

MAMCO GENEVE  
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PRESS KIT

WALEAD  
BESHTY

MARTIN  
KIPPENBERGER

COLLECTION(S):  
DONATIONS &  
ACTIVATIONS

Summer 2019

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MAMCO Genève  
10, rue des Vieux-Grenadiers  
1205 Geneva



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# MARTIN KIPPENBERGER

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## *The Museum of Modern Art Syros*

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Organized by Sophie Costes and Samuel Gross, in collaboration with Swiss Institute, Rome, the exhibition was first presented at Fondazione Sant'Elia, Palermo, with the generous support of Fondation genevoise de bienfaisance Valeria Rossi di Montelera

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The MOMAS (Museum of Modern Art Syros) of Martin Kippenberger (1953-1997) was created in 1993 and existed until 1996 in an unfinished, abandoned building on the island of Syros in the Cyclades, Greece. This museum was "founded" when Kippenberger, invited there by his friend Michel Würthle, spotted by the sea the skeleton of a piece of concrete architecture. He turned it into an institution with neither walls nor collections—a non-museum. The self-proclaimed director of a self-founded site, Kippenberger invited artists to make propositions for the MOMAS which was more of a museum of projects than a museum of works. "If I am not given the possibility to put on an exhibition in a museum, then I'll create my own museum, faraway, on the edge of the art world. I'll invite my friends and colleagues and send out invitations. The invitation cards are to be the sole concrete proofs of the activities of this museum," stated Kippenberger concerning the MOMAS. Cosima von Bonin, Hubert Kiecol, Stephen Prina, Christopher Wool (who

produced the signage), Lukas Baumewerd, Michel Majerus, Michael Krebber, or Heimo Zobernig were some of the artists invited to participate in a site destined to receive a very reduced public (ten people at most). The MAMCO owns almost of all of the plans and the model of the MOMAS. This series, rounded off by archives and documents, coming in particular from Kippenberger's Estate, were presented in Palermo in the summer of 2018 (by Samuel Gross) as part of Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art. It is now shown at MAMCO. Kippenberger and the MOMAS are, in any case, a permanent presence in the MAMCO: at its entrance, a compass rose, inserted in the floor, and on which can be seen a frog, an animal which was deified by Kippenberger, welcomes the public and indicates the distance that separates them from the MOMAS (2,254 km).



# GORDON MATTA-CLARK

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## FOOD

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An exhibition organized by Sophie Costes, with the support of Gordon Matta-Clark Estate

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The restaurant "FOOD" opened in New York City in October 1971 at 127 Prince Street, at the corner of Wooster. Thanks to the commitment of Carol Goodden and Gordon Matta-Clark, during the three years of its existence, FOOD was a meeting place, providing food and work for artists, and a truly original collective experience. On Sunday evenings, there was the Special Guest Chef Night: Rauschenberg served there a Chili of his own invention and the Matta Bones can be included among the legendary dishes of this restaurant, which also highlighted Cajun cooking, and one of his emblematic recipes, the Gombo. "FOOD" was a place for culinary communion, where nourishment became a creative, festive event. Matta-Clark regularly experimented with unusual cooking techniques ("Photo-Fried," "Agar-Agar" ...) and all the ephemeral events that he organized led to parties, such as the Braserio placed on the platform of the *Dumpster Duplex*, the second version of *Open House*, in October 1972.

While this experience brought together around its two founders other figures of the

New-York underground (Tina Girouard, Suzanne Harris, Rachel Lew, the members of the Anarchitecture group, and contributors to the magazine *Avalanche*), the renown of Matta-Clark's work has now crystallized attention around him. It was in particular during the refurbishing of the restaurant that he made his first "cuttings": "One of the first times that I can remember using cuttings as a way to redefine a space was at the restaurant 'FOOD,' launched during the first days of SoHo ... We put on shows and created a theater of food. The first version of this space was not practical enough for our needs, when the restaurant became a business. So I had to spend the second summer redesigning the site. I did it by cutting up what had already been constructed and turning it into work spaces. I then attended to the walls and other partitions that divided up the inner space. This was perhaps the last time that I used cutting, the process of cutting-up for practical purposes."

FOOD has become an urban legend, with Matta-Clark, for a while, thinking of selling the concept to Leo Castelli.





# COLLECTION(S)

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## Donations & activations

John M Armleder, Burhan Doğançay, « Autour de Gilles Dusein », Editions Givaudan, Piotr Kowalski, Klara Kuchta, Ken Lum, Nam June Paik, Franz Erhard Walther

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Organized by Paul Bernard, Lionel Bovier, Sophie Costes and Françoise Ninghetto.  
With the support of Serge Aboukrat, Soizic Audouard, Christian Bernard, Caroline Bourgeois, Christoph Doswald, Marc Jancou, Benjamin Kaufmann, Andrea Kowalski and the Zurich Insurance Company Ltd

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## Quicksand 2, 2019

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At first sight, the installation devised by John M Armleder (b. 1948) for London's Dairy Art Centre in 2013, now re-created in a new version for MAMCO, resembles an industrial storage facility partly filled with an eclectic assortment of items (sheets of Plexiglass, artificial flowers, books etc.), and animated by audio and televisual elements. John M Armleder delights, it seems, in mixing styles and registers through his use of furnishings, artistic and decorative objects, natural and artificial materials to form an ensemble reminiscent of a shop interior, an artist's studio, or the reserve collection of a museum—the assembled objects hark back to their commercial and industrial origins, or to the works of art represented by their fragmented remains.

Like John M Armleder's earlier installations—featuring piled-up bottle racks, mussel shells, and sledges, with a nod to the figures of Marcel Duchamp, Marcel Broodthaers, and Joseph Beuys—the objects in *Quicksand 2* remind us of what Arthur Danto has described as art's power to "transfigure the commonplace."

The origins of this practice—the transformation of ordinary objects into artworks—lie of course in the "ready-mades" of the early 20th century, but also in American Pop art of the 1960s and in the "commodity sculpture" trend of the 1980s (including Jeff Koons, Haim Steinbach, and John M Armleder himself).

We might equally be reminded of the *Wunderkammer* or cabinets of curiosities assembled by collectors from the Late Renaissance onwards, featuring natural, scientific, and artistic treasures alike: ultimately, it is precisely these systems of classification that Armleder is calling into question. His work demonstrates how the power of display, the very act of organisation and presentation (however chaotic) will always prevail over the individual items presented. Artistry resides in the arrangement of the objects, their interrelationships, and the desire (however illusory) to harness them to *make meaning*. Nothing is ever wholly an original piece, or a reproduction, or a product of artistic or

contrastingly commercial intent: things are always shaped in some way, and this is also the "art of context."

These are the "quicksands" of the title, into which the artist invites the viewer to venture. John M Armleder's installation crystallizes the preoccupations of an artistic career extending from the late 1960s to the present: the metaphor of the museum as a repository for the fragmentary leavings of artistic practice, the concept of a reservoir of available forms for the shaping of a new work of art, or an assortment of items offered up by an improbable vendor.

In the 1970s, Armleder's work with the Ecart group highlighted this non-distinction between every-day and artistic activity, in the wake of the Fluxus movement. In the 1980s, his *Furniture Sculptures* (as per Erik Satie's "furniture music") stressed this aspect of avant-garde practice and its ultimate fate. In the 1990s his *Pour Paintings* and murals stressed the ancillary role of the composition in relation to the vagaries of the artistic program. Since the early 2000s, his installations have showcased artistic (or curatorial) endeavours that hark back to the era of the "B movie," when a set created for one screenplay would become the springboard for another. Today, as we discern the overall purpose and direction of this unique oeuvre, we can look into the heart of the maelstrom of forms, media, new creations and re-workings, gestures, and references and see—as in Edgar Allen Poe's short story—how its swirling power draws everything in. As if the unblinking "eye" of the vortex was gazing out at us in its turn.

# BURHAN DOĞANÇAY

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This exhibition has been made possible thanks to Benjamin Kaufmann. The Musée d'art et d'histoire has recently received two successive donations of paintings and gouaches (from the *Walls of Israel* series), making Geneva an important center for the conservation of Doğançay's work. Since 2004, the Doğançay Museum in Istanbul has exhibited the work of Adil and Burhan Doğançay, ensuring their continued visibility in their home country.

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Burhan Doğançay (b. Istanbul 1929; d. 2013) was taught by his father Adil Doğançay and Arif Kaptan, both celebrated Turkish painters. He also studied law in the Turkish capital Ankara, and economics and art in Paris (the latter at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière). He returned to Turkey in the mid-1950s and held regular exhibitions of his work.

In the early 1960s, as a diplomat in New York, he was strolling along Eighty-Sixth Street and came upon what he described as "the most beautiful abstract painting I had ever seen." The work in question was a wall bearing the remains of a poster, and a constellation of fragmentary motifs. One year later, reeling from the aesthetic aftershock, he abandoned his diplomatic career and devoted himself to art.

Burhan Doğançay developed a multiform œuvre—painting, sculpture, photography and graphics—in which the series *General Urban Walls* (1963–2013) played a central role. The

paintings reproduce the texture of urban walls, celebrating their power to evoke a sense and memory of place.

*Detour* (1966)—displayed at MAMCO with six other works by Burhan Doğançay—is one of the first works in an ensemble of images that form a sub-group within the vast corpus of *General Urban Walls*. Strips of canvas covered in paint are stuck onto a wooden panel, creating a highly tactile surface: a wall on which signs and inscriptions can be seen.

Inevitably, these vestigial fragments of quintessentially urban fabric recall the work of the Nouveaux Réalistes. But they convey a vision, too, of the city as an ensemble of visible, legible signs, derived from the written word, drawing, abstraction, and "figuration."

# "AUTOUR DE GILLES DUSEIN"

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The collection "Autour de Gilles Dusein" has been gifted to MAMCO with the support of the artists involved, Serge Aboukrat, Christian Bernard, and Caroline Bourgeois.

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Gilles Dusein (b.1959, d.1993, of AIDS)

It was my good fortune to know Gilles Dusein in the late 1980s, when his gallery Urbi et Orbi was on rue de la Roquette in Paris's 11th arrondissement. I immediately liked his distinctive programme, with its emphasis on photography, and we quickly became friends. Gilles was one of the first to show Nan Goldin—her work was an artistic shock to me—but also Zoe Leonard and so many others (Pierre Molinier, Sandy Skoglund, Jan Saudek etc.) who spoke to a sense of urgency, of lifestyles that differed from those familiar to us in Paris. In the early 1990s, Urbi et Orbi became an itinerant venue, and I worked with Gilles at the time: his vision of installing his gallery inside other people's spaces, to present an "other" vision of art, seemed to me like a glimpse of the future.

Gilles Dusein was an extraordinary person. When I met him, he was earning a living as a dancer at the Alcazar while studying philosophy (he was part of Michel Foucault's circle). Very early on, and ahead of his time, he chose to focus mainly on photography, while remaining open to creative practices of all kinds, as his collection demonstrates. Jacques Donguy, a gallerist who showed work by radical artists, offered Gilles the chance to curate part of his program, and that's how Gilles began his own career as a gallerist.

He lived in a modest apartment overlooking Père Lachaise cemetery: confronting his destiny, even then. Gotscho was his life partner and Nan Goldin published unforgettable photographs of the pair, taken as she accompanied them through to Gilles's death. They lived with artworks by their close friends: Nan Goldin, Zoe Leonard, Pierre Keller, Larry Clark, Jean Christophe Bourcart, Pierre Molinier, Angela Bulloch, Jack Pierson, and so many others. All shared a commitment to a lifestyle outside the mainstream.

Gilles knew very well that he was different, a minority, but he chose freedom. The freedom that comes with accepting your choices and moving forward with your life as best as you can. Freedom resides, always, in knowing our limits. In his life, in his physicality, Gilles lived the message handed down to us by Michel Foucault (who also embraced his minority status, and difference of a kind): never forget to invent your own life.

— Caroline Bourgeois

The exhibition organized by honorary curator Françoise Ninghetto, is built upon the gift by Soizic Audouard and Xavier Givaudan in memory of Claude Givaudan.

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In 1966, Claude Givaudan (1938–1988) opened Galerie Givaudan in Paris. In 1978, he opened a second gallery in his native city of Geneva. Givaudan was born into a family of renowned chemists, specializing in flavors and perfumes, but his personal passion was for the arts and culture, especially literature and contemporary art. The Geneva gallery organized numerous exhibitions, including shows by Piotr Kowalski, Takis, Louis Cane, Sturtevant, “Ready-mades and editions by and about Marcel Duchamp,” Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd, etc.

But it was as a publisher that Claude Givaudan proved most influential. Inventive, curious, ground-breaking, he published limited editions, books, prints, sculptures, records, and films over a twenty-year period, beginning in 1965, in collaboration with poets, writers, artists and film makers. Givaudan developed a corpus of unbridled originality, both in terms of the materials used—such as Rhodoid, acetate,

and metal—and the forms of the resulting book works: cardboard boxes, paper sculptures, wooden boards, ping-pong balls. Asked why he continued to refer to these objects as “books,” he replied that each contained text that was designed to be read. They were books that “sought neither simplicity nor ease of comprehension.”

Thanks to a generous gift, MAMCO holds a near-complete set of these publications, including numerous first editions: a fitting tribute to an extraordinary publisher, who never tired of baiting his readers, as with this warning, in *Catalogue-Sculpteurs* (1966): “Catalogue for the stressed, the hyper-active, the over-stretched, lazy, and impatient, who prefer to leaf through its pages beside a warm fire, with a decent pipe and a tumbler of whisky to hand.”



Takis Vassilakis dit Takis  
 1 / ∞, 8 déc. 1967 - fin janv. 1968  
 Silkscreen  
 71.70 x 41.60 cm  
 coll. MAMCO, Soizic Audouard  
 and Xavier Givaudan donation, in memory  
 of Claude Givaudan



Gudmundur Gudmundson, dit Erró  
 Exhibition's poster, Galerie Givaudan,  
 Paris 5 décembre 1969-10 janvier 1970, 1970  
 Silkscreen  
 60.10 x 53.60 cm  
 coll. MAMCO, Soizic Audouard  
 and Xavier Givaudan donation, in memory  
 of Claude Givaudan



Klaus Rinke, Affiche exposition 8 1/2 (*La Suisse. Berne : fumier devant la Kunsthalle*), 1970  
 Silkscreen poster of the exhibition organized by the Harald Szeemann Agency, Berne & Klaus Rinke, Düsseldorf  
 62 x 44 cm  
 coll. MAMCO, Soizic Audouard  
 and Xavier Givaudan donation, in memory  
 of Claude Givaudan



Piotr Kowalski, *Ceci se déplace à 29 km / sec\*\* par rapport au soleil.*, avril 1969  
 Non-framed silkscreen  
 56.10 x 44.90 cm  
 coll. MAMCO, Soizic Audouard  
 and Xavier Givaudan donation, in memory  
 of Claude Givaudan

# PIOTR KOWALSKI

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Exhibition organized by honorary curator Françoise Ninghetto,  
with the support of Soizic Audouard and Andrea Kowalski.

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Piotr Kowalski (1927–2004) embodies the figure of the artist as research scientist and inventor—a tradition dating back to Leonardo da Vinci. Born in Warsaw, Kowalski studied mathematics and architecture at MIT in Cambridge (Massachusetts, USA) and moved to France in the late 1950s. He practiced first as an architect, notably with Ieoh Ming Pei, Marcel Breuer, and Jean Prouvé, before turning to art and developing a corpus of sculptural work based on scientific principles. For Kowalski, the practice of art cannot be purely aesthetic: art is an urgent necessity, an expression of social activism.

Kowalski uses state-of-the-art and everyday technology like a painter uses colour, to “transform the world and produce objects,” but never as an end in itself—always as a stimulus to the imagination. He strives to make the laws of physics perceptible, using poetic means, everyday language and contemporary tools. He dreamed of creating a space for “joyful wisdom” or learning—a kind of amusement park of ideas, designed to forge an understanding of the universe through objects. Kowalski produces simple, minimalist forms and basic structures, invariably as the result

of a process made visible by the artist. His works vary in size from extremely small to vast—on the scale of a city. Very early on, he reflected on the possibility of incorporating art into the urban fabric, and produced monumental works in France, the US, and Japan.

His inquisitive, scientific approach leads him to use a broad range of materials, keeping pace with technological progress. His exploratory works have incorporated light, gases, lasers, explosives, magnetic energy, holograms, microprocessors, and the Internet. Some of Kowalski’s works hand control to the viewer: by displacing a tube, cube or glass sphere containing a variety of rare gases or a magnetic field, he or she triggers the diffusion of radiant, coloured light. In this way, Kowalski gives the viewer a tool for direct learning, while at the same time inspiring a sense of poetic, almost child-like astonishment. Added to which, the spoken word – the voice of the poet Ghérasim Luca—forges an unbreakable link between science and the imagination.



The exhibition is organized by Paul Bernard, based on works in public collections in Geneva.

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Hungarian artist Klara Kuchta (b. 1941) studied at the Bucharest Academy of Fine and Decorative Arts, where she specialized in textiles and developed a distinctive technique based on Aubusson tapestry, allowing her to incorporate a variety of different materials in the same piece. She came to prominence as a textile artist at the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennial of 1972, and moved to Switzerland permanently in 1975.

Kuchta abandoned tapestry when she discovered the “sociological” art of Fred Forest, Hervé Fischer, and Jean-Paul Thénot. For almost ten years, she focused exclusively on the study of hair, reflecting her determination to connect art, society, and the economy. She established a research program to conduct a phenomenological study of hair, as a visual object (both living and dead) and a traditional, cultural artefact. Her research took the form of a series of projects conducted with meticulous, quasi-scientific rigor throughout the 1970s, combining installation, performance, and video.

Critic Pierre Restany discovered Kuchta’s work and invited her to exhibit at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, in 1978. Kuchta presented a piece entitled *Venetian Blond*: based on wedding agency advertisements of the period,

and the bleaching and dyeing techniques used by 15th-century Venetian women on their hair, Kuchta notes how the color known as Venetian blond represents an enduring archetype of Western femininity. In its own, detached way, the work deconstructs the mythic qualities of hair, and the values with which we impute it.

As the guest of the International Cultural Center in Antwerp, in 1979, Kuchta initiated her project *Echantillon de grande valeur* (“Sample of great value”), which she has conducted ever since. Through encounters and performances, she collects strands of hair from her subjects and asks them to complete a questionnaire. In this way, she has amassed an archive of several hundred strands, reflecting hair treatments and fashions, social pressures and individual quests for identity. Some of the strands have acquired the status of quasi-religious relics—notably the shared braid of artists Marina Abramovic and Ulay. Accompanying the collection, “tables of statistics” present Kuchta’s sociological research, conducted since 1975 in association with a leading, global shampoo manufacturer.



*Fire Piece* was donated to MAMCO by Zurich Insurance Company Ltd this year. It adds to the corpus of works by Paik in the museum's collection, presented in 2017 on occasion of the Marika Malacorda bequest.

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"The Michelangelo of electronic art," "visionary missionary," "cultural terrorist"...just some of the many descriptions applied to Video art pioneer Nam June Paik (b. Korea, 1932; d. Miami, 2006). From his early performances to multimedia installations, video strips, "prepared televisions" and "video sculptures," Nam June Paik's contribution to the history and development of video art has been exceptional indeed. Razor-sharp, witty, and provocative, his work is a relentless quest for new strategies for the deconstruction and reinvention of televisual language, content and technology. Paik asserted that Video art was more than a screen and a sequence of images: it was the stuff of life itself. He created the first ever work of video art by filming Pope Paul VI riding in an open-top car down Fifth Avenue in New York. The piece was shot from a taxi and screened that same evening at Café Au Go-Go in Greenwich Village.

Created in 1992, *Fire Piece* is a large-scale video installation of black television screens

showing color images of a fire. Paik uses the television, his "fetish object," both as an art form in its own right and a support for the diffusion of images. The colorful moving images emanating from the stack of technological devices are a perfect illustration of the two-fold function of the television as object/motif and support in Paik's work. Piled one on top of the other, as here, the televisions are elements in a physical work of sculpture. But as devices for the transmission of pictures, they stand as a counterpoint to the work's dark, technological, apocalyptic landscape, while at the same time transmitting an image of destruction by fire.

The piece is also an acid critique of the television as an icon of domesticity: an object that even now is used by many to transmit the image of a fire burning into their homes, all day long. A world of comfort and reassurance that falls apart before our eyes.



# FRANZ ERHARD WALTHER

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Walther's work *1. Werksatz* was acquired for the museum Antonie and Philippe Bertherat, Marc Blondeau, Pierre Darier, Christina and Pierre de Labouchere, Aline and Christian Gauduel, Philippe Nordmann, Bernard Sabrier, and Karma Liess-Shakarchi.

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One work by German artist Franz Erhard Walther (\*1939) has featured prominently at MAMCO since the museum first opened: *1. Werksatz* (1963–1969) or *Work Ensemble 1*. A frequent presence in the exhibition spaces, this ensemble of 58 textile objects begun while Walther was still a student at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, and completed in New York. The work is often presented as a *Werklager* or *Work Storage*, a room in which the objects are arranged together, sometimes with related photographs and/or drawings.

The objects are simple geometric forms (rectangles, squares, linear shapes, circles, etc.) made from textiles, so that they suggest jackets, rugs, fabric strips—each viewer is free to interpret them as s/he sees fit. In each case, the viewer's own body becomes the means to activate, reveal, or invent the plastic potential of these sculptural objects. As Franz Erhard Walther states, the viewer engages with and defines the work, in response to its forms, not merely by looking, but through the involvement of his/her entire body. The *Werksatz* is, then, an "open" work that can be "activated" (literally or imaginatively) by the audience. The project is rooted in a minimal visual vocabulary (Walther was hailed as one of the first "German minimalists") that hints at possible uses for its sculptural components (for this reason, it has been described as a "participative minimalist" work).

The black-and-white photographs, taken by Timm Rautert, often in accordance with the artist's instructions, are more than a documentary record: they envisage the usage of the objects that make up *1. Werksatz*, and their manipulation (*Handlung*), mostly in natural landscape settings. One or more figures are seen unfolding and using one of the *Werksatz* items, so that they "become sculpture." The images offer a variety of perspectives on the work, not so much a photographic record as an exploration of its potentiality.

Occasionally, *1. Werksatz* is displayed with an accompanying ensemble of drawings in line and watercolour wash, known as *Werkzeichnungen* (*Work Drawings*). Combining figures, words, lines, and colours, these are not working drawings but rather graphic extensions of the project, into media other than sculpture or photography.

The use of the term *Werklager* (*Work Storage*) to describe this type of presentation of an ensemble of objects, with its accompanying photographic and graphic extensions, reflects the importance accorded by Franz Erhard Walther's to the arrangement of forms as a practice that is an integral, essential aspect of their display. This in itself is a significant innovation.

## *A cappella*

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Visitors entering the sound installation of seven musical sequences by Kristin Oppenheim (\*1959) find themselves at the heart of the medium of song. The *a cappella* voice retains the essence of the original song: a short melody and one or two phrases. The artist appeals to the individual and collective memory by featuring a familiar tune, played on a loop.

The voice comes close, sharpens our senses and envelops us in its gentle warmth. A second, more distant voice overlays the first and expands the sound-space. The spatialization and reverberation of the voices enables us to ascertain distance and become aware of the space. Our listening is conditioned by the way in which sound is inscribed in space.

The work also brings primal sensations to the surface, through vocal vibrations, the shifts back and forth between the voices, and the rhythm, comparable to that of breathing. The body is more than a screen onto which the voices project: it is a permeable, receptive organism that allows us to rediscover the tactile properties of sound. And yet, contrasting with this conscious physicality, we detect a kind of evanescence at work, the absence of a body projecting this plain, unadorned song into the empty space.

Oppenheim's use of lyrics also evokes a sense of lacking, inadequacy and distance from the other: the artist glimpses a figure in *Through an Open Window* (1992); she is neglected in *Shiver* (1992), she weeps in *Cry Me a River* (1992), then in more seductive mode, calls out "Squeeze me tight" in *Starry Night* (1993). In *The Spider and I* (1993), a strikingly visual cover of Lesley Gore's song *I Would*, she sings of all the journeys she would make for love: "I would swim the coldest oceans, I would walk in burning sands, I would crawl across the desert with my heart held in my hands." The title of Oppenheim's work suggests the voice spinning its threads in space, like a web.

For Kristin Oppenheim, voices take the place of figures, as they accompany the visitor. Singing allows her to play on a comprehensive range of emotions. The use of melody favors the development of more haunting, vulnerable, cajoling vocal nuances. Ultimately, the tone and the use of repetition seek to reveal other voices, buried deep inside us all.

# PARTNERS

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