

(advertisement)

202

Exhibition
09/02 – 24/03
Opening
08/02, 6 – 8 pm

SVEN AUGUSTIJNEN

SUMMER THOUGHTS

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

Summer Thoughts

phies. They constitute a layered network of references, associations, personal experiences, cultural occurrences, and political events happening in the time of writing. *Summer Thoughts* questions the present state of crisis in Europe as not merely an economic or political one, but as a moral and cultural challenge marked by the twisted meaning of democracy and freedom, personal responsibility, and, as a consequence, fertile ground for the resurgence of far-right movements.

The second letter in this series is reprinted on page 2.

Questions	the present state of opinion in
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Brussels, May 8, 2014

Dear Marta,

Some time has passed since I have heard from you! As I understand, you now live and work in Stockholm, Sweden, a neutral country!

I was in Norway last December, just before Christmas. Corinne and I went to have a closer look at the Hannah Ryggen tapestries in the depot of the National Museum in Oslo. It was very exciting to see the works rolled out before our eyes with the curators of the Museum who discovered them at the same time as us!

Outside the Museum, we walked through the government district, which was, to our astonishment, still in the same state since the Anders Breivik attack, with most of the windows still boarded up. In Trondheim the new director of the Kunsthindustriemuseum, Åshild Adsen, showed us some pictures of the inside of the government building after the attack, and more particularly Ryggen's tapestry *Vi Lever på en Stjerne* (*We are Living on a Star*, 1958) that was at the entrance and got damaged.

The former director, Jan-Lauritz Opstad, who is still doing research there, told us stories about Ryggen whom he knew personally. One of them particularly grabbed our attention: the *Etiopia* (1935) tapestry was censored during the 1937 Paris International Exhibition, or at least partly since the head of Mussolini pierced with a spear, which is depicted in the right upper corner of the tapestry, had been covered with a white cloth to avoid diplomatic trouble!

Another historical coincidence appeared when I learnt that during the Second World War, Ryggen and her husband helped with the escape of a Belgian resistance fighter from the concentration camp at the island Ørland where they lived. We went to visit the island and the little museum dedicated to her work where the tapestry *Fiske ved gjeldens hav* (*Fishing in the Sea of Debt*, 1933) is exhibited, as pertinent today as it was in the thirties. To my question about the depiction of Haile Selassie as a descendant of the King of Israel in *Etiopia* and the use of more abstract stripes referring to traditional Jewish religious clothing, the museum staff answered that Trondheim had a small community of three hundred Jews of which only a quarter survived the war.

The Synagogue in Trondheim was not destroyed—it is a museum today—unlike so many synagogues in Central and Eastern Europe. No doubt you know the 1957 book *Wooden Synagogues* by Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka. Coming back from Chicago and New York and being confronted with the strong presence of Jewish culture there, one cannot help question the present state of crisis we are confronted with today in Europe. I didn't see Dieter in Chicago since he was traveling, but I met with Bruce Jenkins, who organized the Chantal Akerman exhibition *D'Est* at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1995, and this made me think of a recent interview of Akerman that Dieter did. If I remember well, she asks Dieter if he knows Jean-Claude Milner's book *Les penchants criminels de l'Europe démocratique* (*The Criminal Leanings of Democratic Europe*, 2003) in which is developed the provoking idea that for Modern Europe the "Jewish question" was a central one to be solved. And that beyond all discourse the unification of Europe was finally only possible through the destruction of the European Jews in the concentration camps.

Traveling from Bard College to New York City on the Amtrak, I was also thinking about your father who must still live there somewhere in the woods... And whether he lived in Ukraine during the Second World War and how? Which brings us to the present latent state of war in Ukraine and the role of NATO, already questioned by Hannah Ryggen in her tapestry *Jul Kvale* (1956), named after the Left Party worker who expressed resistance against Norway's membership to NATO and about whom you wrote in your dOCUMENTA notebook.

Don't know if she told you, but Corinne is preparing an exhibition at the Kosovo National Art Gallery in Pristina for this summer and it will include this tapestry as well as *Etiopia* and *Drømmedød* (*Death of Dreams*, 1936)! Coming back from a fieldtrip, she showed me some pictures from the Kosovo National Museum, which used to have a rich collection of prehistoric objects discovered there but taken to Belgrade just before war broke out in 1998. On the upper floor of the museum in Pristina there is currently an exhibition dedicated to the history of NATO and I was wondering if something similar will happen in Kiev in a decade? Moscow's recent evocation of the ghost of fascism to legitimate military force reminded me of a question I wanted to ask you in my first letter but didn't manage to: Did you ever visit Cherkassy? I imagine there must be a monument. And how is the landscape?

I'm drifting away, or maybe not. In any case, I have to run, and yes, in the rain, this is Brussels after all!

Talk more later,
Sven

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Francis Alÿs at Beirut Art Center

BEIRUT, JAN. 10 — *Knots'n Dust* is the first solo exhibition of Francis Alys in Lebanon and in the region. It gathers the artist's early and recent works that explore themes of turbulence, from instability to total chaos, from meteorological phenomena to geopolitical manifestations, from a simple knot in the hair to an ascending spiral. Knots represent links and bonds, as well as resistance and binding. They are the smallest unit in the making of a fabric yet they are its sine qua non mechanic condition: a continuous surface that can bring some opacity, some support for projection, inscription, hiding, drawing and building.

Knots'n Dust arises from a two year long dialog between Francis Alys and curator Marie Muracciole and will include a new animation film, *Exodus 3:14* (working title), that portrays a female character completing a benign and beautiful gesture of tying hair into a knot which the loop transforms in a Sisyphean task. With this knot, a vortex

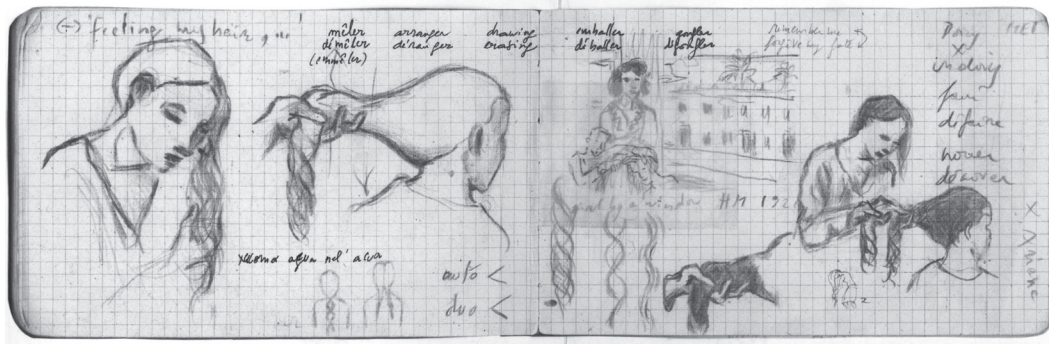
opens as the hair infinitely undoes itself as in a gesture of self-absorption in which the figure appears both engaged and detached.

Knots (walks) (Mexico 2006) produces its own code of registering the incidents of a walk: the small reactions, movements and accidents that happen to the stroller. These notes are written with different knots accompanied by their translation on a sheet of paper, tying the knots to actions and situations. In the video *Tornados* (2000-2010) the artist chases “dust devils” and attempts to enter their eye with a camera in hand. Francis Alys then films their windless core, a monochrome of dust that literally abstracts him from the outside world. As a local echo of this series, in 2015 Alys took photographs in the streets of Beirut during a sand storm, which will be on view as well.

In these works, every affirmation walks along with its opposite, any gesture comes with its own undoing.

"Doubt, doubt again & doubt better" (Samuel Beckett). This poetic step invites the spectator to engage in larger issues throughout deceptively insignificant details. Alys's exhibition occurs in a country surrounded by endless conflicts and repressions and that is populated by millions of refugees. Between the traces and the oblivion of the country's wars and wounds, between memories of a faraway golden age and the never ending (re)construction of an increasingly globalized metropolis, Beirut seems to produce a space inside of the tornado, in its eye, with a vision of history frozen in monochrome vision. You can see it as a space for freedom or for alienation. You can build on it or drown in it. But it will not be the same for everyone nor will it be forever

Opening 31/01, exhibition until 09/04.



FRANCIS ALÿS, Photocopy of notebook, animation study (2013-2017)

Mr. Mondrian, would you lend me one vertical line?

By
Dessislava Dimova

BRUSSELS, JAN. 15 — Thinking of Stanley Broun's lines and the appeal of horizontals and verticals in general, their power to punctuate and disorient perception and space, alone or in grids, I wonder why and how a straight line appears and reappears in history. I wonder mostly why it sometimes doesn't appear at all. One could probably find whole art histories, which struggle with straight lines. They don't ignore them, they know of their pervasiveness and normativity. But they resist them nevertheless, mainly despite of themselves.

Years ago I stumbled upon a work mentioned in a book on the origins of Bulgarian avant-garde¹ art. Its title — "Mister Mondrian, would you lend me one vertical line?" seemed to be both a question and an answer. It took nearly 10 years until I discovered the actual piece, by artist Vladimir Ivanov. Ivanov became known in the 1980s both as an important representative of Bulgarian graphic arts and as part of the growing experimental movements of the time, most notably with his participation in the group Var(T)na. Little is known however about his early works from the 1970s which were clearly made in conversation with conceptual art examples from the West. "Dutch Landscape" (the work's real title as it turned out) is an installation from 1988, revisiting the artist's experiments from the 1970s, which he could not publicly exhibit at the time. The installation consisted of a grid of images, each of them suggesting a grid within the image, defined by the horizon, and the vertical presence of the artist. The question addressed to Mondrian is typed as a series of horizontals and one vertical, and repeats this structure.

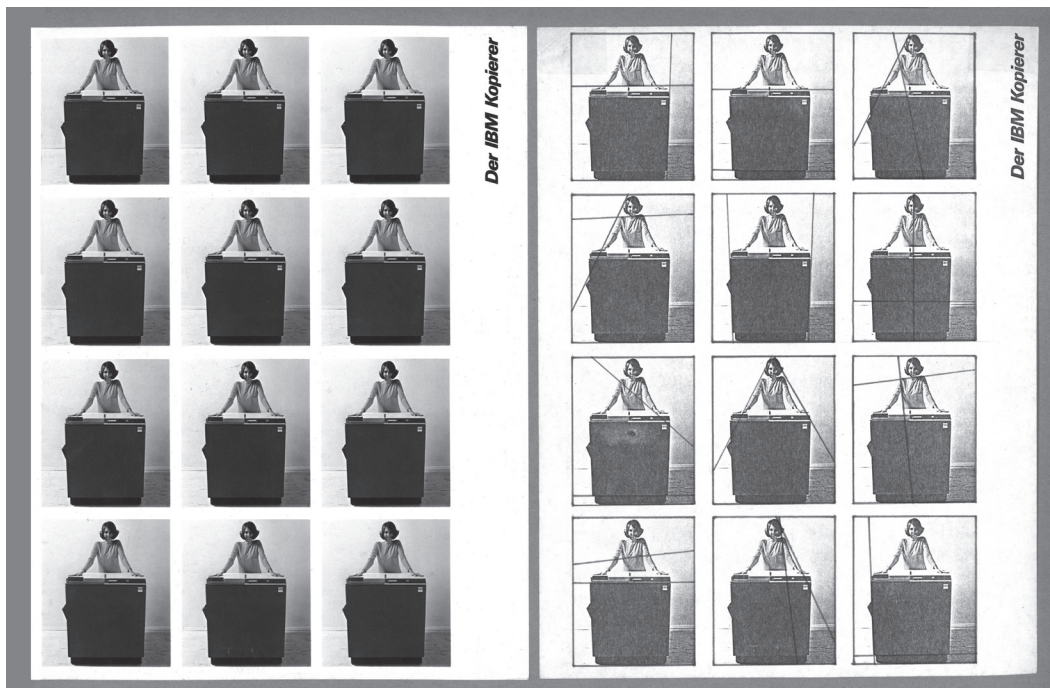
Neither the human figure (we see only the artist's back), nor the vertically typed "vertical" are enough to offer the pure straight line needed to withstand the horizontal force of sea and sky. A higher authority is summoned — the grid of abstract

art, the absolute vertical of spirit and mind. A red vertical line is indeed added next to the images and their transcription into the pure materiality of water, sand and air, locked in jars. A small note humorously indicates that the line is donated by the Mondrian Foundation. The line in "Dutch Landscape" is not only an aspiration, but marks a separation — temporal, spatial and cultural.

There is a profound feeling of lack and impossibility in this work that cannot be disguised by its ironic presentation. Compare it for example to the vertical line separating the Russian artists Komar and Melamid from their American colleague Douglas Davis in their 1974 photographic work "Where is the line between us?". Despite the pictures being taken in two different countries, the collage visually enacts a dialogue between the artists. Ivanov's dialogue on the other hand is an imaginary conversation. His vertical line is an impossibility. There are no straight lines to be found within his own art history (the story of Bulgarian abstraction would be an interesting one to tell), they could only be borrowed and remain external to his landscape. The grid in this work is not implicit to a material or spiritual reality, it can not originate purely from its own conditions. It is a collage of realities, an apparition, a projection.

The grid, Rosalind Krauss affirmed, is the most stubborn, immutable and pervasive form of the 20th century. A form that represents art's autonomy, at the crossroad between pure materiality and a quest for spirituality. In every grid, there is a Cross, Krauss points out, but also a Window — a plane between inner and outer world, nature and culture. The grid expands vertically — from matter to spirituality, and horizontally — it is universal, modern, beyond borders.²

However immutable, a grid holds a suspicion towards its own self-sufficiency. The stricter a line is, the more it tends to go beyond itself back to the world. A Stella painting eventually strains and



Vladimir Ivanov, *Der IBM Kopierer*, original printed material and photocopy, drawing, 1974.

deforms its own support, and Buren's autistic stripes always lead to the context of what's around them.

This aspiration towards life dictated a different path for the grid in revolutionary Russian art for example, where it was part of a more constructivist impetus. The constructivist grid aspired to leave the canvas and venture into architecture, design, into framing real life.³ The Russian constructivist grid, Margarita Tupitsyn argued against Krauss, is a structure rather than a surface, a voice rather than a silence, a structure for mass spectacles as opposed to the Western grid's hostility towards narrative. Instead of art's autonomy the grid stands for the overcoming of art.⁴ As such, the constructivist grid did not survive its own social and political conditions. Heavy with political intentions it would not reappear until the 1970s, but like in the paintings of Russian artist Erik Bulatov (one of the best known representatives of Russian Sots art), this time its rigid structure evoked imprisonment.

What happens if we look at the outer

edges of the modernist grid? Does it resist space and time travel? Can it stretch endlessly without distortion? When and why a grid appears through the fabric of the world?

There is an anxiety in the grid's presumed immutability, in its perfect logic and simplicity. We can almost see its abstract pattern bending with the weight of worlds, stretching and distorting by endless extension through space and time. A grid is a grid, but also a world, straightjacketed by parallels and meridians, yet oblivious to them, trapped in the perspective of some other Eye, with its own divine geometry of spheres, rotations and cycles.

Vladimir Ivanov's other works involving grids, all from the mid 1970s, might look perfectly straightforward but are products of a very sinuous process. One of them is a drawing over a copy of an advertisement page of an IBM copy machine. Human and machine offer almost infinite possibilities for creating grids of various space relations. Copy machines however were not an easy thing to find in Sofia in the

mid-seventies. The artist's interest in seriality was not a preoccupation stemming from his immediate reality but a knowledge of another world and other artistic practices. This is a dialogue between realities, between the copies of these realities, available through images, but also a feeling of thoughts and signals travelling through space and frontiers – an abstract grid of information circulating through temporal and spatial noise.

Another of Ivanov's grids is similarly a drawing over a copy, this time of a picture of Gina Pane's performance "Action Escalade non-anesthésiée, avril 1971", found in a magazine. The presence of the human figure is even more important here. Indeed Ivanov's grids are aware of their impossible abstraction – they are necessarily inhabited, the grid peaking behind the body and the body holding together the grid. A grid is an experience of everyday life.

Just a few years after Ivanov's first grids, my own first experience of space was a grid. I know the grid intimately, at least a

certain kind of grid. I grew up in a brand new neighborhood of Bulgarian socialist urban development, in a time when space was still abundant. Big apartment blocks with even bigger green areas in between, ordered in rhythmic conversation with the distant lines of the sea to the east and the lake to the west. Outside the grid, wastelands were stretching as the edges of a computer generated world. At night, squares of artificial light randomly self-organized within dark grids, with the only purpose to hold the world together, curtains battered by cosmic winds in the vast abstract space. The cries of stray cats, which somehow made it to the outer rims of space, were not a call of nature but the horror vacui of a Schrodinger cat stretched between two points in the Universe at once.

I wonder sometimes how the Soviets of the early 20th century experienced the experimental constructivist structures. Did they really inspire them hope? Strength? A distant fear? Did they see them as empty blueprints for a future they could fill in with whatever their hearts desire? In Hollywood films, the villains always inhabit modernist houses. A pure form requires a strength of character, a single mindedness, an all consuming purpose. In my own, really existing grid, like Vladimir Ivanov in his, I would fill my room with joyful traces of other worlds, as proofs that our own world existed – images from magazines, colorful packages, leftovers from distant places. The only purpose of things seemed to be to divert the eyes from staring into the void. Neither cross, nor window; without any distance of representation or signification, the grid was space.

Grids were a rare exception in Bulgarian art, which has always remained emphatically figurative, holding on to a reality that never seemed stable enough, own enough – the distorted edge of a grid, which center was always somewhere else. The images, which Vladimir Ivanov chose in order to reveal the grid, were not something belonging to his reality. They couldn't be. I try to imagine what these works would have looked like if he'd taken examples of Bulgarian art or advertisement of local products. The grid would have appeared probably too monstrous, too close, a product of abstraction of another kind. As a symbol of autonomous art, the grid could make itself present only through the superimposition of the distant world, the undistorted center (real or imagined)

by which it was brought into being. It is a translation of experiences, an import of practices that can potentially create ruptures in the real environment. This import was not an isolated strategy. In the 1980s, Bulgarian artist Daniela Nenova for example was systematically remaking historical performances following RoseLee Goldberg's book on performance art, besides her own original performance practice.

Even in its most abstract manifestations the grid always aspires to reality. Whether it is about a dream world or a parallel universe, a hidden truth or a brighter future – a grid is a tool for revelation, a technology of apparition. By virtue of its etymology, the grid is a grill, a cooking utensil, an abstract pattern on the way between food and fire, a screen between things and worlds. The most material of things can be projected onto the Infinite and the Infinite peaks into reality through the earthliest of shapes.

1. Svilen Stefanov, *Avant-Garde and Norm*, 2003, Sofia: Agata-A
2. Rosalind Krauss, *Grids*, October, Vol. 9 (Summer, 1979), pp. 50-64
3. There was a similar ambition in *De Stijl*
4. Margarita Tupitsin, *The Grid as a Checkpoint of Modernity*, Tate Papers Issue 12 2009
<http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7275>; accessed 12 January 2018

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BRUSSELS, NOV. 8 - Leila White-Vilmouth, **Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster**, Marie Brines and Qin Han during the opening of 'Drawings and Plants', an exhibition at the gallery with works by Jean-Luc Vilmouth selected by Gonzalez-Foerster. Photo: Julia Wielgus

In Brief

The Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie (FR) acquired the work *The Future is Coming Soon*, 2011 by **Pierre Bismuth**.

The Vlaamse Gemeenschap (Flemish Community) acquired the work by **Sven Augustijnen**, entitled *Photos taken by Jacques Brassinne in Tshilatembo in Shaba (Katanga), on 18 June 1988*, 2011.

The gallery was invited by Hollybush Gardens to participate in Condo London, a large-scale collaborative exhibition of international galleries. The work presented is *Summer Thoughts* by **Sven Augustijnen**, open till 10/02. (hollybushgardens.co.uk) (condocomplex.org)

Manon de Boer has been commissioned by Groundwork to realise a new film work for an exhibition opening at CAST in Cornwall (UK) this Spring. The work draws on De Boer's experience of attending master-classes at the International Music Seminar at Prussia Cove. Among the other artists participating in Groundwork is **Francis Alÿs**. See also Agenda.

Dessislava Dimova, an art historian and curator living in Brussels, has been commissioned to contribute a series of texts for the gallery's newspaper. Thanks to her for accepting the invitation and to Jacob King who was the previous author for this section of the newspaper.

Agenda

Francis Alÿs

Age of Terror, Imperial War Museum, London, 12/10 - 28/05; *Field Guide*, Remail Modern, Saskatoon (CA), 21/10 - 25/02; *Ruinen Der Gegenwart*, KINDL - Centre for Contemporary Art in Berlin, 22/10 - 11/02; *Never Ending Stories*, Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg (DE), 29/10 - 18/02; BIVOUACS. *Academie de la Marche*, Le Magasin, Grenoble (FR), 16/12 - 31/03 (screening); *David Zwirner: 25 Years*, David Zwirner Gallery, New York City (US), 13/01 - 17/02; *Knots'n Dust*, Beirut Art Center, Beirut, 31/01 - 09/04 (solo); *A titre-D'AILLE*. *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; *Dwelling Poetically: Mex-*

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I am in a hand. I am in a hand.
I am in a hand. I am in a hand.

you still abundant. Dis apartment blocks
I am in a hand. I am in a hand.
I am in a hand. I am in a hand.

ico City, a case study, Australian Center for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (AU), 21/04 - 24/07; *Groundwork*, CAST, Cornwall (UK), 01/05 - 16/09; *Knots 'n Dust*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (UK), 20/06 - 09/09 (solo)

Sven Augustijnen

Summer Thoughts, Hollybush Gardens, London (as part of Condo London), 13/01 - 10/02 (solo); *Summer Thoughts*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 09/02 - 24/03 (solo)

Pierre Bismuth

Hôtel du Pavot 2, FRAC, Île-de-France (FR), 30/09 - 04/02; *More or Less*, A4 Arts Foundation, Cape Town, 07/02 - 01/05; *Perspective de la visibilité*, Espace d'art contemporain du Théâtre de Privas, Privas (FR), 09/02 - 07/04; *RE-SET*, Museum Tinguely Basel (CH), 27/02 - 13/05; *Hello World. Revisioning a Collection*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 23/03 - 19/08; *Where is Rocky II?*, Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, 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

Manon de Boer

Two Times 4'33", La semaine du son, Flagey, Brussels, 29/01 - 04/02 (screening); *Groundwork*, CAST, Cornwall (UK), 01/05 - 16/09

Rineke Dijkstra

Hasselblad Award 2017, Hasselblad Center, Göteborg (SE), 11/10 - 04/02 (solo); *Figures: 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 museum, Tilburg (NL), 10/03 - 22/07 (solo)

Mario Garcia Torres

289 148, Silesian Museum, Katowice (PL), 01/08 - 31/03; *When Time Loses Its Patience*, Franco Noero Gallery, Torino (IT), 31/10 - 03/02 (solo); *The Way They Looked at Each Other*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 08/12 - 27/01 (solo); *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, Vaduz (LI), 09/02 - 13/05; *Global Resonances. Revising a Collection*, Hamburger Bahn-

hof, Berlin, 23/03 - 19/08; *γεωμετρικές*, The Agricultural University of Athens, Athens, 27/03 - 15/06; *All Our Secrets*, Center for Contemporary Arts, Celje (SI), 20/07 - 16/09

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

Field Guide, Remai Modern Art Gallery, Saskatoon (CA), 21/10 - 25/02; *Welt ohne Außen. Immersive Spaces since the 1960s*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, 08/06 - 05/08

Douglas Gordon

Never Ending Stories. The loop in art, film, architecture, music, literature and cultural history, Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg (DE), 28/10 - 18/02; *'Jesus is Not Enough' and so much more*, Das Giftraum, Berlin, 06/01 - 25/02 (solo)

Joachim Koester

Folklore, Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (AT), 07/10 - 15/04; *Bringing Something Back*, 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; *Matriz Do Tempo Real*, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (BR), 13/01 - 18/03; *A Life of Their Own*, MALBA, Buenos Aires, 23/03 - 11/06 (solo); *The Desert People*, Cinema 2, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 18/04 (screening)

Sharon Lockhart

Pivotal: Highlights from the Collection, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach (US), 07/10 - 25/02; *The Time. The Place. Contemporary Art from the Collection*, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle (US), 04/11 - 22/04; *Look At Me! Portraits and Other Fictions from the 'La Caixa' Contemporary Art Collection*, Pera Museum, Istanbul, 07/12 - 04/03

Tino Sehgal

Stories of Almost Everyone, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (US), 28/01 - 06/05; *Officine Grandi Riparazioni*, Torino (IT), 02/02 - 11/03 (solo)

Philippe Thomas

Optik Schröder II: Works from the Alexander Schröder Collection, MUMOK, Vienna, 03/02 - 27/05; *Inéchangeable*, Wiels, Brussels, 19/04 - 12/08

Tris Vonna-Michell

Tris Vonna-Michell, Local Arte Contemporaneo, Santiago, 20/10 - 12/02 (solo); *Recent Acquisitions. A Watermark: Capitol Complex*, Serralves Museum, Porto (PT), 18/11 - 11/02 (solo); *Artist's Books*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (DE), 01/12 - 02/04; *Resebuds*, D21 Kunstraum, Leipzig (DE), 29/12 - 28/01; *Registers*, Temporary Gallery, Cologne (DE), 01/02 (screening); *OET#79*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 23/03 (screening)

Also represented by the gallery:
stanley brouwn, Ian Wilson

destroyed. it is a museum today. walking
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STATE OF CHINA WE ARE COMING

Colophon

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