

IMMANENT DOMAINS_ Relational Strategies + Grey Matter

An abundance of conceptually informed exhibitions opened in New York in the space of 3 days last week, buoying the spirits in the wake of collapsing world economies. Consider that art is a language; intentions and materials, techniques, historical referents, among its parameters. The relational aesthetics, demonstrated by a core group of the 90s at the Guggenheim, is not a new concept but an agreeable show of younger artists work. Recall Beuys', Free International University, the Green Party, and *Social Sculpture*; an assertion of the individual's social existence as a malleable form of potentially creative political structuring. The importance of applying this realization outside the institutions of art is also one of the parameters of Situationist practices. Of course there is Duchamp, and why he quit painting. His activities, especially that of *respirateur* speak volumes, without words. Take a deep breath and think about it. In these 4 shows one can savor the balance weighted toward grey matter while reading diverse meta-narratives.

Lothar Baumgarten at the Goodman Gallery is offering a sound environment, *Matteawan / Fishkill Creek*, completed this year about which he wrote, "*It is the experience of the phonic drama in an urban landscape in which one becomes aware of the ongoing shift and coexistence of culture and nature.*" His practice cross-references and informs through structural works, the underlying concerns with nature and culture. In temporal-spacial compositions like, *Fragmento Brasil*. which asks the viewer to dwell awhile among projections on 7 machines. We see randomized sequences of paired and one single projection, combining 3 image types. Delightfully painted portraits of birds by Albert Eckhout,¹ are reminiscent in style to the work of American painter George Catlin, who captured many American Indians before their extinction. The bird characters are both full images with their names in the composition, and cropped to show details of the landscapes or the animal. These are mixed with black and white photographs of the Rio Caroni, Rio Uraricuera and Rio Branco regions in Venezuela and Brazil taken by the artist in 1977 on a five-month walk, which have a quality that suggests that the locations may have been destroyed by natural or human forces. A third image type are cropped abstract pattern-based drawings made by Yãnomãmi tribes-people between 1978 and 1980. It would be interesting if the piece gave more information about the protocol and procedures involved in making the drawings. About it the artist has written:

The painted European vision of Brazilian birds opposes the exploring native hand. The configurations of both lines and concept overlay another. Through this binary stratum they talk back to us about the diversity of two multiple shaped worlds.... The abstract drawings and watercolors of the Yãnomãmi people represent the animistic cosmos of a non-writing society. In their abstraction they often match the plumage pattern of the birds. This species are also game and find regular use in the native kitchen. People adorn themselves with their feathers or use those patterns of the plumage for body painting or

¹ The probably extinct birds were painted in oils after his return to Holland from an expedition to Brazil from 1637 to 1644. On this trip, Eckhout and other artists accompanied Johan Maurits, the Dutch governor-general, and documented the country's plants, animals, and people. Upon their return to Holland, Maurits commissioned him to produce a painting series that depicted the things they saw in South America; though these are noted for the Europeanized landscapes in the backgrounds. This series was given to Louis XIV in 1679.

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to adorn their goods. This exceptional and intriguing circumstance and stunning quality became the material source to develop this piece. The drawings of the Yānomāmi, who hadn't experienced a sheet of paper before they drew on it, are extraordinarily sensual through their spiritual truth and technical skills. These markings were animated and collected by my self during a time frame of eighteen months while I lived among the people of Kashorawë-theri in the Upper Orinoco region in 1978-1980.

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Ten of the earliest works by Joseph Kosuth from 1965 - 1970, in pristine condition and elegantly installed, are on view at the Sean Kelly Gallery. A classic and original relational work, *Information Room (Special Investigation)* of 1970, can be installed in any space whatever. Here it involves a room painted a warm dark color, containing two simple tables bearing newspapers, periodicals and books of all kinds, that treat art history, philosophy, language, scientific, and intellectual theory. Simple wooden chairs like those one might find in a school classroom of the 70s, are there for visitors to use while perusing and studying the materials. A voluptuous collection of printed matter, and while they may remind one of texts needing to be read or re-read, what is a book? It is the container of ideas; human thought transmitted through time by language on a printed page.

The *Definitions* series shown here *Blue, Orange, Green, Purple, Red* and *Yellow* are each an enlarged dictionary definition of the referenced color; large white silk-screened text on a black field. *Glass Words Material Described*, are four glass panels spaced along the floor, leaning against the wall, each bearing a referential word, Glass, Words, Material and Described. A transparent bow to the inventor of readymades, *One and Three Shovels*, consisting of an actual shovel hanging from the wall, beside a full sized photograph of the shovel, beside a photographic enlargement of the definition of 'shovel.' Kosuth's work was essential in the progression of modern art. The 60s and 70, when this work occurred, was creatively explosive in America, Europe, South America, parts of Asia and to artists around the world. Pop, minimal, photography, painting, dance, music, literature, poetry, the sciences; in every field of human endeavor, an expansive and ideal driven forward movement occurred. What is "ART" perhaps the most important question was nakedly posed. Kosuth's work is formally refined and beautifully demonstrates aesthetic mastery in putting art back in the service of the mind.

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theanyspacewhatever, exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum was organized by Nancy Specter, Chief Curator, and Manager of the Hugo Boss Prize since it's inception in 1996. Hugo Boss, the clothing company, is a principal sponsor of the show. Since 2004 regular meetings with the 10 participants has resulted in an exhibition that is spry and at times beautiful. Simultaneously, 3 galleries off the rotunda show series of photographs by Catherine Opie, and one is a tribute to Robert Rauschenberg. The press release summarizes:

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During the 1990s a number of artists claimed the exhibition as their medium. Working independently or in various collaborative constellations, they eschewed the individual object in favor of the exhibition environment as a dynamic arena, ever expanding its physical and temporal parameters. For these artists, an exhibition can comprise a film, a novel, a shared meal, a social space, a performance, or a journey. Using the museum as a springboard for work that reaches beyond the visual arts, their practices often commingle with other disciplines such as literature, architecture, design, and theater, engaging directly with the vicissitudes of everyday life to offer subtle moments of transformation.

Eight men and two women were chosen as exemplars of this creative impulse: Angela Bulloch, Maurizio Cattelan, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, Carsten Höller, Pierre Huyghe, Jorge Pardo, Philippe Parreno, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. A number have been in exhibitions curated by Nicolas Bourriaud who coined the expression “relational aesthetics,” defining it as “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.”² The Guggenheim show seems a bit self-conscious and it includes contributions from satellite participants with the artists, The Wrong Gallery, a brainchild of Jeffrey Deitch, is represented by a reprinted periodical giveaway, if you notice it in racks on the museum’s ground floor.³

Douglas Gordon’s *Prettypmucheverywordwritten,spoke,heard,overheardfrom1989 . . .*, uses wall texts in various fonts and sizes; they are encountered on ceilings, and around corners, in a jubilant and thoughtful kind of hide and seek with your internal monologue. Liberating the audience from the said expectations of museum installations. They are in the stairwells and the elevator, “someone is listening.” Liam Gillick’s signage system is amusing and détournes the usual expectation for museum signage, it is a lot heavier, suspended in the airspace they can be humorous and graphically interesting.

² Wikipedia_ I did not go to the source link given at (2) on Wiki

³ In addition to its core presentation, *theanyspacewhatever* includes three “micro-exhibitions” featuring the creative endeavors of a number of curators, filmmakers, and designers who have collaborated with many of the ten participating artists over the years to create separate but related projects and enterprises. These include:

- A series of screenings will showcase the work of Anna Sanders Films <http://www.annasandersfilms.com/> a production company based in Paris. Founded in 1997 by Pierre Huyghe, Charles de Meaux, Philippe Parreno and the Association of Contemporary Art Distribution (Xavier Douroux and Franck Gautherot) in collaboration with Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster.

- The Wrong Gallery, an ongoing curatorial project by Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni, and Ali Subotnick, is also participating in the exhibition. The gallery, which initially operated in a tiny exhibition space behind a glass door in Chelsea and is the brain-child of Jeffrey Deitch and has since maintained an itinerant presence in institutions such as Tate Modern and the Whitney Museum of American Art, is presenting a special reprint of its annual newspaper, *The Wrong Times*, that unites previous issues to create an exhaustive archive of interviews with artists who have collaborated with the gallery.

- The graphic design studio M/M (consisting of French designers Michael Amzalag and Mathias Augustyniak) is presenting a site-specific project in the museum's Aye Simon Reading Room, in which they realign this functional space within their distinctive aesthetic style, to create a library of past projects. M/M has collaborated extensively with many of the artists participating in *theanyspacewhatever* exhibition.

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Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's, *Promenade*, on the third ramp of the museum is wonderfully minimal consisting of a divine white baffle of white scrim material and a sound composition resembling a rain storm, achieved through more than eight channels of sound. A light-sound installation commissioned for the Works & Process series, NY.2022 will regularly animate the Peter B. Lewis Theater, it was created in collaboration with Ari Benjamin Meyers.

Angela Bulloch's, *Firmamental Night Sky: Oculus.12* and her "pixel box" sculptures, a series that use neon and musical sounds, meticulously crafted devices, are also quite appealing.

CINÉMA – VERITÉ, a coffee bar / lounge installation, which has evidently been installed in other countries since 1996, is attributed to Tiravanija and Gordon. The space is populated by large black cushions that easily accommodate 2 people, who can flop down and rest a while and watch a roster of films that were selected, we are informed, because they had been censored in America. It is an odd program and suggests a number of meta-narratives; a complete list is at the end of this article. The free coffee is an excellent option, and in this case "It has been made possible by the generous contribution of illy caffè." People are hired to wear illy uniforms and serve coffees to all comers. I thought maybe Rikrit or Douglas would be there hanging out or serving coffees, but no luck. The expression, *Cinéma en Liberté*, invokes both the Cannes Film Festival, and the Paris '68 riots which were triggered by censorship of the Cinémathèque. The films shown here and the environment in which they are screened is definitely early 21st century; it does not inspire revolutionary sentiments, more the opposite.

Catalan has made a provocative sculpture, drowned and floating face-down in the pool. It is Pinocchio, but at first I thought it might be Mickey. Recall that in the Disney version of the story Pinocchio finally emerges from the deep ocean, and eventually becomes a real person; I like to imagine this character getting out of the Guggenheim pool alive.

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Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, a Mexican-Canadian artist, showed *Pulse Room* in a Palazzo at the 2007 Venice Biennale to wide acclaim. *Pulse Park* is the culmination of that series, presented by The Madison Square Park Conservancy's, Mad. Sq. Art. Encountering this piece after sunset made the impression of a waking dream; sort of like visiting *Un dimanche à la Grande Jatte*, at night. The Oval Lawn in the park is lined with 200 powerful lights which are triggered by visitors' heart rates that are measured by sensors located at the north and south points of the lawn. Individual heart rates are projected across the central space; systolic and diastolic pulses run sequentially down rows of spotlights, as consecutive participants makes contact with the sensors. The experience inside the Oval Lawn is soothing, hypnotic and invigorating. Vital signs transform this public space into a universe of moving light which takes place every night for three weeks from dusk until 10:00 p.m. Lozano-Hemmer will be mounting a new series of inter-active works in London this November.

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Lothar Baumgarten: *'Fragmento Brasil'* (1977-2005), *'The Origin of Table Manners'* (1971), *'Concordance'* (2003-06), *'Matteawan / Fishkill Creek'* (2004-08)
Marian Goodman Gallery, October 21 – November 20, 2008

Theanyspacewhatever

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 24, 2008 – January 7, 2009
Featuring: Angela Bulloch, Maurizio Cattelan, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, Carsten Höller, Pierre Huyghe, Jorge Pardo, Philippe Parreno, Rirkrit Tiravanija

PULSE PARK, An Interactive Public Light Sculpture by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer

Nightly from October 24 – November 17, 2008
Tree Huts Tadashi Kawamata:, on view until Dec. 31
Madison Square Park Conservancy, a project of Mad. Sq. Art

neither appearance nor illusion: A Selection of Early Works from the 1960's by Joseph Kosuth
Sean Kelly Gallery, October 25 through December 6, 2008

The Exhibitions are arranged by opening dates but I am writing about them in a specific order_

[This list of the films in CINEMA – LIBERTE could go at the end of the piece](#) ⁴

⁴ *CINÉMA – LIBERTÉ* installation by Douglas Gordon and Rirkrit Tiravanija, café courtesy Illy cafe
The list of the films screened below, was provided by the Guggenheim:

The Red Kimono (1925, dir. Walter Lang) Plot: how a small-town girl becomes a prostitute (white slave) and shoots dead her pimp, there's high-profile trial, she's saved by true love, based on a true story. Restricted for immorality, depicting prostitution and gun violence (unconfirmed exactly where) Also, the woman on whom the story is based, Gabrielle Melvin (née Darley) sued over violation of privacy in *Melvin v. Reid* (1931) and won

Freaks (1932, dir. Tod Browning) Plot: love, betrayal, revenge, murder, and sideshow performers employing real sideshow performers as actors in a horror film. Banned in Boston for offensive content; MGM studio released a heavily cut version

Scarlet Street (1945, dir. Fritz Lang) Plot: married banker has an affair with a prostitute and kills her; her lover/pimp dies for the murder. Banned in New York State, Milwaukee, and Atlanta for immorality

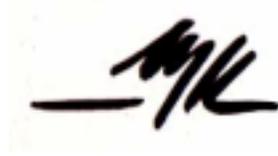
Pinky (1949, dir. Elia Kazan) Plot: light-skinned daughter of a black woman passes for white, becomes engaged to a white man, returns to the South when her secret is exposed, where she is discriminated against by black people who do not accept her as black. Banned in Atlanta, Marshall (Texas), and other theaters in the South for its controversial portrayal of racial passing and interracial relationships; laws against interracial marriage existed in the US until 1967 (!)

A Streetcar Named Desire (1951, dir. Elia Kazan) Plot: a troubled woman visits her pregnant sister and brother-in-law instigating a disastrous collision of money, sex, power, and love. Censored in its adaptation of Tennessee Williams's play, rape scene omitted as well as references to Blanche Dubois's sexual exploits; concern over the moral ambiguity of the characters

Salt of the Earth (1954, dir. Herbert J. Biberman) Plot: Mexican-American mine workers go on strike Blacklisted under McCarthyism for its sympathetic portrayal of labor disputes and perceived allusions to Communism.

L. Brandon Krall © NYC November 2008

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Victim (1961, dir. Basil Dearden) Plot: married, bi-sexual/closeted gay lawyer goes after an extortionist targeting gay men who has caused the suicide of a friend. The first film to use the word "homosexual," banned for its engagement with homosexuality

Titicut Follies (1967, dir. Frederick Wiseman) Plot: explicit documentary about the mistreatment of patients at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution for the criminally insane. Banned ostensibly to protect patients' privacy by a Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling, viewed as a cover-up of what was happening in the institution Aired on PBS in 1992

I Am Curious (Yellow) (1967, dir. Vilgot Sjöman) Plot: twenty-year-old Swedish woman experiments with sex, politics, and meditation, contains documentary elements including an excerpt from a Martin Luther King, Jr. speech. Seized by Customs and banned in Massachusetts as alleged pornography, US courts ultimately decided it was not obscene

The Last Picture Show (1971, dir. Peter Bogdanovich) Plot: coming-of-age story set in a Texas town ca. 1950, the ennui of small-town life metaphorized in the immanent closure of the local movie theater. Banned in Phoenix for obscenity (Cybil Shepherd's nudity), overturned by federal court

The Tin Drum (1980, dir. Volker Schlöndorff) Plot: adaptation of Günther Grass's WWII novel Banned in Oklahoma City for sexual situations involving minors.

The Last Temptation of Christ (1988, dir. Martin Scorsese) Plot: an alternative take on the life of Christ including a sexual relationship with Mary Magdalen. Religious groups organized boycotts and picketed the film for its allegedly blasphemous content.