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Ian Wilson, an interview (1970)

By
Tommaso Trini

MILAN, DEC. 12, 1970 – *For over three years Ian Wilson has made no visual works or objects and has worked only through the media of dialog and discussion. His art-form is Oral Communication. Wilson lives in New York and his work was presented by a printed work of another artist, Robert Barry. Last December he met with the public in London and Dusseldorf (Galerie Konrad Fischer). Michel Claura presented him in a Paris café and a Milan hotel. On this latter occasion, the 12th of December 1970, he was interviewed.*

TT: What is your idea of art?

IW: What is my idea of art... It's that I would want to be an artist and that I prefer to present myself through speech. I prefer to talk about art.

TT: For the last three years you have been making oral communications as an art form. What is the real subject of this oral communication?

IW: The subject is speech itself. Perhaps we could also say the subject is art spoken. The problem is that we have ideas, we have information, and if we are to communicate... if we are artists it is very important that we communicate... And if we are to communicate, we are required to use modes of communication and these modes influence the information a great deal, so they become quite important. They have a great effect on the final outcome of the information.

TT: How do you usually organise your artwork? I mean, would you describe the situation in which your work takes place?

IW: I usually try to arrange the situation,

as here at the Albergo Rosa, so that I am speaking with artists or people who are a part of the art system, people who are interested and want to support a discussion, as you are doing now. You are questioning my intentions.

TT: What is the main difference between your speech and, say, a happening?

IW: The difference between myself and an artist involved with a happening is probably the difference between a happening and a discussion. I am involved in a discussion and not a happening.

TT: We are used to artists who, through their works, try to communicate something which is not in the works themselves, something else... Oral communication is a medium that does not communicate itself only, does it? So, when you say that your speech is about art, there must be something else that could be not art.

IW: I don't understand. What is the question?

TT: Let me put it this way: it is through speech that we also make aesthetic judgements; that is, we make culture out of art. Art is what you do, but what happens while we discuss it that probably we just make culture.

IW: I don't know whether there is aesthetic judgement in my work, there must be... Perhaps my decision to use speech instead of print is an aesthetic judgement... I don't quite understand the reason for this decision.

TT: Maybe you wanted to be more radical than you have been before or more radical than other artists.

IW: Well, perhaps yes, perhaps no. The reason I didn't get involved with print is not so much that I was being radical, but

that I wanted to... Oh, in a way it could be regressive... I was just dealing with the problem of presenting my ideas.

TT: Besides we know, or we have been told, that there is an increasing need of oral communication in our electronic age, and this could be another good reason, an important point for our changing in culture.

IW: Even print is important, and all the electronic media are important, but all of these electronic media first require that someone says something, and then have it interpreted through the medium... So, finally, speech is unavoidable. It is a prime mover in all of these modes of communication.

TT: As soon as people discussing with you have grasped and accepted your ideas, what could be the following step? What would you be interested in talking about?

IW: There isn't too much to talk about once my intentions are understood. The whole problem goes around understanding them, and this is never completely understood, so the problem is never really resolved. It is not necessary to go beyond, and perhaps it's not possible to go beyond either. I've noticed with some friends who have known me for years now and who have understood my work, we never talk of it anymore, we talk around it; it is implied.

TT: At a certain moment you decided not to carry any more physical objects, as art objects, why?

IW: I'm very interested in walking. I spend a lot of my time walking in the street. To carry something like a book is cumbersome. I prefer to be free from this and just be able to walk.

TT: Have you never written down your ideas?

IW: I haven't written down my ideas. I don't

use print directly... Perhaps a reason I have not used print is that I have never had the feeling that what I have to say is important enough to print.

TT: There is a physical contact with your art in that there is a physical contact with your person and your speech. In a certain way you are the object, even if an object to listen to, and the same occurs with the audience. Yesterday, you were talking with some people and some of them said they felt as though they were the object of your work, or just an object, a rather passive one... The question is: do you expect a creative role from people involved with your oral communication?

IW: Yes, there is a creative role on their part as well as on my part. But I think this is the case with all forms of art. For me it's very interesting to know how people are reacting and how they interpret what I say. It's interesting to hear their questions and the problems involved in my work that they are aware of, and to know that perhaps I do not have the same perspective as theirs.

TT: When you talk with people who are very close to you and who have understood your intentions, so that you don't have to refer to them anymore, are you still making your work?

IW: Yes, because I'm aware of friends of mine who associate my idea with me when they are talking with me, and they are continually using it as a reference point.

TT: I wonder how you were able to decide that what you think or you say is not important enough to be printed.

IW: I don't know.

TT: Was it because of an aesthetic judgement?

IW: I suppose it was... This is a good question, I don't know how to approach it. I think it's probably wrong to have said that it is not important...

TT: Do you teach?

IW: No, I've never taught.

TT: If you were teaching to art students, and you had to talk about art history, for instance, I wonder if you would be making your art or something else?

IW: That's difficult to say. I think I would probably be more interested in what they would have to say. But it could be interesting, perhaps one day I will try it.

TT: Are you influenced by the audience involved in the discussion?

IW: Oh yes, I'm influenced by people I speak with, and the ideas they present to me, in response to mine, are important... And also they help me to avoid dogmatic or emphatic statements, or, I don't know... When I am with different people and their preferences, this seems to cancel our differences.

TT: That's true. Having personal contact with different people is a very strong way to cancel out prejudice.

IW: Oh yes, I think so... This is possible. Perhaps there is an association between dogma and print.

This interview by Tommaso Trini and Ian Wilson that took place on December 12, 1970 in Milan, is reprinted on the occasion of the exhibition 'Perfect' by Ian Wilson at the gallery. It was first published in the magazine DATA #1 in September 1971 and later included in the publication 'Tommaso Trini. Mezzo secolo di arte intera. Scritti 1964-2014' by Luca Cerizza (Johan & Levi, 2016) and 'Concept Art' by Klaus Honnef (Phaidon Verlag, 1971). This interview is in the collection of Jack Wendler. With thanks to Tommaso Trini and Luca Cerizza.

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(advertisement)

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Exhibition
03/09-10/10
Opening
03/09, 11 am-9 pm

IAN WILSON PERFECT

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

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Sven Augustijnen

Maps of the Middle East (1942–1969)

Insofar as an Empire draws the maps of the regions under their influence, it also draws a portrait of itself. (S.A.)

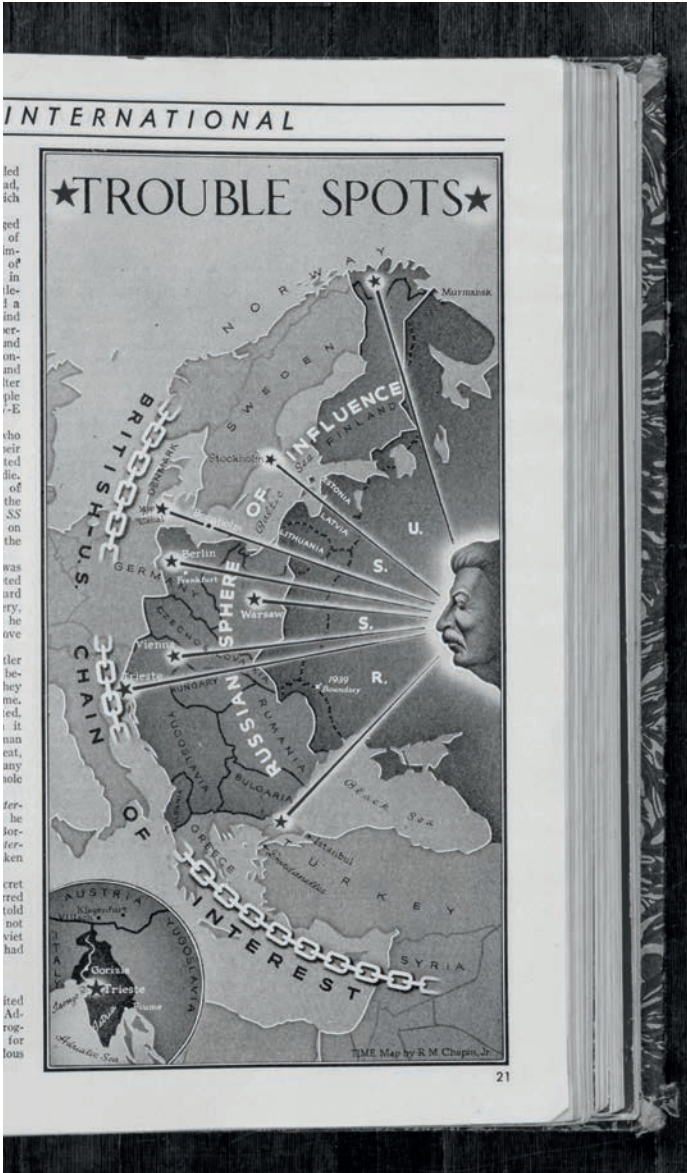
The Kunsthal Aarhus (DK) presents a solo exhibition of Sven Augustijnen entitled *Maps of the Middle East (1942–1969)* from August 21st to November 1st. The new work from which the show draws its title is composed of more than 70 photographs of maps published in the American weekly magazine *Time* in the period between 1942 and 1969.

The majority of the maps are geopolitical or war maps, while others are religious or archaeological. Sven Augustijnen's photographs of the maps show how political power and focus have changed through the 20th century and the way in which new nations were born and acquired independence.

With a profound interest in historiography, for Augustijnen the visualization of historical writing is a method to remember and see how history has unfolded and still unfolds. The lines and borders in the *Time* magazine maps are visible to this day, in our political systems and, generally, in our perception of the world — how the term "Middle East" as well as earlier designations such as "The Orient" or "Near East" position Europe as the world's center.

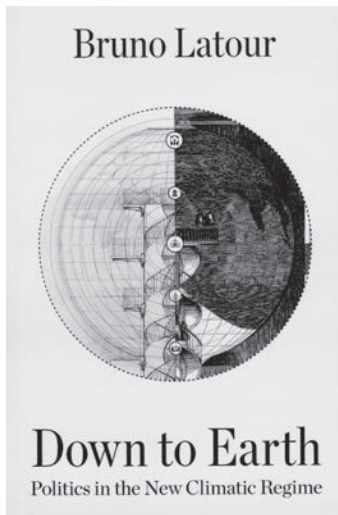
In the exhibition *Maps of the Middle East (1942–1969)* it becomes clear that how much we objectively think we can measure the world, the map is not just a practical tool that shows us national borders, mountain formations and the world's oceans. Equally, the map is a visual symbol of the discourses and the power relations that dictate the measurement of the world. In this exhibition, Sven Augustijnen tries to uncover these relations.

The exhibition is curated by Jacob Fabricius with Nadia Donnerborg.



Sven Augustijnen, *Maps of the Middle East (1942-1969)*, 2020 (detail)

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BERLIN, AUG. 15 – *Down to Earth* is an exhibition and an unplugged programme taking place at Gropius Bau in Berlin from August 13th to September 13th, which is co-curated by **Tino Sehgal**. The title of the project takes its name from the book by Bruno Latour. The daily changing live events explore how the agenda of a shift in climate policy affects our own “operating system”. Within the project Tino Sehgal presents his work *This situation*. Together with Louise Höjer, a long-term producer of his work, he will hold a lecture about outdated institutional habits, sustainable modes of exhibition making, and travelling overland (22/08 and 05/09). And on September 13th he will participate in a panel on sustainability in museums.

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Tino Sehgal in dialogue with Ludwig van Beethoven

VIENNA, AUG. 20 – From September 29th until January 24th the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna presents an homage to Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827).

Beethoven’s universal and unique reception, the epochal significance of his music, but also the perception of his deified persona,

create numerous entry points; high and popular culture, commerce and politics all form an inexhaustible reservoir for inspiration and appropriation.

Next to a newly commissioned work by Tino Sehgal, the exhibition brings together paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, sketchbooks by J. M. W. Turner, graphic works by Francisco de Goya, Anselm Kiefer and Jorinde Voigt, sculptures by Auguste Rodin, Rebecca Horn and a video by Guido van der Werve among others, all of which are brought into dialogue with the music and persona of Beethoven.

Tino Sehgal’s work *This joy* was conceived over the period of several months in 2019/20, and draws on a number of compositions by Beethoven arranged for voice. These include the 1st movement of *Symphony No. 5*, the 1st movement of *Symphony No. 6*, the 2nd movement of *Symphony No. 7*, the *Overture to Egmont* and an adaptation of the 4th movement of *Symphony No. 9*. The work was developed with and is enacted by Alexandre Achour, Moss Beynon Jukes, Margherita D’Adamo, Sandhya Daemgen, Hanako Hayakawa, Leah Katz, Justin F. Kennedy, Vera Pulido, Lizzie Sells.



Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, ©KHM-Museumsverband.





Ghost Party by de Boer and Laâbissi

BRUSSELS, AUG. 19 – In 2016, Manon de Boer and choreographer/dancer Latifa Laâbissi entered into a continuous dialogue, addressing the multiple voices that inhabit their bodies and thinking. From the exchange, the conversation itself emerged as a working tool and a performative form. By capturing and ‘cannibalising’ each other’s influences, a genealogy of shared references appeared. Ghosted by the words of artists and writers such as Marguerite Duras, Anne Carson, Casey and Valeska Gert, in *Ghost Party*, their new and first performance together, de Boer and Laâbissi play with language, accents and voices, meshing their selves with others. The performance will premiere during the exhibition *Risquons-tout* at Wiels at the Open School Risquons-Tout (Avenue Van Volxemlaan 316, 1190 Forest/Vorst) on 30th and 31st of October at 6.30 and 8.30pm.

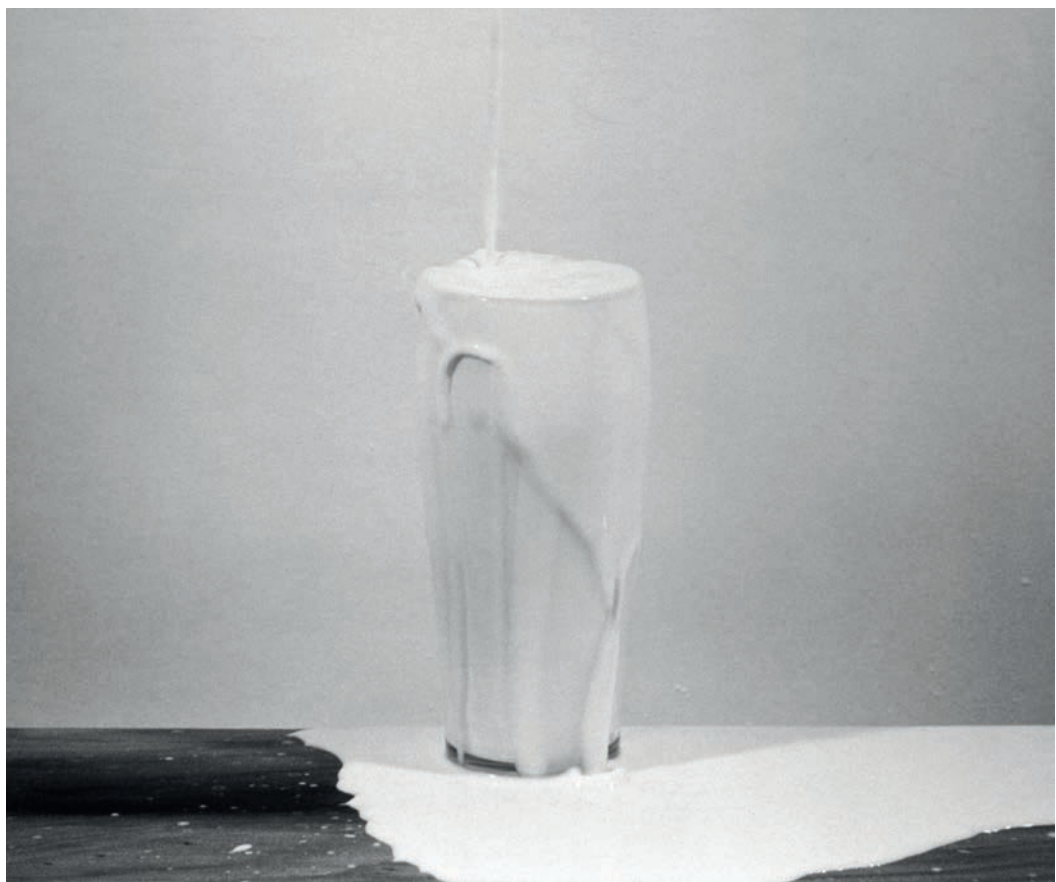


Valeska Gert performing *Le cri muet* (1920s) and vases used in the performance *Ghost Party*.

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ZÜRICH, AUG. 21 – Multiple works by **David Lamelas** selected by Adam Szymczyk are included in the program of the 22nd edition of experimental film and video festival Videosex 2020 in Zürich. On Friday 18/09 at 7:30 pm: *Argentina II: Time as Activity – David Lamelas* and on Sunday 20/09 at 4 pm: *Argentina III: Movies and Television: David Lamelas* and at 5:45 pm: *Argentina IV: In Our Time – David Lamelas*. (Image: David Lamelas, *To Pour Milk Into a Glass*, 1972)



In Brief

Tate in London acquired the works *Circle on the Floor* (1968), *There was a discussion with Lucy Lippard in New York City (walking up the west side) in 1969* (1969) and *There was a discussion, walking in the Tate Modern, May 18, 2017* (2017) by **Ian Wilson**.

The gallery participates in the upcoming edition of Brussels Gallery Weekend and will be open on Thursday 03/09 from 11 am till 9 pm; and from Friday 04/09 till Sunday 06/09 from 11 am till 7 pm.

A commemorative text on **Ian Wilson** titled *A Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose: Ian Wilson* by Catherine Wood was recently published in Mousse Magazine no. 72. In the upcoming Fall issue of Flash Art Magazine another text on the artist, written by Luca Cerizza, will be published.

Agenda

Francis Alÿs

The Location of Lines, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago (US), 29/08–21/02; *No Man is an Island*, Museum IJsselstein, IJsselstein (NL), 12/09–31/01; *Francis Alÿs*, Tai Kwun Center for Heritage & Art, Hong Kong, 16/10–15/12 (solo); *Sandlines*, Festival International du Livre d'Art et du Film, Perpignan (FR), 26/10–01/11 (screening); *Sandlines*, Lo schermo dell'arte Film Festival, Florence (IT), 10/11–14/11 (screening); *Bon Voyage! Travelling in Contemporary Art*, Ludwig Forum Aachen, Aachen (DE), 13/11–11/04; *Salam Tristesse*, Fragmentos, Bogota, 19/11–tbc (solo)

Sven Augustijnen

Spectres, Universciné, Brussels (streaming), 01/10–30/09; *Maps of the Middle East (1942–1969)*, Kunsthall Aarhus, Aarhus (DK), 21/08–01/11 (solo); *Monoculture. A Recent History*, M HKA, Antwerp (BE), 24/09–24/01

Pierre Bismuth

Museum for Preventive Imagination, MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome, 17/07–27/09

stanley brouwn

Manon de Boer

Risquons-Tout, Wiels, Brussels, 12/09–10/01 (performance on 30/10 & 31/10); *Inspire*, Iseip, Brussels, 18/09–28/11

Rineke Dijkstra

Five Ways In: Themes from the Collection – Self, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (US), 14/02–03/01; *Beyond the Image. Bertien van Manen and Friends*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 29/02–20/09; *Fashion Nirvana: Runway to Everyday*, McNay Art Museum, San Antonio (US), 17/07–17/01; *Crossing Views*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, 23/09–03/01; *Masculinities: Liberation through Photography*, Gropius Bau, Berlin, 16/10–10/01

Mario García Torres

A toi appartient le regard et la liaison infinie entre les choses, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, 30/06–01/11; Luisa Strina Gallery, Sao Paulo (BR), 21/09–tbc (solo)

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

Ballard Garden, deSingel, International Arts Campus, Antwerp (BE), permanent (solo)

Joachim Koester

Vampiros. La evolución del mito, CaixaForum Madrid, 14/02–06/09; *Vampiros. La evolución del mito*, CaixaForum Barcelona (ES), 07/07–31/01; *Danser Brut*, BOZAR, Brussels, 24/09–10/01; *Possessed*, MO.CO., Montpellier (FR), 26/09–03/01; *Joachim Koester*, Kunsthalle Mainz, Mainz (DE), 27/11–20/02 (solo); *Kosmos Emma Kunz*, Aargauer Kunsthau, Aargau (CH), 23/01–24/05

David Lamelas

Argentina II – IV: David Lamelas, Videoex Experimental Film & Video Festival, Zurich (CH), 18/09 & 20/09 (screenings); *Images liées*, Château de Servières, Marseille, 09/10–19/12; *David Lamelas*, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea, Santiago de Compostela (ES), 12/02–23/05 (solo)

Sharon Lockhart

Just Connect, MCA Chicago (US), 17/07–07/11; *Baumettes, notes pour un film*, Manifesta 13, Montéviedo Marseille, Marseille (FR), 09/10–13/11

Tino Sehgal

Down to Earth, Gropius Bau, Berlin (co-curated by Tino Sehgal), 13/08–13/09; *Beethoven moves*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 29/09–24/01

Philippe Thomas

Museum for Preventive Imagination, MACRO

Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome, 17/07–27/09

Tris Vonna-Michell

Ian Wilson

Not in so many words, Kröller Müller Museum, Otterlo (NL), 01/02–27/09; *Perfect*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 03/09–10/10 (solo); *I am before, I am almost, I am never*, Contemporary Art Center Parc Saint-Léger, Pougues-les-Eaux (FR), 26/09–24/01

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(advertisement)

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