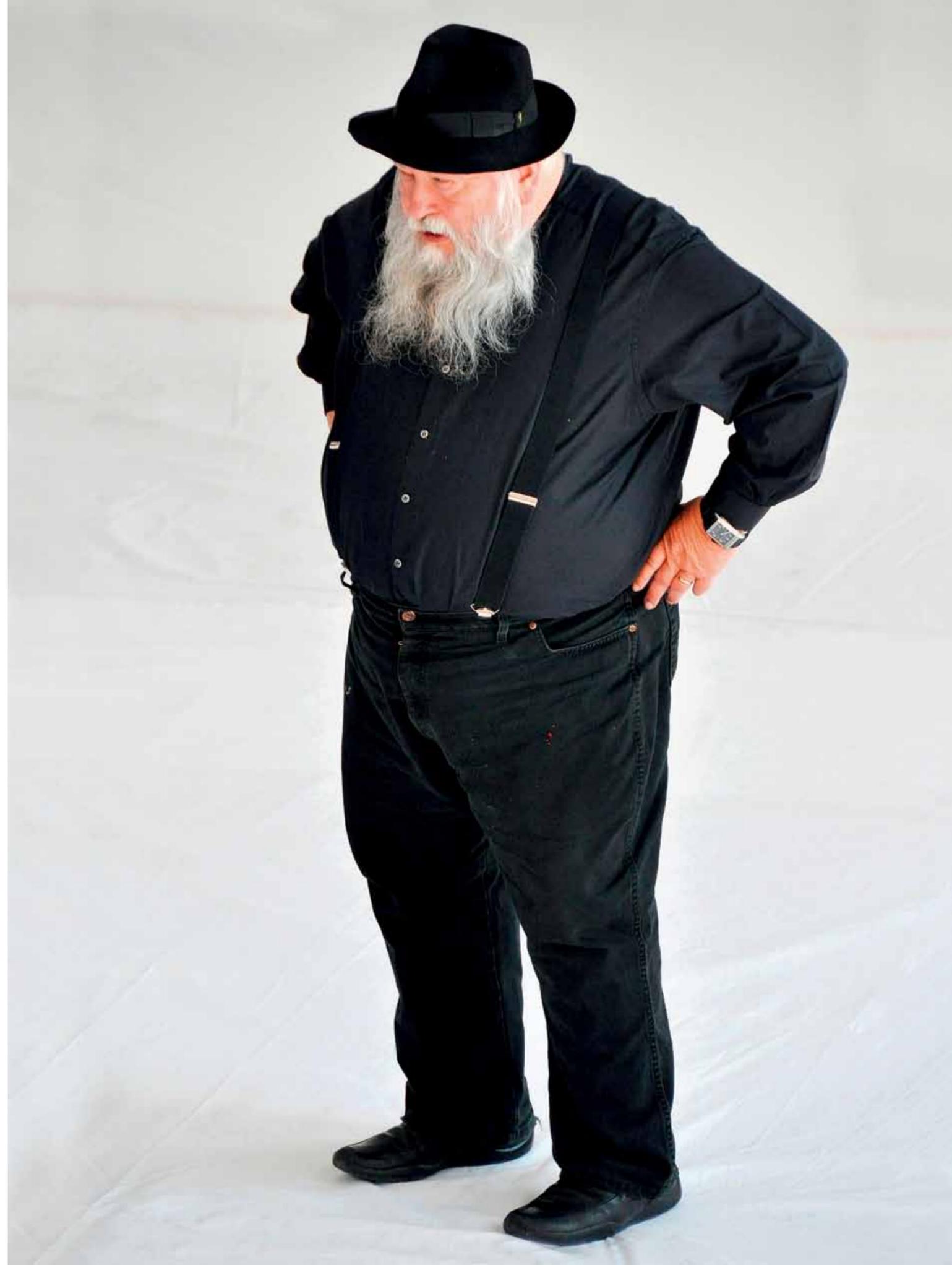
HN: I hope there is. I have no secondary education, because I was thrown out of every school, but even so, I became a professor and doctor, even without taking the civil and academic efforts I reached it anyway and I am proud of that, but it was life itself which made me who I am today. Unfortunately, I have achieved all this after my mother died, she would have loved to see it.

*KDJ: But perhaps she knew that you would be able to do it.*

HN: She knew it exactly. She always scolded me and asked, "Why are you doing this nonsense? Why don't you go to a bank, or become a schoolteacher? But, whenever I had visitors in my mother's apartment and I was, for example, on the toilet, she expressed her pride to these people. Under the bed, she kept old drawings of me, which she then showed to them. If I had not done my work anymore, my work that she so hated, then my mother would have been bitterly disappointed. Basically, she believed in me.

*SG: Do you have any idea why you made this so called 'nonsense'?*

HN: In a positive way, you come very close to me now. Now I will not answer you with academic rubbish, but I made it because I was convinced that it was necessary and still is. To work in this way and to question the world in this way. Christ said: "What is truth?" It was Pontius Pilate and Pilate makes an incredibly great figure in the New Testament. The fact that he washed his hands and really did not want to have anything to do with politics and, then plainly asks: "What is truth?" I want that too. I have always fought for the truth. One cannot reach the truth, but you can move in the direction of the truth. I never wanted to improve the world as a whole for that, the world is far too great, too diffi-



cult, too complex. You can only extract great moments from the world, in terms of large deep experiences that penetrate into being. But Being is actually the thing in itself. Since everything is inside of it: the terrible abyss, and the glorious splendor, the greatest moments of joy and the deepest holes. And yes, I have always fought. I would say, it was for the truth of Being.

SG: *Have you fought for us, for the other, or more for yourself?*

HN: That is all in one round. For example, it is the nature of art that she is altruistic, that she is there for others. If Beethoven would be sitting here now, with his last string quartet, then that is transferable. Art is a language in which moments of joy and deep experiences of Being can be transferred to thousands of people. Would that not be the case, then art would be without purpose and not socially intimate and it would to a large extent not be useful, which art really is.

KDJ: *Now you have been creating your work for about 50 years. Having lived in Vienna I am of the opinion that the Viennese Actionism was destined to arise there, have you been able to change something? Have you in your environment, or perhaps even to a larger extent, made a difference?*

HN: Look, a great example for me is Freud. Whether the therapeutic success of Freud was really so great is a question I do not want and even cannot answer. But he had a great influence on our whole culture, even on mythology and theology. Actually, he preventively has eliminated dispositions towards the classic Freud Neurosis through his educational work. In this sense, he was therapeutic in insight therapy and that is for me also the case. I do not believe in an improvement of human beings, or an improvement of nature. But I think that we can use the conditions that we have better and more intense and that everyone by himself, can intensively develop his Being.

SG: *Now, from today on, you will live maybe 10 years more...*

HN: I would like to live another 10 years. But you have to have good partners who can endure that you are not so fast anymore. They have to be able to deal with my wisdom, just like with the great painters, just like with Titian.

SG: *These last 10 years, what can you still give us as a final accord?*

HN: I would like to make the most beautiful thing I am perhaps still able to make. I would like my work to become more colorful in every respect, and more undogmatic, unspeakably a message of Being. That Being says: "Come to me," you are created to be and experience it. You do not experience it in hell, not in distress and not in pain, but you experience it in the greatest joy. Just look the suffering and the Cross, the tragedy, the tragic and death, in the eye. The images of wars and Holocaust unfortunately, that all belongs to Being. I would like to be on the side, just because I have intimately and altruistically experienced Being. In that moment I am then fully there, when I am completely in luck, then I do not understand humanity. I do not believe in isolation that is so awful now, that people grow up in big cities. They have lost contact to the whole, they are really isolated.

They are really narcissistic and have a poor existence. But there are also those who can enjoy honestly, in great pleasure there are no restraints. Another 10 years? Visions for the future, I am not really as interested in them as I am in experiencing the moment, the now, the experience.

SG: *Do you not have the feeling that, for the younger generation, enjoying honestly moved to the background?*

HN: I think this was so at all times. At all times, it has always given prophets who preached. He used to be called the Good Lord or something like that. There were always those who called for intensity, the essential. Perhaps it was a ridiculous figure, but there were always people who have called for such a thing.

KDJ: *A few weeks ago you met the two of us for the first time. Can you tell us how you experienced that?*

HN: I had seen your book, *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE* with the interview inside that the German art historian conducted with me. When I had seen the other interviews in the book, I wondered why, like with the other interviews, the two pretty young ladies did not come to me, I would have preferred the two of you.

KDJ: *But now we are here. What do you think now?*

HN: I cannot tell you, this is however not against you; rather these are social considerations which I must take. You will write it down then and that would not be good. Please do not think anything negative at all, and that I am not saying it yet, should not limit the intimacy of our cooperation.

SG: *But I think we are very open. So, you cannot shock us, whatever thoughts you might have, we are simply very interested.*

HN: It is only positive. Maybe we come to the moment that I let out anyway, but I would like to say that we will not continue this direction for now, now it is still a bit early.

Do you see my Italian assistant there; I have known him for a very long time. He was such a handsome man. I am not at all homosexual, but I would have liked to be both, and not be oriented in one direction only. By the way, sometime, somehow today, I have to undress you. I am sorry; are you washed?

KDJ: *Yes. It is nice to see that we are coming closer to each other quickly. Why does everyone call you just Nitsch?*

HN: I wanted it that way. My wife calls me Nitsch, and all my friends say Nitsch to me. I do not want to be called by my first name. And I also do not like this kind of intimacy that you tap people on the shoulder and say if someone is famous and his name is Joseph, that they say: "Ah, yesterday I had lunch with Joseph." Furthermore, with the name Nitsch I have done something, there are lots of people called Hermann.

I am Nitsch, but in reference to our conversation, do not think, firstly, that I am infallible, and secondly that I have a desire to be infallible. We artists would of course like to become famous and now that I am 71, and have been an artist for more than 50 years, what is important to me is that I can say: "I am capable to do that."



It has developed in such a way, that today young people like you come to me. Of course that pleases me; it should indeed be like that. With regard to this, I have been spoiled my whole life. I was known fairly quickly, perhaps notoriously, always polarized and always questioned. I believe that my work will never stop to be questionable, but I only show the world as she is.

SG: *Karlyn and I have talked together a lot about you and your Aktionen and it seems that a lot of people do not understand you, even though you explain it often and so clearly that I had thought many people should be able to relate to what you say.*

HN: You are absolutely right. Bankers, lawyers, and many others like that, are often not able to really read my art, and that is sad. I can only teach them to a certain extent, and I can teach them best through my work itself. I know that perhaps 80% of the people, who have kept me alive, in the sense that they buy my art, do not understand it.

KDJ: *Why is that, do you think?*

HN: A very drastic example: there is the Second Viennese School, the Schoenberg School. Schoenberg is the one who has determined the music of the 20th Century. Once there was a day of death, or something like that, of one of the composers of this school, Anton Webern, and then the best musicians came to Vienna. He had only written for small ensembles, that is, the best soloists were there. Nevertheless, only a few listeners came. The work is so great but nonetheless is discarded in the world. It is so unbelievable that something may go away empty-handed like that. For me it is not considered empty and for the music and for those who know, he has been essential and still is essential. Also for example, like with Bach, someone who has made the most wonderful things, but when his work is played in a concert hall,



perhaps only 1000 people will and can come, there are soccer stadiums that can contain 100,000 people.

SG: *Does that hurt you?*

HN: Well, an enemy that can not be overcome, one should simply join. Of course, these sports fights have also a lot to do with art, football is dramatic, and it has a lot to do with drama. Today, sadly enough, it is like that, but on the other hand, it is so that we have a say in it ourselves as well. This may be something one does perhaps not notice, but indirectly we together decide a lot.

KDJ: *You will be 72 this year, but you work a lot with young models. You told us that we, with 29 and 32, are almost too old. The age distance between you and your models seems to become bigger. What does this mean or say to you?*

HN: What shall I say now? Every age can identify itself with the heroes of that age, and now today I am an older lover. If I would say that I like women, but that I really am not constantly anxious to play the bells in some way to impress the women, I would actually be lying. Now it is so, the young people are easiest to get, the older-looking, one will not get. What I do not like is that bourgeois obesity, but one that is reasonable skinny, that pleases me a lot, but one does not easily get a model like that. It is just a convenience that I just take the people from a student's repertoire, but otherwise there generally is no age limit.

KDJ: *So there also no limit for the models who are naked?*

HN: No. Not at all. In a given case, I would also take those who have this bourgeois fat. It is about the human, but then there is of course the tradition of art history, with the beautiful bodies of Michelangelo. And what always interested me... Why are you laughing, Sarah?

SG: I had to think of Rubens.

HN: Marvelous, marvelous. Without further protest, I would take such people. But it is the Christ-ideal of sculpture that is an ideal that has very much determined me. A woman with not so strong breasts has such a similarity with the body of Christ. Something like that interests me in particular. But the beautiful story comes through the Passion of Christ, and through Greek sculpture, in that tradition I have grown up, that is my cultural environment. Dionysus, for example, is not a fat god, such as Bacchus. Dionysus is slim.

KDJ: What do you think about your own body?

HN: Perhaps by a not so happy upbringing, I have not learned to love my body. But I am not against my body, I am for the body, but I am very much against the exaggeration of the physicality in sport. I have forgotten to love my body as it would perhaps be nicer, but still loved it enough.

KDJ: Do you love the bodies of other people when you hang them on the cross? What does the crucifixion of these bodies mean to you?

HN: It is an expression of many things. When I go into a museum and I see a crucifixion by Titian or Rembrandt there, I would say that, that is the human appearance, theatrical, until the tragic, until the resurrection. I do not think that the human body is more beautiful when it hangs on the cross, but it creates a dramatic expressiveness. Although I am not a practicing Christian, that tragic has a monstrous adventurous element to me, nevertheless tragedy is always associated with great beauty. That can also be seen in art history.

KDJ: Do you believe there is a god?

HN: I do not think that that is the most important question, however, our own existence, our Being, that is important. That is not even a question, but a command. It is the way that we become. We should enjoy our lives and in some way do it so intense, that you get goose bumps.

KDJ: You seem to be a very intellectually oriented person, but at the same time also a very emotional person.

HN: Yes, I am very much at the border of the intellect. And precisely for that reason, because I know I am on the border and move at the frontier of science, I am not against emotionality. Many are always against the intellect and say that nothing can be achieved with the intellect. But I also believe that I am passionate. In the past I seem to have been much more terrible. And now I do not know, but my work has always been a plea for sensuality. That is, however, done in such a way, that I always say, "sensibility is a mental thing", it is dealt with by consciousness. So, with this platonic thing however, mind separated from body, I do not play along with that. This is out of Christianity, that is no longer my world. My work is an apologia for sensuousness. We no longer live in the Middle Ages, when the mind was everything and the body was condemned, and our life was only the preparation for the beyond. My life is no preparation for the beyond. The beyond is there, when I am intensely present.

KDJ: Do you believe that you are always intensely present?

HN: Yes, but of course I must die, but when I look around, when I look at the universe, it is always moving, always recurring. Everything that is destroyed comes back. I actually carry the whole universe really deep into my heart.

KDJ: How do you see your relationship to the universe then, what is your position there?

HN: I do not say that quite exuberant, but I say: "I am all that, all around, that is all me." There is identification with the whole and that gives me a great sense of happiness. Perhaps we are still on our way, but we should all experience this great awareness.

KDJ: Are you yourself still on your way?

HN: I will be my whole life; I will always be on my way, in the infinite space of eternity or infinity.

KDJ: You stress the word 'always'.

HN: I have had to suffer a lot in my life and do not know how much I still have to suffer, but nevertheless I want to experience it again and again, because it shows me everything: suffering, death, joy, lust. I would say that I regard myself as an intersection where a lot of experiences meet and above all as a human subject in which, by which, Being is experienced intensely.

SG: Do you have the feeling that you have been able to experience intensely enough or would you have liked to experience more, do more, live more.

HN: That is difficult to answer because I must be satisfied with what I have learned.

KDJ: Are you happy?

HN: At the moment, yes. But I am also often very unhappy. To me it always gets on my nerves when people ask me how I am. The question is incredibly hypocrite, for 95% the question is not meant genuinely, and people are shocked when you answer the question honestly.

SG: Is there a moment in your life of which you say that you should not have done that. Or are you generally satisfied with what you have done?

HN: Recently I have said to myself, I would not have decided otherwise when I would live on, or if everything would be repeated again. It is actually so, that I think... Not that I have made the right decisions, but I have been pushed into the right decisions.

KDJ: Does that mean that these decisions are not made consciously?

HN: For example: I told you already that I was a bad student. I was kicked out of grammar school. In secondary school I was then been put in the b-section. I got so angry, that school did not really interest me anymore and I despised it. I have always been a dreamer. When the teacher was preaching, I was always writing novels. They were always hero-novels, in which I lived in one country for a long time and then became a hero and, of course, then I went home to my mother. It is a long story. There is always so much energy in people, if we could channel that



a little... One did not know what to do with me. I have always disappointed my mother very much, but she had always known that I was good at drawing. There is a school in Vienna where you can learn graphic art, there you had to draw incredibly much and perhaps I learned more there than at the Art Academy. 300 children wanted to go there and they took only 20 and I had the good fortune to be among those 20. I was pushed into that, it did not depend at all on my own will. That is what I mean; it was the greatest luck in my life. The teachers encouraged my love for the old masters. That is what I mean, certain decisions one cannot make oneself.

KDJ: With your hero-novels you always lived in a dream world. How did you get into reality?

HN: Maybe I am still not there. But it is like that, what is real? Probably the world, of which I have told you, is the reality. The banking crises are not realities, because they only give an illusory world. The illusory world suddenly shows holes. In addition, that what we call reality, I would say, I do not recognize that as reality. That is the black reality. I often ask young people what they study, science or economics. Then there are always these cheaters who try to imitate something they themselves cannot understand. In that way we will all slip into a terrible imaginary world and forget that we exist at all, even though that is the most important thing. Zen Buddhism has very much dealt with this matter. So it is with Being, we are in the middle of it and do not see it.

SG: How can you help someone to see that, do you have the feeling that you can do that through your art?

HN: Yes, indeed, with my art and in the past for example, through the endless sitting at *heurigen*, with wine, with good friends. I have had wonderful conversations there. I learned more at the *heurigen* than in lecture halls.



KDJ: At *heurigen* there is often a lot of alcohol involved. How does that relate to wanting to create a conscious life?

HN: First of all, we humans are to some extent depending on drugs. Of course, who can do without drugs, that is wonderful. Alcohol, you have to be able to handle it, it can ruin you, but there is also a drinking technique through which you can handle the alcohol. For example: you can drink every other day. Asians for example, have other drugs. Also the Greek philosophers always drank a lot. In Taoism there is a sect, who have only been drinking and singing and they were very happy. But, I will not be an apologia of wine, and so far I have not exaggerated it.

SG: I have read something about excesses, were these excesses created by intense Being? Or did they develop earlier on also through the use of alcohol or other drugs?

HN: Look, existence or orgies are of course, to some degree almost synthetic concepts, a vision however that can come close to it. It is there as a vision and as a wonderful idea, as an excess in certain cases, it is always possible, and perhaps even necessary.

SG: Why necessary?

HN: We need it for our blood circulation. Today they all go to this wellness centers and things like that. I do believe that it is important to purify ourselves, and by that to be able to live intensely, by which intense life cannot be captured in a textbook.

# HERMANN NITSCH

## UNDER MY SKIN

23 MAY 2010

By Karlyn De Jongh  
Naples, Italy

Today would be the day, after 6 days of preparations, Sarah and I would become part of Nitsch's *130<sup>th</sup> Aktion*. I was in Naples, Italy, and woke up around 6am, from sheer enthusiasm. How I looked forward to this! Now it was really happening. I had this positive tension. Especially for this day, I had promised myself to have no moral restrictions, to just experience what happens, without cultural boundaries, because that is what Nitsch is about. I stayed in bed for a while, thinking about what was going to happen. What a chance this was, to be part of Nitsch's artwork. Not only would we be part, we would be the centerpiece, the finale. We had build up such a relationship with Nitsch that he changed his script and rearranged it around Sarah and me. How fantastic that was! And Sarah and I would be writing about our experiences, making a beautiful book. What an adventure it had already been, spending these previous six days with Nitsch, seeing so much of the preparations, being able to ask him any question.

We had to be at the Fondazione Morra, the Museo Hermann Nitsch at 8 o'clock and I had plenty of time. We did not have to prepare anything: naked and without make-up was how we were supposed to present ourselves to Nitsch that morning. Off we went to the museum, it was around 7.15 am. It was quiet and beautiful, there was this fresh heat as in summer mornings. Sarah and I walked hand in hand as always. We passed large billboards with announcements for the *Aktion*, for our crucifixion. It was early Sunday, but our favorite café was open. We stopped for two cappuccinos and a croissant and continued on our way to the museum. When we arrived, we did not have anything to do and so we took a seat in the sun on the museum terrace, chatting with the filmmaker, the Dutch artist and the book lady, watching the others set up the space and make it look beautiful. It was warm outside and I drank quite a bit of water. Some active actors with experience had warned me for dehydration and advised me to drink a lot, because we would not get any water during the *Aktion*, just blood and slime. Although I longed for it, I was still nervous about the blood being poured into my mouth. It was 11 o'clock, the *Aktion* would start at 12, but we had to be ready before the visitors would arrive.

I was sitting there, naked on my table, my island, and observed the other tables and the objects lying on them. They were all

covered with white cloth. Some were set with the fish and other seafood we had bought on the market. They were placed side-by-side, very straight. It was interesting to see that so much attention was being paid to how all the fish were positioned. Large lumps of intestines were brought in. It was very possible that at some point one of these lumps would end up upon my body. I tried smelling them, but it was too far away, there was only this very light scent, and it was so light that I could not describe it. The fish were more impressive in that sense, but also their smell was not so strong yet. After a few minutes, the cloths were drained with blood or water, depending on the object lying on it. Stuff came out of the intestines. I remembered the liver having a beautiful color, a very dark deep red. I imagined what it would feel like, firm and soft and how slippery it would be. Everything was seen by me from an erotic point of view. It was as if you are bound to the bed and you know that in a certain amount of time you will be taken and you, very consciously, watch what is going on around you and put everything into question. What will they do? How will they use me? Nitsch had told us in great extent what was about to happen to us, but during the interviews he had also made a remark that during the *Aktion* he sometimes changes things, depending on the situation. I liked this idea of not knowing completely what was about to happen, it triggered me: everything was possible. I observed the other tables and the piles of strawberries and tomatoes that were lying on them. It was interesting to know that the objects could be used for my body. There were the beautiful, natural reds of the strawberries, cherries, tomatoes and also the intestines of animals, and all with different shapes. Then someone came and blindfolded me.

Lying in my position on the table with my eyes covered, I was ready to start. Sarah and I did not say much to each other anymore, maybe just a few words in between, but most of the time I was just lying in position. It was comfortable on my table and I entered my own world, feeling a little distant on my island. Maybe I was just tired from the previous days as I had not slept much. It had been long days with many impressions and now lying there on my table, I was very relaxed. The nervousness was gone. I closed my eyes behind my blindfold and suddenly felt myself dozing off. This was





a bit too comfortable. Now when it was finally happening, I had to be awake. I opened my eyes again and looked through the gap between the blindfold and my cheek. Looking through that gap felt like cheating, but it was for the better. When the *Aktion* actually would start, I would close my eyes and really concentrate on my other senses. It was interesting to experience the difference, having your eyes closed or looking through that gap. Having the ability to see, I automatically neglected my other senses and focused solely on what I was seeing. People were moving around, rushing to get everything ready in time, and upstairs on the balcony of the first floor I could see the documentary maker in position. I could not see whether he was actually filming, but the thought of it was a pleasant one.

After some time, it became quieter in the space and I heard Nitsch's voice. He spoke softly and I could not hear what he was saying, there were other sounds in the space, but I do not remember what they were, because I concentrated on Nitsch. The tone in his voice seemed a formal one and it could have been around 12 o'clock. I assumed he was making a speech as a preface to the start of the *Aktion*. As far as I could hear, he mentioned aspects of what he had been telling Sarah and me during our interviews. I wondered how many visitors there would be. I closed my eyes and took this sound of Nitsch as the actual beginning of the *Aktion*. There I was, lying on my table, being one of the passive actors in Hermann Nitsch's *130<sup>th</sup> Aktion*. All that was about to happen would only last a short moment. To my recollection, I had

experienced so much while just being in the moment, that I forgot about the time that was passing. Sometimes I thought about the sequence of events following each other, and sometimes I wondered how long I had been hanging on the cross. I had however, been thinking more in the sense that it was remarkable that I did not experience the length of time, that it was as if my sense of duration was gone. Later I was told the event in the museum had taken about 4 hours, while I had just experienced the 'now'. At a certain point, it just was over. I had experienced all the scenes in the sequence we had rehearsed in the days before, but besides the feel, smell, taste and sound of things, in the moment of the *Aktion* there did not seem to be anything else.

Naked, on my table, having my eyes closed, I tried to get as many impressions as possible, to experience everything around me as intensely as I could. At a certain moment, I felt the hand of Nitsch's son on my arm. It was nice and warm. Already from the beginning, I had been cold again and his hand came as a pleasant surprise. "Here is the blood," he said. When I heard him say it, I thought, "Oh fuck!" I had feared this moment from the very beginning, and now I would be served my blood. I opened my mouth, slowly. My lips and tongue, the whole inside of my mouth and actually my entire body, I felt everything longing for this taste. I opened my mouth. The blood..., what a fantastic fluid! It was a little cold, but it was this thick, really nice tasting, wonderful liquid. My mouth was anxious, as if the complete surface of the inside of my mouth was full of desire to get all the taste. My tongue reached inside this

stream of blood that was flowing into my mouth. It was filling my cheeks and I let as much of this blood inside my mouth as possible, to taste it as intense as I could, everywhere in my mouth. This was such a fantastic experience. This was so erotic. This was so unlike anything I had ever tasted. This was wonderful. The blood kept coming. Nitsch's son poured more and more blood in my mouth while he slowly shifted my head to the left. I wanted to take as much as possible and relaxed all the muscles in my face in order to stretch my skin and make more room in my mouth. It took several seconds before my mouth was filled to the top and was overflowing. I felt the blood running over my lips and the corner of my mouth. It run over my cheek and gone it was. Nitsch's son asked me to now slowly press the blood out of my mouth. I listened to him, pressing it very slowly out. It was wonderful to feel the counter-pressure of the blood while I was pushing it out and at the same time feeling the delicious taste of a thin layer still covering the inside of my mouth. There was something about this thick, sticky fluid, it was so erotic. The blood felt warmer now, which was even better and allowed for a fuller taste. The blood was sticking on my lips, I felt them full and swollen as if they were burning, as if my own blood was being aggressively pumped through them. I felt my body reacting: my nipples were getting hard, my pussy getting wet. It was as if my whole body was trying to come closer. Even now, when I am writing this, it is as if my tongue is again reaching for it, wanting to taste it. The blood came again. Nitsch's son poured another amount of blood in my mouth

and then pushed my head to the opposite side. Again my mouth was filled with blood and I felt my cheek started hanging from the weight. Slowly, I pushed the blood out. It was running over my lips. They were swollen, thicker than usual. Everything in my mouth was completely sensitive, my jaws, the blood sticking on my teeth. When he was finished, the blood on my cheeks dried quickly. It was sticky at first, but later I felt these two dry lines on my face. They were tightening my skin and it felt as if this dry skin kept my lips open. The blood on my lips stayed liquid for quite some time. I imagined how red they must be now.

I heard some noise coming towards my direction. People lifted my arms, placing my hands on the wooden stick, in the right position. I was lifted up. It felt amazing. It was as if my legs were tied to the table. The rest of my body on the contrary, felt very light. I felt the openness of my chest, my breasts and the desire that came with it. I wanted to be observed, to be touched, to be taken. More blood came. I still had the taste of blood in my mouth from the previous time, but now there was more. They poured it in. This time, there was so much at once, that it flew over my chin down to my chest almost immediately. Only a part came into my mouth. I felt the blood running over my breasts. It was incredible. I had wanted to be touched and now, instead of being touched by people, I was being touched by the blood. It stuck to my skin. The blood was running down, down over my belly and my pussy. The cold blood was tickling my clitoris. There was a pool of blood growing under me, and I was sitting in it, this wet spot. The blood was getting



warmer from my body temperature and when they put me back horizontally again, the blood was drying on my body. I felt its presence: the places where the blood was and those where it was not. My body was so sensitive and everything felt so good, I was getting more and more aroused. I imagined the power these actors now had over me and it felt fantastic. I wondered what it would be like to fuck in the blood, to be rolling on that table with another person, to be taken and that someone would lick the blood off my body. To be licked clean and get penetrated, taken with all these people watching, with the cameramen filming me. I wanted it. I wanted to have it. I wanted it here, in the *Aktion*. The desire for more blood was so strong that water came into my mouth. My lips were still open, ready to take in more.

Nitsch came. He told me that now something new would happen: "An octopus will be laid on your lower body." I enjoyed his presence, hearing his voice. My lips, still sticky, swollen and curled up from the blood, were burning. The rest of my body was trembling. Some things were happening around me, I heard footsteps, rumbling and some other sounds. There was also the music. It was as if all the musicians were coming in my direction, positioning themselves in a half circle around the top end of my table, close to my ears. The moment the octopus fell on my pussy, was the moment they started their fortissimo. The octopus was cold, I was shocked, I moaned. I felt its long, slimy tentacles running down, immediately reaching my pussy. With the overwhelming music and the tentacles of the octopus around my clitoris, I nearly came. It was just a little

too cold to really reach an orgasm, but it was wonderful. Squids came, all my muscles were tightened, and my skin and my nipples were hard. They were such slippery, slimy animals, it felt fantastic. I wanted the tentacles to go inside my pussy. I wondered what it would be like to have the whole squid in my vagina, not just staying on my lower belly, but going deep inside. How good would that feel? More blood came, it was mainly poured over the octopus and squid now and I felt the stream of blood bouncing against them, making more pressure on my lower belly. The blood felt like a fountain with quite some force, as if the octopus was spitting it out. It was like a big power and it was on exactly the right spot, the place where I normally push to force myself into an orgasm. Drops were splashed everywhere on my body and the pool of blood I was lying in was growing. The drops of blood splattered around. The smell of it was great. It was light, but it was there. I was completely in the moment, fully concentrated on what was happening right there on my belly.

There was no more blood, they left the squids where they were and poured warm water over me in a similar way. My body relaxed for a short moment from this sudden heat and I nearly peed over the table. The squid was still lying there like this hump of jelly and I wanted to grab it and rub my pussy against it, to feel its slimy soft texture even better. I was trembling on my table, breathing heavily, while being inside this fortissimo music. It was very intense, so loud, that it overpowered all possible other sounds. It was as if I was one with the music. I felt very light, as if my weight

was gone. It was as if all the energy was taken out of me and the blood in my body had disappeared somewhere. I was losing consciousness. I tried to control my breathing in order to stay 'present', although I was also tempted to just let it go. The musicians left now and the music became less loud. I was still on the verge of losing consciousness when Nitsch's Italian assistant laid his hand on me and asked if I was all right. That got me completely out of my mode. It was for the better, I guess. It was as if I was back amongst the living again. Although I had not moved, it felt as if I was back on my table, back in the *Aktion* again.

A person took my hand and carefully helped me off the table. I had to sit down for a moment first, to adjust to the vertical position. There were two people now and both were very friendly to me while assisting me to my cross. I was still trembling. I did not feel strong. Slowly, I positioned myself on my cross. Ropes were placed around my arms and I felt a knot was being made. I felt free. My arms were spread again, bound to my cross. It was a liberating feeling. I took a deep breath and filled my lungs with air. It had a feeling of safety, to feel my cross against my back. I was being lifted up and I was brought in the sun, until I felt the warmth on my entire body. It felt really good to slowly heat up again. The blood that was sticking on my skin, dried even harder. It felt nice to have this dry blood tightening my skin and my body feeling the direct heat of the sun. Then a soft sponge filled with warm water, touched me. I was being washed, still tied to my cross. I had the feeling I was parked outside for a moment, as if I was not part of

the *Aktion* now, no longer 'useful'. There were voices around, not this soft, sensitive way of speaking that was present inside the museum. I wondered what was going on inside now. At a certain moment, I heard people say something to Sarah, whether she wanted some water. Apparently she was lying on my right hand side. They asked me too, but I still had this taste of blood in my mouth and was not sure whether I wanted to wash that away. Everything in my mouth was thick; all had this layer of blood over it. I did take the water and it felt great, this stickiness and then the water, the blood became liquid again in my mouth and this time I swallowed it. It felt clean and fresh. It had been something I did not want, I had been so tense about the blood, but in reality it was absolutely erotic. It has been one of the most erotic things I have ever tasted in my life.

A little later, I was being brought back into the museum and placed against the wall. There was the sound of the whistle, which had been there each time there was a change of scene. This time it was the start of the ravaging. I was hanging on my cross, next to the pig. There was only a very light smell of meat. I wondered how close the pig was to me. There was something going on somewhere else and I noticed I had no clue of where that was. My feeling for orientation was not well anymore. Sometimes I felt drops of blood splashing on my body. Feeling these drops made me feel even more distant to what was actually happening. And with the ropes around my wrists loosening, it was less erotic for me. I felt the small bar under my heels. Now I did not feel so light anymore. I felt the



weight of my body. However, all pain had disappeared. The previous days, during the rehearsals, it had been painful to be on my cross, but being in the "Aktion" I no longer felt it.

Hanging on my cross, there were more scents around. I smelled flowers, and I smelled strawberries, which made me hungry. I wanted to eat them, to bite in them and feel their juices. Still, it was mainly the sound that was present. The ravaging was going on quite close to me. Actors, I heard their emotions, the screaming, the moving around, the sound of meat being squeezed, of liquids being poured, splashes. The emotions seemed controlled, the screaming stopped and started whenever there was a whistle. They were shouting, "Blood! Blood!", but it did not sound convincing, the pain or the desire was missing. At a certain moment, I was being served blood again. The taste was still nice, but they poured it more along my under lip. I felt the pressure of the blood and my under lip started hanging. The blood was running over my chin, my chest, along my nipples, down over my belly, to my pussy and over my legs. It was as if the cold blood was cooling off my warm body, relieving it a little from its desire to be touched. Another amount came. I took the blood in my mouth and slowly let it flow. It was fantastic. Feeling the blood run down my body.

Some time later, I was taken off the wall and brought back to the center of the space. Two people unbound me. I was assisted back to my table. I had to sit down first and felt the cold pool of blood and water that was still lying there. It actually felt quite good, this

cold liquid. It felt as if I had already peed, but I wanted to let it go when I positioned myself horizontally again. I now felt Sarah's warm body. It felt comfortable and it was nice to be there with her and experience it together now. I told her I had to pee. She replied that she had already done it. I liked the idea of just letting it go, but I felt restricted: we were about to have sex for the first time together in public and to start by peeing now, seemed too much. We started kissing. We took it slow. While kissing, I touched her nipples. I felt how soft she was and started licking her breasts. They had the taste of blood still on them. I felt her nipples hard in my mouth and twirled my tongue around them. We were mainly kissing a lot and I had my hand on Sarah's pussy while still kissing her nipples. Rolling in this pool of blood, pressing my pussy against her thigh, it aroused me. It felt good to be with her: strong, firm, warm, erotic. All of a sudden somebody touched us. There was the voice of Nitsch's son. I could not hear what he said, but I stopped kissing Sarah to ask her in a whispering voice whether she had understood what he had said. She was not sure either. For a second, I feared that we had done something wrong. Nobody had told us what we were supposed to do while lying on the table together. We decided to slow down and just continued kissing each other. We kissed and cuddled. Nitsch's son returned, saying that we could be a bit more active. This I heard clearly. I went down with my hand and put two fingers into Sarah's pussy. Slowly I started fucking her like that. I heard her moan and I heard cameras flashing. Still with my fingers inside Sarah, I started fucking her a

little harder. There was a sponge on my back, as if a person was washing it. The presence of this other person and the soft feel of the sponge were wonderful. I felt being watched and I liked it. Sarah then put her fingers inside of me and it felt really incredible. I felt myself sliding over the table backwards, with Sarah's fingers in my pussy. I was screaming, reaching for air and felt a weight pushing me closer to Sarah. It was a nice soft push, as if someone was pushing me with his belly. Unfortunately, I was too cold again to be able to reach an orgasm. I would have liked it. We stopped, we were probably asked to, I do not remember.

I was brought to my cross and sitting there, my blindfold was taken off my head. It had gotten loose and had to be renewed. Now the blindfold was gone I felt empty, incomplete, as if something was missing. It felt as if my face was covered with blood. I opened my eyes for a second and looked straight in a camera. My eyes felt as if they were on fire. The blood was everywhere and for a moment I felt like a predator, ready to take her prey. In this short moment, I saw a dark line of people. There were many and many were looking in my direction. It felt as if I had them in my power. I felt calm, serene. I imagined what my light colored eyes would look like in this face that was covered with blood. I was not ready to return to reality and closed my eyes to get back in the *Aktion*. Someone took my head and put a new blindfold around it.

They bound me back to my cross, I believe I even asked them to tighten the rope stronger, and placed me on the wall. It was similar

to the previous time. More blood was poured in my mouth. This time it had clutters inside. Before, when Nitsch had explained that the blood was half cow and half pig blood, he said there was something being put inside in order to keep it from clattering. The clutters felt a little strange and the pouring was less soft as the previous times. It felt as if it was being done faster this time, abrupt, as if in a hurry. I still had to pee. I wanted to let it go, have this warm rain running down my legs. I tried several tricks, but it did not work. I gave up.

After some time I was taken off the wall and carried outside again for another short break. After two people delicately washed me, the ropes were released from my wrists. I felt close to the persons doing it, although I really did not know who they were. The filmmaker made himself known to me, by asking a question. I guess he wanted to know whether I was all right. My face was washed, but my lips were still sticking together from the blood, they were still swollen. It felt awkward to speak and hear myself talk; I do not remember what I told him. This time, I did not have to keep lying in the same position; I could stretch my body a bit. It felt really good. The sun felt amazing again, so light and warm. My muscles were loosening up. I had not realized they were so tense. I spread my legs and felt the warm sunlight on my body. Now it returned, this strong sense of excitement. I imagined how the filmmaker was filming me, the idea of his presence and that of the camera made me wet. I wanted him to desire me. I wanted him to come closer, to touch me, to see every part of my body through his camera.

I heard other voices around, but I do not recall what happened next. Someone bound me to my cross again, but I believe they did not move me yet. It was only after some time that they lifted me up and placed me on the wall outside. I heard the whistle several times again and there was the smell of the white flowers. I was given more blood and I heard the active actors during the ravaging. When the whistle sounded again, I knew it was time for the finale. Now it was my turn to get all the intestines on me, the moment I would get the large fish, my fish, placed on top of me. They lifted me up and carried me a little distance from where I was. Then I heard footsteps coming my way, and voices. They were carrying Sarah closer and placed her next to me. I felt the cool shadows over my body. Sarah and I were now head to head. It was time for the finale.

I got a sort of mat on me. I felt its weight and pressure on my body. It was relatively heavy. It felt like a prison, as if I was taken and locked up behind bars. I would have much rather preferred to feel the fish directly on my skin. It was as if the actors had taken control over me and deprived me from my pleasure. Then the fish was placed on top of me, its tale touched my face for a moment. Immediately, it was moved away. Now I did not feel it anymore, only its weight. There were voices mentioning something about a knife. From the sounds around, the movements, the shifting pressure, I got the feeling it was a long, thin knife. Nitsch had already told me the day before, that the fish would be cut open on top of me. Now I was quite happy with my mat. Apparently, it was difficult to cut the fish open, because I felt them trying to push the knife inside. Nitsch's son was doing it, he had such a power on the knife, I was quite afraid that he would lose control and slide it right through my heart. To put myself at ease, I opened my eyes and peeked under my blindfold. I saw the knife. It was long and thin. I saw the belly of the fish, the knife on it, the long thin blade and a pair of hands pressing it down. It did not make me feel more at ease, not at all. But after some time, finally, the fish was cut open. Now it really started. The sound of the whistle. The music in fortissimo. They started ravaging. I felt pressure on me, the mat was pressing into my body. Besides the varying pressure, I did not feel much of what was going on, on top of me. It was more the hard objects hitting my throat and face, as well as the squids and intestines between my legs, that I felt. The fish did not have a strong smell. It was more a combination of smells: fish, blood, strawberries. There were several people around me. I could not feel them, but I heard them ravaging, shouting, "Blood! Blood!" Blood was being poured over me, my face was covered in blood, and my nose was filled with it from all the splashing. The music was very intense. It was overwhelming and the musicians seemed to be standing very close to me. It made me breathe intensely again. The music covered most other sounds, but I could still hear the splashing of blood and squeezing of slimy objects. I was being used now. It was what I had been hoping for. There was no erotic feeling for me at that moment. It was more as if I was sucked into the sound. The music became stronger and stronger. Then there was the sound of the whistle. The ravaging stopped. I heard Nitsch say something. Another whistle and the ravaging started again. The music seemed louder now, the weight moved

heavily on my body and the active actors were shouting again, "Blood! Blood!" It was the grand finale. It really felt like being used, they were using my body, all of me was being used. After all the erotic of the previous moments, I had lost most of it now. Instead I felt serene, numb. The last whistle and the *Aktion* was over.

There I was, covered in blood. Used. The fish and all the other animals and things were taken off of me, and after that the ropes around my wrists. They helped me into a sitting position and I heard Nitsch's Italian assistant say, "Karlyn, it's me, it's okay." It felt strange and empty for the *Aktion* to be over. Someone took off my blindfold. Being able to see again was very unusual. Nitsch's Austrian assistant helped me get up and together with a young woman he accompanied me inside. The floor inside the museum was slippery. It looked like a battlefield where an explosion had just taken place. There was blood everywhere, with dark red pieces mixed into it. Fruits and tomatoes were lying everywhere. I saw it all and was trying to adjust to my new situation; I was not really present yet. I was mainly looking and did not hear much. There was so much to see. They led me through the office space, outside to where showers had been installed. There were many people there. Some were taking a shower, others were observing them or making photographs or filming. Sarah was already there and I joined her under the shower. The water was cold, but felt pleasant. I washed away the blood and it took quite a long time before most of it was gone, off my body, out of my hair. I looked into the group of people that were watching us, while rubbing myself with soap. The two cameramen were filming, the Dutch artist was taking photos and I heard many other cameras clicking. I looked straight into the lens. Now I was able to see again, this felt very erotic. I did not smell, nor hear, taste, feel anything. I just watched. Sarah was done and I think she took me with her. After putting on my bathrobe, I became warmer and slowly felt more 'present' again. The filmmaker put his camera in our faces and started asking questions. Sarah did most of the talking. When we were done, we were told that there would be food and drinks up on the roof terrace. The Dutch artist took my hand and we walked the winding stairs together. There were many steps and somewhere halfway I became incredible dizzy. I had to take a break. I nearly fainted. I felt my blood flowing out of my head and tears were running down my face. The Dutch artist held me tight, squeezing my body just in time. We reached the roof terrace. Sarah was there together with the film crew and the book lady. I sat in the sun, drinking water and eating bread. I was doing a little better. There was a warm atmosphere in the group, we were all together.

It was time for the procession and Sarah and I still had to put on our *Malhemden*. We went downstairs, put them on and I carefully walked outside to take position on my cross. My cross was the last one in the row and had been lying in the shade. There was a pool of blood on my cross, the surface was still wet. I sat down on it first, so that someone could blindfold me. I felt my back and hips pressing in the blood, leaving a mark on my *Malhemd*. My *Malhemd* covered most of my body and I felt the cotton fabric on my skin. There had been many voices around, but after some time they were getting weaker, becoming sounds in the distance. I was



lifted up and carried through the museum alley. I heard my carriers speak and now other voices were becoming stronger again. Sometimes, I heard the musicians play in the distance. There were many sounds: the mopeds, footsteps on the stones, people talking, the music, but they mainly appeared from far away. The exhaust fumes, the footsteps of my carriers, the bouncing of my cross from their irregular steps and their voices, were the main things I experienced during the procession. People were talking to me, giving me their visual impressions of the procession. The route was similar to the one we had been taking the last few days when walking back from the museum to our apartment. When I was carried passed our house, into the vineyard, the sounds were softened and the scents changed: the earth, plants and trees, flowers, fruits. At a certain moment I was placed on the floor, unbound and released from my blindfold. When I looked up, Nitsch was sitting on a chair and there were many people around. Sarah and I went to Nitsch and spoke about the *Aktion*. Nitsch was drinking the wine from the vineyard and we got a glass as well. We toasted many times. There was a beautiful view over Naples. I needed to be alone for a moment and take the last bit of sunshine. I watched over the bay and was looking over to the Vesuvius again. The view of the Vesuvius had been magnificent all other days of our visit in Naples, and I had enjoyed it immensely, and now, after having been blindfolded, it was even more intense.

Sarah and I, as well as everybody else were invited to the big garden party which started immediately after the procession.

There were many long tables with many people and a lot of food. I absorbed it all, but I still felt quite numb, I had lost my conscious awareness. After Sarah and I thanked Nitsch, I took a walk up the hill with the Dutch artist. We sat in the grass, looking over the bay and spoke about what had happened. When it was getting dark, we went down again to the celebration. There was a really nice atmosphere. I changed into my regular clothes and went looking for something to eat. During the celebrations of that evening, I thought about the experiences of the past few days. How interesting it had been and how special it was with Nitsch. I thought about my fantasies and how erotic the event had been for me. Now the event was over and I was still not really in this world, still trying to realize what all had happened, but I considered it was time to live some of the fantasies I had had during the last week. So, I asked a man I knew and went with him, I needed sex, and I needed to come back to reality. What an event this had been. What a life.

# HERMANN NITSCH

## UNDER MY SKIN

23 MAY 2010

By Sarah Gold  
Napels, Italy

Today was the day I had so long been waiting for. In a few hours Karlyn and I would participate in the *Aktion* of Hermann Nitsch in Naples, in Italy. Having learned about the Viennese Actionists as a child, being familiar with the photographs from the sixties and seventies, I felt privileged and grateful to participate. Karlyn and I would document the *Aktion*, describe our experiences, our thoughts and feelings as honest and sincere as possible, and therewith creating our own Personal Structures Art Project #2 HERMANN NITSCH: UNDER MY SKIN. The awareness about this all had a positive impact on me, I had kept repeating these thoughts in my head.

I woke up before the alarm and felt very horny. I did what I needed to do. Now I was ready for the day. We arrived around eight o'clock at the Museo Nitsch. The "active actors" were already preparing the tables and placing them in a certain order, inside and outside of the museum. I was standing on the terrace which has this marvelous view over Naples. What a melting pot of activities, of life, overseen by the Vesuvius. I had a feeling which best could be described as stage fright. I was keeping close to Karlyn and holding on to a bottle of water; we had been advised to drink a lot, since the *Aktion* would take the whole day.

Walking through the museum, awaiting the moment, I saw a pile of bath robes lying in the office. Karlyn and I got undressed and put on the robes, so it would be easier for us to get naked when needed. Immediately I felt more comfortable, more like a 'real' model. We went back into the main space of the museum where Nitsch was sitting and we had a short talk with him. All week he had been taking time for us, I felt spoiled. He was always in such a good mood, and communicating as far as I could tell, as truthfully as possible: A grown man who has lived a full life. Today would be his 130<sup>th</sup> *Aktion*, for me it was the first and most likely the last. We asked if it would be okay, in case we needed to pee during the *Aktion*, to just let go. If the moment was suitable, we got told, it was fine. I was happy to hear that, although I should have known that it would be all right to do so; Nitsch's *Orgien Mysterien Theater* was there to help us to learn to let go of all your boundaries, to free yourself from your social restrictions, to live life to the maximum.

While still feeling anxious, I also felt at ease in my bath robe, beautiful and special; alive, a small part of it all. I was happy that over the duration of the week, I had gotten more and more comfortable getting undressed, being naked in front of many people, which had until now been the most difficult part for me. At 10.45 we were told to get undressed and to lie down on our table. This seemed very early, the *Aktion* would start at noon, but since the *Aktion* is like a theater play with set guidelines, I followed the instructions and took off my comfort shield. Standing next to my table a woman blindfolded me by rolling standard gauze around my head. Now, I could hardly see anything anymore; only by looking down I could get a glimpse. I was assisted getting onto my table and several soft feeling hands helped me to lie down into the Egon Schiele position Nitsch wanted me in. The "come and fuck me" pose, in which Schiele often depicted his models, was named after him by Nitsch and was now part of a very different kind of artistic expression.

All of a sudden the orchestra, 10 Italian musicians with nearly all brass instruments, started to play. "Will it be 12 o'clock?" That would mean that I had been lying on the table for more than an hour already. I had started to feel the pressure in my bladder slowly building up; I had drunk a lot of water. Usually, the need to pee can be sexually stimulating to me, especially whilst sitting in the car, being the passenger, but now it was not the moment, to make myself come. I was a so called "passive actor", here just a witness, to experience.

The second the music started and the sound waves hit my ears, my body reacted by making goose bumps, and shivers were going through my whole body. This was feeling very good. Just lying there, not having to feel bad for doing nothing. I tried to focus; my hearing and feeling were totally occupied by the music and the soft cool breeze which was stroking my body. I tried to memorize all I was feeling, in order to be able to write it down later. The music was definitely a very special element for me, grabbing me, blocking out all other sounds which were around. I do not know what exactly was happening, not being able to see, but that was all right; I was alive, living life, experiencing life to the maximum possible at this very moment. Doing nobody harm;



hopefully even trying to do good through this art project. Describing as honest as possible what I felt, by feeling my sheer existence and trying to share this feeling, trying to share my awareness with others. Me, trying to live according to my thoughts, to be a good human; kind, to give freedom, to be supportive and flexible, and to try to be without any culturally imposed moral restrictions; trying to experience as much as possible, each and every day; today, tomorrow, the rest of my life.

I live according to three important aspects, in order to have an interesting and fulfilled life. The first being: having an interesting professional life; I live my work, my work is my life. Of course I sometimes have to do also things which are less my favorites, but that keeps me flexible. Secondly: to travel; to see different countries, different landscapes, experience the differences in cultures, all this making me a richer, a more knowledgeable person. Understanding that things develop differently from region to region. Like realizing that different cultures have adapted different moral restrictions. Third: I like to experience other humans, to encounter people on a very personal level by which I mean also sexually. Through communication and sex, you get a thorough understanding for the other person.

Thinking about my life, I tried to focus again on the *Aktion*, which was not difficult since often a whistle would get you back into the moment of Being. Nitsch and also his son, who was assisting during the *Aktion*, had to notify the actors with a whistle when a new scene would be coming up, it reminded me of the lifeguards in Miami Beach. Lying on my table, my ankle bone was hurting, but knowing today would be the last time, I felt fine with it. "Now, you will be given the blood", Nitsch's son told me. Finally I would find out how this would be.

I had been a little nervous about the blood; the taste, the smell. "Open up your mouth"; I obeyed. For the sensation I was about to feel, I could not have been prepared for. I never had even thought about this possibility at all. The feeling of getting blood poured into my mouth was more than surprising, the cool substance felt fantastic. This cream like liquid, filling the cavity of my mouth, running down along the side of my face onto my neck, this felt highly erotic. Immediately I wanted more, but I could not ask for it, I had to wait. Having the taste of blood still in my mouth, I was trying to think what it reminded me of; it tasted like the smell of raw meat, and there was this saltiness to it. I cannot remember how often exactly I got given blood whilst lying on my table, but it must have been several times. I felt at peace. This sensation was every time so strong, I could have laid there forever while being fed with blood.

The music was still playing, filling the space and me. Now, with also the sensation of taste and smell, all of my senses, except sight, were triggered to the maximum. I was told to hold on to a wooden bar, two people were pulling me up until I was sitting in a 90° degree angle, my arms stretched far above me, holding onto the bar. I knew from the rehearsals that in this position I would be given blood again and I was looking very much forward to it.

I opened up my mouth slightly and the blood got poured in; immediately leaving my mouth, running down my neck, over my breasts, straight into my pussy. This felt so exiting; I imagined sitting on my partner while blood was being poured over us and surrounded by beautiful horny women; feeling their slippery bodies against ours and me demanding my partner to fuck the girls whilst I was kissing and touching their sliding bodies.

I seldom have sexual fantasies; I normally live them in reality. If it is being in a gangbang or fucking girls senseless with a strap-on, I try it all, but getting aroused by blood, that, I had never even thought about. Whilst thinking all off this, I was so aroused, I did not care anymore, I had let go of all my shame, I needed to pee and I did. It felt wonderful, the awareness that two hundred people were watching, photos and films where made, and I just let it shamelessly run.

Blood kept coming and in between the blood, I got given something which was called, slime. During the last week, I had seen the boxes with tapestry glue, recognizing the particular shape of the box. Knowing this substance very well, I was aware of the sensual feeling it used to have for me and normally I would have liked it, but after being so impressed by the sensation of the blood, the slime felt not special at all. After the slime, I got given warm water and was ordered to rinse my mouth. Fortunately, I did get blood again.

I had lost total sense of time, I really was experiencing just being in the Now, an act of life, my life. I could hear the wife of Nitsch asking Karlyn if she was okay. How long had I been lying on the table for? Nitsch's son came again and told me: "Now, you will be given the octopuses on to your crotch".

Shortly before the *Aktion*, they had told us about their plan. Maybe Nitsch had decided upon this just the night before, adding it into the "Partiture", the script for the *Aktion*. It sounded like an interesting idea to me: the soft and slimy feeling, the substance of the octopuses and also the squids, their tentacles. Nitsch had selected them for Karlyn and me and now they would be united with us. The thought felt sensual and sexual. Being already very aroused by the blood, now it would be even topped, by getting the octopuses.

The second they touched my body, it felt as if they were still alive, cool, touching my lips with their tentacles, sliding down, feeling my pussy, as if they had long fingers, trying to make me come. Maybe because I was blindfolded, my other senses much more sharpened, this was so sensual. I had the blood still in my mouth, and I decided to swallow it, this making me even more aroused. Now blood got poured onto all what was on my body. I felt the blood splashing into my face. The octopuses got stirred, the sensation of their bodyweight, feeling their tentacles again searching for my pussy, this all nearly made me come; it just stopped too early.

This was one incredible sensual and sexual experience for me. I could not see all the blood, but I could totally focus on the feel-



ing; the touch, the tentacles caressing my pussy, the blood sticking onto my body. The way it felt, the way it tasted, at that moment, I really would have loved to have sex, rolling around in the blood, in total ecstasy.

The music still surrounded me, covering me like a big blanket, the blood slowly started to dry, it felt like a second skin. Often I could hear a whistle from Nitsch or from his son, directing the next move. I had no clue what was happening and I was very fine with it. Lying on my table, just being in the now, experiencing. I had felt very comfortable, but now I got cold by lying still for so long.

I started to shiver, I tried to control it, but I could not, my body was not listening to my mind. Fortunately, two women brought me to my cross, which was lying on the floor in the museum. I lay down on it and I was bound with rope to the crossbar. Straight away I got carried outside onto the terrace. The sensation of feeling the heat of the sun was incredible; I felt like a lizard having to heat up in order to function, I started to stop shaking immediately. I remember being washed, feeling a big sponge on my skin; it felt hard, although I know the sponges they were using were very soft. I had become very sensitive.

I knew everybody was watching Karlyn and me. What an interesting phenomenon in our society, our social rules normally do not allow us to look so shameless at two naked women but now, in this situation it was allowed, because that is what Nitsch is about;

losing your shame, losing your boundaries, experiencing life, live your life today. I liked these thoughts and it felt very good knowing that these people were standing around me, watching me. I had always pushed myself to try to overcome my boundaries, and as long as it would not leave any permanent physical or mental damage to pursue and experience it, whatever it is. I really felt alive, and that is what Nitsch is all about; whatever you do, whenever and wherever you are, experience life with all its aspects to the maximum and most important, enjoy it.

Sitting on my cross which was still lying on the floor, I had warmed up. I assumed that Karlyn was next to me, and I asked if she was alright, which she was. I could hear my partner, the Dutch artist, checking if we both were ok. I still had no comprehension of time passing; I was just being in the moment. I got bound to my cross again, with big tough pieces of rope, lifted up and carried back inside the museum. Carefully I got put straight up against a wall. Karlyn should be next to me and the pig probably in between us, but I was not sure how exactly I was positioned, I had also lost my sense of orientation.

The music was still playing. I got given blood again, I felt like a junkie, relieved. I felt the cool thick blood running over my chest again, over my belly and in between my legs, into my pussy. This could have gone on forever, I felt so good, the blood coming and coming. I had to pee again and mixed it with the blood running down my body in between my legs. While receiving the blood, I



got cleaned very softly and caring. This time, the sponges were feeling like unusual strange objects, caressing my body. Blood was again running down and it became a second skin, covering me all over. I was wondering how Karlyn was, would she also find this feeling, the blood, so unbelievably erotic?

I must have been on the cross for quite a long time because my feet were having trouble to stand on the small supporting bar. Again a whistle, I heard things flying through the air, moaning and other sounds of excitement. That must be from what they had been talking about, the so called rummaging; was the pig being rummaged with intestines, octopuses, grapes, tomatoes and that all mixed with blood and water?

At a certain moment I got taken away from the wall and laid softly down on the floor with my cross. I got untied and two women led me to a table where I was joined with Karlyn. Nitsch's son was there, talking very nicely, making us feel at ease with the situation, saying something like: "Now you are with your girlfriend, enjoy yourselves". We had kissed a little during the rehearsals, but now there was a lot of public and now was not the moment to have any boundaries, now I should follow my natural instinct, which is, to take Karlyn.

With my hands and legs I could feel Karlyn next to me; I felt the blood, her slippery body, warm and cool at the same time. I was aroused; we were holding and really feeling each other. Touching

each other's body with our second skin, the blood, sliding. We started to kiss, tender but strong and passionate. Now I could feel Karlyn very good, her tongue was playing with mine, what a nice texture and shape. It felt very stimulating and sexy. I do not know for how long it went on. While we were caressing each other intensely, I got cleaned with sponges and warm water, fortunately that took not too much away from the slipperiness of the blood. We were sliding so much on the table that I could feel an arm or a belly making sure that I did not fall off. I went down with my hand, touching Karlyn's pussy and circling the area of her clitoris. I could hear Karlyn moan. Should I fuck her also with my fingers?

Karlyn responded to my action and also slid down with her hands and she softly started to fuck me with the top of her fingers. Now I knew I could fuck her too. I could hear a camera making photos at such a high-speed, trying to capture every moment of Karlyn and me having sex. Who would it be? At a certain moment there was a lot of commotion, something was being shouted. Did we do something wrong; did we go too far? Taken out of our rush, we stopped; now we were lying in each other's arms, covered in blood, surrounded by spectators and musicians. I felt tranquil and exited at the same time; still enjoying the moments I had with Karlyn. The blood on our skin, sliding and slipping, feeling each other, I wanted to have real sex, no uncertainties or hesitations, touching and caressing, being penetrated by all kinds of objects, blood being poured all over us. Karlyn got taken away; I was left alone on the table.

Although so much was going on, I was in my own world, but being at the same time part of the whole happening. The son of Nitsch checked how I was doing and then I was brought to my cross again. I lay down and got bound on to the crossbar with the rope. I got lifted up and carried to the terrace again, but now the sensation of feeling the sun was a lot less. It is fascinating to feel the blood when it dries; it is like a second skin and at the same time it shrinks making your skin feel wrinkly. I felt beautiful and free of worries, no fear, just very much alive. I got cleaned and this time the sponge did not feel hard anymore.

They lifted me up and put me carefully against the wall. The musicians seemed close by, making my body shiver. I got given blood and of course, it felt very good again feeling this natural erotic sensual material, but my body was slowly giving up on me. My legs were starting to shake. I had been on the cross for a long time today and it seemed that I had reached the maximum. Because I was shaking so much, two active actors, women, rubbed my feet in order to stop the shaking. I could feel by the way they touched me that they really cared. Unfortunately, in daily life, it is very unusual to get this kind of attention from total strangers which you cannot even see and perhaps because of that, I will never forget their caring touch.

You cannot imagine how relieved I was when my cross was lifted from the wall and taken away, being put onto the floor somewhere, still outside, on the terrace. Was this the end, was this

the grand finale? The whistle was being blown again, things were happening. This was the finale for sure. Additionally to being blindfolded, I had my eyes closed for most of the time but, now I could not withstand the urge to have a quick look and by the little I could see from under my blindfold, I saw the pig coming towards me. The little stiff tail coming closer and closer to my face. Being told that the rummaging is extremely wild, I was not too keen on having his tail too close to my face. Now the pig was on top of me, the little tail close but not too close to my face, his large head in between my legs. The weight of the pig was spreading my legs, I had to give way and I liked it, I surrendered to the pig. It felt erotic and finally I would find out what this rummaging is all about. I could hear many people around me; they seemed to put all kinds of things inside the pig. I knew that that must be intestines like livers and kidneys, but also octopuses, squids, fishes, strawberries, tomatoes, grapes and other natural materials.

The whistle was blown and I could feel many people going wild; like a feeding frenzy of piranhas. Objects were flying, hitting my face, sliding down my neck, this felt good. I could go nowhere. Give it up, let all your worries go, feel life, and experience death on top of you. Unite. Blood was being poured all over, splashing on my face and I had to stop myself from licking it off my lips. As a passive actor you were supposed to be as neutral as possible, not laughing, not speaking, just Being, and being used. It felt very intense and I felt safe. At a certain moment I realized what the



things were that were hitting my face, they must be mainly the tomatoes and that big thick soft slimy thing, which was running down my neck, was probably a squid, or was it a liver or a kidney? What an interesting feeling it all together was, although I had lost my orientation about time and how I was lying, I was consciously aware that I was very much alive, laying in Naples, being right now part of the *Aktion* of Hermann Nitsch, while again blood was being poured over me. What an incredible experience this all was, being used, by the actors, by the audience and being taken by the music, by life.

I heard a whistle, was it over now? Swiftly my pig got taken away from me and I got untied, the blindfold taken of my eyes. It felt unusual after so many hours having been blindfolded, now being able to see again. It felt like facing the world again, it had felt so safe not being able to see, knowing people are looking after you and nothing bad could happen, you did not have to worry. Your visual input being stopped, no eye contact, just hearing the music, feeling the air touching your skin, the blood, the octopuses and the squid, the warm water, the sponge cleaning your body, taking your second skin off, the fruits and organs hitting you, the blood splashing in your face, the smell, now that all was over. I was back in normal life again.

Karlyn and I got taken to a shower which had been installed at the back of the museum. The water was cold, but it did not matter, I remember the blood gushing out of my hair, the water being red

for ages. We showered for a long time, trying to get ourselves clean, although the blood had been feeling so good, it was nice to get back to 'reality'. All what was left were the memories and new gained experiences. My feeling of solely Being got replaced by the awareness of the factual time-space experience. I remember that after the shower, the Austrian filmmaker came with his camera and asked us how it had been. I cannot remember at all what I said, but I hope I was able to express my feelings at that moment. While I walked upstairs, the Dutch artist took care for Karlyn who had lost orientation. I remember being on top of the museum in my morning robe and people coming up to me to congratulate me. It was very nice of them, but at the same time strange; for most of the day I had been only lying around.

It must have been from all the sensations, the music, the blood, not being able to see, trying to capture all the thoughts and moments in full awareness in order to write them down later. I was worn out. After maybe half an hour brake we had to put on our *Malhemd*, a kind of big 'over through' dress, which Nitsch has used in his *Aktionen* for many years while the idea apparently was taken from the painter Gustav Klimt, who painted in it. I got my eyes covered again with the blindfold and had to lie down on my cross; I felt it was still a little wet from the blood. I got tied on to the cross again and now Karlyn and I would be carried 2 kilometers in a procession to the vineyard, uphill, over the same street we had been walking on so often. I got lifted up, I felt very bad that people

had to carry me. I remember that the tune of *The Godfather* got played by the brass band. It felt odd being carried lying on a cross over the streets of Naples; blood stains everywhere. It took a long time until we were in the vineyard, there we stopped half way up. I took off my blindfold, now I could see that all the visitors and participants of the event had gathered. Food and drinks were prepared. I could see over Naples, what an amazing view that was, with the Vesuvius on the background.

Karlyn and I went over to Nitsch and asked him how the *Aktion* would proceed. He told us that he had wanted to finish off the *Aktion* in the vineyard, but that for the first time in his life, the blood had run out. Apparently all the blood had been used; all the 300 liters. The procession had to continue for another 500 meters. I was lying on my cross for the last time, and although I had the blindfold on, I remember that I could fully enjoy the view of the sky, thinking what a wonderful, unusual and exiting life I have. After a steep hill, we arrived on top of the vineyard; I got placed on the floor and untied.

I could see that in a cluster, many tables and benches were prepared for a big dinner. Now we would get to eat the animals which had been on my body; I especially waited for the pig to come, I wanted to taste him. Karlyn and I thanked Nitsch for the wonderful experience. I told him how erotic the blood had felt and I was delighted to hear that not only Karlyn and I had gained new experiences, but that for Nitsch it had been the first time that

two women had sex during his *Aktion*. I was very pleased hearing this, now I felt I had not only taken but also given something to Nitsch. After the food I walked down together with the book lady and my partner the Dutch artist, accompanied by many glow-worms. I felt very happy that the week was over; I was already curious what new experiences would be awaiting me. To finish the day, I needed to feel my partner and after short but intense sex, I fell asleep feeling his sperm inside my pussy.

# ROMAN OPALKA

## TIME PASSING

### PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS #03

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

Opalka's house and studio, Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France, 9 June 2010



*On 9 June 2010 Sarah and Karlyn visited Roman Opalka in his house near Beaumont sur Sarthe, France. That day they were for almost twelve hours an active part and witness of Roman Opalka living. A detailed record of all spoken words and activities in the life of Roman on that specific place and time. Discussing, eating, painting, sleeping, walking, discussing, eating, and during these events, time has been recorded while it was passing.*

*ROMAN OPALKA: TIME PASSING has been published as a limited edition. The edition comprises 100 copies of which 50 DeLuxe, numbered from 1 to 50, and 50 DeLuxe hors commerce, numbered from 1 to L. In addition, there have been created 10 Artist Proofs, numbered from 1 to 10. Each item of this limited edition consists of a book and a photograph of Roman Opalka painting in his studio, mounted on dibond and behind plexiglass, housed together in a cassette. The edition is signed by the artist.*

Today is 9 June 2010. The two of us, Sarah and Karlyn, are walking over a driveway with various roses on each side. It is 11:22 hours when we see Roman waiting for us. He is standing close to the barn in his garden and welcomes us from a distance. We say hello and after continuing our way towards him, Roman greets us with kisses and invites us to his house. We carry our suitcases in preparation for our new art project: *TIME PASSING* with Roman Opalka. We want to spend as much time with him as possible to document a part of his life, while the minutes are ticking away. Together with Roman, we slowly walk the graveled path towards his house, carrying our suitcases, now and then pausing to speak.

11:23

- "How are you doing?"

- "Good, good. And you?" Before we can answer, Roman looks at Sarah and says:

- "White hairs. Already?"

- "Yes, already for a long time."

In previous meetings with Roman it became clear that German is the best language for the three of us to communicate in. So, in German, we talk about the roses, about their different colors and scents, and about the house and its beautiful location near Beaumont-sur-Sarthe in France. When we reach the house, Roman makes a remark about our suitcases and asks to leave them outside on the terrace. While Roman goes inside we do as he asks and follow him a few seconds later. We enter a small hallway with a mirrored hat stand with two piles of hats, and continue into an office room, where his wife, Marie-Madeleine, is sitting behind a writing desk. There are three other women present: Roman's stepdaughter Alexandra, his secretary Catherine and a woman who appears to be the cook. We start greeting them.

11:24

Roman positions himself in the corner of the room, close to the hallway and leans against the doorpost, while we continue to greet everybody. When we are finished, Marie-Madeleine starts speaking to us in French and explains that we can only stay one day, not the two days we had hoped upon. She asks us practical things, about the hotel where we are staying and how we are going to get there. In the meantime, Roman is still standing in the same place and quietly observes what is happening.

11:25

We answer Marie-Madeleine's questions and explain that, if wished for, we could leave any time. After that, Marie-Madeleine asks whether we have been at her house before and we tell her her about our previous publication *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE* and the interview with Roman that is published in it. Mentioning this meeting of two years prior, Roman says something to his wife, which we cannot understand so well.

11:26



It seems to have a good effect, as Marie-Madeleine now starts to inform us about today's program. She tells us that Roman will take us to his studio where we can stay together and talk until around 13.30, when it will be time for lunch, and after lunch, he will need some time to edit an interview text for an Italian magazine. Roman does not seem too thrilled about this. He makes several remarks about it in French and laughs. Marie-Madeleine continues making clear today's program and adds that the lunch would be enjoyed together with her, her daughter and Catherine.

11:27

After a few seconds, he gets Marie-Madeleine's attention and in French the two discuss the situation around the interview text. When they are finished, we leave the office, following Roman outside to the terrace where our suitcases are still standing. Roman watches us lifting up our bags and then turns around, silently leading us into the house. We follow him, through the dining room and a narrow hall into his studio. A large bookshelf existing of two parts with a gap as a sort of doorway divides the studio in two parts, an entrance area and a spacious working place.

11:28

We close the door behind us and place our suitcase next to the wall in the smaller half of the studio where carton boxes are standing. Roman looks at the boxes and says:

- "These are preparations for an exhibition."

- "Which exhibition is that?"

- "In New York, at Yvon Lambert."

We suggest to Roman that we take a seat somewhere in his studio and he chooses a spot on the other side of the bookshelf. He points to two benches along a small table and a rocking chair. Sarah takes one of the suitcases with her to the small table, the place where we also sat with him two years ago.

- "You can sit over there and I will sit here, like a king," Roman says while pointing to the two wooden benches. We prefer a place closer to him and when Roman takes a seat in his rocking chair, we position ourselves on the cold, brown tiled floor in front of him.

11:29

- "We have done that before, haven't we? What was the result of that meeting?"

Sarah takes PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, number 1 out of our red bag and hands it to Roman. He recognizes it and is happy that we brought more copies for him. Roman flips through the book, until he sees a picture of a young woman standing in front of Rene Rietmeyer's artwork at the Venice Biennale 2009. He asks about her and we inform him about her relationship to our project. While Roman closes the book and puts it on the floor next to him, we take the opportunity to tell Roman in more detail what we intend to do today, the reason of our visit. Sarah takes the special edition we recently made with Lawrence Weiner out of our bag and places it on the floor in front of us. Roman bends forward a little with his chair and looks at it. We explain that we brought the edition as an example, so that we could better show what we want to publish with Roman.

11:30

We repeat the intention of our project, that we want to document a part of Roman's life, while the minutes are ticking away. Roman remembers that we had told him that also during a meeting in Venice, Italy, at Café Florian on Piazza San Marco, some months ago. He likes the concept of our art project *TIME PASSING*, so, we leave that subject and continue to speak about the larger context of our art project, the series Roman's book will become part of.

11:31

Roman asks whether there will be other artists in his publication, and we assure him it will be just Roman. We tell him that we have respect for each artist we have chosen for our series, but that we have more than just respect for him.

- "For us, you are at the top."

- "How high? Totally at the top?"

We confirm and Roman laughs.

- "We admire the fact that you yourself and your work are one," Sarah explains.

- "The unity."

- "That is something you do not see so often amongst young artist nowadays."

- "Or not at all," Roman suggests.

Roman laughs again and continues to speak about his position in relation to other artists:

- "My work has a trace-history."

11:32

Now art can no longer develop as Avant Garde, that is not possible. This concept 'Avant Garde Art' is, now we are talking about it... In my case, my work is the only possible example that we can interpret as an Avant Garde art. After Opalka it is no longer possible, no longer will there be made Avant Garde. Perhaps one can get something from Bob Ryman, or artists such as Sol LeWitt. He was a theoretician. Something like Concept Art, that is no longer possible."

Having said that, Roman wants to continue to speak about our project *TIME PASSING*, his book.

11:33

We explain more precisely what we intend to do with our publication, that it will not only be a special edition, but that an excerpt of the text will also be published in our next, large substantial book, PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME • SPACE • EXISTENCE number 2.

11:34

Roman utters confirming sounds and shows that he likes that. Step by step, we show him the Lawrence Weiner special edition and tell him that we will discuss all aspects with him and make the visual appearance of the book according to his wishes.

- "Yes, because I do not like this blue."

- "For you we were considering to make it white on white."



- "That would be beautiful."

11:35

We then mention that we would like to have part of the edition signed by him.

- "100 signatures? That is a lot."

When we promise Roman to come over personally again, he laughs and then he makes clear that he understands the financial aspect of the special edition. He promises to sign the books.

11:36

We continue to discuss the details. Roman jokes about the editing that has to be done.

11:37

11:38

11:39

11:40

While he tells us about the difference between his sound recordings and the passing of time in his paintings, Roman points to the white canvas, which is standing on his easel at the other end of the room.

- "That is linear."

We look in the direction of the painting and because of the light in the studio we can see the difference in shine between the top and

bottom, the difference between the part that is already painted and that which is not. We keep looking, while Roman goes on:

- "But look at one of my pictures. That goes into all directions. I am probably repeating myself, but this was also the case from the very beginning. But it is very important and you should not forget it. It should not only be linear, it should result in a certain dialogue."

11:41

The three of us continue to speak about time and how quickly it has passed since the first time we saw Roman. For me, Sarah, that was in St. Etienne at the Musée d'Art Moderne, during Roman's exhibition of his Octagon in 2006; and for me, Karlyn, it was at our symposium PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME in Amsterdam in 2007, where Roman spoke about his program.

11:42

He says he recalls seeing us there and then changes the conversation back into the direction of his special edition.

- "White would be very beautiful."

11:43

Now, having an agreement on the color, we continue to discuss the material and the type font. Roman points to Lawrence Weiner's special Margaret Seaworthy Gothic type font and says:

- "This font, I do not like it."

- "That is Weiner's special font. We will not use it for your book."

-“The other font is much better, as it is easy to read and minimal.”

11:44

-“I do like the idea of white letters on a white surface, although it is not so easy to read.” More thoughts follow.

11:45

Roman then promises to tell us exactly what he wants, before the actual printing of the book.

11:46

We softly bring the conversation back to the 100 DeLuxe copies of the edition we plan to make and mention the photo we would like to take of him, painting in his studio, later on that day.

11:47

In summing up some of the possibilities that crossed our mind to include in the DeLuxe copies, we also mention the clock. Roman says that he indeed likes the photo much better:

-“A clock is simply a form of knowing at what time you come here, at 9 or at 10 o'clock. It is only a means to meet, perhaps for the train or for a flight. The time is inside. I once had a conversation with the artist On Kawara.

11:48

On Kawara creates these so-called *Date Paintings*, from his *Today* series. He says: “If I am not finished between Berlin and New York, then I must destroy this space-time, this period, this *Date Painting*.” To me that is not logical, because time is in everything and because that is the case, it should not be necessary for him to destroy his painting. This determination or fixation that he has, seems to be completely Japanese. It has nothing particular to do with time. It is simply a tool so that we can find each other somewhere at a certain moment, in an infinite space-time.

11:49

Still in the Middle Ages, humans have determined themselves by the path of their life, by specific moments of their lives. But that has very little to do with time. The time in their heads, that really was perhaps time. It is in our bodies, in our minds.”

-“What do you mean that time is something ‘inside’?”

Roman continues and answers Karlyn's question:

-“Your body, your experience, that is something one cannot make precise, that is something one cannot determine. That finds itself between the time of Opalka and infinity.

11:50

In this period of time, my life happens. But that what passes in this period, OPALKA 1965/ 1 – ∞, is not to be specified in the sense of time. In my case, in my concept, the physical aspect of existence is strongly present. On Kawara, for example, makes this documentation of newspapers, to show what has happened. Who wants to look at that afterwards, when that day has passed? People do not even have time to read today's newspaper! This documentation of On Kawara is so archival. In the future we will have no time for it.

11:51

We already do not have time for our own lives. Why should I be interested in his? What would be the time of On Kawara? In an artwork, as in everything that happened in the artworld... If you would for example take a look at *La Gioconda*, the Mona Lisa, then Leonardo da Vinci is there. There is this interpretation that considers the possibility that *La Gioconda* would be a self-portrait. I am sure, that is true as well, because a painter would very much like to make a beautiful portrait, whether it is a portrait of a woman or not, it is always a self-portrait. You do not need to look at the eyes or look whether the hair is white or not, it is always a self-portrait.”

Roman points to his painting again and adds:

11:52

-“This concept is completely unknown as an idea about space-time, the space-time of a work, of a life, of an artist. Perhaps I have already said it, but maybe in this case you must always be clear: What is time? Basically, it is not possible to measure time. My time is not measured. At one moment it is painted with three or four figures and at another moment with only one figure. But the time itself cannot be measured.”

11:53

-“The last few days we have spoken a lot about time,” Sarah says, “So that we might gain a little understanding of what it is. We thought that time is measured by light.”

-“Yes, yes, the trace of light. But of course, that is again a concept that belongs to the instrument, to the measuring of time. Naturally the mind wants to know a lot, but the French physicist and philosopher Blaise Pascal has already thought about this concept very precisely.

11:54

This moment as a unity, is as the smallest in the cosmic space.”

Roman brings his fingers close together and demonstrates the size of this unity.

-“But the largest one as well, since we cannot imagine it, this infinite time span.”

-“You often mention the infinity of time, but on the other hand, as you have mentioned in interviews, you seem to see a beginning of time,” Karlyn remarks.

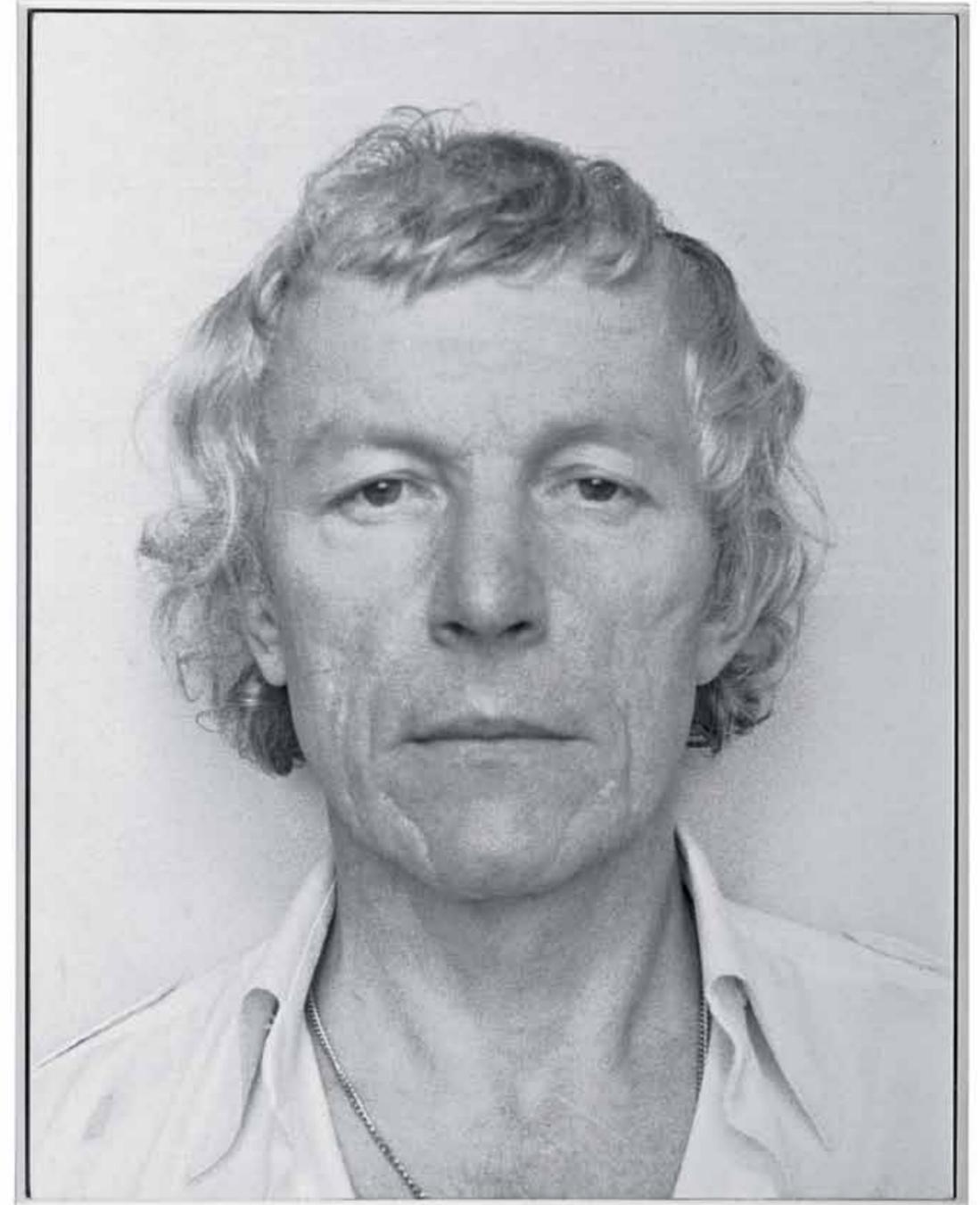
-“Yes, this so-called Big Bang. But perhaps there are several great ideas. This is something that can be considered. It could be possible in the cosmic space, maybe we are in the aftermath of a Big Bang.

11:55

It is only our own little history, that we have understood. Today there are already theorists and astrophysicists who say that it is possible that there are billions of Big Bangs. This is really terrible and at the same time fantastic, we have shown us our space-time. In my work also our universe is shown. Basically, what I am painting today, my concept, in a certain sense could have already been realized in Greek times.

11:56

They just did not have the chance that the figures... For example, the zero was not there yet. Zero is a very wonderful concept, because with zero one can count infinity.”



- "But you have started your program with the number one and not with zero. Why did you choose this?"

Roman complements the question and then answers:

- "Zero was outside," and after a pause he adds: "Of course, I have asked myself this question: should I start with zero or with one? A child does not come from zero; a life does not come from zero. Also the Big Bang does not come from zero. At least there was a certain energy present. It was possible for the Big Bang to explode. The idea to start something from zero is meant as a mathematical tool.

11:57

For example, when you count human beings, then you start with one, not with zero. Zero was always outside. Zero was outside of the painting. At the beginning of my program, I have asked myself incredibly deep questions. In that sense, I could not afford to make any mistakes. Would I have started from zero, mathematically it would not have been a scandal. But in a philosophical way, zero is for me outside. At that time, when I painted this figure..."

Roman shapes his hand as if he is holding his brush, looks straight ahead and moves his arm slightly downwards, painting a 1 in the air and following his movement with his eyes. During the move, he simulates the sound of his brush on the canvas:

- "Shhh..."

11:58

...'Painted' is not well put, but the *one*... I do not know, you write the number *one* down in a telephone number. But basically, the number *one* is different here, in my program. The Greeks have already said it: the number *one* is everything; it is not just a *one*, it is a sign that creates everything. The number *one* is the basis of everything, it is the beginning."

While making a similar hand gesture as that of Roman, Sarah asks him whether he can still remember the moment he first started and painted his number 1.

- "Yes, that was an incredible emotion. I do not remember how long it actually was, but I had difficulties with the rhythm of my heart. That comes from this emotion, this unity, this Being [*Dasein*].

11:59

And this stroll, about which we have already spoken, that was not so relaxed. I was very tense. I heard my heart beating. This arrhythmia was the reason that I was in the hospital for a month. I had good connections in the hospital and thus I was registered as an officer. I was saved. Had it been otherwise, it could very well be that I would no longer be alive. Because one can see even today in France, there is no place in the hospital, all beds are filled.

12:00

Back then, in Poland, it was even worse of course. Because of these connections, I had a chance."

- "When this 1 already contains everything, why did you continue painting?" Roman complements the question again and continues.

- "One can ask the question: why? Strictly speaking, it is this dynamics or power of existence, of nature. I could have said: "I do not want to, I will not!" A child could know what is our existence. No, no, I do not want to. I do not want to exist; I do not want to live. But this strength of life, this power, is so strong.

12:01

It is strong like an animal. We know how that happens in nature. Of course: man has that ability, that he can ask himself philosophical questions. Animals do not have the difficulties that we humans do have: why are we born? That is a very well known and very banal question. If a child asks such a question however, his parents do not have an answer, at least not in a philosophical sense.

12:02

But this is without any intellectual right. A philosopher can say that it makes no sense to exist, but he is already there, he is alive. But what do you do? Commit suicide? This question also belongs to my work. Should I buy myself a pistol? Or should I nevertheless execute my program? I decided to do that, to realize my program. Doing it is a certain type of suicide, but it is a suicide that creates a work. This moment in time is a work. But that is only one aspect of the question why we exist, why we live.

12:03

The other is in my case also a response to this time, this situation in contemporary art: what is there still left to do with regard to the history of art?"

Roman reminds us of what he said before about Avant Garde and suggests that maybe in the future, it would be possible to make something like his concept. Intrigued by what Roman said about suicide, Karlyn asks him whether he had ever thought about killing himself.

- "Yes, it is a certain type of suicide," Roman lightly replies and continues, "But at the same time it is a work. The French call it an intellectual pirouette. It means that I can be very aggressive towards existence, but that I have not killed myself. I did not commit suicide.

12:04

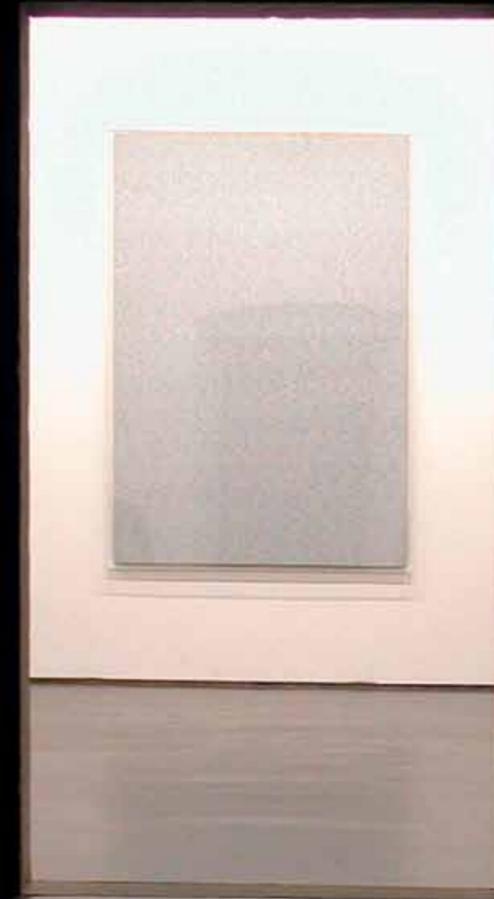
I was rescued. To paint a work, that was my rescue."

Roman refers to a story by Marguerite Yourcenar about a person building a boat and rowing into infinity. He explains that it is important for him, because the suicide of the Chinese is represented as a metaphorical act. The Chinese is 'simply gone' and loses himself in space-time.

12:05

- "In a sense, that is also my work. I have determined that I move towards the horizon and the horizon moves along with me as well. In my case, infinity is like an instrument for death. Let me repeat that Leonardo cannot say when his *St. John the Baptist* is finished. He knew already, he was incredibly intelligent, he had no answer to the question: 'when is a work finished?' He has used the sfumato as his painting technique for the *Gioconda*, because of that one cannot say: "My painting is finished."

12:06



One can go ever more deeply. And my work—only just—has an answer. A work of mine is always finished, completed. Always. Just like our existence. In the moment that a child is born the completion is already there. In the moment of birth, death is already there. For that reason, my method is so fantastic. My number *one*, I could have died immediately. Of course, it was complete inside of my existence. But with regard to my work? It was an idiot, there in Warsaw, there on the roof, who considered to give himself such a life, like today...”

Roman sticks his finger in the air and pauses, before continuing:

12:07

-“...Fortunately, already for 45 years, it has created itself. And maybe that is a good message for my current existence. I am often asked why I did not create other things after I painted my number one, why I have continued to paint my numbers. I was already quite known as an artist before starting my program and could have done it. But when I would have done that, my work would have been an anecdote, and not a program. It would not have been meaningful. The work would have been like a gimmick, like a plaything.”

-“You have often said of your work that it is nonsense.”

12:08

-“Yes, our existence, it does not make any sense. When you would be religious, you would probably say something else.”

Roman tries to remember a story in which this situation was being discussed, but it he cannot recall it. Then he comes up with:

-“But what was there before God? This is a diabolic question.”

12:09

Roman seems to be looking for words in German, Sarah takes over and says:

- “But Roman, for us, your work is no nonsense at all. For us, it is very important as it shows humanity the importance of time, the consciousness about time.”

Roman remembers now what it was he wanted to say and asks whether he can continue his explanation.

-“The sense in my work has a really strong dimension of nonsense.

12:10

In French we call it *le sens du non-sens* [the meaning of non-meaning]. That means the sense of nonsense, this strength or power. Never has a work demonstrated this nonsense so heavily.”

Roman repeats in French what he just said and then continues to explain in German:

-“Perhaps ‘answer’ is not the proper word, but my work is a response to nonsense. Such nonsense has never happened before. At least not as a work of art.”

After sketching an anecdote of a situation where people are complaining about the nonsense of life while drinking liquor in a bar, he refers to Marcel Duchamp. Roman tells us that he was a student of Duchamp, but that he criticizes his teacher for not asking the

question about ‘what can still be done?’ and instead of making art, rather chose to continue playing chess.

12:11

When Roman seems to have finished his statement, Karlyn continues asking about his work.

- “You have been painting numbers now for 45 years now and you seem to only be painting a few numbers a day. How do you feel about dedicating even the last moments of your life to painting, realizing your program?”

- “Yes. Of course. You can always and extensively ask yourself this question. An old man who wants to continue living forever, but in an intellectual or logical sense you could say: “I quit.”

12:12

Elderly people may not have the material possibilities to continue living. But this nonsense, and the difficulties with the body... You might say that it is not sufficient enough and that you make an end to it. This idea is a really great idea and it is always there. Suicide is a very strong freedom. But then still you can ask: is it still possible? If you do not want to continue to exist. This suicide is good news.

12:13

It is good news, just like death itself is good news.”

Sarah disapproves of this and softly whispers that she does not agree and wants to live forever.

- “Yes, we always have this physical aspect that is included in death. Yes, of course, when I am saying this, I am not thinking of the people whom I have known and who are no longer alive, such as my first wife. The physical condition of my body is terrible at the moment, now that I am telling you this. But these thoughts are present as well: “What is still left to do? What is still inside of it? Not much, but still.

12:14

It is a very strong feeling when you visit the graves.”

Speaking of graves, Roman mentions Leonardo da Vinci again and talks about the uncertainty regarding the location of his grave and adds that today’s technique makes it so easy to find out details about corpses. Concerning a possible location for Leonardo’s grave, Roman sees a possibility in a spot in Bologna where an unbelievably large skull was found.

12:15

-“How do you feel about your own death at the moment?”

- “Terrible! That, which is so terrible about death, is precisely this physical part. But in a philosophical sense, in the sense of Being, of existing, death is a gift. It is a gift, because we are finally liberated from our bodies. Sleeping is comparable with a certain ‘little death’, because at such a moment, we are no longer there. Perhaps we are dreaming.

12:16

Perhaps there are dreams which give certain information.”

Time is passing, while Roman speaks about the enigmatic quality of dreams. He tells us that he does not dream often, but remembers the



strong feeling of information he had each time he dreamt about his mother. For the next few minutes, he wonders that something like that can happen, although his mother has been dead for a long time.

12:17

12:18

We try to bring the conversation back to his work and Roman’s concept of time and ask whether he would be able to give us a ‘definition’ of what time means to him at this moment.

12:19

- “Basically... There is a definition that has already been said by the philosopher Immanuel Kant: time does not exist. Time is an idea, like we have when going for a walk. For Kant it was at approximately 11 o’clock. When, back then in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, people would see Kant, that was the moment on which they could determine: this is the stroll. But what has happened in Kant’s head during this stroll, this is time and that cannot be measured. Then Kant made a mistake by saying that time does not exist. But time is the only thing there is. Time is not there in the sense of measuring time.

12:20

I repeat: what has happened in his head during his walk, that is time. The steps are already there, but in between the steps that we take, is our life, our thoughts.”

12:21

The stroll of Kant, reminds Roman of another philosopher whom he considers very important: Martin Heidegger. Roman mentions Heidegger’s *Feldweg* and we shortly discuss the political climate that was present during Heidegger’s lifetime.

12:22

12:23

Roman compares Heidegger’s Nazi complications, with the concessions he made himself because of the communist era he grew up in. In addition, he mentions Malevich, who—as Roman puts it—as well, made “communist propaganda.”

12:24

12:25

Karlyn wonders whether this communist climate he was living in, was not also fruitful, because of a lack of commerce.

- “Yes, that was my chance. Maybe it was the biggest chance I have ever had in my life. It was because I have lived in a system where such a work could come about. The work has no sense of course, but the nonsense was so strong that it could happen. It was not a political work, but on the other hand, when you would go deeply into it, that is not correct: in a certain sense it was also political.

12:26

I had an exhibition in Warsaw, Poland. At the moment I would have that exhibition in Warsaw, I myself was actually in New York, so I filled

the show with my *Carte de Voyage, Travel Details*. Someone then said: "The exhibition is closed because of ideological reasons." A very intelligent member of the Communist Party came to the opening; he sat down and said, "Now you have gone too far." He understood the nonsense better than anyone else.

12:27

The nonsense in my work is so strong. It does not make any sense, just like our existence makes no sense. For a communist life is meaningful: you have to work for the society!

12:28

For your country! Of course, there is something to it, to be active in one's life. But for such existential matters, I do fight."

- "Do you believe you did something good for society in making your work?" Karlyn continues.

- "No," and after a pause, "No, and especially not for the society. Did Socrates do something good for the society? Philosophy has absolutely no purpose for society.

12:29

There is a part of philosophy that deals with the society, but the Greeks were already an elite. We were the ones who have popularized it."

12:30

- "By displaying your *Autoportraits*, your self-portraits, in an exhibition, you usually have a certain distance between the photos, larger or smaller, depending on the time that has passed between making them. In this case, how is for you this relation between time and space?" Karlyn wonders.

- "It does exist, but not in an entirely accurate way, because it belongs and depends on the space. If I have to prepare an exhibition in a gallery, I make a journey to this gallery. It is necessary, I do it to know what works to exhibit and how many. Maybe I do not go back and forth to New York; in these cases I will get a floor plan of the building.

12:31

From these plans I already have certain information, but it is always best when I travel over there. Apropos your question: it is always best to create the room, the space, in such a way that the different sequence of photos... I have already made so many photos that I cannot show all of them. I have this dialectic in my painting as well. But one single photo of my face is not enough.

12:32

That would nearly be similar to a photo in a passport. If there would only be two photos, it already becomes interesting. Why? The two are not the same. It is the same human being, but not in the same period of his life. It is there that my work begins. To have the possibility to see that time has passed, perhaps not in your hands, but in photos it shows up clearly and exactly. In more than one photo this stroll becomes clear, this process of my program. This project has already been developed since years and years.

12:33

And this person that you see on the photograph has found himself in another space-time. A young man of the 1960s..."

Roman points to a sequence of pictures, three *Autoportraits*, hanging on the opposite wall. Through the opening in the bookshelf, we see Roman in various stages of his life, from the 60s until the present time. We turn around again and look straight ahead at Roman, who is sitting in front of us today, now.

- "That is really a very strong situation. That what belongs to my work, also belongs to this Marxist dialectic, in which one makes a project, a program. The Soviet had planned everything.

12:34

Every ideology, whether it is right- or left-wing, makes a certain program. But the Communists and Fascists, they are from the same family. They naturally already had a concept, which existed in programming the people. And also in my work there is a certain program, but my program is nonsense. But this nonsense creates an artwork. Because of this *planification* [precise planning], my work could happen.

12:35

In Paris or New York it would not have been possible. The whole Daniel Buren group was than close to art, but they may not have made it. How can you develop yourself? Buren makes very different things nowadays."

- "Does that also mean that you have programmed your own life?" Karlyn wonders.

- "Yes, exactly, that is because of this *programmation* [programming]. This man in my exhibition, of whom I just spoke, had understood my work exactly.

12:36

This *planification* for nonsense. A laborer will work and sleep. I am going to work and sleep, but what about my work? What is my artwork? It has no sense: I cannot eat it, I cannot... Yes, it is nonsense. It is perfect nonsense. Such a work in this contemporary system would have no chances of surviving. The government, the Communist Party has—quite paradoxically—bought it.

12:37

The Polish have always had two parallel sides of intelligence: we do something for the Party, but perhaps also for our culture. And they bought my work."

Roman continues with, for us difficult to follow, thoughts about the cultural climate in Poland at the time when he started his program, and tells us about the practical complications of being ideological and about how politicians create installations of their power and abuse their powers.

12:38

12:39

12:40

12:41

12:42

12:43

- "You have just spoken about the Prime Minister of Russia, Vladimir Putin, who according to you, cannot forget the past and moves into a certain direction and makes decisions according to that. Roman, are there for you certain restrictions that you cannot free yourself from? Or things that determine the decisions you make?" Karlyn wants to know.

12:44

- "No, maybe in the sense of the power that was present there, that was a chance to live. And it is also important to say, I was not so naive as perhaps the artists in New York and Paris were. In a philosophical sense, that was the world, that was the future. I did not dream of a revolution, of course. I had already gotten to know about it and experienced it as something negative and bad, as far as it comes down to the result of the revolution. I knew that the result would always be the same.

12:45

Sooner or later, each power seizes the same: a certain confiscation of freedom. The ancient Greeks had considered freedom for their people, but that was only meant for the elite. The others lived like animals. It is always possible that the elite uses the other people."

After this part about politics, the conversation moves in another direction when we ask Roman about the religious aspects of his work.

12:46

Roman comments that the word 'religion' is maybe not so adequate in this context. He prefers the word 'metaphysics': his work is more metaphysical than religious.

- "Metaphysical is physical. It is strong, and it is meta: it is larger than that, it goes beyond that. And that is something that always belongs to a work like mine.

12:47

The power of metaphysics is this nonsense."

Roman's words remind us of what he said in his interview for our book *Personal Structures* two years ago, about the 'path to white'. We wonder whether that cannot be seen as something religious or metaphysical and ask Roman what this path means to him. As a response, he compares the white on white square of Malevich with his own work in relation to the possibility to continue painting, the question whether there came an end to art. Roman mentions the *planification* of his work, its *programmic* aspect, which—as he puts it—is nothing like the contemporary programming in computer-based art.

12:48

12:49

- "When you first started your program, you made that choice to show time with numbers. Why did you do that?" Sarah asks.

- "That belongs to what you see here on the wall."

Sarah and Karlyn look at the interesting, dotted painting that is hanging on the wall next to the window behind Roman's rocking

chair, while Roman explains that this was painted possibly in 1963, as a result of the wish to show time. He had considered several instruments then and at that time in his life, the hourglass seemed a good way to show the passing of time. It became the start of a series of works, called *Chronomes*.

12:50

But—as Roman adds—the hourglass had the disadvantage of repeating itself and was limited to an amount of three minutes, which to him was not enough to show time passing.

- "This work was the last stage in the experiment I made about how one can make a time manifest.

12:51

At that time, I painted with tempera. Again and again, I always washed it off and then painted these time-dots new again, just like they are in an hourglass."

Roman paints dots in the air, in a seemingly random way.

- "In the hourglass however, you cannot tell where you are. "In this picture," you could say, but that is a little vague."

Roman shows the chaos regarding the 'moment' in his hourglass painting by moving his head in many directions.

- "I was here, here, here, here, here, here..." he adds, while still moving his head, "There is no completely precise point where I am. I was here when I showed this point."

12:52

Roman tells us that he noticed that people had the feeling they were looking at the cosmos, when viewing his work. As a consequence he stopped the series, because:

- "This dot," he paints a dot in the air, again shaping his hand as if holding a brush, "Was not obvious."

He tells us he painted other things for about a year, but he was not content with them.

12:53

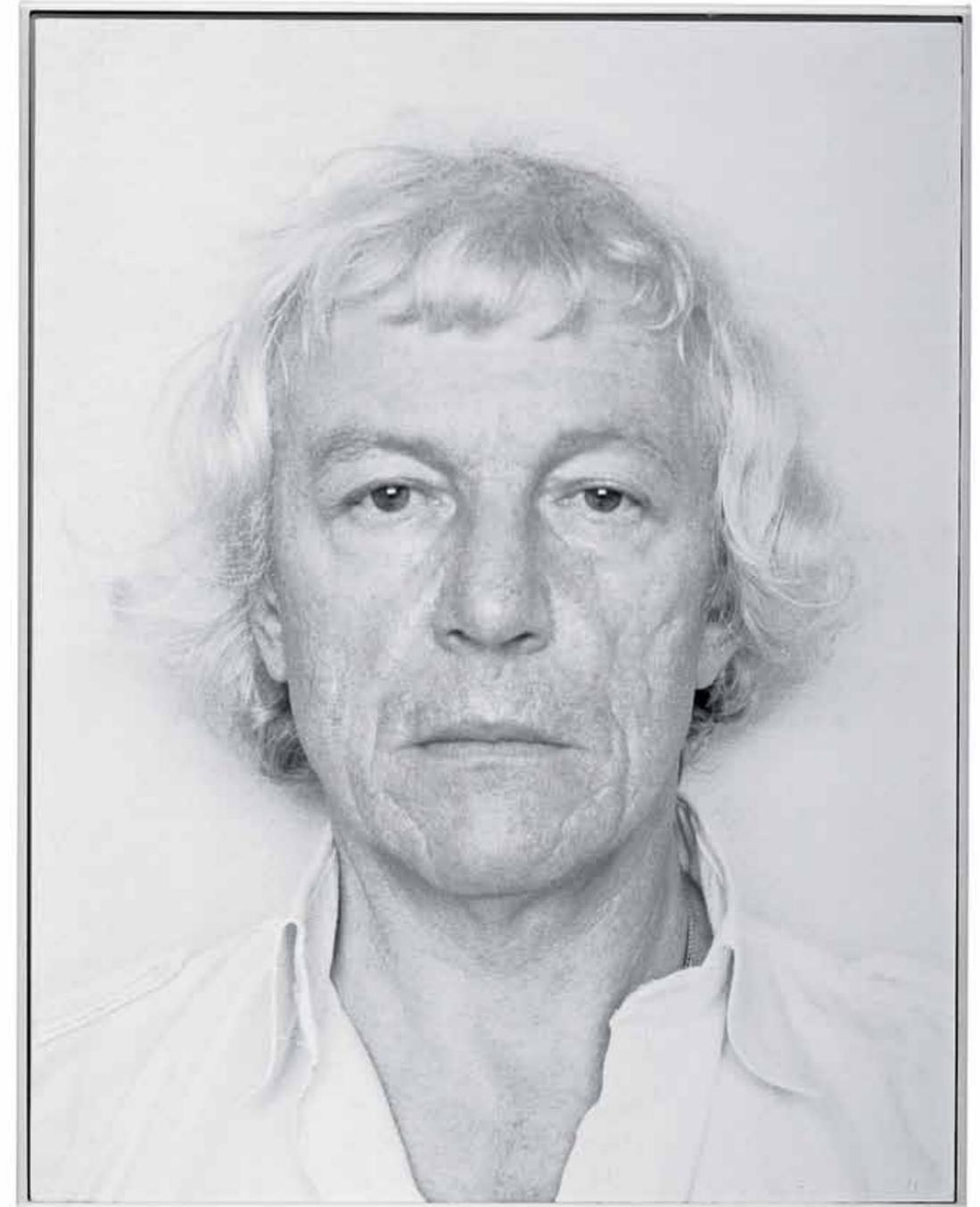
"They were the type of canvasses that the French artist Pierre Soulages makes nowadays, the difference being that Roman made them white on white and Soulages black on black, but forty years later," he adds.

12:54

- "What you just said about your hourglass paintings, that you are here, here, here, sounds similar to your voice recordings of Polish numbers, the *mixage* [mix], that there is no direction, nothing to hold on to," Karlyn remarks.

- "Yes, if this *mixage* is here as well, we know that we are dealing with a part of the whole. I mean, one of the many different parts of the entirety of the program. If we take a walk, speaking of Heidegger's *Feldweg*, what happens in the mind, goes in all directions."

Roman points to the hourglass painting on the wall behind him again and continues:





- "That goes also in all directions, but in this painting the directions are not precise."

12:55

If you take a point here, in one of my *Chronomes*, then you are in this total. Here, in the *Chronomes*, you are in the whole. But where has it started? If I look at the figures that I painted today, I know that this number 1, this figure, moves itself. This number one that was there at the beginning, is the same figure, but has a different meaning. It is like our existence. A number is only its potential. After this moment comes this space-time. And my program makes that very clear.

12:56

But in my hourglass paintings it used to be like this: each point is a number one. And that is what happened to me, when I was waiting for my wife in Hotel Bristol in Warsaw, Poland. When we have time, we have the chance to ask ourselves interesting questions. Because normally we are running from one place to the next. In philosophy that is well-known: when one is waiting, that is the chance that we have, because then you have time.

12:57

To be waiting is a gift," but he adds, "When you are intelligent. In other cases it is just like: "Oh, shit..."

Together we laugh at Roman's acting. Then Karlyn continues asking.

- "You have determined your program in 1964. In the years that came after, have you ever had the temptation to change the visualization of your concept? That you thought, maybe I should make the figures a little bit bigger, for example."

12:58

- "Yes, that is one of the very important questions that I have asked myself. I have made sketches for example. We had laid them on the floor of my studio and my brother found them there and sold them to a museum. In a certain sense, by selling them he saved some of these sketches. This is the paradox; otherwise they would have just ended up in the trash.

12:59

On these sketches you can see how I have considered my way of showing the passing of time. You can see how I tested the size of the figures, but you can also see how I considered painting a one for example. And 2, and 3 as well, of course, and the figure four especially: shall I paint it like a chair or like a hill? Angles would naturally not be good. To make sketches like that... that is the way it was back then. Nowadays, with the computer, that all became much easier. The figures have already been programmed beforehand.

13:00

For me this was very important and I have made such sketches for almost a year. But then I said to myself: now I will start. And that was really a very great emotion. I thought, I have to keep away from my studio window, because the building stories are so high. This moment, this one, was so incredibly important. It was so very strong that I—but I have already mentioned that—developed a problem with my heart.

13:01

This is not only because of the tension, because of the intellectual emotion, but also because of my body. If you paint or present numbers like that, whether they are large or small, you are very free with regard to respiration, breathing in and out. That is something I have learned afterwards. I have found a certain profession for myself, my Opalka-job. And in this job that I created for myself, I now have to let my body function in a certain way. The first picture that I painted in my program took me seven months.

13:02

That is not exactly the right amount of time, but it certainly did not take longer than those seven months. I placed the picture against the wall, with its surface facing the wall, not with its back. I did that so that I could not always look at it. From time to time I looked at this painting, repeatedly. A magical piece. And the size? The size of the number is derived from the size that I am able to see when I am standing in front of the canvas. On the *Travel Details* the numbers are much smaller, that is because the format is smaller. Once, I have made a gift for someone on which the figures are still even smaller."

13:03

Roman remarks that he does not make gifts anymore and tells us about a situation regarding his *Travel Details* for an exhibition at a Gallery in Vienna, Austria. The gallery apparently never sent him back his work.



- "The *Travel Details* have developed from the idea to work differently some times. Otherwise, it would always be like that," Roman says while pointing at the unfinished canvas resting on his easel.

13:04

- "I had to travel to bring my propaganda into the world. Because: what do I do in the time that I am in New York? The *Travel Details* are in a format of at least A4, they are not exactly A4 because they are not so precise."

- "How is the continuation of your numbers with regard to your *Travel Details*? Do you continue painting your numbers? Or is there a gap in your painting of the numbers that you used for your *Travel Detail*?"

- "No, I have to finish it first."

We can sense the dedication of Roman to his program and the three of us joke about the things he has to do before going on a journey.

13:05

- "Of course, in this case I have to finish it to the end. But today this is no longer my problem, because since the border between East and West is no longer there, I do not make any more *Travel Details*. Back then, when I went to New York, I did not only go to make an installation at John Weber's Gallery for instance, I had also used this trip to stay in New York for some time. Nowadays, I do not have time to stay in New York. A week is already too long for me.

13:06

In the communist times, I had to work for months to get a passport and afterwards three more months to obtain a visa, in order for the Americans to accept my trip to New York."

13:07

- "So you did not make any *Travel Details* in the last 20 years?" Sarah asks.



- "No, the last one was maybe in 1990."

13:09

Karlyn suggests the possibility that it might have been a pragmatic or financial decision to start with the *Travel Details*, that because of them, Roman would have a painting that might be easier to sell. But this is not the case. They are even more expensive when considering the number of figures on the picture, Roman says.

13:10

13:08

13:11

- "In the case of my concept of white on white, that is so very complicated that I may never in my life bring it to an end."

13:12

We look at the prepared canvasses that are leaning against the wall. There are five. Karlyn notices that two years ago, when they visited Roman, there were seven paintings lined up. The other two are still in the studio and Roman shows them to us from his rocking chair. The seventh is finished and stands behind the others; the sixth is standing on his easel and is now painted halfway. We are told that Roman keeps them there just in case, because he already sold his last two paintings: the next-to-last to a museum in Poland; his very last, unfinished, painting of Roman's program, he sold to the Sammlung Lenz Schönberg, which bought it together with the complete studio-installation of microphone, tape recorder, easel and camera. When Roman finishes the one he is working on right now, he will be able to move this 'sixth' canvas. He tells us about the paintings that he has sold and the ones he bought back. He tells us that the painting where he passes the 1,000,000, is in the back of his studio, on a stand behind his easel. Then an anecdote follows about how Roman got that painting back into his possession.

- "You have spoken about your number 1 and your 1,000,000, are there any other numbers that have been similar important for your own life?" Karlyn asks.

- "In a personal sense, no, but in the sense of my program, yes. The special passages, the million-passages. Because these structures are very, very strong and particularly in this picture from the first million, this painting has such a moment... The structure with six figures and after that each number has seven figures.

13:13

And especially it was the moment that I knew: I am going into the million. And that is an incredible emotion. To get to this moment, to reach my one million, has taken as long as seven years. And this structure is phonetically in Polish... Have I already done that for you once?"

- "No, you have not,"

- "So, I was painting my program already for seven years and then I come to the point where the numbers consisting of six digits change, into numbers of seven digits.

13:14

I am saying," after a short pause, Roman straightens his back and seems to concentrate himself on what is about to come, then he continues in Polish. His voice is softer and deeper now and has a slow, monotonous rhythm. We are impressed and quietly watch as Roman is approaching his one million.

- "*Dziewięćset dziewięćdziesiąt dziewięć tysięcy dziewięćset dziewięćdziesiąt dziewięć...* Maybe I am going a little fast, but the rhythm is there. The emotion was so very strong on the tape that I recorded... Unfortunately, a gallery owner has lost the tape. Back then, I had not taken this emotion, this passage, so seriously. I repeat," Roman pauses and goes back into his position of pronouncing his numbers in Polish, "*Dziewięćset dziewięćdziesiąt dziewięć tysięcy dziewięćset dziewięćdziesiąt dziewięć...*" Then Roman states that the French count very badly, "The history of the physicist and philosopher Blaise Pascal with his systems of numbers... The French count illogically."

- "That is different in Polish?" Sarah asks.

13:15

- "Yes, for example 21 in German language, is not right, because one comes before twenty: *einundzwanzig* [one and twenty]. The Polish language and Latin are perfect. In Italian it would not be a problem either. So to come back to the story with the millions, I repeat: six times the figure zero. They do not repeat themselves. You always communicate the six digits in one total. When I reached that particular moment..." Roman pauses for a moment and straightens his back. His right hand bends, pretending to hold a brush. In his

left, he is holding an invisible cup of paint. He dips his brush into the paint, while describing to us in words what he is doing.

- "Now I am preparing my brush and everything that is about to come.

13:16

I say *jeden* [one]... So, I am not announcing this million immediately. I take the air into my lungs."

Roman does as he says. We see his chest move up.

- "*Jeden*," he says in a deep, slow voice.

We hold our breaths and watch while Roman quietly paints six zeros in the air.

- "Then I paint these six zeros. I do not say a word, because there is nothing to say. Listen to me. I say: *jeden... milion* [million]. First come the six zeros, and then I say *milion*," while saying it, Roman breathes out, "After the six zeros, I can say *milion*, previously there was only the figure one: *jeden* then a pause in which I am painting these six zeros and *milion*. It is very difficult to understand, this emotion, and also this moment in time. And the emotion that I have as an artist..."

13:17

And then it continues: *jeden* and this time followed by five zeros and then the figure 'one' again. Twice the figure one. Because of the five zeros, the logical right is created to represent this other 'one'."

Watching Roman, painting the million in the air and saying the words in Polish, his eyes seem to be filled with tears. There is still quite a

strong emotion present. We ask him about these emotions which he still seems to feel very strongly.

- "What I have experienced... Of course, I could not go on. My work has already become known, but as good and as strong as I have felt it, no one else has felt it like that.

13:18

This means: I can continue to function in this work. We have already discussed that. But it is this emotional part that is really wonderful to experience. What is without emotion is this Big Bang, which is making itself always stronger. If God had existed, he would also have been very excited about this space."

Sarah proposes to take a look at Roman's work. We get up and together we walk through Roman's studio to where his work is standing on his easel.

- "Roman, are there any specific numbers that you are still looking forward to paint?"

13:19

At the moment there is not, he says while switching on the light in front of his canvas: the lamp he uses for taking his *Autoportraits*. Because of the white on white it is even with the light on difficult to see where Roman painted his last numbers. Slightly we can decipher the place where he stopped painting the day before. But which number it is, also Roman does not immediately know. He has to put on his glasses to see it. While walking away to get his glasses, Roman remarks that he can see without his glasses, but that he needs them for the contrast: 5 million 591... Even with glasses, it is almost impossible to see. We try to decipher it.

13:20

13:21

- "It is terrible," Roman says.

- "It is not so easy anymore to see it."

- "Yes, of course," Roman puts on his glasses, but he still has difficulties to read his last number. Slowly he reads in German:

- "5,591,675."

- "It is an incredibly meditative work," Sarah remarks while looking at the painting.

13:22

- "Yes, now with my glasses on, I can see it, but to paint it... Of course, when I am already painting, I have the numbers fixed in my head. And then I know: now I should paint a number more, so then comes 676 and so it continues like that. This means, that I do not necessarily think about the last number, because I have it fixed in my head."

- "Do you work every day?" Sarah goes on asking.

- "Yes, but nowadays I cannot do very much. I paint approximately one hour per day. No more. I cannot do that anymore. That is not due to my eyes, but because of the standing. And that is precisely the time, the conceptual time, when I say that my work is connected to my own personal life.

13:23

When I look at one of my *Details*, I see my life. Every artist can say that, Renoir or someone else: my painting is my life. It is like a playground, but much deeper. 'Play' is a bit too banal. It also has to do with: it is my moment in time. There is nothing like a space-free space. These microsomes, these dots, they are like a body.

13:24

When you are looking at a body that is painted by Leonardo da Vinci or any other artist, the shape of that body is only an image. Here it is not only that which you see, but also very clearly that what you carry in your body. Everyone, including Leonardo, could say: "That is my painting, that is me." That is correct. But it is not as strong as in my work.

13:25

My life and death, everything is inside of my work, in the eternal time, in the work process. That means," Roman clears his throat and continues, "That is already defined in Christian thinking: it is my blood, my body. Body is blood. That is a logical error, actually, the body alone is enough. This is the host. It is everything: my blood and my body.

13:26

And like this," Roman points at his canvas, "It has never been shown. At least, not as strong as 'this is my body'. It is almost religious, but I am not religious. Speaking of believing: it is so strong present here, my Being in a painting."

Standing in front of Roman's work, Sarah asks whether it would be possible that, when Roman would paint today, that we would be there, too.

13:27

Suddenly, Roman wants to be aware of the current time. We do not know what time it is and Sarah walks quickly to the other side of the studio to check her phone. In the meantime, Karlyn asks more questions, about how it feels to see one of his old paintings.

- "When your work is so closely related to your life and your own body, do you see yourself as a young man again and who you were at the moment that you painted the work?"

- "You always see yourself every time you represent yourself, our existence. You also see yourself as a child and what we have been like in our existence.

13:28

But that is like a stroll, the *Feldweg* [Pathway] of Heidegger if you wish. That is when the other moments in time show themselves along the way and in the sense that they are thinking... These are the various pathways and the reliefs of this pathway, at the time when I read this text. It was only much later, when Heidegger was seen very critically in Poland, as a fascist.

13:29

Of course, I could not read a text by Heidegger. Later I read it and saw that it is like an Opalka. Maybe there is something else that could be said in this context. Philosophers and poets are always much more difficult to understand than art, visual art. He could have understood them, my stupidities. But in a logical sense, the pathway is perfectly well meant.



13:30

Speaking of *Feldweg*, this story of the million-passages, the six-digits and afterwards the seven digits, they are very, very strong. I am not making myself a compliment. He [Heidegger] would probably have been impressed by it. But that remains only a probability, because I know a lot of people, friends and so from Warsaw, who did not understand it.

13:31

To read Heidegger's *Feldweg* takes a couple of hours, maybe a few days, but my own Pathway takes such a long time. To understand this, why you would do something like this, it is almost like a sacrifice. Such a concept, to realize a work like that, in this sense

that is a certain insight. The word 'sacrifice' does not sound very well to me, but it certainly is a sacrifice.

13:32

I had to do it, although it is better not to work, better not to do anything, to just lie down and look at the stars. Someone had to do it. That is why it is a sacrifice to the history of art. I understood that, but who wants to realize that? No one. I could not say, "Do that, please." In order to do it, you have to understand its necessity, that you have to do something like that. In that sense it is not a sacrifice, because I knew that this sacrifice would also be a chance for my existence in the history of art. So, now we are talking about it: I do not fear history.

13:33

It is not possible to wipe out such a work. That is simply not possible. I have no fear. Death is also a gathering of everything. Probably, apropos the number one, everything is contained in it and this period between birth and death... In the theory of Raymond Moody, for example, a time span takes in the whole, and that cannot be measured.

13:34

And with him, death would be an ending. But this end would already be present in the time between death and 'one', which you cannot measure. And this little point of Pascal, this unit, is the largest. This means: death carries all of that inside of itself."

After Sarah's remark that it is already half past one, Roman explains that we will soon have lunch and that he will take a short siesta afterwards. After that we will be able to continue with him. While switching off the light in front of his canvas, Roman asks us about our plans for the night.

13:35

13:36

On our way to the door we pass a wooden sculpture of Jesus on the cross, hanging on the back wall. Karlyn remembers that Roman once mentioned it as being important to him, and asks him about it. Roman pauses next to the sculpture and looks at it while saying:

- "I am an agnostic, but that what is happening here within this sculpture, in this statue, is better than the sculptures that we see in churches. The pain of Christ is often shown in a bit of a banal way, with blood and all, but here the wood is creating it. The pain is so strong, it is inside the wood. That is why I bought it.

13:37

We know the artist Lucio Fontana. His works also have a sexual part. Here in this sculpture the pain is so strong, a sculptor cannot do that. This has been done by the material. The pain is so very well present."

13:38

- "Do you see similar pain in your own work?" Karlyn asks.

- "Yes, I repeat: Christ has also made a sacrifice for the people. I am not religious, but already the way we know the story of Christ, you understand that that was a sacrifice. And he wanted to do it. I myself also have this question."

13:39

Slowly, we leave the studio and go through the dark hallway with its low ceiling into the dining room. On the wall are two paintings by Roman from 1949, from before the start of his program, and a light installation that is placed in most corners, lights the room. The long, antique wooden table is already set. It is luxurious, with beautiful plates, wine glasses and silverware. Alexandra is looking through a service hatch, between the kitchen and the dining room. We say hello. Roman starts speaking to her in French and walks over to the kitchen. He returns after a few seconds.

13:40

The three of us take a seat on a divan that is in the corner of the dining room next to the large, stone fireplace with piles of wood on the side, and wait for the lunch to arrive. In the meantime, Roman tells us about what his days usually look like:

- "It is not very German."

13:41

The Germans always have the problem of their schedule, the timeline. I am going for a walk, but not necessarily in the way the philosopher Immanuel Kant did it. I go for a walk before or after taking an afternoon nap. Or often I do not sleep at all, maybe today I will not. But maybe it is for the better and we can talk again later on, in the afternoon. I am not so disciplined or organized with my time, not like the German mentality.

13:42

I am more relaxed. The *Feldweg* of Heidegger is quite beautiful in this line of works. The works are not all the same, they are different. This is also the rhythm of my existence: sometimes I do not sleep, at other times I do sleep, sometimes I sleep more, or less. This is the best: not to program yourself like that. In my work I have created a program, but this program has a lot to do with this imprecise time span. Speaking of which, in the beginning I could have died.

13:43

Every artist, when he is painting a picture, can say that he is making a certain sacrifice.

13:44

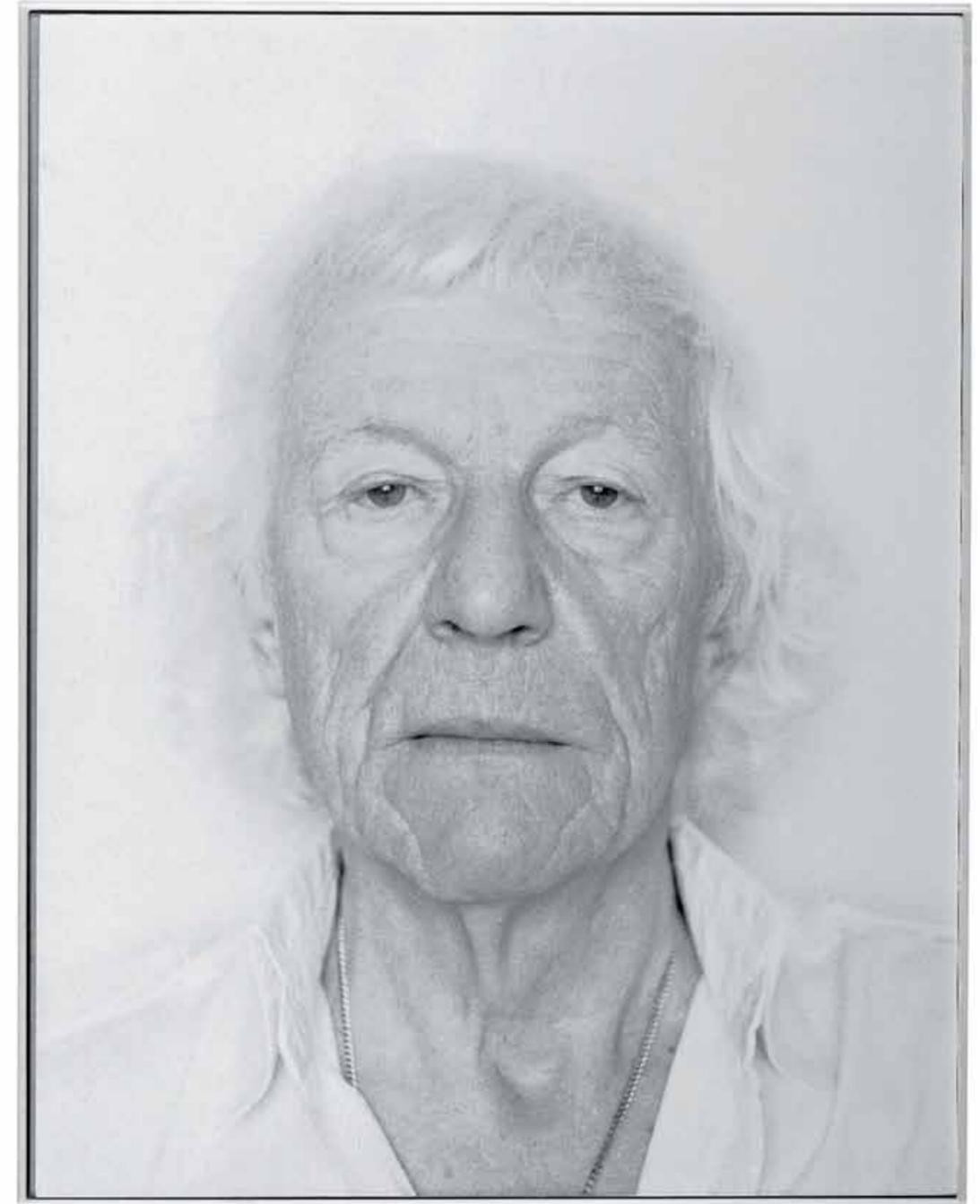
Speaking of *Feldweg*, sometimes it rains. I was a realist once and then at times I had problems with the weather. It rained and then I painted anyway. This is almost anecdotal. In my case, the program is that, which belongs to my life. It is always like it is in our lives, meaning: anecdotal.

13:45

I can sleep or not, but that is entirely voluntary. With you here, I have to watch my energy a little. It costs energy to tell you about everything, these stupid things. If I so terribly say "stupid things", you can see our existence, or interpret it like that. Our life has no meaning. My work is the nonsense that manifests this. It is comparable with the Germans drinking a glass of *Schnaps*, or the Frenchman having a glass of wine: life has no meaning.

13:46

The German and the Frenchman are right. They are also philosophers, but then they have to show it. That is almost hypocritical, but I think they should show it. The consequences are very different when you very seriously have these thoughts that our existence has nonsense."



# ON KAWARA

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS #04

By Karlyn De Jongh

2007-2011

*From 2007 until 2009, Karlyn De Jongh has collected questions for On Kawara—who seems to have never published any personal written statements. It resulted in a collection of 80 questions by people from all over the world, who know the artist or his work very well. After several attempts to present these questions to On Kawara—visiting his apartment in New York, sending postcards and contacting his closest friends—until this day, the questions remain unanswered. The following text tells the story about the sequence of events that became the Art Project ON KAWARA: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS.*

ON KAWARA: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS is the documentation of Personal Structures Art Projects #04. It has been published as a limited special edition. The edition comprises 250 copies of which 50 DeLuxe, numbered from 1 to 50, and 50 DeLuxe hors commerce, numbered from I to L. The 150 Standard copies are numbered from 51 to 200. Each item of this limited edition consists of a book and a CD in a case, housed together in a cassette. The DeLuxe edition additionally contains a postcard with a question for On Kawara, returned to sender.

Today is Saturday, 19 December 2009, and right now I am in my apartment in Venice, Italy. My name is Karlyn De Jongh. I am an independent curator and author from the Netherlands. The past two years, I have been working on the project *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara*.

*Unanswered Questions to On Kawara* consisted of collecting questions for the artist On Kawara. I gathered questions from all kinds of people who are somehow connected with On Kawara, people who either know the artist or his work very well, asking them to submit a question they themselves wanted to ask him. Their questions have all been formulated in the languages I was certain On Kawara would understand: Japanese and English. It resulted in a collection of questions posed by 79 people from different parts over the world—Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. As they are, the

questions provide information about On Kawara's life and work. This special edition contains all questions asked.

### On Kawara

On Kawara (born in Japan in 1932) has been making work that addresses time, space and existence since the 1960s. To say something about On Kawara, to give a biography or to state something about the meaning of his work, is complicated. It seems that On Kawara has never published any personal written statements, that he doesn't give any public speeches, and that he doesn't give interviews.

Catalogue texts about On Kawara are often formal descriptions of his work. Biographies of On Kawara have been made without detailed facts concerning his personal history. Often they only state the amount of days the artist has been alive at the time of writing. For example:

"Biography of On Kawara (August 16, 1974) 15 211 Tage"<sup>1</sup>

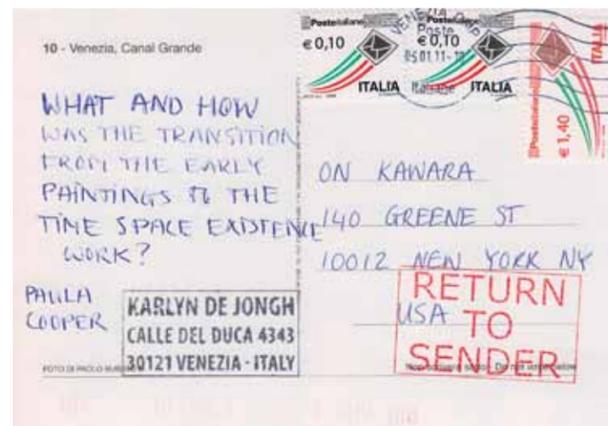
Taking the information from his *100 Years Calendar*, On Kawara seems to have been born on 24 December 1932. Today that means On Kawara would now have been alive for 28,119 days.

Because of all these elements, most people—who, like me, have never met On Kawara personally—only seem to be able to 'know' the artist through his work. But what if you think his work is so important that you want to include him in a publication with texts by, and interviews with, other living artists? How do you include someone who solely communicates through his work? Someone who never publishes any personal written statements? What do you do?

The only thing we can do to get information about On Kawara's life is to rely on statements from people who have met the artist and said something about him. Having to rely on such statements, we can only guess about reasons why On Kawara does not speak publicly. Franck Gautherot and Jonathan Watkins, for example, state: "There is too much and therefore nothing for the artist to say."<sup>2</sup> In a recent



MAR.25.1997



catalogue, curator Charles Wylie says: “Kawara, as an artist, does not, in fact, wish to be quoted nor to have his ideas and thoughts paraphrased: his project is not that of subjective autobiography but of steady, disciplined recording, in universally recognized and accepted objective terms, of experience and time that stretches from the year 1966 to today.”<sup>3</sup> Or: as Ulrich Wilmes clearly pointed out in an email to me: “I know Kawara and for quite a long time. And if you do some research you will find out that he never wrote a text or published a statement, nor did he ever give an interview. This is not a caprice of an eccentric artist, but part of his artistic concept. The only way that he communicates is via his works!”<sup>4</sup>

On Kawara created several series of works that seem to manifest his existence. Most of these series he started in the 1960s. For example: Since 1966 On Kawara has been making the *Today Series*; the series *I met* and *I got up* both started in 1968 in Mexico City; his *I am still alive* telegrams have been sent at irregular intervals since 1970. Of these series, the *Today Series*—also called *Date Paintings*—is probably the most well known: a monochrome ground on which month, day and year are painted in letters and figures, the spelling being influenced by the country he was in. On Kawara continues to paint such works until the present time.

To me, On Kawara’s work seems to be a self-portrait. The series of facts that these works present, say something about On Kawara’s life. The series lend presence to the artist, while he himself remains physically or, depending on the viewer, even personally, absent. His works seem to state something similar to the number of days in his biography: at that specific point in time On Kawara existed.

The questions in this book are a way to learn more. They give additional information and add to the knowledge we have about the artist: the 79 questioners, the questions they ask, the statements they give, all these things provide information about On Kawara.

#### The beginning of my collection

The project *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara* started in April 2007. It was the result of the wish to incorporate On Kawara in the publication *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE* (2009) which includes interviews, essays and symposium texts by 53 artists, communicating their thoughts verbally or in written word.<sup>5</sup> Given his artistic concept, including On Kawara was a challenge.

To ask an art historian to write about his work was not an option for us. Instead, Rene Rietmeyer suggested asking people who know On Kawara personally, or at least his work, to submit a question and then try to present these collected questions to On Kawara. And: in the expected case that he would not answer, we would publish these questions in *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE* as the *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara*.

I met Rene Rietmeyer for the first time on 14 May 2007. At that time I was a student, on the verge of finishing my M.Phil. in Art History at Leiden University, Netherlands. I was asked to work with the project *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* as a curator. Together with Sarah Gold, I organized the *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* symposium and exhibition *TIME* in Amsterdam, Netherlands. As part of the exhibition we showed twenty *I am still alive* telegrams, which On Kawara had sent to the German art critic and writer Klaus Honnef in 1971. I placed this installation in the exhibition: it was my first opportunity to work so directly with On Kawara, and I was deeply impressed.

After finishing my studies, in September 2007 I went to Venice, Italy, where I worked for the German Pavilion at the Biennale di Venezia. Rietmeyer was in Murano at that time where he was creating his *Venezia* glass-boxes. During a dinner on the island of Murano, he asked if I would be interested in taking on this On Kawara project. The artist and this project intrigued me and, without thinking, I said “yes.” *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara* became my project.

Our initial idea was to collect approximately 50 questions. And at that point in time, when I first heard about the project, we had only collected one: Rietmeyer had asked Klaus Honnef for a question, because of his connection to On Kawara. It was 7 May 2007 and Honnef had spontaneously reacted with “Do you still remember me?”

After hearing about the project, I immediately started doing my homework. Sitting outside of the pavilion that October, in cold and rainy Venice, I searched the Internet for names that showed up in connection with On Kawara. I was looking for answers to my own questions: To whom did he send his telegrams? Who received postcards? Who did he meet? Who wrote about him? Which museums have his works in their collection? What galleries handle his work? At first, I was overwhelmed by the number of names that came up. I realized: this was not art in theory; this was art in reality and I was new to it.

#### Dublin, Ireland, Winter 2007

After Venice, I moved to Dublin, where I would spend most of my time for the next 18 months. Full of naïve confidence, I started contacting the first people on my list. A few people reacted to my request, but without actually sending me a question to pass along to On Kawara. Amongst them was Jean-Marc Avrilla. He said that, to him, it seemed difficult NOT to accept my request and participate in my project. Avrilla added that he considers On Kawara’s work as one of the most important in contemporary art, “dealing not only with concept but with poetry and corresponding precisely to changes of the time perception.”<sup>6</sup> Xavier Douroux also reacted. Together with the Le Consortium co-director Franck Gautherot, he had done several books and exhibitions about On Kawara; Douroux was traveling at that moment and wanted me to call him the week after. I was naïve and did not foresee, that it would actually take a very long time to get the result: 7 months for Avrilla’s question; 12 for that of Douroux. But at that time, that they hadn’t sent me a question yet did not matter to me: the fact that they replied was enough. I was full of hope that the project would become a success. Until this: a message from someone at David Zwirner Gallery:

“Thank you for your email that you sent to the gallery regarding On Kawara. I have sent this on to On. However, On Kawara does not indeed do interviews, nor is quoted or have published dialogues. We thank you for considering him, but he is declining participation with this project. We wish you luck.”

I thought I would die. I kept thinking about their response for weeks afterwards: what happened there? What did I do wrong? For a while, I left the project as it was.

#### Tokyo, Japan, March & April 2008

For the *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* project we went to Tokyo, where Sarah Gold and I organized the symposium *EXISTENCE* at the Setagaya Art Museum. Between meetings, I looked for anything related to On Kawara: I went to the National Museum of Modern Art where I was confronted with On Kawara’s early, figurative work. And I went to Gallery 360°, a gallery that shows several Japanese and Western artists and also handled work by On Kawara. I remember sitting at a small table with the gallery owner Toshiyuki Nemoto, his wife Miyuki Sugaya and the artist Yuko Sakurai. We were

served tea and sweet, sticky rice balls. With Yuko’s help, I was able to communicate with Nemoto, who gave me a question on the spot:

あなたが続けている、アートワークの、デートペインティングについて、一つの質問があります。時々、青と赤のペインティングがありますが、これはどのよ

Nemoto’s question meant, for me, the real start of the project.

The *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* symposium was a success. I especially remember our lunch breaks under the blossoming sakura trees in the museum’s park: having sushi together with all the artists who spoke at the symposium. Choosing this specific time of year had been Joseph Kosuth’s idea, who had come especially to Tokyo to speak at our symposium.

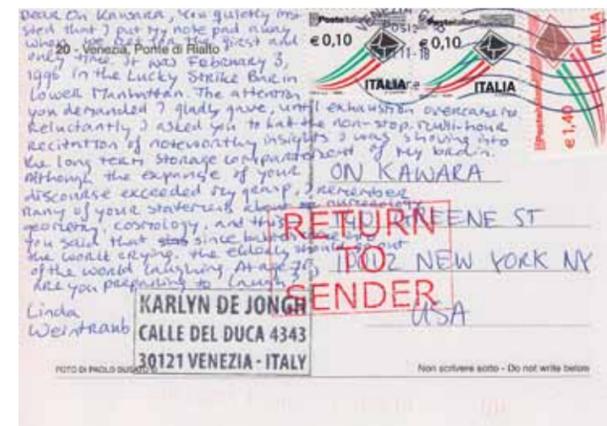
One day after the symposium, it was 4 April 2008, we met Joseph Kosuth again. It was a Friday night and we went out for dinner in a traditional Japanese restaurant. We were sitting on the floor, in a circle. In the middle were plates with carp. As I remember, at first Kosuth was as he always was, but his behavior changed when he heard about my project *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara*. He impulsively reacted with the question “When will you call me?” Seconds later, he considered having the question translated in Japanese. Later, he withdrew his question and didn’t want to contribute it at that point in time. He then explained to us why he came up with this question: Kosuth told us about how he and On Kawara used to play Risk together. That Kosuth always took the initiative for their meetings and that once he had said something like: “On, why don’t YOU call ME next time.” On Kawara apparently never did.

#### Dublin, Ireland, Spring 2008

With Nemoto’s question in my pocket and a freshly developed love for Japan, my enthusiasm for the project was enormous and I had forgotten about the difficult start a few weeks earlier. Back in Dublin, I started searching for and contacting new people. Now it appeared that 50 questions might be obtainable.

#### Miami, USA, Spring 2008

On 1 May 2008 I went to Miami, where Sarah Gold and I curated two exhibitions. Being in Miami, I started contacting new people, focusing on the ones in the USA. The Americans seemed easier to



reach: I spoke with Christian Scheidemann who stated that he met On Kawara once, with Charles Wylie who had just curated the On Kawara exhibition in Dallas, and with several other people.

Even though Wylie declined my request for a question, because he was not sure about how it would fit in with On Kawara's artistic concept, slowly more questions came. From Ute Meta Bauer, who came to her question because of a death in her family. From Gregor Jansen, whose question I received the next day, with compliments on the project: "Mr. On Kawara, What day is today?" From William Wells, who allowed me to choose one of the following:

- 1- 29<sup>th</sup>-05-08 "What is the identity of today's date." or
- 2- "If the validity of time is reduced to the man-made construct that is the date, is our existence annulled if a day is undocumented?"

And from Fumio Nanjo: "What is time for you?" Nanjo had contributed to several books on On Kawara and as the director of the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, for me he was one of the key figures on my list. I felt I was getting closer to reaching my goal.

#### Continental Europe, Summer 2008

Back in Europe, I went on a tour together with Rene Rietmeyer and Sarah Gold. For the PERSONAL STRUCTURES project we had some meetings with artists. One of them was Roman Opalka, in Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France. Meeting Opalka for the first time, impressed me tremendously: his house, his studio, the prepared canvasses leaning against the wall waiting to be painted, the white shirt on a hanger, the tape recorder, the man himself and the way he spoke... Opalka took us out for lunch to his favorite restaurant. I remember sitting next to him. He came up with a question for On Kawara straight away, as if it had been on his mind for years: "How is it possible that there are often two date paintings of one day?" A critical question, as might be expected from a person who has been working with the concept 'time' for over forty years.

After we visited Roman Opalka, we went on to Dillingen in Germany, for a talk with the owner of our printing company about the PERSONAL STRUCTURES publication. While driving, we discussed the project *Unanswered Questions to On Kawara*: the questions that I had collected so far and the ones that were still to come. It was

at this point in time, right there in the car, that the concept of the project developed to its final state.

We were considering ways to exhibit the questions, possibilities for including On Kawara in our exhibitions and presenting the project in a visual or audible form. We decided to display the questions on a wall and fill the space with the sound of my voice presenting the questions to On Kawara in New York City. We also decided that we should not only publish the questions in the PERSONAL STRUCTURES book, but that we should print them as a separate publication too, a project standing on its own.

To make a more complete statement, 50 questions did not seem to be enough. As a new number, we set 80. I knew from the time and effort I had already put in the project, it would not be so simple. But I was crazy about this idea of the special edition and thought it was fantastic.

#### Dublin, Ireland, Fall 2008

After my return to Dublin, I continued collecting during the next few months. Now it became easier for me to collect questions: I would not be traveling so often and had more time to focus on the remaining 62 questions I somehow had to gather.

The next response I received on my 28<sup>th</sup> birthday: a statement from Kasper König. Kasper König and On Kawara are said to be good friends, going back to the 1970s, at least. They have worked together on numerous projects and On Kawara sent him several telegrams and postcards. Although König did not submit a question for On Kawara, he had taken the time to write me his statement and that fact counted. His statement meant a lot to me.

A few days later, Sarah Gold and Rene Rietmeyer had a meeting with Joseph Kosuth in Rome, Italy. It was 2 September 2008. They spoke about my project again. Kosuth repeated his question: "When will you call me?" Unfortunately, he gave the question without the permission to publish it. That did not count. And so, in the time that followed, I tried to contact Kosuth; I would hear from him only months later.

Because I did not have a telephone at my home in Dublin, I went to the Chinese Internet Café around the corner. It was a shabby place. From one of the telephone booths—my favorite was number 2,

because it had a little bit of leg-space and what they called a 'table', a piece of wood big enough to put my On Kawara Address Book on—I phoned all over the world. Although there were days when I did not reach anyone, on some days I was luckier, receiving two questions on the same day.

For me, one of those lucky days was 11 September 2008: I reached Andreas Bee, Gunnar Kvaran, and Pétur Arason. The conversation with Arason was quite strange. Through various channels, I had gotten hold of the number of his mobile phone. Normally, I prefer to call people using their home numbers, but in this case I had no other choice. Arason picked up. I explained to him my project and then straight away—in broken English—he said, "Will you come to Iceland?" I never had a question this quick before. I thought he was asking me: he had not said a word in the minutes before and suddenly came that question as a reply. Then he changed his question to, "Would you like to come to Iceland and fish salmon?" This wasn't meant for me. I thanked Arason for his question and he hung up the phone. When I got home, Andreas Bee had emailed me his question: "Is death simply a mistake?"

I felt I needed at least one of the galleries working directly with On Kawara in the project, as a confirmation. For many people my project was still seen as a tricky thing: On Kawara himself had not yet been contacted—at least not by me—and had therefore never given an approval. So, after having sent several messages and without receiving any reply, I phoned Michèle Didier in Brussels, Belgium, the owner of a gallery that produced *One Million Years* and sells editions by On Kawara. A friendly voice explained to me that she liked the project and that she was sorry for not replying to me, knowing about my previous attempts to get in touch with her. Didier said she was happy I called, and explained that she had promised On Kawara years ago never to publish any statements about him. For her, that included questions.

#### The Netherlands, November 2008

Relief came on 10 November: Thomas Rieger, of the Konrad Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf, Germany, sent his question. On Kawara had his first solo exhibitions in Europe at *Ausstellungen bei Konrad Fischer*. Since 1971 at least, the Konrad Fischer Gallery has been

working directly with On Kawara. Being the assistant director of this gallery, Rieger was one of the first to learn about my project. In summer 2008, he had promised to send me a question. But I had not heard from him in months, and I feared that I would never get the confirmation I was looking for. But it came:

"KNOWING THAT THE ARTIST WILL NOT ANSWER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS THERE'S STILL ONE DETAIL THAT OCCUPIES ME: WHY STOPPED THE ARTIST INSERTING NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS IN THE CARDBOARD BOXES OF HIS DATE PAINTINGS?"

And: Rieger gave me the artist's address in New York, a possibility to actually get in touch with On Kawara.

#### Dublin, Ireland, Winter 2009

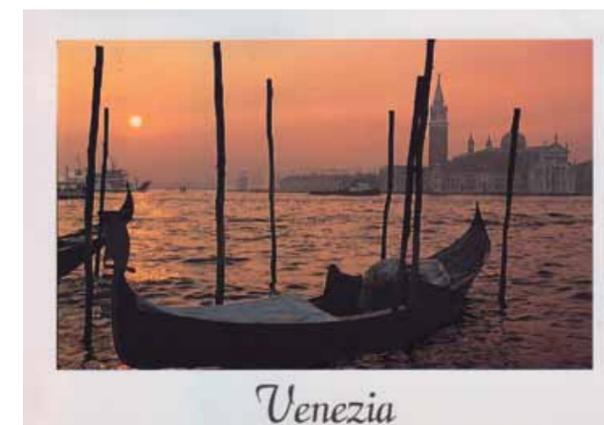
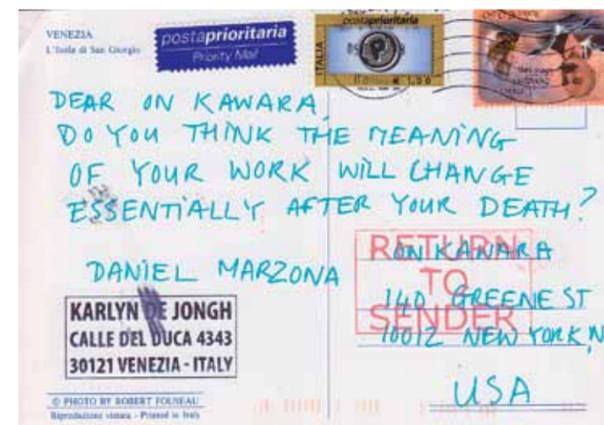
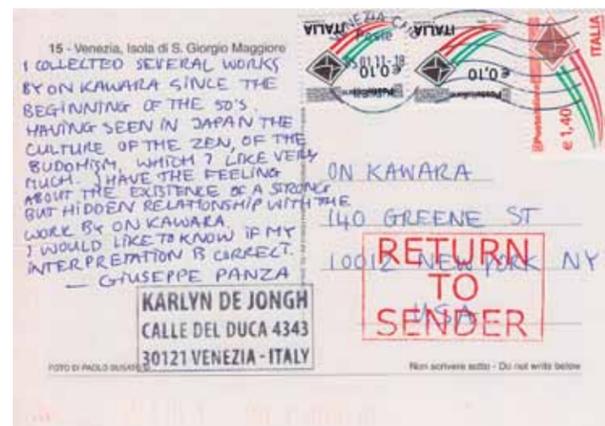
Contacting the Japanese was particularly interesting: the pachinko tunes or Viennese waltz music while waiting to get an English speaking person on the phone, the spelling of names: L or R, London or Red? But somehow it came to a result... At a time I did not expect to receive any questions at all anymore—all of December had been quiet and by now it was those days between Christmas and New Year's Eve—I got mail from Japan: a question from Fumihiko Tanifuji, curator of a collection that includes date paintings by 'On Kawahara'.

In the New Year, the flow of questions started again. At this time, Xavier Douroux responded to my request. A year had now passed since I had first contacted him; his name had already been on my very first list of people. More questions came in: from René Denizot, who has written several times about the artist since the early 1970s; Rüdiger Schöttle, On Kawara's gallerist in Munich; and Sheena Wagstaff at Tate Modern in London, UK, who sent a question instantly: "When exactly is now?"

#### Paris, France, January 2009

16 January 2009: together with Peter Lodermeier, I met Lee Ufan for an interview in Lee Ufan's studio. Early in the morning I left Dublin, to arrive in Paris in time for the encounter. It was my first time in Paris. And it was my first personal encounter with Lee Ufan.

The encounter was strange to me. We had asked Yuko Sakurai to join us as a translator, but still I could not really follow Lee Ufan. Around



the end of the interview Yuko asked Lee Ufan who his favorite artist is. Lee Ufan named On Kawara. From the smile on her face, I knew good news was coming my way. When Yuko translated her conversation into English, I knew I had to get Lee Ufan into my project!

I tried to explain my project to Lee Ufan and asked him, begged him, for a question. He smiled. He did not give me a question, not yet. Lee Ufan stated that On Kawara has a studio around the block, just a one-minute walk from his. We were all curious: Was On Kawara in Paris at the moment? Unfortunately not.

But Lee Ufan told us about how he often met On Kawara, that he really respects On Kawara, that they drink tea together and have discussions about art. I feared that Lee Ufan was avoiding my request... I tried to bring it to a point. Lee Ufan explained that he was sometimes also critical about On Kawara's art. Then came his question:

なぜ、数字を用いるのでしょうか。数字にこだわるのは、数字に信仰があると私は考えるのですが、温さんはどう思われますか。

The next day I was having breakfast in the café across my hotel, still perfectly happy from my encounter with Lee Ufan. I had taken my laptop in order to check my email. Daniel Marzona sent me his question for On Kawara on the day I met Lee Ufan: "Dear On Kawara, Do you think the meaning of your work will change essentially after your death?" It came with a message: "I wanted to wish you all the best with your project, which is one of the most exciting I have heard about in a while." This I considered to be a big compliment, coming from the director of the Konrad Fischer gallery in Berlin. I now had 58 questions in my pocket. I was getting closer to On Kawara.

#### Miami, USA, January & February 2009

A few days later I went back to Miami. Wanting to search for new names, I learned that the number of names seriously related to that of On Kawara is limited: there might be an end to the project. I kept in mind that there must be many people who, for whatever reason, I had failed to contact up to now, people who might be very close to On Kawara. And also, there had been others I had actually tried to contact, but who—at least at that point in time—were 'unreachable'. It seemed there were only relatively few people left who could still be asked for a question.

Be that as it may, there were still a few people left I really did want to ask. And so I contacted Harry Cooper from the National Gallery in Washington, USA, which has On Kawara's work *Title* from 1965 in its collection. And John Baldessari, who replied by sending me four questions. I could pick one of the following:

- Has any of your work taken the form of a question?
- Do you ever use spell check?
- Are you still alive?
- What's with the ionized air in the Kawara room at DIA Beacon?

The last day of my stay in Miami came; we would drive to New York. It was during this trip to New York that we came up with the idea to make more Art Projects, to create a series of special edition books: *PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS*.

#### New York, USA, February 2009

Sarah Gold and I went to New York for a week to make arrangements for our *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* symposium *SPACE* at the New Museum that would take place in early April. I considered passing by On Kawara's building, to see if he would be there. But it did not feel right; it was not the right time. I had only 69 questions at this point and there were still a few people I wanted to approach; it was too early to go to On Kawara.

#### Vienna, Austria, March 2009

At the beginning of March I left Dublin. I gave up my apartment and went to Vienna. I would stay there a few days until it was time to go back to New York again for the symposium in the New Museum. I did not have Internet access in my apartment, and was 'forced' to go to one of the Viennese coffee houses. Café Sperl, my favorite, was around the corner. I remember sitting in the middle of the over-crowded café and receiving a question from Olle Granath, director of the Moderne Museet during the time that On Kawara had his exhibition there in 1980 and got robbed on the streets of Stockholm, Sweden:

"Dear On, What exactly was the content of the chapter of your life being erased when you were robbed in Stockholm in connection with your exhibition at Moderna Museet in the beginning of the 1980's."

By the time I left Vienna for New York, I had a total of 75 questions. I was close. But with the symposium coming up, I did not have the time to go to Greene Street.

#### The Netherlands, April 2009

Upon my arrival in the Netherlands after the symposium, Sarah Gold contacted me. She had asked Georg Kargl, who believed he had a photograph of On Kawara buying a hat and Luca Beatrice whom she had met in Venice while I was in New York.

The collection was now reaching its 'ideal' number of 80 questions. At least to me, 77 was close enough to 80. And besides: I knew I could count on the one from Rene Rietmeyer, to whom I had promised that he could ask the last question. I knew he had his question ready and would send it whenever I needed it. And so, I booked a flight back to New York. This would be the moment; I would go to Greene Street and present my questions to On Kawara.

#### New York, USA, May 2009

Around the end of April, I arrived in New York: the time had come; it was the right moment to make an attempt to contact On Kawara. I knew from Thomas Rieger that On Kawara lives on Greene Street; it was the only information I had. To go to On Kawara's apartment was the only possibility for me to get in contact with him. It was 1 May 2009. It was almost exactly two years after the first question from Klaus Honnef, when I received Rietmeyer's question. I now had 78 questions for On Kawara.

In the meantime, I received phonetic 'translations' of the Japanese characters in a cross-over between an English and Dutch pronunciation, which—in the end—was—for me—sort of readable (someone did recognize it as Japanese when I was reading it out loud on the street). Lee Ufan:

"Nasee soe-chie-o mochie-iroe-noodee sjookaa. Soe-chienie kodawaroe-nowa, Soe-chienie shinkogaa aroetoo waatashiwa kanga-eroe-no-dessga, Onsanwa doo omowaremasska."

I practiced the Japanese. I bought a nice, furry microphone. I printed out my questions. And off I went. To On Kawara.

During that week, I went to On Kawara's apartment several times. From 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to SoHo. The first time in particular I was very nervous, mainly about the possibility of standing face-to-face with On Kawara. It was after a meeting with Richard Tuttle in Café Café, at the corner of Greene and Broome Street that I went for the first time.

It was Saturday morning. I was in the neighborhood and for me that meant I could not escape: I had to try.

After standing in front of his door reading my questions to him, I took my chance and rang On Kawara's doorbell: no one answered. Then, three days later, I tried another time. This time—what I assumed to be—On Kawara's wife was there and I spoke with her over the intercom. Again On Kawara was not at home. But at least he was in New York.

#### Greene Street, 7 May 2009

On my last day in New York, it was Thursday 7 May 2009, I had to do it; it was my last chance. I went to SoHo by subway. I walked across Greene Street, holding the questions in my one hand and my microphone in the other. As I approached his apartment building, an older Japanese man and woman crossed the street. They were walking together with a younger man, who was carrying suitcases. They got into the car and drove away. I am sure it was On Kawara. I realized that when I saw the number of the apartment house; the car was standing almost in front of it. Impossible that it could have been someone else.

I waited in front of On Kawara's house for nearly two hours, reading over my questions to him and trying the doorbell several times. No one answered and no one returned. I had missed him.

After I returned from New York, I don't remember the date, I got a nice surprise: I may have missed On Kawara, but Joseph Kosuth suddenly gave approval for the publication of his question.

(Venice, December 2009)

#### But the story continued:

In October 2009, we published the 79 Questions as the *Unanswered Questions* in our book *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE*. It was what I had been dreaming of since the start of the project in 2007. The pages in the book looked beautiful and I wanted to show them to On Kawara. Excited and with two freshly printed books under my arm, I took the plane to New York. Especially directly after the struggle to get the book printed before the deadline (the *Frankfurter Buchmesse* in Germany), it was wonderful to be in New



York, the sunny weather, life... Walking in the streets of New York, I remembered the previous times I had been there and how I then had just missed On Kawara. I did not think I would ever see him again, but a few days later, I thought I had a chance. When visiting the Museum of Modern Art, I saw the same woman again who I had seen with him in May. Did this mean that also On Kawara would be in New York? I passed by his apartment the next day, there was no sign of life.

#### London, UK, Fall 2009

I left the questions for what they were—unanswered—and in the weeks after, I worked on the text for this special edition. It was planned to be the first book in the series of *PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS* and I wanted to have it published before the opening of the exhibition we were organizing in Bregenz, Austria. We would exhibit the visual presentation I had made as part of this project (we had planned its creation earlier, summer 2008), and we had considered it to be a good idea to have the book ready then as well. It was a strange time for me, having just finished the book *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* and also the 'On Kawara' project was reaching its end. It was time for new projects, a.o. *LEE UFAN: ENCOUNTERS*. I went to London, to Lisson Gallery, for an Encounter with his work.

On 4 December, a friendly young woman showed me two Lee Ufan paintings in a warehouse on Bell Street. It was an intense encounter, Lee Ufan was on my mind. Before leaving the gallery, I noticed On Kawara's *Phaidon* book standing on a shelf behind the counter. I asked if I could have a look at it. I knew the book very well, but this time, it felt different to me. "He is a wonderful artist." I turned around. It was Nicholas Logsdail. I took the opportunity to tell him about the project and showed him the *Unanswered Questions* in the *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* book I had brought with me. He seemed to like them a lot and told me stories about some of the people that had asked a question. He asked whether I had ever met On Kawara and in return I told him about my "unlucky" encounter on Greene Street. Logsdail explained: if I wanted to meet On Kawara, I would have to do that soon. Apparently, On Kawara smokes several packs of cigarettes each day and is not in good health.

#### Bregenz, Austria, January 2010

In the first week of January I made a test version of my On Kawara book. I was in Bregenz at that time for the setup of the exhibition I



curated together with Sarah Gold. Two hours before the opening, the German printing company owner arrived. I was in the office space of the museum, when he came over to me and pointed to a light grey box lying on the table. It were the first eleven proofs of the *Unanswered Questions* special edition!

After long consideration, we decided to print the edition *Unanswered Questions* after publishing first a few other titles in the series *PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS*. We used the proofs as examples for future publications.

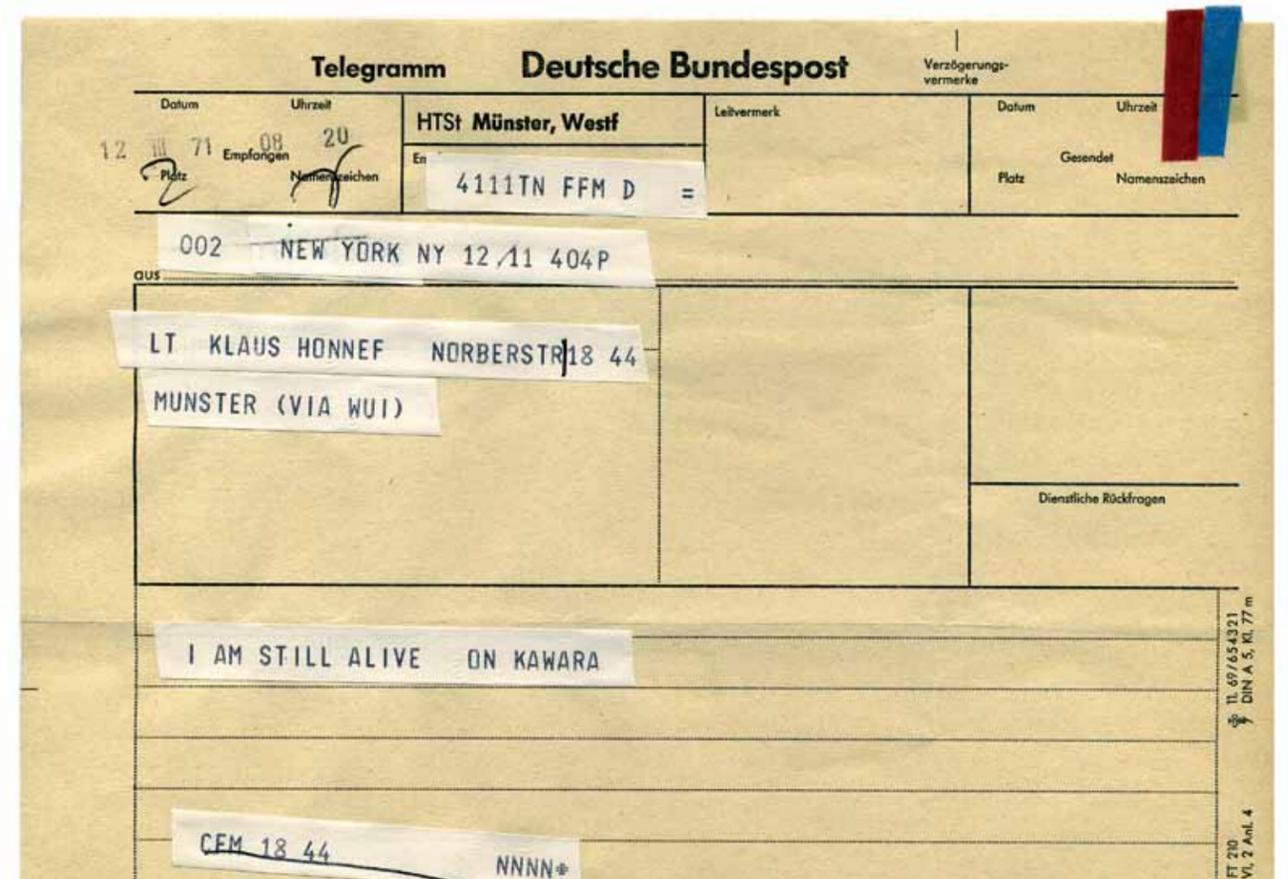
#### Venice, Italy, Fall 2010

Time passed. Sarah and I published two of our Art Projects and had decided to organize the exhibition *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* at the Venice Biennale 2011. When we were in the process of finding artists to participate, On Kawara came to the foreground again. Of course, it was our big dream to include On Kawara in this exhibition, showing a sign of life. Konrad Fischer Gallery in Germany was contacted and we heard that one of its directors, Daniel Marzona, was planning a visit to New York in November to meet On Kawara. I asked, begged if it would be possible to join him, telling it was my great wish to meet the artist and talk with him—if only for 5 minutes. Marzona welcomed me on his trip, but told me that his 'appointment' had not yet been confirmed. Since we had so many things to do in Venice, I decided to wait until there was a confirmation from On Kawara's wife.

The day came that Daniel Marzona went to New York, but still no sign of On Kawara. Apparently it had become very difficult to meet him. Nicholas Logsdail confirmed this in a telephone conversation later that month: On Kawara's physical state is critical and he does not want to see anybody anymore. According to Logsdail, Jonathan Watkins was one of the very few people who were still in contact with the artist—and even this was uncertain, he added. On Tuesday 23 November 2011, Sarah and I sent On Kawara an email: "Dear Mr On Kawara, *onegashimas...*" Maybe it was a little farfetched, but at least we tried.

#### Venice, Italy, January - April 2011

We did not hear from On Kawara, no sign of life. There seemed only one last possibility to reach On Kawara directly: postcards. I



I bought a whole bunch of them, 1 for each question plus another one for myself, my own question to On Kawara, and a few extra just in case some would get lost in the mail. On 5 January 2011, I posted all of them, at San Marco Square in Venice. In the months after, I received back the postcards I had sent to On Kawara. Stamped: Return to Sender.

In the meantime, also the Art Project with Roman Opalka had been published and it became time to print this special edition *ON KAWARA: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS*. In a last attempt to get a sign of life from On Kawara in this book, I contacted Jonathan Watkins. In a two-minute staccato telephone conversation, I explained him my dream and that he was my last hope to make this dream come true. He understood. I had to send him my request to his email address and he replied some days later. On 22 March 2011 he wrote:

"Dear Karlyn,  
I'll be in touch with On and get back to you as soon as possible.  
He will say no most probably, and of course that will signify he is still alive.  
With best wishes,  
Jonathan"

I appreciated his support very much and was full of hope. Would there still be a chance to hear from On Kawara? Two days later, on 24 March 2011, Watkins wrote again:

"Dear Karlyn,  
It's a 'no' I'm afraid.  
With best wishes,  
Jonathan"

At first, I was thrilled about the email. But did this 'no' come directly from On Kawara himself? I asked Watkins kindly for a confirmation. Until today, I did not hear from him anymore.

No answer.

(Venice, April 2011)

- 1 *On Kawara. 1973-One Year's Production*. Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland, 1973, p 5.
- 2 *On Kawara. Consciousness. Meditation. Watcher on the Hills*. Les Presses du Réel & IKON, France, 2002, p 7.
- 3 Charles Wylie, *Of Today*. In: Charles Wylie, Ervin Laszlo and Takefumi Matsui, *On Kawara. 10 Tableaux and 16,952 Pages*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2008, p 34.
- 4 Ulrich Wilmes in an email to the author on 29 April 2008.
- 5 Peter Lodermeier, Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold, *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE*, DuMont, Cologne, 2009
- 6 Jean-Marc Avrilla in an email to the author, on 11 December 2007.



## ARNULF RAINER UNFINISHED INTO DEATH

PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS #05

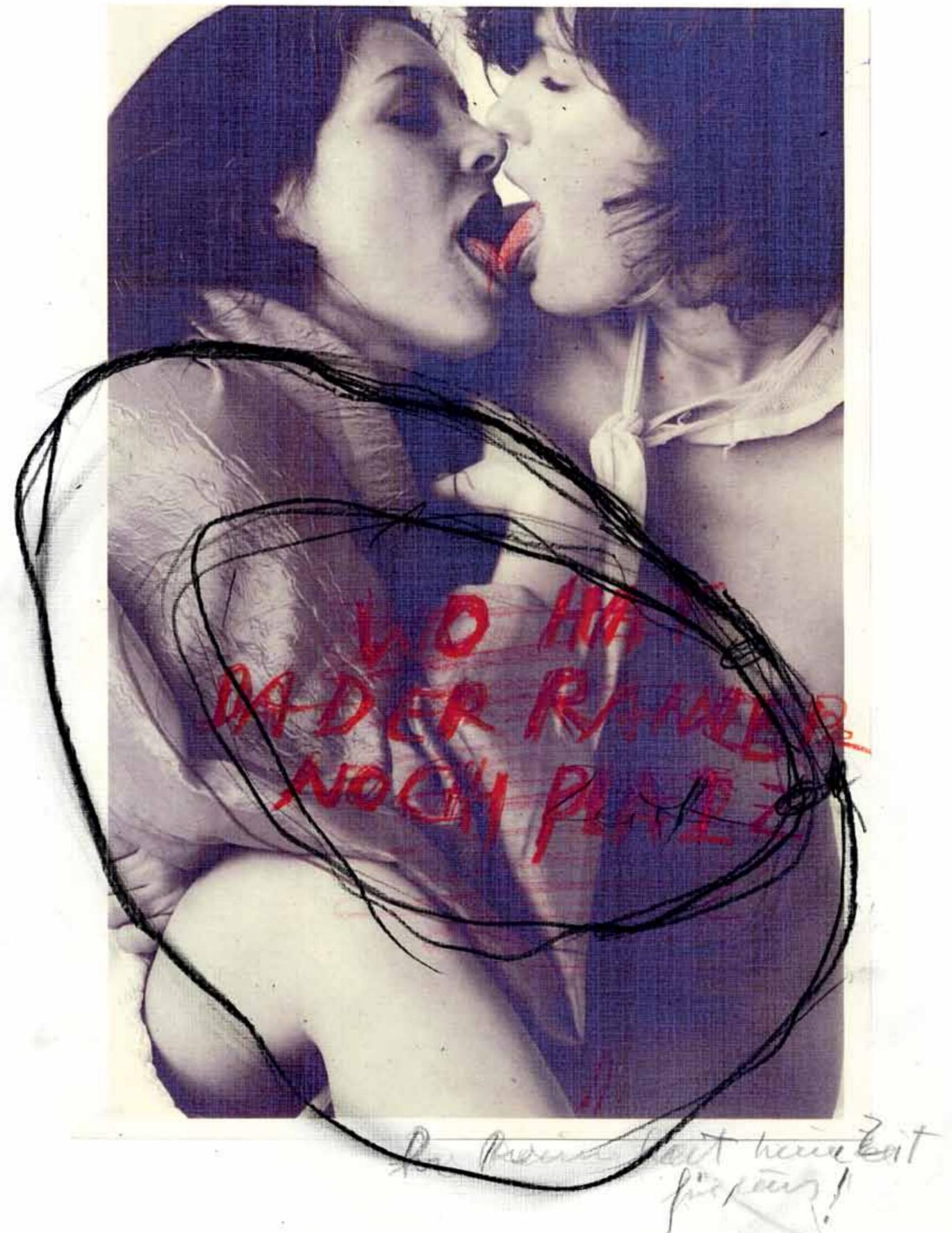
By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

Rainer's studio, Tenerife, Spain, January 2011–

This April 2013, it is more than two years ago that Sarah Gold and I, Karlyn De Jongh, started an Art Project with the artist Arnulf Rainer (\*1929, Baden, Austria). Since the 1950s, Rainer's work is characterized by over-painting: he uses existing images (paintings, photos or drawings of his own art or that of others) to work over, in order to make them "better". Besides his Crosses and Finger-paintings, Rainer became well-known with his *Face Farces*, a series he started in 1968. The *Face Farces* are black and white self-portraits—photographs that Rainer took late at night in a photo booth at a train station in Vienna—showing his face contorted in grimaces and his body twisted in uncomfortable poses. At home, Rainer then accentuated these photos by working over them with pen and chalk. Using his own body as a vehicle, these and other self-portraits seem to have been a way for him to explore human expressions. But, after several years of using his own face and body, he became tired of 'himself' and started using other images instead, other faces to work over. Two years ago, Sarah and I became two of these faces.

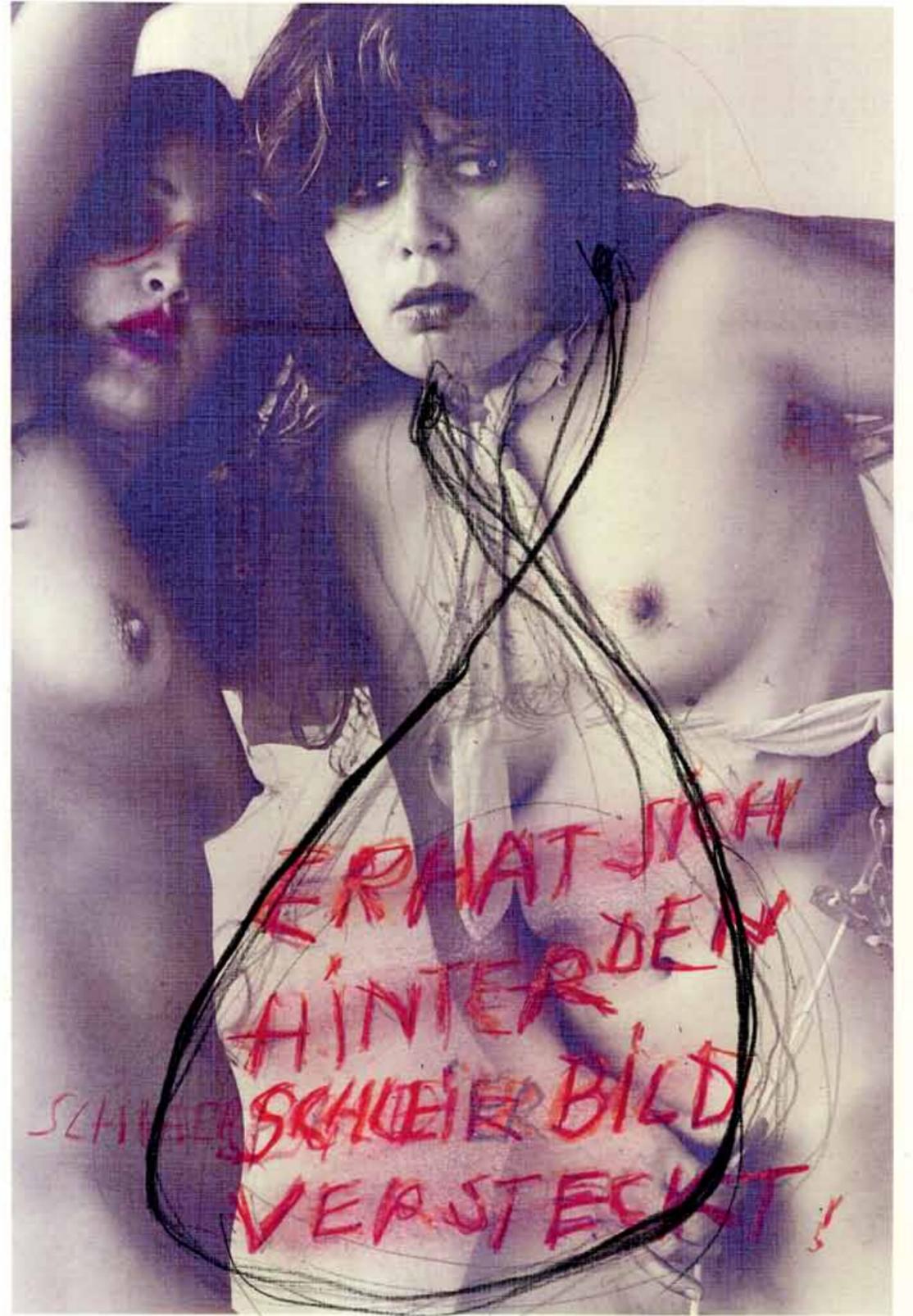
It began with our dream that Rainer would over-work one photo of us. We easily managed to convince him to consider including us in a series he was working on at that time in December 2010, called *Schleiertanz* [Veil Dance], and received his letter with initial 'instructions': you should dance in synchronized poses with a fishnet or other type of 'veil'. And so, we started dancing together naked on our bed, with a veil. After meeting Rainer on Tenerife, Spain, in January 2011, the situation changed. Rainer was very eager to learn, to develop himself and to challenge us in doing things we had never done before. We were a good match. Soon, the veil-dance photos were too boring for him. In his mind the project quickly transformed: from slapstick and belly dancers in Chinese negligees it turned into SM, bondage and later developed into series of angels, opera singers, masked gods and even a series of orgasms from Sarah and me. And it continues until today, with requests from Rainer that include itching powder, bondage and positions only done by highly skilled circus athletes.

In 2011, together with Rainer we decided to present the Art Project until where it was at that point in time. 100 works out of this series were published as a limited edition book, comprising 250 copies of which 50 DeLuxe and 50 DeLuxe H.C. Each item of this limited edition consists of a book and a DVD, showing Arnulf Rainer working in his Tenerife studio, in a case, housed together in a cassette. The DeLuxe edition is signed by the artist and additionally contains a photograph by Arnulf Rainer of Sarah and Karlyn, between plexiglass. A selection of 12 photos out of the erotic series was published by the Global Art Affairs Foundation as a limited edition, with a certificate of authenticity signed by the artist, presented together in a black linen bound box.





wo ist Rainer?  
wo ist er? wo ist er?



SCHNEIDER  
ERHAT SICH  
HINTER DEM  
SCHNEIDER BILD  
VERSTECKT!



## WOMEN, FIGHTING, HISSING (A SHORT CHRONOLOGY)

By Arnulf Rainer

Tenerife Spain, March 2011

Am I as an unworldly, hermit artist ever allowed to create series of works, when behind them may stand the whisperings of the devil?

After an automatic camera had been installed in my studio in Tenerife, and its background had been covered with white linen, so that you would perhaps be able to see blood and tears, the first séance began. A rival fight: "Ladies' Wrestling" and similar acts were planned. I had to be cinematographer, referee and story editor, all at the same time. I had, however, never attended a sports academy, and although I was a professor once, I did not know any duel tricks, nor various clandestine strategies and neither any possible danger for the referee.

Two young Dutch art historians were to compete, the lovable Sarah and the bolder, naughtier Karlyn, who knew each other much better than I knew them. They did not care about how I

had imagined this, and with loud screams they started attacking each other. We had pushed the room inventory to the side—only the old faded pink armchairs and an Italian iron bed with its accessories, we could not remove. The two ladies got into a wild foreplay. They pinched and bit each other, pulled each other's hair and then put on hair-nets. Half-naked, dressed in a kind of veil nightgown, they felt most free. Under the bed they had secretly hidden "Sado-Material".

I had the feeling that they were somehow attuned to each other. Could it be that they practiced more often at home?—Headlocks, knuckle crushing, tearing out body parts, etc.? At first everything went smoothly, as if it was rehearsed. So, I had to cheer them up. As a reaction, they were cursing in Dutch (at me, as I later learned). Karlyn's nose and chin were getting redder and redder—will blood be spilled now? Which of the two is scratching and choking harder? The camera shot one picture after the other. The automatic shutter responded quicker than I could see.

I suffered from this brutality. Karlyn stuffed some sort of ball in Sarah's mouth so that she could not talk to me anymore. Then she whispered something in her ear, both women focused on me and Karlyn pulled a rope out of a corner. It was the famous, Dutch three-mast-rope, with a kind of "devilish circle-sock structure", which is so very dangerous because it can wrap itself around your body like a snake.

I gave Sarah a red curtain to divert Karlyn, "the tall one", away from me like a bullfighter. But she then bound Sarah with one end of



the rope. The other end she threw over me like a lasso, tied me up and announced that she would now tickle me "to death" using the famous Chinese-Dutch torturing method. Sarah, however, bravely freed first herself and then me.

During the turmoil the camera had fallen, so no more pictures were taken. The tripod, however, was in my reaching distance. Although I was the referee, I could not blow the whistle for the end of the scene, because in the meantime "the tall one" had put a Venetian tennis-ball into my mouth. Now all I could do was swinging the tripod against her. It hit her on her back, down from the shoulders.

Right after that, we immediately started using our camera again. Sarah insisted on this photographic documentation. We started a new series. I now had the role of the beast; they played the Angels, "Angels in Négligée". For that, I put (self-painted) Dionysian masks on them, after which they positioned themselves or lay down as if they would give birth to a god.

Next, I proposed a series of "Sabbath of the Witches". Witches' brew was quickly taken care for. My terrace neighbor cultivates daturas, and the thorn-apples keep falling over and over again into my studio.

The women retreated and rubbed each other in. Karlyn was the first one to come out of the bathroom. She had the hypnotic, crazy, piercing look of a giraffe. Scared, I ran into my bedroom

and put on my cross-embroidered nightgown. That calmed her down and she began to softly and melodically sing lullabies. That moved me very much.

Meanwhile, Sarah was looking in every room for brooms, but found nothing. Frustrated they left me, kissed each other, before going up into the sky, flying into heaven.

Left alone, I watched the resulting film. Everything was just black. Next time we will have Rene join us, the photographer of darkness. Even if he has never taken snapshots of embracing angels before. Over time, we might be able to make it happen, to provoke these secrets from the sky. For a new series, of course. But what do angels do when they are not singing, flying or kissing each other?



## FRAUEN, RAUFEN, FAUCHEN (EINE KLEINE CHRONOLOGIE)

Von Arnulf Rainer

Teneriffa Spanien, März 2011

Darf man als weltabgewandter, eremitischer Künstler überhaupt Werk-Zyklen schaffen, wenn hinter ihnen die Einflüsterungen des Teufels stehen könnten?

Nachdem in meinem Atelier in Teneriffa eine automatische Kamera aufgestellt und der Hintergrund leinenweiss ausstaffiert war, damit man eventuell Blut und Tränen sehen konnte, begann die erste Séance. Ein Raufduell: „Damen Wrestling“ und Ähnliches war geplant. Ich sollte gleichzeitig Bildregisseur, Schiedsrichter und Dramaturg sein. Ich war zwar einmal Professor, hatte aber keine Sporthochschule besucht, kannte weder Duellantentricks noch diverse Hinterlisten, auch nicht eventuelle Gefahren für den Schiedsrichter.

Zwei junge holländische Kunsthistorikerinnen, die gutmütige Sarah und die frechere, schlimmere Karlyn, die sich gegenseitig

besser kannten als ich sie, traten an. Sie kümmerten sich nicht darum, wie ich mir das vorstellte, sondern gingen mit lautem Geschrei aufeinander los. Wir hatten das Zimmerinventar zur Seite gerückt,—nur die alten, rosa verblichenen Fauteuils und ein italienisches Eisenbett samt Zubehör konnten wir nicht entfernen. Die beiden Damen kamen in Anfangsfrage. Sie zwickten und bissten sich, zogen sich an den Haaren und setzten dann Haarnetze auf. Halb nackt in einer Art Schleiertunika fühlten sie sich am freiesten. Unter dem Bett hatten sie heimlich „Sado-Material“ versteckt.

Ich hatte das Gefühl, dass sie irgendwie aufeinander eingespielt waren. Übt sie vielleicht öfters zu Hause?—Schwitzkasten, Haxenrumpler, Gelenke ausdrehen, etc.? Zuerst lief alles vorsichtig und wie eingeübt. Ich musste sie also anfeuern. Daraufhin schimpften sie holländisch (auf mich, wie ich später erfuhr). Karlyns Nase und Kinn wurden immer röter,—wird jetzt Blut vergossen? Wer kratzt und würgt fester? Die Kamera schoss ein Bild nach dem anderen. Der automatische Auslöser reagierte schneller, als ich schauen konnte.

Ich litt unter dieser Brutalität. Karlyn stopfte Sarah eine Art Ball in den Mund, damit sie nicht mehr mit mir reden konnte, flüsterte ihr etwas ins Ohr, beide fixierten mich und Karlyn zog aus einer Ecke ein Seil hervor. Es war das berühmte holländische Dreimastentau, mit einer Art „teuflischer Ringelsockenstruktur“, das so gefährlich ist, weil es sich wie eine Schlange um jeden menschlichen Körper wickeln kann.



Ich gab Sarah einen roten Vorhang, um Karlyn, „die Lange“, wie ein Torero von mir abzulenken. Diese aber fesselte Sarah mit dem einen Ende des Taus. Das andere warf sie wie ein Lasso über mich, schnürte mich ein und kündigte mir an, mich jetzt durch die berühmte chinesisch-holländische Foltermethode „zu Tode“ zu kitzeln. Aber tapfer befreite Sarah zuerst sich und dann mich.

Die Kamera war im Tumult umgefallen, sodass es keine Fotos mehr gab. Das Stativ war aber in meiner Greifnähe. Als Schiedsrichter abpfeifen konnte ich die Szene nicht, da mir „die Lange“ inzwischen einen venezianischen Tennisball in den Mund steckte. Jetzt blieb mir nichts anderes übrig als das Stativ gegen sie zu schwingen. Es traf sie rückseitig, von den Schultern abwärts.

Gleich danach waren wir mit der Kamera wieder da. Sarah bestand auf der photographischen Dokumentation. Wir begannen eine neue Serie. Ich hatte jetzt die Rolle des Ungeheuers, sie spielten die Engel, „Engel in Négligées“. Dafür setzte ich ihnen aber (selbstgemalte) dionysische Masken auf, woraufhin sie sich so stellten bzw. legten, als würden sie einen Gott gebären.

Als nächstes schlug ich eine Serie „Hexensabbat“ vor. Hexengebräu war schnell angeschafft. Mein Terrassennachbar züchtet Stechäpfel, die immer wieder in mein Atelier fallen.

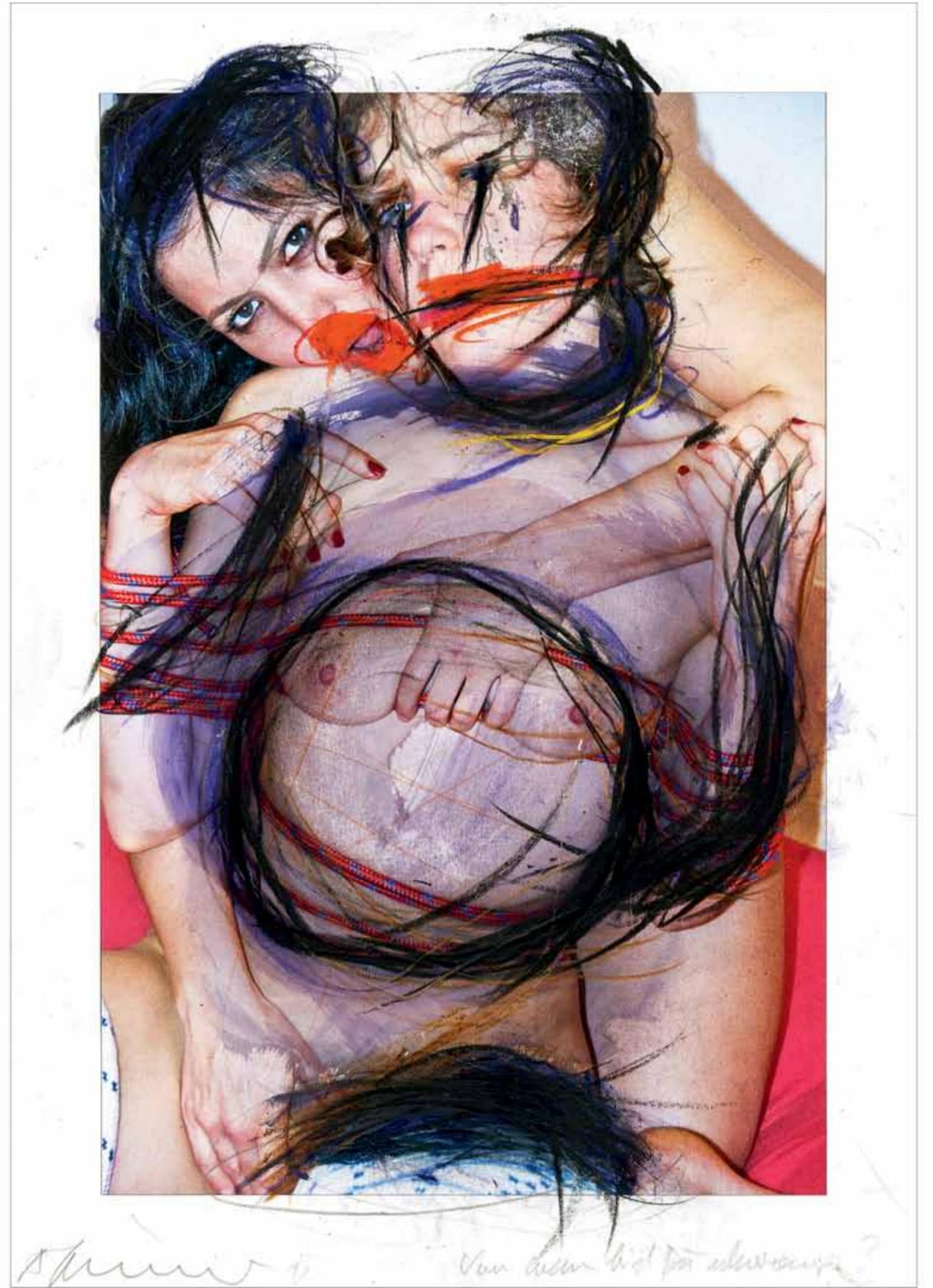
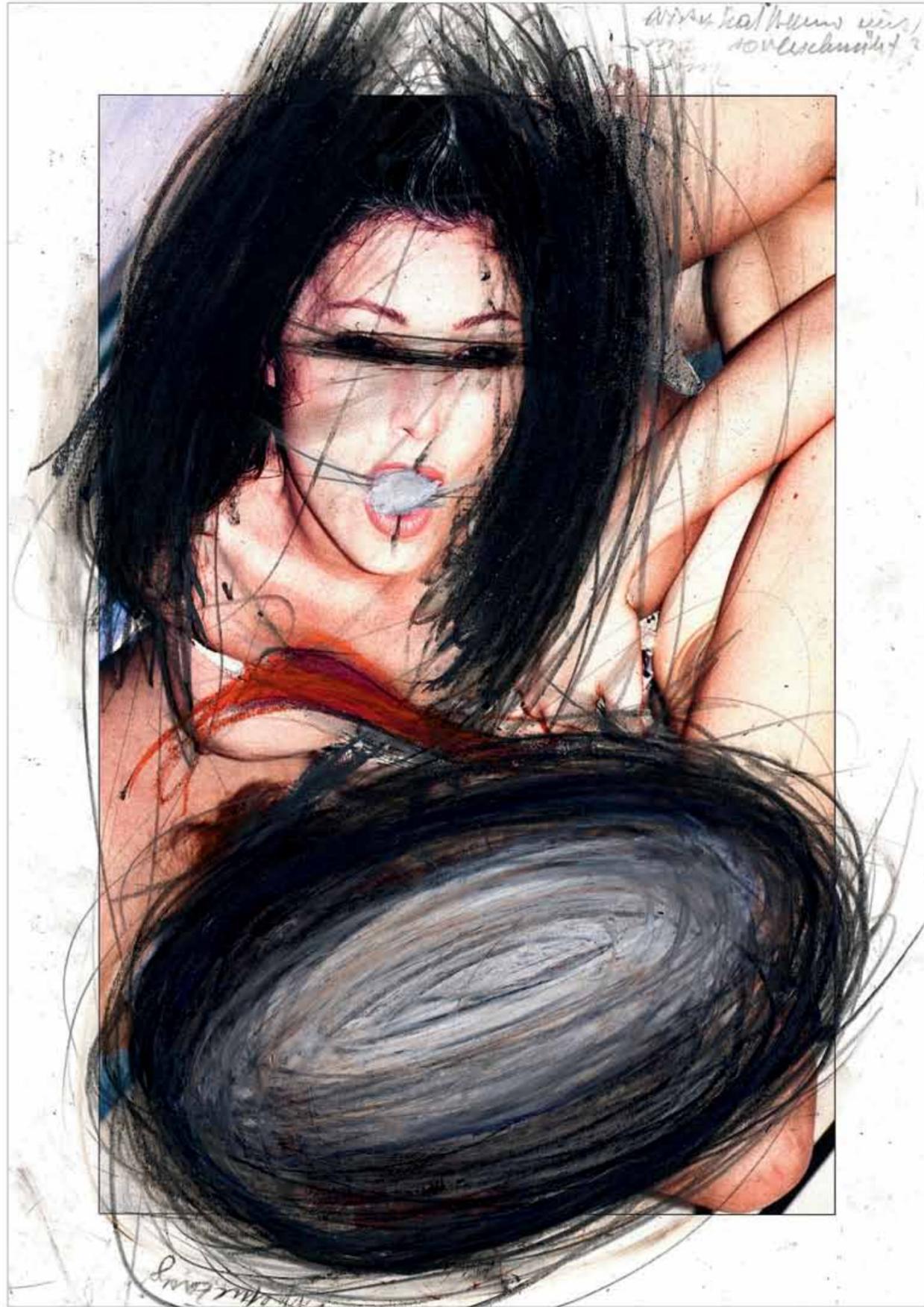
Die Damen zogen sich zurück und rieben sich damit ein. Karlyn kam als erste aus dem Bad. Sie hatte den hypnotisierenden, irren, stechenden Blick einer Giraffe. Ich rannte verängstigt ins

Schlafzimmer und zog mein kreuzbesticktes Nachthemd an. Das beruhigte sie, und sie begann leise und melodisch Wiegenlieder zu singen. Das rührte mich sehr.

Inzwischen suchte Sarah in jedem Raum nach Besen, fand aber nichts. Frustriert darüber verließen sie mich, küssten sich, um dann auf in die Luft, in den Himmel zu fliegen.

Allein gelassen sah ich mir den entstandenen Film an. Alles war nur schwarz. Nächstes Mal nehmen wir Rene, den Finsterphotographen dazu. Aber der hat noch nie umarmte Engel geknipst. Mit der Zeit schaffen wir es vielleicht, dem Himmel diese Geheimnisse zu entlocken. Natürlich für eine neue Serie. Aber was machen Engel, wenn sie nicht singen, fliegen oder sich küssen?

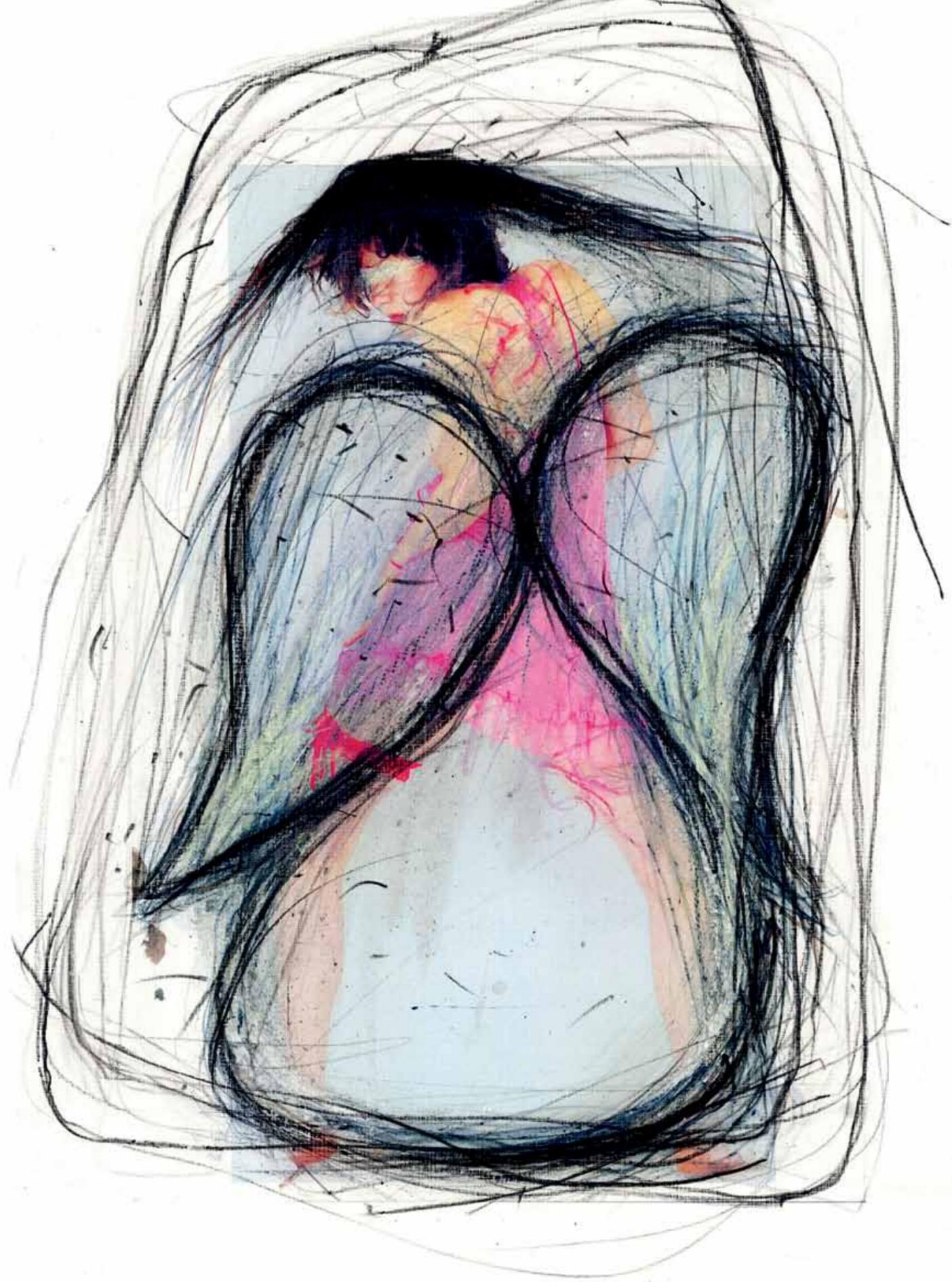




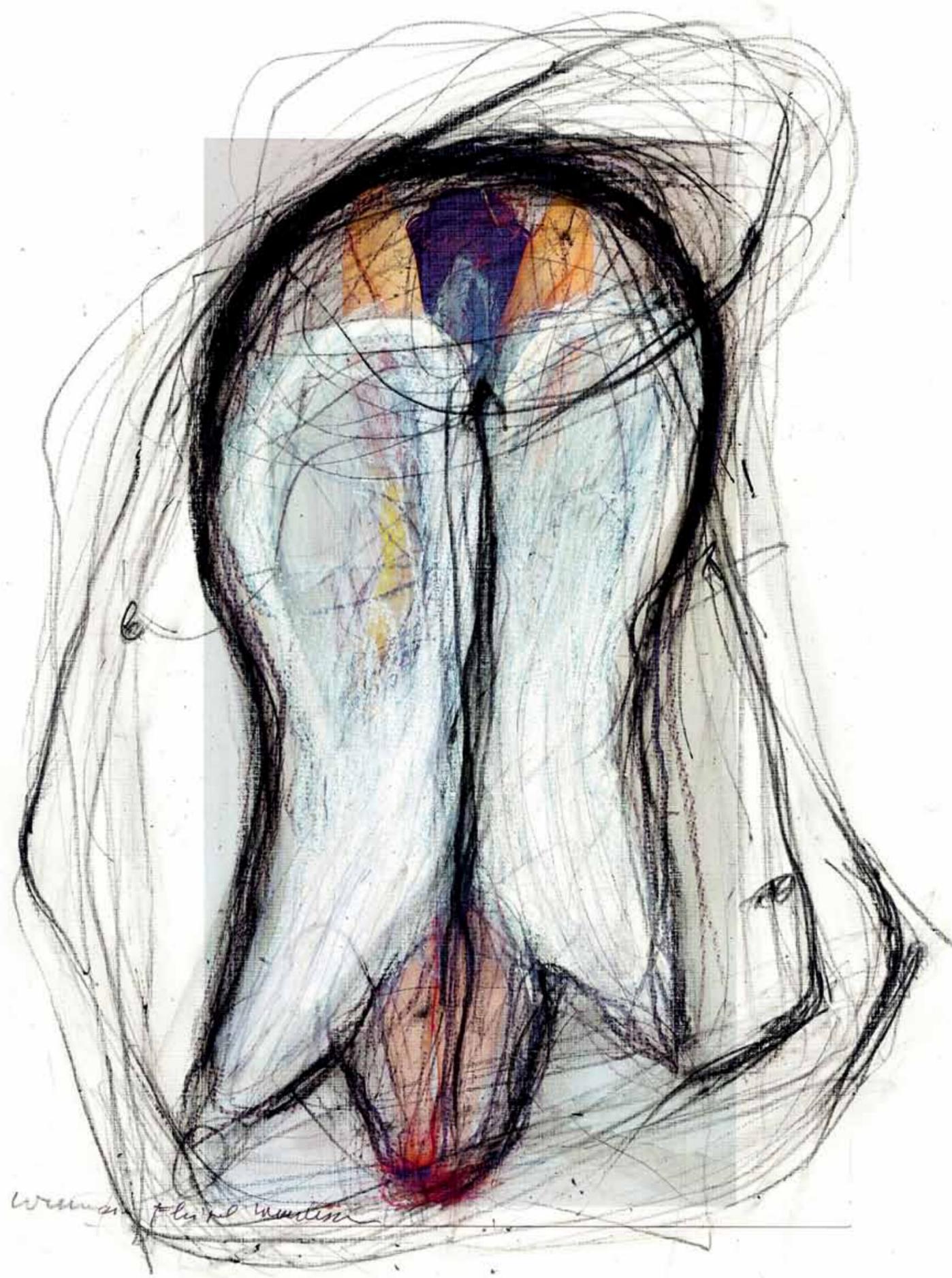
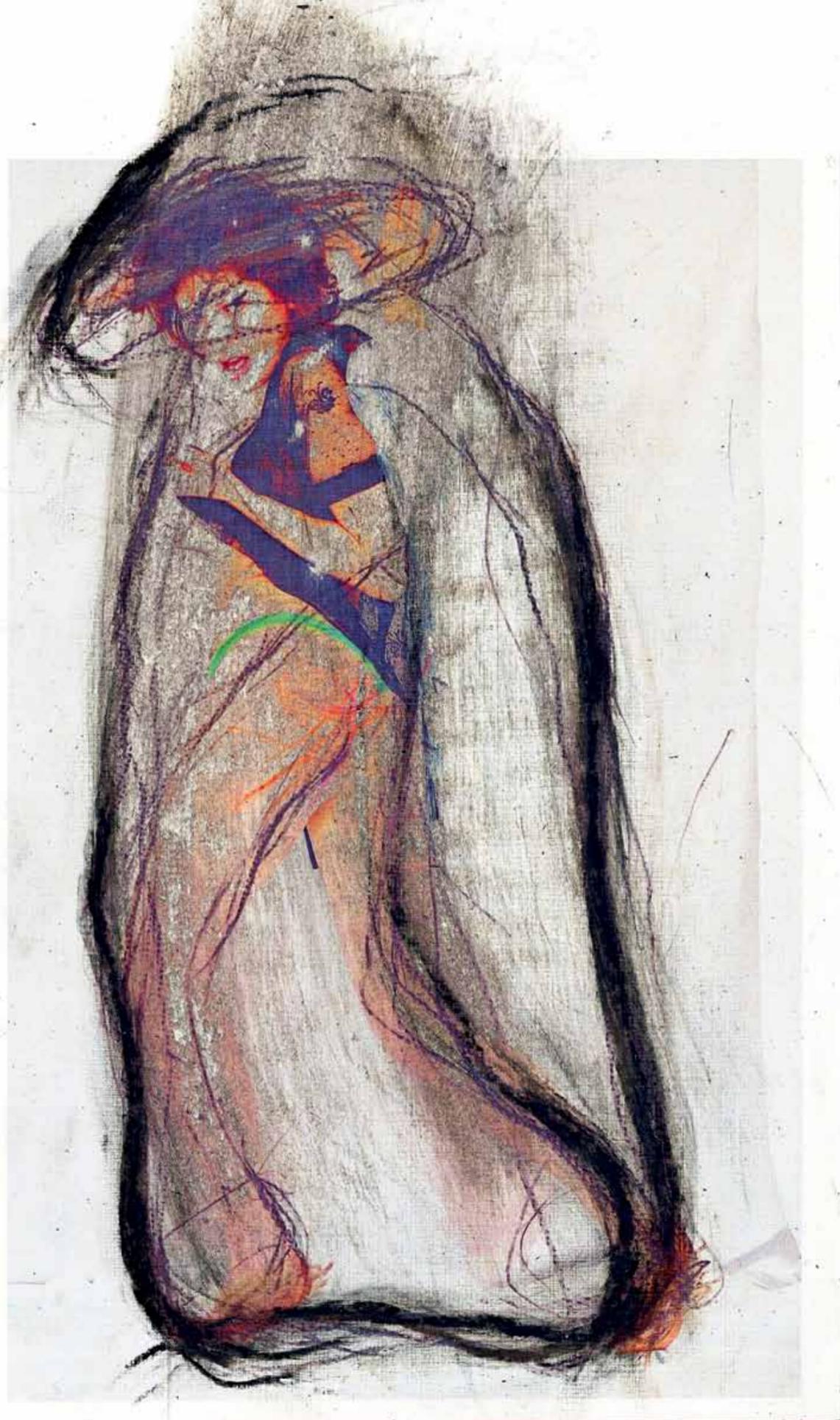
Noni sagt es so vor dir  
Fenster



Noni sagt es so vor dir  
Fenster



Engel im Neutheum



Woman's face in profile

Woman's face in profile



Rainier! Besorg mir meine Flitzel



Jetzt wird dich der Regen wein wickeln, dann bist du ein

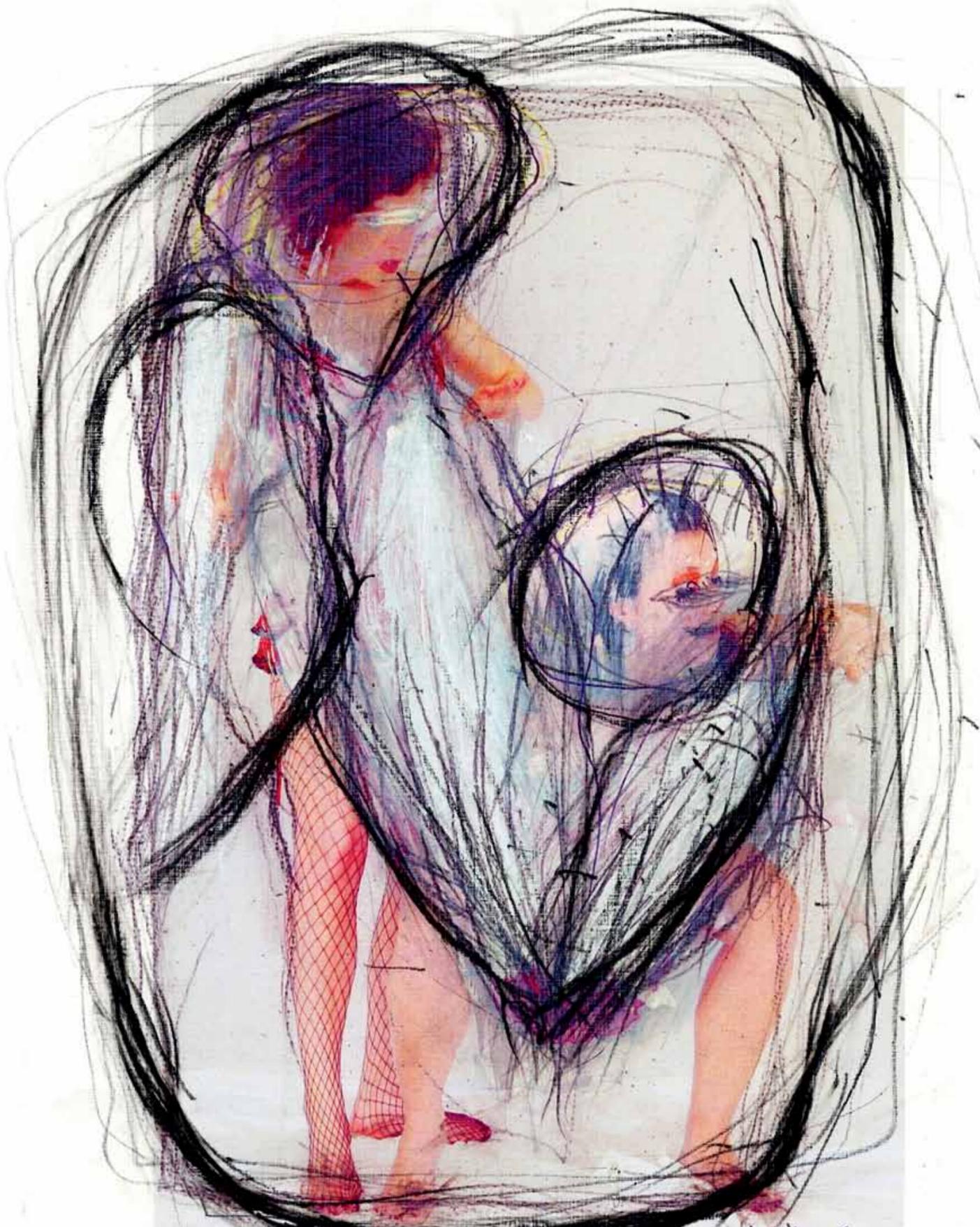
Bild und Text: sein Namen bleibt



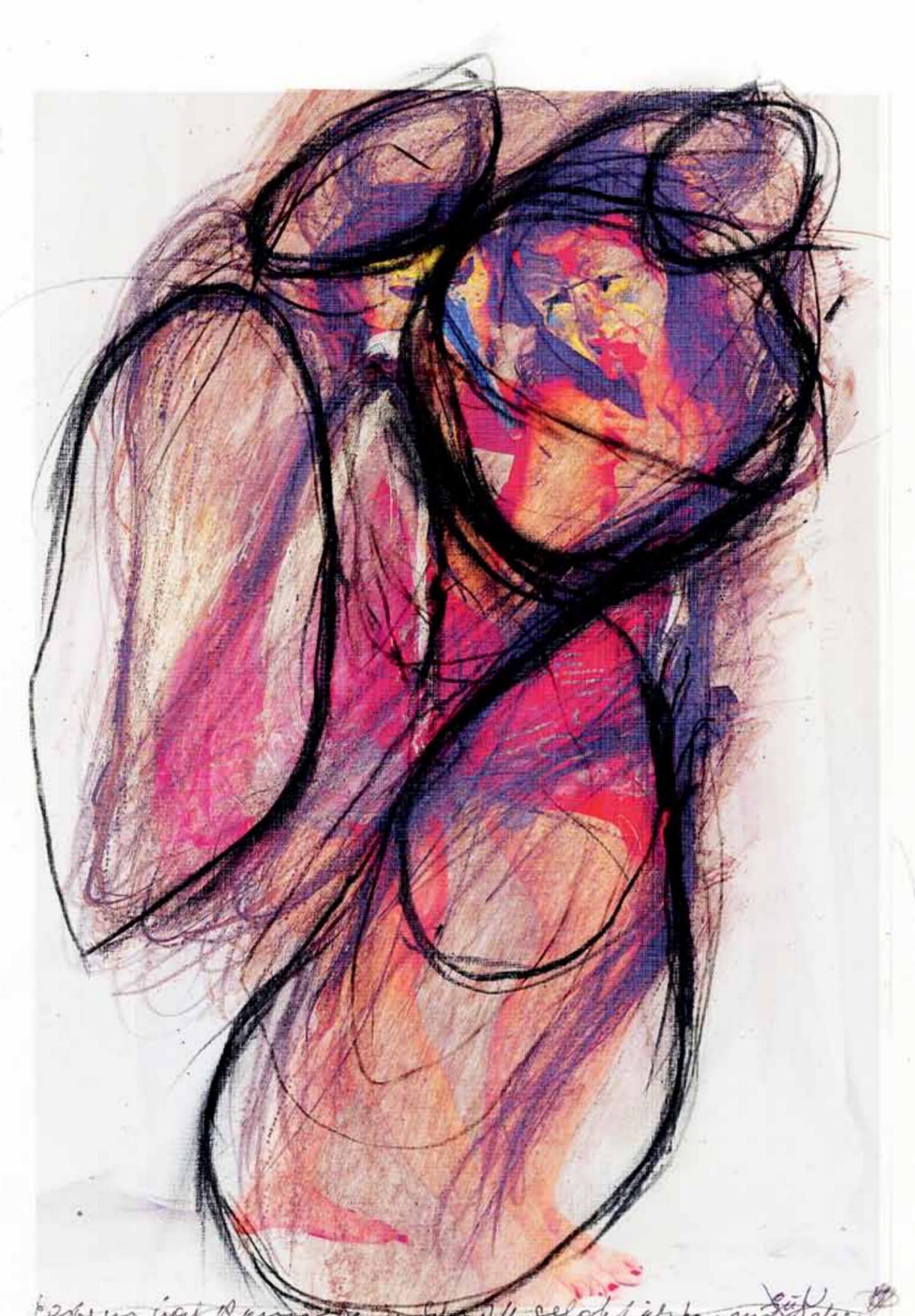
So hörte ich immer mit uns + du sein. Er schwankt immer.



angst  
 Keiner wollte uns als Dieb. Nur in Rot sagte ich  
 wir werden fallen <sup>angewacht</sup> sagt er



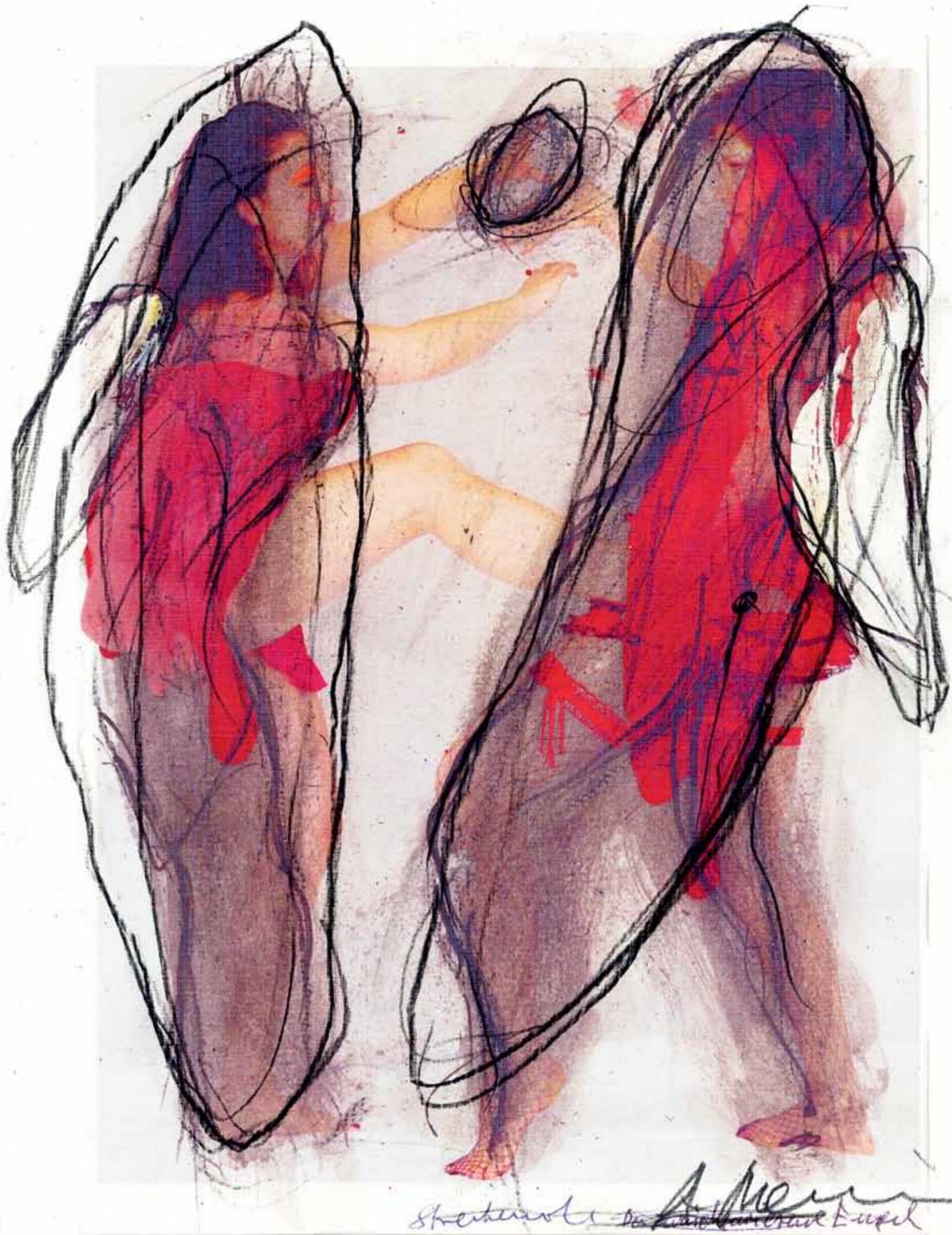
Proben wie zu zwei auf. Erst Flügel  
die



sehen ist dann eine Sicht selbst, als man sich sehen

Deine Nack trium Flügel aus Flügel

Statt zu fliegen, sehen man jetzt na den Körper  
mit seiner phän lange weicht et man alles aus  
von den von nie schauen, als wieder verstehen



Stehen vor dem Engel

wohin Engel mit mir den Ball balgen

20. November 1911



Wie ist das passiert? Jetzt sind wir beide schwanger!

# LEE UFAN ENCOUNTERS

## PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS #06

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

2007 - 2012



*Since their first encounter with Lee Ufan in Venice in September 2007, Sarah and Karlyn have had many different encounters with him: interviewing Lee Ufan in his studio in Paris, private viewings of his works in galleries in New York and London, transporting his works for their exhibition in Austria, publishing texts and assisting Lee Ufan in the set-up of his Venice Biennale installation. Living a life in art, experiencing "otherness".*

*LEE UFAN: ENCOUNTERS has been published as a limited edition. The edition comprises 250 copies of which 50 DeLuxe, numbered from 1 to 50, and 50 DeLuxe hors commerce, numbered from I to L. The 150 Standard copies are numbered from 51 to 200. Each item of this limited edition consists of a book and a DVD of Lee Ufan's installation at the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES as part of the Venice Biennale 2011 in a case, housed together in a cassette. The DeLuxe edition is signed by the artist and additionally contains a metal plate.*

### 28 JUNE – 30 JUNE 2007, VENICE, ITALY

#### SARAH GOLD

In the late afternoon of Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> of June in 2007 we arrived in Venice. This was the first time that I visited this city, and the tranquil, romantic feeling still accompanies my thought of that day.

The next morning the Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer, initiator of the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, and I had an appointment on the island next to Venice called Murano. Due to a previous meeting on an art fair in Austria, I had established contact to a glass factory who had invited Rene to speak about a possible cooperation. For most of the two days we were occupied in meetings, no time to see the city or visit the Biennale itself. But somewhere in those two days I think to have had my first encounter with Lee Ufan. I cannot recall the time or place, but I do believe to remember seeing the poster of his Biennale exhibition. Showing a large white canvas with a 'dark square', a boulder in front of the painting. Did the poster really look like that? Or did I imagine it all...

In hindsight I believe that this was the first time I met Lee Ufan. Little did I know that 5 years later I would be writing about this first encounter.

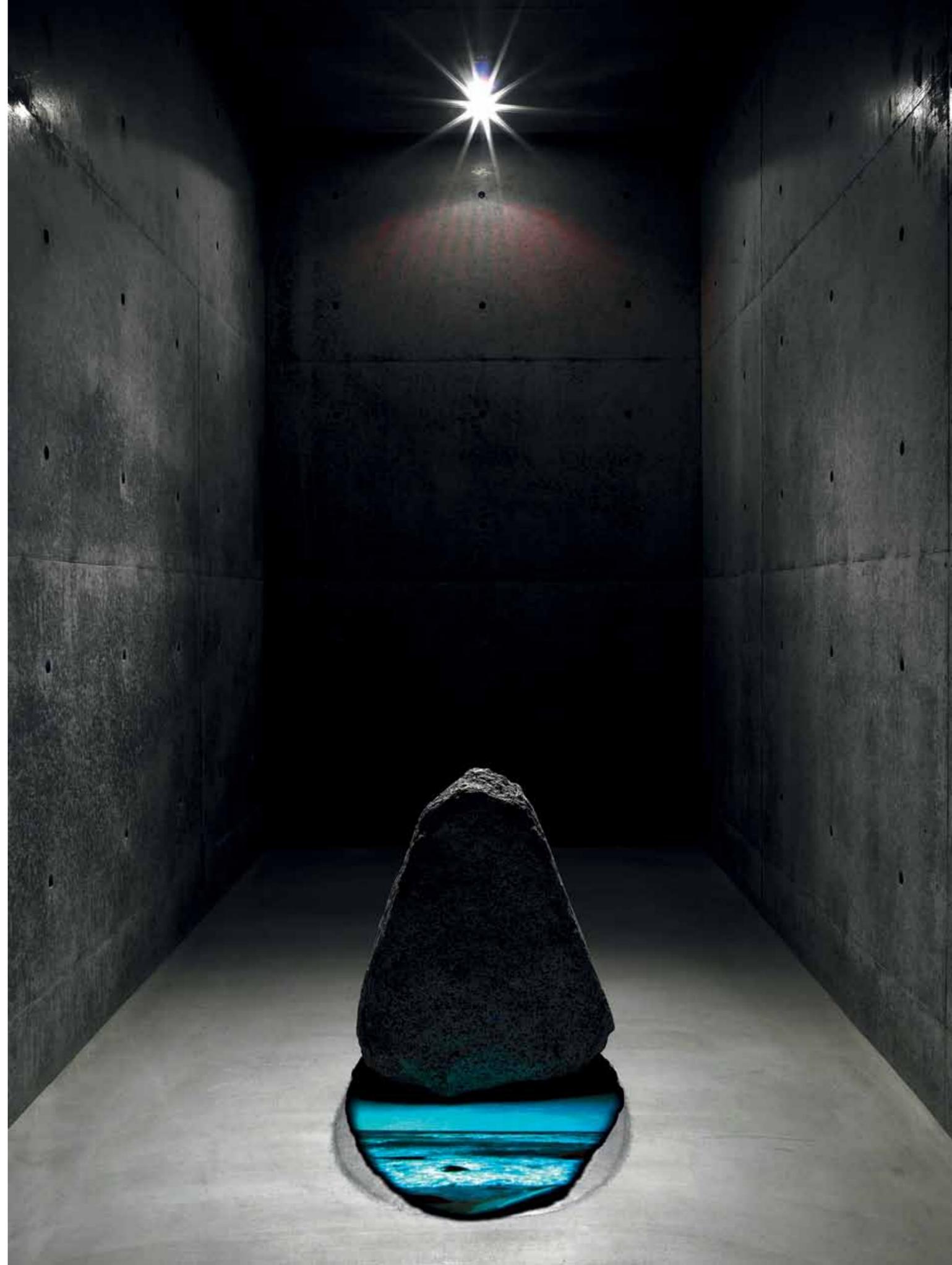
### 16 JANUARY 2009, LEE UFAN STUDIO, PARIS, FRANCE KARLYN DE JONGH

On 16 January 2009 was my first personal encounter with Lee Ufan. The meeting was at 3 o'clock at his studio on Boulevard de Clichy in Paris. I had a cheap Ryanair ticket and left my apartment in Dublin around 4.30am to catch my plane. A few hours later, I arrived at some airport far away from the center of Paris. It all did not matter: it was my first visit to Paris and I was very excited about this and at the same time having a chance to meet Lee Ufan—as well as Christian Boltanski a few days later.

When it was three minutes to 3pm, Peter Lodermeier, Yuko Sakurai and I walked over to Lee Ufan's door. Yuko who had joined us as a translator, had an access code of the main door that opened to a courtyard. At the end, at the right hand side, was Lee Ufan's studio. It looked very dark, as if no one was there. We knocked. No sound. Would Lee Ufan be at home? Then, after a few minutes, a tiny, fragile-looking man opened the door: Lee Ufan. It was a strange experience to suddenly see him in reality.

We greeted each other warmly, but not in what I knew as the Japanese greeting-ceremony: we got a handshake. Lee Ufan invited us in and made tea. In the meantime, we prepared for the interview: voice recorders and questions on the table, the correct position for taking photos. It was only a very small table, just a simple desk. I sat in the corner; Lodermeier opposite of me, so that Lee Ufan could sit between us. It was such a small space, that I could see a lot from this one position.

In the back was a bathroom; behind the other door seemed to be a small kitchen where Lee Ufan was preparing tea. I imagined his studio would be completely different, more something in the direction of





Antony Gormley's giant space in the north of London. This was humble, quiet and modest. Almost too modest for an artist whose paintings sell for approximately half a million Euro. It made me wonder about Lee Ufan's life.

From my chair, I looked at the paintings that were leaning against the walls—three walls were used for this purpose, the fourth had the entrance door and the table we were sitting on. There were several lined up. On the wall next to the entrance door, the painting on the front was facing us. It was beautiful, seeing a Lee Ufan painting in his own studio. From the paintings against the wall between the bathroom and the kitchen, I could only see the back side: *Dialogue*, with a year. And next to me were even more paintings until almost into the kitchen. High windows were above the little table, but not much light came in. Lee Ufan returned with tea, in what seemed to be Lee Ufan teacups.

Lodermeyer opened the conversation in a very nice way, very honest and direct, asking Lee Ufan about encounter and communicating through language. Soon it appeared that Lee Ufan did not want to answer in English. The question required a serious answer and Lee Ufan preferred to give it in Japanese. But his English was fine enough to understand our questions. So, whenever Lodermeyer or I said something, Lee Ufan replied in Japanese and Yuko translated his words. Of course, it was too much for now to translate everything Lee Ufan had said, in a few sentences she communicated what to her was the point of Lee Ufan's answer. The answers were quite different than what Peter and I discussed beforehand and what I 'expected'.

After one and a half hours, the interview was over. When we started packing our things, Lee Ufan left for a moment to the 'kitchen'. We took the opportunity to look around the studio, to the canvasses that were leaning against the wall. I was drawn to one of the paintings that was facing us. I had seen it when entering the space and during the interview I had been looking at it, because Lodermeyer had been

sitting in front of it. After some time, Lee Ufan returned with three catalogues. It was the book that I saw lying in the Biennale bookshop at the Giardini last year and could not afford to buy. Now I got the book from Lee Ufan himself. I asked him for a signature. He sat down and took his time. He was quiet during the signing. Mine, he signed in Roman letters; Yuko's catalogue, in Japanese.

When he had finished, we exchanged business cards and spoke about our project *PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE* (2009). We showed him the preliminary cover of the book. It was nice to see how Lee Ufan carefully checked all the names, pointing to some that he did not know, from others—quite many—he said they are his friends. A little later, he showed us his brushes and told us about the grinding of stones to make pigment. I was happy to be there together with Lee Ufan, Yuko and Lodermeyer in Lee Ufan's studio. It was great sharing time together. But unfortunately, it was time to go.

Feeling full and empty at the same time, we left Lee Ufan. The three of us walked next to each other without saying a word. Although I did not know what to say, I did not want to be alone either. It must have been around 5 o'clock and we decided to go for a drink together in another part of Paris. I was exhausted. It was one of these moments where I had been looking forward to and experienced with great pleasure, but at the same time had to give my maximum to endure a good conversation with Lee Ufan and to contribute in making it a success. Now it had come to an end.

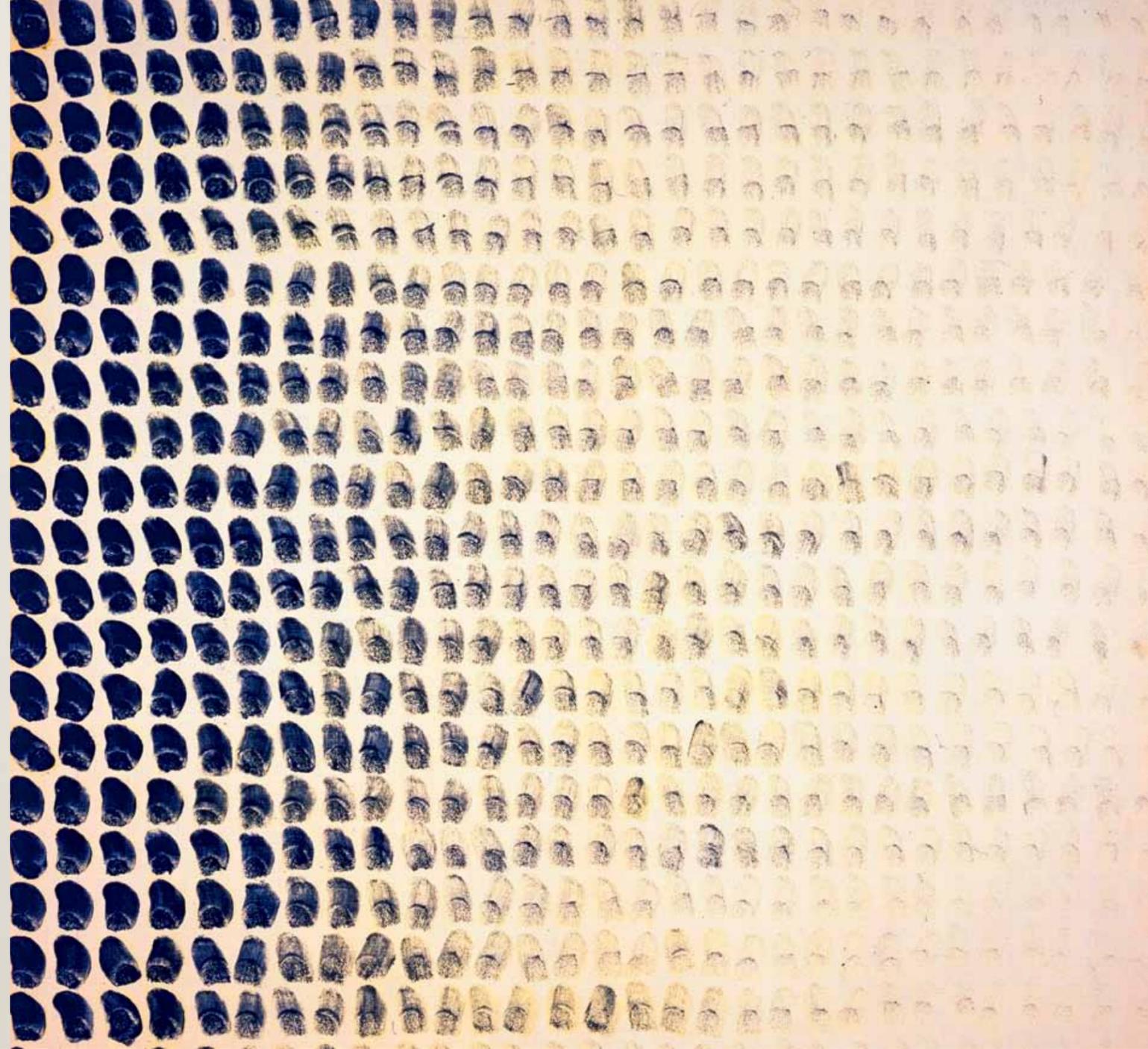
We found a nice café close to the Centre Pompidou. At a certain moment, the conversation broke loose again and for hours we discussed everything that had happened. Together we tried understanding what Lee Ufan told us about his work. It was interesting to see: Three people, experiencing the same situation together, but all having a very different view. Again, a real encounter.

**4 JUNE 2009, PALAZZO CAVALLI FRANCHETTI, VENICE, ITALY  
KARLYN DE JONGH**

It were the opening days of the Venice Biennale. It were busy times, with so many artists now in our 'home town' that we took every opportunity to meet as many as possible and take as much out of them for our project—photos, interviews etc. We had also planned a symposium in Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, next to Academia Bridge. The speakers were fantastic, especially Marina Abramović. To sit next to this power-woman and be able to ask her questions, was very special.

After the symposium, there was a reception going on in the garden of the Palazzo. The reception was mainly planned for the visitors to the Glass exhibition that was at the first floor. We ate and drank something in the garden, where a work by Dan Graham was prominently placed in the grass. For the interview section in our book, we still needed an introduction photo and the idea was born to have our photograph taken in the installation. Lodermeyer and I stood inside, talking about Liam Gillick who I was supposed to meet that evening at the opening of the German Pavilion. Sarah stood outside. When we were done, we collected our voice recordings and finished everything properly in the Palazzo. At 4:10pm, we wanted to go home.





The Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer and Sarah waited at the exit, while I picked up some bags that we left lying in the garden. I squatted to pick up my bag from the floor... Still halfway between squatting and standing, I looked up. All of a sudden, I was face to face with Lee Ufan. We bowed and shook hands. I was a little confused by this sudden encounter, but we greeted each other heartily. To my surprise, he now spoke English. It was the first time I had a direct conversation with him, without an interpreter. We chatted about his schedule for the next few days, about the weather, about where he was staying and fixed the appointment we had already planned for the following morning: 9.40am at Hotel Monaco. Although it was a spontaneous and pleasant atmosphere, I do believe that I popped back into the

behavior that I had learned in Japan. Soft and with the Japanese politeness, we spoke. Sarah and Rene came to check what was going on. They had never met Lee Ufan and did not know what he looked like. Then Lee Ufan greeted with reserve.

After a few minutes, we said goodbye. Lee Ufan was with a very beautiful Asian woman and they had to leave. Because I had already scheduled an appointment with Lee Ufan for the next morning, this felt like an 'extra'. To just meet Lee Ufan in Venice, was very special.

Slowly, we walked to the front entrance of the Palazzo and stayed there some time, discussing the schedule for the rest of the day. We had the opening of Rene's Biennale exhibition, I had to meet

Liam Gillick and at a certain point we were supposed to visit Joseph Kosuth. Peter Halley also called for an appointment and there were other meetings regarding our symposium that was planned for the next day, with Anish Kapoor, Roman Opalka and Tatsuo Miyajima.

We were in the middle of this discussion, when—fifteen minutes after we had said goodbye—Lee Ufan returned. We all became quiet, instantly. Lee Ufan now came from the side entrance of the Palazzo, where there is a nice cast-iron gate. It looked as if he was lost and did not seem to realize that we were standing there. Rather he focused on some people who were installing a sculpture, unwrapping it and

taking it off a pallet. He seemed intrigued by this spectacle and circled around it for a few minutes. Then he walked away through the fence.

**5 JUNE 2009, HOTEL MONACO, VENICE, ITALY  
KARLYN DE JONGH**

Around 8am, Yuko Sakurai and I left our apartment in Murano to be in time for our meeting with Lee Ufan. Before 9.40am we were in Hotel Monaco, close to San Marco Square in Venice. It was only a short meeting, maximum ten minutes. Lee Ufan had answered my questions—the ones I made in London, a few days earlier. We would meet to pick up the paper with his handwritten answers. We were early and waited in the lobby for his arrival.

It was interesting to see Lee Ufan again, when he came walking in the lobby: this fragile-looking Asian body in a big, quite modern space. Especially after having seen him the day before and having so many meetings with other artists myself, it almost became 'normal' to pay him a quick visit.

When Lee Ufan came, he immediately apologized saying that he had another meeting right after. He gave Yuko the little yellow paper with Japanese characters on it, saying something to her that I could not understand. I watched Lee Ufan while they were speaking. He seemed tired. I thanked Lee Ufan for taking the time to answer my questions. We continued chatting about his program for today, while Yuko took some photos of us and portraits of Lee Ufan alone.

**6 JANUARY 2010, LEE UFAN STUDIO, PARIS, FRANCE**  
**SARAH GOLD**

For our upcoming PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition at the Künstlerhaus in Bregenz, Austria we decided that we would like to include a work by Lee Ufan. We arranged that this would be possible and because Lee Ufan was not there at that moment, we had to meet with his assistant Mr. Moon. The studio of Lee Ufan is close to the Moulin Rouge and driving there with a rental bus and little parking possibilities, I remember feeling to come alive; *real life*.

Because the work was not crated, Rene Rietmeyer had constructed a wooden frame, in order to place the large canvas inside. Until now, I had never seen any work by Lee Ufan in reality. All I knew was that the work was called *Dialogue*, which had been created in 2007 and the measurements were 227 x 182 cm. After calling Mr. Moon on his mobile he opened the big gate and we entered the courtyard.

The mysterious Mr. Moon turned out to be a friendly Korean man, maybe late thirties, early forties; he did not speak English, but could speak French with Rene. He guided us through the courtyard, to the right side of a building. When we entered, I could see to the left, in front and to the right, probably around thirty paintings leaning against the walls of the studio. They were looking at me as to communicate, "Take me with you", but without being unhappy with their present location. What paintings: they conveyed curiosity, tranquility, stability and presents all in one. We took off our shoes and got given slippers, which were in abundance—as if awaiting a lot of guests—on the left of the door you entered the space.

Now, the moment of truth had come. Mr. Moon pointed to *Dialogue* and *Dialogue* looked huge. My worries about the frame being too small were steering up. We lay the transport frame on the floor, took the painting which we had packed before with special foam and carefully but without hesitation, placed it into the wooden structure. It fitted perfectly; what a relief! We handled the further packing very clean and finished with the paperwork, the famous *loan forms*.

**6 JANUARY 2010, LEE UFAN STUDIO, PARIS, FRANCE**  
**KARLYN DE JONGH**

On 15 January 2010 would be the opening of our exhibition in Bregenz, Austria. It was planned as a test for our Venice Biennale exhibition one year later, in 2011. Sarah and I had never organized a large exhibition

before and since we expected that in Bregenz there would anyway not be many visitors, it was a good start, where nothing could go wrong. It was large, though, with 27 participating artists and 700m2 to fill. It were interesting times, we had just published our book and now trying pay back the money we owed to the printing company as well as starting new projects.

The budget for the exhibition was very limited and we had little time to organize it, four weeks, which included Christmas and New Year. Through the contacts we had build up thanks to our book, we could easily call up some artists: Giuseppe Penone, Lawrence Weiner, Arnulf Rainer... Lee Ufan was also part. I was excited about the presence of Lee Ufan's work in our own exhibition and a possible new encounter. Lee Ufan's assistant, Mr Moon, handled the affairs.

For different reasons, we decided to do the transportation ourselves, in the sense that we would actually drive 3000km to pick up most of the artworks. We rented a Hertz bus and made a little tour through Europe.

On 6 January we drove to Paris to meet Mr Moon and pick up a painting at Lee Ufan's studio on Boulevard De Clichy. There was a lot of traffic in Lee Ufan's street and it was difficult to find a good parking space. After a few rounds around the block, we stopped at the gas station near Lee Ufan's studio. Mr Moon was already waiting for us. He was smoking a cigarette in front of the door to Lee Ufan's studio. Rene stayed inside; Sarah and I got out of the bus to greet him.

Mr Moon took me to the studio to show me Lee Ufan's painting. The interview had made such an impression on me that I could still draw the space in my head. To actually be there again, was like coming home, in the sense that everything had a history and felt very much part of my life. The paintings leaning against the wall, the table we had been sitting at, the posters on the wall, the little kitchen in the back... At the same time, I knew that it was only my perception. The feeling of familiarity I had, depended only on one meeting and Lee Ufan might not even remember me.

Mr Moon showed me the painting. It was beautiful. An immaculate white surface with one brushstroke approximately in the center. In my best French, I asked Mr Moon if he could help us with the front door, so that Rene could drive the bus into the courtyard. Luckily, he understood and he rushed away from me. I followed—carefully, because it had been snowing. He opened the doors to the courtyard, but the bus could not go through. It was too wide. While Rene parked our bus opposite Lee Ufan's studio on the other side of the green park that divides the two lanes, Mr. Moon and I went back into the studio. Sarah waited outside. Now, I was alone with Mr. Moon. With hands and feet and in a combination of French and Italian, I tried communicating with him. From what I could detect, Mr. Moon, a Korean, did not seem to speak French very well either. But we seemed to do fine together.

From what I understood, Mr. Moon was already 10 years working with Lee Ufan, as his assistant. He arranges everything for him in Paris. With a smile on his face, he told me about a secret studio that Lee Ufan uses to 'make' his sculptures and where he himself works as a sculptor. I wanted to tell him how special it was for me to be





here again. By pointing to the little desk in the corner, I told Mr. Moon that one year ago I sat there during an interview. He smiled. A second later, Sarah and Rene entered the studio. Rene introduced himself and asked Mr. Moon about his name. With his finger, he pointed at his face and made a circle: moon-face!

We packed the painting in a frame that Rene had built especially. It went very easy. Together, we brought the work to our bus. Mr. Moon and Rene carrying the painting; Sarah and I stopping cars, so that the others could quickly pass. Over the street, crossing the little park to where our bus was standing. We attached the painting to the side of the bus. After Mr. Moon signed the loan form, we drove off. There we went, through the heart of Paris, over the Champs Elyses in our Hertz bus with a painting of quarter of a million chattering in the back.

**4 FEBRUARY 2010, KÜNSTLERHAUS BREGENZ, AUSTRIA  
KARLYN DE JONGH**

After the opening of our exhibition in Bregenz and some meetings that we had there, we went to the Netherlands, where Sarah and I would have the 24-hour meeting with Lawrence Weiner for the first book in this series of PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS. We rented a holiday home in a park close to Amsterdam, where we prepared questions for Weiner. It was a highlight, to be with Weiner on his houseboat on the coldest day of the year... On the way back to Venice, we were supposed to meet Gotthard Graubner at the opening of his exhibition in the Kunstmuseum

Liechtenstein in Vaduz that evening on 4 February. Because we were early, we decided to pass by our own exhibition in Bregenz to take some photos for future publications, and besides: it was a perfect excuse for another encounter with Lee Ufan.

Rene took photos from me in front of Lee Ufan's painting. It was interesting to encounter the painting in this way, to me it made a difference that Rene was not only present, but was taking photos of me as well. It was beautiful to see the work again, but although I felt it was a part of me, I could not get close. The painting felt familiar and like a stranger at the same time. It was like seeing an acquaintance after many years: you have a shared past and know a little bit about each other, but were never close.

The presence of the camera did make a difference. Much more than the previous encounters, I became aware of my own body, my position in the space and my position with regard to Lee Ufan's painting. There have been many photos taken of me and I am used to it. With clothes on, I was usually not insecure about my body, but this time I did not feel at ease. I could not concentrate on the painting as much as I would have liked to. I heard the camera clicking and felt my own body. I felt very aware of it: the space my body was taking in and the 'empty' space around it as well as the other 'bodies' in the room. In comparison to my encounter of 16 January, this was a very physical experience. How am I standing? Where am I standing? Where is Lee Ufan? And the camera? How is the camera seeing me in relation to Lee Ufan?

It was as if the camera was spying on me—indeed, it was as if Rene had disappeared and only the camera was left. It felt like an intrusion, as if someone was coming very close to me, without my 'approval'. This may sound very strange, especially coming from someone who has no secrets. But what I try to make clear is that for me the encounter was so intimate, that—at that time—the camera was too much for me. It changed the situation. It made the encounter look 'staged', not 'real'. Plus: it was as if the viewpoint had shifted away from my body to that of the camera. I felt being watched. Of course, I was encountering the camera too, but not in the same proportion as he was 'seeing' me. It felt like an unequal relationship in which the camera was only 'taking'; I was more 'being looked at' than actively 'looking' myself.

Despite this awareness of my own body in the space and the feeling of being watched, it was still relatively easy to be absorbed in the painting. It was as if the painting was pulling me towards it. At the same time, however, the camera pulling me back to my position again. By each click, it took me out of Lee Ufan.

**7 MAY 2010, GEORG KARGL FINE ARTS, VIENNA, AUSTRIA  
SARAH GOLD**

Part of our PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition which was on display in Bregenz, we brought to Vienna to show at the gallery of Georg Kargl. So did *Dialogue*. Being in a new environment and having not seen each other for months it felt, without being boring, more than

familiar. Placed in the most prestigious room of the gallery, with the whole ceiling being sky light, it looked at ease. The natural thus sophisticated surrounding suited the painting and I was wondering how Lee Ufan himself would be as a person. On the right of *Dialogue*, on a curved wall were hanging the big, red, vividly painted *SHARK VALLEY, USA Boxes* of Rene Rietmeyer. Although both artists obviously come from different cultures and backgrounds, their work clearly communicates and does raise thoughts. As Rene Rietmeyer is what he makes, and what he creates in turn influences him. I had the feeling, that also Lee Ufan would be *one* with his work.

To me *Dialogue*, because of its subtleness and its *meditative brushstroke*, feels "Asian"; Lee Ufan expressing his existence at that moment in time when he created the work. Whereas the *Boxes* depicting Shark Valley, a nature reserve in Florida, which at the moment of visit mostly consisted of aggressive mosquitoes and alligators, are an expression of Rietmeyer's existence at that specific moment in time and space. But not only because of the relation to the subject matter, is the work of Rene Rietmeyer compared to Lee Ufan "in your face", far from Asian, typically Dutch. It was interesting to see these artists next to each other, so different yet so similar, and my curiosity to find out about the human Lee Ufan grew.

**24 MAY 2010, TATE MODERN, LONDON, UK  
KARLYN DE JONGH**

In May, I was a few weeks in London. It was mainly for private reasons that I went there, but I could work there too. I was writing an article



about Time in contemporary art for the scientific magazine *Kronoscope*, discussing the work of Roman Opalka, Rene Rietmeyer as well as Tatsuo Miyajima, who would have a presentation at TATE Modern on 24 May. Because I wanted to ask Miyajima a few more questions about his concept of time, I went to see him that day. His presentation was fantastic. With a lot of charm and spontaneity, he discussed his thoughts. Because of the interview I had done with him almost exactly one year prior, I knew a lot of what he was saying already, but it was great to hear everything. Miyajima spoke English this time and so it was a different experience, being actually able to 'understand' him.

Miyajima spoke about there being no focus, no goal in his counters. Time just continues to exist: it keeps changing, continues forever and everything is connected. He explained about what he called 'personal time': the experience of time; that time can feel long or short. To elucidate his thoughts, Miyajima asks: "can I show a film?" The lights went out. On the big screen behind him, first there was a projection of Miyajima's desktop with different Kanjis. The film started to play and suddenly, in a 2 x 3 m size, I saw Lee Ufan sitting behind a bowl of water. He was wearing a red shirt and looked straight into the camera. I knew this project from Miyajima *Counter Voice*, but I did not know that Lee Ufan had participated in it. It was a nice surprise!

It was fantastic to see Lee Ufan participating in the artwork of another artist, especially Miyajima who I—like Lee Ufan—appreciate very much. To me it showed that also Lee Ufan respects Miyajima so much, that he would participate in this and show himself in such a vulnerable position.

I heard Lee Ufan's voice and thought he was speaking either Japanese or Korean. Because I had seen a similar video before, I imagined he was counting down from 9 to 1. At zero, he stuck his head in the bowl of water and—in comparison to the other people I had seen doing this—quite long. After a few seconds, he slowly took his head out

of the water again. Water was dripping all over his face and Lee Ufan had difficulties looking into the camera. He was blinking with his eyes and was making faces as if he did not like it. He was supposed to start counting down again, but he seemed to have so much trouble with the water that he could not start.

Miyajima commented: "It's very difficult!" and started to laugh at the look on Lee Ufan's face. More time elapsed before continuing the countdown. Then Lee Ufan caught himself again and started counting. While time was passing, it seemed to become easier and easier. In the meantime, Miyajima explained that this person on the screen is Lee Ufan, "A very important Korean artist."

After Lee Ufan, other people did the same thing. "Normal people," Miyajima comments. In comparison to these so-called 'normal' people, Lee Ufan's movement and way of doing seemed very controlled. Counting down like this, was meant as a countdown until one's own death. I wondered how Lee Ufan's encounter would have been, what he was thinking.

**9 DECEMBER 2010, RIVA LONGA 17B, VENICE, ITALY**

**SARAH GOLD**

Since the beginning of the year 2010 we had been developing and planning our exhibition *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* as part of the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. After nearly 8 months of negotiation we were on the brink of signing the lease for the space we had set our minds on: Palazzo Bembo, located just 70 meters from the Rialto Bridge, overlooking the Grand Canal. Now we felt secure enough to actively invite artists to participate and get involved in our project. I received the following email.

Dear Sarah,

I'm delighted to inform you that Mr. Lee Ufan is planning to visit the space in Venice for the group show that you'll organize during next Venice biennale.

His stay in Venice will be from December 8 late afternoon to morning of December 10.

Could you kindly inform me of the address of the place, and around what time he should come visit the space?

Also, could you please confirm that the following phone number is correct?: 39-3490889763

Sincerely yours.

Esra - Lee Ufan's assistant

Because of severe weather conditions in Paris the flight had a serious holdup, and our meeting was delayed for a day. We met just behind Piazza San Marco in hotel Monaco, where Lee Ufan apparently likes to stay. We were waiting in the lobby and when I saw an Asian woman walking towards us, I knew that must be Esra. I was amazed by her beauty; I could look at her for hours for sheer pleasure, what a delight. She told us, while we were still waiting for Lee Ufan, that also she is Korean and that she just had moved, after living in Paris for a long time, to the United States.

Some minutes later, Lee Ufan came walking through the hall of the lobby, he looked confident, and contrary to the first time when I had





seen him, he did not feel fragile at all. He felt freely and was dressed fashionable but effortless. We went to sit down in the café area of the hotel; I believe we all ordered coffee and established the best language to communicate in, which was *basic* English. Rene started to put in plain words *who* we are and what our goal in life is; carefully he explained PERSONAL STRUCTURES and his Time-Space-Existence concept and goal. Although language was not a strong point in this meeting, Lee Ufan understood. He connected with Rene; quality recognizes quality; and saw that he is, like himself, a *real* artist. After explaining our passion for what we do, and the need for us to *spread the word*, we walked to Palazzo Bembo.

At that moment, the Palazzo still looked a real mess and I lively remember how Lee Ufan had to climb through scaffolding, which he did with agility and I even had the feeling he liked it. We showed him all the rooms, and because we knew that he would prefer a room “from one of four corners”, we wanted to offer him the prestigious corner room in the front of the building with view to Canal Grande and Rialto. But he had looked at it, grumbled something in a friendly way and had moved on. When he entered the room we had thought of dedicating to Rene his work, he immediately made clear that this room he would like. It was set, Lee Ufan made his choice and he seemed satisfied. He invited us for lunch and first we walked to *Fiaschetteria Toscana*, not far from Rialto, but it was closed. Now, Lee Ufan guided us, walking fast to *La Colomba*, a restaurant located behind San Marco, but also this, was closed. We decided to enter any restaurant, of which there are many; I remember sitting in the back of

a restaurant, checkered tablecloth and Lee Ufan being at ease, telling all kinds of stories of his life. It was a true pleasure to share *life and time* with him.

#### 9 DECEMBER 2010, VENICE, ITALY

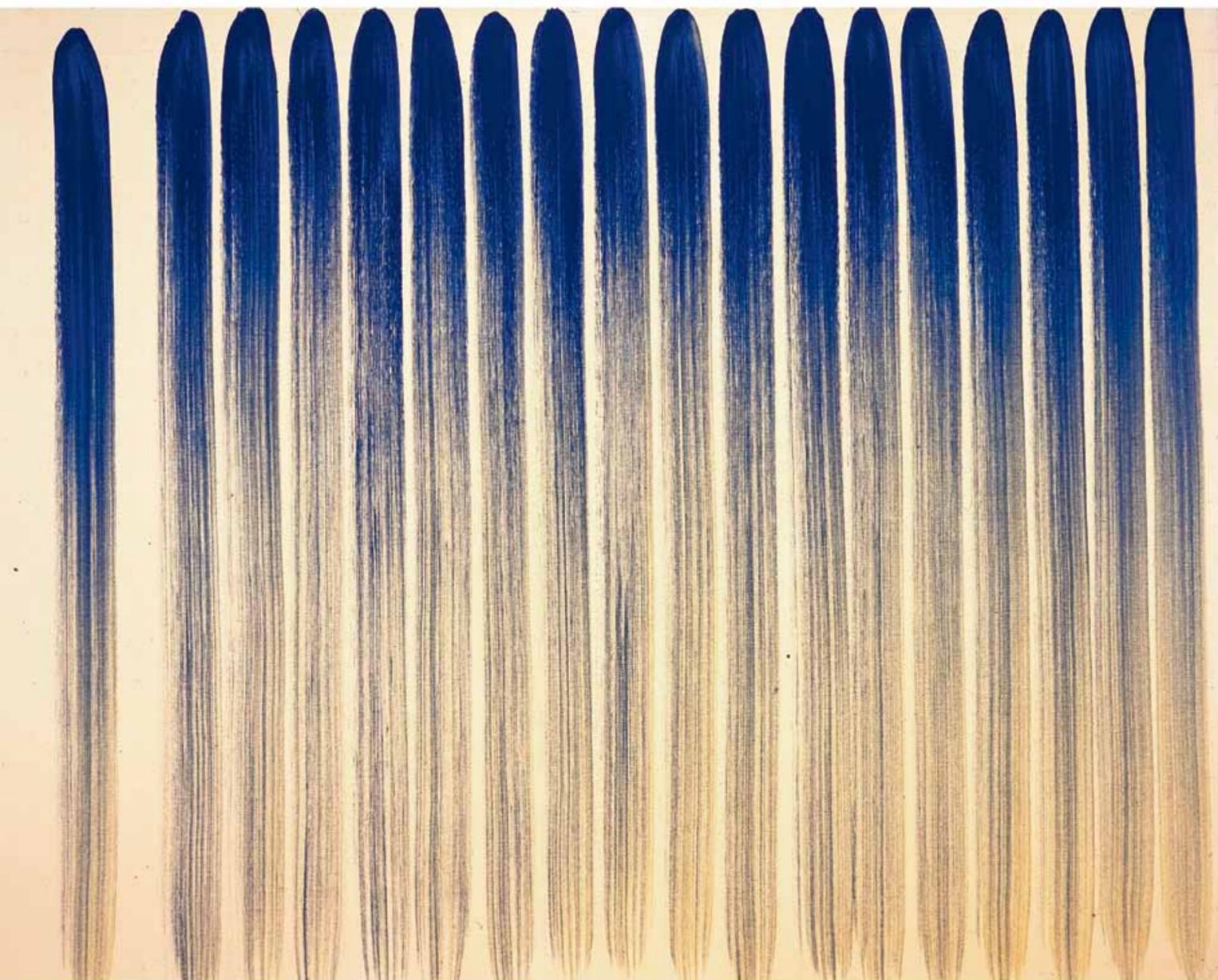
##### KARLYN DE JONGH

On 8 December 2010 Sarah, Rene and I had scheduled a meeting with Lee Ufan. We were supposed to go out for dinner together, but Lee Ufan was stuck in the snow at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris. He sat in the plane for six hours before it finally took off around 9pm. Instead, we met the next day at 11am in the lobby of Hotel Monaco, the hotel where he was also staying the last time I met him in June 2009. Lee Ufan had come to Venice to see Palazzo Bembo, to see if he wanted to participate in our Biennale exhibition and possibly to choose a space for his installation. Another thing we had to discuss with him, was the sales of one of his paintings to a German art dealer who had a client for it—Lee Ufan knew about this already and had sent us a photo of the work the week before.

It was going to be a tricky meeting: we were not sure what to expect, how Lee Ufan would react and we figured he might be tired and not in a good mood because of the delays in his flight. Besides, it was cold and very dark outside; it were not the best conditions for viewing a Palazzo. But I felt fine about meeting Lee Ufan and was quite relaxed.

Five minutes before the meeting, the three of us took a seat in the lobby of the hotel. Around 11am, first the assistant of Lee Ufan





arrived—it was the same woman he was with last year. Then Lee Ufan came walking into the lobby. He seemed in a very good mood. Apparently, they landed in the airport of Venice around 11pm and it took them quite some time to reach the hotel. But it did not seem to affect Lee Ufan too much; he was fresh and lively.

Lee Ufan invited us for a coffee at the hotel bar. We were the only ones in the space and all had a cappuccino. I took a seat opposite of Lee Ufan, next to Sarah. Rene did most of the talking. From the three of us, he is the one with most experience. He introduced our project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, who we are and our approach to life and art. Then, slowly, he told everything there was to know: that the Palazzo was still a disaster, the plans of the other exhibiting artists, the two rooms that we had in mind for him, that if necessary we could help him finding stones. It all seemed to be fine; Lee Ufan spoke very well English and seemed open for everything we told him.

We offered Lee Ufan that if necessary, Sarah and I could travel a week through Italy to find the right stone. "Finding stones in Italy is very difficult," Lee Ufan commented and adds, "A Japanese stone has a Japanese face; an Italian stone has an Italian face; an American stone has an American face. There is a difference. I have experience in this for over 40 years." He started telling us a story—in Korean. It was remarkable to see the dedication with which he seemed to want to tell it. It was a story about one of the first exhibitions he had in France. Lee Ufan needed stones for his installation and looked in a circle with a diameter of 500km around Paris. For about a week, he looked everywhere, but could not find anything that was 'right'. Even though there were stones, he did not see any stones. When he returned empty-handed to the location of his exhibition, he found some 'good' stones in a garden close by. It appeared to be a Japanese garden. Lee Ufan said that, without being aware of it, he used to only have an eye

for Japanese stones. From that moment, he opened himself up for 'local' stones. Now he can find stones anywhere.

Lee Ufan told us about the feeling he has, that he is always a stranger: in Korea they say he is Japanese; in Japan people say he is Korean. "I am a traveled man." He continued: "My work is not Asian, not Korean nor Japanese; my work is Lee Ufan." It was a statement that he also made in Peter Lodermeier's fax-interview with him that I read in preparation for our meeting in Paris. That interview addressed the topic of Orientalism and so, it did not surprise me that Lee Ufan made a remark about it.

This time, however, it came out of the blue. It seemed as if Lee Ufan felt he had to defend himself against being seen as an Asian artist. To me, his work is indeed Lee Ufan—I keep describing works as "Lee Ufan" rather than as "Lee Ufan's painting" or "Lee Ufan's sculpture". But I must admit—and this might sound contradictory—that I do think that when seeing the work for the first time, you would guess it is made by an artist coming from Asia. I mean this in the way that Hermann Nitsch's *Orgien Mysterien Theater* came forth out of a certain region at a certain time; and without giving any ethical judgment, you can know the artist did not come from Holland. In the case of Lee Ufan, I also feel that you can see the work is made by a person who was born in Asia—at least: an American could not have made such a subtle work.

Because of our meeting at the Palazzo at 1pm, we still had some time after all the necessary things were discussed. We enjoyed our coffee, while Lee Ufan went to his room to pick up some books that he had brought for us. It was the catalogue of his new museum in Naoshima, Japan. Lee Ufan flipped through the catalogue with us and showed the works that he has in his museum.

He commented that many Europeans are more toward the object. "There is a strong ontology there," he said. In Asia people apparently look more at the relation between objects and their own relation to the object. According to Lee Ufan, we, Europeans, look more to the object itself, as if you are projecting your own position. Rather than showing objects, Lee Ufan said he preferred to show the space. Indeed, the catalogue had many photos of spaces in and around the museum. I wondered what he would be thinking of our Palazzo and the spaces we had given him as an option.

We left the bar at Monaco to visit Palazzo Bembo. We had to take a special exit, because the street in front of Monaco and Harry's bar was under water. They had built a bridge over a piece of metal that was supposed to keep the water outside. Without trouble, Lee Ufan stepped over it. It was cute to see and I realized Lee Ufan had become human, to me—or better: I had become more human and could now enjoy this in others. I had lost the blind respect I had had for certain artists. I still had a lot of respect for Lee Ufan, but now it was more based on experience, being able to see him for what he is.

Before our meeting, we had carefully checked the best route to Palazzo Bembo, so that our walk over there would be smooth and easy. But it was all for nothing. San Marco square was flooded. We took one of the walkways, but soon it appeared it would not be possible to continue

that direction. Venice was again like a labyrinth, where we were trying to find the right way without getting wet feet. I like these sudden surprises, just not so much when I am in an important meeting like this. But it did not seem to trouble Lee Ufan. We cannot go that way? Ok, fine! Or he would go through alleys that were actually closed off. "No entry"-signs did not impress him either.

We took the long route to Rialto, but I believe I never walked it in such a short time. Lee Ufan has a very quick pace. 74 years old, but he was the most fit from all of us. We chatted about Venice; he had come here already since 1973—7 years before I was born. He was nothing like the helpless tourists that you often see wandering around; Lee Ufan knew his way around.

Full of energy, Lee Ufan walked up the stairs of the Palazzo. Everything was still in a disastrous state. Our exhibition would be on the second floor, but a particular room that we had selected for Lee Ufan was at that time only reachable through a separate, secret staircase on the first floor. They were renovating that part of the building; a scaffold blocked our route. We explained Lee Ufan the situation on which he took the initiative to climb through the scaffold to the other side of the building. When we entered the space that we thought was suitable for Lee Ufan, he looked around and started measuring it, taking big steps. He did not say much; he just observed. At a certain point he asked about the windows, whether they could be closed or should stay opened. We clarified that he is the boss of the space, that he can decide everything himself and can do as he wishes. Lee Ufan commented that this room was quite narrow, but made also clear that he was pleasantly surprised by the space.

We went up to the second floor, where we showed him the spaces in the horrible state they were in, each time telling Lee Ufan about the great plans we had for it. "Here comes Toshikatsu Endo." "Here comes Arnulf Rainer and we will build the space like this." "This room is for Kosuth." It is that I myself knew that we could make it happen, but going back at it now, it is quite surprising that it did not discourage him. We went through the space quite quickly; Lee Ufan did not need much time to see it.

We entered the corner room that would become Lee Ufan's space. He was quiet again for a few seconds and then said he wanted to make an installation here, with marble split on the floor (like a Japanese garden), that he would place a medium size stone (we did not have to worry; it would only be 500kg) and one painting. I imagined how it would look and liked the idea very much. It seemed that Lee Ufan wanted to give his best to make a strong statement here, in our exhibition. We had opened the windows, because on the phone Lee Ufan had indicated that he wanted to have natural light coming in the space. But apparently he had changed his mind. He asked if the windows could be covered and said he wanted to hang his painting there. Lee Ufan explained that visitors would be allowed to enter the space and could sit on the 'marble' floor. Lee Ufan took quite some time, standing in the space, as if he wanted to feel the atmosphere of it, how it feels. Taking large steps, he measured the space. To be extra clear, he again said: "I want this space."



Our visit to the Palazzo was over and Lee Ufan invited us for lunch. From one of the participants in my On Kawara project, a French cook, I had heard Lee Ufan was a very good 'taster'. In high speed, we walked through Venice on search of a good restaurant that was open at this hour. Lee Ufan had two favorites, but both of them were closed. Around the opera house, Lee Ufan seemed to have lost his orientation. We went back again and passed by a regular restaurant, operated by some Chinese. It was great to be sitting there with Lee Ufan. We spoke about Toshikatsu Endo, who said that the basis of his thoughts comes from Lee Ufan. Lee Ufan knew him well and commented that Endo is living too much in his head, that he does not travel enough to see other countries and therefore is not open to new influences. We

told him about Endo's text in our book and the time and effort it had taken to translate it. "Endo is very difficult..." From what I had heard about Lee Ufan before I first visited him in Paris two years earlier, I had understood he was a philosopher, a big intellectual. Here it became again extra clear to me that to Lee Ufan all this theory is not most important. He just lets things go and be as they are. He is not focused on himself, his own thoughts and is open for change.

It was so great, talking with Lee Ufan like this and being together, I had a smile on my face the whole time from sheer happiness. I sucked in the moment, trying to get as much of the experience as I possibly could. It made me feel very present and alive. From this day on, the freshness of a 'fresh encounter' had something light, something easy and positive.



**16 DECEMBER 2010, LEE UFAN STUDIO, PARIS, FRANCE**

**SARAH GOLD**

In order to realize our Venice *endeavor* we had to raise an enormous amount of money. Until that time, we had financed all projects through the revenue of Rene's artwork, but this was going far beyond our possibilities. Other ways had to be found. We were just in Naples to speak to Peppe Morra from the Hermann Nitsch Museum (and our car had just broken down) when I got a call saying that we would be able to place a Lee Ufan painting in a private collection. We contacted Lee Ufan; he had understood the needs for our exhibition. As a sign of goodwill he would allow our Foundation to place his work in a good home. On 15 December Rene and I drove from Venice to Paris to meet Lee Ufan and pick up

the painting. The weather condition worsened by driving to the north and at a certain moment the snow was tremendous, but we did arrive in Paris in time. Again we passed the Moulin Rouge and found a parking spot. When it was time, we went to the studio. I felt a little uncomfortable, this was the first time I had to *deal* with such an artist and while Rene brought the painting to our car, I explained Lee Ufan the situation. He understood and because he wanted to support our Foundation he was very generous. Drinking the tea I had been served, I could hardly believe what just had happened. This was a big help for our project.

Because of the severe weather conditions, we decided not to drive but to ship the work. We found a shipper in Paris and left the painting to be shipped safely to his new home.

14 – 21 MAY 2011, PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY

KARLYN DE JONGH

The exhibition grew day by day. It was wonderful to see each day a bit more result of what we had been working for every single day for the past year. One weekend, probably three weeks before the opening, there was little else we could do at that moment and so I started with Lee Ufan's installation. After painting all the electricity lines and covering the linoleum floor with an anti-slip cloth, I began with the first layer of split.

Besides the weight of the bags, it was a simple job: putting the marble on the floor and spreading it out to an equal layer. But it was great to do it. Normally we sit for hours behind the computer; this was hands-on work. The preparation, the setup of an exhibition like this and seeing it grow, was amazing: each action you take brings you one step closer to a real, visible result. With each bag, the cloth got more and more covered, the piles in the corridor outside of Lee Ufan's room were getting smaller, and the room was getting more and more special.

But the act itself was an interesting experience too, that I enjoyed with almost all of my senses. I was part of the creation process of Lee Ufan's installation and it was great. The sound of the stones falling on the floor; the sound of them grinding over each other while spreading them out. The marble was still wet from the water they had used for splitting it, which left a strong scent: the smell of the moist, the 'liquid marble'. The grey color over the white cloth. I used my bare hands to spread the split, making them white, wet and tingly. I wanted to feel the stone. When I was done, my hands were still 'burning'—reminding me of Lee Ufan for the rest of the day.

The next morning the first layer of marble was dry and had become white. It looked very special! The sound in the space had changed. Now, it was soft, giving the room a quiet, contemplative atmosphere. But rather than contemplate, I continued with the next layer. There was no time to 'waste'. Again the sound, smell, feeling... and seeing the grey marble covering a white surface. This time the experience was slightly different. I heard my own footsteps over the white marble, softly grinding it. The sound of the falling marble and the spreading was less hard. The smell of the moist stones triggered the smell that was already hanging in the room. The grey, wet stones left a beautiful cover over the white, dried split, marking exactly where I had been. Even when Sarah joined me, I remember not thinking about much else than this experience, repeating it until only a few bags of marble were left.

29 MAY 2011, PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY

SARAH GOLD

When we had met Lee Ufan in December the year before, he had told us, that he probably would not be able to come to the opening because he would have to attend the set up of his solo exhibition at the Guggenheim in New York. I remember to have felt a little sad, because it is the nicest when the artist is there for setup and the opening as well, because PERSONAL STRUCTURES is alive, real and sincere and by meeting or seeing the artist, the right people will recognize this, creating *positive dynamic*. We were in full set

up mode, when Lee Ufan showed up. I was happy to see him and he was in a good mood. We walked over to his room where Rene had hung Lee Ufan's painting earlier. When entering the space he became very serious, he spoke in Japanese to Yuko Sakurai, maybe to express his thoughts more precise and freely. It felt like all was wrong. But it turned out, less dramatic than it felt to me. The metal plate had to be re-placed, *off center* from the painting. Together with Rene, Toshikatsu Endo (who was installing his massive sculpture in the front of the building) and several other people, we re-placed the plate. Also the stone had to be adjusted, so its "face" was looking towards the plate and the stone—*Relatum*. Lee Ufan looked pleased and satisfied and so were we.

29 MAY 2011 – 1 JUNE 2011, PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY

KARLYN DE JONGH

During the days before the opening we were extremely busy: finishing the last installations, lighting, discussions with Joseph Kosuth, giving tours to surprise guests, such as Günther Uecker, and many, many other things. Lee Ufan arrived in Venice around this time, before going to New York for the installation of his exhibition at the Guggenheim. Not exactly sure when he would come to Palazzo Bembo, it was a great surprise when he just came walking through the door. We greeted each other heartily, like old friends. He seemed very happy to be here as well. In between everything, we took the time for him. It was great to show him around our 'exhibition to be', sometimes meeting artists who were putting the finishing touches on their work. Lee Ufan and Kosuth did not seem to have met each other; with others, such as Toshikatsu Endo, it was an interesting rendezvous.

The stone, metal plate and painting as well as the 2000kg of Carrara marble were already in Lee Ufan's space. We knew where the painting was going to go—that one was easy—and of course the marble was already 'done', but the stone and metal plate? When walking into his room, Lee Ufan seemed to concentrate on his installation. He looked at the painting and marble split, commenting, "Good, good". The rest was no good, yet. The stone was lying on top of the metal plate; it had to be moved—it was only a medium size, but still approximately 200kg. Lee Ufan seemed to have a very clear idea of what he wanted.

The metal plate, which was oblique on one side, had to be turned 180° to be with its widest side towards the painting. Now the place of the stone was adjusted: it had to be moved a little bit away from the metal plate in the direction of the wall opposite the painting. And it had to be turned. Lee Ufan explained that, "the face of the stone has to look that way," and pointed in the direction of his painting. At first, this way of expression surprised me, but then I saw what Lee Ufan meant: a pointy, upwards-looking part of the stone was indeed like a 'front'; compared to the rest of the stone, it felt like a logical way to talk about it as the rest clearly was not a 'face'. It was as if the stone was looking directly at the painting now; starting with its 'back' on the marble, going in an upward movement to the front. A few workers helped to place the stone where Lee Ufan wanted it. "Ok, ok," Lee Ufan said. But when the workers left again to continue what they were doing, Lee Ufan did not seem





convinced yet. He looked carefully at the stone and decided it had to be turned a few millimeters to his right. On his own, this thin, fragile-looking man bent over the stone, placed his arms around it and with what seemed all his power, tried to move the stone. This was no success. For four heavyweights it had already been difficult to move it; for Lee Ufan on his own, this was impossible—of course, the marble split floor did not help either. Lee Ufan stepped away from it, had another look at the stone's position and waved his hands next to his body, "Ok, ok." He had another look and started—in a very gentle way—to flatten the marble split next to the metal plate, sometimes removing pieces that were 'out of place'. It indeed looked cleaner. When he straightened his back, he seemed satisfied and said: "Finished!"

It had went very quickly and there was still time to show Lee Ufan the exhibition spaces he had not seen yet, like that of Tatsuo Miyajima whose work was in the space that Lee Ufan had decided not to take. In comparison to what he had seen a few months ago, the building was transformed. He seemed to like it.

The next day Lee Ufan returned. I believe I was installing Lawrence Weiner's work, when he came to get me. "There is a big problem! A big problem." He immediately got my attention; a problem was the last thing I needed, and especially for Lee Ufan. Some possible disasters went through my head, but nothing seemed plausible. Relaxed, I followed Lee Ufan to his space. There he pointed to the lights, clarifying their position was "no good." This was an easy

one to solve. Someone got a ladder for us and started adjusting the position of the lights. An extra light was needed and the assistant went to get it. The ladder was free and Lee Ufan—as if it was nothing—climbed up with the greatest ease and continued finding the right lighting position: two spots, one on the stone and one on the plate. With an extra floodlight on the painting, Lee Ufan was happy. But there was another 'problem': the metal plate needed to be rubbed in with a slight bit of baby oil to make it shine. That was the last thing; Lee Ufan was done.

In the next days, Lee Ufan returned several times, with collectors and the directors of museum in Japan and his future museum in Korea. We greeted each other with kisses now, which seemed a little bit unusual to him, but pleasant enough to do as often as possible. They were cute encounters, these surprise visits. Lee Ufan seemed to like being in Palazzo Bembo and proud of his installation in our exhibition, showing it to everybody. Unfortunately, there was so much to do that we could not spend more time together. Also at the opening, I recall seeing Lee Ufan and exchanging a few words, but that was the last time I saw him.

**22 SEPTEMBER 2011, PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE, ITALY  
KARLYN DE JONGH**

On 22 September 2011, we had organized a brunch for a group of Belgian collectors on the first floor of Palazzo Bembo which was followed by a tour by Sarah and me on the second floor, where was our PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition. Around 3 o'clock, when

the Belgians had just left, I went downstairs to pick up something that I had forgotten. In front of the closed door at the first floor stood a Japanese woman, about 40cm shorter than I am. For as far as I could tell, she looked 65 and seemed a little helpless. "Exhibition?" she asked. I softly guided her to go upstairs.

When I returned to the second floor a minute later, the same woman was in discussion with one of the students who was working for us. "My husband's work is in this exhibition." It was not likely to be anybody else and indeed it was Lee Ufan. "Where is my husband's work?" Together we walked through the exhibition. I wanted to take the opportunity to tell her about our project and show her the exhibition and its location, so I did not take a direct straight line to Lee Ufan. We took a little detour, via Toshikatsu Endo, Carl Andre, Arnulf Rainer and the view over the Grand Canal. In the mean time, I slowly explained her about PERSONAL STRUCTURES, the philosophical topics it addresses, that we offer artists a platform to speak about these topics and that we make symposia, exhibitions and especially books. It was clear she did not speak much English, but I think we both tried our best to communicate. At least, when she told me Lee Ufan fitted good to what we were doing, I took it as a confirmation that she had understood. I had the feeling she liked the exhibition, but that her eagerness to see Lee Ufan's installation was stronger. So, we went through relatively quickly.

When we passed François Morellet, I announced Lee Ufan's space. Not sure whether she could enter, she halted at the entrance of the space, the point from where you can only see the painting, the metal plate and, of course, the marble split on the floor. "*Dozo, dozo*," I said, making a gesture that she could enter. With a Japanese surprise reaction, she carefully stepped on the marble. Another surprise came when she saw the stone, then she slowly moved her head in all directions. "Very special," she said. And then: "So simple." She quietly and carefully walked through the space, seemingly taking everything in, softly repeating: "So simple..." It was wonderful to see her move like that and I quietly observed her: a little bit bent, taking conscious steps, looking all around her. "The marble is new." I had never seen any image of an installation in which Lee Ufan used marble (or a different kind of split) like this, but I figured that did not say anything. Hearing Lee Ufan's wife say this was for me a confirmation that Lee Ufan really made something special for us.

When I felt it was alright to say something again, I asked her whether she had already been to Palazzo Grassi to see Lee Ufan's installation there. She had. "But this one is more special. It's better," she added. To be honest, I was happy to hear that. I felt that in comparison to Palazzo Grassi we were like 'the underdog': with relatively no money we managed to make an impressive exhibition. It may sound naïve—or like wishful thinking—but hearing her say this, felt as if we have a connection with Lee Ufan that Palazzo Grassi could never have.

Lee Ufan's wife stopped looking at the work and opened her bag. A camera came out, which she handed over to me. "Please, take a photo." She took a position as central as possible in the space. She straightened her back and stood there as a strong, proud and

serious woman. I took a few photos of her, and included as much of the installation as possible. I imagined she wanted to have the proof that she had seen her husband's work.

We continued with the rest of the exhibition: Lawrence Weiner, Marina Abramović, SASAKI, Roman Opalka and in the last room Tatsuo Miyajima. Slowly, we return in the direction of the entrance. When passing Lee Ufan, again she says, "So simple..." Passing the other spaces, each time she looks inside to the installation that is presented in there. I invite her for a prosecco on the couch and show her the publications we made: Lee Ufan's pages in the exhibition catalogue and the pages of our Tokyo symposium with Japanese text as well as the interviews with Miyajima and Lee Ufan. She seems to like it very much.

Lee Ufan's wife wanted to continue her way to Palazzo Fortuny. She did not know where it was and I offered to join her. Together we walked over to Fortuny. It was interesting to be with her like that. We could only communicate in a very basic way, but while talking I remember thinking what a nice woman she is, what a warm atmosphere she has. We chatted a little: about good shoes for walking in Venice, about her daughter who arrived the day before, about her plans for the upcoming days and how she liked Venice. She told me she does not travel so often, but that she had been in Venice four years ago, when Lee Ufan had his solo exhibition at Palazzo Palumbo Fossati, but that still she always got lost. Laughing, she told me that already after the second corner, she did not know where she was anymore.

Fortuny was getting closer and felt I needed to try to take my chance to ask her information about Lee Ufan. At that moment, I wanted to know how it is for her to encounter Lee Ufan's work, knowing him and his work so very well. It was not easy to make my question understandable; I tried in several ways. But it did not matter. Lee Ufan's wife was talkative and did her best to answer the questions she thought I was asking. From her answers I understood that they were already together in the time that Lee Ufan was still writing text for Mono-ha, before he made his first work, over 40 years ago. She smiles and tells me that Lee Ufan is "very difficult." "He always goes his own way, always choosing the difficult way. Sometimes I wonder why. But he does not deviate from his path." When we reach Palazzo Fortuny, she halts: "Now, Lee Ufan's work became more simple. He found peace."

# BEN VAUTIER

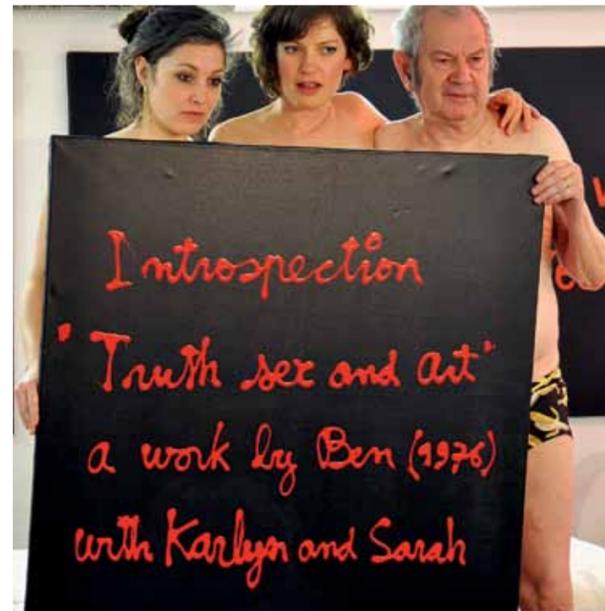
## INTROSPECTION

### TRUTH SEX & ART

PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS #07

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

Nice, France, 17-19 February 2013



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 part 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. It 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.

KDJ: Who do you want to be?

BV: I want to be truthful. I just want to find the truth and to say: "I am not a liar".

SG: Do you think, you have been truthful in your life?

BV: No, I have been a liar. You know, once George Brecht told me he liked a painting in which I wrote "I am a liar". I said: "why do like that painting?" He said: "Because it is not true: you are not a liar! And if it is not, and if it is the truth, then you are not a liar. So, to write "I am a liar" is a truthful sentence."

KDJ: Can you still look in the mirror and be serious about yourself?

BV: When I look in the mirror, I... I once did a piece called *Mirror Piece*, in which I looked into the mirror, hoping to see myself change. But it takes a lot of time. Now, when I look at myself in the mirror, I have bags under my eyes. When I was young, I did not have bags under my eyes.



KDJ: But that is a visual impression. Can you look at yourself in an human way? Are you proud of yourself?

BV: No, I always see the same. I suppose, I always see the same ego.

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.

SG: Is it survival of the fittest?

BV: It could be.

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.

SG: We spoke about your mother yesterday, tell us about her.

BV: My mother was very, very important to me, because I lived with my mother and she used to say: "Ben, the only thing that counts is the truth, the truth, the truth!"

KDJ: What did she mean?

BV: She always used to meet her friends and play bridge together, and my mother used to make horrible fights between them, because she used to say, "In the name of the truth, I must tell you that you went with another man and your husband does not know it!" So, that were horrible stories!

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: If it is like you told us that 'ego is jealousy'. I am not a jealous person. Do I still have ego?

BV: Maybe you do not know your jealousy sometimes. I think, jealousy is culturally different. Maybe. I do not know, I can't tell you. For myself and I think for most artists when they look at another artist, they think in their mind: "Oh, that's good! I would have liked to have done it." So, "Oh that's good, I can do better" or "that's not good, mine is better." It's a way of 'the other'. If it is a degree different in jealousy. It is the presence of the other. There could be jealousy in a way, when you say: "I did this! He took my idea. Why did he get



success and I don't and I did before him?" So, there I would say is a more condense jealousy. But that is always, for example when you go into a show and you look at the work, you think: "That is good! I would have liked to have done that."

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!

SG: So what you drew here, that is 'all'? Everything?

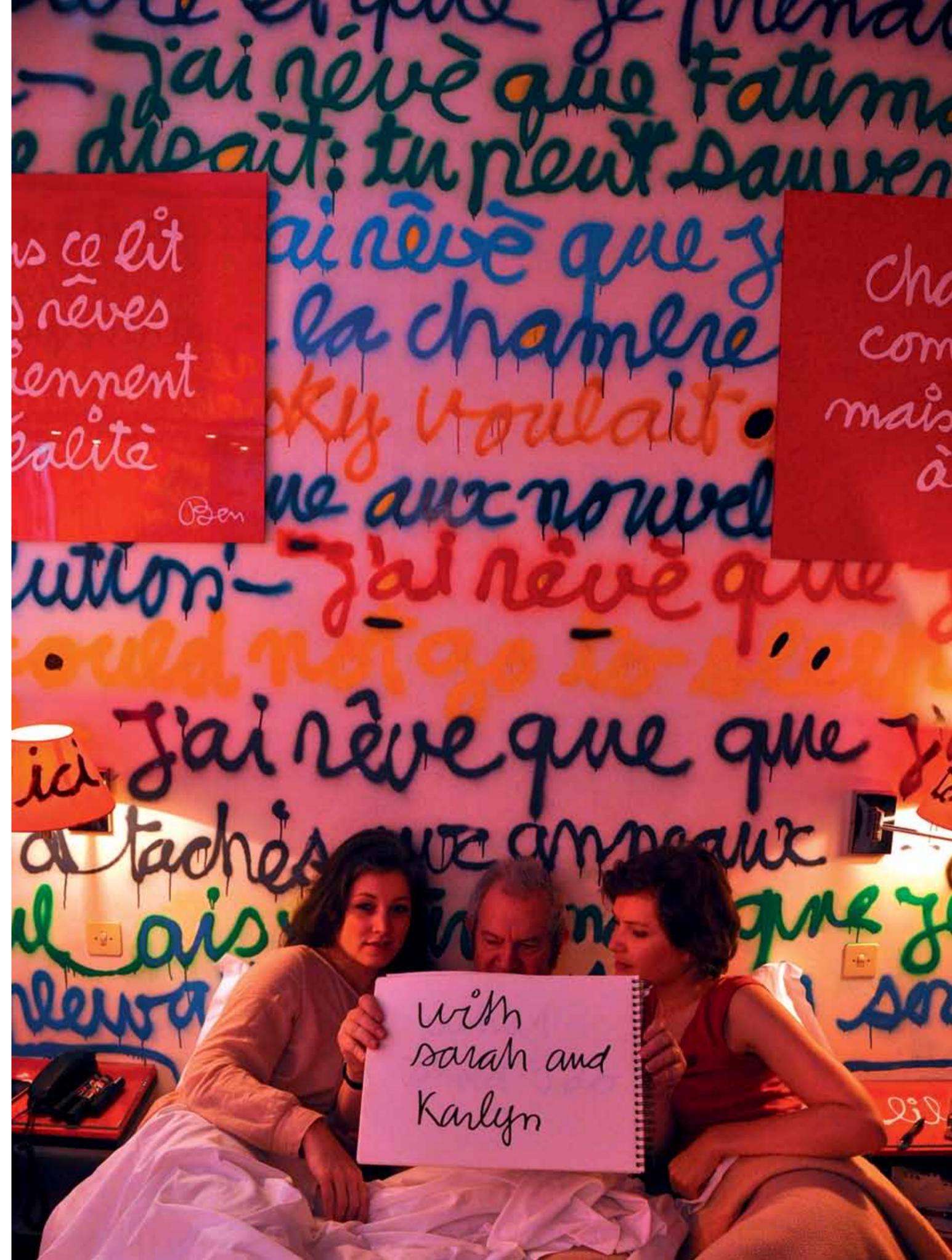
BV: Yes, it contains all. The 'particle of ego' means *lucidité*. It means 'introspection'. You cannot speak of ego unless you know what it is made of. What is ego? Ego is the name of jealousy, ambition, wanting to be, not wanting to be, *lucidité*, *lucidité* over the others. What means ego? We come back to my famous verse [Ben searches the right plate out of the collection he made that day]. This one! and it becomes this one! How did the ejaculation come? It comes from an ego which was all alone in the universe. There was nothing. And he met another ego by chance, we do not know how they met. He became very angry and started to fuck the other one. And then... BANG!... the ejaculation! The bang of two egos gave the ejaculation.

KDJ: Are you afraid of sex because your ejaculation is not as powerful as this one?

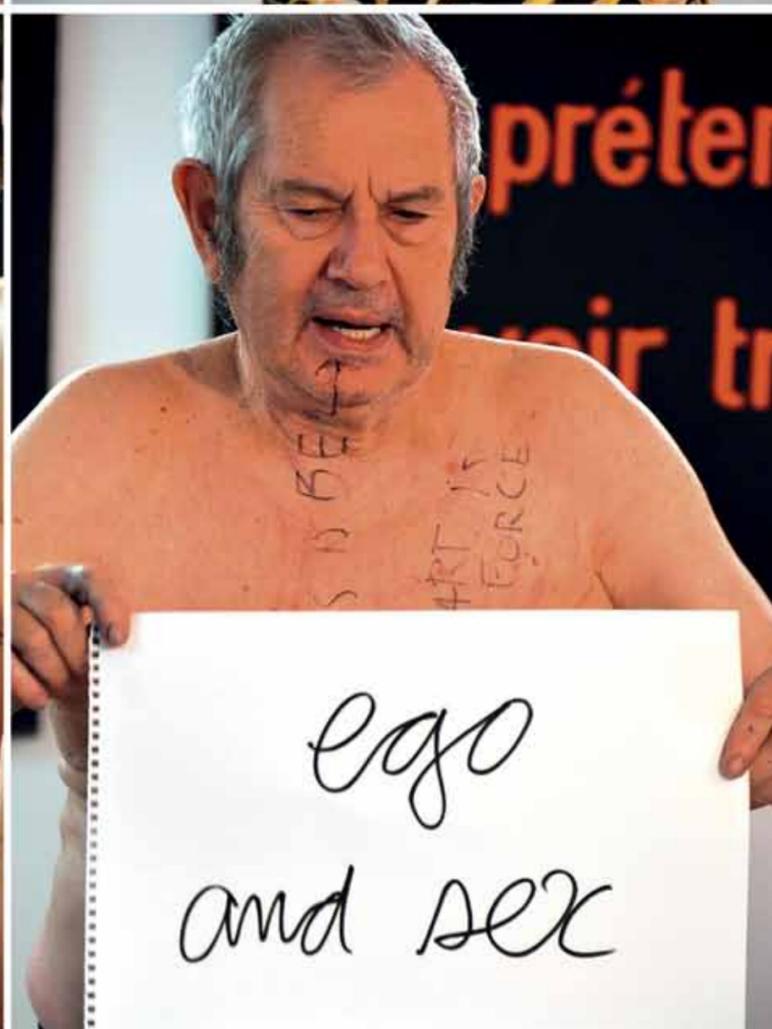
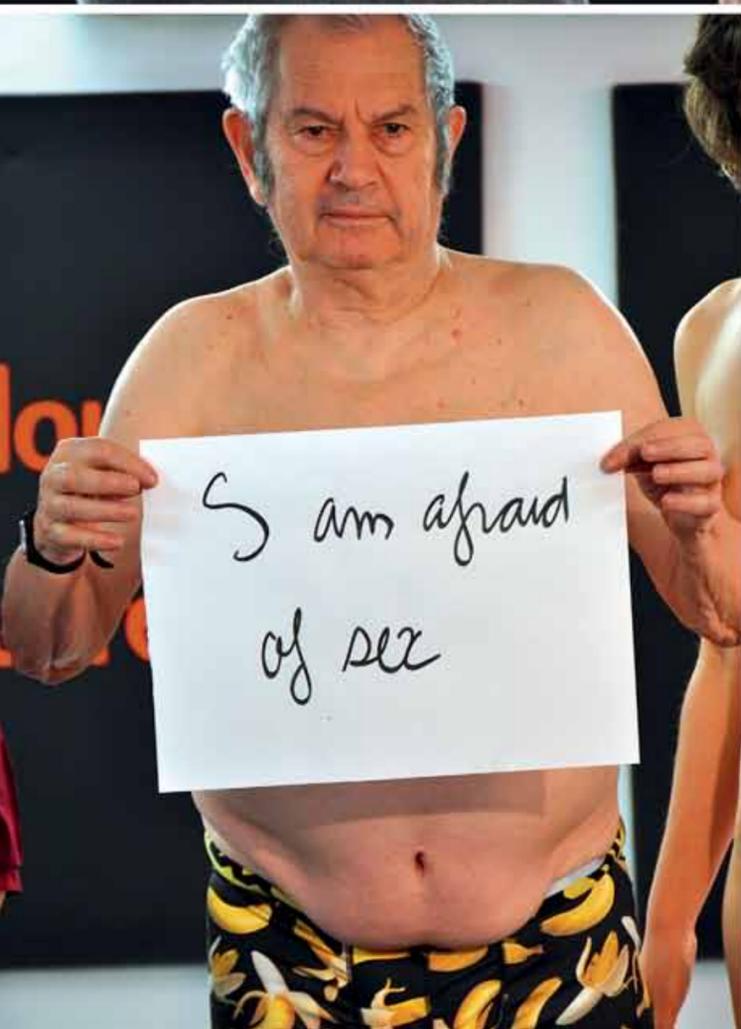
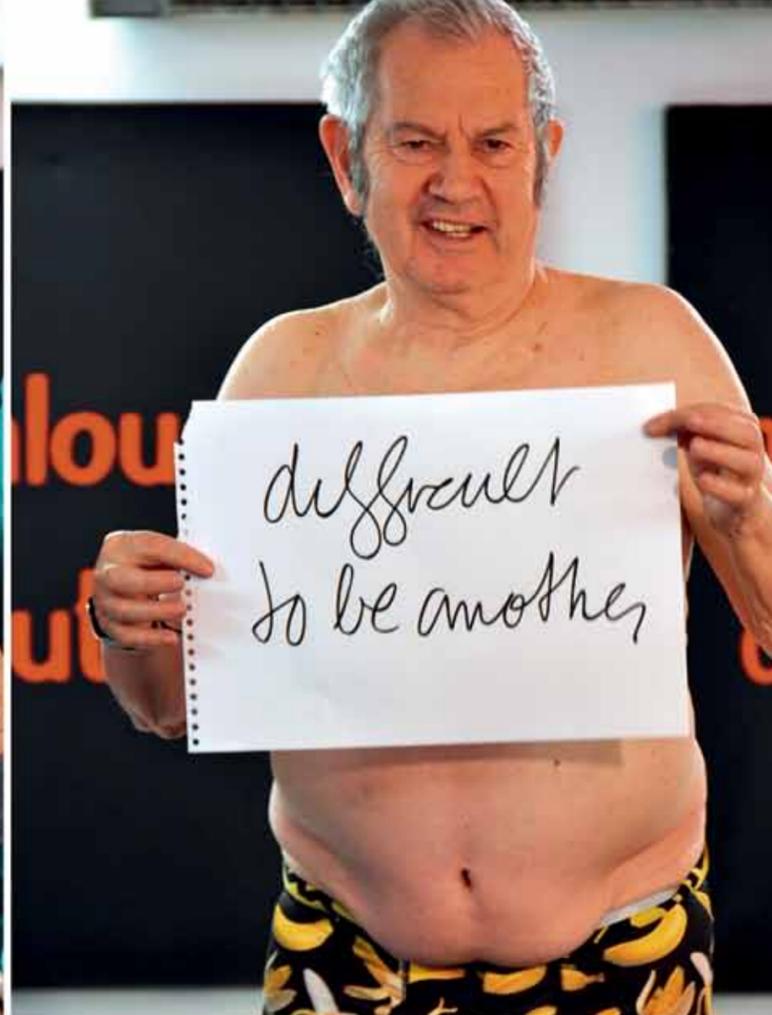
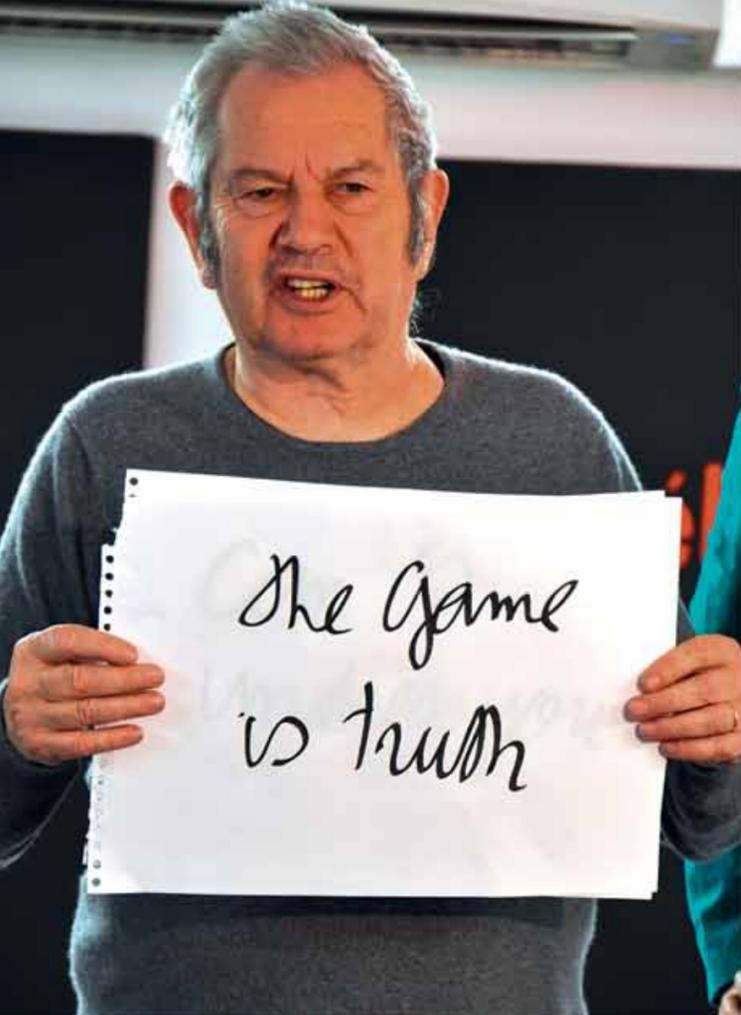
BV: Yes this one is very powerful...! But I have two children and five grandchildren.

SG: This was such an intense ejaculation that he must have died after his ejaculation and we do not want that to happen with you, of course.

BV: This one? Yes! But I have another theory. Today we have the extremes, the extreme world. We have the extreme big and the extreme small. We are losing this sense of knowing where is the middle. So, I was thinking: if you take your brain... Your brain is full of billions of neurons. It could be that my 'ejaculation of ego' has led to tons of other egos that are ejaculating too. So, we have not one universe but we have many universes. I'm still working on this. It is very complicated.









# PERSONAL STRUCTURES

Palazzo Bembo  
54<sup>th</sup> Venice Art Biennale  
4 June - 27 November 2011

# MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

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

23 April 2013

*Marina Abramović (1946, Belgrade, Serbia) has been a performance artist since the early 1970s. Using her own body as the subject as well as the medium for her work, she has pioneered the use of performance as a visual art form. Her works are an exploration of her own physical and mental limits.—Marina Abramović lives in New York.*

*Valeria Romagnini: In your work you have tried to understand and discover the meaning of pain, the limits of endurance and often you took great risks. Today your perception of life will probably be different from the moment you started. What is the value that you give to your life today? Do you think that you have ever put your life in real danger?*

Marina Abramović: I think that at the beginning, many things, many ideas about my work, were done more by intuition, without really knowing where I'm going. The older I get and the more experience I have, I understand that taking risks is incredibly important and it is a crucial step to get to a new territory and to understand your own limits. I think, especially as an artist, when you find the one way to express yourself and then start repeating yourself to please the public or the market, then you kind of stop respecting yourself. So, to me it is really important to be always looking for new territories. Right now, for example, I am choreographing in the French opera the *Bolero* which is a completely new territory for me. I have never worked with dancers, especially not with classical dancers. To see how I can actually bring my new ideas into this kind of category—which is very, very traditional—and to see “can I make a revolution here?”, that is what I am really interested in. The more I am, the more time passes, the more I take a risk to go to places where I have never been. Not just in art, but also in life.

*Karlyn De Jongh: How does it help you then, when you performed Lips of Thomas in 1975 and 'repeated' the performance in 2005 at the Guggenheim in New York City? By doing a similar performance, are you then still taking a new risk in the sense of 'finding new territories'?*

MA: No this was... First of all that example was only one example. It was unique and this was really meant to give an example to everybody else who is taking the works from the 1970s and putting these works into different categories—like fashion, like design, theatre, film, dance—without actually giving any kind of recognition to the original sources, to the artists who made these works in the

1970s. I was thinking that, of the few artists who are still alive and performing that I should take some of these examples, especially examples from other artists of whom I have never even seen the piece, but which I liked (like Vito Acconci or Joseph Beuys) and find out: if I repeat the piece, what kind of example should I be giving to the people who are doing it? And what is the difference? The difference would be to ask and pay for permission, to understand the original material and put the name of the artist where the material comes from first, and then your own name in second place; this is the example how it should be done.

My piece *Lips of Thomas*... The original piece lasted one hour. I repeated this performance and it lasted seven hours. And I was sixty years old. People said to me: “Oh, but you have done such strong performances before.” But I could never do seven hours when I was 20 years old, because I never had that kind of concentration and knowledge. Now, for this piece, I have just changed the time. So, I was repeating the performance, but not exactly ‘repeating’ it, because I put the dimension of time into this piece.

*KDJ: So, the boundaries that you have been trying to 'explore' in your live, they have actually shifted and it is not 'simply' a matter of knowing where they are.*

MA: Yes, it has really shifted and I am still constantly searching. I just spent three months in Brazil working with the Shamans and studying in co-operational entities about the spirits and how that kind of energy... I can learn about that kind of energy, it's the invisible world that actually deals with this. To go to the places in nature that have that energy and power, like waterfalls, like certain rock formations and so on, and to expose myself and see what I can learn... Because, you know, I have learned about energy, but not enough yet.

Performance art is about immateriality, and this is only something that you can feel. It is energy that you can feel. You cannot put it on the wall like a painting. So, you have to learn every day more and more about how to deal with this and how you can deal with it much further than I have done until now.

*KDJ: To cut open your belly again 30 years later, must have had quite an impact on your body. Aren't you afraid that by taking these risks with your body, your life will be a few days shorter?*





MA: You know, I have never felt better in my life. Now, this year I will be getting 67. My body is excellent; my immune system is good. I went to the doctor the other day, to have my organs checked, you know: my liver, my skin, my heart. He said: "your organs look 20 years younger than your age!" I think because of my performances I am only becoming stronger. I think that anybody who thinks their life finishes when they are 60 and must go into pension, has a much bigger risk to die, than I have.

KDJ: Are you afraid of dying?

MA: No. I am even planning my own funeral all the time. And now I am playing my own funeral in a theater piece with Robert Wilson, titled *The Life & Death of Marina Abramović*. First of all, I do not think that death exists. This is what I discovered lately. It is just another form, a transformation of energy. If you deal with energy and understand energy, then you understand that death is not there. Another thing is the physical death, but that is something completely different. There is no spiritual death, that does not exist. So when you really understand that and you see this other reality outside of the now—like I did just now in Brazil—then your death is not something to be afraid of.

KDJ: You have indicated that your work is mainly about your ideas, rather than about what it looks like. With your *Center for the Preservation of Performance Art* you seem to be teaching other people about your ideas. In this way, your work, your thoughts will continue to exist after you yourself have died. Do you wish your work and thoughts to live on forever? Do you think this 'energy' will continue to exist?

MA: You know, it is not about me. I am not so concentrated on myself, I'm just concentrated on what I learn, on how I can transmit this to other people and how they can benefit from this. And the really important thing is: today, in our western society, how can we change consciousness? I mean: you live in Italy and what is happening there is such a real disaster. There are so many problems! If only the Italians can change the consciousness of their leaders and bring some kind of spirituality—at least a different view of the world—then everything will look different. I think it is very important that if nobody is doing it, then artists should be doing this.

But also for me, every journey starts with a big step. It is very easy to criticize society and say what is wrong, but much more important is what the individual can do on his own. I am trying to do my best in my own work, in my own art. If I can change just some individuals, for example the people I am dealing with in my institute, I would be very happy. This is really very important. It is so easy to just be in an ego trip, and then you can see your name is going to live to eternity. It is not about that. Much more important is that people can benefit from what I learn and I have really learned my lessons in the hard way, because that is what I am doing. I have spent so many years working with indigenous cultures, being in nature. Everything I have learned, I have actually experienced. I do not learn from the books; I have learned from the direct experiences.

VR: Your *Center*, designed by Rem Koolhaas, will serve as a performance and education center of long-duration performance art and it will represent

*the home to The Abramović Method. What do you hope to transmit to your students? How do you hope performance will develop after you?*

MA: They are not students any more. I am talking about my public. I am talking about the people who would come to the institute, but this is another also important thing. This institute it is not just about my work. It is going to be a combination between artists, filmmakers, theatre directors, dance, opera, music, scientists, the new technology, the spirituality, the new ideas about spirituality; it's going to be a kind of laboratory between everything. I wanted to create a commune with different people who can benefit and can create and then expose their creations to others. I wanted to create a platform. It is not that I am showing them my work; I'm showing the unity of different media together.

KDJ: A few weeks ago we went to Michelangelo Pistoletto, and it seems that the aim of his project *Love Difference* is similar to what you are doing. To me, it seems very, very difficult to achieve something like that.

MA: But Pistoletto works with students. I do not want students, I want creative people in different fields and I also want to do something, like Bauhaus, you know. Here the best people in the field come together and when you put them together you create a miracle. The best architects, the best philosophers, the best spiritual leaders, the best people from technology, the best people from art; if you put them together then something happens. This is what I want, a very large kind of platform where you can really work on changing the consciousness of our society today.

KDJ: When you spoke at our 2009 symposium at the Venice Biennale, you have said that in your performances you give yourself 100% and that the presence of the audience is very important. Besides giving yourself, do you take something back? Is there something you want back from your audience?

MA: I do not, you know. I am not thinking in that way. I am only thinking that I as individual have to give 100% and then they can do whatever they want with this. The moment you are giving something in order to get something else back, it is already wrong, wrong energy. You have to give unconditionally and you should not expect anything back. If it happens it is wonderful, but if it does not, it is wonderful too. You have to have a purpose in your life and I have always been interested in knowing: "what is my purpose?" Since I was a child, I have had a very clear idea that I am an artist and my purpose is to be in this field, as good as I can.

KDJ: But I think it is also about 'sharing the moment'. You have said that you do not feel pain so much when you stand in front of your audience, but when you cut yourself when you are at home, you cry.

MA: You know, the most important thing about me is to show everything. We are not heroes, we have vulnerable sides and I think it is important to show every part of yourself. I mean like now with the piece that Robert Wilson made, it shows exactly all the different parts of myself: the one who is very heroic and pushes the limits, the other who is very fragile and full of vanity and the third one who is very spiritual and wants to become a monk. Everything is true. I think

that every single human being has his own contradictions with himself, but there are only few people that have the courage to show them. Most people are ashamed of things and try to hide them. But I am not. I do not even have personal email. I do not have it. Everything, anybody knows about me is common knowledge. I do not have secrets, and it is so liberating especially when you show things you are ashamed of.

*KDJ: Me too, I do not have secrets, I always try to speak open and honest to everybody. But if you are always the same and live your life for art, could you see your life as a total durational performance?*

MA: I do not know. Everybody's lives are long durational performances. Everybody starts with the birth and every single day is closer to your death and then one day you die. But I think what is very important is that in that life every single moment you feel happy and that you are really happy with what you are doing and do not make compromises. That I think is the most important: to not make compromises to society, nor to yourself.

*KDJ: If you can still make a distinction between your 'private' life and your life during a performance, where is the difference? Is it about the location?*

MA: It's a completely different purpose. I mean, it is like with any other artist: first you get idea. I get my ideas from life. When I get the idea, then I figure out what is the best place, the best situation, the best moment to realize. It is very important. And then you create the moment when performance is going to happen. I have always said that performance for me is the mental and physical construction when you enter in a precise space and time in front of the public. Then the energy happens and that is what performance is about and then when performance is finished. Whether I said, "I'm going to do ten days" or "three hundred days," I will do my job and when it is finished and then that part has ended and then you go home. It is simple, like everybody else: you do a pop-concert, you do your work and then you go home.

*Sarah Gold: To me, you 'fill' the space you perform in with your sheer presence. What significance does the space where you perform have for you?*

MA: To me space is very important. I prefer much more museums than private spaces or galleries, because to me museums are the modern temples. That is where where the public comes to see art.

I am an artist and I like the context of art. I do not like other places where this context of art is missing. Let's say, when I wanted to make *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005), it took me 12 years to get the place I wanted and the place I wanted was the Guggenheim museum, because the Guggenheim museum was built with the idea to show spiritual art and I want exactly to be there and nowhere else. So, I waited 12 years. But I didn't want to make it in any other place.

I want a particular space, a particular architecture. And, you know, the people who come to the museum, they are not just an art public. Let's say in Moma, when I made my work there, there are many people who come because it is a tourist location. They came just to see the museum. But when they saw my work, they started coming back and became really my very preferable audience. You see, it's in the museum because you can reach all kinds of public, not just an art public.

*Carol Rolla: In an interview with Germano Celant, you affirmed that the demands you put on yourself are very different than the demands you put on the public, which you would like to be involved and go through changes as you do. Do you feel responsible for your public?*

MA: Extremely. For me, my public is... every single person is important and I am very aware of my public. I really keep connected to my public, always. My public loves me. I feel that love and that gives me lot of energy.

*KDJ: Are you not afraid that you have become an idol—something that according your own manifesto, an artist should not be?*

MA: I am not afraid of anything. I think that being an idol or not being an idol is a side effect. But this is not the reason why I am doing things. You know, I always go back to myself and I have the reason why I am doing it and the reason is really to change the consciousness, to lift human spirit. That is my main reason. Whatever the public projects in my work, that is their problem, it is not my problem.

*KDJ: In our 2011 Venice Biennale exhibition, we exhibited your film Confession (2010). Instead of human beings, there is a donkey in front of you. Is there for you a difference in the experience of being here-and-now, depending 'who' is in front of you? Or is it about the fact that you are not alone, that 'life' or 'something living' is there with you to share the moment?*

MA: No. I need real contact with real people and you know, I understood that always in reality performance was always being seen as a group of people but never as individual one to one. I prefer this idea of the individual experience, because this one-by-one experience is much stronger and deeper.

Can I just say a bit more about the 'idol'? You know, artists should not be, should not become an idol. Actually, when an artist is becoming an idol in public, that is one thing. But an artist should never believe that he is in fact an idol. That is the problem. That is the danger, because if that would happen, his ego becomes an obstacle to his work. But if he is idolized by his public, that is something that he cannot control. But he himself should not believe he is an idol. And I've never believed myself that I am an idol.

*KDJ: That means you must be criticizing yourself the entire time.*

MA: I am the worst critic of myself, because I always demand from myself—always—100% and more. And if I do not give it, then I am very unhappy.

*SG: One of the other 'rules' in your Manifesto is that you say that an artist should be erotic. I understand that a woman can be erotic and convey this, but for me, a man cannot. Could you explain why an artist should be erotic?*

MA: It is very important, because this is the energy that we have. It is the one main energy that we have, to survive: reproduction energy, which is about eroticism. I think that good art always has this aspect of eroticism. It is not only about eroticism, it has many other layers, but one layer is eroticism. One layer is the erotic, one layer is the spiritual, one layer is the social, one is the political... So, many different layers, but one would be for sure eroticism. So we have to think about it.

*KDJ: Another subject that seems very important for your art is duration. Hermann Nitsch told me, that when you were in your twenties, you took*



part in one of his performances. In 2010, I was a passive model myself in Nitsch's 130<sup>th</sup> Aktion. The performance took seven hours in total. For me, one of the most interesting experiences from this event was that I had no feeling for duration. I mean: Time was passing, and I experienced the sequence of events, but the feeling of duration was missing. It seems that in your performances you strive for this feeling of being in the 'now' and aim to not feel the duration of the passing time, but be in the 'present' as long as possible. Some of your performances took several days. Do I understand correctly that you use 'duration' in your work in order to not experience duration itself? Did you ever manage to stretch this state of being, when the performance was over?

MA: First of all, from the now 40 years of experience in performance art, I understand that duration is the most important of all, because the performer needs to get into a certain state of consciousness. Then, after I get into this state of consciousness, I can bring the audience to the same state. But I need the time and the audience needs the time. This is why the length of the performance is extremely important. This is why my institute in Hudson is going to be based on duration. That is why you as an audience have to sign the contract to stay six hours with me as the public in order to give the experience. Because the duration... One thing we don't have enough in this 21<sup>st</sup> century is time, time for anything. That is what I want: to claim time back.

KDJ: But in OCEAN VIEW, your 12-day performance at Sean Kelly Gallery, for example, people could just walk in and out.

MA: Yes, also in the museum and everywhere else. You know, I did not get this idea until I finished the MoMA performance. It is my new idea. Every performance brings new ideas and a new idea is that of actually restricting six hours to the public, I give them more opportunity to experience than when they are free.

KDJ: Do you think that your audience has a similar experience of your performance as you do?

MA: Oh, I have so many proofs of that. I think, I can make a book of a few thousand pages of testimony of my audience.

KDJ: I can imagine that sometimes the length of the performance depends on the length of the exhibition, but in the cases where you are deciding it yourself, when you are so concentrated on the here-and-now, how do you know that it is over?

MA: When the performance is six hours or a day time, then they tell me when the performance is over. But I know if I want to be there three months, then I know what means 'three months', because I am counting.

VR: While doing your performances in the 'here-and-now', Time seems very important to you. When looking back at the works you have created and at your presence in many different 'here-and-now' situations, what does the passing of time in general mean to you?

MA: Nothing. As I said, for me if you really succeed to be in the present, time does not really exist. That is the most beautiful and fulfilling moment that you ever can experience and I hope that I can teach my public to be more and more in that moment. But you know when it is finished, because you cannot maintain for long time that feeling. Then you have time like everybody else and you know, in my case, I do not have time in my real life. Every hour, I have things to do.

I wake up at six o'clock. I am like a soldier working like hell, so when I make a performance, I claim my time.

KDJ: Nitsch told us that when he goes to the heurigen, to drink wine and sit down, time is slowing down. It is in these moments that he can enjoy life in a very intense way. Is this similar for you, too, that when you are in the performance, slowing down the speed of your regular life, that you can really enjoy the moment?

MA: No. I experience life by making journeys. Like now I lived in the Amazon for three months, then I go to live with aborigines and then I go to... You know, I call them 'research trips', I make these trips with a very special motivation what to do and what to learn. I do not have time at the moment to just hang around and drink wine. I am soon 67, I do not have much time left to create an institute, to find money to run it, to build this place and to do everything I want to do. Really, I do not have time to sit around. But I really enjoy what I am doing right now, every single day I live in happiness.

SG: You said that you are going back to simplicity, even stating in your Manifesto that an artist should have "more and more of less and less". Applying this upon yourself, do you manage to succeed?

MA: Yes, because you know, right now, I do not have a private life, I do not have children, I even live mostly in hotel rooms. I just focus on my work. I am traveling with less and less luggage, I do not have much family left. It is a kind of interesting, because this makes life so much more free and easy because you have no obligations to the people around you, you can just focus on the work. And with regard to my work: Can you make even less than a performance with just two chairs? And nothing is happening, there is no development, there is no beginning, there is no end, there is just two chairs. But I think, I could do with even less. I am now working on this new piece, and it is even less.

CR: During the work Count on us a children's choir sings: "Still there is energy and there is hope." What are your personal hopes about the future? And what about your hopes for performance art?

MA: I do not think about performance art any more. I am thinking about the future of humankind. I am much more interested in humankind. For me, performance is just a tool, nothing else. I mean, who knows if we will exist, or would change or something. I do not know. I am not clairvoyant. I am only thinking that I hope that a day would have 26 hours, so that I can finish everything I want and create this legacy and create this platform where the really different minds of our century can get together and create something which is meaningful and can change or lift the human spirit, but can also change the consciousness of our society today, to understand interdependency, to understand that what we are doing on this planet at the moment, is not right. We have to kind of wake-up, and I think if we have the scientists, if we have philosophers, if we have architects, if we have somebody who is busy with new technology, the artist... If we put all of them together we could maybe create new solutions, new dimensions. This is what I hope is going to happen in my life time.



## QUESTIONS FOR CARL ANDRE

For "Personal Structures: Time Space Existence" 2

By Karlyn De Jongh

1- In your works you have always gone back to The Elements, seemingly reducing "things" to their essence. You are now 77 years old and seem to have lived an intense life. What would you say is the element of life? When you reduce life to its essence, in your opinion, what is it about?

2- In the past years Sarah Gold and I have exhibited your works in several PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibitions, f.e. in Bregenz, Austria, in 2010 and at the Venice Biennale in 2011. It seemed to me that in creating your works, you carefully consider the weight and size of each unit. But thinking about the materials, I can imagine there have been other important aspects in creating your works, such as the value or cost of the materials and the possibility of being dangerous for humans to get in contact with. Considering these aspects, your work seems very 'human' and gives the impression to show a lot about how you think as a person. In my opinion, your work is much more than "an investigation of the properties of materials" [Alistair Rider, 2011] and a wish of using, like you once said, "wood as wood, steel as steel, aluminum as aluminum [and] a bale of hay as a bale of hay." Your works show 'that you exist'. Your work shows 'minimalist characteristics', but at the same time seems very personal. What are your thoughts about this minimalist appearance and your personal presence within your works? Are your works anything more than just the proof of your existence?

3- Since your works of the early 1960s, scientists have 'discovered' several new Elements. The number of Elements known in the 1960s has expanded, reaching 118 Elements today; it seems the so-called 'knowledge' of the world has changed over time. If you would have had the knowledge that you have today, would you have done anything differently in your life?

4- During our Art Project with Lawrence Weiner – staying on his houseboat in Amsterdam for 24 hours – we spoke about 'Sculpture'. Lawrence told Sarah and me about Ad Reinhardt's definition of sculpture: "the things you trip over in the dark." Many of your works lie 'flat' on the floor and do not seem to fit this definition; your work seems more to deal with 'changing a space'. What does space mean to you?

5- Two weeks before he died, Roman Opalka visited our 2011 Venice Biennale. He had so much respect for you, that when I showed him your work "Crux 14" (2010), he took a big step over your metal plates, making sure that he would not touch it. Dedicating his life to show 'time passing', there were very few contemporary artists who Opalka admired: there were four in total (himself included). Opalka explained me that he admired you, because in his opinion you maintained an "Avant-Garde" position: while time has been passing you stayed active in the front line, without becoming repetitive. When you look back at the oeuvre you have created, do you think Opalka judged you correctly?

6- In an interview for our first book "Personal Structures: Time Space Existence" in 2008, you stated that "Life is what makes art possible". I have heard the rumor that although you are still alive, you have stopped making art. Is that possible?

ANSWERS FOR KARLYN DE JONGH 23MAR2013

1. THE ESSENCE OF LIFE IS NOT BEING DEAD.
2. MY WORKS ARE ESSENTIALLY THE GRATIFICATIONS OF NEEDS THAT CANNOT BE GRATIFIED IN ~~THE~~ OTHER WAY.
3. MOST OF THE NEW ELEMENTS <sup>ANY</sup> ~~WAS~~ <sup>WAS</sup> ~~WERE~~ <sup>WAS</sup> CREATED IN ATOMIC REACTIONS CAUSED BY HUMAN INTERVENTIONS. THEY ARE NEVER FOUND IN NATURE. THEIR ~~WAS~~ HALF-LIVES ARE MEASURED IN NANoseconds.
4. SPACE IS THAT WHICH IS HERE & THERE & ALL AROUND & EVERYWHERE. THINGS CANNOT EXIST BEFORE SPACE & TIME OR AFTER. \* ‡
5. AS HENRY MOORE SAID, HE JUST CONTINUED TO DO AS AN ADULT THE THINGS HE DID AS A CHILD.
6. IF IT APPEARS THAT I HAVE STOPPED MAKING WORK, IT IS BECAUSE I HAVE ALREADY USED THE COMMONLY AVAILABLE MATERIALS IN THE CONFIGURATIONS THAT SATISFIED MY NEEDS. IF GOLD & SILVER SHOULD SUDDENLY BECOME AVAILABLE IN THE SAME WAY THAT COPPER & ALUMINUM ARE, I WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO MAKE LARGE IN GOLD & SILVER. I AM NOT INTERESTED IN

MAKING <sup>WORKS</sup> JEWELRY.

NOTE FOR KARLYN DE JONGH: FROM THE NATURE OF YOUR QUESTIONS, I CANNOT ESCAPE THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU HAVE NEVER REALLY EXPERIENCED THE PLEASURE THAT I HOPED ~~MY~~ MY WORKS WOULD PROVIDE. I HOPE THAT I AM MISTAKEN. WHEN I VISITED THE GREAT GARDENS OF KYOTO WITH SOL LEWITT, WE WENT FROM ONE TEMPLE TO ANOTHER IN A STATE OF EXALTED BLISS. AT EACH TEMPLE, A MONK WOULD BE PRESENT TO EXPLAIN THE ALLEGORICAL MEANING OF EACH STONE & PATCH OF MOSS. AT RYOANGI, THE SIMPLEST & MOST PROFOUNDLY MOVING OF ALL THE GARDENS, THE MONK SIMPLY SAID THAT THIS GARDEN IS FOR THE PROVISION OF PLEASURE ONLY.

MOST OF ALL KARLYN, I WANT TO THANK YOU MOST SINCERELY FOR YOUR INTEREST IN MY WORK. BE WELL, @carl andre

\* INFINITY & ETERNITY ARE ESSENTIALLY RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS. THE INFINITY OF MATHEMATICS IS SIMPLY A STATEMENT OF THE INEXHAUSTIBILITY OF CERTAIN OPERATIONS SUCH AS THE DETERMINATION OF VALUE OF  $\pi$ .

‡ WHEN AD REPEATED HIS DEFINITION OF SCULPTURE TO ME I REPLIED: "THAT'S TRUE, AD, BUT WHEN YOU TURN OFF THE LIGHTS ~~NO~~ THE PAINTINGS DISAPPEAR BUT YOU STILL TRIP OVER THE SCULPTURE." HE WAS NOT PLEASED WITH MY REPLY. I MUST MAKE IT CLEAR THAT I HAVE ALWAYS ADMIRER AD'S PAINTING & I ENJOYED HIS COMPANY VERY MUCH.







## HERMAN DE VRIES

herman de vries (1931, Alkmaar, Netherlands) lives in Eschenau, Germany, close to a forest. This forest—nature in general—is his studio and “our primary reality.” But not only is nature the place ‘where’ he creates his works, it is also the subject: de vries addresses “the process of being; the process of destruction; the process of becoming,” as it happens in nature. His work is about ‘this’—the process we are part of.

Change and chance are aspects of being that he explores by focusing on the (disrupted) relation between humanity and nature. His aim is to create an awareness of being a human within nature. In this way, de

vries’ work is about the connection between mind and senses: experiencing this moment in time. It is about this life: I exist here and now.

de vries’ works span a wide variety of media: room installations with flower buds, collections of bones, photographs of himself naked in the forest, or leaving marks of gold leaf on stones in the mountain. Some works are even almost created without the artist’s interference: ‘just’ by the influence of time on the ‘object’, letting it be until declared ‘ready’ by the artist. The works are like a trace, a trace of de vries’ existence, but at the same time they are an attempt to make ‘nature’ available for perception by others, to share.

de vries wrote the following statements as a result of an interview by Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold.

(de vries)  
↓  
7/

time is now  
space is here  
existence is this

chance & change  
now here this

now is always (all ways) in continuum. now is the moment of change. the moment of change is the moment of chance: without change there is no chance. chance always happens in the chaos, maintaining balance.

this is what i make visible, what is here, that represents the process <sup>that</sup> we are a part of.

here is where i am, you are, everywhere we are, and the horizon of our existence is everywhere where we are. that is our life-space, at that moment, in the continuum of now.

- (1.) nature is our primary reality. culture is our human reality, always having its base in nature (though often forgotten or neglected). the virtual is a third reality, based in culture and at last still based on nature. working in and from nature or with natural processes means to work with primary processes or facts. my choice to take something is spontaneous, possible by a personal process of observation and contemplation. mostly something jumps into my perception. some time i see something and wait till i come back and it has become changed in the process. doing this is not caused by

thinking. i don't know. perhaps i should call this intuition. it is spontaneous.

(3) for me, art is a contribution to our consciousness or to the process of becoming conscious. but, consciousness is a difficult word. i will not try to give a definition - that would be a limitation. to show a work means that i take part in the realm of development of society: opening new ways of seeing and experience. chances for change.

(4) our being is possible by active awareness of our senses, inclusive the mind. awareness is central in being. art can help to become aware, see it or hear it, taste it, feel it or smell it. in the Netherlands i developed a garden that invites to smell the flowers, among others there were over so different lilacs. they all smell like lilacs, still they all smell different. different and identical. actually in my work i show beauty. beauty is not typical soft or friendly, beauty can be terrific as is the process of being.

(5) the forest, nature, is my studio. there the work is done. my part is



to show, make it available for perception. open the senses and mind for what is often neglected. it is unchanged real and so it is true.

Worms

✓ seeing beauty is love.

# TOSHIKATSU ENDO

By Karlyn De Jongh

March-April 2010

*With his work Toshikatsu Endo (1950, Japan) addresses human existence. The artist wishes to return to the side of today's life that seems to have disappeared; his art is a device to go back to the essences of human existence. With materials, such as bones, wood, water and fire, his mostly circular sculptures have a primal feel to them. When standing in or in front of Endo's work, you know you are confronted with ancient times.*

*Karlyn De Jongh: What does an encounter with your work look like for you? How do you yourself deal with your work? How do you encounter your own sculpture?*

Toshikatsu Endo: For me, the creation of my work is an act that connects the most important elements of human existence. In that way it is a correspondence. I think that for us who live today—not only for art—that our entire surrounding environment is inside of modernism and therefore we live parallel to the context of modernism. As for the material and how it refers to ancient contents: I talk about this from my modernist perspective.

Well, although I indicated the above as a prerequisite, I carefully avoided connecting the context of leading edge contemporary art with the basis of my own expression. For me it is opposite: I try to look at the foundation from the point of the primitive or origin, the place of mankind. This is because the matter of leading contemporary art has the possibility of falling into an extremely peripheral situation, and is like the media that include general aspects of mankind.

Of course, even though I explain the primitive life of mankind, it is impossible to experience it in reality and it remains in an imaginative range. Because I look at contemporary art from a primordial viewpoint, I got the confidence that it is a considerably rich and effective critical perspective. That's why, for my artwork, I use the element of origin from the maximum limit of my thoughts. In fact, earth, air, sun, water, fire, man, woman, life, death, sex, etc... they are the pure essence and I start facing them with imaginative power. Because of that I came to think of my sculpture as a device for gathering together these essences.

*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.

*KDJ: Your work has an element of sacrifice. Making your work, do you feel that has to do with sacrificing your own life as an artist, too? How do you feel about the act of making art?*

TE: Sacrifice is not a necessary condition for artistic expression. Rather, I would say that there is not so much art that contains an element of sacrifice. But from the beginning of my art creation, I wanted this element of sacrifice; I wanted my art expression to be the medium that reaches into the deepest part of human's animalistic side. As a result of my search, I went into the direction of questioning life, death and religion and I even went to the basis of human life: to the matter of sacrifice.

Sacrifice is happening in a community kind of place that is prescribed by a synergetic imagination. That's why sacrifice does not work out by peering off from the community: if you try to use the phenomenon of sacrificial ceremony as a matter of art expression or if you try to make an individual object. And also, in today's world, the ritual of the typical sacrifice has been already lost. From that point, I considered sacrifice as the only possible matter. The space-time of sacrifice had lived realistically. I got into its imaginative power and then it influenced my work as one of representational expression.

But a request for sacrifice has not been completely lost. Sacrifice is a matter of community, so until there exists a community, the sacrifice mechanism exists in a latent way. It appears with death, life, anima, sex, and around eroticism. By the way, I am not sure if the artist can continuously make art in which he is taking himself as the object of sacrifice.

*KDJ: Sacrifice is often related to a hope for something to happen in the future. What is it that you hope for? What drives you in making your work?*

TE: Without any exception, artworks have the desire to go beyond the dimension characterized by the daily. And they approach the dimension that becomes inevitably holy. So for me, going deeply into sacrifice is one of the opportunities to get close to the dimension that goes beyond daily life, towards transcendence.

In ancient times, sacrifice existed as a kind of system to defecate the dirt that accumulated inside the whole community. In ancient times,





sacrifice was important and incorporated in the society. It was also a mysterious mechanism. But today, the inevitable form of sacrifice is hidden in a disassembled way behind our complicated society. That is why, the factum of my art is a temporary device, which has the wish to return—even only a little—to the side of today's life that has disappeared: memory and soul.

*KDJ: It seems that Void—which is also the title of your large wooden circle that you showed in our 2011 Venice Biennale exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES—is for you a place where you can experience life and death. What do you do when you—symbolically—burn this Void? Do life and death come to a standstill for a moment? Does the ecstasy you feel relate to a reviving of your animalistic side? What about the experience of death?*

TE: I suppose, the 'Void characteristic' is a hidden and enclosed part of the real world and is itself 'external'. The act of burning the 'Void' is a metaphor for approaching the action of sacrifice.

Of course, in reality it is impossible to burn the 'Void', because it is a non-physical existence. I create the 'Void' to symbolize the object as sculpture. Then I burn it. I desire to change the object from a daily thing into a non-daily transcendent existence. I do this through the realistic process of creation, burning the piece and destroying it. These are never feverish actions. Rather, the process is intended calmly and realistically and by carefully avoiding danger. However, it is true that I get a vague feeling of ecstasy in the center of my body and my brain. This feeling is existence as a multidirectional and polysemous matter, by getting



closer to the place where death and trance coexist impartibly. This momentum causes the chemical reaction between body and language.

*KDJ: You have spoken about Eastern and Western culture, that with regard to the Void there are many similarities and that they have the Void in their centre. Would it ever be possible for a person to become the Void? Is there for you also an ethical aspect related to this, a question of how to live?*

TE: Hypothetically spoken, to embody the 'Void characteristics', a person must be completely covered by silence. My image of 'Void characteristic' is the place to accomplish a complete absence of volition, thought and emotion. Even of Jesus and Buddha, we cannot say that their existence is one of complete silence. So, we could say they are incomplete as embodying or personifying the meaning of the 'Void characteristic'.

My 'Void theory' is a kind of communal theory. For that reason, the meaning of the 'Void characteristic' is not just 'Void' itself. It is the imaginative power by the members of the community who surround the 'Void'. In fact, the 'Void theory' is a fantasy of harmony happening inside the community. That 'Void' is the complete 'Void': it becomes a dimension that is the situation of complete non-existence and non-volition.

My 'Void theory' does not materialize specifically in the realistic world. In the end, it is an ideal shape or matrix. So, that is why it does not completely materialize in my sculpture either. In theory, my way of sculptural expression is an act of accumulating value. It is not more or less than that.

# JOHANNES GIRARDONI

*Johannes Girardoni (1967, Graz, Austria) is an Austrian-born, American sculptor and installation artist. Girardoni's works are reductive investigations at the intersection of light and material through which he explores the continuously shifting relationship between reality and image. Girardoni is best known for his Light Reactive Organic Sculpture, in which the primary material vocabulary—found wood, beeswax, pigment—and its physical constellation, become both the carrier of an explicitly painterly event, while also being the foundation of an immaterial phenomenon. The works are often examinations of phenomenological processes, where a hollow or empty space—a tangible emptiness—turns out to be the actual center. Opposites and contradictions form fundamental structures in Girardoni's work. His orchestration of material and light, presence and absence, things found and things formed, all resist clear fixation, thereby maintaining and creating works with their own non-derivable reality. Girardoni lives and works in Los Angeles.*

## Seeing Outside Our Selves

Since I think that most relevant questions in art making today are asked in between defined disciplines, I tend to organize my work at ambiguous intersections. Can sculpture function as architecture, and if it takes on that role, where is the line that architecture ends, and art begins? Are there opportunities to create new definitions of space by linking physical and digital information? Can an artwork be an extension of our perception, and how would that impact our definition of reality? Can new relationships between light and material be created through an algorithm? Is there still a place for radically non-technological work, and what conditions can it create that disconnect it from existing knowledge? Are inquiries into the relationship between sculpture and painting still relevant, and if so, how do they relate to life and culture today? Whatever the answers, they are all pertinent questions because of one inevitable evolution in our time: the distinction between our physical environment and virtual space is rapidly fragmenting. Our natural selves are cross-pollinating with digital systems. I tackle this novel condition—with all of its problems and opportunities—by creating conditions in my work that respond to, and shape this new reality.

My experience has been one of flux. Growing up in the deep freeze of cold-war Vienna in the 1970's, I went through a complete cultural

re-acclimation when I moved to Southern California in my teens. I left behind the shadow the Iron Curtain cast over the small medieval towns of eastern Austria for the thick, palpable light of the American West, the hard radiance of the open desert, and the novelty of no immediately apparent history. I was fast-forwarded to the present. By way of Maine, and some time at MIT in Cambridge, I eventually made my way to New York, a city that epitomizes the 24/7-reinvention cycle. For some twenty-two years it was the perfect place for a cultural nomad as myself to feel at home. The one constant of Manhattan is its perpetual re-rendering of itself, driven by the hard-edged blend of desire, creativity, commerce and greed its inhabitants unleash on their island in an effort to survive and thrive. I recently replaced this saturated fabric, one that leaves no square inch un-designed or un-commodified, for Los Angeles. Less predictable, more loosely articulated, and more complicated to grasp than its East Coast sibling, LA is a decentralized platform of nature and urbanity, full of grit and intoxicating beauty all at once. Los Angeles is a state of mind, one that can be constantly reimaged.

I have used the continuously shifting conditions in my life as a point of orientation. I move fluidly between photo-based work, sculpture and installation art, never letting a singular medium in any of those disciplines act as a sole protagonist. I consistently rely on a convergent architecture: my photography is digitally deconstructed and physically over-painted; my light installations are physical environments that merge natural and artificial light and re-articulate that information as sound; my beeswax sculpture is characterized by its heavy materiality, yet it is work about light, and results from an act of painting; my *Metaspace* installations are spaces about space. They are large physical structures that are about the immersive and redefining conditions they create rather than the space they occupy. All the work is connected by a reductive inquiry into the relationship of light and material, through which I explore the continuously evolving relationship between our sensory apparatus, reality, and image.

After spending time in West Africa in 2008 on a research expedition with a group of architects, scientists and other colleagues, my focus broadened into a critical inquiry of contemporary culture.



I left Mali with complex and indelible impressions—with unresolved thoughts about a people, whose existential condition is shaped by one of the world's most inhospitable climates and whose culture, which is physically and spiritually designed purely to maintain survival, exposes life in its rawest, most un-aestheticized form. As sometimes well-meaning, sometimes arrogant first-worlders, we have managed to develop and use knowledge-systems, technology and infrastructure, to move refuse, dis-ease, and death a little bit further away from ourselves than some of our less-privileged fellow inhabitants. We are often oblivious to the fact that we have done so at the expense of those who have not. I could not help but land back home with the notion that technology as a solution to

everything serves merely as a temporary distraction from the inescapable reality of our own mortality. And yet, technology creates new perceptions of our selves, and even has the capacity to extend and preserve organic knowledge. After a month-long immersion into a culture completely off the grid, I was struck by the vast, albeit somewhat deteriorated infrastructure visible from my plane on final approach to Newark. More artifact of 19<sup>th</sup> century post-industrial revolution, than our 21<sup>st</sup> century information-linked reality, it brought me to thinking about where we are right now. We occupy a hyper-connected world, one that meshes physical and digital infrastructures on a scale that is difficult to perceive. The core of our discourse takes place at the intersection of digital information



and analog material. In the current cultural context, where the real and the virtual are converging and cross-pollinating in unprecedented ways, I face this new reality by creating constructs that combine digital and material expression in spatial, atmospheric and conceptually immersive work.

Coming back from Mali, I was continually reminded how our culture is saturated by digital systems. We use our phone's intelligence to get us to the right place. That alone, has shifted how we understand and read our environment. The algorithm behind Google searches detects behavioral patterns, the sum of which yields a digital identity that knows more about us than our friends; or worse, more than we know about ourselves. We make decisions based on information provided by algorithms. My focus on the interaction of light and material brought me to the idea of reality augmentation in art. With the use of sensors and tone generators, I could use an algorithm to make light audible and push the whole paradigm of phenomenological art into the current context. If we are experiencing a work by James Turrell or Robert Irwin, for example, we encounter perception in its purest form. We experience ourselves sensing. Even now, artists like Olafur Eliasson work with perception as the medium itself. The whole history of art culminates there. As with the "death of painting," however, there is no end. The evolution, and this is where we break with history, is that we are now occupying a cultural condition in which we are not the only ones sensing. Artificial perception extends our own sensory apparatus at large and creates a new reality. An environment that we sense while it

also senses us, and then changes as a result, heralds the end of the supremacy of our perception. This is the new now.

The notion of a physical-digital convergence is at the core of my light and sound installations. Much of my work is focused on turning light into sound, based on mapping the frequencies of the visible spectrum onto the sound spectrum. I call this sonification of light Spectro-Sonic Refrequency. I use sensors to pick up an array of light information and use that information to generate sound. Why is this transposition relevant? First, this is a different idea than playing a sound to visuals for dramatic effect, as in a soundtrack. It is also different than a recording. The leap here is a form of reality augmentation. In my work, light is made audible in real time, and changes based on what the sensors see. The shift is from relying on one's sensory apparatus, to expanding perception through technology. Our perception remains fully engaged, but we are also hearing light. Depending on who you speak with, the use of reality augmentation in art, or its presence in the wider cultural context, is considered problematic, controversial, an opportunity, or all of the above. Regardless, I am focused on creating an art that sees viewers in their environment, changes its behavior based on what it sees, and rearticulates all of what it sees as sound, in real time. That creates a condition which redefines the role we play as participants in art and in life.

My first installation that addresses these questions fully was *The (Dis)appearance of Everything*, shown at the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale



in 2011. *The (Dis)appearance of Everything* is an interactive installation that explores the convergence of physical material and light by rearticulating light as sound through Spectro-Sonic Refrequency. The installation's architecture questions the limits of perception and activates the border area of natural phenomena and digital systems. Natural and artificial light merges inside five purple cast resin elements that appear to subtly shift in color and luminosity depending on the viewer's position within the space. Two sensors, calibrated to measure both the purple and daylight frequencies, drive a tone generator, which converts the frequencies of light into frequencies of sound, making light audible. The sensors also register the presence of the viewer moving through the space, which additionally modulates the sound. In this set-up, virtual and physical information is processed both by the viewer and the work, further blurring the boundary between phenomenological and virtual events.

I am currently involved in mapping the entire visible spectrum, transposing it on the audible sound spectrum, and developing sensors and processors that read video data, color information, movement, light frequencies, as well as other light parameters, all of which convert to sound frequencies. This research is applied in a new project, titled *Metaspace V2*. A raw aluminum shell provides the framework for the sculpture's seamless elliptical interior skin. The sculpture is entered through a low and narrow opening. Inside, the space expands into an immersive light and sound environment that continuously evolves. Monochromatic LED light is projected into the

space through a resin lens at the top of the sculpture. The curvilinear geometry of the work scatters the colored light inside, in effect dematerializing physical boundaries and creating a pure color space. Sensors measure the light frequencies of the specific color and drive tone generators that convert the frequencies of light into frequencies of sound. The visceral sound vibration shifts and modulates as the light condition changes. The sensors also register the presence of visitors' movement in the space, which changes the progression and speed of the color sequence and hence the sound. Virtual and physical information is processed both by the viewer and the installation, creating a feedback loop between the two. Natural and virtual structures, layered on top of one another, create a multi-sensory, immersive environment of phenomenological events and digital systems. Matter becomes light and light becomes sound. Ultimately, at the core of this setting, *Metaspace V2* questions the border of natural and artificial phenomena.

*Metaspace V2* is a space about space. The sculpture not only challenges existing definitions of space and how we perceive it, but also proposes how measurement of waveforms, the space between peaks and valleys, and digital systems extend perception to enable the formation of new realities. Equipped with sensors and tone generators that make light audible, *Metaspace V2* questions our current cultural paradigm, one in which technology and nature find themselves at an increasingly blurred intersection.



## PETER HALLEY

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

*Peter Halley (1953, New York, USA) creates colourful, geometric works often depicting the relationships between what he calls 'prisons' and 'cells'—icons that reflect the increasing geometricization of social space. For Halley space has always been the subject of painting—painting, which he understands as anything that involves an image. According to Halley, we live increasingly in a 2-dimensional world of images. The flatness of painting reflects this; the imagistic world is less affected by our physical or 3-dimensional spatial experience. Halley lives and works in New York, USA.*

*Sarah Gold: What does your installation Judgment Day which you presented at our PERSONAL STRUCTURES 54<sup>th</sup> Biennale exhibition at Palazzo Bembo in Venice (2011) mean to you?*

**Peter Halley:** All of my installations are site-specific, having to do with the proportions of the space, the character of the architecture, and the nature of the city. This piece was a response to how fine art and decorative elements have been integrated into architecture from the Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo periods.

My installations are made with digital prints. Back in 1993, I did a big print, called *Exploding Cell*. Over the years my prints have remained focused on the image of the explosion itself, an image I associate with romantic or violent change.

*Karlyn De Jongh: At our symposium in the New Museum in New York in 2009, you stated that space has always been the subject of painting,*

*understanding 'painting' as anything that involves an image. At that time, you indicated that your work is an enquiry into social space, a space created by humans. It seems that with the work you created for our 2011 Venice Biennale PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition, you not only 'inquired' into space, but also 'produced' a space. The space itself was already there, but with your wallpaper installation you transformed it and created it in a new way. Did your understanding of space change? In reference to this particular work, what does space mean to you?*

**PH:** My installations are based on my interest in the relationship between images on the wall and the surrounding architecture—how the three-dimensional space of the architecture and the two-dimensional space of the prints play against each other or enhance each other. How two-dimensional elements on the wall change the reading of the architecture is very interesting to me.

*KDJ: You created Judgment Day especially for our exhibition and refers to Venice. It is said that the traditional founding of Venice is identified with the dedication of the first church, that of San Giacomo at the islet of Rialto, and this dates back as far as 421 AD. Palazzo Bembo is not that old, but still it was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. How did this historical aspect influence you?*

**PH:** The palazzo was built in the fifteenth century by the Venetian noble family Bembo, and is the birthplace of Pietro Bembo, a renowned literary figure who also became a cardinal. I responded to this very rich historical context. The more there is to respond to, the more the installation will feel locked into the space. I also drew on various Venetian artists. I was responding to the kind of color and light found in the Venetian silk fabrics made by Mariano Fortuny. And the title of the work comes from Tintoretto's *Last Judgement*, found nearby in the church of the Madonna dell'Orto.



*KDJ: When you were in Venice, you explained Sarah and me that your patterns were inspired by the marble structures that you had seen in the Venetian churches. When thinking of Venice, there are so many things one could think of that people bring in relation to this city. Why did you choose this reference?*

PH: I was fascinated with the use of marble on the walls and floors of the older churches in Venice such as San Marco. The pieces of marble are sliced, and the two halves are placed side by side, creating a mirroring effect. I wanted to use the same technique with my explosion prints, by creating quadrants in which the prints mirrored one another right and left and up and down.

*KDJ: Venice as a city shows many differences when comparing it to New York, the city or space that has been influencing your work since*

*the 1980s. And this seems to be clear when looking at Judgment Day: the work is quite lively and 'explosive' in comparison to the paintings we know from you. How do you feel about this wallpaper installation in comparison to your prison-like cells and conduits? To what extent does space influence you that you can create such visually different works? What do the works say about you?*

PH: The imagery was the latest metamorphosis of my computer-mutated images of explosions. With the explosion prints, I've tried to establish an alternative world to the classical, unchanging, hegemonic world of my paintings. During my entire lifetime, the explosion has been a powerful cultural image—starting with the hydrogen bomb during the Cold War and continuing to September 11<sup>th</sup>. As an artist from New York, I felt that my explosion prints were almost a premonition of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

The explosions also reflect the Romantic impulse that sees the world in flux, where nothing is stable and everything is in a state of metamorphosis. Even for a city such as Venice, which is sometimes seen as an unchanging historical museum, there is rapid social, environmental, and even geographical change.

*KDJ: In this work there is a large variety of patterns, that are partly repetitive, and have many different colours.*

PH: Patterning is created by two distinct operations. In one, the explosion image is repeated four times, to form a larger image that combines four prints. In the other, the image is rotated four times within a single print to form a more densely layered space. I hoped that these two opposing strategies of expanding the image over four prints and condensing the image four times within one print would provide dramatic differences in density.

*KDJ: The two walls seem to have a dialogue with each other, whereby the wall with the entrance door had muted colours, but in a variety of yellows, purples, and reds; the other side, was bright, but more uniform in colour. Why did you choose it this way?*

PH: One wall was monochromatic red and the other used the primary colors of red, yellow, and blue. I wanted to contrast a fiery red monochrome with the more rational feeling of the primary colors. At the same time, I wanted the overlap of these simple transparent colors to create veils of color without solidity—just the opposite of my very solid, planar paintings.

JOSEPH KOSUTH

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## ‘The Mind’s Image of Itself’

When the book comes to the pages that correspond to the end of the building it is modeled upon, it has automatically come to an end. To go on would spoil the design. The analogy between the abstract structure of the written contents and the solid object on whose shape it has been projected gives the book a strange transparency. The reader looks through the words, or past them, and, visualizing the object, can intuit the depths of the analogy. *Mary Douglas*



Everyone with eyes has at some time or other witnessed the play of shadows, or something like it, and has been made by it to see a space and the things included therein. But it works in us without us; it hides itself in making the object visible. To see the object, it is necessary not to see the play of shadows and light around it. The visible in the profane sense forgets its premises; it rests upon a total visibility which is to be re-created and which liberates the phantoms captive within it. Maurice Merleau-Ponty

*It is the nature of human beings, that when they see a picture, they see not only the picture but also the world behind it. That is, because the world is always present, and it is always present that we can see the picture at all, and it is always present that we can see the world.*

That which is expressed by and in the abstract eye is in the first instance something which has its own essential content, but by becoming abstract this something loses its own meaning and becomes the vehicle of something else. Behind the abstract arises, as it were, from the eye which at this point opens between the form and its meaning. The eye is no longer indissolubly united together; the meaning is no longer attached to that particular form, nor the form no longer to that particular meaningful content. What remains is the abstract: in other words, the abstract of meaning which attaches to every representation. Walter Benjamin

All through these very times of their eye and many phantoms continue to see words, although the words are not there and words differ from one another both in meaning and in the range of their meanings. In such cases it seems as if when nothing is changed but only the elements that are the boundaries of things can bring with them some kind of seeing from which all the various things can be produced. Lacan

*The picture is a picture of the world, but the world is not a picture of the picture. The picture is a picture of the world, but the world is not a picture of the picture.*

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This is due particularly to the hard limitations of the eye. The eye can not be in the whole field of the pictorial work at the same time, but rather always only in a part. It stands there before a relatively small picture board, before the task that has been posed, like a grazing animal. It must enter into movement because it can't see everything at once. Paul Klee







## MELISSA KRETSCHMER

*The essence of Melissa Kretschmer's (1962, Santa Monica CA, USA) work is the relationship between matter and light, or "how and how much light reveals the subject and how and how much matter reveals the light." She uses materials such as glass, wax, tar and ink, chosen because of their fragility, liquidity or transparency. Even though their physical state or form is changing, glass and wax are captured in strict geometric shape, perfect at a glance, but marked by widespread micro imperfections.—Kretschmer lives in New York.*

The *Plane Series* body of works are collage-like, low relief constructions made of layers of beeswax, graphite, various types of paper and thin plywood. Not unlike much of my work overall, they exist for me somewhere between painting and sculpture, where flatness and depth; color and matter; transparency, translucency and opacity; light and shadow are inextricably linked.

While I don't consider myself a "colorist", I do have an interest in the color of materials as they come to me... golden beeswax, fleshy-toned plywood, gunmetal gray graphite and "white" paper. I prefer to think of color as being bound to its material, as the very embodiment of its matter. Color becomes affected by the weight,

texture, and flexibility of its material and so seems more subtle, varied and interminable. One might consider it a more reductive way of looking at color... almost looking at color in its "absence".

But I think the works are equally about their collage-like construction... about getting at a sense of a whole through many disparate parts held together; where surface and support become one entity. What lies deeply behind the top-most surface is just as important and remains so, despite its being nearly or entirely invisible. It's this approach that allows me to develop the overall shape and structure of the work over time rather than to determine what it will be before I start. It's a way of allowing the work to emanate, generate from itself.

I have come to understand that the very immanence of any work is dependent upon the simultaneity of various qualities and traits within that work and materials, being the generative force behind my works, provide the means by which I can explore that. It is, in the end, the very essence of a thing that makes it what it is and unlike anything else.

# LEE UFAN

By Karlyn De Jongh

Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy

*Painter, sculptor, writer and philosopher Lee Ufan (1936, Haman County, South Korea) is about Encounter. He focuses on the relationships of materials and perceptions; his works are made of raw physical materials that have barely been manipulated. Lee Ufan's often site-specific installations centralize the relationship between painted / unpainted and occupied / empty space. Through the relationship between the works and the spaces in which they are placed, he invites the viewer to experience "the world as it is."—Lee Ufan divides his time between Kamakura, Japan and Paris, France.*

## 26 November 2011

Tomorrow is the final day of our Venice Biennale exhibition, that was here in Palazzo Bembo for six months. I am now in the main space, where I spent most of my time these past months. It is now 6:52pm. The exhibition is closed. Everybody went home; I am alone. All the lights, TVs and other installations are already switched off. Except for the Lee Ufan room. Because now at this very moment, I feel I have to take my chance to spend some time with Lee Ufan. An encounter with a work that I have seen almost every day, since its realization here in our Palazzo. It is my last chance and in the past six months, I have not really spent any time with Lee Ufan's installation. I decide to have the encounter just like that: speaking in my voice recorder, letting my thoughts come, communicating my experience directly as time is passing.

Slowly, I am walking towards Lee Ufan's room, passing the dark spaces with the artworks of Joseph Kosuth, Hermann Nitsch, François Morellet... It is incredibly cold here. I am wearing three layers of thick clothes and a cape, but still I am freezing. My hands are almost dead. I am actually a little nervous. I do not know why; there is no reason for it at all.

When I arrive in the Lee Ufan space, I become quiet and stop at the entrance, standing on the little wooden bar that we made to keep the Carrara marble inside the room. I look at the installation, it is just 'there'... I do not want to say: "beautiful", that feels 'too easy'. I do not know... There is something about it. It is just special; it just takes over and forces a different atmosphere upon you—silent power.

There is 2000 kilo of Carrara marble on the floor. The marble, you can see that many people have walked over it. It is not straight anymore. I enter the space and hear the change in sound. The sound is different inside. I hear the grinding of the stone under my feet and the change in the sound of my voice. I hear it differently. It is muted.

Everything in the room is slightly off center: the brush stroke on the painting, the metal plate, which is also cut in an unusual shape (not square, not rectangular, taper on each side, but not on each side the same) is off center. Even though it may not have been intended like that by Lee Ufan, in a way I like the marks from the visitors on the plate. It is a white trace: the marble powder sticks to the bottom of their shoes and the footprints are like a trace showing that at another moment in time, there were also people in this space. Does it make a difference for my perception of the work? At the moment, I feel it is still 'the same thing'.

It is interesting how... Every time I am with a Lee Ufan work, I have difficulties finding words and describing what I feel and think.

I like touching the marble somehow. I do not know why. It gives a strange, burning feeling on my skin. I also like its sound while walking over it. Although it consists of thousands of small little stones, the floor feels almost flat, it feels solid together, but when you walk over it with the shoes I am wearing, it is 'complicated'.

Looking at the medium-size stone, I see again how beautiful it is lit. It really stands out. It is like a star, with this white spotlight on it, like in the theater. I remember what Lee Ufan said about the face of the stone. It seems a little strange to me (still) to think that a stone might have a face, but looking at it, it does make sense.

My thoughts seem to go from one place to the other, without any direction. Sometimes, I feel I am not thinking at all. I am just blank. Speaking directly in my voice recorder, this time I experience this feeling of 'not-knowing' stronger than in the other encounters I have had. Perhaps this confrontation with 'I do not know' would be there as well if I, at another point in time, would take a moment alone to relax and think about life. Maybe it is not so connected to encountering a work of Lee Ufan as I have described it in previous



encounters. Maybe it is more connected to the moment of 'pause' that the encounter most of the times is, for me. They stand out of the fast, pressured speed of life. Since I started working with PERSONAL STRUCTURES my life developed very quickly; I, my character, developed very quickly. It is around the same time that I started to become acquainted with Lee Ufan and started this project, collecting my encounters with him. Not that I feel on a daily basis that my life is so difficult. Rather I feel lucky to have the opportunities I have. It is just not always so easy to be 31 years old and work on international top level in the world of contemporary art. I feel there are still millions of things that I have to learn.

Walking closer to the stone, I see the carvings, the effect of time. It has a beautiful, interesting shape: roundish, but also almost rectangular. It has brownish lines going across. Trying to describe the stone, I realize I cannot say anything about it: I can say something about its color and shape, but basically I have no clue about nature. But I like it. It feels like a friendly stone. It has many interesting angles. I walked around the stone several times the past months, but looking at it more closely now, I can imagine why Lee Ufan chose this particular side as the "face" of the stone. The other side is quite flat and has a downwards-shape. The shape of the face is upwards; it is as if it is looking up to the painting.



The stone has glitters on it. They really shine, with this spotlight on it. The light is quite strong and makes the marble under and around the stone look very white. Especially, because there is not so much light shining on the marble. Lee Ufan arranged the spotlights to light the painting, the metal plate and the stone, but that is it. Because of the spotlight, the stone feels alive. Immediately, I remember what Tatsuo Miyajima told me about stones having a life as well. It always sounded a little strange to me to think about a stone in this way, but looking at Lee Ufan's stone here, shining in the light the way it is standing out, the way it is presented here, it becomes alive. It has such a beautiful

structure. It feels like a mountain on its own, like a world in itself. I feel like sitting next to it and looking to the painting together.

In the tours I have given the past months, I kept taking the stone as the example of how to understand Lee Ufan's work and now, at last, I have taken a longer time to look at it myself. It really is different every time. In my head, I sometimes hear Hermann Nitsch's music from the next room. It is switched off, but I can still hear it in the back of my head. The music from the 130. Aktion... I think about Rainer and the moments I spent with him. He will probably call me tonight. How many interesting people I met in this space: Essl, Fumio Nanjo... Memories of the past.

My thoughts are drifting away again. Last week, in Palazzo Grassi, I believe I was quite focused on the installation there. The work was powerful, like an army of little paintings. This work here in Palazzo Bembo is not more or less powerful, but I think just feel comfortable being around it. Maybe it is also because here I have many memories connected to it, different, short encounters that all add up in the experience of the work. They are all part of the whole feeling.

In a few days this will all be gone... One year after Lee Ufan visited this room, the installation will go back to Paris. In a way, 'Miyajima' feels very appropriate at the moment: "life keeps changing—even

'keep changing' keeps changing." I do not feel sad about it. It is just part of life. I also do not feel emotional about spending this last moment with Lee Ufan's work. I feel the installation has become part of me, part of my life. I feel very natural in the space. Maybe because I already experienced it for six months. I feel comfortable with it. That is all I can say. The work is a part of my life that will end tomorrow. Part of Lee Ufan's work that will cease to exist. Maybe I do feel a little melancholic now. But then again: I am tired, cold and hungry and it is nearly 8 o'clock. Maybe it is just time to go home.

# JUDY MILLAR

By Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold & Valeria Romagnini  
September 2011

*Judy Millar (1957, Auckland, New Zealand) is about painting in space. She addresses the conceptual framework of painting by freely referencing its recent histories, and taking up known positions only to deconstruct and question their previous meanings. Lives in Auckland and Berlin, Germany.*

*Sarah Gold: At the end of the 1920's Yervand Kochar initiated discussions about "painting into space", much later people like the German artists Gotthard Graubner and Katharina Grosse have expressed thoughts about painting and color in space. Your works seem also not to be about space itself. Is there development, or even a linear development and who or which thoughts have influenced you? What exactly are you exploring?*

Judy Millar: The first works of art I saw as a child were examples of Maori art. In these works there was always an intimate connection between the painting or sculpture and the architectural spaces they were placed in. Painting never took place on a flat surface but followed the curve of a wooden beam or rafter. The carved figures also had complex relationships between their forms and the heavily incised surfaces. I knew the history of Western art only via reproductions. This has given me a very detached view of European art: I refer to it rather than feeling part of it. Later on, one of my first extended trips was to Italy specifically to study the works of the Spatialists. I was very drawn to their ambition to synthesize colour, sound, space, movement and time into a new type of art.

Growing up at the time I did, it would have been difficult not to have an interest in the concept of space. It was the time of man literally venturing into space. But I was also always keenly aware that I couldn't actually see space, that I could only infer its presence through movement. I was sure, even as a child, that there must be something behind the flat picture of the world that formed before my eyes. My grandparents had thick green velvet curtains between their living room and dining room. Standing in one room I would pull the curtains open as quickly as possible, thinking that if I was fast enough I would reveal something behind the image of the room on the other side. I was trying to put a hole in my image of the world, to literally puncture the world. Ever since then I've been trying to bring the world I see and the world I move through together. So my work is really more about appearance and time than it is about space. About things coming into and going out of view. About images forming and images disintegrating. About trying to reconcile our embodied existence with our mental existence.

*Karlyn De Jongh: If there is a development of painting, or even color, invading space, where might this development lead to, where are you going, and why do you want to bring painting and/or color into space?*

JM: There have always been artists that have wanted to make their work as corporeally present as possible. For me the best painting has always invaded space in one way or another and most often this has been achieved through the use of colour. We live more and more in a "flat screen" world. I want my work to run against this tendency with images that insist on a bodily orientation. I want to put forward an embodied thinking in opposition to the disembodied thinking that most of our recent technologies encourage. By placing colour in space I can disrupt perception and distort some of our normal experiences of distance and time.

*SG: The wild abstract splashes on your object give the impression that the object is painted upon. In fact your object is covered with a canvas-like material where the painted pattern is printed upon. This means that the reality of your object is being accompanied by the illusion that it handles about a painting in space; seemingly leaving it to be just color in space? How does this fit together? Is there logic in your work?*

JM: The colour is not all printed but is a mixture of direct painting, the orange colour, and printing, the black. The work goes through a number of transformations, starting out as a direct painting on a small scale, being scanned and then colour separated. All this allows me to play with the scale of the original small hand-painted work. I play with the human scale and end up with an over-sized exaggeration. The only logic operating here is a desire to find a bigger dimension for myself and the viewer. There is also the desire for the work to end up as an advertisement of its own presence.

*SG: In your work at our exhibition in Venice, you did not stay within the white box given to you. Your 3D, over-sized, dynamic 'brushstroke' seems to me as if it is fighting with the space that surrounds it. You opened, enlarged, the actual room, made your work going through the window to invade the space that surrounds the Palazzo, the room you placed your object in. What exactly do you want to say to me by doing this?*

JM: I want to manipulate the visitor's experience of space. By placing something over-sized, something literally too big in the room I create an uneasy tension between the room, the work and the viewer.



This of course isn't just an issue of size but also one of scale. You have the scale of the room, the scale of the work and the human scale.

*KDJ: Scale and movement seem important elements in your work, which you have compared to an Alice-in-Wonderland-feeling of shifting perceptions—feeling large at one moment and small at another. Why do you wish to create this feeling? Is this the way you live and think about your life?*

JM: This is certainly the world that opens up to me when I'm painting. It's also the feeling I get walking through the streets of Venice where small alleyways open onto "grande piazze" that are made to look much bigger than they really are by cunning architectural repetitions. Both experiences give me the feeling of being connected with something beyond myself.

*Valeria Romagnini: In your work, gestural painting plays an important role. You use big brushes with multiple heads for giant movements, how does the size of your own body relate to your idea of brushstroke size or even to your idea of the size of your objects?*

JM: The experience I have when I paint is of time and space collapsing into one another. Time becomes space, and space becomes time. This gives me the feeling of being dimensionless. Some years ago I began to use all kinds of tools to enlarge my body movements while painting, to amplify these feelings of undecided dimensionality. Working with over-large brushes helped to intensify the experience of an undetermined body scale. This led to up-scaling, using printing techniques and then to testing the relationship of brush mark scale and support structure scale.



VR: You said that your painting/object is forced by the space. How does this influence you in finding a bigger dimension for yourself? How do you deal with the boundaries, which impose restrictions upon what you want?

JM: The boundaries are never restrictions; instead they are essential for energising the possibilities of a new form coming into being. The boundaries really just open up new potentials for thinking and acting.

SG: Unlike by Richard Serra, where the sheer knowledge that the material is steel has a specific impact on the viewer, for you the choice of material seems not so relevant, most important seems to be that the material you use is able to create curves in order to let your work wind its way within the space. Where does this seemingly negligence for the materialistic qualities come from, and where does this will to create curves come from?

JM: I don't need my materials to be in any way truthful. I accept that I'm an illusionist. Having said that I'm not negligent about the materials I use. They must be light and easy to manipulate. They deliberately relate to the materials of advertising and trade-fairs. They also follow the construction of an easel painting, basically a skin stretched over a frame. Neither do I have a will to create curves. Instead I'm trying to get the longest single coherent image into the physical space that I'm working with. This necessitates twisting the image back on itself, effectively making the space I'm working in bigger.

As well as being an image in space the work is a gesture that defines space. It can't have an arbitrary, undefined presence or seem like a piece

of something else. It has a beginning, travels through space, and ends. What might be seen to be the start and finish are interchangeable.

VR: You stated "it's a way of collapsing the separation of the mental and the bodily that I experience in so many other parts of life". What is for you the relation between your painting and your actual created object? Are they a 2D painting on a 3D object like discussible with early Frank Stella paintings?

JD: I think of the works as paintings placed in space. There are four dimensions at play because time is involved too. Stella came up with 3-dimensional objects through collage techniques, placing many different things together. I'm trying to find something equally as satisfying but existing as a singularity. Something more like a singular instantaneous thought that unfolds in space and time.

KDJ: You told me that you like to go beyond what is immediately recognizable. That the viewer does not stop looking after he recognized something in the work, but would keep looking and think "what is this?". Do you want him to eventually find an answer? Or is it more about creating a sense of space? What is it you want to say?

JM: I really have nothing to say. In my work I hope to open a door that enables a shift to occur in the habitual way we define our limits. A feeling of something falling away and a grasp of new potentialities.

# TATSUO MIYAJIMA

By Karlyn De Jongh

March 2013

Since the 1980s, Tatsuo Miyajima (1957, Tokyo, Japan) makes works that address time. They are usually made with LEDs of numbers that count from 1 to 9 or from 9 to 1; zero is not shown. Time is important for Miyajima to discuss what he calls 'The Life,' which is ongoing, combining life and death and concerning nature—humans, animals, stones. These aspects of 'The Life' are visible in Miyajima's three central concepts: 1. keep changing; 2. continue forever; 3. connect with everything. Also important to him is the concept 'Art in You,' holding the viewer a mirror and inviting him to contemplate about 'The Life.' Miyajima lives and works in Ibaraki, Japan.

Karlyn De Jongh: At the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES at the 2011 Venice Biennale, you showed your work Warp Time with Warp Self (2010), which has LED-lights in a strict grid on a mirrored surface. At first, the work reminded me of your concept 'Art In You,' in which the viewer is confronted with himself through a mirrored surface. But in this work the mirror is waved and it is impossible to see oneself clearly. What is it that you wanted to achieve with this particular work?

Tatsuo Miyajima: Through this work the self is reflected on to the surface of a distorted mirror. Through this action you yourself get a metamorphoses when looking at this work.

It is a metaphor of the fact that living nature always keeps changing.

Also, with this particular piece, I deliberately designed the length of the dark time (that is: the black out time of the LED counters) to have an irregular duration of the blank moment. This is different than in my other works. While in all my past work, the LED counters had regular black out durations. With this particular piece, even the movement of the LEDs is changing.

By creating an artwork where viewers see themselves changing with the transforming sense of time, I aimed that viewers would experience the transformation of time and space and would then think about it.

KDJ: The other work that you showed in Venice was Pile Up Life (2008), a work that you made in response to the disasters from the Katrina

hurricane. You chose to exhibit this work in Venice as a memory also of the tsunami and earthquakes that had just happened in Japan that year (2011). When you respond with your work to such natural disasters, what is the message that you want to give out?

TM: I believe that the thoughts and the messages behind an artwork must always be a strong motivation for an artist, when making a work. However, I do not think that viewers need to all understand these messages.

For myself, the strong motivation in creating this work was the "requiescat to the deaths", a wish for the repose of the ones who died.

In the case of violence or war destroyed lives, we can act against it with messages.

By contrast, in the circumstance of natural disasters, there is no victimizer. When faced with natural disasters, man can only pray rather than shouting out messages.

The meaning of making a work here was to mourn for the deaths, a mourning by the ones who are still alive.

KDJ: When I visited Yoko Ono in Frankfurt a few weeks ago, she said that no matter what happens in life, however difficult it might be and no matter how hard you have to fight for your existence, "the sky is always there". It seemed she could get comfort or stability in life from this aspect of 'space'. Would you disagree with her and look for comfort in life or time, saying that "life moves on"?

TM: I would like to express my respect to Yoko Ono's opinion. At the same time, my idea is that the life also creates time and space.

KDJ: When Roman Opalka started in 1965, to realize his program showing 'time passing', he focussed mainly on manifesting that time is infinite. It was later, that he added the connection between infinite time and the finiteness of his own life. Opalka died in 2011 and with that came an end to his work. You seem to be focussed more in general on the passing of time and look beyond the life of one single person. After you die, 'The Life' will continue to exist: it will keep on moving, changing forever, and connecting with everything. How is for you





*the relation between 'The Life' and your own life? To what extent is your own life connected to your works and your wish to show 'The Life'? Are your works more than—to speak with the Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer—the proof of your existence?*

TM: What I am aiming to show through my artwork is "The Life". With "The Life" I mean the entire or whole situation of life, of living beings.

Our individual lives are connected with larger stages of life as a whole, of all living beings combined. Also individual lives came from there. Otherwise, there will be no resonance between one life and the other.

*KDJ: For me personally, the passing of time, knowing that I have less and less days to live, is something that scares me and makes me very uncomfortable. How do you yourself feel about the passing of your own lifetime, the countdown to zero? Do you see—like Roman Opalka (and the German philosopher Martin Heidegger)—your own life as a being-towards-death?*

TM: The idea of counting down your life time does not aim to zero (= death), instead it aims to encourage the attitude of being conscious with its process.

It is rather to see the reality of nowness in one's life.

It is a gadget to sense Henri Bergson's idea of "Élan vital".

*KDJ: In 2010, I visited your talk at TATE Modern in London, UK, as I was writing an article about 'Time in Art' for the scientific magazine Kronoscope. During your talk, you explained death as "a state of sleep", as a preparation for the next birth. Is this "state of sleep" a metaphor? Or will your personal life continues after your death?*

TM: My belief is that the life continues forever. Death is just a sleep to prepare to the next stage.

*KDJ: The Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer, who is the initiator of our project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, makes a clear relation in his work between*

*time and space: to him, space has a strong influence on the experience of time. How is that for you? What is for you the relation between time and space? In your opinion, does space have an influence on the experience of life and on 'The Life' in general?*

TM: Like my answer to the third question where you refer to Yoko Ono, I believe that the idea of time and space came from life itself. At the same time, life is the space, and is the time.

# FRANÇOIS MORELLET

Morellet studio, Cholet, France, February 2011

*François Morellet (1926, Cholet, France) addresses the nature of perception as well as the relationship between perception and environment, creating spaces that aim to involve the viewer. Starting from this experimental basis he explores space as the relationship between object and subject. In February 2011, we—Sarah Gold, Rene Rietmeyer and Karlyn De Jongh—drove 1400 kilometers, from Venice, Italy to Cholet, France, to visit Morellet. The following text includes remarks from Morellet when he showed us his studio, and extracts of previously published statements.*

Here is *Lamentable*, which you will show in Venice. The work is part of an edition. It could be 2 meter higher here in my studio, but what the work looks like depends on the place. The rule of the game is that you can think it is a stripe, which can make a *striptease*. Or the lines... In French we say *bande*— *bande* means to have an erection.

At the beginning, when I was a young artist, there were people who liked my art and put it in their homes. But now, two or three years ago, these same people came, but they buy for other reasons. The big success is when you are bought by people who don't like your work.

In 1960 exactly, I exhibited in a gallery in Milan, Italy. They represented Castellani and Manzoni. In two years, they 'sold' one piece of me. It was Fontana who 'bought' it. Fontana was a very nice man helping young artists, but he didn't pay us. The last time I saw him—I think it was maybe one or two years before he died—I told him: "We can make an exchange. He said: "Yes, yes!" and I quickly added, "but I want two!"

After that, I was always thinking whether my painting was worth more than two. A few years ago, I was contacted by somebody who asked us if we want to sell our Fontanas. What he wanted to pay was less than the value of my painting. So I was... "Oh, *merde!*" Fortunately, at Sotheby's it was more than two. I like this story, because art is not so serious. For me, it was just very funny in Milan.

One of our best friends was Gianni Colombo. We met in Italy in the 1970s and went together from Napoli to the North of Italy, to Bolzano, Genova, Venezia. Even in the little cities, people liked to buy our paintings. There was a taste for our paintings, much more than in France. In Germany there are even many more people who like my work. A few months ago, there was the opening of a new museum. It has nearly six thousand meters square, and for the opening there

was an exhibition of works from the ZERO group, Art Concrete and Lawrence Weiner with his friends... Conceptual Art. For me, from Saarbruecken to Munchen, that piece of land is my country.

I think I am the son of Mondrian and Picabia. You know, I think that particularly in France, you find people who are not good at being romantic and who like to think precise, but who like absurdities. Duchamp was like that. There are some artists, for me, who have the same attitude, Bertrand Lavier and the Swiss artist John Armleder. He is Swiss, but a very concrete one!

## ***Mais comment taire mes commentaires* —Extracts**

"I believed in God until I was twenty, then in progress until I was forty and then... in nothing at all.

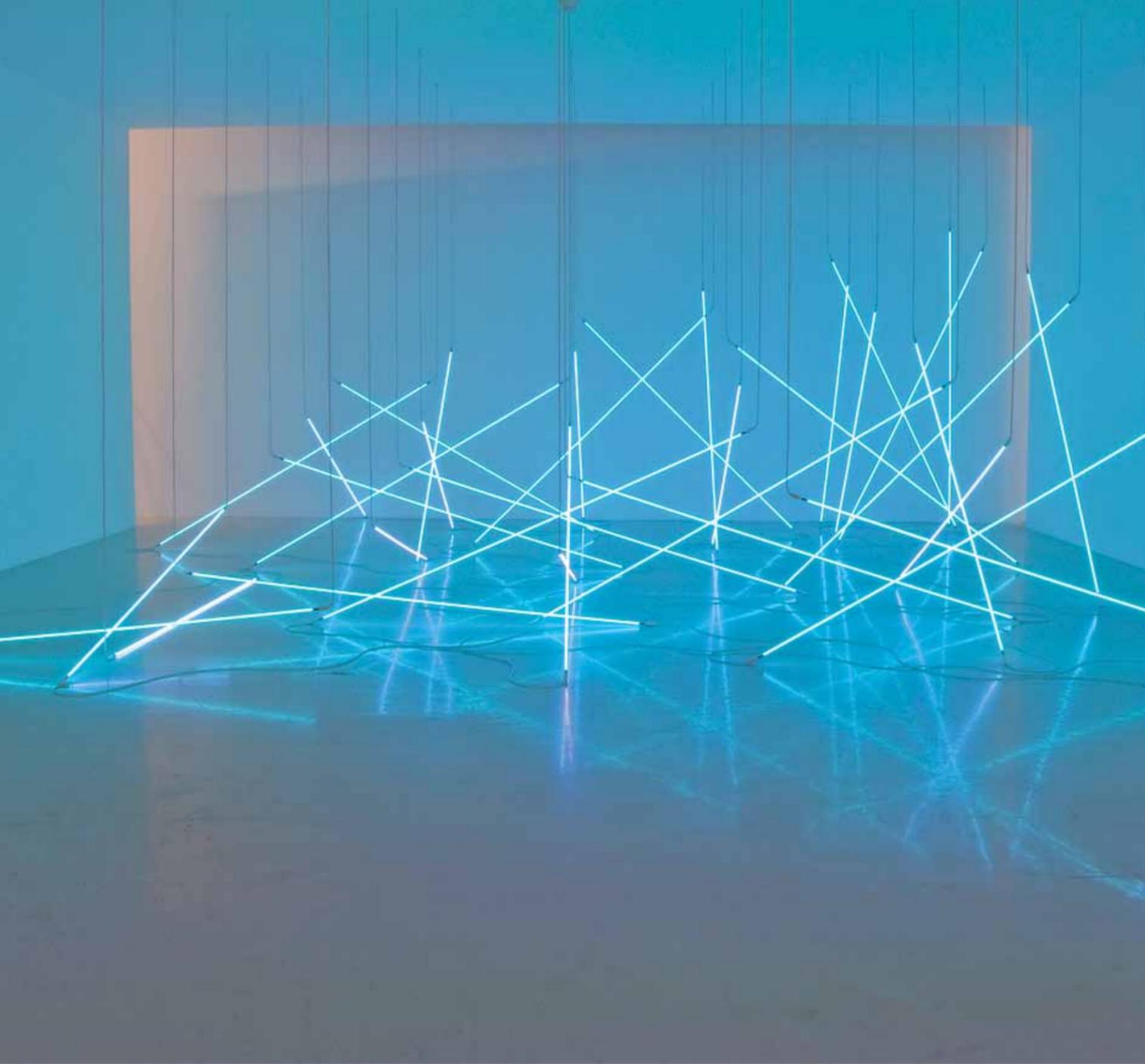
My first 'electric works,' which were created when I was about thirty-seven, are therefore more or less guaranteed to be without transcendence; they neither glorify God nor the electricity fairy and only touched upon the sciences of the future such as kinetics, cybernetics, computer technology or quite simply mathematics. [...]

At that time I was also entertaining myself by conjuring up, by means of mechanical combiners, equally thrown together, a succession of neon shapes and letters, fixed onto three panels. It looked as though this swift, confusing scroll of images was dictated by chance. But as my technical equipment did not stretch to a truly random system at that time, it was actually only a parody of chance that made those geometric shapes succeed each other irregularly—and the four words *cul – con – non – nul* [arse, cunt, no, useless]."

— *Esthétique électrique et pratique éclectique*, 1991

"For about twenty years, I doggedly produced systematic works, the constant guiding principle being to reduce my arbitrary decisions to a minimum. In order to channel my sensibility as an 'Artist,' I did away with composition, removed any interesting aspects from the execution and rigorously applied simple, straightforward systems that could either develop by fluke or by means of audience participation. These 'works of art,' in reaction to the flood of messages conveyed by the vogue for Expressionism and Lyrical Abstraction twenty years ago, were a complete flop when





they were first presented in a range of specialised venues. They occasioned no comment. In the recent past, however, even though they cannot be ranked among the new fashionable trends which, more than ever before, cultivate the myth of the 'Artist' (now it is no longer his gestures that are analysed and admired but his attitudes, his body, his concepts), they are triggering increasingly substantial and positive comments. Analysis specialists see in them rigour, joy, nihilism, anguish, virtuosity, asceticism, etc. [...] The plastic arts should allow the spectator to find what he wants, in other words what he brings to them.

Artworks are picnic areas, places where you take potluck, consuming whatever you've brought along. Pure Art, Art for Art's Sake, is there to express nothing (or everything)."

— *Du spectateur au spectateur ou l'art de déballer son piquenique*, 1971

"Over the last seven or eight years, I have ceased to regard my 'pictures' as perfect geometric planes (immaterial and infinite), which needless to say they had never been in the first place. I have turned towards all the basic material limitations: the thick, heavy picture that requires hanging.



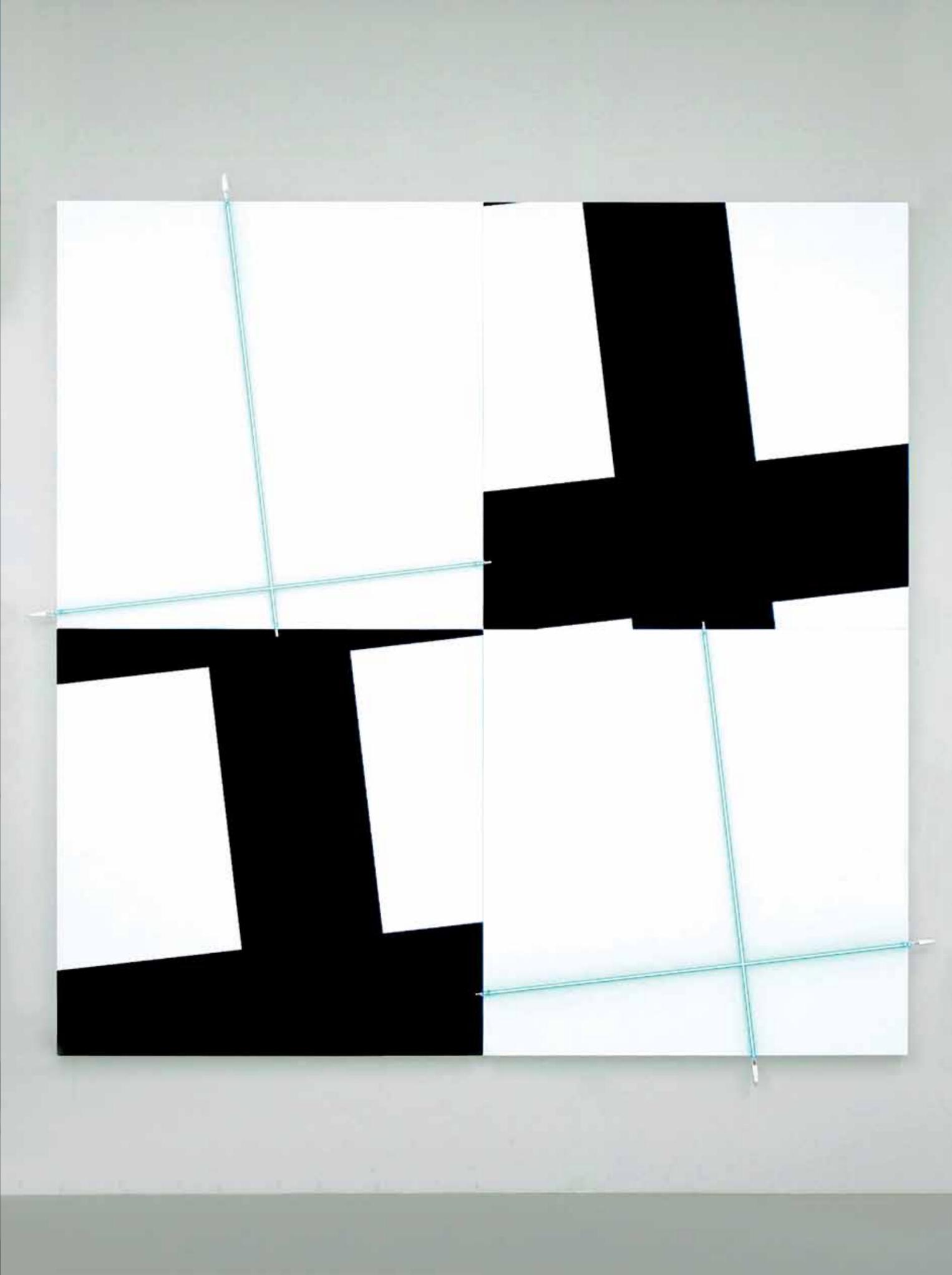
Following the limitations of geometry, I started concentrating on the geometry of limitations. One of the limitations I played with a great deal was the overwhelming presence of the wall/floor couple, the verticality-horizontality with which the canvases usually comply in the most docile manner. It was sheer delight to make the modest 'picture-neutral medium' disobey, turning it, with its unusual position and slant, into a work of art, and reduce the pretentious 'information bearing painting' to an unassuming role of horizontality-verticality indicator."

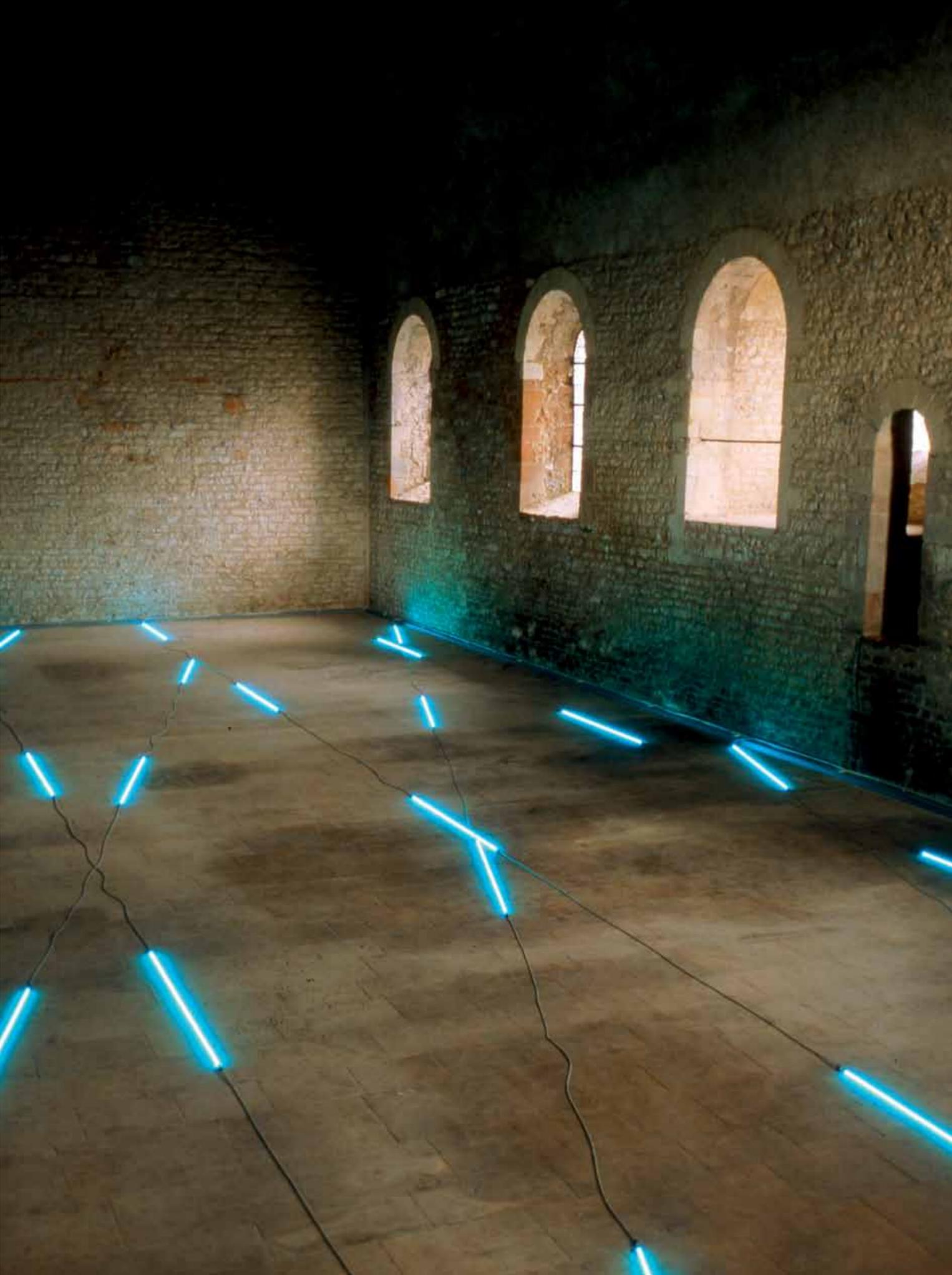
— *Depuis sept ou huit ans*, 1982

"What are the qualities of this Baroque art from Bavaria-Austria (to put it simply) that so appeal to me, that I endeavour to transpose into my work?

Humour, frivolity, joie de vivre, which are all impossible to find to this degree in any Western church. [...] And also a wonderful disrespect for architecture, with its clever lack of balance and its volumes, which counter one another by ignoring and severing any symmetry. To such an extent that an ordinary item of architecture can be 'Baroqued' with equal nonchalance and success."

— *BarocKonKret*, 1994





# HERMANN NITSCH

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

Museo Hermann Nitsch, Naples, Italy, 17 May 2010

*Nitsch (1938, Vienna, Austria) started his Orgien Mysterien Theater in 1957, in which he deals with archetypal themes such as birth and death, and addresses the excessive beauty and intensification of human existence, highlighting the experiencing of life with the senses. The following text is a part of the continued interview with Nitsch from 17 May 2010.*

*Karlyn De Jongh: Nitsch, you just spoke of a drinking technique. Is there also such a thing as a 'technique' to live a satisfying life?*

Hermann Nitsch: Maybe not a technique, but there sure is a way. I try to live intensely. I try not to be lazy. Lazy means going on holidays, skiing. Real pleasure is extremely determined, pleasure is not only relaxing, pleasure is a large and deep probation.

*Sarah Gold: When we talk with you like this, you seem to be a very gentle man who is very aware of his life, but I have also read that you like conflicts, how do you connect these two contrasts?*

HN: The world is movement, by the Greeks this was called *panta rei*, everything flows. As I already said, everything returns. At this moment everything is green again where I live and I think here in Naples too, and that is all fight and movement. I am a dramatist, and drama is actually the struggle for Being. Taking part in this eternal life, the life which carries all joy and the possibility of experiencing that joy is a fight. And now something very important, time, time does not exist at all. There is only space of eternity, and in that space of eternity, beginning and end are both given. We can never think differently than that a day is over when the sun goes down, we eat when we are hungry, everything with a beginning and an end in the temporality of our lives. You are born and disappear and that is something that you are not always so aware of. There would only be time when something begins, arises and passes away again. Now it is so, it is the truth of reality, this permanent flow, *panta rei*, there is no beginning and no end.

In the great Asian religions and also in Christian mysticism there are also no beginning and no end. And even the so-called God, he is without beginning or end, and cannot house time in him. Now, if I believe in it, that movement and fight are permanent, and then I know I will not pass away, I have always been and always will be. Look, you know your parents, your grandparents and perhaps

their parents, but then at a certain moment it stops, but that does not mean that there was nothing before that. We always talk about life after death, but what about life before death.

There is only movement, and not a real beginning. The real beginning some say, was perhaps in the Big Bang, but probably the Big Bang was not even the beginning because we know that there must have been many. Cosmology also believes that cosmoses exist side by side. I say, movement is the greatest thing and that is my answer to the fight. Without struggle, you will not get there, you will not manage. I am very much against wars, but war is then also more than a struggle, that is a terrible machine to mass destroy.

*KDJ: How do you see your own life in relation to this movement, following up from existing individuals?*

HN: I am a great admirer of Nietzsche; he said incredible things, for example: "I was really everything, I was Alexander the Great, I was Cesar, I was Christ... Or Napoleon." I also believe that I have been everything, and that I will be all that will ever be. This is perhaps an extension of the idea of reincarnation that the Buddhists and Hindu have, but my thought is much bigger. Since it is already about a Pan-awareness. I am also you now.

*KDJ: When you say: "I am you", how do you see this connection?*

HN: In literature apparently, there seems to be a recognizable development towards the subject in nature. This is already given in the lowest living beings. It already starts with plants; that a plant is on its way in the direction of a subjective perception. Then next are animals, and then people. According to me, God is the absolute subject. From there we are coming closer again to the first question. We are of course all related to this absolute subject and therefore in the great idea of love, it comes down to subjects that dissolve into each other, in the mystical God. I would say, there are profound reasons of Being. Of course, there is also Being in which we are all connected with each other forever. That is the Christian idea, the Last Supper and love and the attempt to cancel and overcome the subject into the art of the higher subject. There is a man whom I admire very much and also of which I have learned a lot that is the C.G. Jung. He has spoken of a development process, in which I become myself. The I is the temporal. The self is shown as subject, based on the whole.





## ROMAN OPALKA

*Roman Opalka died on August 6, 2011. On that day came an end to the program he started in 1965: documenting time passing, by painting the numbers from 1 - ∞. The last number he painted was 5607249. The fundamental basis of Opalka's work, to which he has dedicated his life, manifests itself in showing "Time Passing". His work is a process of recording a progression of numbers that both documents time and also defines it. It began on a single date in 1965, and will continue until he dies. Opalka's work records the progression to infinity. The following text is part of the Art Project ROMAN OPALKA: TIME PASSING.*

*Karlyne De Jongh: Does the sacrifice of painting become bigger, while you are getting older and have probably less and less lifetime left?*

Roman Opalka: I do not have time to live in the same way as before, because before I was very active. Nowadays I have much more time to lie back and not do anything. In previous times I did not take a siesta and I was able to work 17 hours per day. 17 hours... I did that, because I was naive. Afterwards my concept became known. First in Italy, after that in Germany and then later in New York. In the beginning it were the Italians, they usually learn about these art things quickly. "Pancia della mamma [in the belly of the mother]," they say. The Germans perhaps, but much later. The French did not notice my work at all as a situation in art until the 80s. I have lived in Paris, but nobody knew about this

idiot Opalka, who was painting something like that. Nothing, no interest. Nowadays they are interested, but back then, no interest. The other painters in France were political. I was also political, but not in the sense they were. The others were naïve; I was already much further with my thoughts, because I thought: revolution? No result. Revolution, yes, but do not make great sacrifices for society.

*Sarah Gold: What do you consider to be the drama in your art?*

RO: Being. This is not a drama; it is the simple strength in my work, to show Being, to represent it. There surely is no pessimism in my work, but certainly also no optimism. There is a certain realism in my work, which is perhaps derived from my experience with Marxism. A human being is not as much as one often imagines it to be. As with Blaise Pascal in his philosophy: human beings are still small, but grand at the same time, because you know that you are so small. A drama can sometimes help a lot in art. Why should I make something? Why not simply live and love? That is nice, is it not? What more could you want? There is no art without drama. Leonardo da Vinci was a homosexual, and being a homosexual was a problem in the society at that time. Nowadays it is no problem. Back then, however, it was and created a problem. But for Leonardo this drama was very influential for his art. Without traumas, there is no great art. Otherwise it is just too easy. This chance d'or [golden chance] is dangerous."

*KDJ: Roman, you now painted approximately 230 canvasses. When you created the concept of your program, did you take into account that you would probably paint a relatively small number of paintings?*

RO: Of course, it was evident to me that I would not generate so many paintings. Maybe I have said it before, but in principle, I am against polluting the world with art. People produce so many things. I would not say that there are many artists. But in that time art had a criterion, such as realism. You could say what is well painted and what is not. But today: well painted, what does that mean? There are still artists who paint realistic works, but this type of art does not belong to this world called 'Avant Garde'. I belong to this Avant Garde history, and because of this: Avant Garde makes no sense anymore nowadays. Today there cannot be an artist who was at that time part of the so-called Avant Garde, such as Soll Lewitt or Bob Ryman, and say: "We are Avant Garde." The things that Ryman is making today are unrelated to Avant Garde. Avant Garde is only this first line of soldiers at the frontline in the army. Why should Bob Ryman spend his whole life attacking at the front? That makes no sense. It is naïve to think something like that. But such a concept like mine belongs to this Avant Garde story, but it says that it is no longer possible. That is the paradox. Be Avant Garde and leave, you might say. Basically, this means: Avant Garde is no longer possible only through one work. One could say that it has nonsense to continue making art. You can say that, but what can or should you do then? Duchamp played chess in New York. This is however not a solution, he should have done something. That was a very passive choice. Duchamp was very intelligent, but without art.

*SG: But maybe there is a development possible after your work?*

RO: I do not think so. Unfortunately not. People have wondered about that, but it makes no sense. When you pour water into wine,

the wine does not taste that good anymore. Do you understand? A life is a life. In sport, in Estafette [relay], they say that something like that does not exist in our life.

*KDJ: You once told us that one has to deserve a number. What do you mean by that?*

RO: To deserve a number? Yes, maybe in the sense... I have deserved the number, and today we have painted up to the number 5,591,678. I can remember that. Apropos your question, that means that I have deserved that number. I mean, you can easily imagine a number. They are references for the police, for example. But the number that I have just painted today, that one I have earned. I deserved it in the sense of sacrifice. I earned myself 5,591,678.

*SG: That moment of your 1,000,000 must have been incredible.*

RO: Yes, that is the reason why I bought it back. It is incredible also in the phonetical sense. That it is incredible, visually and structurally, that is very clear. Any painter, Mark Rothko for example, could have made this painting. But to deserve this, this trace or lead, that is something quite different. Rothko was a great artist, but my work is very different, I mean that, mentally and conceptually it is something completely different. How a form like this presents itself and is realized. It is without the certain formalism that was present in the 1960s, also in Conceptual Art. In my case, in my work, it happened like this, and not in any other way. It is because of this concept; the work comes from a principle. What happened here, in this painting, is something that has happened after seven years of painting.

# THOMAS PIHL

*Thomas Pihl's (1964, Bergen, Norway) paintings and sculpture centralize his critical dialogue with the phenomenon of the (over-) aestheticizing of western, everyday culture and the confrontation with the implications of mass production and mass consumption of pictures. Pihl captures the smooth and perfect aesthetics of the visual everyday culture. In addition to the paintings, Pihl creates sculpture, made out of the rest-material of his paintings. —Thomas Pihl lives in New York City as well as in Bergen, Norway.*

I—am the first one to see the painting I produce, as it will appear for years to come. I am the one—to decide when not to technically work with a painting anymore—and leave it as is. The reasons for not touching the work—ever again—with neither medium nor pigment—is a choice sometimes very certain and without any questions. At other times works are left forever with doubt and difficulties I was never able to resolve—although I choose to define these frictions as original facts I can stand to live with—facts I am willing to expose to the scrutiny of a strangers pair of eyes—These marks may be interpreted as an inspired irritation—for someone else it might read as a mistake, or a pause or a punctuation mark. It's not for me to describe, because it is now the connection with the eye's potential that is established. This connection is what is important. An entire complex world, triggered by the act of seeing is drawn in—and activated. If this contact is established—the quality ranges from micro phenomena almost not detectable and hard to record—even for the eye itself. Or on the contrary—the contact might generate a solid visual bond.

My work in relation to the eye is aesthetic and optical practice only. It is about seeing and how to respond. I facilitate a painterly layout with complex subtleties. I want to ignite a flow of creative experiences between the artwork and the act of seeing. I work the surface to a matt, smooth and sensual quality. The surface mimics an industrial fabrication: perfect, smooth and clean, it seems—but it is not.

I disperse the fine pigment into a slab of clear acrylic medium. This is not only to enable an optic vehicle for light to physically penetrate and infiltrate the physicality of the painting. I create a blend of painterly and natural light—to a soup so merged that it is difficult for the eye to differentiate. The layers and layers of translucent paint are laid out with almost invisible contrasts, to challenge and test the eyes capacity to discern subtle and barely visible phenomena.

In my work the individual pigments are lit by the available source of light—like planets in relation to the sun. I utilize the individual pigments three dimensionality. The pigments closest point to the viewer—its “high point”—near the paintings surface and the light source, bounces most effectively the colored light back to the space—and to the eye of the beholder. Where the pigments volume curves away—towards the canvas itself—less light hits the colored grain. The backside of the pigments surface floats in its own shadow—not in complete darkness—but in a reduced light value. This arrangement adds shade to the work. This shade again enhances the visual quality and a deeper hue to the color—like an intrinsic subtle component to some ones mind.

The clear acrylic itself traps, and holds the natural light—for a slight immeasurable moment within—and ignites the painting.

The weight of the pigments varies form color to color. This depends on the chemical composite. The pigment settles in the fluid layer of wet paint according to its weight. Some of the pigments are light and floats to the surface while others are heavier according to their physical complexity—These heavier pigments—descend deeper—towards the canvas and the layers underneath. The pigment finds its natural place in the fluid chemical matter. When the process of the mediums coagulation starts to occur, the pigment has found its relation to weight and gravity. It has found its place in space.

This entire visual arrangement opens the surface to vision. Eyesight is then allowed—not only to read and analyze the work as visual information: In addition my intention is to facilitate a display where eyesight itself—pierces the surface and bleeds in through the suspended fog of pigment and adds a subjective component to the visual experience. I think of it as a challenge to the eye—to include and activate the outskirts of its own optical and aesthetic abilities.

Of the four paintings displayed in Palazzo Bembo 2011, three of them are 60 x 96 inches and one 72 x 60 inches. They are specifically formatted to the room, to which I was assigned to for this project. That is: fairly large art pieces for a fairly small room. My central intention working with the limitations of the space was not to fill the room to its maximum capacity per se, but rather get as close as possible to the viewer and their eyes. This is what I felt was the spatial potential I wanted to confront. I made a model of the



room in New York, and measured carefully the perspective between the observer and the wall where I would place my work. Much more than in earlier exhibitions I have produced, this exhibition space did not give the viewer any spatial escape—except for the door. I wanted to utilize this opportunity to facilitate an intense intimacy with the public. It was an open and free space with a trap quality at the same time.

So how do I describe the colors of these paintings? I don't. This is as problematic as photographing and reproducing my work. It is created for time space and existence in reality. It's created for direct contact. It is not made for reproductions or any other mediums: like words. So again: I do not describe the colors of my work. But one

might label the three larger horizontal paintings in this show—as warm? I was personally interested in a fusion between warning and desire, like drives within yourself that you cannot resist, but where you don't know the consequences of reaching out towards. One painting was different: It was slightly smaller and vertical. It was dark, heavy and voluminous. I was thinking of an immense translucent space, where light barely reaches.

This is a space that exists, but where your body cannot enter without any life support. But again: I do not tell any stories. My interpretation is private and absolutely indifferent for other than myself. I made an exception though. I might regret it.



## MIRIAM PRANTL

*Miriam Prantl (1965, Bregenz, Austria) aims to deepen the experience of perception in space, using changing coloured light.*

### „Manas“

Already since the 1920s artists tried to develop a way to work with artificial light in the form of light kinetics, an art form focused on the use of moving lighting effects.

Moholy-Nagy wrote in a letter dated 1934, „I dream of light machines with which one can hurl handmade or automatic—mechanical light

visions into the air, into large spaces and onto screens of unusual character, onto mist, gas and clouds, (...) I want a bare room with twelve projectors so that the white void can be activated by the criss crossing of beams of coloured light.“ (Maholy-Nagy exhibition catalogue Museum Friedericianum Kassel, Cologne 1991, p.9f.)

This visionary proposal how light will become a medium of visual art has inspired many artists to experiment with light. I've always been interested when working with light, to introduce movement, as an expansiv dimension and allow the light to flow and merge from one colour into another, in order to modulate and structure the impulses that can be achieved with light. In my work I have been trying to combine these two elements with each other, even adding film and sound.

Compared to the beginning of the rebirth of light-art in the 1950s, there has been an amazingly fast development in lighting-techniques. Presently I can use low voltage, high efficiency LED- lights and pixel, connected to a sequencer, with which I can virtually mix an infinite range of colours by programming it over the computer. I can modulate the speed of the moving light and the blending of the colours and so integrate rhythm, moments and time into space.

I believe that a well structured view has internal consistency and logic, like architectural structures. A well constructed view can make things obvious to the viewer and can empower interaction.

This particular light object „manas“ consists of 4 cubes. Each of the cubes has 150 LED-pixels built into it, which are arranged all

over the surfaces. To programm the light diodes, I used a film of recorded led-lights, of mixing and merging colours, as the score. Each led-pixel plays a part of the film, the film is basically wrapped around the cubes and emanates and projects into the space. The frames of the film are the navigation data for the light and the LED-pixel are the data points in a coordinate system, which orchistrates the light cubes. The colours move in a pattern, layered, timed, mapped out, so that the different coloured moments, similar to a musical score, can appear.

The modulation derives into a dynamic, complex unison between time, space, light, colour and physical presence.

# ANDREW PUTTER

Lyric for *Secretly I Will Love You More*  
(written by Andrew Putter)

Do not fear me little one –  
welcome into our home!  
How beautiful you are,  
little shiny one, with your woolly hair,  
smelling of sweet buchu.  
Your differences from me make you so precious!  
Your smallness belies your significance.  
Meeting you has changed us forever.  
I will love you as I love my own children:  
Secretly I will love you more.  
The warm summer wind blows and it makes me dream.  
I dream of your people and my people changing each other.  
Welcome into our home precious child.

Nama translation of lyric for *Secretly I Will Love You More*  
(by Pedro Dausab)

Ta lao ti #khariro –  
//Kore //kare-he sida oms !nâ.  
Mati koses a exa neparas !abuxa /ûn/kha  
#khon buxuba rahâm.  
Sa !kharasasib ge.  
//n\_tikose sasa ra !gom/gausa kai.  
Sa !kharisib ge ra sa !gom /gausasiba ra #hûmi kai.  
Sasa /hau-us ge sida huka-/gui ra /khara/khara.  
O ta ni /namsi ti oâna ta /nam khemi:  
#Gan!gâsa se ta ni /namsi !nasase.  
/Gamsa //khanab di #oab ta !gom tsî ra //habo kai te.  
//Hawo tara o ti khoïn tsî sa khoïn xa ra !n /khara.  
//Ore //hares sida oms !nâ !gom/gausa /\_oa.

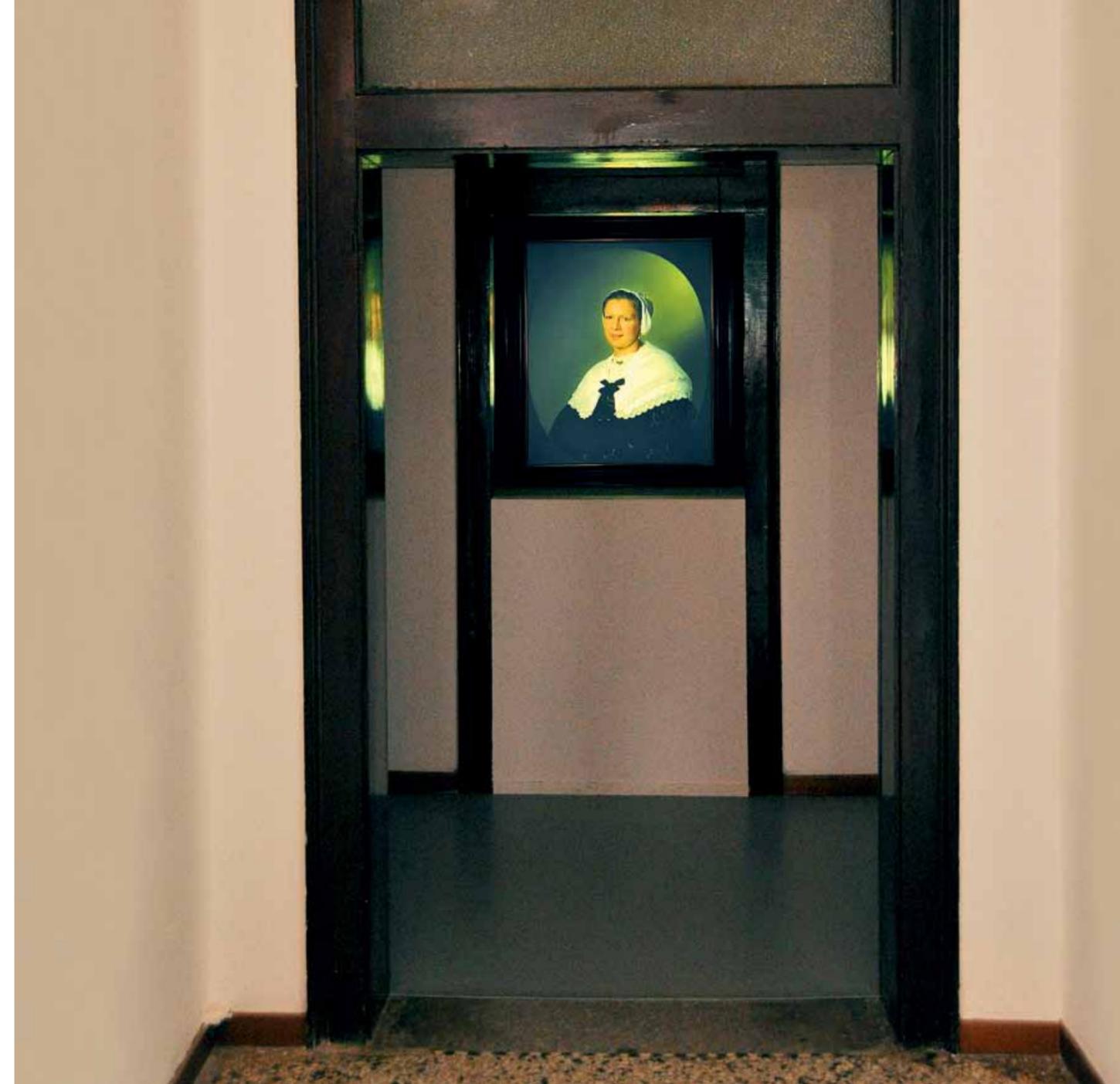
*Andrew Putter (1965, Cape Town, South Africa) makes use of the past to construct images of how we might live together in the future. Drawing equally on the cultural histories of Europe and Africa, Putter addresses the possibility for new forms to emerge through the interplay of dissimilar cultures. With his work, he shows that this interplay is already present in colonial history, gently reminding purists that everything is always already a mixture. Putter lives in Cape Town, South Africa.*

## Secretly I Will Love You More

For most of my life, I have lived in a suburb of the city of Cape Town, South Africa, within a thirty-minute walk of where I was born. Much of the work I do as a creative person is based on

exploiting the latent potential of this out-of-the-way place I call home. Before 1652—when Dutch colonists arrived at the bottom of Africa where Cape Town now stands—the area had been the ancestral home of the Cape Hottentots. Within fifty years of the Dutch arriving, the ancient culture of the Hottentots (who called themselves Khoikhoïn) had been all but extinguished in their encounter with the Europeans. Over the centuries, the pre-colonial life of the Cape Khoikhoïn has been erased from popular memory. They have been forgotten.

My artwork at the Venice Biennale draws on the secret utopian potential of the historical encounter between the Hottentots and the Dutch at the Cape in the 1600s.



Shortly after her arrival in 1652, Maria de la Quellerie—wife of the first Dutch commander at the Cape—took Krotoa, a Khoikhoïn girl-child, into her home to live with her family. Krotoa had learnt to speak Dutch by talking with sailors who had come past the Cape on their way to the East. Even though a child, she played an important role as an interpreter between her people and the Cape Dutch. (Sadly, her role between cultures ultimately led to her rejection by both the Khoikhoïn and the Dutch, and she died abject and destitute).

My artwork begins by imagining that Maria de la Quellerie loved little Krotoa so much that she learnt to speak the child's language. In the artwork, Maria sings a gentle Khoikhoïn lullaby to an out-of-frame, sleeping Krotoa. The lullaby is full of the characteristic

click-sounds still found in Nama, an endangered Khoikhoïn language spoken in present-day Namibia.

We have no record of any Dutch colonist ever learning to speak the language of the Khoikhoïn people whose ancient territories they annexed at the Cape. It was always the other way around: the Khoikhoïn were forced to speak Dutch. Due to these—and related—pressures the language of the Cape Khoikhoïn has long been extinct.

In the artwork, we catch Maria in a moment of reverie and realization, singing of her profound connections with this strange pseudo-daughter and the exhilarating potential that exists between two people facing each other across incommensurable cultural universes.

# ARNULF RAINER

By Karlyn De Jongh

February 2012

*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.*

*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: When you invited me into your studio and I could experience you while you were working—your selbstgespräch turning into a dialogue—I had the feeling that creating an artwork is such an intense experience for you that you seem to forget everything that is not directly related to it. Are you conscious about where you are at that moment? Do you have a feeling for time and space when you work?*

AR: No, during my working time not. I have to concentrate. Artistic work requires the highest concentration. A painter has it relatively easy, though: when he makes a wrong brushstroke, he can make a second one to correct it. But when an actor does not say a sentence correctly, the director will say, "Again, again." The actor can try, but then he will be too tired to bring it together. A painter can always say he wants to over-work something. I continue this process until I do not know any more how I can improve it.

*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: Now you also were honored with your own space in the Pinakothek, but there were times in the beginning of your career that you seem to have been struggling to survive. When came the moment that you could live from your art?*

AR: That was very general; I was always lucky that I could make my own living. In the beginning I was dealing with furniture.

*KDJ: When Sarah Gold and I did our Art Project with Hermann Nitsch, he told us stories about how you—many years ago—had a studio in Nitsch's castle close to Vienna. How was that time for you?*

AR: I did not live with him, but I indeed had a studio in his castle. At that time, Nitsch had said: "Painting has no future. That stuff is outdated." In the attic he had a very large space and on very generous conditions, he





gave that to me. There I had the space to paint large paintings. In general, in my life somehow it always went fine. And even now, it is a good time. People fear that their money loses value. They think that in three years time their money might not be worth anything anymore.

*KDJ: Probably you are lucky because you are one of the top artists. Emerging and lesser known artists seem to have a difficult time to survive nowadays.*

AR: Age-wise that is correct. The beginners are having a hard time now. But there are nowadays also many more artists, many people study art. They have to share one market. Besides, people always say that the death of the artist is the best for the price development.

*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.



# RENE RIETMEYER

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

January-April 2012

*Rene Rietmeyer (1957, Netherlands) is about "Time-Space-Existence". Rietmeyer creates "Boxes": abstract, three-dimensional objects, which are presented mostly on the wall in multi-part, variable installations. Rietmeyer dedicates himself to making visible the subjectively felt effect of cities and landscapes, as well as of persons. This comes about with the purely abstract formal means of color, form, material, surface structure, composition and the installation in space. His work is about expressing his own existence, about living a conscious life and creating an awareness about existence in others. As he says: "Ultimately, my work is nothing other than the proof of my existence."—Rene Rietmeyer lives in Venice, Italy.*

*Sarah Gold: Your artistic career started like most artists 'traditionally' by which I mean 2-dimensional drawings and paintings. But you have developed and since many years you create these abstract, 3-dimensional objects which you call 'Boxes'. How and why did you develop into this direction?*

Rene Rietmeyer: Like many Dutch artists, I started with making black and white drawings. It was probably, because I did not have the courage to use color. I was just not brave enough. I made these black and white drawings for many years. I finally tried to really use color when I was already 25, and started painting. Of course, I also read the texts of Frank Stella about his early work as well as Donald Judd's thoughts about Stella's work. More and more I realized that my works do contain something. They contain me, my thoughts.

As a reaction to the thoughts of these artists, I started to see better and better that the 'paintings' I made are in fact 3-dimensional objects. I started painting the sides, too. After moving my main studio to the USA in 1997, the same happened to me as what must have happened in a sense to Stella in the early 50s. I bought wood at Home Depot. By itself, this wood had a thickness that was much larger than the wood I would regularly buy for a painting in Europe. Just by using the cheap, available wood, automatically my works became much thicker. I noticed what was happening to my work and continued with it.

Knowing the thoughts of several American artists, gave me the courage to 'just do it': to step over the tradition of my culture and

just do it. In 1997, for the first time, my paintings became deeper than an inch, 2.5 cm. They became 2, 3 and 4 inches thick. They really became Boxes. I referred to my work myself with the term "Boxes", even though I avoided using this term for a long time. After I saw a catalogue from Kenneth Noland called *Doors*, I had the courage to stand behind the word "Boxes" as things that contain something.

The five sides of my Boxes are more or less equal. In the beginning, I only painted on these, canvas stretched over wood, Boxes; later, I constructed them out of many different materials, such as steel, ceramic and glass. Although I still like using oil paint and wood, because it has such a large variety of ways to work with.

*Karlyn De Jongh: The installations you created for the Venice Biennale 2011 were painted in and made for the space where you exhibited them. In principle your work is not site-specific, in the sense that the work is not specifically about or referring to the location it is made for. Rather the installations referred to other places, such as Naples or El Hierro. To what extent are you influenced by the space you work in? How much did Palazzo Bembo in Venice, Italy, influence your installations?*

RR: First of all, the Boxes, the series I construct are themselves in the strict sense of the word never site-specific. In my works I express my emotions towards certain regions or people, a series can refer to places, such as Naples and El Hierro. The series itself is as it is; its topic, its formal means do not change, they belong to the series, not to the space in which the installation eventually will be placed. So, there are two big differences here. I create a series of—let's say 50 or 100—Boxes that refer to a person, a city or an area. Secondly, there is the placement of these Boxes within a space. This placement is preferably very site-specific. I see the site, measure and 'feel' it. Then I decide which installation, the amount of Boxes, the position of the installation, the distance between the objects. These decisions are all made specifically for that particular location.

In the case of the Venice Biennale, I created my objects within that space. But the decision of what these four different series would look like in terms of color, shape, texture, material and size, had been made before that. It had nothing to do with the room where it would later be placed. I had already created the series in my head; I only executed them in that space. The reason why I painted them there





was practical: all four series were painted with oil paint. With the thickness I paint in, it would have taken 6 months to dry for the work to be transportable. I had no time for this, so I painted these series in the space and hung them wet on the wall.

My works, each series, not being site specific does not mean that the circumstances, the space in which I create them has no influence on the creation at all. My work is being influenced by all factors which have an influence on my being and therefore in this particular case, the space of Palazzo Bembo did have an influence.

*KDJ: In his sculptures, Lee Ufan is concerned with the relation between the 'used space' (the space his stone or metal plate take up) and the*

*'not-used space' (the remaining space of the gallery). Both are equally important to him and both have an influence on the experience of the sculpture. In your work, there is the space between the Boxes and also the penetration of the Boxes off the wall and into the space. What does this not-used space mean to you?*

RR: I think I am very close to Lee Ufan here. For me, the space as a total is one. My Boxes within the given space are part of the space as a total and create a certain atmosphere within that space, with that space. Just as the stone of Lee Ufan penetrates the space, occupies a

certain amount of space and has a certain amount of space around it, so do my Boxes. The space around my installation is therefore very

important as well. I find it difficult however to state that it is equally important, because I do not think you can measure that. What you can say is that my works are clearly present in the space surrounding them.

*KDJ: When I showed the German artist Gotthard Graubner your installations in our exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES at the Venice Biennale 2011, he was intrigued by the 3-dimensionality of your work, but he did not agree with the placement of your works on the wall, "too high". Why do you not place your works lower or—like in some works by Donald Judd—let the installation reach to the floor?*

RR: When Graubner places his artwork, he wants that the average spectator looks down to it. He wants that his art feels humble and

you—the spectator—feel this humbleness. Graubner also seems to have said once that "you look up to God and not to an artwork". I do not agree with him. I like to place the mid-level of my artwork easy 4 to 6 inches higher than what is in most parts of the world considered as 'museum height'. I like placing my work higher, not only because people have grown since that height was defined, but also because I want to go beyond that. I want that the spectator has to look slightly up to my work, it underwrites the feeling of respect. I like it when, not only my artworks, but all serious artworks, create this slight feeling of respect by the spectator. Yes, strong works can get this respect also when they are placed lower—even on the floor. But I found that this respect is easier gained when you have to stand straight in front

of it and look slightly up. Having said this, I do have made several installations which started just above the floor.

*KDJ: Lawrence Weiner once told us about Ad Reinhardt's definition of sculpture: "the things you trip over in the dark." Although he makes text installations on the wall, Weiner considers himself to be a sculptor. Also your work is remarkable in this way. Although your Boxes are 3-dimensional and you are very concerned with the concept of space, your work does not seem to fit this definition. Why is generally speaking the wall the best location for placing your work?*

RR: Lawrence Weiner statement that he considers his work to be sculptures is very brave. An object is by definition always a 3-dimensional thing. But all these concepts and definitions can be discussed endlessly. Lawrence uses language as a material, I prefer not to use language for my work. Lawrence even makes works in languages which he does not speak himself, communication through language is always limited to the people who understand the language. I prefer using objects displaying a set of formal means to communicate, because I believe that in this way I can reach a wider audience.

It is of course, always possible to defend or explain your own position. I, in my position, prefer to leave the word 'sculpture' and not use it to describe the items I make. I prefer to refer to myself as someone who constructs 3-dimensional objects. Of course, you can trip over them and there are many other reasons why you can consider them as sculptures, especially when they are made of steel or glass. Even with the changing definition of the word sculpture over the last 100 years, for me, however, the word 'sculpture' still mainly refers to a manual activity, which most often does not apply to the objects I make. So, even with the generally accepted definition in mind, I consider my work only partly as 'sculpture'. I prefer describing my work as being '3-dimensional objects' constructed by me.

The reason why my work is mostly placed on the wall has mainly to do with the angle in which you observe the installation. My work has a strong relation to the spectator and he is best able to observe my work within the given surrounding best when it is placed on the wall. For sure, there are times and locations when placing my objects on the floor would be better—or perhaps even on the ceiling, which I have never done so far. Without doubt, however, the wall is the best position for my 3-dimensional objects.

*KDJ: In the New Museum in New York in 2009, you spoke mainly about the "perspective of space", not about space in general. The experience of a space, seems for you to depend more on the people you are with than on the location itself. In your recent installations you also make a combination in the title between a location and a person that you were with at that time. When you paint a work, for example Miami Beach or Houston, does the specific location itself have a meaning to you? Why do you associate your work with a specific location? Why not simply leave it out? Also: When you want to heighten a certain awareness in the visitor about his own Existence in Time and Space, does the specific location the work is based on still matter when it is displayed in an exhibition?*

RR: First of all, I think that space in general will be very difficult to discuss, because all the space we encounter is our own personal

perspective of that space. We can theorize about space. But space eventually is what we personally encounter, that is how we feel and perceive space. So, the personal perspective of space is what space is about in our daily existence. Having additional knowledge however, physical knowledge, about space, is good to have. Knowledge about space taught by astronomers or physicians has of course also an influence on how we perceive space. But I am, my work is, about the personal perceiving of space. The discussions about space in general these days are so specialized, that my understanding cannot cope with many of these complicated facets. Of course, I read some Einstein and have looked into Space-Time, but the truth is: "how little do I know."

The people I am with are part of my space and therefore have a great impact on how I perceive the space. It makes a difference if I am in a white cubic space, without doors or windows together with a beautiful sexy woman, or with a hungry lion. My perception of the same space will be very different. I express myself at a specific moment within time and space, my existence on that moment. Since I am often at different locations, I do express those locations. My work is about the location I mention in the title, it is about me experiencing that location. You can say that these works are like 'landscapes'. The works that have the name of a person are like 'portraits'. Often my titles have the name of a person and the surrounding. The surrounding has a big impact on how a person is, how he expresses himself and how you perceive that person.

I use the title as a reference for the spectator to follow my thoughts. For me, a title is not necessary, but I like it when the spectator can follow me and understand how I, Rene Rietmeyer, felt at that particular moment when I experienced Miami Beach or El Hierro. It shows the viewer that a different location brings along a totally different feeling and way of expression. This forces him to realize that a different location brings along a different awareness about your own existence within time and space.

*KDJ: Several years ago, in the first development stages of PERSONAL STRUCTURES, you 'tested' the main themes of Time, Space and Existence on Joseph Kosuth. He advised you to take "location" instead of "space": "Location, location, location...", he said. In your work you address different locations and, at first glance, you do not seem very concerned with space in general. Why did you 'overrule' Kosuth and chose for "space"?*

RR: Kosuth was indeed more focused on 'location' being a very important aspect. In my opinion, location is only a part of space: space is so to say 'bigger' than location. Location is very important, but space is more 'overall' and includes many locations. In my work, I address different locations, because that is me at a certain moment in time and at a certain position, location within space. My discussion with Kosuth about space and location has not finished. Kosuth did not move; I did not move. I did not 'overrule' Kosuth, but for my project I chose Time, Space and Existence.

*SG: As the initiator of the international art-project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, which presents artists who are concerned with the subject matter of Time-Space and/or Existence, what do these subjects mean to you and how are they integrated in your artistic work?*



RR: I think that since thousands of years, many humans started trying to ask big questions about who we are. Our own existence is a very interesting, but very large question. Over the millennia, we humans have come up with many different answers. And even now, depending if you are born in China, Africa or the USA, you probably have a different "answer" regarding your existence. It can be influenced by various religions or no religion at all.

Time, Space, and with them, cultural background, religion, etc., they all have an influence on answering questions about your own existence and about the existence of mankind as a total. I think that this question about our own existence, my personal existence and the existence of mankind is the basis, the core of

my artwork: the awareness that I exist in a certain moment in time, and a location in space. This awareness about time-space and what this means for my personal existence and that of mankind, that is what my work is about. It is not that this is 'integrated' in my artwork; my artwork is this awareness about time, space and existence.

*KDJ: You seem to have quite quickly developed to your concept of the Boxes, which you maintained for the past 15 years. When you look at your oeuvre, are there certain Boxes that mark a transition? How do you see your artistic development? Or is it more like in the work of Roman Opalka, where the continuation of the artistic concept seems to be the development in the work?*



RR: In the mid-90s I started to be seriously concerned with contemporary art and influenced by the books I read and the artists I met, I created my own thoughts, my own theory and concept. That went very fast, in a period of two years. It went through many stages. Once I found my concept, my thoughts. I started to only fine-tune them, which is since the summer of 1997, since then it did not move so much anymore. I could give it a stronger intellectual backup, with examples out of art history. I refined the use of my abstract language and the formal elements, my awareness grew over time, my capabilities to use color, shape and material more consciously became bigger. But there were no big changes, no Boxes that “mark a transition”. None. There are no special marking points. It has been a

continuous expressing of my emotions with the formal means of color, texture, material and size ever since. Opalka was much more a voluntary victim of his own concept and could not have another kind of emotional expression. He had a very strong concept, but mine is more complete, more complex. Opalka really only focused on time, you could then also claim that he was focusing on existence, but that was never his goal. When he came up with his concept, the consciousness was not there that it was about existence. Consciously, it was only about time. My concept is consciously about time, space and existence, my own existence and the existence of other people and my surrounding. The fine-tuning in my concept, you cannot call that a development. I exist as a human being, and yes, I do change.

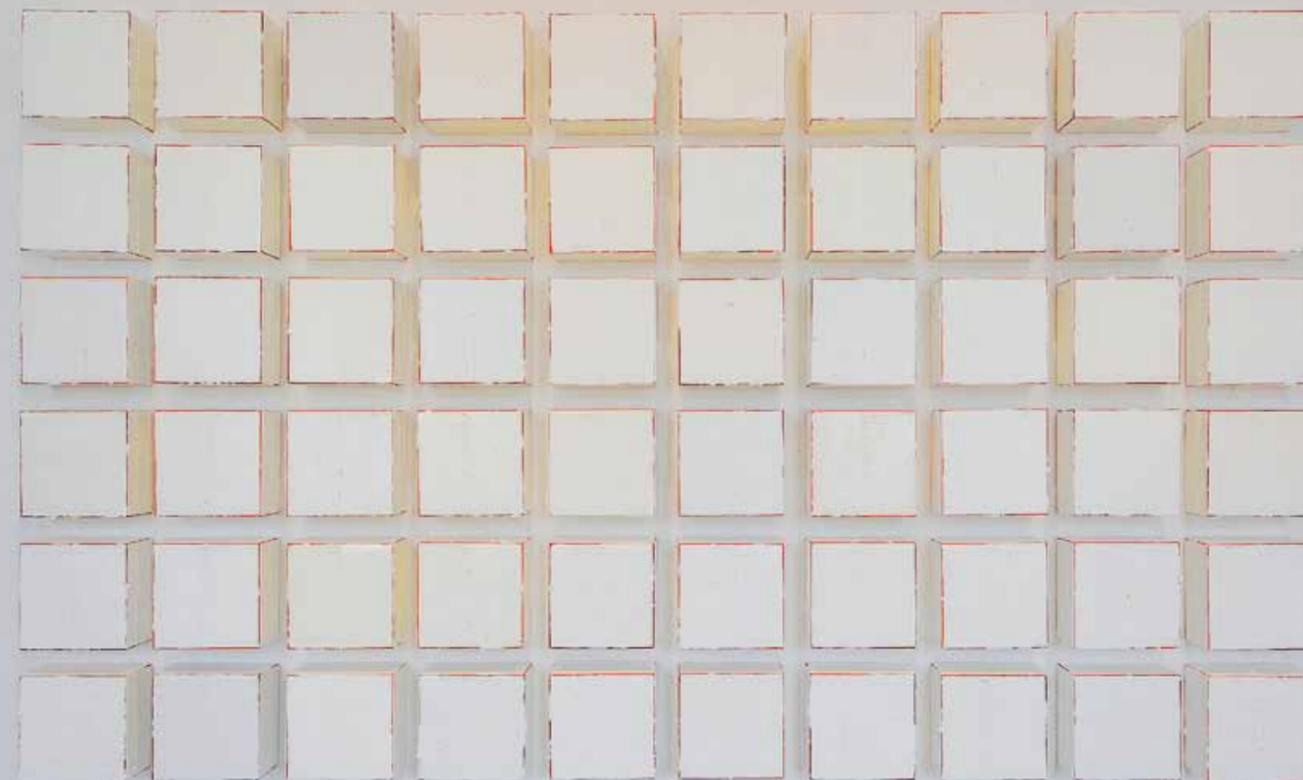
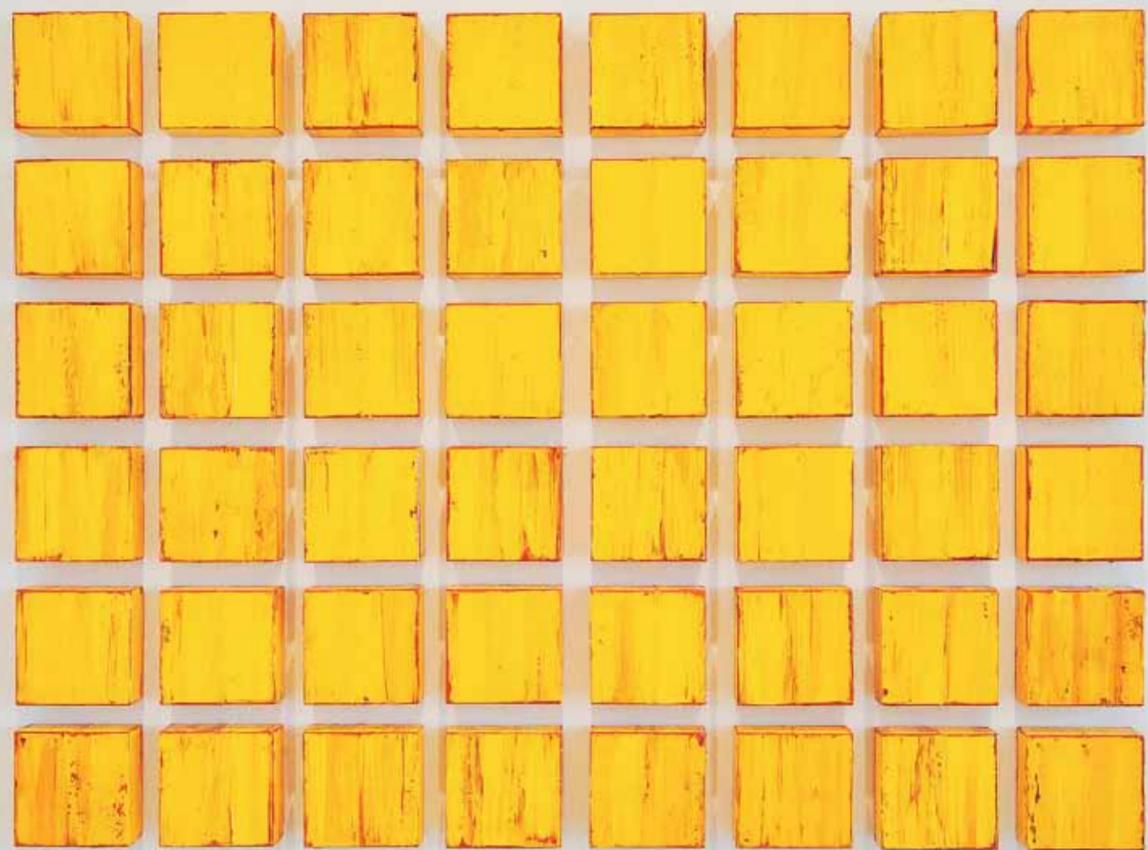


Development is mostly seen as a linear development, like an improving, like a searching towards something, trying new things. I do not have to try new things; I express myself as I am at this point in time. Perhaps I am more complex or complete, with more knowledge than ten years ago. To call that a development is a large word. Unfortunately, in the artworld development is mostly seen as one style following up another. There is no need for that at all. There are too many artists now that have shown that development should be seen totally different than it was 100 years ago in the single artist's careers and art history as a total. People like Lee Ufan, Opalka and me execute their concepts. That's it. That is what they do until they die. In my work and that of Lee Ufan you can see a personal

development, a growing older. I, today, am a different person than I was ten years ago or that I will be in ten years from now—if I am still alive. That is all the development to be seen. There will be no further artistic development in that sense. Only an expression of my thoughts today. These thoughts will not be exactly the same as time passes. There are always slight changes as humans change over time.

*KDJ: In 2002 you initiated the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES and worked the past 10 years to make it grow. You decided to focus on this group of artists rather than on your own career. Why did you choose this path?*

RR: I started of course, by just being occupied with myself. Eventually, when I had done that for 5 years, it went very well and my career



developed fantastically. At the same time I realized, that someone who makes the type of art I make, will not easily achieve a sufficient enough level of influence on other people.

My work is not spectacular. At first glance, it does not look amazing and does not attract you by a first view that easily. I knew that if I would continue by myself, I would reach only few people. That just did not seem enough to me. I looked at other artists, such as Bram Bogart, and thought: If I would now work very hard in my life, I might reach the importance and presence of a Bram Bogart. That was not enough for me; I wanted more than that. I thought that when I create a group of artists around me, that then people might listen and might notice us much more easy. And they do.

*KDJ: Looking at your glass-installation VENEZIA at the 2009 Venice Biennale, Joseph Kosuth commented that these works of yours are "too beautiful". For many collectors, it is an important aspect of a work that it is aesthetically pleasing to them, that they like to live with the works in their collection. Beauty is subjective, but you sometimes make Boxes that address a—for you and in the broadest sense of the word—not beautiful location and as a result you claim that these Boxes are also not aesthetically pleasing. Why do you choose to make Boxes after experiences of cities that were not beautiful? Don't you want to forget about those? Or is an artwork that is visually too beautiful, a danger for its concept?*

RR: In my life many memories are of the strange, the weird, the so-called 'not beautiful' experiences. I remember so well those unusual

sexual experiences, which were not beautiful at all. The beautiful sexual experiences I may have partly forgotten. My work is about things that make a strong impression on me, regardless whether it is beautiful or not. My concept is in no danger what so ever. I am executing my concept regardless the aesthetics of the result. Too beautiful, too ugly, it does not matter. My concept is to express the experiences I experience, with all formal means that I can handle. This concept cannot be broken; it is regardless of the kind of experience. As long as I express my experiences, I follow my concept.

*KDJ: So, you choose experiences that are remarkable in your own life, but what do you want to say to the viewer in this respect? You do want to make him more aware about his own existence.*

RR: By expressing my own existence, by showing the viewer my own existence and how I express my own personal experiences I hope that the viewer relates to his or her own existence and starts to contemplate about his or her own existence and how they experience certain regions or persons in life. I want them to see that when I am so conscious about living my life and experiencing the experiences I had, I hope that also they learn to be more conscious about what they experience and try to see more clearly their own existence within the environment in which they are.

So, in first instance I want to express myself. Then I want to show other people how I express myself and I hope that from that on they consider more about how they experience and perhaps even

could express themselves. I hope this will lead to a larger awareness about their own existence. I think that by showing how aware you are about your own personal existence, it might have an influence on other people and they might then look more carefully to their own existence.

*KDJ: How is for you the difference between 'you 15 years ago' and 'you now' with regard to the intellectual value in your work?*

RR: There is no change. The main intellectual underwriting, the basis of my intellectual backup has been created in the spring and early summer of 1997. It has been refined over the past 15 years. Details have been added, but the main content has not changed at all. My works from that period and looking back to spring time 1997, it has not changed. The intellectual backup has become better. I have a better foundation, because I know more about other artists. But it has not changed. And also the emotional value of my work for me personally has not changed. Today it feels basically the same as 14 years ago. Of course, when I look at the works I made around that time, they have an emotional impact. But the works I made last week, they have also an impact on me. There are differences from series to series; some have a strong impact on me and others a less strong one. But it is not counted by the year, but by the series. So, I cannot say that my relationship towards my work either intellectual or emotional, has changed over the years.

*KDJ: Your work shows 'you'. Although you lived most of your life outside of the Netherlands and have had encounters with people from all over the world, it seems you are still very Dutch. When looking at the Dutch tradition of painters, you seem to fit very well in the line of Van Gogh, De Kooning and Mondriaan and even Schoonhoven. To what extent is who you are influenced by the culture you are brought up in, or even the time that you did not experience yourself? Do you think, when you would have been born in another part of the world, that you would have expressed yourself in a similar way as you do now?*

RR: I am a product of my culture. I think there is no denying. I traveled many countries and lived in many countries and all these situations must have had an influence on me. But, yes, I am probably still very Dutch, even though I left the Netherlands when I was 21 years old and only briefly came back around my 40s. I am part of my surroundings and part of my genes, just like everybody else. I think that, would I have been born and grown up in a different culture, let's say Saudi Arabia, for sure I would have expressed myself differently. Emotionally and probably also intellectually, I would have been a totally different person.

It is an illusion to think that one really only, totally creates oneself. For a large part, it is your genes, the way you are built, and for a very large part also your cultural surrounding, which forms you as a human being. That means, the thoughts I think are probably not so much from myself, but are probably more a product between my own personal relationship and my own personal exposition with my culture, with the knowledge and the things I see and learn. We are not that unique by ourselves. I think we are a product of learning about our surroundings. When I would have been grown up in the jungle, not knowing anything of what I know now today, I would

have felt and acted much different and I think especially the emotional repertoire that someone has to express him or herself, is largely influenced by the culture you are surrounded by. I have seen in myself how I acted as a human being in Greece, it was different from how I acted being in the Netherlands. Also emotional expression has to do with communication with the people around you. In order to communicate with people, you have to find the right type of language. In different cultures, you communicate differently emotionally in order to communicate well. You adapt even your own personal emotional way of expression.

*KDJ: Visualizing experiences that happened in your life, in your work you are mainly focused on the past. At the same time, you are someone who is very aware of how short life actually is and seem to think often about the possible number of days that you are still alive and how this number is decreasing every day. What does your future mean to you? How do you feel about the moment that you will paint your last Box?*

RR: I have less and less lifetime and I am so aware that I have to hurry up... I have to hurry up with regard to my artwork, my personal life, in everything, in experiencing. It is like I once said, when I told you about my meeting with Robert Rauschenberg: "I am running out of time." Everybody, no matter in what age you are, should immediately understand that you are running out of time. Time is very, very limited. There is no reason why you should hesitate in experiencing new, other things and there is no time to waste in creating. You have to create and do as much as you can within your lifetime as fast as possible, because it is so short. You are dead within a "second". This awareness should push us. It is sad that I have to sleep every night. I would prefer to stay awake, always and never die.

*KDJ: Your work shows 'you' and you see your Boxes as proofs of your existence. According to you, how does Existence relate to Time and Space?*

RR: We exist within time and space. Existence is everything and infinite and everything exists within time and space themselves being infinite to. You cannot be outside of time nor can you be outside of space. As Einstein taught us time-space, space-time is one, you cannot be outside. Everything, the whole cosmos is time and space; everything exists within time and space: me, you and my artwork.

*KDJ: During your life, you have lived in many different countries all over the world, from Japan to the USA. In this way, you are like a nomad. Before you die, you will probably not be able to see as many places anymore as you would like to. How do you feel about becoming older? Are there specific places you would like to paint?*

RR: There are no special places that I would like to paint, from which I would like to construct objects. I construct my work according my existence and it is fine, whatever I experience, although I would have liked to experience endlessly. Time is not my friend; time is definitely my enemy. Dying will be a very sad moment in my life, because I wish my life could continue forever. It will not; I will die.





## YUKO SAKURAI

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

### Three works for Venice Biennale 2011:

#### *Ise – Tsuyama – Tsumekizaki*

I came back to Japan in January 2011 and returned to Paris on 11 February, just one month before the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and the following Fukushima Nuclear disaster. After the tragedies, I have felt the distance between me and Japan diminished, Japan was closer to me than ever before.

This is the reason why I had chosen to present these works, *Ise – Tsuyama – Tsumekizaki*, inspired by my 2011 Japan trip on the Venice Biennale. Furthermore, I went to Venice in April, a few weeks before the opening of the Biennale, where I had the unique

opportunity to create these “Japan” works directly in my exhibition room at Palazzo Bembo in “Venice”.

#### **About Ise:**

It was my first visit to Ise Jingu. I felt Ise was certainly an exceptional place in Japan. There is a dense forest of Japanese cypress (hinoki), covering 5500 hectares, which is comparable to the size of Paris. Because of the enormous scale of the secret land, I felt completely disconnected from the present and I could imagine how the ancient time was. In fact, a shrine complex composed of a large number of Shinto shrines is centred on two main shrines. I learned that Jingu is rebuilt every 20 years with exactly the same form and proportions

on a plot next to the old one, to remind us of eternity and to continue this cycle that exists since a long time. I was fascinated to look at two spaces, one full and another space with a small symbol, the one was situated in the present and the other in the future.

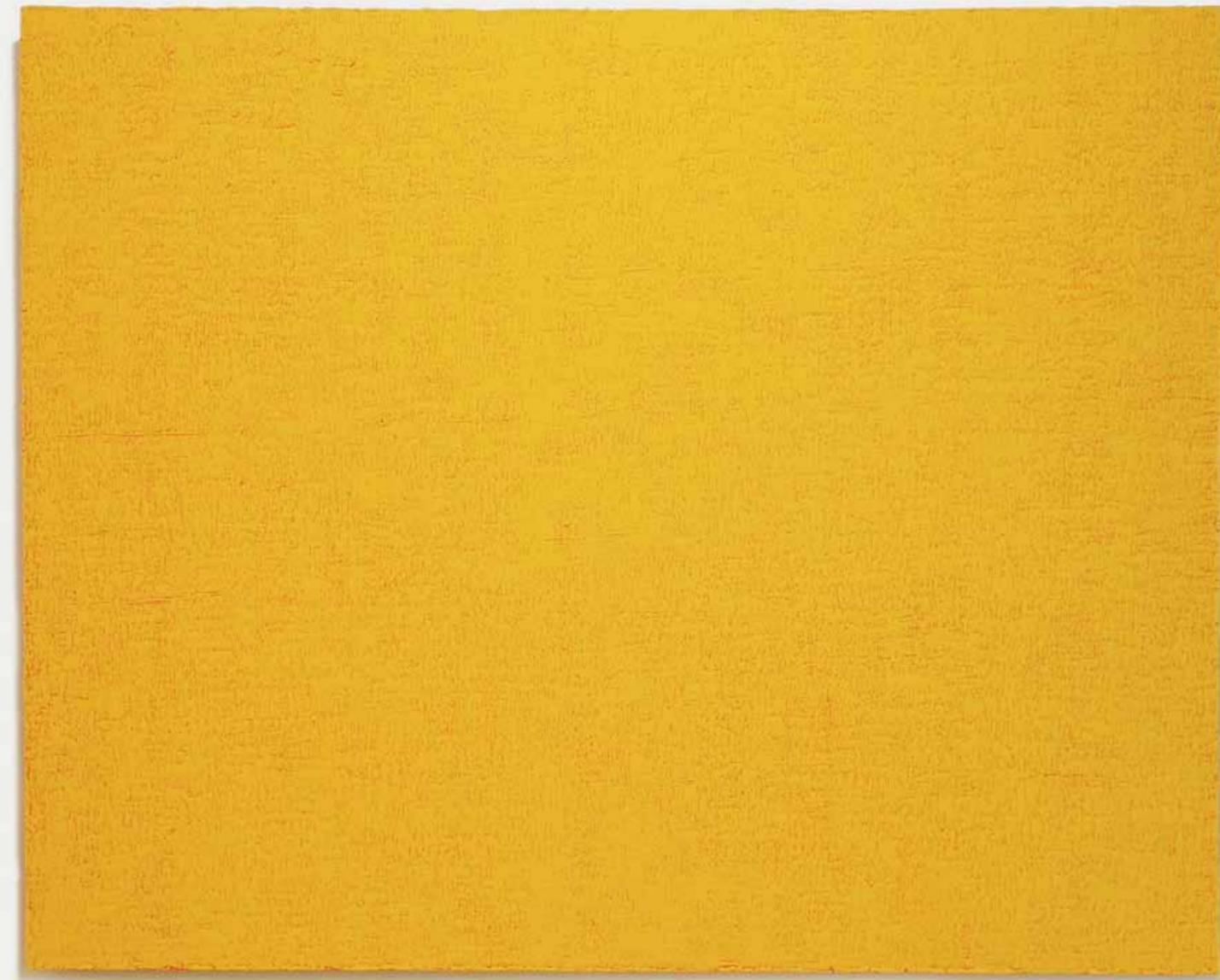
The simplicity of the architecture was astonishing, the builders used unpainted cypress wood in the ancient Japanese style. I was deeply moved by this dynamic simplicity and got a strong emotional impact from the uncolored pillars, it felt as if the wood was still alive. Standing on the land where huge size trees are growing that are more than 300 years old, I could experience a passage of time between the trees, and I felt that I was encountering the extended history of Japan.



I made this triptych work, because I wanted to create an atmosphere, which contains many different substances of this dense forest. The color is from "Red to Pink": red is the expression of the high emotion, the strong tactile experiences made by hands and feet while encountering the passing of time. I used pink in the way I normally use white, to express stillness, peacefulness, and tranquillity. By using Pink, I wanted to create the subtlety of a sensibility, in the same manner as light does. Also, I wanted to find an overall expression for the modest behaviour of the Japanese, which can find its equivalent in the very nuanced colour of Pink. But at the same time, I wanted to show that we are having a strong inner part, for this reason red can be still seen under the layers of pink.

**About *Tsuyama*:**

*Tsuyama* is my parent's hometown in Okayama, the place where I was born. Every time I return to Japan, I get back to this town to recall my sense of self-identity. *Tsuyama* is my roots, and they are always there. It has not changed much since I was small, even the smell is still the same. There are a lot of mountains, clean creeks, rice fields and farms. By being outside of Japan, my emotions towards *Tsuyama* increase. This place is the base of my representation of Japan. In the past, I have made works called *Tsuyama* from time to time. *Tsuyama* is my life work. The color for this work is "Orange-Yellow", which presents warmness and the light that we receive from the sun, positive atmosphere, energy.



**About *Tsumekizaki*:**

*Tsumekizaki* is located on the coast of Suzaki in the southern Izu Peninsula, about 150km to southwest from Tokyo. It was the first time I saw the columnar joints produced by wave erosion and I felt the thousands of years from its history. The hexagonal patterns of the rocks fascinated me. From a distance, it looked like turtles; the natural process amazed me. I went to the Izu Peninsula with my parents, their favourite place. The wild white Narcissus and red flowers of Aloe were wavering in the strong wind. It was a beautiful contrast between the vivacity of flowers and the rough nature of columnar joints. We walked along the coast for quite a long time. I made two panels of different size for *Tsumekizaki*, as a metaphor of

my parents. It will stay as my last journey with them. For the panels, I have chosen "Deep Blue and Light Blue", which is the continuous-ness, freshness, earth and wild nature.

The connection with nature is significantly important to me and to my work. Nature is not something to be governed nor regulated by us, but it is something coexisting with us. Nature is strong, we cannot control it and we have to respect it. I still believe that Japan is a beautiful island, even though we are carrying a tragedy. But I should not forget that the world is connected. Traveling is part of my life and I would like to have a close contact with nature in my daily life.



## SASAKI

### HEARTBEAT VENICE BIENNALE 2011:

HEARTBEAT DRAWING as a Heartbeat-Portrait aims to raise your consciousness and make you listen to your heartbeat. In addition it is about the visual act of drawing. HEARTBEAT VENICE BIENNALE 2011, this performance is all about harmonizing the heartbeat, between the visitor whose heartbeat I draw, and myself, SASAKI. It is the process of a live performance in an environment with the sound of the heartbeat, which is composing the artwork. Spiritual interchange occurs between the artist and the visitor, who are both experiencing time and space.

HEARTBEAT DRAWING gives the opportunity to purely sense the simultaneous existence of people from all over the world, a method that can be undertaken by anyone anywhere, it is the power of the heartbeat. By simply placing your hand on your chest, you can feel the rhythm, the beat of your life. Since 1995, HEARTBEAT DRAWING has been consistently capturing this rhythm in real time in the form of drawing. But rather than drawing, it is closer to the nuance of inscribing, of pounding something out. Until today, there have been over 20 million beats inscribed. The visualized beats, the red rhythm of the work, captures a specific time and place, a specific context and functions as a device to visualize a complicated information resource. Each slightly different wave is a confirmation of life, and expresses a pure way of being. HEARTBEAT DRAWING continues to add value to the existence of every beat. HEARTBEAT

DRAWING continues as an art to draw attention to the fact that we are all born within the ecosystem of the earth. The art of HEARTBEAT DRAWING is to enable you to sense that all over the world there exists a simultaneous pulsating rhythm of each person's heart, a harmony of sound that exists in one moment, and in this moment the commonality of the world is formed. From this small awareness we are led to the consciousness of our basic human equality. This is a unique expression of reality.

Ever since 1995, SASAKI has been obsessively continuing to produce HEARTBEAT DRAWING, in which he records heartbeats. In total there have been depicted more than 20 million heartbeats, on over 1600 artworks—and that number is still growing. To be sharing the drawings of people being at a specific time in a specific space, is an important part

of the concept of the HEARTBEAT DRAWING project. The drawings are originally created with pen or air-brush in red ink or another material. SASAKI is devoted to inscribe and record the heartbeat. Each individual drawing is a fragment of his entire activity and shows lines of red ink, forming a dense sort of net, suggesting the unlimited expanse of life.

"Beat of the Heart", the fundament on which life in this world is given continuity, is the essence of "life" as we know it. It is the proof of living in the 'now' and the bond "shared" by most forms of life. "Sharing-Owning" of the Drawing is about participating in SASAKI's ever-expanding project, where one shares "life" with others as a continuous element. HEARTBEAT DRAWING project is progressing with each heartbeat of each human being in this world.

# LAWRENCE WEINER

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

Weiner's houseboat Joma, Amsterdam, Netherlands,  
26 January 2010

*Lawrence Weiner (1942, Bronx USA) creates what he calls 'sculptures': wall installations consisting of words, often in bright colors. The basis for his installations is the idea that language is material. Weiner's installations are flexible: size, language and color are variable; how they are depends on the location. Weiner maintains that: "ART IS THE EMPIRICAL FACT OF THE RELATIONSHIPS OF OBJECTS TO OBJECTS IN RELATION TO HUMAN BEINGS & NOT DEPENDENT UPON HISTORICAL PRECEDENT FOR EITHER USE OR LEGITIMACY."—Weiner lives in New York and Amsterdam.*

*Sarah Gold: It's interesting where you stand, you reflect upon your life today.*

Lawrence Weiner: It's almost impossible for me to do it. That's why I was thinking to take today, when there would be anything in it for me, to get to that point where you may be able to reflect, without having to sit quietly with somebody in a bar all night. I don't have a picture of myself that is very clear, I really don't.

*Karlyn De Jongh: How do you feel about the art world today?*

LW: Yes, I am extremely disappointed in the art world. It turned into continuation of art school. With the same fights and the same stupid ideas. They complain about not fitting into the system and then they fit in and then they make sure nobody else will fit in. Why didn't they change the system? But I'm also embarrassed by the failure of the opportunity everybody had. When you speak now, let's talk rationality. Why is it that in music, in science and mathematics we are still basically talking about the same problems, while everything else has gone ahead?

*KDJ: What is it you would like to talk about?*

LW: Don't you think it is really rather strange that we are living in this world where there are people who cannot accept digital morality? And yet they use it to impose reactionary morality. That's the whole Taliban thing.

*SG: What is it you actually mean with digital reality?*

LW: Think about it: The simultaneous realities within the digital, the thing that makes your cell phone work, that makes your computer work. The computers from nowadays, not the earlier computers, because those were analogue. It's not analogue. Analogue is related to the world we live in. It's anthropomorphic, digital is not. It

has been what I have been trying to use most of my adult life. In the simultaneous reality there is no such thing as hierarchy. There can't be a hierarchy, it just can't exist. Now if you build anything that's based on a hierarchy, you are already going backwards. And I don't know why nobody made this leap. There are artists who are able to handle the idea of simultaneous realities; they don't have to be the only ones who are right. I don't mean on a personal level. We tend to personalize things. Don't personalize it. But I mean it politically: I am not a humanist. I will fight for somebody's right to be who they are, but I'm also going to fight the person who forces me to sit through one family evening.

*KDJ: Are you disappointed that for all your hopes only this much has changed?*

LW: No. Hey, you're only one human being. There are billions of people. No, I'm not disappointed at all. I'm not disappointed personally. Maybe dissatisfied. I'm not pleased with the extent of the result. And I'm not pleased sometimes with what's come about, what's come out of it all. But that doesn't mean anything. I mean, who cares whether I'm happy or not?

*KDJ: Well, you maybe care.*

LW: Do I? I wouldn't know what to do about it. I care. Yes, I care. But again: That's stages in your life where you've done well, you've done good for people. And you continue to do good for people. But you're not terribly happy with what it means to you. But you have accepted all these responsibilities, it's this problem: you have to figure it all out. It's all very nice to be existentially free, but existential also means taking responsibility for what you do. You can't balance it, I can't figure it all out.

*SG: Would you have done anything different in your life? If you would have a chance now, looking back?*

LW: Looking back, no. Looking forward, yes. And if I intend to be able to do it, there's no way I can talk about it in public. That's something where it's not about honesty, it's about, it's not part of the game. Looking back, no. Yes okay, I regret I have hurt so-and-so's feelings and I should have been nicer to people, but that is nothing. Because you cannot even say you will do it better in the future, because it's



not the same situation. Looking forward, I see things I would like to be doing differently. Then I'm put into the position of where I am. And I'm trying to change it radically. But again, that's not the kind of thing you can change. It's a hegemony, it's an imposition on you: You don't call up the culture which is your adversary at the moment and tell them what you intend to do. Because they are in a position to build up all the barricades possible.

It's a major question. The bullshit that happened in the last 20 years, that art is about a career, that wasn't what it was about. It was about making these things that people fell over, and they had to get up and decide whether they were worth walking

around or throw them away. You know better, you do better. If you don't know better, you can't do better. And the whole point of artists is to develop up not as themselves, but develop up in their practice with a relationship to the world as it's changing. But that doesn't necessarily mean being on mode. That might just mean getting better in relationship to the world. Too many things we use today are made by people who were willing to take the chance that what they were doing was not going to work. All the ones that didn't work, you never heard of. That doesn't mean they didn't make the right choice, does it? [...] I'm sorry, it sounds so heavy, but it's the truth. I don't know what is expected of artists. Yes, we're stuck with it. Not mom and pop people. Opalka is a



good example. I'm sorry, I really don't get it. It's this idea that the artist who believes... This is quotable... that their own self-development is the whole reason for the existence of art. It doesn't have a fucking thing to do with self-development. Almost everything is science, philosophy, mathematics, art, cinema, music and cooking; it only functions in the stream of life. There are accidents and other things, but this self-involvement really gets to me. [...] But it's work, it's not you. And every omelet isn't great. I've read it somewhere: it's called profundity. You want somebody to look at it if you want to hear more than *O, wat mooi* [How beautiful]. *Dat is niet genoeg* [That's not enough].

*KDJ: When you say it's your work and not you, is there a difference for you between yourself and your work?*

LW: Yes, there is. But if I fuck up, my feelings get hurt just as much as another person's. I have feelings and things, but it's not me. It's not a reflection of me. How I deal with it in the world is a reflection of me. But it's not me. It's not a representation of me.

*KDJ: What do you mean, when you say it's not you?*

LW: Things are made by people for other people. But being a person, you also have your own feelings and your own existence and everything. I don't see the work as me. It's not me. I'm very proud of

it, I like it when it works. I like getting compliments, just like anybody else. But if it doesn't work, and it was a good shot, I can be upset, I can be depressed. But I don't feel I am *verminderd* [reduced]. If the second time it doesn't work, then I am *verminderd*. Then I'm not functioning. But there's also this other thing, it's not going to work all the time. Somebody can say: "It should have been green". I have to listen. But it's not you. That's the problem that people with celebrity have. Do end up doing strange things, like going into a bar even if it's not the people you're interested in, but they have no way of knowing who the hell you are. It's like when somebody's cruising you, there's something left in you that doesn't go with the whole package. It can

lead to embarrassing situations, but that's life. At least you know that there is something left in you that has a certain charm. You forget sometimes, you lose it. You begin to think that you are just another kind of presence. It's the same problem with some of the earlier artists we have been talking about. They forgot that it has to be them outside of the uniform, outside of who they are in the world. Just every once in a while. That's different. That's personal. You wanted personal? That's personal. And that's a major problem. You like it. You like the idea that you have access to the entire world, practically. Because the art world is international.

## XING XIN

*Xing Xin (1981, Chongqing, China) is a performance artist. His work explores concepts of time, space and existence to express the human condition, in particular his own existence within society. Xing Xin currently lives and works in Chengdu, China.*

### **Here's the scene of 2011, I Exhibit Myself in a Western Exhibition:**

May 31<sup>st</sup> 2011, in the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE as part of the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, I was locked in an empty room of approx. 5 m<sup>2</sup>, behind iron "prison" bars. I was dressed with tailored trousers, while half naked to the waist; the tailored coat, shirt, tie, hat, purse, sun glasses, and watch were orderly placed at the corner of the room. (All the outfits were the top luxurious brands in the world, but all fake.) During the 30 days of the work, at the opening hours of the exhibition, I stayed there, doing nothing. People were free to look at me through the iron bars, as a Chinese artist, a Chinese; even at dusk when I put on my outfits and left the room, I was still the work itself.

To talk about the conception of this work, I first would like to talk about my personal values. And the following text were what I recorded back then, when I conceived the work:

This is a work of simplicity, as what I do is simply to exhibit myself. However, it is saturated with my current thought about "living space" and my own existence today.

Flourishing and prosperous is China today. Considering the past century's turbulence, hardly anyone could resist the urge of going with the favorable wind of the current economy. With the continuing Reformation and Opening Policy, the world economic battles gradually take place in this nation, China, which for decades had applied planned economy policy. The ups and downs of the stock market and real estate constantly feed people's appetite for money, while the accelerating inflation moreover triggers their discussion and participation on "economics"! (Hereby, I don't mean to question the rightness of reformation and opening, with which I actually agree. The Chinese society, ideology, etc. will therefore become more humanistic.) But under such circumstances, any linear reasoning of the non-economic fields is disturbed by the economic subjects flying all over, and impacted on the development of academics!

As you imagine: when the chitchat on every family's dinner tables—and I mean EVERY family—were even occupied with investment, rewarding, and benefits, where else could we have our serenity make? The schools? Of course not! In such times, professors thereby deservedly cast their green eye to the colleagues overseas; or just being messed up by all the mess-up of mob scene. So don't waste time hoping to find somewhat a Xanadu or Shangri-la or Arcadia there!

Knowing these, it makes me feel depressed! As a "human", I can't agree my life merit just of this! Therefore, I chose my life, chose to be an artist, to enclose my precious yet frail courage in the name of an artist! I fight, fight with the unseen. I'm bewildered, bewildered by the wilder bewilderment of my family, my lovers, and my friends!

As an artist, I constantly feel lost and I feel I am facing with horror! I'm lost, in the Chinese contemporary art world, which only seems to be dealing with the total as an academic subject, instead of treasuring any individuals to light the world. In my eyes, the flourishing of contemporary art is nothing more than a mixture between the curiosity of the westerners and the speculations of the New Rich in the East! Whereas the horror, comes from my ignorance of how much I am like them! As I can infer: lotus comes from the mud water while untouched, but I am only human!

In this society where humanity encounters with economics, in these times when speculation invades, I force to engage myself with the Allies: "de facto this moment I was born, only wish to fight my way through the din and thorns; thus free and easy may it lead, over through my whole life will be lit!"

As for every element applied in this work, they are, in my eyes, all of special and irreplaceable significance:

**Field:** Realizing this work at the Venice Biennale, which was (and is) lead by and saturated with western aura, what appealed to me most I think, was the cultural significance the Biennale carries, and the sociological symbols it derives. In my eyes, it was a concentrate of the western field opposed to Chinese ideology.

**Prisoning:** The concept of prisoning was applied in this work due to symbological concerns. Prisoning here is personal, as well as sociological; it is the key to contradiction, and the key itself.



**Half-nudity:** In a serious exhibition, the unserious half-nudity was somewhat ironic. I think it gives people a rude impression. I hope the work seems to be more of "the third world". It helps to deliver my certain kind of feelings toward the less civilized cultures. (I remember the summers when I was little, people stripped to the waist were seen everywhere in the day or night.)

**Fake brands:** My favorite element in this work is fake luxurious brands. In my perspective, it is really special. Although such fake brands are also consumed in the developed countries, (during the process of this work I met two women from Europe proudly telling me, "what I'm wearing is also counterfeit, but I like this stuff.") Still, I think most western residents are pretty rational toward luxuries.

Mostly they would choose to consume something they could afford, instead of swarming into producing and consuming counterfeits to substitute for luxury goods in order to show off their wealth and "taste". In China, the output and sales volume of counterfeits are huge. Brands like Louis Vuitton and Gucci are easily seen in the streets, on the bus, or in the vegetable market. It's hard to imagine that in China, there's really someone who could go to the vegetable market to carry the 1-yuan-per-kilo cabbage with a bag which an ordinary citizen could only afford with a whole year's salary—without any living expenses to cover.

**Suit:** There's a story about "suit" which is still fresh in my memory. In 2004, I participated in an exhibition in Shanghai and shared a



shabby hostel with a friend who just started in the IT industry but who now is really famous. He was wearing a neat dark-blue suit. In the following few days, every time he returned to the room he would hang the suit up with the hostel's rusted hanger on a string across the bed, so as not to crease the suit. It was winter. In the paper-thin white shirt he sat there at the head of the bed, shivering while sharing a whole night's conversation with me. His behavior of over-cherishing his suit, makes me question. It is what I had in mind when I thought about the attributes for this performance.

**Interaction:** In that specific room, almost everyone who came to the exhibition shared a short or long conversation with me. They

brought many information. Some were just out of curiosity, some came to talk about Ai Weiwei, or about cultural differences, or about fashion, and etc. Other than answering their questions respectively, I also asked some questions that I was interested in. With the Q&As to and fro, both being individuals, we had respectively left a trace of our existence and a piece of mind in each other's life forever. In the meantime, I regarded every moment of my life in Venice as part of the work. Even when I was asleep, I was presenting the work, though there was no one watching at scene. But as long as the audience knew I was doing this work, they would have thought, at night, this piece of "work material" was sleeping.

**The perspective in which I presume the audience sees this work:**

In recent years, the western countries often see Chinese with "China Threat Theory" in mind. But in a Chinese's point of view, I think there is indeed a hint of "threat". For the western people, many tiny little objects in their lives are "made in China". These tiny little objects do not only represent the cheapness of Chinese industrial products, but also indicate that many and more Chinese objects are gradually penetrating into the western's lives, cultures, and every other aspects. In some aspects, if we take for example the increasing unemployment rate in the developed countries led by the Chinese export of cost effective industrial products, which has made the society of developing countries relatively unstable, it has to make them panic.

I placed the work *2011, I Exhibit Myself in a Western Exhibition* in a western audience dominant field. In a manner of speaking, this work was first exhibited to the western audience, and then to the oriental audience. When it was exhibited to the western audience, I became a symbol, a Chinese identity. When it was shown to the domestic audience, it became a work formed by an incident produced by a Chinese artist blended with the western audience's attitude. Therefore, it has a totally different content and it is from different perspectives that the western and oriental audience see this work.



# CHINESE ART & ARCHITECTURE TODAY

Palazzo Bembo  
13<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale  
28 August 2012



## YING TIANQI

*The work of Ying Tianqi (1949, Anhui, China) addresses human history.*

I would like to see the world through China's issue and to see China via the world's issue. To see art from the perspective of architecture and architecture from art. To see the modern from historical relics and see the historical relics through the modern. To produce new concepts in a process of making a thorough inquiry and discovery to raise questions.

China has embraced rapid economic development in the shortest time frame. And has quickly become the world's second largest

economic body, the rapid progress has drawn the world's attention. But too fast a pace can create problems, and cause recklessness and unrefinement. Like when someone is walking too quickly one may trip and fall. The problem is the same.

China as an ancient civilization of thousands of years, in the process of rapid economic development and urbanization, it is difficult to preserve historical memory in the city's remains. The historical relics of China's city have become dilapidated from last century's cultural revolution destruction in the 60s and today's rapid economic development. The rapid growth in the city population has resulted in the massive urban construction. The city's architecture has been replaced by a faceless and repetitive high-rise jungle. It has become a regrettable reality.

In today's China, you can't find a city like Paris or Venice with a well-preserved center and complete architectural memory. China's history, culture and remains have become interrupted here. This destruction has exceeded China's last century's cultural revolution's destructive impact.

Of course the world faces the same issue. Pompeii's gladiator house has collapsed under inadequate care. Precious artefacts in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo have been destroyed in the political unrest, and many similar issues occur in other parts of the world, including destruction of human historical civilization by natural calamities and man-made disasters. Under these circumstances, China's problem is most serious. Humanity not only has to face the destruction of the ecological environment, but also the loss of human civilization and historical remains.

Perhaps the artist thinks more about history and civilization. Of course, the change in the natural ecology threatens the existence of humanity, but this may be salvaged by the scientists. For example, Germany's Rhine river has been polluted by the emptying of industrial waste from its banks during the post-WWII economic development. The Rhine river has recovered its beauty and through the scientist's treatment. The uncontrolled and unprotected destruction of remains, historical artifacts, architectural remains cannot be recovered. As the thousands of years of information imbedded in them cannot be replicated through scientific matters.

Historical civilization and remains are the common foundations of contemporary society development like the material and spiritual and should be confronted and valued.

# YING TIANQI

By Valeria Iacovelli

Valeria Iacovelli (1979, Conegliano, Italy) is an independent curator. In 2012 she was co-curator of the 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale exhibition *Traces of Centuries and Future Steps*.

Italy features a large portion of the world's cultural heritage and although there is a consensus over the need to preserve it, in practice this is a challenging issue which is proving expensive and difficult to carry out efficiently.

At the same time, in China, the architectural landscape is undergoing a drastic makeover, reflecting the country's new position as an economic superpower and as an increasingly globalized territory. As a consequence, a large amount of traditional architecture is being demolished and quickly replaced by the same forms that dominate other global cities in the world (such forms typically including buildings with intricate shapes and an abundant use of glass and steel). Like everywhere else, all major centres are becoming more and more alike—and so are their inhabitants' ways of life.

The instinct to preserve what is familiar to us is a very human one. Psychologically it gives us a sense of security, unlike change. But preservation is also primarily a means to keep alive a people's collective memory and its sense of cultural identity. At a time when rapid transformations are taking place, it seems important to stop for a second and ask what it means to demolish something and to build something else in its place. Roughly speaking, when a building is demolished and something else is built in its place, it is almost as if the first one never existed—it survives only in photographs and memories. Conversely, we seem to think that every new construction is destined to last forever because we tend to perceive architecture as something "permanent" in spite of the fact that globalization promotes the cyclic replacement of the old with the new.

To answer the question about whether we could, or even should, attempt to stop globalization, I believe the answer is no: we cannot and should not. But this is not to say that there is no room for intervention. The latter is needed on many levels: artistic, personal, political. So for instance in the 1960s and 1970s, a time of the radical change in the appearance of the U.S. cities (Manhattan in particular), some American artists turned their attention to architecture, questioning our notion of "permanent" and "temporary", the notion of

monument, and our relationship to space: Gordon Matta-Clark operated a series of thorough-and-thorough vertical cuts in some buildings scheduled for demolition; Robert Smithson devised a tour of some deserted industrial relics in the Passaic Valley in New Jersey, which he called the "monuments of the the Passaic" and also, more famously, he re-arranged the land of a site on the Great Salt Lake, in Utah, creating the *Spiral Jetty*, an earthwork sculpture within the landscape and away from the city (where attractions and monuments typically are), or even an anti-monument, as it is sometimes defined.

In response to the changes happening in today's China, artist Ying Tianqi (\*1949, Anhui, China), whose work is prominently featured in the exhibition *Traces of Centuries and Future Steps*, gathers old objects and debris from demolition sites and re-uses them as material for new works reflecting on globalization and on the need for preservation. The large-scale installation *Brick Soul* (2012), for instance, is a three-metre high and three-metre long copy of a single brick (about 20 times enlarged) saved from a demolished temple located in Xidi Village, in the Eastern Chinese province of Anhui. The piece is built out of a mixture obtained from other pulverized fragments of the demolished temple. Something on the verge of being destroyed is turned into something which can hardly be ignored, almost like a new monument.

In the installation *Imprisoned* (2012), instead, the artist highlights one of the paradoxes of a globalized way of life. The installation consists of a tall structure made of several metal cages, containing TV screens and personal objects, like toys, and various pieces of traditional furniture, mostly broken. By recreating a sense of physical and spiritual imprisonment, the artist emphasizes the contradiction of living in extreme proximity with our neighbours, divided only by thin walls and ceilings—while at the same time entertaining friendly relations with people on the other side of the planet through internet and the social media.

In earlier works the artist dealt specifically with the theme of his cultural heritage and with the notion of change. In the celebrated *Xidi Village Series*, realized between 1986 and 1994, Ying Tianqi takes inspiration from the many examples of century-old houses, temples and monuments that still exist in Xidi, in spite of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which led to the destruction of many traditional landmarks in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Taking the views of Xidi as his starting point, he produced a series of watercolour woodblock prints, in which some elements of the original landscape (e.g. the ground, the sky, the streets,





etc.) are replaced with black hard-edged shapes. The black is the “non-readable” part of the image, where perspective, volume and colour, which normally guide our understanding of depicted space, are annulled. Just like Xidi Village could have been erased by the Cultural Revolution or by other destructive forces or events, so each print in the series could have been totally black. Instead, Xidi continues to exist and in 1994 a museum was opened to permanently host Ying Tianqi’s Xidi Village Series. In 2000, largely as a result of the Ying Tianqi’s works, Xidi was officially recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In the performance suite *Zero Hours: Breaking the Black* (1999–2001) and in the ensuing series of prints *Broken Black* (1999–2001), also featured in this Biennale, Ying Tianqi considered the notion of change. For the

performance, the artist proceeded to break several pieces of blackened glass with a hammer: in his studio on New Year’s Eve in 1999, then in 2000, and once publicly in 2001. According to the artist, blackness is “expressive of the last century in China as well as for the entire world”. The act of smashing the black is therefore an act of liberation, an “exorcism” of the dark times. The fragments obtained from this rupture form the basis for re-elaboration in painting and printing, new logical unities that Ying Tianqi re-arranges in the prints *Broken Black* and which, ultimately, represent the potential for reconstruction and renovation.

The risk of losing the country’s sense of identity and the potential for improvement are the two faces of the coin of change. As I stated earlier, I believe it is not useful or feasible to oppose globalization, if

this means attempting to revert to any previous moment in the political and economic history of China, or of the world. Like for other countries that have been dealing with the globalization process for a longer time, it is now China’s turn to face the many challenges of introducing it into its own social and economic structures. Change does not necessarily entail the destruction of what is known and familiar. Quite the opposite, long-term and sustainable change should include strategies that allow to preserve the memory of China’s rich yet troubled history and identity. While on one side Ying Tianqi’s works express criticism and concern towards today’s Chinese politics and society, at the same time they strongly advocate the need to move forward without leaving behind the country’s collective memory and

cultural identity. The straightforward application of the prevailing foreign models (in culture, in politics, in education, etc.) to the Chinese context, as globalization prescribes, eliminates diversity and weakens the country’s self-identity. It has been suggested that this has been the case, for instance, of the development plans carried out in Beijing and Shanghai in preparation for the 2008 Summer Olympics. On the contrary, imagining a Chinese renaissance capable of addressing the unique characteristics of the Chinese context means to take China’s past and present specifically into account. Given the current state of things, how should artists respond in order to increase awareness of the current situation and, most importantly, what role can they really play in order to stimulate a critical Chinese response to globalization.



## WANG LIN

*Wang Lin (1959, Xian, China) is professor at the Sichuan Fine Art Institute, the Xi'an Fine Art Institute, and chief expert of National Contemporary Art Research Center of Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China.*

A few days ago, I went to the island of Sicily, the expressway from Palermo to Agrigento is one of the main Sicilian transportation routes. According to the driver, this road was built on the ancient Rome horse route. There are many road turnings, but few that passes through the mountains and periodically surviving or abandoned castles appearing

on the hilltop. This is the road the roman army, the Spanish army, Napoleon's army and General Patton's army have all walked passed. The road carries the geographical history and human history.

This makes me think about China, whether it is our expressway or our high-speed rail, they all head straight to a destination and do not have consideration if the route connecting the two places has any geographical history or historical geography.

The same issue also takes place in the architectural arena. The massive urban demolition changes not only the architectural form, but more importantly the road structure, which is also human geography's historical context. Both Chinese and foreign architects strive to use singular architecture design to preserve

the cultural essence of traditional Chinese architecture. This is admirable. But I would like to say: "This is not enough". When the relationship between the city's road structure and residential is completely destroyed, to the inhabitants of the city, it has become an unfamiliar city. The homeland no longer exists with no spiritual belonging. I think that Yin Tianqi's work you see here expresses the pain in the heart of Chinese people today.

What is it that I would like to examine? Exactly what the Taiwan Pavilion curator Mr. Ke-Fung Liou has mentioned in *Architect/Geographer - Le Foyer de Taiwan*. But what is behind geographical enlightenment is cultural issue. Mainland China from 1949 onwards, one-party politics has penetrated every corner of every town and countryside. The

ordinary people have lost their spontaneous and autonomous cultural rights. In the "all power belongs to Soviet" state system, China's culture, including architecture culture, would not have a chance of a real renaissance in the process of modernization. That is to say, when China's architecture school, architecture organization and architects are completely under government control, the issue of architecture is no longer just the issue of architecture, but an issue of institution.

One of the key issues in how to rebuild a civil society and cultural freedom and cultural autonomy among the people, the significance is, art in a kind of cultural politics, whether an architect or artist should use one's own creation to promote progress China's modern culture renaissance.

# ARATA ISOZAKI

By Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold & Valeria Romagnini

*The architecture of Arata Isozaki (1931, Oita City, Japan) is influenced by the Metabolism school. His building structures show a mannerism, borrowing from a spectrum of architectural influences. Isozaki's architecture mainly stresses collaboration and cooperation.*

*Sarah Gold: In an interview many years ago, you have stated that in Japan you are probably not seen as a typical architect but as an 'art oriented type of architect'. Looking at your oeuvre it seems you have been always an artist and architect in one; collaborating with other artists and creating not only architecture but also artworks (in the classical sense). How would you describe yourself?*

Arata Isozaki: I personally define myself as an "Artist-Architect". As an Architect, I was close to the Metabolism Group movement. As an Artist, I was associated with various writers and art critics of the art industry in such movements as Neo-Dadaism, which evolved into concepts such as "color" and "environment", and eventually came into fruition in the form of *Omatsuri Hiroba* (Festival Square) at the World Expo in 1970. Since I was conceptualizing architecture and cities in the context of art, it only made sense to complement architecture with art.

In *Incubation Process (Fuka katei)* (1962) I stated that "the future city is a ruin." I juxtaposed a series of images of future cities called *Joint Core System* with the ruins of ancient Greek cities. The inspiration to depict a city as an image of unintentional discontinuation came from art works such as Jackson Pollock's *action painting* and John Cage's *Chance Operation*. A problem I was tackling at the time was uncertainty and undecidability.

*"Process Planning" theory* (1963) is a text that I added to the first blueprint of the former Oita Prefectural Library (now Oita Arts Plaza). It is about solidifying an image of a building that stretches and shrinks like a carbon-based life form. In other words, it was an attempt to find a solution to resolving undecidability, in a situation where a decision must be made despite the lack of a goal (Telos). After surveying the worldwide eruption of radicalism in the late 60s in *Dismantling Architecture*, I further realized the importance of eradicating a goal (Telos) when I later was working on the *Mirage City* project (1994).

*Valeria Romagnini: With the urban planning for the Central Business District sub-center for the Zhengdong New District, China, you made a design*

*in order to create a city which works as a closed urban space, independent from its surroundings, and then you compared it to Venice. Can you explain how it is possible to conceive a city which can be independent from its surrounding? What do you mean by the concept of the autonomy of the city?*

During the second half of the 60s, I was predominantly engaged with concepts of "color" within architecture, namely the effects of timeless light, whereas in. In the 70s, I took a metaphysical position towards everything I approached, just like Atsushi Miyagawa who critiqued critiques, for example, the *Projective Transformation of  $\sqrt{2}$*  is one method to this approach. This is a method that I have incorporated over the years, where the artist himself, is not allowed to actually touch anything. The problem is designed in a way to enable the form itself to self-develop, without an artist having to actually do anything. In that sense, it relies on participation from the audience, or in this case, the local residents. Instead of a top-down structure, the form is developed through an indefinable network. This is a method that has been attempted by many people since, but at the time in the 70s, I was attempting to give a solid formula to the indefinability of a self-creating art form. One places a piece of technology with an inherit system embedded, and without involving an artist, you leave the site. Eventually, a form is generated automatically over time. I experimented with this concept at the *Omatsuri Hiroba* (Festival Plaza) during the Japan World Exposition in 1970.

The question of whether design is expression or control rose during this time period. "Control" could nowadays possibly be defined as "governing". In the case of a city, how would one govern a city? This issue is closely related to events such as: the campaign against the Japan-US security treaty in the 60s, naked Neo-Dada dancing, various "happenings" on the streets, Hi-Red Center, the "Thousand-Yen Bill Incident", red and black tents in Shinjuku, and the occupation of Yasuda Auditorium at Tokyo University. All of these incidents happened in the 60s, especially during the first 2-3 years of that decade. The relationship between architecture and control is especially salient in the "anti-war folk guerrilla incident" that occurred at Shinjuku West-Exit Square in 1969. The gathering of the "Folk Guerilla" collided with riot police, in which the legality of the occupation was overruled by application of Road Traffic Law that interpreted the gathering as an illegal occupation. This incident is also well known as it leads to the renaming of *West-Exit Square* to *West-Exit Passageway* overnight.

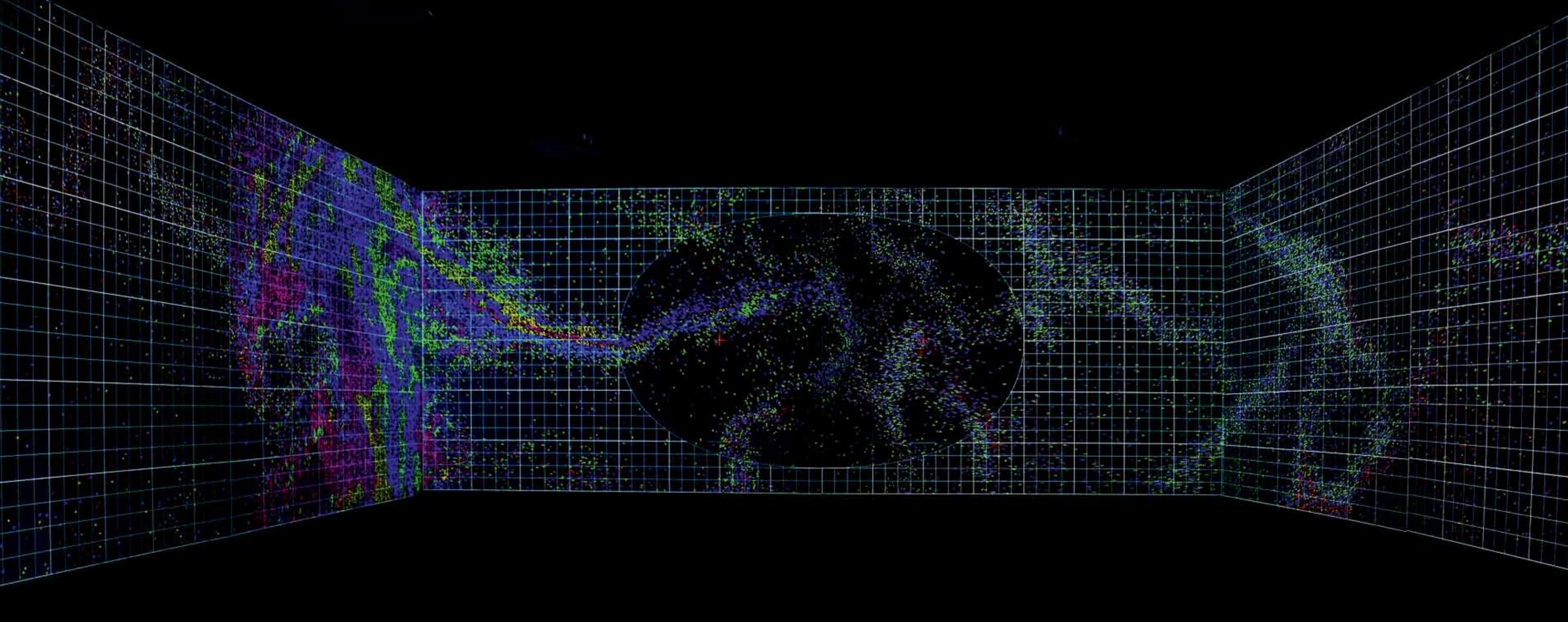


It is undeniable that Expo '70 was the starting point of crowd control developed in Japan. Up until then, I had had experience in city design, but the 300-hectare area involved absolutely all aspects of design. The infrastructure included multiple mechanical contraptions that were potentially dangerous, ranging from the multipurpose underground utility conduits to moving walkways. The magnitude was nothing short of planning an entire city. At the same time, I was constantly thinking about how to break the various boundaries that occur when a city is planned. In that sense, I commend Dada Kan who ran through the Expo naked. What balls he had, literally. The security (i.e.: boundaries) was extremely high. That makes his actions admirable. There was also someone who managed to climb up the Tower of the Sun (Taiyo no Tou). Most people would criticize the

design of the tower for enabling this. Regardless, it is incredible that this person slipped through the barriers and climbed the tower. It is about breaking the law. That is in itself, a performance.

*VR: We could say that the city is a living organism and as you mentioned a city is a process of change. Many big decisions have been taken and many different influences through architecture have contributed to build the world as we know it. Living in Venice, I am every day confronted with the history of buildings, houses that were built over 500 years ago. What does Time mean for you in relation to the space you create?*

The finalized notion of space in *Spaces Within Dark* (Yamino Kuukan), in Japan for example, begins first with an existence of bright spaces. Then the spaces are forcefully connected together, and eventually become



dark. In architectural space, the contrast does not simply consist of light and dark, but all is encompassed and eventually disappears as if it were mist. It gradates into an ultimate form of darkness. The words Signifier (French: *Signifiant*) and Signified (French: *Signifié*) defined by Saussure, which were not used at the time, dictate the issue of “what signifies” and “what is signified”, in which the Signifier separates itself, and the Signified becomes “darkness”. The Signifier dissipates into “nothingness”. The parallel is “Darkness” and “Nothingness”. In the middle exists the “real” world. In other words, it is not a conflict between “nothingness” and the “real”. “Nothingness” is “Virtuality”, and “Real” is “Reality”. Subsequently, “Darkness” is interpreted as so-called “actuality”.

Basically, this implies that space is not a tangible form existing in front of us, but rather something that occurs to us when we enter a space and notice its existence. In that sense, I question as to whether we have misinterpreted a very basic principle in this modern era by attempting to define time and space by giving it form and weight. This is something that I have contemplated over the years. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this notion has gradually

become refined—referred to as hermeneutics or anthropology—and eventually was philosophically understood as representation and meaning (such as is Signifier and Signified). However, at the time, this differentiation did not exist. Franz Kafka’s *The Castle* and Junichiro Tanizaki’s *In Praise of Shadows* (In’ei Raisan) are familiar literary references that embody this form of experiencing space.

Backtracking in time, I personally hope that my text *Coordinates, Twilight and Hallucinations* (Zahyo hakumei to genkaku) (1965) would be revisited and reevaluated. In 1963 I visited New York City. I wrote about the difference I perceived in the space compared to any other city I had visited before. Despite the lack of color, the city itself dissipates into the light via the glass—a space that dissipates in its entirety like mist. In that sense, *Coordinates, Twilight and Hallucinations* ties itself to *The Castle* and *In Praise of Shadows*.

*Karlynn De Jongh: The Greek philosopher Protagoras once said: “Man is the measure of all things.” In your architecture, you deal with people from all over the world, who are physically but also culturally very different. In a global world, can you still take ‘man’ as the measure?*

AI: When a new city space grows into a metropolitan space, especially the type of spatiotemporal city development that is seen on the coastal regions in North America, it is not possible to grasp what is happening with the modern day notions in which time maintains its continuation on a straight axis. Space spreads homogeneously and light spreads properly. Within the city space, various symbols scatter without weight or size. By recognizing this fact, a person is able to move around in a city. It is simple semiology, which is a question about the signs seen in current cities, or a question of cognition. This kind of change has made obsolete the existing notions of “Time” and “Space” that began with Bauhaus, which had been referred to in modern architecture and modern design. These two words can no longer be used. Furthermore, one cannot go in the direction of weight or gravity. Despite that fact, a structure emerges equipped with its own system. This has emerged as the role of the Architect and Artist, in which a question is presented as to how a city can be built without the previously prevalent notion of time and space, which is as if a city itself is such a hypothesis.

That being said, zapping through the remote control of a television is like looking at a building. Say we have a preconceived image of a piece of architecture, but what we see changes drastically when we move where we stand. It is as if it is a continuous switch of perception, and continuation of image does not exist. It is a form of “monad” where all become particles and time is instantly irrelevant. In order to explain this image, I discovered that comparing it to “zapping the remote control of a television” is relatively easier to use as a metaphor.

*KDJ: Already in 1962 you spoke about decay. Lee Ufan told me: “Man is always trying to ensure that human-made things exist, or ‘live on’ forever. But, nature always works to break them down and return them to their original elements. Thus we could say nature and humans are fighting.” This “disappearing of things” seems to be connected to the understanding of ‘infinity’ in Japan. In your work, you probably deal with nature all the time. How do you see this relation between man-made objects and nature? Do you strive for infinity? If so, how do you understand infinity?*

AI: My impression of the year 1968, is that of being involved in social disturbance—being pushed around by waves not knowing what we



were drifting towards. However in the 70s, I had the impression that color was being lost, or decolorized all of a sudden. At that moment, everything fantastical disappeared once again. In the 60s, anything technical or high tech was still considered partially fantastical. At that time there was the psychedelic and drug culture, and a movement to connect everything toward illusions. That suddenly all disappeared in the 70s. Drug culture was reduced to merely one dropping out of society or a movement of returning to nature. Hippies became nothing more than the way they dressed. Architecture was no exception, and all expression became bleak. Even fine arts became predominantly overridden by minimalism and conceptualism. Briefly during the early 70s in Japan, the Mono ha emerged. Various works and artists such as Arte Povera in Italy, "Support/Sur-

face" in France, Joseph Beuys in Germany, and Richard Serra in the U.S., all had roots in the rejection of illusionism, and embraced ideas which were supported by various notions such as the laws of nature, and the presence of matter or space correspondence. They shared common ground regarding the rejection of illusionism.

Personally, I believe that the Mono ha movement, to an extent, was driven by a rebound effect. Saying "no more" to art forms that utilized technology. For example, calling for people to "plough soil"—that was the result, which would be fine if it were merely a primitive form of expression. But I believe it is more of a rebound effect.

In 1985, I was involved in designing *The Palladium*. This was an old opera house built in 1926 that was being converted into a disco. At

the time I mainly designed cultural facilities such as art galleries and libraries, so people wondered why I decided to work on something that was so commercial. I didn't particularly understand why myself, but I gave it a thought and this was the conclusion:

When I was contacted about working on this project, the first thing that caught my interest was when they explained to me that this was not like a typical disco club or cabaret club you would find in Japan, but that the objective was to create a disco that enables the audience to have an altered-space experience. Instead of an altered-space experience induced by the effects of marijuana or cocaine, the theme was more literal. With lights flashing simultaneously with the music, the challenge was to test the extent to which the image of the

vintage space could be altered with technology and modern media. Architecture is inherently limited to creating a static contour. However, the essence lies in the various contraptions that are installed within that contour. When it is time for the contraptions to be installed, light and sound designers work together with the sole focus of figuring out how to most effectively shower the human five senses with a combination of images, lights and sounds.

However, when I began thinking about experiences in such settings, I encountered some problems. It was already clear that nature was disappearing from cities. The same could be said about mountains, rivers and forests. Furthermore, religious facilities traditionally served as a sanctuary to the people. For



example, it had always been tradition to go to a church to be in touch with God, but that custom was being lost.

Because of such shifts, it has become more and more difficult to encounter another person or a thing, or even ideally something divine, when living the every day city life. I am very certain about this fact. That was when I thought I may be able to create a space that provides a simulated experience of that something divine, regardless to how artificial or fake that actually may be. That, I thought, was what a disco could be.

*VR: Visiting you in Tokyo last January, impressed me very much. I am now 26 and I'm trying to understand as much as possible about concepts like Time Space and Existence. Once you were 26 and must have been discovering the same topics. You are now 82, what should I learn about Existence?*

*AI: After the burst of the economic bubble in Japan in 1990, I noticed that Post-Modernism as a topic was mentioned less and less. Today, you seldom hear about it. The same thing happened 25 years ago. Modernism was under full-scale attack, and after the cultural revolution in 1968, it was never mentioned by anyone. The fact that the generation who studied architecture during the oddly quite years of the early 70s produced a large number of architectural historians, may be further proof of the rebound effect that affected that time period.*

To place these events in the context of different eras, one can refer to two events that happened in Japan in 1995: The Great Hanshin Earthquake and the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. This was

exactly 50 years after the end of the Second World War. In place of Post-Modernism, Information Technology and Globalization were the hot topics. These were followed by the Superflat movement. Post-Modernism did not only reverse time, but shuffled it in its entirety, and saved it all in a database by utilizing information technology. In short, time was broken into pieces, saved in a non-chronological manner, and readily available to be summoned at will. During this era, space also became subject to shuffling. The world which consisted of boundaries, where the waning of racially homogeneous nations, disappearance of national borders, extending boundaries, and complex systems were separate entities co-existing in a space with its own order, was converted into code and saved on a database. In other words, the time and space that the year 1995 consisted

of has been separated from the system that it belonged to, shuffled, and converted into an intangible form of digital code.

Therefore, a large shift in the entity seems to occur every 25 years. Would one call this a law, or simply repetition? In reality, it is simply an unexpected change. The truth is, the ages that we live in are subject to shifting. It is a phase shifting out of place, and by transitioning smoothly into a new phase it results in a sort of a catastrophe. In that sense, I believe that the current era is very likely to shift once again. The manner in which this shift occurs is not logical, and happens without you noticing it. The only time you realize it has happened is when you start to notice that people around you are talking about different things.

# DEGANG WANG

*The architecture of Degang Wang (1963, Shanghai, China) is oriented towards an "active process"; a conceptual congregation of surrounding elements including religion, culture, and climate. This 'process' seeks to distill a sensual touch from life and society, to discover the essences of human history which have transcended and fused cultural and colloquial characteristics through the progression of time. Degang Wang lives and works in Nanjing, China*

## Essential Architecture

I have been an architect in China for over twenty years, experiencing the astonishing boom in the country's construction industry which occurred over approximately the same period. My understanding of architecture is that the architect must resolve two fundamental problems in the creative process: the Who + the How.

Architecture design does not begin with some of the overarching themes we often associate with architecture, such as culture, national identity, or history. The basis of architectural design is to study the Who: the people who will use the building, and then the How: how it would be done. It is difficult to set a standard for architecture, but the beauty of architecture lies precisely in this lack of standardization.

When we acquire a project, it is imperative to first consider the needs of the people in this project, how they will use the building, and what they require of it. Then, we should consider how to construct a building with an environment that provides the greatest level of satisfaction and respect for its occupants. We cannot imagine a building out of the blue, and then teach people how to use it. Instead, we believe that since people are the most fundamental and important existence in this world, the concept of architecture must be formed and provided in service to the people.

Let me tell you about my experiences studying the course *International Studies in World Vernacular Architecture* with Dr. Paul Oliver in the United Kingdom. Our course was based upon research and learning of the architectural fundamentals in different areas, societies, and environments, to study those that traversed and withstood the test of time rather than those that are intentionally created and manipulated by an architect: its essence is its

existence. This too is my understanding of the concept of Essential Architecture. The reason for the beauty in various architectural styles around the world and in different regions is that it is born to cater man's needs, and their beauty exists only in its respective contexts and surroundings. Architecture is not purely the creation of an architect, but rather the non-architect's natural response to the needs of man as well as his respect for the environment.

Having resolved the problem of the Who, we must approach the How: the architectural design process. My understanding is that architectural design is a behavioural rather than deliberate process. Artistic expression of human behaviour requires the fusion of many elements of society, such as religion and the environment, in addition to one's own artistic techniques and interpretations. On the other hand, expression through deliberate design is based fundamentally on one person's understanding and perception of his surroundings. Architectural design should draw more ideas from our daily lives, because daily life represents the condensation of history. The lifestyle of a certain people brings with it a history of culture and regionalism. This design process is not an entirely rational or entirely emotional process, but rather a process of creation that is based on a study of people and towards different specific environments. Only through such a process can one create architecture with temporal and spatial awareness, and more importantly, a sense of existence. The building's sense of existence is based on its acceptance by people, by the environment, by society, and by the economy.

If we do not do the above in our design process, but rather try to present architecture from grandiose schemes such as culture or nationality, then the resulting product is likely to have difficulties being accepted by people and society. This would be a wasteful process to resources and the environment.

In China, rapid development has led to rapid urbanization. The development of cities, a process that in normal circumstances should have taken decades, has been compressed into a few years. Subsequently, there has not been time for people to study it in detail. Expansion of urban areas took over villages, and farmers who lost their lands walked into the cities. I call this type of development "Concentrated Development," and the manifestation of Concentrated Development in the realm of architecture and urban development is



the indiscriminate replication of architectural styles and forms from all over the world into China. Inappropriate to China's native environments, the consequences of wasteful practice is already evident. A design process which is not based on the people is a waste of environments and resources, and should be rejected.

The "Essential Architecture" I want to discuss is an architecture that is formed from the formula of "Who + How," and one that is forever transient. Man is a life-form that is highly in unison, but at the same time complex and full of change. The form of man is therefore composed of the duality of uniformity and contradiction. The architectural process, which focuses on understanding the needs of man and respect for the environment, is hence also composed of uniformity and contradiction. I enjoy this design process, and it is essential to the beauty of Chinese architecture as I understand it. I never know what my next design would be, and the creativity and lack of standardization that comes with this approach is infinitely attractive and enticing to me.

I like to use a simple, single unit, and discover from its unity and contradictions the corresponding needs of man and changes in the environment. For example, the square is a very simple shape, appropriate for the basic requirements of an architectural building and the basic shape requirements for human activity.

The *POD* project I designed for software incubator companies in XuZhuang Software Park near Zijin Hill in Nanjing, China, is built on a newly planned empty space. This project has two major design requirements: first, that since they are for incubator companies, the size of the buildings need not be too large, and in order to develop the business the buildings cannot be completely separated; second, even though the land is long and narrow, each company wants to have an outdoor section to their property in order to take advantage of Zijin Hill's scenery value. My strategy is to use the concept of a peapod, whereby the individualism of the peas are unified under the concept of the pod, so that the design remains suitable for incubator companies at different periods of their development. The square is used as the basic unit shape in this project. All the structures are being arranged on the perimeter of the long, narrow site divided into eastern and western parts. The middle part will be landscaped as public lawn. Individual volumes are expressed through the shape of the building units, most of the ground floor of which is designed as "grey zone". This design would ensure the concentration of outdoors activity areas while maintaining the uniformity of individual units, satisfying a variety of usage requirements from the incubator companies while attaining scenic views of Zijin Hill from different perspectives. The *POD* project has been completed and under use for three years. Our approach was very successful in achieving the initial design goals, and allowed the investors to attain a healthy profit.

People are weak against time: we can change or create space, but we cannot change time. When choosing materials in architecture, I like to select materials that reflect the wear of time: the passage of time leaves its unique marks on the facet of a building, and makes the building's appearance increasingly vivid. In the *POD* project, I selected natural pebbles, stainless steel, timber bricks,

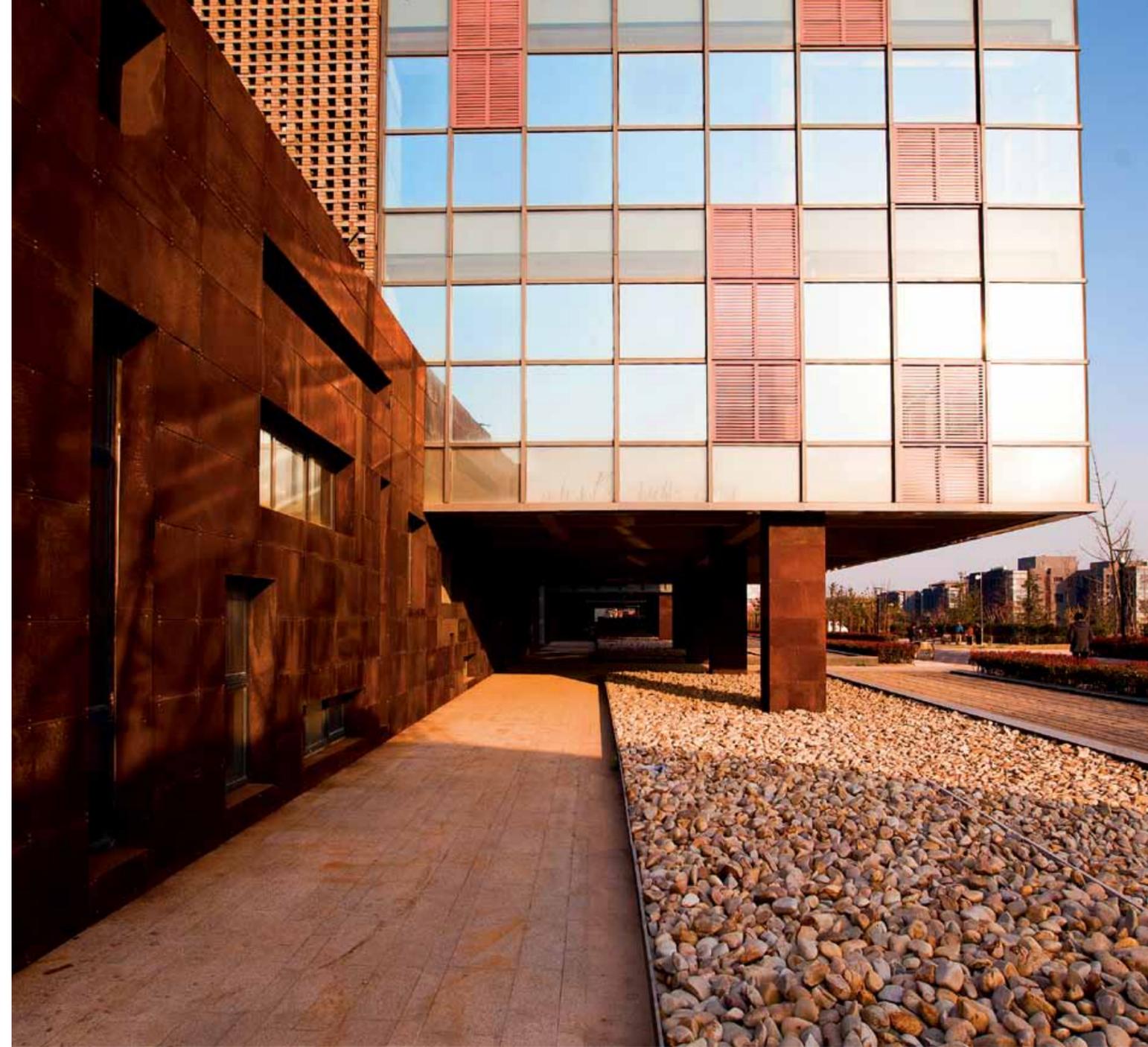
and stucco, because these materials become increasingly stunning with the passage of time.

My other project is located in a scenic area in Ninghai town, Ningbo city, Zhejiang province. Taking on this project was a major challenge for me. The owner's original idea is to develop a large-scale real-estate project on this valuable property surrounded by both water and mountains, which by normal standards means a project combination of a hotel with individual houses. However, after over a year of research regarding the needs of people in this sort of environment, as well as field research and analysis of the location, we arrived at a different conclusion: the original plan, which is the standard course of action for similar development projects in China, would unlikely cater to the current market in China. In order to achieve a profit, we must construct a large amount of buildings, but the high density that would result would be detrimental to the existing environment while undermining the scenic views that the buildings would have.

After investigating the mountain structure as well as the patterns and scale of the natural water system, we concluded that the main attraction this area brings to people is the possibility to enjoy great natural scenery without overwhelming costs. People will come to the establishment to enjoy a moment of natural beauty and tranquility away from city life. Therefore, in the planning process we decided to do all that we could to maintain natural scenery, and concentrate the buildings in a specific area, increasing its height rather than its area in order to maximize its development intensity. This is what we call the *dashu dami* (pairing great sparseness with great concentration) plan. While allowing the user of the building to enjoy wide scenic views from different angles within the building, this plan also leaves large empty spaces in the district so people can walk into nature and enjoy the serenity that the environment brings them. In order to maximize conservation of the current natural surroundings, we used short-distance tunnels to transport people into the buildings, avoiding the distractions that above-ground roads would cause to the environment.

After setting up this system, the question of how to allow large-sized architectural structures fit into the environment became a great challenge. This is also something that architecture design faces in dealing with uniformity and contradiction. I chose the simple "egg" as my basic unit shape, with the objective of obtaining maximum architectural area while taking up minimum ground space. The shape of the *Egg* achieves this purpose, meanwhile its natural and unobtrusive shape overcomes contradiction and comes in unison with the surrounding mountains, making the building part of nature. Adoption of the "egg" shape allowed a large-sized architectural structure to combine naturally with the environment.

Normally, architecture should avoid and retreat into its natural surroundings. However, this method is only suitable at a very low density of construction. In today's China that is lacking in land resources, continued use of this method for high-density construction would inevitably damage the original environment and users would not accept the architecture. The market is cruel, and if we construct under this method, it will lead to a waste of resources.

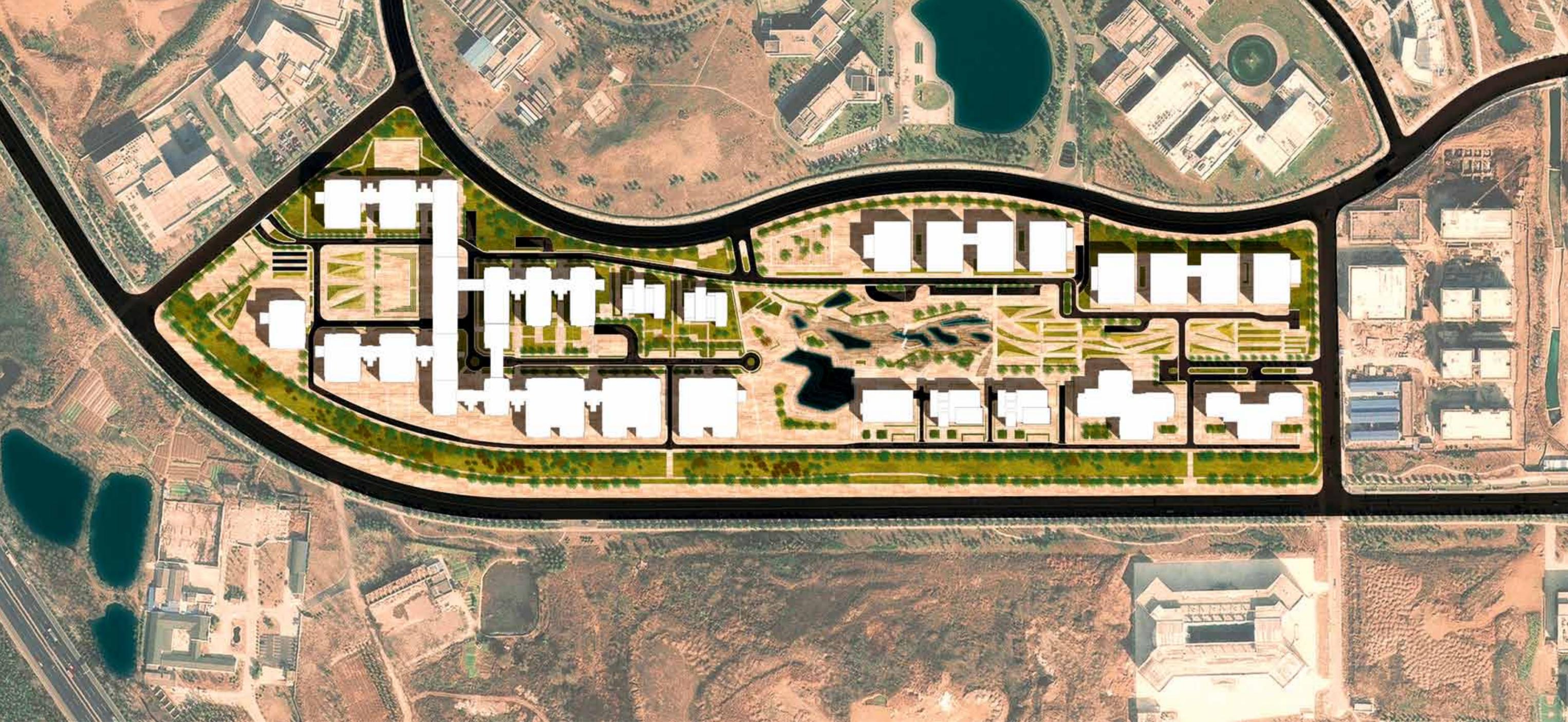


The four egg shaped towers, on the mountains, emulate the notion of nature and mountainous terrain as an alternative to human habitation. To be built specifically as a hotel and residential tower, it is expected to deliver supreme living pleasure and comfort amidst natural surroundings. Geometrically, the tower profile starts from a simple rounded square and travels upwards to be transformed into a circular geometry. This gradual deformation and eventual transformation of profile creates a visual voyage, encumbered with ambiguity yet uniformity.

The tower also conserves building energy levels and ensures the highest comfort level for its end users for each season of the year. The mechanism of protection from the outside is achieved by the subdivision of the tower's external skin into two strictly demarcated

zones, the north and the south façades. Acting contrary to ideal concepts, external protection has been rendered by trying to invite more of nature into the building. While the north is more relaxed in terms of sun exposure and diffuses light along with providing a scintillating view of the artificial lake right in front of the towers, it has been allowed to cantilever hanging balconies throughout the face. This zone also boasts the inclusion of a highly reflective mirror-like surface set in a specific angle to not only reflect nature back on to the tower from outside, but also allow the resident to view the reflection of the mesmerizing lake from inside the room.

The more delicate end of the tower is definitively the southern façade which directly faces the sun throughout the year. This part is allowed to



build a trombe wall on its surface for intricate heat storage and dissipation inside during winter nights, which drastically curtails the heating load. Also, regular louvers and adequate floor slab projection outside protects it from high summer sun glare and heat. The hanging balconies on the northern part of the tower contain small planter box projections, which make the building go green in its true essence. The building highlights and celebrates the nature by bringing it right inside up to its core, creating a centrally designed atrium space 200m in depth. An operable skylight and vent system on top of the tower ensures that the building lives and breathes by ventilating fresh air in and out.

I chose materials that resemble the wear of time for this building cluster, including the wide use of wet concrete, wood, and stucco both

indoors and outdoors. We use these materials with the hope that with the natural passing of time, these buildings would take on traces of the climate, and integrate more naturally and lively into the environment.

While talking about essential architecture, I also want to talk about cross-discipline designs between architects and artists, something I discussed in my presentation at the symposium in the Venice 2012 Architectural Biennale. This process of cross-disciplinary design has a long tradition. In my understanding, I like to view architecture, art, science etc. as upside down pyramids, whereby the basics of each discipline begin at the narrow bottom. As one advances through each discipline, its pyramid expands toward the top. Eventually, each of the pyramids meet and converge, at which point the different

disciplines become one. For architects and artists, this is finding uniformity in contradiction. In other words, when developed to an advanced level, the work of architects and artists will inevitably intersect and interact with each other. The line of division between architects and artists are blurred, and the so called cross-discipline design is in fact design within the same larger discipline.

In my design process, there is a lot of collaborative creation with artists and those from other disciplines. My design team includes artists and social scientists, and creating things together allows us to better investigate the needs of people in each project, to consider how our architectural design can satisfy those needs, and to pay respect to the environment.

Without an investigation into and understanding of "man", we cannot find an answer to the design of a building or a project, or even to decide what is a good design. I like to approach my design process under the auspices of contradiction and uniformity. Whether in urban, rural, historical, or natural settings, our architectural designs add value to the existing buildings in the surroundings, and add to the historical and environmental values in the area: this is a good answer.

## FANG ZHENNING

*Fang Zhenning (1955, Nanjing, China) is a critic and was curator of the Chinese Pavilion at the 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale.*

If we discuss the problems of Chinese cities here in Venice, I wonder who is going to hear us except those present today? The whole world is concerned about China, but one of the main reasons for that is because China provides other places around the world with employment opportunities. For example, the current Venice Biennale [Biennale architettura 2012] has not involved a great deal of Chinese input. Although there are the Chinese, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese pavilions, the curator David Chipperfield does not seem to have invited Chinese architects to attend any events. As such, it is my feeling that the Venice Biennale is mainly an extravaganza for Westerners.

What I am stressing here is that the space made available at the Venice Biennale for the discussion of China-related issues is very small and pretty much limited to today's symposium. As such, I would like the wider world to hear about the issues we are discussing at this symposium. I like would to say that the Global Art Affairs Foundation has done an excellent job as to the discussion of China related issues here at the Venice Biennale, events such as this symposium are certain to attract the attention of the Chinese media.

The first thing I would like to say is that I hope that news of the issues we discuss today will be disseminated around the world. Secondly, one of the times I attended the 10<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Biennale in Venice, a Danish project (Co-Evolution) received the prestigious Golden Lion Award. That project involved a survey of Chongqing and was a joint venture between Danish Arts Foundation, China's Tsinghua University and other universities. The award was not announced until near the end of the biennale. However, I wrote a commentary on it when the event started, long before I knew it would win anything. The conclusion I reached in that article was that China's problems are the world's problems and that as such China's problems are far more serious than anyone realizes. Although the exhibition I curated at the China pavilion this year is titled *Originaire* and involves installation pieces that are artistic and architectural, the choice of title was intended to call attention to, rather than critique, two issues that relate specifically to China.

First, why has China razed such a large number of buildings with historical memory, including the flattening of whole cities? The second is that China is simultaneously constructing new buildings, but most are ugly. There are two reasons for this: first, they have no interest in historical memory; second, they have zero understanding or feeling for aesthetics. That is why they can raze overnight things that are of great beauty to us, whether bricks or walls, with absolutely no regrets. That is exactly why I chose *Originaire* as the title of my exhibition, as a call for us to return to the beginning and rethink for a moment what beauty is. What are the most beautiful things we remember? Although the exhibition I curated is about contemporary art and architecture, I also see myself playing another role and that involves using web blogs and *Weibo* [China's equivalent of *Twitter*] to mercilessly attack the savage actions of those involved in the destruction of old cities.

Urban development is unstoppable because it is a product of human desire and capital combined. We have no comment on these powerful business groups because we are unable to stop what is happening. However, from an architect's point of view, I agree with what Mr. Wang Lin said, namely that certain architects have participated in this destruction and I am therefore inclined to oppose some of the projects on display at the foundation exhibition, even though to say so runs the risk of being considered impolite. For example, I have to ask if a survey was conducted for Arata Isozaki's project on the development of Zhengzhou? What is the significance of the project? A large number of projects have been developed in Zhengzhou in Henan Province, that are a complete waste of money because it is an empty city, making such projects useless.

As a critic, it is my job to criticize to the full when I see things that are wrong. For example, there are architects who do not have very good projects in their own countries and whose projects are not really serious, but in China there are some particularly stupid leaders who still accept these new projects with open arms. I consider that to be a huge waste of urban resources and capital. Allow me to offer another example of Chinese architects participating in such destructive behaviour: The Beijing Royal Archives. The Royal Archives is where the national archives were kept during the Qing Dynasty and it is part of the Imperial Palace, making it a location where absolutely no new buildings should be built. Three years ago I was completely ignorant



of this development, but because I was choosing projects in China for overseas exhibitions I presented it to the director of the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin (*Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*). On reviewing my proposal he expressed shock. He informed me that the project would completely destroy a cultural treasure and asked me how I could possibly recommend it for overseas display. What was particularly disappointing was that the former director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Thomas Krens, seemed to support the architects on the project. However, when the project became common knowledge and people started to protest, the Chinese public blamed it on the architect's lack of culture and expressed the hope that the cultured Guggenheim would stop the project. Little did they know that behind the scenes the Guggenheim had given its full backing to the project as a springboard to better sell its brand in China. At one point a female journalist asked the former director: "Don't you think it's wrong to design such a building for this location?" And he replied: "The most important thing is not the design, but whether we successfully sell the Guggenheim name to the Beijing Royal Archives."

This project was tied to politics and in effect a business deal. So, if you want the world to hear what we are saying at this symposium then let it be known that a Chinese critic in Venice said: "We do not want the US to be involved in the destruction of culture in China." When it comes to architects like Zhu Pei, I have to say that he has been responsible for some excellent works in Shenzhen, such as the OCT display space. So, how did he come up with such a design for this project? Whether it was for fame or money I don't know, if that

would be true, that would make this a very complex issue. Another example is Herzog & de Meuron, who designed the Beijing National Stadium (*Bird's Nest*). When they were competing for the tender to design the stadium they did everything they could to ingratiate themselves with Chinese culture, but once they were awarded the project and received payment, as soon as voices were raised in the West about them doing business with an autocratic government, they did a complete U-turn and said the project had nothing whatsoever to do with Chinese culture. For me this is an issue that touches on the morals of architects.

My point here is not that the Chinese government is autocratic, but rather to ask why the architects were at that time working with China? I have looked at this project and it was most definitely inspired by ancient Chinese culture, which was why it secured the tender. However, when the company was interviewed by the media in Japan it denied any such link. As a result, I wrote a critical article which I couldn't get published in China or later in Italy. However, there are also good architects such as China Architecture Design and Research Group deputy director Cui Kai. At that time they wanted him to work on renovating a building near the Drum Tower, but he said: "I cannot be involved in the project because it is in a protected area and no new buildings are permitted." Cui refused to be involved and that was a good thing.

I have spoken for too long, so I will end here by saying that any discussion of problems in China needs to be serious and impassioned, involve experts, be broad ranging and be heard by as many people as possible, because only then can it have real meaning.

# VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK

Palazzo Bembo  
8 - 15 December 2012

VENICE INTERNATIONAL  
PERFORMANCE  
ART WEEK



## VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK

Performance art is a discipline that is—first and foremost—life in itself. It doesn't represent or portray; but used to awaken the mind and investigate cutting edge ideas in different fields of human activities. It analyses how and why people and their surroundings evolve or devolve, therefore generating reflection. As it is ephemeral, it holds an enormous potential of contemporaneity and immediacy.

It is an art form characterized by the use of the artists' own body and attitude as support. It steps beyond borders to purpose an experience of immediate impact. It requires to be responsive "here and now" and to position oneself. Hence, not only the artist, but also the visitor needs to be prepared for making something happen, to engage emotionally and intellectually into the core of what is Performance art today.

The VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK aimed to catch moments, moods and circumstances, reacting to it, opening up a ground of mutual exchange between artists and audience, with the possibility of a direct, personal discourse about art and its possible impact on modern society.

It is a project based on a mutual engagement and commitment to the purpose between the participating artists and the curators: presenting a selection of Live art performances with a precise curatorial line, so as avoid ending in another hypertrophied platform of global art, nor to speculate on our current social condition. The concern is also aesthetics, where, in any case, the objective is to analyze, through Live art, thoughts and ideas on life, space, time and existence as a simple question of form and substance in continuous transformation, through an eye able to go beyond the surface.

The artistic value is matched with human qualities, in order to produce challenging expressions to explore concepts such as interconnectivity, experiential knowledge, empathy, lasting and endurance, persistency, necessity and trial, resistance and awareness, struggle and love.

To be fully aware of human emotions, political habits, social lives, and how the Self relates to them, offering a range of possibilities to scan meanings about how to live this life with more care, and to create mechanisms for positive change.

Andrea Pagnes, 2012

*The following pages document the 2012 VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK, starting with a selection of photos of some of the live performances that took place at Palazzo Bembo, and followed by interviews with three artist-couples.*







# VESTANDPAGE

## Interview with Valeria Romagnini

*Andrea Pagnes (1962, Venice, Italy) and Verena Stenke (1981, Bad Friedrichshall, Germany) work together as VestAndPage since 2006. Their performances are socially or environmentally orientated and originate from a here-and-now interpretation of the fragility of the individual and its surroundings.*

*Valeria Romagnini: The theme of freedom is part of many of your works, although often in different ways. In an interview you stated, "The fact that we always work as a duo, involves that we form a bipolar sphere. What exists together reciprocally influences each other, it infects each other positively and negatively" and this thought could be enlarged to a social system. Martin Luther King stated "your freedom ends when my freedom starts". What do you think about this statement, do you see this similar or can you redefine your and the other's freedom?*

Verena Stenke: This phrase from our interview is by German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, from his investigations about Micro- and Macrospherology in the trilogy *Sphären*, which inspired us significantly for our movie trilogy *sin∞fin The Movie*. I agree that there is no freedom at any stage of life, also considering the discourse about conditioning, manipulation and dependence. No decision is taken liberally. Personally, I am very fine with this, I enjoy my responsibilities that inter-crossing spheres bring along, and those that I do not enjoy I try to avoid in life. Our investigation about freedom courses mainly around the question if freedom actually is fundamental for happiness, or better, to ensure a state of wellbeing. We have met and worked with poor people, physically or mentally chained people, people with different abilities. We saw that many of them are more serene than any so-called free, normally abled man. They are considerably freer on a spiritual level. It is also not a coincidence that a 'free' man once said: "Free me from all freedom." Freedom of the heart and soul can bring serenity, but if we engage our souls (and only oneself does this, no one else), all outer freedom won't help.

*VR: Since you do performances together, what does it mean to you to be human both as individual and as a collective entity?*

VS: I perceive myself as a human in a constant spherical interchange with and influence of others, humans, surroundings, conditions. I try to respond to this, through being open to all encounters, collisions,

and embodiments. Being human is a very 'human' idea first of all. For me it's not about seeking perfection, rather it's all about making the best out of our time, for the others and us. Mistakes are part of being human, we are an erroneous species, and it takes us a long time to learn. We are born completely disabled; the moment when we exit the womb we are the less developed species among all. Any other species can stand up and walk after a short time, but it takes years for us human to learn the very basics of independent survival. And we're still questioning about freedom and independence? Maybe because we are born so dependent, we have the illusion that this could be changed later, once we know how to walk, eat, talk and earn money. We have a lot of possibilities of expression and significant influence, but if I'd have a free wish, I'd like that in heaven it's all about music, the most beautiful thing human ever created.

*VR: Do you see the body of the other as a tool to question your own body?*

VS: Not directly, at least not in the corporal sense. Of course the (body-) mind and the (body-) psyche of the other/s are questioning each other's positions continuously. Any physical body in a shared space is another subject to relate to with open senses: not as a tool, but more as an occasion, a potential to generate something new. What inspires and challenges me is the mind-set and spiritual reach of another being, might it be my partner, or the audience members: there lies the library of experience, which can be opened to take out and present something.

The physical body is the one to encounter more easily, but also the most superficial, while encountering the mind and spirit of the other is demanding, and much more full of expectations.

Andrea Pagnes: It makes me think a lot: passing by a single person, or when engulfed into a mass, the so-called collective body, however—at least to my eyes—is always composed by individuals. I have found the quote "My body asking your body questions" that Performance artist Helena Goldwater wrote in the occasion of her participation at the Venice International Performance Art Week, very pertinent and indicative. I've worked for years in Social Theatre, training, writing for, and playing on stage with differently-abled, Down syndrome affected and psychic patients. I've learnt from them firstly how lucky I am to be born as I am, and then how important it is to become outgiving and humble, strong and tender at the same time,



and more, how precious is the gift of authenticity and how difficult is it to reach it, keep it, and metabolize it. I learnt from being close to and looking after bodies of people I loved while decaying and dying. I watch and observe, wherever I am, bodies, hands, faces, eyes, postures. Bodies distressed, shaking, relaxed. Ways of talking, arguing, screaming, looking, glancing, moving. Bodies suffering because of hard life, with their injuries inflicted, encountered or inherited. Bodies hammered by age, bent over, serene or angry. Bodies scared, excited by stamina, bodies in rut, stoned by cheap alcohol, or smashed by street drugs. Anorexic bodies. Bodies built with steroids. Empty palms, dirty frozen finger tips begging for a dime, smiles full of joy, smirks manifesting hypocrisy, lifted cheeks, lips pumped with Botox. By seeing the body of the other, I'm still wondering who I am.

VR: *Can you find space for yourself when you are performing?*

VS: Performing is being in my space.

AP: Which is: your space, my space, and anybody's space.

VR: *You develop live performance actions in prominent locations around the world. It seems that location within space and time has an important value in your performance. Which are the criteria for the choice of a specific location?*

VS: The locations have always chosen us, and we only followed. We don't follow a script, neither in life nor art. We just attempt to be vigilant and approachable to that which is offered.

AP: This provided us already with many determinant experiences, which we would have never imagined before. We are open to be constantly surprised.

VR: *How do you perceive time passing during your performance?*

AP: Time = 0. Dilated space as if liquid.

VS: As with anything worked on with deep concentration, commitment and passion, time loses numbers. It's fascinating how a seemingly unmanageable 24-hour performance passes just in a wink, once the intensity raises. People tell us that for the audience the experience is similar. It's a matter of density.

VR: *Is there any kind of spiritual dimension within your performance and if so, what is this spiritual dimension?*

VS: We don't represent. We offer what we are. We do not represent ourselves in a state other than the one we are in, here and now. The spiritual body is as essential as the mental and physical one for us, in life and our performance, and so is the acceptance of the unabridged state of the moment. This way we can trigger elements that are already stored inside our inner library, we activate them, and therefore open up hidden treasures. Many times we are impressed what this process unveils, in ourselves as well as in the public. It is like digging within a sort of genetic memory, the memory of the subtle 'bodies'. In Sufism culture, memory is considered a sense, just as sight and taste.

AP: I perceive my spirit as my saviour, guardian, engine, protector, maybe my closest friend. I've learnt how to listen at it, and still I have to learn better. Paradoxically, I feel like to be my spirit apprentice. I've learnt to trust through my spirit, and more, to trust it. Therefore, for what I can say, especially when I perform, it is as if I am in a spiritual

journey. So to perform is for me a spiritual dimension undoubtedly. I also must say that while performing I have many times the sensation that the actions I make are part of some rituals, or better, splinters, memories of rituals, which come from very far. Specifically, before performing, I do Dynamic Breathing exercises, though not always, and, yes, I repeat in my mind a personal prayer.

VR: *Tehching Hsieh once said in an interview: "I wanted to do one piece about human beings and their struggle in life with each other. I find being tied together is a very clear idea because I feel that to survive we're all tied up." Many people seem to have this feeling to be tied to a job, to a person, to a place, to a situation. Do you feel being tied to anything or to your partner?*

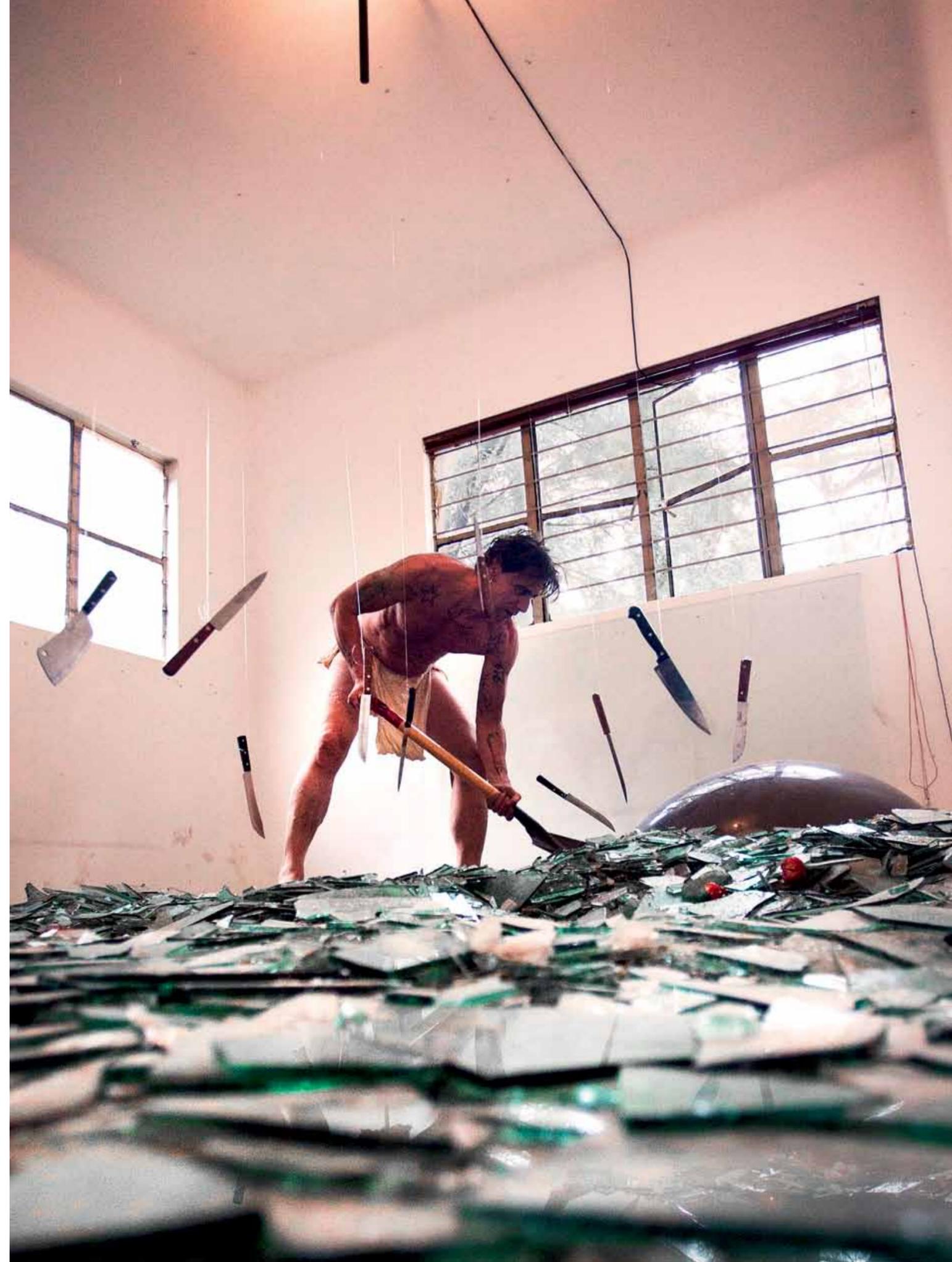
VS: Peter Sloterdijk seems to think that the idea of the individual is something that society wants to uphold for confining ourselves into bubbles, but that in reality is an illusion, as what exists together, influences each other—good or bad, wanting or not. I too think that the individual is an illusion, but less than perceiving this as a cage or being tied up, I perceive this as a being tied together. I think it's a great thing to have a connection, to share and be linked (really, not just virtually).

VR: *The request for recognition, attention, love, is what the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan seems to consider to be the core of human activity: the capability-possibility to love only once you get to know the love of another for yourself. According to this, then, an individual, "I am able to do anything to be loved and to understand the extent to which the other is able to pull him- or herself to 'me'. To what extent do you see certain behaviours and the need to control the body, and possibly other people's bodies in you as well as in your performance?*

VS: We are not interested in manipulating, attracting or fascinating people, as any recognition based on this would be temporal. We are searching for the eternal notions contained into the ephemeral. We want to touch the bottom of the well, open the boxes and tear out all the hidden treasures and secrets, and this can be done only through mutual trust, not through manipulation or control. We are interested in creating a common ground together with the public, to openly confront ourselves with ourselves, with our true Selves, and discovering something previously unknown about ourselves—in the best case something beautiful, a notion of compassion or liberation that we were not able to unleash before, or even a negative notion which we face more clearly now, to reflect upon and maybe transform into something positive. We watch you in your eyes and want to see your true story, just as we offer ours to you.

VR: *Were there ever any frictions when it appeared that one of you was not able to carry out a part of the performance that was planned? How do you deal with such a situation during a performance?*

AP: We work with failure. There is nothing 'planned'. The solution is not written on paper, and sometimes there is no solution. Between each other, we do roughly agree on frames beforehand, but we don't determine timings, as we know that each one of us needs the freedom to dwell inside an action if the process needs it. Hence it is necessary to be at the same time concentrated on one's own action, while being alert to what the other is up to—a 360° vigilance, cognizance of everything that is happening around, plus the centre of oneself, too.



## WEEKS & WHITFORD

By Karlyn De Jongh & Valeria Romagnini

*Rebecca Weeks (1979, London, UK) and Ian Whitford (1971, Truro, UK) work together as Weeks & Whitford since 2010. They create performances about the relation between the self and the other.*

*Karlyn De Jongh: You have said that you want your work to communicate the tensions between the individual within the relationship. How do you see this relationship between the individual and the other?*

Weeks & Whitford: When I described 'the tension between the individual and the individual within a relationship' in relation to our work I was talking about the need for the person generally, and the artist specifically here within a relationship to retain their own way of working, their own images and actions. The ideal situation with regard to making performances with another person is for two distinct voices to be present which compliment each other.

We are all individuals. Too often couples think that being a couple means being indivisible and presenting a unified front. A relationship should be strong enough to support difference, in the same way that a society should be strong and democratic enough to support difference, otherwise it is potentially oppressive and fixed and therefore obstructive to learning, to communication and to development and even beyond this it may become intolerant of difference. Primo Levi [in: Zinc, 1975] of course understood this danger only too well:

"In order for the wheel to turn, for life to be lived, impurities are needed, and the impurities of impurities in the soil, too, as is known, if it is to be fertile. Dissension, diversity, the grain of salt and mustard are needed: Fascism does not want them, forbids them, and that's why you're not a Fascist; it wants everybody to be the same, and you are not."

*KDJ: You have stated that you began working to confront your own social and emotional limits and the limits of others. It seems this is quite similar to what Marina Abramovic is doing, although her focus may be more on physical and mental limits. Where Abramovic often performs singly, you are making your works as a duo. How do you think this 'performing together' affects your aim of confronting your limits? Do you think you manage better in shifting your boundaries when you do it together with someone else and share the moment?*

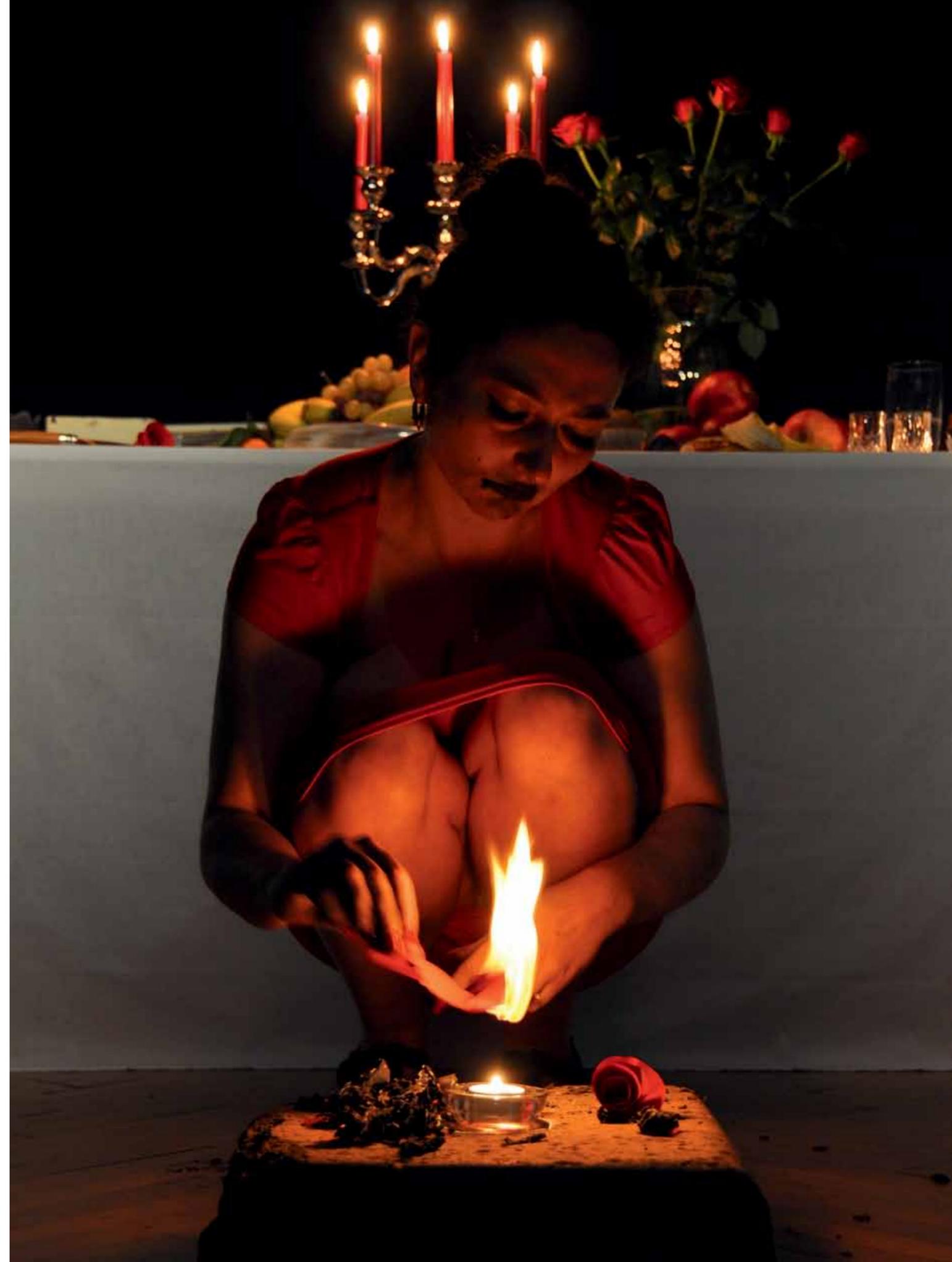
WW: The limits explored when working in and through a relationship are perhaps different to the limits explored by a solo performer. Working with another allows for a degree of slippage in terms of controlling the outcome of a work, or for a not knowing how far something will go, or how intense an action will become. There is always the possibility that the touch of the other, their eye contact, or their gesture could activate something unexpected and open something that was not anticipated, and that it may be complex to mediate within the work and retrospectively to understand or explain. Working with another can also encourage one to be gentler or more precise when there is physical and or emotional risk involved, because it's one thing to risk harming yourself and another thing to risk harming another, especially someone you love. Working in relation requires a very strong sustained focus and awareness.

*KDJ: When you are confronting your social and emotional limits, what role does the body play? How do you understand 'the body', the human figure that is performing?*

WW: The body is a tool, it enables us to act in the world and to sense the world, and it mediates the world for us. The body is also a signifier for others who will read it in different ways. The body can be shaped, it can be adapted and refined through exercise and training, but so can our other capacities which go beyond the physical, such as reading body language, establishing empathy, being able to communicate with others with your body, and being open to receive communication with others. In this sense we understand the existence of an energetic body as well as a physical body.

*Valeria Romagnini: You have done performances for several years now; probably during that time your physical condition has changed. How do you experience this change of your bodies over time?*

WW: We have to work with the body in whatever state or condition it is in. We have to adapt around long-term injuries and the impact that these can have on general strength and stamina and confidence. Over time we learn what food, supplements or activities can best support our individual needs and ways of working and we have to factor these in because it is a lifelong journey. It is a marathon not a sprint. In some ways what is lost in terms of youthful strength and resilience is gained from experience in terms of focus and technique.





The wonderful thing about performance is that it can be what we make it, so we can perform our brokenness, our difficulties and our pain as well as our skill, beauty or grace. As performance artists we do not have to conceal the marks that life leaves upon us, we can work with the reality of our frailty, our mortality.

*VR: In an interview for PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE (2009) Antony Gormley stated: "my body isn't mine either, it's a temporary tenancy, so yes, I'm in my body at the moment, but I think it's a mistake to be saying "my body"". How do you perceive "your" body, what does it mean to you? And does it mean something different during a performance, when it seems to become part of the viewer too?*

**WW:** I understand what you mean about the body as a temporary shelter. If you have ever lost a loved one and spent time with their dead body, you will know how apparent it is that the body is only a shell, the person is no longer there in the body, the body is not the person. The problem with this is that our consciousness and our sense of self is bound to our body, we cannot conceive of ourselves outside of our bodies. When we think of people we love we can visualise their walk, their smile, we know their smell, these become the ways that we read and understand other people and recognise them. These are the details which make us feel warmth when we visualise or remember a friend. In performance this human language, the ability people have to read body language, to understand the meaning of a gesture, an expression and to empathise is what we rely on to communicate. The performer's body beyond being an individual also stand for 'the human body'. It becomes universal and acts on behalf of everyone. At

the same time as standing as a signifier for humanity, the performer's body can be a site of contestation and an arena in which moral tugs of war take place between those for instance who would protect and those who would abuse the performer.

*VR: Can you find space for yourself when you are performing?*

**Rebecca Weeks:** I arrive at a point within the performance that is something like an emotional epiphany or confrontation with myself. Somehow the performance allows me to know and understand something that I already knew, but on a deeper level which resonates in my body. In this sense there is an inner self-activated through the work, even when the work's meaning is made through performing in relation to each other.

Within performance, I experience my own existence in an unmediated way. I am in a mode of primary experience, which means that I am not considering any other time or mode of experience, I am fully engaged in the present. I think Ian experiences a similar localisation of his experience. However, at times we experience different aspects of the same work. Ian may be wearing blinkers and his experience may therefore be localised to what is immediately in front of him. We have pieces of the whole experience between us and this mirrors life.

*KDJ: During the Venice International Performance Art Week, you have done a durational work, spread over 7 days and each day with a 4-hour performance. How do you experience the passing of time in this week? How are for you the few hours between each 4-hour performance? And how is your experience of time during each performance?*

**WW:** Within each of the 4-hour slots of performance we would quickly become submerged in the work, become located in the present, and lose any sense of time. Between the performance sessions we were focused on sourcing materials and props and talking about how to proceed and we experienced some anxiety whilst in these windows of planning and preparing. Towards the end of the week it was easier to be in the performance than outside of it, and we longed to return to it. We were finding the coming in and out of this deep state of connection to the work and to each other and then being surrounded by lots of people who wanted to talk to us quite difficult.

The looping soundtrack we were using acted as a way to mark the passage of time, it cycled in two hour loops of sound, so that we knew when we needed to move towards the end of each section of the work. Often the end of the sound loop was the only point where we would become aware of time at all. During the performance slot we could not feel any discomfort or tiredness, it was only afterwards that we would feel tired or sore. This is how it always is.

*KDJ: An important aspect in your work seems to be the encounter, either between the two of you as performers, or between you and the viewer. The way you address your theme of the encounter, seems to be by addressing values of life: tolerance, sexual open-mindedness, being a 'good' human towards the other. Another artist whose work is about encounter is Lee Ufan. It seems that for him, 'a fresh encounter' is like an attitude, a way to deal with or approach the world around you. When you address the encounter with the other in your work, what do you*

*want? Is it your aim to pose a new ethic, an answer to the question of how to live? What does the encounter mean to you?*

**RW:** The encounter as framed within our works sets up different dynamics, sometimes there is an intended outcome or way for the audience to respond or participate. Sometimes our intention is more ambiguous and reflects the complexity of encounter in life. Encounters are interesting because they allow for the fluidity of identity, which depends on the interplay between those involved. We are either paler or darker skinned, older or younger, the same or the opposite sex to the viewer that encounters us, and this colours what they perceive and how they respond, and in turn how we then respond. I am interested in Kristeva's understanding of the encounter as encompassing the other and the stranger within, who only becomes known to us through encounter with others. Encounter can be understood as a way to gain knowledge of others and self and this has implications for an ethics of dissensus. This connects back to my use of Primo Levi in relation to the acceptance of difference within wider society. Micro-politics become macro-politics. The personal is political.

Working with encounter demands a communication between performers and between the performer and the audience that can only happen in live work. Everything is brought to bear in an ephemeral temporal moment of human communication and the decoding of this and ability to work with it are fascinating. This exploration of human communication does have an ethical aspect in terms of developing and operating sensitivity and how this could positively impact the world.

## ZIERLE & CARTER

By Karlyn De Jongh & Valeria Romagnini

*Alexandra Zierle (1969, Mosbach am Neckar, Germany) and Paul Carter (1984, Basildon, UK) have been working together as Zierle & Carter since 2005. They create work that sites an embodied investigation into what it means to be human.*

*Valeria Romagnini: In 2012 you 'exhibited' at the Venice International Performance Art Week in our Palazzo Bembo with your durational work "At the Edge of Longing". What are your intentions to express with your performances?*

Zierle & Carter: Well, in some respects it is the same as in life; we intend to have heartfelt, sincere, poignant, challenging, memorable and transformative experiences with people. One of our main intentions is to communicate beyond what could be expressed through purely visual, spoken or written language. We are interested in people having embodied (in and from the body) 'in the moment' experiences and responses. With our performances, we invite people to get out of their rational minds, the familiar self defined constructs, and take a leap into the unknown.

In our work we use everyday objects, actions and materials familiar to the context, that on first glance, through the way it is deployed, feels in context, like it 'fits' and blends in, but on further inspection feels totally 'other'. It is this encounter with the 'other', the unknown that interests us. Through flipping everyday and universal actions/roles upside down, we intend to initiate a new dialogue around the potentiality of space, momentarily redefining what is possible.

We are less interested in communicating our own beliefs and manifestos, big ideas and grand statements, instead we are trying to plant an invitation for people to confront, reassess, question, reflect, meditate, and take action upon issues that they hold close to them. A potential catalyst for change as it were.

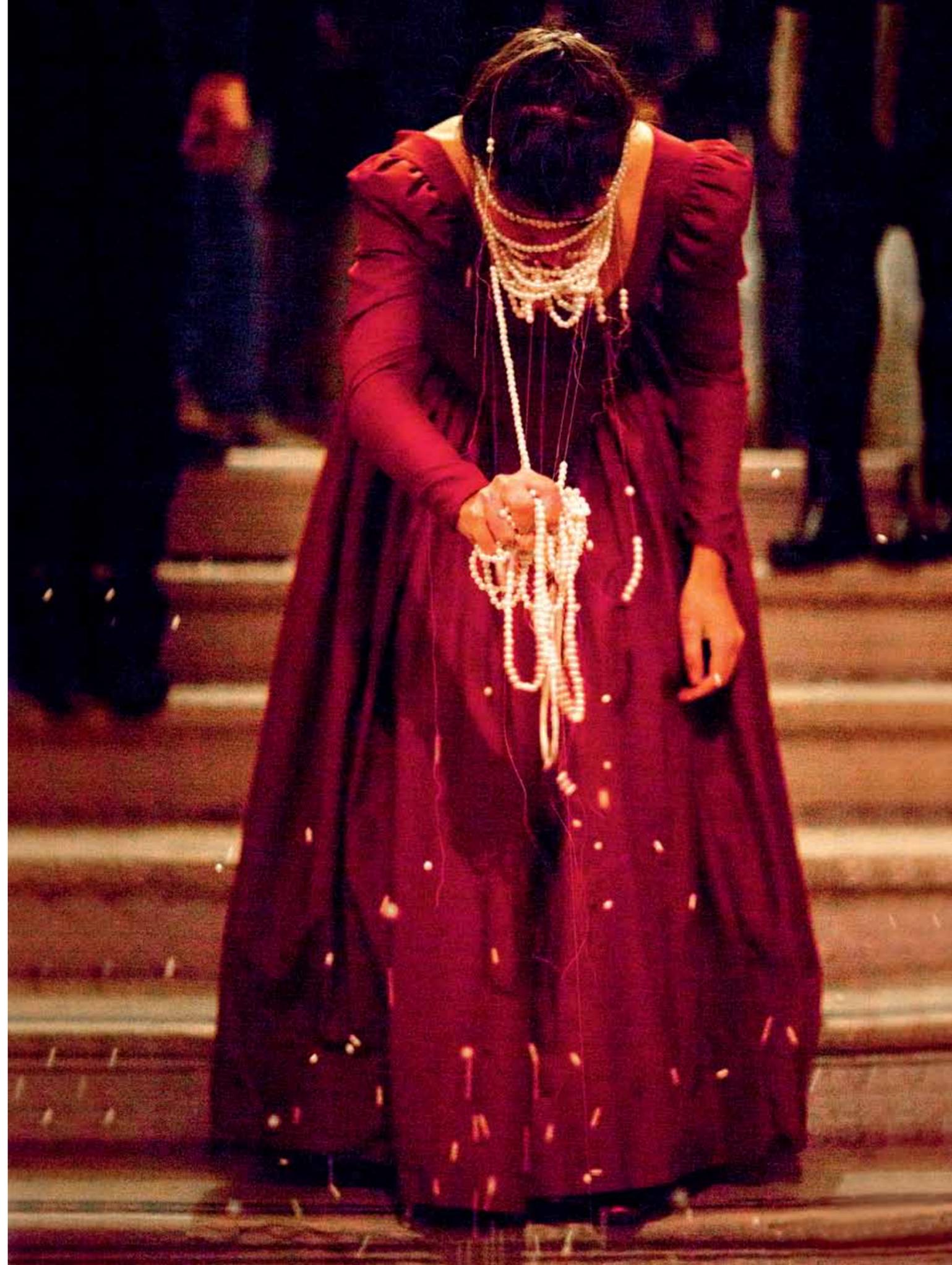
*Karlyn De Jongh: In your 'definition' of performance art, you describe performance art as a moment, an extraordinary moment. How do you understand this moment and how does it relate to any other moment in life? Should it not be our goal that our life in general is extraordinary?*

ZC: Yes, indeed it could be our goal to live our lives in a continual state of profundity, of heightened awareness, and we believe that this is

possible. What makes any moment special is the degree of undivided attention that is given to it, and by sharing this moment intentionally with others this focus or energy is multiplied, whether this is a moment in 'ordinary' life or during a performance. With this in mind, we do not really see a major difference between a moment in life and a moment in performance, simply the framework is different and the context is shifted. With performance there is often an expectation that something 'special' will happen because as a social and cultural phenomenon its purpose is intrinsically linked to heightened life experiences, 'memorable moments', dramatized reality, and an engineering and packaging of an experience to consume. There are parameters. This is where we are more interested in digging deeper, in blurring the unnecessary boundaries between the performed and the lived moment. Where a structure, a frame, a focus (which could be called 'performance') is applied to everyday experience, that operates to bring everybody, including the 'performers' into a state of heightened awareness, into a collectively shared and co-determined unknown moment, a departure from the parameters imposed by an art form or by societal conditioning, just a space of pure potential. Whether life or performance does this for us it does not matter. If we could now imagine that we would all be in this state of absolute presence at all times, to be 'in the moment' as it were then performances as a structure for creating extraordinary moments might become obsolete.

*KDJ: When Marina Abramovic spoke about her performance at our Venice Biennale symposium in 2009, she referred to the 'here and now' and that a good performance can only exist when you as a performer are there 100%, being aware that 'I am here at this moment'. In your case, you are working together: 'I am here' seems to be an 'I am here with you' or a 'we are here'. How is the relation between this 'I' and this 'we'? Or does in your case 'I' already include the other?*

ZC: In our case the 'I' includes the other, as the 'I' cannot exist without it, they are one and the same, part of the same experience, yet there are two vehicles of communication, two bodies involved in the work, and the space in-between the two bodies is where things happen. Differentiating between the two is useful at times when studying the images created and considering how these two bodies relate to each other in time and space, yet in the live 'present' moment, time and space seem to dissolve, and so do the 'you' and the 'I'; in the state of full awareness/presence only 'oneness' seems to exist.



*KDJ: In one of your Venice performances you were asking visitors to write a note (a positive wish) for a stranger. This note you were then giving to the tourists in the Gondolas that were passing by Palazzo Bembo. Participating in this performance, I was reminded of Lee Ufan, whose work invites people to be open and have a fresh encounter, to experience without prejudices. When you have humans interact with each other in such a positive way, is this your own wish that you give out?*

ZC: The intention for the encounter based works, whether it is amongst strangers or the audience encountering us, is essentially to facilitate an experience wherein everyone participating can take time to consider another human being. Providing an opportunity to view each other with new eyes, with compassion, to drop their guards and prejudices, and enter into a more humane, 'heart to heart' connection, rather than a possible disembodied set of projections, collisions and or conditioning from a 'head to head' mental framework that potentially overlooks the other for who they really are. At times we use light humour and quirky actions as a strategy to build trust and humanise the at times challenging or potent scenarios that unfold.

*VR: In an interview for the first edition of PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE Antony Gormley stated: "my body isn't mine either, it's a temporary tenancy, so yes, I'm in my body at the moment, but I think it's a mistake to be saying "my body:" How do you perceive "your" body, what does it mean to you? And does it mean something different during a performance, when it seems to become part of the viewer too?*

ZC: Our bodies are vehicles for expression, vehicles to communicate and to explore and navigate the world through the five senses. More than that to us, our bodies are a vessel for record keeping, shaped and conditioned through life and personal experiences as well as the shared experiences in performances. As our bodies have various abilities to shape and manipulate the material world around us and reach out in gestures and actions, we work in direct connection with and through our bodies, exploring a deeper and more refined connection with each single cell of our bodies through the embodiment of actions and life as such. But the challenge for us is not to over-identify with our bodies, knowing that we are so much more than our physical bodies, they are our instruments, but not the players.

*KDJ: Taking part in Hermann Nitsch's 130<sup>th</sup> Aktion, Sarah Gold and I were blindfolded to heighten our awareness and experience the world around us not visually, but with our other senses. In several performances you did, you covered your head: in snow, toast, beads... Why do you do this?*

ZC: There are multiple reasons why we explore materials in this way. One reason to use 'head disguises' is to deal with the head as a canvas, material or sculpture. Disguising our head with a universally or culturally symbolic material highlights and reveals previously un-surfaced layers and aspects of ourselves, further core questions and tensions inherent to the human experience, and it provides the opportunity to explore in a raw and immersive manner the relationship to the material that smothers and mutes our senses. It also allows us to talk in poetics and metaphors and not always in means bound to gender or age specific readings. It allows us as individuals to step into the background and to make space for something else to come into focus, something other than our personal, social and cultural identity, the 'I' is somewhat neutralised in exchange for a more universal

projection surface. Often the action/process of revealing is representative of a symbolic act of stripping back, peeling and tearing away to once again return to our 'true,' authentic, unpretentious and 'natural' self, a transformation back to our true identity, the revealing of our face/head, the pivotal and primary sensory vehicle in which we interface and navigate the world from, and which we are often distinguished by. At times we immerse our two heads in objects or materials that form a bridge between each other, so the space between us, the connection, is the focus and material for the work.

Another intention for using head disguises is the giving ourselves over to the experience of navigating our immediate environment through other senses other than sight, arguably the sense we rely most upon. At times, in addition to depriving sight, we have even explored muffling our hearing. Being able to explore and develop a better understanding of what other sensory perceptive systems emerge dominant when our hearing and especially our sight is 'disconnected' was a revelation quite early on in our creative practice. As much as we also use head disguises as a strategy of sorts to create strong and at times iconic (external) images, being blind also sensitises us to our inner senses and landscape and to our intuition in a way that working with all our senses cannot. It is a method for us to journey inwards, to delve deep into a less familiar terrain, whilst also navigating an external environment. This process of directly navigating the internal whilst simultaneously navigating and journeying through an external space, both searching in all respects has for the most part created an extremely compelling and charged experience for both ourselves and for our audience.

*KDJ: Being in the performance with Nitsch, I experienced time in a different way than I normally do: I could experience the sequence of events in the performance, but I missed the feeling for their duration. How do you experience the 'now' when you are in a performance?*

ZC: When we fully experience 'the now' we do not think of the past or future, only the present exists in that moment. However as soon as we give thoughts to moments that happened in the past or experiences yet to come, we are no longer in the now anymore. For us the now is timeless and when we experience the now the concept of time and how we usually experience it disappears, the moment is stretched as we are immersed, lost within it.

*VR: Since you do performances together, what does it mean to you to be human both as individual and as a collective entity? Do you see the body of the other as a tool to question your own body?*

ZC: To be human means to constantly explore and evaluate oneself in order to find ways of coming into a better feeling place, whether that is through thoughts or actions. There is an inherent striving amongst us to experience joy, and to create a joyous adventure of a lifetime on an individual basis as well as collectively. This dictates most of our decisions.

The body of the other can serve as a mirror and it seems whatever we observe within each other we can find a resonance of it within ourselves. This can at times reveal more hidden aspects of ourselves and can at the same time enrich our relationship with each other's and with our own bodies. Questioning the body is questioning our physical existence in the world, as we are constantly changing and expanding mentally and emotionally our relationship with our body changes also, so if there's anything that is constant in life, then it is the on-going process of finding new questions and provoking new experiences.





# PERSONAL STRUCTURES

Palazzo Bembo  
55<sup>th</sup> Venice Art Biennale  
1 June - 24 November 2013

## KARLYN DE JONGH

27 April 2013

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.

Time and Life are concepts that I have tried to 'research' in a number of ways: through art, art history and philosophy. But for a long time I did not know 'how' to express them visually.

Since I started working with the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES in 2007 I had different encounters with artists, such as Roman Opalka, Tatsuo Miyajima and Rene Rietmeyer. The 'concepts' grew into me and I started to understand more about their reality. It was in February 2011, when I visited Arnulf Rainer for the second time on Tenerife, Spain, that I realized that I had to do something serious myself. Sitting next to Rainer, we were talking while he was drawing over a photo of Sarah Gold and myself. "What colour shall I make your hair?", Rainer asked. "Green", I replied. He took a green pastel and started scratching it over the photo. I did not draw it myself, but what I said had an influence on Rainer and therefore on the work. After that moment, I started thinking seriously about how I could express myself.

The idea of painting the days of my life, came naturally to me in the weeks after my return to Venice. However, to actually start, took me several months. Probably similar as it had once been for Roman Opalka, I knew it was a big step and that it would have far-reaching consequences for my life. Maybe because I knew that 'change' would not be a problem but a challenge, starting to execute my program gave me the greatest feeling of freedom I ever experienced.

My 'days' are represented through painted colour on a surface. With colour, I visualise my emotional relationship to the days lived. 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'.

Physical time flows linearly in the direction of the future. My work shows the accumulation of days of my life, my lived days. My oeuvre is becoming larger, my 'past', the list of facts about my life is becoming longer. Seeing the passing of time from my personal perspective, the flow of time might just as well be a countdown to the undefined moment of my death, having less and less personal 'future'. In my daily life, I am mainly focussed on the future, thinking about the passing of time in the sense of a countdown still scares me too much. Because: when I die, my life will be over.

A day has a present, a past and a future. In my paintings, past, present and future are all 'present'. Maybe because I am still relatively at the beginning of my consciously experienced life (at least, I hope so), for me the future is very important—this might change as I get older. The past has past. However, for my work the past is still influential when it says something about the future.

To me, a moment is not durationless. It is possible that I do not experience the duration that intensely, but still the moment has an





end. Like my life, like my personal time, there is an end—death. Physical time will continue passing, regardless the various experiences of it.

My colours show the passing of psychological time. For me, this psychological time has not so much to do with the speed of time. To me, speed is not “of the essence” (as Lawrence Weiner stated). Yes, I experience time moving faster or slower depending on how I am ‘enjoying’ the moment, but for me, the actual ‘joy’ is reflected in the colour, because this is how I experience the physical time the way I do.

The experienced relation between the days is an important factor: I choose the colour of a particular day by comparing it to the

other days that I experienced in the past. At the moment, my life is very beautiful and therefore I choose beautiful colours, but there is a difference: some days are more special than others and require a brighter colour or a bigger surface to visualize it. Days that might at another point in my life would be considered fantastic, might now in relation to the recently lived days be not so special—or the other way around.

My awareness of ‘being here-and-now’ is strongest when both physical and personal time are consciously experienced in the same moment. Then I experience myself within past and future, seeing where I come from and where I am going and how I am at the moment. In my work I always paint the ‘now’. When painting a

day that has already past, I am painting the relation I now have with this past day.

The content of ‘now’ changes over time. The flow of physical time is real and objective. Apart from all my personal experiences and thoughts, I see my body ageing. Besides that, ‘facts’ come into existence: events that only existed as possibilities in the future, become present and then turn into ‘past’. Only through memories (personal views) and the presence of artworks (present facts), do these past events exist. In the end, my artworks are all that is left over.

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.

# TOSHIKATSU ENDO 遠藤利克

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

March 2013

*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.*

*SG: In general your sculptures appear to me very raw, basic and in a way ‘brutal’. To me the rough bones, 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?*

TE: 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.

遠藤利克: 私が作るの、円環や、円筒や、立方体や、板などの、一般にありふれた没個性的な形体ばかりです。それを、最も審美的ではないやりかたで加工します。なぜなら、私は、私が作るそれらの物体を、近代彫刻の審美的な文脈から最も遠い位置に置こうと考えているからです。

また、私の目的は、それらの形体を完成させることではなく、それらの形体を、最終的には破壊し、消去させることにあります。破壊と消去によって、それらの形体が内部に抱える<空洞>を露呈させることにあります。そして、これらの行為を私に促すのは、私の内部に存在する、原初的な衝動と情念です。

*KDJ: In your work you seem focused on the classical elements of air, fire, water and earth—maybe adding wood and metal for ancient China and*

*‘spirit’ for Japan. Rather than focusing on the material as such, these classical elements seem to denote ‘change’, to the different phases of matter and have quite a strong history. If you want to return to language without dust, why did you choose to go back to these ‘ancient’ elements and not—like for example Carl Andre—to the chemical Elements?*

TE: Carl Andre has treated matter as objects which are distinct from mankind. Lee Ufan, a member of Mono-ha, has tried to trim away the language and illusions associated with matter and make matter into pure objects.

In contrast, my position is that matter from the perspective of mankind only appears within collective illusions. In this meaning, my position is the direct opposite of the Mono school. Mankind’s recognition for matter exists within the chain of language although this is true only in a context of cultural history, not scientific knowledge. We view and experience matter through language. Within our lifestyle, matter is certainly not experienced as objective chemical substances. Instead, matter is experienced in the ideological context and chain of meaning within the collective. For example, such experience is similar to the comprehension of the world of alchemy.

遠藤利克: カール・アンドレは、物質を、人間から突き放した事物として扱ってきました。もの派の李ウーハンは、物質にまわりつく言葉や幻想をそぎ落として、純粋な物質そのものに還元しようとしてきました。

しかし私の立場は、人間にとっての物質は共同幻想の中にしか現れないという立場です。その意味では、もの派とは正反対の立場です。

科学的な識見ではなく、あくまでも文化史的な意味においてですが、人間にとっての物質の認識は言葉の連鎖の中にあります。われわれは言葉を通して物質を見、また経験しているのです。われわれの生活においては、物質は決して客観的な化学物質として経験されるものではなく、共同体における意味の連鎖、思想的な文脈において経験されるものです。例えてみれば、錬金術的な世界把握のかたちに近いと思います。

*SG: Why do you feel the necessity or even the urge to work with these basic elements like water, fire, wood? Have you always felt this urge? Or did you carefully choose these elements? What do they mean to you?*

TE: Now that the modernism of art has reached such levels, I often feel that the current state of modern art is extremely unsophisticated.



The reason for my feeling is that it is impossible to interpret the world using only a modernist perspective, and it is impossible to grasp the totality of mankind using only an evolutionary transformationalism. At least, I have begun to think this way.

Since early modern times, as an extension of Western ideas, art has been engulfed in a wave of evolutionism, avant-gardism and over-emphasis on individuality. However, art is more than the work of individuals; indeed, there is also an aspect of will which were anonymously born from the collective. I feel more richness in art that has exceeded the individual level.

For the reasons stated above, I have tried to root myself in the quest for the most primitive level.

遠藤利克: 芸術のモダニズムが行き着いた果て、今の現代美術の状況が、私にはとても瘦せて貧相に感じられることが多くありました。その理由はおそらく、モダニズム的な視点だけでは世界はとらえきれない、進化論的な変革主義だけでは人間の総体はとらえきれないためではないでしょうか。少なくとも私は、そのように考えるようになりました。

芸術は近代以降、西洋思想の延長上として、進化論主義、前衛主義、個性偏重主義の波に飲み込まれてきました。しかし芸術は個人の成果というばかりではなく、共同体が匿名的に生み出してくる意志という側面があります。そして、そうした、個人を超えたレベルの方に、私は、より多くの豊かさがあると感じているのです。

以上の理由で私は、最も原初的なレベルへ向けて、錨を下そうと試みたのです。

KDJ: *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.

遠藤利克: 西洋文化と東洋文化の間には永遠の断裂があって、そのあいだを隔てる川は越えがたいものがあります。また、中国文化と日本文化もまた、多くの異質性に隔てられています。しかし、いずれの文化においても、その始まりの段階には、大地があり、太陽があり、水があり、火がありました。そして、そうした環境の中に、男と女という、

二つの性をもった生命があり、死があり、原始共同体がありました。すくなくともその部分に関してはどの文化にも共通する条件であったと考えてもよいと思います。ただ、その後の文化発展史において、多くの差異が生じてきたのは確かです。

しかし、原初の共通項に立ち戻れば、お互いの理解は難しくはないと思います。そして私は、そうした原初の共通項に焦点を絞って制作しているわけで、そうした前提で私の作品を見ていただければ、理解は、それほど難しくないとだと思います。

KDJ: *Traveling through the world, encountering people from many different countries, I see more and more that I am Dutch. It seems that the culture I grew up in, formed me as well as others growing up in the same region. Also when I look at your work and read your thoughts, I see a similarity between you and Japanese artists in the topics you are concerned with. It seems, however, that you see culture as a replacement for our human incapability to reach our original human existence. What is this origin?*

TE: One hypothesis states that since the instincts of mankind have been destroyed, we use culture as a replacement for instincts. Language is the primary element composing culture. In other words, mankind uses language to adapt to the actual world. In contrast, living creatures other than human beings respond using their instincts.

So, why has mankind come to use language? The only explanation is that our instincts have been destroyed, which leading us into a never-ending circle. It's similar to the question of whether the chicken or the egg came first. However, one other hypothesis states that everything begins with how extremely immature we are at birth. Living creatures other than human beings are born in a relatively finished form and respond instinctually to the outside world. However, newborn human babies are completely powerless of responding to the outside world, depending almost entirely on their mother for that response. Mothers cater to every whim and fulfill the needs of babies. This relationship continues for several years, during which the fundamental elements of human beings are transmitted from the mother to her child and the child's ego is formed. Then, the system of language and culture is established as an alternative to instincts.

It can be said that this fundamental structure is shared by all of mankind. However, it is also true that the contents transmitted from the mother already possess cultural differences according to the mother's background.

遠藤利克: ひとつの仮説ではありますが、人間は本能が壊れたために、本能の代用として文化を行使するようになったと言われてます。そして文化を構成する大元は言語です。ゆえに人間は言語をして現実世界に対応していると言えます。それに引き替え、人間以外の生物は、本能によって対応しています。

ではなぜ人間が言語を行使するようになったかといえば、それは、本能が壊れたからという他なく、堂々巡りとなってしまいます。鶏が先か、卵が先かという話です。ただそこにはもう一つの仮説が存在します。それは、すべての始まりは人間の赤子が超未熟児として生まれてくることにあるという仮説です。人間以外の生物は比較的完成形として生まれてきて、外界に本能的に対応してゆきます。しかし生まれただばかりの人間は外界適応においては完全に無能で、適応のほとんどを母親に依存しています。母親が赤子の手足となり、赤子の欲求



を満たします。そしてその関係は数年に及び、その過程で、母親から子に対して人間の基本的な要素が伝達され、自我が形成されてきます。そして、本能の代用としての言語と文化という体制が確立されてゆくという仮説です。

この基本構造は、人類共通のものだといえますが、母親自体の出自に応じて、母親から伝達される内容がすでに文化差を孕んでいると言うことも、確かなのです。

KDJ: *When looking at a stone, I can look at it in different ways, by focusing on its different aspects: colour, shape, surface etc. But each time I 'see' something, I seem to also 'name' it: I notice the round shape of the stone and in my mind I formulate it with that word "round". It*

*seems for you there is a separation between an object and the language to describe that object. How does an object relate to the language that denotes this object?*

TE: The naming of an object is a prerequisite for our experience of that matter. Objects first appear in this world when they are named. This is the same as saying that something does not exist if it has not been given a name. Although this may be an extreme description of phenomena, I believe that language functions in this way for mankind.

遠藤利克: ものは、名付けられることにおいてはじめて、我々にとって経験される事物となります。ものは、名付けられることにおいてはじめて、世界に現れるのです。ゆえに名を与えられないものは存在しな

いということと同じです。極端な言い方ではありますが、われわれにとって言語とは、このように機能していると、私は考えます。

*KDJ: When looking at the essence of human existence, I think that sex is a very important element—if not the most important. What role does sex play in your work? What is for you the essence of life?*

TE: Life, death, sex and spirituality are intricately linked as the essence and core of life. Naturally, this means that the same elements are involved in the essence of art. The most important drive when creating my work is eroticism.

生命の本質、生命の中心には、生と、死と、性と、聖が密接にかかわっています。当然、それらは、芸術の本質にもかかわっています。私の作品制作において、最も重要な動因は、エロチシズムです。

*KDJ: Being part of Nitsch's performance for me as a passive actor was a very erotic experience. This did not have only to do with the many people that were involved, all interacting with each other, but also with the experience itself: to feel the sun on my skin, to taste the blood in my mouth, to smell the jasmine flowers. When you create your works, making first the round wooden construction, then covering the wood with tar and then lighting it on fire, I can imagine it is a very strong experience. How do you experience this act?*

TE: To be honest, I act very calmly to conduct my plan. It is my belief that Hermann Nitsch is also in the same state.

正直に言えば、私は極めて冷静に、自分のプランを遂行するだけです。おそらく、ヘルマン・ニッチもまた、同様の状態にあるだろうと推測します。

*KDJ: How do language and existence relate?*

TE: As long as human beings are a language-based existence, it is not possible to stop the world's constructive chain formed through language. Ever since human beings became a language-based existence, the existence of mankind has been maintained through language. From the perspective of my own epistemology, language and existence are in an infinite, linked relationship of great intimacy.

遠藤利克： 言語による世界の構築性の連鎖は、人間が言語的存在であるかぎり、止めることはできません。人間の存続は、人間が言語的存在となって以降、言語によってこそ維持されているのであり、私自身の認識論の立場から言えば、言語と存在は、密接な無限連鎖の関係にあります。

*KDJ: After we heard you speak about Hermann Nitsch at our symposium about Existence in Tokyo in 2008, we decided to contact Nitsch for a first interview. The contact with him reached so far that Sarah and I became part as passive models in Nitsch's 130<sup>th</sup> Aktion. We experienced 6 days of preparations for his Orgien Mysterien Theater and then the actual performance, where we were both hanging on the cross, getting blood poured into our mouths. Experiencing Nitsch, made me understand more about you. However, where Nitsch's performances are still a 'theater', I have the impression that your works are 'real': there seems to be nothing staged and rehearsed. Creating your works seems much more about instinct, whether it is beautiful or not. What role does aesthetics play in your work?*

TE: Hermann Nitsch and I are similar in that we both explore sacrifice. We are different in that Nitsch comes from the West and I come from

the East. Another difference is that sacrifices are replicated much more directly in Nitsch's performances, while sacrifices are used more symbolically in my work. However, in any case, sacrifices are now a custom of the past. There is no collective or culture which shares the ritual of sacrifices as a real event. Still, both Nitsch and I share the recognition that, as a primordial form of religion, sacrifices continue to have an extremely fundamental and important meaning to the existence of mankind even today.

The first issue which must be considered when incorporating sacrifice into work is that the collective bodies which share sacrifice have already disappeared. Therefore, we are only able to make sacrifice the primary theme of our work through symbolic, ideological and suggestive aspects. The more we exceed this limit and pursue extremes, the more the deeper layers of sacrifice become disconnected from its essence and it falls into superficial scandal. Although my work aims at the instinctual level of mankind, in no way am I driven by instinct to go too far. Moreover, I have chosen to position myself as far as possible from an aesthetic response. Mediocre aesthetics distance the act of creation from its essence.

遠藤利克： ヘルマン・ニッチも私も、供儀を主題としていることでは、共通しています。両者の違いとしては、ニッチが西欧の出であり、私が東洋の出であるという違いがあります。そしてもう一つの違いは、ニッチのパフォーマンスにおいては、供儀はより直接的に再現されており、私の作品においては、より象徴的な意味作用として導入されているという違いです。しかしいずれにしても、現在、供儀は過去の習慣となってしまっており、供儀という儀式をリアルなものとして共有する、共同体と文化は存在していません。ただ、供儀という、宗教の原初形態としての機構は、現在においても、人間存在にとって極めて根源的で重要な意味を発信し続けているという認識においては、両者は共通していると思います。

供儀を作品に導入することにおいて警戒しなければいけない第一の問題は、供儀を共有する共同体が、あらかじめ失われているという現況についてです。ゆえにわれわれが作品において供儀を主題にし得るのは、その象徴的、理念的、示唆的側面においてなのであり、その限界を超えて過激性を追求すればするほど、供儀の深層は本質から乖離してゆき、表層的なスキャンダリズムに墮しかねないということです。

私の作品は、人間の本能的なレベルを射程にありますが、決して、本能に促されて暴走しているわけではありません。また、私は、美学的な対応からは最も遠い位置に身を置くことを選択しています。中途半端な美学は、作品行為を本質から遠ざけます。

*KDJ: In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several philosophers have discussed the malleability or changeability of our existence (the ability to change ourselves and not accept the way we are). I have the impression that people like you and Lee Ufan believe in this human ability and that your art is in a way an answer to the question of how to live. You told me that your art is "a temporary device, which has the wish to return—even only a little—to the side of today's life that has disappeared: memory and soul." You seem to want to create a consciousness about our own acts, caring about the past and not only look at the future. Do you think humans will live a more happy life when they are conscious about their own acts? Or is that not what it is about?*

TE: The most important point is that I am a mere artist. I am not a counselor, man of religion or politician, nor am I a philanthropist, critic or phi-





osopher. I have absolutely no interest in the question of how people can live happily or how they can move in a more positive direction. Furthermore, I have no certification or ability to refer to such questions. All of what I express is my own emotional inclination or language that is directed to the other side of my own consciousness. In no way do I attempt to express a model for people. Finally, I believe that the only ultimate objective of art is to provide a receptacle for my own psychological inclination and to draw people into an irrational labyrinth.

遠藤利克: もっとも重要な点は、わたしは一介の美術家であって、決して、カウンセラーではなく、宗教家でも、政治家でも、慈善家でも、評論家でも、哲学者でもないということです。私は、人々がどう生きれば幸せになれるか、よりよい方向に進めるかということについて、まったく関

心がありません。また、そうしたことに言及する資格も能力もありません。私が何かについて語る場合、それはすべて、私自身の心的傾斜、あるいは私自身の意識の向こう側に向けられた言葉であり、決して人々に規範を語ろうとするものではありません。そして芸術の目的とは、最終的に、自分自身の心的傾斜に受け皿を与えること、そして、人々を理不尽な迷宮に引き込むこと、それに尽きると思います。

SG: In our 54<sup>th</sup> Biennale exhibition (2011) you presented VOID (2010), a large sculpture consisting of slices of burnt wood assembled into a circle. What are your thoughts behind this particular sculpture?

TE: It goes without saying that the main theme of this sculpture is the internal "void" which is surrounded by wood and removed from



the viewer's sight. And the "void" is not an actual entity; rather, it is "X" as symbolized through a collective illusion.

遠藤利克: 主題としては、言うまでもなく、木という物質に囲まれて人の視線から隔離された、内部の「空洞」です。そしてその「空洞」は、実体のあるものではなく、共同幻想として現象する「X」です。

KDJ: Not being able to see the inside of VOID made several visitors curious. What is the reason why in some works you do not show this Void?

TE: The "void" first begins to act upon the imagination of people surrounding the "void" by distancing it from their sight. If the closed "void" were opened to the outside, all of the tension would be lost.

遠藤利克: 「空洞」は、視覚から閉ざされることによって始めて、「空洞」の外を囲む人々の想像力に作用し始めるのです。閉じた「空洞」が外へと開かれてしまえば、すべての緊張は、消失してしまいます。

KDJ: I always had the feeling 'Void' was something positive for you, a state of harmony that you hope to achieve. Thinking about the wish to go back to a life where memory and soul are still part of our existence, it gives me a different interpretation of 'Void'. It seems as if the void is also a mirror to ourselves as humans of what we become when we are not aware of our own existence within time. Tatsuo Miyajima in his work also refers to the void, when he speaks about the moment of 'zero', which includes death, but also the possibility of becoming. What does 'void' mean to you?

TE: For me, the meaning of “void” has absolutely no relationship on the level of view of life, the philosophical level, the moral level or the Zen level. My concept of “void” can be simply described as a “closed place.” Moreover, that void is a symbol which first appears in relation with a collective. I do not consider the void itself as something special which possesses an ideological meaning. A “void” is only realized by gathering the thoughts of members that compose a collective; in other words, by collective illusion. Since the place is a “void”, it absorbs the will inside the unconsciousness of the collective. At the same time, it returns the same as shared will of the collective. The will brought from the “void” begins to function as a deep level of knowledge. In other words, I view the “void” as a standard which invokes the mechanism for forming such will.

遠藤利克: 私が考える<空洞>は、人生論的なレベル、哲学的なレベル、道徳的なレベル、禅的なレベルとは、まったくかわりありません。私が考える<空洞>を簡単に説明するならば、それは、「閉ざされた場所性」ということに尽きます。またその<空洞>は、共同体との関わりにおいてはじめて現れてくる表象であって、それ自体に観念的な意味が付与された特別なものというわけではありません。<空洞>を現象させるのは、あくまでも、共同体を構成する成員の想いの集合、つまり、共同幻想に他なりません。その場所性が、<空洞>ゆえに、共同体の無意識裡にある意志を吸収し、同時にそれを、共同体の共通の意志として送り返してくる。そして<空洞>からもたらされた意志は、深層の知として機能し始める。つまり、そうした機構を発動する原器として、私は<空洞性>を、考えています。

SG: *What does 'space' mean to you in relation to 'empty space /void'? Are they 'equal' to each other?*

TE: A “void” is indeed a type of “space.” However, my work refers to a “void”: a “space” which is removed and closed from the senses of human beings.

遠藤利克: <空洞>も、<空間>であることに違いはありませんが、私が作品において言及する<空洞>は、人の視覚からは隔離され、閉ざされた<空間>だということです。

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.

遠藤利克: 時間だけということは、在り得ません。すべては時間と空間の関数において現象していると言えます。

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.

実際に制作するときは、極めて覚めています。制作は没我的な状態の中ではできません。

KDJ: *In his book das sein, Nitsch states 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.

遠藤利克: 私にとっての現実、もちろん、今、ここにしかありません。それは基本です。それを前提としての話なのですが、私が、過去の知や、人間共同体の原初的な状態に関心を持つのは、そこに人間共同体の、もっともシンプルで強力な構造を見出すからです。決して過去に戻るようとしているわけではなく、過去から現在にまで連続する時間軸の中で、人間存在をとらえ返し、表現をとらえ返そうとしているに過ぎません。

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.

遠藤利克: 現在、地球上は、近代主義の延長上にあります。近代主義は、一度まわりだしたら加速する方向にしか進まないという性格を持っています。しかもグローバル化はますます進み、地球はますます狭くなり、急速に加熱しつつあります。地球上から未開の辺境は消えました。こうした中で、昔のような、あるいは野生動物のようなゆったり



りした生活時間に戻りたいという願望は、必ず生まれてきます。しかしそれは、いつの場合も、一時的でセンチメンタルなノスタルジーに止まるものでしかないのです。仮に時間の後戻しを試みたとしても、それは一瞬にして前のめりの回転に巻き込まれていく。われわれから、後戻りの可能性はあらかじめ奪われているのです。

そうしたなかで我々にできる唯一の対処方法は、加熱と冷却の循環システムを滞りなく動かしてゆくような、方法の構築なのだろうと思います。そして芸術は、そうした方法を十分に担いうるメディアだと、私は考えています。

加熱と冷却ということを別の言葉でいうならば、秩序の構築と秩序の破壊と言い換えてもよいと思います。この破壊というベクトルの中に、死とエロチシズムは立ち上がります。そしてこの破壊は、蓄積した熱と穢れを開放します。芸術にはそうしたちからがあると思います。

誤解していただきたくないのは、私が過去を参照するのは、過去に戻りたいためではありません。現在よりも過去を、より多く評価しているわけでもありません。私が求めているのはただ一つ、過去から現在まで貫通する、生命と言語の根源的なシステムに身を置くことなのです。

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.

遠藤利克: 観客に対して、私は何も強要することはありませんし、どのように感じてほしいという期待もありません。その人が感じるように感じればよいというだけです。

KDJ: *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? is the title of one of Gauguin's paintings, but also asks three questions. They are questions I often ask myself when I take a moment to think about my existence 'here and now'. When I think about your work and these questions, I have the feeling that you answer the first question quite clearly. And it seems you demonstrate a wish for the future: a world without the dust of too much unused language. But is this a realizable dream, within contemporary society? What are we?*

TE: First, there is one point which I must clarify at this time. The concept of Lee Ufan from the Mono school is that a great amount of dust has accumulated on objects and that we are unable to experience pure objects. Through the creation of art, Lee Ufan seeks to provide objects free from the dust which obscured them. I have subsequently indicated that the dust referred to by Lee Ufan is nothing but language. Therefore, in my opinion, dust is equivalent to language.

Now, the question is whether the world or objects can exist without being covered by the dust of language. In my opinion, such a thing is impossible. Indeed, the dust of language makes it possible for us to view and experience the world and its objects. In this respect, I take the exactly opposite position of Lee Ufan.

遠藤利克: まずここではっきりさせておかねばならないのは、もの派の李ウーハンのコンセプトは、つまり、もの(物質)には沢山の埃が積もっていて、ピュアな物質として我々は経験できなくなっているか

ら、作品行為によって、ものに被さった埃をとり除いた状態として物質を提示してゆきたいというものです。そして私はその後において、李ウーハンが言うところの埃とは、言語にことに他ならないだろうと指摘したのです。だから私の見解では、「埃＝言語」だということです。

そして、埃としての言語が付着しない物質や世界があるかと言えば、それはあり得ないというのが私の見解です。むしろ、言語の埃にまみれることによってこそ、物質や世界は、我々にとって可視的で、経験可能なものとなるのです。ここに至って私は、李ウーハンとは反対側の立場に立つことになったのです。

KDJ: *PERSONAL STRUCTURES as a platform for artists who are concerned with the concepts of time, space and existence, documents a large variety of different opinions. Many of the artists presented in this book, do not only express themselves and their thought, but also want to achieve something in others. Hermann Nitsch is a good example of someone who wants to heighten our awareness about ourselves and make us experience life more intensely with all our senses. Nitsch has spent the past 50 years proclaiming this and still continues to do so. It seems you do not only want a consciousness about our existence, but a real change. But where Nitsch seems to be in the meantime enjoying himself, experiencing his life together with others, it seems you are fighting alone. Can you get enough satisfaction out of your existence to keep on going?*

TE: I am nothing more than a sculptor. Therefore, my only choice is to work alone, just as sculptors did until now. When restricting our discussion to the theme of sacrifice and when considering the current spiritual state in which a collective that shares the system of sacrifice has disappeared, sacrifice must be carefully translated and applied to modern conditions.

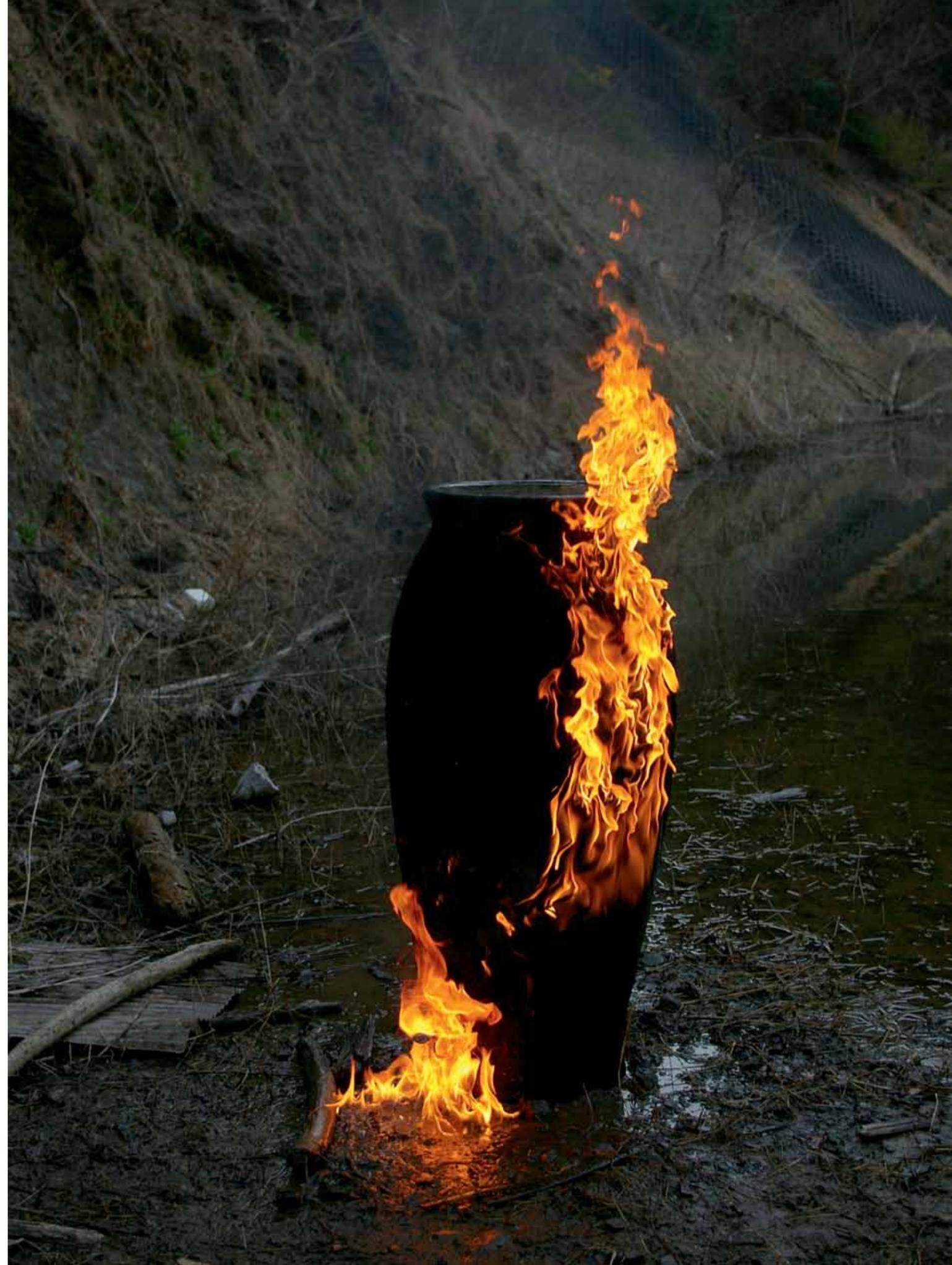
Since there is no collective that shares sacrifice, the theme could be reduced to an empty scandal the more extremely we attempt to treat sacrifice. We must be quite careful when handling the theme of sacrifice. This position is quite far removed from the dimension of enjoyment. However, I believe that this result contains the possibility that another space-time continuum will open. This space-time continuum can be described as being the same as the "Where?" which was the fantasy of Gauguin.

遠藤利克: 私はあくまでも彫刻家なので、彫刻家という存在が今までそうであったように、単独で制作に立ち向かうしかありません。

供犠というテーマに限定していえば、供犠というシステムを共有する共同体がなくなってしまった現代の精神状況にあっては、供犠は慎重に現代の状況に翻訳されて、適用されなければなりません。

供犠を共有する共同体が存在しないということは、供犠を、過激に取り扱おうとすればするほど、結果としては空疎なスキャンダリズムに堕しかねません。供犠を扱うとき、我々は相当に慎重にならざるを得ないわけで、それは、楽しむという次元とは程遠い位置にあるのだと思います。

でも、その果てにこそ、もう一つの時空が開いてくる可能性は存在していると思います。そしてそれは、ゴーギャンが夢想した、〈何処〉と、同じものだと言えるわけです。



## VALIE EXPORT

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

April 2013

*VALIE EXPORT (1940, Linz, Austria) is a performance and video artist. Her often provocative works address the body and have a feministic undertone. VALIE EXPORT attained prominence in the 1960s and 70s, when—in search for sexual freedom—she did performances in the streets of Vienna. Later on in her career, the focus of her art developed towards a more general representation of the body, and the voice in particular, still discussing social and political issues. —VALIE EXPORT lives and works in Vienna, Austria.*

*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 our 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 unambiguously defining identity 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 in our 2009 interview that you see yourself as a product of yourself? To what extent do you think that 'our identity' is moldable or changeable by ourselves?*

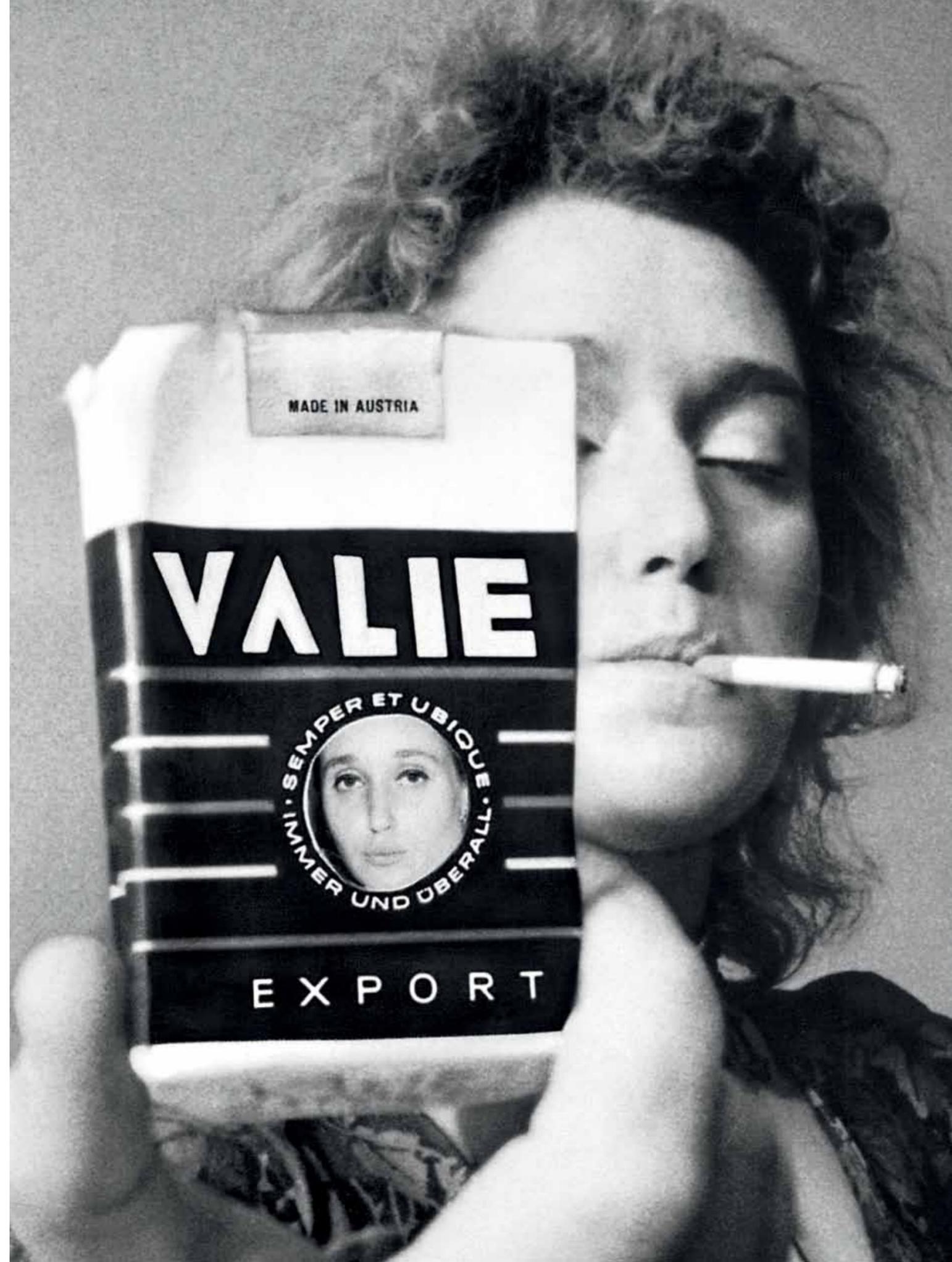
**VE:** Within ourselves we carry structures of identities which have moulded us from the outside. They are strangers to us because they do not meet our desires and needs. There are rights that make the rules, there are barriers that surround and also challenge us to recognize the strangeness within 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: There are still many countries in the world where people (women) are—for whatever reason—not 'able' to express themselves freely. Of course, you cannot 'rescue' everybody, but it seems that when Europe became more 'open-minded' towards women, instead of moving to other parts of the world, you seemingly kept your focus on Europe. Is that right?*

**VE:** I have started many years ago, in the 1990s, with a work on the issue of clitoral circumcision. I have occupied myself intensively with this issue and have shown pictures and films about it in exhibitions. It still keeps me busy.





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.

KDJ: Your works seem to react to what happens in society. You grew up in Austria, where sexuality apparently was (or is) quite repressed. In my opinion, confronting this society with itself, it is ‘logical’ that your works have been quite sexual in nature. To what extent do you think that Vienna as a city (or Austria in general) has influenced your work? Do you think you would have addressed the same or similar topics if you had been living in another part of the world?

VE: Of course, my habitat is important for me, Austria has a grand intellectual habitat. The history of Vienna is of great significance: Sigmund Freud, the Vienna Circle... If I had lived elsewhere, this habitat with its past, present and future would not have become part of my thinking, feeling, my consciousness. This is also true for all cultures associated with my habitat, for it is more than that, it is space.

Valeria Romagnini: At the beginning of your career, your provocative and strong actions, seem to break away from structures imposed by education and by the conservative Viennese culture of the ‘60. It shocked the society of that time. You have now become quite an important figure in Viennese society yourself. How do you see your

present position in comparison to your position in the 1960s? In your opinion, what kind of actions would be necessary for a woman in contemporary art today?

VE: I cannot answer this last question just like that because, as I have already stated, everybody has his own and also strange identities. We all should or must express them, otherwise they remain locked in us.

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...

KDJ: You were a beautiful, sexy woman. But where men often look better when ageing, time is unfortunately less friendly to women. At a certain point you stopped doing performances in which you presented yourself naked. Was this on purpose? Why did you not continue to present yourself naked, honestly showing ‘this is me’, like Maria Lassnig does in her paintings? Is beauty important?

VE: There is big difference between a painting and a live performance. A performance that implies nakedness, was *The voice as performance, act and body* in the context of THE PAIN OF UTOPIA. SCHMERZ DER UTOPIE during the Venice Biennale of 2007. I show in this performance the pure architecture of speech, the glottis. That is just as nude for me, because it is part of the naked embodiment of language and speech.

KDJ: During her MoMA exhibition *The Artist is Present* in 2010, Marina Abramović had other people perform several of her old performances. You have said that you are not interested in ‘re-performing’. Why is that? Are your works ‘time-specific’?

VE: No, they are certainly not, on the contrary. They make the time in which they were created more visible, express the *zeitgeist* [spirit of the time] even more and once again. But I turn to new forms, to new expressions.

SG: In 2005, Marina Abramović performed your *Aktionshose: Genitalpanik* at the Guggenheim Museum in 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 Abramović? 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?

KDJ: “Remote...Remote...” is one of the works in which you hurt yourself. Having seen a lot of performances at Palazzo Bembo during the Venice International Performance Art Week, it appears to me that pain, blood, burning skin, cutting body parts and other ways to shockingly hurt oneself can recently often be seen in performance art. Do you think that this is because of the present time? Why did you mostly choose for an un-painful way of presenting yourself? Or was it already painful enough to see or present society for what it really is?

VE: I do not believe that it is our present time. We had in those days the debate about how far one can go, to the limits of the body or even beyond these limits.

SG: I saw a part of your film *Die Praxis der Liebe*, which contains a very straight or direct dialogue. Did you manage to maintain this directness in your life?



VE: In *Die Praxis der Liebe* is a scene in which the two, a man and a woman, talk with an image of the other, with a picture, a representation of the other or from oneself, too. I consider that a direct dialogue, as we speak mostly with an image, a figure.

VR: 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 the real speech? This touches again my discussion of identity and where it can be found, it is always different and of another nature.

KDJ: In a way, many of your performances are quite 'minimal' in the sense that they depart from your own body, with simple single actions: breathing or pressing your ear against a glass plate, making a self-portrait by 'just' showing your eyes, speaking while showing the inside of your throat. By doing so, you seem to throw away everything that is 'unnecessary', 'simply' saying 'this is me', 'I am here.' When looking at yourself today, are you satisfied with your own existence?

VE: What is contentment? Who, when, where, why, there and then, and so on...

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: In order to comment on society one has to use a form of language to express oneself. In your early performances you used the body and body language, later (the sound of) your voice became more present. Is there for you a difference between written or spoken language and the mimic gestures of your early performances?

VE: Spoken or written, gestures and facial expressions are involved when I am holding a pencil or moving my tongue.

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: Language as a way to communicate with other persons. 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.



# JAKOB GASTEIGER

By Karlyn De Jongh

April 2013

*The analytical painting of Jakob Gasteiger (1953, Salzburg, Austria) centralizes the process and act of painting itself. Gasteiger lives and works in Vienna, Austria.*

*KDJ: For this year's 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, you will make a room covered completely with carbon paper. Why did you choose to make this particular statement? What do you want to say with it? Why create a Black room?*

JG: For twenty years I have worked with paper as well, carbon and tissue paper. Before the introduction of computers and printers, carbon paper was used for copying. What you see are, strictly speaking, industrially produced monochrome charcoal drawings.

Tissue paper is being sold in many colors as wrapping paper for presents. I stick these papers on canvas or, for an exhibition, directly on the walls of a museum or gallery. They are environments, graphic rooms which temporarily can be walked in, and at the same time murals. The color pigments of the papers come off when I stick them on the walls and you get, although I don't use any paint here, the impression of a painting. The 'treated' walls are not black, however, depending on the brand the colors of the papers come off differently.

*KDJ: In an interview for Personal Structures: Works and Dialogues (2003) you stated that your basic concept is the question: Where is the boundary between graphics and painting and between painting and sculpture." Now 10 years later, can you give an answer to this question? Has your answer changed over the years? Have you been able to extend these boundaries? Which boundaries would you still like to abolish?*

JG: In my works with tissue and carbonpaper I question the boundary between graphics and painting, my acrylics do the same with the boundary between painting and sculpture. But I am not especially interested in giving answers. Thirty years ago, when I started with this concept, I attached more significance to it. Since then my artistic activity has become independent, now I can draw on my wealth of experience. I do not want to eliminate boundaries either, I was interested in recognizing these boundaries in my work, but I did not intend to abolish them.

*KDJ: When you are 'researching' the boundaries between painting and sculpture, the concept of space must be an important discussion point*

*for you – if only as a consideration of the 2- or 3-dimensionality of your work. What does space mean to you?*

JG: The beauty of Japanese art lies in the "Ma", the negative space or gap. It is considered to be a "filled emptiness". This has inspired me as much as Japanese or Chinese tissue papers or lacquer painting.

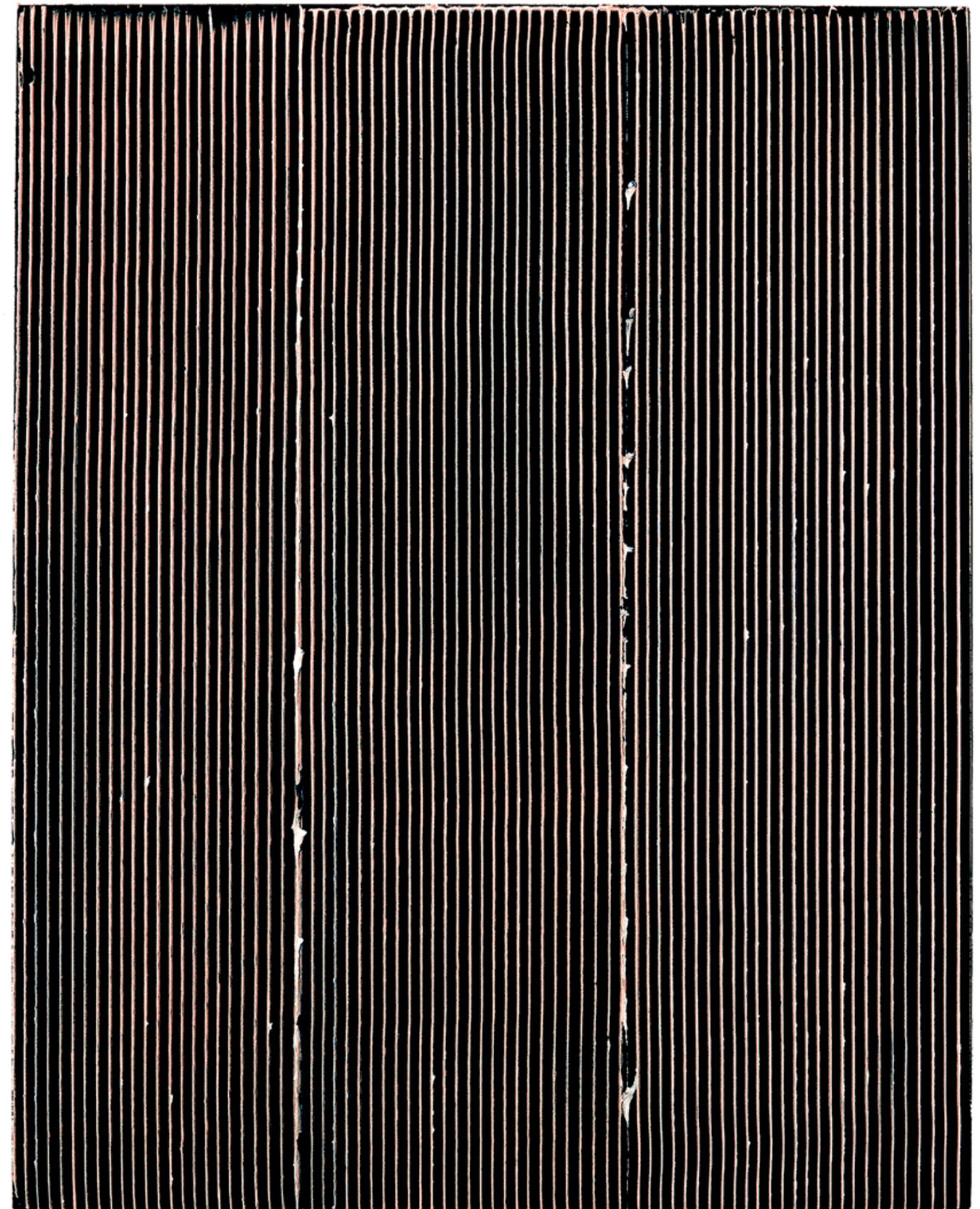
*KDJ: Artists such as Hermann Nitsch, Toshikatsu Endo and Rene Rietmeyer have a strong urge to say something, wanting to be heard to create awareness and accomplish some change in humans and the way they think about the world around them. This is one of the reasons why Rietmeyer started PERSONAL STRUCTURES, for example. Maybe I am mistaken, but I have the feeling that you make your work for different reasons. It seems you are more introvert and create your works as a research for yourself. Am I right? Is there something you want to change in human thinking?*

JG: As an artist, I hardly have a missionary urge with my work. However, I would like to change human thinking a bit. Worldwide there are about twenty wars and more than a hundred violent conflicts. We are experiencing racism, discrimination, intolerance and violence all over the world. With my work as an artist there is nothing I can do about these problems, but as a politically conscious person I can express my disgust at this state of affairs.

*KDJ: In 1978 Marcia Hafif wrote the essay "Beginning Again", in which she describes the situation of painting at that time as no longer being relevant. Her aim was – and seems to have been for the past 30 years – to go back to the question of what painting actually is. Although you seem concerned with the same subjects as she is, you are one generation younger than Hafif is, and were born in another part of the world. Was your situation different than hers? Why do you have this urge to question 'painting'?*

JG: All questions of art reappear cyclically. How often has the end of painting been proclaimed... But every generation faces its new tasks which have to be analyzed in accordance with the time and for which new solutions have to be found. Abstract or non-representational painting is probably the greatest achievement in the art of the 20th century, and it is still relevant to me and my work.

*KDJ: In texts about "Radical Painters" and related artists, often there is a reference being made to the German word "Farbe", which in English denotes to both paint and colour. Being Austrian, having German as your mother*





tongue, is there for you an existential difference between paint and colour? Or can we not see them separately? How does colour relate to material?

JG: Paint is just material to produce my paintings. In this context, color does not carry meaning or content. A red painting is for me nothing more than a painting that was created from a material whose color is red.

KDJ: When I visited your studio in Vienna, it had the impression of being a laboratory. It seems that developing new ideas, coincidences are sometimes

important to get further in our development. When you work in such a clean space, is there still room for coincidences? What role do precision and exactness play in your work? To what extent is the act of making a new work an analytical practice?

JG: I see myself as an architect who is planning and designing a building. It must comply with his ideas and it is not supposed to collapse. Nevertheless, there are many unexpected problems during the construction that require new decisions.

KDJ: For making his brushstrokes, Lee Ufan grinds stone to make pigment out of it. You also sometimes use 'unusual' pigments to create your works, such as copper, glass, aluminium or iron. Why do you do that?

JG: I already answered your question about paint and color stating that a red painting does not carry meaning or content. But a red image (or whatever color) nevertheless evokes in the viewer a mood, a feeling. I use different materials, grated to powder, that are atypical as pigments in painting. Copper, iron, glass, aluminum

are commonly used for sculpture. Copper has something old-fashioned and reminds one of copper kettles or copper roof sheeting, while aluminum, as the metal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, lets one think of airplanes or cars. One of my aluminum pictures is "faster" than one made from copper.

KDJ: Joseph Kosuth once remarked about Rene Rietmeyer's VENEZIA glass Boxes that they "suffer from aesthetics." Opinions are always different, but to me, with regard to your choice of colour, your work

does not seem to 'aim' for 'beauty'. What role does beauty or aesthetics play in your work?

JG: Especially with my graphics and my works with paper I try to keep to a dilettante approach. Whether the results are "beautiful", I do not know. I believe that the terms "right" or "appropriate" are more suitable. Viewers have probably their own opinion about it.

KDJ: The colours you choose for your work are – in my opinion – quite sombre. Having lived in Vienna for some time, for me these colors go very well with Vienna as a location. To what extent do you think your colour choices – or your work in general – is influenced by the location where you create your works?

JG: I am not influenced by the location of my studio. My choice of colors is also not dependent on my whims and moods. Since I started to use iron, glass, copper, etc. as pigments some years ago, the colors do get a completely different meaning. There was one exception once: I made Yves Klein-blue images because I wanted to break the taboo of his ultramarine. But it was just a quote, I did not refer to Klein's metaphysics.

KDJ: Instead of a brush, you use a comb to apply paint to the canvas. What attracts you in this 'tool'? Why not use your fingers directly, like Arnulf Rainer did?

JG: When I started to occupy myself with analytical painting, I also questioned the tools to apply the paint with and I have tried various other tools instead of the commonly used brush. I wanted "impersonal" tools, so fingers were no option. I used timber, boards, nails or a saw-blade to work with the paint. Later I cut comb spatulas from cardboard, I still do that today.

KDJ: In the PERSONAL STRUCTURES catalogue for the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Florian Steiningger writes about your work that it is about "painting as process, aloof from the emotional and personal gesture." What is meant by "painting as process"? Do you look at the process of this particular painting? Or is it also about the process of your oeuvre?

JG: I believe both. The ever-repeated gesture of applying and structuring the paint material to create my images is a repetitive work process and to some extent the growth of my oeuvre in small changes is also a process over many years.

KDJ: I have met you a few times in Vienna and Venice and you made a very "soft" impression on me. To me, you as a person seem quite receptive of emotions and it is hard for me to imagine that your works would miss this 'emotional' aspect. I think that always emotions have at least a small influence on the decisions we make, even when it is just from being hungry or wanting to have an orgasm. Is it your aim to exclude these emotions as much as possible – even though it can never really be accomplished?

JG: Instead of "soft" I would rather say "well-disposed". It applies to artists as well as to politicians or other people: those who shout, quickly lose their voice. I prefer tolerance and respect myself and other people as well.

Making art is like an expedition. It is planned and prepared, and the expedition leader should keep a clear head. On the way you have to react to something unexpected or you must choose a detour. This is,

more or less, my situation as an artist for over thirty years. But still it is not certain that the expedition reaches its destination. You could also reply with the famous quote that the journey is the reward.

KDJ: In 2009, I interviewed Marcia Hafif in her New York studio. She told me about her work in relation to time and space. The concepts of time and space were understood by her in a very 'concrete' way: the actual location of the work, and the time necessary to produce a work. It seems that time has a broader meaning in your work. An important element in your work seems to be 'change', the change of yourself as well as from your work. Change is perceived over time. How do you understand time? What does change mean to you?

JG: Of artists is expected that they always come up with something new. "New" receives much attention. I did not want to live up to these expectations, so I adopted an attitude of denial. I began to produce the same pictures again and again, to repeat myself. That worked out well, because soon people started to say that "Gasteiger makes always the same". But because I am basically non-dogmatic, I have expanded the range of possibilities to express myself in the course of time.

KDJ: In an interview for PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE (2009), Joseph Marioni states that "the element of time, is that my paintings involve a visual transition." In your paintings, is change only a visual transition? Or does it go beyond that and are they in fact different?

JG: Works of art are rooted in the time of their creation. Good art is resistant to zeitgeist and fashions and keeps its importance beyond the time of its origin.

KDJ: Being very interested in time and existence myself, for me it is quite difficult to imagine that a person like you or Marcia Hafif spend their life 'researching' materialistic elements of painting. After a certain number of years and having painted a certain number of paintings, I know that for me it would become boring. Why does this research matter to you? What keeps you from continuing? Or have you changed over the years and adapted your main concept accordingly?

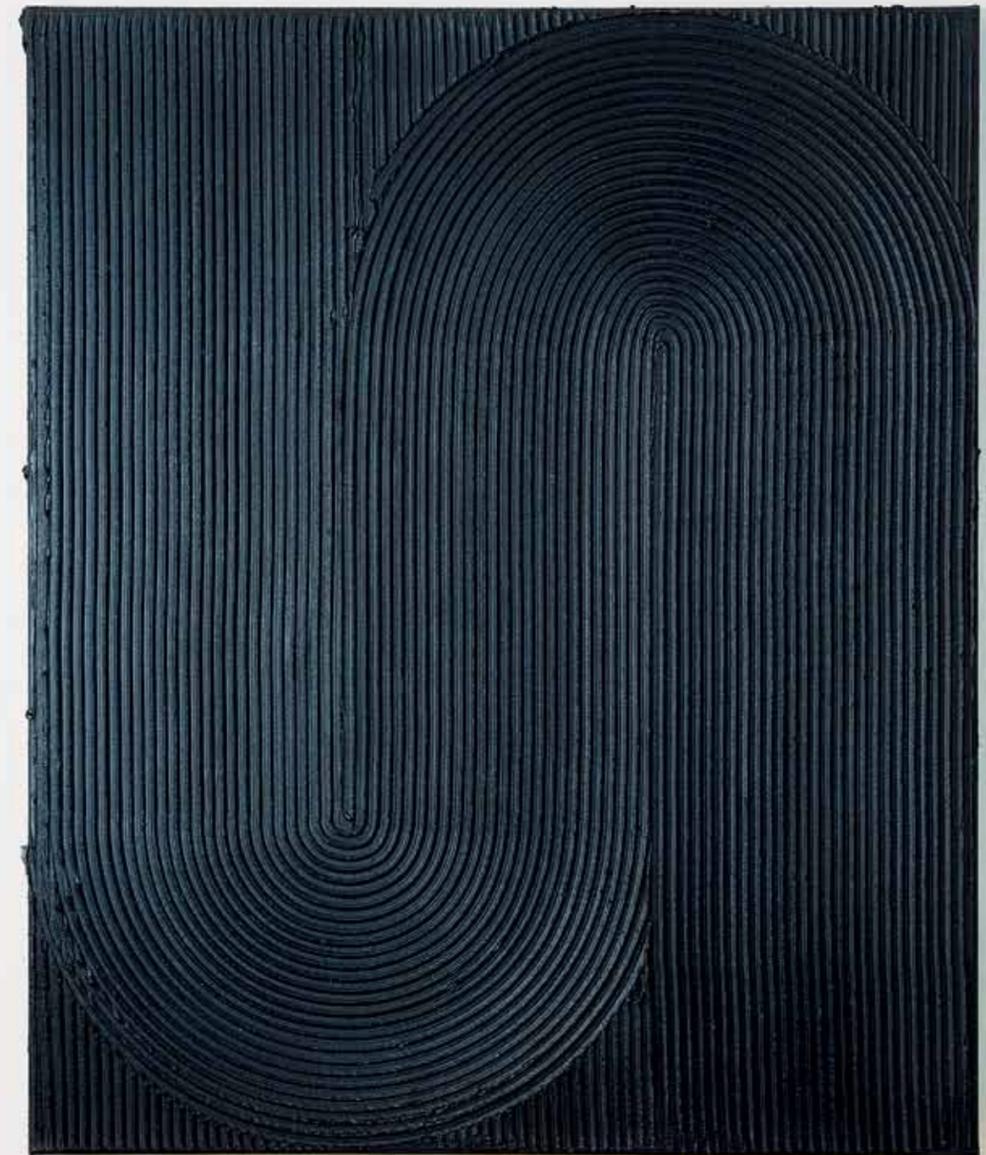
JG: Of course I have changed over the years, at least I hope so. In my art, however, changes are not an intentional decision. I let them happen. There are outstanding works – of myself and others –, they are a benchmark for my work. Working in the studio always means self-reflection and a commitment to high quality standards. Mistakes happen nevertheless, and over time there have been works that I would rather not have shown.

KDJ: In 2003, you have stated that "art is man's activity of creating something new, of researching, of discovering." Are you still this same opinion? Why do you think it is necessary to create something 'new'?

JG: It is not necessary, it happens.

KDJ: Seemingly having a similar concern in your art as Hafif and Marioni, what is so 'new' about your work? Is it not rather the fact that it is made by you, that makes the work particular?

JG: Yes.



# GOTTHARD GRAUBNER

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

2 May 2013

Gotthard Graubner (1930, Erlbach, Germany) creates what he calls *Farbraumkörper* [colour-space-bodies], 3-dimensional paintings that are about colour and painting. For many different reasons, it was not possible to get our interview with Graubner for this publication ready in time. We hope that Gotthard will be available again to answer questions for our next larger publication. Hereby we therefore publish some of the questions we have.

Sarah Gold: In the mid fifties you developed away from geometrical shapes and concentrated on 'colour'. In order to find different approaches in handling 'colour' you used at the beginning watercolours and later you worked on canvas. In the sixties you began to mount cushions in your works; later you would cover them with perlon fabric. In this way, you could enhance the spatial effect of the colour surface. These *Kissenbilder* ('pillow paintings') and the term *Farbleib* ('colour body/body of colour') which you had used to describe your works until that point, you replaced in 1970. Since then you use the term *Farbraumkörper*, 'Colour Space Body'/'bodies of coloured space'. You have devoted your life to visualizing colour in space; colour occupying space. Can you recall the moment you decided to research 'colour and space'? Or has it been a gradual development?

SG: In the sixties you developed your idea about *Nebelräume*, 'fog spaces'. Could the fog in these projects replace 'colour'?

SG: Your work *Black Skin* from 1969 has been highlighted by the BBC as one of '100 Great Paintings'. When you painted this work you were in your late thirties. Since then you have painted another 44 years. How do you relate today to your works which you made in the 'beginning' years? In which way do you think your work has developed?

Karlyn De Jongh: It seems that over the years your colours have become lighter and brighter. How does this reflect your attitude towards life? Did you become milder with age? Have you become more brave?

KDJ: Colour is one formal element, but there are others too: texture, size, shape... How do the other formal elements stand in relation to your colours? Are they equal to colour? Or are they rather a means to give colour a certain presence?

KDJ: You have often made the connection between colour and the act of painting, saying "colour = concentration into organism = painting". How is the encounter with colour for you? When does the colour become a living entity? How can colour create a space?

KDJ: The size of your works is often much bigger than you are. How do you yourself, your own body, relate to your works?

KDJ: Apart from the volume of your work, where do you think your 'space-bodies' differ from the more usual painted "flat bodies"?

KDJ: With your *Farbraumkörper*, it seems you aim to create a liveliness in the work. Your colours are not 'monochrome' but a vivid battle between various colours. It seems you want your works to be 'living bodies'. What makes your works come alive? Is it the viewer? The space? The light? Or can they survive regardless any external elements?

KDJ: In 2010, we visited your exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein. I can still remember the beautiful, warm colours of your works in the main space. Of course, this is a personal perception, but I can imagine someone like Joseph Kosuth could say your works "suffer from aesthetics"—as he once said about Rene Rietmeyer's *VENEZIA Boxes*. What would you reply to Kosuth?

KDJ: When you visited our exhibition *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* at the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011, we showed you the work of Judy Millar, who could be seen as a next generation of artists who discuss 'painting in space'. With her 20 meter long painting, curled up in a relatively small space, she seems to go a step further than you. How do you see the future of painting? Will it become more-and-more 'spatial'?

SG: For you, placing your work is elementary: "the painting has to carry the wall, and not the wall the painting." In our *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* exhibition as part of the Venice Biennale 2013 we will be presenting one work from you, which we got on loan by the Lenz Schönberg collection. The work is beige/off-white/blueish/greenish and is 204x204x18 cm. The height of the wall is 4.80 meter and the length 6.20 meter. What would be the best way to hang this work?



# HEINZ MACK

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

March - April 2013

*Heinz Mack (1931, Lollar, Germany) founded the artist group ZERO together with Otto Piene in 1957. Light and Space stand at the center of his work that encompasses a huge range of artistic media. He lives and works in Mönchengladbach, Germany, and in Ibiza, Spain.*

*Sarah Gold: I love your statement: "Light is decisive for my art. As far as light is concerned, I want to go to the limits of the possible. I am fascinated by the spectrum of light, as it relates to space and time. Light has its own energy and quality. Light in a space articulates a message. It can even just be a candle in a space. But time also finds itself reflected as a rhythmic element in my works." Do you know when you became aware that you are fascinated by light and that you want to dedicate your life to it? Why is it important to you to 'convey light'?*

Heinz Mack: Light has made the biggest impression on me, when I opened my eyes for the very first time; that was 82 years ago!

In the war another light fascinated me. It was the man-made light, when one night the city of Krefeld was devastated by heavy bombardment.

When light dances on the moving surface of the sea and an infinitely large light relief comes into being, then the old gods Poseidon and Apollo return once more. I myself am a medium for light.

*SG: You have stated "I don't have any theories; I have ideas, which I take with me into the studio." What are your ideas? And have you been able to express them to your satisfaction?*

HM: My ideas fall from the sky like stones and jeopardize my life—I create birds out of them and let them fly again; for this relieving work I need my power. It gives me great satisfaction when coincidence guides my hand and something is being created that I would never have expected.

*Karlyn De Jongh: Duchamp said that the viewer finishes the artwork. In your case, it seems more that 'light' finishes your work. What is for you the relation between the sculpture as a material object and the changing light that reflects on it?*

HM: Light enters into the marble, when the night leaves the stone and the stone uncovers itself in the light; that is the transformation from materiality into the immaterial appearance.

*KDJ: When reading about and seeing the photos of some of your projects, for example the works in the desert where we see you walking in silvery shining suits, I can hardly believe you are German. Someone like you coming forth out of—in my opinion—such a 'strict' culture. On the other hand, I can imagine you wanted to escape from that culture and wanted something else, looking for light in your life. How did your culture influence you and your works?*

HM: Sometimes I do not even understand myself that I am German, no matter how much I affirm it. Nowadays countless people are travelling all over the world, something that I occasionally call a kind of escapism. My expeditions in the desert and in the Arctic were amongst others things also a flight from the cultural deserts of our big cities.

*KDJ: You have stated that "Light never goes around the corner, but always shines straight ahead." It is direct. In human history, light has often been used as a metaphor for knowledge, for truth. I think you have always asked yourself questions about our human existence: seeing how it was and trying to change it. When you look back at your own life, how do you see yourself? Have you been able to make a difference?*

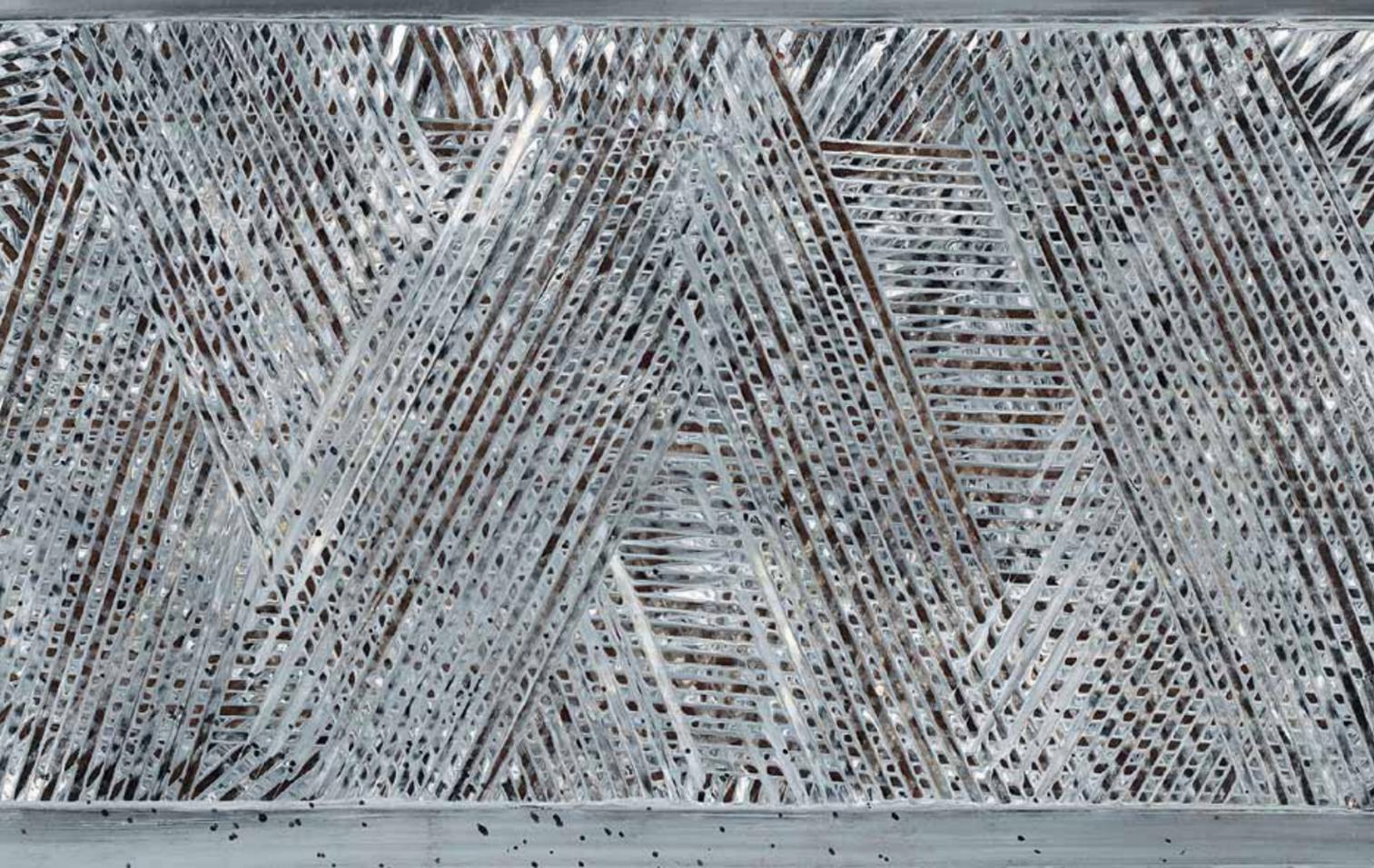
HM: The 'condition humaine' [human condition] is for me a metaphor for my life, for my creative work. People say that I am a radical humanist. In my art, I recognize who I was, who I am and who I may become, when I will no longer be.

*KDJ: PERSONAL STRUCTURES is a platform for artists who are concerned with Time, Space and/or Existence. Through books, symposia and exhibitions, documenting different opinions, it is our aim to heighten people's awareness about their own existence within time and space. In a way it is a utopian project, an attempt probably similar to what you and Otto Piene attempted in the fifties and sixties. Do you think these utopian ideas have a chance to ever be realized? From hindsight, is it possible to change life through art?*

HM: Rilke's poem about the torso contains the sentence: "Du musst Dein Leben ändern"[You must change your life].

Nobody knows the parameter of the utopias better than the unknown spheres, that we dream to enter without crossing the dialectic borders between being and not being. Our bold expectations, our day dreams, our ideas and our actions, they will unravel and vanish and will eventually





be given away, when we will still be prepared to entrust our work up to the confused assets of the world. The cultural institutions, thought to protect our interests, still show the continuance of cemeteries. Our attempts fool us and only sponsor their conservation.

Here follows one of my favorite quotes of Seneca: "Only he who is awake, can report his dreams."

*KDJ: In our project PERSONAL STRUCTURES we work with sincere artists, which to us means that the artist and what he creates are 'the same'. You seem to have sometimes taken this connection between yourself and your work a step further. I am referring to the times, when you often seem to have dressed in silvery reflective materials, giving yourself a similar material surface as your work. What was the reason you did this? How do you see the relation between yourself and your work? Is your work more than an expression of you? To what extent are you yourself a part of it?*

HM: My clothes made out of shining aluminum were not a costume, but complied with my wish not to enter the space of the desert and the Arctic in a civilian dress worn in cities. Besides that I noticed that it is ideally suited not only to reflect the light, but also the great heat. The meaning of my life: that is my work, my art; that is the reason why I live.

*KDJ: In the 1960s you placed some of your Light-stelae in the Tunisian desert. On the photos they look like beautiful fata morganas. The influence of air layers of different temperatures changes the 'shape' of the object as you created it. In a way, it shows that light does not always connect with 'truth', but also to illusions. What role does optical illusion play in your work?*

HM: Optical illusions are a sort of pointless luxury, that exists in temporarily forgetting reality in favor of an illusory reality.

*SG: Some people have mentioned that your projects could be seen as "Land Art". Would you agree to this idea and have you ever been drawn to going into this direction? How do you feel about the general human necessity to categorize and label?*

HM: Obviously, my Sahara-work has been shown in the LAND ART exhibition in Los Angeles and later in Munich, to document its early importance for this art form. My work is of a plural nature and so diverse, that its classification within the art-historical drawers has not been accomplished yet.

*KDJ: You did several projects where your Light-stelae are the only 'things' on the horizon. A vast landscape with a clear sky, only interrupted by the vertical line of your 'totem poles', reflecting light, land and sky. Your work stands free, alone and vulnerable, but strong at the same time. It reminds me of an explanation of Heidegger's Dasein: 'being' in the form of resistance. Why did you choose these totem-shaped sculptures?*

HM: Though I have always avoided the figurative sculpture, the stelae remain a last formulation of man, standing upright—with dignity—in the space. To me, the grave stele of the Greeks seems to be the vertical counterpart of the horizontal grave. The resting, no longer visible, the dead pure and simple, is lying under the surface of the earth, is adapting to the earth curvature. The visible, the admonishing, which is not to be consigned to oblivion, is standing upright, mediating between earth and sky.

But far earlier, man already erected signs, vertical manifestations of himself, as fixed points in the endless expansion of space, by setting up slim stone squares, constructing towers, crowning mountains. In this ancient, archetypal sense, my stelae also are standing for the upright standing, hieratic man, they still hand down the figure in the space, the *stabilitas loci*, the moral self-evidence of the Renaissance and of the Enlightenment.

The stelae of the Greeks, the god sculptures of the Egyptians and the Kings of Chartres present themselves mainly frontally, as all figures whose abstraction is an expression of mental manifestation. Also my stelae show this confrontation between spectator and work.

It does correspond to the body of man, if he particularly expresses the upright standing. The front view permits the direct meeting between work and spectator: and their dialogue permits the spell of instantaneous fascination, but also permits the meditative seeing which is known to the Asiatic.<sup>1</sup>

*KDJ: Placing your works on location, in the desert or in the Arctic, requires travelling and encounters with different cultures. Did your understanding of light and life change through these encounters?*

HM: With a very elementary vitality, people who stay for some time in the desert or in the Arctic, must be able to give up everything that makes no sense in the desert.

*KDJ: You have often worked with shining surfaces as if you want the light to reflect in it. The Japanese artist Tatsuo Miyajima frequently uses*

*mirrored surfaces in his work to articulate his concept "Art in You": to hold a mirror up to the viewer, so that he or she can reflect on his life. The mirror has often been taken as a metaphor for 'reflection'. Looking in the mirror today, what do you think about your achievements? Is there anything you could have done better in your life?*

HM: A speculative question! Even doubts, my constant companions, evoke the question what one could have done better. I love the calculations, of which the sums don't come out and these I will not regret.

*SG: What would you like to 'achieve' with your work?*

HM: To avoid that my life was in vain.

*KDJ: Light is important to make something feel alive. To not loose the light in your life, what do you need? What are for you the most important 'things' in your life?*

HM: Also a very curious question and provocative! My answer for the public? My ability to overcome the impossible.

"Important things in my life"? —that are countless things, that constantly change their meaning.

*KDJ: Around the time you founded the ZERO movement with Otto Piene, your works were often metal constructions, reflecting light. Now, 55 years later, your works burst with colour. What happened?*

HM: In addition to almost monochrome pictures there is a sensual polychromy in my new paintings. Colour constellations enter into

dynamic relationships and effect harmonic structures, dematerialized by the aura of the coloured light. My colours are luminous colours.<sup>2</sup>

*KDJ: In 2010, Sarah and I took part in the 130<sup>th</sup> Aktion of Hermann Nitsch in Naples. When after having been blindfolded for approximately seven hours the bandages around my head were removed, I had a very strong visual impression: I could only see; my other senses were 'numb'. In the desert the light is very strong and I can imagine its strength influences your physical condition. How do you experience light? Is it for you mainly a visual experience? Or are your other senses involved, too?*

HM: All senses react equally intense on light, on the extreme heat, on the borderless space and the timeless time, on the absence of all conceivable odors, on the extreme drought, the extreme silence, sometimes stirred up by the music of the wind.

*KDJ: Light seems to go together with time: how the light is, its strength, colour and intensity, depends on the time of day and the time of year. Two years ago, Sarah and I went to Tunisia, where we spent one night in the Sahara. It was impressive for me to see the importance of light there: navigation by the sun during the day and by the stars in the night. Light determined the day: you get up with the sun, rest when the sun is the strongest etc. Do you consider these changes of light in your work?*

HM: In particular my *Light-reliefs* change their appearance, when the light becomes weaker or brighter, when the angle of the incoming light and the angle of the reflected light correspond with each other, when the position of the viewer changes.

*KDJ: During our Art Project TIME PASSING we stayed almost twelve hours with Roman Opalka, documenting his life while the minutes were ticking away. Opalka told us that he 'earned' his white by painting and seemed to be quite proud that also his Autoportraits were getting lighter and lighter. What is for you the relation between light and your existence?*

HM: They are like mirrors, like instruments for the light. Light does not have any weight! How wonderful.

*KDJ: It seems that you have always been open for 'crazy' projects. If there would be no physical or financial limitations, is there a project that you have always dreamt of realizing?*

HM: It is a general idea that utopian designs keep themselves radically distanced from the given reality; that the dimensions of the utopia always are a dimension of distancing as well and that this in turn is a romantic remoteness, respectively implies a worldview.

But in the end all utopias are orientated towards a paradise. Even when this is only a projection, only a dream, it is at least already anticipated as a last possibility.

Maybe the best dreams are those that question their realization. As long as those dreams do not have a place, nor a time, and also no borders, they are possibly closer to paradise than all attempts to materialize and realize the immaterial, untouchable, Indescribable, inexplicable, unimaginable, unattainable.

Because none of my actions later met these demands, it remained a utopian idea: the projection of a large light-spectrum on an ice-surface through a large prism, possibly close to the South Pole.

For some time, a totally different idea seemed to be realizable in the Arctic, but it was thwarted by objections of the Danish Ministry of Defense. I had proposed to create a slit of about 300 meter long on a large piece of floating ice, using a snow blower, dead straight, and not all that deep. From a helicopter this slit was to be filled with paraffin and petrol, which would eclectically be ignited at dusk.<sup>3</sup>

*SG: As an artist you are very diverse in your use of material and techniques. Apart from phosphor pictures and fire sculptures, light pillars, light rotors, light reliefs and light cubes you also made monumental stone-sculptures. Plexiglas, aluminum and wood, even 'traditional' oil paint are also mediums you use. What are the criteria for choosing specific materials and what do they mean to you?*

HM: Maybe they correspond to ideas, maybe to material. Often the material evokes my ideas—one has to understand the language of the material to be able to speak with it.

*KDJ: Sometimes your works seem quite 'playful' to me: you have used a wide variety of media and also the shapes you use (especially of your sculptures) seem -to me- unusual. Maybe also because you are concerned with light, your works have a certain weightlessness. At the same time, you deal with serious topics. Does this playfulness reflect your idea about life?*

HM: This "playfulness" is about the aesthetics of Friedrich Schiller, according to him the playing man is the human man. It is in the mere play that guilt and atonement are solved without tragedy.

*KDJ: Your works are very colorful, using many different colors, but at the same time they seem structured in a grid. The grid seems to let light come through. What is it that you do? Do you try to catch the light? Is it still more about reflection? Has the meaning of light changed for you over the years?*

HM: The colors mean only themselves. The relations between the colors are autonomous.

Painting in which the simple, elementary forms enable the color to breathe, to swing, to shine, to flow, to lighten, to rest.

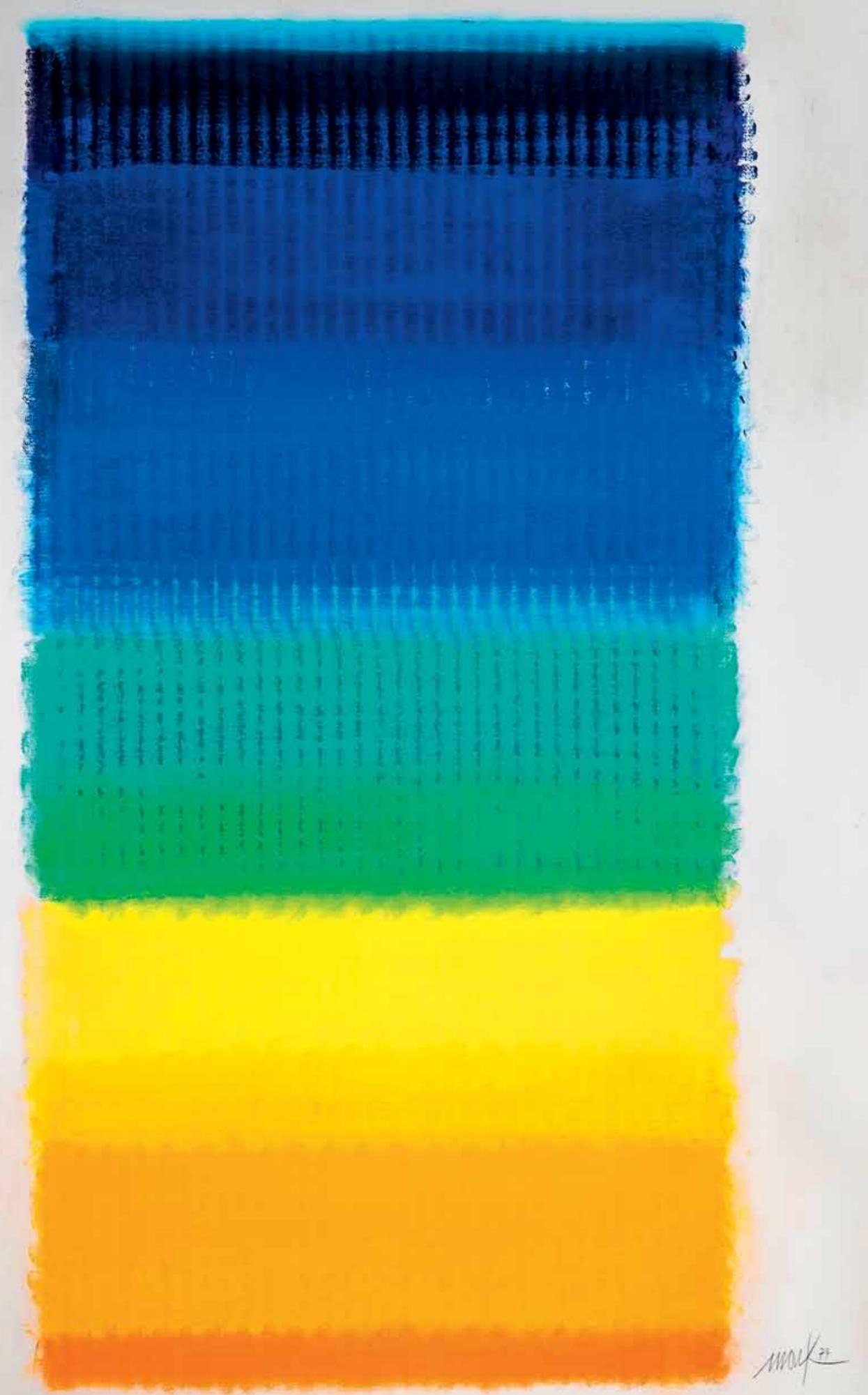
Painting in which the contrasts of the colors are vital, but in which a multiple chromatic refraction of the colors causes a great richness of nuances as well.

Painting with the contrast of opaque and transparent colors which are interdependent at the same time, in the sense of brightness and shade, thickness and transparency.

Painting in which the colors are concrete and a colored, present matter, but at the same time apparently non-material, like energy-fields, like levels of vibration in an irrational pictorial space.

I am interested in painting in which imaginations become concrete, in which—perhaps according to an internal code—fundamental human experiences sublimate and intensify.

My painting is a culture of the surface, on condition that surface without depth is inconceivable. Surfaces are in principle not more visible than 'underfaces', and these stay invisible unless they become surfaces. Everything we see in art is surface. On the surface you decide what is art, what is not.<sup>4</sup>



SG: Could you tell me about your paintings? How did the Dynamic Structures of 1957-1966 develop and later the so-called Chromatic Constellations (from 1991 onward)?

HM: That again are very complex questions, I have thought and written about them many times.

During the time of ZERO I tried to replace the composition with the structure (the grid) and to develop it fundamentally in order to get clear, vibrating energy-fields similar to those which emerge in scanning electron microscopes. In my research, the place of white and black and their continuous serialdialogue was later taken by the visible spectrum. This was close to Goethe who reconciles observing thoughts and thoughtful observation. The concept of beauty as a metaphor of order, structure and vital harmony can be perceived by the senses only in painting.

SG: Now you have studios in Germany as well as on Ibiza. What were the criteria for choosing these locations? How is the light on the island?

HM: Ibiza has the best light of the world. My studio has light from the north, what I do there with the color must pass the examination outside the studio in the brightest daylight. That are also phenomena of energy.

KDJ: If light is so important for each work you make, how do you create your objects?

HM: The material lives due to his surface. Picasso once said that only the surfaces decide whether something is a sculpture! And by that he also meant the light and the tactile aspect of our 'grasping'. In a painting you can 'dematerialize' the material of the pigments so that the color radiates as if light comes from it. I don't have to explain here how that is being achieved, also the great painters didn't do it.

KDJ: The experience of your Light-steles in the desert, must have been very different from seeing them placed in the German countryside. What influence does location have on the experience of your work?

HM: The particular space and the various positions within that space influence our perception as they affect the visibility of the objects in the space. What is more, every space has its own light, its own dimension and its own time.

KDJ: Your Raumspiegel [Space-mirror], like the one you made for Oman, mirrors the location, changing—maybe 'expanding'—space. What does space mean to you? What is for you the relation between light and space?

HM: Light and space are interdependent. That is very complex when a physicist like Stephen Hawking describes it quoting Einstein who, when old, declared like Galilei: "I'll ask the question until the end of my days, what is the light?"

SG: In our PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition in Bregenz, Austria, we exhibited your Japanische Trias [Japanese trias] (1970), three of your Rotoren [Rotors]. The first you made in 1959. Could you tell us more about the thoughts and development of these objects?

HM: Rotors are dynamic, kinetic objects. I developed them to overcome the static state of the works of art. The influence of Duchamp, who in my opinion is greatly overestimated, has reached me through his colored, visual illusory records. My rotors are suns or clocks. They don't indicate

time and their continuous movement shows an own immanent ritual, the way we turn in a dance or the wind forming a spiral. And there are still one hundred more characteristics, of course.

SG: From 1950 you studied Fine Art at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and from 1953 Philosophy in Cologne. What brought you to study philosophy and how did you bring 'philosophy' into your art?

HM: The aspects of worry, of fear, of the confrontation with nothingness, with the "Being-towards-death" and the existential basic experiences involved had become to me, a child of the war, sufficiently known in practice. To understand them philosophically I turned to *The Rebel* of Camus, but also to Sartre and Kafka.

At the university I focused, in addition to the required reading e.g. on Aristotle, on the ontology of Nicolai Hartmann. He started with Husserl's phenomenology and developed a metaphysics of being in which the timeless being of the classical ontology is an abstraction. It does not represent the absolutely essential, universal, perfect being any more, whose reflection are the objects, things. I believe that Nicolai Hartmann developed a kind of theory of relativity of metaphysics in which the absolute is no longer thought of.

The light-mysticism of Plotinus is for me naturally of great interest. Dionysius the Areopagite had similar views, he gives me food for thought. And the speeches of Buddha, which already impressed me as a schoolboy, are in the first place sermons, but imbued with deep philosophical intellect and of great wisdom. However, extremely important to me is also the sincerity with which Seneca reveals his practical worldly knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

SG: From 1953-1998 you have worked on the series Silberlicht [Silverlight] which is a chemically produced documentation of light on photographic paper. Could you tell us more about this series? What have these years of research shown you?

HM: The element silver belongs to the chemistry of a photo. Moreover, my black and white photographs and photograms reveal the original artistic fascination with the phenomenon of light. I have used the black and white medium of the photo-technical reaction (until the beginning of color photography actually not more than a light- and shadow- document which artists like Maholy-Nagy and Man Ray had already taken as a theme) as an artistic instrument for the development of sculpture. Moments from reality and an enhanced perception of objects found in the everyday environment were influential inspirations for the expansion of artistic media. And the—technically by this time already obsolete—black and white recording of my own work became the most accurate representation of my artistic intention as well.<sup>5</sup>

1 Mack. *Skulpturen 1953 - 1986 Werkverzeichnis*, Dieter Honisch (Hg.), Econ Verlag, Vienna 1986, p 51.

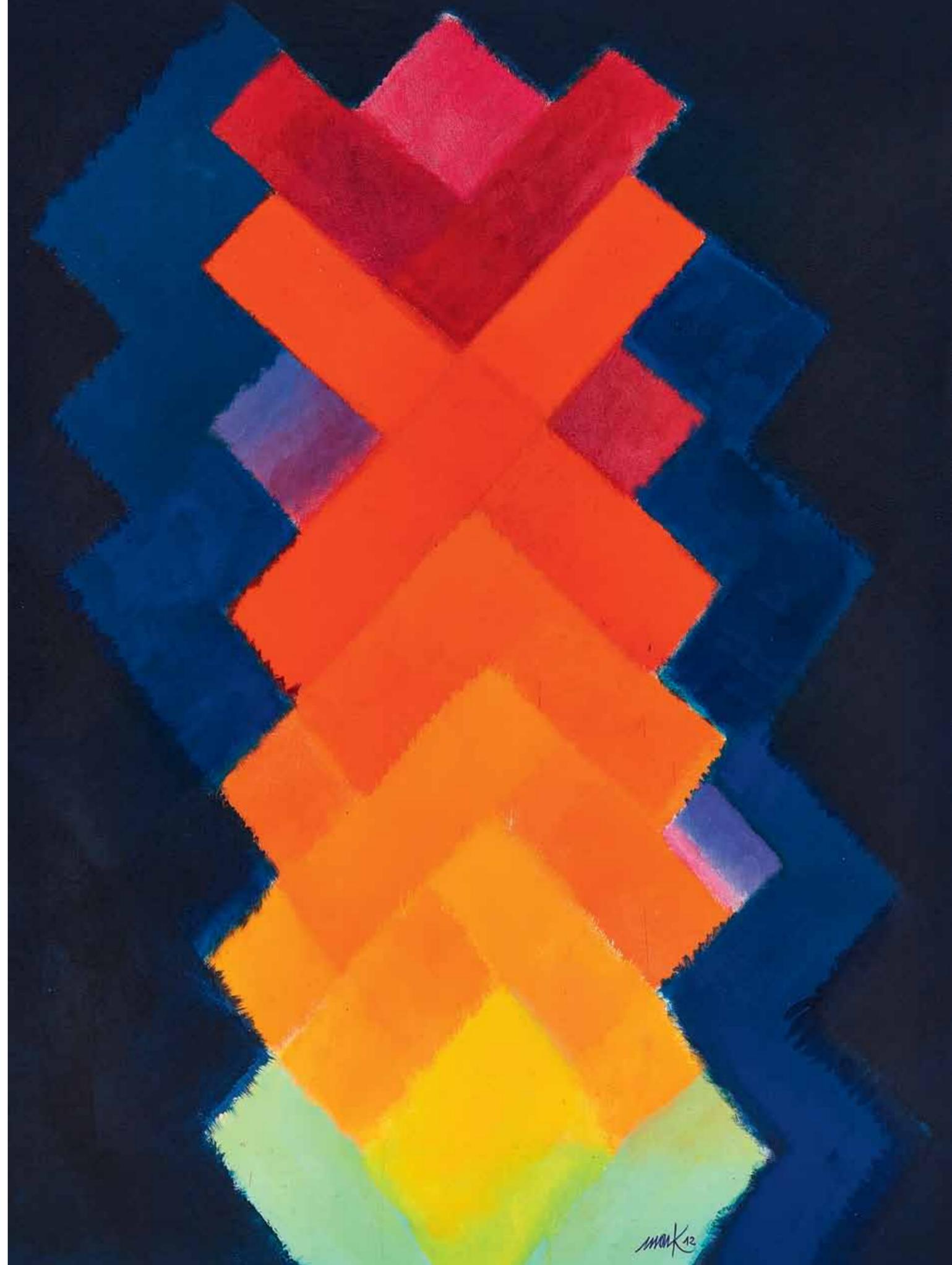
2 MACK. *Malerei / Painting 1991-2011*, Marion Agthe, Ute Mack (Hg.), B. Kühlen Verlag, Mönchengladbach 2011, p 221.

3 See Mack. *Utopie und Wirklichkeit*, Wieland Schmied (Hg.), DuMont, Cologne 1998, p 58-64.

4 See Mack. *Malerei 1991-2001*, B. Kühlen Verlag, Mönchengladbach 2001, p 14f.

5 See Heinz Mack. *Silberlicht*, Städtisches Museum Abteiberg (Hg.), B. Kühlen Verlag, Mönchengladbach 2006.

6 See KUNSTPORTRÄT Heinz Mack. *Das Paradies auf Erden schon zu Lebzeiten betreten. Ein Gespräch mit dem Maler und Bildhauer Heinz Mack*, ars momentum Kunstverlag, Witten 2005, p 20-22.



# 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, *Morgenrote -Gedanken iJber 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 Vlg., Stuttgart 1996, p. 283

# YOKO ONO

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

February - March 2013

*Driven by a wish to do good to society, Yoko Ono (1933, Tokyo, Japan) creates works - ideas, scores, performances, sculptures, installations, music - that a.o. address the effect of ideas on the actions of human beings, allowing the viewer to see things in a new light.*

*Sarah Gold: In our 55<sup>th</sup> Biennale di Venezia exhibition you show your work ARISING. What does the title mean to you?*

Yoko Ono: We, women, are now rising together. ARISING expresses the rising of our spirits.

*SG: The work ARISING consists out of 'burnt women' from different cultures from all over the world. Their 'remains' will be put on display and visitors may take small fragments in boxes provided. Could you explain why you 'burn' the women and then why their 'remains' may be taken by 'strangers'?*

YO: It is a symbolic act of what women are going through in our world on this planet. We are being burnt, drowned, chained and raped and humiliated.

*SG: ARISING does not only consist of the 'remains' of the 'burnt' women. There will also be the possibility for women (and only for women) to put their photographs on the walls of the exhibition and to add a small text about their own suffering as a woman. What would you like to achieve with this statement? Why are only women 'allowed' to participate?*

YO: So that it will sink into our consciousness what we are going through. It will give us a moment for meditation without the interference of minds of men.

*SG: As the exhibition progresses the pile of 'remains' will become smaller, but the photographs and writings on the wall will increase. What is the relationship between the pile getting less and the wall with photo's and text getting more?*

YO: The reality will be buried and forgotten, but what all women have gone through will be passed on and told forever.

*SG: Is there any relation between ARISING and your 1996 record RISING?*

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.

*Karlyn De Jongh: Sarah and I met you in Frankfurt, Germany, for the opening of your half-a-wind show at Schirn Kunsthalle. When you entered the space before your performance Sky Piece to Jesus Christ, a woman from the audience shouted, "Yoko, I love you!". I was pleasantly surprised to see your reaction: you stood up and shouted back, "I love you too!". When you say "I love you" to a complete stranger, what does love mean to you?*

YO: Our planet is almost too small for all of us to be on. We are family. I feel incredible love for all people who are on the planet now with me.

*KDJ: After the performance in Frankfurt, you explained that you had broken a vase that day. Everybody could take a piece of that broken vase and ten years later (in 2023) we would all meet again and glue the pieces back together. The action reminded me of the classic idea of the 'symbol': the object stands for something else, it points away from itself to something else. In your case, the symbol seems to be a reminder of a moment in time, 13 February 2013 in Frankfurt, but also points towards the future (2023). What is the awareness that you want to create by this? Is it for you about being 'here and now'? Or is it for you more about 'being together', creating a special bond between 300 strangers who happened to be in the same room in Frankfurt at that particular moment?*

YO: All good artworks, supposedly, have layers of meanings though the expressed body could be minimal. You pointed out two: It is about being here and now, and about being together. Also, letting us know that a promise is made. How we deal with that promise will be different with each one of us, and that is incredibly interesting as well.

*SG: What does the title half-a-wind show mean?*

YO: We live in the world in which we only know half of everything. One day everything will be transparent to us, but not yet.

*SG: After the opening of your retrospective at the Schirn Kunsthalle you went on to Berlin where you celebrated your birthday at the Paris Bar and you gave a concert. Being a creature of both art and music, have the two always harmonically coincided with each other?*

YO: Yes, of course. Music is visual, and visual art is music.





KDJ: In several of your works the day seems important, f.e. Counting Piece I and II (1962) or Morning Piece (1964) in which you are selling future and past mornings. What does the day mean to you?

YO: Life.

KDJ: Another Japanese artist, On Kawara, started his Today Series in 1966. Was this focus on 'the day' or on 'time in art' a coincidence?

YO: On was a friend. I left New York on September 1st, 1966. I don't think there is such a thing as coincidence. Coincidence is a name we give to a phenomenon we don't understand.

SG: YES (1966) is not only a title of a work but also a way to live a happy and interesting life. The Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer (and initiator of the

project PERSONAL STRUCTURES) has taught me to say YES to all that comes across life. Can you tell me how YES has influenced your life?

YO: To understand that everything that comes to me are blessings.

SG: To understand and/or to make your work 'complete', the interaction with the spectator is often essential. What is the reason for this needed interaction?

YO: Monologue is dancing by yourself. That's not bad either. But when you start a dialogue, your heart leaps a little, and you go on dancing with a smile!

KDJ: Your 'scores' are written texts that possibly involve an action. Is this action required or does the work also exist without it being acted upon?



YO: You could enact the score conceptually or by acting out. It's your call.

KDJ: At the Venice International Performance Art Week in our Palazzo Bembo in 2012, you showed BAG PIECE, a work that was first performed in 1964. When we were at Schirn, Sarah and I saw photos of the 1964 performance. The work exists, but it seems different every time, each time a different location, other people in the bags or it is presented through photos. How do you understand the existence of your artworks through time?

YO: BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH IS ALWAYS PERFORMED DIFFERENTLY.

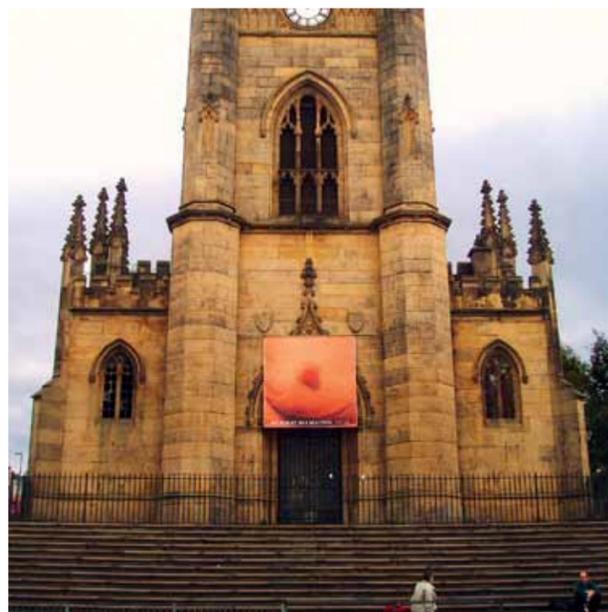
SG: Karlyn and I saw Sky piece to Jesus Christ being re-performed in Frankfurt (2013). Has the work changed its meaning for you over the years?

YO: It was so nice to be reminded of this piece. The Frankfurt performance was beautiful. Think of it as any music score. It is different each time, and it is always interesting to me.

KDJ: Thinking of Lawrence Weiner and his idea that 'language is material' made me wonder about the materiality of your work. Especially with your scores, but also with your performances, what your work 'is', often seems untouchable and seems to have more to do with a moment in time. What does material mean to you?

YO: Something that enables the score to communicate to the performer.

KDJ: During the opening of your half-a-wind show at Schirn, I was talking to someone and suddenly noticed a black mark on the wall. When I came closer, I noticed it was your handwriting: "This room is



bright blue," you had written. The sentence made me realize where I was at that moment. It was like a poke, to imagine the world could be different, but it is like this. Is this right? Or does the imagined world really exist? Are there multiple worlds?

YO: There is only one world—a beautiful world of eternal wellbeing. We just don't notice it sometimes.

KDJ: During your life, you seem to have always done your maximum best to promote peace and even since a few years, you hand out your own 'Peace Prize'. Do you feel you have been able to make a difference or is peace a utopia? In your opinion, what would the ideal world be like?

YO: Numerologically, it has been calculated that by 2050, all of us will be living in heaven on earth. Let's sustain ourselves and live that day.

SG: PERSONAL STRUCTURES is an open platform for artists who work with the subjects of Time, Space and Existence. To me, your work is filled with these subjects. Which of the 3 subjects (if any) are more important to you—and why?

YO: They are all important.

SG: What comes into your mind by the following words: Existence (and co-existence), Space, and Time?

YO: EXISTENCE IS WHAT WE THINK WE ARE. SPACE IS THE FREEDOM WE HAVE, AND TIME IS MERELY A MAN MADE CONCEPT, WE THREATEN OURSELVES WITH AND at the same time BE BORED WITH.

KDJ: The Japanese artist Tatsuo Miyajima has three main concepts for his art: (1) keep changing, (2) continue forever and (3) connect with everything. The concepts are there to explain what he calls "The Life" (containing life and death). It seems Miyajima understands each human's life to end when the person dies, but "The Life" (life in general) continues to exist. How is that for you? Do you live forever? How do you understand 'life'?

YO: Life is what makes us have this dialogue. Isn't it nice? Life is. And it is a miracle we enjoy.

KDJ: It seems for you 'the other'—instead of 'ego' or 'me'—has been the main focus of your art (and life). How is your relation to 'the other'? And how do you see yourself?

YO: I am the other in terms of you. Be aware of the other. It gives you wisdom and power for knowing...

KDJ: The body seems to be an important element for your work. At the same time, you seem to focus on 'things' that are in the mind: dream, imagination. What does 'body' mean to you?

YO: It is what we are.

KDJ: When I visited Japan in 2008 for our PERSONAL STRUCTURES symposium about Existence, I learned that what is 'logic' for me is not 'logic' in Japan. I can imagine that being a Japanese woman living in New York in the 60s, it was not always easy. What pulled you through?

YO: To me, there is no such thing as Japanese thinking or Western thinking. It is all individual thinkings. And I enjoy communicating with all of them.

SG: Seeing you perform—drawing on 7 canvases in lightning speed—I was amazed by your cheer dynamic. You just turned 80 years now. How do you feel about yourself?

YO: I REALIZED THAT A DAY IS AS SAME AS YESTERDAY—WHEN I WAS 79.

KDJ: In an interview for PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE in 2009, Arnulf Rainer told me that "Life, as it appears, is a pale reflection of art, of artistic creation." Now you are 80 years old and it seems you have lived a very intense and challenging life. In works such as "Smile", it seems that for you art and life have always been quite interwoven. How do you see the relation between art and life?

YO: Art is an expression of life. Life makes all expressions possible. Still art is just an expression, while life is reality.



# ROMAN OPALKA

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

Opalka's house and studio, Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France, 9 June 2010

*Karlyn De Jongh: Do you think about the time that you yourself will not be there anymore?*

Roman Opalka: It is also important to say this: death has a certain period of time, it is so that you never know that you have died. This bad news, which we always carry with us in our existence, is so scary. We are afraid of death and we have the right to be afraid, because death is unaesthetic. The physical condition of the body and so on. But death, in the sense of how it is mentally, in the head, is a certain gift of nature, perhaps from God, because you never can reach that point where you say "I am dead." We can only know that we are damned, for example when you know you will get the electric chair or guillotine. But that also is just an idea. The moment itself cannot be determined, not by the person who himself has died. When are you dead? Only the family of the dying person can experience death. That is very, very wonderful.

*KDJ: Is that not also a hope, to be able to close ones eyes for death? Not having to experience that moment of death is also something pleasant, isn't it?*

RO: Yes, yes, this is a gift from nature. Only human beings know that they will die. In our era, that is the biggest problem we have: we have to die. That is also the case in my work: I use this bad news as something positive for the finishing of my program. That is why my work is always completed. And human beings will die and are in that sense complete as well. Throughout the entire history of painting, even in the realistic works, an artist like Rembrandt for example, says: "The picture is finished." I say, "That is not true." The picture is never finished. Every time I have an exhibition coming up, I have to send a painting at some point in time. In my case, the painting is always finished. But this is dangerous because the painting can perhaps get damaged through transportation. But a work, in my case, is completed totally. Because it belongs to my Being. If the author dies... That means: when I die, the end is perfect! I repeat, it is no good news that I have to die. Every person has problems with his death, of course. Always in bed when you cannot sleep, you have problems, because of having to die. But this problem is liberated in my case through my work. Like any human being, I leave a certain trace. Some people leave a child behind or, in case of the Rockefeller family, a bank. It is a good aspect of life that you can leave something behind. What I as a person leave behind after my death, is very specific, especially as it is a sacrifice for other people. I could not have asked another person to do what I have realized as a

program. I was the one who could still do it, because it was my idea, my program. It is meant very Christian, too. My blood is my body; it communicates to say it like that. But if one would have told Christ: "I will do this for you," that does not work. This transformation cannot be done, and especially not in my work. In my work the numbers are always deeper and deeper, and also more objective in order to rationalize this depth. I can say I have gone deeper, because today I have painted a few more numbers. This is the depth that I am talking about.

*KDJ: Roman, you have told us that death is a gift...*

RO: For everybody, in general. Why people often commit suicide? They want to free themselves from life.

*KDJ: But when you lie in bed at night, do you fear death?*

RO: Yes, like everybody else. But I however, have certain thoughts that come with it: I leave a work behind. But of course, almost everyone can say that, for example if he has children. Especially in this context, if I had children, then I possibly would not have come to such an extreme idea. Because a human being who has a child, is already saved. The trace of his existence continues.

*Sarah Gold: What would you like to happen with your work after you die?*

RO: As with any artwork that has a certain historical significance to the history of art, I want to save my work, because otherwise you could have tried many other things in your existence as an artist. The work can be saved by authors who write about my work, even in posthumous editions. A book. They say: "A book can be written without having a publisher." That is not correct. Every writer has the hope that once it will be printed. My paintings are everywhere in the world, you could say. Australia, the United States. Not in South America, because that is a different world. My work and the history of art, the first handprint in a cave until the work of Duchamp, it is a way to better understand art and to experience it. We do not need to go to a museum when we already have information about art history. It is enough if you know: Duchamp was there and he did something like this, Rembrandt was present, and Opalka was there. This is always a unit. One single artist would not be possible. It is art history that makes the artist. The artist alone in the air, that is not possible. Only this message of that what happened in Altamira with this hand, which was already a desire to leave a trace. We do this to this present day. I make this trace.

# OTTO PIENE

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

28 April 2013

*Otto Piene (1928, Bad Laasphe, Germany). In 1957, he and Heinz Mack founded the ZERO movement. Piene who is famous for his smoke and fire paintings created new art forms like Light Ballet and Sky Art. He lives in Groton, MA, USA, and in Düsseldorf, Germany.*

*Karlyn De Jongh: Yoko Ono told me that to her the sky gives comfort, because no matter what happens in life, the sky is always there and is always—according to her—the same. For you, the connotation of sky is probably very different, because in our 2009 interview with you, you said that in the sky you saw the war airplanes and the light after the WWII bombings. What does sky mean to you today?*

**OP:** We can understand the sky in different ways. For me, the sky is how we can live. It is what feeds us and what keeps us alive. We eat the sky. Essentially, we are products of the sky, because it keeps us alive and it keeps us acting and working and painting all the time.

*KDJ: So, for you sky is actually a very personal thing.*

**OP:** It is an extremely personal thing. At the same time, it is universal: we all live of the sky. The air is the sky and the sky is the air, the atmosphere and that is how we function. The atmosphere is what we eat and the atmosphere is what we breathe. Therefore: without the sky we would not exist and could not exist and maybe even do not want to exist.

*KDJ: During your lifetime there have been different discoveries made about the universe. Did this seemingly knowing more (in a scientific way) about the sky, affect your understanding of it?*

**OP:** We know much more about sky, much more than we knew one hundred years ago or one thousand years ago. You know, now there is the science of the sky, the theory of the sky and then the physics of the sky. We learned increasingly and by that we learned increasingly our range. The importance we put on this understanding is constantly growing and increasing. It gives us more intelligence.

*KDJ: Gotthard Graubner told me that he prefers hanging his paintings quite low, because for him, we should only look up to God, art should be accessible and therefore hung 'low'. Instead of looking down, or straight ahead, with your Sky Art, people are forced to look up. Was this intended?*

**OP:** Yeah, I intended this probably for myself. Some other people must have looked at the sky a lot as well as many artists, because many

many art works—including many paintings—are about the sky and are inspired by the sky. So, it is not really new. It is just different the way how we look the sky these days. It has a somewhat more universal range and reach and universal meaning to us because we can indeed work with the sky and that makes the art a wider field of experiences. Art or Sky Art is something that transports us beyond our earthly, our local concerns. It tells us about the important parts of the universe, such as the stars and the creatures of the sky—beginning with the birds—and tells us about the range and the reach of human life.

The sky is also the territory of religion and I guess not accidentally so, because it is bigger than we are. It is bigger than what we know. It tells us, there are many many things that go beyond our every day concerns and our every day knowledge.

*KDJ: Does that mean that for you, when you look at the sky, you see yourself as a very small element within the larger space, and within the continuing time?*

**OP:** Yeah, the sky tells us that the world—in a wider sense—is much more than what we can grasp. It tells us that there is a world beyond, a world beyond what we can touch. It keeps us—our thinking and our feeling—in proportion to the grandiose range, the grandiose scale that the earth's creation provides us with. It keeps us modest. It keeps us from thinking that we know it all and we have it all and we make it all. So, the sky is also giving us the measure of human endeavor.

*KDJ: It seems that with your Sky Events, such as Rotes Pferd (2004) that you made for the main square in Sienna, Italy, weightlessness is an important aspect in your work. I have the feeling that this weightlessness reflects your attitude towards life: to take things as they come. Is that correct?*

**OP:** Well, the weightlessness is of course another thing that, if we are lucky, we can experience as humans, as opposed to gravity or gravitation that keeps us clinging to the earth. Going beyond the gravitation is somewhat metaphysical and is obviously part of our human longing and human endeavor. So, on the one hand, we are tied to what is happening on the earth, the gravitation keeps us lightly tied to the earth. On the other hand, the weightlessness is something we strive for, we yearn for. That seems to suggest that balance between the two is part of human life and is what we deal with while we are alive. We hope that we will experience more of it, once we are beyond the terrestrial life and deal with what is beyond.





*Sarah Gold: Is this longing a similar longing to what you seem to have had with the ZERO movement, to change something in society?*

OP: There are social aspects of it. One can certainly see that and strive for it. ZERO is many things. ZERO is on one hand this world beyond everyday concerns and on the other hand it is also something that tells us about the world beyond that what we try to reach with art, any time, much of the time as an endeavor that does not only have to do with Sky Art, but also has to do with traditional art forms that in many ways try to tell us about what we do not know.

*SG: When you and Heinz Mack founded the ZERO movement, the two of you had similar concerns about light and society. In the last few years there has been a strong tendency to include artists to ZERO, such as*

*Arnulf Rainer, who may have exhibited with ZERO, but do not seem to share these ideas. How does that feel to you?*

OP: Oh well, there is a way of dealing with the un-understandable. Arnulf Rainer is an interesting artist and friend of us, certainly a former friend. What he does in his art may not be conventional but is interesting and certainly interests me. What he does there, with the faces and the figures and the role of black, I see that with other artists too. For example, with my old time Italian friend Aldo Tambellini, who has dealt with Black as the world that interests him and that he somehow embraces with his art.

*SG: Do you think that today a group like ZERO, with similar thoughts could still come into existence? Or do you think the thoughts of the*

*ZERO movement are quite particular of the time when you yourself and Heinz Mack founded it?*

OP: Well, you know, the human spirit, no matter how limited it is, is also very expansive in the human striving for more, for more knowledge, for more experiences and for more insights. So, I find it entirely possible that at some point, some people might have experiences or thoughts that lead them to wanting something like another group ZERO, but it could also be quite different, I guess.

*KDJ: In an interview with me in 2009, you have said that "the artist is a social creature". You always wanted to change society, but that is also quite a responsibility. When you look at society today, do you think you managed to change society a little? Are you proud of what society looks like today?*

OP: I am not proud of society today, but I can always see the need for improvement. ZERO has a lot to do with the necessity for peace. There can never be enough peace—so to speak—as we have recently dramatically experience again, so I hope that more ZERO will be visible and can be heard and can be felt in the future as well.

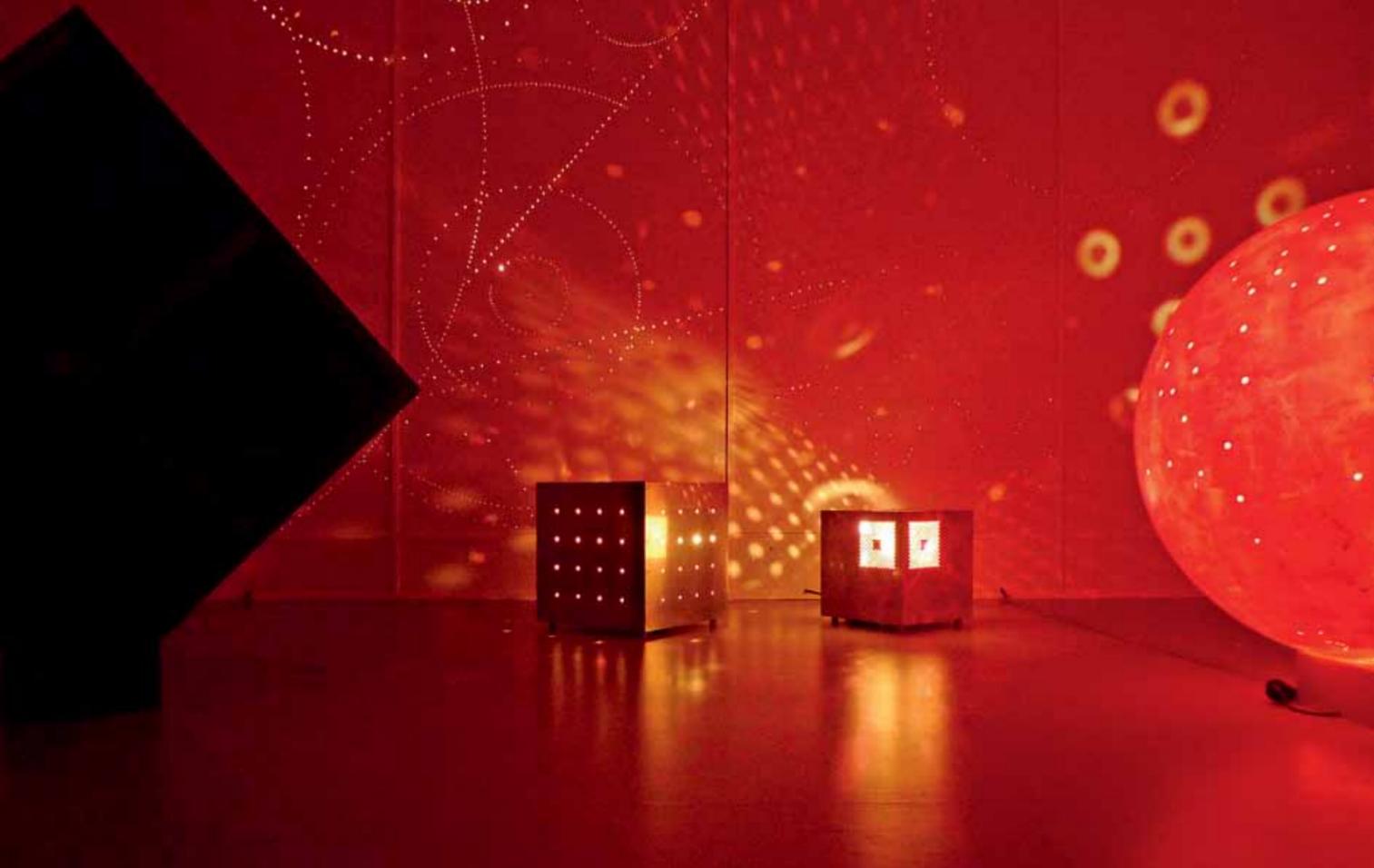
*KDJ: Movement seems to have always fascinated you as well as change. I can image that change is good when you go from a bad situation to a better one, but of course it is possible that it becomes worse. Is change as such always a good thing, regardless the outcome?*

OP: No, there is also bad change. From peace to war is certainly bad change. The experience of war as we said earlier on, had a very strong motivating force momentum in the becoming of ZERO after the war,



because I felt that we really needed to see how bad it has been and how it has to be better in the future. Not just as a kind of entertainment of the idea of change, but also as something that is necessary to happen. When WWII was over I thought that, as well as many other people with me, that now people would have learned and never want another war again. In my youthful wisdom I thought it would be at least 25—or maybe even more—years until people would get tired of peace and would be ready for another war. Unfortunately, that is what really happened. Some people do not need peace because they are just made in a very strange, very disharmonious kind of way. That is really unfortunate. So, I hope that the great catastrophes will not be upon us so soon, if ever. But the catastrophe as we have experienced

during the past weeks, for instance, when very very bad things happened in Boston, which is very very closed from where I am now. These terrible things are kind of unthinkable, as many people have said. But they happen anyway, how and why is for me very very difficult to understand, because I have seen enough bad things in the war and other catastrophic situations. Some people just do not get it. In many many ways that is not just a matter of rational thinking or rational instruction, but also a matter of education. That has played a big big part in our cultural life, in our intellectual life and we should not forget it. So, if people think that teaching to artists is beyond the artist' dignity or sense of adventure, it is not quite true. It is beautiful enterprise if it works out and hopefully it will be working out further.



*KDJ: What is art about for you?*

OP: It is for our experience of the full capacity of our sensory equipment house. And in being so, this is part of human physics as well as our soul. To activate as much of our possibilities of using our soul to live and expand our experiences, is part of what artists do.

*KDJ: To me, your works where you used fire on a red surface are incredibly beautiful. At the same time, fire has the connotation of 'destruction'. What does beauty mean to you? And how is it related to destruction—not only with regard to your works, but to life in general, to nature?*

OP: Striving for beauty is also playing with fire. In other words, it is trying to reach an intensity that can not be reached with cold processes, so to speak. And you know, fire transforms things. In cases of good evolution, it creates things that cannot be made with other means. In my painting or in many sculptural processes, for example, they are technically not possible without the use and application of fire. But there is always danger there and sometimes things go 'kaput', because of the intensity of the fire that is applied. On the other hand many good things happen in technical artistic processes, such as the processes of using metals and using the transformation of metals, the melting of materials and the transformation that happens that way. It is just technically necessary to use processes like that, that make things—to put it simply—more beautiful.

*KDJ: Fire and also air are part of the Classical elements. What attracted you to particularly these elements and not to earth or water, for example?*

OP: There is a fascination in all elements, but it was fire where my fascination was particularly strong and the reach maybe more intense. The intensity of producing things, of making things as well as of experiencing things. There is also the element of speed and instantaneity and quickness to processes that employ fire. So, there are many advantages. We all know, that it not just in art that these are things are important. They are also instrumental in the industry and in the crafts and in many many situations of production. And then of course there are all the advantages of using fire because it is also warmth, it is heat. It is a little bit like the air; it keeps us alive. And at the same time brings with it, you know, the dangers of over-doing it.

*KDJ: For me, fire and light are very fascinating to watch. I can sit in front of a fire and look at it for hours. And I think that counts for others too. This ability of fire and light to pull people towards it, to fascinate, was that one of the reasons why you chose it? To grasp the attention of others in order to be heard and spread your ideas?*

OP: I wanted, or we wanted, to alert other people to the possibilities of an expanded art. And the possibilities of expanded life and increased alertness, an increased being awake and being productive. Those are all things that I want and I hope to happen. I have been trying to achieve—or at least to detect—this since I have been a thinking artist.

*KDJ: Your Sky Events, I can imagine they are partly also about a coming together of a group of people. It is a moment in time that you share*

*together with others, much more actively than with looking at a painting, for example. What do you hope these experiences provoke?*

OP: Well this about the practical thing that in many many cases, in many many situations more people can achieve more than one person. Hence the idea of group work can be quite productive and can be quite inventive and can be quite enriching. That can be extended beyond art and other areas of life, such as sports events, which are not very very far from the goals of art. The togetherness, the group effort produces beautiful results that cannot be achieved by a sole artist, a sole person in his or her lonely studio far away from the world, and that people thought of as the ideal for the 19<sup>th</sup> century genius...

*KDJ: With your light-rooms, by filling the space with light and immersing the viewer in your light, did you want to metaphorically immerse him also in your way of thinking?*

OP: Well light—in many ways, not just in a physical way or in a physics way—means many things. Light means not only warmth and lighting; it also means enlightenment. That is one of the basic miracles that happen when we enter into or face the light: that we see things that we did not see before and that then we feel things that we did not feel before and that we therefore, are richer than we were before, when we had not been exposed to this incredible phenomena of light and had not been practicing it and experiencing it. It really adds things to the human vocabulary that are not possible without light. Beside that,

beyond all that, without light we cannot live anyway, but we can live better, we can live better with better and with more mature, more intense and more refined light than just with common lighting means. Beside that, the technology has given us so many more forms of light than we had before and they produce wonderful things. So, light art is something that is very close to and very closely related to sky art, both deal with elements that give us alive.

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

OP: One thing that I hope for in the future is that Sky Art becomes more Sky Art. Meaning: it really conquers the sky, so we can conquer and experience and enjoy more our, the larger universe. Because what we see on earth or from the earth are just a small part of the grand creation of the universe.

*KDJ: Like Heinz Mack, I think you have always been open for crazy projects. If money and physical power would not be an issue, what project would you still like to realize?*

OP: I would do things not all that different from what I am doing now. I would, you know, expand my work into the sky, into the universe more, in order to experience more and to share it with other people, the people I live with, people are care about and the people that are my friends and colleagues. I do not think money is the issue that much anyway, at any time as long as you keep all senses alive and our alertness intact, so we can indeed feel and see and act accordingly.



## ARNULF RAINER

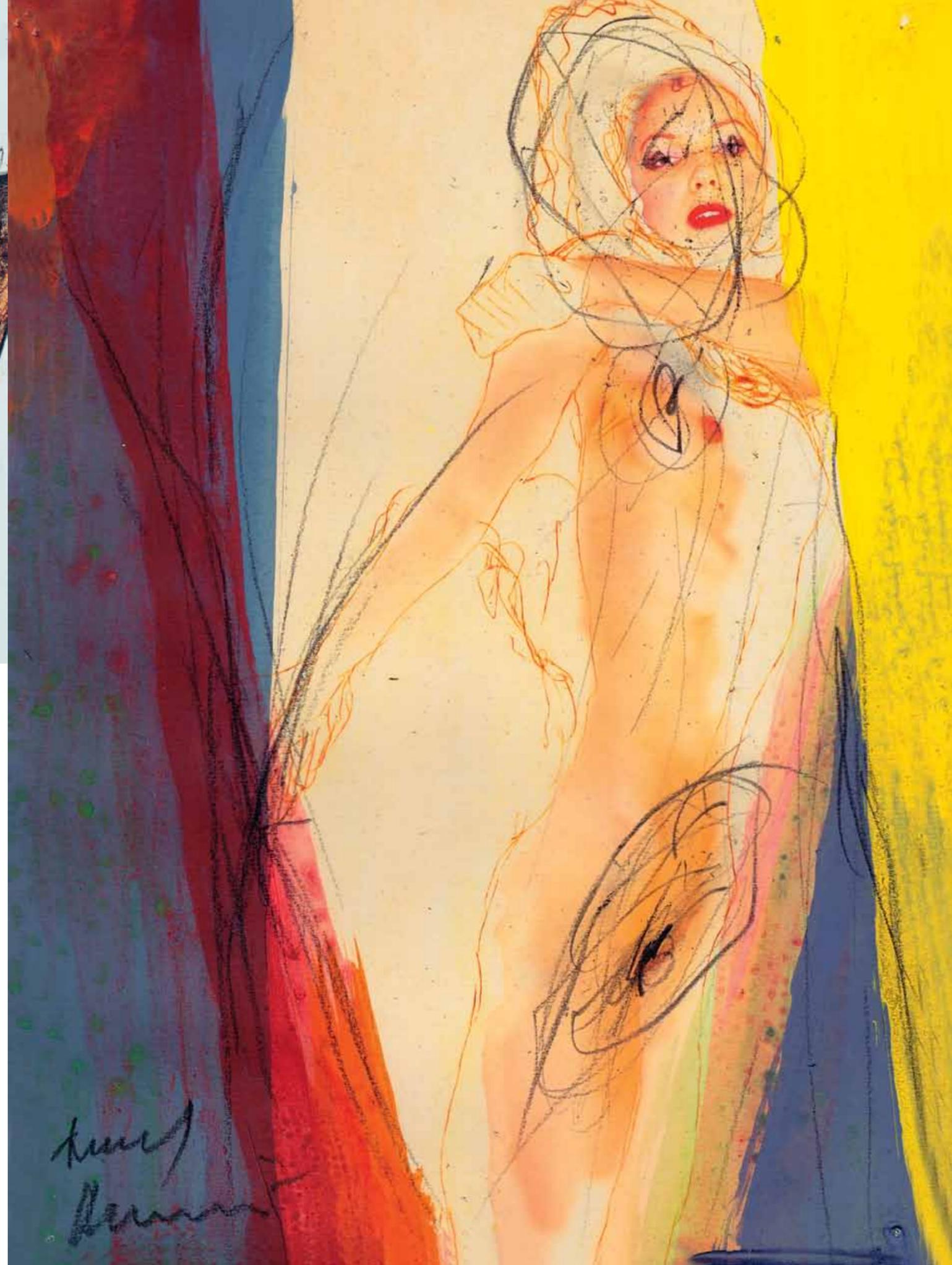
### UNFINISHED INTO DEATH—continued

UNFINISHED INTO DEATH appeared to be a suitable title for Arnulf Rainer's project with us. Rainer had realized that with us he could outlive all his artistic phantasies. And there were many—some of which he never imagined possible to realise anymore.

After the printing of our special edition ARNULF RAINER: UNFINISHED INTO DEATH, it continued with more requests from Rainer. It was very exciting to see the different steps in his creation process. First the eagerness with which he waited for our photos. Then it started for Rainer with the selection of these photos and the initial sketches over them. Then again the anxiety with which he waited for the first enlargements, the drawing or painting over those, and sometimes another enlargement and painting over that. In other cases, he kept the size as it was, but worked multiple times over the sheets until he did not know how to improve them further. During the entire process, he kept informing us about the progress he was making, over-working our photos.

Even more interesting than the creation process, was to get an insight in Rainer's thoughts. To hear the reasons why he draws our eyes white, for example, or wishes that include fighting with each other, tying each other down, or dancing like a Mondrian painting—and if we would be incapable of doing this, 'Van Doesburg' would be just about acceptable. And these were some of the more 'normal' ones.

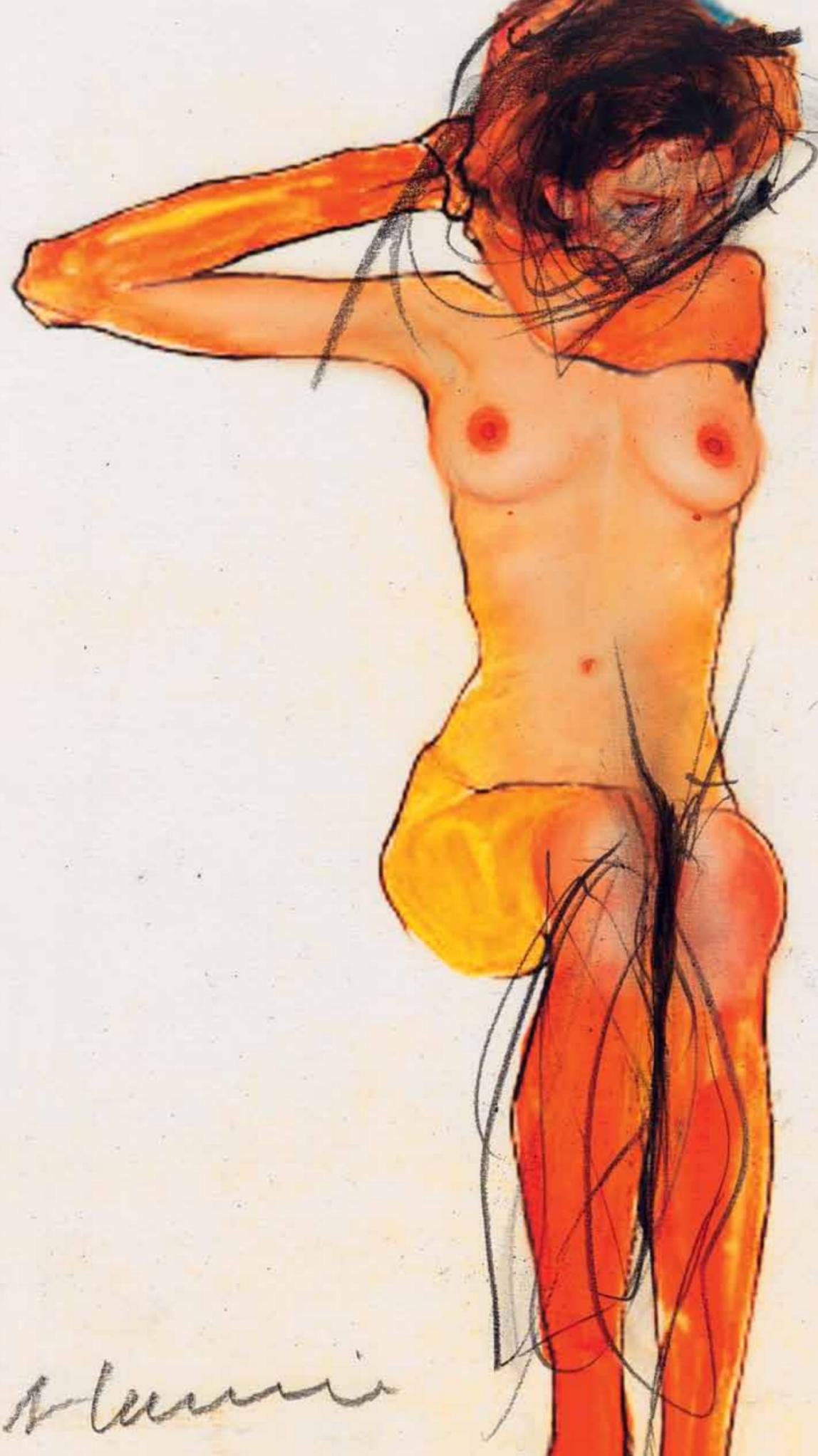
The following pages contain a series of works by Rainer that are over-drawn or over-painted drawings of Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt. Rainer came with the idea of making works on the basis of these mostly erotic drawings, where we would then simulate the poses of Klimt and Schiele's models. We collected images and started mimicking the poses. Posing on our bed in our Venice apartment, we—Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold—this time with Carol Rolla, Francesca Crudo and Valeria Romagnini, bent our bodies in sometimes nearly impossible ways. Then we glued our image—or elements of it—into Klimt and Schiele's figures. But the result appeared to be a success, as Rainer over-worked several and already gave the instructions for our next photo session—more bondage.





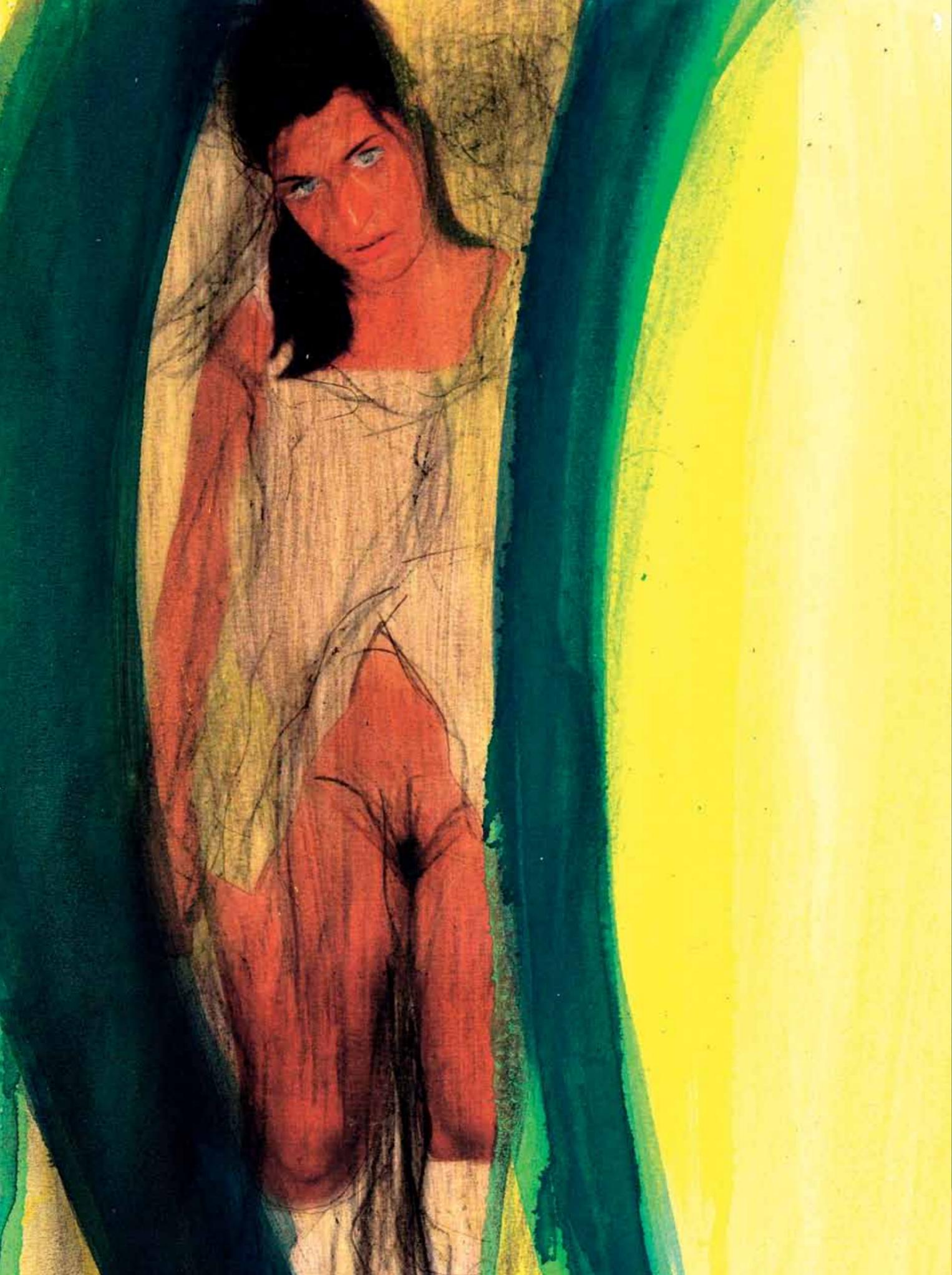


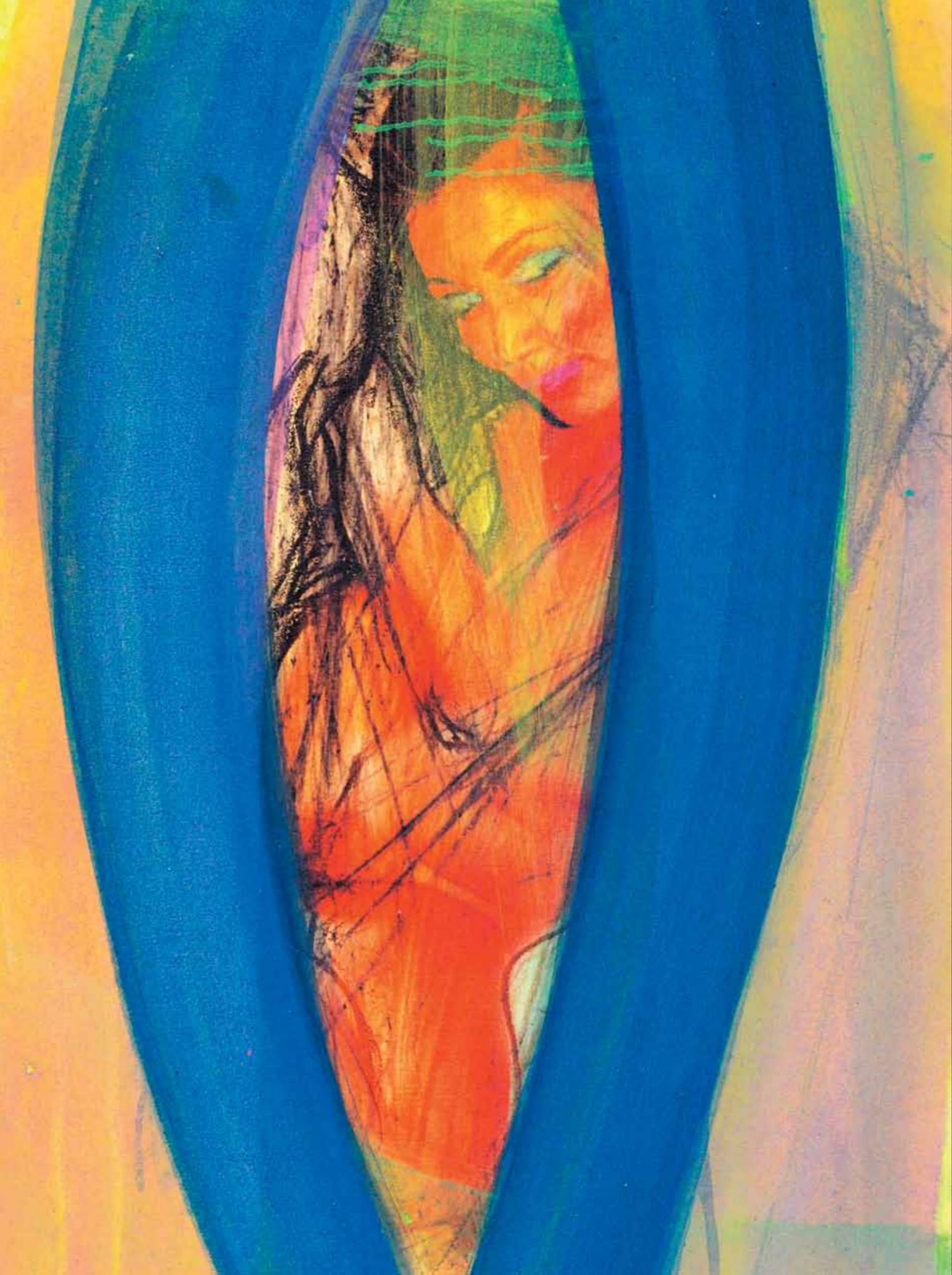
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# RENE RIETMEYER

By Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold & Valeria Romagnini

30 April 2013

*Rene Rietmeyer (1957, 's Hertogenbosch, Netherlands) is the initiator of PERSONAL STRUCTURES. His 'Boxes' express himself and his awareness of Time, Space and Existence in relation to his surroundings.*

*Sarah Gold: Since you were a young man, you have always created as much as possible your own life. Planning carefully your direction and how you live your life. You have told me that you regarded your decision to become a contemporary artist as "an intellectual challenge". Could you describe this "challenge" and do you have the feeling that you "succeeded"?*

Rene Rietmeyer: In 1994, after having been for 9 years the director of a private art academy, I still had no idea what contemporary art is about. I just did not understand it. Then, 36 years old, I finally managed to let go of managing the academy and I dedicate all my time to trying to discover what contemporary art actually is about. I expected and hoped for contemporary art to be mainly an intellectual achievement. I therefore thought that understanding this and becoming able, me myself, to create contemporary art, would be very much an intellectual challenge.

It seems however, that a large part of the people involved in the art world do not really seem to care about serious intellectual thoughts in contemporary art. It might be because we live at least the last 30 years in a society where we are all well fed and have a lot of time left over, that many people had the possibility to somehow survive while creating items they like to call "art", without real contents. While several other 'artists' continued, corrupted by money, to make items they themselves do not even believe in anymore. In reality I found only very few artists who really take contemporary art as a mainly intellectual challenge. But those who do, were and are very interesting personalities. Taking some of these respected international artists as a standard to measure myself, I have to come to the conclusion that I feel as if I myself "succeeded", but it did take me more than 12 years of intense occupation and confrontation, with artists and contemporary art, to come to this feeling.

*SG: After you had 'established' yourself as an artist you initiated PERSONAL STRUCTURES. Knowing how much of your time, energy and money you invest in this project, could you tell why and how you came to creating this 'open platform'?*

RR: I felt that if I would continue to focus only upon my own personal career as an artist that, with my own 'unspectacular' art, I would never be able to reach a lot of people. It is my goal to reach as many people as possible with a message about consciously living a life, and at the same time somehow financially survive myself, while having an interesting life. Bringing many different artists together creates a certain dynamic and by doing so I will be able to reach many more people than by being alone. I might therefore myself not become very well known as an artist, but I will reach the maximum possible regarding my main goals.

*Valeria Romagnini: You started the project in 2002, over time the group of artists involved has changed and has grown until now. After 11 years what do you think of the development of the project as a total at this point and what would you need to get further in your attempt to heighten your own and other people's awareness through your project?*

RR: Remembering how unknowingly I started and seeing where the project stands today I can only be pleased that somehow we came so far. Although it took me over 11 years to get this far, I still think that the project is only at its beginning. The project has now a strong base from which it can continue to grow. Now it is important to keep working on the quality of the contents, the symposia, the exhibitions and the publications, and most importantly, not to stop. Therefore I am now already supporting the people who hopefully one day will continue what I have started. The project is planned as a very long term project because I believe that the larger it grows, the longer it lasts, the larger the impact will be upon society.

*Karlyn De Jongh: With PERSONAL STRUCTURES you have chosen for a standpoint of documenting different opinions and ways of expression. In the past, when you first started the project with 16 young artists, you chose artists expressing themselves in a visually similar way. However, in 2008 after experiencing Toshikatsu Endo talk extensively about Hermann Nitsch at our Tokyo symposium about Existence, you decided to open up the project and give a platform also to artists who are visually so very different. Why did you do this?*

RR: In the beginning years of PERSONAL STRUCTURES I focused by the participating artists, besides the contents of their works, also on the visual homogeneity within the project. This however excluded





several artists who had very interesting thoughts but “unusual” approaches by expressing them. Although I had started in 2007 to include artists in our exhibitions whose works had a different appearance, it really was only after Toshikatsu Endo’s lecture in 2008, that I re-thought my original concept and opened the project also to artists concerned with Time-Space-Existence, but now regardless the visual appearance of the art work resulting from that confrontation. Claiming that the homogeneity in the project is now not any longer in the visual appearance of the art works but, more importantly, solely in the topics they deal with.

*KDJ: Recently we went to visit Michelangelo Pistoletto in Biella, Italy, and spoke about his project ‘Love Difference’. With initiating PERSONAL STRUCTURES as an artists’ platform, thereby documenting different opinions, you seem to be a living ‘model’ for someone who loves difference. What do you hope to find or hope to achieve with PERSONAL STRUCTURES?*

RR: So many different humans, with so many different points of view, often believing that they are the only ones who see it right. Documenting as many as possible well fundamented visions about the subjects Time-Space and Existence, by trying to stimulate the discussion and awareness about these topics. In addition I would like to try to make more people see that beauty is in the difference and not necessarily in that what reflexes one’s own opinion.

*VR: Looking at your work from your early career until your recent works, it seems as if you have created a personal inventory of your experiences. One can travel the world and perceive different atmospheres as*

*suggested by your series. Your works are reactions upon a particular space in a particular moment in time, which could possibly also be seen as sequences of different moments following one other over time. However, having lived these moments, the perception probably will be different and these moments have become part of your memory, your consciousness, your awareness. How do you consciously perceive time?*

RR: Looking back I remember the many homes in the Netherlands where you sat in the totally silent living room and you could hear the clock loudly ticking the seconds away. This feelings has not left me ever since, I feel the seconds that I am alive ticking away. It is a linear passing of time, sometimes it feels to tick faster, sometimes slower, but it does not stop, my life time keeps ticking away, in seconds, days, years. It is not a nice feeling, but that consciousness is the driving thought behind my restlessness to achieve, to experience, just as long as I am still alive. Fortunately thereby creating an accumulation of memories, consciously lived moments of time passing expressed in my works.

*SG: Looking at your earlier works, your series were often much frailer, softer, more ‘human’. Now your works have become more ‘hard’; the size of your boxes is in general larger, the Box itself much more ‘perfect’ and they feel ‘stronger’. Could you explain this development, this change?*

RR: Please do not mix frailer and softer, with more “human”, I am just as “human” today. But, especially in the 1990s, I was carefully searching; I am not so bold and reckless as I often see by American artists. Art-History was in the way. For over 5 years now however, having been able to have many direct confrontations and comparisons with artists

that once seemed so far away, I feel very strong regarding my own work and the thoughts within. I know for myself where I stand, I know my materials, know what I want, no need for carefulness anymore and in addition, my project and my private life, living my life as a total, gives me especially in the last years great pleasure, this probably also shows.

*KDJ: During our visits to artists such as Hermann Nitsch and Lee Ufan, we have often discussed the influence of their culture on their work. You stated that would Nitsch have been born in, for example, the Netherlands, he would probably not have come to his Orgien Mysterien Theater. Last year I asked you a similar question. Did your view change? To what extent are the ideas that you proclaim and the works you create a ‘logical’ consequence of the culture you are brought up in?*

RR: Without any doubt cultural influences have an immense impact upon our own thoughts and actions, our works. The combination of my inherited dispositional properties with the surroundings in which I grew up had so much influence upon “what I want” that the way in which I express myself in my art works can only be seen as the “logical consequence” of all these factors. In short: “me” is how I express myself.

*VR: In one interview with Sarah Gold and Karlyn De Jongh, you stated that in different cultures you communicate differently emotionally in order to communicate well, you adapt even your own personal emotional way of expression. You lived for several years in different countries, Austria, Greece, France, USA, the Netherlands, Japan and at the moment you are in Italy, since approximately 4 years. How have you adapted your own personal emotional way of expression now? And how does this reflect in your work?*

RR: In comparison to living in countries such as the Netherlands and the USA I feel that my overall emotional status is less optimistic, less positive: Italy is slowly dragging me down. I try to stand up against this overall feeling, but it is in the faces all around me, and it is not just the momentary economically difficult situation in Italy, it is within them, drama and problems. They seem to have a tendency to complicate things instead of solving difficulties. Looking back upon the works I made here, this might have reflected in my work and that also therefore my latest works, in order to balance, have become all very strong in colors, very optimistic, but this is just guessing, it is at this moment difficult to say, I will probably have to look back upon my works ten years from now.

*KDJ: Most of your works are made a few months after the ‘experience’ that they have as a subject. We recently visited the place where you lived in Austria during your 20s. The memories seemed to be still quite strongly present and the time you spent there was an important part of your life. Would you consider painting a work after an experience so long ago?*

RR: It is only the last three years, due to my occupation with my project PERSONAL STRUCTURES, that my works are made several months after the “experience” itself. In the years before it did not seem possible to make a work later then 2-3 months after experiencing the subject. Now I can imagine very well that a longer time period could be in-between. However, my executed works express until now chronologically experienced subjects, like a linear line. At this moment, I have no intentions to change that, so picking up an experience from long ago seems today no option.



KDJ: You painted your works sometimes even almost a year after the actual happening. For me, there is a difference between a fresh memory and a memory of something that happened a long time ago: through time I tend to forget aspects of the experience. Your Napoli 2010 Boxes that you showed at the 2011 Venice Biennale, were actually painted a few weeks before the opening of the Biennale in May 2011. It seems your Napoli 2010 is influenced by how you were at the moment of painting. Why do you not 'double date' your works?

RR: All my works are of course also influenced by my momentary state of being on the moment of execution. Sometimes more, sometimes less. Yes, dating my works is a question which occupied me for a while until I decided that; the moment in which the main part of the thoughts about how a possible execution of a possible work could look like were made, is the moment in time that counts. However, this is not easy to establish and without measuring exactly, I continue to date my work with the date of the actual experiencing of the subject. Double dating would however be more accurate. However, I never liked to give it much effort, to sign, title, number and date my works, it are the collectors who value this, not me.

KDJ: In a few months we will travel to Australia, an encounter with this country and its people can in my opinion be a nice subject for a new series of Boxes. When you think about Australia today—without ever having been there—you probably have certain expectations of possible experiences: snorkeling in the Great Barrier Reef; driving to Ayers Rock. These expectations are an experience in themselves and show 'you today' in relation to Australia. Why have you never made a work of something that will happen in the future?

RR: I did. It is hardly known, but in the beginning years of working on and with the concept behind my works, I experimented and made a few different series (Miami Beach Boxes from 1997 and Brooklyn 1998) shortly before I went to live in that region. However, after that I only made works directly on the location of my subject or shortly after I had been there. So, despite having seen documented information, Australia is still more or less empty in my brain. No shape, no size, no colors.

VR: In your work you express your point of view and thoughts after an experience at a certain moment in time and space, by giving shape to your emotions and feelings of it in a specific moment. The actual moment of the creation of your work is then different from the moment of the experience you refer to. You express and present your work to your public as a proof of your existence and of your awareness at that moment in time. By time passing, you become more and more aware of your life as a total and your emotions and feelings about certain experiences probably could change, you could perhaps add more reflections or change your mind upon it. In this case, have you ever thought of expressing your renewed feelings and perceptions upon the same experience that you once already described?

RR: Normally, once I made a series of a certain experience I never return later to that same experience anymore, even if I do not like the outcome of my artworks. I move on. However, I have made very few exceptions, one of them is a series I made about my encounter with Nobuyoshi Araki in Tokyo May 1999. This was a very unusual encounter and at first I had made a series of blue Boxes with yellow

lines over it, but after making them I really did not think that they express my experiences well, I started a new series and was pleased with the result. My feelings and perceptions had not changed, but in my early years I was not yet so sure about the formal means in which to express myself in the way I thought that was needed.

VR: In 2012 you showed me the wall in Antibes, where Nicolas de Staël might have jumped to his death, and the place where you lived in Vallauris, next to the Picasso Museum. While spending time in the South of France you started to have more freedom and courage in the use of colors and soon after your works became more 3 dimensional, they really became your Boxes. Also for Matisse the South of France had a very important impact on his work. The brightness and the strong powerful saturated colors impressed him and he started to use blocks of color, therefore he stated, "the kilogram of green is greener than half a kilogram of green". What does color mean to you and why do you create often such a very material surface?

RR: Yes, Matisse was right, it is not only the color itself which has an enormous impact upon how we perceive, but also the amount of color, the opaque presents of the material color can add an enormous power in expressing emotions. Whenever I have the financial means and it "fits" to the subject, I like creating an opaque surface, it is a lot of me in there.

VR: When looking at your works since the beginning of your career, while it seems that oil paint and wood are your favorite materials to work with, you have used so far a wide range of different materials: glass, wood, concrete, silicon, acrylic, glue, steel, ceramic. What are the characteristics that bring you to the choice of a certain material? Are there other materials you would like to try out and use?

RR: I am not so sure about how personal or how universal my emotional response to certain materials are but, it is obvious for me that each material has very specific qualities which I can use in order to achieve a certain perception. So has for example acrylic paint for me a more superficial, artificial character than oil paint and glass a colder feeling than corten steel. Unfortunately, I lately did not have the right circumstances to experiment with new materials, but I hope that I will once have the opportunity and subject by which I can use lead in combination with oil paint and wood.

VR: Your boxes transport your emotional relationship with different subjects and your work expresses your emotions, thoughts and feelings towards certain persons you met and places you visited in the world. If you should consider the option of creating a self-portrait of you at this moment in time, what kind of emotional and intellectual thoughts would you express? How would it look like?

RR: I have been dealing with these questions often but I never answered these questions but, OK. Today I am a wooden cubic, 40x40x40 cm, a hard edge slightly sanded, strong present size, dark blue/alizarin crimson red, thick, opaque pallet knife, honest and strait forward oil paint surface, stable deep colors and not fragile yet.

KDJ: The last few years, except for your glass-Boxes, you have always made your works with the same materials. Although the 'subjects' that are indicated with the titles seem so very different, your series Oman





2012, El Hierro 2011 and your 2010 Kosuth-Boxes are all 'oil paint on wood' and are also very close to each other in their shape and size. Am I right in thinking there is a shift of focus taking place? That in expressing your relation to a certain subject, 'you' are becoming more and more present in your works rather than 'your subjects'?

RR: I do not think that it is to a great extent my own personality who shows more and more, also not in the choice of oil paint as material. One of the main reasons why I have mainly worked with oil paint in the last years is unfortunately that, since I left Miami and the Netherlands, I do not have the same two large studios anymore. Since the last 4 years I focused mainly on establishing a home for my project here in Venice, Italy. I could hardly work and my studio here is only 20 square meter. For the glass and ceramic works I used assistances, and these works were not made in my studio. But, it is how it is, my works become according who I am on that particular moment in time, with the resources and within the possibilities that I have. I continuously change, my works will fortunately change again.

KDJ: Except for your Miami Beach and Côte d'Azur series, the colors you choose for your Boxes are often quite 'basic'. I mean that they are often either red, yellow or blue, and there seems to be not much difference between the colors—the red from your El Hierro Boxes is quite similar to that of your Shark Valley Boxes; the yellow of Prague is comparable with the yellow of Napoli. Why is that? Do all 'formal elements' with which you express yourself, have a similar importance to you or are there some that you favor over others?

RR: I also noticed that the last few years I often use, as you put it, "basic" colors. I think this influence upon the color choice for my series says more about me than about the subject matter of that particular series. In earlier years I have made many series with, as I call them, "in between" colors, but somehow I seem to have a tendency to what I feel as "stronger" colors, whereby in my opinion there still are large differences even between the one strong red *El Hierro* and the other *Shark Valley*. These differences do not show well in print, but very well by displaying the works next to each other. Similar to that I only once made a box with a curved side. For me, Color, Shape, Texture, Material and Size are not all equally important, color for example has unavoidably for me always a big impact, texture less, but have there own importance, I cannot neglect one of them, and it hurts when I have to admit (often years after) that I probably choose wrong.

VR: In the 2013 PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition during the Venice Biennale, you will present a new installation in a space shared together with the presentation of the Japanese artist Toshikatsu Endo. How do you think the two presentations will fit together within the space?

RR: I have exhibited once before, in Vienna, in a direct confrontation with a work by Endo and I had the feeling that we did not reach the wished for result. So, we are trying again. Although visually so different, I am the opinion that there are many similarities between Endo, his work, and me and my work. The work of Endo, for our joined square room, has been decided upon some time ago already. Knowing this I created a work from which I hope it will make its own strong statement, as Endo does, and that at the same time the two works together will create an excellent strong room installation.

Being both about human existence, presenting both modified three dimensional wooden objects, the round, the square, the fire and copper, the red paint, the one on the floor, the one on the wall, two mature men from such different cultural backgrounds presenting themselves and, when we are not satisfied with the result, we will separate us, the works, again.

KDJ: In the PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition during the 2013 Venice Biennale, you will also present a typical Venetian boat-pole, painted yellow. This installation is quite different than your 'usual' Box-shaped works. How does this new work fit into your concept?

RR: I previously painted on found wooden objects, in 1998 in Japan and in 1999 in Germany and besides their visual appearance there is not a big difference between them and my Boxes. I most often use Boxes which are made by my carpenter shortly before I work with them. These Venetian boat-poles have been made long ago. My Boxes are created solely for the purpose of me painting on them; the poles had a different use before that I painted on them. It is this different use at a specific location and the passage of time that added additional contents to the objects. The object was created, the object was used and abandoned, I found it and I left my touch and my thoughts, me, on and in the object.

VR: In one interview, speaking about your artistic practice, you defined that the fine-tuning in your concept, you cannot call that a development. You exist as a human being, and therefore you do change. Development is mostly seen as a linear development, like an improving, like a searching towards something, trying new things and you stated that you do not necessarily have to try new things; you express yourself as you are at this point in time. These days you are a different person from whom you were years ago and the thoughts you had at that time might have changed. How does the development of you as a person reflect in your work?

RR: Many young artists are always looking for something that has never been done before and when they find something they think that they found art. I do not have to find a new technique, a new gimmick, I just express myself while my concept basically stays the same. It is the way in which I express myself that changes. I always try to look inside myself and inside the experienced moments of my life as consciously as I can. When I am in my studio I try to express myself as consciously as I can in my artworks. Reflecting my personal development, my personal status of that specific moment in combination with the previously experienced moments being the subject matter of my artworks, is in the choice of my formal elements, such as size, color, material etc. As in my personal development there is no "linear progress" I am just always changing, always moving, seemingly existing without a clear direction. Whereby I do hope that I continuously become a better human, without knowing exactly what that might be.

SG: You are a person who wants to make 'a difference'. I know that in your daily life, you do have a tremendous (positive) influence on the people in your immediate surroundings. Also to me, your art is a result of your desire to express yourself and consequently has an influence on the spectator. Living today, in a world which seems never to have been so 'fast', where there is a constant overload of information and people seem difficult to "reach"; do you think you are able to achieve this positive influence through your art?



RR: Unfortunately, I am aware that I will only be able to reach very few people, but if I would do nothing, I would reach nobody. I try to reach as many as possible people with my art, with my project, with me, even while knowing that all this might only have a limited influence upon a few people.

SG: As a person, you are all about Awareness; Awareness of our own existence, our surroundings, and our life-time. Why do you think, you developed this special heightened consciousness?

RR: Seeing so many people dying around me and at the same time knowing that there will be no life after death, forces you to take being alive very serious. Knowing that a life-time is very short makes you realize that every day alive is an important day and therefore should be an interesting beautiful day.

SG: Many wise words have been spoken and many books have been published on how to live a good and positive life. But then looking at many lives, even those of the 'big thinkers', most often they have not developed this capability of putting 'theory into praxis'. How have you been able to: "Carry the consequences of your thoughts" and created the life you are living today?

RR: You have to make yourself very clear where you want to put your priorities in life, how you do value everything and then act according that. Millions of people have fantastic ideas about all what they want to achieve, however most often they act not according their own ideas, especially when they realize the prize that there is to pay as a consequence of carrying out their thoughts. If you really want it, you have to be willing to pay the price; a good idea is nothing without its execution.

VR: As a reaction to your personal experiences and as an expression of your existence as a person, your works have the name of a specific location or the name of a person and the surrounding. In 2007 you created a series of work, which you titled "Life". What did you want to express with this work and why did you decide for this unusual title in your oeuvre? Is that mend to be a statement or an overall expression of all your accumulated experiences and feelings in your life together? To what extend does this work differs from other works of yours in regard to your statement that your work is ultimately nothing other than the proof of your existence?

RR: I choose the title "Life" because when I created the series, it was a moment in which I looked back upon the life which I had lived until then and a moment in which I looked upon me, my "now". Not as usual a region or another person, but a more abstract statement, "Life", yes, probably all my experiences and my momentary feelings about life combined. The subject was me, my life. Almost like a self portrait but mainly about life itself, and at the same time as all my other works, ultimately nothing other than the proof of my existence.

KDJ: In regard to this statement "Ultimately, my work is nothing other than the proof of my existence". What exactly constitutes your existence? What makes you 'you'?

RR: The creation of the "me" is a complex biological, social and psychological process. This obvious starts with the genes on which we have no influence, then we receive cultural influences from our surroundings and in a later stage we can add our "own" influences in ourselves, self reflex ion and carrying out the consequences of that

awareness can be of great impact. All these and several other influences eventually create the "me", but only as long as I am still alive. When I die, only my body is left over and also that will disintegrate, "me" ceases to exist.

KDJ: Last year all of us visited Botswana together. On one of these days, we went to a 'water hole', a place where animals come to drink, and stayed there the whole day, just sitting in the car and watching the different animals. It was very impressive for me to experience the speed of life from these animals and we discussed also about that we, humans, should, would, do better—live happier—if our speed of life would be slower. Seeing you work, I have the feeling this is not really possible for you. It seems you are more like Arnulf Rainer, who is now 83 and only slower than he used to be because of limiting physical power. Would you ever seriously consider slowing down with all the consequences that it may have for your life?

RR: What I want from life has been all my consciously lived life the same, health, intense personal relations, discovering people and the world, a positive influence on my surroundings, an interesting profession, etc. and in that order, but also somehow balanced according my personal needs. I wanted to create a project larger than myself, and in order to achieve that I had to put my artist-ego by side and work in a to high speed. In order to achieve anything significant these days, it seems that one cannot "afford" to slow down. Rainer, 83, by not slowing down, sacrificed many of the things that I value, I, 55, do not want to do the same, to live a fulfilled live according to my ideas, I will have to slow down and focus again on all important aspects of live.

SG: For you "seeing the elephants" has been since you are a young man, a metaphor for 'living a life'. Always there has been this 'goal' in life. Now, you have seen the elephants, what will come next?

RR: Seeing the elephants has for me always had the symbolic meaning of go out there and discover the world. I always will remember Rauschenberg who regretted that he could not discover more because he was running out of time. I know I will eventually also run out of time, so, I have to hurry up and continue to discover many more "elephants". "Living a life" should never stop.

KDJ: You have developed PERSONAL STRUCTURES in such a way that it can survive as long as there are people working with it. Also other projects that you created in your life have continued to exist, even though you have moved on and chose to live your life being an artist. Since we met in spring 2007, you have influenced my life and the way I think about my existence. For whatever reason it might be, we now agree on many topics and one could say there is a lot of thought from you in me. Of course, I hope that you live a very long time, but I also hope that I live longer than you. After you die, could I continue painting 'your' Boxes?

RR: Karlyn, you are already painting "my" Boxes, yours only look at the moment more flat, and so, I do hope that you will continue long until after I have died, no matter how the visual presence of your works may be.





## BEN VAUTIER

Conversation with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold  
Nice, France, 18 February 2013

*Ben Vautier (1935, Naples, Italy) was part of Fluxus. His performances and writings are a confrontation with himself, and therefore with art, society and existence in general.*

*Sarah Gold: Are you happy that when people see your work today, they see "that is Ben"?*

Ben Vautier: Yes, well I am not so happy when they think that Ben is always in graphics, in a graphical way of writing. There I missed it, I did not succeed.

SG: Because you want to convey a content?

BV: I want to convey sense and contents. And they want to see me writing a name in my handwriting. My work is not handwriting. But I am very pleased to be one of the first: the ego and dates go together, and I must have been one of the first to do writings with sense. But then today writing is... every artist, more and more artists—also the big ones—use sentences in their works, and so nowadays that is normal. Nobody can tell me I cannot do it, because I did it before.

*Karlyn De Jongh: You say that you were so early and so recognizable, but at the same time you are different. Can you say that you made a difference?*

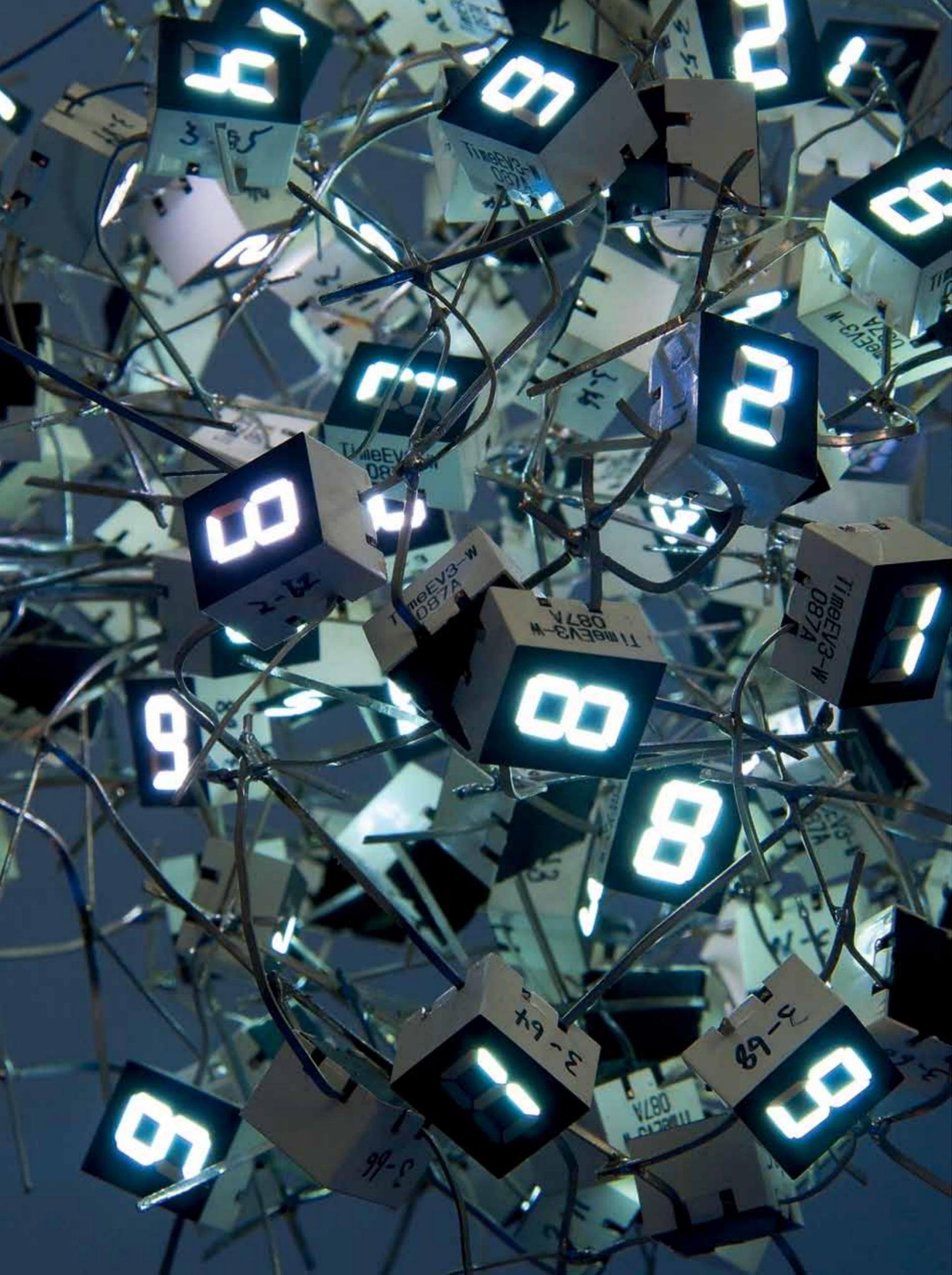
BV: I was looking for difference. I was thinking how can I bother the others, because art is ego and ego is jealousy. So, I was trying to be, trying to see: what can I do to make my difference? So, I thought: "nobody did this, then I will do it." Nobody wrote "this is blue", or "this is art." I mean nobody wrote a sentence, so I did it. I was very pleased with myself, because I thought that nobody had done that. But if you then look at the history of art and find out about Housman or you find some Dada artists who used writing too. The thing is that they did not use writing as their main work. My main work was in a way not writing. It was writing sense, being myself.

*KDJ: Is that why you are so afraid of making 'nonsense'?*

BV: Yes, no! But I think nonsense could be art too, because since Duchamp said that 'everything is art', you have also those who say that not succeeding is art, not doing what you want is art, art has become... it burst. But what I'm showing in Venice is an important work which is: a moment in which I ask myself questions on 'who am I?', 'who I was'. I am. *Je suis*. Those introspections done in 1976 are a kind of introspection analysis on 'I am', 'I want to show off'... In all of these paintings, I put negative parts of myself. I could have put only positive parts, but all those negative parts were strong.

*SG: Do some of those introspections still apply to you today?*

BV: All, all of them! I'm always jealous, I'm always anxious, I'm always... I am now missing one painting about my sexuality, *sexualité refoulée*. My sexuality is always there. My sexuality... at some time I stop. Although, physically I can.



**IN ADDITION**

# ANTONY GORMLEY

By Karlyn De Jongh

January 2010



*Antony Gormley (1950, London, UK) makes 3-dimensional works that deal directly with the presence of his own body. Gormley's own body is the point of departure to discuss the human body in general, which he understands as a place of memory and transformation. Most of his early works are based on the process of casting; in these works Gormley's body functions as subject, tool and material. More recent works deal with the body in a more abstract or indirect way and are concerned with the human condition, exploring the collective body and the relationship between self and other.*

*Karlyn De Jongh: In 2010 your work Event Horizon is exhibited in and around Madison Square Park in New York City. Thirty-one life-size casts of your body will be placed on the pathways and sidewalks of the Park as well as on the rooftops of the Flatiron District. Most of these sculptures will be on rooftops. In an interview, Vito Acconci told me that in New York you are in close-up and that you rarely see buildings, that you need to be in Brooklyn to see the buildings in Manhattan. To what extent do you think people will be able to see your sculptures? And to consider or contemplate them? Or is the mere presence of your sculptures on these rooftops enough for you?*

*Antony Gormley: Event Horizon is a scopic field, and the high density and height of the buildings of Manhattan obviously intensifies the tension between the palpable, the perceivable and the imaginable. However, we are seeking a method of positioning the sculptures as close to the edge of the buildings as possible. The work will enter into and out of visibility, and that is the point. The field of the installation should have no defined edges and the ambition is to play with the very particular topology of Manhattan, making people more visually aware of their own environment, and indeed the edge of it, above their heads.*

*What matters is the way in which the sculptures infect the collective space of the city. The work is an acupuncture of this space, and its subject is not the sculptures but New York, its inhabitants, and how their perception of their environment changes as a result of these foreign bodies. It's about the searching gaze, the idea of looking and finding, or looking and seeking, and in the process re-assessing your own position in the world. So we're looking and seeking things that lie on the edge, and at the same time perhaps becoming aware of our status of embedment. In this installation of Event Horizon, more than any other, the occupants of the buildings around Madison Square will be aware of these liminal positions as they look from their windows.*

*KDJ: In the interview with me for PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE 2009 you have spoken with me about the placement of your work, that you like placing the body "at the edge" and that you raise the question "where does the human body belong?". Why do you search these places that are on the edge? How does the 'danger' of being on an edge relate to your understanding of the body as the first shelter?*

*AG: The work treats both context and the body as a test site, and interrogates the unconsidered nature of collective space. In every installation of Event Horizon the nature of that space is different and indeed the subjective reaction of the inhabitants of that infection will be different.*

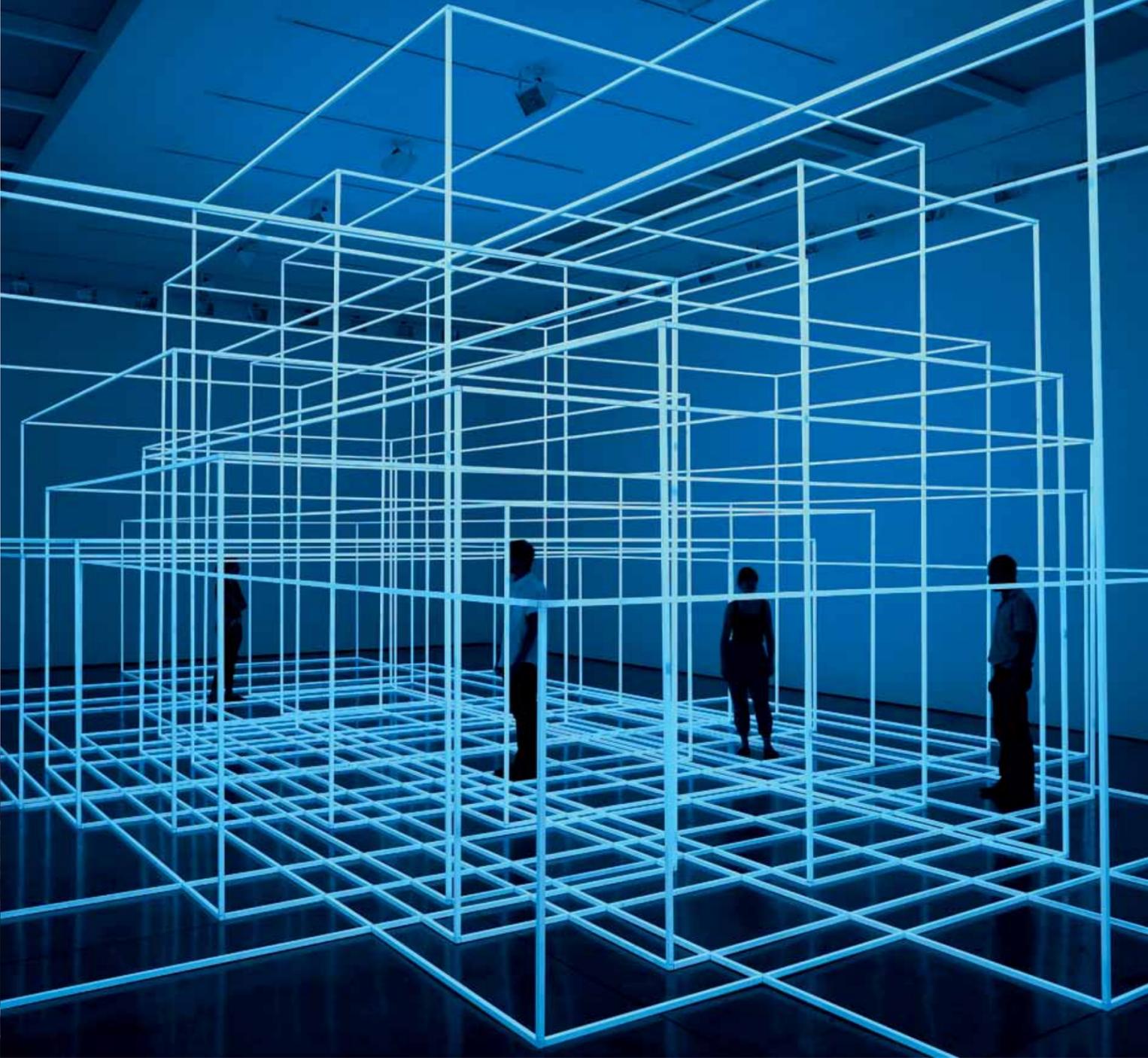
*KDJ: In 2007 Event Horizon was in London, UK; in 2008 in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Now, in 2010, the work will be in New York City. What do these different locations contribute to answering your question about where the human body belongs?*

*AG: By being vertical animals, with the cerebral cortex as the highest point in the body, the human body has separated itself from most of the biosphere. That verticality is very much part of this work. It's still asking the same question: Where does the human body belong, now that we have separated ourselves in terms of specification from those other, more enmeshed, animals? This pertains to our eco-niche as much as it does to our body-type. The human body is now detached and in some senses might belong more to space than it does to the earth. When Event Horizon was going to go to Moscow I was very aware of images of the astronaut around the city as being the imagined future realm of the human body.*

*KDJ: At the same time that Event Horizon is exhibited in New York, you will have a solo exhibition at Sean Kelly Gallery. There you will show your work Breathing Room, for which a new construction will be created for their gallery space. You have said that the body is the first form of architecture. How does Breathing Room relate to the body? What is it that you want with this work? Is it also a body for you? Or is it about the encounter of the viewer's body with the work? How does this Breathing Room differ from the one you created in 2006?*

*AG: Breathing Room starts an exploration of the living space enclosed within a room and produces an object that is perhaps as ambivalent as the recent body-works (which are completely abstract). You are not certain whether you are looking at a drawing or an object, something*





virtual or real, an object or a space. This is a kind of measure or trap that the viewer's body is invited to go around and to enter. The work is always dependent on the proportions and overall volume of the room. At the centre is a cube space-frame which describes a thirteenth of the total room-volume. We re-stage it four times more, with each frame pulled along one axis. The viewer's body is the subject of this spatial configuration, and can move around it, through it, and dwell inside it. The space alternates between very bright light that stays on for around one minute and a glow-time of about fifteen minutes. So the work alternates between a meditative and an interrogative state.

*KDJ: You have described the body as a place of memory and transformation. In One & Other—your project for Trafalgar Square in London, UK—the*

*transformation of the body seems literal: 'the body' changes every hour. Is this indeed the case for you? To what extent can you speak about 'the body' in this work? How important are the one-hour time slots?*

AG: This was an exercise in self-representation, but also an exercise in interrogating the status of the statue; the statue that endures in time and in the elements. Now art is being replaced by life. But it also has to endure, in time and in the elements, so it was very important that it was a completely uninterrupted occupation of the plinth for the one hundred days. The idea of this was a slow frame change which nevertheless maintained a continuity. We started with the individual person, and ended up with some idea of the collective body. Every person who contributed to that time-line of representations changed it.

*KDJ: It seems that several Plinthers see their hour in One & Other as a highlight, as an important moment in their lives. It is interesting to see what they do during their hour: many speak up for good causes, they are active and use sound. You have described your work as very quiet and contemplative. How do you see this living sculpture in reference to your other work?*

AG: All of my work demands a certain kind of projection. You could say: How do we project our lives into the silence and stasis of sculpture? How do we use it as a focus for the things that we have and it lacks (meaning freedom of movement, thought and feeling)? And in a sense that's exactly what *One & Other* became: this isolated and idealised space of public sculpture becoming the place of personal projection.

*KDJ: In the interview you did with me last year (2009), you said that you try to do very little (as opposed to the idea of the sculptor who does a lot) and start from your own body. In One & Other you seem to be there only indirectly. Why did you choose this position? How are you embodied by the men and women on the Plinth? How do you see the relation between yourself and 'the other' in this work?*

AG: *One & Other* is an authorless work. There is no object here; I was only responsible for a frame, which I allowed life to occupy. It is my work, but it is also everybody's work. We have to wait and see how this shift from object to space will pan out!

Images: Antony Gormley, *EVENT HORIZON*, 2007 (p385); *ONE & OTHER*, 2009 (p386); *BREATHING ROOM III*, 2010 (p387). All images © the Artist

# TIME IN CONTEMPORARY ART

**ROMAN OPALKA**  
**TATSUO MIYAJIMA**  
**RENE RIETMEYER**

By Karlyn De Jongh  
April-May 2010

*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 three contemporary artists who have taken this concept as a motive in their work: Roman Opalka, Tatsuo Miyajima and Rene Rietmeyer. It becomes clear that time in art 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>*

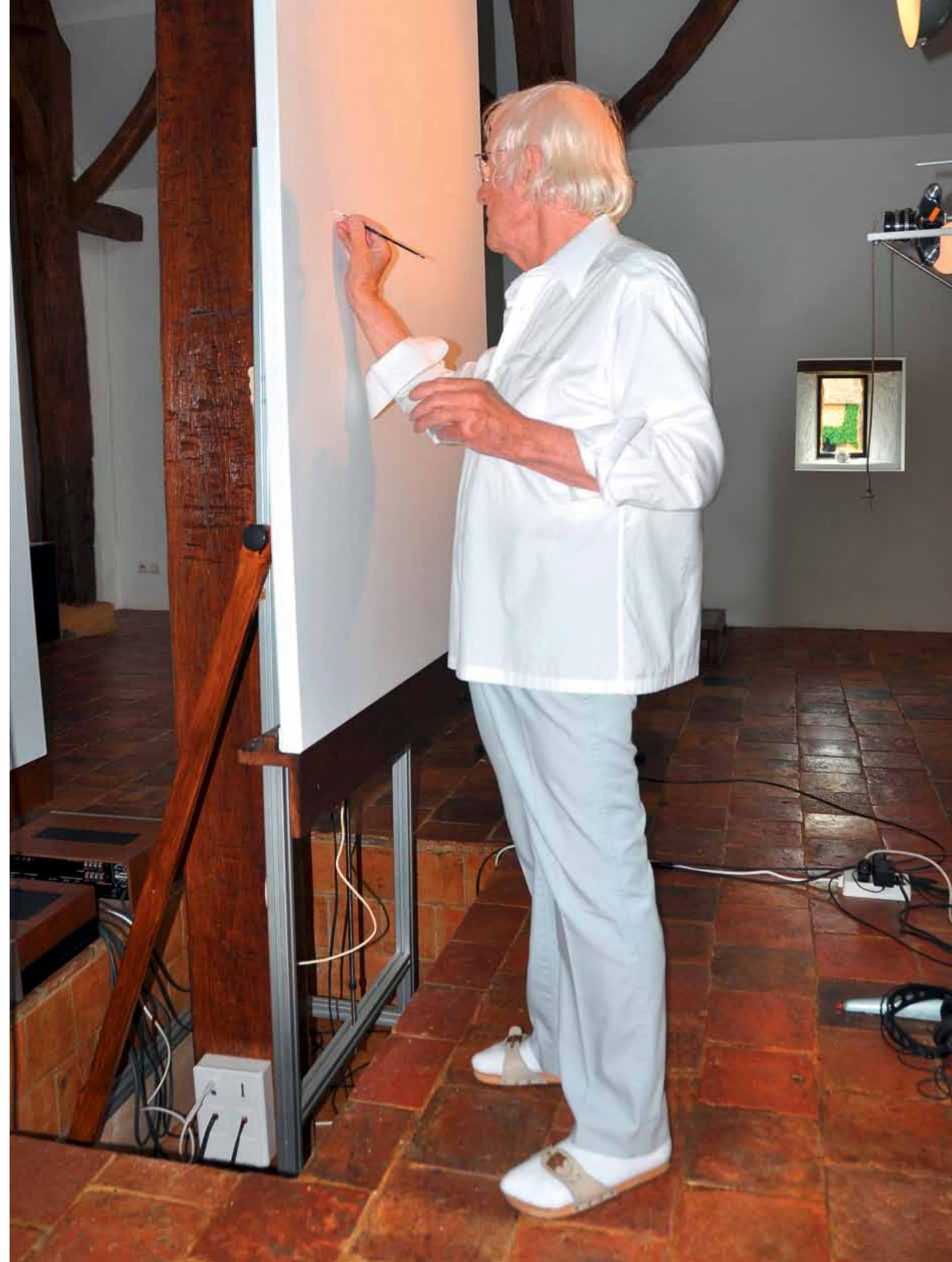
As a curator for the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, I organize exhibitions and symposia and publish texts about the concepts time, space and existence together with my colleague Sarah Gold. The project was initiated in 2002 by the Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer, who defined these concepts as essential themes for his own art. He 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.

Even though the concepts time, space and existence have been a point of discussion for many years in philosophy, physics and other fields of study, art seems to have stayed 'behind'. It seems that there have been artists' movements for which time and space were an issue, such as in Futurism or Cubism, but they do not seem to have been the primary concern. Within artists' movements there have been single artists who seem to have been concerned with time. The

impressionist artist Claude Monet for example, painted a series of works with the façade of the Cathedral in Rouen, France. Each of these paintings shows this façade at a different hour of a day and at different times of the year. But also here seems to count: time was an element in these paintings, but it does not seem to have been the specific topic of the work. By these artists the thoughts about time and space are assumptions. Because of the further knowledge we gained over the years about a concept as time, it is likely that we see these paintings of Monet differently now than they may have been seen at the moment they were painted. Through the developed knowledge of the viewer, concepts that may have been unconsciously brought in by the artist, are now recognized as being present. And still: working with this PERSONAL STRUCTURES project, I meet artists who do not seem to have 'thoughts' about what they have been doing: they 'simply' made the work. The 'thoughts' are assumptions and read into the work by others, Art Historians for example. There are, however, artists who do have time as their main topic, Roman Opalka for example, whose work and thoughts will be discussed in this article. It is almost impossible not to notice that the work he has made for the past 45 years has been about time passing.

That it is not so easy to formulate a stance towards these concepts and to present philosophical thoughts in an artwork also becomes clear when looking at the age at which artists who do work with such thematic in their work, have developed their practice and thoughts. For all three concepts addressed in the PERSONAL STRUCTURES project, it seems that many artists go through a period of search to come to a point where they can discuss these concepts in their work. The thoughts about these concepts take time to develop; they are not easy to discuss nor to form a personal opinion and present it in a 2- or 3-dimensional object. One needs life-experience, one needs time to develop one's thoughts about time.

In this article it is my goal to explore the subject of time in art today. Within contemporary art there are many artists who have sincerely thought about time or refer to it in their art practice. However, it seems that only very few have taken this concept as the main focus or motive in their work. The subject is so complex and personal that no artist approaches time in the same manner. I will highlight a few. An artist who seems to have been occupied with time is the Japanese



artist On Kawara. On Kawara's series of work manifest his existence, marking a day in his life. His *Today Series*—also called *Date paintings*—is probably the most well known: a monochrome ground on which month, day and year are painted in letters and figures. On Kawara started this series in 1966 and continues to paint such works until the present time. To say something about On Kawara's concept of time is, however, problematic: the artist himself seems to have never published any personal written statements. The only statements he has given are his artworks. Therefore, I prefer to not further discuss his work here, everything I say remains a 'guess'.

Another artist who has been dealing with time is the Taiwanese performance artist Tehching Hsieh. After growing up in Taiwan, he came to the USA in 1974, where he stayed as an illegal immigrant for fourteen years, until he was granted amnesty in 1988. During this period, Hsieh made five *One Year Performances* in and around his studio in New York City, and started his *Thirteen Year Plan*. His performances were based on giving himself restrictions, such as not allowing himself to look for shelter and therefore living outside in New York for one year, or staying one year in a cage, not allowing himself to read or talk to anyone. Using long durations, Tehching Hsieh's performances centralize time as the main theme of his work, making art and life simultaneous. Time is understood by him as a life sentence: life is passing time. Since the millennium, released from the restrictions of the *Thirteen Year Plan*, Hsieh is no longer doing art. His performances were so extreme, that for him it became too much on his life, it took too much power and he stopped actively making art performances. As he told me, now he is "doing life."

Two artists who, although less specific, address time in their work are the Americans Max Cole, whose line paintings are concerned with infinity, and Joseph Kosuth whose work is about meaning, but for example made a work called *1 and 5 Clocks*. Their work addresses time only from a specific angle, but they did speak about it. In the panel discussion of our PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME symposium in Amsterdam, for instance, Kosuth stated the following: "On first thought I would assume 'time' to be, intrinsically, devoid of meaning. At best it would be a flow which provides the dynamic within which meanings are formed for individuals or society. But for itself, it has no 'meaning' per se." Not only more established artists, but also amongst young artists the concept of time is represented in art: examples are the Belgian artist Kris Martin who addresses time using found objects and the Japanese performance artist SASAKI who draws life-time on the beat of the heart. Each of these artists is so specific, that their work does not overlap, but approaches time in a very personal manner. They cannot be linked directly to each other. I have chosen not to focus on these artists in this essay, but rather on three other artists who have extensively spoken about time and have also discussed several aspects of the 'matter', who have extensively proven for many years that for them their work specifically addresses time.

What the work of the previously mentioned artists does make clear, is the following: In art, time seems to be discussed mainly in its relation to life, to human life and in particular our own personal existence. It is the creation of an awareness of time and of our lifetime within time that seems important to many artists. This is not

only something they want for the viewer of their work, but also for themselves. And this means: you have to live your thoughts, you have to realize them in reality, in a realistic manner. To be able to make an object, whether it is a painting or a 3-dimensional installation, that contains your thoughts, you have to live them: Thoughts and life are integrated; they are the same. A good artist lives his thoughts and lives his art. Like the Austrian artist Arnulf Rainer said: "For 24 hours a day, my principal occupation consists of working as an artist, discussing with myself, and thinking about money that is to be spent. Earlier on I also did what others consider to be living." And he adds in an interview with me: "Life, as it appears, is a pale reflection of art, of artistic creation." Rainer's words show an awareness that one only has 24 hours a day and that you have to set your priorities towards what you do with these 24 hours: he does with his time what he considers to be most important. It is an awareness of the limited amount of life-time.

It is this desire to demonstrate time, the passing of time, and to create an awareness about time, that is present in the works by three contemporary artists: Roman Opalka, Tatsuo Miyajima and Rene Rietmeyer. All three have been sincerely occupied with time for a number of years. In this article, I will show their perspectives on time. I will do this by discussing their work. I have chosen these three artists, because of their differences: they are from different parts of the world and different generations. On the other hand, there are similarities that may show a general tendency in thinking about time in art. In this article, I will describe their work, their thoughts about time and how they realize these thoughts in their lives. The thoughts presented here are based on the personal contact I had with them or what they said in the symposia I organized. The three artists represent their thoughts in any of their works. That is why the images selected, are mainly to show how each artist chose to represent time in their art; each work may highlight a certain aspect, but the overall meaning is the same. The artworks referred to are examples for the general body of work.

### 1. Roman Opalka: A monument to nonsense

Roman Opalka (1931-2011) is a Polish artist, who has spent the past 45 years painting the progression of numbers from 1 to infinity. Painting these numbers, Opalka realizes a program with which he portrays time passing. There is only one date: the beginning, 1965. In this year the artist started painting numbers 1, 2, 3... on a canvas, using white paint. In the symposium PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME in Amsterdam in 2007, Opalka says the following: "All the machines we know of, the clocks, "tell" the time, but I "show" time, and that is something entirely different. This is the painterly solution to the question concerning what a visualization of time might be. In this sense numbers accomplish best what we up to this day may show of time in the sense of progression, in the sense of dynamics, in the sense of the unity and the expansion of time."<sup>2</sup> Opalka starts each picture from the top left corner and paints from left to right, ending at the bottom right. It has resulted in approximately 230 paintings, which he calls *Details*.<sup>3</sup> Opalka's paintings are, however, not solely a progression of numbers on a canvas. There are several aspects of Opalka's work that are important in order to understand his interpretation of time.

First of all, there is the background color of the canvas. While the numbers from 1 to infinity are painted in white, the background color changed gradually over time. This change was part of the concept: Opalka started with a black background, adding 1% white for each background in the years to come. The adding of 1% white was based on an estimate: at that time, men who were born in his region were estimated to become 75 years of age. Adding 1% of white with each painting meant that Opalka would paint white numbers on a white background by the time of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. The last 5 years of years of his life, Opalka had been painting white on white until he died in 2011.

While painting his numbers, Opalka simultaneously recorded the numbers on a tape recorder in a monotonous voice. He spoke the numbers in the Polish language, which was his mother tongue. The pronunciation of numbers in Polish is “logical”: the numbers come in order of appearance; 85 is eighty-five and not, like in German *funf-und-achtzig* or in French *quatre-vingt-cinq*. When displaying his paintings in an exhibition, the sound of his voice fills the room and allows for a contemplative atmosphere. The audio used for exhibitions, is a mix between different recordings of spoken numbers; you hear numbers in a random order, referring to what happens in your head when reflecting. The artist chose this combination of an audio and visual display of time, because it manifests two different times simultaneously: the linear time of the painting and the not-linear time that is going back and forth in your head, reflecting—for example while looking at the painting.

Opalka not only showed ‘time passing’, but also portrayed himself: the passing of his life-time. A camera installation stood in front of the canvas he was painting. After each day of working in his studio, the artist took his own picture. The photos show the artist’s face, frontal, wearing the same type of white shirt and the same haircut. On the background is his painting, showing the numbers he just added. Keeping the visual aspects of the photographs the same, the effects of time in his face become clearer. When hanging the photographs, Opalka takes his own height as a reference, keeping in mind the change of his height over time—from 177 to 170 cm. The photographs show the stages in the artist’s life. Even though these photographs are called *Auto-portraits*, they are, however, not only self-portraits: “I do not tell about my life, I make life manifest.”

Roman Opalka came to his concept in 1964, at the age of 33, when he was waiting for his wife in Café Bristol in Warsaw, Poland. She was two hours late and he had time to think about his future. The artist was already quite well-known at that time, but was struggling with his work. He wondered how time could be painted. From 1959 to 1963, he was painting his ‘hourglass paintings’ called *Chronomes*: white dots on a black background. The problem for him about these paintings was, that it was difficult to determine where the beginning is and where the end: he says that it could not be measured or determined. For these *Chronomes*, there was no direction, while time for Opalka does have a direction. To that came the question of ‘what is left to do?’, which was the basis of a popular discussion concerning the end of art. At that point in the 1960s, painting seemed to have dealt with all possible topics. Opalka, however, realized no artist had

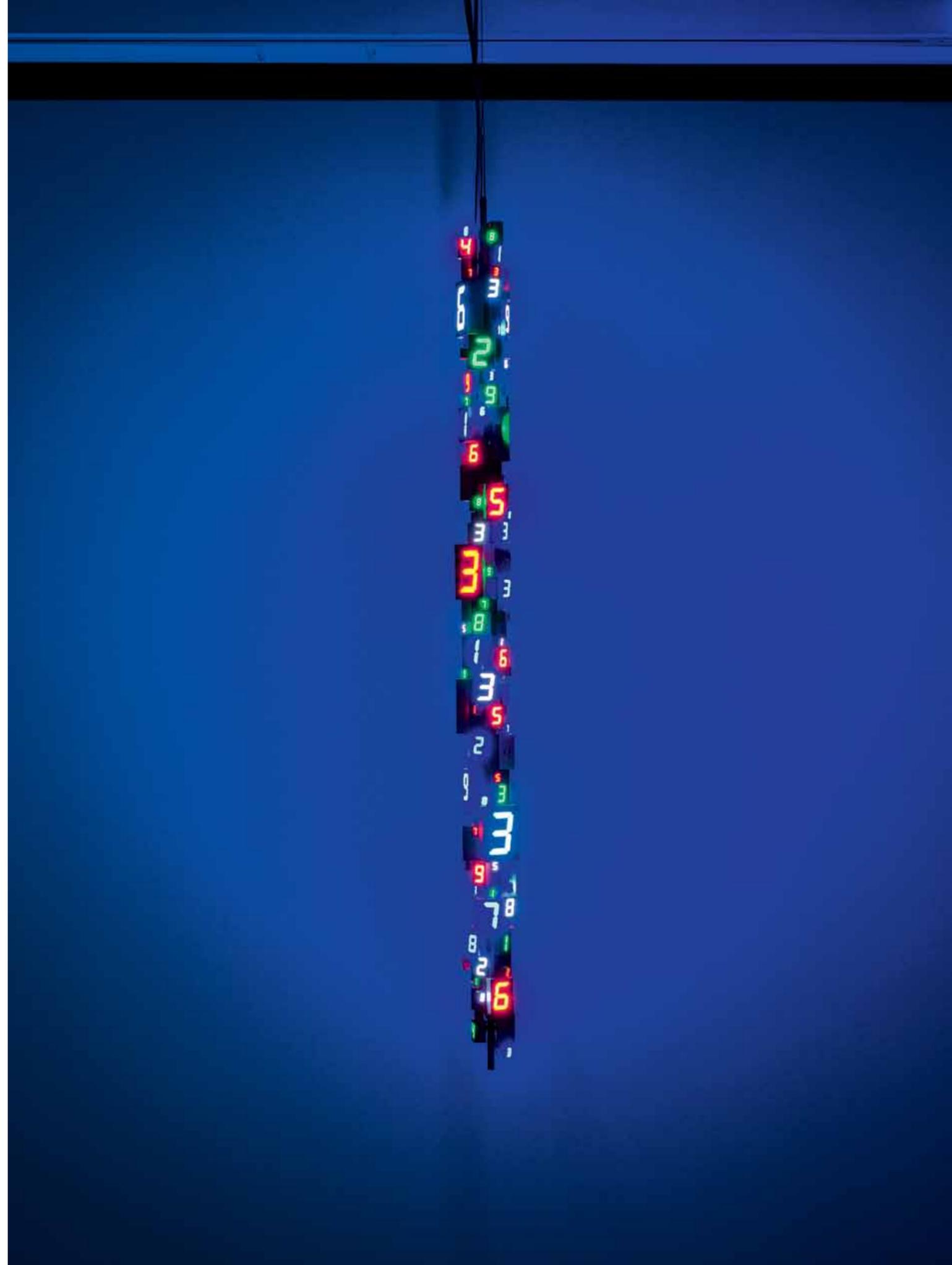
dedicated his work to time. In this way, he found a way out of the impasse that painting seemed to be in—and, as he claimed, he would be the last Avant Garde artist.<sup>4</sup> The moment he was waiting for his wife, the idea occurred to him that each dot could be a number. With this new concept, using numbers to show time, his problems were solved: it was possible to point a beginning, his number 1, there would be a direction, and there would be no end.

#### From 1 to infinity

Opalka’s notion of time developed like the work. The artist said he understands time as well as life better, although even in our last meeting he admitted he doesn’t really understand it. But Opalka added the question: “How can you understand a thing as stupid as our existence? Maybe that sounds too brutal, but this existence makes no sense, it is nonsense. And this nonsense is my work.” For Opalka, time makes no sense and, although we keep trying, we cannot understand it.

After the moment in Café Bristol, it took Opalka 7 months to start with the realization of his concept and paint the first number, number 1. It may seem such a simple movement, just a small line, but this small line had far reaching consequences: painting numbers from 1 to infinity for the rest of his life, doing nothing other artistically than painting these numbers. This awareness that this would be his life, was very strong: “I already knew what this concept was the beginning of. I knew it would continue throughout my entire life.” After a few weeks, the artist developed a heart problem because the tension was so unbelievably strong. He adds that this tension was “not only because it was so good, but because of the sacrifice it meant I would have to make a life long for this work.” He spent one month in hospital because of it. And even after 45 years, recalling this experience, it affected Opalka.

But Opalka chose to start living out his program. The awareness of painting numbers for the rest of his life, without purpose, did not keep him from continuing. He didn’t want to leave it. For him, the sense of his program lies in its nonsense: not only the nonsense of art, but the nonsense of existence and time. His work is as he says “a monument to nonsense.” As he told Sarah Gold and me when we visited him in France for our Art Project Roman Opalka: TIME PASSING: “Our life has no meaning. My work is the nonsense that manifests this. It is comparable with the German drinking a glass of liquor, or the Frenchman having a glass of wine: life has no meaning. The German and the Frenchman are right. They are also philosophers, but then they have to show it. That is almost hypocritical, but I think they should show it. The consequences are very different when you very seriously have these thoughts that our existence has no sense.”<sup>5</sup> The wish to make this ‘nonsense’ manifest, may come from the Polish mentality of that time. Poland was a socialist country. “It was a Marxist world back then. To work was the goal. Work was like a certain religion; it was something positive for the economy and for the people. This example, that is my work, is such a big nonsense... I can tell to no worker that what he does, makes no sense at all. He needs to earn money. The nonsense of my work has never been so strong with regard to production, it is a productive mentality: I had to create something. But I made something that has no sense: I could



not eat or sell it.”<sup>6</sup> This socialist climate in which Poland found itself during that time was important in the development of Opalka’s concept. Opalka said that there were good galleries in Poland, galleries that were not influenced by the idea that “time is money”; there was total freedom without commerce. The artist saw this as his chance. Because of the lack of a commercial atmosphere, Opalka claimed to have been freer than artists living in other parts of the world, and named On Kawara who started his *Today series* around the same moment as Opalka started his program as an example. The ‘nonsense’ of living out a program for showing time, has much to do with Opalka’s interpretation of time.

Time, for Opalka, moves continuously in a linear way. There is no repetition. As Opalka told me in a meeting in Venice in April 2010, he cannot even repeat the numbers on his tape recorder. Wishing to remake a tape he lost in which he spoke 1,000,000, it appeared impossible because his voice had changed so much over time. Opalka compares it to a river: “With my work it is something like a river, but the river has only one direction.” This continuous movement goes on into infinity.

But although time is infinite, Opalka did seem to point out a beginning. Time does not seem to be something that has always been there; it is something that continues to exist. Maybe this idea of a beginning is Opalka’s religious residue. He did, however, speak about a Big Bang and even remarked that there may have been other Big Bangs: where the beginning lies, is unclear. In reference to this the artist has described himself as an agnostic and admitted that he ‘just’ doesn’t know. With respect to his paintings has he described his number 1 as a Big Bang. But 1 is not only the beginning: according to Opalka, the 1 is everything, a unit. The artist mentioned that he could have stopped painting after marking the 1, because it contains all the other numbers, just like each *Detail* contains his entire concept. It is here where all the dynamics exert their power, like the number of a birth date. Opalka adds that the actual birth is administrative information and that we have to keep in mind that the real beginning is in the concept, which date is difficult to determine.

Time may be going infinitely in one direction, but the experience of time can go in all sorts of directions. This is what Opalka manifested with his spoken numbers. To explain this, Opalka took the example from his favorite philosopher Martin Heidegger in his book *Feldweg* [Pathway] from 1949, and compared this aspect of time with going for a walk. Influenced by this book, the artist was of the opinion that: “If you go for a walk, you go in one direction, but your head goes all directions.” What happens in the interim time, the relativity of how long an hour or two hours can last, cannot be measured. The mind goes in all directions. “What has happened in his head during his walk, that is time. The steps are already there, but in between the steps that we take, is our life, our thoughts.” Opalka described this as being an entirely phenomenal emotion. This way of thinking about time was part of Opalka’s program. With this example of going for a stroll, Opalka showed a different understanding of time, one that is not programmed, but has a rhythm of its own. As he said, this aspect of time is both demonstrated by the spoken Polish numbers, but

also of concern for his paintings: “The works are not all the same, they are different. This is also the rhythm of my existence: sometimes I do not sleep, at other times I do sleep, sometimes I sleep more, or less. This is the best: not to program yourself like that. In my work I have created a program, but this program has a lot to do with this imprecise time span.”<sup>7</sup>

#### Being toward death

Time for Opalka was ongoing, linear and separate from life itself. His work shows the progression of numbers from 1 to infinity. Even though his paintings portray time as an independently moving entity, on the other hand the work addresses the time we find ourselves in. They are intertwined with the artist’s life. Opalka has stated that he paints his existence: “I have chosen my life as the time period, as the emotion facing what would be time. This is the work of someone freer than any man in history has ever been before. He reflects upon his existence and thus, it is also an echo of philosophy, for example, Heidegger, the ‘existence’ is in my work.” As Opalka saw a direction of time, he saw a direction of life as well. In this quote, he refers to Heidegger’s Being-toward-death [*Sein zum Tode*]. Opalka seemed to understand himself as well as his work as a Being-toward-death. “Heidegger’s Feldweg, his walk on the path through the field, that is like my work. I walk further into the landscape, the horizon goes on, with me... This is almost like what I do in my work. Being-toward-death means that life is determined by the awareness of death.” Opalka remarked that without knowing that we will die, we cannot live a real life. With this he meant that only by knowing that we will die, there is an emotion towards life. Without it, life would be monotony without a goal. This does not mean that death is the goal of life; it means that Opalka considered life to be without purpose, but that we at the same time should enjoy it, because it is the only life we do have.

Even though Opalka described himself as an agnostic, he admitted that he ‘almost’ sees an element of Christianity in his work. This element lies in Opalka’s sacrifice. Living out his program, the artist saw as a sacrifice, a sacrifice to mankind and to art to show the passing of time. He had been painting his numbers for 45 years, every day. At the end of his life, he was not physically strong enough to paint more than one hour a day. Not being able to do very much anymore, to spend the time that he can do something on continuing his program, he saw as sacrifice and he compared it with doing impositions. Opalka sacrificed his life-time to portray time. This also means that Opalka’s life is so intertwined with his work, that he has compared this to the story of Jesus Christ and how He sacrificed his body: “this is my body.” His body is always being there in the work; each painting is like a mirror, a reflection of himself. Opalka’s paintings are his life; the work of Opalka was finished, when he himself died. The artist mentioned this several times: “In the work the concern [...] is for the completion of existence. This is a very special situation inherent to its construction. The work is always sufficiently there.” This means that Opalka did not have to complete a canvas in order for a work to be ‘finished’. The work is as it is. One could even say that when Opalka painted the first number, the one, *l’unité*, everything was there already. About this beginning, the artist remarks: “Of course, this was only in the sense of a concept. In order



for it to be a work I had to make this sacrifice, otherwise it would only have had a logical basis, but would not be a work. My work simply contains all aspects of existence. My work is always virtually complete. It is no problem, not to finish a picture. I have always completed the work. Like my life, it is always complete.”

As humans, we live only a short moment in time. But also with regard to life, Opalka speaks about infinity. The artist mentioned that: “I cannot know when I will die. I know that I will die, but the moment when it happens is so infinite because no one will know that he has died. [...] In this sense we are eternal.” The knowledge of the moment of death is important here. We know that we will die, but we can never know that we have died: the artist made a combination between his Being-toward-death and his idea that life, like time, is infinite. Death seemed to be a difficult subject for Opalka: on the one hand he saw it as a liberation of living out his program, on the other hand he feared it like anyone else.

## 2. Tatsuo Miyajima: time is life

Also in other parts of the world and by the next generation of artists there are serious and sincere attempts being made to address time in art, such as in the work of the Japanese artist Tatsuo Miyajima (\*1957, Japan). For Miyajima, time is life. His goal is to raise an awareness of what he calls ‘The Life’, an umbrella concept for time and existence. Although he addresses ‘The Life’, Miyajima focuses on time as the primary motive to explain it. Miyajima clarifies: “Why I did not explain ‘The Life’ directly is because at the beginning of my performance period, I just did not have a clear mind for it, and until 1995 I was just too immature to use words and also too inexperienced to explain it. Like many others before me have also done, it means that it is easier to explain ‘Time’ as a concept than ‘The Life.’” Miyajima’s ‘The Life’ is an English translation of the Japanese ‘Inochi’, which does not only refer to each person’s life, but to that of animals, stones and plants as well. Miyajima explains that in the Eastern world ‘The Life’ is taken as a totality; it refers to everything that has life. In the past few years, he has started to try explaining ‘The Life’ directly, while holding on to his notion of time.

Tatsuo Miyajima has been making works that address time since the 1980s. Just like Opalka, Miyajima uses numbers to express movement and change. According to him, the counting numbers are universally understandable and that’s why he uses them. Miyajima’s understanding of ‘The Life’ is represented by the numbers on his LEDs. He says that counting gives you the feeling of ‘the passage of time’, a ‘rhythm by counting speed’. Each LED in Miyajima’s installations has its predetermined speed. The combination of LEDs in an installation—sometimes 1000 different lights—show different speeds. Each countdown or enumeration of numbers seems to stand for one life, for the life of the individual. The variations simulate the differences between individual lives: some people’s lives can last 100 years; others die young.

Miyajima’s body of work is diverse: he started out with performances, continued to making sculptural installations, public projects and 2- and 3-dimensional wall installations. Despite the variations, now his work is often easily recognizable as being made by Miyajima. They have in common that they involve counting numbers. Most

works are made with LEDs of numbers that count from 1 to 9 or from 9 to 1; zero is not shown. Instead of showing the zero, there is a moment of darkness on the moment zero is ‘expected’ to appear. It is Miyajima’s way to emphasize this moment of zero. “One other thing [...] is to emphasize the deleting of the zero. For example, 9, 8, 7, ... the numbers go down in order. Zero will arrive naturally by prediction. At the moment the zero should come, it gets dark (no number). So, you can come up with the thought why there are no zeros. There, you can think about zero. So, the numbers go down in order and go up in order, that is very important and, in fact, that is my expression to let the audience consciously experience ‘Ku.’” In particular towards his work *Counter Void* from 2003 that was installed in Tokyo’s Roppongi area, Miyajima explains the absence of zero, ‘Ku’ as death: “Originally, Roppongi is town of night and filled with desire even more than daytime. I dare to bring ‘Death’ to such night in Roppongi, bring ‘Darkness’ to the center of mass media. The artwork will create the black hole of ‘Death’ and ‘Darkness’, and offers opportunity to think of ‘Deeper Life.’”

The counting numbers represent ‘The Life’. All moments in the counting are included: the numbers 1 to 9 as well as the zero. The numbers 1 to 9, the visible part, stand for life. Zero is the counterpart of ‘The Life’. For Miyajima, zero is the moment of death; death is ‘not’ visible: there is a moment of darkness when zero is expected to appear. Nothingness is only one of zero’s meanings in Miyajima’s work. The other meaning is vast quantity. With ‘vast quantity’ the artist indicates the possibility of something in the future, that there is a potential. This means that the moment of darkness is also the possibility of a new beginning, the possibility for a new life to be born. Or: that there is a tremendous mass we cannot see but is there, we cannot see but there are many. Zero meaning both the nothing and the plus, Miyajima says to go back to its original meaning. In a talk at TATE Modern in London on 24 April 2010, Miyajima explains death as a state of sleep: it is a preparation for the next birth. ‘The Life’ includes both life and death. In his work this is portrayed as the visible and the not visible; it includes the numbers from 0 to 9. But it does not stop after zero. Zero means potential; ‘The Life’ continues after death and keeps repeating. ‘The Life’ is like a wavy line, the recurrence again and again.

That ‘time is life’ means that we should not deal with it as a concept, but that it has to be taken realistically. As he indicated in an interview with me: “My work [...] does not indicate ‘Time’, ‘Space’ and ‘The Life’; my works try to live with ‘Time’, ‘Space’ and ‘The Life.’” For Miyajima, time and life are not concepts, but they exist and are real. This means that Miyajima does not proclaim a theory about time. The work is made to give people the opportunity to think about how to live their life. He leaves it open, to give everyone the opportunity to fill it in for themselves. He does, however, have his personal interpretation of time. In 1987, the artist created three central concepts, which he does not seem to question: 1. keep changing; 2. continue forever; 3. connect with everything. Even though the first two may seem inseparable for a Western person, Miyajima explicitly remarks that in Eastern theory ‘Continue forever’ and ‘Keep changing’ are not the same. Together, the three concepts indicate ‘The Life’.



### Three concepts

Each LED in Miyajima's works keeps changing. Miyajima remarks: "Everything keeps changing, life keeps changing... [...] Even 'keep changing' is constantly changing." The LEDs count in order 1, 2, 3,... or 9, 8, 7,... The next number in the sequence is predictable. When the numbers change in another sequence, for example like this 1, 5, 10,..., Miyajima feels they are 'jumping' rather than changing. When counting backward 9, 8, 7,... the numbers go down in order and zero will arrive naturally by prediction. At the moment the zero should come, it gets dark, there is no number. This is different than expected; in this way, the moment of the zero is emphasized and the viewer is triggered to think about this moment and the meaning of zero. After this dark moment of zero, the counting starts all over again. It keeps on going and continues forever.

The idea that everything keeps changing is an important element of Miyajima's idea that 'The Life' continues forever. "What continues forever changes 'The Life', which is, to be born and to die. Those changes and the process of changing, continue forever. 'The Life' is forever, changing all the time, also death and come again, to be reborn. But to the world, 'The Life' appears the same. They have different faces, but 'The Life' is the same." This 'forever' has nothing to do with the permanency, which to the artist is the case in Western theory. There may be a permanency in 'continue forever', as it does continue forever, but it does not remain unchanged. In the Eastern world the thought is that a 'shape keeps changing by movement and that continues forever'. The movement is eternal. Miyajima adds: "Permanent, we use it, but one day we humans, or life, will die out. 'Changing by movement' does not die out."

The third of Miyajima's concepts 'connect with everything' is often visualized in the combination of LEDs as well as in the use of technical and natural materials in one artwork, such as in his *Pile Up Life* project where LEDs are connected by mud.<sup>8</sup> In Miyajima's installations there is hardly ever just one counting LED. But even this one LED shows the unity of numbers: the number 8 is digitally constructed out of seven parts, lines. By putting these seven parts on and off, all numbers can be created: 8 without its left two lines creates 3, without the top right corner it is 6. Miyajima explains: "In fact, the number 8 contains all numbers. It shows one is many and many is one. One human is the same person, but the human character changes many times (many). But it is just one human life (one). 'The Life' is one form (one). That one life changes many times (many). The number 8 contains all these images." In this way, a counting LED is a unity or whole that contains everything: life, the passing of life-time through the counting numbers and death.

### The awareness of time: Art in You

Although the three concepts are general, Miyajima describes another concept that is specific and aims to address each viewer: 'Art in You'. With 'Art in You' the artist tries to raise an awareness about 'The Life' by confronting the viewer with himself. Miyajima explains: "My concept 'Art in You' is that the work uses a mirror, which projects the inside of the body of the audience and they, the audience, discover the art inside of themselves. They notice 'the Art' which they had already in them. My artwork is the device for the audience to

take notice of 'their Art'. Otherwise, without having any background knowledge of it, we will not be moved by seeing artwork coming from a completely different culture, language or religion." Miyajima seems to present this mirror mainly by reacting on events that happen in the world: *Pile Up Life*, for example, addresses natural disasters and allowed the viewer to participate by selecting a counting speed for one LED. This focus on each viewer and allowing him to select this speed seems to connect with what Miyajima calls "personal time". This personal time is the experience of time: an event feels long or short depending on your situation. This to Miyajima is the main understanding of time. He says that: "Time' is definitely a personal thing. The Time concept [which] began in Greenwich in 1884 [was] the conceptual interpretation of a new modernism. It is based on the universe and an impersonal general theory. Essentially, 'Time' is the same as an individual's death. It should be very personal. Individual death exists in an infinite variety of distinctions. One is not the same as others."

### 3. 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>9</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." 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. Like Opalka, 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 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."

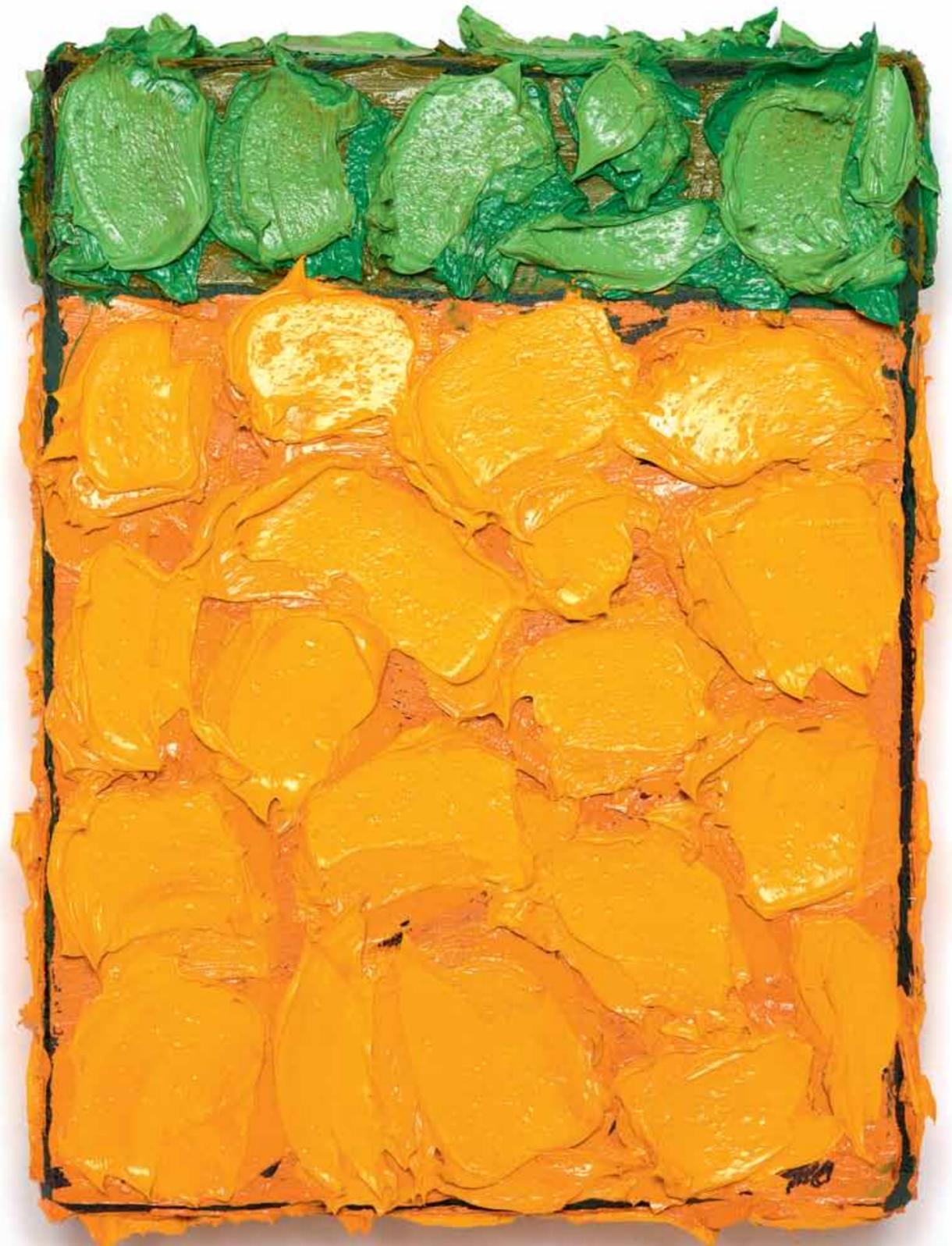
This awareness about ourselves within time is described by the artist as follows: "In general, awareness seems to be a combination of observation and the conscious reflection upon the observation, with the capability of handling language and language itself, as tools. The capability to be aware seems 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, 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 minuscule 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. Rietmeyer states: "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 an interview 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!"

#### Conclusion

In this article I have discussed three artists who deal with the question of time in their art practice: Roman Opalka, Tatsuo Miyajima and Rene Rietmeyer. I have not searched for an answer to the question of time as such, but showed aspects of it that appear, at least for these three artists, important in their personal interpretation of time. The differences in focus, however, makes it difficult to draw conclusions regarding the differences and similarities between the three interpretations of time. It would require a lot of time and effort to discuss each aspect in detail in order to compare. And: because of a lack of life-time in combination with a language barrier and cultural differences, it is and was also impossible to discuss time together with Opalka, Miyajima and Rietmeyer in a satisfying way. That is why I prefer to leave the interpretations open here and let them speak for themselves. If I must conclude, however, it is clear that for all three counts that there is no goal, no focus in time: time is something infinite that continues to exist—regardless of how this 'infinity' presents itself. It seems that in contemporary art, time is taken in its relation to life: the awareness of the limited time of our life in relation to the infinity of time in general. Our death is the reason to enjoy life and make the most out of it—whatever this 'most' means for each individual. Raising this awareness of time and a wish to leave a trace after they themselves have died, is important and even seems one of the main reasons for actually making the work.

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. Because Roman Opalka died after this article was first published, I have slightly edited the article where it talks about Opalka before printing it in this book.

2 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

3 This is the number of paintings Opalka mentioned in the Summer of 2008.

4 The discussion about the end of art, seems to be mainly a discussion about the end of painting. The sixties was the start of several new movements as a reaction to this. The Concept Art movement, of which Joseph Kosuth was one of the founders, or the Radical Painters, such as the American Marcia Hafif and Joseph Marioni, are examples. As far as I am concerned, Opalka is outside of these movements and found his own 'place' in the history of art by living out his program.

5 Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold, Roman Opalka. *TIME PASSING*, GlobalArtAffairs Foundation, the Netherlands, 2010, p. 58.

6 *TIME PASSING*, p. 61.

7 *TIME PASSING*, p. 57.

8 Exhibition *Tatsuo Miyajima. Pile Up Life* at Lisson Gallery in London, UK, 25 November 2009–16 January 2010. Later we showed *Pile Up Life* at the *PERSONAL STRUCTURES* exhibition as part of the Venice Biennale 2011.

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





## ANNA LENZ

No matter where we travelled—since 1960, a camera came along every time... As our life basically always revolved around art, and my husband Gerhard Lenz and I, being art collectors, also lived every day with art, this became the overall focus of my photography. It emerged into expressive series of encounters with artists in their studios, of many art festivities and cultural tours, and in particular series of our exhibitions.

For almost 40 years, we presented our ZERO-collection in various museums in cities all over Europe, a.o. Moscow, Warsaw, Madrid, Zagreb, Salzburg and Munich. A total of thirteen times, especially selected works went on tour, and every time my camera captured what were for us unforgettable moments: from the transportation and installation of the works, to the opening of the exhibitions. It is nice that my photographs, which originally and to a large extent developed within the context of exhibitions, were actually themselves shown in an exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2011; now it is complete.

The title PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME · SPACE · EXISTENCE refers to issues that play an important role also in my photographs: they document personal relationships, the passage of time, processes, places as well as various forms and states of being.

So many artists who are represented in our collection, we call our friends. They were always involved in our engagements and exhibitions and most of the time, they were present in large numbers.

Some of them no longer are alive; they are of course present in our collection through their works and alive through the photographs. I am specifically referring to the portraits of Jef Verheyen, Roman Opalka and Karl Prantl that are exhibited here, showing the artist as he is—through the photographs you suddenly feel their strong presence again. Especially with the portraits, I think it is important to let the artists be. It seemed best to me, to observe people and things from a distance, not to stage and therewith show direct involvement.

Over the years, people forget so much, that we often confuse things in retrospect, and keep coming back to the same questions: Which works were exhibited where? What were the rooms like? And the lighting? How and when did the stones of Karl Prantl come in place?

I therefore consider my pictures and series to be a form of diary. They document the history of our collection, and with it the history of the artworks and artist as they were with us.

What can photographs accomplish, what do they mean to me? They let us understand and process things. They let us discover or rediscover and, above all, remember. By taking pictures, precious moments can be saved, moments that would otherwise be lost forever, as if they never existed. From this perspective, the quality of each single photograph is secondary. First they are meant as a time document, they are true to life.

Motto for me and my camera was and is: "Make that visible which without you might never have been perceived." (Robert Bresson)

Egal, wohin die Reise ging—der Fotoapparat war seit 1960 immer dabei... Da sich unser Leben im Grunde immer um die Kunst drehte, und mein Mann Gerhard Lenz und ich als Sammler auch Tag täglich mit der Kunst leben, wurde diese zum übergreifenden Aspekt meines Fotografierens. Es entstanden ausdrucksstarke Serien von Begegnungen mit den Künstlern in ihren Ateliers, von vielen Kunst-Festen und Kulturreisen, vor allem aber von unseren gemeinsam organisierten Ausstellungen:

Seit fast 40 Jahren präsentieren wir unsere ZERO-Sammlung immer wieder europaweit in unterschiedlichen Museen, beispielsweise in Moskau, Warschau, Madrid, Zagreb, Salzburg oder München. Insgesamt dreizehn Mal gingen ausgewählte Werke nun auf Reisen, und jedes Mal hielt ich mit meiner Kamera für uns unvergessene Augenblicke fest: Angefangen vom Transport, dem Aufbau und der Hängung der Werke, bis hin zur Eröffnung der Ausstellungen.

Es ist schön, dass meine Fotos, die ja ursprünglich in der Mehrzahl im Rahmen von Ausstellungen entstanden, in 2011 tatsächlich selbst in einer Ausstellung gezeigt werden sind; so schließt sich der Kreis. Der Titel PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE verweist auf Aspekte, die auch für meine Fotografien eine wichtige Rolle spielen: sie dokumentieren persönliche Beziehungen, den Lauf der Zeit, Prozesse, Orte sowie verschiedene Formen und Zustände des Seins.

Zu vielen in unserer Sammlung vertretenen Künstlern stehen wir in freundschaftlichem Kontakt, sie waren bei unseren Unternehmungen und Ausstellungen immer eingebunden und meist in großer Zahl dabei. Einige von ihnen leben heute nicht mehr, sie sind natürlich durch

ihre Werke in unserer Sammlung präsent und durch die Fotos lebendig. Ich denke speziell an die Portraits von Jef Verheyen, Roman Opalka und Karl Prantl, die die Künstler in aller Natürlichkeit zeigen—, spürt man plötzlich wieder deren starke Präsenz. Gerade bei den Portraits halte ich es für wichtig, den Künstlern ihren eigenen Raum zu lassen. Schon immer entsprach es mir mehr, Menschen und Dinge aus dem Hintergrund zu beobachten, nicht zu inszenieren und dadurch eine intensive Form der Anteilnahme auszudrücken.

Man vergisst im Laufe der Jahre so vieles, häufig verwechselt man Dinge im Rückblick, und immer wieder kommen ähnliche Fragen auf: Welche Werke hingen wo, wie waren die Räume, wie die Lichtverhältnisse? Wie und wann kamen die Steine von Karl Prantl an ihren Ort? Meine Fotos und Serien betrachte ich daher als eine Form des Tagebuchs, sie dokumentieren die Geschichte der Sammlung, und damit zugleich die Geschichte der Kunstwerke und der Künstler mit uns. Was können Fotos leisten, was bedeuten sie für mich?

Sie lassen uns Dinge verstehen, verarbeiten, entdecken oder wiederentdecken und vor allem erinnern. Durch das Fotografieren können wertvolle Augenblicke bewahrt werden, die sonst für immer verloren wären, als hätte es sie nie gegeben. Die Qualität des einzelnen Fotos wird, aus diesem Blickwinkel gesehen, zweitrangig.

Sie haben in erster Linie die Bedeutung von Zeitdokumenten, sie sind aus dem Leben gegriffen. Leitspruch für mich und meine Kamera war und ist: „Mach sichtbar, was vielleicht ohne dich nie wahrgenommen worden wäre.“ (Robert Bresson)

# JANNIS KOUNELLIS

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

April 2013

*Jannis Kounellis (1936, Pireas, Greece) was an active member of the Arte Povera movement. Kounellis's multi-layered installations juxtapose earthy substances (i.e. coal, coffee, wool, iron, stone) with evocative objects (such as sewing machines), producing theatrical tableaux in which "art" collides with the "everyday." In this way, he attempts to deconstruct and re-contextualize artistic and cultural hierarchies, challenging not only the consumerist ideology of the art market but also the viewer's passive gaze. His ongoing investigation of material, process and adaptability references social and political concerns (commerce, agriculture, trade, labor), while his use of personal artifacts (overcoats, hats, shoes) sympathizes with the human condition, alluding to ideas of transience and regeneration.*

*Though performance-based and sculptural aspects of his work are apparent, Kounellis identifies as a painter; his canvas is real space. This sense of dimensionality was most famously demonstrated by his 1969 exhibition of twelve live horses at Galleria L'Attico, in Rome; the installation addressed the long history of equestrian representation while profoundly transforming the viewer's experience. Kounellis's classically-composed, landscape-like scenes are informed by his thorough understanding of art history, narrative and myth. The inherent tension between opposing elements (rigid/malleable, animate/immobile, structured/formless), deepen the poetic resonance of his chosen materials. As he has described: inorganic elements provide structure, organic elements provide sensibility. This dichotomy culminates in installations which are simultaneously pensive and engaged, meditative and provocative, spontaneous and deliberate.—Kounellis lives and works in Rome, Italy<sup>1</sup>*

*The following interview was done by Kounellis during the set-up time for his solo-exhibition at Cheim Read Gallery in New York, USA, when there was almost no time. The night of his opening and the printing of our book were on the same date: 2 May 2013.*

*KDJ: From seeing your work and reading your statements, I think what was very important to you—at least in your choice of materials—was 'to let things be' as well as to open up a space for thought, giving room to new ways of thinking. When looking back at the work you created over the past 50 years, what did this attitude bring you? Do you think you managed to change—even only a little—human thought?*

*JK: Maybe I was able to change myself a little, to cultivate my own idea of liberty, to measure the weight of consistency. I did not have the temperament to draw commandments. I love the dialectic because I think and I hope that the other is different from me.*

*JK: Forse sono riuscito a cambiare un pò me stesso, a coltivare una mia idea di libertà, a misurare il peso della coerenza. Non avevo il temperamento per disegnare dei comandamenti. Amo la dialettica, perché penso e spero che l'altro sia diverso da me.*

*SG: To you 'environments' have been until today an important part of your work. Today you are creating settings that manipulate the space and therewith the spectator's experience of that space. What would you like to achieve with your 'display of space'?*

*JK: It is better to say "polarize" the space, and understand that, talking about Space, there exists not only the division, horizontal or vertical, but there is also that unique and unrepeatable point that reveals the fullness of it.*

*JK: È più giusto dire "polarizzare" lo spazio, capire che, parlando di spazio, non esiste solamente la divisione, in orizzontale o verticale, ma c'è anche quel punto unico ed irripetibile che ne rivela la pienezza.*

*KDJ: In 2010, I visited your exhibition at Ambika P3 in London, UK. Besides the large work in the main space, the rest of the gallery was filled with small works that were spread out over the space—pieces of clothing that were 'just' hanging somewhere or were lying in corners. Walking through, felt like a discovery, it was as if I was navigating through the space and this created an awareness about different aspects of the space. To what extent is the space itself the art object that you are creating?*

*JK: I have been a traveler since the beginning, but I have never been a nomad. How could I have ever been? I was born in a city surrounded by walls and I still live in another city always surrounded by walls, but I have always been anxious to know the evident and hidden conditions of the world.*

*By travelling I discovered the possibilities that the space of a building could offer to my work; first of all being attracted by people, it was natural to shift from people to rooms and to put 100 kilos of coal at a precise spot near the corner, to polarize the space.*





JK: Sono stato sin dall'inizio un viaggiatore, ma non sono mai stato un nomade, come del resto non avrei mai potuto. Sono nato in una città circondata da muri e adesso vivo in un'altra città ugualmente circondata da muri, ma ho sempre avuto l'ansia di conoscere le condizioni evidenti e nascoste del mondo.

Viaggiando ho scoperto le possibilità che lo spazio di un edificio offriva al mio lavoro; essendo innanzitutto attratto dalle persone, è stato naturale per me passare dalle persone alle stanze e appoggiare un quintale di carbone in un preciso punto vicino all'angolo, per polarizzare lo spazio.

KDJ: In his *Die Wahrheit des Kunstwerkes* [The Origin of the Work of Art], Martin Heidegger speaks about the shoes of Van Gogh. The shoes have a functionality, but over time, when the shoes become outworn, they lose their 'raison d'être'—the truth or being of the shoes stays 'hidden' because you do not think about it (you just put them on). In the painting, according to Heidegger in this essay—'a' truth about these shoes is revealed and this—to him—is exactly what art does. Where Van Gogh paints his shoes, you 'just' take them and use them for your art, seemingly changing the meaning of the objects, but also of the space where you place them. What does this act of placing mean to you? How do meaning and space relate to each other? What role does your own perspective play here?

JK: In the paintings of Franz Kline there are no perspectives and no shade, the black marks the space and creates an image which

is not descriptive. This is the space offered by the canvas. Then there is the space offered by the cavity of a building with its history. It offers itself to the painter, imposing him the condition of its volume and giving him the possibility to build non-representational images. Nowadays it's impossible to paint *The Birth of Venus*, but I can actually put my shoes at a position to polarize the space and that necessarily creates a viewpoint.

JK: Nei quadri di Franz Kline non ci sono prospettive e non c'è tonalità, il nero segna lo spazio e crea un'immagine non descrittiva. Questo è lo spazio che offre la tela. Poi c'è lo spazio che offre la cavità di un edificio con la sua storia. Si offre al pittore imponendo la condizione del suo volume e regalando la possibilità di costruire immagini non tematiche: Oggi è impossibile dipingere *La Venere che esce dall'acqua* ma è possibile effettivamente posare le proprie scarpe in un punto che polarizza lo spazio e che inevitabilmente crea una visione.

SG: In the early sixties you began to introduce also found sculptural objects into your work. What made you use these 'found objects' and integrate them into your art?

JK: The parrot is not an object. I never considered my 100 kilos of coal as a material. I have used it as a weight. The fragments are not material, they have their own story and as such they belong to us as logic and emotional capacity do. They point out the lost totality, they indicate an indelible drama, not a liability but a tension experienced in the "chiaroscuro", which is placed on an iron plate as writing, from

left to right as the letters of an alphabet, for this monologue there is nothing new or futuristic.

JK: Il pappagallo non è un oggetto, non ho mai considerato il mio quintale di carbone come un materiale, io l'ho usato come peso, i frammenti non sono materiale, hanno una loro storia e come tale ci appartengono come logica e come emotività, fanno presente la totalità perduta, indicano un dramma incancellabile, non una passività ma una tensione vissuta nel chiaroscuro, posata sulla lamiera di ferro come una scrittura, da sinistra a destra come le lettere di un alfabeto, per questo monologo non ci sono novità futuribili.

KDJ: You seem to favour big, bold statements and often create huge objects. I imagine you used to make these objects yourself, but are now probably forced to work with others together in creating them. Recently, I spoke with Arnulf Rainer about his work. For him, it is unthinkable that somebody else would execute his concept, and this means that because of his physical limitations because of his age, he can only still make small works. How do you feel about becoming older and your changing physical power? How did it influence your work?

JK: Of course, growing old is a problem, but not for what concerns the large size. As far as I'm concerned, please consider me as an acrobat!

I always think of the painting by Watteau, *le départ pour Cithère*. I have to find the time—as long as I still have the strength—to make

a trip to a beautiful island in the company of my friends from the theatre, because the painter is a theatre man who does not use words.

JK: Certamente invecchiare è un problema, ma non per la preoccupazione della grande dimensione. Per quel che mi riguarda, ti prego di considerarmi come un acrobata!

Penso sempre al quadro di Watteau, *Le départ pour Cithère*, devo trovare il tempo—finché ne ho la forza—per fare un viaggio in un'isola splendida in compagnia dei miei amici di teatro, perché il pittore è un uomo di teatro che non usa la parola.

KDJ: At TATE Modern, London, I saw your work UNTITLED (1971), where a cellist plays in front of a painting on which musical notes are 'written'. For this work, it is said that you were "interested in creating a harmony between history and a contemporary experience, and used the theme of music to reconcile memory with the immediacy of the present moment." You often use objects in your work that have a certain past, but will continue to exist in your artwork for years to come. In your opinion, how are past, present and future related? To what extent is the here-and-now influenced by the past and our possible future?

JK: When I was a child I learned to play the violin for a couple of years, and the nostalgia is so strong that every now and then I find an opportunity to put an instrument on stage. It's my childhood that comes back to me.



*JK: Da bambino ho imparato per qualche anno a suonare il violino, ed è così forte la nostalgia che ogni tanto trovo l'occasione per mettere uno strumento sulla scena, è la mia infanzia che ritorna.*

*KDJ: Creating or 'changing' space seems essential in your work. The Greek philosopher Protagoras stated that "Man is the measure of all things". Does this statement apply to your work as well? The change you want to provoke or the space you wish to define, are they taken from a human perspective? What does it mean for you to be 'human'?*

*JK: First of all, to breathe, then to love and to be attracted by the other, in such an extent that I catch a train and go visit them. The space is linked with the irresistible desire to move towards the others and to discover what moves them. The space is determined by its literary heritage, whether it is about a church, an abandoned factory or a classroom.*

*JK: Prima di tutto respirare, poi amare ed essere attratto dagli altri talmente da prendere un treno ed andare a trovarli. Lo spazio è legato a quella irresistibile volontà di andare verso gli altri e di scoprire le loro ragioni. Lo spazio è determinato dal suo bagaglio letterario, trattasi di una chiesa, di una fabbrica abbandonata oppure dell'aula di una scuola.*

*KDJ: Freedom seems to have always been an important element in your work. You have created a diversity of works, ranging from letter-and day-paintings, to horses, birds, blocked doors... It seemed you as a person have always felt free enough to develop yourself, without feeling restricted by society. Now, after so many years of creating works, your installations became quite easily recognizable as 'a Kounellis'. Do you still feel free enough to change? Can you still discover new things?*

*JK: I do not have the style of an informal painter and this has never been a problem for me. In addition, monochromism and its monosyllabic extremism are far from the imaginative being of a traveler. However, the last word has not been spoken yet!*

*JK: Non ho lo stile di un pittore informale e questo non è mai stato un problema per me. Inoltre, la monocromia e il suo estremismo monosillabico sono lontani dalla fantasiosa natura di un viaggiatore. Ad ogni modo, l'ultima parola non è ancora detta!*

*KDJ: At Palazzo Fortuny in Venice (2011), I saw one of your works where you seemingly 'block' an entrance. Of course, I experienced an element of curiosity, not being able to see 'what is behind'. But for me it also has a negative connotation in the sense that you are blocking my way, saying "no, you cannot go this way" and moving me in a different direction. How does this act of 'blocking' relate to the feeling of freedom you seem to proclaim?*

*JK: The brickwork inside the empty space of a door or a window concerns the will to bring forth a sensitivity and never to obstruct an entrance.*

*JK: La muratura dentro la cavità di una porta o di una finestra riguarda la volontà di riportare una sensibilità e mai di impedire un ingresso.*



*KDJ: You once said in an interview in 1985 that suffering is a feeling you strongly associate with your work. Are life and art about suffering? Or is suffering a process that Kounellis has to go through in order to feel free?*

*JK: Suffering needs a reason. It is neither for abstraction nor for aesthetics that one suffers. Drama differs from suffering. The dramaticity is a signal of a culture that has nothing to do with suffering. In fact, the dramaticity has a theatrical setting that suffering does not have.*

*The problem is that I am a pluralist. I am far from various examples of monotheism. I already mentioned that I love mankind.*

*JK: Per provare sofferenza è necessario un motivo, non è per astrazione, né per estetica che si soffre. Il dramma è diverso dalla sofferenza, la drammaticità è il segno di una cultura che non ha niente a che fare con la sofferenza. In effetti, la drammaturgia ha un'impostazione teatrale che la sofferenza non ha.*

*Il problema è che io sono pluralista. Sono lontano da vari esempi di monoteismo. Ho già detto che amo l'Uomo.*

<sup>1</sup> This introduction is an excerpt from the press release for Jannis Kounellis' exhibition at Cheim Read Gallery, New York, USA, 2 May - 22 June 2013

# LI CHEN

By Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold

April 2013

*Li Chen (1963, Yunlin, Taiwan) seeks to convey the meaning of culture and life through sculpture. His sculptures are often 'simplified' representations of 'human' figures, addressing the flow of human history.*

*Karlyn De Jongh: You have said that for you the greatness of art lies in 'sharing'. How do you understand the concept of 'sharing'? What is it you wish to share?*

Li Chen: If a good piece of art must be destroyed with no trace or record of its presence, has it ever existed? (Here I am talking about "consequentialism"—to sacrifice oneself in order to achieve a greater goal.)

Art is about spiritual ideas being carried by objects, while the ultimate goal of exhibition is to gain access to the public. "Sharing" is thus inevitable, isn't it? The action of sharing is ordinary yet noble.

I hope to share my insight and imagination about life, and fulfill my desire to create. I must try my best to do that in order to exist in this world without regret.

*KDJ: Joseph Kosuth said: "Location, location, location...!", to demonstrate the importance of location in the presentation of his work. He chooses specific works for a particular location. In the past your works have been presented at impressive, large squares, where many people gather and can see your work. This year (2013) you will present your sculptures at the Place de Vendôme in Paris, France. What does location mean to you? Or is it for you more important that many people can encounter your work, that you can share your work with others?*

LC: The location is the stage. Different locations will induce different interpretations. If an artist can make good use of the stage, it is not difficult. Paris is the origin of modern art, and it is a place that allows us to savor the dreams of artists. It is an absolute honor to hold an exhibition there. Sculptures are solid entities and Place Vendôme indeed provides a venue and opportunity for direct spiritual contact between art and the public, allowing the essence of sharing to effectuate.

*Sarah Gold: When I understood it correctly, at the beginning of your career, you were mainly creating sculptures depicting Buddha. In the*

*meanwhile you create a large variation of subjects. How and why did it come to this development?*

LC: Actually, both modern and traditional Buddhist sculptures are equally important and occur at the same time in my earlier stage. For eight years, I pondered the relationship between traditional Buddhist statues and the freedom of creativity. My eventual determination was that one must rid oneself of subjectivity when making Buddha statues, while creating art is about embracing individual consciousness. This contradiction is where I am bound to make a decision that is inevitable in the path of contemporary art.

*KDJ: It is often stated that your works are liberated from (Chinese) tradition. It seems this 'liberation' is something you are proud of. It is interesting for me to see, because in other parts of the world artists often link themselves to the past culture, mentioning artists or art movements that stood the test of time and influenced them. Is the wish to be 'new' so important to you that you want to distance yourself from your cultural history? Do you think you can ever free yourself from the tradition you grew up in? What does your cultural history mean to you? How do you see your own existence within time?*

LC: That is not what I meant. What I meant is that I do not have the ability to free traditional Buddha statues—I can only liberate myself. The "liberation" here means the recognition of one's own mind and spirit. Any breakthrough or innovation only occurs at the level of concepts and ideas. All artistic creation must have some sort of connection with history and culture unless the artist has no relation to Earth (alien).

From the concept of contemporary art, the purpose of my existence is to deconstruct traditions and resurrect them with modern thought and a signature style in visuality that is shared by our generation.

*KDJ: You create sculptures that are maybe 4 or even 5 times bigger than yourself. Besides their impressive size, your often happy and smiling figures seem very 'approachable'. How do you yourself relate to your sculptures? What do the immense size of your figures and their smiling faces say about your wishes and dreams for yourself and for mankind?*

LC: Greatness radiates with power. A benevolent smile is mind-taking and affection is our soul's desire. Sculpturing is a healing process



for me in which I seek my own salvation. Life is essentially lonely for we can only understand the world as we perceive it. I dream of a peaceful happiness, while reflecting upon reality and making an allegory for life.

*SG: You have made series with titles as Beauty of Emptiness and Energy of Emptiness. Seeing the gigantic sculptures you make, 'emptiness' does not come into my mind. What does 'emptiness' mean to you? Can 'emptiness' be seen as 'empty space' (Void)?*

*LC: A sculpture is an object, so how can you deny its existence? Therefore, it is normal to not to associate it with "emptiness." The moment when my father passed away, I realized life is ephemeral and we must eventually leave behind our body and this material world. Therefore, the series *Energy and Emptiness* and *Spiritual Journey Through the Great Ether* are composed of sculptures trying to present a heavenly nirvana.*

"Emptiness," faintly discernible, is a philosophical concept about time and space; the beginning and the end of universe. I tacitly embrace this philosophical connotation and make it an abstract element that adds to the spirituality in art, with great energy generated from within.

*SG: You have created sculptures in all sizes: from small to monumental. Seeing the photo's of your studio, needing scaffolds to create your works in clay, it raises serious questions about Space. How do your small and large scale sculptures influence your understanding and perception of space? Is the Space in which your sculptures are being installed of importance of you?*

*LC: When a sculpture is enlarged, the surrounding space becomes smaller, and so does humankind. When one approaches a gigantic sculpture, the eyes see small details on a large body and they see the entire body through small details. Such a state of mind helps me to deal with the disposition of sculptures in space. The perspectives of viewing a sculpture—oblique, vertical, horizontal, lying down—are all very important. They are like the rhythm to music.*

*KDJ: In a few weeks your work will be presented in the exhibition CULTURE-MIND-BECOMING at the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2013, where a selection of Chinese artists present their work. Showing your works to a mostly Western public, does it matter that your figures are 'Chinese'? Is the dialogue about 'East' and 'West' an issue for you?*

*LC: First of all, what I see around me are Chinese bodies, including myself. I cannot deny the fact that I live in an environment where history, culture, thoughts, and images are very different from Western Greek culture. There is no right or wrong, nor good or bad, between these two art cultures. It is necessary for me to incorporate millions of years of traditional sculptures with contemporaneity because I live in the present.*

Although there are differences among cultures, we nonetheless have the same problems—problems and confusions around our soul, spirit, materials, and existence are without borders. In addition, "imagery" in Eastern terms does carry over to Western abstraction, yet not quite identically. Therefore, cultural exchange and sharing between the East and West is especially important. If the world were

uniform, why would there be an emphasis on exchanging? Cultural freedom should proliferate with diversity and vitality, right?

*SG: Looking at your sculptures I heard many times the comment from "Western" people that your work reminds them of the Columbian artist Fernando Botero. However, to me your work seems to convey much more than the sculptures of Botero. Do you think that a 'non-Asian' is ever able to really understand what you would like to express?*

*LC: Misunderstanding sometimes has a positive meaning. Any viewer who appreciates my artwork as "heavy yet light" can discern the differences. This is not solely a materialization of a human body, but an issue of philosophy. It is a spiritual activity concerning reality and illusions in life. It is a space that is full of energy and yet as light as air. It is a sculpture that attempts to achieve spiritual salvation.*

*SG: From the moment of conceiving the first thoughts about realizing your work a certain amount of time passes by until the actual creation of the work. How does the passing of time change the outcome of your final work?*

*LC: Making sculptures is time-consuming. Before I start, I spend more time envisaging the formation of the artwork to avoid major structural changes in the process, and modifications, which may cause danger. Sometimes unexpected inspirations pop up to enrich the lives of my works of art.*

*SG: As an artist you have a variety of materials which you can select from. How do you choose the specific material for each sculpture?*

*LC: The discussion of materials I use requires a technical language. Based on the work itself, I use different materials for different series to bring forward a particular concept using the characteristics of the medium. Different materials will produce unique impressions to make the work more lively and interesting.*

*SG: Seeing your development of the different series you made in the last 15 years, how would you describe your intellectual and artistic development?*

*LC: I have studied Western sculptures in my school education; however the West is not my place of birth. Therefore, I returned to my "cultural roots" and tried to seek out new possibilities in traditional sculpture. "New" means vitality. After all, the spirit of freedom of creativity is still very young and active in Chinese contemporary art.*

Over the past ten to twenty years, my works can be categorized into eight series and two major paths: the "emptiness" of the inner spiritual journey and the "reality" of human collectiveness. These two paths of thought brim with philosophical meanings. We all come from different life experiences and backgrounds, and the wonder of art lies in its limitless possibilities. I hope to bring viewers different perspectives, and that is one of the goals of my creations.





# CAPTIONS

4 Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold, François Morellet and Frederic Morellet in Morellet's studio in Cholet, France, with *Lamentable* (2006).

8 Yoko Ono, *Ex It*, 1997. Installation view at L'Almodi, Valencia, Spain. Photo: Miguel Angel Valero. © Yoko Ono

10 Roman Opalka, Rene Rietmeyer and Sarah Gold at the exhibition of Roman Opalka, 27 June 2006, Musée d'Art Moderne, St. Etienne, France.

11 (left) Karlyn De Jongh, Rene Rietmeyer, Roman Opalka and Sarah Gold at the PERSONAL STRUCTURES symposium TIME at arti et amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands on 15 June 2007

11 (right) Sanna Marander, Sarah Gold, Joseph Kosuth, Peter Lodermeier, Rene Rietmeyer, Tomoji Ogawa, Karlyn De Jongh during the sushi lunch break of the Symposium EXISTENCE at the Setagaya Art Museum, 2 April 2008, Tokyo, Japan.

12 (left) Yuko Sakurai, Karlyn De Jongh, Keith Sonnier and Peter Lodermeier during the symposium SPACE at the New Museum, 4 April 2009, New York, USA. Work by Keith Sonnier.

12 (right) Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh, Marina Abramović, Peter Lodermeier and Rene Rietmeyer during the symposium TIME SPACE EXISTENCE at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti, 4 June 2009, Venice, Italy.

13 (left) Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold in front of Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy, in May 2010.

13 (right) François Morellet, Sarah Gold and Karlyn De Jongh in Morellet's studio in Cholet, France in February 2011.

14 (left) Arnulf Rainer, Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold on the terrace of Rainer's studio in Tenerife, Spain, in February 2011.

14 (right) Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh and Joseph Kosuth at Palazzo Bembo in Venice, Italy, in May 2011.

15 (left) Bice Curiger, Manuela Lucà-Dazio, Sarah Gold and Karlyn De Jongh with Rene Rietmeyer's installation *Portrait of S+K* at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy, in June 2011.

15 (right) Georg Baselitz, Sarah Gold and Karlyn De Jongh at the Arnulf Rainer Museum in Baden, Austria, in December 2011.

16 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

18 Sophia Thomassen, Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh and Lawrence Weiner at Weiner's houseboat Joma in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 26 January 2010.

19 Lawrence Weiner. Outdoor commission of *AS TO BE IN PLAIN SIGHT* at the Denver Art Museum, Colorado, 2011. Photo: Moved Pictures Archive, NYC

21 Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold installing Lawrence Weiner's work *ROWS OF BROKEN BOTTLES SET INTO BADLY MIXED CONCRETE* (1996) for the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE in Bregenz, Austria, in January 2010. Courtesy: the artist and Hubert Winter Galerie, Vienna

23 Lawrence Weiner, *HANDLED WITH CARE*, 2010. Installation view with Sarah Gold and Karlyn De Jongh at the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE at Georg Kargl Fine Arts in Vienna, Austria.

24 Lawrence Weiner, *PUSHED AS IF & LEFT AS IS*, 2012 Language & the materials referred to, dimensions variable. © the artist. Courtesy: Lisson Gallery, London

25 Lawrence Weiner, *STASIS AS TO VECTOR ALL IN DUE COURSE*, 2012. Language & the materials referred to, dimensions variable. © the artist. Courtesy: Lisson Gallery, London

27 Lawrence Weiner, *UNTITLED*, this work has been made in June 2007 on the occasion of the Symposium at Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

29 Lawrence Weiner, *C'era Una Volta Italy: Venice Biennale*, Theatre Malibran (Spettacoli d'Artista), Venice. June 6-8. Collaboration with R.H. Fuchs, La Zattera di Babele, Laboratoria di Camion, Venice, Italy

31 Lawrence Weiner, *MATTER SO SHAKEN TO ITS CORE TO LEAD TO A CHANGE IN INHERENT FORM TO THE EXTENT OF BRINGING ABOUT A CHANGE IN THE DESTINY*

*OF THE MATERIAL. PRIMARY. SECONDARY. TERTIARY*, 2002. La Biennale di Venezia, Venice. 52nd International Art Exhibition "Think with the Senses-Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense", 2007.

32 Lawrence Weiner, *MORE THAN ENOUGH* (total), 2011. Description for the execution of the work. Courtesy: the artist.

33 Lawrence Weiner, *MORE THAN ENOUGH* wall 3, 2011. Description for the execution of the work. Courtesy: the artist.

34 Lawrence Weiner, *TITANIUM & LEAD + AIR, MOVING INTO BY VIRTUE, OF INHERENT VOLITION, WATER + FERROUS CONCRETE, ENCOMPASSING BY VIRTUE, OF INHERENT DESTINY, SAND & SILVER + FERROUS OXIDE, HAVING SPACE BY VIRTUE, OF INHERENT MOVEMENT, CADMIUM + MUD, DISPLACING BY VIRTUE, OF INHERENT INSTABILITY*, 1991. LANGUAGE + MATERIALS REFERRED TO. Courtesy: Marian Goodman Gallery

35 Lawrence Weiner, *BUILT TO MAINTAIN THE INNER EDGE OF A CUL-DE-SAC BUILT TO REPLACE THE OUTER EDGE OF A CUL-DE-SAC*, 2009. LANGUAGE + MATERIALS REFERRED TO. Courtesy: Marian Goodman Gallery

37 Lawrence Weiner, *THIS AS THAT BE THAT AS IT MAY*, 2012. Language & the materials referred to, dimensions variable. © the artist. Courtesy: Lisson Gallery

38 Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold and Hermann Nitsch at the Museo Hermann Nitsch, Naples, Italy on 19 May 2010.

39 Hermann Nitsch at the Museo Hermann Nitsch, Naples, Italy on 17 May 2010.

41 Giuseppe Zevola, Karlyn De Jongh and Hermann Nitsch at the Museo Hermann Nitsch, Naples, Italy on 18 May 2010.

41 Hermann Nitsch, Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold in Naples, on 20 May 2010

43 Hermann Nitsch, Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold at the Museo Hermann Nitsch, Naples, Italy on 21 May 2010.

43 Karlyn De Jongh, Sarah Gold and Hermann Nitsch at the fish market in Naples, Italy on 22 May 2010.

45 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

46 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

47 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

48 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

49 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

50 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

51 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

53 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

55 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

57 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

58 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

59 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

60 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

61 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

62 Roman Opalka and Sarah Gold at the studio of Opalka in Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France, on 9 June 2010.

63 Roman Opalka in Opalka's garden in Beaumont-sur-Sarthe on 9 June 2010.

65 Roman Opalka's studio in Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France, on 9 June 2010.

67 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965/1-∞*, Undated. Photo, 33 x 24cm

69 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965 / 1-∞, Detail 918554 – 943954*. Acrylic on Canvas, 196 x 135 cm. Installation view at exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE at Kuenstlerhaus, Bregenz, Austria. Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg

71 Karlyn De Jongh and Roman Opalka at the studio of Opalka in Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France, on 9 June 2010.

73 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965/1-∞, Detail 918554–943954*, Undated. Acrylic on Canvas, 196 x 135 cm. Photo: Baschang & Herrmann, München. Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg

75 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965/1-∞*, Undated. Photo, 33 x 24cm

76 Roman Opalka painting in his studio on 9 June 2010, at 19:11 o'clock.

77 Roman Opalka and Sarah Gold at the studio of Opalka in Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France, on 9 June 2010.

78 Roman Opalka and Sarah Gold in Opalka's garden on 9 June 2010.

79 Roman Opalka and Karlyn De Jongh in Opalka's garden on 9 June 2010.

81 Roman Opalka showing how he makes his Autoportraits at the studio of Opalka in Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, France, on 9 June 2010.

83 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965/1-∞*, Undated. Photo, 33 x 24cm

85 On Kawara, *Date Painting* (MARCH 25.1997). Oil on canvas. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie, Germany

86 A postcard (front and back) with an Unanswered Question to On Kawara by Paula Cooper

87 A postcard (front and back) with an Unanswered Question to On Kawara by Joseph Kosuth

88 A postcard (front and back) with an Unanswered Question to On Kawara by Petur Arason

89 A postcard (front and back) with an Unanswered Question to On Kawara by Linda Weintraub

90 A postcard (front and back) with an Unanswered Question to On Kawara by Giuseppe Panza

91 A postcard (front and back) with an Unanswered Question to On Kawara by Daniel Marzona

92 A postcard (front and back) with an Unanswered Question to On Kawara by Lee Ufan

93 On Kawara, *I AM STILL ALIVE*, 1971. Telegram. Courtesy: Klaus Honnef

94 Arnulf Rainer, Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold on the terrace of Rainer's studio in Tenerife, Spain, in February 2011.

95 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

96 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

97 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

98 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

99 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

100 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

101 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

102 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

103 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

104 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

105 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

106 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

107 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

108 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

109 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

110 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

111 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

112 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

113 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

114 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

115 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

116 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

117 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2011. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

118 Karlyn De Jongh with Lee Ufan, *Dialogue*, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 227 x 182 cm. In the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE at Kuenstlerhaus Bregenz, Austria, on 4 February 2010. Courtesy: the artist

119 Lee Ufan, *Relatum-Shadow of Stone*, 2010. natural stone, 55 x 65 x 66cm, Acrylic on the floor, 109 x 59 cm, Projection, 65 x 58 cm. Installation Lee Ufan museum in Naoshima, Japan. Photo:Tadasu Yamamoto

120 Karlyn De Jongh and Lee Ufan at Hotel Monaco in Venice on 5 June 2009.

121 Lee Ufan, *Relatum - Friendship*, 2003. Two stones and two iron plates. Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery

122 Lee Ufan, *Relatum*, 2011. Detail of installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Courtesy: Lee Ufan

123 Lee Ufan, *From Point* (detail), 1973. Glue, stone pigment on canvas, 162 x 112 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

125 Lee Ufan, *From Line* (81021), 1981. Glue and stone pigment on canvas, 227 x 181.7 cm. Photo: G.R. Christmas. Courtesy: Pace Gallery

126 Karlyn De Jongh encountering Lee Ufan, *Dialogue*, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 227 x 182 cm. In the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES at Kuenstlerhaus Bregenz, Austria, on 16 January 2010.

127 Lee Ufan, *Dialogue*, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 227 x 182 cm. Installation view at the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE at Georg Kargl Fine Art, Vienna, Austria. With: Toshikatsu Endo, Untitled, 1990. And: Rene Rietmeyer, Shark Valley May 2001.

128 Lee Ufan and Sarah Gold at Palazzo Bembo in Venice, on 9 December 2010.

129 Lee Ufan, *Relatum-A Signal*, 2005-2010. Iron plate, 260 x 230 x 3 cm, Natural stone, 126 x 127 x 103 cm. Installation Lee Ufan museum in Naoshima, Japan. Photo:Tadasu Yamamoto

130 Lee Ufan in his studio in Paris, France in December 2010

131 Lee Ufan, *Dialogue*, 2008. Oil on canvas, 291.3 x 218 cm. Photo: G.R. Christmas. Courtesy: Pace Gallery

132 Lee Ufan, *From Line*, 1977. Glue, stone pigment on canvas, 182 x 227 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery

134 Lee Ufan with his work *Relatum* at Palazzo Bembo in May 2011. Exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 2011 Venice Biennale.

135 Lee Ufan, *Relatum - Gravitation*, 2007-2008. Iron plate, stone. Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery

137 Lee Ufan, *Relatum*, 1979-1996. Iron and stone. Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery

138 Lee Ufan with his work *Relatum* at Palazzo Bembo, 2011 Venice Biennale. Photo: Anna Lenz

140 Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh and Ben Vautier in Vautier's gallery in Nice, France, on 17 February 2013

141 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Sarah Gold, Ben Vautier and Karlyn De Jongh in the "Ben Room" in the Windsor Hotel, Nice, France on 18 February 2013.

143 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Sarah Gold, Ben Vautier and Karlyn De Jongh in the "Ben Room" in the Windsor Hotel, Nice, France on 18 February 2013.

145 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Sarah Gold, Ben Vautier and Karlyn De Jongh in the "Ben Room" in the Windsor Hotel, Nice, France on 18 February 2013.

146 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold.

147 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold.

148 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold.

149 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold.

150 Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy in 2011.

153 Marina Abramović, *CONFESSION*, 2010. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. B&W DVD Loop. Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery

154 Marina Abramović, *THE ARTIST IS PRESENT*, 2010. Performance at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Courtesy: Marina Abramovic Archives

155 Marina Abramović, *THE ARTIST IS PRESENT*, 2010. Performance at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Courtesy: Marina Abramovic Archives

157 Marina Abramović, *Lips of Thomas*, 1975. Performance, 7 Easy Pieces, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2005. Photo: Attilio Maranzano

159 Marina Abramović, *Cleaning the Mirror Nr. 1*, 1995. Video-installation performance. Oxford University, Oxford, UK

160 Questions from Karlyn De Jongh to Carl Andre, March 2013

161 Carl Andre's manuscript of his answers to Karlyn De Jongh's questions, 23 March 2013

162 Carl Andre, *Henge on 3 Right Thresholds (Meditation on the Year 1960)*, 1971. Wood. Installation view Konrad Fischer Galerie Düsseldorf 1971

163 Carl Andre, *Cedar Rotor*, 2002. 32 Timbers, each 30 x 30 x 93 cm, Western red cedar on the floor. Installation at exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, Kuensterhaus, Bregenz, Austria. Courtesy: Konrad Fischer Galerie

164-165 Carl Andre, *Crux 14*, 2010. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Hot rolled steel, 14 unit Greek Cross on floor, 0,5 x 50 x 50 cm each, 0,5 x 350 x 350 cm overall. Photo: Thomas Mayer. Courtesy: Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Napoli

166 herman de vries, life, 1996-2011. Animal bones, collected in the woods, vitrine, 58 x 35 x 35cm

167 herman de vries' manuscript, March 2013

168 herman de vries' manuscript, March 2013

169 herman de vries, burned, 2007. Burned trunk of an oak, vitrine, 47x78x47cm

169 herman de vries' manuscript, March 2013

171 Toshikatsu Endo, *VOID 2010*, 2010. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Wood, tar, iron, (fire), 380 x 380 x 220h cm. Photo: Thomas Mayer. Courtesy: Toshikatsu Endo.

172 Toshikatsu Endo, *Void (cylindrical) - 2013 (process)*, 2013. Wood, iron, earth, air, fire, h. 204 x 458 x 458 cm. Photo by Toshikatsu Endo

173 Toshikatsu Endo, *Trieb (Rain Room)*, 2006. Installation view at Nizayama Forest Art Museum

175 Johannes Girardoni, *The (Dis)appearance of Everything*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Resin, LEDs, Spectro-Sonic Refrequencer (V.2.0). Photo: Johannes Girardoni Studio. Courtesy: Johannes Girardoni Studio

176 Johannes Girardoni, *Peak Light Extractor-Pink/Yellow*, 2011. Resin, pigment, LEDs, wood, aluminum, and enamel, 9 x 147 x 4 inches. Courtesy: Johannes Girardoni Studio

177 Johannes Girardoni, *SpectroSonic-Pink*, 2013. Resin, LEDs, aluminum and Spectro-Sonic Refrequencer, Dimensions Variable, 93 x 4 x 3 inches each. Courtesy: Nye + Brown, Los Angeles

178-179 Peter Halley, *Judgment Day*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Wallpaper installation of digital inkjet prints, 1184 x 699 x 410cm. Courtesy: Peter Halley

180-181 Peter Halley, *Judgment Day*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Wallpaper installation of digital inkjet prints, 1184 x 699 x 410cm. Courtesy: Peter Halley

182 Joseph Kosuth, *The Mind's Image of Itself*, 2011. Courtesy: Joseph Kosuth

183 Joseph Kosuth at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy in May 2011.

184-185 Joseph Kosuth, *The Mind's Image of Itself*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Wallpaper, 664 x 401 x 368cm. Courtesy: Joseph Kosuth

186-187 Joseph Kosuth, *The Mind's Image of Itself*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Wallpaper, 664 x 401 x 368cm. Courtesy: Joseph Kosuth

188 Melissa Kretschmer, *Cadence*, 2011. Beeswax, graphite, gouache, Dura-Lar film, paper on plywood, 36 x 42 cm. Courtesy: Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples

189 Melissa Kretschmer, *Timbre*, 2011. Beeswax, graphite, gouache, Dura-Lar film, paper on plywood, 34 x 33cm. Courtesy: Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples

191 Lee Ufan, *Relatum*, 2011. Detail of installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Courtesy: Lee Ufan

192-193 Lee Ufan, *Relatum*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Carrara marble split, a

metal plate, a painting (oil on canvas) and one medium size stone, 658x453x374cm. Courtesy: Lee Ufan

195 Judy Millar, *Il Passaggio della Fortuna*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Paint, sulvant, ink, vinyl and wood, 2000 x 191cm. Courtesy: Judy Millar

196-197 Judy Millar, *Il Passaggio della Fortuna*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Paint, sulvant, ink, vinyl and wood, 2000 x 191cm. Courtesy: Judy Millar

199 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Warp Time with Warp Self No 2*, 2010. LED, IC, electric wire, mirror, 105 x 150 x 15.5cm. Courtesy: SCAI THE BATHHOUSE. Photo: Nobutada Omote

200-201 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Pile up Life No 5 (Katrina) & 6*, 2008. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Light Emitting Diode, IC, stone (pumice), electric wire, both objects h. 84 x w. 64 x d. 64 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery

203 François Morellet, *Lamentable*, 2006. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. 8 red neon tubes, 190cm each, height 358cm, artist's studio collection. Photo: Thomas Mayer. Courtesy: GALERIE AM LINDENPLATZ AG.

204 François Morellet, *L'Avalanche*, 1996. 36 blue neon tubes, white high voltage wires, 400 x 400 cm. Collection of the artist for this version.

205 François Morellet, Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold at Morellet's studio in Cholet, France on 8 February 2011.

206 François Morellet, *π rococo de façade*, 2000. 12 blue argon tubes, Musée départemental d'art ancien et contemporain d'Epinal

207 François Morellet, *Deep dark, light blue n°2*, 2008. Acrylic on canvas on wood and blue argon tubes, 300 x 300 cm. Courtesy: François Morellet

208 François Morellet, *40.000 carrés room from the G.R.A.V. Labyrinth*, 1963. Exhibition view: Musée d'art et d'histoire, Cholet

209 François Morellet, *30 néons et 1 point de vue*, 1990. Blue argon tubes, exhibition view: Abbaye de Tournus, 1990

211 Hermann Nitsch, *130. Aktion*, 2010, Naples, Italy. Courtesy: the artist and Global Art Affairs Foundation

212 Roman Opalka's used brushes. Photo: Global Art Affairs Foundation

213 Roman Opalka painting in his studio on 9 June 2010.

215 Thomas Pihl, *Untitled (Venice) No.1*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Acrylic paint on Canvas, 60 x 96 inches. Courtesy: Thomas Pihl and Galleri SE, Bergen

216-217 Miriam Prantl, *MANAS*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. 4-part installation of wood, LED pixel, sequencer and PNG film, 50 x 50 x 50 cm each. Courtesy: GALERIE AM LINDENPLATZ AG.

219 Andrew Putter, *Secretly I Will Love You More*, 2007. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Video installation, 540 x 193 x 360cm. Courtesy: the artist.

221 Arnulf Rainer, *Untitled (Kopf)*, 2010. Oil on wood, 29 x 25 x 65 cm. Photo: Robert Zahornicky, © Arnulf Rainer

223 Arnulf Rainer, *Untitled*, without year. Oil on wood, 195 x 122 cm. Photo: Robert Zahornicky. © Arnulf Rainer

224-225 Arnulf Rainer, Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. From left to right: Untitled (Kopf), 2010. Oil on wood, 29 x 25 x 65cm; Untitled, undated. Oil on wood, 195 x 122cm; Untitled, undated. Oil on wood, 193,5 x 101cm; Untitled, undated. Oil on wood, 195 x 102cm. © Arnulf Rainer

226-227 Rialto Bridge in Venice, Italy with inside Palazzo Bembo exhibition view PERSONAL STRUCTURES 2011. (From left to right) Arnulf Rainer, *Untitled*

(*Kopf*), 2010. Oil on wood, 29 x 25 x 65cm; Arnulf Rainer, *Untitled*, undated. Oil on wood, 195 x 122cm; Arnulf Rainer, *Untitled*, undated. Oil on wood, 193,5 x 101cm. © Arnulf Rainer. And: Carl Andre, *Crux 14*, 2010. Hot rolled steel, 14 unit Greek Cross on floor, 0,5 x 50 x 50 cm each, 0,5 x 350 x 350 cm overall. Courtesy: Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Napoli. Photo: Thomas Mayer

229 Rene Rietmeyer, *Côte d'Azur*, 2010. Oil paint on wood, 28x21x7 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 100 Boxes.

230-231 Rene Rietmeyer, *EL HIERRO, Spain, February 2011, Portrait of JK and Rome 2010 and Naples, Italy, May 2010*, 2011. Installation at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Courtesy: Rene Rietmeyer.

233 Rene Rietmeyer, *Portrait of Sarah and Karlyn*, Venice 2011, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Oil on wood, each Box 25 x 25 x 15 cm. Courtesy: Rene Rietmeyer

234 Rene Rietmeyer painting his *EL HIERRO 2011* boxes, 22 May 2011

235 Rene Rietmeyer, *EL HIERRO, SPAIN, FEBRUARY 2011*, 2011. Oil on wood, 25 x 22 x 15cm. Courtesy: Rene Rietmeyer

236 Rene Rietmeyer, *Naples, Italy, May 2010*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Oil on wood, each Box 25 x 25 x 12 cm. Courtesy: Rene Rietmeyer

237 Rene Rietmeyer, *Portrait of JK and Rome 2010*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Oil on wood, each Box 25 x 25 x 19 cm. Courtesy: Rene Rietmeyer

239 Rene Rietmeyer, *Côte d'Azur*, 2011. Oil paint on wood, 28x21x7 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 28 Boxes.

240-241 Yuko Sakurai, *Ise, Tsuyama and Tsumekizaki*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. All works oil on wood. Courtesy: the artist

242 Yuko Sakurai, *Ise*, 2011. Detail of 3-part installation at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Oil on wood, 160 x 120cm each. Courtesy: the artist

243 Yuko Sakurai, *Tsumekizaki*, 2011. Detail of 2-part view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Oil on wood, 160 x 140cm. Courtesy: the artist

244-245 SASAKI, *HEARTBEAT VENICE BIENNALE 2011* (Detail), 2011. 10 day performance in which SASAKI draws with air-brush the heartbeats of 299 visitors to the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011, 3 minutes each, and stacks them on each other. Courtesy: SASAKI

247 Lawrence Weiner, *MORE THAN ENOUGH*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Language, mirrored silver vinyl with matte black & red vinyl, 502 x 393 x 360cm. Courtesy: the artist

248-249 Lawrence Weiner, *MORE THAN ENOUGH*, 2011. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Language, mirrored silver vinyl with matte black & red vinyl, 502 x 393 x 360cm. Courtesy: the artist

251 Xing Xin, 2011, *I Exhibit Myself In A Western Exhibition*, 2011. A 30 day performance in which Xing Xin is exhibited as a prisoner in Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Courtesy: Xing Xin

252-253 Xing Xin, 2011, *I Exhibit Myself In A Western Exhibition*, 2011. Relics of a 30 day performance in which Xing Xin was exhibited as a prisoner in Palazzo Bembo, exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES, 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2011. Courtesy: Xing Xin

254 Karlyn De Jongh, Rene Rietmeyer, Sarah Gold, Ying Tianqi, translator and Fang Zhenning at the symposium *Chinese Art and Architecture Today* at palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy on 28 August 2012

256-257 Ying Tianqi, *Imprisoned*, 2012, mixed media, 794 x 270 x 416 cm. Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale 2012.

259 Ying Tianqi, *Brick Soul*, 2012, mixed media, 310 x 96 x 322 cm

260 Ying Tianqi working atop the ruin: *Mourning over the Ruins*, 2012

261 Ying Tianqi working: *Brick Soul*, 2012, mixed media, 310x96x322 cm

262 Ying Tianqi, *Breaking the Black 1*, 2000-2001 (from 0 o'clock at midnight as the transition of the centuries)

263 Ying Tianqi, *Breaking the Black 3*, 2000-2001 (from 0 o'clock at midnight as the transition of the centuries)

265 Arata Isozaki showing his *Zhongyuan* installation to the Administrative Committee of Zhengdong New District at Palazzo Bembo, 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale 2012. Photo: Global Art Affairs Foundation

266-267 Arata Isozaki, *Zhongyuan*, Installation view at Palazzo Bembo, 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale 2012. Photo: Global Art Affairs Foundation

268-269 Arata Isozaki, *Zhongyuan*. Photographic rendering.

270-271 Arata Isozaki, *Zhongyuan*. Installation view of model at Palazzo Bembo, 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale 2012.

273 Degang Wang, *Bird view of Building Egg*, 2012. Cuckoo Mountain, Ninghai County, Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province, China. Rendering: Silkroad Digital Technology Co., Ltd.

275 Degang Wang, *POD 1, View of Jiangsu Software Park*, 2000. Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province, China. Photo: Li, Gan

276-277 Degang Wang, *POD site-plan*

279 Ying Tianqi, *Crying Wall*, 2013. Mixed media, 122x198cm

280 Alperoa, *Tattoo for Venice*, 2012. Tattoo by Daniel Campos | 13Agujas Tatuajes. Photo: Cristian Beroiza

282 Yoko Ono, *Bag Piece*, 2012. Performance at Palazzo Bembo. Courtesy: Yoko Ono

283 Boris Nieslony, *A Feather Fell Down On Venice*, 2012. Live performance at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy. Photo: Monika Sobczak

284 Wanda Moretti, *FAR VUOTO*, 2012. Performance on Palazzo Bembo's facade.

285 VALIE EXPORT, *HOMOMETER*, 1973. Action by the sea with bread, b&w photography © VALIE EXPORT, photo: Eric Timmermann

286 BBB Johannes Deimling, *Blanc #9*, 2012. Live performance project at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy.

287 Alperoa, *Par de patoz de lanaroja y velas*, 2012. Live performance at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy. Photo: Monika Sobczak

289 VestAndPage, *Fear.Is.Fear*, June 2012. Performance, Mexico City, Mexico. Photo: Bernardo Arcos

291 VestAndPage, *Fear.Is.Fear*, June 2012. Performance, Mexico City, Mexico. Photo: Bernardo Arcos

293 Weeks & Whitford, *Wearing the horns series*, 2012. Live durational performance at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy.

294 Weeks & Whitford, *Wearing the horns series*, 2012. Live durational performance at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy. Photo: Monika Sobczak

295 Weeks & Whitford, *Wearing the horns series*, 2012. Live durational performance at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy. Photo: Monika Sobczak

297 Zierle & Carter, *At the Edge of Longing*, 2012. Live durational performance at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy. Photo: Monika Sobczak

299 Zierle & Carter, *At the Edge of Longing*, 2012. Live durational performance at Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy. Photo: Monika Sobczak

300 Yoko Ono, *Action Painting*, 2013. © Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt 2013. Photo: Bernd Kammerer

303 Karlyn De Jongh, *8 + 9 DECEMBER 2012, 22 + 23 JANUARY 2013, VENICE*. Oil on wood. 180 x 15, 180 x 80, 180 x 30, 180 x 15 cm.

304 Karlyn De Jongh, *18 & 19 DECEMBER 2012 – DOHA QATAR*, 2012. Oil paint on wood, 50x25cm, 50x35cm. And: Karlyn De Jongh, *20 DECEMBER 2012 – HONG KONG*, 2012. Oil paint on wood, 50x10cm

305 Karlyn De Jongh, *21, 22, 23 & 24 DECEMBER 2012 – HONG KONG*, 2012. Oil paint on wood, 50x10cm, 50x10cm, 50x25cm, 50x25cm

307 Toshikatsu Endo, *Void (cylindrical) - 2013 (process)*, 2013. Wood, iron, earth, air, fire, h. 204 x 458 x 458 cm. Photo: Toshikatsu Endo

309 Toshikatsu Endo, *Untitled*, 1990. Burned wood and copper, 350cmØ. Work as shown during the exhibition PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE at the Kuensterhaus Bregenz in Austria, 2010. Courtesy the artist.

311 Toshikatsu Endo, *Void – circle⇌pot*, 2012. Wood, tar, (fire), h. 115 x 375 x 375 cm. Photo: Shizune Shiigi

312 Toshikatsu Endo, *Trieb—Helsinki*, 1995. Fire, steel, 600φx550Hcm

313 Toshikatsu Endo, *Allegorylll—Wooden boat (process)*, 1988. Wood, tar, water inside, (fire), earth, air, sun, 400x85x70cm. Photo: Tadasu Yamamoto

315 Toshikatsu Endo, *Sacrifice and Void (process)*, 2009. Wood, tar, water , (fire), steel, mirror, bone, whole exhibit space. Photo: Tadasu Yamamoto

317 Toshikatsu Endo, *Sacrifice and Void (process)*, 2009. Wood, tar, water , (fire), earth, air, sun, 50φx121Hcm. Photo: Toshikatsu Endo

319 VALIE EXPORT, *VALIE EXPORT - SMART EXPORT*, 1970. Self portrait: transfer identity, Photographic series, b&w photography. © VALIE EXPORT. Photo: Gertrude Wolfschwenger

320 VALIE EXPORT, Peter Weibel, *Aus der Mappe der Hundigkeit*, 1968. Communication action, b&w photography © VALIE EXPORT Peter Weibel, photo: Joseph Tendl / Archiv.VE

321 VALIE EXPORT, *Electron*, 1992. Heat installation. © VALIE EXPORT

322 (left) VALIE EXPORT, *ELONGATION*, 1976. Body configuration, altered photography, ink on b&w photography © VALIE EXPORT

322 (right) VALIE EXPORT, *Theseustempel (Stufen)*, 1982. Body configuration, b&w photography © VALIE EXPORT. Photo: Hermann Hendrich

323 VALIE EXPORT, *Kubus EXPORT Der Transparente Raum*, 1999/2000. Glass sculpture – permanent installation, Vienna. Photo: © Rupert Steiner / Archiv.V.E.

325 Jakob Gasteiger, *Untitled*, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 80cm. Courtesy: Jakob Gasteiger

326 Jakob Gasteiger, *Untitled*, 2012. Paper on canvas, 200 x 200cm. Courtesy: Jakob Gasteiger

327 Jakob Gasteiger, *Untitled*, 2012. Paper on canvas, 200 x 200cm. Courtesy: Jakob Gasteiger

329 Jakob Gasteiger, *Untitled*, 1990. Oil on canvas, 120 x 100cm. Courtesy: Jakob Gasteiger

331 Gotthard Graubner, *Sphäre*, 2001. Acrylic on canvas on synthetic wad, 204X204X18 cm. Signed and marked on the back. Photo: Baschang & Herrmann, München. Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg

333 Heinz Mack, *Großer Raumpfeil mit Künstler*, 1976. Photo: Thomas Höpker

334 Heinz Mack, *Untitled*, 1957. Resin on hardboard, 34 x 57,5 cm

335 Heinz Mack, *Feuerkamm*, 1975. Projekt (unrealisiert). Photo: Heinz Mack

337 Heinz Mack, *Ohne Titel*, 1977. Pastel on handmade paper, 112 x 77 cm. Photo: Archiv Mack

339 Heinz Mack, *Red Cross*, 2012. Chromatic Constellation. Acrylic on canvas, 163 x 147cm. Photo: Reginald Weiss

341 Hermann Nitsch, *Schüttbild*, 2012. Acrylic on canvas with painting shirt, 200x300cm. 64th painting performance, MART, Rovereto, 2012. Courtesy: Hermann Nitsch. Photo: Box Art Gallery

343 Hermann Nitsch, *stretcher (relict)*, 2012. Stretcher, blood on cotton, wood, approx. 250x250x150cm. Courtesy: Hermann Nitsch. Photo: Peter Böttcher

345 Yoko Ono, *Porträt*, 2013. © Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt 2013. Photo: Gaby Gerster

346 Yoko Ono, *Play It By Trust*, 1966-2011. Marble, Installation at Treviso, Italy. Copyright: Yoko Ono

347 Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964. Performed by the artist on 21 March 1965, Carnegie Recital Hall, New York, USA. Photo: Minoru Nilzuma. Copyright: Yoko Ono

348 (left) Yoko Ono, *My Mummy Was Beautiful*, 2004. Installation in the Liverpool Biennial. Photo: Simon Hilton. © 2004 Yoko Ono

348 (right) Yoko Ono, *Imagine Peace Tower*. Photo: TetsuRo Hamada. © Yoko Ono

349 Yoko Ono, *Sky Piece to Jesus Christ*, 2013. © Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt 2013. Photo: Bernd Kammerer

351 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

353 Otto Piene, *Licht Ballett (Light Satellite)*, 1969. Diameter 15 in. (38 cm). Chrome and electric light bulbs. Credit line: Private Collection, courtesy Moeller Fine Art New York – Berlin

354 Otto Piene working on his fire painting, in his studio in the Gladbacher Strasse in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1966. Photo: Maren Heyne

355 Otto Piene working on his fire painting, in his studio in the Gladbacher Strasse in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1966. Photo: Maren Heyne

356 Otto Piene working on his fire painting, in his studio in the Gladbacher Strasse in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1966. Photo: Maren Heyne

357 Otto Piene in his studio in the Gladbacher Strasse in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1966. Photo: Maren Heyne

358 Otto Piene's light room in Leopold-Hoesch-Museum in Düren, Germany. Photo: Hartmut Witte, 2012

359 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

360-365 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2013. Acrylic on paper, 210x297mm. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

366-371 Arnulf Rainer, *Unfinished Into Death*, 2013. Acrylic on paper, 420 x 594mm. Courtesy: Arnulf Rainer and Global Art Affairs Foundation

373 Rene Rietmeyer, *Côte d'Azur*, 2010. Oil paint on wood, 28x21x7 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 100 Boxes.

374 Rene Rietmeyer painting his Boxes EL HIERRO JANUARY 2011, 2011. Oil paint on wood, 25x22x15 cm.

375 Rene Rietmeyer, *EL HIERRO JANUARY 2011*, 2011. Oil paint on wood, 25x22x15 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 72 Boxes.

377 Rene Rietmeyer, *VENEZIA JUNE 2010*, 2010. Murano glass and silver, 48x11x16 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 103 Boxes.

378 Rene Rietmeyer, *FIRENZE 2010*, 2010. Murano glass and silver, 25x25x20 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 100 Boxes.

379 Rene Rietmeyer, *VENEZIA 2013*, 2013. Oil paint on wood, 300 x 18 x 18 cm

381 Rene Rietmeyer, *Côte d'Azur*, 2011. Oil paint on wood, 28x21x7 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 28 Boxes.

382 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold.

383 Ben Vautier, *Introspection, Truth, Sex & Art*, 2013. Art project with Karlyn De Jongh & Sarah Gold.

384 Tatsuo Miyajima, *C.F. Brain no.2*, 2009. LED, power supply transformer, electric wire, stainless flame, 42x 25 x 50 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Lisson Gallery

386 Karlyn De Jongh and Antony Gormley at Gormley's studio in London, UK, in April 2010.

387 Antony Gormley, *EVENT HORIZON*, 2007. 27 fibreglass and 4 cast iron figures, 189 x 53 x 29 cm. A Hayward Gallery Commission, Presented by Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York, 2010. Photo: James Ewing. Courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York and White Cube, London. © the artist

388 Antony Gormley, *ONE & OTHER*, 2009. The Mayor's Fourth Plinth Commission, Trafalgar Square, London. © the artist

389 Antony Gormley, *BREATHING ROOM III*, 2010. Aluminium tube 25 x 25 mm, Phosphor H15 and plastic spigots, 482.6 x 1693 x 895.1 cm. Caldic Collection, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Installation view, White Cube, Mason's Yard. Photo: Stephen White, London. © the artist

391 Roman Opalka painting in his studio on 9 June 2010, at 19:11 o'clock.

393 Roman Opalka, *OPALKA 1965/1–∞, Detail 5255314–5270335*, Undated. Acrylic on Canvas, 196 x 135 cm. Photo: Baschang & Herrmann, München. Courtesy: Sammlung Lenz Schönberg

395 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Life I-model Exhibition*, 2012. Installation view at SCAI THE BATHHOUSE. Photo courtesy SCAI THE BATHHOUSE

397 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Life (Rhizome) No.4*, Detail, 2012. 280 LED, IC, electric wire, stainless steel frame, 203x293cm. Courtesy Buchmann Galerie. Photo: Roman März

399 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Diamond in You No. 19*, 2010. 105 LED, stainless mirror, 109,7 x 50,3 x 13,0 cm. Courtesy: Buchmann Galerie. Photo: Georg Kipp

401 Rene Rietmeyer, *Sahara*, 2011. Oil paint on wood, 25x22x15 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 28 Boxes.

403 Rene Rietmeyer, *Côte d'Azur*, 2010. Oil paint on wood, 28x21x7 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 100 Boxes.

405 Rene Rietmeyer, *Côte d'Azur*, 2010. Oil paint on wood, 28x21x7 cm. In this series there have been made a total of 100 Boxes.

406 Anna Lenz, *Roman Opalka Warschau*, 1992. © Anna Lenz

407 Anna Lenz, *Karl Prantl Steinbruch in Huben*, Osttirol, 1988. © Anna Lenz

409 Jannis Kounellis, *Untitled*, 1998. Steel I-Beams, Burlap Bags, Coal, 11' 8"(H) x 11' 8"(W) x 3' 3"(D). Courtesy: Ace Gallery Los Angeles, 1999

410 Jannis Kounellis, *Untitled*, 2012, Wooden cupboards, rope and steel beams, Dimensions variable. Courtesy: the Artist and Blain|Southern. Photo: Manolis Baboussis, 2012. © the artist

411 Jannis Kounellis, Karlyn De Jongh and Sarah Gold at the home of Kounellis in Rome, Italy, on 25 March 2010.

412 Jannis Kounellis, *Untitled*, 2012, Jute sacks full of coal forming 6 separate circles connected by a serpentine line of coats laid on the floor, Each circle has a diameter of 230 cm / (90.55 in). Courtesy: the Artist and Blain|Southern. Photo: Manolis Baboussis, 2012. © the artist

413 Jannis Kounellis, *Untitled*, 1997. Iron sheets and ropes. Courtesy: Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples, Italy

415 Li Chen, *Earth Piercing Fire*, 2008. Mixed Media, 61x44x126cm

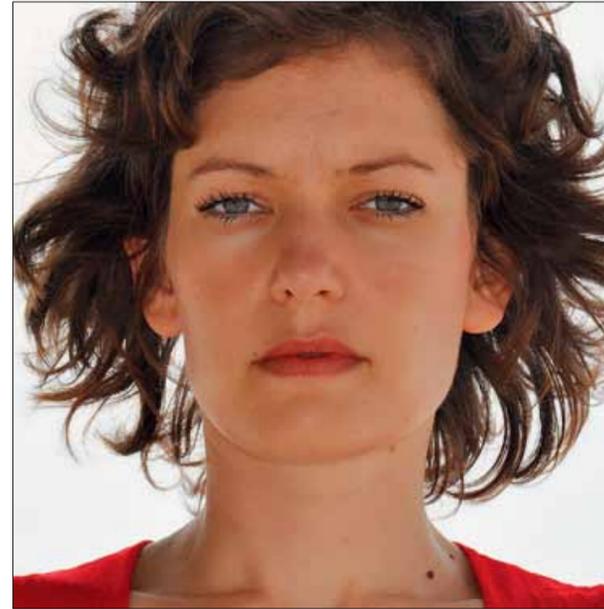
417 Li Chen, *Flickering Moonlight*, 2009. Bronze, 156x304x314cm

418 Tatsuo Miyajima, *Counter Coal*, Detail, 2008. Installation view: Time Train, Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, 2008 (Cover-Foto des Katalogs), coal, LED, electric wire, 675 x 1300 x 280 cm. Courtesy: SCAI THE BATHHOUSE. Photo: Ferdinand Ulrich

426 Marina Abramovic, *RHYTHM\_10*, 1973. Duration: 1 hour, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Villa Borghese, Rome. Courtesy: Marina Abramovic



# BIOGRAPHIES



### KARLYN DE JONGH

Karlyn De Jongh (1980, Netherlands), independent curator and author. Study of Fine Arts in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, Netherlands. Received M.A. in Philosophy and M.Phil. in Art History and Theory at the Universities of Leiden, Netherlands and Santa Barbara, CA, USA. Since 2007, working with the project Personal Structures.

It was on 14 May 2007 that I became acquainted with Personal Structures. In preparation for what would come after my studies, I took a course in 'How to apply for a job?'. I handed in my CV for correction, and a week later, it came back together with a printed email from Sarah Gold, who was looking for a Curator for the Time symposium in Amsterdam. I gave it a shot and called her up; the next day—it was Monday morning, around 10am—we met at the train station in Den Bosch, Netherlands. We drove to Heusden, where we met Rene Rietmeyer. They took the time to explain PERSONAL STRUCTURES to me, eight hours to be precise. The project TIME SPACE EXISTENCE was in its beginning stage; the plans sounded like fairytale stories. But when they asked if I wanted to work with them, I said, "yes."

"Yes" would have serious consequences. In the years after, I experienced what these were: making interviews with well-known artists, publishing books, spending 24-hours on a houseboat with Lawrence Weiner, curating two Venice Art Biennale exhibitions, hanging on a cross by Nitsch, travelling to distant places, interesting encounters with people from all over the world, becoming a muse for Arnulf Rainer, performing with Ben, and now being present in this publication in many different ways. Above all, "Yes" has given me a life in art.

[Photo: Karlyn De Jongh, Balicasag Island, Philippines, 9 January 2013, 11:15 am]



### SARAH GOLD

Sarah Gold (1978, Netherlands) independent curator and author. University education in Germany (Heidelberg) and received her M.A. degree in Art History from the University of Leiden, Netherlands. Since 2005 engaged in the project Personal Structures.

I met Rene Rietmeyer, the initiator of PERSONAL STRUCTURES at the Art Rotterdam in February 2005. I knew his work, because he is represented in the Caldic Collection, where I was an assistant curator at the time, and although he seemed a bit unusual at first, I really liked his project. I still remember taking the train from Leiden to Den Bosch, in order to discuss a future cooperation; Rene Rietmeyer picked me up at the station. His car, the man himself, his life, it all smelled like 'Art'. He offered me the opportunity to work at a fantastic level in the art world, something I had never dreamt of. Since that encounter, I have worked as an independent curator, in close cooperation with PERSONAL STRUCTURES. I have helped to organize exhibitions and symposia in Europe, USA and Japan and assisted in placing artwork in private collections.

In 2006 Rene Rietmeyer and I developed the concept for the project PERSONAL STRUCTURES: TIME SPACE EXISTENCE. In 2009, we published PERSONAL STRUCTURES TIME SPACE EXISTENCE, 'Number One' and shortly after we also started with our PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS. After recovering financially we decided that, in order to make our 'thoughts' better heard, we should organize a PERSONAL STRUCTURES exhibition during the Venice Biennale; this we did at Palazzo Bembo in 2011. Again, we financially nearly died, but two years after, we recovered. Now we are publishing 'Number Two' as well as presenting a new Personal Structures exhibition at Palazzo Bembo. And as always: I am looking forward to the future!

[Photo: Sarah Gold, Balicasag Island, Philippines, 9 January 2013, 11:17 am]

**To be continued...**

