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Marc Camille Chaimowicz

09.25.09



Marc Camille Chaimowicz, *Enough Tyranny*, 1972, mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation views, Serpentine Gallery, London.

The London and Burgundy, France-based artist Marc Camille Chaimowicz is well-known for numerous works made during the 1960s and '70s that collapse distinctions between performance and installation, as well as art and life. For the reopening of Artists Space in New York on September 26, Chaimowicz will present Enough Tyranny Recalled, 1972–2009. Here he discusses the work.

I WASN'T FAMILIAR with Artists Space. I don't know too much about the contemporary New York art scene at all, really. My decision to do this show had everything to do with the institution's new director, Stefan Kalmár, who I've worked with before in Munich and London. When he called me with a request to exhibit this piece, I felt as though I couldn't turn him down, even though this particular work takes a while to put into place.

This exhibition is as much about me showing this work as it is about Artists Space inaugurating a new era. It was when we agreed on the show that we also realized that *Enough Tyranny* originated in 1972, the year Artists Space opened. It was last shown in 2007 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, in the context of "The Secret Public," and there it had a dedicated space upstairs. At Artists Space, it will appear in a room that is much more open, as there is now a certain transparency to the gallery.

I never imagined that I'd have to deal with issues of storage or longevity. Everything I made back then was based on the ephemeral. Who would want to revisit *all* of their earlier work? But in a sense, this show concurs with my skepticism of the forced presumption that time is linear. Perhaps time operates in a different way—a warping that can fold in on itself. Hopefully, given the specificity of the venue, it's like a new work. But it also has a shared protocol, a footprint that returns to its origin.

This exhibition will provide a nice foil to my forthcoming show at the Secession in Vienna, which will comprise new work. There's a comfort in dealing with the known at Artists Space, and it frees me to deal with the unknown at Secession. It's a reversal of George W. Bush's comment, "There's new work happening in the old world, and old work happening in the new world."

Enough Tyranny was first shown in the west gallery of the Serpentine in London, which at the time seemed like a posh establishment to young artists. Only weeks before I had exhibited *Celebration? Real Life* at Gallery House. These venues were located close to each other in Kensington, so it felt like I was easily transferring issues and sensibilities from one venue to the other, although that wasn't necessarily the case.

Gallery House was a much darker club-like environment compared to the Serpentine, which had traditional hours, a regular staff, and daylight filtering in. But they were opposite sides of the same coin, really. I compensated for the middle-class values inherent in the Serpentine's program. It was tougher, but I had to pare my ideas down.

In terms of reception, the way I was working was alien to an audience that was still presuming to see work on the walls to be negotiated at eye level. Mine was floor-based, scattered. At the Serpentine on a sunny day, people walking through the park might stop by, and they were bemused, shocked by the work.

In many ways, the young hippie crowd was the most relaxed. They would linger. The drug culture

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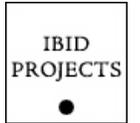
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then was charming, more gentle. They spoke to their friends about the work and came back. It became a haven, which I was courting. I was critical of the alienating distance between the work and the viewer, and this is a gap I've continued to review.

One thing I wonder about is whether the work still has a degree of radicality. It was shown several years ago in Zurich, where no one had heard of me. It was interesting because art students were asking about this "new young artist." They presumed youth behind the work, which implies, perhaps, that there is still a critical urgency.

— *As told to Lauren O'Neill-Butler*

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