

203 – 204

Jaargang 22 No. 111



Lawrence Weiner: How You Know Is Not What You Know

By
Marja Bloem

Museums were founded as warehouses for objects: paintings, sculptures, drawings and *objets d'art*. These commodities – carefully selected – acquired a privileged status because they were considered to be precious and unique, and in some cases, because they were considered to be representative of certain ideas of the time. In addition to amassing collections of things, museums also had an educational function, especially directed towards the specialized craftsman and student, rather than to the general public. Museums, under these conditions persisted for quite some time as closed, private, institutions.

Little by little, under growing social and artistic pressure, the museums began to open up to the living world around them, which lead to, among other things, the organizing of temporary exhibitions, and often exhibitions heralding new tendencies. After World War II this practice developed considerably, as a conscious attempt to infuse new vitality into the museum-as-institution. In doing this, the museum's two prior functions of storing and exhibiting were gradually separated and refined. This was especially the case in Germany where the exhibition role of the museum was taken over by the newly-created *Kunsthalle*, public galleries which do not collect art but only show it.

This question of the role of museums took on a new dimension in the 1960s when artists and their work began to pose new problems for the museum as a physical, cultural and social space. These new questions affected, among other things, both the exhibiting of art as well as the role of the museum curator. Because the nature of the new art it was no longer possible to

simply have a work delivered and hang it or set it down for the public; now the artist was often needed to install his or her work. This forced the curator, in turn, to rethink his role, which often evolved into that of a 'producer' or 'artist' thinking up new, original ways of presenting art.

But the nature of the new art did not just change the way of exhibiting art in galleries and museums, it especially called for new physical and mental spaces outside the artworld structure, 'neutral' sites, outdoor areas, streetcorners, etc., especially selected and more adapted to the work being made. During this period, museums spent more and more time worrying about their image and their public and how to reach them and get them into the building, a concern which has culminated today for example, in the concept of the museum-as-tourist-attraction, as opposed to the earlier museum-as-temple-of-art. With art as just another form of entertainment, the real purpose behind many 'site-specific' outdoor projects, for example, is to lead the viewers to 'interesting' city areas, for example shopping centers.

Lawrence Weiner, and another artists of his generation, contributed incontrovertibly to posing the important questions arising from this new cultural situation. They were no longer concerned with the question of how art should look, but rather what art is, how we – i.e. society – even know that art is art.

Although their work no longer needs the traditional physical or cultural structure of museums and galleries – and in many respects is antithetic to them – they do need the economic structure of museums and galleries if they want to live from their work. This dichotomy is even more striking with these artists than with earlier groups of artists contesting the art system, as their work is not oriented towards the production

of objects, is not particularly attractive or a source of easy pleasure, but rather on the contrary, it demands the involvement of the viewer and makes demands on their intelligence by asking some hard questions about art and life.

It is within this context that Lawrence Weiner has created his work. It exists primarily in the form of language, visual or oral. As it does not consist of tangible objects it goes far beyond the limits of a museum or commercial gallery which exists principally to provide objects to an identifiable 'known' public. Language is not a medium that lends itself readily to visual presentation. Working on a small memo pad that he always carries with him, or typing on an A4 sheet of paper, Weiner's work lacks the traditional 'aura' of historical masterpieces. Generally speaking, the works are collected by museums which are – more or less – obliged to own important or representative works of a given period. For private collectors to 'invest' in a Weiner work is not an easy decision. As it is the content that matters, Weiner's way of jotting down a work makes it very clear that the form was not the most important – although it is precisely the form that most collectors are accustomed to buy. Furthermore his work is economic; it is pared down to the basic essentials, and his materials are 'ordinary' and often derived from the techniques of communication; i.e., while, the message is fixed, the form of presentation can vary.

This separation between content and presentation can be better understood by considering how Weiner's work developed. He began as a painter at a time when 'Pop Art' had just began but the ideas of 'Abstract Expressionism' were still very strong, especially the idea of individual gesture and emotional content. The partisans of 'Pop Art', as



well as the younger artists of Weiner's generation, who were thinking about a more theoretical and formal investigation of art, questioned whether the appeal to emotion was important in art, and if the value of an artwork was based on its being unique. Artists of the so-called 'Minimal Art' (and later 'Concept Art') were clear in formulating these thoughts and acting on them. By eliminating the hand of the artist and its expressiveness, they arrived at the use of the modular, reiterative forms and a diminished use of imaginary. At this time, the early 1960s, Weiner was doing painting based on television tests patterns, his so called 'Propeller' series.

Later, towards 1967, he made rectangular paintings of various colors and sizes - which the customer could select - from which he cut out a rectilinear area from one corner to create a six-sided figure. These works he called 'removals'. The works functioned more as a sign, a spool of the artist, rather than unique objects. They were based on the principle of 'subtraction', of taking something away, rather than the more usual principle of 'addition'.

Weiner's theoretical point of departure for these early series is characteristic of his later production as well. Historically, it is also important, for it leads to the general rather than specific object. In a formal sense, the corner removed from the earlier paintings can still be recognized in the truncated frames which Weiner often uses in his recent work.

The paintings were a way to transmit information by means of materials which had nothing to do with the kind of information involved or with its presentation. This differentiation between the content of a work of art and its presentation is at the heart of Weiner's work: it is a major contribution to art of the Twentieth Century.

In 1968 Weiner published a statement which although often cited since has lost none of its original relevance:

- 1 AN ARTIST MAY CONSTRUCT A WORK
- 2 A WORK MAY BE FABRICATED
- 3 A WORK NEED NOT BE BUILT

A REASONABLE ASSUMPTION IS THAT EACH BEING EQUAL AND CONSISTENT WITH THE INTENT OF THE ARTIST THE DECISION AS TO CONDITION RESTS WITH THE NEEDS OF THE RECEIVER UPON THE OCCASION OF RECEIVERSHIP

Weiner arrived at this formulation when

he went to assess the damage done to one of his works in an exhibition at Windham College. He realised that the condition of the piece in question really didn't matter. The work existed purely and simply by virtue of its having been made public. The eventual consequence of this was that the rendering of a work in language was sufficient.

The use of language, moreover, made it possible to realize the work any where, anytime and in any manner. Thus an entirely new and different relation emerged between how a work looks and what it is. Furthermore, because the work only exists in the form of language - and the materials referred to - it has a sort of a timelessness, in as much as a physical art object has a specific 'look' about it which invariably betrays when it was made. (Isn't this 'timeless' precisely what we are told art should strive for?) The fact that Weiner's work employs fastidiously constructed language - past participles, never a future tense, nouns, adverbs - also contributes to its high level of generality. This viewer is obliged to assume an active role; depending on his or her own context they must visualize the information provided. Weiner exhibits his work in several different ways. Frequently, they are pasted down or painted on the wall in large block letters. This method of display, first used by an architect who installed Weiner's work for a private Italian collector, pleased Weiner so much that he adopted it himself. He also uses forms of printing common to the advertising world, such as stickers, billboards and posters. Weiner's work clearly shows how conscious he is of typography and design; the influence of the Dutch designer Piet Zwart (1885-1977) whose style is characterised by spacial illusion and fields of color, is unmistakable. One form of presentation which not many artists have used is the engraved inscription, either in stone or metal. Historically, inscriptions are a form of public writing often relating heroic situations and the propaganda of ruling ideas. Perhaps they also had a coercive character: a semi-illiterate public is confronted with the word from above. Its placement makes it practically impossible to avoid reading. At the same time the inscribed texts functioned as art; graceful calligraphy or skilful engraving reinforcing an architectural design. They also clarified, in some cases, the purpose of the building on which they were engraved. More recently, Weiner has been fascinated by an empty sandstone frame on the brick work façade of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. He proposed to place a work of his in this frame; its text clearly

expresses his idea that art concerns the relationship between people and objects, and between objects and other objects in relation to people.

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EEN VOORWERP GEMAAKT OM OP EEN ANDER TE LIJKEN DOOR TOEVOEGING VAN EEN VOLDOENDE HOEVEELHEID UITWENDIGE KWALITEITEN

AN OBJECT MADE TO RESEMBLE ANOTHER BY THE ADDITION OF A SUFFICIENT QUANTITY OF EXTERNAL QUALITIES

Could this perhaps mean that the museum - like a platform or a table - is a warehouse and exhibition space for such objects?

The above text was published in the catalogue that accompanied Lawrence Weiner's retrospective exhibition What is Set Upon the Table Sits Upon the Table. Works from the Beginning of the Sixties Towards the End of the Eighties curated by Marja Bloem at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1988-1989).

With thanks to Marja Bloem and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam for the permission to republish this text.

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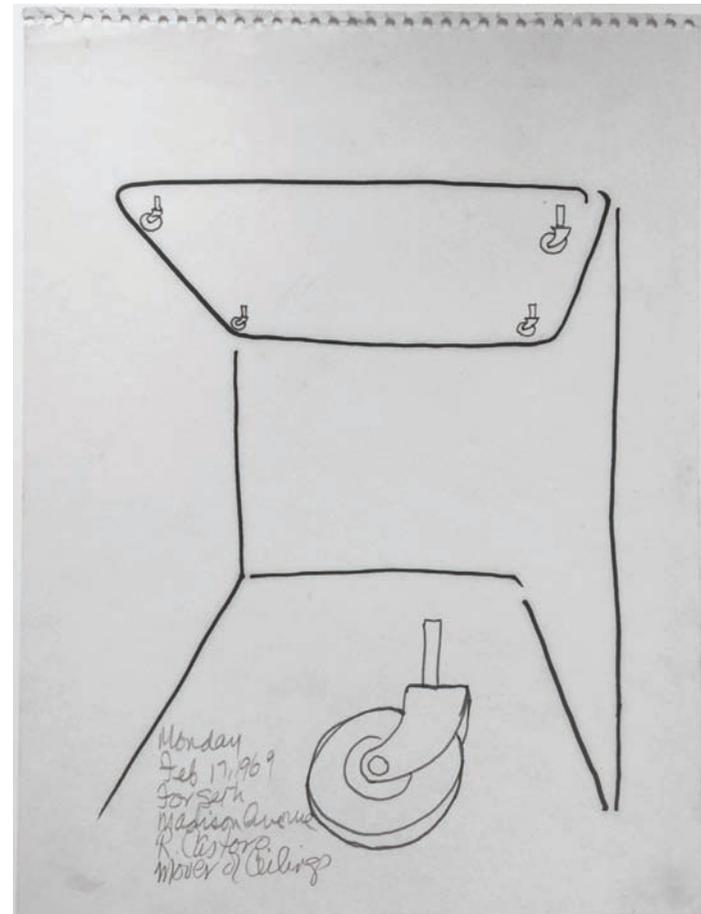
203

Exhibition
13/04 - 26/05
Opening
12/04, 6 - 8 pm

**CARL ANDRE,
ROSEMARIE
CASTORO,
HANNE
DARBOVEN,
SOL LEWITT,
LAURENT
SAUERWEIN,
LAWRENCE
WEINER**

**WORKS FROM
STICHTING
EGRESS
FOUNDATION
AMSTERDAM /
SETH
SIEGELAUB**

Jan Mot
Petit Sablon / Kleine Zavel 10
1000 Brussels, Belgium



Rosemarie Castoro, *Untitled*, 1968, ink on paper, 30,5 x 22,9 cm will be part of the exhibition *Carl Andre, Rosemarie Castoro, Hanne Darboven, Sol LeWitt, Laurent Sauerwein, Lawrence Weiner. Works from Stichting Egress Foundation Amsterdam / Seth Siegelaub* opening at the gallery on April 12 (copyright Estate Rosemarie Castoro).

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THE ARTIST'S RESERVED RIGHTS TRANSFER AND SALE AGREEMENT

The accompanying 3 page Agreement form has been drafted by Bob Projansky, a New York lawyer, after my extensive discussions and correspondence with over 500 artists, dealers, lawyers, collectors, museum people, critics and other concerned people involved in the day-to-day workings of the international art world. The Agreement has been designed to remedy some generally acknowledged inequities in the art world, particularly artists' lack of control over the use of their work and participation in its economics after they no longer own it. The Agreement form has been written with special awareness of the current ordinary practices and economic realities of the art world, particularly its private, cash and informal nature, with careful regard for the interests and motives of all concerned. It is expected to be the standard form for the transfer and sale of all contemporary art, and has been made as fair, simple and useful as possible. It can be used either as presented here or slightly altered to fit your specific situation. If the following information does not answer all your questions consult your attorney.

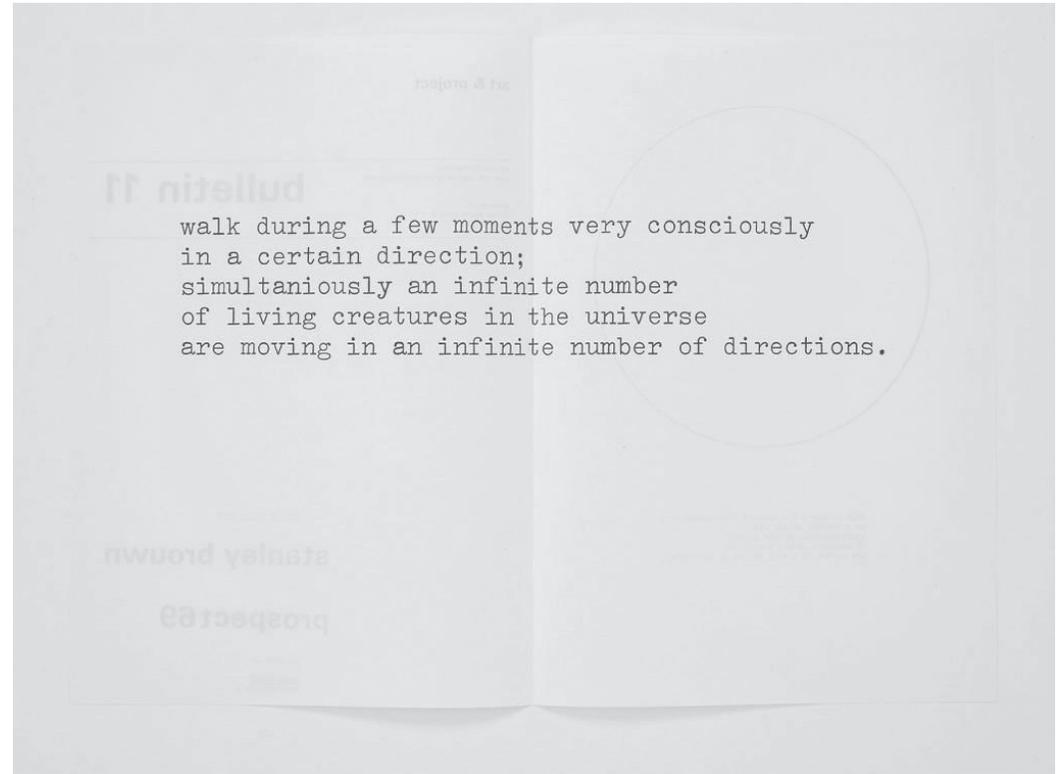
Material Longevities

BRUSSELS, MAR. 18 - On May 26, the last day of the show with works from the Stichting Egress Foundation Amsterdam / Seth Siegelau, the gallery organises a conversation between Andrew Hunt, Diana Kaur and Tris Vonna-Michell about their forthcoming publication *Material Longevities*, due to be published during 2018 by BOM DIA BOA TARDE BOA NOITE (Berlin), Mount Analogue (Stockholm) and Slimvolume (London).

The publication consists of a text-triad: an essay by Diana Kaur in which she performs a close reading of Seth Siegelau's introductory text in 'The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement'; a set of guidelines and other documents to condition the sale of an artwork by Tris Vonna-Michell, and an interview with Kaur and Vonna-Michell conducted by Andrew Hunt.

The interview brings together the two bodies of text - an art historic case study and the practice of a contemporary artist - in a conversation about issues of aesthetic control through transfers of ownership and how these considerations can become an integral part of the limits that cordon off an artwork.

The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer And Sale Agreement - written with the help of lawyer Robert Projansky - was published by Seth Siegelau in 1971 and can be downloaded from www.primaryinformation.org.



stanley broun, walk during a few moments very consciously in a certain direction (...) was published in art & project's bulletin 11 (1969) which appeared on the occasion of broun's participation in *Prospect 69* in Düsseldorf.

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NEW YORK, MAR. 10 – For his solo exhibition at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis opening in October, **Mario Garcia Torres** is shooting a new film *One Minute to Act a Title: Kim Jong-Un Favorite Movies*, a pendant to *One Minute to Act a Title: Kim Jong II Favorite Movies* from 2005. In these films actors mimic the titles while their co-stars off-camera are guessing.

(advertisement)
204
 Conversation
 26/05, 5 pm

MATERIAL LONGEVITIES
A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ANDY HUNT, DIANA KAUR AND TRIS VONNA-MICHELL

Jan Mot
 Petit Sablon / Kleine Zavel 10
 1000 Brussels, Belgium

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In Brief

Je ne sais si c'en est la cause (2009), *Have you ever seen the snow?* (2010) and *Xoco, the Kid Who Loved Being Bored* (2012) by **Mario Garcia Torres** as well as *Time (Performance)* (1970) by **David Lamelas** were added to the collection of MoMA in New York thanks to a recent gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros encompassing 250 works by various artists.

The installation by **Francis Alÿs** *Without an Ending There is no Beginning*, 2014 - 2017 with which the gallery inaugurated its space in Petit Sablon / Kleine Zavel last year, was acquired by the SMAK in Ghent.



In **David Lamelas'** new film *In Our Time* (2018), inspired by James Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (1888), the stories of Marcel and Jacqueline entwine in Los Angeles and Ostend, where Ensor spent his life. The present blends with the future and the past...or is it perhaps that each story transpires in parallel times, with the progression of the film's narrative linked to our own perceptions? *In Our Time* was produced in conjunction with the 2017 exhibition *David Lamelas: A Life of Their Own*, organized by the University Art Museum at California State University Long Beach.

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Agenda

Francis Alÿs
I am you, you are too, Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, (US), 07/09 – 19/01; *Age of Terror*, Imperial War Museum, London, 12/10 - 28/05; BIVOUCAS. *Académie de la Marche*, Le Magasin, Grenoble (FR), 16/12 - 31/03 (screening); *Knots'n Dust*, Beirut Art Center, Beirut, 31/01 - 09/04 (solo); *A Titre-d'Aile. Figure de l'envol*, Centre photographique, Rouen (FR), 17/02 - 26/05; *Sublevaciones. Didi Huberman*, Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, 24/02 - 29/07; *Hidden / Secret - Strategien des Verborgenen*, Villa Merkel, Esslingen am Neckar (DE), 25/03 - 03/06; *glorious (?) FAILURE*, Triennale voor Hedendaagse Kunst, Het Psychiatrisch Ziekenhuis, Duffel (BE), 04/04 - 16/06; *Dwelling Poetically: Mexico City, a case study*, Australian Center for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (AU), 21/04 - 24/07; *Je marche donc nous sommes. Académie de la Marche*, Le Magasin, Grenoble (FR), 26/04 - 15/10 (screening); *Groundwork*, CAST, Cornwall (UK), 05/05 - 16/09; *Knots'n Dust*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (UK), 20/06 - 09/09 (solo); *RESIT! The 1960 protests, photography and visual legacy*, BOZAR, Brussels, 27/06 - 28/08; *Liverpool Biennial*, Liverpool (UK), 14/07- 28/10; *Gwanju Biennial*, Asia Culture Center, Gwanju (KR), 07/09 – 11/11; *Shanghai Biennial*, Shanghai (CN), 03/11-tbc

Sven Augustijnen
Summer Thoughts, Jan Mot, Brussels, 09/02 - 31/03 (solo); mudac, Lausanne (CH), 27/03 (talk); La Médiathèque du FMAC, BAK, Genève (CH), 28/03 (talk); *Spectres*, Tënk, Lussas (FR), - 09/05 (online screening); *First Person in Plural*, BAK, Utrecht (NL), 12/05 - 22/07

Pierre Bismuth
More or Less, A4 Arts Foundation, Cape Town, 07/02 - 01/05; *Perspective de la visibilité*, Galerie d'Exposition du Théâtre de Privas, Privas (FR), 09/02 - 07/04; RE-SET, Museum Tinguely, Basel (CH), 27/02 - 13/05; *Hello World. Revising A Collection*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 23/03 - 19/08; *Rendez-Vous*, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem (NL), 30/03 - 30/09; *Where is Rocky II?*, Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (MCO), 05/04 (screening); *Hollywood and Other*

Myths, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, 24/04 - 29/09; *PLAY*, Stedelijke Musea, Kortrijk (BE), 23/06 - 11/11; *Nouvel accrochage des collections*, Musée régional d'art contemporain, Sérignan (FR), 23/06 - tbc

Manon de Boer

Groundwork, CAST, Cornwall (UK), 05/05 - 16/09

Rineke Dijkstra

Figuren: Rineke Dijkstra und die Sammlung des Sprengel Museum Hannover / SPECTRUM Internationaler Preis für Fotografie der Stiftung Niedersachsen, Sprengel Museum, Hannover (DE), 27/01 - 06/05 (solo); *Rineke Dijkstra*, De Pont, Tilburg (NL), 10/03 - 22/07 (solo); *Stories of Self-Reflection: Portraiture by Women Photographers*, Gund Gallery at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio (US), 19/03 - 19/04

Mario Garcia Torres

Stories of Almost Everyone, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (US), 28/01 - 06/05; *The Matter of Photography: Experiments in Latin American Art since the 1960s*, Cantor Arts Centre at Stanford University, Stanford (US), 07/02 - 30/04; *The Reservoir of Modernism*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Liechtenstein (LI), 09/02 - 13/05; *En Busca de un Muro*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, 03/03 - 01/06; *Textile as Art: Antonio Ratti Entrepreneur and Patron*, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome, 08/03 - 29/05; n.c.n.d.n.t., neugerriemschneider, Berlin, 10/03 - 07/04; *Hello World. Revising a Collection*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 23/03 - 19/08; *γεωμετρικες*, The Agricultural University of Athens, Athens, 27/03 - 15/06; *A Brief History of Jimmie Johnson's Legacy*, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, 04/04 (screening); *Mario Garcia Torres*, neugerriemschneider, Berlin, 27/04 - 01/06 (solo); *The Way They Looked at Each Other*, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, 01/05 - 30/05 (screening); *All Our Secrets*, Center for Contemporary Arts, Celje (SI), 20/07 - 16/09; *Mario Garcia Torres: Illusion Brought Me Here*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (US), 24/10 - 17/02 (solo)

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

Dreaming Awake, Marres, Maastricht (NL), 10/03 - 03/06; *Welt ohne Aussen*, Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, 08/06 - 05/08

Douglas Gordon

Deutschland ist keine Insel, Kunst-

und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn (DE), 08/03 - 27/05; *The Obscure Object of Desire*, Villa Fortes Vilaca, Sao Paulo (BR), 10/03 - 05/05; *The Obscure Object of Desire*, Villa Fortes Vilaca, Rio de Janeiro (BR), 10/03 - 28/04; *Art Capital: Art for the Elizabeth line*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 13/03 - 06/05; *I will, if you will...*, Galeria Marilia Razuk, Sao Paulo, 08/04 - 26/05 (solo); *Douglas Gordon*, Instituto Moreira Salles, Sao Paulo (BR), 14/04 - 10/05 (solo); k.364, Kunstsammlung NRW / K20, Dusseldorf (DE), 14/04 - 19/08 (solo)

Joachim Koester

Folklore, Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (AT), 07/10 - 15/04; *Bringing Something Back*, Kunsthall Bergen (NOR), 26/01 - 18/03 (solo)

David Lamelas

A Tale of Two Worlds: A Dialogue between the MMK Collection and the History of Experimental Latin American Art, 1940s - 1980s, Museum für moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main (DE), 22/11 - 02/04; *Art and Space*, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (ES), 05/12 - 08/04; *A Life of Their Own*, MALBA, Buenos Aires, 23/03 - 11/06 (solo); *Reading of an Extract from Labyrinths by J.L. Borges*, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, 12/04 - 26/05 (solo); *The Desert People*, Cinema 2, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 18/04 (screening); *David Lamelas. Fiction of a Production*, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum Michigan State University, Michigan (US), 02/06 - 28/10 (solo)

Sharon Lockhart

The Time. The Place. Contemporary Art from the Collection, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle (US), 04/11 - 22/04; n.c.n.d.n.t., neugerriemschneider, Berlin, 10/03 - 07/04; Sharon Lockhart, Fondazione Fotografia Modena, MATA, Modena (IT), 07/04 - 03/06 (solo)

Tino Sehgal

Stories of Almost Everyone, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (US), 28/01 - 06/05; *Welt ohne Aussen*, curated by Tino Sehgal and Thomas Oberender, Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, 08/06 - 05/08

Philippe Thomas

[SIC]. *Works from the CAPC Collection*, CAPC musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux (FR), 13/10 - 27/10; *Optik Schröder II: Works from the Alexander Schröder Collection*, MU-

MOK, Vienna, 03/02 - 27/05; *Art & Entertainment*, MAMCO, Genève (CH), 28/02 - 06/05; *Inéchangeable*, Wiels, Brussels, 19/04 - 12/08; *Readymades belong to everyone? An Investigation of the Avantgarde Strategy in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, Swiss Institute, New York City (US), 21/06 - 12/08

Tris Vonna-Michell

Artist's Books, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (DE), 01/12 - 02/04; OEI#79, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 23/03 (screening); Galeria Francisco Fino, Lisbon, 09/05 - 31/08 (solo); Italian Institute, Stockholm, 18/05 (screening)

Also represented by the gallery:

stanley brouwn, Ian Wilson

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Colophon

Publisher Jan Mot, Brussels
Concept Design Maureen Mooren & Daniël van der Velden
Graphic Design Maureen Mooren, Amsterdam
Printing Cultura, Wetteren

(advertisement)

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