

CENTRE D'ART  
CONTEMPORAIN  
GENÈVE

# Pourquoi Attendre !

Une exposition autour du Fonds André Iten  
10.12.2009 – 7.2.2010

PRESS DOSSIER

# Pourquoi Attendre !

An exhibition regarding the "Fonds André Iten"  
11<sup>th</sup> December 2009 – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2010

OPENING THURSDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2009, 6 TO 9 PM

With: Giovanni Anselmo, Abramovic / Ulay, Vito Acconci, Samuel Beckett, Stefan Brüggenmann, Claude Closky, Martin Creed, Peter Friedl, Holger Friese and Max Kossatz, Thomas Hirschhorn, Christelle Lheureux, Gianni Motti, Bruce Nauman, Jean-Paul Sartre, Richard Serra, Tatiana Trouvé, and Bill Viola.

Ground floor: "5 minutes de retard", an installation by Alana Kaprow

"The waiting room is in every way an in-between. Wherever it may be, this space with basic furnishing, poorly lit and uncomfortable, leaves no room for doubt: it is not a goal per se. It only serves as a transitional space-time continuum to other territories. No reason to spend more time there than necessary. And yet, we will stay longer than expected. We will have to find an occupation to spend that time.

But why wait? What is there to see beyond?" Simon Lamunière

Curated by Simon Lamunière, the exhibition partly comprises video works collected by André Iten at the Centre pour l'image contemporaine (CIC - Centre for Contemporary Images) between 1986 and 2008. Simon Lamunière was involved in the carrying out the CIC's programme on an assignment basis from 1987 onwards, then as a curator from 1996 to 2003. In particular, he curated the "Version" biennials between 1994 and 2002. This exhibition is an extended dialogue about the works assembled by André Iten.

## EXHIBITION CONFIGURATION

The exhibition comes in two stages. Firstly, the core of the exhibition (around the entrance stairwell) appears like a large waiting room divided into 8 sectors. After taking a ticket at a queue ticket dispenser, visitors first sit in one of the sectors to watch a selection of videos from the "Fonds Andre Iten". Here, the waiting room represents an in-between, transitional place that suggests a temporary, constrained occupation. This stop-off in time and space offers visitors to watch these works while waiting their turn to enter the second part of the exhibition.

All around, a white wall offers a glimpse, through a succession of entrances, into the ambulatory part of the exhibition, consisting of eight specially fitted-out rooms that feature video projections or installations by internationally renowned artists. All deal with the theme of void. The starting piece of the ambulatory part is Samuel Beckett's "Geistertrio", which sets the tone and plunges visitors into a waiting atmosphere, a sense of the very slow passing of time. The installations offer the visitors to physically feel that "void feeling", in particular with works by Martin Creed or Stephan Brüggenman, through rooms that empty and fill up as visitors get in and out.

Exhibition curator: Simon Lamunière

Location: Bâtiment d'Art Contemporain (BAC), entrance off 28, rue des Bains

Coordination and production: Centre d'Art Contemporain in partnership with Fondation Saint-Gervais Genève and Fonds d'art contemporain de la Ville de Genève (FMAC)

With the support of Ville de Genève.



## WORKS FROM THE ANDRE ITEN COLLECTION

(Core part of the exhibition)

CHRISTELLE LHEUREUX

“Bingo Show”, DVD Film, 2003, 8 min



“F.T.V. is the equivalent to the BBC in Sarajevo. The scene is set on the TV studio of the national lottery. The presenters are ready, waiting to go live. The black light set comes alive. Time and lottery balls hang suspended. Wind and smoke machines, halogen screeching. The follow-spot beams are looking for a trajectory. The station and its inhabitants are waiting for the transmission. These presenters have no voice, no smile, and they are off-programme. They are floating in a time with no grid left.”  
(Christelle Lheureux)

Christelle Lheureux’s video works and installations explore the new narrative issues, down to the narrative’s breakdowns and suspensions. Working on possible junctions and disjunctions between the soundtrack and the image, all her works explore the discrepancy and the connection between reality and fantasy, either collective or personal.

ABRAMOVIC / ULAY

“Breathing In, Breathing Out“, video, 1978, 10:26 min

Marina Abramovic and Ulay worked together between 1975 and 1988. They met on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1975 (their birthday). Six months later, they decided to meet in Prague – halfway between Belgrade and Amsterdam – where they initiated a series of duo performances in 1976. Their common work can be divided into two performance periods: the “relation-works” (1976-1980) and the “almost-ritualistic performances” (1981-1988). “Breathing In, Breathing Out” presents a static relation, where the solidarity between the artist couple is symbolised by the fact that they breathe each other’s air throughout the whole performance.



VITO ACCONCI

“Focal Point”, 1971, video, 33 min

Vito Acconci studied literature and poetry, before taking to visual arts. He has always advocated, for that matter, a very plastic approach of writing and of the page itself, which he sees as a small space for performance. This notion of space was the starting point to a series of experiments on various media in order to explore real, temporal, social, or cultural space. However, it is mostly through these physical performances that Acconci has been recognised. From 1969 and “Following Pieces” on, he focused on the experimental study of his own body’s place as well as the viewer’s place during performances. “Focal Point” is an exercise in the act of viewing and being viewed. Blindfolded, Acconci stands against a wall, his nude back to the camera. The camera focuses on his neck and the cameraman says, “I’m staring at the back of your neck from straight on.” The camera angle changes and the cameraman continues, “I’m staring at the back of your neck from the left side,” etc. Throughout the tape, the camera moves to focus alternately on his body and on objects in the performance space, while Acconci attempts to guess the object and direction of the camera’s gaze.

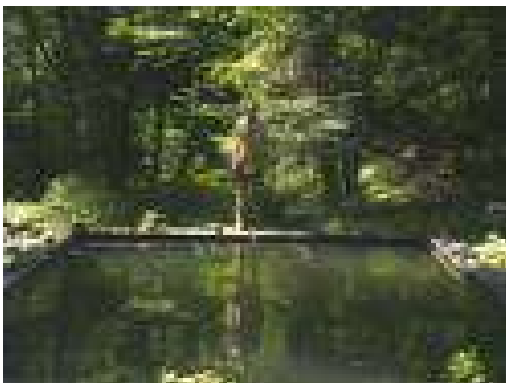


THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

« Für Reto Flury », 1994, video, 5:30 min

Through the simplicity and the economy of Thomas Hirschhorn's object arrangements, one can immediately sense the complexity of his aesthetic and political involvement, the absurdity and the distress of the human condition. His work essentially consists in making out an inventory of everyday objects, scrap and waste, fragmented prints or packages, seen as leftovers from an outdated consumer society. This process allows him to question the validation system for these objects, and the ambiguousness of relationships between value and price.

In his video "Für Reto Flury" Thomas Hirschhorn pays tribute to his late friend. He throws a sheet of paper from the top of a building, and then films it as it floats in the air until he loses sight of it.



BILL VIOLA

"The Reflecting Pool", video, 1977–1979, 7 min

A man comes out of the woods and stands still at the edge of a pool. His reflection can be seen on the surface of the pool. Then he hovers in a frozen, midair leap over the water. The reflection disappears. A whole life of various movements gets organised. The man's body dissolves and disintegrates in the leaves, while his standing reflection appears in the water, like a trace of his presence.

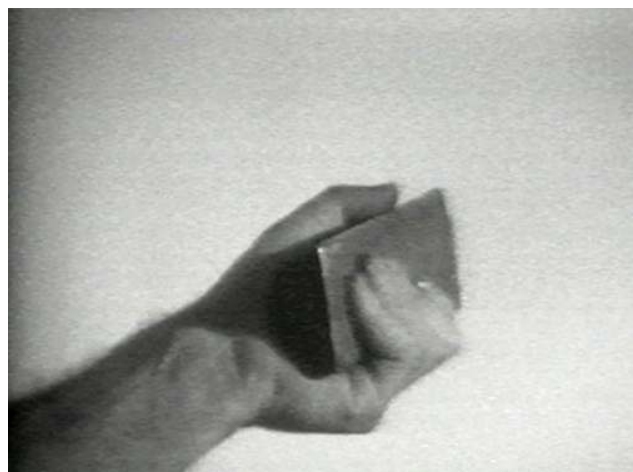
Bill Viola is considered a pioneer in the medium of video art. His video installations are "total environments" that envelop the viewer in image and sound. Viola's works explore the universal human experiences — birth, death, the unfolding of consciousness — and have roots in all of the world's spiritual traditions, including Zen Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, and Christian mysticism. Using each visitor's inner language of subjective thoughts and collective memories, his videos communicate to a wide audience, allowing viewers to experience the work directly, and in their own personal way.

RICHARD SERRA

"Anxious Automation", 1971, video, 4:27 min

Although American artist Richard Serra is internationally known and renowned for his sculptural work, he also explored video in the sixties and seventies.

In his video works, he developed a critical thought about social issues related to the question of image, such as the influence of television on its audience. His criticism focuses on the total lack of political involvement in the messages delivered by the television institutions, the issues of press monopoly, and of television's commercial dimension and its impact on the consumerist behaviour of the audience. Ironically, Richard Serra illustrates his criticism of the medium by using the medium itself.



Richard Serra, « Surprise Attack », 1973

BRUCE NAUMAN

“Stamping in the Studio”, 1968, video, 1 h 02 min

Bruce Nauman is one of the most important figures in contemporary art. His video works from the sixties and the seventies have largely inspired other artists and are amongst the most avant-garde contributions to digital art. In his works, Bruce Nauman uses his body as an art object; his body is the tool with which he executes repetitive performative gestures in his studio. He always makes use of the intrinsic quality of the video medium – its immediacy, a sense of space and its inner-life dimension. His movements in real time investigate the concrete process of art practice. Using his body to explore the limits of daily situations, Nauman uses video as a theatre set and as a surveillance device within an installation context.

In “Stamping in the Studio”, an upside down camera placed above the floor records Nauman’s back and forth pace across the studio. The noise of his footsteps pounds out a rhythm that reminds of indigenous drum rolls, or primitive dance rituals. However, Nauman is not taking part in any social or community rite, since he is totally alone. Isolated in his studio, his actions have no apparent reason or foundation beyond their aesthetic dimension.



Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix, New York © ARS  
NY and DACS, London 2006

## “INTERACTING” WORKS

(Outlying part of the exhibition)

GIOVANNI ANSELMO

“Invisible”, single-slide projection, 1971

Italian artist Giovanni Anselmo is one of the major figures of Arte Povera. The artist organises his work around the notions of endlessness, invisibility, remoteness, and universality through the space/time relationship, while emphasising the notions of energy, magnetism and gravity, as well as entropy, transformation, and wear-out. When describing his work, Anselmo said that “only through the visible can the invisible be understood”. This sentence alone encapsulates his installation “Invisibile”, a slide that projects the word “visibile” without making it visible, unless the viewers randomly cross the beam of light and the word is accidentally projected on their body.



GIOVANNI ANSELMO « Invisible », 1971

SAMUEL BECKETT

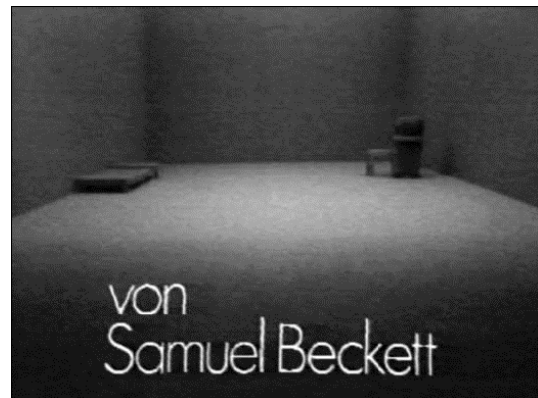
“Geistertrio“, teleplay written in 1975, directed in 1977 by Samuel Beckett, Alan Schneider, featuring Klaus Herrn.

From the very beginning, “Geistertrio” plays with undefined figures. This teleplay “stages” the sound of V – a female voice – an invisible character, and the only one playing with words, and S – a male silhouette – the “character” of a form without content. The concept of the play is as follows: in a closed space, S is seen but not heard, while V is heard but not seen.

“Beckett became less and less tolerant of words. And he knew from the outset the reason he became increasingly intolerant of them: the exceptional difficulty of “boring holes” in the surface of language, so that “what lurks behind it” might at last appear. [...] It is television that, in part, allows Beckett to overcome the inferiority of words: either by dispensing with spoken words; or by using them to enumerate, to expound, or to create a decor, which loosens them and allows things and movements to be introduced between them; or by emphasizing certain words according to an interval or a bar, the rest passing by in a barely audible murmur, as at the end of “Eh Joe”; or by including some of the words in the melody, which gives them the accentuation they lack [...]. In television however, there is always something other than words, music, or vision, that makes them loosen their grip, separates them, or even opens them up completely.”

Extract (translated by Anthony Uhlmann) from Gilles Deleuze, “The Exhausted”, in *Sub-Stance*, Vol. 24, No. 78, 1995, pp. 3-28

Original title “L’épuisé”, Editions de minuit, 1992



Opening credit, general view of “Geistertrio”, produced by German television Süddeutsche Rundfunk in 1977.

MARTIN CREED

“Work No. 360: Half the air in a given space”, 2004, silver 16” balloons, dimensions variable



“Choose a space. Calculate the volume of the space. Using air, blow up silver 16-inch balloons until they occupy half the volume of the space.” Viewers are invited to immerse themselves in this closed space, the volume of which is half-occupied by balloons. The notion of void in the work is put into perspective again, as it becomes physical, sensual, sometimes frightening, always entertaining. We can decide to either blow up the deflated balloons each day, or else the balloons may be left to deflate naturally, until the end of the exhibition.

A view of the installation at the Johnen Galerie, Berlin

PETER FRIEDL

“Untouched”, 1995–1997, video, 3:39 min

In “Untouched”, Friedl filmed his son over a period of two years as he played with balloons labeled ‘Nobody Knows Science’. The boy acts out the stages of cautious curiosity, fierce play and finally torment. In his work, Friedl manages to track down the concealed seeds of ideology, the hidden contradictions of social systems, and the resultant political hypocrisy and lies. He reveals invisible instances of censorship or self-censorship, whether related to the intimate sphere or the public realm. His work was widely noted at the Documenta X (1997).



GIANNI MOTTI

“Higgs” A la recherche de l’anti-Motti, CERN, Geneva, 2005, video, 5:50 min

On 20<sup>th</sup> May 2005, Gianni Motti compared himself to a proton. After going down into the LHC (Large Hadron Collider) circular tunnel, he walked 27 kilometres at the average, unaccelerated pace of 5kph (about 6 hours). In comparison, particles turn around the ring 11.000 times in one second.

This experiment is reported via a tracking shot. The artist walks along the world’s largest accelerator, empty and dull. The camera follows him at constant distance. He achieves in six hours something that no scientist had considered experimenting. In this very lengthy film, time disappears as if it no longer passed by. The walker flies off like a lost atom in the cycle of the universe. A strange uneasiness takes hold, the very uneasiness indeed that Einstein called relativity.



## JEAN PAUL SARTRE

“Huis Clos”, directed and adapted by Michel Mitrani, 1965, film, 1 h 34 min

A committed intellectual, philosopher and writer rewarded with the Nobel Literature Prize, Jean-Paul Sartre delivered with “Huis Clos” (“No Exit”) a play that epitomises Existentialism, the literary movement that he founded. In 1965 Michel Mitrani adapted Sartre’s play for television. He chose to only use a light camera that allowed for close-ups. Two women and a man tear each other to pieces in a windowless room. The viewer no longer watches the show from the outside, but enters the dead-end room. This filming technique is inspired by Sartre’s will to define the human being both through its gestures and “non-gestures”.



## STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN

“(This Is Not Supposed To Be Here)”, 2001, black vinyl lettering

“This is not supposed to be here”. This controversial sentence immediately makes it difficult to deal with Stefan Brüggemann’s work. All the capital letters in black vinyl that have become his trademark (Brüggemann has already produced tens of sentences) are actually challenging the visitor. Through this phrase, the artist asserts his linguistic stance of refusal. And yet, however negative it may be, the sentence still leaves room for thousands of potential extensions, as many ways as there are to start a story. For instance, it could be understood as the beginning of a criticism on the situation of art. Stefan Brüggemann’s sentences can thus be taken literally, one by one, or as a body of statements that comment on, and criticise, the production context and the exhibition.



## CLAUDE CLOSKY

“+1”, 2000, interactive installation



One of the features of Claude Closky’s work is his taste for accumulation and rationalised classification, down to a poetry of the absurd, such as “les 1000 premiers nombres classés par ordre alphabétique” (the first 1000 numbers sorted in alphabetical order), only for their plastic value. Closky is not kidding himself; the figures he uses offer no new information, and have no scientific value. He simply carries out a decision according to a system so repetitive that it becomes absurd. Those who look at it cannot ignore the aesthetic value of the work; zero usefulness, zero magic. And yet, the artist does not

claim to invent an order, he produces neither praise, nor criticism. Closky simplifies the grammar of the elements in our environment, revealing them as words from an invisible and mute language. The outcome of this process is an almost autistic translation of reality, which alters the automatic reflexes of our representational systems. The installation “+1” offers the visitors the possibility to click on a computer mouse and add a number to the total displayed on screen.



TATIANA TROUVÉ

“Untitled”, 2009, bronze, black patina, copper, dimensions variable

Operating mainly through installations, Tatiana Trouvé has focused since 1997 on a single work, the “Bureau d’activités implicites” (BAI – Bureau of Implied Activities) for which she sets up miniature constructions whose elements are put down directly on the floor, and adapt to real space while suggesting another dimension. Besides, she also developed a series of Modules, which are sound banks that recreate all the spaces where she had to wait: “Module d’attente” (waiting module), “Module administratif” (administration module), “Module de grève” (strike module), etc. With time, the series keeps growing and changing. To justify her approach, Tatiana Trouvé said “For years, my work was non-existent; it was mere projects, titles and unachieved ideas. [...] The Bureau came as a shell, a place for stockpiling and displaying these things. A brain.”



HOLGER FRIESE AND MAX KOSSATZ

“www.antworten.de”, 1997, French version created specifically for the Centre, 2009

Holger Friese was trained as a graphic designer and computer programmer. He therefore has a particular perspective on what is published on IT networks and, on the one hand, aims to push back the limits of the machine and its processing power, and on the other hand, to emphasise its inherent formal contingencies. In 1995, playing with the limits of the browser’s window, Holger Friese created “Unendlich, fast...”, one of the first monochromes on the Web, too large to be fully captured on screen. Antworten.de (answer.de) is a website that makes the visitors wait for so long that they are offered the option to “Read” or “Write”. “Read” actually provides the website’s statistics, while “Write” allows them to send a question to the address fragen@ antworten.de (ask@ answer.de).

URL: <http://www.antworten.de/>



« www.antworten.de », 1997,  
Courtesy Hannelore et Hans Dieter  
Huber collection, Stuttgart

SIMON LAMUNIERE

\*1961, Swiss & French nationality

Lives and works in Geneva and Basel, Switzerland.

[www.interversion.org](http://www.interversion.org)

#### INDEPENDENT ARTIST AND CURATOR

Director of Utopics, 11<sup>th</sup> Exposition Suisse de Sculpture, Bienne (2009)

Curator of Art|Unlimited, part of Art|Basel, (since 2000)

Curator, Centre pour l'Image Contemporaine, Geneva (1996-2003)

Curator of Version, Centre pour l'Image Contemporaine, Geneva (1994-2002)

Curator of Mudam.lu, Mixm.org, and the Documenta X websites

#### SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Utopics, 11<sup>th</sup> Exposition Suisse de Sculpture, Bienne, 2009

Art Unlimited, Art 40 Basel, 2009

Swiss Art Videolobby, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania, 2004

L'Image Habitable, Versions ABCDEF, Geneva, 2002

Version\_2000, Geneva, 2000

Anticipation, Version 4.0, Geneva, 1998

version simon lamunière, attitudes, Geneva, 1998

documentaX, website and CD-ROM for DocumentaX, Kassel, 1997

Version 2.2, Saint-Gervais Geneva, 1996

Cabines de Bain, attitudes + Fri-Art, Fribourg 1996

Aperto, Geneva News, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, 1995

Chamer-Räume, Peter Bläuer + Forum Junge Kunst, Cham, 1991

simons lamunières, Salle Crosnier, Palais de l'Athénée, Geneva 1991

#### VIDEOS, FILMS, OTHER EVENTS:

More than 100 events featuring artists, film-makers and authors at various venues including Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris / Fri-Art, Fribourg (CH) / Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg (D) / Centre d'Art de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel (CH) / Kunsthalle Basel, Basel / Museu da Imagem e do Som, Sao Paulo / Swiss Institute, New York / Centre pour l'Image Contemporaine, Geneva.