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## KUNSTHAUSBASELLAND

### Jonathan Monk

27th May – 17th July 2016

#### EXHIBIT MODEL ONE.

“...But on occasion I like to do some things slightly differently. Maybe this is one of those occasions.”

#### Jonathan Monk in conversation with Ines Goldbach

**Ines Goldbach:** Let's talk about your concept for the solo exhibition here at the Kunsthaus, which is quite unusual. You once said that what you really like is the fact that a lot of artists make models for their exhibitions – and now we are making an installation that will look like a model; all the works are black and white images of themselves. What interests you most in this idea?

**Jonathan Monk:** My original plan was a straightforward exhibition of objects etc.. But to invent something new, to add a new aspect within the usual framework of realising an exhibition, though also due to the financial constraints, I decided to come up with something that was a new departure for me, yet would still fit within Kunsthaus Baselland's proposed budget and open up questions about the condition of an exhibition itself.

In the past I've tried to make exhibitions that had no fixed concept, but the actual installation would be what held the works together...works that had been made years apart were encouraged to sit together. I never make models of exhibition spaces; I prefer to deal with works directly in the space. For Baselland I've worked with the idea of a model of an exhibition, a model that does not really include specific works. The idea was an exhibition made up of images of some of my previous exhibition – a 2D installation of installations.

**IG:** What, in your opinion, will be the interesting point for you, though also for the audience, about experiencing works of art in a 2D image installation instead of having them 1:1 in front of you? A model of an exhibition, for example, gives an idea of an exhibition but does not represent the work itself and is usually unable to mediate the physical experience of the work.

**JM:** A lot of art is experienced in book form and it is probably more common now to see art via the Internet. We are used to looking at pictures of work rather than the work itself. It has become almost impossible to tell the difference. I often see art in museums that I only know from books; sometimes it feels like I am just ticking things off the long list of things I need to see. I feel I already know the work, probably without having seen it. Most art I experience in my head anyway...but naturally the physical interaction with some artwork can't be matched on the printed page. My show might have the feeling of walking through the pages of a crudely photocopied book.

**IG:** We are going to produce a publication as well, one which, on the one hand, shows all the black and white images and installation views from different locations and times mentioned, as well as illustrations of the exhibition here in the Kunsthaus, both with and without visitors – and the interview we are doing right now. In a way it's the only 'object' within the exhibition, and takes it to extremes. It is documentation of an exhibition that has itself the character of documentation, opening a publication which you have just walked through, verifying your own perception of an exhibition and works you really did see, or maybe only shots of their installations. How do you view this publication?

**JM:** The catalogue will document the exhibition. It will add to it and become part of it. And yes, it is the only object within the exhibition. Something that is there to be removed – like the wallpaper.

**IG:** Your exhibition is entitled 'Exhibit Model One' – this sounds like an ongoing process. Do you already know where the project of an exhibition with no limits might lead? What interests you most about this new kind of planning, creating, experiencing and publishing? This new kind of exhibition model?

**JM:** There is a plan for this type of exhibition to continue. But I'm not sure exactly where. Within each exhibition space the

images used in the piece would function differently and could be exchanged for many others. The next publication could, and would, also vary. Once the system is in place the show makes itself. It needs some help but can grow quite easily if nurtured. I also think it would be possible to install another, more traditional exhibition directly upon this one. One would be the background for the other.

**IG:** Could that lead to more freedom for both the artist and the institution, without missing the physical part of an 'exhibition of objects' as you offer a physical experience of the space? You once mentioned the idea of traveling with an exhibition – also a retrospective – on a memory stick...

**JM:** Certainly in this case. I'm slowly starting to see the rooms of the Kunsthhaus as the object; images from some previous exhibitions have simply been allowed to envelop the space. I'm hoping the lack of objects will allow the viewer to focus on the spaces seen within the space. But I'll only know this once the exhibition has been installed...it might be impossible to paper over the cracks after the fact. Perhaps reviewing images allowed me to focus, to find a place to which we can come and be free for a while to think about what we are going to do.

**IG:** I always admired the way you deal with expectations, those of institutions as well as those of visitors. Could it be more radical for an internationally known, mid-career artist – with many artworks in circulation, working with several important galleries – to have an exhibition during the period of the most significant international art fair but to exhibit not a single artwork in it? Is the show here at the Kunsthhaus an answer to some of the expectations placed upon you as an artist?

**JM:** This context was a starting point, yes. But it was perhaps too obvious, even for me, to fill the show with things that could be sold. I know that Art Basel is more than a trade fair... though from the outside it is basically a place where we are encouraged to sell our wares; two weeks after Art Basel the giant halls of the Messe will be pitching to completely different kinds of buyers.

I have very low expectations; I also try not to think too much about what is expected from me. It's probably nothing; 'Exhibit Model One' is an experiment and it seems to work on the screen of my computer. Clean, polished and perfectly aligned. The reality of 400m<sup>2</sup> of wallpaper might be something different – awkward and messy and out of sync – both approaches seem to fit the way I work.

**IG:** What do you mean by saying you have "very low expectations?" Regarding what? The art scene, the art fairs or art in general? I think, at the moment especially, we face again a moment in time when society is confronted with many experiences, situations, fears, uncertainties and problems that we are not familiar with. Culture, and art in particular, would or could function as a tool to help us face the unknown. Interestingly, although everything is changing within our society, the society that provides the context and the surroundings, inside art institutions, museums, the art scene and maybe exhibitions as well everything stays the same. Maybe your exhibition can be read as a first step towards the question: should we carry on regardless, like we do all the time, or should we rethink everything?

**JM:** In relation to my own career as an artist – I never expect anything. I'm actually pleased to even be able to say I'm an artist, that I'm encouraged to do what I do and that people seem to be interested in allowing me to continue. The art world seems to quietly tick away – without being influenced by the world around it. Prices of certain works continue to rise and this seems to keep the people at the top of the pile happy and no doubt annoy people lower down the chain. Perhaps life just becomes too easy and the self-celebratory aspect of the art world is just not interesting anymore. There is something sadly false about it all. Museums and other cultural institutions seem to feel the difficulties before the private sector acknowledges any problems. Governments rely on collectors and large private corporations to sponsor their museums. It seems to be all wrong but it is probably the only way forwards. Even Art Basel is sponsored by UBS – it would be great if this allowed free entry for all, but comically it only allows free entry for the VIP collectors and artists who attend the glittering opening event. I'm not sure how my exhibition fits into all of this...maybe I'll know once I've seen it.

**IG:** Many of your works can be seen and experienced as a reaction to and an interaction with the art of your colleagues, or the concept of artist colleagues, but you often give them the chance to react and interact as well. I like the idea within your exhibition here at the Kunsthhaus that you react and interact with the conditions of this particular exhibition space, its financial restraints, but maybe also its freedoms, in so far as you are able to react with new ideas and exhibition concepts. As a curator I will be confronted with thoughts and questions that the appearance of the exhibition will raise; maybe I'll have to work with expectations about the exhibition that won't be fulfilled. Are these, I'll call them 'positive interventions and irritations,' in relation to art, colleagues, art institutions, curators and directors part of your artistic undertaking?

**JM:** Thank you! And yes. I often think that artists become masters at making their own work. I also fall into this trap – but on occasion I like to do some things slightly differently. Maybe this is one of those occasions. This is perhaps what makes it exciting for me. The installation process will be long and hard and my wallpapering skills are not vast, so things could go wrong; but that will then become part of the work.

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## THE ART NEWSPAPER



### SPECIAL REPORTS

Earplugs required for Douglas Gordon's Bound to Hurt performance plus more Basel gossip  
Life imitates art, beer bellies magnified in Unlimited installation, and so much more  
by THE ART NEWSPAPER | 17 June 2016

### Navel-gazing of the highest order

There is no shortage of shows in the Art Basel institutional orbit, but should you tire of those, might an exhibition on exhibitions be of interest? The Kunsthau Baselland is showing Exhibit Model One, a conceptual meta-exhibition by the UK artist Jonathan Monk that seeks to examine "the conditions of an exhibition". There are no works in Monk's presentation, just giant black-and-white representations of installation views from previous shows his work was in, such as Less Is More Than One Hundred Indian Bicycles, at the Kunstraum Dornbirn in 2013. "My show might have the feel of walking through the pages of a crudely photocopied book," Monk says in the catalogue. (True.) "I'm hoping the lack of objects will allow the viewer to focus on the spaces seen within the space." Indeed, one comes away with a strong sense of the exhibition aesthetic: pacific, white and idiosyncratic in familiar and clearly defined ways. Surely such a show is not on during Art Basel by accident.

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# ATP DIARY

## Interview with Jonathan Monk – Claymation, Museo Zauli

Matteo Mottin  
October 3, 2015



Jonathan Monk. Claymation - Residenza Museo Zauli, Faenza 2015 - Work in progress

On October 5 Museo Carlo Zauli in Faenza will present Claymation, solo show by Jonathan Monk curated by Guido Molinari. The exhibition features ceramic artworks designed by Monk during his June residency for the XII edition of the project Residenza d'Artista.

We asked some questions to Jonathan Monk to know more about this project.

**ATP: Could you introduce us to your residency? How did you manage your time in Faenza?**

Jonathan Monk: I managed it very well. It was quite short and reasonably intense. I haven't really worked in

ceramics since I was in high school, so it was really a chance to explore the media again. In the end I came out with two different things, and the third was just an attempt, or an experiment. From my experience at high school, I remember that there was a clay bin in the corner of the space. It was there to recycle failed attempts. Once students made an object and they were not happy with it, the clay was just recycled. It was a big bucket that was full of water that people would throw their mistakes into, so the clay can be used again. I took this idea and actually made a one to one copy of a dustbin, that would be painted outside black, like the plastic bin it's been taken from, and the inside just shows the clay and my fingerprints how they were pushed into the mould. This is one of the pieces that were made. The other piece is actually quite hard to explain, and even when you see it it's hard to imagine, but it was a vase, or it is a vase, or hopefully it will be a vase if it survives the journey through the kiln. It's based on my hands, I used them as the negative space inside the vase, so it's possible to put ten flowers in it. Each stem of the flower goes into what would be the negative of my fingers. It looks kind of crude, but hopefully it will work. It was very complicated to make. I'm not involved in that process, we just used my hands.

**ATP: In Faenza did you discover new or traditional techniques that inspired you for other works?**

JM: Maybe more about the process of how you can work with clay became interesting during the days that I was here. Being such an old and traditional material, to be honest I've not really explored it greatly, but it was nice to come here and think about the possibilities of using clay in different ways. I had ideas for other things that I could make in the future, maybe with other ceramicists from this area. We'll see it if it goes any further.

**ATP: What are these ideas about?**

JM: I want to copy an existing sculpture by someone else, and then find this moment, which I'm not really sure exists, where the clay is not dry exactly but it's possible to take it out of the mould, and cut it in half, or bend it slightly. I don't know if it's even possible. We made another cast yesterday and we took it out of the mould today, and I think there must be a moment when you can still play around with the clay before it's dry, and then hopefully fire the clay when it's been manipulated slightly.

**ATP: Could you tell me further about your interest in the process?**

JM: I guess with clay and ceramics you're always following almost the same process, and then every ceramicist over the centuries added their own touch of magic – not that I feel that I have any magic touches, but you can see what other people have done and maybe twist the process slightly, hopefully changing it and adding things that have not been added before, which I'm sure it's very difficult, if not impossible.

I also like the idea that in the last minutes or the last seconds of a piece being made, if you have air bubbles in the clay, it can still actually explode in the kiln. I guess it's like when you make a film on real film and you're not sure until it gets processed of what's on the actual film. It's something that I still find interesting, the excitement whether the things actually gonna work. You can spend months creating something with the idea that it could be destroyed when you try to finish it.

**ATP: Why did you decide to call the exhibition Claymation? Is it also the title of one of the pieces?**

JM: Maybe not. I didn't really have a title, I have to say, but I quite like this idea of claymation. Wallace and Gromit, you know? That's not clay, but it's some material that they animate with stop motions, and these characters come alive. I guess the idea of claymation is speaking about what essentially is just soil and that you can give it life – up to a point, I mean, it doesn't appear to be alive but you give it another life, so that's why I thought claymation might make sense, even if it's not really Wallace and Gromit. (laughs) It's funny, but it makes sense.



Jonathan Monk. Claymation – Residenza Museo Zauli, Faenza 2015 – Work in progress



Jonathan Monk. Claymation – Residenza Museo Zauli, Faenza 2015 – Work in progress



Jonathan Monk. Claymation – Residenza Museo Zauli, Faenza 2015 – Work in progress

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## Why Philadelphia Is Commissioning Skateable Public Art

The city hopes to engage young people in its downtown parks and museum plazas by installing skateable sculptures.



One of Jonathan Monk's "skateable sculptures" (Facebook/City of Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program)

Philadelphia kicked off its new public outdoor-arts exhibition Open Source: Engaging Audiences in Public Space on Friday with two sculptures made for skateboarding on. The artist Jonathan Monk installed the "Skateable Sculptures" in Paine's Park, a publicly funded skate park built in 2013, not far from the downtown Philadelphia Museum of Art. Monk's sculptures appropriate, in some ways, some of Sol LeWitt's public artworks found in the museum's sculpture garden.

In an effort to “explore and illuminate Philadelphia’s diverse urban identity,” additional pieces built for public interaction will be created through October by a range of artists, including Shepard Fairey and immigrants-rights activist and artist Michelle Angela Ortiz. The project as a whole is part of Philadelphia’s famed Mural Arts Program.

Monk discussed his minimal approach to designing the sculptures in an interview with Gregston Hurdle at Green Label:

**[Hurdle]:** Your approach to your work is similar to a skateboarder’s approach to their environment. You take what is established or “not to be touched” and make it your own. Has this ever occurred to you before? Was it the reason your pieces for Open Source incorporate skateboarding and skateboarders?

**[Monk]:** Perhaps. But in this case I was specifically invited to make a skateable sculpture for Philadelphia. The skate park’s location helped, so I drew direct parallels to the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s small sculpture park, a short skate from Paine’s Park.

Monk will add more “skateable sculptures” over the next few months, but says his exhibit won’t be complete until skaters actually start using them. It was just six years ago that skating in Philly’s parks was illegal, with police sometimes enforcing the ban through excessive force. Monk’s collaboration with the city seems, in part, an effort to renegotiate that downtown space so that its youth can co-exist with tourism and basic city leisure without the tension of aggressive police oversight.

Said Monk to Green Label about skating on his sculptures, “I just hope nobody hurts themselves. It does seem to be pretty dangerous.”

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**cac Málaga**

Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga

## **FERNANDO FRANCES | DIRECTOR OF CAC MALAGA**

When visiting a theme park one maintains an innocent attitude that responds to the childlike illusion of experiencing and playing with curiosity, while keeping the surprise factor active. These are exactly the sort of exciting experiences that the viewer has when suddenly encountering a work of art, although the desired result is not always achieved. It is precisely this capacity that is contemporary art's principal virtue and if there is one artist who stands out in this sense it is Jonathan Monk (born Leicester, UK, 1969), a leading name in conceptual art. CAC Málaga is now presenting the work of this British artist for the first time in a museum in Spain. Monk invites the viewer of his work to climb onto a roundabout of emotions, to have fun, to rediscover the playful side of life and above all, to keep alive the capacity to be surprised at what is to be seen in the gallery. In all his previous exhibitions Monk has succeeded in preserving intact both uncertainty and the surprise factor. One example is the exhibition organised in 2005 by the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, which was the first retrospective of Monk's work to be held in his native country. For this event Monk divided the gallery into two different display areas: one of them had fixed, unalterable works in it while in the other, the arrangement was changed every day. The result was a children's game, a naughty piece of fun, but it meant that every 24 hours we could see a different exhibition, with the result that visitors' expectations were maintained on a daily basis.

Monk moves like a fish in water in the field of experimentation. Any memory or work of art can provide the basis for the construction of a body of work that involves a boundless imagination and also the use of irony, the latter predisposing the viewer to look at his art with a sense of humour.

Given that the imagination has no limits, Monk's creative capacity does not envisage them either. Sculptures, prints, paintings, videos, photographs, installations and neon works: his artistic versatility knows no boundaries. In one of his works the starting point consists of photographs from a family album, based around a photograph of his parents, his sisters and himself having fun together in 1977. In other works ('Trying to imagine the colour of my brain whilst painting' trying to imagine the colour of my brain, 2000) an intellectual reflection is the guiding thread that expresses through watercolour the notion of his brain's activity while he is working.

Monk's references may also be derived from works by other artists, which he reinterprets in his own style. The avant-garde painter Piet Mondrian and the contemporary artists Jeff Koons, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner and Bas Jan Ader are among his references. While drawing on the work of these artists and on the artistic icons and art movements of the 1960s and 1970s, Monk introduces them into his own realm of experience that involves his childhood and the vivid years of his youth.

Another source of inspiration for the artist is books. The bohemian environment in which he was brought up by his parents meant that there was no television or other "modern" items at home. Film and reading thus became their principal forms of entertainment. As Monk himself has acknowledged, while he was originally most interested in football magazines, his intellectual curiosity gradually led him to turn to art ones, thus encouraging his creative side. The smallest detail brought forth a rich horde of forms, figures and colours

that meant that he was in a constant state of creation, and Monk's talent did not go unnoticed by his parents and teachers. By the early 1990s it was starting to take shape, and during his early career these references to his life, environment and English culture were notably present.

An example of the latter is provided by the performances in which Monk recreated a relaxed afternoon with friends in a pub (*Making Work*, 1994), and which are reflected in the permanent marks on a canvas left by the drinks of the people present at these gatherings. Another example is his action of waiting for famous people in airports with signs bearing their names (*Waiting for Famous People*, 1995-1997).

The texts, words and forms to be seen in his neon pieces encourage questions and ideas that remain floating in the air as dispersed thoughts in the exhibition space (*Do Not Pay More than \$80,000*, 2009) or which enclose a story or childhood memory in a work consisting of a photograph and a word in neon (*A Short Story Translated by My Mother & Milk {Barbecue}*, 2008). Once again, these intimate childhood memories return to the present and are on display in an exhibition space, in full view of everyone.

The roundabout of emotions does not stop for any viewer who contemplates the work of Jonathan Monk, given that the visitor will undoubtedly rediscover his or her own experiences and freely and openly share them with the artist. This ability to allow ourselves to be carried away and succumb to provocation is the most playful and amusing side of art and one that is absolutely evident in the present exhibition. Viewers need to be prepared to get on the fairground ride of their own lives.

Colours, Forms, and Text/Words According to Jonathan Monk  
JESUS PALOMINO

## I. INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Monk's work consists of invention or of the intention to invent. Experimentation with texts, drawings, objects, photographic images, videos, 16 mm films, slide projectors, and so on substantiates a solid aesthetic project that uses methods of appropriation, reproduction, and textuality as needed to articulate his work, from the starting point of references encountered in Art History, personal and family memories, favourite books, and the art world. All this found material, which the artist appropriates, imitates, duplicates, reproduces repetitively or simply in a varied, idiosyncratic manner, forms the basis for his practice: a practice characterized by a refined process of selection and reinterpretation, of transformation and contraction, of a formal and symbolic stretching to which the artist subjects his appropriate materials, achieving, nonetheless, an end result that retains a personal air of freshness, lightness, and humour.

Monk does not appear interested in the question of the original, nor in that of authorship or style; his enquiry seems more taken up with a constant movement of opening up and a constant flux, in the sense that the starting point of the work allows for an experience of communication and encounter. Escaping as far as possible from formal rigidity and conceptual aridity, Monk seeks the human touch in the reception of his work and tries to invent something different through the introduction of a calculated cognitive dissonance that amplifies the conventional processes of interpretation and provokes the possibility of differentiated thought in the spectator.

In his early work at the beginning of the 1990s, Monk focused his interest on references to English popular culture and pub culture mediated through photographic documentation, performance, painting and the conscious use of titles as a significant textual element. Starting from a referentiality that seemed of minor importance and paid attention to seemingly banal details and low-level symbolic capital, Monk elaborated a dialectically ironic discourse that theatricalized the encounter between "high and low culture," combining a calculated dose of hooliganism with methods and procedures particular to contemporary art practices. The performativity of some of these early works reproduced attitudes and activities in a spontaneous manner, which allowed the artist to launch an assault on artistic practice through the medium of a demystifying social

gaze that gave access to action and social participation. These performances, conceived as simple exercises in strategic essentialism, allowed the artist to realize his inversion: treating History on the one hand at the level of everyday life and, on the other, incorporating the banality of the day-to-day in art discourses.<sup>1</sup> These theatricalizations of sociability on the relational level, often resolved quickly through humour, were nonetheless not free from a certain friction and tension.<sup>2</sup>

His work *My name written in my piss* (1994) belongs to this era of high beer consumption. A pair of two photographs show the moment at which the artist, standing on the sand in a beach landscape, inevitably has to urinate and takes the opportunity to memorialize his name: Jonathan written in his own urine. The pair of black and white photographs *Yard of Ale (Get Shirty)* (1994) also document a pub ritual. The first image shows the start of the action and the artist holding a container with a large quantity of beer in his hands; the second image shows the artist after he has drunk the entire contents of the container. The pair of photographs omits the action of the process, which, we imagine, brings on drunkenness more quickly, at the same time as it implies a show of manliness, determination, and alcohol tolerance. Or the revealing action documented in *Me up a tree* similar to one painted by Piet Mondrian in about 1915 (1995), in which the artist appears to have climbed a tree that indeed calls to mind trees represented in Mondrian's early paintings. The action is explained in the title. In a similar manner, he documented his ascent to the top of a public sculpture in *Me up a tree* similar to one painted by Piet Mondrian in about 1944 (2000); or his performances in an airport arrivals lounge, where he went greeting signs in hand to stage a histrionic reception for Marcel Duchamp, Woody Allen, and Princess Diana in his series *Waiting for Famous People* (1995-1997).

Towards the end of the 1990s, Monk's work takes a new direction, developing an astonishing licence for citation, appropriation, and referentiality, using existing works by legitimate authors for his own project. (As they say in Spanish, "citar es resucitar": "to cite is to resuscitate.") Initially, he focused his interest on the creative methods of the post-conceptual artists from the New York scene in the 1980s, such as Jeff Koons, Ashley Bickerton, Richard Prince, and Sherrie Levine; he later went on to find models in the conceptual and minimal art of the 1960s and 1970s, starting with the works of Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Joseph Kosuth, Douglas Huebler, and so on. The intention behind these operations of appropriation was to access new possibilities of expression in plastic media through the dissolution of closed positions, the rejection of rigid decision making, the refutation of a clear definition, and the critique of confinement in a single, definite place. In his games of referentiality, realized with a high degree of spontaneity and procedural clarity, the artist expresses knowledge and respectful admiration and seems to be openly declaring: "If I admire all these authors deeply, why would I not base my investigation on their works, ideas and methods?"

## II. KNOW-HOW

If the works appropriated in various ways as formal or conceptual citations serve as the basis for Monk's practice, I would like to analyse the particular way in which this process occurs in his work, taking as an example *Untitled (me naked in the kitchen)* (2004), an aluminium slab 100 x 138.7 x 2 cm large and weighing 75 kg, resting on the ground. The slab has a minimal aspect that easily calls up echoes of the work of Donald Judd or Carl Andre. Obviously an aluminium slab such as this does not retain any realistic or mimetic reference to the human body, which, according to the title, is the body of the artist, naked in the kitchen. The only reference that can indicate to us that the slab still bears some relationship to the artist's body is its weight. The artist and the slab weigh exactly the same: 75 kg. In this work the artist introduces the concept of presence through the textual and imaginative game of the title but also through the medium of a dimension, in this case the medium of weight. Monk weighs 75 kg and so does the slab. This is his way of incorporating the figural element of the naked body in this piece of metal the appearance of which is coldly industrial.<sup>3</sup> So we have: a) the formal presence of the aluminium slab, which we can perceive as it is, in its physical materiality of 100 x 138.7 x 2 cm, 75 kg in weight, with a cold, polished surface; b) the referential level that brings us historical echoes of the minimal and its precise orthodoxy; c) the cognitive displacement encouraged by the title, which facilitates the incorporation of the figural in the object. In short, in *Untitled (me naked in the kitchen)*, the perceptual experience, the historical reference, and the meta-linguistic game of the title produce

an idiosyncratic aesthetic device through the medium of an operation of mystification that combines formal purism, imaginative humour, and the subjective accumulation of the artist's process. As the end result of this multifaceted process, interruptions occur between form, reference, and title, which the spectator must overcome on the mental level by using their imaginative and interpretative skills. It is these interruptions that are responsible for the humour, the way in which a laminated slab of industrially-produced aluminium gives rise to the suggestion of the naked artist's "self portrait."

In *Untitled (rolled up)* (2003), we encounter another good example of Monk's characteristic production, which the author explains simply as "My height converted into a minimal circular sculpture". This work consists of a tubular arc, the circumference of which measures the exact height of the artist, 177.5 cm. This dimension, which he identifies with his own person (Height = Me), allows him to realize his abstract synthesis by means of a synecdoche and to elaborate a series of sculptures following this particular method.<sup>4</sup>

The series was extended to constitute a group of works with a distinct personality despite their formal thinness. Using the same material, aluminium tubing, Monk presents more elegant and bare circular sculpture. This time the operation consists of introducing his height, 177.5 cm, in the diameter of a tubular circumference entitled *I See Through You See Through Me* (2003). Next, he elaborates a series of sculptures in the shape of a triangle, a square, and a pentagon, the sides of which all measure 177.5 cm, the artist's height. These sculptures, with their minimal form, figural resonance, and their titles' multifaceted textual game, involve us in a network of readings and connections that are not exhausted by simple identification of the process of the work's conceptual production. In order to address objects produced to be visual experiments, as mentioned above, it will be better to comprehend them from the starting point of images.<sup>5</sup>

This general introduction to Monk's work and methods would be incomplete without some comment on his work *One Cubic Metre of Infinity (with Disco Ball)* (2012) and the curious history surrounding it. The work transforms the chosen reference point of *Metrocubo d'Infinito* created originally by the Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto in 1966. The work is a one-metre cube constructed with six mirrors whose faces reflect inwards. Monk introduced a simple but definitive variation when constructing his own appropriationist version, simply altering the placement of the mirrors, which now reflect outwards (*Un metro cubo d'infinito, reversed* [2005]). He also constructed a quite humorous version starting from the same reference, introducing a mirrored disco ball into the mirrored metric cube. I wonder if it is cause and effect that the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto presented a solo performance some months ago at the Louvre, the main action of which consisted of destroying a version of his original *Metrocubo d'Infinito*.<sup>6</sup> Whether or not Pistoletto was annoyed by this history, Monk's long and prolific career would be difficult to sum up briefly, given his very varied strategies, different in each moment and open to new developments in the future, which indeed appear to proceed from " ... for saying simple things in your own way, in affects, intensities, experiences, experiments."<sup>7</sup> And it is possibly this versatility and will to openness, expressed in a work of light and slight formality, that lends Monk's work its conceptual interest and assertiveness as experience.

### III. PERFORMATIVITY HAPPY HOUR

The body is in the social world but the social world is in the body.

-Pierre Bourdieu<sup>8</sup>

In Monk's early work, a body is dancing in front of a Richter, a body scales a tree or a LeWitt public sculpture, a body greets famous people, takes part in drinking contests, writes its name in urine on sand or on a Richard Serra sculpture, and so on. All this documented performative activity forms part of the first pieces in which the artist uses his body, his person as a vehicle for relationality and demystification. If Monk had been available as an artist in 1969, he might possibly have been included in the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* curated by Harald Szeemann at the Kunsthalle Bern, a show that brought to prominence the novel gestures and behaviours of the post-conceptual American artists who were renewing art strategies and discourses in their time.<sup>9</sup> Last year, almost 43 years later, *When Attitudes Became Form Become Attitudes* was

exhibited, a revision of the same presuppositions, curated by Jens Hoffmann in the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco. Monk's work was included in the show.

I would like to explain which behaviours tie Monk's performances together and why he is occupied with gestures, activities, and events that have a marked social character. Critically these actions were related to what was available in the social and artistic field (appropriationism),<sup>10</sup> to the performativity of a temporal social identity (strategic essentialism) and, with the application of methods particular to language (lingualization),<sup>11</sup> to the practices of contemporary art. Ultimately all these actions are humorously orientated toward an irreverent, aestheticized iconoclasm (hooliganism). All this inevitably implicated a mystification of fields and a collision of various forms of capital. As the best way to understand what an object is to find out how it was made, allow me to explain: in 1994, Monk invited his friends to spend the evening in a bar whose tables are covered with canvases. He drinks, smokes, chats, and imagines that he is dancing, laughing, and joking. Well, this is what happens in this type of get-together. Making Work (1994) is a performance about the reality of meeting and celebration. I do not know if there are documentary images of this evening. I do know that the canvases that covered the tables were exhibited afterwards showing the expected tracks and traces of beer, food, and ash. The canvases were titled: Waiting with Gain, Waiting with ruborg, and Waiting with Guinness. Cain, Tuborg, and Guinness, all these well-known and popular brands of beer were eagerly awaited. At this get-together, it would appear, no one was waiting for Godot.<sup>12</sup> This festive performance, elaborated from elements of the pragmatic everyday (beers, people celebrating, traces of the experience on the canvas, and so on) that derive from the artist's personal context, endows the resulting works with collective authorship. Ultimately, the canvases were produced by everyone who took part in the event, and, as with Daniel Spoerri's tables, the remains of the festivities constituted, at least for those who took part that night, the effective possibility of artistic practice as a revitalizing force of experience of the world. "Let's have a party while pictures are painted, or paint while we party. Or, even better, do both at the same time and call the situation Making Work," is what Monk and his guests seemed to think.

These performances raised a certain amount of dystopia and cognitive head scratching<sup>13</sup> through their collision with the field of art, with its high scholarly, symbolic, and cultural capital, and the field of British middle- and working-class popular culture, with its well-established reference points and practices (pubs, beer, football, holidays in southern Europe, and so on), which the artist intentionally used.<sup>14</sup> This is because the record of these events, whether documentary or pictorial, effectively constituted the artist's work, the final destination of which, on a case-by-case basis, was a gallery or a museum space. Its interest lies in this displacement of field and exchange of capital; a mundaneness of banal capital that was recapitalized culturally, symbolically, and economically by being incorporated in the circuit of value of galleries and museums, spaces for exhibition and exchange in which art objects open up their visibility through recounting their stories, emotions and intensities.

#### IV. FEBRUARY 4, 1969

The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world.

-Hannah Arendt<sup>15</sup>

It is curious that the idea of birth occupies such an important space in Monk's work, equal to the idea of eating, action, the unexpected turn, and difference. Of course, one good way to understand an author's motivations is to listen to them talking live about their interests and inclinations. There is a great interview on film in which Monk speaks in a straightforward manner about his work.<sup>16</sup> The artist is in his studio and that lets us appreciate the atmosphere and objects that he lives with on a day-to-day basis. Behind him a painted fuchsia mural frames the conversation, alongside a battery, a gigantic poster of The Smiths, several works by the author leaning against the wall, various scattered objects, a bicycle and books, many books

and catalogues. It is a workplace, without a doubt.

In this interview Monk speaks about Happy Birthday (2011) among other works, a work that consists of a simple neon light with two lines coloured red and green exhibited on his birthday on February 4.<sup>17</sup> And so, every year, every February 4, the work will be installed and, once the twenty-four hours of this day have passed, taken down. Monk explains that gradually, year by year, through showing the work, viewers will be able to establish a relationship with the appearance of this work and its motivation, which is nothing but Monk's birthday and hence the anniversary of his birth. With the passing of time, celebration will be converted into a routine, and so the work Happy Birthday works from the artist's expressed desire to restrict its showing and visibility to the one annual date, February 4, which results in it being a work rooted in an understanding of the long passage of time.

The interview also shows the artist's interest in the illusion of time, memory, and personal life histories. Hence, it is common to find references to existing artworks in his work, combined with photographic images of his childhood and adolescence, for example. In the interview, Monk shares his select collection of his books, catalogues, and invitations, stopping to explain a pair of works resting on a piece of furniture. They are two small photographic works, two photo collages. The first is a black and white image of Dan Graham talking with a friend; the photo is from 1970: Monk has stuck a colour photo from the same year, of himself aged just one, with his sister, to the back of this image. They seem to be in their lounge, eating tea. At this moment the key to the work is revealed and seems to point to a telling temporal parallel between him, his sister, and Dan Graham. Both images were taken in 1970 but in different places. They also appear to present, in an accessible manner, the tremendous collision that results from the bringing together of personal memory and historic register. Monk shows another work similar in process, which is composed of an original invitation from the artist Bruce Nauman, the text of which reads The Consummate Mask of Rock. The artist has stuck a picture of his parents and siblings onto this, in which they appear with their faces made up like clowns, red nose and all. They are all posing on what seems to have been a family fun day in the distant year of 1977, the same date stated on the invitation to American artist Nauman's exhibition, with the intent of creating a connection, both obvious and secret, that alludes to the mask: the mask in the exhibition title and the family experience of all making up for fun in clown masks. So, in this simple and yet sophisticated way, Monk creates a reading of his works through the tension of a historical documentary juxtaposed to a collection of family memories. Again, the resulting work repeats the parallelism: same time, different space. The same year, 1977; different places by virtue of the personal circumstances of the images' protagonists: Bruce Nauman and the Monk family. These two works are good representative examples of the artist's particular and idiosyncratic approach to his work and his eloquent way of confronting historical time with personal history. In a manner that is warm and human on both levels, history and individual, they remain openly challenged in respect to what we might call a domestic interpretation of time, memory, and its representation.

After accessing this illuminating explanation of his work in the interview, I thought to type February 4, 1969, into Google. Here are the ephemera that relate to this same day: 1) The foundation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasir Arafat, whose objective was to represent the Palestinian people on their path towards national and territorial self determination; 2) Birth of the Canadian hockey player Dallas James Drake who played for the Detroit Red Wings in the Canadian professional league; 3) Birth of the actress and model Brandy Lee Ledford, also known as Jisel, who played the role of Doyle in the science fiction series Andromeda and was "Pet of the Year" in 1992 in the American edition of the magazine Penthouse.

It is also true that when looking for images relating to this date that the first thing the search engine offered me was one of Monk's pieces, A Work in Progress (to be completed when time comes) 1969 - (White) (2005), a work in which the artist's name and date of birth appear inscribed on a white marble slab. Again, the title accurately explains the process of this particular piece. Monk encourages the owner of the work to complete it when the time comes and thus it essentially remains a work in progress until the artist's death. Effectively, all this is a humorous statement on the importance of birth and the appearance of newness in the world,

which the work's owner will eventually conclude by introducing the author's date of death when he "ceases to be among men" (*inter homines esse desinere*, as Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Human Condition*).

## V. AMBIENT TEXTUALITY

One of the main achievements of conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s was its capacity to bring plastic textuality to its greatest level of formal and significative autonomy. Monk appropriates works, recuperates methods, utilizes references, and expands on strategies inherited from conceptual art, actualizing the possibilities of textuality in a very unusual and tremendously effective manner.<sup>18</sup> His use of texts has been displayed in the media of letters, words, and phrases produced in neon, in laser projections, in the aestheticized function of the titles of his works, in texts on canvas, paper, or presented on walls, and so on. It would be difficult to summarize this long list of works and would be no exaggeration to say that the exuberant variety of his textual projects will potentially expand and transform in the future.

There is a good example of this in the show now being exhibited in CAC Málaga in *The Two O's in Jeff Koons Used as Eyes (Red)* (2009), where the artist proceeds to treat the form of Koons's name in a surprising way. Monk takes from his admired artist only the two o's in the name Koons name and dismisses the rest. These two rounded forms, two o's that together easily bring to mind two eyes, are produced in red neon. The text of the title explains the process. The artist makes his process transparent, nothing remains hidden, and this object of simple, minimal form results in the transformation of the word "Koons" into a pair of eyes, which incorporates the possibility of seeing the world through them into his aesthetic device: a new, red-coloured gaze. The eyes are also produced in green, blue, and yellow neon. Isn't that wonderful? Another forceful example is the text produced in neon letters, *Do Not Pay More Than \$80,000* (2009). Attention, collectors! Although it would be interesting to know the real price of a work in order to accomplish its true intent, this work challenges the text's authority in the world, in this case, the art world, provoking a long list of questions: can the artist put a limit on the price of their own work through a literal text? Does the text speak in the artist's name? Is it Monk himself who authorizes the text? Does he do it to avoid economic speculation on his work? Is he laughing at collectors, or is it more an ironic look at gallery practices? Ultimately, we cannot know the hard science of what is occurring in this message, and it is precisely this multifaceted polysemy and plurivocality addressed in this work that aesthetically actualizes the productive friction that links world, text, and author. In the work *A Short Story Translated by My Mother & Milk (Barbecue)* (2008), the different elements of the piece remain distantly closed despite everything being visually eloquent; the upside-down red neon text and the picture of a glass of milk coagulate like a secret, clarified ambiguously by the title that tells how his mother communicated a story; the story appears to be accompanied by a picture of a glass of milk. *Barbecue & Milk? What kind of story would that be? It's a mystery. Only humour and imagination can answer that question.*

It is clear that as understanding of Monk's work deepens it admits his natural command of form in relation to intertextuality and meta-language. Another example shown in CAC Málaga exhibition is *DISAPPEAR* (2007), made out of incandescent light bulbs in the style of neon signs of the past. The use of these outmoded elements of light technology gives the work a certain nostalgic charge: *DISAPPEAR* appears like a street light whose spectacular character is now past. Possibly the provocation of meaning is triggered before a luminous word that conveys a message of disappearance, with this message transmitted through the presence of a visual sign produced to last. But Monk has added another element that gives life, or a life, to this straightforward sign. Once the individual light bulbs die they should not be replaced, thus allowing for a slow transition from light to dark, from life to death. This tension between seeing and narrating becomes entwined in an interminable loop of meanings, the final effect of which is to illustrate the potential of language and images, to give a narrative account of time and memory. This work reminds me of John Cage's paradoxical expression, "I have nothing to say / And I am saying it."

Monk's experimentation with textuality and light in his work forms part of a premeditated and simple technology, a *techne*, a rhetoric for detecting multiple visible and invisible levels of meaning and for provoking

new interconnections from the starting point of a highly-enveloping ambient and visual experience, which could on occasion be called intensely sensual. The artist designs his objects of light, his illuminated texts and installs them carefully in spaces under specific light conditions in which 16 mm films, laser installations, neon light, and slide projections are shown. These environments, created intentionally to provoking the required concentration of attention and perception, possess the capacity to add or accumulate silence because of their half-light, their black walls, and/or their specific conditions. In this way, the ambient experience of these installations becomes intensely effective on account of the type of stories that interest Monk, some of which have a marked intimacy. One profoundly intense work, unfortunately not in the current show, is *Replica 1b* (2002), in which two slide projectors each transmit carousels of eighty images each; this time the artist has chosen a colour photograph of his mother. The image has been reproduced making a copy from each copy, repeating the action of copying until the original image has become completely faint. The repeated duplication ends up making the figure and familiar face of the artist's mother, which had been gradually disappearing under the progressive accumulation of marks, blurring, and loss of image quality, unrecognizable. This simple operation of reproduction, repetition, and memory presents an analogy, a striking metaphorical parallel between the work and the biological existence of the human species. The disappearance of the mother's image, reproduced repeatedly until it deteriorates and totally disappears, reminds us of the similar process of biological ageing encountered in people's lives, and this inevitable reality of the human condition is shown to us in a neutral, distant, silent manner.

#### VI. CAC MALAGA, SEPTEMBER 13, 2013, 8:00 pm

For CAC Malaga a specific group of works made from 2000 onwards was selected. The exhibition offers a selection without a defined theme, allowing for a sufficiently open interpretation. The works selected are a good representation of the extensive range of recent processes and the breadth of Monk's "styleless style," which starts with *Deflated Sculpture No. 1* (2009), a sculpture that appropriates sculptural references from Jeff Koons, presenting a deflated version of those hyper-polished metal sculptures from the 1990s; continuing with a bare and laconic tubular sculpture entitled *Corner Piece (for Pistoletto)* (2006), an homage to the Italian artist; and finishing with *Levitating Reclining Nude* (2009), an aluminium sculpture with a green patina, which represents a towel resting on several cans of soup.<sup>19</sup> The piece is presented directly on the floor of the room; the title refers precisely to that which is not present in the sculpture; a reclining nude that it appears to be lifting up. All these pieces function by means of forceful citations of form and referential humour.

The work *The World in Stars and Stripes* (2011) functions in a slightly different way. Here Monk takes as his starting point a reference to the tapestries made by Alighiero e Boetti in Kabul, Afghanistan, in the 1970s. These tapestries, constructed with patchwork-style borders show maps of the world in which each country, each national territory, is represented by the colours of its flag. The result is a colourful and varied *mappa mundi*. Monk enacts his personal programme of transformation on the US flag. Now, and seemingly pointing to the current status quo, the map of the world does not appear bordered in its diverse, variegated colours; now each one of the territories is occupied either by the motif of "stripes" or the motif of "stars." The end product is an image of the world from the viewpoint of the universalization of the flag and culture of the United States. *Around The World (compact version)* (2010) is a good example of the careful attention paid by the artist/documentary-maker who collects references and modifies them creatively to the benefit of his plastic narrativity. The work generates a new account, a new story recomposed from the starting point of elements appropriated from the film *Around the World in 80 Days*, based on the Jules Verne novel, in which the game of mirror and reference cross to articulate a fiction within another fiction. Monk appropriates an image of the actor David Niven who played Phileas Fogg, a main character in the novel, in the film version.

The photographic image that we encounter shows Niven, in character as Fogg, riding a bicycle, probably in a break from filming. He has a small square mirror stuck onto his face. Through the reflection, the viewer will be converted into Phileas Fogg himself; will take on his identity through this simple play of reflection, identification, and the projection of a fantasy whose end is to imaginatively include the viewer in the story being told. This work is linked to a much broader project also missing from this show, entitled *Model for a Giant Mirrored Balloon and Proposal* (2000-2008). *Rew-Shay Hood Project XX* (2008-2009), which forms part

of a series of airbrush-painted car hoods from locations in Los Angeles, taken from Ed Ruscha's photographic work, functions in a similar manner, provoking documentary connections and referential turns, as does the work *Near Death Experienced* (after Jack Goldstein after Chris Burden after) (2006), an oil painting that recreates Burden's performance *Doorway to Heaven*, an iconic image that Monk appropriated from the American edition of *Artforum* from 1973.

Works that focus their interest on immediate perceptive data, treated as part of the artist's work in progress, which combine the analysis of memory and feelings, through a visual medium, operate on another level, such as *Trying to imagine the colour of my brain whilst painting' trying to imagine the colour of my brain* (2000). Its redundant and tautological title depicts the artist imagining what colour his brain will be while using one or another colour at the moment of making the work and the closely linked piece *All the possible combinations of office colours* (2002). The latter is a Monk family photo from 1977 (Jonathan Monk is the blonde boy in the foreground next to his father), which presents a game combining all the possible variations of these five colours above their heads, making clear reference to the images of John Baldessari. Also included in this type of work is *Using my daughter's coloured pencils to find the colour of my mother's lips* (2005), whose title explains simply a process of searching for the precise data of memory, endowing the final work with a certain aspect of empirical and mnemonic proof. "What colour are my mother's lips? Has my daughter inherited this same colour in her lips?" appear to be the questions of interest to Monk in this work.

Finally, the series *Incomplete Open Paperclip I, II, IV, V*, (2006), which shows four sculptures coloured blue, red, white and yellow, made out of metal tubing, constructions of different versions of a simple and banal manual gesture. How often have we got hold of an office paper clip and casually deformed it, this simple action resulting in a new form? For a few moments we have stopped to observe the three-dimensionality that results from this gesture that we have often made unthinkingly while we talk on the telephone. Well, this is what Monk shows us with this series of sculptures whose physical presence is thin and seems to be in a minor mode. The gesture has been converted into sculpture and the clip has gone from being a small tool to an open, incomplete three-dimensional form, as the title informs us.

It is difficult for me to conclude this text on Monk's work, a work that is still developing, that shares the lightness of air and an expansive conceptual process that make it by no means easy to give a critical conclusion. Gilles Deleuze said that "in works of creation there is a multiplication of emotion, a liberation of emotion," and this applies to the work that is currently on show at CAC Málaga. However, one cannot just say that these works liberate emotion; they also liberate intuition, a refined aesthetic education, diversion, and high doses of artistic reflection. Monk's offering brings a demystifying gaze, lucid and free, over History, language, and imaginative participation; it is work that asks to be approached without prejudice and takes pleasure in the discovery of the newness of media to provoke new possibilities and to invent new enunciations. It is definitely an investigation that reveals itself as an adventure in plasticity, mundaneness, humanity, composed from the starting point of colours, forms and words, all arranged according to the particular version of the world, seen through the eyes of its author, Jonathan A. Monk. Enjoy the exhibition, for it is indeed based on emotions, freedom, and also the multiplication of stories and resonances that are expanding as their author travels through time towards his future.

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1. The term strategic essentialism was proposed by the thinker Gayatri Spivak and refers to the strategy that some nationalities, ethnic groups and minorities use to present themselves socially in a more prominent and simplified manner. The proposition behind this temporal solidarity is social action. It is sometimes advantageous for these groups to assume a temporary, essentialized identity, which helps to convey certain claims or positions. Source: Wikipedia, s.v. "Strategic essentialism," last modified July 27, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic\\_essentialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_essentialism).

2. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with Mathieu Copeland (Paris: Les Presses du Reel, 2002), 21. The author states in this sense: "In observing contemporary artistic practices, we ought to talk of, formations' rather than 'forms.' Unlike an object that is closed in on itself by the intervention of a style and a signature, present-day art reveals that form exists only in the encounter and in the dynamic relationship enjoyed by an artistic proposition with other formations, artistic or otherwise."
3. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum/French Ministry of Culture, 2002), 2: "Painting has neither a model to represent nor a story to narrate. It thus has two possible ways of escaping the figurative: towards pure form, through abstraction; or towards the purely figural, through extraction or isolation. If the painter keeps to the Figure, if he or she opts for the second path, it will be to oppose the 'figural' to the 'figurative.'"
4. A synecdoche is a figure of speech in which one part of something is used to represent the whole. Translated from the Greek, it would signify "simultaneous comprehension." The synecdoche is a rhetorical licence in which a part of something may stand as an expression of the whole. It is one of the most common ways of characterizing a fictitious character. Frequently, a person is regularly described by a single part or bodily characteristic, such as the eyes, which come to represent the person. Source: Wikipedia, s.v. "Synecdoche," last modified August 23, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synecdoche>.
5. Works by Jonathan Monk in the Yvon Lambert Gallery, [http://www.yvon-lambert.com/2012/?page\\_id=246](http://www.yvon-lambert.com/2012/?page_id=246).
6. Michelangelo Pistoletto, "Distruzione di un Metrocubo d'infinito," performance at the Louvre, Paris, April 23, 2013, in the exhibition *Annee 1 - Le Paradis sur Terre*. To see the video go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4BhCrzVcs4>.
7. Gilles Deleuze, "Letter to a Harsh Critic," in *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 7.
8. Pierre Bourdieu, "Lecture on the Lecture," inaugural lecture given at the College de France, Friday April 23, 1982, in *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 152.
9. Harald Szeemann's revolutionary exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* was shown in 1969 at the Kunsthalle Bern. The show, in which European and American artists participated, was an expository milestone and entailed the emergence of North American postminimal in the international art scene. The show addressed behaviours and gestures, extremely open, free, and participative research processes and methodology. The show was born and grew from this kind of approach and was brought to fruition without a prior curatorial plan.
10. Field (champs in French): a concept put forward by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, is a space in which agents and their social positions are actualized. Each particular agent's position is the result of the interaction between different field norms, the agent's habitus, and their social, economic and cultural capital social. The various fields interact with each other hierarchically, by virtue of relationships of power and/or social class. Source: Wikipedia, s.v. "Field (Bourdieu)," last modified June 29, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field\\_%28Bourdieu%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_%28Bourdieu%29).
11. Wolfgang Iser, a German art critic analysed the phenomenon of the mutual interpenetration of literature and art, distinguishing three forms of interrelation: 1) the inclusion of language in the art work; 2) the use of language as a medium in visual arts; 3) its utilization beside the work.
12. *Waiting for Godot*, a tragicomedy in two acts, written by Samuel Beckett in 1953. The plot of the work centres on a pair of tramps and their efforts to entertain themselves while waiting in an erratic manner for a person named Godot, who is known only by reputation. In order to pass the time, they philosophize, sleep, debate, sing, take exercise, exchange hats, and also think about the possibility of committing suicide, whatever it takes "to hold the terrible silence at bay." Source: Wikipedia, s.v. "Waiting for Godot," last modified August 27, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waiting\\_For\\_Godot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waiting_For_Godot).
13. Scratching: a percussive effect obtained by manipulating a disc manually while it is playing; a technique used habitually by DJs to create sound effects while playing a disc; a sound effect that characterizes rap music.
14. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

University Press, 198 ..).

15. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 178.

16. "Kadiview with Jonathan Monk," interview on the subject of Jonathan Monk's work by Michel Balagué for the Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, 2012, <http://vimeo.com/41054174t96>.

17. The contract for *Happy Birthday* (2011), with instructions and the terms of exhibition, reads: "Details: An abstract sign made out of neon lights . The neon light must only be installed on one day a year: February 4, 2012 (and subsequent February 4ths) until an unspecified future date. A specifically designed sign to be installed temporarily in a window of the Kadist Foundation in Paris. The piece represents a small celebration that is neither clear nor evident to the passer by. Gradually the yearly presentation of the piece will become a routine. Signed : Jonathan Monk."

18. Lucy R. Lippard, ed., *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley and Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1997), vii: "Conceptual art, for me, means work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or 'dematerialized.'"

19. "Style belongs to those who don't have style": Gilles Deleuze in *L'Abecedaire de Gilles Deleuze [Gilles Deleuze's ABC Primer]*, dir. Pierre-Andre Boutang with Claire Parnet (Paris: La Fémis / Sodaperaga Productions, 1996). In *Gilles Deleuze's ABC Primer*, the French thinker reviews the most outstanding concepts developed during his career, in alphabetical order. On coming to the letter s in this particular alphabetical primer, he stops to define the word style: "This is the first aspect: submit the language to a process, but an incredible process: that is why the great stylist is not a conserver of syntax. They are a creator of syntax. And I cannot better Proust's great formula, 'Master works are always written in a sort of foreign language.' ... This is true of Celine; it's true of Péguy. That's how you recognize a great stylist. Secondly, at the same time as the first aspect, syntax is made to undergo a process of deformation, contortion, but a necessary one, which also creates, also constitutes a foreign language within the language in which one is writing, And so, at the same time, the second principle, similarly, is that one pushes all the language to a type of limit, a limit which ... is the border that separates it from music. It produces a sort of music. And so, if both of these things have been done successfully, and it is necessary to do this, then that is a style ... That is, to dig a foreign language into language and to take all language to a musical limit." French version with Spanish subtitles available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT241uCy0jk>.

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## **Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga presents Jonathan Monk's Family Album**



Installation view of the exhibition at Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga.

MALAGA.- The Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga is presenting the first solo exhibition in Spain of the work of Jonathan Monk. Entitled COLOURS, SHAPES, WORDS (pink, blue, square, circle, etc.) and commissioned by Fernando Francés, it includes sculptures, neons, paintings, drawings and photographs. Monk's work is notable for his use of a wide variety of materials. In some cases the artist bases himself on his own personal experiences while in others he reinterprets the work of other artists who are icons of Conceptual and Minimalist art of the 1960s and 1970s. Jonathan Monk currently lives and works in Berlin. This exhibition, which is one of the events organised to mark the tenth anniversary of the CAC Málaga (2003-2013), has benefited from the support of the British Council.

"I have always thought that art revolves around ideas and the idea of an original and a copy are clearly two very different things", explains Jonathan Monk (born Leicester, UK, 1969). In COLOURS, SHAPES, WORDS (pink, blue, square, circle, etc.) this British artist explores and experiments with the concept of the appropriation and reinterpretation of works by iconic artists of the 1960s and 1970s, while adding to them the mark of his own particular experience. The present exhibition comprises around thirty works that offer a multidisciplinary survey of Monk's recent output.

For Fernando Francés, Director of the CAC Málaga, "The texts, words and forms to be seen in his neon pieces encourage questions and ideas that remain floating in the air as dispersed thoughts in the exhibition space (Do Not Pay More than \$80,000 of 2009) or which enclose a story or childhood memory in a work consisting of a photograph and a word in neon (A Short Story Translated by My Mother & Milk (Barbecue) of 2008). Once again, these intimate childhood memories return to the present and are on display in an exhibition space, in full view of everyone. The roundabout of emotions does not stop for any viewer who contemplates the work of Jonathan Monk, given that the visitor will undoubtedly rediscover his or her own experiences and freely and openly share them with the artist. This ability to allow ourselves to be carried away and succumb to provocation is the most playful and amusing side of art and one that is absolutely evident in the present exhibition. Viewers need to be prepared to get on the fairground ride of their own lives."

Monk offers an exhaustive analysis of each aspect of the creative process. This aspect has the same importance as the final result: between the moment when the artist has the idea until the time when the invitations to the inauguration are

sent out, a series of situations and events take place that Monk captures and portrays. He deconstructs these moments and studies them in great detail while also recreating them, as we see in watercolours such as *Trying to imagine the colour of my brain whilst painting trying to imagine the colour of my brain* (2000). Another characteristic feature of his work is the presence of visual language and irony, which he employs in a notably direct manner. In each work the artist aims to summarise what he wants to say through the words that give the work its name, leaving the final interpretation to the viewer's imagination, as we see, for example, in *Levitating Reclining Nude* (2009).

The echoes of works by other artists, particularly by iconic figures of the conceptualist trends of the 1960s and 1970s, are the principal theme of other works that can also be seen at the CAC Málaga. Monk often makes use of works by artists such as Sol LeWitt, Ed Ruscha, Duchamp, Jeff Koons and Lawrence Weiner, of whom the latter designed the front cover of the present catalogue. These references may come about through the use of the original work, as in *Deflated Sculpture No. 1* (2009), based on Jeff Koons's sculpture *Rabbit*, or through the construction of a symbolic game that directly refers to those artists, as in the neon installation *The Two O's in Koons Used as Eyes 3-d version* (2010).

Another source of inspiration for Monk is his own memories. The fact that when he was a child his parents did not own a television set undoubtedly influenced him and books thus became his principal form of entertainment. As he got older he also began to collect them and now possesses a large number. Monk's curiosity and imagination was aroused from an early age. Other works are based on everyday objects from his normal surrounding that have caught his attention and which are transformed into works of art, such as *Using my daughter's coloured pencils to find the colour of my mother's lips* (2005).

Another feature that defines Jonathan Monk's works is his regular collaboration with other artists. As noted above, the front cover of this catalogue has been designed by Lawrence Weiner, while he has also worked in the past with David Shrigley and Douglas Gordon.

Jonathan Monk was born in Leicester (UK) in 1969. He obtained a BA in Fine Arts at Leicester Polytechnic in 1988 then an MA in the same subject at the Glasgow School of Art in 1991. Among the artist's most important exhibition are those he has held at the Lisson Gallery in Milan, (2013), the Centre d'édition contemporaine in Geneva (2013); Yvon Lambert in Paris (2013, 2011); Meyer Riegger in Berlin (2012, 2010); Eastside Projects in Birmingham (2011); Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York (2011,2009); Dvir Gallery in Tel Aviv (2011, 2010); Lisson Gallery in London (2010, 2009); Morra Greco in Naples (2009); Artpace in San Antonio (2009); the Nicolai Wallner Gallery in Copenhagen (2011, 2009); the Palais de Tokyo and Musée d'art Moderne in Paris (2008) and at The Tramway in Glasgow (2008). Notable group shows in which he has participated include those at Andreas Huber in Vienna (2012); Thaddeus Ropac in Paris (2012); Frutta Gallery in Rome (2012); CCA Wattis in San Francisco (2012); the South London Gallery in London (2012); Boers-Li Gallery in Beijing (2012); Centre of Contemporary, Torun (2012); Artpace in New York, Crate Studio and Project Space in Kent (2011) and Pratt Manhattan Gallery in New York (2011).

In 2012 Monk was awarded the prize given by "Les Quartier des Bains", a Geneva-based organisation that groups together international contemporary galleries and institutions. In addition to the present solo exhibition at the CAC Málaga, another is scheduled for the Dallas Contemporary in Texas.

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<http://premierartscene.com/magazine/jonathan-monk-interview/>

# Premier Art Scene.com

## Focused on the Premium Segment of Contemporary Art.

UGL: Jonathan Monk, would you guess the name of one of my grandmothers?

JM: You want me to do it now?

UGL: Yes, please.

JM: Hm.. Dorothea?

UGL: No, that's wrong. You did something similar with collectors of yours as part of your artistic practice. So, was this art now?

JM: I'm not sure, but it might have been. I think that particular guess probably wasn't art, but the idea of me continuously guessing in an attempt to find out some personal information by pure chance could be seen as art. The work is only complete when I guess correctly. It doesn't have to be art, it could be also a game, but that can be part of the art as well. For most people it wouldn't be seen as art – that is also fine. I think it should only be important to the sender and the recipient.



Detail of Jonathan Monk: 'Dancing With Gerhard' of 1995, 4 color photographs (c) the artist courtesy Nicolai Wallner

UGL: Let's talk about painting. David Shrigley once said that you were a pretty good painter back in art school.

JM: People say a lot of things. Well, I don't think I was a particularly good painter. It wasn't really important to me what things looked like. I had just left high school. Painting has the weight of history on its side - this is sometimes very good and sometimes very bad. I still make paintings. Some of them I paint myself, for others I employ trained professionals or complete amateurs.

UGL: I like your work from the mid-1990s, called 'Dancing with Gerhard'. It depicts you dancing in front of two grey monochrome Gerhard Richter paintings. It seems to me that every young artist or painter has to work against the icon Richter. There is now also the big retrospective here in Berlin. How do you think about Richter?

JM: I do not think about him. I think he is an important figure. However, I don't even think of him that much as a painter. Some things look like paintings, some things look like photographs, some things only look like paintings because there is paint involved, otherwise they could be something else. Obviously, he has been very influential since the early 1960s but I think there are a lot more possibilities in painting. It is a straight forward act of discovery and experimentation. Once something has been done, it can be done again in a different colour.

UGL: Recently, you did your One-Minute-Paintings. What is the idea behind them?



Jonathan Monk: 'One Minute Painting (Pink, red, blue, yellow)' of 2011, Acrylic and spraypaint on canvas, dm.130 cm, Unique (c) the artist courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner



Jonathan Monk: 'This Painting Should Be Installed by a Lawyer' of 2011, Acrylic on canvas, 160 x 110 cm, Unique, (c) the artist courtesy Galleri Nicolai Wallner

JM: I was trying to do something incredibly quickly. It came from a number of different sources, John Latham's one second paintings of spray paint on paper and the simple movement of a clock. Each dot was painted for exactly one second and the entire painting had to be finished in one minute. I hope they are quite beautiful. But it was less about painting and more about process. The production is visible but the beauty of the work is its simplicity or something like that.

UGL: Did you do the One-Minute-paintings by yourself?

JM: Yes, I did them myself, but I had people helping me: I sprayed the colour on the canvas and I moved around them. There were two assistants shaking the cans and then there was someone shouting what colour came next. There was no skill involved at all, but that is not important.

UGL: At last year's Art Basel, I first saw your work series 'This painting should be installed by a banker', or '...a lawyer', or '...a prostitute' and the like. They really made me laugh. Do these paintings relate to Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of Relational Aesthetics?

JM: I suppose, in a roundabout way they do. It was more about the life of a work and what happens to it when it leaves the studio or the gallery and who should be involved in this process afterwards. The work only can be completed when it is, hopefully, installed by a banker or whoever is named. If you buy for instance the '...prostitute', you actually have to employ a prostitute to install the painting. This also means, if there is no prostitute available, the painting must simply lean against the wall.

Most of the time, I cannot control what happens to a work, when it leaves the gallery. Here I can at least control, who hangs it on the wall. This series started in Paris, when I employed circus troupe to install a series of paintings. Some are now in a show at the Kunsthalle Vienna. Installed by an Austrian circus school. I am interested in the possibilities of how to control my work once it has left the studio.

UGL: Your work often plays with the price for art. How do you feel about the current situation of the art market in general?

JM: I try not to think about it too much. I think it is always up and down anyway. It is sadly controlled by outside forces.

UGL: How do you feel about art fairs?

JM: The problem with fairs is the same as with art magazines: In the end they all seem to be controlled. Controlled by people who have a lot of money. It takes a lot of money to get in the important fairs. This leaves certain galleries outside. Because everyone wants to do Art Basel, which is the biggest of all, the fair has a huge influence. The fairs can make or break an artist. If the gallery you work with is involved, then perfect, but if it is not, what does this mean? It's really the fairs that control the art world - much more than they used to. The big art fairs have more influence than curators, critics or museums. Although I guess some galleries are bigger than all of them put together. Power and marketing. The problem is: The galleries rely on the big art fairs and the artists rely on the galleries. So artists need to make things for

fairs. I think that is a shame. I try to make things that might be on a fair, but also somewhere else. If you show a work in a fair, it is a success if it sells. And in the context of a fair, this is the job of the work. But in general that shouldn't be the job of art. The importance of a work shouldn't be controlled by a collector or whether a work is sold or not. It is a little bit awkward now, because of the power of the fairs. And if a work doesn't sell a fair, you cannot do anything with it for 2 or 3 years, because someone will remember having seen it in Miami or Basel. It is kind of annoying, but if you play the game you have to accept this. Or work against it.

UGL: And is this really important?

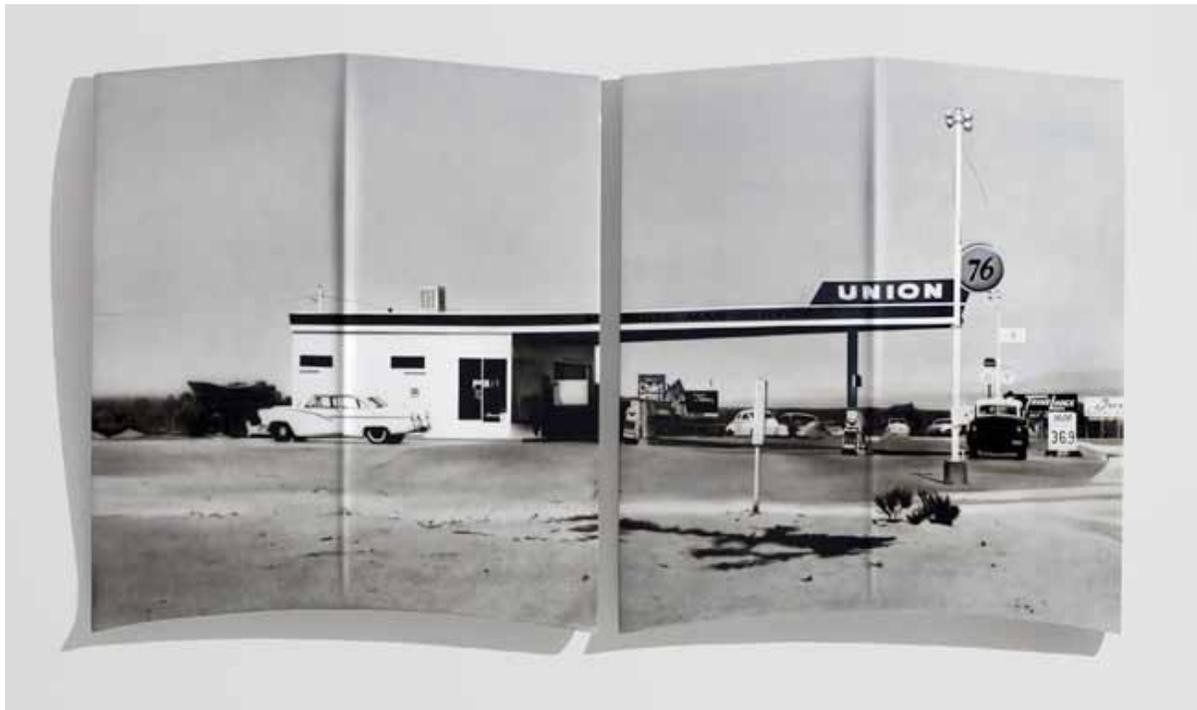
JM: I don't think so.

UGL: Your work often contains a sense of humour. I think it was Woody Allen, who once said 'The creation of comedy is an entirely serious and boring business.' Would you agree to him?

JM: Yes, that is true. I mean, I don't think that I am very funny, being funny is difficult. When you meet a comedian you immediately want him/her to make you laugh, but it just doesn't always work. Sometimes it is easier not to think about it too much. There is not a lot of humour in art. Which is funny in itself.

UGL: Do you think it is possible to appreciate your work without a deeper knowledge of art history?

JM: Yes, but I think it adds something to it, if you have a deeper understanding of art history. To be honest, this is true with



Installation view at Casey Kaplan Gallery of Jonathan Monk: 'Rew-Shay Hood Project III', 2008 - 2011, Airbrush paint, Two 1974 Plymouth

UGL: What are you working on currently?

JM: I am doing lots of things. I like to think of myself as a chef in a small but fine restaurant. I have lots of sauce pans on the stove and must prevent them from burning. I am moving lots of things at the same time in different places. Mainly here in Berlin, but also in Copenhagen or New York or London or Milan or Turin or Paris or. Recently, I did a number of works, in which I asked a father and a son make a piece together. Two car doors painted in a car body shop here in Berlin owned by a father and his son. I asked each of them to paint one of the doors. I didn't tell them what to do and I don't know what they are going to do. These are the kind of projects that I like instigate: I have no idea what I will get and I do not know where it will take me.

UGL: It seems you did a lot of car part works, recently? Like the last show you did at Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York.

JM: That was another kind of project. It was inspired by Ed Ruscha and Richard Prince with all the 1970s US car parts.



Jonathan Monk working on his piece 'The World in Denim'

UGL: Yes, it looked very American. The art you show in London, Copenhagen or New York seems to look different. Is your art different, depending on where you show or produce it?

JM: Yes, of course! I use that as an opportunity to make things possible. I like the idea that the works I have made in Copenhagen look different from the works I have made in New York, even though I often give the same instructions. The context is more than half the work.

UGL: Thank you for the interview!

JM: A pleasure.

This interview by UGL. took place on 26th April 2012 in Jonathan Monk's studio in Berlin, Germany.

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IT'S A CIRCUS!

Jonathan Monk  
*It's a Circus!*  
10 March – 8 April 2011

**Opening Thursday, March 10 from 6 - 9 pm.**

Yvon Lambert is pleased to announce *It's a Circus!*, Jonathan Monk's fifth solo exhibition at Yvon Lambert.

In this exhibition, the artist will present 23 monochrome paintings, which will be installed by a circus troop composed of two acrobats, three jugglers, three clowns and two mimes. These paintings are installed into the main gallery following a precise choreographed process dictated by the artist.

Neither the circus performance nor the paintings will be visible to the public; only 23 photographs in the first room of the gallery will document the installation. Monk describes this unusual presentation as an artwork in itself:

*« the act painting will be almost hidden  
the paintings await to be activated.  
the paintings become what they are during the days before the  
exhibition is made public.  
they are nothing at the moment  
they are there to become something  
a magical energy will be added by the people who are there to perform the magical act »*

A newspaper that explains the origin of the artist's project will be distributed during the opening of the show.

Jonathan Monk (b.1969, Leicester, England) lives and works in Berlin.

For press inquiries please contact Didier Barroso [didier@yvon-lambert.com](mailto:didier@yvon-lambert.com)

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Wilson, Michael, "Jonathan Monk, 'Your Name Here'," Time Out New York, April 11, 2011, > <http://newyork.timeout.com/arts-culture/art/1151947/jonathan-monk-%E2%80%9Cyour-name-here%E2%80%9D>>



**Jonathan Monk**  
**"Your Name Here"**

Monk's road trip almost runs out of gas.



Photograph: Courtesy Casey Kaplan Gallery

Jonathan Monk's previous solo appearance at Casey Kaplan—2009's "The Inflated Deflated"—took a pin to Jeff Koons's iconic Rabbit sculpture from 1986, representing the stainless steel blow-up bunny in various states of flaccidity. Had the work been produced for Monk's current show, it might have read as a barbed comment on the collapse of Koons's recent lawsuit for copyright infringement against a hapless manufacturer of balloon-dog book-ends. As it was, Monk's target didn't feel quite hard or current enough for the project to deliver its intended critical punch. And while there is more to chew on, both conceptually and formally, in "Your Name Here," the frustrating sense that Monk could and should be aiming higher somehow persists.

Monk's new work, which includes painting, sculpture, drawing and photography, derives from time he spent in Los Angeles during the late 1990s. The title (filched from John Ashbery) is an obvious death-of-the-author gag that implies we should substitute our own handle for the artist's, while the show itself focuses on roadside California in general and the area's conceptual-art touchstones in particular. Most prominent, and most enjoyable, are entries from the "Rew-Shay Hood Project" series—a collection of muscle-car hoods spray-painted with black-and-white images of Route 66 gas stations taken from a cult photo book by West Coast hero Ed Ruscha. Here, at least, Monk mitigates his inside-baseball tendency with a striking dose of genuine cool. Elsewhere, it's still just revenge of the nerds.

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Rosenberg, Karen, "Art in Review: Jonathan Monk 'Your Name here'," New York Times, April 1, 2011, section C31

# The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

## Jonathan Monk

By KAREN ROSENBERG

Published: March 31, 2011

**'Your Name Here'**

Casey Kaplan  
525 West 21st Street  
Chelsea  
Through April 30

California Conceptualism dies and goes to heaven in Jonathan Monk's latest show at Casey Kaplan. Mr. Monk, who gave us deflated Jeff Koons bunnies in his last appearance at the gallery, is now taking aim at vintage Ed Ruscha (with nods to several other artists and a poet, for good measure).

"Rew-Shay Hood Project" reprises Mr. Ruscha's 1967 "Twentysix Gasoline Stations," a studiously neutral book of photographs shot from a car traveling along Route 66. For his version, Mr. Monk commissioned a local hot-rod painter to airbrush images from the series onto the hoods of classic American muscle cars. On its own, this tribute doesn't have much traction, but it's just one component in a sprawling, must-see installation that makes West Coast art look so dour as to be almost unrecognizable.

Also on view, for instance, are small photographs and drawings that date from the late 1990s, when Mr. Monk (who is from Leicester, England) was living in Los Angeles. In the best of them, he extrapolates melancholy narratives from Ruscha-esque Polaroids of motel exteriors — introducing emotion to a deadpan form.

Most stirring, though, are the headstones scattered around the gallery: eight in all, slabs of varied hues bearing the text "Your Name Here" in different types of lettering. Here, with some help from John Ashbery's poetry collection of the same title, Mr. Monk splits the difference between Mr. Ruscha's laconic humor and his own morbid romanticism.

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### JONATHAN MONK – Name Used To Fill Space

The work of Jonathan Monk (born 1969) is multi-purpose, and includes a wide diversity of techniques. This ranges from painting to photography, from film to sculpture, from installation to performance; which makes him one of the most elusive contemporary artists. He refuses to be pigeon-holed, and he has always been determined to slip in somewhere unexpected, and continually feed relevant reflection about the notion of understanding.

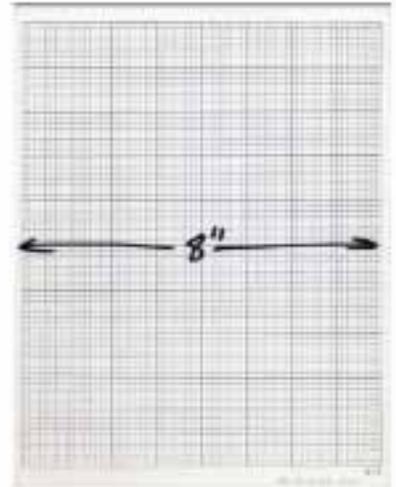
He relies on a sound knowledge of art history, and through his own work, he explores some avenues that other artists could have gone through in their own work.

For his project in the Wunderkammer entitled Name Used to Fill Space, Monk has created a work in neon lights consisting of 10 letters. These letters in neon placed at perfectly regular intervals form the word MEL-BOCHNER which, at first sight, does not seem to mean anything familiar. After deciphering it for a moment, it becomes apparent that it is a name: MEL BOCHNER, who is an American conceptual artist born in 1940.

He is very well-known for his Measurements (exact measurements of areas written down on the surfaces themselves), and for his more recent paintings which are lists of words, nouns or adjectives relating to one idea. The words each follow on from the previous one, but each is painted in a different colour. As an artist taking account of measurements and language, Bochner can be considered as a reference on this subject.

In a response to the Self/Portrait that Bochner made of himself in 1966, listing a whole series of words, Monk reproduces here in letters what constitutes any official identity on paper, in other words, a name.

Not without humour, Monk shows his own attraction to conceptual art and the complexities of language by referring to a historic figure in one of the main tendencies of 20th century art.



\* Mel Bochner, 8" Measurement, 1969. Ink on graph paper, 11 x 8,5 inches

\*\* Mel Bochner, Irascible, 2006. Oil on black velvet, 35,5 x 36,5 inches



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**GALLERI  
NICOLAI WALLNER**

PRESS RELEASE

**JONATHAN MONK**

WORLD TIME CLOCK- USED CARS

SEPTEMBER 2 - OCTOBER 15, 2011

*It is a great pleasure for Galleri Nicolai Wallner to present: World Time Clock and Used Cars, two exhibitions with new works by Jonathan Monk.*

*Jonathan Monk consistently recasts or extends conceptual art's most emblematic strategies - ideas over object making, the dematerialization of the art object, and serialization. Challenging the notions of originality and authorship still present in art, Monk's work suggests ways of rethinking both the traditional role of the artist and the creative process in general. Through his artistic career he has paired a conceptual approach with a wry wit and a certain down-to-earth sensibility.*

*A series of neons, Used Cars inhabit one of the exhibition rooms. The works are priced and titled according to various used cars being sold in the local newspaper. The possibility of either acquiring a car or an art piece – choosing between the satisfaction of practical needs or aesthetic fulfillment - cleverly reflects our notions about art, its status, appearance and market value. Similarly employing the idea of the handed down object two pairs of grandfather clocks beat in and out of synch. Their humanlike shapes suggest two people eyeing each other. The sound of the clock poetically address childhood memories of visiting your grandparents coupled with a classic feeling of Memento mori.*

*The concept of time is further underlined by a number of circular One Minute paintings inspired by the thoughts of UK artist John Latham (1921 -2006). Latham searched all his life for a single theory that could encompass the different biological and psychological aspects of life, and seemingly found it in the idea of flat time which he visualized by a single burst of spray paint. Perhaps a more realistic vision of a system to unify the world is presented through a series of maps: Map of the World in Handkerchiefs, Map of the World in Black Leather, and Map of the World in Work Wear. With the national states reduced to specific pieces of clothing Monk rather humorously suggests another way of bringing us together.*

*Recent solo museum exhibitions include Time Between Spaces, Palais de Tokyo and Musée d'art Moderne (Paris) and the travelling exhibition Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, etc., Kunstverein Hannover (Hannover), Kunstmuseum St. Gallen (St. Gallen), Kunsthalle Nürnberg (Nürnberg), and Haus am Waldsee (Berlin). Monk is represented in numerous public collections including Museum of Modern Art (New York), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), Tate Britain (London), Moderna Museet (Stockholm), and The National Gallery of Denmark (Copenhagen).*



Jonathan Monk, *The World in Workwear* (2011), Textile, Approx. 156 x 197,5 cm, Unique. Courtesy of the artist and Galleri Nicolai Wallner.

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YOUR NAME HERE

EXHIBITION DATES: MARCH 24 – APRIL 30, 2011  
OPENING: THURSDAY, MARCH 24 6 – 8PM  
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10 – 6PM

Our relationship with the British artist, Jonathan Monk (b. 1969) began in 1997 when he was living in Los Angeles for two years, a period that became quite informative for his practice. Fourteen years later, we are extremely pleased to present Monk's seventh exhibition at Casey Kaplan. *YOUR NAME HERE* resurrects drawings and photographs from Monk's time in southern California alongside new sculptural works in neon, marble, fabric and leather, that are interspersed with the second installment of a project that has been three years in the making, the "Rew-Shay Hood Project", 2008-2011.

Monk continually questions identity and authorship, while engaging in a game of intellect and wit between himself, Conceptual artists from the 1960s and 70s, and the viewer. Beginning in early 2008, Monk found inspiration within Ed Ruscha's 1967 iconic photographic series and limited edition book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, where Ruscha shot black & white photographs of twenty-six different gas stations found along the legendary Route 66 highway on a road trip from his studio in Los Angeles to his home state of Oklahoma. Utilizing the talents of a commercial, hot rod, airbrush painter located in the Bronx, Monk has selected twenty-six different classic American muscle car automobile hoods to serve as the canvases for each of the original Ruscha gasoline station photographs. In Monk's *Rew-Shay Hood Project IX*, Ruscha's intentionally banal 1962 image of a Texaco station in Jackrabbit, Arizona, is transformed, newly presented onto the hood of a 1970 Datsun 240z as a dynamic, graphic airbrush painting.

Born and raised in Leicester, England and educated in Glasgow, Scotland, Monk's understanding of art and his initial experiences, specifically of Conceptual Art, were as an outsider, a voyeur learning through images found only in books. Out of these circumstances, Monk has become an avid book collector with a serious collection of limited editions, such as: Ruscha's 1967 *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* and Sol LeWitt's 1980 *Sunrise and Sunset at Praiano*. Just as Monk dramatizes the intimate experience of two-dimensional images in Ruscha's book, "Sunrise" and "Sunset" leap off the cover from LeWitt's book onto the gallery walls in the form of neon signage written in the original Western typeface.

The title of this exhibition, *YOUR NAME HERE*, is additionally a poetry book by one of America's most influential writers, John Ashbery. This duality raises the level of uncertainty over the ownership of Monk's show, which is compounded further by a series of eight new marble headstones that contain the word "YOUR NAME HERE" etched into their surfaces in varying fonts. The stones function as advertisements for how to be memorialized, with an offering of different choices of color, grain, and typeface, while also referencing the mortality of the father-like figures from art history that Monk so regularly quotes.

Jonathan Monk has participated in numerous recent group exhibitions at prominent institutions including: *Power to the People: Contemporary conceptualism and the object in art*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2011); *Exhibition, Exhibition*, curated by Adam Carr, Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art Piazza, Turin, Italy (2010); *Pictures about Pictures. Discourses in Painting from Albers to Zobernig*, MUMOK: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria (2010); *Second Hand*, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France (2010); *The Traveling Show*, curated by Adriano Pedrosa, La Colección Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico (2010); and *Compass in Hand: Selections from The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection*, curated by Christian Rattemeyer, which travelled from the Museum of Modern Art in New York to the IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern in Spain (2010-2011). On May 14th 2009, the first installment of Monk's "Rew-Shay Hood Project" opened in the Hudson Show Room at Artpace San Antonio, Texas. Past solo museum exhibitions include *Time Between Spaces*, Palais de Tokyo and Musée d'art Moderne, Paris, France, 2008 and *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, etc.*, Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover, Germany; travelled to the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland; Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nürnberg, Germany; and Leiterin Haus am Waldsee, Berlin, Germany from 2006 - 2007. The artist lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

For further information please contact Loring Randolph, [loring@caseykaplangallery.com](mailto:loring@caseykaplangallery.com).  
Next Gallery Exhibition: GARTH WEISER, May 6 – June 26, 2011

GALLERY ARTISTS: HENNING BOHL, MATTHEW BRANNON, JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, MILES COOLIDGE, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, GEOFFREY FARMER, PAMELA FRASER, LIAM GILLYCK, ANNIKA VON HAUSSWOLFF, BRIAN JUNGEN, JONATHAN MONK, MARLO PASCUAL, DIEGO PERRONE, JULIA SCHMIDT, SIMON STARLING, DAVID THORPE, GABRIEL VORMSTEIN, GARTH WEISER, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER

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Jonathan, Monk, "Dear Painter, Paint For Me One Last Time, essay" Blondeau Fine Art Services, Geneva, Switzerland, September 15, 2011

## **Johannes, Good to talk with you yesterday!**

There is not really an exact plan of how the interview text can work but I'll have a think and write again very soon. The gallery in Geneva is called BFAS Blondeau Fine Art Services. And I'm really pleased that we can make a trade... until soon again jm

Hi Jonathan, thank you for your message. This is very funny because I know the gallery in Geneva quite well. Marc Blondeau and Philippe Davet bought some works of mine and I also showed there two or three times in group shows. We also talked about a solo show but it wasn't realized yet... I'll send you the painting book including the Smiths-paintings to your address in Berlin. I also used the material for an artist book which is more like an object. Please feel free to contact me anytime with your questions. Of course you can also call if you prefer this... In the meantime I'll check which of the paintings are still available... All my best, Johannes

Johannes – all sounds good – I'll think of a good way to start the interview and I look forward to receiving your catalogues etc – so more soon – jm – And this is perhaps a good way to start the interview type text thing – Do you think MK would have approved of my Lieber Maler, male mir open ended extension? Your package arrived this morning with many thanks. I really like Smiths Painting No. 7 which I think is Terrance Stamp but they are all great so I'd be happy with any of them... and did you have a moment to think about my question? And if you'd prefer to start by asking me something then that is also fine. Until then jm

Hi Jonathan, happy to hear that everything arrived safely at your home. I'll

check about the Terence Stamp version, still waiting for the answers from the consigning galleries... Concerning your question: This is hard to tell for me because I can't speak for him. During his lifetime he was generally quite open about artist colleagues making use of his work. I could draw one analogy from my experience with Martin. Before I started working for him I did a series of watercolours which were based on his Heavy Burschi/Heavy Mädel series. It was a remake or more a remix of this series which was already meant to be to work like a remix of existing works. During our job interview he asked me about my interest in his work so I told him about my work based on his and had to show it to him the next day. When he saw the whole portfolio with the series of 51 watercolour images he seemed to like it. At least it was a proof for him that I was seriously into his work because he could see that I invested a lot of time to make the watercolours. In the end he signed some of the watercolours and gave it the title Heavy Fuzzi which stands in a line with the other titles and is most likely derived from the word Schnulzenfuzzi which he used frequently. Also he did so with works by students or assistants which he just signed and made his own. In the beginning of the 1990s he gave a work of his to Cosima von Bonin who showed it under her name in a gallery show and he then bought it back as a work of Cosima's... So probably he would have asked you for a trade...

I sense a kind of YES/NO/MAYBE situation here – and I completely understand it is very difficult to know how Martin might have reacted to this particular work. I think my original idea of employing a painter to repaint images that were originally made in the same way is an obvious extension to things I have done before. Pushing the works of others a little further down the same path. It has been com

mon place to commission works of art since the 60's and the minimalists could make entire shows from the yellow pages, but these kind of works always had a very hard edge, in the end there was very little of their maker visible. Martin appears to have clearly encouraged the idea of sharing or borrowing or taking the works of others and using their style and working methods as his own and vice versa. I guess almost his entire output can be mapped by the assistants he employed. I often employ a similar tactic and attempt to make works that can be produced via instruction. Each time the resulting work is exactly the same but completely different. But I can't work with assistants in the same way as MK did. I do have people working for me all the time but they are not in my studio. I like to sit quietly doing my things while my outworkers are busy doing my things elsewhere. What was Martin's studio situation like?

Martin had different studio situations. He was working with students or assistants at his studio sometimes but had also people working for him at their places. He enjoyed his last studio in Austria very much and was very productive there. Also he liked being in Syros/Greece and working on Michel Würthle's compound there. He went to town with his crayons and did hotel drawings at a café. In the afternoon we picked him up and went to the beach... Martin moved a lot and so had different places with different people working for him and helping him. Each place had another character and seemed to work slightly different. When I started working for him I visited him in Frankfurt first, shortly after he moved to St. Georgen in the Black Forest in the south of Germany.

Martin's studio practice seems to be a roll model for me (and many others) without realizing it. I tend to work on projects with specific people and continue to do this until the energy is all used up. A series

JONATHAN MONK

of works can last until it is complete and their completeness is often controlled by those involved rather than the ideas involved. I do not move around that much, but clearly ideas change with ones environment and with the people one associates with. I think originally the Lieber Maler, male mir was co-signed with Werner, the painter who was hired to make the work, but this connection seems to have been lost over time. I know that you (and other assistants) made works for Martin without a great deal of input. Did this feel odd at the time or was it just part of the energetic creative studio situation – a kind of Warhol Fabrik?

No, not at all, it didn't feel odd because it was more or less daily practise. Martin encouraged his assistants to work in his mind. He was always curious for this kind of input. When I worked for him I wasn't purely the studio assistant but worked more on the organisational side running his office as a secretary. At that time I was collecting material for him related to The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika, street lamps, eggs, interesting books, furniture etc... Also I was making photographs for him when I found interesting reference material somewhere which he then used. This was really normal and there were many befriended people collecting stuff for him like hotel stationary or odd shaped pasta. When I visited him at his studio we worked together and then there was sometimes a kind of 'Factory'-feeling if not in NYC but in the Black Forest. There were other students and assistants like Sven O. Ahrens or Thilo Heinzmann around, the Grässlin family and people visiting like the photographer Albrecht Fuchs who did portraits of MK then. Look at this photo so you can imagine it better [www.albrechtfuchs.de/portraits/franz-west-2.html](http://www.albrechtfuchs.de/portraits/franz-west-2.html). The studio was stuffed with works by other artists and good furniture, a wonderful working atmosphere. We used to watch a lot of TV. I had the to ask you some questions related to Kippenberger. Did you ever meet him or

Sadly I never met MK. Douglas Gordon and I often spoke about inviting him to make a project in Glasgow. But we never got experience him during his lifetime? remote control and Martin told me when to switch... in the afternoon he slept and I was drawing, in the early evening we went out to the restaurant, eating, drinking, talking and some more work after we returned to the studio. We were also allowed to do our own works at his studio, sometimes he used the paintings as backgrounds for his works. Also I wanted round to it and then it was suddenly too late.

To me his artistic output was more or less purely conceptually orientated which in the reception of his work seems to be often overshadowed by his skills as a painter. How do you see that?

I totally agree with you. Even if Martin was understood to be a painter, I think he often only used painting because he could. Painting offered him a tradition or history he could hide his ideas within. From his very early attempt to paint his height in Florence, through the Lieber Maler, male mir via the Preis paintings into the later paintings Picasso couldn't paint. Today it might appear that his output followed a very traditional visual approach, but I think he was a conceptual artist, an artist who shared much more with Weiner and Baldessari etc than it looks – I think he enjoyed what he did and he invented a way of working that fitted into his many different contexts. He did a lot in a short time, but as my father always said – many hands make light work.

And another one. What other works or series by MK would you concern to work about?

I have made a number of things that have taken Kippenberger works as a starting point. But I think his attitude and approach to art and the world that follows it around have been of the greatest influence on me as an artist. This is perhaps why I feel comfortable following his example – mach dich doch selber nach etc.

as well. Do you have some of his work?

I am a collector of sorts... and have tried to find things that interest me. I am very interested in Kippenbergers multiples and have managed to acquire a few things in one way or another... Alkoholfolter, 1989, a sock book mark he made for Königs in 1991 and Haus Schloß Case from 1990 and some poster and invite ephemera but a lot of the multiples are now being treated as smaller works in edition and are becoming very expensive. It is a shame MK didn't get to see how people are now fighting over his works... and there you gogo. I was thinking it might be nice to finish where we started and follow up with the trade. It would seem that the perfect work to trade would be one of the copied Kippenbergers. And I guess that leads nicely into a YES/NO answer... My favourite is the dog so let me know if it appeals and I'll stick our correspondence together in the coming week. Until then jm

Hi Jonathan, good to hear from you. Very much like your proposal for the trade. So YES!

This dialogue between Jonathan Monk and Johannes Wohnseifer took place between april and August 2011. Johannes Wohnseifer is an artist based in Cologne.

Appropriation is something I have used or worked with in my art since starting art school in 1987.

At this time (and still now) I realised that being original was almost impossible, so I tried using what was already available as source material for my own work. By doing this I think I also created something original and certainly something very different to what I was representing. I always think that art is about ideas, and surely the idea of an original and a copy of an original are two very different things.

Jonathan Monk, 2009

I declared a painting ban for myself, I let someone else paint for me.

Martin Kippenberger, 1981

JONATHAN MONK

—  
On the 15th September 2011, to coincide with the Nuit des Bains, BFAS Blondeau Fine Art Services is pleased to present the first solo exhibition of Jonathan Monk in Geneva, at its space at 5 rue de la Muse. Previously, Monk has taken on artists such as John Baldessari, Jeff Koons, Sol LeWitt, Richard Prince, Ed Ruscha, and Lawrence Weiner, as source material for his own artwork. For this exhibition Dear Painter, paint for me one last time, Martin Kippenberger arranged: while the latter had his paintings copied from photographs that he had taken, Monk's paintings exist as images of a secondary order, preceded Jonathan Monk follows his attention to the artist Martin Kippenberger and addresses the status of contemporary painting. In 1981, Martin Kippenberger made his first museum show Lieber Maler, male mir (Dear painter, paint for me) at Berlin's Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst. He hired a billboard painter called Werner to execute the paintings. Martin Kippenberger proclaimed that this was Werner's first indoor exhibition. Jonathan Monk commissioned reproductions of 10 paintings by a Chinese painter which will be exhibited in our gallery 30 years after the museum debut of Martin Kippenberger. 'By delegating his own painting to others Jonathan Monk demonstrates a multiplication of the duplication that Kippenberger arranged: while the latter had his paintings copied from photographs that he had taken, Monk's paintings exist as images of a secondary order, preceded by the generation of Kippenberger's paintings. The series Dear Painter, paint for me one last time consists of a system circulating within itself, by narrating art as art, therefore speaking of itself, without incorporating the concrete self-expression of the artist. Where Kippenberger retains a reference to his own person in the form of the paintings' subject, in Monk's case it is merely the action which remains as a trace in his work: this conceptual artistic stance is counterposed by an action as a service and reduces the relationship between original and reproduction to absurdity.'

\* Christina Irgang, 2008

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A collaborative project initiated by BFAS Blondeau Fine Art Services, Geneva and Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe/Berlin with the assistance of Jonathan Monk.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication, edited by Julia Hölz and designed by Daria Holme. The photographs were taken by Annik Wetter. It includes a short informative dialogue between Johannes Wohnseifer and Jonathan Monk. The project was realized with the assistance of The Oil Painting Kingdom and DHL International.

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## Meyer Riegger

Current Karlsruhe

29.05.2010 - 17.07.2010 Jonathan Monk ...so different, so appealing?

Current Berlin

01.05.2010 - 05.06.2010 Korpys/Löffler Strahlungen

Jonathan Monk

...so different, so appealing?

We are pleased to present "...so different, so appealing?", the sixth solo show of the British artist Jonathan Monk in our Karlsruhe gallery space.

Jonathan Monk's artistic work has its origins in the contemplation and alteration of previously existent creative concepts: forms of expression derived from pop art, minimalist and conceptual art appear equally as strategies and parodies in his pictures, collages, objects, installations and films. In the process of quotation and simultaneous modification of the quoted subject matter Monk's work shifts between memory, imagination and a tangible condition. The artist attributes a distinct temporality to the individual piece, while raising the validity thereof to question – often in a humorous way.

In his current exhibition Jonathan Monk is showing fourteen different electronic devices from the area of home entertainment. Powered speakers, a flat-screen monitor, an iPod, a radio alarm clock or an interactive video game console – the new and functional brand name devices selected by Monk form a cross-section of the range of products to be found in an electronics retail store. However, the artist undermines their usability by presenting the individual devices in custom-fitted plexiglass showcases, therefore conserving them as objects.

By exhibiting consumer goods Jonathan Monk makes a direct reference to early pieces by the artist Jeff Koons: In the early 80's series "Pre-New" and "The New" Koons presented kitchen and household appliances – predominantly vacuum cleaners – in showcases and on fluorescent lamps as an interpretation of the readymade. The transformation of the functionality attributed to an object into its purely visible form through the prohibition of touching brings the act of showing, and viewing itself into the foreground of Koons' series – as a form of voyeurism.

While Jeff Koons keeps his focus on the visuality of the specific object and its symbolic formal language, for Jonathan Monk the seminal point is more the renunciation of a perspective that is bound to an object. By enclosing, almost nostalgically archiving a current object of utility the artist undermines its topicality. In the process of repositioning these products Monk demonstrates their transient, finite, even replaceable substance, which defines the image of such appliances in a world where consumer attitudes and product development are always characterized by novelty.

The engagement with new forms of consumerism, which brings with it the question of contemporary awareness compared to historic awareness also forms a reference to early pop art subject matter.

The question first voiced by Richard Hamilton in a collage in 1956, "Just what is it, that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?" is further pursued by Jonathan Monk in his exhibition of the latest home entertainment products, and emphasized by the quote "...so different, so appealing", which serves as the title and a type of framework and contextualisation for the exhibition.

Christina Irrgang  
translation Zoe Miller

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# FlashArt

## REVIEWS

### JONATHAN MONK YVON LAMBERT - PARIS

Parallel to the Alighiero Boetti exhibition at Tornabuoni Gallery in Paris, Jonathan Monk proposes another one, inside Yvon Lambert Gallery's library. The exhibition title is "e", the letter, the Italian word for "and", which Boetti placed amongst his first and surname.

The Italian artist's intention was that of doubling his identity, therefore raising uncertainty about the uniqueness of his artistic position. Introducing himself as a multiple person (a double one), he addressed his work in terms of a reflection on duplication and sharing of the authorship. Many of his works were realized through collaborations, amongst those were the embroidered tapestries realized by Pakistani and Afghani artisans. The model could be interpreted by the person delegated to fabricate it. Together with the fact that these embroideries were realized on a delegacy principle, the model could be interpreted by the person in charge of his realization.

It is this vagueness in terms of the author's position that Jonathan Monk questions by pointing out the "e". He has brought to the exhibition two pieces by the Italian artist and two of his own. One within the other, Carpet Piece Perhaps, is a white, hand-sewn wool

carpet with a black text on it. The text is a declaration by the Archive of Alighiero Boetti, made in order to authenticate the artist's works, warning collectors and gallerists of the existence of false Boettis, advising them to get in touch with the Archive prior to any sales.

Re-materializing Boetti's practise of having artisans make his works, Jonathan Monk underlines the fact that the artisans's place or role is as dramatically diminished by the authentication procedure as the whole "vagueness of uniqueness" principle. Because, if Boetti skimmed past (with exultance) the attempt to erase the author's figure for what attains to his work, the later (the author) is clearly celebrated as a unique person from the moment of his effective disappearance. And, if Jonathan Monk, as usual, considers his work as a game with another artist, he has revealed with some sarcasm that the "e" has actually been erased till when shown by Tornabuoni Art Gallery and Alighiero Boetti Archive.

(translated from French by Ben White)

François Aubart



JONATHAN MONK, Carpe, Piece Perhaps, 2010, Wool handtufted carpet, 285 x385 cm. Courtesy Yvon Lambert, Paris.

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LISSON GALLERY

## Jonathan Monk and Douglas Gordon

### Double Act Repeated

23 June – 31 July 2010

29 Bell Street

Lisson Gallery is proud to present a new exhibition by Jonathan Monk and Douglas Gordon. Double Act Repeated is conceived as a collaborative project and comprises four films, an opening-night performance and a series of new works created especially for this exhibition. Monk and Gordon share an interest in exploring the creative act as an intuitive and conceptual process, rooted in Conceptual Art. As friends they share a passion for found images, football, word-play and the belief that the best ideas are generated around the dining table.

The Sublimation of Desire, 2008 are four films which record the change of state of a bottle of beer, a glass of champagne, a mug of tea and a cup of coffee from cold to warm and from hot to cold. The films are the re-make of an hour-long video the artists shot in the mid 90s on a very hot afternoon in Budapest of a cold beer getting warm. Again, at the end of the 90s, on an ice-cold morning in Shwaz, Austria, they documented a hot mug of tea becoming tepid. The original video tapes are now lost and the artists decided to re-create these moments on 16mm film. Set on a loop, the static images are obsessive recordings of the elapsing of time and minute observations of subtle changes in state and relentless images of the sublimation of desire: cold beer becomes warm, champagne bubbles go flat, steaming coffee and hot tea become undrinkable.

The artists move effortlessly between formats: in the lower level gallery Monk and Gordon present a series of new works which reference the Two Ronnies (Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett), a British sketch show the artists share fond childhood memories of. The logo for the programme, two pairs of spectacles, is multiplied and presented in variations of scale and material. The sculptures, affixed or simply leaning against the walls, are a celebration of the double act – incidentally both artists also wear glasses. As the films act as a visible transcription of the passing of time, so the sculptures represent a material translation of an idea, something the artists have also explored in numerous neon works, where neon transcriptions are intermittently lit in correspondence to actions or experiences that the two artists have performed together or simultaneously in different places, thus recreating the substance of the act as duration.

For the opening night Friends Electric Bar, will see Gordon and Monk hosting a temporary bar in the gallery, sharing their favourite drinks and music with the visitors to the show.

#### About the artists:

Jonathan Monk (1969, Leicester) and Douglas Gordon (1966, Glasgow) met for the first time in 1990 in Glasgow, where they both studied fine art, possibly back-stage at a Miles Davis concert or while watching England lose to Germany on penalties.

The films formed the basis of an exhibition at the Fondazione Morra Greco in Naples in 2009 and are presented in London for the first time.

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**JONATHAN MONK**  
*THE INFLATED DEFLATED*

EXHIBITION DATES: MAY 7 – JUNE 20, 2009  
OPENING: THURSDAY, MAY 7, 6 – 8PM  
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10 – 6PM

*“Appropriation is something I have used or worked with in my art since starting art school in 1987. At this time (and still now) I realised that being original was almost impossible, so I tried using what was already available as source material for my own work. By doing this I think I also created something original and certainly something very different to what I was re-presenting. I always think that art is about ideas, and surely the idea of an original and a copy of an original are two very different things.”*  
– Jonathan Monk, 2009

Casey Kaplan is pleased to present new work by artist, Jonathan Monk (b. 1969 in Leicester, England, lives and works in Berlin, Germany), in his sixth solo exhibition with the gallery, *The Inflated Deflated*. Previously, Monk has taken on artists such as John Baldessari, Chris Burden, Sol LeWitt, Ed Ruscha, and Lawrence Weiner, as source material for his own artwork. For this exhibition, Monk turns his attention to the artist, Jeff Koons. By employing his own intrinsic artistic strategies, appropriation and recontextualization, Monk presents an exhibition that appends art history with a narrative of his own interplay between the objects and ideas of the past and his newly conceived reincarnations.

In the late 1980's, while Jonathan Monk began art school in Glasgow, Scotland, Jeff Koons created a highly polished stainless steel cast of an inflated, plastic bunny shaped balloon, entitled “Rabbit”, 1986. The sculpture debuted that same year in the seminal *Group Show* at the Ileana Sonnabend Gallery in New York. “Rabbit” has become an icon of its era. Utilizing a similar inflatable, carrot carrying, plastic toy bunny as a starting point, Monk presents his own version of Koons’ infamous work in five different poses. Monk’s stainless steel bunnies capture five frozen moments of silent, animated, slow deflation. With each dissipation of air, the mirrored bunny droops, folds, and gently falls from a standing position to a reclined figure. If seen as a sequence, the sculpture ultimately comes to rest in a low, undulating heap of metal, recalling one of Henry Moore’s classic bronze reclining nudes.

Surrounding the five sculptures are five photorealist style paintings that depict various stages of the fabrication process of Monk’s bunny sculptures from the clay moulds to welding of steel. Through the paintings, Monk demystifies the process of the creation of his own artworks as a conceptual component to the exhibition.

In Gallery III, the exhibition transitions from balloons losing their air to light bulbs that gradually burn out and go dark. Monk additionally presents four wall-based, light bulb artworks entitled, “The Death of Geometric figures” (circle, square, rectangle, and triangle). Each of the geometric signs is a mirror surrounded by ceramic white light bulbs that recall Hollywood-style vanity mirrors, and also artworks from the 1960's and 70's by various Conceptual artists. As the bulbs burn and fade to black, Monk’s signs become realized.

*The Inflated Deflated* will run in parallel with *The Deflated Inflated* at the Lisson Gallery in London, May 20 – June 13, 2009. Following his opening with the gallery, Monk will present an exhibition of unique t-shirts and posters at Specific Object, New York, May 8 – June 12, 2009. Opening May 14, Monk will present *The Rew-Shay Hood Project Part II*, at Artpace, San Antonio, Texas. Monk’s work is also currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in an exhibition curated by Christian Rattemeyer, *Compass in Hand: Selections from The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection*, through July 27. Recent solo museum exhibitions include *Time Between Spaces*, Palais de Tokyo and Musée d’art Moderne, Paris, France, 2008 and *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, etc.*, Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover, Germany, which traveled to the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen. St. Gallen, Switzerland; Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nürnberg, Germany; and Leiterin Haus am Waldsee, Berlin, Germany from 2006 - 2007.

For any inquiries please contact Loring Randolph, [loring@caseykaplangallery.com](mailto:loring@caseykaplangallery.com).

Next Gallery Exhibition: Fantastic Tavern: The Tbilisi Avant-garde, curated by Daniel Baumann and AIRL, June 25 – July 31, 2009

GALLERY ARTISTS: HENNING BOHL, JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, MILES COOLIDGE, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, PAMELA FRASER, LIAM GILLICK, ANNIKA VON HAUSSWOLFF, CARSTEN HÖLLER, BRIAN JUNGEN, JONATHAN MONK, DIEGO PERRONE, JULIA SCHMIDT, SIMON STARLING, GABRIEL VORMSTEIN, GARTH WEISER, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER

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Saltz, Jerry, "Rabbit Redux," New York Magazine, June 1, 2009, page 75

# NEW YORK

## Art

EDITED  
BY EMMA  
PEARS



### **RABBIT REDUX**

For two decades, Jonathan Monk has been one of the cleverer jester-stalkers of the art world. The Englishman has made images of himself at airports carrying signs that read MARCEL DUCHAMP and created works riffing on art by the likes of Ed Ruscha and Lawrence Weiner. This time, he's made funny, pointed hay out of the most iconic sculpture of the past twenty years, Jeff Koon's *Rabbit*. The result takes you from thinking about supersonic Henry Moore sculptures to the production lines in China where parts of Monk's sculptures were made and even to the deflated economy (at Casey Kaplan through June 20). JERRY SALTZ

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**REW-SHAY HOOD PROJECT PART II**  
NEW WORK BY JONATHAN MONK DEBUTS AT ARTPACE SAN ANTONIO

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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS—Artpace San Antonio presents Rew-Shay Hood Project Part II, on view from May 14 through September 6, 2009, in the Hudson (Show)Room. Curated by Executive Director Matthew Drutt, the exhibition debuts a new body of work by Berlin-based artist Jonathan Monk. Fittingly located in the space named for Artpace’s former function as a Hudson automobile dealership, the exhibition features a series of paintings after American artist Ed Ruscha’s iconic photographic series and book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*.

In Rew-Shay Hood Project Part II fourteen distinctive hoods of classic American cars—from a 1963 Plymouth Fury to a 1982 Chevrolet Camaro—serve as canvases for the photo-realistic airbrushed paintings. “Re-presented” on car hoods, Ruscha’s deliberately sober early 1960s photographs of service stations located in Texas and Oklahoma are transformed and monumentalized, provoking reconsideration of the narrative of conceptual and pop art.

In previous projects, Monk has referenced other canonical modern and contemporary artists, such as Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, and most recently, Jeff Koons. He is at the forefront of a generation of artists who have appropriated American conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s to create contemporary projects that deal with reception and re-presentation. Monk’s works inhabit a diverse range of media, from photography and sculpture to film and installation, where the artist, the creative process, and art’s dictum of originality collide.



Jonathan Monk. Rew-Shay Hood Project XX, 2008/09.  
Airbrush Paint, 1978 Chevrolet Malibu Hood  
55 x 62" / 139.7 x 157.5cm  
Unique  
Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Since graduating from the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland, in 1991, Jonathan Monk has amassed an impressive roster of exhibitions and publications. His most recent solo exhibitions include Time Between Spaces, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2008); Twodo-Project 2007, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Germany (2007); and Some Kind of Game Between This and That, Casey Kaplan, New York (2007). Monk's work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions including, most recently, Time Pieces, Galerie Jan Mot, Brussels, Belgium (2008); Looking Back, Mireille Mosler Ltd., New York (2008); and The Store, Tulips & Roses, Vilnius, Lithuania (2008).

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition is made possible in part by the Linda Pace Foundation.

Exhibition Details and Related Events:

Exhibition Dates: May 14 – September 6, 2009

Reception and Artist Walk-Thru: Thursday, May 14, 5:30-8:00 PM

The opening reception for Rew-Shay Hood Project Part II will be held from 6:30 to 8:00 PM with a gallery walk-thru led by the artist at 7:00 PM. The Members' Preview will begin at 5:30 PM.

Brown Bag Lunch: Wednesday, June 10, 2009, 12:00-1:00 PM

Join Artpace for a curator-led tour and discussion of Rew-Shay Hood Project Part II. Lunch is provided by Sip (\$6.50). Call Artpace for menu and reservations.

Private Tours

Tours in both Spanish and English are available by appointment. To schedule a group tour, contact Celina Emery at [cemery@artpace.org](mailto:cemery@artpace.org) or call 210 212 4900 x323.

## ABOUT ARTPACE

Artpace San Antonio serves as a laboratory for the creation and advancement of international contemporary art. Artpace believes that art is a dynamic social force that inspires individuals and defines cultures. Our residencies, exhibitions, and education programs nurture the creative expression of emerging and established artists, while actively engaging youth and adult audiences.

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Davies, Lillian, "Critic's Pick: Jonathan Monk," Artforum.com, June 24, 2009  
<<http://artforum.com/archive/id=23158>>

**ARTFORUM**

Critics' Picks: San Antonio

**Jonathan Monk**

ARTPACE SAN ANTONIO  
445 North Main Avenue  
May 14 - September 6, 2009



Jonathan Monk, Rew-Shay Hood Project XIX, 2008-2009, airbrush paint, 1965 Chevrolet El Camino hood, 52 x 53 1/2".

In his exhibition "Rew-Shay Hood Project Part II," conceptual jester Jonathan Monk riffs on the phonetic spelling of one of the art world's biggest names—Ed Ruscha—while popularizing images from the elder artist's first book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (originally published in 1963). Onto the hoods of classic American cars, including a 1969 Ford Mustang and a 1968 Pontiac GTO, Monk has airbrushed images of the gas stations that Ruscha photographed along Route 66, between his hometown of Oklahoma City and Los Angeles. Presented at Artpace, formerly a Hudson automobile dealership, in the midst of an energy crisis and GM's descent into bankruptcy, Monk's thirteen hoods (some featuring signs advertising diesel at less than thirty cents per gallon) imbue Ruscha's aestheticized project with political and social gravitas. In Monk's hands, these classic American cars, coveted in the way that some limited-edition art books are, exist as a single part—a useless relic of a historical moment. Meanwhile, by resituating Ruscha's images, Monk extends his practice of undermining the idea of the unique art object, as well as the culture of consumption that has fueled it.

# JONATHAN MONK

## TIME BETWEEN SPACES

29 MAY - 24 AUGUST 08

**For the first time, the Musée d'Art moderne de la ville de Paris / ARC and the Palais de Tokyo are opening an exhibition together.**

“What time is it on the moon?” Jonathan Monk wonders, putting forward the hypothesis that this satellite of the earth is in the same time zone as Houston (Texas) where the Apollo Mission Control Center was located. Reflecting these two geographical points that have been rendered synchronous, this exhibition simultaneously occupies two institutions that face one another within a building constructed in two almost identical parts: the Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris / ARC and the Palais de Tokyo.

Beyond the traditional model of the single, unique work and under the sign of concomitance, “Time Between Spaces” suggests an elastic and stereo time that, to be fully appreciated, has to be looked for outside the two institutions. In this unusual context this “stereoscopic” exhibition questions and juggles with historical, autobiographical or simply event-based time.

The works dealing directly with these themes: so the performances of clockmakers at work (“Repairing Time”) and people taken on to think of yesterday or tomorrow. At the opening of the exhibition, two pendulum clocks facing one another are synchronized: everything suggests that, as time goes by, the work composed of two clocks entitled *Odd Couple* will show different times. A science fiction movie is shown by means of a complex arrangement of alternating cassettes during which the video signal gradually deteriorates.

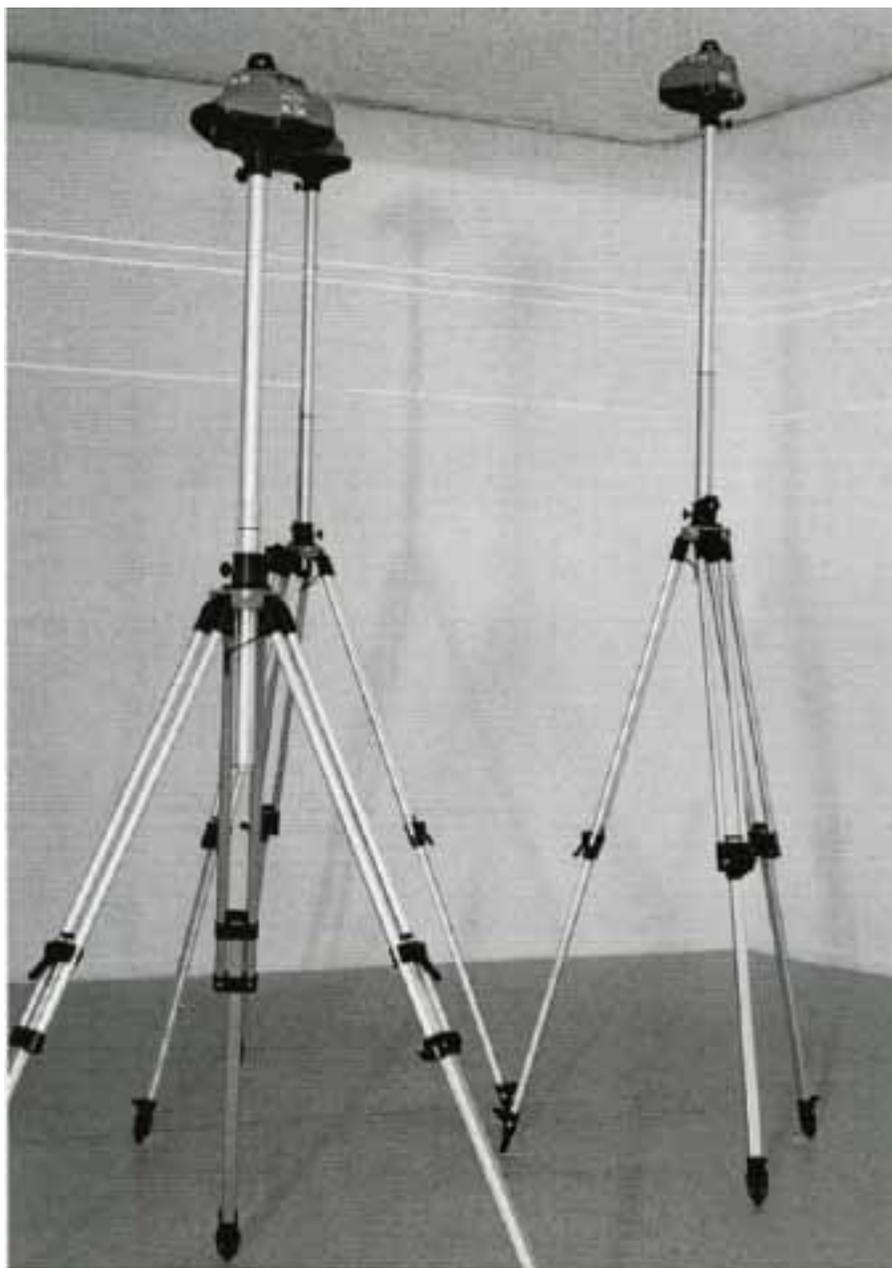
The artist revisits as well time in its historical dimension as Paris's revolution era, or time of minimal and conceptual art as in *Conversation Piece and Four Sol Lewitts, Three Ed Ruschas and a Lawrence Weiner*.

The exhibition “Time Between Spaces” also introduces an autobiographical dimension that can be found on many occasions: *My foot painted to look like my mother's, Father son - shoulder Piece, etc.* The latter work shows the height of Monk's son when carried on his shoulders: a measurement that will change as the artist's son grows up.

Time is also envisaged under the sign of relativity. A jigsaw puzzle exists in two versions: its perimeter (The Outside of Something) and its center (The Inside of Something). A work by David Hockney depicting a dive is replayed as “before” and “after” when the water in the swimming pool is unruffled.



**Jonathan Monk, *Stationary Metamorphosis Within a Geometric Figure*, 2008, Courtesy Nicolai Wallner**



**Jonathan Monk, *Father Son Shoulder Piece*, 2007**  
**Dimensions variable, Single edition**  
**Courtesy Lisson Gallery, London, and Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv**

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# JONATHAN MONK

What position can artists adopt after the heroic gestures of the pioneers of modernity? How should they carry on after the clean sweep made by the avant-gardes?

Using a variety of mediums, Jonathan Monk endeavors to demystify artistic creativity, linguistic, semantic, logical, etc. “Constantly Moving Whilst Standing Still” (2005), representing a back-to-front bicycle the two wheels of which turn tirelessly in opposite directions, illustrates this English expression literally. Playing with interpretative logic and referring to everyday life, Jonathan Monk shatters the usual authority of the work of art.

The artist has presented many international projects at prestigious institutions; Swiss Institute (New York), MoMA (New York), Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, ICA London, etc. He recently held two exhibitions at Tramway (Glasgow).

1969 born in Leicester (UK), Jonathan Monk is represented by galleries : Lisson (Londres), Yvon Lambert (Paris et New York), Nicolai Wallner (Copenhagen), Meyer Riegger (Karlsruhe), Sonia Rosso (Turin), etc.

“Time between spaces” is his first major exhibition in Paris. It is also the first time that two Parisian institutions have formed a partnership to create a joint exhibition...

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**THE EXHIBITION OF  
JONATHAN MONK  
IS PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP  
WITH LE MUSEE D'ART MODERNE  
DE LA VILLE DE PARIS / ARC**

With the support of the Amis du Musée d'Art  
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# ARTFORUM

Davies, Lillian. "Critics Picks: Jonathan Monk", Artforum Online. <[www.artforum.com/picks](http://www.artforum.com/picks)> June 30, 2008.

Critics' Picks: Paris

**Jonathan Monk**

PALAIS DE TOKYO

13. Avenue du President Wilson

May 29-August 24



View of "Time Between Spaces." (Photo: Didier Barroso)

Facilitating an unprecedented partnership between two historically distinct institutions, Jonathan Monk's Parisian museum debut is a clever presentation of the artist's playful manipulations of time and space. Smartly curated selections of Monk's new and recent work are installed in strikingly similar spaces at the Palais de Tokyo and the Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, bridging an array of spatial, temporal--not to mention social--divisions between the two establishments. Commissioned by Monk from an atelier in China, *Before a Bigger Splash*, 2006, is a near copy of David Hockney's iconic painting, modified to present the moment just before the diver arrived in the frame to break the perfect blue stillness of a Los Angeles pool. This work is on view at the Musee d'Art Moderne, while *After a Bigger Splash*, 2006, hangs at the Palais de Tokyo. The latter image is exactly the same as the former, but the titles tug at issues of appropriation, as well as of painting's time-based potential. Three wall texts (each 2008) from Monk's "Meetings" series are installed in each space, and for the first time, the random dates include potential rendezvous in the past in addition to the usual future dates for meetings. Further investigating the construction and presentation of time, every Saturday afternoon two young horologists perform a ritual exchange of antique clocks. At long desks, a timepiece from each space is taken apart and reassembled. The conceptual implications of the show are most interesting in this move across the wide sidewalk and terrace joining the galleries. In this liminal passage, Monk's conceptual jet lag, a stereophonic reverb, takes hold.

Jonathan Monk's exhibition "Time Between Spaces" is on view concurrently at the Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and the Palais de Tokyo from May 29 through August 24, 2008.

---Lillian Davies

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**JONATHAN MONK****LIRA HOTEL**

20 February - 28 April 2007

In the centre of Kabul, in the early 70's Alighiero Boetti opened the "One Hotel", which was a meeting point for those visiting the capital and home to the artist when he stayed in Afghanistan. Amongst the other names chosen for the hotel by Boetti, and then rejected, the name LIRA HOTEL has now been chosen by Jonathan Monk thirty years later, in order to herald the beginning of a new and ambitious project at the Sonia Rosso gallery.

The gallery itself was converted into a hotel, thus becoming a true meeting point and residence for those interested in modern art, and who wish to stay in the city and fully experience the atmosphere of the art gallery.

The LIRA HOTEL project involved the preparation of a hotel room inside an art gallery, while the exhibition area features a series of original painting and sculpting works, all in some way linked to the theme of travelling and hospitality that is typical of a hotel. So that there is a lighted sign with the wording LIRA HOTEL above the entrance to the gallery, the neon RECEPTION sign, cushions made out of marble and a television that is on, and which is totally enclosed in a white box, its images being reflected and projected onto the surrounding floor.

A particular tribute goes to Michelangelo Pistoletto with his novel update of the "Structure for standing", which whilst being varied in terms of measurements and proportions becomes a kind of stylized reception desk.

The Lira Hotel, inside the Sonia Rosso gallery is located in Borgo Vanchiglia, in the historic centre of Turin, 100m from Vittorio Veneto square and the banks of the Po with its Murazzi abounding with clubs, restaurants and pubs. It is near the Mole Antonelliana, which houses the Cinema Museum and in the same street as the "Fetta di Polenta", another important historic building of Antonelli and not far from either Piazza Castello, Palazzo Madama, the Regia Theatre, the Roman Quadrilateral, the Egyptian museum etc.

The room is complete with minibar, tv and dvd and air conditioner. There is also a small lounge area at the disposal of the guests for the consultation of catalogues and magazines and fax and internet service.

The gallery staff is at hand to provide information on the exhibitions and museums of Turin, at the GAM, Modern art gallery at Rivoli castle, at the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation and at the Merz Foundation.

The gallery is only 10-15 minutes by taxi, tram or bus from the main Porta Nuova and Porta Susa stations. The principal airports being those of Torino Caselle that is 25 Km from Turin, and Milano Malpensa that is 100 Km away, and which can both be reached by means of a shuttle bus, train or coach service.

For lira hotel reservations, please. contact [lirahotel@soniarosso.com](mailto:lirahotel@soniarosso.com) or +39(0)11 8172478

Gallery hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 3 - 7 pm

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Stange, Raimar, "Hannover: Made in Germany," Modern Painters, October 2007

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**HANNOVER****MADE IN GERMANY**

SPRENGEL MUSEUM HANNOVER, KUNSTVEREIN HANNOVER, KESTNERGESELLSCHAFT

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Where does art originate? The elegant and astute answer Lawrence Weiner once gave was "in the mind." In the north German city of Hannover, such conceptual insight was replaced by a logic tied to nationhood. Mounted across three venues, "Made in Germany" surveyed "contemporary art from Germany"—art produced in the country by both native and foreign-born artists. On this large canvas the curators wanted to demonstrate that today artistic identity has something to do with "the place where the artist produces the work of art." The triumphal argument of "Made in Germany," not unlike that of "Swiss Made," a contemporaneous two-part show at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, which also links art to its place of production, is that what matters is not where you're from but where—in geographical terms—you're at.

To demonstrate this, the six curators from the three institutions involved in "Made in Germany" carried out a thoroughly subjective selection. For example, they paid almost no attention to the entire east of the country. The Leipzig School, commercially the most successful export from German ateliers in recent times, was not represented in the exhibition at all. The former West German art capital of Cologne was also given short shrift. Instead the curators concentrated—why is this always the case?—on those well-known sites of production, Berlin and Munich. In this way 52 German-born and 14 non-German artists, all more or less well known in the artworld, were brought together. This utterly incomplete "major review exhibition," as it was wrongly described nonetheless presented some understandable interesting works. Interesting specifically because

they resist the show's logic that production is related to nationhood.

For example, in Bjørn Melhus's video installation *Emotion Field #1—The Odd Couple, German* (2007), red or yellow monochrome blocks of color light up on 16 monitors in apparently chaotic rhythm, thereby producing, along with the black encasement of the monitors, the constituent shades of the German flag. The sequence is determined by the sound track, which comes from an episode of the American TV series *The Odd Couple*: the sound of a woman's voice makes the monitors glow yellow; the sound of a man's turns them red. This random relationship between meaningful speech and abstract colors—as represented by an American TV series lighting up German flags—is a successful symbol of the arbitrariness of national attributes.

Candice Breitz's video installation *King (A Portrait of Michael Jackson)* (2005) was also on view. Showing Jackson fans singing his songs, this piece belongs to a continuing body of work in which Breitz (who grew up in South Africa) emphasizes the increasing power of fandom in pop culture. The installation is part of a series of portraits that she began in Jamaica with Austrian funding. *King* was made in Berlin, but most of the project was not: it was continued in Italy and Britain, with portraits of Madonna and John Lennon fans. On top of this, at the time of writing, this work was the last made in Germany by Breitz—a good two years ago. This is exactly what distinguishes many of the artists presented here, among them Michael Butler, Ceal Floyer, Jeppe Hein, Simon Starling, and others: they may very well make art in Germany, but they also pro-

duce work in many other countries. The "artistic identity" of their works is thus no longer linked with places of production, a predictable effect on our increasingly globalized world. Indeed one of Breitz's subjects, the aforementioned Lennon, seemingly anticipated this, as he sang, "Image there's no countries..."

Jonathan Monk's sculpture *Ohne Titel (Dem Deutschen Volke)* (Untitled [To the German People], 2007), meanwhile, takes the concept of a link between artistic identity and "the place where the artist produces the work of art" to absurd lengths. Even the ironically antiquated phrase *dem deutsche Volke* points to the distanced approach with which Monk installed his work, a mirror-surfaced Volkswagen Golf conceived specially for the exhibition. On first view the car still clearly seems to have a claim to the motto *Made in Germany*, but what emerges is that today, even Volkswagen Golfs are for the most part produced no longer in Germany but rather in so-called low-wage countries. Frequently only the final assembly takes place in Wolfsburg.

Monk's Golf thus reflects the concept of the exhibition, standing for a transnational production logic that long ago took the place of the national: both industrial and artistic production have become mobile and fluid processes, and are rarely attached to fixed sites. And Lennon's imagined dream of "no countries" has mutated, thanks to neoliberal capitalism, into a nightmare of social injustice. To ignore this precarious moment with a statement as sentimental and populist as "Made in Germany"—therein, precisely, is what makes this exhibition so politically problematic. —RAIMAR STANGE

TRANSLATED FROM GERMAN BY

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Renate Wiehager, (ed.), "Jonathan Monk," *Minimalism and After*, DaimlerChrysler AF, Ostfildren: Hatje Catz Verlag, 2007, p. 366-369

## Jonathan Monk

\*1969 in Leicester, GB

lives in Berlin, Germany

Jonathan Monk has been examining the response to American Minimal and Concept Art for several years. He is most interested in the element of "image finding" and the process of "image emergence". To this end he processes the works of the forerunners of these art movements, in this case Sol LeWitt in particular.

The works on paper acquired by the DaimlerChrysler Collection One from five (new from old), one from five (old from new) and Slight alterations 1-5 were produced in the immediate context of the 16 mm film SOLLEWITTONEHUNDREDCUBESCANTSSLOWSLOWEASYNOWFRONTTOBACKBACKTOFRONTONITSSIDEFOREVER. For the film, Monk put a series of black-and-white photographs of an isometric cube together to form a loop. He chose the illustrations he used from Sol LeWitt's book "100 Cubes", published in 1990. His treatment produced a stumbling flow of images, rather like a cartoon film. The works on paper have the use of simple resources and materials and also small, deliberate 'imprecisions' in common. Both elements tear Minimal Art's material fetishism and perfectionism to shreds ironically. For One from five (new from old), one from five (old from new) Monk took five pages from '100 Cubes' (one from five), cut them into pieces and reassembled them to form a new, white 'cube' (new from old) and a colored 'cube' made up of the 'remnants' (old from new). The artist finally worked on the white 'cube' in watercolor. But according to LeWitt a white cube cannot be painted in watercolor. The break that is caused by modifying the American's working method is visually 'slight', but striking.

Slight alteration 1-5 refers to the strategy of 'slightly altering' an existing work of art. In this water color, Monk varies the method developed by LeWitt of producing certain mixed shades by using various overlaid layers of color and by hatching. The English artist broadened Sol LeWitt's spectrum by hand coloring photographic reproductions of work produced by this technique and thus creating new 'cubes' that are not in the book.

For I Own a Ruler Once Owned by LeWitt, Monk used a ruler that Sol LeWitt left behind in the gallery Yvon Lambert in paris in 1967. LeWitt always tries not to link the production of works of art with his person, for which reason he produces precise concepts about their creation that can be carried out by other people in different places and at different times, without his needing to be present. By referring to the fact that the work was produced with LeWitt's ruler, he is suggesting that it could also be based on one of that artist's ideas, which makes the work of art become independent. "The idea becomes a machine that makes art." (Sol LeWitt, 1970)

Jonathan Monk has been analysing the reception of pioneering works in Abstract Art of the 20th century since the mid-1990s. In animated films, drawings, objects and installations, he interprets the icons of 'subjectlessness' through aspects of duplication, perpetuation and permutation. He does this however not in a denunciatory manner, but instead in the sense of a critical-scientific analysis of fundamental parameters of abstraction, and their interpretation, combination and reduction, accompanied by misunderstandings, on the path through the progression of styles in Modernism. Monk draws on the approaches taken in Concept and Minimal Art of the 1960s/70s in order to generate logic and the ability to objectify the process. Yet at the same time he nonetheless undermines them by offsetting them with forms of private appropriation and blasé British humour.

This can be seen in two of the artist's characteristic graphic works. In 2004 Monk took the 33rd sentence from Sol Lewitt's 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' and over a period of weeks turned it into a German-English translation loop: every translator makes changes to the semantic preciseness of the original sentence in that they bring in their own personal knowledge and experience. A further example is Monk's artists book 'Milk' from 2004, which takes the final photo from Ed Ruscha's book 'Various Small Fires and a Glass of Milk' (1964) as its starting point. From the color photo of a glass of milk in front of a white background, Monk had duplicates printed from a duplicate of the original until the original colorfulness had been transformed into 'milk-white' monochromy.

Citation and repetition are also the basic principle of a group of works of super-8-films on which Monk has been working since around 2000. Once again he uses artists' books as his source material, which in turn have taken on a legendary status in the reception of contemporary artists or for succeeding generations of artists. Among the first films in this context, as described above, is Monk's processing of Sol LeWitt's book '100 Cubes'. This was followed by a filmic interpretation of Ed Ruscha's book 'Various Small Fires and a Glass of Milk' (1964), which Bruce Naumann burned shortly after its publication, and documented this act of 'admiring destruction' as a poster that he brought into circulation. In 2003 Monk created the film 'Abstract Painting', which takes 69 details from an artist book by Gerhard Richter and brings them into motion in film.

The film From A to B and back again deals with the 'black circle' and the 'red square' as the seminal icons of Abstract Art. Kazimir Malevich developed the theory of Suprematism in Moscow in 1913 and reduced his concept of the 'subjectless' image to elementary geometric forms. The material basis for this film by Monk was postcards that he photographed and had printed as a puzzle. Monk photographed the step-by-step 'puzzling into one another of the two motifs and had the photos animated by professional cartoon film-makers. Monk's disassembling of Malevich's typical images sums up the categorical concepts of images of early Modernism in an endless loop in which the process of assertion and negation of the 'last' the 'absolute' image overruns itself again and again.

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Carr, Adam, "Jonathan Monk: Tomorrow's Yesterdays Today," Janus, January 2007, p. 26-33

# JANUS 21



JOHNATHAN MONK:  
TOMORROW'S  
YESTERDAYS TODAY  
Adam Carr

As I begin to formulate this text I have already been at this position before: my computer crashed and the original data has somehow become irretrievable. I now begin rewriting my text on the work of Jonathan Monk but I am failing to precisely recollect what I wrote initially. It is inevitable that this version of the text will always differ from the first version, and yet strangely this seems to be one of Jonathan's artistic imperatives: the recollection and reapplication of a particular moment in the past. However, whereas I am attempting to selvedge information established only a few days ago, Monk's search reaches further into the past: namely to the unique strategies of conceptual art as (un)seen in the work of key artist's who rose to prominence in the late 1960s and 70s. When one looks closer into the artist's work it becomes quickly apparent that his reinterpreting act of appropriation is not as straightforward as it seems. One can observe how, although this does provide the main source of inspiration behind his work, it is in fact, tangled with the continuous references he makes to his own personal history.

One of the most instantly recognisable traits within the basis of Monk's work is his frequent homage paid to the artist's conceptual predecessors, while at the same time he delicately revisits and rewrites their original concepts. Yet his own methods, however, often deviate from the artist's he shares a particular affinity with. Particularly when they demonstrate a disregard for the so-called notions of purity and intentfully refute the position as a claimer of originality. Instead, Monk's strategies concern themselves with demystifying the artistic process, ultimately suggesting alternative formations in which history and the role of the artist can be interpreted differently. The myths surrounding Monk's conceptual counterparts are reproduced and examined under new conditions, whereby the somewhat seriousness of high-art theory and austerity allied to the artist's own humour and wit. A dose of humour as well as any precise interpretation of his work, however, contrasted when a sincere sense of melancholy is located at the very core of a number of works in which the universal message of conceptualism turns to an account of a personal story.

One work by Monk clearly exemplifying these issues is a series of pieces bathed in both melancholy and sentiment, each titled, "Today Is Just A Copy Of Yesterday" (2002-ongoing). The work comprises a set of colour

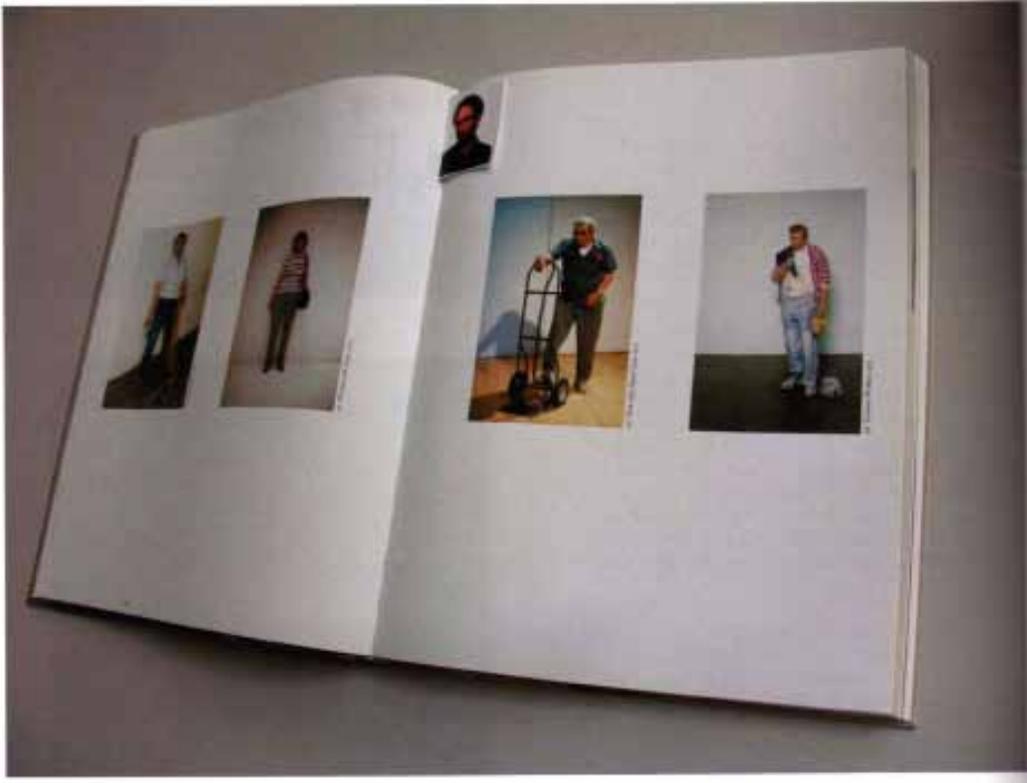
slides, which, image by image, are projected directly onto a wall within a given exhibition space. Each slide is a duplicate of the previous one displayed as a result of the artist assigning a photographic laboratory to follow this particular process of duplication until a carousel of either forty or eighty slides is filled. Due to the slide being shown singularly day-by-day, one must return back to the exhibition to see an alternated version. The subject depicted in the slide is usually of personal significance to Monk—a memory which constitutes who he is as a person and as an artist. The distinctiveness of a treasured moment—which, over the duration of time deteriorates unstoppably—is perfectly reflected in the work itself, as the aforementioned artistic method, used to make the work, causes the chosen image to diminish in clarity as the sequence of the slides progress. At first glance, its appearance could be said to resemble the process-led work of Jan Dibbets or Douglas Huebler, but if attention is brought to the details, one finds not only Monk's distance from these artists, but also his unique approach of connecting art with life.

While some works evoke the failings inherent within the passing of time, others look to the uncertainty of the future. A series of works that operate under the title "Meeting" (1997 - ongoing) announce a place, date and time. When purchased, the work becomes an appointment between the artist and the buyer, for which Monk himself may, or may not, attend — whether it be the Eiffel Tower on the 13th October, 2008; at noon, November 20th at the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 2027; or the promise of a meeting at lunch time with the Lion Enclosure, London's Zoo, 12th May, 2014.

When looking at the sheer magnitude of Monk's artistic output illustrated at recent solo exhibitions held at the ICA, London; Kunsthalle Nürnberg; Kunstvererin St. Gallen Kunstmuseum; and Kunstverein Hannover, Germany—and given the aforementioned examples of work—it is clear that a large portion of his artistic endeavours are premised on the idea of seriality. However, works that are shaped by this particular process often involve a degree of failure and constant progress for the artist. In particular, these works escape the stage of exhibition and remain partially, or completely unseen, consequently leaving their existence known to a selective few. Given the vast amount of writing on Monk's work, the recent overview exhibitions and the artist's constant affair with uncertainty and loss, the following interview aims to step away from the works for which the artist is best-known, and instead to elucidate and bring attention to a body of work less known.

all images on these pages  
Jonathan Monk, Silence is golden, 2004  
series of postcards  
Courtesy of the artist and Sonia Rosso, Turin





Jonathan Monk, Lost in Your Head  
Courtesy the artist & Collezione La Gaja, Busca (Cuneo), Italy

One of the most instantly recognisable traits within the basis of Monk's work is his frequent homage paid to the artist's conceptual predecessors, while at the same time he delicately revisits and rewrites their original concepts.

A CONVERSATION WITH  
JONATHAN MONK

Adam Carr

JANUS 21



Jonathan Monk, *Stolen Postcards without Postage*, 2002  
Courtesy Jonathan Monk & Yvon Lambert Paris

Perhaps the central aspect of this interview could focus on discussing your pieces that people do not get the opportunity to see. In specific, works that are continually in process and those completely bypassing the stage of the exhibition.

Like secret projects that are in process and are rarely seen, some only by the people that own them, and some not by no one.

Let's start by discussing a recent work I have not seen, entitled Jonathan Monk presents a book by Donald Burgy from 1973 shown at Jan Mot's gallery. Is this as straightforward as the title suggests? The presentation of the Burgy book at Mr. Mot's is exactly what it says it is... I made the piece for last year's Baltic Triennial in Vilnius, not that I really made anything; each day of the exhibition a new page of the book is presented, a page is turned in the morning and visitors must come back to see the entire book unless, of course, they already have the book at home.

You mentioned pieces only seen by their owners; could you elaborate on this idea with some examples? I know of one

piece in which you established a correspondence with a Canadian collector in an attempt to guess his grandmother's name: what are the rules and parameters of this piece and where does this particular concept stem from?

The name guessing is quite a simple piece: each week I send the collector a new guess until I guess correctly and then the piece is complete. I guessed the Canadian collector's mother's name, but it took three years. Her name was Berta. I am still searching for an American's grandmother's name and an Italian mother. The whole idea is almost futile as there are millions of names in the world and only so many weeks in my life. Actually, guessing correctly is solely down to luck, it's always random and without research. The work can only exist if someone decides they want it to exist. It could last a lifetime or a week, either way the work is the same.

Lost In Your Head is a ten year project that involves me sending passport sized photographic self portraits to two Italian collectors and they then hide the pictures within the pages of books in their library.

Are there any other pieces in process which also share the condition of using the collector's participation in the work itself?

Only really Time Piece (2002), which is a postal work that involves the sending and receiving of cards in which the time is depicted, such as church clocks, town halls, railway stations, etc. The collectors then order the cards according to time.

The postcard pieces are very pertinent in regard to the seen and not so seen, which you described in relation to your work. When shown, they only illustrate a particular phase of development since they have an ongoing life beyond the occasion of an exhibition—Mantelpiece Piece (1997) is a good example. Could you briefly describe what this piece entails?

Postcards sent by me to the Lisson Gallery, in London, that I believe might have influenced the idea of sending postcards to a gallery and subsequently displaying them on a shelf at mantelpiece height. The shelf without cards resembles a minimal sculpture, a John MacCracken style plan perhaps. The piece has been shown three or four times... once at the Basel Art Fair... many cards were stolen... but the work remains constantly in process, only ever completed when no cards can either be sent or received.

I am interested in knowing about the other postcard pieces in perpetual progress, could you tell me a little about them?

The only others are The Thelonious Monk Orchestra Piece (1998) and Silence Is Golden. In the first I send holiday postcards to a Brazilian collector, now a very large collection of the blues. It is nice to work on holiday without it being work... In the second, cards are sent to Galleria Sonia Rosso, in Turin.

Such as what?

Any postcard where some kind of sound is pictured, we imagine the sound without hearing the sound. Did I mention Day & Night (2002)? I send cards to the Guggenheim Museum in New York of exactly the same place pictured in the day and in the night. One kind of flows naturally into the other, day turning into night and back into day.

There is a great tradition of artists who use the postal service as a system for the production of work—strategies principally used by the artists who raised to prominence in the 60s and 70s—for example, Douglas Heubler or On Kawara. Your focus seems to be directed not only toward the process of sending but also the uncertainty that through the course of the journey the pieces might never arrive to the chosen recipient. The postcard series sent without postage drives this idea to its limits. I'm interested in knowing what was the initial impetus behind your postcard pieces?

All of the post card pieces are straight forward, they involve the sending and receiving of postcards, they are always in process, their end is also mine or the recipient's.

A lot use the system that is present and or presents itself. Either through the post office (stolen post cards sent without postage) or the card produces themselves. One series titled



Ryan Gander. Enough to start over. 2008  
A passport photograph of the artist's mother wearing the earrings featured in the original work To Tears by Jonathan Monk, 2006 from the collection of Ryan Gander.

The Sun Never Sets involves the sending and receiving of black post cards—such and such a place by night.

We have discussed the pieces that are initiated for the eyes of collectors, or the pieces that are only seen partially such as the aforementioned post card series. Are there any works in existence that you yourself have never seen?

I made a show in Zurich in 2003 called The Unseen Unseen II, a show that I was not allowed to see. In fact, I am never allowed to see the piece I proposed to the gallery. They show a 16mm film loop and ten photographs but the content of the film and photos was entirely up to them... There may be some documentation, but I have never seen it.

What happened in the first version of this piece?

The first version of Unseen Unseen is purely photographic, eighty black and white photographic prints from Berlin: my assistant found them in a flea market. I have never seen them and never will.



Jonathan Monk, photograph from Meeting no. 17, Charpenel Collection, Guadalajara, Mexico  
 Courtesy of the artist, Lisson Gallery, London & Jan Mot, Brussels

The first version of Unseen Unseen is purely photographic, 80 black and white photographic prints from Berlin: my assistant found them in a flea market. I have never seen them and never will.

I wanted to ask you about the meeting pieces, a series of works that connect with this notion of what one sees and doesn't see. I am particularly interested in how these works operate in two stages: the showing of the work proposing a meeting in the distant or near future, which, when purchased, becomes an appointment with the buyer of the work. The encounter at the meeting is based on trust whereby both the purchaser of the appointment and yourself need to attend the meeting at the proposed time and destination. This turns around questions of uncertainty in a way not too dissimilar to the post card pieces. I know that some of these meetings have started to take place, could you discuss a little about them? How many have already taken place and have you been finding each other at the proposed destination?

The idea came to me when I lived in LA. I wanted to make a text work that was simply an instruction for something else to happen. I guess similar to Lawrence Weiner's sculptural texts. LA felt very disjointed and far away from where I come from and not just physically. One needed to plan well in advance, nothing happened spontaneously. Perhaps this led to the forward planning with the meeting works. I am also interested in how the works function on three levels: the invitational text, the actual meeting and the memory of the rendezvous. Only one meeting has taken place—it was very straightforward, exactly how one could imagine a collector meeting an artist as a work of art. I also have meetings scheduled for San Francisco, Tu-

rin, two in New York and one in Hong Kong.

Are there any pieces that go completely undetected to the visible eye, that are devoid of any visible trace and which ultimately remain secret?

There are projects that have been made and are available to be seen but are impossible to see. The laser that writes To Infinity and Beyond in the sky—I know it writes the text, but there appears to be nothing to read or even see.

What about the piece in your exhibition at the ICA, London that took place around the time of the Frieze Art Fair? One could see this piece but couldn't hear it.

Yes, the Sound Piece or Silent DJ. It was also performed at the Museum Kunst Palast for the exhibition Spectacular; a DJ is hired to play a regular set, but only s/he gets to hear the music that is played, through headphones; the audience just watches the movements of the performer.

I'm interested in discovering what is missing or unseen in the piece Missing Letters. The Missing Letters is a remake of a piece I made a couple of years ago called the Missing Letter, which was in many ways a remake of Boetti's postal work from the early 1970s. I followed Alighiero's example of moving the stamps around on an envelope... three stamps and all their possible combinations and sent six letters to his last known address in Rome, five of which were returned, so one I assumed arrived. The remake was done for a show in New York and the letters were sent from New York to Rome... we can only make assumptions... they are missing and may still return. The system is now making the piece. The very first version of this piece was also stolen or misplaced between Germany and England; now the entire work is missing. Lastly, playing around with the genre of interviews: perhaps

you could propose a secret question to an artist of your choice and we could include their answer, whoever that may be?

I would like to ask Mark Rothko:

What made you do it?

I forgot to tell you that another of the name-guessing pieces we spoke about earlier is now complete: I guess the grandmother's name after almost 2 years of weekly guesses. Her name was Edith.



Jonathan Monk, Sound Piece (Brussels). 2004  
black & white photograph, instruction

**JANUS 21**



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## PRESS RELEASE

**JONATHAN MONK — WITHOUT TITLE**

8th February — 10th April 2007-01-25

Opening            7th February 2007, 8pm  
Introduction      Prof. Dr. Schmidt-Wulffen, Rektor der Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Vienna

After his comprehensive exhibition Yesterday, today, tomorrow etc. (Kunstverein Hannover, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Kunsthalle Nürnberg and Haus am Waldsee Berlin) we are awaiting a site specific installation here for Hamburg by Jonathan Monk, who was born in England and currently lives in Berlin.

As Stefan Berg phrases it in his introduction to the exhibition in Hannover (March 2006) "his works are irritating games with language and ideas". This places Monk in the tradition of Conceptual Art. At the same time the artist undermines the strict principles of this movement, when he imbues them with aspects of everyday life and confronts them with his biography. His photographs, drawings, objects, installations and films reproduce existing works and seminal works of art history in the 20th century.

In fact Jonathan Monk initially proposed for Y8 to repeat John Armleder's recent installation (80 fir trees were suspended from the ceiling), except Monk would have turned the installation around, so the trees would have been planted firmly on the ground: "Maybe we should do it again, but the right way...", he suggested. His artistic process is less about finding/inventing new objects, rather he is concerned with finding again what potentially was at the beginning of creating an art work and went missing as a result of modes of perception and mystification. Strategies of recontextualization, appropriation, reflection, criticism, doubling and shifting of proportion could certainly be read in a distanced manner, if they were not connected with autobiographical facts. This connection releases Monk's works into a hybrid field of tension and creates a place, which manages to juxtapose and thus confront concepts and elements.

The floor of Y8 is divided into a grid of 36 equally large fields. They point towards the East and serve for the orientation of daily yoga practice. While Armleder decided to paint over the floor with golden paint so that the slightly elevated marks of the grid appeared as a relief, Monk decided to adapt an iconic late work by the constructivist artist Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) for the grid structure. Inevitably discontinuities occur. In addition, his earlier works A journey from here to there and Zero O' Clock (both courtesy Galerie Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe) will be shown together with new works by the artist, which relate explicitly to Y8 and its function.

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Tim Ackermann, "Jonathan Monk: I'm not good at telling jokes," *Deutsche Bank spotlight*, 2007/01, Available: <<http://db-artmag.com/archiv/2007/e/1/2/517.html?dbiquery=null;jonathan%20monk>>

**"I'm not good at telling jokes"**

**Jonathan Monk recycles international art stars with a dry wit**

*He sends Sol LeWitt's cubes off to the disco, pees a homage to Jackson Pollock in the sand, and encounters Andy Warhol in his coffee cup: Jonathan Monk is the art world's biggest vampire. His postcard set The collectors' leftovers can now be seen at Deutsche Bank's headquarters in Milan. Actually, Tim Ackermann wanted to meet the British artist in his favorite pub. But then Monk got the flu, and the meeting fell through.*



Jonathan Monk, *The collectors' leftovers* (Detail), 2003, Deutsche Bank Collection

When asked if it would be possible to talk to him about his art, Jonathan Monk's answer was "we can try." These were the very same words of Sol LeWitt; when asked for an interview, the American conceptual artist had given Monk exactly the same response. Unfortunately, the planned meeting doesn't work out; the British artist has caught the flu and feels "pretty terrible." However, he kindly agrees to a telephone interview. He's lying on a couch in his old Berlin apartment and says he's put on two sweaters, just in case. Occasionally, a lengthy coughing spell interrupts the conversation.



Jonathan Monk, *A cube Sol LeWitt photographed by Carol Huebner using nine different light sources and all their combinations front to back back to front forever*, 2000, Photo: Dave Morgan, Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

"How was it when you interviewed Sol LeWitt?" - "Around six

years ago, Hans-Ulrich Obrist and I flew to NY, then took the train up to Connecticut with the idea for the book that I was making. Then I asked if we could start the interview and he said: 'we can try.' He doesn't really like to talk about the work he's doing. After the long trip, the thought that we wouldn't get anything was pretty scary."



Jonathan Monk, *I saw Andy Warhol in my coffee cup for a second and then he vanished*, 2005, Courtesy Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris

"How did the interview go?" - "In the end it was very good. I talked to him about taking books that he's made and turning them into films, and he was actually interested in that. He didn't encourage me, but he said he was very happy if that happened; when the book is out in the world, then it's available for anyone to use to create something else."



Jonathan Monk, *The space above Bruce Naumans head*, 1997, Photo: Galerie Nicolai Wallner, Kopenhagen

And Monk certainly did make something new out of it: for the photo book mentioned, LeWitt originally took a simple

white cube and lit it with nine lamps in various combinations. Each individual lighting arrangement lent the minimalist form of the cube its own expressive appearance, which was then photographed. Monk took LeWitt's book and used the photographs to make a 20-second animated film. Played in a loop, the cube looks as though it were dancing beneath a cheap disco light. What comes across as a gag actually follows the principle of "art about art" – a method of working that refers explicitly to already existing works and concepts. Monk himself cites the source of his "dancing" cube: *A Cube Sol LeWitt photographed by Carol Hueber using nine different light sources and all their combinations front to back back to front forever* – probably the world's longest work title. At the same time, it is a homage to the father of conceptual art. Sol LeWitt is obviously one of the most important sources of inspiration for Monk's work. The English artist, who was born in 1969 in Leicester, repeatedly demonstrates the validity of LeWitt's influential guiding principal from 1967, according to which the idea is the most important part of the work in conceptual art. Yet there's something Monk failed to mention during his visit to his spiritual father in Connecticut: for another work, he had himself photographed while climbing over one of Sol LeWitt's Open Cube structures. Pretty much like a kid on a jungle gym.



My name written in my piss, 1994, Courtesy the artist and Gallerie Nicolai Wallner, Kopenhagen

If you want to put it meanly, Jonathan Monk is something like a vampire bat biting into the art world's neck. The English artist hones in on the international ueber-artists, sucks a bit of blood from Bruce Nauman, nibbles a little on Duchamp's fame. He likes to alternate his victims frequently, but one thing always remains the same: when he's finally finished sucking, he's grown plumper and the others look a bit paler. When Monk presents new perspectives on well-known artistic positions, some aspects become visible that are missing in these positions.

Another one of the English artist's trademarks is the recycling of foreign works. Indeed, more than anyone else, he seems to breathe art, eat it, digest it. Monk can't even pee without thinking of art history: when he peed his first name into beach sand in 1994, it was a homage to Jackson Pollock. The master of dripping is alleged to have experimented with that technique at a tender age as well.



My name written in my piss, 1994, Courtesy the artist and Gallerie Nicolai Wallner, Kopenhagen

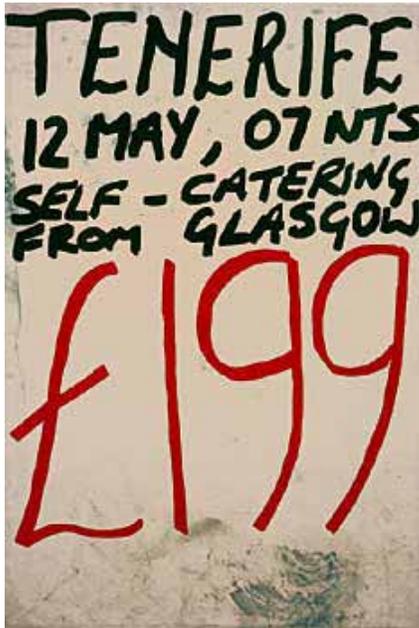
But Monk also likes to test his powers against famous artist colleagues in other ways. His photo series *None of the buildings on Sunset Strip* clearly quotes Ed Ruscha's famous artist's book *Every Building on Sunset Strip*. Yet while Ruscha focused on the iconography of the American road trip by photographing motels, gas stations, and billboards, Monk's series merely shows the intersections of cross streets on the Strip. Similarly lacking in respect and yet incredibly funny is a large-scale photograph of Monk's portraying a cowboy hat on the lower edge of the image without the accompanying head. The rest of the picture shows a vast mountain panorama in the evening sun. The title of the photograph, *The space above Bruce Nauman's head*, plays ironically on the American multimedia artist's hat-wearing habits.



Jonathan Monk, *None of the Buildings on Sunset Strip*, 1998, Photos: Dave Morgan  
Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

Sol LeWitt as jungle gym, Ruscha as interstice, and Nauman as a headless Stetson – is this the way to make enemies out of one's artist colleagues? "Oh, come on," Monk sighs; what he means is: "Be real, man!" In end effect, his art hardly affects the art of the others. "To be honest, I don't think they really care what I do." Added to this is the fairly lax treatment of copyright laws in the art business. These allow him to recycle the material of other artists at a relatively small risk. "I get more trouble from my sister and my mother if I use their photographs."

Whether it's a case of an inverted bicycle as a double Ready-Made à la Duchamp or Andy Warhol's face in the form of coffee grinds at the bottom of a cup – the game with references immanent to the art discourse occupies a large part of Monk's creative activity. And despite this, you'd hardly notice that he's a brainy meta-artist. Admittedly, he's sometimes worn intellectual horn-rimmed glasses recently. But in most pictures he still looks like the typical English "lad": lanky, cropped hair, sneakers. He's the type who'd rather go to a soccer game than to an opening. Added to this is his typical British humor, which is as dry as Gordon's Gin with an olive.



Jonathan Monk, No. 88 (Tenerife), 1992, Photo: Dave Morgan, Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

you told a joke." - "It was Sherrie Levine's joke. Her art is all about re-photographing things, so I just re-told her joke." A person who even appropriates the jokes of other artists must certainly have an ambivalent relationship to a concept as old-fashioned as "originality." And yet Monk, along with his acts of duplication and repetition, which have always assumed their own artistic form, has created numerous works that are also original in the traditional sense: he painted slogans from the store-front windows of travel agencies in broad brush strokes for his series of *Holiday paintings*. *Tenerife, 7 nights, self-catering* is painted on one canvas, and the painting is offered for exactly the same price as the vacation package deal on sale.

His work *The collectors' leftovers*, part of the Deutsche Bank Collection and currently on show at the Italian headquarters in Milan, also bears no direct reference to an artistic predecessor. Instead, it is based on the tradition of the "Objet trouvé." The work consists of a series of 70 vacation postcards that Monk found in Berlin's flea markets. A section is cut out of the upper left-hand corner of each. "Why is the work called *The collectors' leftovers*?" - "I was playing with the idea of the collector. Stamp collectors will buy postcards and cut the stamps out. So these are the leftovers. And now Deutsche Bank has bought the leftovers from someone else's collection."



Jonathan Monk, *The collectors' leftovers* (Detail), 2003, Deutsche Bank Collection



Jonathan Monk, *The collectors' leftovers*, 2003, Deutsche Bank Collection

"So you sold junk to Deutsche Bank?" - "They wanted what someone else didn't want. That is how art functions. Some people don't like it and some people do." You can admire his impudence, but don't forget that it comes from a privileged position. To a certain extent, Monk is a fool who stands off to the side and comments on the activities in the art court with a wink of the eye. Judgments of his work mean little to him, because his works blossom in the wide field of art discourse and can always find their justification there. The fact that many of them aren't only funny, but also aesthetically convincing is nice, of course – but not particularly necessary.

Given the success the artist enjoys with his appropriation strategies, it was inevitable that his work would also serve as raw material at some point. Last year, Ryan Gander, also a British artist and wearer of horn-rimmed glasses, purchased a work that Monk created for the Camden Arts Centre: it consists of a photograph of the artist as a young boy with a pair of earrings as eyes. Gander reworked the earrings in a piece of his own. "I didn't mind a bit," Monk said. "I found it funny, and I even tried to buy the work."

"Do you have a favorite joke?" - "I'm not good at telling jokes. I always forget the punch line." - "I read an interview in which

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JONATHAN MONK

*SOME KIND OF GAME BETWEEN THIS AND THAT*

EXHIBITION DATES: MARCH 30 - MAY 5, 2007  
OPENING: THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 6 - 8PM  
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY - SATURDAY, 10 - 6PM

For his fifth solo show at Casey Kaplan, Berlin-based, British artist, Jonathan Monk, will present a new body of work that takes shape from key principles of Conceptual art—the favoring of ideas over object-making, serialism, the dematerialization of the art object—interpreting them with a playful sensibility and through a variety of media: 16mm film, painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, and a laser-light installation. Combining influences from popular culture and art history with snippets of personal history and autobiography, the works on exhibit offer a personal and humorous twist on the aesthetic practices and artistic concepts of the 1960's and 1970's.

Using Sol LeWitt's 1970's series of incomplete, open cubes as a point of departure, Monk's *The New Sculpture* is a variation of the original that cleverly explores both the playful and logical aspects of the geometric form. In his version, Monk uses the sculpture as a dressing room complete with a mirror, shoes, and pair of red trousers. Ironically, the structure itself remains unpainted and naked.

Similarly, in *The Reason for the Neutron Bomb*, Monk's painted Volkswagen hood sculpture pays homage to Chris Burden's performance piece, *Transfixed* (1974) for which the artist was infamously crucified over the rear section of a VW automobile. In the case of Monk, the forked Peace symbol adopted by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has been affixed to a yellow VW hood additionally referring to another one of Burden's installation pieces, *The Reason for the Neutron Bomb* (1979), which consisted of 50,000 nickels with matchstick tips glued to them, arranged in tight rows across the floor of the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York. The tank for tank reconstruction was intended to represent the enormous 50,000-strong Soviet tank force that was placed along the border between Western and Eastern Europe at the time. The combined tank fleet from the United States and all of the western European forces was outnumbered more than two to one. If this numerical imbalance was considered to be a prime reason behind the military's promotion of the neutron bomb, Monk's emblem of peace is a playful reconciliation.

Jonathan Monk was recently included in the exhibition "New Photography 2006," at The Museum of Modern Art, New York and recently had a solo exhibition entitled, "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, etc.," which traveled from The Kunstverein Hannover, in Germany; Kunstmuseum in St. Gallen, Switzerland; Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Germany; and Leiterin Haus am Waldsee in Berlin, a full-color catalogue was also published. Other exhibitions include: "Jonathan Monk: Continuous Project Altered Daily," at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London in 2005 and participation in the 2006 Tate Triennial at Tate Britain, London. A volume of artist interviews, *Until Then..If Not Before*, was released by Domaine de Kerguehennec Center for Contemporary Art in March 2007.

FOR FURTHER EXHIBITION INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT THE GALLERY.

CASEY KAPLAN IS PLEASED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DUESSELDORF ART FAIR APRIL 19 - 22 2007

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Tousley, Nancy, "Back and Forth," *Canadian Art*, Spring 2007, p. 103-104



Installation view (detail) of Michael Snow and Jonathan Monk's *Back and Forth (Again)*, 2006. Two 3-min 16-mm colour silent film loops, dyed floral bouquet, aquarium with fish  
PHOTO MICHAEL MITCHELL

## Back and Forth

JESSICA BRADLEY ART + PROJECTS, TORONTO

The British-born, Berlin-based conceptualist Jonathan Monk put the finishing touch on "Back and Forth" after he arrived in Toronto, with a bouquet of roses. Bringing flowers is the gesture of an admirer, a guest, someone with a sense of occasion. It was a simple but brilliant response to the venerated Toronto avant-garde filmmaker Michael Snow's work in the two artists' installation at Jessica Bradley Art + Projects. And it was entirely in keeping with Monk's practice of playing off of the work of artists of the 1960s and 70s, which he honours and challenges by revisiting and revising high-modernist ideas within the context of life—his own.

Forty years apart in age, Snow and Monk met in Toronto in 2003. The installation, made at Bradley's invitation, evolved via e-mail. "Back and Forth," also the title of a celebrated film Snow made in 1969, hand-

ily describes the process. Ultimately, Monk suggested each artist make a 16-mm film-loop projection, a form common to both their practices; the gallerist Jessica Bradley proposed each respond in some way to the other's film. Each pairing was like a volley in an artists' game, more match of wits than collaboration.

Monk made *Fireplace* (2006) by buying stock DVD footage of a burning fireplace and having it transferred to 16-mm film. It was projected on the wall at fireplace height. When he chose this readymade, he said, he could hear his mother talking about the days before TV, when the fireplace was the centre of the home and the focus of dreams. Facing it, Snow placed a lit aquarium filled with fish of colours chosen to represent fire. Like both films, the fish presented a moving image and acted as brush strokes within a frame. If fire melts snow, water douses fire. In the give and take of "Back and Forth," the punning gamesmen came to a friendly draw.

Each was at his best in the other pairing. Snow's *34 Films* (2006) invokes the Russian constructivist avant-garde, Duchamp's *3 Stoppages-Étalon* (1913-14), Action paint-

ing and Snow's own works from the 1960s and 70s, such as *Wavelength* (1966-67) and *Painting (Closing the Drum Book)* (1978). Using old stock, Snow filmed 16 rectangular coloured gels falling onto a white surface, then flipped and reversed the film so that 16 gels or films fly back "into" the lens, making 32 gels. (The 33rd is the film in the camera; the 34th is the film in the projector.) Projected on the wall, the frame of light becomes like a painting, the random composition of which parallels the "total improvisation" technique Snow uses in musical performance. Entirely in keeping with his earlier work, it is a masterful summary-like other summations Snow has made.

Nearby, Monk's dyed floral bouquet, inspired partly by Snow's fish in water, slowly dropped its petals during the exhibition, echoing the falling gels of *34 Films*. The flowers, a reference to the flower works of Bas Jan Ader, also recalled painting—the memento mori—making the bouquet an homage to Snow and a fond farewell to modernism. NANCY TOUSLEY

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Burton, Johanna, "Jonathan Monk, Casey Kaplan Gallery," *Artforum*, Summer 2007, p. 496-497

# ARTFORUM

## Jonathan Monk

CASEY KAPLAN GALLERY

Jonathan Monk,  
*Deadman (detail)*,  
 2006, wax, rubber,  
 human hair, oil paint,  
 fabric, 76 x 22 x 12".



A few years ago, Ken Johnson, reviewing a Jonathan Monk exhibition at Casey Kaplan Gallery, stated that "Conceptualism can be overbearing but it can also be sweet, wry and poetic." Such readings—of Monk as the sensitive offspring of a band of drier forebears—abound. The word *playful* is often used to characterize the artist, who is generally considered to be enacting a kind of spunky homage. Indeed, Monk is most often understood to be nudging viewers into believing that conceptual tenets remain relevant by acknowledging the tendency's contemporary potential for a "softer" side.

But Monk's overarching project is—I hope—more complicated than this, even if unintentionally so, for it acknowledges both the desire to belong to a (it must be said, almost exclusively male) critical artistic genealogy and the ways by which one must announce both proximity and distance from any history claimed. And by so vehemently aligning his own "content" with that harvested from recent art history, it would seem that Monk might admit his own unadulterated, and thus highly problematic, desire to lay claim to a legacy. For the canonical era of Conceptualism hardly marked a clean break from "expression" or questions of the subject. And while undoubtedly interested in epistemology and ideas, first-generation conceptual art was divorced from neither pleasure nor aesthetics, even while (or perhaps because) it so urgently sought to question institutions and objects. So perhaps Monk's work can be thought of more as a response to and reevaluation of clichés about the period from which he pilfers and less as any real representation of its operations. Ironically, it is this slippage (between historicism and fiction) that makes Monk's enterprise potentially more than just a cute exercise, but also renders it vulnerable to becoming just that.

For his most recent exhibition at Casey Kaplan, "Some Kind of Game Between This and That," Monk filled the gallery with works that nod to a variety of ancestral figures from his self-chosen lineage. Chris Burden makes an appearance as a Madame Tussauds wax figure in *Deadman*, 2006, lying wrapped in a faux blood-soaked blanket and memorializing the artist's infamous 1971 performance, *Shoot. Nearby, in The Reason for the Neutron Bomb*,

2007, the hood of a VW Beetle extends the reference to two other seminal Burden works. Photographs of Bruce Nauman's sculpture *From Hand to Mouth*, 1967, are re-presented, adorned with turquoise earrings and retitled as *Frank Sinatra Piece*, 2007. Sol LeWitt (an artist revisited often by Monk) is included, via one of his unmistakable open cubes, in *The New Sculpture*, 2006-2007. Here the iconic form is cast in shiny aluminum and rendered into a dressing room of sorts, within which Monk leaves a pair of his own designer shoes and red pants. John Baldessari's famous "Commissioned Paintings" from the late 1960s were here recommissioned by Monk; the names of the artist and sign painter hired by Monk, as well as those of the artists originally hired by Baldessari, have been (almost) seamlessly incorporated into Baldessari's deadpan demonstrations.

But what ultimately comes of this pile of references, to say nothing of other works in the show: a delightful photograph of Magritte, his cigarette illuminated by the red beam of a laser pointer, the room filled with fog and the scent of apples; a pair of pool cues hung at the artist's height; an old black-and-white movie of gamblers; a collection of Berlin flea-market books renamed after Monk's favorite albums; a neon sign announcing (backwards and upside down) Monk's birthplace (Leicester); an invitation to a meeting in Mexico in the year 2017? Monk's relentless insistence on his own place in today's narrative of Conceptual art reveals a desire to hold onto and further the stakes of a kind of serious art production while potentially rendering his references into decontextualized, reified relics. Perhaps the most interesting—and certainly most risky—element of this work, then, is an acknowledgment that in securing such a pedigree, one necessarily undermines one's elders, for better or worse. That acknowledgment is crucial, unless the only effect garnered is a "playful" one.

—Johanna Burton

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Press Release

**JONATHAN MONK**

***Apples and Pears and Other Fruits of the Forest***

December 14, 2007 - January 19, 2008  
Opening, Friday, December 14, 2007



**De :** jonathan monk

**Date :** Tue, 18 Sep 2007 11:41:04 +0100 (BST)

**À :** melanie <melanie@yvon-lambert.com>

**Objet :** Re: From paris

Dear Melanie,  
here are a few thoughts about my show

### ***Apples and Pears and Other Fruits of the Forest***

In a dream I met Marcel Duchamp, I asked him for his autograph  
and he signed someone else's name.  
This didn't seem to matter and then I woke up.

I guess this short story sums up my show as you know the starting point will be Nude  
Descending the Stairs and I have based works around this idea:  
paintings of eyes looking through walls  
of dressed up ladies walking down stairs  
of mine and someone else's hair growing from a perfect sphere  
of spinning circles in the sky  
and of 100 free bicycles for visitors to escape into the city  
of the inside and the outside of me sleeping  
and of double exposures  
there might be more  
as I am working on some collages  
but all will be more or less clear in the near or not  
so near future  
until then again jm x x

ps: the works to be collected should be ready for  
collection on monday or tuesday of next week..

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Why are we Artists?

David Shrigley interviews Jonathan Monk, 2006

Jonathan Monk — The plan for the book is to have two or three interviews: you and I, Richard Wright, if he answers my first question this year, and Thomas Demand . . . perhaps? Then some unanswered questions from Ed Ruscha, John Baldessari and Daniel Buren. It is starting to sound over complicated already and I have yet to mention Frédéric Paul's text. We should approach it very simply, quick and easy as my grandfather would say . . . And maybe I should start with a question: Why are we artists? We should continue so.

David Shrigley — I thought I was supposed to be asking the questions? I suppose it doesn't matter. Why are we artists? Perhaps because neither of us was good enough to become a professional footballer. Though I seem to remember you were more into athletics. Do you think you could have made it if you'd just played football and not done all that cross country running?

J.M. — You are really supposed to be asking the questions and you can start again if you'd like . . .

I am pretty sure I would not have made it in any league. In any case I would have retired now and be managing non-league.

D.S. — All things considered I'm glad I'm an artist. Footballers are a bunch of morons.

I was out for a drink with Alan (who we were at Art School with) last week and we were talking about the figurative paintings you used to do when we were first at Art School in Leicester. You were a really good painter, much better than most, but you stopped as soon as we went to Glasgow School of Art. I guess you just didn't like that kind of painting? I think if I had as much talent as you had I would have continued. You were really good at drawing too, vastly better than me. Why is it that I've ended up doing these things and not you?

J.M. — I was never convinced by what I painted and perhaps I didn't believe in it when I got to Glasgow? We were young and restless . . . and not footballers! It is difficult to say what would have happened if I continued to push color around and around. I now think the only thing that stayed with me after art school was the idea of context. What and where things are placed in relationship to other things in the world. And I am not sure painting can deal with this thought over and over again. Funnily enough this interview will appear in a publication that presents a series of paintings that were made for me by professional sign painters. The paintings state their ideal position in the world, where they could or should end up. 'Opposite', 'to the right of', 'above', 'below' works by other artists. Most of them have found the correct home, which is in fact, hard to believe . . . When you make something for an exhibition are you interested in where it might end up? On someone's wall or under the bed or on top of the wardrobe, etc. What happens to all the stuff we (artists) produce?

D.S. — In terms of where my things end up, one of the things that has started to concern me is what is art and what is me just messing around. It seems that every creative thing I do has the potential to be art, doodling on the phone, graffiti on the wall, etc. It seems to spoil the fun somehow. Once I've decided something is art I guess there are another set of decisions to be made as to how and where to display it and then perhaps who might purchase it and where they might put it.

Your work has always acknowledged it's position as art and has often had fun with that position. One of my favourite works of yours was a piece you made at Nicolai Wallner's Gallery in Copenhagen, quite a few years ago now, where you spilt a glass of red wine on a light-colored expensive carpet. I loved the idea that if a collector bought this work you would just go around to their house and spill a glass of wine wherever they liked. Did you ever get to do that?

J.M. — I agree, it is sometimes difficult to understand where it (art) all begins and ends. It is probably our job to make these simple decisions and I am always interested in this factor . . . Is it or is it not or can it or can it not be? This is something that has been dealt with within the art world for some time and I guess the unanswerable question keeps us all going . . .

I am trying to guess the name of a collector's grandmother. This process may or may not be art. The work is complete when I guess correctly, a possible life time of incorrect attempts at finding the name. It is strange to be involved directly with a collector in such a (personal) way. I have made a number of things that can only be realized when someone else decides they want them to be realized. The red wine piece may have been made a number of times by accident, but never on a collector's living room floor. I'll speak to Nicolai about it again, maybe it is time to re-invent the work . . . Maybe we just see things a little bit differently than other people, or we believe we do?

D.S. — How do you feel about being involved with collectors? Whilst I've met people who I like who collect my work I wouldn't go out of my way to meet them in the first place. For me it's too much exposure to the business end of the art world which is something I'd rather let others deal with (as most artists do, I'd imagine). You acknowledge the business of buying and selling your work as the subject of some pieces. It's as if you like getting your hands dirty?

J.M. — I actually try and avoid getting my hands dirty, but I know what you mean. My involvement with collectors, etc. is minimal and it is only important to me when it becomes part of a piece. I am trying to guess the name of one collector's grandmother and this is a strange and even personal relationship, but still quite distant and abstract. I send a letter each week with a new name a new attempt and it is probably a life time of failure . . . Who knows? Similar projects involve sending postcards to various places from various other places. I recently met a Mexican collector at Piccadilly Circus as an art work@. Most of these pieces are straight forward. Their only problematic is their undefined duration. Most of the collectors I have met are very creative and enjoy working with me on various different projects. I avoid the dirty part of the transaction that is generally in the hands of others. It is interesting to see how things have changed for me. Certain ideas have only become possible in recent years. This, I guess, is the same for you too?

I guess our lives as artists have changed a great deal since we lived on Bentinck Street. There are a lot more possibilities now. I'm trying to make the most of it.

D.S. — I think these widening possibilities are a lot to do with self-confidence. I think to make ideas-based art of the kind that you make requires a lot of self-confidence. There seems to be a lot of risk involved, or at least a great many variables. The artwork reveals itself in public. This is something I've never felt comfortable doing myself. I always like things finished when they leave the studio.

J.M. — Glasgow in recent years has managed to sustain the careers of quite a number of artists, this though is a recent development in the city. When I left Glasgow in 1997 there was all but nothing happening in the private gallery scene. When we studied at the art school there was no pressure from the gallery system and I think this was a great relief for us, even if we were not aware of the situation. I entered art school with no thought of what I would do afterwards and am still surprised today how everything worked out. Have things changed a great deal in the last few years?

D.S. — I think you're right when you say it was a relief. Whilst the growing commercial scene is obviously a good thing, it does create some very powerful players whose opinions have a large impact on the kind of art that gets made, or at least what gets shown. I think that artist-run spaces have become a lot less important for people from outside the city, and this isn't such a good thing. Artist-run spaces are important because they are democratic. It's good to have five young artists on a committee deciding an exhibition program rather than one professional gallerist. I guess people coming out of art school today are a lot more aware of the opportunities out there. When we left art school I don't think either of us really thought we would ever be in the position we are in now, or that such a position was possible?

J.M. — Let me know if you think we are heading in any kind of direction and if you think any of this is interesting . . .

D.S. — I think this interview is going OK. We shouldn't think too hard about going in one particular direction. It's better to just chat. There should be some interesting stuff to edit down at the end. The only problem is I'm not sure who is interviewing who. Anyway . . .

J.M. — My mother mentioned that she had seen you on TV taking pictures with your mobile phone in and around Leicester. She is always happy to see that we are able and allowed to be artists . . . Still not sure she understands how and why it is possible. I have involved my family in the production of a number of projects and try to fully explain the meaning and ideas behind the work, but still it is unclear as to whether all or only part is misunderstood. This normally only adds to the (complex) relationship between my art and my family. Is what you do understood and appreciated by your family?

D.S. — God, I can't believe so many people saw that show. It was on BBC4. I thought I was the only one who watched BBC4. I had a documentary made about me on Channel 4 a couple of years ago (very embarrassing) which proved to be a real turning point in my folks appreciation of what I did. The documentary answered a lot of questions for them (who I am and what I do). I think they are proud that I'm famous enough to be on the telly. I guess you have to find your common ground in getting along with your parents. Our common ground is certainly not Contemporary Art, but at least now they know what it is. It must be quite a strange thing for your family to have been so directly involved with your work. I imagine it really forces them to take it onboard.

J.M. — It does seem strange that TV or film tends to captivate the eye of the viewer and their respect much more than a painting hanging in the local museum. Fine art does appear to have lost its grip on the mind of the public, which is not such a bad thing. What might be interesting is the crossover between art and the other arts . . . film, music, fashion, design, etc, etc. I have not been involved directly with the film or music industry in my work, even though I have used both in one way or another. I am standing outside of this more mainstream cultural vernacular. You have been involved directly with music video and TV, what has your experience been and how has it made you think about what you really do/make?

You have also been involved with artist book publishing for some time. You became interested in spreading ideas via the printed page almost immediately after art school.

I think more and more artists are finding cheap and simple ways of making their work available to a wider public. Recently I have also made a number of small publications, books, postcards, badges, bookmarks, etc. and am always interested in finding new ways of getting the ideas out there. One easy way of opening up a world to millions of people is the Internet, have you made anything on www? I did once and hated it . . . It just seems impersonal and lacks any of the quality inherent in books and or similar . . . Are you still in a band?

D.S. — I think that being involved in the mainstream is both good and bad. It's good because it's flattering to be asked and a lot of people get to see what you do (and hopefully like it) and it's bad because there are so many constraints, so many people telling you what you can and can't do. Do you think you would do a pop video or something like that if you were asked? I think a good artist can work in any medium.

My experience of the web is perhaps similar to yours. The first few things I was asked to do I hated. I hate that 'new media' tag that gets put on it. It's like when artists play music or football it's somehow seen as different from when other people do it, or at least the intent is seen as being different. Once I got my own web site I started to appreciate the possibilities of the Internet. Having a web site is very practical but is also a great environment to place and create work. The important thing is to do it on your own terms.

It begs the question "why don't you have a web site?" Even my Dad has a web site. I'd imagine a lot of the things that you make to do with direct interactions with people would work really well on your own site. I guess that the 'ephemera' that you produce and send through the post serves the same function as disseminating things on the Internet. I agree with you that it's vastly preferable to get something through the post rather than an e-mail. Objects are nice, but as our friend David Bellingham says 'Ideas leave objects standing'.

Speaking of books I still have that book we made together at art school about James Dean. You bound it in blue denim.

I still play music with Martin Young. He has become a master of 'Logic Pro' so he can put sounds to my rambling spoken word nonsense.

Changing the subject I have a question that I really want to ask you: Most of your early work was very sarcastic, perhaps 'punk rock' in its attitude. You were quite irreverent to the world of art, which was mostly your subject matter. Then after your Dad died you suddenly started making work which very sincere, using images of your family. It seems that the two very different strands still exist in your work side by side. They are like Jekyll and Hyde almost. I'm sure that after you are gone and your oeuvre is complete the art writers of the future will devote many chapters to this event in your career. I'm sure you are very aware of this and how it makes an overview of your work quite complicated.

J.M. — There was a giant switch in ideas and attitudes when my father died, it was also a time when I was living in Los Angeles without the escapist pursuits that Glasgow had on offer. The memory of my father became a way of dealing with the loss, Farewell to Faraway Friends 1. My father's things (photos, slides, drawings, etc.) became a way for me to look at my past (directly), and at once I realised that almost everyone has images hidden away in an old box that trigger emotions of one kind or another.

It became possible for me to work with this close related personal history in an open way. Hoping that it was accessible to wider audience, but also understanding the full possibility of misunderstanding what was being presented. The viewers misunderstanding of my ideas have never really been an issue for me. Most of what I make requires a certain amount of added information and this is often told by a different teller, the stories are sometimes made easy and other times more complicated.

The art I encountered on the West Coast also seemed more personal and poetic. My life changed completely . . . But punk rock never dies. It just gets tired and finds another way (visibly less aggressive) to attack the system . . . stolen post cards sent to you without postage. Would I make a music video if asked? Probably, but I can't imagine it would be very exciting. Maybe a boring video could have functioned some years ago, but the market has changed a great deal and I am pretty sure what I would propose could sell not music. Perhaps some obscure Japanese punk band, but that is your territory.

I made a small project recently for a web site, you clicked on my name and the page displayed the sentence "Jonathan Monk is not available, please try again later". I never did become available. As a structure to pass on information quickly it can not be beaten, but I think I missed the www boat, I prefer to queue at the post office with the other old timers.

Did you see or hear of a puppet show called Never Trust Anyone Over Thirty by Dan Graham, Rodney Graham and Tony Oursler? If you didn't see it, you should try, it is something you would like.

D.S. — I guess there is a tendency to want to see an artist's oeuvre (I don't really like this word but I can't think of another one) as something very reasoned, the evolution of which can be understood and explained. The evolution of your work is not so easy to explain other than that something happened in your life and you responded to it. I can imagine that I am not the first person to ask you about it.

I know this is a pretty lame journalist-type question, but what do you think you would have been if you weren't an artist? Also, do you feel you've made any of your most important works yet? Or are you still building up to it? By this perhaps I mean is there a piece that you would like to make on a much larger scale than you have not previously had the means to realize?

J.M. — Who am I and what do I do? I guess that has been a problem in the past . . . Where do I fit in to a curators/art historians thoughts . . . has the world changed or have I changed . . . Do I do this or that or everything at the same time, there is no ultimate plan or path that I follow. Circumstance is a major factor and sometimes half the work. My position in the art world appears to have recently changed and now I can almost fit in to any kind of show, which I like. I am generally pleased to be involved in interesting projects large or small. There has also been a change in what I produce, but I often rethink and play with ideas of my recent past, develop them slightly, focus on one thing. It is always interesting for things to be slightly confusing, is it even my work anymore? Next month I am presenting a book by another artist (Donald Burgy) in the Baltic Triennial each day a page will be turned and when the end is reached, we start at the beginning again and after the show I put the book back on the shelf.

Have I made my best work or biggest? I hope not. Big work, I guess means important and I think that it is hopefully too early to say. Some of the things that are not shown might be more important than the things that are shown, but who knows?

What would I do if I was not an artist? Difficult, because I am not sure I am really qualified to do anything. What I would like to do is nothing and that would quite quickly turn into something and what that something would be I am not sure.

D.S. — I like the idea of turning the pages of someone else's book. It would be nice to do the same thing with a porno mag. Circumstance is half the work. Is that the same as 'the context is half the work'? I suspect it is a little different. Your work seems to always exist as art, in the context of the gallery or art publication. Have you ever made work which could be seen as something else? Something more interventional and public. Something without the art tag. Who's your favourite artist right now? One of mine is Andreas Slominski.

J.M. — I make a lot of work that is never seen and that does almost fall out of the art category. But I agree, it is, at times difficult to separate what I do from art and art from what I do.

The cancelled project I made in Glasgow in 1990 was not initially made as art, more like protest. I am repairing a bench in the garden at the moment that is probably not art.

Who is my favourite artist at this time? This depends on the weather and today's list reads so: Wilson, Boetti, Barry, Penone, Paolini.

I was once at a small dinner party in Berlin with Slominski and he said he was a sculptor and he was introduced only as Andreas. I didn't know he was who he was, which now makes his work appear even more appealing. I like the stupidity of it, washing the roof tiles of an entire house in it's dishwasher and then replacing them.

Do you collect or trade with other artists? I have managed to pull together a number of things in one way or another. Above my desk is a drawing by Sol LeWitt from 1971, a Boetti drawing from 1984 and a photograph of Ed Ruscha balancing six of his books on his head by Gerry McMillan.

Collecting has become part of my project, mainly books and invites.

You make a lot of books, do you collect other peoples books?

D.S. — I met Slominski one time as well. He seemed like a good guy. I have fond memories of your ‘cancelled’ piece. It was brilliantly simple. Sometimes, I feel like I’ve exhausted all the simple stuff and most of what I make now is more complicated, maybe because I’m much more aware of the context in which it exists. Do you know what I mean? Perhaps you could have only made the ‘cancelled’ work when you were 22, because the context was new and exciting back then? I’m not sure I really believe this but I’m saying it anyway.

The debate around what is art and what is not highlights one of the shortcomings of being an artist; that everything one does has the potential to be art. I find this annoying. Sometimes you just want to mend that bench and leave it at that.

It’s only recently that I have thought about collecting things. I think it has something to do with being a homeowner. I have several of your paintings. I don’t really consider them to be part of my collection. They are more like heirlooms. I also have paintings by Keri and Katie (our old flatmates), nothing by Jackie though!

When you moved away from Bentinck Street it always struck me how much you left behind. I think most of the stuff you took is still at your Mum’s house. You really started again at that point. It was only when I moved house a couple of months ago that I finally got around to throwing all your old art mags away. I kept the first edition of Frieze though. I don’t collect books but I have a collection of ‘found art’. One of my pals works at the Salvation Army shop and he finds notes and things in coat pockets and saves them for me. Do you collect anything that isn’t art related?

J.M. — A new chapter . . . Do I collect anything that isn’t art related? Odd socks and old photographs of people I do not know. But it is a little scary when you think about not being able to escape the art world and everything that surrounds it.

Moving house is one of the only ways to make a change and get rid of a lot of stuff that was just there for no reason or it’s reason had run out. I think we are getting there or maybe we have already.

David Shrigley, Jonathan Monk  
July-August, 2005.  
Edited by Frederic Paul.

1. Title of a color photograph by Bas Jan Ader, 1971.

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MoMA.org  
The Museum of Modern Art

## New Photography 2006: Jonathan Monk, Barbara Probst, Jules Spinatsch

September 21, 2006 - January 8, 2007

The Museum of Modern Art presents New Photography 2006: **Jonathan Monk, Barbara Probst, Jules Spinatsch**, the latest installment of its annual fall showcase of significant recent work in contemporary photography. The exhibition is organized by Roxana Marcoci, Associate Curator, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art. Explains Ms. Marcoci, "Today's photographic-based work holds a complex genealogy—it is rooted in established photographic traditions, and is also an outgrowth of the broader world of contemporary art. This year's exhibition features three artists from Europe whose varied approaches tap into film, video, and digital technologies, attesting to the diversity of the medium."

The British artist **Jonathan Monk** offers a personal, humorous twist on the aesthetic strategies of 1960s Conceptual art. The exhibition features Monk's new work, including the slide installation, *I Do Not Know Where I Am, I Do Not Know Who I Am With* (2004), which is shown for the first time in New York. For this piece, Monk asked his mother to review the contents of a box of slides his father had shot in the late 1950s and 1960s and point out all those she could not identify. In the installation the slides alternate between views of unidentified places and portraits of people Monk's father met before marrying his mother. Found photographs are a source of inspiration in Monk's work. This is evident in *One in Fifty in One (fishing boats)* (2005), a series of 50 prints that takes Ilford photographic paper as its material. The artist appropriated an image from the lid of the Ilford box, and asked a commercial lab in Berlin to print the image on all of the 50 sheets of paper contained in the box.

## **“Jonathan Monk: yesterday today tomorrow etc”**

2006-02-25 until 2006-04-16 *Kunstverein Hannover* Hannover, DE

The Kunstverein Hannover presents the first comprehensive German solo exhibition by the British artist Jonathan Monk (born 1969) who lives in Berlin. Monk's works play irritating games with language and imagination based on a principle of repetition and critical appropriation relating to pivotal artworks and artistic concepts of the 20th century. However, they are in no way reflections of a self-centred l'art pour l'art: In addition to his own life, Monk's points of reference are the routine and the profane.

His photographs, drawings, objects, installations, and films reproduce existing works and models, follow up on them, reinterpret them, and counteract them. His references range from Piet Mondrian to Sol LeWitt and Richard Serra to Dan Flavin as well as Alighiero Boetti. The demands for autonomy and the strict regulations aimed at objectivity inherent in Concept Art and Minimal Art during the 1960s and 1970s form the co-ordinate system for his reflections, which often combine elements from his own biography and personal environment.

Lightness, irony, as well as a sometimes endearing, sometimes biting disrespect characterise Monk's dealings with art historical reference works. They can be subversively profane or offensively shameless as for example when the artist urinates on a sculpture by Richard Serra, preserving the act in a photograph that he then entitled "In war time, this would be a tank (Pissing on Serra)", 1995. As in this case, Monk often confronts the ideally conceived constructs of Concept and Minimal Art with an irreverent reality.

Language and titles are of crucial importance in this regard. As opposed to Lawrence Weiner's dictum, "the piece does not have to be realised", Monk consistently forces ideas and thoughts coined by himself or by others into concrete material forms. In "Constantly moving whilst standing still", 2005, for example, a linguistic

paradox is translated into an object. It comprises an upside-down bicycle with two wheels that roll for some unexplainable reason in different directions. In spite of the permanent movement, forward movement is made impossible.

Notwithstanding Monk's total concreteness, the repudiation of all unambiguity and commitment is a central aspect of his artistic strategy. Monk is more concerned with questions than with answers, for example the answer to the question about the definition of art. What does it promise and what promises does it (thankfully) not keep? The meaning and importance of authorship is also a primary question. The fact that the artist often delegates the realisation of his works to others is symptomatic for Monk's relationship to his own authorship. He even occasionally deliberately oversees the setting up of his exhibitions from a distance, allowing the interpretations of third persons to influence and alter the original concept. By consciously taking the incalculable elements of their realisation into account, Monk fundamentally tests the artist's authorship even more thoroughly than Minimal and Concept artists during the 1960s and 1970s for whom this was also a fundamental question.

Jonathan Monk was born in Leicester in 1969, studied at the Glasgow School of Arts from 1988 to 1991, and has lived in Berlin since 1999. The exhibition in the Kunstverein Hannover is the first comprehensive overview of Jonathan Monk's works from the early 1990s to 2005 to be shown in Germany. In addition, the artist will include new pieces created especially for the exhibition in Hannover. After the premiere in Hannover, the exhibition will travel to the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen (27 May to 13 August 2006) and the Kunsthalle Nuremberg (7 September to 5 November 2006).

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue published by Revolver-Verlag in Frankfurt/M., c.160 pages, German/English, with texts by Stephan Berg, Konrad Bitterli, Douglas Fogle, Jonathan Monk, and Ellen Seifermann, Price: 27 € (22 € for members).

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Rosendahl, Lisa, "When is the artwork at work?," Gallery Hours, MAC/VAL, Musée D'Art Contemporain, Du Val-De-Marne, France, 2006

Every weekday at 10 am Greenwich Mean Time (plus one hour during British Summer Time), the Lisson 'Gallery in London opens its doors to the public; the lights in the offices and the exhibition spaces are switched on, the computers start up and the phone lines open for the day. Meanwhile, at Galerie Meyer Riegger in Karlsruhe, 11 am Central European Time, pretty much the same happens; the gallery opens and the workday begins. In Paris, however, Galerie Yvon Lambert has already been trading for an hour, as has Galleria Massimo Minini in Brescia. Galleri Nicolai Wallner in Copenhagen will only be opening to the public at midday, although Nicolai himself has undoubtedly been in the office working hard since the early morning and will continue to do so way past the official closing time at 5pm. Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York, operating on Eastern Standard Time, will remain closed for a further five hours to then stay open long after its European counterparts have left for the evening.

This pattern of activity—a daily routine of opening and closing, switching on and off, working and not working—is mirrored in the series of works by Jonathan Monk titled *Gallery Hours*. Consisting of six white neon signs mounted on white Plexiglass, each sign announces the opening times of the gallery that commissioned it. The signs are turned on and off according to the advertised hours, reflecting the individual timetables of the dealers precisely. The geographical position of each gallery is indicated in the titles of the works, and the signs continue to operate according to the local time of their place of origin, wherever in the world they might be exhibited.

The particular and personal is frequently used in Monk's work to playfully undermine the administrative and objective procedures of conceptual art. In *Gallery Hours* the references to specific places also function to make visible the effect external factors invariably have on our perception of an artwork: should the Paris sign be displayed in

Los Angeles, it would be switched on in the middle of the night at 1 am Pacific Standard Time to correspond to the 10 am Central European Time opening hour of Galerie Yvon Lambert, and unplugged again after eight hours (not forgetting the official Parisian lunch break between 1 pm and 2.30 pm), leaving it switched off for more or less the entire time the exhibition could be seen by an LA daytime audience. Thus we are immediately made aware that the problems associated with the conditions of its display are inherent in the work itself, and as such necessary for our understanding of it.

The circular relationship between what Monk's neon signs say and what they do echo the neat tautology of Joseph Kosuth's *Five Words in Blue Neon* (1965). But if Kosuth's neon literally is what it says it is, signifying only the elements that it is composed of, Monk's works certainly refer to something outside of themselves. As evident representations of the galleries that produced them, the signs are unavoidably announcing their status as consumer goods. Rejecting the idea of the artwork as an object with no primary use value, Monk's neon signs have a clear and apparent function; they are advertising the possibility of their own acquisition, placing them firmly in the mundane world of capitalist exchange.

If in theory the neon signs are only available when they are switched on, as this is the only time when the particular galleries dealing with the works are open for business, they are in practice still available outside those hours as artworks to be experienced rather than bought; they are still 'working' when they are not working, i.e. when they are switched off. As with Robert Barry's seminal installation *Closed Gallery* (1969), where the only work on exhibition was the actual closed gallery space itself, Monk's pieces are still 'on' intellectually speaking even when they are off; we can still make the link in our minds to the places they refer to, albeit this time through imagining their non-availability. Like the signs themselves,

the gallery offices are still out there somewhere even though dark and unoccupied, silently waiting to come alive again. Or are they! Monk's neon signs conceal behind their bureaucratic surface a gap between the universal understanding of time as a precise measure, and our subjective experience of it. Questioning the authority of systematic knowledge, they leave us wondering if the passing of time indeed does continue moving at the same pace, hour after hour, day by day, continuously and concurrently across the globe whether we are conscious of it or not.

LIGHTS OUT

**Lisa Rosendahl**

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Lamy, Frank and Julien Blanpied, "Interview," Gallery Hours, MAC/VAL, Musée D'Art Contemporain, Du Val-De-Marne, France, 2006

## JONATHAN MONK

Though the history of relationships between art and economy is a long and complex one, with a range of forms that could rapidly be grouped under the label of economic art, from Marcel Duchamp's *Monte Carlo Band* in 1924 to the entrepreneurial activities of Fabrice Hyber, it has been well-charted by many important exhibitions.

With 'Zones de Productivités Concertées' a series of twenty-one monographic exhibitions in three parts spread over the 2006-2007 season, it is a case of shifting the perspective. Combining artistic worlds that, at some point, bring economic questions into play (work, exchange, production, stock, activity, function, flow, the workshop...), it is not so much thematic expositions to which the visitor is invited, but a sideways analysis. The economy its questions, its concepts, its thinking is taken as a critical filter for some of today's artistic practices. The works of the artists invited are not set in some illustrative or mimetic rapport with the economic sphere. Complex and polysemic, they go well beyond these notions.

For Jonathan Monk, the history of art (in its forms, its attitudes, its anecdotes) constitutes a stock, a repertoire of forms to be drawn upon. Appropriating strategies of conceptual and minimal art of the sixties and seventies, demystifying the requirements of purity and autonomy advocated by his predecessors, Jonathan Monk effects a productive, autobiographical and daily contamination. The self-referentiality of modern art becomes a playing field, an area for action and activities.

**How did you perceive the invitation to take part in this series of exhibitions based around economy?**

Economically.

**In your opinion, where does the economic dimension of your work lie?**

For the last six years I have been practising the signature of Andy Warhol for fifteen minutes every day.

**You have proposed a series of works for the exhibition. What did you base your choice on?**

I think the works deal with the idea of a market in a very straightforward manner. Perhaps money never sleeps, but the idea of exhibiting works that display the actual opening and closing time of the gallery that represents the work deals more with an idea and loop of availability. When the light is on, the work may be acquired; when the light is off, there is no one around to deal with sale enquiries. Seeing all six versions at the same time, going on and off depending on the time depicted will add another dimension to the ever-increasing global art market.

**When you rework the works of the past, you take them all back to the 'activity', almost give them a 'valeur d'usage'**

**(use value). But this 'appropriation art' makes fun of the copyright and/or the property. Is it a way of attacking the idea of fetishism?**

I recently presented a painting at Art Basel titled *Before The Los Angeles County Museum on Fire*. Based on Ed Ruscha's painting, *The Los Angeles County Museum on Fire* from 1965-68. A copyist was commissioned to remake the original without the fire before the fire had started. I was told that during the fair some of Ruscha's representatives even tried to buy the work believing it was an actual study by Ruscha himself. I do not appropriate, I use what is available and maybe add a slice of lemon.

**This question of 'stock to be reactivated' acquired a new dimension in the ICA's exhibition last year. You have used your own works this time. Can you tell us more about this project?**

It was very natural way to develop a tight concept to show more works than the space allowed. Over the course of the show the exhibition changed, developed every day into another show. The actual works took on a completely different meaning, they were parts of a large puzzle that had no specific solution. Used directly without consideration. I liked the chance of a failed exhibition that could be rectified the following day.

Interview conducted by Frank Lamy and Julien Blanpied

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Grant, Catherine, "Jonathan Monk: ICA," *Flash Art*, January-February 2006, p. 106

## Jonathan Monk

### ICA

The title of this exhibition, "Continuous Project Altered Daily," is taken from the name of a 1969 exhibition by Robert Morris, for which objects were added or moved each day to create a gradually evolving landscape that started as a mound of earth and grease. The title was also used by Yvonne Rainer for a dance performance in which Rainer allowed at least part of the control to move from herself to the dancers. Finally, Robert Morris reused the title in 1993 for his book of collected writings.

The previous existences of this title point to some of the major themes in Jonathan Monk's exhibition: the appropriation of conceptual and minimalist work from the 1960s, and the centrality of performance in the presentation of Monk's work from 1993 to 2004. Subverting the traditional format of a retrospective exhibition, the two gallery spaces of the ICA have been split into a 'storage space' and an 'exhibition space,' in which a continuously rotating set of works is displayed, with a daily list of works available for the viewer. On the day that I went to see the exhibition, the display was one which could have easily been by one of the '60s conceptual artists that Monk delights in taking apart. Various film and slide projectors whirred, sets of photographs were framed in serial compositions, the gallery floor space was punctuated by the odd bit of neon sculpture. Ultimately, whilst the individual works were gently humorous, the experience was rather sedate. In contrast, the 'storage space, with the piles of works on casual display, was much more exciting. Here, the expectation of seeing all of the artist's work, central to the idea of a retrospective, was made almost possible, with

technicians on hand to make available any works that were not accessible, so that the viewer could at least have the fantasy of creating their own exhibition of their favorite pieces. However, this was not a case of one space being curated and the other being left free and open. Monk's composition of this archive and the performance of these partially available works was signaled by a large text painting still in its bubble wrap, which read: "This painting should ideally be kept in storage."

**Catherine Grant**



**JONATHAN MONK, Twelve measurements in pink piece, 2005. Enamel coated aluminum. Dimensions variable. Collection Beat Raeber, Basel, Switzerland. ©Jonathan Monk.**

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Hoffman, Jens, "Jonathan Monk: Retrospective," Continuous Project Altered Daily, ICA Exhibitions, London, Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2006, p. 15-21

—JONATHAN MONK: RETROSPECTIVE—

The idea of a retrospective might seem somewhat absurd given that the artist under discussion was only thirty-five years old when we began to talk about this exhibition. A closer look, however, reveals the comparatively massive amount of work that Jonathan Monk has produced over the last twelve years, so much so that the idea of a retrospective suddenly seems considerably more realistic. And yet a retrospective always suggests something of an end, a form of closure and, in the case of a younger artist, one might think more of using the expression 'overview' exhibition. So the question remains: why did we aim for the idea of retrospective?

The initial thoughts we had regarding this stemmed from the desire to challenge the standard conception of a retrospective and to find a format that would neither lead to an 'end' nor towards a fully determined understanding of Monk's work, but rather keep his practice open to new ideas and possibilities in the future. The idea of how to achieve this came in the end from combining the notion of a retrospective with that of a new project, one which would not necessarily be a new work by Monk, but which would function on a curatorial level, on the level of the exhibition itself, addressing the idea of the exhibition as a work of art. The process for all discussions and thinking around the format for Monk's 'retrospective' started here.

Early on in our discussions it became apparent that it would not be possible to show all of Monk's works at the same time (given the limited space of the ICA) and that such a static and museum-like exhibition would also distract from the dynamism of his practice. What was needed was a different form of display. I suggested that we could have artworks on rotation so that over the course of the seven weeks of the exhibition we would change the works on view daily, with each work exhibited at least once. At the same time, I was looking for a way to structure the show that would reflect Monk's own strategy when making his artworks, and allow me to apply his own approach as an artist to the overall exhibition. Monk mentioned his interest in Robert Morris' CONTINUOUS PROJECT ALTERED DAILY, 1969, and we understood that this could be the perfect model for the show. The question remained how this would translate into the gallery spaces. The spaces at the ICA are after all quite complicated as the two main exhibiting spaces have very different characters: the ground floor gallery is a very clean white cube; while the first floor galleries consist of two spaces that are part of the original structure of the building. To connect the spaces (which are at either end of the institution) and make the show consistent always calls for a specific concept that takes these architectural realities into account.

When I came across the work by Monk THIS PAINTING SHOULD IDEALLY BE PLACED IN STORAGE, 2004, we found the solution. We decided to fulfil the work's request and create a storage space in the Lower Gallery, which would house all the artworks in the exhibition (including this one). Upstairs would be a classical exhibition, though one in which the works and their display would continuously change. While the 'storage space' in the Lower Gallery was obviously a representation of a storage space, a theatrical set. It was in fact also a real functioning art warehouse and workshop to which the audience had access. Visitors to the exhibition could walk through this space and look at the artworks being unpacked, examined and condition-checked, before being placed on various shelves and tables to be 'stored' for the duration of the project. The empty and full crates, in which the works had travelled, placed at the back of the space were even suggestive of an exhibition of minimal sculptures. All equipment needed for the presentation of the works was placed in this Lower Gallery which mimicked the 'real' ICA workshop and art store. In fact the Gallery Manager set up his office for the duration of the exhibition in one corner of the space overseeing the changing of the works from a practical standpoint. Other elements in the storage space in the Lower Gallery included a weekly photo-diary that gave audiences the chance to see which works went in and out of the Upper Galleries over that period, as well as a list of all the works in the show, over one hundred in total. Every day between 4 and 5pm the audience had the chance to view works from storage on request and these were placed on display in the storage area—an idea that allowed us to offer



*This painting should ideally  
be placed in storage, 2004*

—JONATHAN MONK: RETROSPECTIVE—



*Upper Gallery*



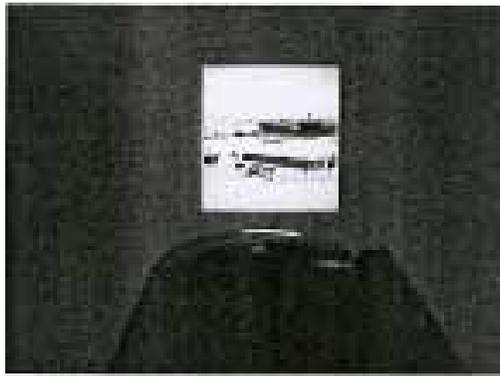
*Lower Gallery*

every visitor the chance to see any of the works in the exhibition should they not be able to come back every day, or even every week.

The selection of works for the first display in the Upper Galleries was based on our desire to give the audience a very broad impression of Monk's work including a variety of media; film, painting, sculpture, slide and neon works as well as photography. From then on we set out each week to introduce another line of thought that we identified in Monk's work, with the aim to include (and remove) up to three works every day, such that every Friday a completely new selection of works would be on view. The second week, for example, focused on works related to travel, the third week on works about Monk's family, for the fourth week we selected works about sport and pets, the fifth consisted mainly of self-portraits, the sixth week of works specifically related to other artists, and the final week, as a grand finale, again returned to a broad overview of Monk's practice with a much higher number of works than had been seen in the previous weeks.

Two works that always remained in their position in the Upper Gallery were *BIG BEN PIECE*, 2003 and *EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD THAT HAS EVER BEEN SEEN*, 2005, as they represent, in very different ways, two of the core ideas in Monk's oeuvre.

*EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD THAT HAS EVER BEEN SEEN*, 2005, is based on an iconic work by the Italian artist Giuseppe Penone titled *TO TURN ONE'S EYES INSIDE OUT*, 1970. In the original work, which is a black-and-white photograph on canvas (37.3 x 26.7cm in size) we see Penone wearing mirrored contact lenses indication, as he says, "the point that separates me from that which surrounds me." In this work, originally a performance during which the artist walked the streets of Turin.



*Big Ben Piece*, 2003

Penone reflects in his eyes the external world. But it is not an exact reflection, it is the reflection of the world, including the viewer who is part of it, seen through the eyes of an artist. Penone created a representation of the world through his own vision and understanding of it. He subverts the traditional understanding of the artist as a solitary figure removed from the everyday activities of the world and instead attempts to dissolve the boundaries between the exhibition or studio space and the world outside.

Monk's homage explores all of the above but in addition focuses on himself, his domestic sphere, biography and personal experiences. *EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD THAT HAS EVER BEEN SEEN*, installed at the entrance to the ICA's Upper Galleries, is a postcard of the Penone photograph mounted to the wall by means of two small silver earrings that were punched through Penone's eyes into the wall. The height of Penone's eyes in the postcard corresponds with the actual height of his own eyes, which are also, strangely, exactly the height of Monk's eyes. Just as Penone offered us his perspective on the world, Monk takes iconic works by other



*Everything in the world that has ever been seen, 2005*

Giuseppe Penone, *Rovesciare i propri occhi (To turn one's eyes inside out)*, 1970

artists, and gives us his own personal reflection of interpretation of what he sees. Like Penone, and many other Arte Povera artists, Monk is trying to connect art and everyday life, bringing his own personal world into the gallery and confusing it with that which we consider to be high art. An example of such a piece, also included in the exhibition, that summarises the way Monk sees and thinks about other artists' work is ALTERED TO SUIT (SOL LEWITT INCOMPLETE OPEN CUTE 5/9. 1974), 2004. Where one viewer might see a white minimal sculpture and associate it with geometric forms, Monk sees a football goal: a Sol LeWitt sculpture is thus subtly transformed into the white posts of Monk's favourite sport. Typically Monk takes something he is attracted to in art and utilises or alters it to reflect exactly what he himself appreciated in it. The artist is showing us his interpretations of other artists' work.

The second work that was permanently installed in the Upper Gallery was BIG BEN PIECE, 2003. The piece consists of a projection of fifty-six slides, each of which represents a postcard (all found in souvenir shops in London) of Big Ben with the clock face clearly visible. In each image the hands of the clock are pointing to a different hour of the day. The slide machine is set such that it projects an image at the precise time in the gallery that is shown on the slide of Big Ben for precisely on minute. The slide machine then goes off again until the time of day that matches that of Big Ben on the next slide. The machine remains on throughout the course of the exhibition and is never turned off, to allow for the times that appear on the postcards during the night and the early

morning, outside the opening hours of the gallery.

Apart from the obvious references to works by artists dealing with ideas of seriality in representations of the world and vernacular culture, BIG BEN PIECE points to Monk's very British ability to bring things down to size through humour. The wit of Monk's work functions like a Trojan horse making UK audiences, generally rather unfamiliar with the legacy of Conceptual Art, which happens to be Monk's favourite source of inspiration, aware of this particular art history by providing something immediately understandable and approachable: humour. At the ICA, the BIG BEN PIECE was installed in such a location that it was possible for the audience to see each of the slides, showing for example 3:10pm, and view the real Big Ben across the park from the ICA through the window, also at 3:10pm. Humour in Monk's work is used as a leveller that allows everyone access to the works and the show itself as well as, hopefully, enabling them to realise that Conceptual Art is in fact often quite comical and not at all as complicated and elitist as many imagine.

Finally, as viewers left the exhibition they walked down the Concourse Gallery of the ICA passing all of Monk's MEETING pieces presented as large wall texts and indicating possible encounters with the artist in the years to come. All of us are invited to meet again in 2027 on the Sydney Harbour Bridge on November 20 at 12pm for Monk's fifty-eight year retrospective. Or maybe earlier, in 2010 on the Sunset Strip for the artist's forty-one year retrospective. Be there or be square!



*Meetings, 1997-ongoing*

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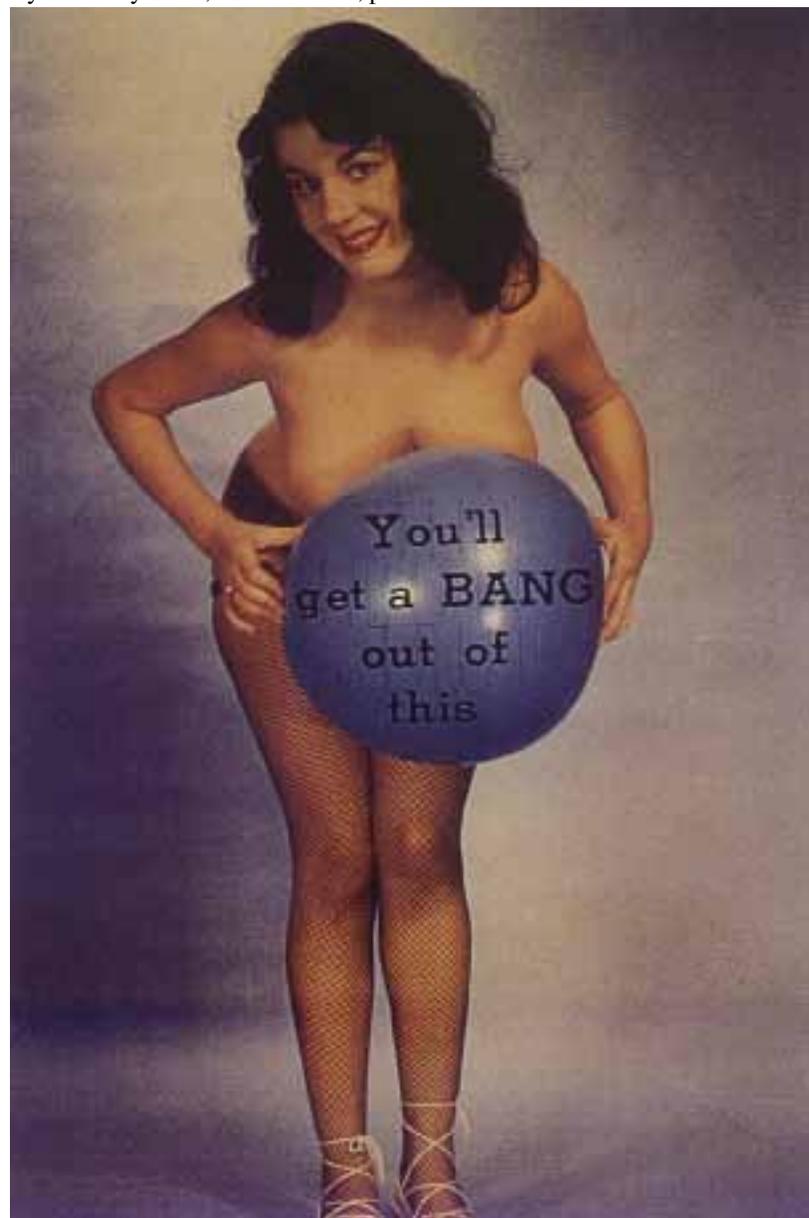
## an extended family

raimundas malasauskas

Through unconventional operational logics, Jonathan Monk confers an infinite variability of meaning to his work.

Malasauskas, Raimundas, "An Extended Family," *Tema Celeste*, January/February 2004, XXI No. 101, p. 60-65

The notion of parenthood is useless in a post-productive family where, contrary to the logic of reproduction, everyone is a member and the laws of original vs copy do not apply. Deriving from the concept put forward by Nicolas Bourriaud of a "post-production category" where artistic recycling is crucial in the creation of new work, the post-productive family proposes adoption as its key feature, not to mention the notion of adaptation. When the mother of artist Jonathan Monk was asked what she thought when her son put his family photos on exhibit, she answered, "There seemed to be a nice warm feeling about his relationship with his family. It was as if he was saying that he had had a great time with us." It seems that Monk has a great time with his post-productive family as well; the artist's mother and sister are the central female figures in this predominately male and carefully chosen group that includes, among others, Thelonious Monk, John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha, Gerhard Richter, Robert Barry, Sol LeWitt, Gregory Peck, Gilbert & George, Jack Goldstein, and David LaMelas. Adopting and appropriating from this selective crowd, Monk fills his artwork with artistic citations. In 1972, LaMelas filmed his *Interview with Marguerite Duras* and, as a follow-up to the interview with the French intellectual, had intended to create a second similar work with a fashion designer. Picking up where LaMelas left off, Monk fulfilled this unrealized promise almost thirty years later in the creation of his own silent film, *The Unrealised Realised Realised* (2003), which presents a fashion model standing in front of the camera in Paris. Following the same rules with slightly different results, Monk remade his own film again in New York, and plans to do so once more in London, Milan, and Tokyo respectively. One could claim that through his work Monk has recontextualized the classic codes of conceptual art and opened them up for further replay. While making people aware of conceptual artists of '60s and '70s—Yvon Lambert joked that he found Ed Ruscha via Jonathan Monk—he also liberates their work from the fixed rule of the code. In this respect, his work could be linked with fan fiction (where fans invent new stories of their favorite heroes), unauthorized sequels, the search of missing links, and the ideology of an open source in software programming. To comprehend Monk's work, there-



fore, one must consider not only the individuals that form part of his post-productive family but also conceptual art conventions. First, as suggested by David Cronenberg in *eXistenZ*, "you must play the game to know why you are playing the game," then take Bruce Mau's lead to "begin anywhere,"



▲ **Jonathan Monk** *Stolen Postcards Without Postage*, 2002, ink on postal paper / inchiostro su carta postale, work in progress. Installation view / Veduta dell'installazione. Courtesy of the artist/ dell'artista and / e Yvon Lambert, Paris / Parigi.

◆ ~ **Jonathan Monk & Douglas Gordon** *You'll get a BANG out of this*, 2000, color photograph / fotografia a colori, 161 x 115cm. Courtesy Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen / Copenaghen.

and, in the words of Sol LeWitt, “let the system do the work” so you can see how art could become “a selfgenerating software” (Ole Bouman). And don’t forget Hans Georg Gadamer’s assertion that “the real subject of the game is not the player, but instead the game itself.” Stringing together these proposals could lead you to the reasoning behind Monk’s *High School Boogie Woogie* (2001), a 16 mm film that shows a Rubiks Cube through a number of stages to full completion. Critic Lucy E. Smith explains, “By turning this three-dimensional icon into two-dimensional animation, Monk has achieved an effect of infinite variability of the same.” Indeed, one can find a million ways of completing the same cube, realizing a freedom of action without adding anything extra to the existing world. The same concept of unbounded variability emerges in the film *Gerhard Richter Abstraktes Bild 825 - 11 69 details Insel Bucherei No. 1166 front to back back to front in an overlapping kind of way on its side forever* (2000), where sixty-nine details of Richter’s painting fastened into a book are flipped through at a constant speed of twenty-four pages per second.

Monk’s trip across medias includes film, video, collages, neon pieces, radio, drawings, performance, photography, and even telepathy. Yet making art for Monk is not just an additive process; it is also based on the subtraction, removal, and erasure of elements as exemplified by *Sentence Removed (Ts Remain)* and *Closed* (both 2000). There’s also his series of postcards of different places “I was not there” (2000), created in collaboration with Pierre Bismuth. Nevertheless, the most complex act of erasure

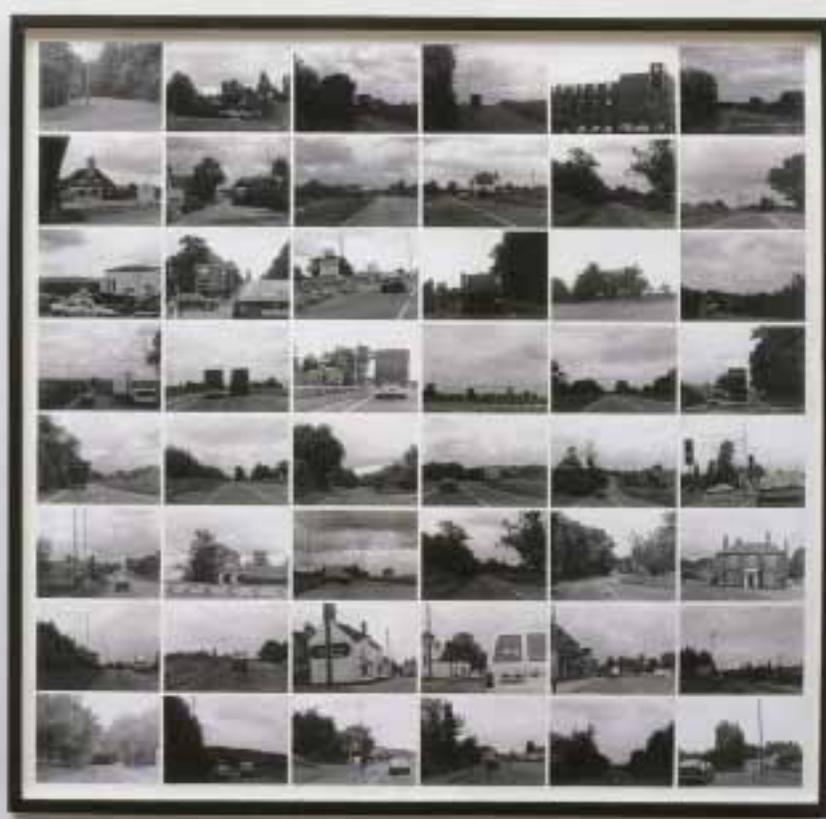
took place in 2003 when Monk burned pages of Ed Ruscha’s book one by one and filmed the entire process in a work that subsequently became titled *Small Fires Burning (after Ed Ruscha after Bruce Nauman after)*. When Nauman burned the same book in 1967, it cost several dollars; Monk’s fire cost \$1,600. The result of this destructive act in the future will cost even more—the chain continues, the fire spreads. Chance is another key category in Monk’s practice. Curator Jens Hoffman once complained, “There’s the impossibility of ever being able to meet with Jonathan Monk.” Yet this is not quite true; there’s always a chance that you might meet the artist through the purchase of one of his *Meeting Pieces*. These happenings, which are scheduled to occur in 2007 or 2014 in various locations around the world, are both a promise of future memories as well as an act of trust on behalf of the person who purchases the meeting. Monk’s employment of telepathy materialized in 2003 with the work *During the exhibition the gallery will be open*. The gallery-owner Jan Mot declared that Monk was the person who received the telepathic message that artist Robert Barry had transmitted in 1969; although the message had been sent, no one until now had ever publicly acknowledged that he or she received it. Monk exhibited not only the original text of Barry translated from English to Flemish to Dutch to Chinese, around the world and back again to its original source language in English, but also a photograph of a dog “who might have received the message [as well].” In addition to his artistic escapades, it has been said that Monk enjoys playing soccer in the position of central midfielder. There



remains the slight possibility that the reason Monk became an artist, rather than a soccer star, was only because his father would take him to church on Sundays instead of letting him go play his favorite game. In the end, Monk is guided by the same operational logics of the central midfielder, who must organize the game while mediating between defense and attack, between past and future. It is therefore not surprising that Monk has done a series of works on the sport. "Little things that make all the difference" (2000-02) is a series of soccer photos taken from newspapers

where the ball is cut out and placed somewhere else in the photo. The works are often quite funny, depending on who you support. It can be equally amusing to do the reverse—to think about Monk's work while reading different sections of the newspaper: "The past is theory," states a scientist in a recent article of "The New York Times." "It has no existence except in the records of the present. We are all participators, at the microscopic level, in making that past as well as the present and the future."

Jonathan Monk was born in 1969 in Leicester. He lives and works in Berlin.



- ▲ **Jonathan Monk** *The gap between my mother and my sister*, 1998, 40 black-and-white photographic prints, text on paper / 40 stampe fotografiche in bianco e nero, testo su carta, 152,5 x 213,5 cm: 29 x 29 cm each / ciascuna. Courtesy of the artist/ dell'artista and / e Lisson Gallery, London / Londra.
- ◀ **Jonathan Monk** *The Unrealised Realised Realised in New York*, 2003, still from 16 mm film / still da film in 16 mm, duration: 10 minute loop / durata: 10 minuti in loop. Courtesy of the artist/ dell'artista and / e Casey Kaplan, New York.
- ▼ **Jonathan Monk** *The Odd and the Even Days*, 2003, 2 slides / 2 diapositive, dimensions variable / dimensioni variabili. Installation view / Veduta dell'installazione. Courtesy of the artist / dell'artista and / eYvon Lambert, Paris / Parigi.





▶ **Jonathan Monk** *Searching for the center of a sheet of A4 (black on white, white on black)*, 2002, 16 mm silent film in color / film muto in 16 mm a colori 20-second loop / 20 secondi in loop, projector, and loop system / proiettore e sistema a loop. Courtesy Meyer Riegger Galerie, Karlsruhe.

▶ **Jonathan Monk** *Black Eyes* (detail / dettaglio), 2003, found photographs, black pins / fotografie riciclate e spilli neri. Courtesy Galleria Sonia Rosso, Turin / Torino.

▶ **Jonathan Monk** *The little things make all the difference*, 2000, altered newspaper image / immagine alterata da giornale, 20 x 28 cm. Courtesy Meyer Riegger Galerie, Karlsruhe.



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Stern, Steven, "Jonathan Monk, 'Time And or Space'," *Time Out New York*, December 4-11, 2003, Issue 427, p. 66



**Jonathan Monk**  
**"Time And or Space"**  
**Swiss Institute, through Dec 20**  
**(see Soho).**

In Jonathan Monk's *Big Ben Piece*, 42 slides, all of postcard images of that London landmark, fill a slide carousel. Each is projected once a day, for exactly one minute—the minute when the clock depicted shows the correct time. It's a witty and resonant conceit; as if brought to life, the clichéd tourist image is made seemingly functional, a picture of a famous clock becoming, briefly, a real clock. The projected image embodies what all souvenir postcards aspire to say: This is where I am right now.

Yet there's an obvious catch. As a work of art, this piece is more or less invisible. Encountering it in person—at Monk's current show at the Swiss Institute—you will likely see a nonfunctioning slide pro-

jector pointed at a blank wall. Unless you happen to be around for one of those 42 minutes, you might assume that someone simply forgot to plug the thing in. Only on consulting the gallery checklist does it all come clear.

Without recourse to the notes, the static slides and film loops that make up this exhibition are similarly hermetic. This is a show in which little is actually shown. Whether that's a failing depends, perhaps, on your patience with conceptual art's deferred gratifications. For Monk, such delays are clearly thematic. Spread around the gallery walls, four text pieces offer locations, times and dates in the future. These "Meeting Pieces" are ambiguous proposals. Will you show up? What will happen? Existing only as potential, they are like postcards cast in a strange grammatical tense: Wish you will be here.—*Steven Stern*



Jonathan Monk, *Today is Just a Copy of Yesterday (Full Moon)*, detail, 2002.

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Higgs, Matthew, ed. Jonathan Monk, Lisson Gallery, London and Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris, 2003

# Jonathan Monk and Rita Monk

## An interview by Matthew Higgs

In the spring of 2001 I travelled from London with Jonathan Monk to his hometown, Leicester, to interview his mother about Jonathan's childhood and about her relationship with his art. The interview took place in his mother's sittingroom on an overcast Sunday afternoon.

**Matthew Higgs** When did you first meet Jonathan's father?

**Rita Monk** I first met Owen in 1954 when I was fifteen.

**MH** Was he older than you?

**RM** Yes, he was ten years older.

**Jonathan Monk** That was illegal!

**RM** It wasn't at the time!

**JM** It still is illegal!

**RM** We only talked, Jonathan!

**MH** What did Owen do?

**RM** Owen was an architect, and he was into jazz. He was a pianist in a jazz band. To be honest, I didn't really know much about that world. I had just left school and I didn't go to any of Owen's concerts. Jazz never really came up in our conversations, we just got on very well together, despite the age difference. Shortly after we met, Owen moved to London. His parents still lived in Leicester, though and he would visit them regularly and he would always phone me and we would always go out. When I was about eighteen he moved to America with his brother to join a jazz band, which he was involved with for a few months but it didn't work out. So he travelled. He was away in America for about four years, but we always wrote and always kept in touch.

**MH** It sounds both very romantic and very unusual: the idea of your boyfriend leaving 1950s England to go and tour the United States in a jazz band.

**RM** He said it was, but I'm afraid I am a very down-to-earth, practical sort of person. I didn't think 'Oh no! This bloke's going to America!' It never occurred to me that it might be a problem.

**MH** During the time that he was away, did it occur to you that one day you would eventually be together, get married and have children?

**RM** No! Not at all! Absolutely not! I had lots of other boyfriends, one of whom I was quite serious about. But I was probably too young. I wasn't ready for that sort of responsibility.

**MH** What happened when Owen came back to England?

**RM** He came back to Leicester in 1962, I would have been about twenty-two or three. In America he and his brother had got this brilliant idea to open a pancake house, so that's what they did. Britain's first pancake house! It was called the 'Hungry Eye Pancake House'.

**MH** It sounds very bohemian for 1962. Would it be fair to say that the circle around Owen and the pancake house constituted the Leicester 'In crowd'?

**RM** Yes, I suppose so.

**JM** Really?

**RM** Owen had found the location for the restaurant and they fixed it up themselves. Owen was very practical, he was very good at making things.

**MH** Was he still playing jazz?

**RM** He always played jazz. Wherever he went there was always some kind of jazz group. And he always played football, he always managed to get into a football team. Anyway, around the time the pancake house opened we had begun seeing each other regularly and we got married in 1963.

**MH** So around the time that you got married Owen was running the restaurant and still playing jazz. What were you doing?

**RM** Me personally? I was working in an office. I don't know why—I was hopeless! I had my first child, Vanessa in 1967, followed by Jonathan in 1969.

**MH** Given that your children were born in the late 1960s, were you and Owen involved in any way with the hippie movement? Did you engage with any of the progressive or radical ideas associated with that time?

**RM** No! Not at all!

**JM** You did! You were vegetarians.

**RM** Oh well, yes I was a vegetarian! But at the time I didn't feel that that was part and parcel of the whole flower-power thing.

**MH** But surely all that time in Britain to be a vegetarian would have been perceived as being somewhat strange?

**AM** Oh, it definitely was! Also we didn't have a car or a television. Most people in our area had cars and televisions. And people would point at us in the street and say, 'See that couple there. They haven't got a car or a television!'

**MH** Were these economic or ideological decisions?

**RM** Ideological.

**MH** So you were ideological?

**RM** Oh yes. I suppose we were.

**MH** So it would be fair to say that Jonathan grew up in a fairly ideological environment?

**RM** I guess so, but to me that wasn't anything unusual. It was just the way that we were.

**MH** So when Jonathan was growing up and going to school, his home was probably quite different to that of his friends?

**RM** Well it probably wasn't typical. I never thought we were different, but when I look back I suppose you could say we were unusual. For example, Jonathan and Vanessa would take their own sandwiches to school and they would have been things like dates and carrots on brown bread! I guess they must have really gone through it. But at the time it didn't strike me as being out of the ordinary.

**MH** When Jonathan was very young, was there any indication that he had an interest in art?

**RM** Not really. He enjoyed art, but he really loved films. Which he still does of course. I always used to have film books around the house—that was the thing to do when I was younger. Not having a television, we were very keen on the cinema.

**JM** There was a combination of film and art books at home

**RM** But you weren't looking at art books when you were five. You would go and get my old film books and sit looking at them for hours. Jonathan really wasn't a reader. We tried lots of ways to get Jonathan reading, but his only other real interest was sport—football in particular. We were regular church-goers and Owen wouldn't let Jonathan play football on Sundays.

**JM** That's probably why I ended up as an artist and not playing football for England!

**RM** I know, it's sad!

**MH** Were your religious convictions quite fundamental?

**RM** No! No!

**JM** You just sort of went along with it.

**RM** No I didn't! [laughter]

**MH** What kind of art, if any, did you have on the walls at home when Jonathan was a child?

**RM** We had a part of Van Gogh's *Night Cafe*. Owen really liked Van Gogh.

**MH** Were there others?

**RM** No, I don't think there were.

**JM** Wasn't there a copy of a Vlaminck painting above the mantelpiece?

**RM** Oh yes! Of course there was!

**JM** It's funny, because you say that the house wasn't bohemian, but you had a black terry-towelling-covered couch, you had orange and black curtains and this dark, sombre Vlaminck painting hanging above the fireplace.

**RM** That's right! I've still got it. We also had wooden floors.

**MH** It sounds like Jonathan's childhood home was not unlike Richard Briers and Felicity Kendal's house in the 1970s TV show *The Good Life*?

**RM** Oh yes. It was definitely *The Good Life*! In fact Vanessa always says "Mum, it was Just like The Good Life!"—we even grew our own vegetables and kept chickens.

**MH** Jonathan told me recently that when he was nine or ten years old you and Owen took him and Vanessa to the Tate Gallery in London?

**RM** Yes, we did. We stayed overnight. At the time it was a bit unusual to take two children to London.

**JM** It wouldn't be so unusual now.

**RM** But at the time it certainly was. We went around all the museums and the art galleries, and we also went to listen to the Methodist minister on his soap box at Speakers' Corner.

**MH** Do you remember if they were interested in what they saw at the Tate Gallery?

**RM** I would have thought so.

**JM** Vanessa wasn't!

**RM** No. Vanessa probably wasn't. She doesn't like museums or anything old.

**MH** Did you and Owen think it would be beneficial to introduce your children to culture?

**RM** Well yes. I think we thought that it was important for them to experience these things.

**MH** Would Jonathan have seen art locally in Leicester?

**RM** There was an art gallery within the local museum, and whilst we didn't go every year we would still go quite frequently.

**MH** Did your social circle include any artists?

**RM** Not artists. but definitely jazz musicians.

**JM** What about the next-door neighbours?

**RM** Oh, yes! Sheila and Stuart. They were teachers, and they were into art, and we did see them quite frequently.

**MH** So, given the time, it would it be fair to say that Jonathan grew up in an atmosphere where an idea of culture was present?

**RM** Oh yes, definitely.

**MH** When Jonathan was a teenager were you concerned as to what he might do with his future?

**RM** We weren't that concerned. Jonathan was still really keen on sport, so we did think for a while that he might become a physical education instructor. That is until his art teacher asked us to go and see him.

**MH** What happened when you went to see Jonathan's art teacher?

**RM** The request came out of the blue. I remember thinking "I wonder what he wants?" So of course we went and he told us that he thought Jonathan had a 'special talent'!

**JM** [laughs]

**MH** How old would Jonathan have been?

**RM** Thirteen or fourteen.

**MH** He actually said that Jonathan had a special talent for art?

**RM** What he actually said was that Jonathan had a special talent for perspective.

**JM** [laughing] Oh, come on.

**RM** That's what he said!

**MH** Clearly you and Owen weren't aware of this 'special talent'?

**JM** [laughs]

**RM** Good heavens no! We had no idea!

**MH** Do you think the art teacher was basically saying that Jonathan should think about going into some form of creative higher education?

**RM** Yes, definitely.

**MH** You said earlier that it was hard to encourage Jonathan to read, did he under-achieve academically at school?

**RM** We were always told that Jonathan had a lot of potential, but we didn't quite know what this potential was.

**MH** Do you think they were trying to say that they were worried about Jonathan?

**RM** No! They weren't worried about him at all. They thought Jonathan was great! I have to say that they always thought Jonathan was great to have around.

**MH** So when you came home from visiting the art teacher you knew that your son had a 'special talent'?

**JM** [still laughing]

**RM** 'Special talent'! [laughs]

**MH** What did you make of this news?

**RM** We didn't consider that his future profession would be in art, but we realised that he obviously had this talent, this bent for art, and that art would be a part of whatever else he was going to do.

**MH** When Jonathan was sixteen, studying for his O levels—and thinking about going on to do A levels—were you aware that he might be drifting towards studying art at further education level? Was it discussed?

**RM** Yes. I think Jonathan knew he wanted to do art. He was definitely going to do art at A level, at the time that was the main thing.

**MH** After A levels Jonathan went on to do an Art Foundation Course in Leicester. Do you have any memories of his other interests at that time? What kind of books he was reading, what kinds of music he was listening to?

**RM** Oh yes! The Smiths! It was The Smiths wasn't it?

**JM** [laughs] I knew that she would remember that!

**MH** Smiths' fans were often introverts. Was Jonathan introverted?

**RM** No. I don't think Jonathan was an introvert,

**JM** How would you know? You never saw much of me around that time!  
[laughs]

**RM** It's true. I didn't see very much of him, he was always out.

**MH** After Jonathan's course finished at Leicester he went on to study at Glasgow's School of Art. Had Vanessa left home too?

**RM** Yes, Vanessa had gone to America.

**MH** How was it at home?

**AM** Very quiet.

**MH** Was it a strange time?

**RM** Yes, it was a strange time.

**MH** On the occasions that Jonathan would ring home from Glasgow did he ever talk about the kind of work he was making?

**RM** Oh yes! And we went to see Jonathan a few times.

**MH** What did you make of what he was doing?

**RM** Well, it was difficult to know what to make of it.

**MH** Why was that?

**RM** Well, it was strange. He was making unusual things. Urinals. I think it was.

**JM** [laughs]

**MH** What were the urinals?

**RM** They were something he did for his degree show.

**MH** When Jonathan's art teacher identified his special talent. I'm sure he meant that Jonathan was quite gifted in traditional skills, such as drawing or rendering, but clearly in Glasgow his work was becoming increasingly conceptual. How did you and Owen react?

**RM** "Very interesting", I think we kept saying!

**JM** [laughs] I don't think you really had that much interest. I can even remember Dad once saying that when he was in New York in the 1950s he saw a Jackson Pollock show and he couldn't understand it. In fact he hated it!

**MH** Despite the jazz, the pancakes and the bohemian household, would it be fair to say that when it came to art your's and Owen's tastes were quite conservative?

**RM** Oh yes, I suppose they were.

**MH** Did Jonathan's more conceptual approach to art in any way alienate you?

**RM** No, it was just different. And we simply accepted that it was different, that it was coming from a different perspective to ours.

**MH** Did you identify a relationship between your son and the things he was making?

**RM** Not really, because by that time Jonathan was quite independent of us, he was a person in his own right.

**JM** But could you still not see me in it, even if I was independent?

**RM** Well, I suppose the work always had a quirky sense of humour. Jonathan has a great sense of humour. Owen and I could see the humour in these things and that Jonathan still really wasn't taking himself seriously. In fact, he still doesn't really take himself seriously!

**JM** [laughs]

**RM** Well, some people take him seriously, or at least they appear to! Whether they do or not underneath, I don't know.

**JM** Do you take me seriously?

**RM** No! I don't take you seriously!

**JM** [laughs]

**MH** Given that Jonathan was now studying art, were you and Owen in any way worried about how he might support himself in the future?

**RM** No.

**JM** [laughs]

**RM** Is that the wrong answer?

**JM** I think you were worried, because you would always say to me: "Well, if trying to be an artist doesn't work out you could always become an art teacher"!

**MH** Some time after leaving Glasgow School of Art Jonathan started to make work that dealt with, or included, aspects of his own family history. What did you make of this shift? How did your relationship with his art change?

**RM** I have to say it was rather nice actually. Owen had died by this time. And even though I didn't really know why Jonathan wanted to show photographs of his family on gallery walls, there seemed to be a nice warm feeling about his relationship with his family. It was as if he was saying that he had had a great time with us.

**MH** Did you have any conversations with Jonathan about by he started to look to his own family for inspiration around the time of Owen's death?

**RM** We didn't discuss it, did we Jonathan?

**JM** No.

**RM** I don't really get to see Jonathan as much as I used to. I see Vanessa far more often. And when I do see Jonathan, he's never with me for long enough for us to get back to that easier relationship that we used to have. When he comes back to see me, we sort of have to get to know one another again. So we never really have the time to get into deep conversations about his art.

**MH** Was it an odd experience to see images of yourselves presented in this strange context, where most of the people looking at these works would have no understanding or knowledge of your family's history?

**RM** Yes, it was very strange, although I must say that it didn't make me feel uncomfortable.

**MH** What did you think Jonathan was trying to say with these works?

**RM** I'm not sure. Perhaps he was trying to say something about the bonds that exist between us.

**MH** Often the images Jonathan uses in these works pre-date his own birth, is it possible that Jonathan was trying to recover something—and I don't necessarily mean in a psychoanalytic sense—from the past, that had perhaps never really been addressed?

**RM** Yes. Maybe. Maybe. Perhaps he was, in some way, trying to get closer to Owen, trying to be a part of Owen's life before he was married and had the children, trying to be a part of Owen's youth.

**MH** Have you acclimated to the idea that Jonathan is an artist?

**RM** Oh yes! I've accepted that Jonathan is an artist!

**JM** [laughs]

**RM** Whatever Jonathan wanted to be I would accept. Of course I would.

**MH** How do you feel when you see his name on invitation cards, and in advertisements and reviews in art magazines?

**RM** I'm thrilled! Primarily for him. I don't go round to the neighbours and say: "Guess what? Look at this!", but I am thrilled for him.

**MH** Do you tell members of your extended family about Jonathan's career?

**RM** I might tell my sisters and probably my brother, but the art world is so divorced from the normal world that if I was to mention it at school—where I work—I don't think they would know what to think about it.

**MH** When Jonathan is encouraging you to become involved in one of his art projects, does he explain to you what he is thinking about? Does he say why he is asking you to be involved?

**RM** Oh no!

**JM** Oh I do! I think I do!

**RM** [laughs]

**JM** I always like it when other people do things for me, because then I tend not to be so interested in the way that it 'looks'.

**RM** They take the responsibility off your shoulders!

**JM** Yes! Ultimately my only responsibility is with the idea.

**RM** [laughs]

**MH** How has Jonathan becoming an artist affected your ideas or understanding about contemporary art and its value or worth?

**RM** I suppose I now go on the defensive when people go on about art, which they do—saying that it's a load of rubbish, blah-di-blah-di-blah.

**MH** Do you feel an obligation to defend it because of Jonathan?

**RM** Yes, I do. But by doing that I find that I am thinking about it more. I realise that things are different now, for example the camera has made things different—the perception of painting before the camera was different. Of course all things change anyway—music, architecture... You can't keep churning out the same old style.

**MH** Do you think people complain because they don't think that there is any skill involved?

**RM** Yes, I'm sure that has a lot to do with it. You know, for example, when people say "Well, anybody could do that" But I don't think they could.

**MH** If Jonathan hadn't become an artist, do you think you would have the same opinions about art that you have now?

**RM** Well, I can't say really. I suppose art is a reflection of society, and always has been, so I think I would have been interested, but as to what I would have thought about it, I don't really know.

**MH** When you've met Jonathan's peers and colleagues, have you noticed a difference between Jonathan and his friends who became artists and the friends who didn't? Is there something in their characters that you could say was different?

**RM** Yes, a slight madness, I think! [laughs] Really! Yes I have to say that. A sort of zany madness. Whereas his other friends are far more practical and calm.

**MH** Ignoring the fact that Jonathan became an artist, as his mother, what would your hopes and ambitions have been for him?

**RM** Just for him to be happy doing what he is doing. If he should happen to make some money along the way, then good for him. The essential thing is to enjoy what you are doing and do it honestly.

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Herbert, Martin, "Jonathan Monk," *Frieze*, May 2003, Issue 75, p. 94-95

# frieze

## Jonathan Monk

Arnolfini, Bristol/  
Lisson Gallery, London

Poor Gene Simmons. The legendarily priapic bassist of US rock group Kiss once rode high in the personal pantheon of Jonathan Monk, who in 1992 went so far as to exhibit a photograph of himself wearing Simmons-esque grease-paint. But in these two exhibitions he was nowhere to be seen, replaced in the intervening years by a hipper class of hero and a less transparent approach to homage. Monk's professed interest in the Rubik's cube was as embarrassing as things got. *High School Boogie Woogie* (2001)—one of 20-odd pieces at the Arnolfini in a generous but airy selection of work from the past five years—was a looped 16mm animation in which the twistable terror

of 1980s playgrounds was repeatedly scrambled and solved, allowing the artist to achieve in seconds something that, according to his catalogue notes, was beyond him in real life. Beside it was the formally similar 16mm projection *Sol LeWitt 100 Cubes Cantz* (2000), which animated 100 Cubes, LeWitt's 1996 book of varicoloured gouaches. Sprinting through cubic variations, this reminded us that it's a short step from frustrated schoolyard nerd to Conceptual art-history geek—so long as we overlook the Heavy Metal years, of course.

The juxtaposition was paradigmatic, since Monk's output now invariably interlaces his own life and that of systems-based Conceptual art in a manner that structures the former while simultaneously fracturing the purity of the latter. Therein lies the subtlety of works such as the Arnolfini's grid of framed photographs



Jonathan Monk's output now invariably interlaces his own life and that of systems-based Conceptual art.

*Self-Portrait # 6 (10 x 15 Glossy)* (2003), for which Monk sent one negative to be developed at 25 different high-street photo labs, with the resulting prints showing his skin tone in shades ranging from tangerine to grey. While corrupted Conceptualism is de rigueur, he appears to speak not for an entire culture that can no longer believe in 1960s ideals, but only—and with apparent therapeutic intent—for his own decentred self.

As such, a literalist might infer self-portraiture from the numerous works he has made that involve trying to stick a dot exactly in the middle of a piece of paper. For Arnolfini's *Searching for the Centre of a Sheet of Paper (White on Black/Black on White)* (2003) he allowed two volunteers to do the work, one of them sticking a white dot on a black sheet, the other a black dot on white. Monk animated their various attempts and projected them

**Jonathan Monk**  
*Today Is Just a Copy of Yesterday (Lisson/LeWitt)*  
(detail)  
2003  
Slide Projection  
Installation view

on to either side of a suspended sheet of A4 paper; the result was a pair of dots dancing a frantic *pas de deux* on a shimmering grey field. Jostling with this work's autobiographical suggestion, however, was its structural intermingling of order and chance.

In his *A Year with Swollen Appendices* (1996) Brian Eno speculated that perfect music requires both regular rhythms and chord changes because the human organism wishes equally for stability and change. Although pieces such as *The Height of 23 Children and 8 Adults on 6 March 2003* (2003)—a rising stack of horizontal blue chalk lines on a wall—threatened to tip into self-parody, this mix is characteristic of Monk's works and may be the key to their pleasurable effect.

Yet the crucial element is probably their guiltless admission of something that still feels oddly *verboten*—the fact that admiring, without apparent irony, the work of other artists and the seemingly less problematic art of other eras is natural, and Modernist autonomy is not. Among the first works one encountered in Monk's Lisson show was *Lost Days* (2002), based on Gilbert and George's 1971 photographic flip-book *The Lost Day*, which was originally made from a film. Monk reversed the process, ani-



inating the book frame by frame and looping it to show George endlessly inhaling and exhaling a cloudlet of cigarette smoke. The effect of this scratchy, sepia-toned loop was unashamedly nostalgic; it suggested the action of one who, endlessly flipping the book's pages backwards and forwards, keeps his heroes in perpetual motion. Monk seems aware of when his National Health spectacles are steaming up, though. The Lisson show returned again to LeWitt; *Today is Just a Copy of Yesterday (Lisson/LeWitt)* (2003) was a slide projection using one image—a photograph of an assistant installing a wall-work by LeWitt at Lisson in 1972. Each day, however, the slide was replaced by a dupe made from it, ensur-

ing a progressive degradation of image quality. On my first visit the black and white shot was crisp and clear; three weeks later its whites had taken on a deep sapphire cast and much of the action was wreathed in blackness, an image not of hard Conceptualism but of how we may fondly remember it.

Monk ventures farthest from his heroes (allowing for a pinch of Lawrence Weiner) in his long-running series of 'Meeting' wall texts, which invite viewers to a rendezvous at a specified future time and place. From the Lisson: *The Lion Enclosure London Zoo Regent's Park London 12th May 2014 lunchtime* (2003). From the Arnolfini: 'Free Lane Leicester England August 19th 2006 noon' (2003). Pretty

specific, and yet the artist may not turn up. The future as well as the past is open to reworking; this system is open to change. And that's the surprising twist when Monk's art is seen in bulk—his own system apparently isn't open to change, but is revealed as being based on precise counter-balances of personal and impersonal, ordered and chaotic. Underneath all the formal inventiveness and witty deployment of selfhood, a practice lurks that is increasingly as steely, centred and professional as those of the Systems art masters he reveres. Gene Simmons, you're history.

**Martin Herbert**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JONATHAN MONK: "THE UNREALISED REALISED REALISED IN NEW YORK"

EXHIBITION DATES: NOVEMBER 14 - DECEMBER 20, 2003  
OPENING: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH, 6 - 8 PM  
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY - SATURDAY 10 - 6 PM

Jonathan Monk's distinctive working practice involves exploring his fascination with conceptual artists from the 1960s and 70s to entertain his own history. Working in a range of media including 16mm film, photography, text and slide projections, Monk merges his playful interest in art history with personal sentiment to create work that demystifies the creative process; challenges artistic authority; and explores the dematerialization of the art object, all the while, maintaining light heartedness and humour.

For his fourth solo exhibition in New York, Jonathan Monk will present a new work that takes inspiration from a pioneer of conceptual art, David LaMelas. During the 1960s and 70s, LaMelas's work analysed art as a means of communication by relating it to informative media such as the newspaper, radio and television. Through photographic series and film installations the artist investigated how meaning is constructed and manipulated by the sequential structure of film. In "Interview with Marguerite Duras," 1972, LaMelas interviewed the French intellectual and icon, while filming the process on 16mm film and taking pictures with a standard camera. One could hear the sound of the shutter as each photograph was shot. The film, photographs and text from the interview were then installed together. The continuity of the film was juxtaposed against the discontinuity of the photos. LaMelas had planned to make similar work with a fashion designer, but this was never realised.

For his recent exhibition in Paris, Jonathan Monk made the first version of David LaMelas's unrealised project with a French fashion model. The artist continues to realise this project for his New York show using a local model. The silent film involves the model standing in front of the camera as she is filmed. She does not speak; she simply fulfils her visual role. Over the course of the 10 minute film, one sees the flash of a camera appear intermittently as each photograph is shot. The film thus records the photographs being taken; and the photographs document the film. Each photograph, regardless of the "quality," is printed the same size as *Vogue* magazine and installed alongside the projected film.

"The Unrealised Realised" will be completed upon Monk's future exhibitions in London, Milan and Tokyo, Ultimately, the five versions will correspond with French, American, British, Italian and Japanese Vogue .

Monk's one-person exhibition at the Swiss Institute - Contemporary Art, New York, opens November 13, 2003. The artist is currently exhibiting a film alongside "Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism," at The Menil Collection, Houston Texas and has a solo show at Galleria Sonia Rosso, Turin, Italy. Since his last exhibition in New York, Monk's solo shows include: The Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada; Arnolfini, Bristol, UK; Yvon Lambert, Paris, France; Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, Austria; Lisson Gallery, London, UK; and Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen, Denmark. Jonathan Monk was born in Leicester, England. He currently lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

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PL, "Spot the Celebrity," *Art Review*, February 2003, Vollum LIII

## Art Review:

# SPOT THE CELEBRITY

Everyone loves going through the arrivals gate of an airport and seeing somebody holding up your name on a card. But this only happens to a lucky few; the rest of us have to make do with the joy of recognising famous names written on the cards, and looking for the celeb. But if Jonathan Monk is in the vicinity, things may get confusing. In the past he's gone to the airport to pick up Jon Travolta, the Beatles and even Thelma and Louise. None of them ever arrive.

*Waiting for Famous People*, (1995-7) is typical of Monk's projects: playful, popular, deceptively simple and extremely funny. The Leicester-born artist, who has an unusually long CV for a 33-year-old, works in a wide range of media (installation, photography, film, sculpture and performance), combining influences from both popular culture and high art. In a list submitted to the Swiss Institute, New York, he named Bruce Nauman, Leicester City Football Club, the Wizard of Oz, his driving instructor, Seth Siegelau, the Archers, Ginger Rogers and 1980 as some of his many references.

For this, his second exhibition at the Lisson Gallery, Monk is going to show three slide and video projections. *Big Ben Piece* is made up of slides of postcards of the monumental clock that are projected at the exact same time depicted in them. *Today is just a copy of yesterday* projects increasingly poor quality images of a 1972 Sol LeWitt exhibition in the Lisson; the slide carousel moves round just once a day. *Meetings* is a vinyl text on the wall arranging a date, time and place for a meeting without stating who's supposed to attend. **PL**

*"Projected Works", to 6 March, Lisson Gallery,  
London NW1 (020 7724 2739)*

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Mahoney, Robert, "Jonathan Monk, 'Free Lane'," *Time Out New York*, January 31 - February 7, 2002 Issue 331



## Reviews



**Jonathan Monk, "Free Lane"**  
Casey Kaplan, through Feb 9  
(see Chelsea).

It seems that Jonathan Monk's every work is carefully thought out and economically staged, and displays some snappy showmanship. Certainly that's the case in his latest show, where all these characteristics are evident in found antique photographs and two slide projections that explore the interrelationships within his

family.

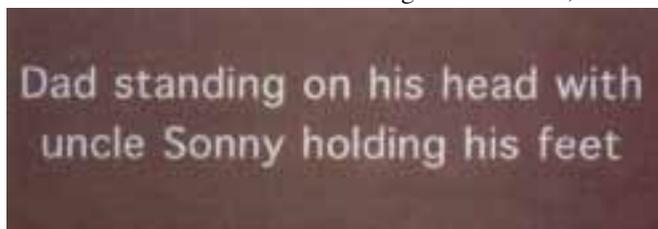
Most of the exhibition has a Proustian feel. The slide projectors seem antiquated with their whirring and clacking sounds. The best projection piece, titled *One Moment in Time (kitchen)*, was inspired by Monk's mother, who, in order to fill the void created when her children left the nest, covered her kitchen walls with old snapshots. Rather than show us the images themselves, Monk had

his sister describe the pictures to him over the phone. From the inventory, we get 80 or so one-line descriptions of photos, such as MUM'S GARDEN ON A SUNNY DAY, MUM AND DAD AT FOOTBALL MATCH and YOU AND ME IN A TREE. Seeing the words instead of the images makes the passage of time more acutely painful than you might expect; it's a remarkably moving idea.

The star of the show, for its sheer razzle-dazzle, is a 16mm film titled *High School Boogie Woogie*, in which an animated Rubik's Cube is solved again and again in a loop. The bright colors, not to mention the playful solution of the cube's puzzle, put rose-colored glasses on

memories of the toy's faddish fame. The cube was notoriously difficult to solve: Like life, it remains, in the minds of many people, open-ended and unresolved. The piece suggests that we'd all like to dream up our little cartoons of closure.

Monk also affixes words letter by letter above the heads of people in a group of old family photos. Most telling is one in which his aunts, uncles and parents sit around a cleared table, the word SECRETS formed in the air above them. It's a simple excavation of a complicated dynamic and recalls that dirty laundry almost always lurks under the cozy cheer at the family dinner table.—Robert Mahoney



Jonathan Monk, *One Moment in Time (kitchen)*, detail, 2002.

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Johnson, Ken, "Jonathan Monk, 'Free Lane'," *New York Times*, January 18, 2002

# The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 2002

## ART IN REVIEW

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### Jonathan Monk 'Free Lane'

Casey Kaplan  
416 West 14th Street, West Village  
Through Feb. 9

Conceptualism can be overbearing but it can also be sweet, wry and poetic, as it is in the hands of Jonathan Monk, a Berlin-based English artist. Mr. Monk uses film and photography to explore personal memory while playfully recycling classic Conceptualist strategies originated by artists like Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Vito Acconci and others.

A slide projection piece called "One Moment in Time (kitchen)" presents a sequence of 80 brief phrases, like "Dad as the captain of a sailing ship" and "You wearing stupid glasses." The words were generated, one learns from a handout, by the artist's sister, whom Mr. Monk had asked to describe, via telephone, all the snapshots, postcards and drawings their mother had on display in her kitchen.

"High School Boogie Woogie" is an animated film loop in which a Rubik's Cube rapidly solves itself. If you associate the cube with the moment of its mass popularity when Mr Monk was a teenager and, like most of us, could never solve it—the film takes on a nostalgic poignancy. The reference to Mondrian, an artistic father figure, adds another layer of resonance.

A second slide projection piece, in which a photograph of the artist's mother dissolves sequentially into near abstraction on one projector while resolving itself into clarity on another one, is a moving meditation on loss and hope. And "Meeting No. 12" consists simply of white letters on the wall designating an address where Mr. Monk promises to appear at noon on Aug. 19, 2006. Who knows? Maybe Mr Acconci will show up, too. *KEN JOHNSON*

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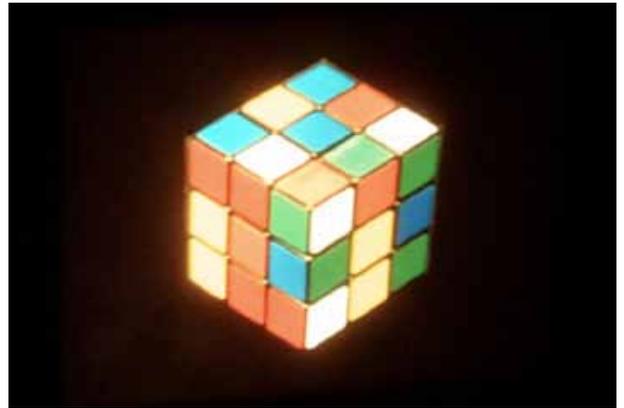
Wilson, Michael, "Jonathan Monk at Casey Kaplan," *Artforum*, January 16, 2002,  
< <http://artforum.com/new.php?pn=archive&id=2253>>

**ARTFORUM**

Critics' Picks:

**Jonathan Monk**

CASEY KAPLAN  
416 West 14th Street  
January 11 - February 09



*High School Boogie-Woogie, 2002*

"1. The artist may construct the piece. 2. The piece may be fabricated. 3. The piece may not be built. (Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.)" Lawrence Weiner's classic credo from 1968 is perhaps familiar to the point of invisibility, but its inclusion here is more unexpected. Each letter of the text is perched atop the head of a figure in an anonymous group photograph, introducing Jonathan Monk's preoccupation with combining the names and strategies of Conceptual art with an endearing affection for family. *One Moment in Time (kitchen)*, 2001 is a sequence of eighty slides featuring verbal descriptions of the artist's mother's collection of doodles, holiday postcards, and domestic snapshots: "A POLAR BEAR"; "EGYPT"; "ME WITH MY DOG BEN." *Replica 1B (version 1)*, 2001, consists of multiple variations on a slide of the artist's mother. Each is a duplicate made from the one before, and, through the gradual degeneration of the image, a process-based aesthetic is effectively applied to a meditation on memory and age. In the animation *High School Boogie Woogie*, 2002, Monk fulfills a childhood dream by "completing" the Rubik's Cube. Playful and irreverent, yet structured around a precise art-historical logic, Monk's third New York solo outing is a pleasure. Bring the kids.

—Michael Wilson

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present  
tense

contemporary project series no. 23

Jonathan  
Monk



Present Tense 23  
Jonathan Monk  
September 28 – December 1, 2002

Art Gallery of Ontario

## ROUNDBABOUT

*American artist Sol LeWitt published his legendary “Sentences on Conceptual Art” in 1969, the same year Jonathan Monk was born. In rejecting an art system based upon material commodities and museums, Conceptual artists introduced new relations with the everyday world and radically changed the course of contemporary art. Monk’s tongue-in-cheek methods recall procedural approaches typical of 1960s Conceptualism, but his work bears little relation to the social, political and artistic ideals of the time. These ideals today represent a historical past of opportunity and hope that, though inspirational, appears utopian. Instead, Monk turns to the more modest constants of family and social relations—cultural contexts defined by bars, movies, football games and pop music putting art to the test of the everyday with an irreverent nod to the artistic legacies he has inherited.*

*My mother, my auntie and uncle interpret my holiday photographs* (2000) evokes the family slide show of his parents’ generation. Banal but inevitably hilarious phrases like “another market” or “raining again” appear colour-coded to each speaker on a black void. As the viewer creates mental images with each passing set of slides, the work’s succinct formal rigour is undermined by a flow of associations. In *All the possible arrangements of 5 colours* (2002), clown makeup obscures a five-member family posed for a snapshot. The coloured “balloons” change on each slide while the subjects remain the same, their exaggerated grins fixed for the camera. To distinguish all the possible arrangements requires an exercise in pure concentration. Monk plays upon art school lessons in colour theory and Conceptualism’s self-referential end-game through the absurd confrontation of festive face painting and abstract colour permutations.

Taking Lawrence Weiner at his word, for this exhibition Monk uses a text work by the artist from the AGO’s collection (*Many things brought from one climate to another to make a grouping of things not related to the climate at hand*, 1981). Monk colonizes the host text with the names of his own relations. His postcard work *Memories of Toronto* (2002)—an image from another climate—reveals nothing about Toronto (Monk’s sister’s memories of the city are inscribed on the back). In *Keep Still (Snow ‘74)* (2002) (illustrated here), he adds “local colour” to an unidentified found photograph through reference to a film installation entitled *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974) by Toronto artist Michael Snow. In his recent film loop *Circle circles circles* (2002), Monk’s futile efforts to fill in the perfect outline of a compass-drawn circle result in a jittery blot on the gallery’s white wall, a mesmerizing intrusion that leaves the ideal of pure form cold. Circling around the recent art histories that shape his artistic present, Jonathan Monk treads gently but gleefully upon myths of artistic purity and authorship, paying homage to his predecessors while slyly seizing new territory in their shadow.

Jessica Bradley,  
Curator, Contemporary Art

The following interviews present two other viewpoints on Monk’s practice, his own and his mother’s.

## *Jessica Bradley interviews Jonathan Monk:*

**JB** Did you have any special talent for art as a child?

**JM** If I did, I can't for the life of me remember what it was.

**JB** When did you decide to become an artist?

**JM** I'm still thinking about it. These things just happen, they come in the still of the night.

**JB** Did you start out wanting to be a painter as many art students do?

**JM** I still want to be a painter, but I am not sure I understand painting anymore.

**JB** Much of your work is an affectionate homage to Conceptual art, to artists of your parents' generation. Did Conceptual art have a particular influence or value in the Glasgow scene at the time?

**JM** I don't remember there being a huge interest in Conceptual art, maybe people were secretly reading about art as idea as idea. As students we were encouraged to think about a context for our work (i.e., site specific), which could amount to the same thing. Lawrence Weiner had a show at Transmission Gallery many years ago, which was very influential. Conceptual art slowly creeps up on you and suddenly you realize you are walking side by side. I used to wear sneakers a lot...

**JB** Conceptual art is generally thought of as rather dry, intellectual, nonvisual, etc. You bring the personal and everyday into this realm, reinventing what's there with a similar economy of means. Why?

**JM** If I knew the answer, I wouldn't be doing it.

**JB** How has including your relations and family snaps in your work changed your view of the art audience, if at all?

**JM** I'm not sure my relationship to the viewer has changed. I have never really thought about them too much. It would be far too patronizing to worry about what they might or might not think. I never want to produce something that couldn't be produced by someone else. For my graduation exhibition I asked my 5-year-old niece to write a wall text for me, the text read "I could do that." I wanted to say it before anyone else did.

**JB** Did you explain to your family what you were doing? How did they feel about it?

**JM** I think I do explain, but I am never sure they fully understand. They are more than happy to help though. Maybe through time they are slowly piecing my art puzzle together and will soon get a better picture of who I am and what I am trying to do.

## *\*Matthew Higgs interviews Jonathan Monk's mother:*

**MH** When Jonathan was a teenager, were you concerned what he might do with his future?

**M** We weren't that concerned. Jonathan was still really keen on sport, so we did think for a while that he might become a physical education instructor. That is until his art teacher asked us to go and see him.

**MH** What happened when you went to see Jonathan's art teacher?

**M** The request came out of the blue. I remember thinking 'I wonder what he wants?' So of course we went and he told us that he thought Jonathan had a "special talent"!

**JM** [laughs]

**MH** He actually said that Jonathan had a "special talent" for art?

**M** What he actually said was that Jonathan had a special talent for perspective.

**JM** [laughing] Oh! Come on!



**MH** When Jonathan's art teacher identified his 'special talent' I'm sure he meant that Jonathan was quite gifted in traditional skills, such as drawing or rendering, but clearly in Glasgow his work was becoming increasingly conceptual. How did you and Owen react?

**M** "Very interesting", I think we kept saying!

**MH** Did Jonathan's more conceptual approach to art in any way alienate you?

**M** No ... it was just different. And we simply accepted that it was different, that it was coming from a different perspective to ours.

**MH** What did you think Jonathan was trying to say with these works?

**M** I'm not sure. Perhaps he was trying to say something about the bonds that exist between us.

**MH** Do you tell members of your extended family about Jonathan's career?

**M** I might tell my sister and probably my brother, but the art world is so divorced from the normal world that if I was to mention it at school—where I work—I don't think they would know what to think about it.

**MH** How has Jonathan becoming an artist affected your ideas or understanding about contemporary art and its value or worth?

**M** I suppose I now go on the defensive when people go on about art, which they do saying that "It's a load of rubbish, blah-di-blah-di-blah" ...

**MH** Do you feel an obligation to defend it because of Jonathan?

**M** Yes I do. But by doing that find that I am thinking about it more. I realize that things are different now, for example, the camera has made things different—the perception of painting before the camera was different. Of course, all things change anyway, music, architecture... you can't keep churning out the same old style.

**JM** Do you think people complain because they think there isn't any skill involved?

**M** Yes, I'm sure that has a lot to do with it. You know, for example, when people say "Well anybody could do that." But I don't think they could.

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Stange, Raimar, "Interviews 2001/02," *Surfaces*, 2001, p. 95-97

RAIMAR STANGE

## SUR.FACES

*Interviews 2001/02*

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REVOLVER ARCHIVE FÜR AKTUELLE KUNST  
*Frankfurt am Main*

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## JONATHAN MONK

*Berlin*

>>IN ART, AS IN LIFE, IT IS NICE NOT TO ALWAYS HAVE A PERFECT ANSWER<<

R. St.: What is more important for you: the concept of your work or the visible result of it?

J. M.: The idea will always be more important than the visible result. I prefer to be surprised with the look of a finished project. It is also important to remember that one can learn to like the appearance of anything, if there is a good enough idea behind it. The artist cannot imagine his art, and cannot perceive it until it is complete.

R. St.: When do you think a work is complete? After you had transformed an object, or maybe after that object has reached the viewer/thinker? Maybe a work is never complete?

J. M.: A work is complete when it performs its intended function. The viewer is only important if they alter the work, adding or subtracting something. A work is always complete or always incomplete, but a work can be finished then unfinished and then finished again. One can project a slide in eight different ways (and constantly alter the size or sharpness of the image), films can run in reverse as well as forward. A single idea can come into the world in a million different ways. Hana is crying! Maybe a work is never complete? But if you want it to be, it can be!

More thoughts on this tomorrow. We should do this quite quickly and then go over everything again etc. Is an interview ever complete?

R. St.: To make it more complete, let's talk more about a particular work of yours: Is the holiday painting series finished now?

J. M.: *The Holiday Paintings*, 1992—..., 60 x 40 cm, acrylic on canvas (over 1,000 still available): One either spends ones money on a holiday (eg. Tenerife—one hundred and eighty nine pounds) or on a painting of an advert for a holiday (Tenerife—one hundred and eighty nine pounds). The painting and the holiday cost exactly the same amount, in this case, one hundred and eighty nine pounds. One can even pick ones own location and price range. The holiday is a short break from regular life and the painting is a short break from regular life. They are both real (holiday and painting), but with the painting one gets to use one's imagination, to dream of the perfect holiday, without having to pack a big suitcase and go to the airport.

R. St.: This ongoing work is very closely related to real life. Your latest works on Sol leWitt refers more to the >>art<<. How do you explain this?

J. M.: I will now write a few words about the link between a holiday painting and a Sol LeWitt film (a space of ten years). The *holiday paintings* (based on hand written adverts for real holidays) were first made as part of a series of paintings. I also made abstract paintings based on pieces of paper that pens had been tested on in art material shops and small paintings of notices (back in five minutes etc.). I was interested in using other peoples writing or scribbles, I really wanted to distance myself from my own signature and this is still the case. I don't think I have ever made a photograph (and don't make any of the films). They are always made by others. This is mainly because I am in the photo or it is important that the photo is taken by someone else (my mother or father for example). At art school I made reference to other artists' work (Jeff Koons' *equilibrium tanks* with footballs). I honoured Van Gogh by colouring my beard orange (nobody noticed in Scotland) and when I left school I still

produced art with art sometimes. I have made large Pollock paintings while listening to death metal, I pissed my name in the sand, I photographed *None of the Buildings on the Sunset Strip*, but slowly I started mixing art, the family and everyday. I made a slide piece called *In Search of Gregory Peck* with slides taken by my father and another called *Landscapes which are lost*, both works refer to the death of my father. The first film I made was *Cartoon*, (shown at Casey Kaplan in NYC) with an image of my father sailing back to England. I also made a flip book (*Comic Book*) and started to look at other books as flip books. Flipping through art books (in fact any book) I noticed even a static image appeared to move or at least changed colour. The second film was *Sol LeWitt one hundred cubes cantz front to back back to front slow slow quick quick slow on it's side forever 2000*. My latest film (another slight switch) is called *High School Boogie Woogie*, a combination of Mondrian, LeWitt and my attempts at completing a Rubik's Cube whilst waiting for the school bus.

R. St.: So art becomes a part of life? Maybe in the sense that >>art is what makes life more important than art<< (Robert Filliou)?

J.M.: Not that art becomes part of life, it is part of life already. The two go together, but life goes together with everything (we have nothing more). Life is what makes art more important than life, it isn't so poetic in reverse. I think I am too cynical to really believe Robert Filliou, but it's nice to try. Sometimes when I make a drawing I am deciding what it is whilst it is being made. In art, as in life, it is nice not to always have a perfect answer or a difficult question, because when you start to understand everything you do (before you start) there is no point doing it! Art should always be a learning process. It's not a recipe, artists should keep critics and curators on their toes. Don't give them what they want all the time.

It is said (Bruce Nauman) art is a matter of life and death, this may be melodramatic, but it is also true. I think I am more in line with Warhol, everything is just how you decide to think about it. I am writing more only because Isabell is on the phone and I can't send this email yet...

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Trembley, Stéphanie Moïsdon, trans. C. Penwarden, "Jonathan Monk: Galerie Lambert," *Art Press* 259, July - August, 2000

**art press 259**

**paris**

## JONATHAN MONK

*Galerie Yvon Lambert*  
20 mai - 10 juillet 2000

One of the qualities of Jonathan Monk's work lies in the way it displaces the question of what we know towards what we believe or want to know. More an active methodology than a strategy, its principle is based on a precise system in which the artist integrates and reactivates a fragment of the history of modern or contemporary art. His research is related to the position of the viewer, who brings to the artwork a purported knowledge of its genesis and mode of production, which are the conditions to be fulfilled for it to function. Thus the perceptual space is not so much a place of discovery and knowledge as of recognition and confirmation. In this perceptual space, it would be reductive to characterize Monk's work as no more than a clever and reflexive exercise that consists in stitching a perceptual fabric together with the threads of conceptual art and modernism (appropriation, readymades, loss of site, decontextualization, etc.). Nor is it simply a matter of repeating a few commonplaces about reproducibility, mimesis, plagiarism or the artwork's loss of aura. Rather these various parameters are treated as vectors of fictions and subjective experiences, of mythologies and stereotypes, in a history that is at once collective and individualized. The work is based on the intuition which sees art as an out-of-frame area where the perceptions of the art-goer are juxtaposed with those of the critic and the artist. This relation to art draws on a broad panorama of major figures, from Marcel Duchamp or Andy Warhol to Sol LeWitt and Lawrence Weiner but also on various aspects of popular culture, and creates an extroverted form that is detached from the subject of study and grounded in social games, in deciphering and in irony.

Monk's latest exhibition at Galerie Yvon Lambert perfectly embodies all these mechanisms and at the same time goes beyond his established system. It is an almost literal copy of his earlier exhibition in the same gallery two years ago, which brought together a set of 13 photographs taken from the family archives and then arranged in such a way as to create doubles and set up effects of correspondence and mirroring with certain references specific to art. Although Monk never clearly indicated the author or origin of these images, his aim was to draw attention to the question of filiation and the transmission of history, to show a kind of equivalence between the family background and artistic heritage. By placing his own family opposite that of the art world, he situated himself between the two, working on those prejudices that distinguish between good and bad subjects, taking up other more random, emotional and spontaneous criteria. For Monk, the artist is someone who employs what is already there, who makes free use of a whole range of available materials, be it an image by Bruce Nauman, a photo of his aunt on the beach, a cartoon handed down by his father (now made into a flip book and a second-long looped film), a soccer match or a rock concert.



Photographie couleur. 28 x 56 cm. Color



Jonathan Monk. <<Roman Holiday>>. 1998. photograph



Jonathan Monk.. Film 16mm. 1999. 16 mm film

However in reproducing the context and content of his previous show, Monk also introduces a slight discrepancy. He has enlarged each element, including the invitation, and conferred on them the status of unique pieces. This inflation by the same token makes the earlier exhibition appear as a kind of preparatory study and ironically overturns the conventions governing the ideas of format and development. This latest hanging thus becomes a kind of commentary on the mannerisms and paradoxes of the art world which, although ideologically open to the notions of reproducibility, process and Immateriality, spends its time insisting that artists provide original, spectacular and rare works as if to make up for a lack, to reassure against the fear of emptiness, and maintain the tenacious belief in creative genius.

Stephanie Moïsdon Trembley  
Translation, C. Penwarden

*Meeting # 1000*, jointly published by the gallery and Book Works, offers each buyer the chance to meet the artist at midday on October 13, 2008, at the foot of the Eiffel Tower.

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Jouanno, Evelyne, "Reviews: Jonathan Monk, Côte Rué—Yvon Lambert," *Flash Art*, October 1998

# Flash Art

## R E V I E W S

JONATHAN MONK

CÔTE RUÉ - YVON LAMBERT

For his first solo outing in Paris, young Los Angeles-based Glasgow artist Jonathan Monk presented what was, a priori, a nostalgic, even "romantic" work, using materials unearthed from among the personal affects of his father who had died a few months earlier: family photographs from the 50s and 60s, a projected image of the Eiffel Tower of the type once screened during the interval in Paris cinemas of the era, a folding screen with negatives of past journeys, a small old leather suitcase, and in large black letters and stuck to the wall, an invitation to a future rendezvous: "Eiffel Tower, 13 October, 2008, midnight."

If the autobiographical dimension appeared to inhabit this ensemble completely, there was still a scattering of details so obvious that they could only be just the fruit of happy chance coincidence. A bicycle wheel behind the grandfather, a broad striped deckchair, Jonathan and sister digging in the sand, and the suitcase, all of which effectively told us that each element had been shrewdly chosen for the link it might suggest with the work of art superstars such as Duchamp, Buren, Smithson, etc.. Inevitably, the result is one of considerable confusion, an evident betrayal of the History of Art.

The challenge lies in consciously and ironically embracing the inspirations and anecdotes of modern and contemporary art which had led Monk to propose his own alternative models of the artist in particular and the way art is interpreted in general. Whenever Monk is demythifying creation, there is always a clear interest in the undifferentiated role of the artist. With considerable humor and a deep understanding of the implication of social reality in the work of art, Monk is addressing the human trace and mythical destiny, at the same time raising questions linked to "contexts" and "non-contexts," identity and so on, notions which, nowadays, are significant contributors to the mechanism of modern art. The phrase on the wall regarding a future rendezvous lends a futurist perspective to the proceedings, making of art nothing more than a simple pretext to meet up and communicate, a pretext which is not very far removed from the famous "Tea Party" (title of the exhibition) for a long time anchored in popular British culture.

**Evelyne Jouanno**

*(Translated/rom French by Christopher Martin)*

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Perreau, David, "Jonathan Monk l'imitateur: Chugalug the Beer, Don't Swallow the Rules," *Art Press*, June 1998, p. 26-30

## JONATHAN MONK l'imitateur

### *Chugalug the Beer, Don't Swallow the Rules*

*Jonathan Monk's work conforms to no particular style. There is no single distinguishing feature that would allow us to recognize it at a glance. The reason for this is simple: Monk is one of those artists who shamelessly samples others, who likes to make history stutter by reprising, often with high style and brio, the behaviors of its heroes.*



<<Yard of Ale (get Shirty)>> 1994. Extrait de la vidéo. (Coll. Frac Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier; Court. Nicolai Wallner Gallery, Copenhagen). Excerpt from video

■ Jonathan Monk already has a long list of works and actions to his credit. While it would be impossible to list them all here, mention can be made of a few examples, such as his very special version of a Jeff Koons *Equilibrium Tank (Not Quite Equilibrium)*, 1990) and the group of pizza boxes containing the raw materials for making a grid in the manner of Agnes Martin (*DIY, Agnes Martin*, 1995). There are also his numerous allusions to modern painting—that of Ad Reinhardt (*Black*, 1994), Robert Ryman (*Artist at Work*, 1994, and *Salon Ryman*, 1996), Jackson Pollock (*My Name Written in My Piss*, 1993, and *A Brush with Death*, 1995) and the almost forgotten William Green, a 1950s artist who made strange paintings by riding a bicycle over canvases (*Crash, Band, Wallop*, 1996). Among his more memorable actions are pawing around under the skirts of a Charles Ray model (*It's a Dirty Job, But Someone's Got to Do it*, 1994), showing that a public commission by Richard Serra is the ideal place to urinate (*In Wartime This Would Be a Tank (Pissing on a Serra)*, 1995), and teaching a dead rodent to read an art magazine (*Jonathan Monk Reading Flash Art to a Dead Hare, à la Beuys*, 1996).

Clearly then, Monk's work does have its own characteristics: these include an irreverent, insolent and disrespectful attitude toward Art with a capital A, and a penchant for experiences through which the artist retraces the steps of shielders and replays the excellent adventure of modern art by reliving its greatest episodes just for himself. In these particular cases, what the artist is up to, as he explains, is a kind of "archeological restoration of the mythic word," an undertaking that involves the resurrection of the sometimes grotesque episodes usually left unmentioned by the more orthodox historians of modern art out of desire to rid painting and sculpture of those elements that they consider unworthy of it.

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## In the Catbird Seat

To grasp the measure of Monk's ambitions, perhaps it will suffice to recall a few of his more notorious actions. For instance there was the one in which he revisited a scene from the life of Pollock, who, as a child on vacation at the beach, used to amuse himself by peeing his name in the sand. A very serious Pollock biography gives central importance to this event. There are two surviving photos of the Monk action, rather literally entitled *My Name Written in My Piss* (1994). One shows him from behind, peeing on the sand at the beach. The other bears witness to the kind of incredible dexterity exhibited by Andy Warhol in his 1960s *piss paintings*. In the middle of this photo we can read "Jonathan" so skillfully traced in the sand that we can only assume Monk is by now well on the way to becoming a distinguished Abstract Expressionist painter.



Sans titre. 1998. Vue de l'installation. 250 x 574 x 60cm. (Coll. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Court. Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen). *Untitled*. *Installation view*.



<<Salon Ryman>> (detail). 1996. 4 toiles, 3 miroirs, étagère, vidéo, cheveux naturels. Dimensions variables. (Coll. Frac des Pays de la Loire. Nantes). 4 canvases, 3 mirrors, shelf, video, natural hair.

A 1995 photo shows the artist perched in a tree. It is the result of an action called *Up a Tree Similar to the One Painted by Mondrian in 1914-1915*, which, as the title clearly indicates, consisted of climbing a tree of great but secret importance for the comprehension of Mondrian's work. According to Monk, this was exactly the same tree that the great founder of Neo-Plasticism painted just before deciding to reduce his art to a series of monomaniacal grids. In the hope that this tree could eventually play the same kind of decisive role in the future of his own art, Monk comments, with the critical irony typical of his work, "Maybe I should do some grid paintings after this?" This is surely also the secret promise of his 1996 *Erased Olivier Mosset Painting by Jonathan Monk*, a contemporary version of the well-known de Kooning drawing erased by Rauschenberg in 1953.

It is certainly no accident that on numerous occasions Monk has chosen to refer to abstract painting. What other artistic model has been better able to ideologically resist all the many kinds of language and all the forms of literary and anecdotal association? The ten small monochromes of *Some Things Just Are*, lined up horizontally, are framed by two loudspeakers hooked up to a record player. Spread out on the floor are the old and never very hip records (Stone & Charden, Dave. Mireille Mathieu, Sheila, Enrico Macias, Frédéric François, etc.) that guided Monk in his choice of colors while doing these paintings. As he explains, "I was standing in the studio with the sun coming in the windows and whilst listening to some French pop music that I had never heard before, I saw pure color, my eyes were drenched in beauty, I almost cried. First I thought it was just a trick of the light, but then I listened to new songs and new colors appeared before my eyes. It was magical!" The artist continues, "Viewers are encouraged to listen to each record in turn whilst looking at the corresponding painting, If they do it properly, they will see the beauty of the work."

## The Brush and Its Hairs

*A Brush with Death* is an installation done for a solo show at the Tramway gallery in Glasgow. Hanging on the wall are two Abstract Expressionist paintings worthy of Pollock himself, On the other side of the wall, sitting on top of a paint-spattered sheet of plastic, are the heaped and abandoned remains of a catastrophe—open paint cans, used paint brushes and an impressive collection of empty beer bottles. In a corner, a video screen retells the story: we see a macho, alcoholic artist, Monk as an impulsive shaman, although less well-endowed than the Pollock of Hans Namuth's celebrated photographs. As heavy metal thrashes away in the background, Monk downs the beers one after another and throws himself around, brush in hand, paint dripping violently on and around the canvas.

*Salon Ryman* is made up of four whitish canvases painted in the manner of Robert Ryman and three mirrors in the same

format. The ensemble is hung horizontally, lower than is usual in an exhibition. A video nearby shows the artist painting away at these canvases in the hairdresser's salon that served as his studio for the occasion. With pieces of freshly-cut hair stuck in the impasto, the canvases retain, as could be expected, the traces of this somewhat unusual studio. They are also a rather simple way of exorcising the *bête noire*, so to speak, of the painter of monochromes: the hair of the paintbrush.

## The Urge to Abase

Monk's work is shot through with the memory of those moments in the history of modern art when it fought to break free of ordinary life. By conducting his own activity on the threshold of the ordinary and giving greater emphasis to the simultaneously heroic and banal circumstances of their production than to the works themselves, Monk shakes the very foundations of the capital works of modern art. By bringing to light exactly that which is usually repressed, Monk's indecent works carry within themselves the terms of their own negation. They demystify the concept of artistic genius and even shatter the idea of the pretentious,



<<Annulé project>> (détail), 1996, Bandeaux imprimés et collés. (Court. galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris). "Cancelled Project." Printed, glued strips

## JONATHAN MONK

Born 1969

Lives and works in Los Angeles

Recent Personal shows:

1995: *The Agony, the Ecstasy (and some other stuff)*, Index

Galerie, Stockholm; *A Brush with Death*, Tramway, Glasgow;

*Lust for Life*, Galerie Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen

1996 *Salon Ryman*, Frac des Pays de la Loire, Nantes; *Crash,*

*Bang, Wallop*, City Racing, London; *The Time between the*

*12th and 13th of January 1996*, Atle Gerhardsen, Oslo

1997 Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York; CAN, Neuchâtel

1998 Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris (juin-juillet); Galerie Nicolai

Wallner, Copenhagen



<<Oblivion Island (a Discussion)>>. 1997. 100 verres, bouteille de champagne, cendrier et table. Dimensions variables. (Coll. Lisson Gallery, Londres; Court. Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York). *100 glasses, champagne bottle, ashtray, table. Variable dimensions.*

portentous artwork. This is also true of his *Consignment Paintings* (1997), which were to be destroyed if they had not been purchased during the timespan of their exhibition. In the end, the merit of this dumb art lies only in its ability to discredit.

Monk would like to seem convinced of the importance of these esoteric anecdotes in explaining the great works of the past, and equally certain that if he resurrects them today they will have the same miraculous effect on his own work. It is in keeping with that logic that on various occasions he has appropriated the social habits of others who like him are in their early thirties, as if this ridiculous lifestyle—alcohol abuse, kicking it with friends, long hours spent staring into a glass, laziness, in short, the idle mode of existence represented a contemporary utopia. If it is true that they have contributed to the story of modern art, might not these often pathetic mythologies of our times contribute to creating the great works of the 1990s, especially for Monk himself? That's what he is betting on when he has himself photographed after having drunk ten pints of beer (*Pissed Off [10 Pints]*, 1995). Or when he does stupid performances that consist of chugalugging, as an audience of experts cheers him on,

a yard-long glass (*Yard of Ale [Get Shirty]*, 1994-95) or a quart and a half of beer (*Legless In France*, 1996). The beer-stained white shirts worn on such occasions were later exhibited as if they were religious relics. Similarly, in 1997. Monk organized his solo show at the Neuchâtel art center around his decision to stop smoking.

## Me Too!

Monk's art is marked by the kind of willful self-degradation that is typical of what has been called "parody art."<sup>(1)</sup> His work mocks the ideas of the artist and his authority. It bins the imperatives of originality and innovation, which concepts are now no more than stale adjuncts of advertising. It undermines and cheapens the very idea of the artwork and simultaneously challenges the distinction between real and fake, shaking things up even more, for example, by copying posters for concerts and other events and overprinting on them cross-out marks and the word "cancelled" (*Cancelled Projects*, 1990-1996). Monk put up posters in the streets of Cologne advertising a Kiss show when all that was really on offer was a bedroom showing of a video in which the makeup-laden artist lip-synched the hits of this notorious band (*Kiss Alive*, 1995).

Ready to lay it all on the line to make his point, Monk the huckster offers us an ever-increasing torrent of references, more or less plausible, more or less honestly presented, to back his bid for the position of artist. He is impatient to catch up with his elders, as can be discerned, for example, in the photos of the series *Waiting for Famous People* (1995), which shows Monk in an airport arrivals area, sign in hand, successively awaiting the arrival of Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollock and Salvador Dali, as well as the Sex Pistols, the Beatles, the Stones, Bruce Willis, Madonna, etc. It can also be perceived in the photos of a nocturnal visit to Duchamp's tomb (*Nothing that Actually Occurs is of Any Importance [An Evening in Rouen with MD]*, 1996). In an often ridiculous and stupid way, his works tell us that art today is no longer about attempting to write a definitive page in history but rather, like certain new groups, a matter of sampling other people's style and even their behavior, trying them on and getting taken over by them, as if to say, "Now it's my turn to have that experience." •

Translation, L-S Torgoff

(1) Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux. *L'Art parodic'* (Paris: Editions Java, 1996).

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Perreau, David, "Stroboscopes," *Documents sur l'art*, Issue #8, 1996

## Stroboscopes

David Perreau

Monk's art doesn't rest on any formal unity, any specific style that would allow his works to be instantly recognized. Nonetheless one can point to his insistence on using the great and lesser episodes of the history of modern and contemporary art. To this date, his work consists in actions such as climbing a tree resembling one painted by Piet Mondrian ("Up a tree similar to one painted by Mondrian in 1914-1915", 1995), urinating on a work by Richard Serra ("In war time this would be a tank [pissing on a Serra]" 1995), or reviving an episode from the life of Jackson Pollock, who claimed that as a child he had fun writing his name by pissing in the sand on vacation beaches ("My name written in my piss", 1994). To these may be added a new version of "Equilibrium Tank" by Jeff Koons ("Not quite equilibrium" 1990), and a group of 25 pizza boxes containing 30 sheets of white paper, a ruler, a pencil, and a pattern to make oneself artworks in the style of Agnes Martin ("DIY Agnes Martin", 1995). All

these works would certainly have no importance whatsoever if they didn't allow Monk to strip down and shatter the mythologies still conveyed by "Art with a capital A" and, on other occasions, to exalt and integrate to his artistic practice the new social habits of those who, like himself, are not much more than thirty years old.

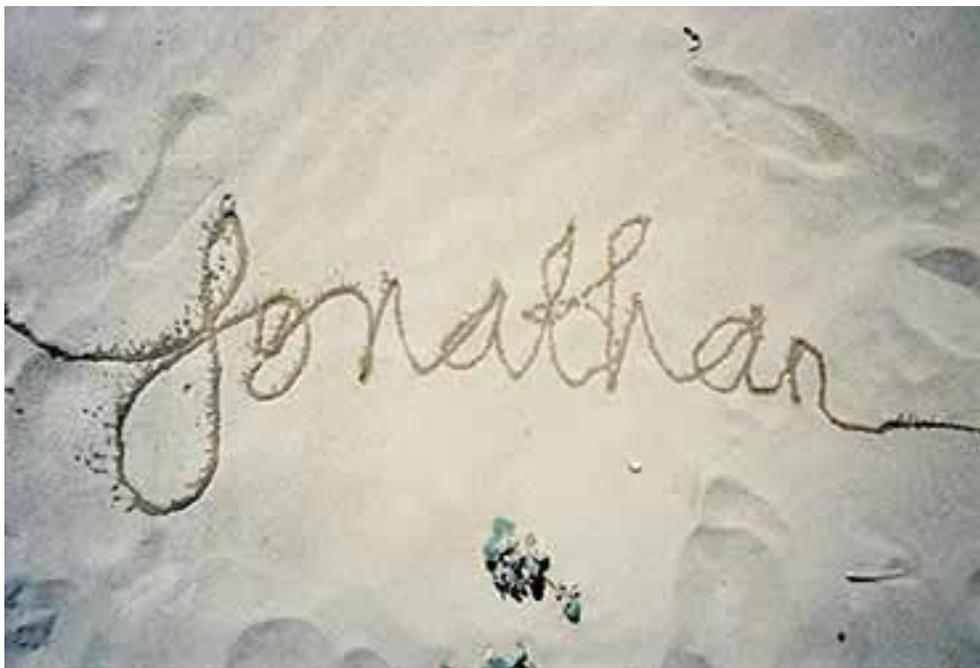
"Making Work" was held in 1994 at the Exhibition Bar in Glasgow, then in 1995 at the Salatfedet in Copenhagen.

The action took place in far too normal a way to arouse any suspicion. Monk invited a group of friends to spend the evening in a bar. Nothing much original up to that point, except that certain tables of the Exhibition Bar were covered with fresh canvas.

The evening went by, the beers went down and the ashtrays filled up. Gradually strained by splashing beers and overflowing ashtrays, the canvases become works, perhaps unbeknownst to those using them for something they weren't.

Monk then exhibited them under the titles "Waiting (with Cains)", "Waiting (with Guinness)" and "Waiting (with Tuborg)". What better way could a work today bear witness to group encounters? Monk's art does show a marked preference to act outside the sclerotic centers of contemporary art. This explains the group exhibition organized in the toilet of his apartment in 1994 ("My little toilet show"). It also explains his choice to make bars the place of choice for his artistic production. When they are not selected for their purely aggressive qualities ("Making Work" 1994-95, "Kiss Alive", "Six Pack", Cologne, 1995), bars in Monk's art become places that can convey new contemporary mythologies like the ones suggesting he have himself photographed after drinking ten beers ("Pissed off [10 pints]" 1994), or that he exhibit a shirt stained during a performance carried out at the Mitre Bar in Glasgow, consisting of Monk drinking a yard-long glass of beer ("Yard of Ale [Get shirty]" 1994).

**JONATHAN MONK**  
MY NAME WRITTEN IN MY PISS, 1994  
Edition de trois diptyques,  
photographies en couleurs  
Courtesy Galleri Nicolai Wallner,  
Copenhague



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“Don’t Get Shirty (with me),” Jonathan Monk in conversation with Douglas Gordon, September 1994

## Don’t Get Shirty (with me)

Jonathan Monk in conversation with Douglas Gordon,  
September 1994

J. What do you know about my work?

D. It’s strange because I don’t really know so much about your work . I suppose this is the nature of the way things are in Glasgow right now. Everyone knows who is busy, but those people are busy doing things in other places, so it’s difficult to get a handle on what people are up to exactly. So, at the moment you are heading for Copenhagen, and this is your first one-person show?

J. Yes.

D. And its in a private gallery, which is still quite an unusual thing for people like us, in Glasgow, to get used to because it’s not part of our culture.

J. But it feels good. Initially I was asked to curate a group show but the timing wasn’t right, so I suggested I do a solo show. It’s no problem. And working with a young gallery like Nicolai is good. There isn’t so much pressure for huge sales, although that would be nice.

D. What’s the most expensive piece of work you’ve sold?

J. Probably one of the holiday paintings. From an exhibition at the CCA in Glasgow a few years ago. I started this series of paintings in 1992. Initially I was asked to make some paintings for a club, a night-club in the city quite near to the gallery. So, I made some paintings of advertisements for holidays; the type of places where people might go to for a rave or whatever. Places like Ibiza, or the south of Italy. The idea was that the painting represented the idea of the holiday, the idea of an escape - and this could be bought for the same price as the experience itself.

D. So, people could make the choice to go on holiday or have one of your paintings. Do you still make these paintings?

J. I haven’t made any for a while but they are still available. There is a list of over 1000 that you can look through and choose from, like a brochure.

D. I’ve got a note in front of me that lists what I know of your work. I’ve got your Holiday Paintings, Pissing in the Sand, the Drunken Photos, the Bottle of Beer video that we made together, the stuff you made around the group KISS, your paintings of Notes On Doors and walls, the My Little Toilet show that you curated, an early text piece Can None Of You Fuckers Speak English, and the Sandwiches For Sale print edition. I know that there’s more than this but even so, I can see a clear social

strategy here. It's nothing so esoteric as Duchamp's attitude to the ready-made, but more to do with connecting certain social activities with the art world, and sometimes bringing the art world into contact with specific social occasions. I'm thinking here about My Little Toilet.

J. Yes, My Little Toilet. I just invited a group of artists to make work for my toilet, I even let it spill out into the hall. I liked the idea that things had to be so specific, you had to work in such a shitty little space. That appealed to me. To have art entirely stuck in the gallery context is kind of crap really.

D. Talking about My Little Toilet, you showed one of your Pissing in the Sand pieces there. I always thought they should be called pissing in the wind, haha.

J. Cheeky! I guess those pieces came from reading a book about the life of Jackson Pollock where, as a child, he and his older brother would try and piss their names in the sand. I know it's a kind of macho bravado thing, but it's quite funny. So, I just went to the beach with a bottle of water and pissed my name. You see a picture of me pissing and one with my name beautifully written in the sand, you are left to decide whether I did it or cheated. Similarly with the Drunken Photographs where I'd said I'd drunk 10 pints. This is playing with those stupid teenage bragging sessions. 'Yeah, I drunk 10 pints last night and I don't even have a hangover today etc.' Alcohol mythology. D. And this work kind of relates to the pieces that you are showing in Copenhagen.

J. Yeah.

D. Have you seen the drinking works that Gilbert and George made, they're great.

J. Yes, like the gin and tonic ones. Andy Warhol also made a film about a guy who drank a bottle of whiskey. He drank it and tried to leave the building and fell asleep, of course Andy kept the film rolling... It looks like a good movie.

D. Its like the holiday paintings again; the idea of the holidays is a certain escapism and now your on to drink, and we all know the kind of oblivion involved with alcohol. And not only a state of oblivion, but I've seen you, and I'm sure you've seen me, in states of total euphoria.

J. Yeah, remember that work we tried to make in Budapest with both of us in a room together, sitting at opposite corners. Both of us are blind drunk but one of us is laughing whilst the other one is crying, and then vice versa.

D. And it's not just us. I mean, remember the night at the Fruitmarket Gallery when Ross (Sinclair) did his performance. And Graham Gussin made a film of himself having just drunk a bottle of calvados. J. And the Wilson twins on LSD in Vienna.

D. Why are we doing these things?

J. Generation X?

D. Don't make me laugh. I can't afford the time or money to bum around like that dopey guy in Wynona Ryder's film. It makes me sick.

J. Oh, you're such a Calvinist. The way I see it is if it is something that you enjoy, you should do it, why make things difficult. I guess it also has something to do with experimenting. Most people we know drink and maybe take drugs so its just taking it and making art out of it.

D. One of the pieces that you are going to be showing is the 'get shirty' piece. This is going to be a good white shirt that has beer spillage down it. And it's a relic or a prop from an action/performance that you made in the Mitre bar, in Glasgow. How will you present it?

J. This time I'm showing a videotape of the event itself and the prop, which is the shirt, left at the end of the performance. The tape will show me standing on the bar at the Mitre and drinking a yard of ale. So, again it's quite a traditional thing to do amongst certain people in Britain, and it's also another quick way to oblivion. I can vouch for that. D. You are working with attitudes, desires and activities that have a certain urban mythology attached to them. Are you trying to create a myth for/of yourself? Is the beer stained shirt just a prop or do you want it to be seen as a relic, much in the same way as Beuys' suit or hat?

J. Only time will tell, haha. I guess it's a prop and a relic, if you will.

D. What else will be in the show as well as 'Get Shirty'?

J. I've made some new monochrome paintings based on those table tops you get in old bars; the ones that are three feet by one foot with the legs screwed down to the floor so you don't knock them over when you are drunk. It all came about quite naturally as I was sitting in the pub waiting for someone and I thought the rings left by the bottom of my pint looked interesting. That's basically what the painting will be, black or grey paintings with beer marks on them. I think the context of showing work related to beer and drinking in Copenhagen is pretty appropriate, at least in relation to my previous visits. You know it's really expensive to buy a pint of beer in Denmark. But does that stop them? Not likely, mate. It's a real drinking culture, so I'm sure that Nicolai and everyone will understand the work quite well.

D. So the context has people well prepared.

J. Yeah, and within the gallery each work refers to another. Like, just round the corner from the paintings, and across from the video and shirt will be quite a melancholic piece made with a carpet; there is a little space off the main gallery and I am going to install a carpet, in white or cream, and spill a single glass of red wine on it.

D. How will we know that it's wine? Obviously it could be something else.

J. I think it is ambiguous, but within the show it should be clear. It's a sad scenario of the lonely drinker, spilling those last drops of wine. The thought that it could be blood is also sad.

D. Very lonely. It seems very British to be dealing with these things; escape, oblivion and humour. Perhaps not so much within the art tradition, but definitely within the culture of British comedy. All those tragic-comics that were still around when we were children. Like Tommy Cooper, god bless 'im. I really wanted to do a show with him you know.

J. Or, Tony Hancock, Benny Hill, Dick Emery.

D. Les Dawson.

J. Morecambe & Wise.

D. Oh yes, Morecambe and Wise! They kind of sum things up in many ways. Remember that song they used to sing to each other at the end of each show ?

J. It was called 'Bring Me Sunshine'.

D. Do you know the lyrics ?

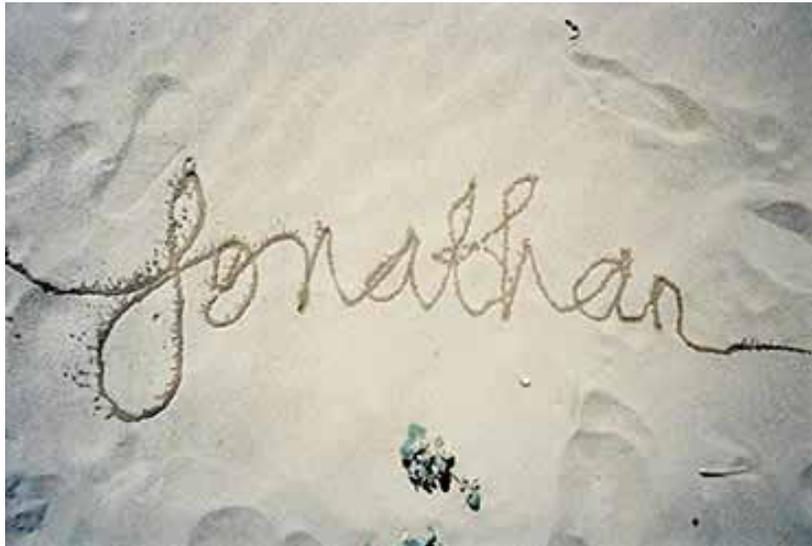
J. Bring me sunshine, in your smile.

D. Bring me laughter, all the while.

J. In this world where we live, there should be more happiness.

D. So much joy you can give to each brand new bright tomorrow!

Together. Make me happy, through the years. Never bring me any tears. Let your arms be as warm as the sun from up above, Bring me fun, bring me sunshine, bring me love. Bring me sunshine in your eyes, Bring me rainbows from the skies. Life's too short to be spent having anything but fun. We can be so content if we gather little sunbeams. Be light hearted, all day long. Keep me singing happy songs. Let your arms be as warm as the sun from above, Bring me fun, bring me sunshine, bring me love.



***My name is written in my piss*** 1993

Courtesy Galleri Nicolai Wallner