ARTISTS SPACE

ELEPHANT CEMETERY
01.18–03.10.2007
MAIN SPACE
Artists Space
January 18–March 10, 2007
Curated by Christian Rattemeyer

Terence Gower & Pedro Reyes
David Maljkovic
Kirsten Pieroth
Pablo Pijnappel
Falke Pisano
Pia Rönne
Jamie Shovlin
Tina Schulz
Mario Garcia Torres
Kerry Tribe

Elephant Cemetery
"Paris, London, Rome, Athens, Peking are all built upon the cemeteries of elephants, and I believe that not one historic metropolis has been able to thrive and endure beyond the area of migration and transhumance of mammoths in the quaternary age, an area thus found to delimit the zone of human civilization."
—Blaise Cendrars: *Hollywood, Mekka of the Movies*

*Elephant Cemetery* is an exhibition about objects and our relationship to them; it is about public space, and the art often found there; and it is about the mechanisms we devise when the object is missing and we are faced with its void. Originally, it was conceived as an exhibition about sculpture in a stricter sense; about the roles presence and absence might play as generators of meaning, and how they might become interchangeable in our perception. It was to be an exhibition about formal concerns, about the ways in which positive and negative volumes are essential sculptural terms. But over time, the hollow and the solid, positive and negative space, came to be understood not just as inert physical states, as descriptions of an object’s protrusions and recessions, but also metaphorically, as an expanded notion of sculpture in relation to its surrounding and its audience. It thus became an exhibition about exaggerated states of presence and absence, about formal languages of monumentality and operations of memory as forces in aesthetic production. Such an understanding of these terms aims to keep at bay an immediate turn to sculpture’s often commemorative roles in war memorials, public sites of remembrance, and other forms of (mainly secular) historic signification. And such an understanding pronounces the languages of monumentality and memory as separate, rather than joined and bounded by the function of meaning production. Instead of focusing on sculpture’s meaning, this exhibition is about our role in its deciphering, about human scale and the human need to remember.

In his study *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud relates a story of his grandson. In what Freud called the “Fort/Da game,” the child would repeat the disappearance and reappearance of a wooden spindle attached to twine, accompanied by sounds Freud understood as “fort” (German for gone) and “da” (German for there). The presence and absence of the object, for Freud, allowed the child to control his anxiety in regards to the (temporary) absence of the mother, and thus functioned on a symbolic level. More pertinent than Freud’s understanding of the game is the potential it holds for our discussion of the role of objects and our relation to them, and our relation to others. Both absent and present object yields the same power for the child, as he can imagine the alternate state in each as long as it is attached to the twine and he can control it. In simple terms, the concept of *Fort/Da* allows us to conceptualize absence and presence as operations that are not oppositional but complimentary, one lifting the other and each prefiguring itself in the other.

The works in the exhibition respond to and expand these operations in different ways. Terence Gower and Pedro Reyes’ collaboration *New Monuments For New Neighborhoods* (2005–07) is the result of a year-long correspondence that is reproduced in full as a continuous display of email printouts. Drawings, models, and photographs serve as footnotes, starting points, and references to illustrate the process of a slowly evolving, open-ended visual association. Triggered by an interest in the formal languages of modernism and the way these languages result in a structuring of public urban space, primarily in Mexico (but also elsewhere), *New Monuments For New Neighborhoods* further functions as a generator for new sculptural propositions planned for specific sites around Mexico City. While Gower and Reyes engage in a speculative mining of previous examples of modernist aesthetics for the benefit of future construction, David Maljkovic’s ongoing series of works *Scene for a*
New Heritage operates almost archaeologically, slowly ascribing meaning to the not-so-distant past as though it were ancient time. Responding to a memorial for the World War II Partisan Hospital—built by Vojin Bakic from 1970 to 1981 in Petrova Gora Park in Croatia and severely damaged in the Yugoslav war between 1991 and 1995—Maljkovic subjects the structure to a double removal: In the video Scene for a New Heritage I (2005) he sets the time of his intervention in the future (on May 25, 2045, Tito’s birthday, to be precise) thus distancing the action from our present time and in turn rendering the monument more distant than its 25-year life span would otherwise suggest. While Maljkovic reclaims the potential for cultural signification as a remaking, or reinventing of heritage from the ruins of civilization, Falke Pisano’s “lectures” are exercises of analysis, small acts of unraveling the essence of those monumental abstract sculptures that have become iconic images of modernist public art: works by Eduardo Chillida and Barnett Newman’s Broken Obelisk. Questions about the language of abstraction, the placement of a sculpture in its surroundings, a sculptor’s process of creation, the sudden realization that our response may be mediated by the documentation of the work as much as it is by the work itself, all find their way into Pisano’s playful videos, where they are turned into material for new meaning. What for Pisano exists as a historically and aesthetically consummate material, which now can be studied and re-engaged, has a more tenuous status for Tina Schulz. Her decision to approach minimalism in a recent series of untitled sculptures, although equally based on an understanding of its language as a finished project, yields a fundamentally different premise. Whereas Pisano’s concern is with the activation of sculpture through interpretive encounters, a process of perception that is almost “alchemistic,” in the words of the artist, Schulz is drawn to the premise of placement, as a situational, not communicative, grounding. Sculpture is placed, places for art are turned into objects, and when an object needs to be animated, Schulz takes this need literally by animating its still image. Jamie Shovlin’s Fontana Modern Masters Series (2005–06) involve a different kind of reanimation. Based on the colorful and bold geometric cover designs of the Fontana Modern Masters Series, a collection of pocket book sized primers to the “great thinkers” of our time, which was published from 1970 to 1983, Shovlin recreates the cover designs in watercolor. But in addition to the 48 covers of published titles, the artist also designed covers for ten titles that were announced in the final volume yet never appeared in print. Capitalizing on the structural logic of the geometric design, Shovlin performs an act of reparation and completion, at once giving the unpublished books a physical presence and spelling out the graphic possibilities of the design to its logical ends. Pia Röncke’s installation Without a Name (2004–05) invokes the personal history of Le Klint, a Danish-born artist, free spirit, and designer of folded paper lamps, who was stripped of the rights to her own designs and her name they bear by her own family. By refolding Klint’s designs, and retelling the disjointed story of her artistic becoming and forced professional unbecoming, Röncke pays homage and aims to literally remake the moment when a humble, yet utopian spirit of construction informed an object that has been forced to repress the memory of its inception. Memory is a crucial aspect of Pablo Pijnappel’s practice, which incorporates fractured and multi-faceted narratives about the artist’s family members. Pijnappel’s slide projection Felicitas (2005) recounts the story of Felicitas Baer (1910–2003), a friend of Pijnappel’s mother and daughter of a German industrialist who immigrated to Brazil shortly after the First World War. Baer was a famous dancer, who lived for many years among indigenous tribes in the Amazon, and after returning to the city, became a familiar sight in the streets of Rio due to a Toucan she carried with her. Felicitas is presumed to be a reconstruction inspired by a personal connection, but the work still remains story.
Kirsten Pieroth's untitled black-and-white photographs of unknown American inventors seem to originate out of a different set of circumstances: when we no longer remember, when the chance for taking a story for a memory is no longer available to us, when reconstruction necessarily becomes an act of invention, in other words, fabrication. Pieroth's work is full of double entendres: photographs of inventors whose inventions we have to guess, in a sense re-invent, since all information on them is lost; and a murder mystery that becomes a murder weapon, albeit in a much more benign death, that of an ant. Fictionalizations are at the core of many of the relationships expressed in the works in this exhibition, be they to people, objects, or places. In his slide work *Blame It On Time* (2006) Mario Garcia Torres follows the itinerary of a double fictionalization. The work documents Torres' search for the ruins of Paramount Studio's reconstruction, near Durango, Mexico, of the secret laboratory town of Los Alamos, New Mexico, for Roland Joffé's 1989 film *Fat Man and Little Boy*. Hypothesizing about Oppenheimer's search for an ideal setting for the Manhattan Project, as well as Joffé's search for a suitable site for its recreation, Torres takes stock of the often considerable expense and the dramatic repercussions we are willing to accept in the making of an image. Kerry Tribe's video installation *Florida* (2003) also responds to a site, the eponymous State often chosen as a place for retirement. As the video slowly tracks through several iconic Florida landscapes, such as mangrove forests and swamplands, its soundtrack features the voices of several retirees who seem to describe an otherworldly or Elysian place. The retirement paradise here becomes Paradise, a fictional, or rather mystical place where life has been transfigured and experiences take a different form.

The works in *Elephant Cemetery* address concepts on monumentality and memory in different ways. They study and expand, recreate and reanimate existing vocabularies and expressions, and often highlight our active role in these operations. They solidify into shape and form that which only existed as a memory, and place *en abyme* forms and places we have come to regard as familiar (perhaps too familiar). They all engage in a game of *Fort/Da*, as they control both states of their objects, and help us ease the anxiety that defines much of our relation to the world around us.

Mexico City, August 17, 2005

Dear Terence,

A pattern which has emerged so far (and can always change) is one where you are more “Cartesian” and I am more “organic”. You sent some images by Beyer and Rodchenko. The reticular space-frames that can be found in the work of Arturo Pani and Reynaldo Pérez Rayón. Modernism. As an opposite approach, I am thinking of some buildings that were the embodiment of anti-modern ideologies: Buildings as anti-modern manifestos. Some that I have in mind are:
- Rivera’s El Anahuacalli, which is almost like an episode of virtual history: what would have happened if America was never discovered?
- El Eco: Form follows emotion.
- The buildings of Félix Candela: His concept of Automatic Beauty and his writing In Defense of Formalism.
- Jose Clemente Orozco’s tetzcocle tomb.
- Carlos González Lobo’s principles of Auto-Construction.
- Eudocio Nieto’s reinforced ceramic structures (...)

Yours,

Pedro

New York, August 23, 2005

Dear Pedro,

I like your comments about our opposing sensibilities. I think we should try for a real collision/integration of these two approaches. The structures could penetrate, or “contaminate” each other in some way — I think this is where the real poetry occurs (...)

Yours,

Terence
David Maljkovic


Near right: Scene for a New Heritage—New Possibilities, 2004, mixed media on paper, 35.5 x 24.5 cm, Courtesy Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam.


It looks like that to me too!

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**Pablo Pijnappel**

**Dieter, a.k.a. “Michael” is waiting for a connection in São Paulo.**

**During the press conference with the actors and the director.**

**Felicitas. 2005, slide projection with 2 synchronised slide projectors.**

*Courtesy carlier | gembaur, Berlin*
Falke Pisano

Studio Lecture 1 (Feb. 2006), 2006, Lecture on DVD 42 min. (with A5 publication) Courtesy of Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam
Pia Rönicke


Right top: Without a Name, 2005, installation view, C prints, Table of Content, paper lamps, installation view, Andersen's.

Right bottom: Without a Name, 2005, "Folding lamps", c-print, 29 x 43 cm, installation view, Andersen's.
top  *Fontana Colour Chart*, 2006. Pencil and colored pencil on inkjet print 50 x 56 cm. Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London

Arendt, 2006. Watercolor and ink on paper, 28 x 19 cm. Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London

Adorno, 2006. Watercolor and ink on paper, 28 x 19 cm. Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London

Winnicott, 2006. Watercolor and ink on paper, 28 x 19 cm. Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London

Derrida, 2006. Watercolor and ink on paper, 28 x 19 cm. Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London

Winnicott, 2006. Watercolor and ink on paper, 28 x 19 cm. Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London
Tina Schulz

Top and right: Zollhaus, 2006, Installation view, mixed media, dimensions variable, courtesy Galerie b2, Leipzig

Left: Unfused (Von Hier, Aus), 2006, Inkjet print, 100 x 150 cm, courtesy Galerie b2, Leipzig
What does it mean to make such an effort to retell the story years later, and the time from a distant place?
Kerry Tribe

Florida, 2003. Color DVD projection with sound, 21 min., audio CD, 46 min., 4-color offset posters, custom seating, courtesy of the artist
Biographies

Terence Gower

Education
Emil Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, Canada, 1991

Selected Solo Exhibitions
2005 Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2005

Selected Group Exhibitions
2005 Serralves Foundation, Porto, Portugal. Serralves Foundation, Porto, Portugal, 2005

Selected Works
1999 Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy. A New Spirit in Painting, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 1999

Kirsten Ploffner
Born 1970 in Offenbach/Main, Germany. Lives in Berlin, Germany.

Education
Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Städelschule, Frankfurt/Main, Germany, 1999

Selected Solo Exhibitions
2005 Kirche Pfarramt, Wessling, Germany. Kirche Pfarramt, Wessling, Germany, 2005

Selected Group Exhibitions

Selected Publications
2005 Kirsten Ploffner: Ein kurzer Aufenthalt in den USA, Berlin, Germany. Kirsten Ploffner: Ein kurzer Aufenthalt in den USA, Berlin, Germany, 2005

Selected Exhibitions

Peter Roux
Born 1972 in Mexico City, Mexico. Lives in Mexico City, Mexico.

Education
2005 Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico City, Mexico. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico City, Mexico, 2005

Selected Solo Exhibitions

Selected Publications
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Cover: Tina Schulz, Toileaus, installation view, Galeries b2, Leipzig, 2000

Inside Cover: Kerr Tribe, Florida, four-color offset poster (detail), 2003