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Ian Wilson's *Time* piece

By Jan Mot

BRUSSELS, 18 MARCH - As part of the recent exhibition Time Pieces at the gallery, Ian Wilson showed a work with the title Time (spoken).1 This work has rarely been exhibited and was somehow brought back into existence by Mathieu Copeland last fall when he included it in the exhibition Performa with oral works at the Swiss Institute in New York. This work can be described as an instruction piece and needs to be realized by the gallery personnel. When a visitor asks what the contribution is of Ian Wilson. they are instructed to reply: 'it is the word time spoken', or 'c'est le mot temps parlé' etc. The work is rooted in the first period of his oral works, i.e. in the year 1968. By then Wilson had stopped producing paintings and sculptures and had turned to language as his medium. In the course of the years he would develop a complex set of spoken works, ranging from informal conversations to organized discussions in galleries and museums. In his attempt to take distance from the valuable art object, he refused to have his discussions being recorded or photographed.2

In 1968 Wilson would try to insert the word 'time' into his conversations with people in all kinds of situations. To Anne Rorimer he described his Time work from that period as follows: 'I would be at a gallery opening and someone would ask me: 'so what are you doing these days?' I would reply, 'I am interested in the word time.' Later, someone would ask: 'But how can time be your art?' And I might have replied: 'As it is spoken, "time" 'Another day, someone might have asked, having heard I was using 'time' as my art: 'So what are you working with these days' and I would reply: "time" I am interested in the idea' I like the word when it is spoken: 'time'. And so the word was used over and over again.'3

The work *Time* (spoken) as shown in the gallery is however dated in 1983. In that year Wilson participated in a group exhibition which was organized by Michel Claura in an abandoned church in Paris. Wilson didn't travel to Paris on this occasion but instructed the people at the reception desk to do his work when visitors asked about it. This work

became the first oral work by Wilson that is not realized or spoken by the artist himself and doesn't imply his physical presence. In fact anyone can bring the work into existence, and whether the person is saying 'time' with the intention of doing Wilson's work or not, is not of any importance to the artist. The work keeps on existing in time as an oral work and in this way distinguishes itself from the Discussions which are realized by the artist (and his public) and take place at a certain time and a certain place.

Between 1968 and 1983 Wilson made other works that didn't imply his active, oral participation. There are for instance two works described by Wilson as 'statements' which take the form of a typed sentence on a sheet of paper and signed by the artist. The texts of these statements are 'There is a discussion' and 'There was a discussion', both works dating from 1981. There are also works in the form of a catalogue contribution, sometimes limited to the insertion of his name in the list of participating artists. And in 1983 Wilson also started to publish is *Sections*, a series of small books relating to the subject matter of the discussions.

In 1968 when Wilson decided to stop creating physical objects, he excluded the idea that the work *Time* could take a printable form. But by 1983 he had been working for more than 10 years with formalized Discussions and the use of certificates documenting them. This practice made the way clear for the work *Time* (*Spoken*) and the diffusion of it through a written instruction.

For the next show at the gallery three early paintings by Ian Wilson that were destroyed or lost have been reconstructed.

Votos

- 1. Other artists in the show were: Pierre Bismuth, Mario Garcia Torres, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Will Holder, David Lamelas and Jonathan Monk.
- Wilson had recorded some early Discussions but later he destroyed the tapes and the transcripts.
- 3. Anne Rorimer, New Art in the 60s and 70s. Redefining Reality', Thames & Hudson, London, 2001, p. 91
- 4. The title of the show was 'Pierre et Marie. Exposition en travaux'. The church was located at 36, rue d'Ulm in Paris.

(advertisement)

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Exhibition Prolonged till 19/4

TIME PIECES PIERRE BISMUTH, MARIO GARCIA TORRES, DOMINIQUE GONZALEZFOERSTER, DAVID LAMELAS, JONATHAN MONK IAN WILSON

Jan Mot Rue Antoine Dansaertstraat 190 B-1000 Brussel Bruxelles

(advertisement)

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Exhibition 24/4 - 24/5

IAN WILSON

RECONSTRUCTED EARLY PAINTINGS

Jan Mot Rue Antoine Dansaertstraat 190 B-1000 Brussel Bruxelles

When things cast no shadow

By Rhea Gaardhoe Dall

BRUSSELS, 18 MARCH - Three artists from the gallery will participate in the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art curated by Adam Szymczyk and Elena Filipovic and opening on April the 5th. Manon de Boer shows her latest work Two Times 4'33", a film shot in Brussels, and Tris Vonna-Michel transforms the attic of the Kunstwerke venue into a studio/ installation activated by his storytelling. Joachim Koester and De Boer take part in the night program of the exhibition, entitled Mes nuits sont plus belles que vos jours, a series of 63 nocturnal acts. On April 29 Koester will talk about hypnagogia, the state between wakefulness and sleep, and other ideas from the (secret) history of consciousness. And on June 6 De Boer will screen Marguerite Duras's Le Camion followed by three of her own works.

Rhea Gaardboe Dall wrote the following text on Manon de Boer's new work for the day guide publication of the Biennale.

'With great subtlety and thought, the filmic art of Manon de Boer repeatedly places viewers at the fault line between sound and image. The slow editing of her analog film, combined with a poignant, often detached soundtrack, reflects her consistent attention to the present day resonance of the postwar avant-garde. Inspired by Chris Marker and Marguerite Duras, particularly the latter's experimentation with voice-over and tone, de Boer repeatedly focuses on unsynchronized soundtracks and other complex sound relations in her filmic portraits of individuals. For Two Times 4'33" de Boer staged and filmed two concerts of John Cage's notoriously silent music composition in three movements, 4'33" (1952). The first half of the two-part 35mm film captures the "natural" sound and image of the performance with a camera fixed on avant-garde pianist Jean-Luc Fafchamps. The acoustics mimetically entrance the viewer throughout: the sound of the pianist entering, marking the "dead" periods with a chess watch, and being applauded upon termination. In the second half of the film, the contextual soundtrack is left out, a (advertisement)

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Screening 27/4, 15h

MANON DE BOER

PRESTO PERFECT SOUND

TWO TIMES 4'33"

(Belgian Premiere)
In collaboration with Auguste Orts vzw

Flagey Studio 5 Brussels

fact felt all the more poignantly as the camera gently pans toward the concert audience and onto a windy outdoor scene heard previously in the first version of the performance. The dead silence is interrupted only by the clicks of a watch; the mute second half of de Boer's film seemingly excludes the screening room public from Cage's "music." Or perhaps the concert only begins at the moment the intimate (bodily) presence and ambient sound in the film's black box converts its public into the "performance"? Whatever the case, confronting the viewer with an aurally numb visual flow contests the sensation of a motion picture divorced from sound and calls into question the very nature of the cinematic sound-image hierarchy.' (RGD)

Two Times 4'33" and Presto. Perfect Sound (both on 35mm) will be screened at Flagey Studio 5 on Sunday 27 April at 15.00h. In collaboration with Auguste Orts vzw. The number of seats are limited, no reservations. Entrance free.



Manon de Boer, Two Times 4'33", 2008, 35mm transferred onto video, colour sound, duration 12 min.
 45 sec. (film still)

The Land that Time Forgot Robert Smithson's Photographs from Passaic

By Joachim Koester

On Saturday 20th September 1967 the American artist Robert Smithson took the bus from New York City to Passaic, New Jersey, bringing a notebook, camera, *The New York Times* and a science fiction novel by Brian W. Aldiss entitled *Earthworks*. His plan was to gather material for a guided tour of his birthplace Passaic, to be used in his next exhibition at the Dwan Gallery. In an early draft for a press release he wrote: "Discover (if you dare) the breathtaking Passaic River and the eternal monuments on its enchanted banks. [...] Only minutes from N.Y.C. Robert Smithson will

guide you through this fabled series of sites."

When the exhibition opened at the Dwan Gallery, however, he had given up the idea of cars that would transport the visitors to the fabled land. The planned tour became the essay *The Monuments of Passaic*, which was published in the December issue of *Artforum*, 1967, and the accompanying photographs began to circulate at various exhibitions. This raises the question whether the work is the photographs, the published essay or the underlying idea, a guided tour. The answer is of course that the work is all these at once, and that the boundaries among its elements are fluid. Resistance is the first thing we encounter when we try to isolate Smithson's photo-

graphic practice. The pictures from Passaic always seem to point elsewhere.

Like many of the artists associated with the conceptual photography of the sixties, Smithson preferred to use an Instamatic. The photography shops with their abundance of equipment – light meters, lenses, filters and tripods – left him feeling exhausted. "There is something abominable about cameras, because they possess the power to invent many worlds," he writes. Like one-eyed giants they break open an endless abyss of viewpoints that can drive artists into a photographic frenzy. Smithson too got lost in the worlds that mechanical reproduction so effortlessly creates. This is the reason his camera is tech-





• Joachim Koester, Histories. Robert Smithson, Golden Coach Diner, Passaic, New Jersey, 1967, 2004, 2 black and white photographs: silver gelatine prints, 45 x 39.5 cm (x2) (left)

nically minimal. It's a Kodak Instamatic 400, with two different shutter speeds and a fixed focus. The films and exhibition copies were developed in one of the many cheap commercial photo laboratories that crowd the streets of New York.

On the way to Passaic, more specifically just before the bus turns down Orient Way in Rutherford, Smithson leafs through The New York Times, where, among the ads for art exhibitions, he sees a poorly focused reproduction of Samuel F.B. Morse's painting Allegorical Landscape. He notes that the sky in the painting is subtle newspaper-grey, perhaps with satisfaction. The grey colour like stacks of distorted and faded reproductions, or suburbs like Passaic, may offer a glimpse of the future. Smithson writes: "I am convinced that the future is lost somewhere in the dumps of the nonhistorical past; it is in yesterday's newspapers, in the jejune advertisements of science fiction movies, in the false mirror of our rejected dreams. Time turns metaphors into things, and stacks them up in cold rooms, or places them in the celestial playgrounds of the suburbs."

Smithson's photographs have a deliberately lustreless look. He shares this aesthetic with many of his conceptual colleagues. The Instamatic camera and the calculated amateurism were one way of distancing themselves from "art photography", which was more technical and inspired by painting - just as the cheap black-and-white copies from commercial laboratories favoured industrial processing as a revolt against the hand-made 'exhibition print'. I have only seen Smithson's photographs from Passaic as reproductions in books, dulled by the grey of varying print qualities. Despite this, they radiate an openness and often a deadpan humour that is in keeping with Smithson's rejection of pictorial pretensions. The photographs are speculative snapshots, silent but latent, sustained by Smithson's words.

One of the photographs – one of the few that actually contains text – a concrete wall with the graffiti PASSAIC BOYS ARE HELL!! – is among the first works I saw by Smithson. It made an impression because of the word Passaic, because of my speculations about what or where Passaic was. Since then

the word Passaic has lost its magic; on the other hand I understand better, I think, why Smithson chose to photograph this. Apart from the intriguing undertone of small town desperation in the statement with the carefully inscribed HELL!!, and the fact that the sentence seems appropriate, written on the wall of a highway construction project, it strikes me that Smithson himself was once a "Passaic boy" and that the inner circle of Hell, according to Dante, consists not of fire but of ice, and thus stands for heat loss, uniformity or entropy.

But there are other Hells waiting to be discovered in Smithson's photographs. Each view contains an underlying layer of catastrophe; a frightening geological world without narrative or plot. Smithson's gaze is often directed towards these, he prefers views that are wide-ranging, which include everything and point to an endless reservoir of years. He sees history as a narrow canal flowing from the remote past to the remote future. It isn't the political reality in the town of Passaic, which was at that time marked by economic decline, decay and racial tension, that is his



• Joachim Koester, Histories. Robert Smithson, Golden Coach Diner, Passaic, New Jersey, 1967, 2004, 2 black and white photographs: silver gelatine prints, 45 x 39.5 cm (x2) (right)

focus. Rather, he immerses his home town in a kind of crystalline oblivion. The monuments he singles out are usually anonymous structures through which time gushes as in the photographs of The Fountain Monument, where large sewage pipes spout waste water out into the Passaic River. In this sense Smithson's walk through Passaic is a kind of inverted historical tour. The most basic questions about Passaic, for example where exactly the town is, who its residents are and what political and historical events have been formative for the structure and design of the town, remain unanswered. Passaic is a place without a predicate. When Smithson takes a break on his tour to eat lunch and put film in his Instamatic at the Golden Coach Diner, he finds himself in a "no center", "a typical abyss or an ordinary void. What a great place for a gallery!"

In June 2005 I went to Passaic as part of my project *Histories*. I was interested in the history of conceptual photography and the history of the places and events that were depicted. Smithson's work played a central role. I got off at Passaic Center and noted that the word "center" still has to be used with caution. *The Golden Coach Diner* had been replaced with a Dunkin' Donuts and behind it lay a McDonald's drive-thru. A busy main street cut through what Smithson calls *The Parking Lot Monument*.

I noticed a closed cinema on the other side of the square. If I couldn't glimpse the future I had to be satisfied with the obsolete: or perhaps the future was exactly what I had seen in the form of the steadily escalating transformation of the midtown into a nonsite. The ticket window and entrance to the cinema were blocked off with chipboard, and its ornamental façade signaled a past epoch, like the worn-down hotel that lay beside it and which to my surprise was still in use. I continued up through the main street, along the railway line which once split the town in two, on the lookout for free-floating adjectives or rather the "adjectives camouflaged as stores" that Smithson mentions in his text. I found none, only the entrance to the ultramodern skyscraper that towers over the town in one of Smithson's snapshots. The building seemed abandoned. There was no trace of activity behind the panes of the lobby, only dusty cardboard boxes, a receptionist's desk, bricks, old plastic and other non-specific remains. I shaded my eyes with my hands to get a better view, when I was approached by a passing man: "It's for sale," he said, and named a price that sounded absurdly cheap compared with the huge size of the building. "You'd better buy it now or they'll tear it down," he continued.

In her book Mirror Travels, Robert Smithson and History, Jennifer L. Roberts writes that Smithson's Passaic project should not be seen as a kind of fantastic exercise in applied crystallography. The landscape around Passaic and in New Jersey at the end of the sixties was characterized by industrial ruins, environmental disasters and huge, half-finished construction projects, like the building of the New Jersey Turnpike and the draining of the Meadowlands, and was therefore a obvious choice as the scene of Smithson's entropic ideas. The half-ruined, as well as the half-finished, were present everywhere, and it seemed less of a paradox to merge these visual phenomena - decay and renewal as well as stagnation - as Smithson does with his idea of "ruins in reverse". Jennifer L. Roberts mentions an article in The New York Times from 1968, where a frustrated citizen of Passaic talks about the town's perhaps inevitable doom: "I don't have any faith left. If they started a new building here Saturday it would fall down Wednesday."

Anyone who chooses Smithson as a guide to Passaic will attempt to look for flashes of his ideas in the urban landscape as well as in his photographs. What for example can be read out of the snapshots that Smithson took of the Golden Coach Diner, the parking lot, or of the muddy area on the outskirts of town? Is it possible to ignore the social reality that characterizes Passaic, and instead see the contours of a remote future in the town and its flat monuments for which Smithson argues so energetically? When we follow Smithson a kind of double vision arises: Passaic is seen through a mirror of post-historical time, and thus two time frames are confused. Paradoxically, it is as if Smithson's cancellation of the town's recent history in fact opens up history as such. With his tour through Passaic Smithson points to a history that cannot be directly instrumentalized: a history of chaos and randomness related to materiality and time.

My walk through Passaic ended where Smithson's began, at the corner of Union Avenue and River Drive. That is where Smithson got off the bus to photograph the Bridge Monument and noted that it is like walking into a photograph. The bridge presents itself as a series of disconnected stills which, like the river of unexposed film that flows past below, constitutes a reservoir of photographic oblivion. For a time Smithson is totally controlled by his Instamatic. He takes snapshot after snapshot of the iron construction of the bridge. In one of them you see the walkway of the bridge, where I stood for a moment on an afternoon in June. The muddy water of the Passaic River was covered with a glistening membrane that did in fact resemble a roll of film, and the low afternoon sun cast diamond-shaped shadows across the boards of the walkway. In front of me lay Bergen County. An apparently endless flow of cars passed by.

In Brief

The gallery started to represent **Tris Vonna-Michell** (GB, 1982). His work was previously on show at STUK in Leuven (2007), Witte de With in Rotterdam (2007) amongst other places. Vonna-Michel participates in the upcoming Berlin Biennale and will soon share the space of the Kunsthalle in Zurich with Mario Garcia Torres (opening April 11). For Oral Culture Tris Vonna-Michell will perform 2 segments from an ongoing project, which is currently evolving in several simultaneous locations. On May 7 he will perform *Auto-Tracking: Ongoing Segments* in the gallery and will conclude it's narration the following day by means of a telephone extension.

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster is the 9th artist to receive the prestigious Unilever Series commission of the Tate Modern in London. She will start installing her new work for the Turbine Hall after the summer.

Deimantas Narkevicius prepares a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art Reina Sofia in Madrid (opening November 2008). Curator is Chus Martinez, director of the Frankfurter Kunstverein.

Joachim Koester is one of the 6 finalists of the Hugo Boss Prize. The winner, who will be announced in the fall, will be given an exhibition at the New York Guggenheim in spring 2009.

The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven acquired the work *Revisiting Solaris* (2007) by **Deimantas Narkevicius**. This film, together with *Once in the XX Century* (2004), also entered the collection of the Museion in Bolzano (IT).

The Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (FNAC, Paris) bought the following works: *August 2007* (2007) by **Mario Garcia Torres** and *Tarantism* (2007) by **Joachim Koester**.

Jonathan Monk's contribution to the Oral Culture series, planned for March 29, is entitled *Classified Football Results* and consists of an English choir boy singing a selection of football results from the UK (activity no. 67).

The contribution of **Pierre Bismuth** on the front page of this newspaper is entitled *No Misunderstanding*.

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Agenda

Sven Augustijnen

Weder entweder noch oder, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart (DE), 31/5 – 3/8; L'art en Europe, Domaine Pommery, Reims, 12/6 – 31/12

Pierre Bismuth

Animations/Fictions, Works From The FNAC Collections, MNAC, Bucarest, 22/1 – August; P2P, Casino Luxembourg, Luxemburg, 26/1 – 6/4; Gravity: Collection Ernesto Espocito, Artium Centro - Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporaneo, Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES), 31/1 – 18/5; Designed by Artists, Z33, Hasselt, 10/2 – 4/5; Time Pieces, Jan Mot, Brussels, 8/3 – 19/4; Locked-in. The Image of Humanity In The Age of Intrusion, Casino Luxembourg, Luxemburg, 19/4 – 29/6; Call + Response, Mudam, Luxemburg, 25/4 – 28/4; Making a Scene, Fondazione Morra Greco, Napels, from May; Fresh Theory, Léo Scheer Gallery, Paris, from May

Manon de Boer

Manon de Boer: The Time That Is Left, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, 8/2 - 27/4 (solo): Recorder Images, The Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia and Art Gallery of South Australia, 15/3 (screening); When Things Cast No Shadow, 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 5/4 – 15/6; Re-make/ Re-model, Courtisane Festival, Vooruit, Ghent, 23/4 - 26/4; Two Times 4'33" and Presto, Perfect Sound, Flagey, Brussels, 27/4 (screening); I Will Be Your Mirror, Konsfack University, Stockholm, 2/5 – 4/5 (screening); International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (DE), 6/5 (screening); Mes nuits sont plus belles que vos jours, 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, 6/6 (screening)

Rineke Dijkstra

Getroffen. Otto Dix und die Kunst des Portraits, Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart, 1/12 - 6/4; Eyes Wide Open. Acquisitions Stedelijk Museum & The Monique Zaijfen Collection, Stedelijk Museum CS, Amsterdam, 19/1 – 1/6; Puberty, Haugar Vestfold Kunstmuseum, Tønsberg (N), 19/1 - 5/5; Presumed Innocent: Photographs of Children, Decordeva Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, Massachusetts, 2/2 - 27/4; Collecting Collections. Highlights From The Permanent Collection of The Museum of Contemporary Art, MOCA, Los Angeles, 10/2 - 19/5; Me, Ophelia, Van Goghmuseum, Amsterdam, 15/2 - 18/5; Courtesy Hans Kemna, een keuze uit zijn fotocollectie, De Hallen, Haarlem, 15/3 - 8/6; Baby, de ideale mens verbeeld 1840

– heden, Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam, 22/3 – 1/6; Street & Studio. An Urban History of Photography, Tate Modern, London, 22/5 – 24/8

Mario Garcia Torres

Other Than Yourself – An Investigation Between Inner and Outer Space, T-B A21, Vienna, 7/2 – 21/9; Detras del Telon, MALBA, Buenos Aires, 28/2 – 21/4; Nouvelles du mont analogue, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Rochechouart (F), 1/3 – 30/6; Time Pieces, Jan Mot, Brussels, 8/3 – 19/4; You & Me, Sometimes..., Lehmann Maupin, New York, 20/3 – 3/5; Some Stories That Went Missing, Others That I Belong To, And A Few Studio Works, Kunsthalle Zurich, 12/4 – 18/5 (solo); There Is Something Very Close In Place And Time, Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City, from 26/4. Still, La Planta Arte Contemporaneo, Guadalajara (MEX), 30/4 – 30/8

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

Everstill/Siempretodavia, La Huerta de San Vicente, Granada, 24/11 – May; The World As A Stage, ICA, Boston, 1/2 – 27/4; Time Pieces, Jan Mot, Brussels, 8/3 – 19/4; Shortstories, Esther Schipper, Berlin, 3/4 – 25/4 (solo); Paradise Now! Essential French Avant-garde Cinema, Tate Modern, London, 19/4 (screening)

Douglas Gordon

Moi, Veronique. Branquinho TOuTe NUe, Modemuseum Antwerpen, Antwerp, 11/3 – 17/8

Joachim Koester

Soigneurs de gravité, MAC's, Grand-Hornu (B), 17/2 – 1/6; Hypnotic Show, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco, 22/4 – 27/4; Photo Espana, Museo Colecciones ICO, Madrid, 4/6 – 24/8; Manifesta 7, Trento, 19/7 – 2/11

David Lamelas

Other Than Yourself — An Investigation Between Inner and Outer Space, T-B A21, Vienna, 7/2 – 21/9; Time Pieces, Jan Mot, Brussels, 8/3 – 19/4; David Lamelas, Kunsthalle Basel, from June (solo)

Sharon Lockhart

Sharon Lockhart, Hamburger Kunstverein, Hamburg, 12/4 – 15/6 (solo)

Deimantas Narkevicius

Genius Seculi, The Contemporary Art Centre of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki (GR), 6/3 – 30/4; Working Men, Analix Forever, Ge-

neva, 13/3 – 8/5; The 46th Ann Arbor Film Festival, Michigan, 25/3 – 30/3; Hot Docs, Canadian International Documentary Festival, Toronto, 17/4 – 27/4 (screening)

Tino Sehgal

The World As A Stage, ICA, Boston, 1/2 – 27/4; *Tino Sehgal*, Magasin 3, Stockholm, 6/3 – 4/5 (solo); Tino Sehgal, CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco, ongoing.

Tris Vonna-Michell

When Things Cast No Shadow, 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 5/4 – 15/6; Of This Tale, I Cannot Guarantee A Single Word, Royal College of Art Galleries, London, 10/4 – 25/4; Tris Vonna-Michell, Kunsthalle Zurich, 12/4 – 18/5 (solo); Tate Triennial 2009, Prologue I: Altermodern, Tate Britain, London, 26/4; Auto-Tracking: Ongoing Segments, Jan Mot, Brussels, 6 – 7/5 (performance)

Ian Wilson

Reconstructed Early Paintings, Jan Mot, Brussels, 24/4 – 24/5 (solo)

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donderdag-vrijdag-zaterdag 14–18.30u jeudi-vendredi-samedi 14–18.30h en op afspraak / et sur rendez-vous