

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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Trisha Donnelly

Press Packet

Imdahl, Georg. "Trisha Donnelly." *Artforum* 64, no. 7, March 2026, pp. 116–19.

Griffin, Tim. "Best of 2020: Trisha Donnelly." *Artforum* 59, no. 3, December 2020.

Glickstein, Adina. "Trisha Donnelly: Matthew Marks Gallery, New York." *Flash Art* 53, no. 329, February/March 2020, pp. 116–17.

Diehl, Travis. "Trisha Donnelly Sculpts in Four Dimensions." *Frieze*, January 14, 2020.

Fateman, Johanna. "Trisha Donnelly." *The New Yorker*, December 23, 2019, p. 12.

Siboni, Katherine. "Trisha Donnelly." *The Brooklyn Rail*, December 16, 2019.

Block, Brian. "The Beguiling Desolations Of Trisha Donnelly." *Riot Material*, March 14, 2020.

Scott, Andrea K. "Trisha Donnelly." *The New Yorker*, May 13, 2019, p. 6.

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Verwoert, Jan. "Against Interpretations." *Frieze d/e*, no. 7, Winter 2012.

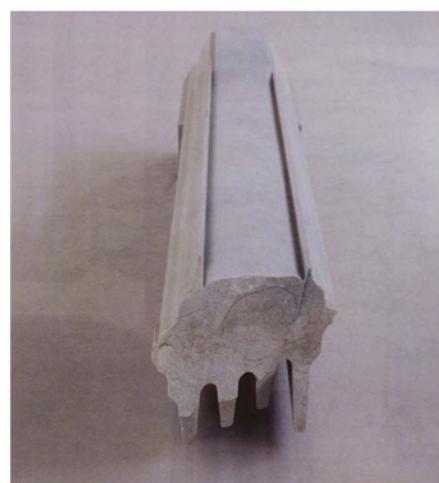
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- Droitcour, Brian. "Trisha Donnelly." *Artforum*, July 29, 2008.
- Griffin, Jonathan. "Trisha Donnelly." *Frieze*, January 2008, p. 191.
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- Hainley, Bruce. "Over and Out." *Parkett 77*, October I, 2006, pp. 76–80.
- Ruf, Beatrix. "Schwa." *Parkett 77*, October I, 2006, pp. 92–100.
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ARTFORUM

REVIEWS



Top row, from left: Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2023, marble (Grigio Carnico), 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 19 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2023, marble (Pieta del Cardoso), 41 × 31 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2019, marble (Botticino), 52 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Bottom row, from left: Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2025, marble (Cippolino), 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " × 1' 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " × 8' $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2016, slate, water, 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 23 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 43 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2023, marble (Bardiglio Imperiale), 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 60".

Trisha Donnelly

MUSEUM FÜR MODERNE KUNST, FRANKFURT

CURATED BY SUSANNE PFEFFER

Georg Imdahl

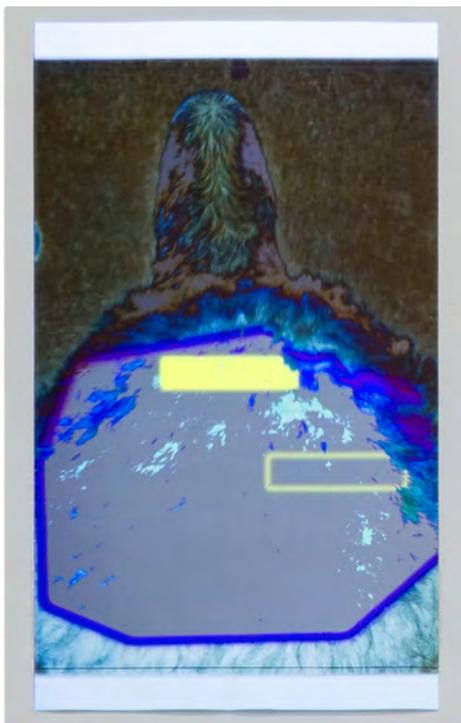
WHEN AN ARTWORK leaves you at a loss for words and you ask yourself what it actually is you are looking at, it will have achieved an objective I consider essential: that of producing wonder. This is something I've experienced on several occasions when faced with Trisha Donnelly's work. Take her contribution to Documenta 13, held in 2012 in Kassel: a sprawling, untitled film installation at the Gloria movie theater, in which blurry grisaille abstractions waxed and waned as they drifted across the screen, hinting at vestiges of objects that were not representational in any clear sense, yet struck me as slightly dystopian. Donnelly's semi-simulacra allowed me to speculate about the archetypes behind them—

bringing to mind “the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be” (Walter Benjamin's famous definition of the aura) and evoking the phantasmic quality of photograms, the cameraless prints in which Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy recorded the negative image of lit objects on paper. Despite its minimal, techy sheen, Donnelly's work led me back deep into the past century, into the classic modernism that art historian T. J. Clark has called “our antiquity.”

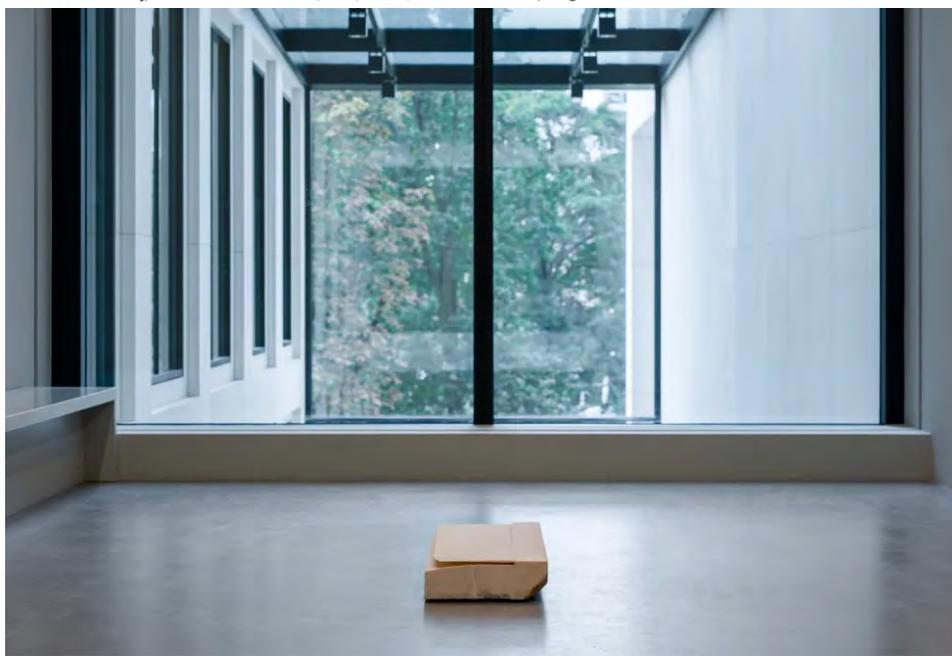
A few years later, in 2016, I saw another set of Donnelly's projections in Kassel, as part of “Images,” a group exhibition curated by Susanne Pfeffer at the Fridericianum. Juxtaposed with pieces by Cory Arcangel, Seth Price, Pierre Huyghe, and Wade Guyton, Donnelly's digital color videos, untitled as usual, stood apart, evoking timelessness, eternal existence. In contrast with the one-liner feeling of “post-internet art,” these hybrid images with quicksilver sheens—you might have thought you were observing toxic chemical

reactions—left me baffled, curious. In 2017, when I next saw Donnelly's streaky apparitions, at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, I was again caught off guard—not only by the challenge of describing the images, but also by the problem of classifying them. We more or less automatically (and perhaps thoughtlessly) characterize, say, Guyton's prints as painting, whereas Donnelly's projections doggedly resist categorization.

Indeterminacy may be the only explicit cornerstone of Donnelly's art. Witness the evasive press release for her largest solo exhibition to date in Germany, currently on view at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, and again curated by Pfeffer. Her works “are simply what they are and not solely in the realm of the visual”; they “oscillate between the concrete and the abstract, in accordance with their materiality and against it, within the



This page, from left: Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled (detail)*, 2018, still projection, C-print, dimensions variable. Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2013, marble (rose). Installation view. Photo: Frank Sperling. Opposite page, clockwise from left: Trisha Donnelly, *The Secretary*, 2008, wooden desk. Installation view. Photo: Frank Sperling. Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2022–23, C-print, 14 × 11". Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2011, marble (Rosa Portogallo), 70 1/4 × 35 1/4 × 23 1/4". View of "Trisha Donnelly," 2025–26. From left: *Untitled*, 2019; *Untitled*, 2023. Photo: Frank Sperling.





Indeterminacy may be the only explicit cornerstone of Donnelly's art.

nature of the medium and contrary to it.” These sentiments might seem like a cliché, indeed a parody, of hedging-all-bets artspeak: “Upon longer and more precise examination, the real of the work is grasped.” Donnelly was involved in writing this text, and it’s undeniable that the artist, who teaches at the Düsseldorf Academy, has honed a public image as a “whispering enigma,” per the magazine *Monopol*; one myth about Donnelly has her showing up on horseback for a 2002 exhibition at Casey Kaplan in New York. But these qualities are not just an attitude. They’re firmly grounded in her work, which asserts, with uncompromising force, its autonomy from extra-artistic logic, from any understanding generated outside the bounds of aesthetic experience.

In the new Frankfurt show there are two small projections, one of them a “still projection” (*Untitled*, 2018) in which Donnelly uses a digital projector to cast an abstracted image of a dog’s head onto

a C-print of the same motif. The result is a mixed picture—part material, part immaterial—that proves a galvanizing irritation to the gaze. The exhibition also includes a small number of drawings and photographic works sparingly set out across the large gallery. One of the latter, a skyscape, perhaps captured from an airplane, has been set on end, making it look like an X-ray of a pair of lungs (and also a little like a Warhol Rorschach painting). The viewer is put on notice: Nothing is how or what it seems.

The show’s central offering is an ample selection of sculptures in marble or, occasionally, slate or limestone or sandstone, all made over the past decade and a half. Donnelly spends years laboring on these “stones,” as she calls them, which are made from found pieces and fragments sourced from Tuscan and Portuguese quarries. The objects can weigh tons; some are voluminous, some compact, some slender, some rather fragile-looking. In Frankfurt,

the sculptures are distributed across the airy yet concentrated spatial economy of Tower MMK’s long corridors, presenting themselves in arrangements of captivating formal clarity. Donnelly manages to attune the senses to real space while drawing our attention to stone as a sculptural material: the detailed veining of elegant Pietra del Cardoso; the noble gray of Bardiglio Imperiale; the undulating white, green, and beige lines of Cipollino; the beguilingly beautiful pink of Moca Cream. It has been quite a while since I saw a show in which fundamental properties of sculpture were subjected to such probing scrutiny.

Yet Donnelly's stones, even as they foreground the "specificity" of their materials, do not content themselves with being "interesting" (to use Donald Judd's words). Never representational, but always discreetly narrative, they formally are not unlike the otherwise very different work of Rachel Harrison and Nairy Baghramian, deftly keeping the viewer on the threshold of allusion. Sometimes they hint at "figure," "gestalt," "gesture," or "pose." *Untitled*, a monumental object made in 2011 from Rosa Portogallo, which seemed to face me head-on, departs itself in a quasi-anthropomorphic manner. It is slightly reclined, like the Rodin bronze *Monument to Balzac*; it has the heft of the *Belvedere Torso* and the brittle corners and edges, the non finito character, of a Michelangelo. Other objects looked to me a sarcophagus, a collection of pharaonic grave goods, perhaps the thighs of a sphinx. I read parallel grooves milled into some of the sculptures as ancient fluting; at the same time, these gestures felt entirely contemporary, evoking the billowing waterfall that the artist drew on a torn piece of paper (*Untitled*, 2003), on view in a nearby gallery. A third type of sculpture—works with deep, delicate ribs—conjured machinic implements from a forgotten industrial past. The critic for the German daily newspaper taz wrote that the sculpture *Untitled*, 2019, reminded her of a radiator.

Donnelly, then, not only reaches back into history, affiliating herself with the lineage of classical sculpture. (Stone, after all, and marble in particular, is not just one substance among many; it is the classical artistic material par excellence.) She also looks to the future, her stones exuding a stoic constancy with no expiration date. Almost every one of Donnelly's sculptures brought an extraterrestrial association to my mind; think *They Came from Outer Space*, or Kubrick's monolith in *2001*. In the end, it is left to the individual beholder to explore which stories these objects might

have to tell—an ambivalence that is key to what sets Donnelly's stones apart from, say, Ulrich Rückriem's imposing granite pieces, which bear simple witness to the cutting and splitting of stone.

And then there is a stately and elegant desk made of rich brown wood, a work the artist showed at Casey Kaplan in 2010. A piece of institutional critique by way of a reference to the gallery situation? Perhaps Donnelly meant to undercut the aura of museum-worthiness the exhibition conferred on her work? If so, I did not think there was any need—Donnelly, in establishing her own antiquity and futurity, becomes the subject of her own contemporary glyptotheque.

GEORG IMDAHL IS A FREELANCE ART CRITIC IN DÜSSELDORF AND HAS BEEN PROFESSOR OF ART AND THE PUBLIC AT THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS MÜNSTER SINCE 2011.

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.

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ARTFORUM

BEST OF 2020

EACH DECEMBER, *Artforum* invites a group of distinguished critics, curators, and artists from around the world to consider the year in art. Ten contributors count down their top ten highlights of 2020, while three others select the single exhibition or event that, for them, rose above the rest.

TIM GRIFFIN

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TRISHA DONNELLY (MATTHEW MARKS, NEW YORK)

It's impossible for me to see Donnelly's sculptures apart from questions of time. Invoking classical form, they seem ruins in advance—projecting the passing of our current era, just one within a sequence of so many others—or better, disrupting any such sequence by realizing a past embedded in our present, so that her works are like stone ghosts. (This last sense is augmented by the barely seen ripples and ridges in their surfaces, which can suggest the work of masonry sects or eons of erosion.) Here, such cultural contingency was only amplified by the white-cube frame broken by the artist, who opened one rear door and removed another to reveal a brick-lined interior vestibule exposed to the elements.



View of "Trisha Donnelly," 2019–20, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York. All works: *Untitled*, 2019.

FLASH ART

4 TRISHA DONNELLY
Matthew Marks, New York
by Adina Glickstein

In 1974, the CIA green-lit a 350-million-dollar cover-up operation to salvage a sunken Soviet sub from the depths of the Pacific Ocean. Hidden in plain sight, the top-secret rescue spawned the “Glomar response,” crafted to elude journalistic inquisition: “We can neither confirm nor deny the existence of the information requested but, hypothetically, if such data were to exist, the subject matter would be classified and could not be disclosed.” The slogan is now ubiquitous, parroted by everyone from Kylie Jenner to the NYPD, but Trisha Donnelly remains its most fascinating artistic partisan. Donnelly’s solo exhibition at Matthew Marks, characteristically opaque and sans press release, collects six new untitled sculptures alongside three blurred projections. Formally, the series of marble plinths that populate the gallery take up the legacy of minimalism – but unlike its adherents Judd and Serra, whose well-known industrial processes are part and parcel of their work, little is known about Donnelly’s fabrication methods. Her undecipherable slabs were, at some point, pulled from quarries. Probably in Italy, the gallery assistant tells me. I’m unable to verify, which is maybe the point: taking Judd’s assertion that methods are irrelevant so long as they result in art’s logical extreme, Donnelly lays an inscrutable series of objects before us and insists that in this pure absence of didacticism we make for ourselves what we will. Donnelly’s exhibition invites a meditative form of curiosity. The absence of a structuring narrative invites close viewing in its stead, drawing attention to the sculptures’ juxtaposing surfaces: flawless smoothness, serrated grain. In the front room, a dim digital image appends three scattered granite hunks, clustered according to an unknowable logic. The works are spaced atypically, quietly resisting the linear standardization of minimalism past and proper. During the day, the surrounding projections are barely discernible; once the sun sets, the sculptures are lit dimly by design. Only part of the show is fully visible at any given time – another subtle jab at the precision of Donnelly’s progenitors? Perhaps. We can neither confirm nor deny.

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4 Trisha Donnelly. Installation view at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, 2020. Photography by Sean Logue. Courtesy and © of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York.

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Frieze

Reviews /

Trisha Donnelly Sculpts in Four Dimensions

BY TRAVIS DIEHL
14 JAN 2020

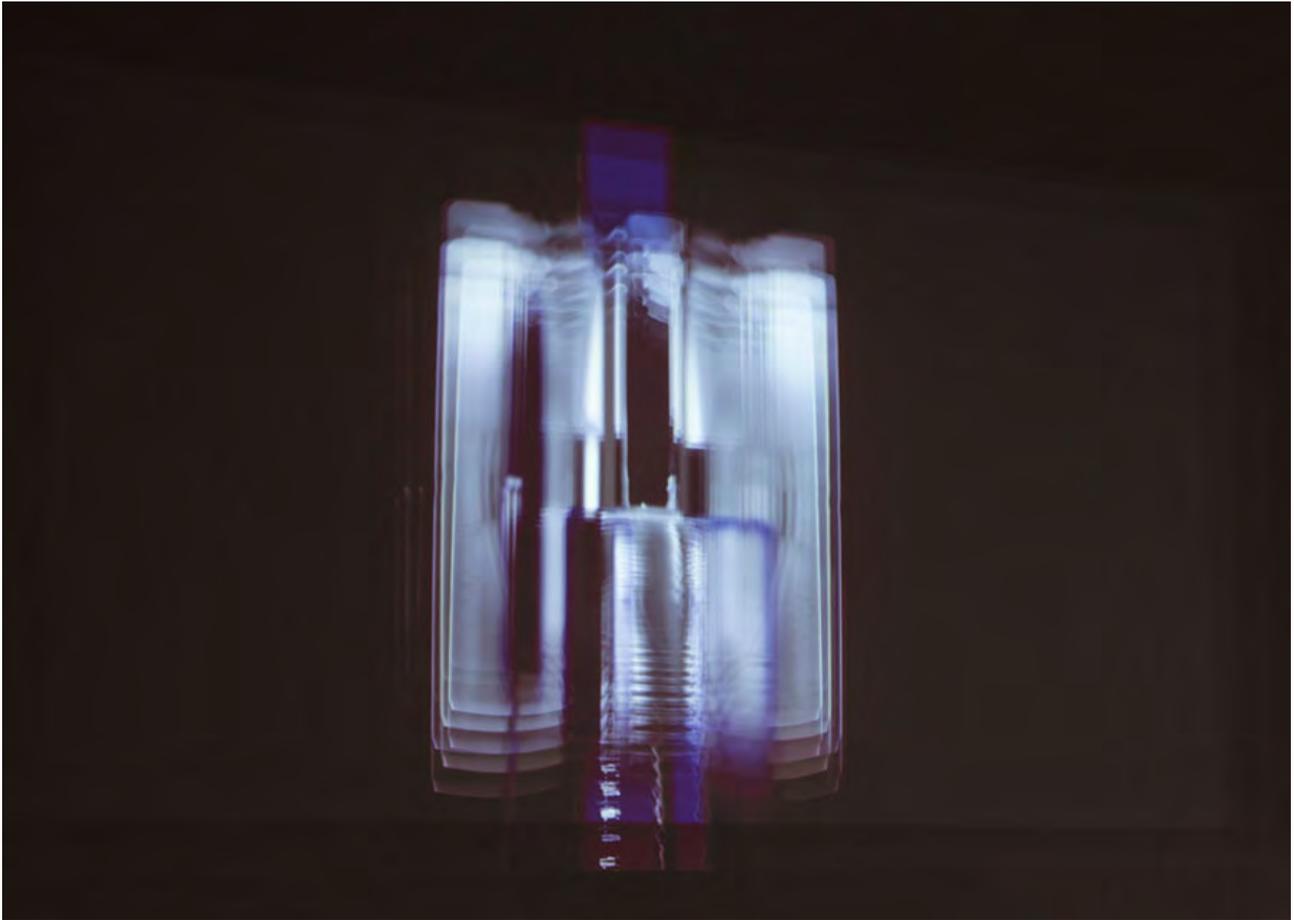
At Matthew Marks, New York, the artist's enigmatic marbles and projections perform a subtle excavation of the gallery's architecture



One of the earliest lessons an artist learns is how to play with positive and negative space. Yet, few artists ever master what Trisha Donnelly knows: how to do it in four dimensions. Her exhibitions are at once so comprehensive and so sparse that it's not always clear which parts are determined by choice and which by chance - an ambiguity that deepens over time.

Several gorgeous hunks of stone have been arranged across two of Matthew Marks's Chelsea galleries. These vary in both size - from pipe stands to refrigerators - and orientation, sitting upright like plinths or reclining like lost bumpers. Their hues range from blue to emerald to rose. Each has been polished on almost every face. (The one exception is an untitled boulder of basalt the size of a bull, which has been sliced flat across its top.) But Donnelly's seemingly modest gesture - nothing if not solid - soon shakes loose. It is

Diehl, Travis. "Trisha Donnelly Sculpts in Four Dimensions." *Frieze*, January 14, 2020.



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2019, three digital videos. Courtesy: the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles and New York

impossible to tell if these are vertical forms laid sideways, or horizontals forced upright, or whether each has been quarried with its present orientation in mind. Nearly every stone is scored with deep, straight, alien lines: the marks of a powerful industrial saw – perhaps Donnelly’s work, perhaps a stonemason’s. From readymade rocks to objects of profound ambivalence: this is classic Donnelly.

The concept, again, is elementary: that some objects are intentional, and others not. The marble pillars rest on the floor, just as their neat, flat sides have been forcibly sliced from wild veins of rock. Donnelly, perhaps, returns to the classical medium of marble to remind us that art has always been an imposition on non-art. When she projects an image of warbling lines and greying rectangles in a white-box gallery, it is as much an intervention as turning stone into sculpture, whether she sculpts it herself or not. The walls of the east gallery at Matthew Marks bear three digital projections, each an untitled abstraction that suggests a graph or an oscilloscope or a billowing sheet. One is a still, single frame; another, a short

loop; the third, taking pride of place on the gallery's back wall, seems to phase in and out of focus. The latter work is comprised of three overlapping projections of the same amorphous shapes, bobbing up and down - a fact that only becomes apparent at a distance too close to comfortably view the whole. Donnelly's projections do for video what her marbles do for sculpture: demonstrate how seemingly hermetic images gradually, irrevocably bleed into their surroundings.

Notice the big signal lamps that look like something from a train next to the east gallery's desk; the printout of another twitchy grisaille shape taped under the stairs in the west gallery; the tarps over the skylights. Donnelly plays the clearly staged against the seemingly unintentional until aesthetic pleasure arises precisely from the ambivalence of this contrast. She has removed one door and opened another in the corners of the east gallery, revealing a dark hallway of old brick and blocked-up, alley-facing windows. An open hatch to the roof



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*,
2019, Botticino marble,
133 x 40 x 19 cm.
Courtesy: the artist and
Matthew Marks Gallery,
Los Angeles and New
York



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2019,
Azul Bahia granite in three parts,
31 x 166 x 18 cm. Courtesy: the
artist and Matthew Marks Gallery,
Los Angeles and New York

lets in winter cold; on stormy days, rain streaks its cinderblocks and pools on the concrete floor. This is why a galvanized metal outlet, exposed to and softly lit by the elements, is protected by a rough, translucent flap of plastic. Donnelly's deconstruction of the white cube apparently required this precaution. Of all the show's moments, this admission of fragility is the most beautiful.

'Trisha Donnelly' is on view at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, from 8 November 2019 to 18 January 2020.

Main image: Trisha Donnelly, Untitled, 2019, Rosa Portogallo marble in two parts, 42 x 167 x 35 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles and New York

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THE
NEW YORKER

ART

Trisha Donnelly

True to form, Donnelly offers no explanation for the six enigmatic pieces in her new show—some poetry needs no translation. One untitled sculpture, which is made of two pieces of Rosa Portagallo marble with jagged ends, rests on the concrete floor like an artifact of an as yet undiscovered ancient civilization. Another smooth, carved slab of stone stands upright, like a modular panel of uncertain function. Maybe Donnelly's sculptures replicate components of prosaic objects, so familiar they've become invisible. A ghostly projection of pistonlike forms, the result of three overlapping videos, achieves a similarly uncanny effect. This eventless film, just one minute and one second in length, feels as mysterious and as consequential as a communiqué from outer space.

—*Johanna Fateman*

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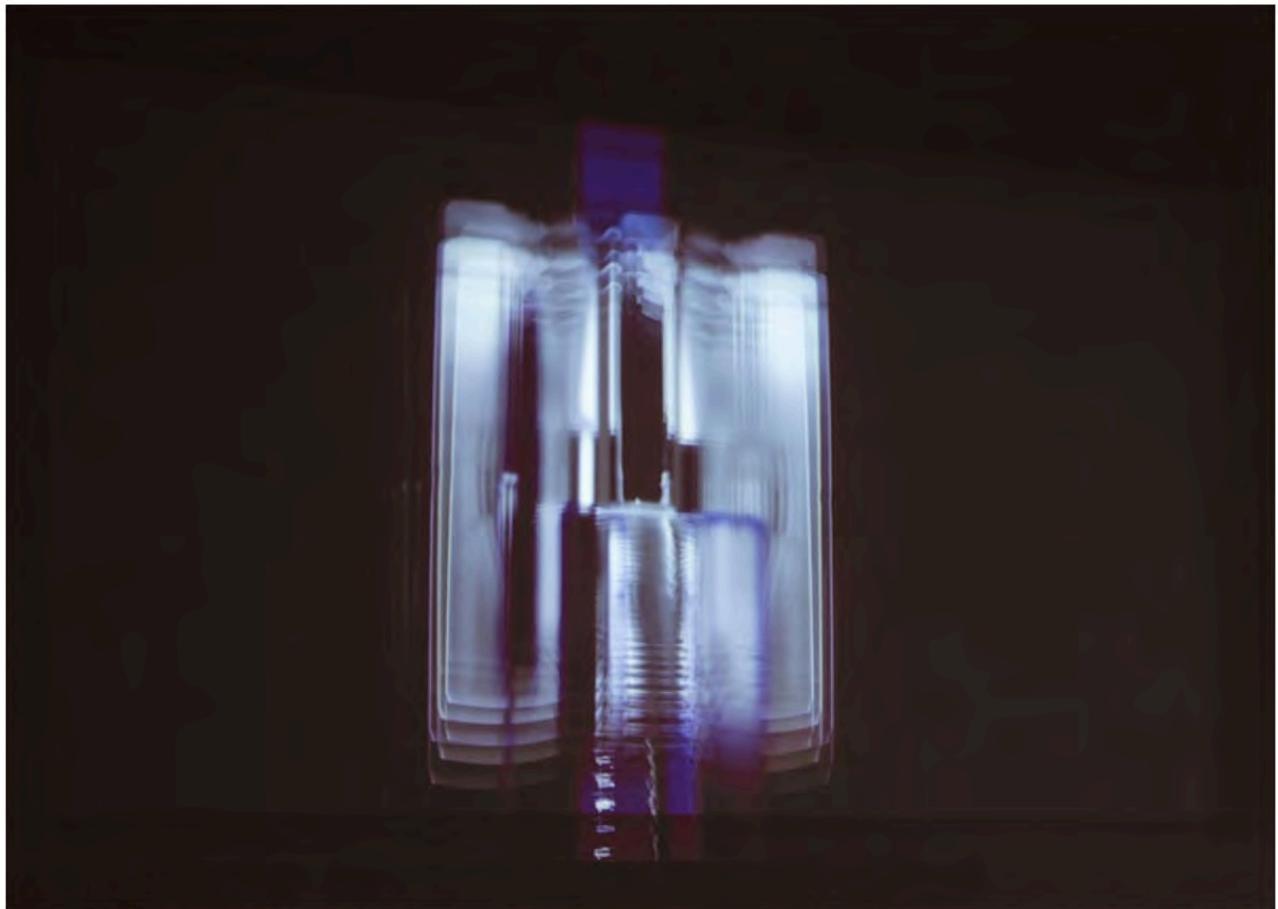
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ArtSeen

Trisha Donnelly

By **Katherine Siboni**



Installation view: *Trisha Donnelly*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, 2019. © Trisha Donnelly, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery.

Cast near the entrance of Matthew Marks, unshielded from natural light, one of three digital projections by Trisha Donnelly repeats on a short loop. A tall, narrow rectangle frames an image—and contains its movement—visually rhyming with the upright and perpendicular marble monoliths Donnelly has

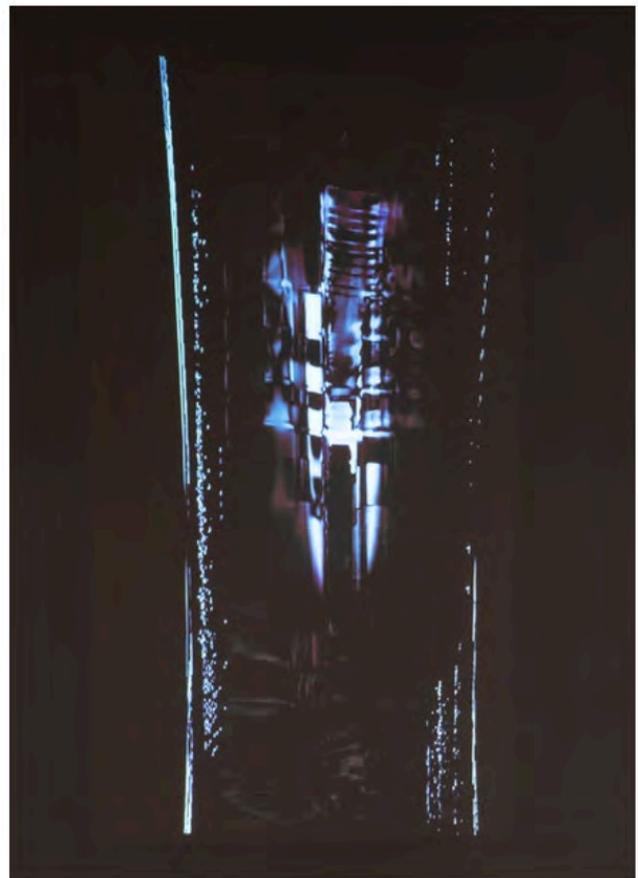
NEW YORK CITY
Matthew Marks Gallery
November 8 – January 18,
2020

Siboni, Katherine. "Trisha Donnelly." *The Brooklyn Rail*, December 16, 2019.

installed throughout the gallery space. In the 19-second loop, dimmed by competing light sources, an inscrutable object with a tangibly metallic, emulsive surface repeatedly traces a downward trajectory within its narrow enclosure. Momentarily, midfall, it quivers under its own weight, then collapses to the bottom edge of the projection, before resuming course with an efficiency so abrupt and unsettling it suggests a full erasure of each preceding loop. The image is velocity and viscosity without an object, a moving picture defined by its operations rather than its content, and further abstracted by its rapidity.

This mute, enigmatic materiality is common in the works on view at Matthew Marks's 22nd street spaces, as it is in much of Donnelly's storied, yet frequently ineffable, practice. Donnelly's exhibitions pierce history—most famously when the artist impersonated a Napoleonic messenger for her 2002 solo debut at Casey Kaplan—or slow events so as to change their nature, as in *Redwood and the Raven* (2004), where dance is rendered as a still form. In the present show, Donnelly's work demonstrates the perceptual effects of looking without identification—a method of temporal manipulation that falls outside of chronology and history, instead showing language and observation to be time-bound. Sensory dislocation is inflicted by all three of Donnelly's projections on view: a central projection on the gallery's rear wall shows a drifting undulation, vaguely solid, the phantasmagoric result of an off-register overlap of three stacked projectors. One still projection, presented before two erect marble slabs, is blurred as if to index motion: a two-dimensional plane appearing to bifurcate into three-dimensional space. Donnelly's marble and basalt objects similarly occupy a state of suspension between raw form and carved sculpture. Chiseled, to various extents, with mechanical precision and regularity, the sculptural grooves appear either ritualistic or functional. Yet Donnelly's rock tableaux also seem to embody an inherent or essential state—a shamanistic analog to Michelangelo's claim of having freed his figures from marble blocks.

On the margins of this restrained presentation, Donnelly casually invites liminal spaces and the elements themselves into a supposedly hermetic gallery experience. A cord near the rear of the gallery travels like breadcrumbs from a projector to a raw opening in the drywall, revealing a narrow corridor along a cinderblock



Installation view: *Trisha Donnelly*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, 2019. © Trisha Donnelly, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery.

wall and an overhead trapdoor inviting natural light (and, during my visit, light rain). Other ruptures in the presentation style of a typical commercial gallery—exposed drywall, painters tape, temporary architecture halfway through demolition—distend the perceptual attenuation provoked by Donnelly's work, further suggesting mysterious intent and a broader allegorical content.

Donnelly's synesthetic practice has tasked her viewers with expanding and contracting one kind of sensory information such that it is received in the form of another, a process she directly guides in language that is at once procedural and metaphysical. In *Vortex* (2003), Donnelly famously instructs her viewer to transform sound into sculpture: "Take the highest male voice. Listen and track it throughout the recording. The sound can compress like a photograph. While listening, flatten it into an object. It's a comb-like structure." Donnelly's silent exhibition at Matthew Marks formally echoes these imagistic similes. Her introductory projection takes the form of a relentless cycle of compression, while her stone objects grow increasingly narrow and pronged when carved: "a comb-like structure." Donnelly plunges the viewer into a mute space in which verbal identification fails, amplifying visual properties so that they become viscerally tactile. The concept of transubstantiation illuminates Donnelly's work, not only for its interpretation of matter as shifting, but also for its origin in myth and its dependence on suspension of disbelief. It is synesthesia inflected by religious ecstasy.

The ghostly three-video work installed at the center of the gallery recalls, in its constant quiver, a common synesthetic method: the production of sound by vibration. The image's curving surface resembles the undulating arrangements of a pipe organ, elements of the shape pushing up and down, opening and closing. Donnelly's *Vibration Station*, a 2002 silver print not included in this exhibition, shows a majestic pipe organ inverted. In 2005, Donnelly described to Hans Ulrich Obrist an unrealized installation by the same name, "I still wish I could make the *Vibration Station*, the organ that goes into the ground ... You would walk through the vibrations of a box organ concerto." In the work on view here, vibrations take place absent literal sound or movement. Silent emanations radiate from visual stimuli, and art does what it is intended to: it summons the intangible.

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RIOT MATERIAL

ART. WORD. THOUGHT.

The Beguiling Desolations Of Trisha Donnelly

MARCH 14, 2020

at Matthew Marks Gallery, NYC

by Brian Block

In this era of pervasive promotional storytelling, Trisha Donnelly consistently chooses to go the other way and expunge. Her works carry no titles, her exhibitions no names, and her press releases only a few facts. This calculated act of liberalizing the viewing field works to intensify the abstracting power of the white cube toward the discrete objects and artist's interventions on view. Indeed, what remains most compelling about Donnelly's practice is her expert crafting of distinctive analogue *mise en scène* that finely reframes the show's perceptual field. Far more gripping than any particular artwork of hers, it is this clandestine manipulation of the gallery space itself — as if it were a fabric in her medium — that she wields to captivating and occasionally frustrating effect.

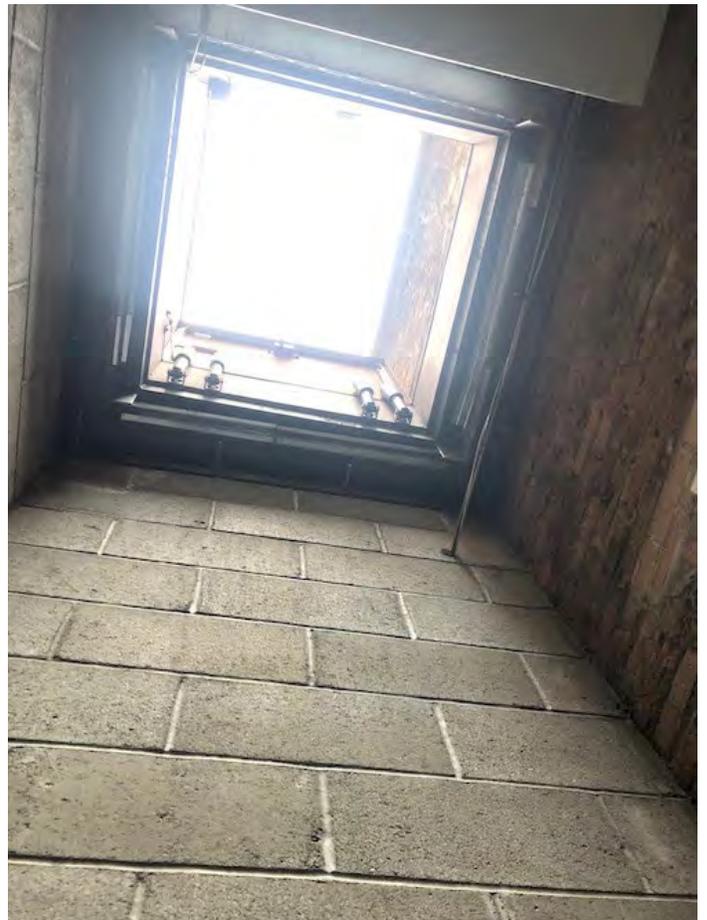
Ten stone sculptures make up the bulk of the artworks on view at Donnelly's most recent exhibition at Matthew Marks Gallery's two Chelsea spaces. There are also three projected digital images of her familiar



Block, Brian. "The Beguiling Desolations Of Trisha Donnelly." *Riot Material*, March 14, 2020.

piston-in-liquid motifs and one small print. The stones are long rectangular slabs either laid down as plinths or made to stand totem-like — reminiscent of historical memorials, of property markers, and pointedly of the white cube's own kinship with archaic sacred architecture and spaces of suspended time. All but one of the stones appear scored to varying extent with mechanical blade kerf cuts and linear incisions that elicit a sense of haunting accidental beauty. What intention may exist behind the kerf cut method or the patterns they form in different stones is left to conjecture.

The ambling visitor also finds that the long, narrow back room of the 526 West 22nd Street gallery had been informally excavated, the two end doors pried ajar, the lights turned off and the metal roof vent left open to the winter sky. It feels as if one has entered into the very subconscious of the space only to find it deserted though pockmarked by previous usage. This mildly transgressive unmasking functions as a kind-of Wizard of Oz mnemonic, but more lastingly as a curious spectral registration of the artist's presence in this most artificial of settings; as well as a sudden, unexpected seeping in of the here and the now in the formidable abstraction machine that is the white cube.



Block, Brian. "The Beguiling Desolations Of Trisha Donnelly." *Riot Material*, March 14, 2020.

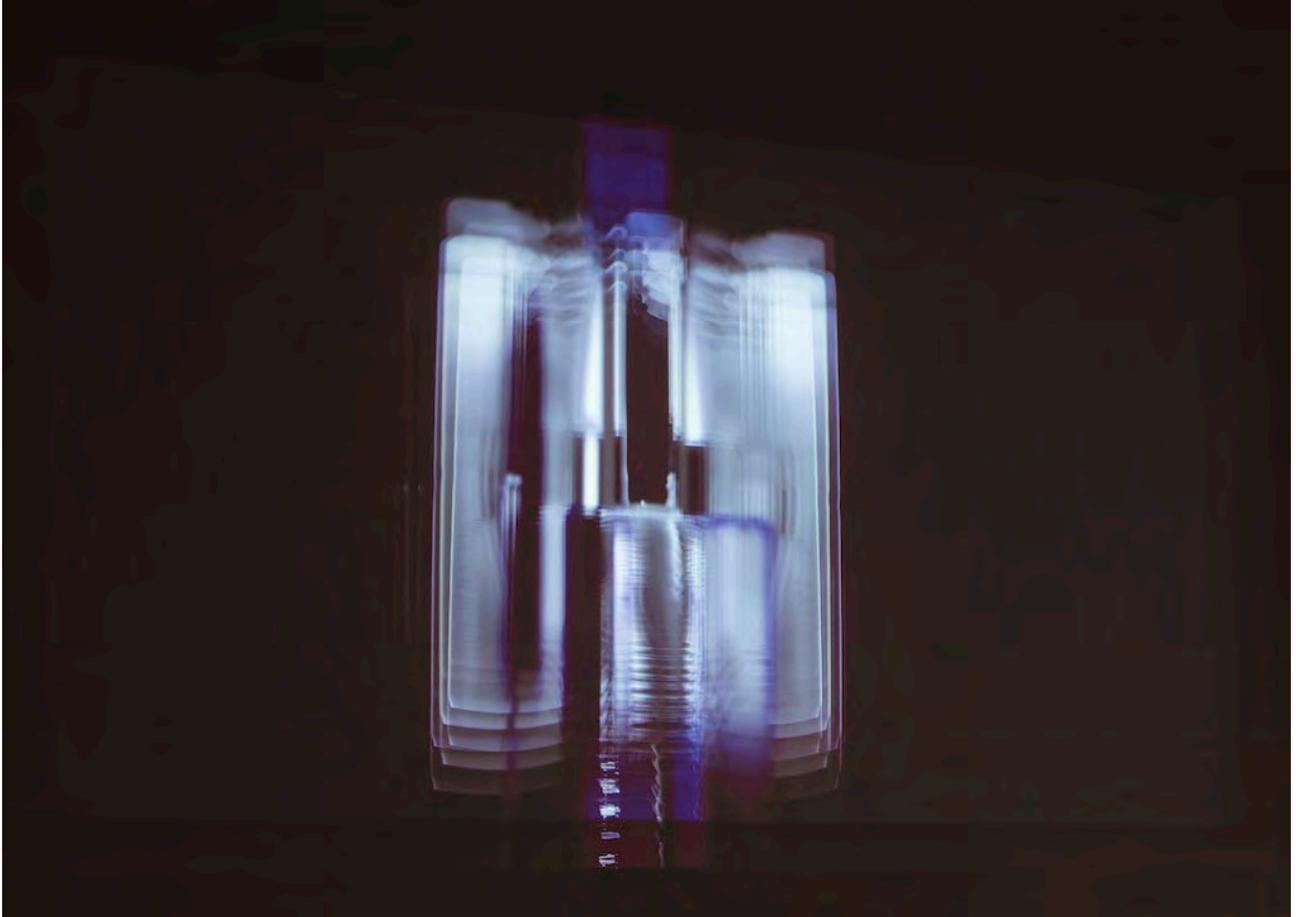
A real pleasure in Donnelly's exhibitions are the mental puzzles and riddles, the telling apart of useful clue from sheer fortuities. A pair of antique brass nautical lanterns not listed as artworks? That unfilled hole in the wall the size of an electrical outlet? One's interpretive senses are summoned to operate on high alert, and this is a distinctively generative quality of her work. One is reminded of the immersive theater performance *Sleep No More*, in which visitors don masks and wander through a building where different scenes of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* are unfolding simultaneously. Here, subjectivity's longing for a master narrative is fractured not by spatiotemporal constraint but by a structural ambiguity that Donnelly cultivates and sharpens with perverse relish: the essential undecidability in reading artwork.



And when said artwork is deployed by a prestigious institutional space such as Matthew Marks, one is tempted to conclude that while Trisha Donnelly's aesthetic program may run exactly counter to Andrea Fraser's — Fraser's *Open Plan* (2016) left entirely bare a floor of the glistening new Whitney Museum, while filling it with audio from prisons — the lesson on the politics of the white-cube-as-capital is one and the same.

Riding the classic gap between object and intention all the way to the metaphorical bank, there is no question that Donnelly's self-exegetic muteness has deliberately courted a mystery that gallerists and writers of all stripes have spun into a bona fide mythology. As in fashion or courtship, nothing activates desire around art quite like demurral. Donnelly was recently featured in a book about artists who have retreated from the art world. The book's title: *Tell Them I Said No*, her own response to the author's inquiry.

When do the results of an art practice fall short of inspiring good faith? When is there enough *there* there? The intermittently frustrating journeys that Donnelly's *mise en scène* repeatedly summon us into are beguiling abstractions of exhibitions. They are hikes along the philosophical crestline demarcating something from nothing — meandering but rarely without reward. Her work makes the convincing case that art exhibitions operate essentially via forms of manipulation akin to film, albeit with a starkly different phenomenology of the container, economics of the stage, and critical knowledge generated.



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THE
NEW YORKER

ART

Trisha Donnelly

You hear this American artist's profoundly thoughtful exhibition before you see it: Leontyne Price singing the "Habanera" aria from "Carmen" on a five-minute loop. The repetition provides sonic structure for the sprawling, moving, untitled installation. The trunks of two mammoth trees—a redwood and a Scots pine, felled after dying on private land in California—rest side by side on dollies, at the north end of the seven-thousand-square-foot gallery, like a couple lying in state. A dense tangle of the trees' branches lines the eastern wall, as does a row of benches. The lights are off, and the only illumination arrives, along with perplexed visitors, through a narrow aperture in the wall, sliced from ceiling to floor in front of a picture window. (Donnelly has rerouted people from the standard entrance and exit.) As Price sings, in French, "Love is a rebellious bird," thoughts turn to the speeds of life—swift for a bird, slow for a tree—and the increasing threat of human beings to the natural world.

—*Andrea K. Scott*

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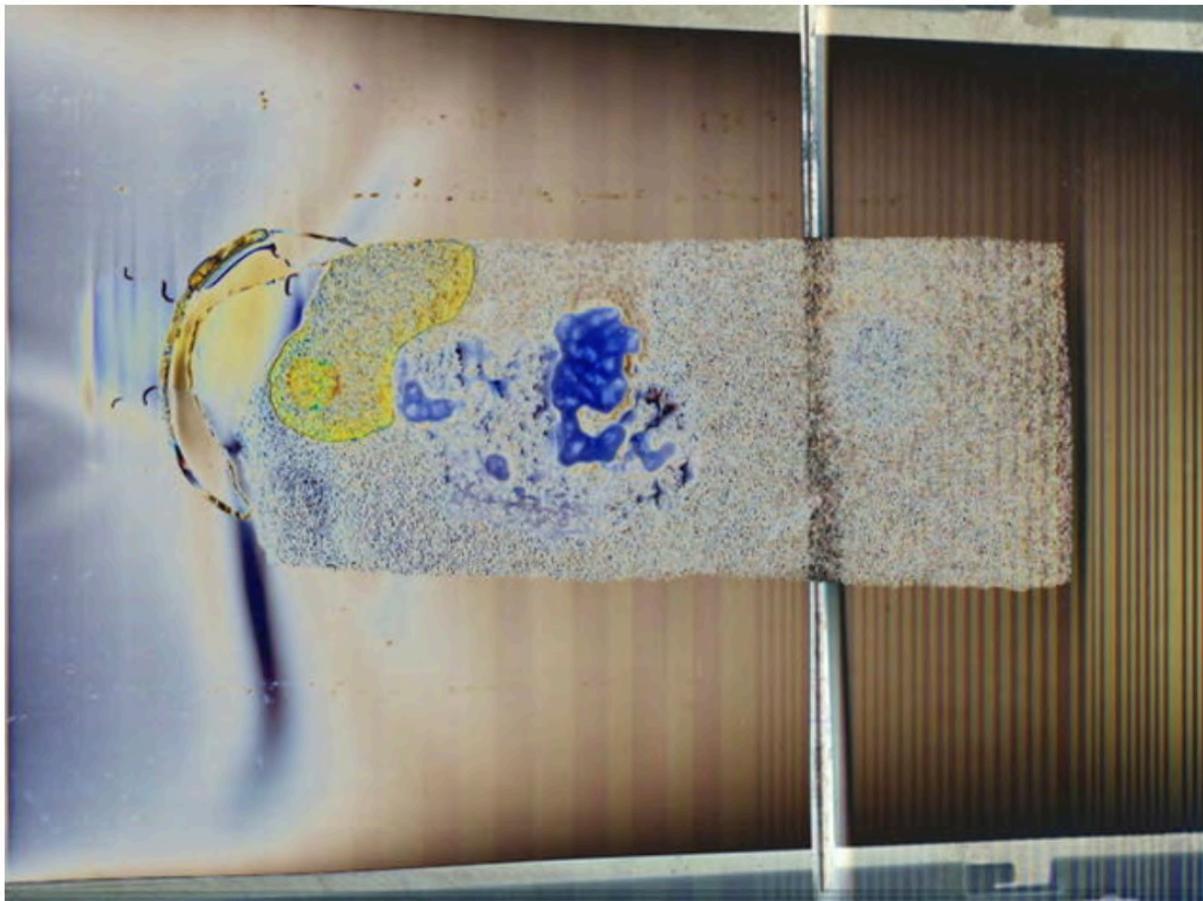
artnet news

People

Trisha Donnelly Wins Germany's Prestigious Wolfgang Hahn Prize

Her elusive work echoes the intentions of the prize's namesake.

Hili Perlson, December 2, 2016



Trisha Donnelly, *UNTITLED*, (2012). Courtesy of the artist, Julia Stoschek Collection

American artist Trisha Donnelly has been named the winner of the 2017 Wolfgang Hahn Prize, awarded annually by the Museum Ludwig in Cologne. The 23rd recipient of the prestigious award, Donnelly will receive a solo exhibition and a catalogue. In addition, the museum will acquire works by the artist.

Perlson, Hili. "Trisha Donnelly Wins Germany's Prestigious Wolfgang Hahn Prize." *Artnet*, December 2, 2016.

The Hahn Prize's solo exhibitions traditionally coincide with the city's major art fair, Art Cologne, whose 2017 edition runs from April 26-29. Donnelly's show is slated to open on April 25.

Donnelly—who does not permit any explanatory texts to accompany her works—uses installation, light, video, and sometimes performance to alter the viewer's experience of the exhibition space and perception of time. While her practice can be challenging to some, it is precisely her resistance to readily-consumable artworks that convinced the jury.

“Her radical approach to themes such as aesthetics and reception were decisive factors in the selection of Trisha Donnelly as the award's winner,” said Suzanne Cotter, director of the Serralves Museum of contemporary art in Porto, who headed the jury.

“As an artist she occupies a position of committed resistance to the easy appropriation of art as something contained and ultimately controllable. At the same time, the extraordinary generosity of her work, that touches on the visual—in particular the photographic—the spoken, the aural and the physical, is electrifying in its permission,” she added.

“Her practice thus echoes Wolfgang Hahn's, who saw in the avant-garde the connection between art and life,” Cotter concluded, speaking for the jury which also consisted of Yilmaz Dziewior, director of the Museum Ludwig; Mayen Beckmann, chairwoman of the Museum Ludwig's Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst; as well as its board members Gabriele Bierbaum, Sabine DuMont Schütte, Jörg Engels, and Robert Müller-Grünow.

The New York-based artist has been featured in numerous institutional solo exhibitions across the US, and has most recently been featured in Europe with major exhibitions at the Villa Serralves in Porto (2016), and the Serpentine in London (2014). She gained recognition in Germany following her show at Portikus, Frankfurt (2010), and at the Julia Stoschek collection in Düsseldorf last year.

She won, in 2010, Rob Pruitt's Art Award, as well as the Prix de la Fondation Luma in Arles. In 2011, she was the recipient of the 10th Sharjah Biennale prize, and the Faber-Castell prize for drawing in 2012.

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ARTFORUM

NEWS

December 01, 2016 at 10:03am

TRISHA DONNELLY WINS MUSEUM LUDWIG'S 2017 WOLFGANG HAHN PRIZE

Museum Ludwig in Cologne has announced that Trisha Donnelly has been awarded its 2017 Wolfgang Hahn Prize, which was established to honor contemporary artists who “have not gained the attention they deserve.” The award includes an exhibition organized by the museum, an accompanying catalogue, and an acquisition of the artist’s work.

The jury consisted of Suzanne Cotter, director of the Serralves Museum of contemporary art in Porto; Yilmaz Dziewior, director of Museum Ludwig; Mayen Beckmann, chair of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst; and Gabriele Bierbaum, Sabine DuMont Schütte, Jörg Engels, and Robert Müller-Grünow, board members of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst.

Cotter said, “Trisha Donnelly is without doubt one of the most compelling artists of our time, whose work offers entirely new ways of experiencing and thinking about form, at once synaesthetic and disruptively transporting. As an artist she occupies a position of committed resistance to the easy appropriation of art as something contained and ultimately controllable. At the same time, the extraordinary generosity of her work, that touches on the visual—in particular the photographic—the spoken, the aural and the physical, is electrifying in its permission.”

Born in San Francisco in 1974, Donnelly received her bachelor of fine arts from the University of California, and in 2000 she earned her master of fine arts at the Yale University School of Art. Since 1999 she has taken part in numerous solo exhibitions, including shows at the Villa Serralves in Porto, the Serpentine Gallery in London, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago.



Installation view of "Trisha Donnelly" at Serralves Villa, Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto.

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

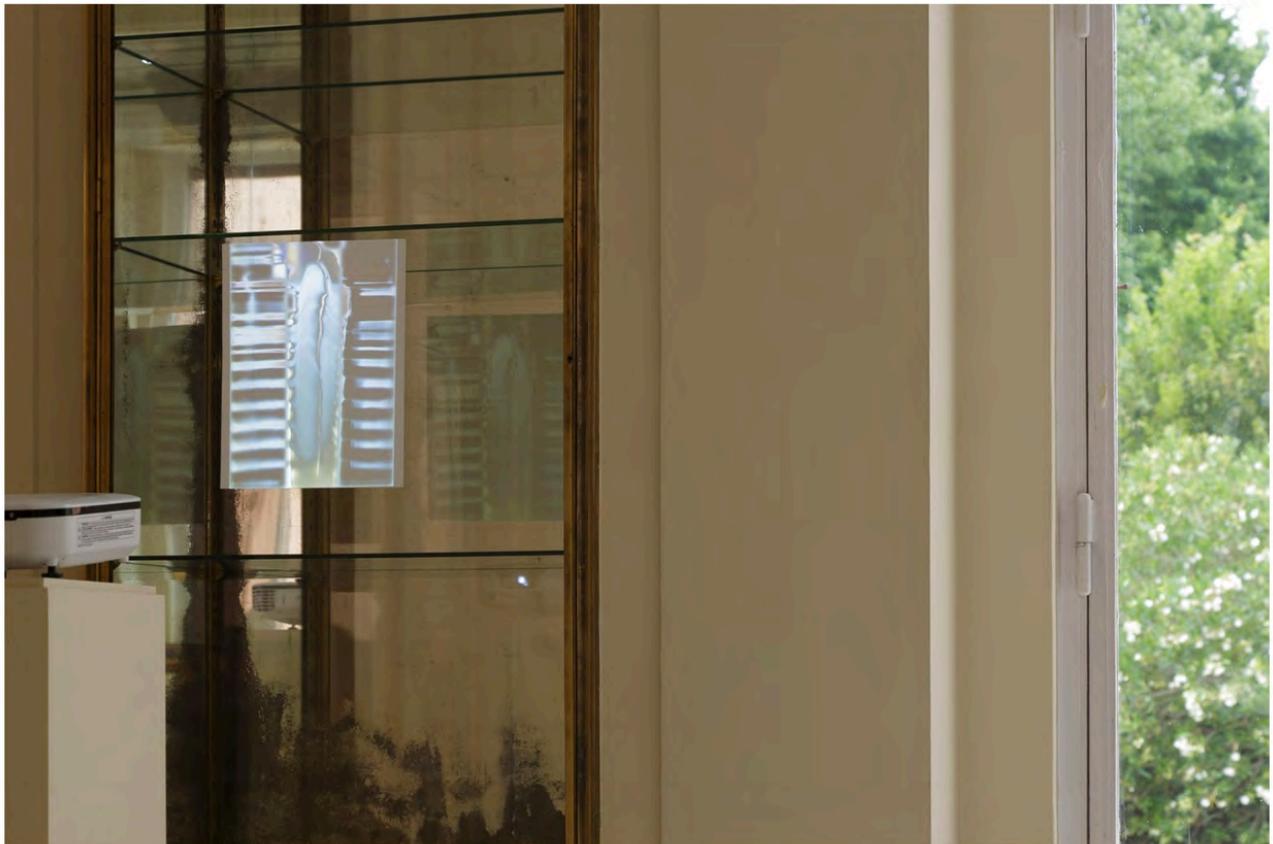
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ARTnews

NEWS — THE TALENT

Trisha Donnelly Wins Museum Ludwig's 2017 Wolfgang Hahn Prize

BY *Alex Greenberger* POSTED 12/01/16 9:26 AM



Installation view of "Trisha Donnelly" at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal, 2016.
©SERRALVES FOUNDATION, PORTO, PORTUGAL/FILIPE BRAGA

The Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany, announced today that Trisha Donnelly has won its 2017 Wolfgang Hahn Prize. The New York-based artist, who recently had a solo show at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, Portugal, will now receive an exhibition at the Museum Ludwig. A sum of money, with a maximum amount of €100,000 (about \$106,000), is typically given to the winner, though the amount awarded to Donnelly was not specified in a new release.

Greenberger, Alex. "Trisha Donnelly Wins Museum Ludwig's 2017 Wolfgang Hahn Prize." *ARTnews*, December 1, 2016.

Donnelly's work (some of which will now be acquired by the Museum Ludwig) takes a wide variety of forms—installations, photographs, performances, drawings, videos, and writings, often dealing with time and perception. Hers are typically slow works that demand patience and often rely on a knowledge of the space in which they're exhibited.

“Trisha Donnelly is without doubt one of the most compelling artists of our time whose work offers entirely new ways of experiencing and thinking about form,” Suzanne Cotter, the director of the Serralves Museum, said in a statement. Cotter added, “As an artist she occupies a position of committed resistance to the easy appropriation of art as something contained and ultimately controllable. At the same time, the extraordinary generosity of her work, that touches on the visual—in particular the photographic—the spoken, the aural and the physical, is electrifying in its permission.”

Cotter was a member of the prize's jury. She was joined by Yilmaz Dziewior, the director of the Museum Ludwig; Mayen Beckmann, the chairwoman of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst; and Gabriele Bierbaum, Sabine DuMont Schütte, Jörg Engels, and Robert Müller-Grünow, all of whom are board members of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst.

Donnelly's exhibition is currently slated to open on April 25. Until then, her work can be seen at “Less Than One,” a show at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis featuring work from the museum's collection.

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ARTFORUM



TOP TEN

NIKOLAS GAMBAROFF

10

TRISHA DONNELLY (MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY, LOS ANGELES, 2015) Donnelly's show presented an unsolvable riddle, defying the ways in which the contemporary art world seeks to overefficiently describe, categorize, and circulate anything in its orbit. Donnelly sidesteps this mode of operation completely without taking the contemporaneity out of her art. Presented was a display of uncharted possibilities, at times dark and abject, but strongly footed in a realm beyond language. The only light was provided by the dance of a blackout tarp flapping under a large skylight. In an otherwise-pitch-black room, it flooded the space with short glimpses of what felt like warm bright optimism against the dead blue hues of digitally projected, nearly static images that also fluttered on the walls, unable to illuminate the room at all. □

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ARTFORUM

Los Angeles

Trisha Donnelly

**MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY | 1062 N ORANGE GROVE
1062 N Orange Grove
September 26, 2015–November 7, 2015**

In Trisha Donnelly's work the deferral of meaning has become an aesthetic operation—one that extends beyond the site of display and into the systems of production and distribution that surround, and often define, the work of art. While one could identify the works in the show as photographs, videos, and drawings, the artist seems less concerned with anchoring artworks in their about-ness as much as suspending meaning in the margins of what is formally "on view." Here, unceremonious gestures—an exposed back door left slightly ajar or the hardcover book propping up a projector, for instance—become heavy with potential significance, occasionally inducing frustration but also moments of sublimity. The most poignant example is found in a black tarp that loosely covers a single skylight—the gallery's main light source. Controlled by the unpredictable choreography of wind, sunlight illuminates the room as wavy flicker or trapezoidal planes.

If the drastic shifts of light and raw borders of her photographs and projections emphasize the periphery, the edges of Donnelly's works embody a kind of softness and viscosity. In the frenzied vibrations and globular shapes, the artist's videos convey the liquid qualities of photographic emulsions and running water—the delicate tremor between darkness and exposure. There is also light jazz. Playing from a speaker-system inelegantly located in a back corner of the gallery, the exhibition's buoyant soundtrack recalls the cinema of Jacques Tati, set here against airport seats and an untitled 2013 video work that manifests the frenetic rhythm of Paul Sharits's flicker films but features geometric and diagrammatic forms evoking the electric insides of a sentient scanner. At some point the music momentarily shifts from pleasant melody to a strange spectral noise with sonar frequencies, locating us somewhere between the deep sea and the celestial unknown.



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2015, gelatin silver print on ilford paper, 10 x 9 7/8".

— *Olivian Cha*

ArtReview

Trisha Donnelly

The San Francisco-born artist is a virtuoso strategist, finessing the slow reveal (or, indeed, no reveal) to deliver work that is portentous, charged and enigmatic

By **Martin Herbert**

Late in 2007, I went repeatedly to Tate Modern's exhibition *The World as a Stage*, primarily to see one small black-and-white photograph – or, rather, a series of 31 small black-and-white photographs presented one at a time and, as per the artist's instructions, rotated daily: Trisha Donnelly's *The Redwood and the Raven* (2004). The experience of this staggered, witchy display, which documents the headscarf-wearing dancer Frances Flannery performing, against a tree in a forest, a dance called 'The Raven', choreographed to Edgar Allen Poe's eponymous 1845 poem, was borderline perverse: you couldn't grasp the moves, hear the poem or precisely remember the previous images you saw, so that the additive melded continually with the subtractive. (The raven in the poem famously answers queries with 'nevermore'.) You wanted more, aware that the more you got would equate to less. This, I already knew, was the American artist's conceptual wheelhouse: earlier that year, in Manchester, I'd seen her deliver a drum-pounding, soprano-screaming, incantatory performance, *The Second Saint*, at Hans Ulrich Obrist's and Philippe Parreno's performance-art extravaganza *Il Tempo del Postino*, a fully confident yet, for all its noise, muted display, ending with the fall of four black obelisks, that resides in my memory as a roaring blank abstraction.

But then methodically parsing the actions, objects and images proffered by the forty-year-old, San Francisco-born Donnelly, who has now returned to London with a solo exhibition at the Serpentine Galleries, is not really the point. Thinking about them as interacting systemic units and conjectures about shaped reality, the fungible nature of space and time, and the strictures of art reception is more fruitful. Hers is a chess-playing art, one of timing and artfully mobilised viewer psychology; or at least that's where it starts. In her New York solo debut at Casey Kaplan in 2002, Donnelly rode into the opening on a white horse, dressed in Napoleonic garb, and, acting as ersatz courier, delivered the oration that the French emperor supposedly should have given at the Battle of Waterloo: 'If it need be termed surrender, then let it be so, for he has surrendered in word, not will. He has said, "My fall will be great but it will be useful." The emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine and with this I am electric. I am electric.' (Eyewitness critic Jerry Saltz wrote that here Donnelly 'stole my aesthetic heart', while reckoning that the performance rather outweighed the show itself.)

HERS IS A CHESS-PLAYING ART, ONE OF TIMING AND ARTFULLY MOBILISED VIEWER PSYCHOLOGY



The Redwood and the Raven (detail),

By 2005, Donnelly didn't even require a real horse; stage-managed rumour was enough. At the opening of a show at the Kölnischer Kunstverein celebrating a major artist's prize she'd won, word 'got around' that another steed was waiting somewhere in the institution, that Donnelly would perform – and the artist, curator Beatrix Ruf remembers, left the preview dinner a few times to reinforce the idea. It never happened, but the very possibility coloured the event. This, in microcosm, is what Suzanne Cotter has called Donnelly's ideal of the 'uncontrived encounter', something Donnelly herself calls 'natural use' and which is the carefully controlled outcome of so much of her work (which, in a gesture of imperial defeat that is also a gift, then abdicates control): a process that, though the description may sound hyperbolic, comes closer to a suggestion of opening up space and time, with visibly disproportionate means, than almost any of Donnelly's contemporaries. See, for example, *Hand That Holds the Desert Down* (2002), in which a black-and-white detail of one of the paws of the Great Sphinx at Giza flips, via titling, into a vertiginous recasting of gravitational reality, though a proposition whose supporting wires are blatantly evident.



Donnelly's art has prowled, avoiding resolution, around stormy transcendence from the outset: the first work of hers I remember seeing (and not being particularly struck by: her work has to accrete in the mind) was *Untitled (Jumping)* (1999), made before she graduated from Yale in 2000, in which she imitates, while moving in and out of the video frame, a variety of musicians in states of musical rapture. Her art since, which encompasses soundworks, actions, lectures, drawings, sculpture, photography and more video, continually stresses the possibility of – to quote the Bard – there being more in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in our philosophy. Or in our artworld, which has a schizoid relationship nowadays to the esoteric and occult, liking it when historical – Hilma af Klint, say – but not so much when offered without irony or a sense that certain ancient fires haven't yet gone out. The thematic framework Donnelly has set up charges even her most outwardly slim works with electricity and expansive portent. The Napoleon theme, for example, continued in *The Vortex* (2003), which featured a recording of the Slavyanka Russian Men's Chorus singing Lermontov's poem 'Borodino' (1837), named after a gruesome battle of the Napoleonic wars. What this added was perhaps just another line of code, though it also aimed at an experience of synaesthesia (see the anticipatory text 'The Vortex Notes', 2002, which advised following the highest male voice and feeling it 'compress like a photograph') and dragged a vast historical event into the artwork's orbit, resituating it in the twenty-first century as a question that is particular and also diffuse. Her sculptures involving carving into quartzite, she's said, relate to 'the enacting of processes of loss in geological time': entertain that, and millennia fall away as you look.



Or, rather, they might. Again, it's characteristic of Donnelly's art that one simultaneously falls under the spell and has a sense, related to critique, of how the spell is cast. What's likely is that no spell at all, or at best a pale shadow of a spell, is cast if this art is received secondhand, and here her work twists uncharacteristically polemical. In an age where so much art is experienced – if that's even the word – through online aggregators and through documentation, Donnelly's art insists on being taken in real time and real space, so that it can ask what those things even are. It's presumably to this end that she has given up doing interviews – we asked, and were politely rebuffed; a 2010 in-gallery interview she did with Anthony Huberman apparently most often featured the response 'pass', with Donnelly playing tracks from her iPod in lieu of other answers – while her catalogues don't usually feature essays and her press releases can veer strongly

THE THEMATIC FRAMEWORK DONNELLY HAS SET UP CHARGES EVEN HER MOST OUTWARDLY SLIM WORKS WITH ELECTRICITY AND EXPANSIVE PORTENT

away from the interpretative. When a visitor attending her 2002 Kaplan show requested more info, he or she would be played some electronic beats. The PR handout for her poised, codified-feeling 2010 exhibition at Portikus, Frankfurt, with its sequence of leaning incised marble reliefs, drawings and video, purports to be a press text but is a list of titles and media.

This matters: one might wish it to be exemplary, except that it is turf that Donnelly almost owns and that, to mix metaphors, would become hackneyed fast. So much art today, as we're all aware, comes with an accompanying explanation that actively disarms the viewing experience, rationalises it, and rationalising appears to be the last thing Donnelly wants: her art, in its myriad margin-directed speculations, says there's too much of that already, and not enough that, to paraphrase that horseriding ensign, really rests its weight upon your mind and mine. Think for a second about how few artists actually sustain this quality of tactical, shape-changing surprise and risk. David Hammons would be one, Lutz Bacher another; there are not that many others. Meanwhile galleries and fairs clog with frictionless production lines. Donnelly operates, conversely, a continual transitive process, new works adjusting old ones, the full picture held back: *Black Wave*, a 2002 photograph of a wave about to crest, feels like it might be metonymic both in its minimal ominousness and its forceful incompleteness.

**ART TODAY COMES WITH AN
ACCOMPANYING
EXPLANATION THAT ACTIVELY
DISARMS THE VIEWING
EXPERIENCE, RATIONALISING
APPEARS TO BE THE LAST
THING DONNELLY WANTS**

The last time Trisha Donnelly stole this viewer's aesthetic heart was in Berlin, at KW Institute's 2012–3 exhibition *One on One*, in which viewers were permitted solo encounters with works of art. Commandeering a high floor, Donnelly presented a suspended sculpture, a big, steel-framed, partly cracked tray held up with aeroplane cables, like a perpetual enigmatic experiment. I remember low lighting, I remember the variable tilting of the oblique tray and water in it, but mostly I remember that characteristic quality of insistent wordless proposition: disbelief suspended, the author as artist erased and replaced, prospectively, with someone or something arcane and anxiety-making, and then the figure of Donnelly, manipulating the murky theatrics, returning to mind. As I write, several weeks before the Serpentine show's opening, the gallery website is displaying a press release for the forthcoming show that features, unsurprisingly, no mention of any work; the press office informs us that Donnelly 'will transform the Serpentine's spaces through the use of objects and interventions, with newly conceived sculptural and performative pieces'. More than that? Pass. Nevermore. Cue beats.

This article originally appeared in the October 2014 issue

Flash Art

Trisha Donnelly

Serralves Museum, Porto

Entering the Serralves Villa, its Art Deco architecture highlighted by large windows and wide-open perspectives, the viewer encounters a large still projection on a plastic screen that obstructs the view of the park that serves as the building's backdrop. Like a curtain, the floor-to-ceiling fabric is stretched between two columns, limiting passage to the interstices between the columns and the side walls. The subject of the work is an abstract image that suggests a mixed-media experiment: layers of different textures are juxtaposed and superimposed to form a newly unified projected image, with a strong spatial ambiguity of depth and protrusion. Two dark shapes, whose granular pattern hints at their rough texture, are separated by a bright vertical slit. The small blue rectangle suspended in the center of the composition turns out to be a portion of sky that constitutes the background of the image, and at the same time a foregrounded piece of adhesive tape that holds the "vision" together.

A sound installation resonates throughout the space, its deep vibrations recalling telluric movements or airplanes rumbling in the distance. Its sculptural force takes the shape of a column of sound, a dynamic swelling that intertwines the entrails of the earth with the sky. In another room, where windows have been left open, the sound of an actual airplane flying over the Villa flows inside, provoking a slight sense of disorientation.

For this exhibition, curated by Suzanne Cotter, the modernist architecture surrounded by nature provided the artist with a vocabulary of elements that reverberate in the works: projections of fluid or flickering shapes, photographs of distorted landscapes and drawings. The intrinsic osmosis between the building and the park is emphasized by Donnelly's transformation of the Villa itself into a living organism – through simple gestures like opening and closing windows or pointing to areas of light and shadow.

by Sara De Chiara

the guardian

▪ Trisha Donnelly, Cerith Wyn Evans London

Trisha Donnelly and Cerith Wyn Evans are an apt pairing for the Serpentine's autumn shows. Both favour a gossamer touch in conceptual art that's often mysterious to the point of opacity, but in a good way. The American Donnelly has a gift for quietly stoking awesomeness in lesser-considered corners, be that the huge hunk of carved pink marble she deposited in the shadowy interior of a lofty old stone building in a Venice garden, where it

stood like a megalith for some secret cult, or the exhibition of exquisite bird photography she staged at MoMA in 2011. Meanwhile, in the Sackler gallery, Britain's Wynn Evans weaves complex allusions to creative thinkers and artistic revolutionaries from Proust to Bataille to Fassbinder in his sound and neon works. He plays directly with the question of interpretation in his chandeliers blinking out Morse code (pictured) and a frieze of neon words. SS
Serpentine Galleries,
W2, Wed to 9 Nov



ARTFORUM



View of "Artist's Choice: Trisha Donnelly," 2012-13, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

JR.'S famous flowchart of Cubist 1936, and bend it back so that it makes a long cylinder. Make sure the edges overlap a bit so Redon (that hermetic sensualist whom Barr shoved over to the sinister side of his graph, and whose influence he reduced to a dotted line) and Rousseau (the outsider whose hard edges somehow qualified him for positioning on the right-hand side, above the hyperrational Constructivists) lie one atop the other. Take a long pin (ideally an Art Nouveau hatpin from 1900 that was made of a new metal alloy later essential for the production of satellites) and pierce the cylinder at the Redon-Rousseau intersection. Push through until the pointy end comes out at the dense cluster of lines where Orphism is snuggling up to such utopian developments as De Stijl, Suprematism, and the Machine Aesthetic. The objects in "Artist's Choice: Trisha Donnelly" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York can be plotted along that hatpin.

TAKE ALFRED H. BARR JR.'S famous flowchart of Cubist and abstract art, ca. 1936, and bend it back so that it makes a long cylinder. Make sure the edges overlap a bit so Redon (that hermetic sensualist whom Barr shoved over to the sinister side of his graph, and whose influence he reduced to a dotted line) and Rousseau (the outsider whose hard edges somehow qualified him for positioning on the right-hand side, above the hyperrational Constructivists) lie one atop the other. Take a long pin (ideally an Art Nouveau hatpin from 1900 that was made of a new metal alloy later essential for the production of satellites) and pierce the cylinder at the Redon-Rousseau intersection. Push through until the pointy end comes out at the dense cluster of lines where Orphism is snuggling up to such utopian developments as De Stijl, Suprematism, and the Machine Aesthetic. The objects in "Artist's Choice: Trisha Donnelly" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York can be plotted along that hatpin.

In Donnelly's installation, objects of utopian disappointments and expired modernities are staged in dense juxtapositions meant (seemingly without irony) to encourage their reinvigoration. Items drawn with enthusiasm from the museum's usually repressed stores of Symbolist painting, ornithological photography, and fin-de-siècle decorative arts share exhibition space with once-futuristic design specimens such as a pair of polarized sunglasses from

ca. 1946 (displayed near the floor) and a glass vase from 1978 (displayed on its side to look like a glistening eyeball proceeding through space, trailing its optic nerve like a comet's tail). Anachronistic stowaways that have been hiding in MOMA storage rooms for years have been brought out and made to shake hands with Donnelly's mystical modernism: A small, round Coptic tapestry from the seventh or eighth century rhymes in both spirit and form with the floating orbs of a Frantisek Kupka painting and with several large, colorful diagrams of microchips, whose dizzying and symmetrical depictions of circuitry work, under Donnelly's comparative power, as psychedelic technomandalas.

Walking through the exhibit, the viewer, like the hypothetical hatpin, traces slanted, oblique trajectories through the museum, even as she strikes through the core of the place: The three galleries Donnelly chose were on opposite ends of the museum and on two floors, so to visit the different spaces the viewer passes through, and thus connects, the center of the museum with the weird stuff the artist exhibits on the edges. Donnelly also establishes a four-dimensional vector through MoMA'S eccentricities and central traditions by way of the recorded audio tour. When visitors enter Donnelly's galleries with guides pressed to their ears, they are not privy to explanations of the show by the artist or by the curators Laura Hoptman and Cara Manes; rather, they hear the congenial voice of

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Robert Rosenblum as he leads museumgoers through the rooms of MaMA's 1980 Picasso retrospective in a recording created for that show. Listening to Rosenblum's languid observations about *Two Women at a Bar, 1902*, while staring at Eliot Porter's photographs of birds in Donnelly's installation, the viewer suffers vertigo in the profound temporal disconnect enacted between the seen and the heard. The viewer is also haunted by the spaces of institutions past: In the floor plan of the post-2004 MoMA, the Gallery 4 about which Rosenblum spoke no longer exists—it is not the Gallery 4 in which Donnelly is exhibiting Porter's photographs, yet the art historian's voice makes the two spaces eerily coexist.

Archetypal themes and forms pass through and link the three galleries, too. This is where the exhibition makes an operatic show of art's strain for triumph and ostentatious defeat—a binary that has obsessed Donnelly ever since she appeared at Casey Kaplan gallery on horseback ten years ago to announce the surrender of Napoleon. The belief in universal archetypes alone expresses an expired

The exhibition makes an operatic show of art's strain for triumph and ostentatious defeat.

idea, but the specific archetypes she chooses tend to dramatize art's sway between heroic yearning and *fai lure*. Take, for example, the figure of the pyramid, which recurs from Massimo Scolari's delicate depiction of a floating pyramid to the triangular motifs of a Bruce Conner inkblot drawing to two black pyramidal air ionizers from the 1980s (one from the MoMA collection, the other purchased by the artist for inclusion in the show, where it is plugged in and purifies the room). These triangular solids act as cryptic keys with which one may unlock the exhibition. The pyramid's soaring tip versus its solid weighty base, its aspiration for immortality versus its rootedness in death—these establish the axis of both transcendence and collapse around which objects of the show pivot. Hence the room of Porter's photographs showing birds either nesting or in flight; hence Alessandro Becchi's *Anfibio Convertible Couch, 1971*, lying prostrate beside Joe Goode's stairway. Needless to say, such urgent symbolism is breathtakingly silly. Yet the exhibition manages to dazzle; it overwhelms (and maybe even uplifts) the viewer with the brilliant beauty of its overreaching. And with this exhibit Donnelly legitimately challenges (even as she enacts) Hegel's declaration that art, after a certain point (after the fall of Napoleon, as a matter of fact), no longer establishes a world in the highest sense. Who could have imagined that MoMA would be the place from which to excavate such Delphic possibilities? And now, how can one see that museum in any other light?

OBSERVER

ARTISTS

Voice Over: Trisha Donnelly on Her 'Artist's Choice' Show at MoMA

By Andrew Russeth



'Barn Swallow, Great Spruce Head Island, Maine, July 9, 1974 (Hirundo rustica erythrogaster)' (1974) by Eliot Porter. (Courtesy Museum of Modern Art)

"It actually makes me nervous to stand up to speak about it, because I still go and look at these things way too frequently," the artist Trisha Donnelly said at the start of her talk at MoMA on Monday night. She was discussing the works in the show that she has organized for the "Artist's Choice" series, which invites artists to curate from the museum's collection. Her show, in galleries on the fourth and fifth floors, is on view for three more weeks.

As an artist, Ms. Donnelly throws curveballs. Most famously, she arrived at one of her crowded openings on horseback, reciting a mysterious speech. At MoMA on Monday, she asked for the lights to be turned off in the sold-out theater. She wanted to play some music that had influenced the show.

First up was a recording of 18th-century composer Domenico Scarlatti's "Cat's Fugue" on harpsichord that, she said, "somehow, I think, spatially builds and generates a dimension that's somewhat inexplicable." She could have been describing her richly enigmatic art, or her show, which is eclectic, historically and otherwise: there are paintings by Redon and Hartley, ionizers, a wheelchair, intricate drawings for microprocessors.

Next came a version of the "Cat's Fugue" for the Moog synthesizer by 20th-century composer Wendy Carlos (of *Tron* and *A Clockwork Orange* fame). Ms. Donnelly asked the technician to turn it louder, and even louder, all with the lights out. She broached the topic of transubstantiation. "It's maybe a dumb Catholic idea, but the possibility that it might have been a digital suggestion before the digital is kind of interesting," she said. "It's pretty radical and actually altogether human and repeated through many belief systems."

And then, an interlude, as Ms. Donnelly paged through a PowerPoint show of a scrapbook by the American photographer Gertrude Käsebier, which is part of her exhibition. It's filled with images of the modernist photographer Edward Steichen, looking dashing, sometimes holding a long, thin pipe. "Look at these photos!" she marveled. "They seem so defenseless or something ... This was like a love journal of unrequited experience."

This slipped into talk of Eliot Porter, who, before his death in 1990, forged a singular style of bird photography, and whose work occupies an entire room in Ms. Donnelly's show. To make his bewitching close-ups, Porter would spend weeks climbing trees, gaining the comfort of birds, and moving nests centimeter by centimeter to make them easier to photograph. Looking at the photos, she said that she thought about "the idea that one point of one bird becomes however many thousands of paths the bird has flown."

She played an abstract John Whitney film from 1975 and discussed his conviction that a new art form would come to exist, the fact that transistors were used for 20 years for various uses before scientists discovered their potential in

microprocessors, and the idea that the Chinese were buried with cosmetics and hunting devices, believing that they would be reanimated. “So, just like a dead being expecting that there will be a regeneration of flesh in the future, by some innovation or finding, [the microchip] plants itself almost as a future discovery,” she said.

An audience member noted that the audio guides for Ms. Donnelly’s show are a little unusual. They have the esteemed art historian Robert Rosenblum, who died in 2006, discussing MoMA’s 1989 Picasso retrospective, a recording that Ms. Donnelly and MoMA’s curators dug up in the museum’s storage site in Queens. (“This museum has a lot of weird stuff like that,” she whispered into the microphone.)

“The feeling when listening to these audio guides was, this was a great work of art ... or work of whatever, work of another entity or another state and dimension, existing,” she said. “[They] are so beautiful ... It’s like the Taj Mahal of languages, building it himself.” And then she delivered what may be an art writer and lecturer’s ultimate eulogy. “By the end, I don’t need the exhibition at all. I’m awash in this ocean of his funny, brilliant voice.”

The New York Times



Artist's Choice:
Trisha Donnelly at
the Museum of
Modern Art includes
a 1968 photo by Eliot
Porter.
Suzanne DeChillo/The
New York Times

January 2, 2013

Ambushed by Sundry Treasures

By ROBERTA SMITH

The Museum of Modern Art's Artist's Choice exhibitions rarely disappoint. There have been nine such shows since the series was initiated in 1989, each with its own flashes of imagination, excavations of neglected artworks and subversions of the curatorial status quo.

Past perpetrators have included Scott Burton, the first to be invited, who ruffled feathers by separating several of the museum's Brancusi sculptures from their bases and presenting all elements as independent artworks. In 1995 Elizabeth Murray mustered an impressive exhibition of art exclusively by women. And in 2008 Vik Muniz created what he called a rebus with a linear sequence of carefully linked works that included morsels like Josiah Wedgwood's 1768 black basalt coffee cup, one of the most elegant drinking vessels of all time.

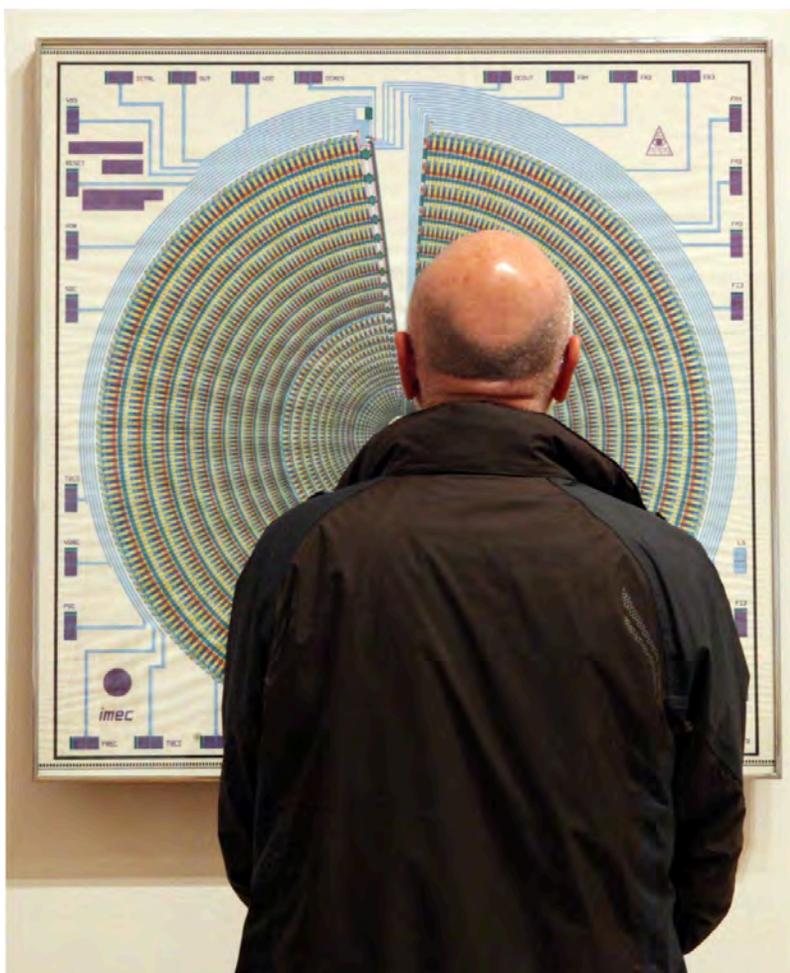
Now the torch has been passed to Trisha Donnelly, an admired Conceptual and performance artist known for her poetic if sometimes hermetic ways with mediums like drawing, photography, video, film and sound art. Working with Laura Hoptman, a curator, and Cara Manes, a collection specialist in the museum's department of painting and sculpture, Ms. Donnelly has done the Artist's Choice tradition proud.

For one thing, she has pushed even harder than most of her predecessors at the boundaries among the museum's medium-based departments. In addition, for the first time, the Artist's Choice show has been inserted into what may be the Modern's very heart: its vaunted

painting and sculpture collection galleries. Also for the first time, it consists of three galleries that are not contiguous; they are to be found in the far-flung corners of the fourth and fifth floors, which house the painting and sculpture collection.

The clusters of work that Ms. Donnelly has chosen ambush us, quietly but incisively disrupting the still largely chronological, mostly canonical, movement-by-movement account of modernism put forth in these galleries. Greatly favoring drawings, prints, photographs and several forms of design over traditional painting and sculpture, her arrangements draw you in, charm and mesmerize, while raising questions about what is art, who is an artist and what constitutes greatness or genius.

The first display — in Gallery 4 on the fifth floor — is a solo show devoted to a photographer, and not one of the medium’s anointed gods like Eugène Atget or Walker Evans. Its subject is Eliot Porter (1901-90), brother of the painter Fairfield Porter, who devoted much of his career to figuring out how to take extraordinarily beautiful and precise photographs of birds in the wild. His images often appeared in *National Geographic* and tended, as the wall text



The exhibition includes a 1989 computer-generated diagram.
Suzanne DeChillo/*The New York Times*

says, “to be relegated to the genre of nature photography.”

The 28 photographs here form a calm, concentrated oasis centering on a single vision, in notable contrast to the displays of larger works by various artists in the adjacent galleries. The images are spellbinding: small, exquisite and mostly in color of an unusually subtle kind, due to the complex dye transfer process Porter used. They have an amazing clarity of detail.

The birds, their markings, their nests, the plants in which they build them, their frazzled, frantically hungry offspring, all seem vividly present. Ideas about the genius of nature (even more than of art), the alien strangeness of birds, the familiar rituals and bonds of parenthood ricochet through the gallery. Its surprisingly intense mood is summed up by Porter’s assertion in a wall label: “Before all else, a work of art is the creation of love. Love for the subject first and the medium second.”



“No!” (1981) by Gino De Dominicis.
Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times



“Anfibio Convertible Couch” (1971) by Alessandro Becchi. Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times

The second gallery of Ms. Donnelly’s show (Gallery 11, fifth floor) is a kind of delirious, cross-generational, multimedia meditation on artistic vision and striving, with nary a canonical artist or masterpiece in sight. Drawings and prints and photographs ring the walls, hung cheek by jowl. Punctuated by occasional paintings and sculptures, the totality of 55 works by 40 artists ranges over more than 100 years. Landscapes, portraits, the figure and the face mingle with abstract works.

Eccentrics, lesser knowns and unknowns prevail here, along with unfamiliar works by better-known artists. Odilon Redon is represented by two early landscape paintings on paper that surprise by conjuring Balthus and the young Dalí. Berenice Abbott (1898-1991), known for her sympathetic portraits, is represented by six little-known abstract “Wave Pattern” photograms (1958-61), made using water, glass and lights.

In a text panel Ms. Donnelly states that she considers each selection “an epic entity,” an outsize phrase that seems to emphasize that any successful artwork, no matter how slight or seemingly delicate, requires relentless personal conviction. Gossamer textures are the norm and once more invite close looking, whether in James McNeill Whistler’s misty 1878 lithograph of the Thames or Jacques Villon’s 1920 etching of the stark terra-cotta portrait head of Baudelaire by his brother Raymond Duchamp-Villon (1876-1918), an image whose fine parallel lines almost seem computer generated. The same might also be said of “Pomegranate,” a tightly wound jewel-like painting from 1957-59 by Pamela Bianco (1906-1994), a British-born American artist who is one of the show’s finds.

“Dunes” (1935), by Augustus Vincent Tack (1870-1949) — an idiosyncratic portrait painter who also produced nature-based abstraction — has a visionary vibe, as does “No!,” a large 1981 painting of a staring head by Gino De Dominicis. “Shoes, Shoes, Shoes,” a 1966 sculpture by Joe Goode consisting of a segment of funkily carpeted wood staircase, all but invites ascension to “The First Step,” a starry abstraction from 1910-13 by Frantizek Kupka.

The other three-dimensional objects here include sculptures by Isamu Noguchi and Edward Higgins and a swank convertible couch from 1971 by Alessandro Becchi that, exhibited unfolded, resembles a life raft. Michael Lax's 1980 air ionizer, a tiny black plastic pyramid, also from the design collection, sits on a pedestal, but is plugged in. Put your hand near it and you will feel it altering the atmosphere, as all art should.

In the final portion (Gallery 22, fourth floor) Ms. Donnelly largely forsakes traditional art for design, with the exception of a few photographs; Giorgio de Chirico's 1921 drawing of Euripides with extravagantly crossed, unseeing eyes; and "The Fourth Dimension," a small planet-studded painting about death as liberation by Patrick J. Sullivan (1894-1967), a folk artist, that was last exhibited at the museum in 1943. This display also includes a small, elegantly misshaped bowl by the great American potter George Ohr, a pear-wood side table by the French Art Nouveau designer Hector Guimard, a pair of amazingly au courant Polaroid sunglasses from 1946 and a streamlined wheelchair from 1986 by the Swiss designer Rainer Küschall. These finally made it clear that, consistent with Ms. Donnelly's interest in performance, all the objects in her show evoke the human body or are used by it.

But the dominant works here are 11 large, colorful, intricately patterned prints that bring to mind checked or plaid textiles, abstract paintings and, in one circular instance, the Maya calendar. Most are computer-generated diagrams of integrated circuitry from the mid-1980s designed by Xerox, Texas Instruments, the Intel Corporation and Sam Lucente, who later became vice president for design at Hewlett-Packard.

Also included is the oldest item in the Modern's collection, a small circular Coptic tapestry from the seventh or eighth century, embroidered with a cartoonish, eerily modern face. On view for the first time, it serves as an ancient ancestor to the printed diagrams.

Someone told me that at the news conference for the show Ms. Donnelly said that one reason she chose the tapestry was the name of the donor: Lillie P. Bliss, one of the museum's founders. Emphasis on Bliss, a good word for this eccentric, joyful, finely wrought excursion.

"Artist's Choice: Trisha Donnelly" remains through April 8 at the Museum of Modern Art, (212) 708-9400, moma.org.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: January 2, 2013

An earlier version of a picture caption with this review misidentified the owner of works included in Trisha Donnelly's Artist Choice exhibition. They were taken from the Museum of Modern Art's collection, not Ms. Donnelly's.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: January 8, 2013

An art review on Thursday about “Artist’s Choice: Trisha Donnelly,” at the Museum of Modern Art, referred incorrectly to 11 large intricately patterned prints in the exhibition. Most of them — not all — are computer-generated diagrams of integrated circuitry from the mid-1980s.

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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NEW YORK

THE ART REVIEW

The Best of the Basement

Rooting through MoMA's century of deep storage for her "Artist's Choice" show, Trisha Donnelly reveals herself.

By Jerry Saltz Published Dec 9, 2012



I don't often go to curator or artist walk-throughs of exhibitions. For a critic, it feels like cheating. I want to see shows with my own eyes, making my own mistakes, viewing exhibitions the way most of their audience sees them. Fresh. But I wouldn't have missed [Trisha Donnelly's](#) magical tour of her brilliantly visionary artist-choice exhibition, now up at [MoMA](#). For me, Donnelly is a rare case of artistic love at first sight—one I still haven't gotten over, even though her work can be abstruse and hard to parse. I admire her work so much I've never spoken to her, afraid I'd act like some dorky fanboy.

My Donnelly love bloomed at 7 p.m. on April 5, 2002, when she rode into Casey Kaplan's 14th Street gallery on a white horse. She was costumed like some Napoleonic messenger. The small crowd stood agog as she gave a brief speech, ending with "The emperor has fallen, and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine, and with this I am electric. I am electric." By the time she rode out into the night, I was smitten. As it happens, Laura Hoptman, a MoMA curator, had been similarly dazzled by another Donnelly performance. "I was hooked irredeemably," she later wrote, adding, "This kind of artist love is rare for me." She eventually invited Donnelly to curate this show.

For the opening, a week after Donnelly had reportedly lost her home and much of her work to Hurricane Sandy, the artist came to MoMA and explained to a very small group of lucky onlookers, including me, how she chose what she chose out of the museum's vast collection. She said she was after "striking voices I couldn't let go of ... paths of encounters and building poetic structures ... images that go beyond the images themselves." One of the three permanent-collection galleries she's filled is devoted to the little-known mid-century photographer Eliot Porter, who shot birds with cameras and techniques of his own invention. (He also documented newborn spiders and the life

Saltz, Jerry. "The Best of the Basement." *New York Magazine*, December 9, 2012.

cycle of the mosquito.) Calling Porter “an amazing weirdo,” Donnelly pointed at pictures of birds feeding their young, nesting, and in mid-flight, and said, “That birds still exist now is a miracle. The speed of their lives is so different from ours ... There’s such an insanity and logic of birds.” Insanity and logic together are keys to Donnelly’s aesthetic. Pointing at a picture I hadn’t noticed before, she said, “That hummingbird is a heroic force.” I looked. *Boom!* It became a tiny god. Gesturing at a barn swallow twisting in midair, she observed, “Every bird Porter saw was a path ... when he shot images, lines between him and the bird exploded.”

Profuse paths, lines, and explosions ricochet in this exhibition. On the way into one of the galleries, Donnelly has placed a 1955 George Platt Lynes photograph of a naked man, seen from behind as he’s looking at an image. The rear end is perfect. At his hip is a cushion depicting a devil’s face. The artwork this Adonis looks at resembles a mirror. In fact, it’s a painting by Russian surrealist Pavel Tchelitchew, whose *Hide-and-Seek* was once among the most popular images in MoMA’s collection. It’s a tip-off to her thinking, a clue to understanding the show. Tchelitchew has fallen out of art-historical favor, and his work lives mainly in storage. Donnelly is plumbing ideas of unsanctioned and homoerotic beauty, and of unseen, forgotten, and overlooked art.

Another of her galleries contains a number of large grid images. I thought at first that they were minimalist drawings, or maybe drawings by the insane. It turns out these cosmic-looking diagrams are renditions from the mid-eighties of silicon microprocessors. Donnelly described them as “movements of paths of thought.” I gasped, and saw the warp of the world tapestry in them, maps that would contain multitudes, change life, move information at unimagined speeds, and create unfathomable possibilities. These drawings aren’t just invention or innovation. They’re great art.

Near those diagrams is a radiant 1938 painting by a forgotten American, Patrick J. Sullivan, a picture of figures standing on some forlorn orb looking up at a Van Gogh sky filled with shooting stars, planets, and other galactic phenomena. Donnelly talked about this painting “of the Holy Grail of art, the rotation of the planets, including the one you’re looking at and standing on.” I looked. She’s right.

In the remaining gallery are moments of aesthetic ecstasy. I sighed aloud at an intense, awkward 1942 masterpiece by Marsden Hartley that hasn’t been on view since MoMA was rebuilt. This impenetrable painting of white waves crashing on brown rocks as black clouds drift in a sooty sky reminds me why Hartley is my favorite prewar twentieth-century American artist.

Then another work I’d rarely seen: a waist-high 1966 carpeted object by lesser-known Joe Goode. It looks just like a staircase. Your parents would surely say, “Honey, this isn’t art, is it?” As Donnelly marveled that Goode had fabricated “a fact,” I saw this work in ways I’d never seen it before. In shows like Donnelly’s, we see the tantalizing tips of enormous artistic icebergs, representative pieces that open multiple visual thought-structures. As I’ve said in the past, MoMA didn’t apportion nearly enough space in its new building for its vital permanent collection. Bravo to Donnelly and the curators for fighting against their building’s infuriating limitations with electric efforts like this.

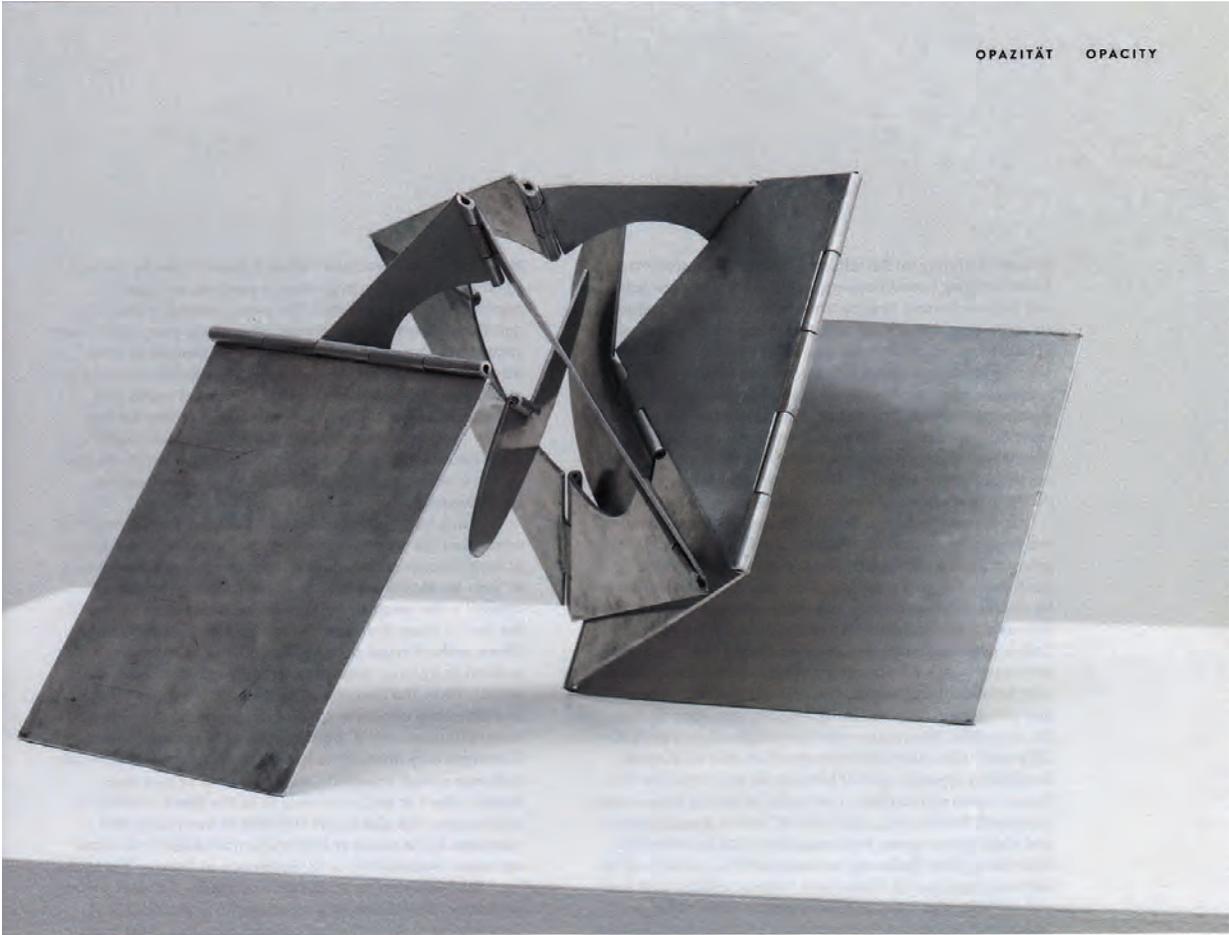
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frieze

Blickdicht

**Against
Interpretations**



Wie lässt sich Édouard Glissants Forderung nach Opazität auf Kunst beziehen? *Jan Verwoert* versteht Opazität als offenes Kommunikationsmodell – und legt eine Kunstgeschichte frei, die von Lygia Clarks Insektenskulpturen bis zu Trisha Donnelly's enigmatischen Filmen reicht

How does Édouard Glissant's demand for opacity translate into art? *Jan Verwoert* explores opacity as a model for open communication – and outlines a history, which runs from Lygia Clark's sculptures to Trisha Donnelly's enigmatic films

1
Lygia Clark
Bicho De Bolso (Pocket Bicho)
1966
Aluminium
Dimensions variable

Es liegt Hoffnung im Rätselhaften. Wenn es für nichts zur Rechtfertigung erhalten muss, sich für nichts zu entschuldigen und keinem Format zu gehorchen braucht. Sondern offen als etwas zu Tage treten kann, was zwischen uns steht, selbst und gerade wenn wir uns verständigen: das unauflöslich Seltsame, Unausgesprochene oder Unausprechbare zum Beispiel, das in einer bestimmten Wortwahl mitschwingen mag, die einem einleuchtet, ohne dass man genau bestimmen könnte, warum. Oder das, was manche Blicke und Gesten vielsagend macht, gerade weil sie zweideutig sind. Es mag auch ein Akzent sein, aus dem, ob man will oder nicht, die Stimmen der Orte, an denen man sprechen gelernt hat, herausklingen.

In diesem Sinne würde ich Édouard Glissant verstehen, wenn er schreibt, dass die Opazität des Poetischen die Dichte gelebter Erfahrung zum Tragen bringt. Was das Opake in der Kunst zu Tage treten lässt, sind, in seinen Worten, „tous les détails des lieux du monde, sans les offusquer jamais“¹: das Spezifische des örtlichen Details, egal wo auf der Welt, das Lokale einer Äußerung also, die Krümmung eines Erfahrungshorizonts – ohne dass an diesen Dingen etwas verheimlicht oder vereinheitlicht würde. Obskurantismus redet Glissant hier also gerade nicht das Wort. Die Art von Opazität, von der er spricht, kann man weder bewusst herstellen noch als „Wurzeln“ einer Identität beanspruchen oder als Kapital vermehren. Opazität gehört keinem. Sie tritt vielmehr erst hervor, wenn man sie lässt. Das heißt, wenn sich die an einem Austausch Beteiligten, „allant de soi“, von sich aus, intuitiv und ohne Worte darauf einlassen, nicht bloß die wörtliche Bedeutung einer Äußerung herauszugreifen, sondern auf all das zu achten, was im Klang einer Stimme mitschwingt und was ein Text oder Werk in allen Aspekten seiner Machart unausdrücklich zum Ausdruck bringt. Die freie Entscheidung, sich aufmerksam auf Opazität einzulassen, erzeugt, schreibt Glissant, „une relation de pur partage“², ein Verhältnis schierer Anteilnahme und Teilhabe, also einen auf stillem Vertrauen beruhenden Gesellschaftsvertrag eigener Art.

Édouard Glissants Plädoyer für Opazität ist ein Aufruf zum Austausch mit künstlerischen Mitteln.

Glissants Plädoyer für Opazität hat deshalb nichts von einer Verweigerungsgeste. Es ist vielmehr ein Aufruf zu einer noch viel entschiedeneren Einlassung auf den Austausch mit künstlerischen Mitteln. Ohne Krücken. Das heißt, ohne auf die falsche Sicherheit von vorformatierter Bedeutung, Nutzwertversprechen und Statuscodes zu setzen. Opazität ist keine Kategorie, die es zu erfüllen, kein Kriterium, dem es zu genügen, und keine Behauptung, die es zu belegen gilt. In den opaken Aspekten eines Werks oder Texts mag in der Tat die besondere lokale Herkunft eines Worts, Bilds oder Klangs zur Geltung kommen. Die Wahrheit liegt hier aber derart im Detail, dass im Licht ihrer Spezifität Verallgemeinerungen über die Identität von Autor und Werk hohl erscheinen müssen.

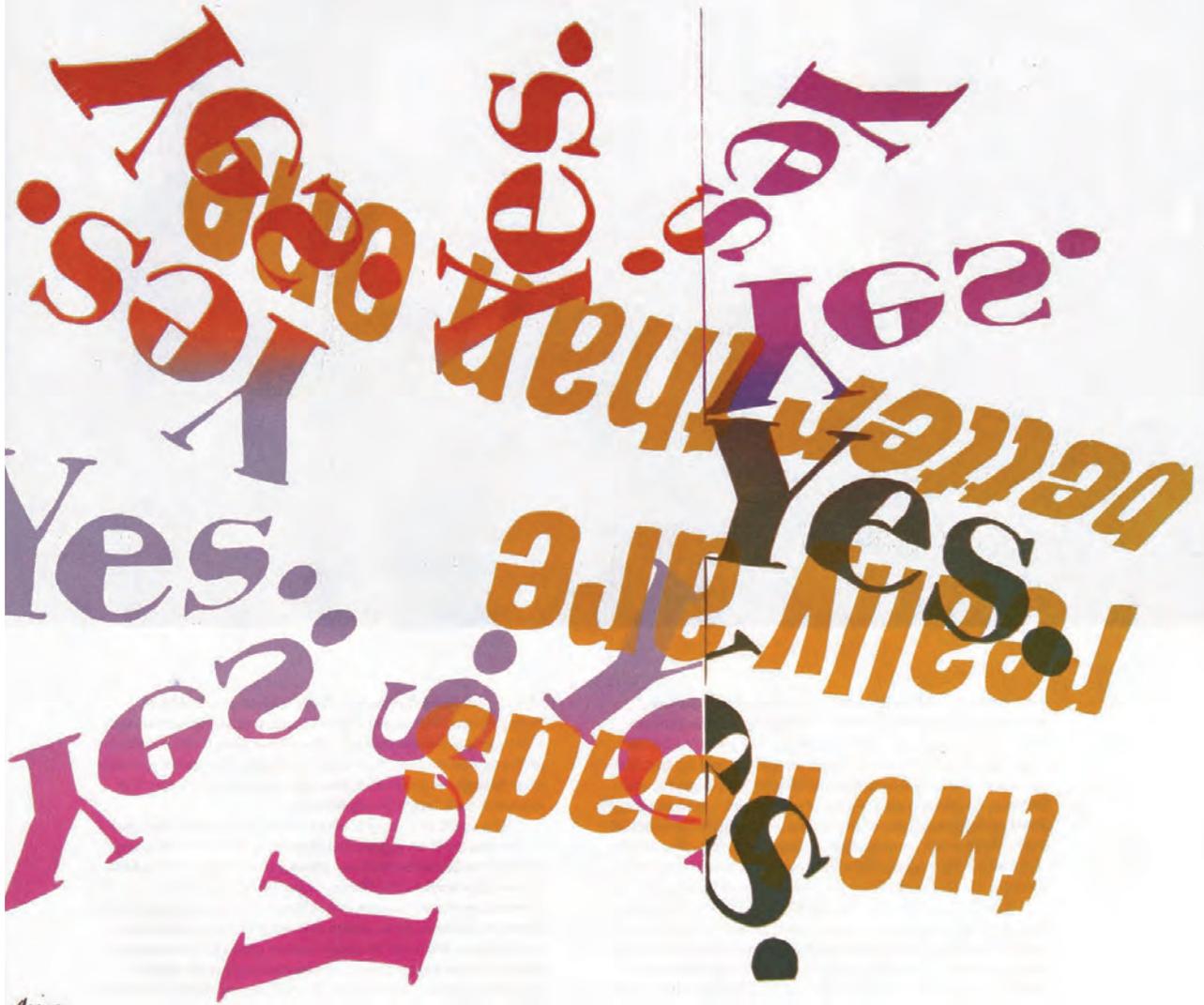
Hope lies in the inscrutable. When it doesn't have to serve as a justification for anything, when it need not apologize for anything or obey any format. But when, instead, it shows itself openly as something that stands between us, even when we're communicating with one another, in fact especially at those moments. Like the irresolvably strange, unspoken or unspeakable quality resonating in a particular choice of words that makes total sense although we can't quite say why. Or the quality that makes certain looks and gestures meaningful, precisely because they are ambiguous. Or an accent which, whether we like it or not, carries the voices of the places where we learnt to speak.

This is how I would understand Édouard Glissant when he writes that the opacity of the poetic does justice to the density of lived experience. In art, he writes, the opaque is manifested in 'tous les détails des lieux du monde, sans les offusquer jamais'¹ – the specificity of local detail, wherever in the world; the flavour of an utterance; the contours of a horizon of experience, without these things being kept secret or rendered uniform in any way. Glissant is certainly not advocating obscurantism here. The kind of opacity he is talking about cannot be deliberately created or claimed as the 'roots' of an identity or multiplied as capital. Opacity belongs to no one. In fact, it emerges only when left to itself – when those involved in an exchange accept, intuitively, wordlessly and of their own accord, 'allant de soi', not merely to fix the literal meaning of an utterance, but also to pay attention to everything that resonates in the sound of a voice and what a text or art work expresses inexpressibly in all the aspects of the way it is made.

The free choice to be attentive to opacity, Glissant writes, generates 'une relation de pur partage'² – a relationship of pure sharing, a distinct social contract based on silent trust. Glissant's plea in favour of opacity is thus by no means a gesture of refusal. Instead he calls for an even greater willingness to engage in exchanges using the means of art. Without crutches. Without relying on the false security of prefabricated meaning, promises of utility value and status codes. Opacity is not a category to be fulfilled, nor a criteria to be met, nor a claim to be substantiated. The opaque aspects of a work may indeed underline the special local origins of a word, image or sound. But the truth here lies in the details – to such an extent that, in the light of the specificity of these details, any generalizations about author and work necessarily appear empty.

For the same reason, opacity is not an element of style to be learnt and deployed. Exercises in stylistic refinement never really achieve density, which is more likely to be reached when someone is not afraid, in the creative process, to surrender to some small degree to the rhythm and rhyme of things thrown up by the world around us – and to hear, in the eloquent silence of the material, the voices of today's social reality. To produce art, then, that takes a vernacular material idiom as its medium and uses it to hatch the cuckoo's eggs of opaque expression.

Lygia Clark's *Bichos* (Insects) from the 1960s are unsurpassed in this respect: a series of sculptures made out of metal plates the size of playing cards, connected by countless hinges. The sculptures are made to be handled and played around with, folded, unfolded and refolded, changing the constellations of the plates, like the faces of a Rubik's Cube, but without the possibility of reaching a solution. Which doesn't exist. Consequently, the sculpture is eventually laid aside so that someone



Corita

2
Corita Kent
daisy, 1966
72 x 89 cm



3
Trisha Donnelly
Untitled, 2010–ongoing
Installation view
Gloria Cinema
dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel

Opazität ist deswegen auch kein Stilmittel, das man erlernen und einsetzen könnte. Stilistische Verfeinerungsübungen erzeugen nie wirklich Dichte. Die kommt eher da zustande, wo jemand keine Angst davor hat, sich im Machen ein Stück weit dem Rhythmus und Reim der Dinge, die die Welt um uns herum auskippt, anzuvertrauen – und aus dem beredten Schweigen des Materials die Stimmen der gesellschaftlichen Gegenwart herauszuhören. Also bei Kunst, die sich eine materielle Allgemeinsprache zum Medium macht und in dieser dann die Kuckucks-Eier des opaken Ausdrucks ausbrütet.

Beispiellos bleiben in dieser Hinsicht Lygia Clark's *Bichos* (Insekten) aus den 1960er Jahren: eine Serie von Skulpturen aus spielkartengroßen Metallplatten, die mit zig Scharnieren verbunden sind. Die *Bichos* sind dafür gemacht, dass man mit ihnen hantiert. Man nimmt sie in die Hände, faltet sie an ihren Scharnieren auf, faltet sie um, verändert die Konstellationen der Platten wie die Felder eines Zauberwürfels, ohne doch eigentlich zu einer Auflösung kommen zu können. Die gibt es nicht. Also wird man die Skulptur früher oder später aus den Händen geben, damit jemand anders an diesem Ding weiterfaltet, von dem niemand sagen kann, was es denn eindeutig ist. Funktion und Format des Objekts bleiben opak, obwohl es von jedem berührt, verändert und weitergegeben werden kann. Wie ein philosophischer Begriff, der plötzlich in aller Munde ist, obwohl niemand genau weiß, was er bedeutet, bei dem jeder, der ihn verwendet, aber spürt, es könnte was dran sein.

else can continue folding this thing that no one is able to define clearly. The object's format and function remain opaque although anyone can touch it, alter it and pass it on. It's like a philosophical concept that suddenly becomes common currency even though no one knows precisely what it means, but that everyone feels might be significant.

The spirit of a thing is often far more strikingly revealed in the opacity of an expression than in its nameable meaning. Political mobilization without propaganda? Sister Corita Kent showed the way! In the 1960s, in her workshop at the Immaculate Heart Convent in Los Angeles, she produced screen prints for posters, book covers and murals with slogans against the Vietnam War and for a non-violent society. The language spoken by her designs could not be clearer. But her graphic approach explodes any format. The writing stretches, undulates and spreads dynamically across the space. Kent mixes her colours more freely than the most abstract Expressionist and as freshly as the best Pop artist. These formal qualities of the prints are opaque and do not propagate clear messages. They are far too distinctive and free for that. But precisely this approach makes the viewer feel what s/he might have against the bomb and why, in the light of the West Coast, a better life seems possible than a life of military service for the nation.

Speaking in the spirit of opacity means speaking freely, not having to talk, but talking nonetheless – or not. Kent's works could consist of only shapes and colours. In formal terms, they would be just as good. Words are not essential.

In der Opazität eines Ausdrucks zeigt sich der Geist einer Sache oft viel eindrücklicher als in seiner benennbaren Bedeutung. In Ablehnung von Propaganda politisch mobilisieren? Geht! Sister Corita Kent hat es vorgemacht. In den 1960er Jahren produzierte sie in ihrem Workshop im Immaculate Heart-Kloster in Los Angeles Siebdrucke für Poster, Buchcover und (Lein-)Wände mit Slogans gegen den Vietnamkrieg und für eine gewaltfreie Gesellschaft. Ihre Entwürfe sprechen eine Sprache, die klarer nicht sein könnte. Aber ihr Umgang mit Grafik sprengt jedes Format. Schrift streckt, wellt und verteilt sie dynamisch in der Fläche. Farben mischt Kent freier als der abstrakteste Expressionist und frisch wie bester Pop. Diese formalen Qualitäten der Drucke sind opak. Sie propagieren keine eindeutige Message. Dafür sind sie viel zu eigen und frei. Gerade dadurch lassen sie einen aber spüren, was man gegen die Bombe haben kann und warum im Licht der Westküstensonne ein besseres Leben möglich erscheint als eins im Kriegsdienst für die Nation.

Im Zeichen der Opazität heißt frei sprechen, nicht reden zu müssen, es aber trotzdem zu tun – oder auch nicht. Kents Arbeiten könnten nur aus Formen und Farben bestehen. Dann wären sie formal genauso gut. Worte sind kein Muss. Aber gerade deshalb wirken sie umso kraftvoller, wenn sie im Bild erscheinen. Weil sie es ungezwungen tun.

Um Artikulation nicht zum Zwang werden zu lassen, muss ihre Aufhebung stets machbar bleiben. Kunst sollte nichts aufführen müssen, sondern den Vorhang stets auch zugezogen lassen können. Die opake Textur einer Arbeit ist (frei nach Lacan) ohnehin wie ein Schleier, der nichts verbirgt, was zu enthüllen wäre, sondern schlicht so oder so in Falten liegt und eben dadurch Bände spricht.

Trisha Donnelly hat einen Blick dafür, was an visuellen Produkten in diesem Sinn schleierhaft ist. Sie geht dem in ihrer Arbeit nach, etwa in dem Film *Untitled* (Ohne Titel, seit 2010). Er zeigt Videomaterial, das so lang durch die Postproduktion geflossen ist, bis davon nicht viel mehr übrig ist als eine Art opaker Ölfilm auf der Oberfläche des digitalen Bildflusses. Seltsam viskos zieht sich dieser Film dann, mit jeder neuen Welle Bilder, manchmal rotbräunlich in Mustern auseinander, um dann in silbrigen Schlieren zu Digitalgelatine zusammenzulaufen. Dieser Schleier ist zu konkret, um die Bilder magisch aufzuwerten. Dennoch kann man den Film endlos ansehen. Der Blick verliert sich in ihm, wie in fließenden Formen von Öl im Wasser. Opazität ist hier elementar, weil reinstes Oberflächenphänomen. In klassischen Urteilkategorien lässt sie sich nicht mehr beschreiben. Man kann wirklich nicht sagen, ob *Untitled* die alchemische Quintessenz aus der heutigen Bildkultur oder Bildschrott-Final-Cut-Ausfluss ist. Und genau das ist der Punkt.

Bei Kara Walker fällt dieses Freispiel des Bildes durch die Einlassung auf dessen Opazität nicht rein formal aus, sondern historisch pointiert. Ihr bevorzugtes Medium sind aus schwarzer Pappe ausgeschnittene figürliche Schattenrisse. Aus ihnen arrangiert Walker ganze Szenen. Auf weißer Wand installiert, wirken sie wie bewegte Silhouetten. In Umrissen erahnt man: Kleidung und Frisuren (beziehungsweise Perücken) stammen aus dem Nordamerika des 17. bis 19. Jahrhunderts. Sklaven, Mägde und ihre Herren sind die Figuren des Spiels. Küchenszenen, Lynchmorde und sexuelle Dienste aller Art sein Inhalt. Der Horror ist hier ein Tintenfleck, aus dem

But precisely because they are not essential, they make a greater impact when they appear in the picture. Because they do so freely, without obligation.

To prevent articulation from becoming forced, it must always remain possible to do away with it. Art should not be obliged to perform anything; it should always be permitted to leave the curtain shut, if it so desires. And in any case, the opaque texture of a work (to paraphrase Jacques Lacan) is like a veil, which, rather than hiding something that might be uncovered, simply lies there in folds, this way or that, and thus speaks volumes.

Art should not be obliged to perform anything; it should always be permitted to leave the curtain shut, if it so desires.

Trisha Donnelly has an eye for this veil-like quality in the visual realm, and she pursues it in works like her film *Untitled* (2010–ongoing). The work shows video material that has spent so long in post-production that little more remains than a kind of opaque film on the surface of the stream of digital images. The film moves with an odd viscosity, changing with each new wave of images, sometimes expanding into reddish-brown patterns, then congealing to digital gelatine in silvery streaks. This veil is too concrete to magically enhance the pictures. Still, the film is compulsive viewing. One's gaze becomes lost as in the swirling patterns of oil on water. Here, opacity is elementary because it is a purely superficial phenomenon. It can no longer be assessed in terms of conventional categories. One really cannot say whether *Untitled* is the alchemical quintessence of today's visual culture or a bunch of sweepings from the cutting room floor. And that is precisely the point.

In Kara Walker's work, this free play of images resulting from an engagement with opacity is not purely formal but also possesses a historical dimension. Her preferred medium is figurative silhouettes cut out of black paper and arranged into life-size scenes. Installed on a white wall, they appear as moving shadows. From the outlines, one can guess that the clothing and hairstyles (or wigs) are from the North America circa 17th–19th centuries. Slaves, maidservants and their masters are the figures in this game, whose action consists of kitchen scenes, lynchings and all manner of sexual services. Here, horror is an ink blot out of which Walker delights in conjuring a succession of figures. Their opacity consists in the absurd level of detail in their outlines. But also in the libido they convey. Walker transforms history into a violently pornographic shadow-play in which she frequently takes on the leading role herself. Walker's Afro-American women often bear her own traits. She is every woman of two centuries (and, if she wants, also a wild boy like Huckleberry Finn), in every position, diabolically self-confident, through every ordeal. The men of old don't have the last word – Walker does, based on a desire that is twisted in all directions with unplaceable queerness.



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Verwoert, Jan. "Against Interpretations." *Frieze d/e*, no. 7, Winter 2012.



Walker lustvoll immer neue Figuren herauszeichnet. Opak sind diese in der irrwitzigen Detailliertheit ihrer Konturen. Aber auch aufgrund der Libido, die aus ihnen spricht. Walker verwandelt Geschichte in ein gewalttätig pornografisches Schattenspiel, in dem sie nicht selten die Hauptrolle übernimmt. Oft tragen die afroamerikanischen Frauen Walkers die Züge der Künstlerin. Sie ist 200 Jahre lang jede Frau (und, wenn sie will, auch ein wilder Junge wie Huck Finn), in jeder Stellung, dämonisch souverän, durch alle Torturen hindurch. Die Herren von einst haben nicht das letzte Wort. Das hat sie, auf Grundlage ihrer unverortbar *queer* in alle Richtungen verdrehten Lust. Walkers Arbeit ist wie eine anklagend lustvoll ins Antlitz der Freiheitsstatue tätowierte Träne. Die ist, wie traditionell der Bart der bärtigen Jungfer, ein Vorhang, den man nicht lüften kann. Weil er die Sache selbst ist.

Von einem unheimlichen Opakwerden des Medialen handeln die Videos von Bonnie Camplin. Wie lebt es sich unter medialen Schleiern, scheint die Künstlerin zu fragen. Ihre Antwort: wie mit Hausgeistern – auf Tuchfühlung. In *I need a Mirror* (Ich brauche einen Spiegel, 2006) schwebt erst ein körperloses Gesicht vor analogem Bildrauschen auf einem Schirm, über den eine digital einmontierte Fliege krabbelte. Eine Frau tanzt, dreimal in einer je anderen RGB-Farbe

Walker's work is like a teardrop provocatively tattooed onto the Statue of Liberty's cheek. Like the beard of the bearded lady it is a veil one cannot lift, as it is what it is, in, by and for itself.

Bonnie Camplin's videos are about media becoming uncannily opaque. What is it like to live behind veils of media? she seems to ask. *Get me a Mirror* (2006) opens with a disembodied face floating against analogue image noise on a screen with an edited-in fly crawling across it. A woman, copied into the image in red, green and blue, dances with herself. Then come drawings of ladies in a series of uniforms, pestered by digital flies. Finally, voodoo masks appear out of the darkness while an actress puts on make-up: Assemble your own self, but beware of digital vermin! Protection may be offered by a screen of images – or, more traditionally, a fan! In *Colonial Fanny* (2005), Camplin waves one in front of her face the whole time and, like an insect with mimetic powers, she merges with the ornamental surfaces of wallpaper and upholstery. Then the fan changes into a butterfly and flutters out of the projection – a blind spot with wings.

All of this is of no use to anyone, the opaque quality of these works answers no questions of status or meaning, and has no value in terms of distinction. Most importantly,



ins Bild kopiert, mit sich selbst. Dann sind es Zeichnungen von Damen in wechselnden Uniformen, die von digitalen Fliegen belästigt werden. Schließlich tauchen Voodoo masken aus dem Dunkeln auf, während eine Darstellerin sich schminkt: Montier dich selbst, aber schütz dich vor medialem Ungeziefer! Das geht hinter Schirmen aus Bildern – oder traditionell: hinter einem Fächer! Den trägt Camplin in *Colonial Fanny* (2005) nonstop wedelnd vorm Gesicht und verschmilzt, wie ein Insekt mit mimetischen Kräften, mit den ornamentalen Oberflächen von Tapeten und Sofa-Garnituren. Dann verwandelt sich der Fächer in einen Schmetterling und flattert aus der Projektion – als blinder Fleck mit Flügeln.

Das alles nützt niemandem etwas, es beantwortet keine Fragen nach Status oder Sinn, liefert auch keinen Distinktionswert. Vor allem stellt es – ohne dabei mit der Geste der Verweigerung daherzukommen – nichts dar. Gibt sich dabei auch nicht berechnend wild. Und erfüllt kein Format. Es ist opak. Und spricht gerade deshalb so deutlich davon, was es heißt, sich etwas vor Augen treten zu lassen.

Jan Verwoert ist Contributing Editor von frieze. Er lebt in Berlin.

- 1 Édouard Glissant, *Philosophie de la relation. Poésie en étendue*, Gallimard, Paris, 2009, S. 70
- 2 Ibid. S.69

and without making any gesture of refusal, these works don't represent anything. There's no deliberate wildness either and they don't obey any format. They are opaque. Which is why they speak so clearly of what they mean when they are given to be seen.

Translated by Nicholas Grindell

Jan Verwoert is a contributing editor of frieze. He lives in Berlin.

- 1 Édouard Glissant, *Philosophie de la relation. Poésie en étendue*, Gallimard, Paris, 2009, p.70
- 2 Ibid. p.69

5+6
Bonnie Camplin
Colonial Fanny, 2007
Video stills

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ARTFORUM



Documenta 13

VARIOUS VENUES,
KASSEL, BANFF, CAIRO, AND KABUL
Daniel Birnbaum

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN to think that things could have stories as troubled as those of people? Many of the objects in this year's Documenta—among them engines, a beehive, a palette knife—had complex, sometimes difficult, stories to tell. Take the Korbinian, a German apple. Its origin arguably lies in 1923, when the Bavarian priest, activist, and apple lover Korbinian Aigner saw Adolf Hitler speaking in Munich. Aigner began to protest the Nazi regime, was arrested in the fall of 1939, and was subsequently moved to Dachau—where, unbelievably enough, he tended a small orchard between two barracks and even bred several new varieties of apple. Using the German abbreviation for *concentration camp*, he named them

KZ-1, KZ-2, KZ-3, and KZ-4. Documenta 13 curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev included nearly four hundred of the priest's drawings of apples in her sprawling exhibition, which was so full of odd objects and curious constellations that nothing, in the end, should have surprised us. The meticulous illustrations, made between circa 1912 and 1960, were installed in strict grids reminiscent of 1970s Conceptualism. They looked monotonous from a distance, but on closer inspection the graceful depictions—some shown singly, some in pairs—displayed all the quirks and blemishes we'd expect from real fruit. Together with artist Jimmie Durham, Christov-Bakargiev

also planted two apple trees in Kassel's Karlsaue Park as a modest monument to the rebellious priest, whose KZ-3 was renamed the Korbinian in 1985.

In the Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Documenta's central venue, the grids of apples were displayed in the same room as the late Mark Lombardi's large drawings mapping the personal and financial connections behind major political scandals such as the Iran-Contra affair. The adjoining gallery contained tables with scientific instruments exploring the nature of light and speed—a "work" by Austrian physicist Anton Zeilinger. The mathematical calculations scribbled on an adjacent wall were impenetrable to me, but according to the catalogue they pointed to a necessary "renewal of the discussion of the definition of reality." The diversity of these examples can perhaps serve as an illustration of the vast ambitions of this exhibition and of the radical heterogeneity of the projects included.

Christov-Bakargiev—who, as the hundred pamphlets published in the run-up to her exhibition demonstrated, is not opposed to metaphysical speculation or to the most complex of thinkers—insisted that her project was not limited by an overarching theme. What was on offer instead, for those of us who wanted some guidance, was a section of the exhibition called "The Brain," located in the rotunda of the Fridericianum and separated from the other rooms by a glass wall. This was described as an "associative space," in which "a number of artworks, objects, and documents [were] brought together in lieu of a concept." It was posited as the very locus of Christov-Bakargiev's vast project, as Lawrence Weiner's *THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF*, 2012, applied to the glass partition, made clear.

The Brain was thus pitched as a "puzzle of an exhibition that condenses and centers the thought lines" of the whole Documenta. Among the items on view were artifacts from the National Museum of Beirut that had melted into one another when the museum was shelled during the Lebanese Civil War, an excerpt of a video made by the Egyptian artist Ahmed Basyony just three days before he

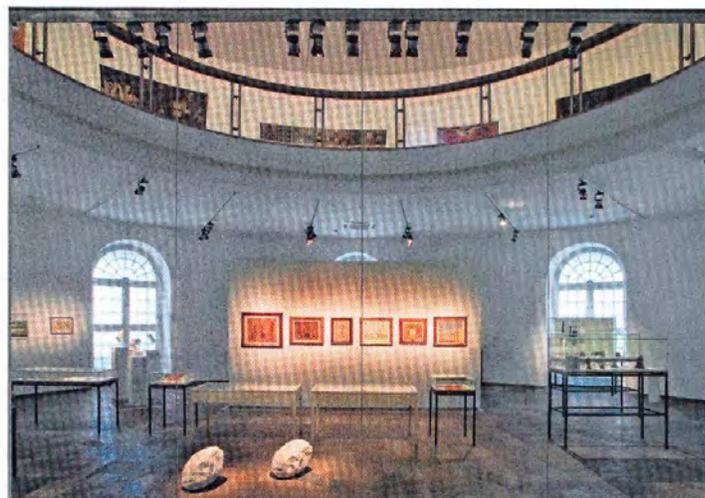
died from gunshot wounds inflicted by the Egyptian police in the winter of 2011, a palette knife used for more than thirty years by the marvelous Lebanese poet and painter Etel Adnan, a bathtub thermometer that the photographer Lee Miller took from Hitler's Munich apartment in 1945, and a selection of figures made some three thousand years ago in Central Asia that are today known as the Bactrian Princesses. Many of these objects could be considered troubled—as the catalogue puts it, there are "innocent objects and objects that have lost something; destroyed objects, damaged objects and indestructible objects . . . hidden or disguised objects, objects on retreat, objects in refuge, traumatized objects." That's where we may want to pause: traumatized objects?

There was, I think, a conflict—perhaps a productive one—at the heart of this enormous multidisciplinary show, and it can be located exactly in the tension between those two words. On the one hand, many of the artworks and the stories they told circled around collective traumas: those of Nazi Germany and, much more recently, those of

Things have stories, but are they so much like us that they are capable of experiencing trauma or having political intentions?

Afghanistan or the countries involved in the Arab Spring. Indeed, Christov-Bakargiev's focus on what she calls "collapse and recovery" is so familiar from recent cultural theory that it is almost a cliché to speak of a traumatic temporality at the very core of all avant-garde artistic developments. But on the other hand, such psychoanalytic language here collides with the idiom of a new, object-oriented philosophy that wants to liberate us once and for all from anthropocentrism and consider instead what the catalogue calls the "inanimate makers of the world." In fact, Christov-Bakargiev's project is in many ways perfectly in tune with the approaches today discussed as "speculative realism,"

From left: Korbinian Aigner, *Apples* (detail), ca. 1912–60, 402 drawings, gouache, pencil, watercolor, colored pencil on cardboard, each 4 1/4 x 6 1/4". Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel. View of "The Brain," 2012, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel. Photo: Roman März.



with its ambition to rid our thinking of the obsession with that historically overemphasized relationship between a perceiving subject and a known object. Instead, the argument goes, we should look into other equally exciting and productive relationships in the world, consisting of so many human and nonhuman actors, or “actants,” as Bruno Latour would put it. Philosopher Graham Harman goes so far as to claim: “Atoms and molecules are actants, as are children, raindrops, bullet trains, politicians, and numerals. All entities are on exactly the same ontological footing.” One can go further still: To quote from an interview with Christov-Bakargiev, “The question is not whether we give dogs or strawberries permission to vote, but how a strawberry can assert its political intention.”

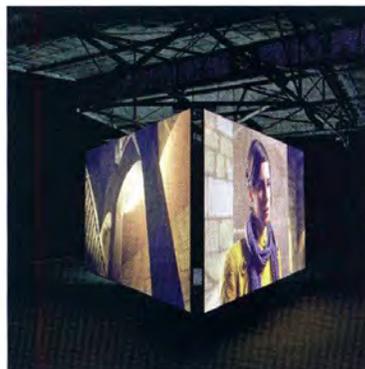
Things have stories, but are they so much like us that they are capable of experiencing trauma or having political intentions? If we end up attributing human subjectivity to nonhuman actors, isn’t there a risk of making anthropocentrism a model for the rest of the world, rather than eradicating the problem? Indeed, the show’s own structure illustrated this paradox: Its center was called the Brain, after all. But it was not at all clear whether we should understand the Brain as imputing subjectivity to the entire exhibition or take it as a neutral scientific metaphor positing a new relationship to things (including artworks) and other living beings.

Either way, the resulting tension played out among numerous assemblages and apparatuses that hovered indecisively at the division between subject and object. What were we to make of the impressive array of car engines that Thomas Bayrle had made into praying machines—as well as the windshield wipers whose movements became inseparable from an audio track of Hail Marys? How, and in what language, were we to respond to the scenario that Pierre Huyghe staged in the composting area of the Baroque park, a scene involving a female statue reclining in the mud with a beehive taking the place of her head, an *acéphale* who was guarded by an uncanny dog with a fluorescent leg? It was as mystifying a tableau as that behind the wooden door in Duchamp’s *Étant donnés* and reminded us that one of the show’s “thought lines” led back through the history of Surrealism. Collected in the Brain were several versions of Man Ray’s *Objet indestructible*, 1923/1965, in which Lee Miller’s wide-open eye, set atop a metronome, never blinks, although it has seen unlikely things, including Eva Braun’s perfume flask and the Führer’s monogrammed towel on the day of his suicide.

In several of the roughly dozen works installed at the Hauptbahnhof, Kassel’s former main train station, the ghostly presence of the past reminded us of the function of the German railway not so many decades ago. It was addressed directly in Susan Philipsz’s *Study for Strings*, 2012, installed at the end of a functioning platform, where seven speakers played music composed by Pavel Haas in the Terezin concentration camp in 1943. In a disused part of the station, meanwhile, Haegue Yang’s *Approaching: Choreography Engineered in Never-Past Tense*, 2012, comprising motorized venetian blinds suspended above the tracks, created an uncanny sense of trains arriving and departing. Yang’s installation was one of the most substantial works in an exhibition with many great new pieces. Another, also at the Hauptbahnhof, was Clemens von Wedemeyer’s riveting three-channel film *Muster (Rushes)*, 2012, a tightly knit narrative about the former Benedictine monastery Breitenau, just outside Kassel. The

work is a mazelike telling of a German psychohistory spinning out from the history of the site. (The Nazis converted it into an early concentration camp, and after the end of World War II it housed a reformatory for girls; parts of it are used today as a psychiatric clinic.) Installed in a large dark space in a triangular fashion, von Wedemeyer’s piece could only be viewed from one side at a time, so one kept circling to get a grip on the connections between Breitenau’s history and such scenes as the liberation of a concentration camp’s inmates by American soldiers, a punk concert, and fragments from Ulrike Meinhof’s 1970 film *Bambule*.

This Documenta, with a firm footing in Kassel as well as outposts unknown to most of us in Cairo, Kabul, and Banff, Canada, was a wildly ambitious and in many ways outrageous exhibition. It created its own imaginary geographies, insisting that there are secret relationships that most of us have never paid attention to. Kassel, Kassel, Kabul. Mention the two cities often enough together and things start happening. Energies start rubbing off, layers of meaning migrate. Naturally, there were plenty of times such frictions did not go anywhere, plenty of not-so-fantastic projects, and a few vain decisions. An awkward handwritten letter in which Kai Althoff explains to Christov-Bakargiev why he could not participate in the show was displayed prominently in the Fridericianum’s ground-floor gallery, which was otherwise almost entirely



From left: Clemens von Wedemeyer, *Muster (Rushes)*, 2012, 27 minutes. Installation view, Hauptbahnhof, Kassel. Photo: Henrik Stromberg. Francis Alys, *Untitled (detail)*, 2011–12, nineteen paintings, photocopy, oil, encaustic on canvas, dimensions variable. Obere Karlsstraße, Kassel. Haegue Yang, *Approaching: Choreography Engineered in Never-Past Tense*, 2012, motorized aluminum venetian blinds, aluminum, cable, module box, DMX recorder. Installation view, Hauptbahnhof, Kassel. Photo: Nils Klinger.

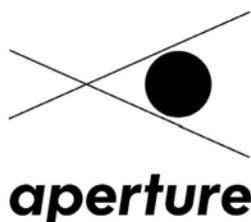


empty, albeit suffused with an artificial breeze, Ryan Gander's *I Need Some Meaning I Can Memorize (The Invisible Pull)*, 2012. But much more evocative was the exhibition's plethora of magnificent projects, which included immersive installations by Theaster Gates and Tino Sehgal, both of which made viewers part of musical activities that went far beyond anything they might have expected, as well as subtle meditations on painting-in-spite-of-everything by the likes of Paul Chan and Francis Alÿs. Wandering into a beautiful cinema in the north of Kassel, I saw a truly majestic and inexplicable shiny entity appearing and disappearing on the screen, elusive, like some sort of cosmic quicksilver. This piece by Trisha Donnelly (*Untitled*, 2010–) existed—like everything else the artist has ever touched—without any explanation. A more modest film elsewhere in the exhibition, Tamara Henderson's *Sloshed Ballot & Anonymous Loan*, 2011, showed everyday objects being manipulated by invisible hands. There is, after all, so little we actually know about the true nature of the things that surround us. However contradictory, the show's attempt to blur the line between the perceiving subject and the rest of the world left me with a question: Was I looking at this show, or was it looking at me? □

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Trisha Donnelly, *The Hand that Holds the Desert Down*. 2002.
Silver Gelatin Print, 5 x 7"

TRISHA DONNELLY: THE ORBITER

In 1966 the unmanned space probe Lunar Orbiter 1 captured, for the first time in the history of photography, images of the lunar landscape and of the Earth from the perspective of another celestial body. On board the spacecraft, a specifically built 70-millimeter Kodak camera and an automated darkroom processed and prepared the photographs for Earth-bound transmission. The data traveled some 240,000 miles to reach its destination, incontrovertibly the longest distance at that moment in time that an image had traveled to reach its receiver. In this spatial and temporal passage, one can imagine, the invisible image signal was exposed to unknown and perhaps unknowable elements, before its eventual re-rendering as a perceivable image. A history of photographic images through the development of their transmission is a history that needs to be written—one that may illuminate as much about the motives of the perceiver as that of the one desiring to see.

Trisha Donnelly is an artist whose acute absorption in the processes of transmission, compression, and expansion not only gives new dimensions to artistic agency, but also signals a renewed role of the viewer.

This is a role that requires a willingness to take part in her artistic cosmology. Through images, gestures, sounds, sculptural objects (and so on), Donnelly's decade-long practice stretches the bounds of medium specificity. Within the elastic spectrum of elements in her artistic output, photography takes an anchoring role, often pointing toward notional potentialities, yielding at first glimpse a seemingly chimeric entryway into the imaginary field. In her second solo exhibition at New York's Casey Kaplan Gallery in 2004, amid large-scale drawings and video projection, was a minuscule black-and-white photograph of the Sphinx, cropped to emphasize the outreaching paw, titled *The Hand that Holds the Desert Down* (2002). Upon an initial encounter with this photograph, and after the mental registration of the ascribed title, the weight of the world becomes suddenly palpable; it underscored, albeit in a droll manner the undisclosed "material" that was present throughout the exhibition.

Starting in 2007 photographic works made on flatbed scanners began to appear in Donnelly's exhibitions. These were not singular pieces, but elements in larger installations (including her 2007 solo exhibition at Casey Kaplan).

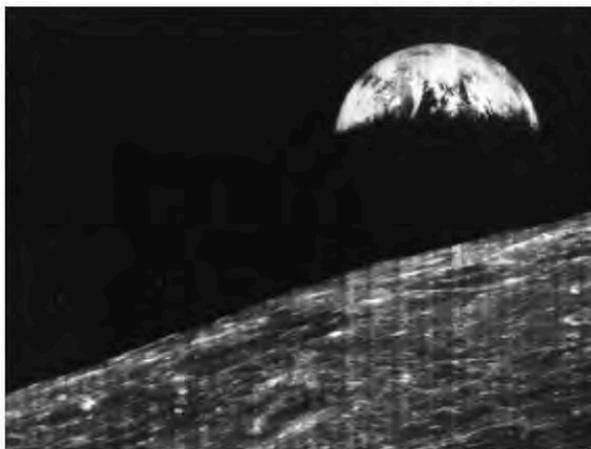


Trisha Donnelly, Untitled II (Peralta.) 2007. Inkjet Print, 62-1/2 x 44"

Although the scanner produces an image that is similar to that produced by a lens-based camera, there are ontological differences between the two types. Light sensors built into the scan head sweep across the document placed on the scanner plate. The speed of the scan is often slow enough that any shift of movement on the glass will be perceptible. Movements rendered through this process are like striated trails, resembling the distortions that are produced in faxed images. Scanned images are also different from camera-based images in that they are direct, lens-less conversions of light (photons) into electric charges (electrons)—transformations of the physical world into digital, pixel-based facsimiles. The scanned image is a digitized index of this metamorphosis.

A series of twelve scanner-made works from 2007 titled

Satin Operator traces the rolling movement of a printed female figure perhaps some starlet, though her identity is not revealed to the viewer. When the images are seen as a sequence, the woman moves across the surface of the glass plate as though in a broken and staggered cinematic tracking shot, with details unfolding slowly, in fragmented succession. The figure seems trapped in an incantatory time lapse, forced to reside beneath the partition of the scanner glass.



There are obvious connections to aspects of performance, though it becomes difficult to discern whether it's Donnelly—the “operator” of the printed image and the scanner device—carrying out the performance in the time span of the scans. Or perhaps it is the young actress herself, operating within the constructed nether space within the scanner, attempting movement in the constricted space. These performative gestures taking place within the durational and spatial confines of the scanner bring to mind Bruce Nauman's early video works, demarcating any and all activities performed within the studio to be gestures of art, but necessitating some form of evidential record as a means of conveyance. Nauman's 1966 *Manipulating the T-Bar* shows the artist assiduously arranging and rearranging two pieces of rebar on the floor of his studio. Nauman's floor surface plays a seeming parallel to the scanner plate of Donnelly's photographs.

Like the reflected face of an actor in a brightly lit dressing-room mirror, the various objects placed in Donnelly's scanner-made still lifes seem to be floating in a suspended foreground, cascading into gradual darkness the farther they are from the light source. A scanner uses a specific lighting mechanism that is different from the refracted light through a camera lens.

Attached to the scan head are florescent or xenon lamps, which are the necessary light source used to illuminate the document placed on the scan plate during a scan interval. This movement of scanning across resembles walking in complete darkness, with torch in hand, where the amount of what you see is gradual, with your own movement through space building a successive accumulation of information. In Donnelly's *Untitled II/ (Peralta)* (2007), a white card floats in the center backed by a trumpet-like object, the arrangement hovering over a grayish morass. On the white card the word *Peralta* (an unfixed reference to the famed skateboarder Stacy Peralta and a Spanish town of the same name) is drawn in pencil appearing as if in a time lapse, an apparent visualization of the slow

transmitting pulses, a self-reflexive pronouncement to the image signal traveling through the scanning apparatus, conjuring Craig Owen's notion of “photography en abyme” a photograph containing the traces of its own making.

In 1990 Bernd and Hilla Becher received the Golden Lion, the prestigious prize for sculpture, at the Venice Biennale for their work *Typologien*, or *Typologies*. This was a selection of three photographic

projects including *Industrial Facades*, *Blast Furnaces*, and *Postwar Houses*, now well-known staples of the historical cannon. Although there is a long and rich history of sculptural ideas deployed through the photographic medium, the occasion of this award pointed further toward sculpture's exponential elasticity, carving out ever greater space in photography's already inherent ability, through demarcation and designation of the physical world and the things within it, to bring forth alternate possible considerations.

It might be said that the gestalt of Donnelly's practice, too, is rooted in the sculptural, and the scanner provides yet another experimental chamber where notions of the sculptural and investigations in materials can be hypothesized and perhaps manifested. Incorporated into installations, Donnelly's scanner photographs also serve as proxies for the studio space. Beyond the sculptural arrangement of objects taking up the foreground (or the scanner plate) in these images, traces of the artist's workspace loom behind. The backgrounds in these images suggest an opening up of the physical architecture, giving hints of another dimension.

IMAGE: First view of Earth from Moon 1966.



Trisha Donnelly, *Satin Operator (12)* 2007. Epson Inkjet Print, 62-1/2 x 44"

exhibition space itself, but in the constant transposition between the here and there—there being the space where the artist (or operator?) works—sparking tension between the space the viewer is standing in and the space viewed, allowing the viewer to shift into the role of the operator.

In August 1966, amid an especially turbulent historical background (University of Texas shootings, protests against the Vietnam War catastrophic earthquake in Turkey), Lunar Orbiter 1 was sent on its reconnaissance mission to survey the lunar landscape, its main goal to find an appropriate landing site for the soon-to-begin Apollo program. In its short lifespan orbiting the Moon, it captured, processed, and transmitted nearly two hundred high-resolution photographs before its final impact with the lunar surface, where it was programmed to self-destruct. The image signals were recorded as files onto reels of analogue magnetic tape. Only a handful of these files were ever processed (though, because of technological limitations, not at the highest resolution the files were capable of); these were soon released, to the marvel of viewers, before public attention was diverted to the more

ambitious landing of Apollo and its crew. For two decades these tapes were stored in the NASA archives, until 1986, when the decision to discard them was contested by Nancy Evans, long-time archivist for the space program. Evans rescued and took over custodial storage of the tapes, and, after another twenty years, in 2006, secured funding to process and digitize the vast archive of never-seen images of the Moon. The latent image data thus remained entombed for nearly half a century, its material form never changing, as the temporal and historical context of their existence went through countless metamorphoses.

This long delay of visibility is a poignant, if oblique, counterpart to Donnelly's scanner-made photographs, where the vestige and process of its temporal passage cannot be shown but becomes intrinsically part of its makeup.

The most famous of these newly re-processed high-resolution images, released in 2008, shows the Earth rising above the lunar horizon, the striation of the pulse transmission clearly visible.

- ARTHUR OU



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled 2007*. C-Print, 27-1/4 x 20-1/2"



Trisha Donnelly, Untitled 2010

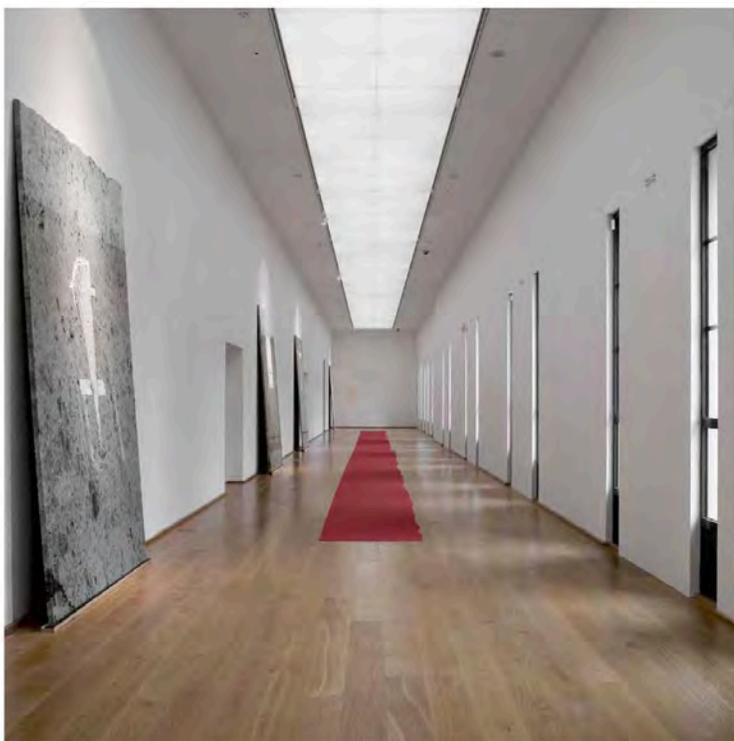
MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

523 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011 Tel: 212-243-0200 Fax: 212-243-0047

frieze

Trisha Donnelly

MAMBO, BOLOGNA, ITALY



The guiding principle behind Trisha Donnelly's new project for MAMBO is the desire to render both the museum and the visitor's experience of art captivating. The spatial and temporal elements of the exhibition are enlivened by evocative dilations and juxtapositions of architectural, visual and audio elements designed to create a narrative that operates on several semantic levels. The first work in the show is a small, black and white photograph (all works untitled; all 2009) of a female face partly obscured on one side by a soap bubble: the delicacy of this unfocused photo looks like a Donnelly's invitation to the viewer to approach the exhibition with an inquisitive mind.

A sense of unpredictability runs throughout the show, and can also be perceived in the next work, for which the artist has modified the architecture of the first, long gallery of the museum – a former bakery constructed next to the site of some now-subterranean streams. Donnelly has produced the sensation of energy flowing through the empty room, like the water in the underground channels, by her subtle modification of light in the space. She has reduced the long line of windows that flank one wall to narrow slots, so that only slivers of light penetrate the space, creating a stroboscopic effect that is intensified by the gloom within. Moulded by these fluctuations in light, the

space seems elongated and merges with the next gallery, in which it is possible to discern only a long strip of red carpet on the floor, one edge of which has been roughly cut by the artist.

The carpet wasn't initially intended to be part of the project; it was only placed there during the installation of the show as a means of protecting the floor. However, as often happens in Donnelly's work, unanticipated effects led the artist to modify her creative process. In the same room, a row of four large slabs of grey marble lean against a long wall opposite the obscured windows. Each slab is engraved with enigmatic designs that evoke abstract shapes or natural forms. Like screens, the slabs reflect both the light streaming in from outside and the shadows cast by the viewers that superimpose themselves onto the patterns in a game of chance invention.

The exhibition presents a 'reloading' of details, both real and imagined, which stems in part from a preliminary work by Donnelly that involved mapping some of the places she had visited in Bologna. These include historical locations – such as the Anatomical Theatre of the Archiginnasio Library, the network of underground streams and the former bakery of MAMbo itself – as well as indirect conceptual influences, such as the metaphysical paintings of Giorgio Morandi (who is also showing at the museum), about whom the artist writes in the press release for the show, and the radio waves that penetrate the atmosphere (the inventor of the radio, Guglielmo Marconi, was born in the city). All these references are alluded to throughout the exhibition in small-scale, black and white photographs as well as in one particular working process that Donnelly refers to as a 'scanning' of found images, translated into video projections, drawings and marble or fabric objects.

Donnelly's aim is to reduce the information we receive from accepted codes and linguistic superstructures in an attempt to rekindle intuition, memory and free association. The works on display, for example, don't have titles. Even at the level of institutional communication, Donnelly's focus is on developing a diverse narrative for the exhibition, personally producing the press release, the invitations and the visitors' guide to promote a sui generis approach that combines the historical and the personal in an open dialogue.

Marinella Paderni



ARTFORUM

Philadelphia

Trisha Donnelly

ICA - INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, PHILADELPHIA
University of Pennsylvania, 118 South 36th Street
January 18, 2008–August 3, 2008

Jerry Saltz wrote that Trisha Donnelly is a good artist who doesn't "mount good gallery shows." Perhaps only a public institution has the patience to let her hang her work right. In this churchlike installation, her works, as ever, are like icons—flat portals to the transcendental. A photograph of a sphinx paw that supposedly keeps grains of sand from floating into the air in *The Hand That Holds the Desert Down*, 2002; an organ with its pipes installed seemingly pointing downward, so that its music can be felt through the floor, depicted in *The Vibration Station*, 2002; and twenty-two other works are all arranged as if in an asymmetrical iconostasis. The line they create jags across one wall of the well-lit, narrow atrium. In the adjacent dim, low-ceilinged space, speakers emit haunting sound pieces, including a howling wind, a chant slowed to a rumble, and a carillon's peals from afar. The show's evocation of the sacred models the viewer's perception of the works to align it with the artist's own.

The atmosphere of reverence discourages discussion of the irreverent thread in Donnelly's work, but to ignore it would be misleading. After all, her art does not construct an actual system of belief. Rather, it suggests that she, like a synesthetic, is endowed with an uncanny cognition, only instead of blending colors and pitches, she sees eternity in oddities. In the last century, nondenominationally transcendent art was austere abstraction, and while Donnelly's works can't always be called figurative—her rejection of mimesis is partly what makes them like icons—they include some plain, earthy elements that allow for ambiguous humor. There is the wide-brimmed, ribboned hat floating in *Study for Danang*, 2005; the pea-green hue of the velvety fabric in *Untitled*, 2007; the grumpy man glimpsed on his balcony in *Untitled*, 2005. Oddly enough, the exhibition best achieves its sacral effect when approached through the back door—not the well-marked entrance that opens onto a sidelong view of the pieces, but one that connects the dim rear chamber to the next gallery. The viewer can pass from empty darkness into the luminous row of artworks only by going the wrong way.



Untitled, 2005, color photograph, 7 x 5".

— Brian Droitcour

frieze

Trisha Donnelly

Modern Art Oxford, UK

A sign insisted that access to Trisha Donnelly's exhibition at Modern Art Oxford was gained via the museum's front stairs; the three spaces that the show inhabited were clearly intended to be experienced in sequence. An optimist might therefore have expected an unfolding narrative, a progression of scenes, or an installation that, in having a front, a best side, signals awareness of the viewer who stands before it. Instead, the untitled installation of diverse objects that filled the galleries hovered uneasily at the edges of the rooms or in corners, like shy children pushed reluctantly into a party.

The first object to catch fire in a corner of the viewer's consciousness was a looming and lumpen structure near the top of the stairs. An off-balance pillar covered in baggy black fabric, it lurched towards the high ceiling, made two right-angled turns and ended pointing loosely back at the floor. Attached by straps to the room's metal rafters, it defied all the expectations one might have of an object – and particularly a work of art – of its size. Without composure or convincing physical integrity, it seemed embarrassed at its own existence, responding to the space's shape and dimensions without answering them in any sensible way.

Just preceding this ungainly leviathan, but only noticed afterwards, was a small pencil drawing pinned to the wall. Hesitating between the authority of a diagram and the abbreviation of a preliminary sketch, it provided just enough information to invite contemplation but just little enough to permit decryption. A guide to the exhibition, written by Donnelly, began, not without a trace of irony, 'Let me explain'. In a text incorporating the sorts of grammatical dead-ends and *non sequiturs* that she employs in her work she refers to the black fabric pillar as 'a type of necessity ... not a sculpture and not a prop. More of an appearance.' The drawing is 'a battery', and Donnelly goes to some length to identify each of its elements and its role in an arcane and ambiguous system of energy production.

At the far end of the space ('I rate it as a ballroom', writes Donnelly) the mood lightened as a mossy exuberance of evergreen *Leylandii* foliage frothed over the edge of a balcony. From behind it,



Trisha Donnelly
2007
Installation view at
Modern Art, Oxford

a recording of soupy, upbeat lounge jazz played on repeat: the kind of culturally superior aural wallpaper that lines theatre wine bars. Vases of roses either side of the next doorway further encouraged viewers to drop their guard; perhaps Donnelly's show needn't be as taxing or unyielding as at first it appeared. After all, most of it looked, from a distance at least, much like the kind of art we are all familiar with, particularly the final room of drawings, paintings and prints. It is only up close that it looked somehow 'wrong'. Gold panels seemed to employ the language of Minimalist painting but, as we neared them, turned out to be generously padded silk and velvet supports for concise, delicately painted marks that sent our understanding of them glancing off into fruitless figurative or functional

interpretations. In a world in which aesthetic comprehension so often relies on comparison and cross-reference Donnelly regularly achieves the rare feat of creating images that simply look like nothing we have ever seen before.

Very often she leaves the viewer trying to ascertain where accident, intuition, pragmatism and precise intentionality meet in her work. At the side of the second room a stash of spare *Leylandii* branches was piled at the end of a narrow corridor, a detail that for a moment seemed like a thrilling glimpse behind the scenes before one realized that the space was built by Donnelly especially for the show. Equally, abject chunks of yellowing foam shoved into a nearby ceiling became almost bewitching when it dawned on you that they were probably put there by the artist too.

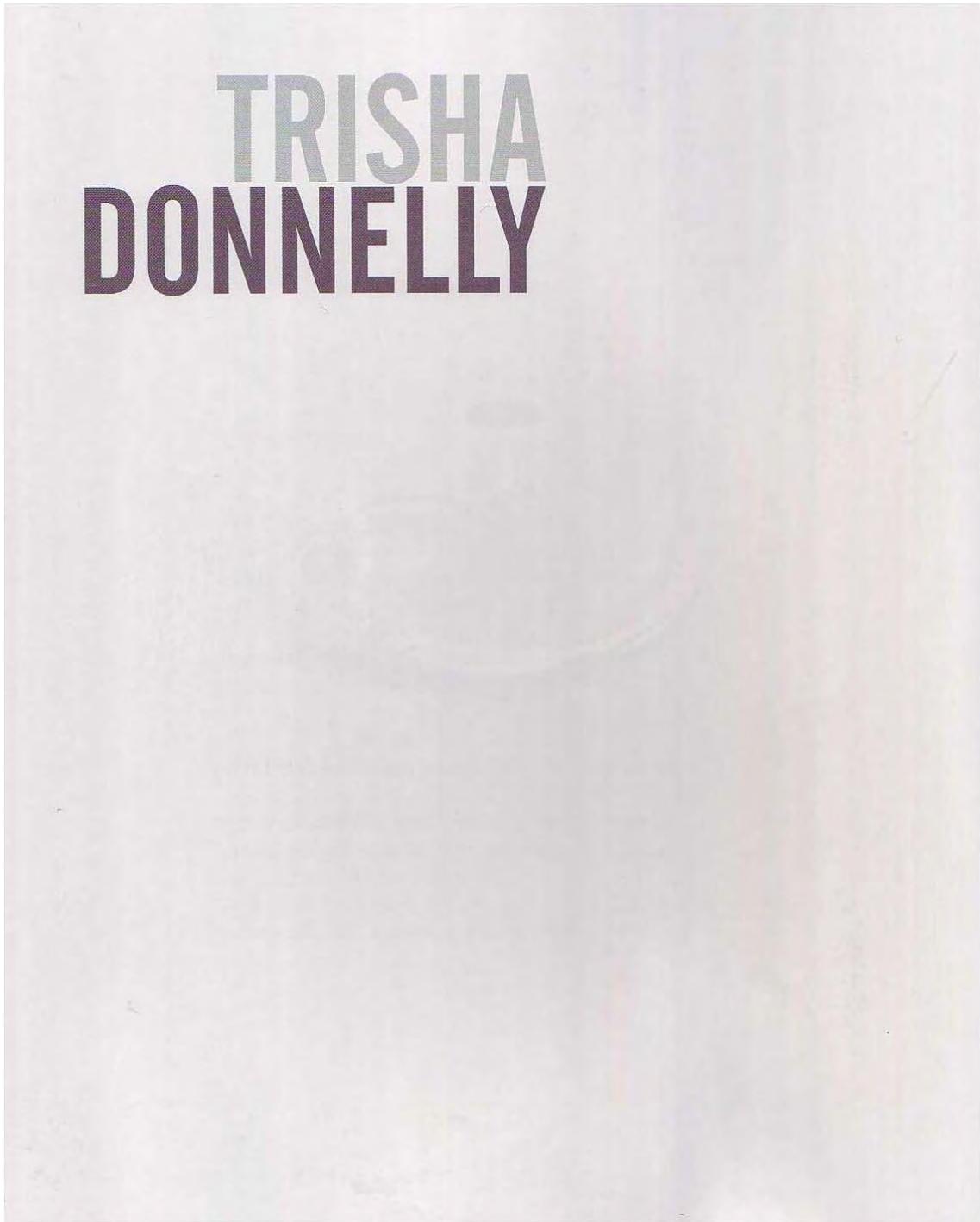
Donnelly's skill is in pulling focus on the competing auras that attach themselves to spaces and objects. She creates things that bear on their surfaces enough strangeness to seem worthy of our time and contemplation, but which are resistant enough to leave a lingering suspicion that we might be just conjuring shapes in the darkness. The show's final work was situated in the museum's elevator: a framed black and white photograph, barely discernible in the dim lighting. The lift's single-storey journey allowed scarcely enough time to register the photograph's shadowy, capsule-like space, let alone guess at its significance. Existing in a fleeting moment in between two floors, like much of Donnelly's work the photograph's power drew on its bewitching shyness and its close-quarters insistence on distance.

Jonathan Griffin

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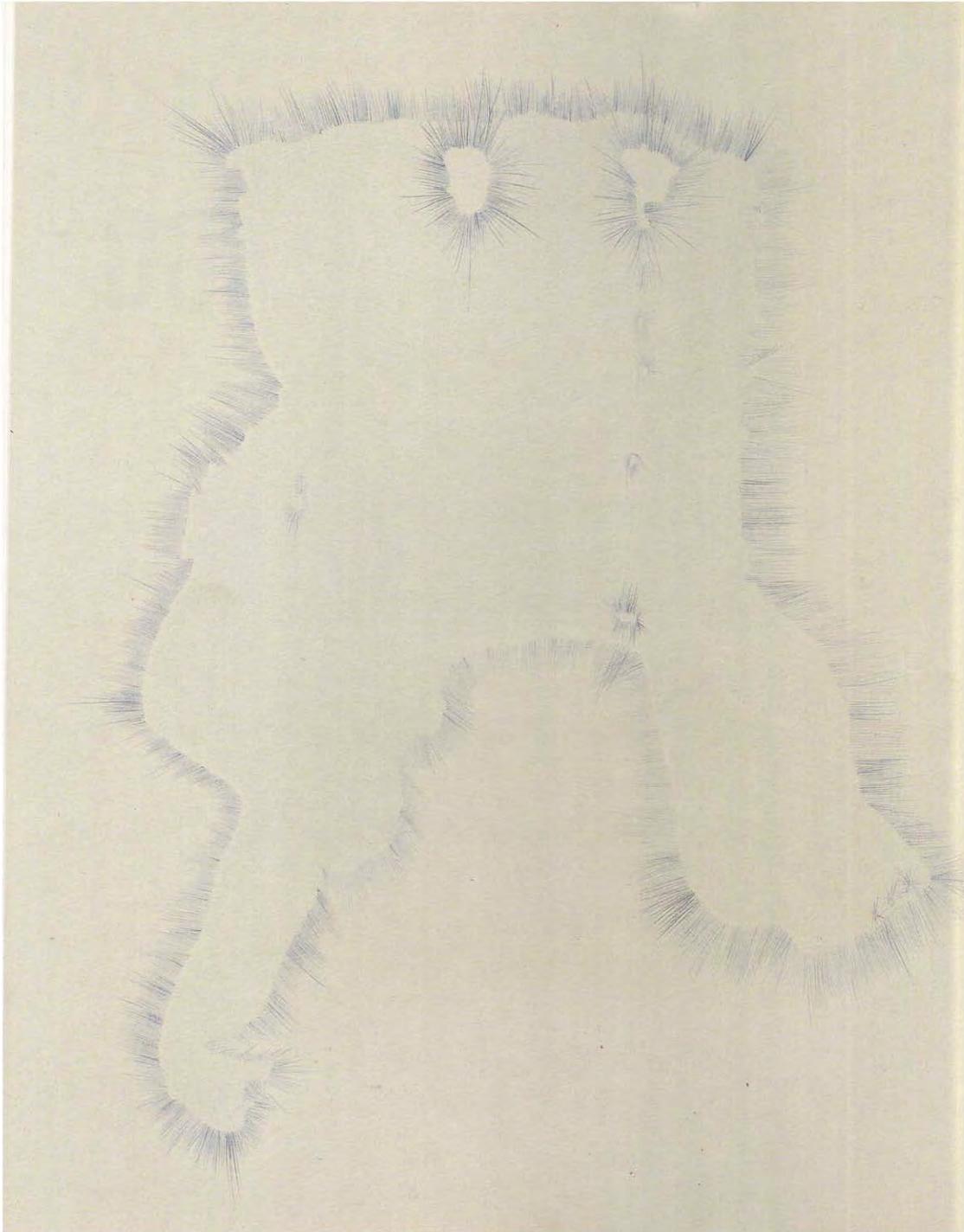
PARKETT



Hoptman, Laura. "Electricity." *Parkett* 77, October I, 2006, pp. 64–75.



Hoptman, Laura. "Electricity." *Parkett* 77, October I, 2006, pp. 64–75.



LAURA HOPTMAN

ELECTRICITY

According to the website where Trisha Donnelly has taught in the new genres department for the past several years: her work questions the necessity and viability of making art.

However hilarious (if her course is successful, you end up in law school!), it is not a surprising assessment, considering that the topic dominating a substantial number of articles on the artist written over the past few years is just how impervious Donnelly's practice is to interpretation. Words like "ephemeral," "immaterial," "ambiguous" and phrases like "barely visible" and "difficult to decode," point the discourse on Donnelly towards dilations on strategic obscurity, the subjective esoteric, and even the paranormal. Without being exactly pejorative, these frustrated attempts to explain Donnelly's work reveal how profoundly misunderstood it really is. Donnelly might be the single truest artist/believer in the necessity and viability of art after, say, Barnett Newman.

Donnelly's oeuvre is uncharacterizable and polymorphous. It includes text, demonstrative activity, intermittent sound, fields of energy, gravitational forces, levers (and the drawings that are their portals), video, and photographic evidence of meta-

phoric phenomena, as well as musical compositions, written dialogues, and visionary projects as yet unrealized, like *THE VIBRATION STATION* (2002), a working organ upside down. Although Donnelly's works often happen only once and leave behind no record, and the sound pieces are timed to go off at intervals, making them easy to miss entirely—to call her work ephemeral is to miss crucial elements of its existence. Donnelly's demonstrations—re-enactments of events that may or may not have occurred in history—happen for a witnessable period, but continue for much longer, as her activity does something to alter time, space, or, more grandly, history. Of her now infamous work at Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York in 2002—in which she rode in on a horse dressed as a courier to read a decree of surrender on behalf of Napoleon, and rode out again—she explains that her gesture not only ended a conflict that had ceased without formal armistice, but that it finally made the iconic Emperor exist as a human. Unbeaten, Napoleon remains iconic; in defeat, he can symbolize a death for all eternity. We, on the other hand, having witnessed this historical *punctum*, are rendered more alive. "The emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine," Donnelly read in her pronouncement, "and with this I am electric, I am electric."¹

A similar sensitivity to dimensionality—in the conceptual sense of time and in the physical sense of space—is necessary to fully consider Donnelly's

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TRISHA DONNELLY: INSTALLED 2004, approach via also previous page; pencil and colored pencil on paper, each 36 x 24"; GUNF-TIME 1111 I, 1111 II, 1111 III, 1111 IV, 1111 V, 1111 VI, 1111 VII, 1111 VIII, 1111 IX, 1111 X, 1111 XI, 1111 XII, 1111 XIII, 1111 XIV, 1111 XV, 1111 XVI, 1111 XVII, 1111 XVIII, 1111 XIX, 1111 XX, 1111 XXI, 1111 XXII, 1111 XXIII, 1111 XXIV, 1111 XXV, 1111 XXVI, 1111 XXVII, 1111 XXVIII, 1111 XXIX, 1111 XXX, 1111 XXXI, 1111 XXXII, 1111 XXXIII, 1111 XXXIV, 1111 XXXV, 1111 XXXVI, 1111 XXXVII, 1111 XXXVIII, 1111 XXXIX, 1111 XL, 1111 XLI, 1111 XLII, 1111 XLIII, 1111 XLIV, 1111 XLV, 1111 XLVI, 1111 XLVII, 1111 XLVIII, 1111 XLIX, 1111 L, 1111 LI, 1111 LII, 1111 LIII, 1111 LIV, 1111 LV, 1111 LVI, 1111 LVII, 1111 LVIII, 1111 LIX, 1111 LX, 1111 LXI, 1111 LXII, 1111 LXIII, 1111 LXIV, 1111 LXV, 1111 LXVI, 1111 LXVII, 1111 LXVIII, 1111 LXIX, 1111 LXX, 1111 LXXI, 1111 LXXII, 1111 LXXIII, 1111 LXXIV, 1111 LXXV, 1111 LXXVI, 1111 LXXVII, 1111 LXXVIII, 1111 LXXIX, 1111 LXXX, 1111 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Trisha Donnelly

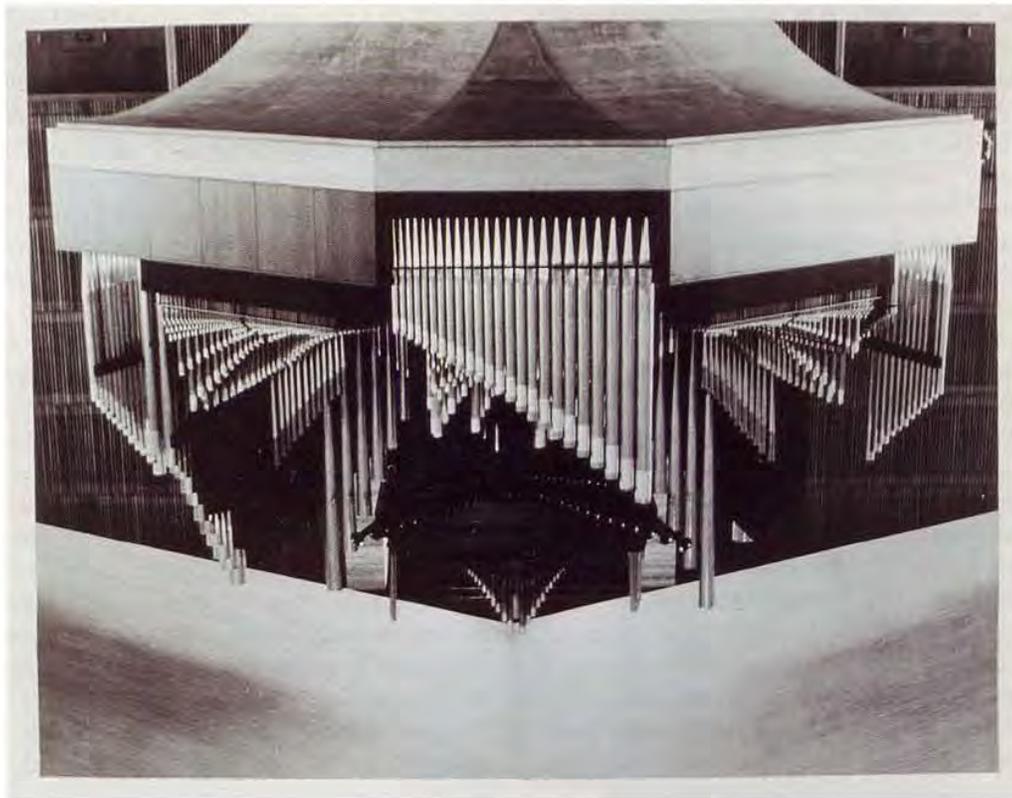
drawings, which, although rendered with careful, almost pedantic attention to detail, can still be extremely reticent, even if the image is recognizable, as in *UNTITLED* (2005), a slim bell pull—a ripcord—that at first glance seems available only to the wildly imaginative and to those who read wall labels. *UNTITLED* is an example of the way that, in Donnelly's drawings, as well as in some of her photographs, it is not what is depicted that counts, but rather what it does and, concomitantly, what it is. Perceptually, the work is merely a pencil drawing of a piece of rope with a toggle, but metaphysically it is a work of art predicated on the artist's awareness of her ability to make the thing itself, and not just a representation of it (like Barnett Newman's zips or Jasper Johns' flags). Likewise, the viewer can choose to believe that the work is a picture of a rope, or an actual ripcord

attached to a parachute that can save your life in an intellectual freefall.

Donnelly has a way with mediums, or rather, has her way with mediums in a manner that makes them useless as descriptive designations. She requires of them that they supersede their expected parameters, and requires of us that we understand them as multi-valent. A still photo can remain a still photo, even as it unfolds in time. Take, for example, *THE REDWOOD AND THE RAVEN* (2004), a sequence of thirty-one black-and-white photographs of the modern dancer Frances Flannery who performs a work she choreographed to a poem by Edgar Allan Poe. As a super slow-motion animation, each photo in the sequence is shown individually for a single day over a period of thirty-one days. Text on paper, which is normally flat, gains volume in Donnelly's hands, in both sound and

TRISHA DONNELLY, THE VIBRATION STATION, 2002, silver gelatin print, 4 x 5" /

DIE VIBRATIONSSTATION, Silbergelatine-Abzug, 10 x 12,7 cm.



TRISHA DONNELLY, *BLIND FRIENDS*, 2001,
C-print, 11 x 17" / *BLINDE FREUNDE*, C-Print, 28 x 43 cm.



substance. *BZRK* (2003) is a poster-text produced for the fiftieth Venice Biennale, but more importantly, it is a character insertion of an historical, secret human weapon let loose during wartime. The poster is not an orthographic acronym for the noun “berserk,” it is the Berserker—hysterical, in the very hot Venetian summer of 2003.

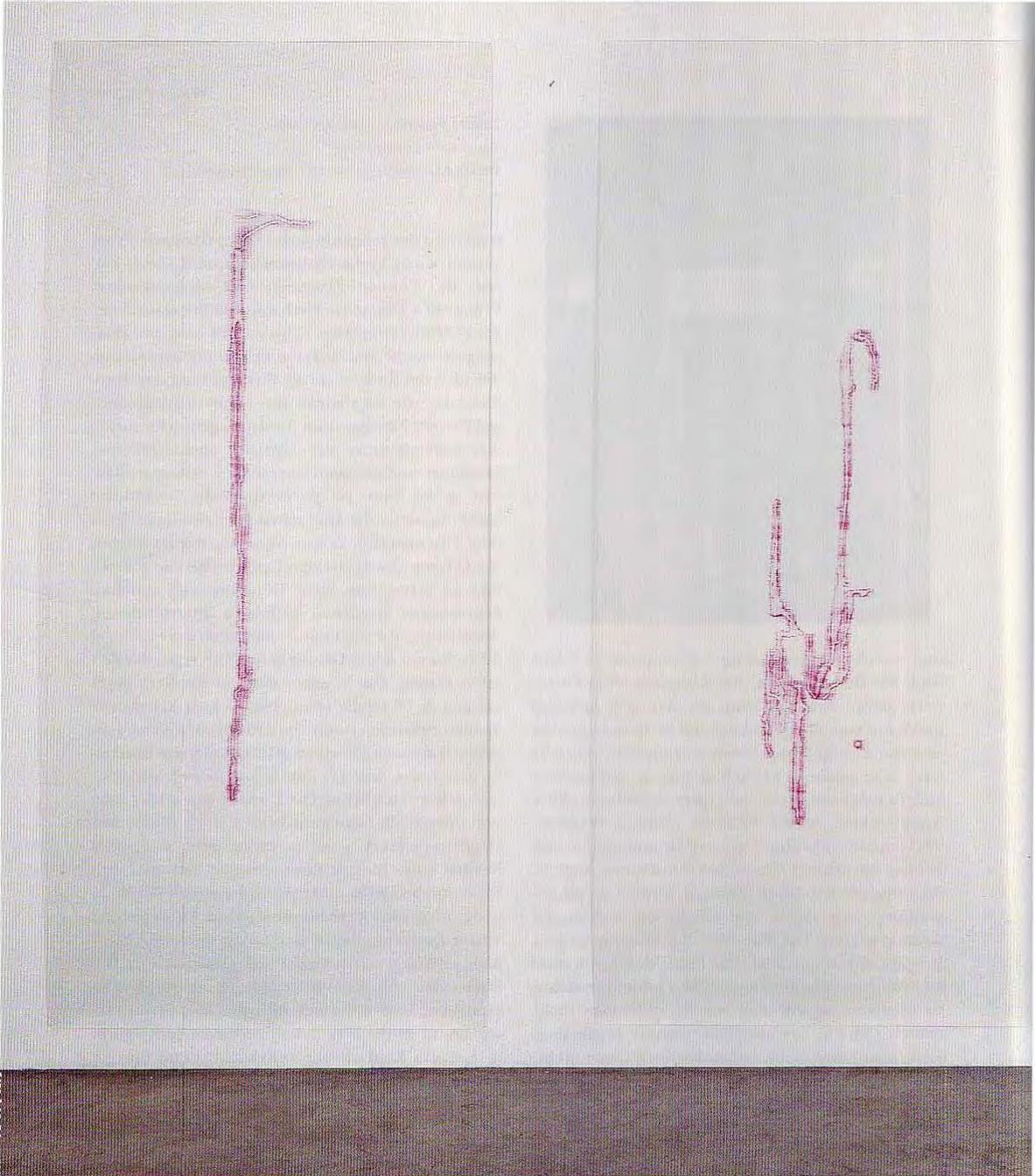
Text then, as Donnelly proves, does not only represent form, it is form, just as action is, and can be read, heard, felt, or witnessed. Concomitantly, sculpture might be, as someone once said, the thing you bump into when you back up to look at a painting, but it is also the act of backing up as well as the space into which one backs. It is clear that sounds—a bell, a cannon, a voice that cries furtively, “Oh Egypt!”—have bodies and can situate themselves within spaces, fill them, as well as travel through them. Sound can also be text. Take for example the title that exists only in audio of a series of Donnelly’s pencil drawings (2002)—a sound, fittingly, that can not be described in words.

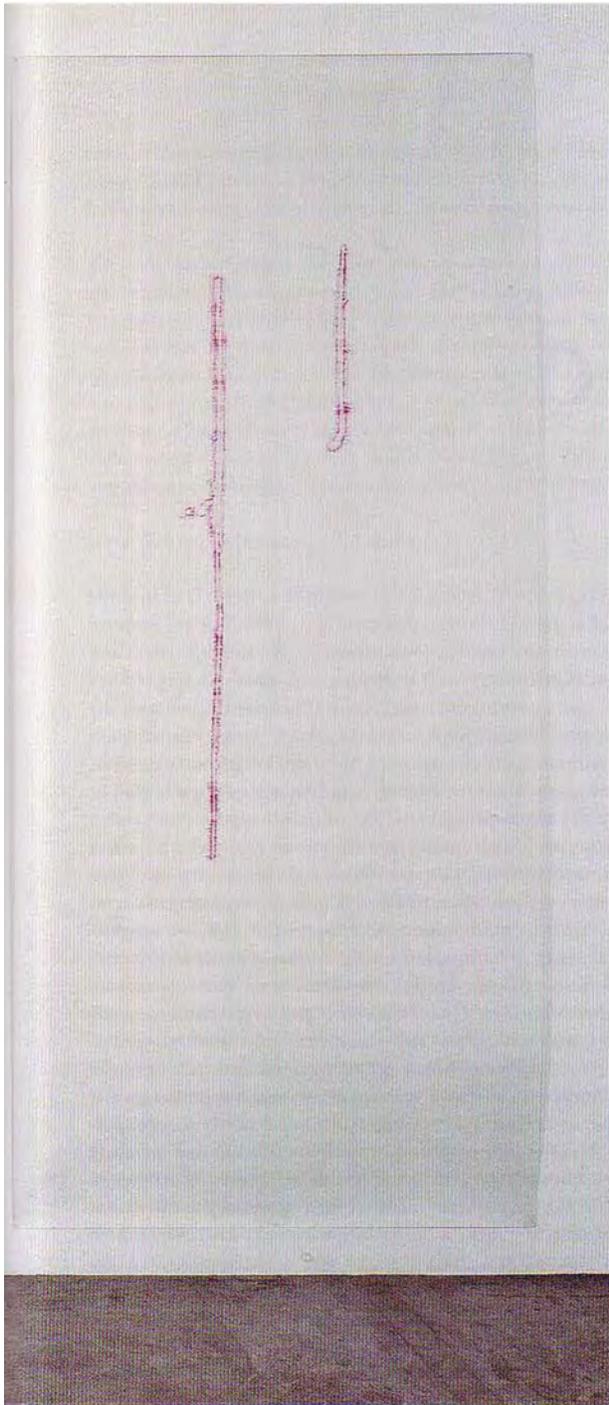
Donnelly’s work seems to exude a profound belief in the notion of art as a situational phenomenon based on how it exists in relation to other things in the world and, just as importantly, how it is experienced. For Donnelly, your reception of a work of art should be dependent upon where you are and when you arrived there, upon whether you try to parse it based on previously received ideas or consider it *in medias res*, whether you see it or apprehend it in other myriad ways. An early work, *BLIND FRIENDS* (2001), is a large group photo of people on a beach. Instructed to walk in the direction of the wind, they have been photographed heading off in every direction. The photo is an exquisite instruction or, to some, a clue as to how to approach Donnelly’s work—to get to where you are going, you don’t always have to see where you are going. An addendum: not see-

ing something does not mean that it isn’t there.

The difficulty that one encounters in trying to decipher Donnelly’s work is a symptom of what makes it so powerful and so crucially important at this moment in time, within a contemporary art ecosystem dominated by the eminently readable. Beyond her time-traveling acts of valor and her medium-shifting, Donnelly’s work lies beyond the specificity of language. Her oeuvre represents a truly contemporary, truly radical re-interpretation of the notion of a work of art as the embodiment of the Absolute, as it was first expressed by postwar artists like Barnett Newman who, weighed down by apocalyptic events, and puffed up by a lunatic belief in art as a talismanic, even godly thing, saw in it salvation or at least profound revelation. It was Newman writing at the start of the Abstract Expressionist odyssey who first drew the line between merely making (performing, interpreting, illustrating, arranging) and creating—bringing into existence a new totality, an end in itself. For Newman, what was at stake was no less than the chance to contribute to reality. Donnelly’s work engages in this very gambit. Newman also believed, as does Donnelly, that something that exists as pure knowledge and is, in this way, inchoate, fundamentally inexpressible as language. Images too are poor vessels to embody the *echte* reality of an idea like, for example, “I am,” and thus they must be accompanied by conviction, which is to say that no one can really be faulted for observing that Donnelly’s work is inexplicable because, in fact, it is. This, of course, in no way blocks us from understanding it. And when understanding hits, and when the ideas that are her works constitute themselves in my mind, I am electric, I too am electric.

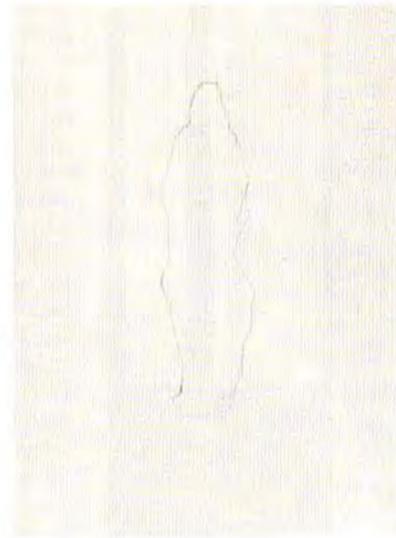
1) Exhibition list, Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York, 2005.





TRISHA DONNELLY,
A 20TH CENTURY, 2005,
pencil on paper /
EIN ZWANZIGSTES JAHRHUNDERT,
Farbstift auf Papier.
(PHOTO: AIR DE PARIS, PARIS)

TRISHA DONNELLY, *THE PASSENGER*, 2003,
11 drawings (see following 10 pages), each 15 x 19" /
DER PASSAGIER, 11 Zeichnungen
(siehe die 10 folgenden Seiten), je 38 x 48,2 cm.



PARKETT

Over and Out

BRUCE HAINLEY



In Trisha Donnelly's *UNTITLED (HC)*, 2006, a recent sculpture, there is at first the sound of chimes; even if at some point disturbed only by the wind or by creature breath, the music or noise must now be heard as purposeful. An intruder alert? An invocation? Garbled voices, as if from a far-off shortwave radio breaking up, follow the chiming. A chant in response and contradistinction. I cannot understand the entire vocal sequence: it seems to begin with someone saying, "help wanted," and end with the someone or something disclaiming, "what—the hell?" But the voice, if it is a voice, in-between the articulation, reduces to murmur, not quite verbal or just beyond what language can communicate.

I tried to write about it in another manner, with other methods, by other means, and failed, and I wonder if that isn't more than a little of its purpose. What do we expect anymore from art? And, more to my task, what is expected in terms of writing "about" art? Should it be explanation or critique? Can it deter exegesis to drift into the abstract, making meaning skid on the oblique? Is "about" a contract? Between whom? Should critical writing, so called, avail itself of private knowledge? Say, if I revealed what I was told the letters "HC" stood for, especially if it was Donnelly who told me, would that "solve" the problem of its imponderables? In an age of "reality media," an owl-like vigilance should haunt biographical, not to mention autobiographical, fallacy. Perhaps artists make something only to confront what cannot be understood. If writing commandeers the second person, would you recognize it as singular or plural, would you think it was speaking about you or me, or about someone who is not simply either? Too much art, in the name—quicksand—of "philosophy" and "art history," fails to reveal the operation of the system and thus attempts to preempt the risk of failure, failure allowing all to come to terms with our own failings, finitudes. The aim is not to communicate change but to create change, and (but?) this requires abandoning, abandonment, being abandoned. The current system is not holding; theoretical and philosophi-

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TRISHA DONNELLY, *THE BENT TOUCH / DIE GEROGENE BERÜHRUNG*, 2006, c-print.
(PHOTO: AIR DE PARIS, PARIS)

cal foreclosure encourages the impropriety of poetic squatting. On her own pirate radio station, Avital Ronell has broadcast the following, which seems attuned to Donnelly's poetics, her operations and maneuvers, and how to deal with what they produce:

The poet, irremediably split between exaltation and vulgarity, between the autonomy that produces the concept within intuition and the foolish earthly being, functions as a contaminant for philosophy—a being who, at least since Plato, has been trying to read and master an eviction notice served by philosophy. The poet as genius continues to threaten and fascinate, menacing the philosopher with the beyond of knowledge. Philosophy cringes. Excluding and appropriating to itself the poeticity by which it is harassed and shadowed, philosophy has provoked a crisis on its own premises as a result of which these premises will henceforth be shared by the antics of the popular poet: “Paradoxically, then, it is perhaps owing to Kant that there can be neither philosophy nor literature, only a permanent scrambling, ever searching to write itself... .. brouillage permanent scrambling...”¹⁾

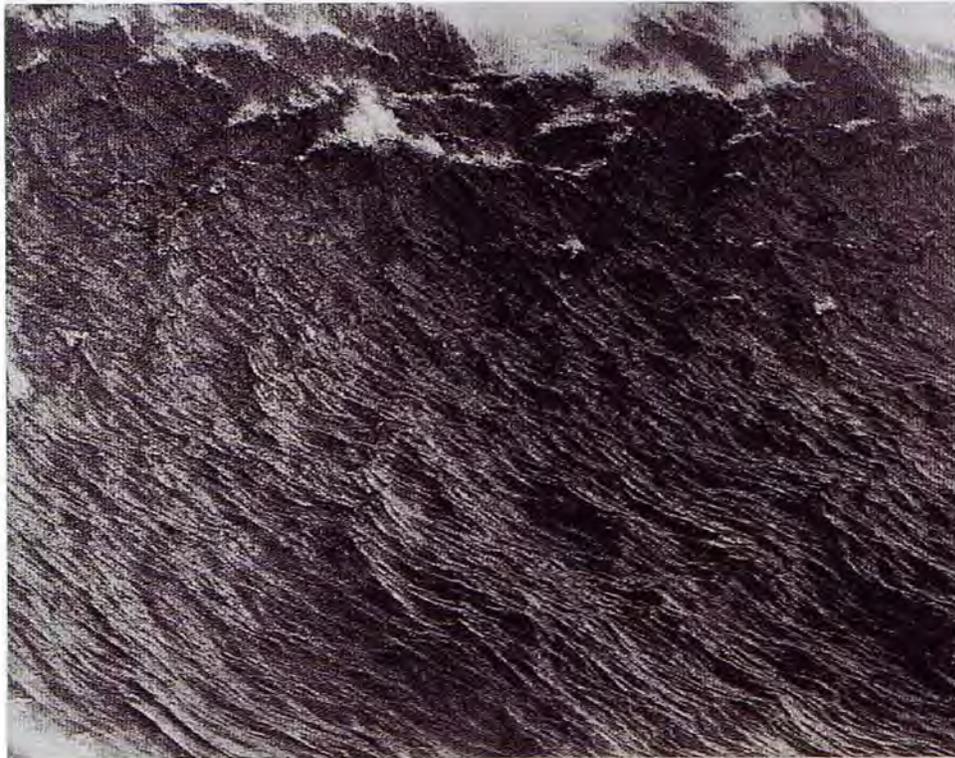
Help wanted. What the hell, I think.

H.C.

Because you chime the chimes, bluely.
Because you wake up with glitter in your блоха, again, and think, better than блоха.
Because you make cheese, collect buttons, lisp.
Because, decades of блоха блоха with such tenacity, your mouth diamondizes coal.
Because even on a nightly street prowl you “tableau,” the last caryatid of the 20th century.
Because, skeptical or, rather, nonchalant about the possible knowledge of anyone's identity, frequently not even able to spy what the hook-up looks like (pitch-black back rooms), you keep mostly to first names or key attributes (“Silver Porsche”; “Cucumber”; “Garlic Breath”), personhood a ruse, what matters how certain structures fit ad hoc openings, countless—beyond abaci—the number of your conquests.
Because you hear only what's untranslatable.
Because you're a mess.
Because you are only about your bodies.
Because there's nothing about that that's not delicious.
Because you accept the dead's collect calls; they're your family plan.
Because блоха glazes your блоха, cruller-like.
Because conjunctions join you to you by coming between.
Because, блоха, you don't look like yourself.
Because ewes don't look like you.
Because the only job you ever have is getting laid, sole occupation the mind wants.
Because something ended—a culture, a way of being—around the time AIDS was named AIDS, and you're sure it must be, will be, renewed, but with what not to mention by whom?
Because you have an ass but hide its use not knowing what it's good for.
Because, with satin halter tops, taxing codpieces, thongs, leg warmers, spandex Lycra, vests, chaps, improvised singlets, tassels, bikini briefs, boots, studded armbands, harnesses, rubber блоха, bandanas, gloves

Trisha Donnelly

TRISHA DONNELLY, BLACK WAVE, 2002, silver gelatin print, 50 x 60" /
SCHWARZE WELLE, Silbergelatine-Abzug, 127 x 152,4 cm.



(fingerless and бляха), mesh jockstraps, page boys, kneepads, lace-up pouches, puffy pants, jungle-print jackets, shoulder pads, fringe, culottes, chain mail, suspenders, cheap cotton, seaman's caps, epaulettes, turquoise, western gear, t-shirts, tank tops, paludal hot pants, low-riding skintight jeans, all hand-altered, you out-peter berlin Peter Berlin.

Because you Nair.

Because you noticed me but it is such an odd looking thing.

Because you cannot get enough of you.

Because, tattooed with the international symbol for biohazard, you introduce contingencies to one another.

Because, бляха, you slur your worlds.

Because you call your lice Louises.

Because faggotry's narcissism is your *Cabaret*, with you in the shoes of both Fosse and Minnelli.

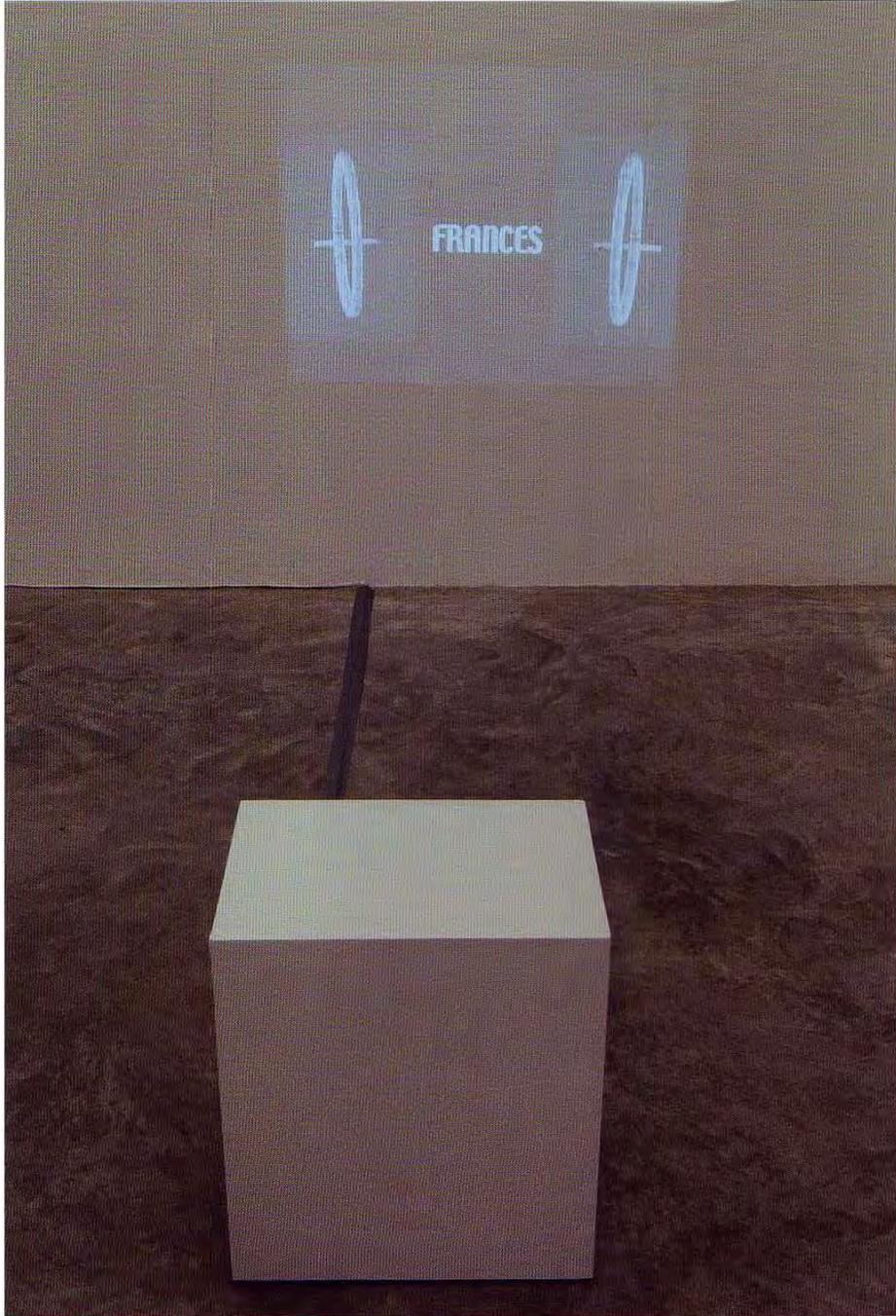
Because, unlike malls of others, you do not look to a body for explanation, knowing it explains nothing, which is its charm, why you return to it, and why it returns to you.

Because, in nooks and crannies, abandoned piers, at recess, in bad odors, immediately after take-off, behind dumpsters, between cigarettes, recently divorced, while talking on the phone, going eighty-miles-per-hour, after snacking, on your knees, arms akimbo, before spanking, overreading, conjunction becomes you.

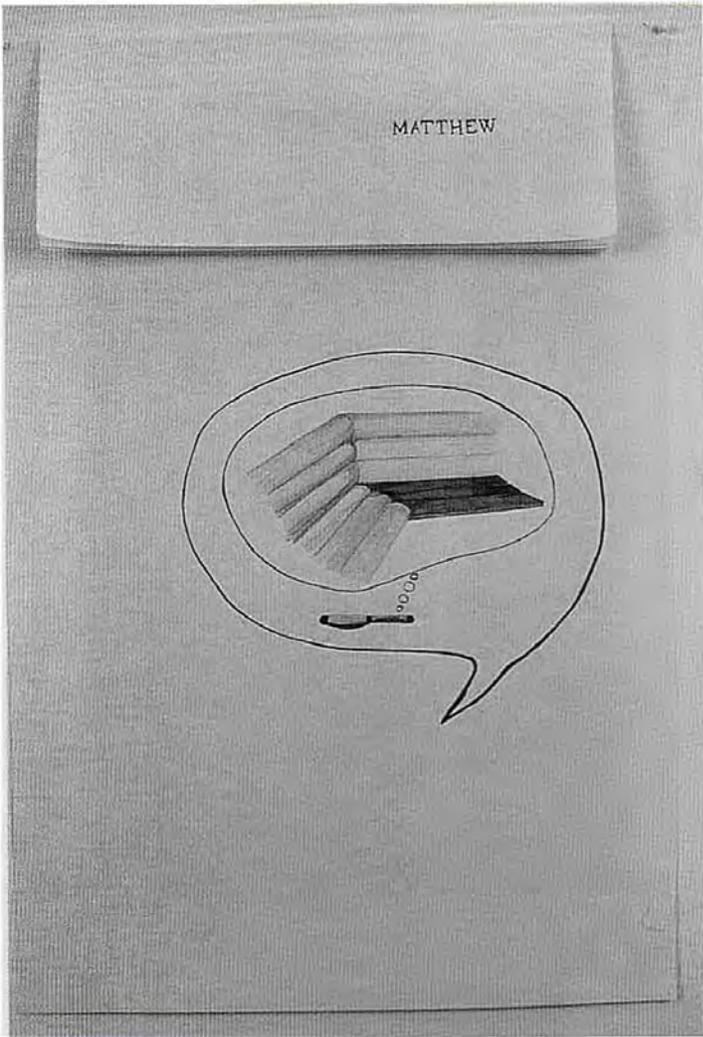
Because the second person is identical, therefore impossible, you and not you.
Because you scheherazade in no-name bars.
Because, just because.
Because of your hegemonic black feminist cock.
Because lemon you, sweat you, lavender you, mint you, Jicky you, b.o. you, beer you, salty you, блоха you—all блоха, pants down around блоха ankles, блоха блоха with блоха, блоха pre-off your nipple.
Because, disdainful alcohol and cigarettes, not understanding doing speed and then just cleaning your apartment or finishing a novel, you binge every two weeks or so—grass, of course, amphetamines, maybe some crack on top of that—and tire out your tricks.
Because your crotch contains a spatio-temporal rift—i. e., why it has to be yoked, sheathed, Russian-dolled—a basket like Dr. Who's phone booth.
Because Santa Monica Boulevard, each block, block by block, secured by different types—trannies, cowboys, twinks, bears, amputees, vampires, junkies, vets, musclemen, bruisers, radical faeries, midshipmen, altar boys, speed freaks, Eurotrash, chubby chasers, daddies, eagle scouts, truckers, gerontophiliacs, twins—you cruise, unenemaed.
Because you accessorize with whatever allows skin its apotheosis.
Because, dear diary, you Dutch-oven me like no other.
Because, bonfire forewent, you use the ex's letters as cum rags.
Because you deter exegesis.
Because you believe moisturizing is the answer.
Because you have a cock but do not know what one looks like or how to package it.
Because, tart, your climax always conveys not its silence but its silences.
Because, vulnerable to diseases heretofore threatening only to small birds, you test sclachian, vermicular and mineral transubstantiations.
Because, supplicant, you breathe, unsettling tintinnabulations which peel in an ascending scale, and, suddenly invoked, garbled voices, as if from a far-off shortwave radio breaking up, respond.
Because you is a manifesto.
Because your dialect recalls the Paraclete's.
Because you trim bush but leave a thick happy trail.
Because you arrive like starlight from a source long gone, the thinking man's блоха.
Because you don't know when to stop.
Because fuck you.
Because you watch, watched, every single friend, each loved one, die and, abandoned, ask yourself, now who the hell is the lucky one?
Because help wanted is the sound of sounding human, you murmur.
Because judicious in the necessary use of sentimentality in a Hallmark world, you make your body into words that reveal it whether or not anyone wants to say them.
Because your domain is earthquake.

блоха с/о T.D.

1) Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Chicago: University of Illinois), p. 287.



TRISHA DONNELLY, CALIFORNIA, 2004, installation view, 8mm film transferred to DVD,
20 minute loop / Installationsansicht, 8-mm-Film auf DVD, 20-minütiger Loop.



TRISHA DONNELLY, MATTHEW, 2004,
pencil and ink on paper, 18 1/2 x 13" /
Bleistift und Tinte auf Papier, 47 x 33 cm.



PARKETT

Schwa

TRISHA DONNELLY

BEATRIX RUF

At the close of her Kunsthalle Zürich exhibition, Trisha Donnelly gave a performative lecture, although she didn't use its original title *THE 11th PRISMATIC* (2005) and instead billed it as a four-part description of the phenomenon of the 11th prismatic refraction of a photograph into an object. With the aid of slide projections and audio input, she added yet more levels to the exhibition space and her works, which already presented a panoply of different shades of reality, fiction, space, and time. For her opening gambit the artist dislocated the real space of the lecture and our own reality by declaring that her lecture was in fact a radio broadcast, after having first—by means of a lightning-fast reality loop—transformed the female speaker into a fictive male figure (Paul), who could change sex again in an instant and repeated the strands of her argument as a voice from the other side, deeper and turned up, her level intensified. This voice reported on the shock to the sense of sight, should the eyes linger too long on a photograph with its ensuing splintering of

BEATRIX RUF is the director of the Kunsthalle Zürich.



TRISHA DONNELLY, *THE D FROM W*, 2005. C-print, 8 1/2 x 11" /
DER D VOM W. C-Print, 21,5 x 28 cm. (PHOTO: CASEY CAPLAN GALLERY, NEW YORK)

the listener's perception—which transform one's original, conventional perception of what is happening. Photographs by J.P.D. (a reference to a drawing in the exhibition that shows a wooden handle with her father's initials incised into it)—photographs that can be nothing and everything. Direct communication and direct realization: someone looked into the camera and the image looked back. Then come the audio pieces, in which the sounds rebound off each other, due to interference, and start to wish for more room, until their desire for space creates such a distance that they can be endlessly variegated, individual and a single sound all in one: "One point, all places."

With the simultaneity of sense perception typical of her work, Trisha Donnelly pilots this notion towards the image of a mirror—that could, however, also be an image from a radio-broadcast situation that we find ourselves in at present. She describes the daily shock of the rebound and the distancing that we experience.



TRISHA DONNELLY, UNTITLED, 2006, digital print, 25 x 18" /
OLIVE TITEL, Digitaltouch, 64 x 46 cm.

the image in time and form. The photograph thus, so we are told, becomes an object with numerous dimensions; its one-dimensionality begins to stutter, multiplying the presence of its realities, becoming a phantom. "This was not a mystical experience. Do not make the mistake of that interpretation. Instead understand it as a metronomed experience. A mathematical realization. Mechanical not spiritual."¹⁾

With the compelling force one has come to expect of Trisha Donnelly's demonstrations and the authority of the uninterrupted monologue, she proceeded to report on four types of echoes—a short-circuit, interference, a fracture, and a tear in



IN THE RECOMBINATION OF THE NOT SO VAST DISTANCE
(The vortex)

Now
If there is a climax to the object there is no object.

With the assistance of this recording
you will build a vortex.

A point will emerge from the original form, grow into an endless, revolving
point moving towards the back of the room.

Listen the first time.

(recording= Slavyanka Russian Men's Chorus "Borodino")
Take the highest male voice. Listen and track it throughout the recording.
The sound can compress like a photograph. While listening, flatten it into
an object. It's a comb-like structure. If necessary start with the image
of the object. Full object follows.

Flatten for transport. Hold.

Listen the second time.

Split the voices open like opposing ribs. Snap them open and take the lowest
male voice. Listen and track it. Again, the sound can compress like an object
within a photograph- flatten for transport.

Now listen the third time.

Third instance- recombine the two objects. Action is delicate and no less
so beside time's illusion of progress. Shift and lean the first object
slightly to the right side before recombination. Lean into the bend. Rotate
the image. Place off track the zipper form. Close it. Off register yes
but close it regardless.

The force of the shift and the attempt to balance will create a natural
momentum. A fall forward. It is not a true chasm, just the view of the chasm.
Note the difference. Get the sense of the fall. As you listen this will
provide the first steady revolution of the vortex. As it progresses, the point
will rotate and grow, get fat with simultaneous forward and sideways momentum.
Like a reverse exit wound. But to build it you must continue through the sounds
clipping and compressing the two forms together. The large size remains in the
front of the head. The exit is precise. The maintenance of this form defines
the object. With no maintenance of the parallel this object dusts itself.

TRISHA DONNELLY, *the Vortex Notes*,
manuscript / *Die Strudel Notizen*, *Manuskript*.
(PHOTO: TRISHA DONNELLY)

However, in both the mirror and the radio our perception range is too confined; we are caught in a to-and-fro with no hope of escape. Not so in the photographs of Greta Garbo, whose figure causes the mirror to bounce back off the camera, treating it, from the outset, with distance: "Greta Garbo—what—not who—was feedback. What you see in the photos is the ricochet. The bounce, the push off, the long arm. Photographically Garbo = original prey. Garbo woke to a million Garbos." When one Garbo photograph meets another, the first Garbo multiplies to become infinitely many Garbos; when her photographs come together in a book, Garbo becomes a stuttering reality, a multiplication of realities, spaces, and times. Pictures look at pictures, pictures multiply and the pictures burst, becoming multi-dimensional objects: Garbo "what—not who" (in the exhibition Donnelly showed a drawing with the name [Joan] Fontaine, to whom she attributed a similar response to the camera).

Trisha Donnelly, whose exhibitions suggest a fundamentally iconoclastic approach, and who—even in the sparsest showing of her pictures—will punctuate their reception with unexpected bursts of sound (in the same way that film scores influence one's perception of the images on screen), seems to be particularly interested in pictures, or rather in the reconfiguration of our perception of pictures. She has immense faith in the "pictures" that she creates through drawing, video, photography, sound, text, and "demonstrations," for her use of different media always plumbs the depths of that realm where, through force of will, fantasy, and imagination, "things" actually come to exist and have meaning.

Like many of her famous colleagues—Alfred Jarry, Antonin Artaud, Marcel Duchamp, Boris Vian, Jena Baudrillard, Joan Miró, and the Marx Brothers, to name but a few—Trisha Donnelly also likes to turn her mind to things that other people ignore: parallel realities and pata-logical definitions of reality—

tempting the spirit. She confronts the public with her experience of possibilities, and tests and extends the impact of art by the above-mentioned, but also, most importantly, by introducing a possible "void."

When Trisha Donnelly entitles a photograph of a sphinx *THE HAND THAT HOLDS THE DESERT DOWN* (2002), she changes not only our perception of this all-too familiar figure, but also the meaning of pictures in general and the relationship of language and image. (If it really were the case that the desert sands are only held in place by the massive limbs of the sphinxes, what would happen if the latter were to stand up and make off? Would the desert disappear with them?)

In the audio work *THE SHIELD* (2004), Trisha Donnelly turns sounds into a physical presence by taking a carefully calculated sequence of tones—from the deepest and most sonorous to the highest, most metallic. And by means of precise audio techniques, she creates a non-material wall to divide a room. Hence one sense-perception turns into another, as Donnelly plays with the limits of one's perception, with realities, with language, experience, and order. Synesthesia—the superimposition or simultaneous awareness of sense-impressions that are other-



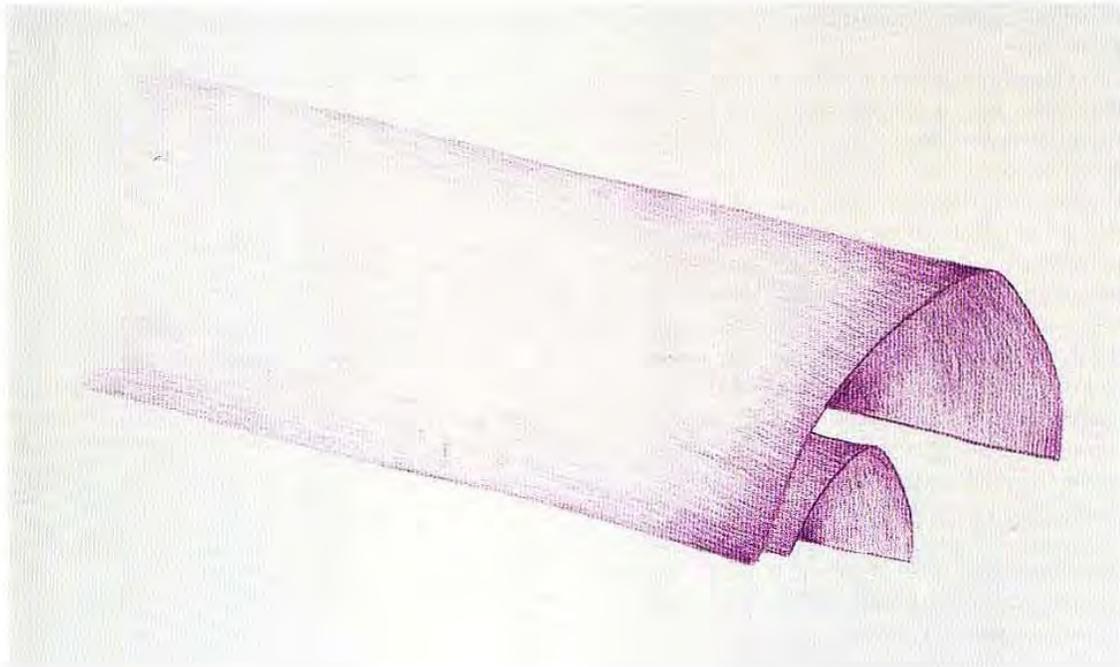
Trisha Donnelly

wise distinct from each other—has an important function in Donnelly's work (seeing colors with letters or numbers, perceiving physical forms when listening to music, and much more). This is not so much an indication of the excessively heightened perceptive faculties of the artist (or of artists in general), as a permeability that transforms the act of relating things to each other into things themselves.

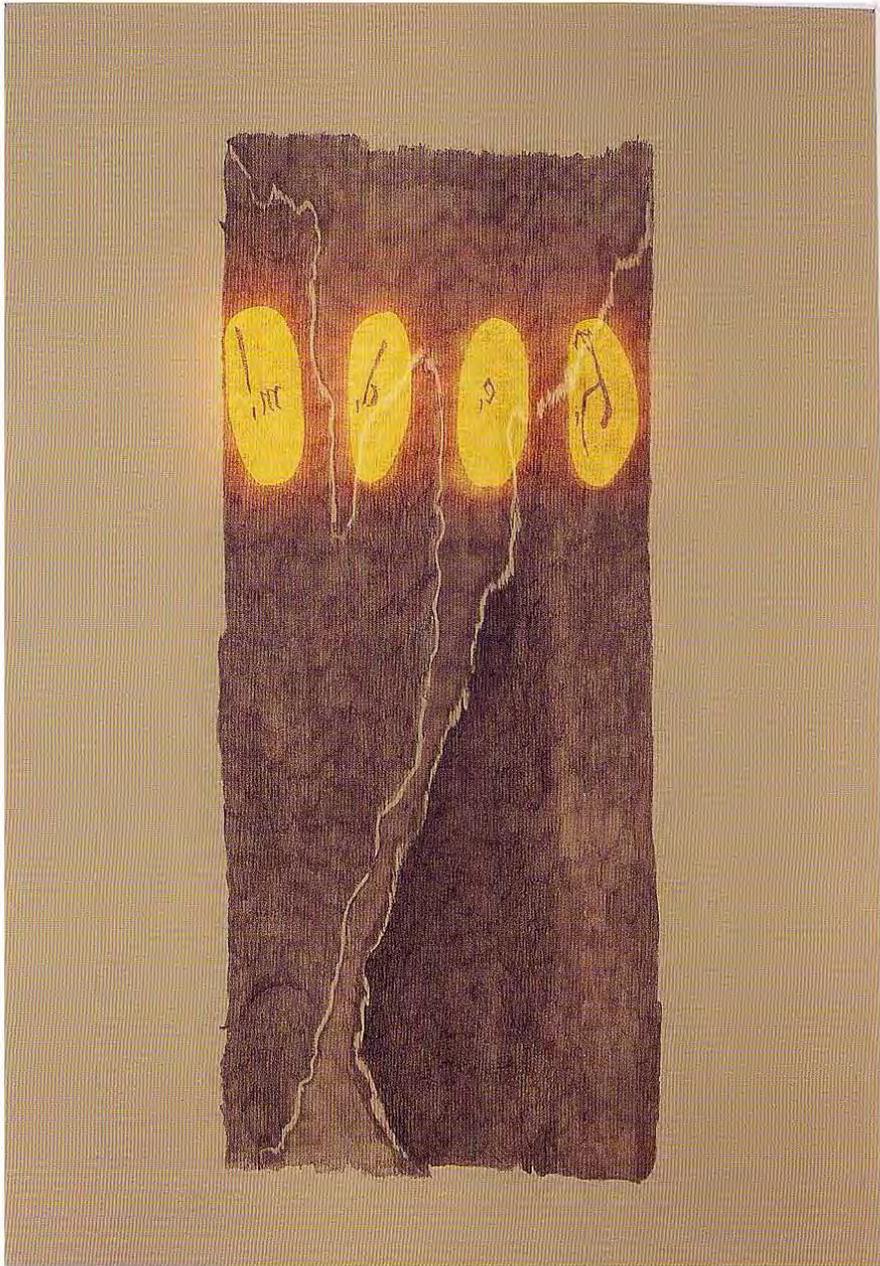
Trisha Donnelly's live works only exist as oral reports by those who were there to witness them, which is to say, as numerous different individual versions. For the opening of one of her first solo shows in 2002 at the Casey Kaplan Gallery in New

York, the artist rode into the gallery on horseback, as Napoleon's courier, and announced that the Emperor had capitulated ("If it need be termed surrender, then let it be so, for he has surrendered in word, not deed."), and rode off again stating "and with this I am electric, I am electric." In another of her demonstrations she asked the public to read out loud from the libretto of Alexander Scriabin's (1871–1915) unfinished symphony *Mysterium*—like Donnelly, Scriabin was interested in synesthesia. The composer planned this symphony as a seven-day spectacle of sensory sensations, involving music, words, dance, light, fire, and smell. After the reading the artist extinguished the light and played "Classical Gas" by Mason Williams, telling her audience that she had found the sound of a solar eclipse. After the lecture she announced that she would take up the next morning of the entire audience, thereby carving out a place for herself in the consciousness of every single participant in the performance, laying claim to their time in the same way that she turned it into a

TRISHA DONNELLY, the title of this artwork is a sound, recorded on CD, and can be played for the viewer on request, 2002, pencil and colored pencil on paper, 30 x 22" / Der Titel dieser Arbeit ist ein Klang, aufgenommen auf einer CD und erklingt auf Wunsch des Betrachters, Bleistift und Farbstifte auf Papier, 76,2 x 55,9 cm.







work of art: through rumors and myths, and above all, in the voids between things and reality, between presence and absence.

Many of Donnelly photo and audio works, and her drawings too, include events that make their presence felt but never come to anything, that one is certainly aware of but that are nevertheless not there. The full reality of the work in question is therefore left open, or is the product of our own imaginations, our memories, our assumptions: her "pictures" are incomplete, fragments, ruins; they operate with densities, reflexes, reversals, and turns.

As rumors build with regard above all to Donnelly's live work, she has increasingly begun to delegate her "Actions" to other protagonists: texts that the curators of her exhibitions record in parallel on tape—be these accessible to the public or not, gallerists, collectors, and curators have to carry out the daily tasks needed to realize a work. As in *THE REDWOOD AND THE RAVEN* (2004), a series of thirty-one photographs documenting a sequence of movements executed by the dancer Frances Flannery, only one photograph from the series is ever shown at a time, and this photograph has to be changed daily for the duration of the work's presentation. The sequence of images and the interruptions that occur during the changeover are more important than any single fixed image.

At the opening of her exhibition at the Kölnischer Kunstverein in 2005, Donnelly's "performance" was pure rumor. The story was that a horse was waiting in the wings and that Donnelly would very soon surprise the public with a new demonstration. Donnelly herself fed the flames by excusing herself from the *vernissage* dinner a couple of times; soon the word spread that a horse had been seen, that the performance had already taken place, and so on—but the fact of the matter was that in the meantime the "performance" had indeed already been realized, in the proliferation of whispered snippets, in the sheer sense of expectation.

The game Donnelly plays with the presence and absence of things, her narratives, and her processes all persist in the work as a principle of strategic dissociation, be they in the "history paintings" and "portraits" of heterogeneous historical figures and

locations (Napoleon, Tacitus, Montgomery Clift, P.P. Arnold, Joan Fontaine, Greta Garbo, Afrikka Bambaataa, H.D., Rome, Egypt, and many more) or in her "abstract" drawings and photographs. Her works are always realized within the context of a system of varied references. She thus activates her works at their voids—asking questions as to the nature of art, in which reality we can trust, and how we are to construe belief and knowledge in the interstices of matter and spirit, abstraction and experience.

It is with striking frequency that Trisha Donnelly uses acronyms in her works, either in titles that consist of abbreviations or in the omission and excision of information in her drawn text pieces. Take *THE PASSENGER* (2004), for instance, a drawing where the word and the idea are only present in the consonants "Th. PSNGR." Enigmatic information? A means of communication shaped by text-messaging and the culture of abbreviation in our mobile world? A secret language? One of her most recent drawings, entitled *22 F.T.S.O. [FOR THE SAKE OF]* (2006), takes the form of a two-line drawing of levitating liquid, "a fracture" that refers to comic culture and is designed to bring movement into the space.

The lecture by Donnelly which I described at the outset posited the concept of "stuttering" and the opening of realities through a fracture in the integrity and continuity of space and time, image and sound, body and experience, reality and fiction, wholeness and fragmentation, proximity and distance. One might therefore say that language and linguistics provide an apt descriptor for Donnelly's art praxis: in linguistics and phonology, the term *schwa* is used to designate the central, unstressed vowel sound that is represented phonetically with [◊]. The Hebrew word *schwa* means nothingness, void. It can also indicate the complete absence of a vowel. In stuttering, which interrupts the flow of normal speech, the repeated initial sounds are connected with the following *schwa*. It seems that Trisha Donnelly works with precisely this "central" void, this hiatus in the flow of language, images, and forms: Trisha Donnelly's work is *schwa*.

(Translation: Fiona Elliott)

1) All quotes from the lecture by Trisha Donnelly are taken from the artist's own manuscript.



Ruf, Beatrix. "Schwa." *Parkett* 77, October I, 2006, pp. 92–100.

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Flash Art



TRISHA DONNELLY

SHE SAID

Hans Ulrich Obrist

Obrist, Hans Ulrich. "Trisha Donnelly: She Said." *Flash Art*, March 2006, pp. 58–60.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST: *The interview happens now at the corner of rue Jacob and rue Bonaparte. Already this interview goes completely circular and reminds me of your favorite message from The Young Ones [British TV series, 1982-1984].*

Trisha Donnelly: Oh yes. "Meanwhile, the next day." It's a break of narrative formula, usually for film, TV or radio. Something is happening in the plot and normally the device is to say, "and the next day" or "meanwhile in Paris" or "meanwhile in Los Angeles." In *The Young Ones*, in between the change of a scene, all of a sudden it says, "meanwhile, the next day." It reversed the function after that, but of course then you realize the next day is the projected idea of the next day.

HUO: *Rirkrit Tiravanija would say "tomorrow is another fine day." It's a very Buddhist sentence.*

TD: It's true. But then you don't have a past but you have a future. So "meanwhile, the next day" I think is a simple validation of the space and time continuum suggestion.

HUO: *You said this is a totally historical and indestructible idea.*

TD: I think that when you have a phrase that names the next day as being the past it is completely indestructible. Once you say that tomorrow is the past, it is indestructible. The duality of any day is that it is bookended by the ideas of the previous day and the day to come. In some ways it seems our memory is much simpler than we think, so we project memory into the future. We have a memory of the future...

HUO: *Recently Stephanie Moisdon curated a show that included your first piece. Can you tell me about it?*

TD: It was called *She Said* (1989). Funny. I was sixteen and came to understand the object nature of " ". If you have words and they are said, then they are said and they stay in the environment like a load of mass. *She Said* is about the first time I understood that; it was the same sensation as mass. So it's the side of a chair and it just says "She Said" painted on it.

HUO: *Could you talk about your drawings?*

TD: I think that they relate to objects the way that you listen to the radio, if you have a radio on. I draw when the radio is on. When I'm drawing, I just wait a really long time because I have to do the right thing. So I don't draw all day, but when I have the thing I am supposed to be drawing, I draw all day and all night.

HUO: *It comes from an object or it comes from an idea?*

TD: Both. Sometimes it comes from the sight of an object; sometimes sight is virtual. Some of the objects are sounds; some of the sounds are drawings, but I think that the drawings that I do are more of a physical realization of what I am thinking of than of myself (i.e., an action). Drawings can be a more intense version of the presence I think. They can act as actions. They



Clockwise from top left: Let'em, 2005. Print from digital image, dimensions variable; Untitled, 2005. Pencil on colored paper, 65 x 52 cm; The Redwood and the Raven, 2004. 31 silver gelatin prints (one print is exhibited daily), each 18 x 13 cm; Untitled, 2005. C-print, 18 x 13 cm. Opposite: Untitled, 2005. B/w re-print, 64 x 46 cm.

are worse. More horrible. More distant.

HUO: *We have [Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris] two drawings published in the catalogue I Still Believe in Miracles. Can you tell me about them?*

TD: Well, one is *Untitled*. This drawing is of an extinct object, which is this specific act of unlatching on a leg. It's an action that is extinct because people don't know how to put them on or take them off anymore because they are not worn. Every time somebody would ask at the place where it was shown, "What is that?" the person who works there has to show them: "it is..." So *Untitled* is that. And the other one is *The Vortex* (2001), which is the beginning of something I understood very simply with physical space. You know when some people

see the color red they have a fit, which they think separates them from the normal world. It's a physical response to the visual. So the vortex is something that I have understood as one of those thresholds.

HUO: *Rupprecht Geiger, the more than ninety-year-old German painter, for many decades developed an almost obsessive attraction to the color red. There is a physical aspect to red.*

TD: I think perhaps red is our most physically humanly understandable color because it's the first time we see ourselves dying. Blood pouring out.

HUO: *So The Vortex has to do with perception.*

TD: It's more than that, I think. It's not even as



Clockwise from left: *The Vibration Station*, 2002. B/w silver print, 10 x 12 cm; *Hand that Holds the Desert Down*, 2002. Silver gelatin print, 13 x 18 cm; *Untitled*, 2005. Video, loop. All images: Courtesy of Air de Paris, Paris and Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York.

much perception, but it's imperceptible motion: you realize that you physically move through the viewable image. The corresponding piece is a demonstration — also called *The Vortex* (2003) — I did which consists of a Russian song where if you link the highest man's voice and the lowest man's voice you can build a vortex in your mind. When I play the song and I state the formula, each member of the audience builds a sculpture in their mind that is like a vortex. So you have hundreds of these built and rendered, point-placed never-ending vortexes in people's minds. Hundreds of sculptures. I consider it more of a sculpture. A mass.

HUO: *The drawing is a trigger for vortex. It is not an object in this regard.*

TD: It's not. But a vortex is never an object; it's something else. We don't have a word for this. It's the same problem when you don't have a word for "not performance." It is not performance.

HUO: *Cartier-Bresson told me the last time I interviewed him: "Photographs should be more seen in books than polluting too many walls." The same thing is true for the way you use drawings and photographs; they are rare instances. It is against pollution.*

TD: Yes. I think polluting something displays that you are sure of things and mortally terrified. Every time you make a piece of work you have to ask if it really needs to exist in the

world and should you do the deed of adding more shit to the world. I write every day; that's more where I do my everyday obsessive habit.

HUO: *So, the writing, the texts are a daily practice for you.*

TD: Yes, the texts. They also take a long time. Sometimes I begin a text one year and then I finish it in four years.

HUO: *I am very interested in this link from art to literature and poetry because art has created all kinds of bridges in the recent years to music, to cinema, but the link to literature is too rare. Your own is a very rare instance of bringing back that link to poetry, and what is interesting is that poetry is maybe the only art form that has not been recuperated by the market.*

TD: It never will be. The only time it had a possibility was in advertising, which has beautiful stuff sometimes. But poetry has regained its status in a way: as people believing that it has a compression that is important. It's both horrible and perfect simultaneously.

HUO: *And you are a native daughter of San Francisco, which is a city of poetry; I think of City Lights Bookstore and the whole beat generation. Have these people been important for you?*

TD: No, actually, not at all. I was not so much a beat fan. Unless you could call Gertrude Stein a beat. But it's a different temperament.

HUO: *And who are your heroes in poetry?*

TD: I love Ahkmatova, Marianne Moore, H.D., Michaux and I love Yeats because I have an obsession with the Irish disaster, the feelings of disaster. If a text's category is somehow loosely dependent on structure then so many things can fall into and out of the form. I had a kind of dumb attraction to film moments in po-

etry. I grew up watching films that were already old. We weren't allowed to watch TV so we watched John Wayne's films, Gary Cooper's films, classic westerns, so I think there would be these epic statements that act as catalysts more than like a constructed poem. John Wayne would walk into a space and say something and then the entire film would shift. The film in this type of action set up is literally built for and around his lines. Set-up lines, to wind its way around the text. The mass of the word. It is kind of like this basic masculinity, mutuality and intensity that are like an explosive statement, the low-grade hesitation and the verbal release. Some films have shorter leashes for this type of thing and make a faster dialogue. Snap you back in quicker. So, if you could build poetry that had a function to move a plot or a story, that was what I found really incredible. But you know I think I was looking for it. I needed to translate it into that structure. It's text with camera movement built in, understood as part of the formula, like writing with the correct sense of punctuation.

HUO: *You film when you travel. You were filming here in Paris too. What about your filmmaking? Is it a daily practice for you?*

TD: It's a daily accidental thing. The camera is palm sized. I never think about it.

HUO: *Can you tell me about your bigger photographs?*

TD: Some big, some small. The big ones are more like architecture. So polluting with columns. We should have a problem with photography. That's all I know. ■

Hans Ulrich Obrist is an art critic and curator based in Paris.

Trisha Donnelly was born in 1974 in San Francisco. She lives and works in San Francisco.

frieze

Trisha Donnelly employs the immaterial – esoterica, occult ritual and paranormal phenomena – to explore the material world of consumer experience

by Jan Verwoert

The Other Side



Left:
Untitled
2005
Pencil on paper
100 x 70 cm

Opposite page and
overleaf:
Untitled
2004
Pencil on paper
Diptych: each 91 x 61 cm

If the temperature in a room suddenly drops, the chances are a ghost is about to appear. Of course, what will happen next no one can predict, but there are spells and charms you can learn – for example, the ideal time to summon a demon is on a Tuesday, at 11 am or 1 am. This, along with other practical information, is available from the manuals in the *Sixth Book of Mose*, an anonymous guide to black magic discovered around 1600. Encounters with the unknown have always involved some kind of ritual. Aleister Crowley maintained that occultism was a question not just of belief but also of practice, and believed it didn't matter whether you were into magic, drugs, sex or yoga, as long as your method worked for you. In 1969 Anton LaVey, in turn, promoted his *Satanic Bible* as 'a primer on materialistic magic'. In conversation Trisha Donnelly has dubbed this thoroughly pragmatic attitude towards the invocation of higher states of consciousness as an 'anti-materialist materialism'. I think this might also be the most apt phrase to describe what her own work is about.

In a variety of media, including performance, drawings, photography, video and sound pieces, Donnelly explores the relationship between the allure of occult experience and the material gestures, ciphers and icons by means of which it is conjured up. Contrary to much current art which draws on the legacy of psychedelic culture, Donnelly rarely relies on direct historical references: she never uses album covers, rare documents or the paraphernalia associated with the cults of excess of the late 1960s, for example – although the spirit of that age is a tangible presence in her art. What sets Donnelly's approach apart is the way she works through the immanent logic of anti-materialist materialism at a structural level by inventing gestures, ciphers and icons that articulate and question the very conditions required for the invocation of a physical epiphany.

The recording of a majestic organ concert, *Untitled* (2005), was played during the first few minutes after the doors opened each day at Donnelly's recent exhibition at the Cologne Kunstverein and again during the last minutes before the doors closed. In contrast to this solemn music, the show itself consisted of a comparatively cool installation of few selected drawings, photographs and a video

projection. What was most notable, therefore, was the tension between the deep dark sound and the wide white room, the sacral air of the music and the sober milieu of the exhibition space. As the times of the concert meant that its audience was limited to those who either came early or stayed late, the piece played on the twin anxieties that overshadow the experience of any event like this: did we miss anything, and what happened after we left?

The crucial tension between sound and space was sustained in *Oh Egypt* (2005), played after the organ concert at irregular intervals on the massive sound system in the gallery basement. The piece comprised a recording of a voice – slowed down to such a low pitch that every vowel was a boost of bass frequencies – uttering the words ‘Oooh Eeegypt’. As the voice filled the room, it seemed to designate the space as a potential site of mystical experience. Yet, at the same time, it denied the actual possibility of this experience taking place, here and now, by assigning it to another time and place, an imaginary elsewhere – Ancient Egypt. Like a lost soul in search of a body, the voice from the basement spoke as much of the desire to make the supernatural real as of the impossibility of such incarnations. The humour of the piece lay in the wonderful cheapness of the sound effect, reminiscent of the subliminal messages you hear when playing a record backwards or a B-movie dubbing voice. It underscored the fact that the secret of a good hair-raiser lies in the grungy materialism of its technological effects. If you don’t see the strings attached, the trick won’t work. (This is something George Lucas used to know but forgot when he went digital.)

The video *Untitled* (2005) went further towards capturing the essence of the materialist magic of effects technology. It showed a still image with the green tinge of a picture taken by an infra-red camera, a close-up of a stuffed animal, a wild cat (perhaps an ocelot) with big black eyes, baring its teeth. Every so often the image suddenly shook, as if the beast was momentarily brought to apparent life by an invisible off-screen force, emphasizing the fact that animation is the art of making inanimate things seem alive. On the wall opposite the video booth was *The Redwood and the Raven* (2004), a small photograph of an old woman in a black dress and headscarf performing ceremonial gestures in a forest. Her movements were recorded in a series of 31 photographs, presented one by one on each successive day of the exhibition like a film shown frame by frame over a month. A spirit not unlike that of a Kenneth Anger movie was conjured up and translated into a ritual staged by the woman with silent grace, a nameless ceremony to evoke a presence whose



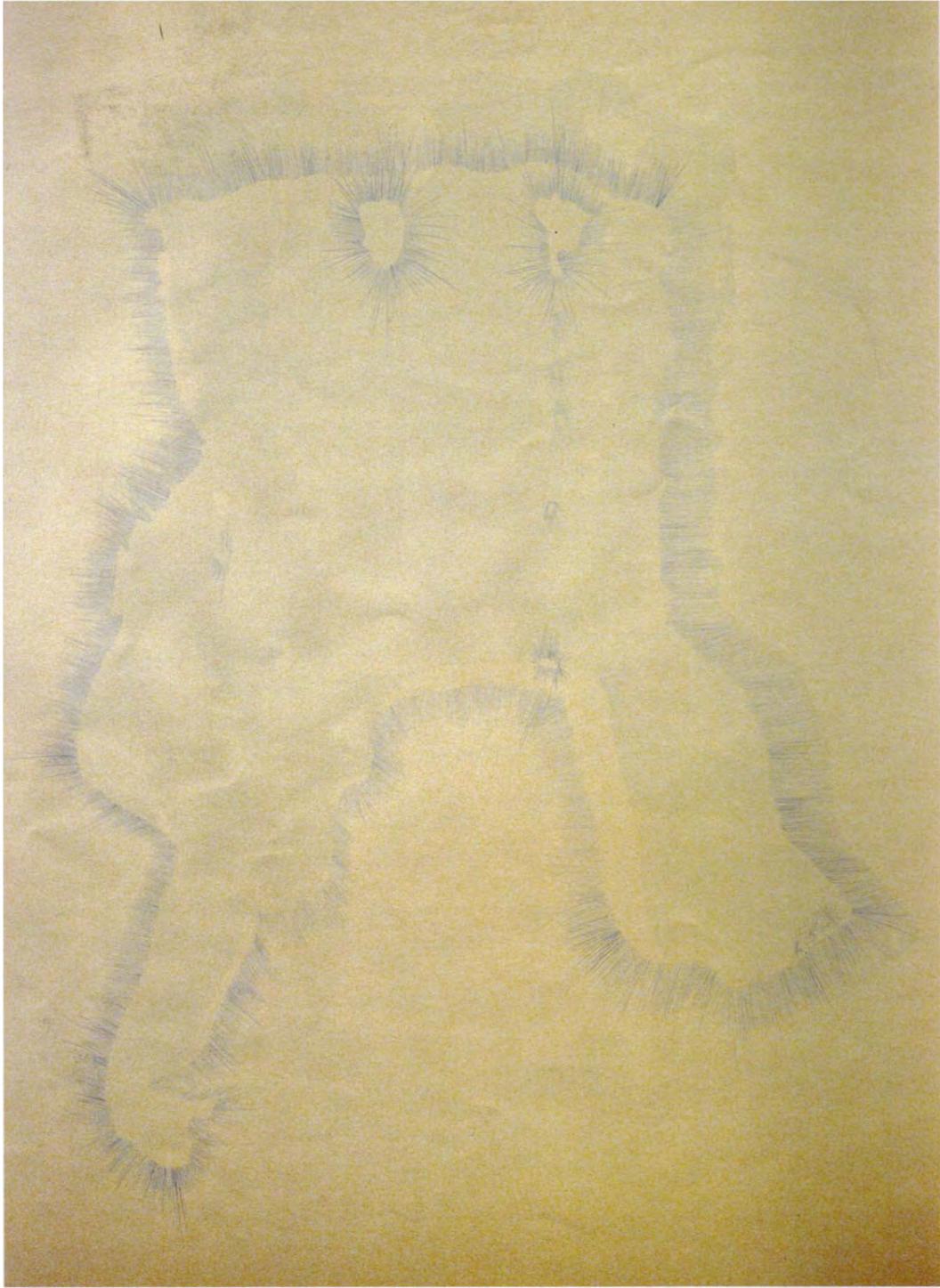
Right:
*The Redwood and
the Raven*
(detail)
2004
31 silver gelatin
prints
18×13cm



Above:
Untitled
2005
Video still



Verwoert, Jan. "The Other Side." *Frieze*, September 2005, pp. 116–19.



Verwoert, Jan. "The Other Side." *Frieze*, September 2005, pp. 116–19.

nature has yet to be disclosed. Next to the photograph a pencil drawing, *Untitled* (2005), depicted a dark, curved shape, a piece of unidentifiable stuff with an uncanny materiality; the dense texture of the graphite made the object look simultaneously flat and rounded. This mysterious sense of corporeality was echoed by *The Grounding* (2004), a black and white photograph of a strange bone structure – perhaps the rib cage of some prehistoric monster.

What characterized the exhibition as a whole, however, was that the eerie feeling evoked by the individual pieces stirred but never fully dominated the otherwise sober atmosphere of the white cube that provided the setting. Moreover, the pious mysticism was effectively leavened with a good dose of humour, for example by the inclusion of the cartoonish drawing *Untitled* (2005), which showed a sombrero hovering in mid-air like an indecisive UFO. Donnelly deliberately reduced the degree of mystery to just a subtle awareness of the possibility of an occult experience, a sense of the ineffable produced by a series of gestures and images, all of which had a distinctive material and corporeal quality.

Metonymic substitutions for the body are a recurrent motif in Donnelly's drawings. In a show at Casey Kaplan in New York in 2004 she installed complementary drawings on two sides of one wall. One depicted what appeared to be a dented piece of chest armour, while the other revealed the contours of the thing like a negative imprint on a veil. Two photographs of heraldic swords, *Untitled* (2004), were installed on each side of a doorway. *Bend Sinister* (2004) is a drawing of a blue reflective rectangular shape, which could equally well be a blade or its sheath, a glass vial or a mirror screen. Ciphers of things that reflect, shield or penetrate the body were thus linked to a situation of passage – a possible one through a door and an impossible one (except for ghosts) through a wall. Seen through the eyes of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the veil, shield, screen or blade correspond to the phallus, an empty material signifier of the threshold between the inside and outside of the body, self and other, absence and presence. As such, it is the key to the mystery: the arcane knowledge that the secret cannot be unveiled as the secret *is* the veil. Its sole function is to bestow meaning on the divide between the disclosed and the yet undisclosed, and thereby to provide the symbolic frame for rites of passage that stage the transition from the profane to the transcendent as a ceremony of initiation or transgression, under the sign of the phallus.

In this light Donnelly's video and live performances can be seen as attempts to share the secret of the secret, without giving it away. In the video *Rio* (2002), for instance, the artist's face is profiled against the soft glow of a lamp as she lip-synchs the words to samba love songs on the soundtrack and moves her hands in a flurry of explanatory gestures in sign language. The video *Untitled (Jump)* (1998–9) shows her bouncing into the frame from a trampoline off-screen. At the apogee of each jump she throws a pose and mimics the facial expression of various rock stars – from Iggy Pop to Dionne Warwick

various rock stars – from Iggy Pop to Dionne Warwick – in the climactic moment of their stage performance. In both works Donnelly stages a pedagogy of ecstasy as she invokes the secret of the untranslatable experience of love and rapture in the very moment of its translation into a body language of signs, grimaces and poses. In the video *Canadian Rain* (2002) the artist gazes at the viewer, repeatedly groping at thin air before pointing at the wall behind her. It is a ritual Donnelly conceived to make rain in Canada. In an untitled performance in 2002 Donnelly, dressed in the uniform of a Napoleonic soldier, rode into the private view of her show on a horse and announced

Dressed as a soldier,
Donnelly rode into her
private view on a horse
and announced herself as
messenger sent to declare
Napoleon's surrender.

herself as a messenger sent to declare the Emperor's surrender. As the bearer and revealer of the secret, the courier comes to embody the gravity and intensity of the experience of revelation. Accordingly Donnelly ended with the lines: 'The Emperor has fallen, and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine. And with this I am electric. I am electric.' At the opening of the Cologne show the horse appeared again, this time *sans* rider, shrouding the fate of the messenger in mystery.

By working through the physical rhetoric of opaque signs or gestures by which the secret of occult experiences is invoked, Donnelly delineates the existential concern of the practical philosophy of anti-materialist materialism as the quest to create other ways to experience experience. In contemporary consumer society exclusive experiences are a hot commodity supplied by event agencies. An event today is 'quality time' packaged as a product. In her work Donnelly challenges this dominant logic, not through any idealistic pretensions but by proposing a counter-materialism in the form of a physical language of the *omen*. The omen is an intense sensation of an incomplete experience, as in all its intensity it only announces the potential advent of the real event and thus reveals that it has not yet happened and possibly never will. As they address you like omens, Donnelly's works preclude you from consuming experience in the event and instead make you experience the un-consumable *as* the event.

Jan Verwoert is a contributing editor of frieze.

i-D

Trisha Donnelly is the artworld's best-kept secret. Working on a strictly need-to-know basis, the 32 year old San Franciscan creates photography and performance pieces that defy categorisation. Notoriously arriving at her NY gallery debut on a white stallion and in full Napoleonic regalia, the myth is as important as the method to this artist's artist. Here Donnelly and renowned international curator Hans Ulrich Obrist move through her cryptic worlds

THE CRANK CALL

INTERVIEW
BY
HANS ULRICH
OBRIST
PORTRAIT
BY
ELIZABETH
YOUNG
ARTWORK
BY
TRISHA
DONNELLY



HANS ULRICH OBRIST: A sense of time and time codes seems to be a thread that runs through many of your works. I just saw your new piece at Casey Kaplan gallery which is a very sporadic sound piece. Can you tell me about it?

TRISHA DONNELLY: It's the sound of a cannon from the turn of the century and it goes off randomly, so that when you're looking at somebody else's work a cannon goes off in your mind. It's not that loud but it's frightening maybe.

How is it triggered?

It's just randomly set up. It's not triggered by anything. It goes all day long and all night long.

Is it different sometimes? Is it always the same sound?

It's slightly different. It has slight different reverberations but pretty much the same sound.

So much of your work is to do with time codes. I was wondering if you think there is any link

to the work of John Cage?

I think automatically there is a link to Cage whenever there is something that is running all the time and people are talking over it. I think that it's a natural understanding of mine that when you have something like an artwork, you experience it then it's over. It happens, you experience it, most of the time you forget it, then you remember it later. The sound just ends up being memory of another sound, because it doesn't stay around long enough to figure it, you know? Besides Cage I was wondering who are your other heroes?

Maybe it started with more musicians. I really like Johnny Mathis. It was in sounds and voices like that that I kind of understood certain things. As for artists, I change my mind so often, but recently I really like that Steven Braun. Steven Braun who has declared all shoe stores in Amsterdam to be an artwork. Secrets. I'm very interested in the concept of secrets in your work. The first time I got



Above, left: 'The passenger', 2004 pencil on paper 269 x 105,5 cm. Above, right: 'Untitled', 2004, RC prints diptych, 340 x 76 cm each. Opposite page: 'Untitled', 2004, pencil and ink on paper, 47 x 33 cm. Courtesy Casey Kaplan, New York and Air de Paris, Paris.

to know your work it was all to do with events which are somehow performances but are actually secrets. So I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about your own notion of the secret, this aspect of you not wanting things to be announced?

I think it's more than that. It began as terror like fear, because if you tell somebody everything, then they can know exactly when and how you're going to do something wrong. So if you replace that kind of knowledge with waiting, sometimes people are happy that something actually happened at all! I think that was my first inclination, so it wasn't begun as a secret but it's much more natural for me now to work without telling people when things are going to happen. I do like that if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time at some party, then you miss something really good. Like when somebody goes through a glass window or something.

What were the beginnings of such secrets? There is obviously a very famous event from your first show in New York, but I was wondering if there was a chronology – what was the beginning?

Well I think that when I was in college, I did what I thought was a form of martial

arts. This was: spatially you could build a house with different gestures and nobody would see it. What I realised was that certain actions and certain things you say can become evasive and invasive. It's like a crank call.

What?

Crank call. You know, somebody says 'Hello, is your refrigerator running?' They say 'Yes'. And you say: 'Oh you better run and catch it!' [Laughs]. Or something like that.

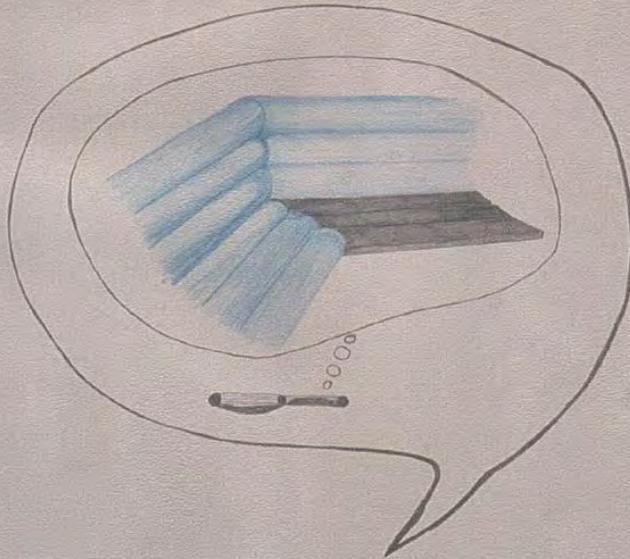
I was also interested to know if you had any projects that had been too big to be realised or even too small.

I still wish I could make the Vibration Station, the organ that goes into the ground. But it's much better if it's never made.

How would this work?

You would walk through the vibrations of a box organ concerto. It'd be really great, because instead of the organ pushing air up to the ceiling, it would push air up through the floor. You know you could walk through the vibrations rising in the room. But it would never happen because it would cost millions and millions. But you know that's probably my most unrealised dream. But I don't think I make my work anyway, it happens inside.

MATTHEW



ARTFORUM



Trisha Donnelly

Trisha Donnelly is a California-based artist. Her solo show at Casey Kaplan, New York, will open this fall.

1 DAAN VAN GOLDEN After seeing this Dutch artist's work for the first time at last year's Lyon Biennale I got totally wonderlost. So when I found the museum bookstore (and the planet), I immediately bought a catalogue, which included his work from the '60s to today. At once dignified and psychedelic, van Golden's paintings are often based on minute photographic forms and classical textiles. In one, he takes a snowy, pixelated outline (derived from multiple Xeroxes of the photo of a parakeet that Matisse used in his late collages) and cradles it in sky blue. Photographs of his daughter between the ages of one and eighteen are lovingly portrayed, curiously layered documents of youth. Within every photograph there is a quiet oddity, and out of each painting grows a form—elaborate and strangely pure of insistence.* Though difficult to locate (van Golden doesn't show in the US because he has an aversion to shipping—perfect), the more I see of van Golden's work, the more radical it becomes.

2 ON A TUESDAY* Read Knut Hamsun's apologia, *On Overgrown Paths*. Then watch the new DVD release of the 1966 Japanese film *The Pornographers*.

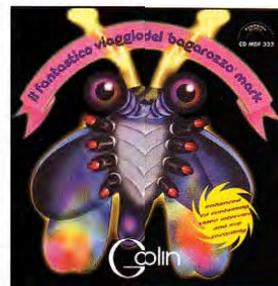
3 MINIATURE MAGAZINES Small magazines are so lovely. It looks as if the reader grew after buying one. If *Teen Vogue* is smaller, does that mean that teenage girls are bigger? Taller? Are they rapidly growing to an infinite and disorderly size? I think *The Economist* should be next.

4 THE LIVES OF MEN Shannon Ebner's *MLK, Double-Horizon*, 2003, is a photograph of a giant, white cutout number "74" (the age Martin Luther King Jr. would have been last year) set on a hilltop against an expanse of California sky. Jason Dodge's *The Disappearance of Samuel Paley*, 2003 (a sculpture in honor of a park that is in honor of a man named Samuel Paley), comprising thin aluminum rods hung

from ceiling to floor, breaks surrounding walls into slivers to make hairline fractures in space. Each of these works suggests a parallel-universe reincarnation: one of a man who today exists for us most fully as an idea; the other of a monument to an idea of a man.

5 IL FANTASTICO VIAGGIO DEL "BAGAROSSO" MARK

Goblin (the Italian rock group who scored most of Dario Argento's films) recorded this epiphany of an album in 1978. Until the recent US rerelease, it could only be found abroad—and for quite a price. Massimo Morante's vocals, hung over winding staircases of organ and electric guitar, fluctuate between a seductive gothic whisper and a "this is when the confetti explosions go off behind me" scream. The album's plot could easily be misinterpreted as the transformation of a young man—Mark—into a space bug, but, Goblin (in hindsight, of course) claim this is their "just say no to drugs" album.

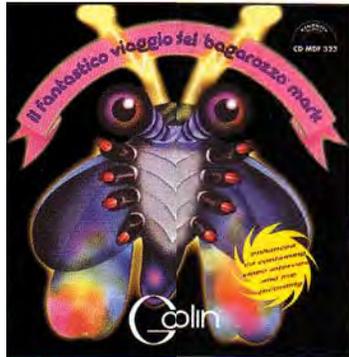


6 IN THE GLOAMING

Adam Putnam's "Magic Lantern" series (on view last month at Artists Space in New York) reminds me of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1851 tale "The Familiar," in which a man is tormented by a delphic paranormal character that he alone can sense in seemingly empty streets, empty rooms, and dark corners. Le Fanu uses merely a shadow of a presence, lightly drawn and nebulous, to haunt the main character into cataleptic death. With his "Magic Lanterns" Putnam reverses Le Fanu's sleight of hand: The looming presence takes the form of an empty room. In his odd, architecturally detailed projections, spaces quiver unnervingly with the movement of the silent candlelight that fuels them.

7 BRUNO SERRALONGUE, CORÉE (KOREA), 2001 Fantastical, sad, at times funny, this piece recounts the story of three Korean auto workers who trek from Korea to France and Switzerland to extradite their embezzling fugitive boss. Consisting of found and gathered texts and interviews and corresponding photographs (which Serralongue slightly tweaks)—all assembled by the artist in Korea and France from 1982 to 2001—

Corée shifts gracefully into and out of literature, speculation, and documentary, vastly expanding the idea of the modern chronicle.



8 “MILKY WHITE WAY” Glory falls down from the stars in the Trumpeteers’ version of this joyful deathbed song.* Recorded in 1947 by the radio-era southern black gospel group; now digitally remastered for the encyclopedic *Goodbye, Babylon* box set (Dust-to-Digital, 2003). I push play. I listen. I rewind then repeat. Then repeat. Then repeat.

9 “MULTIPLIED ENJOYMENT OF THE MOMENT” That’s the intention of Michael S. Riedel and Dennis Loesch, directors of Oskar-von-Miller Strasse 16, who have taken blatant piracy and appropriation for a short walk. Oskar is a space not far from the Portikus gallery in Frankfurt; for four years, Riedel and Loesch have been re-creating Portikus’s exhibitions, transforming the knockoff into a one-of. (Jim Isermann’s white-dotted floors at Portikus became Oskar’s “Isermann” floor scattered with white balloons. . . . On another occasion, the pair sent two men to stand very close behind Gilbert & George and echo their gestures for the entire evening of the artists’ opening.) Riedel and Loesch also staged a Who* concert where, while playing a Who record, they merely stood onstage with their instruments, staring into space. They prefer the Lambretta to the Vespa. If you know what that means you’ll know what they mean.**



10 SPIRIT LOST AND FOUND When the Mars rover lost contact with ground control, it broke the hearts of hundreds of scientists. I like to think that the *Spirit* found its way into a crevice somewhere on that vast, dry planet. Inside: Sturtevant’s *Stella La Paloma* and, leaning softly against the cavern wall, John McCracken’s* sculpture *Mars*. *Spirit* wasn’t lost; it just didn’t want to leave that weirding place, so it shut its radio off. □

* See page 202.

Clockwise from top:
Goblin, *Il fantastico viaggio del “bagarozzo” Mark, 1978.* Michael S. Riedel and Dennis Loesch, **Jim Isermann, 2000.** Installation view, Oskar-von-Miller Strasse 16, Frankfurt, 2000. Photo: Alina V. Grumiller. **Daan van Golden, *Study HM, 2003,*** oil on canvas, 74 1/4 x 47 1/4”.

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

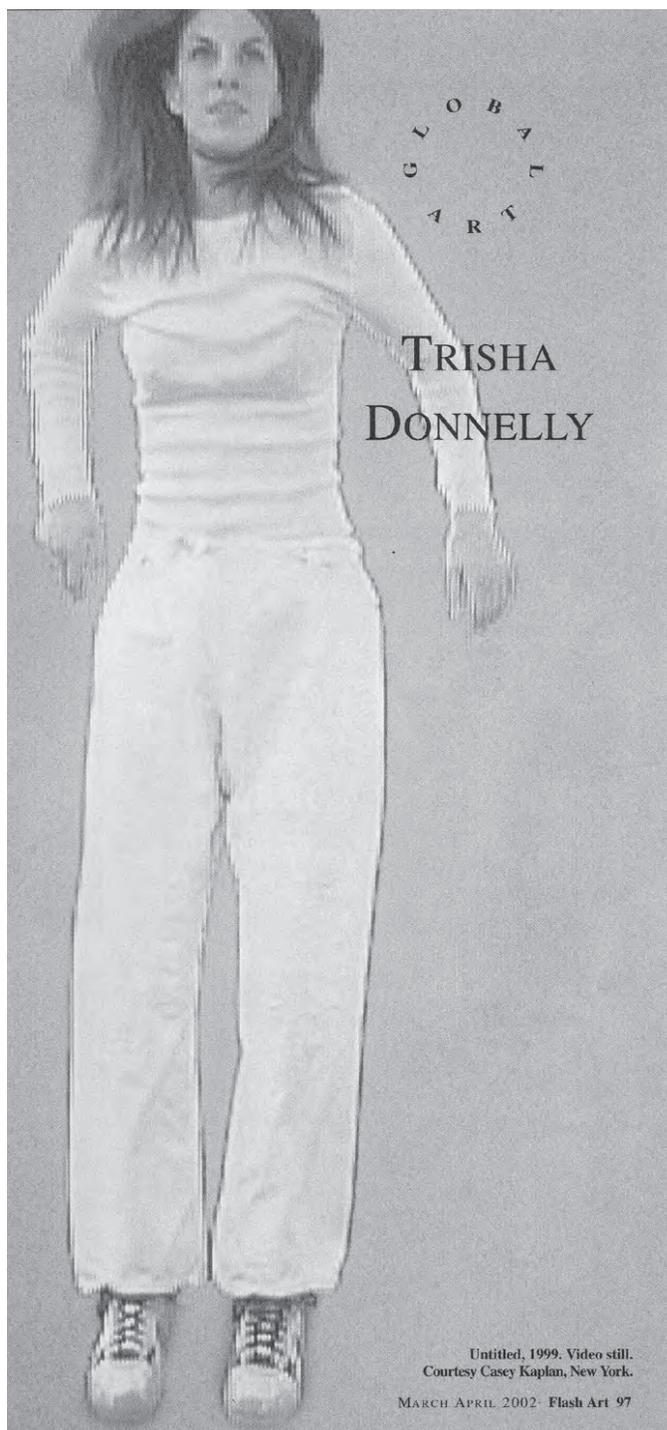
523 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011 Tel: 212-243-0200 Fax: 212-243-0047

Flash Art

Vol. XXXIV n°223 March-April 2002

ADRENALINE IS COMMONLY known as a hormone responsible for severe stimulation in times of fear or excitement, causing rapturous moments of euphoria and ecstasy. It is those moments that Los Angeles artist Trisha Donnelly is trying to catch and reenact in her untitled video from 1999. In the 4 1/2-minutes of the film, she portrays an energy that she has observed in the performances of rock bands. The artist describes it as an "overtaking force" that produces a trance-like state and forms an almost metaphysical intensity that is detached from the actual performances.

In the video we see the artist flying in and out of the image in slow motion, a movement that seems to correspond with the up and down of the performer's adrenaline level during a concert. This motion of appearance and disappearance occurs exactly 17 times during the film, each time with another strangely looking gesture. Those bizarre poses are in fact the ecstatic moments Donnelly is trying to catch. For a split-second the artist merges with those people whose gestures and poses she has studied carefully, trying to find exactly that moment of transcendence. The source for the different positions is never revealed. One does not know what they are or where they come from, and it is only the artist who tells me that we are in fact watching poses and gestures by musicians such as PP Arnold, Ronnie Spector, Joey Ramone or Ozzy Osbourne. Even though the video is made extremely simply, filmed with only one camera perspective and without artificial lightning, it has an incredible power. Donnelly is certainly appropriating the video music format, but it feels as if we are watching something that does not exist anymore. Like a document from an era long before contemporary music videos with over-choreographed performances. In contrast to the entirely self-conscious pop stars of today, Donnelly's film describes very personal and private conditions of fragility and loneliness. It is as if the public



Hoffmann, Jens. "Trisha Donnelly." *Flash Art*, March 2002.

performance she mimics turns into a private moment of self-searching that reveals a true personal intimacy. As violent and aggressive as some of these performers appear on stage, during the moments the artist restages, they display a high vulnerability beyond any awareness of embarrassment.

Donnelly removes herself physically from the viewer by hiding behind her hair, escaping into a dreamlike state in which she is losing orientation and control. The blurred image of the film indicates the ephemerality of the moment. As a result, the work's extremely unreal and fragmentated character suggests the transitory nature of our lives and the somewhat illusory state of what we perceive as reality.

Jens Hoffmann

Jens Hoffmann is fascinated by the unequal relationship between the powerful images in Trisha Donnelly's film and the fragility her poses represent. The ephemerality of life in contrast to mankind's confidence of an enduring civilization constituted by what remains.