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Simon Starling: *The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door*
February 23 – April 22, 2017
Opening Reception: Thursday February 23, 6-8PM

Casey Kaplan is pleased to present *The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door*, Simon Starling's (b. 1967, Epsom, UK) sixth solo exhibition with the gallery. The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door is presented on the heels of Starling's most recent collaborative project titled *At Twilight*, staged in 2016 by the Common Guild in Glasgow and the Japan Society in New York, in which the artist celebrated modernism's continual presence in contemporary culture through the transformation of W. B. Yeats' play "At the Hawk's Well" (1916). For this exhibition, Starling expands upon his multidisciplinary practice to conjure a meeting of three musicians arriving to the United States through Ellis Island at the beginning of the 20th century. The uncovering and re-imagining of historical accounts of immigration offers new insight into our present cultural conditions, and a potential for greater understanding. For Starling, happenings of the past are not simply remembered, but repurposed.

The three musicians assembled for *The Liminal Trio* were selected from among a series of photographs by Augustus Frederick Sherman (1865 – 1925), an amateur photographer who worked in the administration at Ellis Island between 1892 and 1925 and produced over 250 photographs of immigrants entering the United States of America through our most historicized gateway. Typically, Sherman would photograph his subjects in their traditional folk costumes, which seem to have been worn (often for the last time) as a symbolic rite of passage. A strong sense of duality exists within each composition, for the photographs are both celebratory and analytical. Sherman revels in the cultural diversities of those who he encountered, while also objectifying his subjects and rendering them as 'types' to be catalogued and processed.

In one photograph, a Southern Italian piper, Antonio Piestineola (one of the few immigrants to be named by Sherman) clutches his zampogna (bagpipe) to his chest, while in another an unnamed Romanian piper in rough peasant attire holds a simple wooden kaval (an end-blown flute) to his mouth as if about to play. In a third photograph, a female clog dancer from Volendam wears the national costume of the Netherlands and stands gazing expectantly into the middle distance. These three musicians, and the musical traditions they would likely have brought with them, were the inspiration for a contemporary recording that brings these nearly obsolete sounds to life. Realized in New York, Sean Folsom plays the zampogna, Winne Clement blows on the kaval, and Livia Vanaver is clog dancing. This improvised session, orchestrated by Chicago-based musician Joshua Abrams, creates a spare and at times tentative dialogue between the three traditions - Folsom riffing on Southern Italian folk tunes such as the characteristic tarantella, Clement evoking lyrical rural Romanian music, while Vanaver explores the possibilities of the traditional Dutch horlepiep (hornpipe) dance.

Three speakers fed by the individual 'voices' of Folsom, Clement and Vanaver offer musical interpretations that are paired with replicas of the instruments and costumes portrayed in Sherman's photographs. Their likenesses are fabricated in grayscale tones, as no authentic record exists to convey the colors of their clothing (though contemporary reproductions of the photographs often appear dramatically colorized). Under the supervision of costume designer Gustavo Gonzalez, a host of specialized craftspeople including tailors, milliners, and embroiderers were called upon to realize each garment. Finally, three life-size enlargements of Sherman's original images from the archives at Ellis Island inhabit a third space and bring the project full circle.

In lending Sherman's images a material presence, Starling repositions the complexities of Ellis Island's history within an alternate, contemporary realm that waivers between the past and present. A moment in time is isolated among these individuals amidst the twelve million who entered the U.S. between 1892 and 1954, paying heed to our natural origins as the nation's political discord on this very topic heightens. Within each photograph's ephemera, any preconceptions of the time and place existing within the viewer are undone as our imaginations are restored to a palpable simulation of what could have been: The Liminal Trio playing at the Golden Doors of New York.

Simon Starling, the recipient of the 2005 Turner Prize, has exhibited worldwide. In recent years, Starling has presented solo exhibitions at institutions such as The Japan Society, New York (2016); The Common Guild, Glasgow (2016); Rennie Collection, Vancouver (2016); Nottingham Contemporary, England (2016); Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland (2016); Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City (2015); Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Quebec (2015); MCA Chicago, IL (2014); Pérez Art Museum, Miami (2014); Tate Britain, London (2013); Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan (2011); and MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2008). With recent participation in group exhibitions at venues such as the Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, NY (2016) and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2015), Starling will partake in an upcoming exhibition at The Centre Pompidou-Metz, France in March of this year. The artist's work is held in public collections such as The Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo per l'Arte, Turin; The Henry Moore Foundation, Herts; Kunstmuseum Basel; MCA Chicago, IL; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL; Seattle Art Museum, WA; SFMoMA, San Francisco, CA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; and TATE Modern, London. Simon Starling lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.

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THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

ART
APRIL 1ST, 2017

IN CONVERSATION
SIMON STARLING with Marcia E. Vetrocq

Peripatetic and prolific, Simon Starling (b. 1967) has traveled to and across five continents since the early 1990s to research, fabricate, photograph, film, perform, and install his work. Extravagant labor and a disarming absurdity—the operative questions seem to have been "what if?" and "why not?"—were wedded to the punctiliousness of a historian in early projects such as Rescued Rhododendrons, 1999, for which Starling drove seven of the unwanted bushes from Scotland (where they have proliferated as weeds) "back" to Spain, whence the plant had been imported in the 18th century. The straightforward action of the syllabically baroque Autoxylopyrocycloboros (2006) consists of powering a boat across Loch Long by feeding its steam engine the very wood of which the boat was made. The predictable swamping of the cannibalized craft is a strange hybrid of success and failure. You would be forgiven for reading the project now as an allegory of mismanaged resources and rising waters, particularly in light of Starling's recurring investigations into the systems and outcomes of the global transport of materials.

A large portion of Starling's practice has unfolded as a sort of art procedural, in which unearthed facts and evidence of forgotten encounters are interwoven in a series of crosscutting stories, a number of them featuring the works of Brancusi and Henry Moore, others centering on the reconstruction of early exhibitions of Modernist art. Archival digging, recursive photographic procedures, and an attention to technologies—bygone and cutting-edge—are fundamental to Starling's work. To that list he more recently added a deep engagement with performance and collaboration, both prominent in his latest shows in New York. From October 14, 2016 to January 15, Japan Society presented At Twilight, a multipart reconstruction of a Noh play written by Yeats and originally staged at the London home of Lady Emerald Cunard and her daughter, Nancy, on a spring evening in 1916. Starling's sixth solo exhibition at Casey Kaplan, which opened in February and is currently on view, is the outcome of a rather lyrical "what if?": The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door takes the form of a hypothetical musical encounter among three immigrants detained on Ellis Island. Starling and Marcia E. Vetrocq met before the opening of both shows for an extended conversation.

Installation view, Simon Starling, The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door, Casey Kaplan, New York, 2017. Photo: Jean Vong. Courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

Marcia E. Vetrocq (Rail): The "Golden Door" of your title evokes the Statue of Liberty, and immigration policy has become a raw, divisive issue in this country since the 2016 campaign. But the migrant crisis has been mounting on both sides of the Atlantic for years. When did you first consider doing a project on immigration for your show in New York?

Simon Starling: The project has many precedents within my practice in general. For me The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door is very closely related to the work that I made at Mass MoCA in 2008, The Nanjing Particles, which was triggered by the story of Chinese migrant workers coming to North Adams to break a strike in a shoe factory. I came across the story at a moment when America was obsessing about the effect of the booming Chinese economy on the American economy, a conversation which is still running, I suppose. On a political level and also on a formal level, the idea of the "archaeology" of a photographic image—trying to get below the surface—is key to both projects.

I feel that there's also a connection to other shows that I've made here at the gallery. The Bird in Space project in 2004 was about a Brancusi sculpture brought by Marcel Duchamp to the United States that was not allowed free entry as an art work but was taxed as a piece of metal. That project was prompted by the then-current situation with a steel tax, which George Bush had imposed to curry favor with the Rust Belt vote. He was subsequently forced to rescind it because the World Trade Organization deemed it to be an illegal tariff. So, again, the trigger for investigating the art-historical story was very much a contemporary situation, and I tried to conflate those two stories into one work by importing a lump of Romanian steel as an art work to avoid the tax. There are also the birdhouses I made earlier for Inverted Retrograde Theme, USA (House for a Songbird), which was an investigation into the arrival of European Modernism in Puerto Rico during the 1960s. Somehow most of the works that I've shown here at the gallery have had some kind of relationship to the movement of people and things in and out of America. Thinking about my context and the moment in which the shows are being made is very much embedded in the way I conceive of works.

Rail: How did you arrive at the Augustus F. Sherman photographs as your way into the subject of immigration?

Simon Starling, The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door (detail), 2017. Silver gelatin type LE/Selenium prints. 73.8 × 30.4 inches. Augustus F. Sherman, Portrait of two young women from The Netherlands, ca. 1910. Photo: Jean Vong. Courtesy the artist, the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Statue of Liberty N.M. and Ellis Island and Casey Kaplan, New York.

Starling: There were a number of different reasons for thinking about the Sherman photographs in the Ellis Island archive. One was seeing the rhetoric play out around the Brexit vote in Britain, which was at times absurd and hard to watch. You saw first- and second-generation immigrants railing against immigration. Also, over the summer I read this wonderful biography of Willem de Kooning, who came to New York around the time of the arrival of these immigrants who are at the center of my exhibition. De Kooning came from a very impoverished and tough life in Rotterdam, and it was interesting to read about his transition into American life, the urgency to forget the past and assume an American way of being. So, all these things came together to connect me to the Sherman photographs. I'd seen some of them years ago—I can't remember exactly where, though I think one of the professors in my photography training had shown some of them in a lecture.

Rail: Can you take us through the components of the exhibition that arose from the photographs you chose?

Starling: The exhibition presents three characters—musicians—three times. There are enlargements of the rather small Sherman photographs, two of the three cropped, all blown up to be physical presences in the show—but images still. There are re-creations of their clothes and instruments, which are like theatrical costumes for some kind of reenactment. And then there is a twenty-six-minute audio recording. The first experience in the gallery is the music, which is played from three speakers, two on stands—almost figurative in a way—with the clog dancer's speaker sitting on the floor, which seems appropriate. Then there are the costumes and instruments, which have been re-created in grayscale, and then the re-photographs of the originals, also in a kind of grayscale. So the three figures are each represented in three different forms. It's the notion of the in-between or liminal state that these immigrants would have found themselves in on Ellis Island. It's a trio that becomes nine figures in the exhibition. They're "fractured." I guess the idea is that the characters themselves occupy the space between all those representations.

Rail: Sherman's subjects genuinely were in a kind of limbo.

Starling: Yes, the people that Sherman photographed had all been detained for various reasons, probably in what Trump would call "extreme vetting." Some of them were sent back, and others eventually were let in. There were multiple reasons to do with documentation. And also I think at that moment there was a concern about certain groups coming, as there is now. So they were a kind of captive subject for Sherman.

Simon Starling, The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door (detail), 2017. Silver gelatin type LE/Selenium prints. 75.9 × 37.5 inches. Augustus F. Sherman, Antonio Piestineola - 37. Italian Piper SS 'San Giovanni' May 12, ca. 1908. Photo: Jean Vong. Courtesy the artist, the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Statue of Liberty N.M. and Ellis Island and Casey Kaplan, New York.

Rail: How was the music created?

Starling: As well as making costumes we've also made grayscale instruments, which was quite a project. The instruments were used at the recording session by three contemporary musicians—Livia Vanaver, a clog dancer; Winne Clement, a kaval player; and Sean Folsom, a zampogna player. The recording session in Brooklyn had a very appropriate kind of energy, because the three of them had never met before. It was a sort of negotiation among people from different places and different traditions. It was awkward, and I think you can feel that in the recording in a very interesting way. The project is about the idea that three musicians who didn't share a language could have come together and just started to make music in an informal fashion. In the recording, too, there's a sense of three musicians exploring their relationship, finding out what works, what doesn't. There's a lot of ambient, empty space, with just squeaks and odd shuffles. It goes from being very sparse and nonmusical to being vast. When the three of them all get going, it's quite something.

Rail: I don't recall the human figure generally having a significant role in your work. There are exceptions, of course, like the Chinese laborers in the stereograph used in The Nanjing Particles. When you re-imagined the Noh performance in At Twilight or enlarged the Sherman photographs, did you feel that you were working with the human figure?

Starling: For me it's more about ghosts—human figures but in dematerialized forms. I suppose it goes back to At Twilight and the Japanese Noh idea of ghosts possessing actors in the mirror room, which is where they put on their masks. The physical manifestation of the immigrants in The Liminal Trio is a sort of invocation, an attempt to summon the ghosts, perhaps, to occupy this liminal space that I've tried to establish. If three musicians found themselves in this kind of in-between state, sharing no common language, what might they have done? It's a sort of speculative proposition.

Rail: When we first spoke about At Twilight and your effort to reconstruct Yeats's At the Hawk's Well, you used the expression "creative misunderstanding" to describe the idea that not having the information for a complete re-creation allowed—

Simon Starling, The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door (detail), 2017. Replica costumes, zampogna. 75.25 × 26.5 × 25.25 inches. Augustus F. Sherman, Antonio Piestineola - 37. Italian Piper SS 'San Giovanni' May 12 , ca. 1908. Photo: Jean Vong. Courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

Starling: —Yes, something new to be born. In the video based on the performance we did at The Common Guild in Glasgow, Javier de Frutos talks very beautifully about how this was what attracted him to the idea of choreographing the "Hawk's Dance." The entire At Twilight project is based on so little information. Only these tiny fragments have survived—the odd drawings by Edmund Dulac, the little fragment of music, these few photographs by Alvin Langdon Coburn, and, of course, Yeats's script of the play itself. There's the feeling that you're dealing with a sort of amnesia, a gray area of knowledge. It was this very rarefied event in high society, a performance in London in 1916 which was witnessed by a handful of people, never reported by the press because the press was effectively banished. All that exists is hearsay and gossip and odd fragments. In both projects there is this beautiful space for a reimagining of things. The grayscale costumes for the Hawk and for the three musicians all speak to that sense of amnesia, or partial amnesia. You don't know this beautiful Romanian kaval player pictured by Sherman or what the color of the decoration on his jacket was. With the reconstruction of At the Hawk's Well, there was a powerful sense of not knowing. It became an evocative thing to dive into. And the not knowing was as important as the facts, the concrete things. I think it's very much the same with The Liminal Trio.

Another interesting thing is, after I had started looking at the Sherman photographs again, I discovered that there was this project underway to colorize the black-and-white photographs. I guess there's serendipity involved, but because of the political situation at the moment, these things have a kind of currency. In a weird way, that colorization process is doing something similar to what I'm trying to do, or, rather, what I've done is actually the opposite—to accentuate our lack of knowledge of the color through the re-creation of these costumes in grayscale.

Rail: In a 2013 interview you described yourself as being "interested in what it means to make something in a culture in which our connections with making and manufacture are increasingly distant." You've used advanced digital technology in your work for some time. How do you view the connection between digital fabrication and "making"?

Installation view, Simon Starling, At Twilight (After W. B. Yeats' Noh Reincarnation), Japan Society, New York, 2016-17. Photo: Richard P. Goodbody. Courtesy the artist and Japan Society, New York.

Starling: It's a reality of "making" now. The large black-and-white silver prints were made for The Liminal Trio by Griffin Editions here in New York. They were made from black-and-white negatives that were scanned and then written onto the paper, essentially by a laser. As I experience it, there are these shifts all the time from the material to the immaterial and back again in any kind of making process now. I like that. We talked about this idea of the potentials of misunderstandings or mistranslations, and there's this potential in the "slippage," as I call it, that happens from one state to another. It seems to be an ongoing aspect of what I'm doing physically, and also in terms of the way forms and narratives change and evolve through time.

Rail: The creative misunderstandings intrinsic to your re-creation of At the Hawk's Well in At Twilight build upon the initial creative misunderstandings of Yeats and Pound as they set out to stage an "authentic" Noh drama. In the case of The Liminal Trio, did you supplement the information that can be gleaned from the Sherman photographs in any way?

Starling: To some degree, yes, but for me the most interesting thing was how the musicians would respond, because they're all very knowledgeable about the history of their instruments. I asked each of them to think before the recordings about what these three individuals might have brought with them in terms of their musical language from Romania, southern Italy, and Holland. Then the recording session was about trying to find a point of connection. It was a tough day, in a way, because they all have their own sense of quality, and I suppose they all projected prior to the recordings what they thought was going to be born out of this. The hope is that you feel that process of negotiation unfolding in the music that's been generated. It's a tentative conversation as a piece of music.

Rail: Is it just the impression that one gets from the successive presentation of these two shows in New York, or are you exploring collaboration in your work more deeply via theater, dance, and musical performance?

Starling: It goes back a long way in the work, but I've found it so amazingly energizing and enriching to bring other people on board and also to be able to take a step back from the making and allow a certain critical distance. Being able to work with Yasuo Miichi, this extraordinary mask maker in Osaka, and to start to analyze his creative process, working with musicians and choreographers—it's a real luxury. For The Liminal Trio we put on the gallery wall an extensive credit list of all the people who've been involved in making this show. In a way it's a list of immigrants, and their names become very powerful in relation to the themes of the show. You see a complex geography played out just in the names of the people who've been involved—tailoring, hat-making, recording, mixing, framing. It seemed a very fitting statement to make.

Rail: Apropos of the acknowledgments at the gallery, you share credit with Graham Eatough for conceiving, writing, and directing the performance of At Twilight at The Common Guild, and the list of creative and technical contributors to that work is pointedly titled "Collaborators." Similarly, the heart of the current show is an improvised composition performed by three musicians. Tell me more about this progression from research to collaboration and performance.

Starling: In a way, my approach to the play At Twilight evolved from making these rather more narrative film works, like Project for a Masquerade or Black Drop, in which there was a kind of authoritative narration, and also from the way I've used artist's talks as a central part of the practice. The lecture theater has become an important space for me to "perform" the work. I think At Twilight comes from thinking about the way that ideas are pieced together in that kind of context.

Installation view, Simon Starling, At Twilight (After W. B. Yeats' Noh Reincarnation), Japan Society, New York, 2016-17. Photo: Richard P. Goodbody. Courtesy the artist and Japan Society, New York.

The collaboration evolved from our working relationship, with Graham being a specialist in staging and myself more of a storyteller. And it also lent a nice dynamic to the other relationships—Yeats and Pound, the characters of the old man the young man. And it was actually very seamless. The first time I met with Graham to talk about the collaboration, I had pieced together this "mind map," just as a sort of tool to start to discuss the areas of interest and how that all connected in my mind. It was extraordinary how fast Graham was able to lock into that and come on board in a very generous and open way. We decided quite early on that we were both nervous about the idea of putting words into the mouths of poets, because that seemed like a foolhardy operation. So we decided that rather than "write" the play, it would be more of a process of collaging. I had a folder of texts, a huge reservoir of letters that Yeats had written to various people at that time, correspondence between Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska, texts by Pound about Noh and by Yeats about Noh, and so on. I'd gone through all that material and cut out texts that I thought could work very well. I have these pin boards in my studio which I wheel around the place, and I started to collage those on. Then Graham arrived for the first time, and we started to pick things out and define certain kinds of scenes. The transition from the research process to the making process was seamless. When I read or watch the play now, it's impossible for me to decide which bit is Graham and which bit is me. We had an incredibly symbiotic relationship, and it's not always like that with collaborations. People can get kind of territorial about ideas. But I think it was a very smooth, very natural transition from the beginning stage of research. And I think Graham felt quite excited by the volume and the nature of the material that I had put together, so he dived into the writing process—"compositing" is perhaps the best word for it—very easily and very fast.

Rail: I'd like to return to your earlier comment about the Bird in Space project and the pertinence of President Bush's steel tariffs. Elsewhere you've pointed out additional contemporary connections, such as the fact that the Romanian company which provided the steel for your work had been acquired by an Indian steel magnate who was a big contributor to Tony Blair's Labour party. In Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) you recast a 16th-century Noh play as a Cold War yarn, and included the collector Joseph Hirshhorn, who made a fortune in uranium mining thanks to the Atomic Energy Commission. For the 2013 – 14 show Pictures for An Exhibition, you traced the provenances of the Brancusi sculptures in the 1927 Chicago Arts Club exhibition to their current owners. Your essay on provenance is deeply detailed, yet understated, very unlike a Hans Haacke-style exposé. You seem to approach hot issues in a very cool way. What are your thoughts on the politics of your work?

Starling: The Pictures for an Exhibition work was made for the Arts Club, which is a very particular organization whose mem

bers are generally wealthy business people with an interest in the arts, often patron-collectors. It seemed an interesting situation within which "unpack" that culture a bit. The work took two installation views of the 1927 exhibition on a crazy, long detour. In order to reconstruct them, I had to first find out where all those sculptures were now. And in doing that, you start to move back through time to connect the present with the various hands that those things have gone through. Interesting characters suddenly pop up—the president of Microsoft or Phyllis Lambert, the daughter of Samuel Bronfman, the whiskey and oil billionaire. There are, of course, gaps in the history of all of those things still, even though Brancusi is well researched. It became a kind of mapping of the lives of these objects, and the notes that I wrote for the piece are for me a very important part of the work. I think there are a few instances in the way I've formulated those notes where I probably betray a bit of my political sense. But I always try to hold back from a didactic political approach. For me, the politics should seep out of the work in a much more surreptitious way. It's subtext, but it's all there.

Rail: The title you chose for the Arts Club essay is from a Picabia painting called This Thing Is Made to Perpetuate My Memory. Tell me about that choice.

Starling: The painting is in the collection of the Arts Club, and it was one of the first things I saw when I arrived there to start work on the project. It stuck in my mind. Who is the character whose memory this is? The implication is that it's almost a machine in the work. It seemed to embody very nicely, but very lightly, the venture that I was on with the making of my work and the writing of that text. It was a very simple system or mechanism to get from one place to another, or in that case to get back to where you start. I guess that Picabia title talks to the camera for me, the act of photographing. One of the thirty-six photographs in the series I made for that exhibition is an image of the part of the painting which contains the written title, and you can see my camera reflected in the glass of the painting.

Rail: Your notes on Brancusi provenance add up to an intricate and vivid account. After reading those and attending your lecture at Japan Society, I've come to think of you as very much a storyteller. Archival research and narrative performance—which can remain distinct areas of practice—come together happily in your work.

Starling: In the end that's what connects it all—the desire to tell a good story. It's no more complicated than that, in a way. I was thinking about lectures again the other day. I went to see Mark Leckey's show at PS1. He does these amazing performance/lectures which for me are the most interesting part of his practice—he's thinking in a very generous way for an audience. You feel that more and more. There's Hito Steyerl, who was in Copenhagen recently doing a lecture, and she's fantastic at it. It's very interesting, this kind of interdisciplinary realm where artists find themselves acting as an entertainer and a maker and an intellectual, all at once, in this very particular zone: the lecture theater.

Rail: Given your lectures, the extensive traveling that you do, and the value you place on being on site to undertake research and personally source materials for projects, would it be fair to detect an almost diaristic quality in your work?

Starling: In a way my body—how I move through the world and work and travel—is always there or thereabouts in the thing, but always pressed into the background. And I suppose that's how I feel comfortable with it—always stepping back a little bit. I also think this sense of the diary grows as the practice grows. The life lived becomes more and more important, and inevitably seems to haunt the work.

Vetrocq, Marcia E., *In Conversation: Simon Starling with Marcia E. Vetrocq*, Brooklyn Rail (online), April 1, 2017

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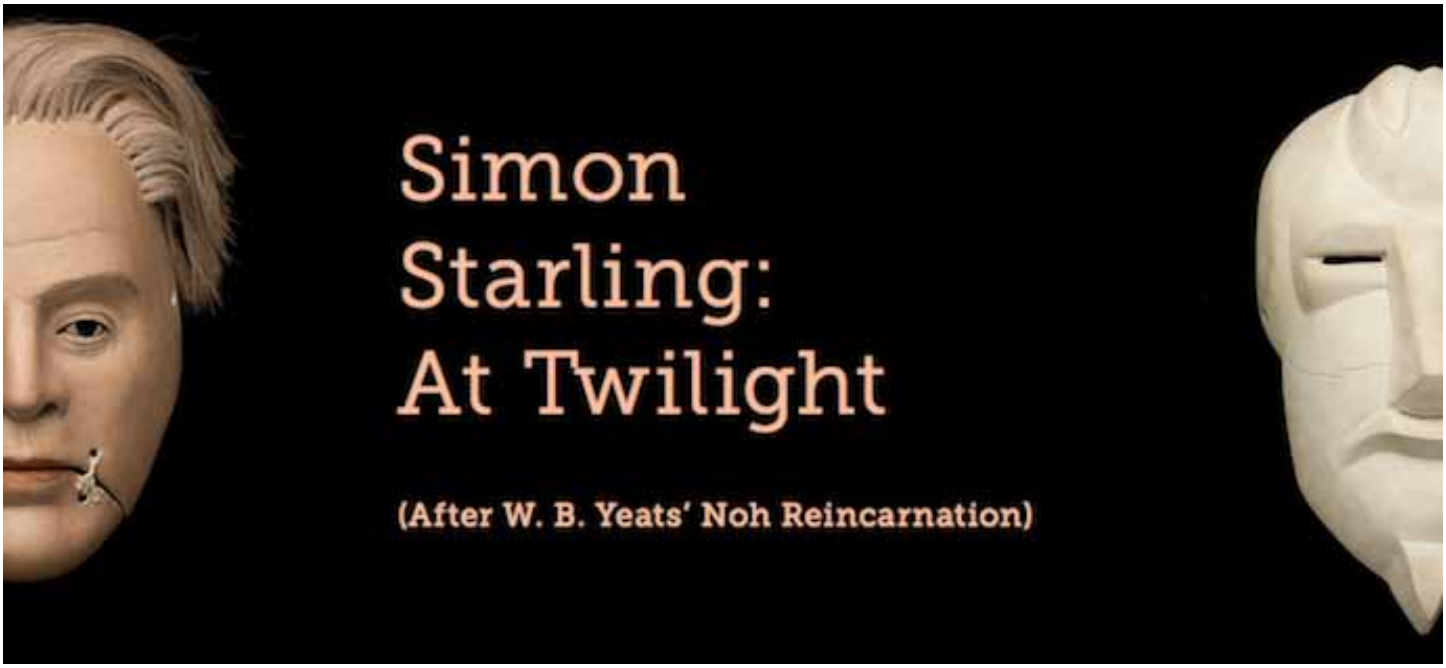

SIMON STARLING: AT TWILIGHT (AFTER W. B. YEATS' NOH REINCARNATION)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2016—SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2017
Members' Opening: Thursday, October 13, 7:30 PM

At the height of WWI, poet W. B . Yeats collaborated with members of the avant garde to stage his Japanese noh inspired dance play At the Hawk's Well (1916). To mark its centennial, Turner Prize winner Simon Starling reinterprets this production in an exhibition that illustrates the impact of noh on Western Modernism. Newly created masks, costumes, and a dance on video are paired with works by the 20th-century masters connected to Yeats' play, bringing to life Starling's irrepressible inventiveness.

This exhibition was organized by Japan Society in collaboration with The Common Guild (Glasgow, Scotland).

EXHIBITION-RELATED PROGRAMMING:

LECTURE
Simon Starling
Friday, October 14, 6:30 PM
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The New York Times

ART & DESIGN | ART REVIEW

Simon Starling: Modernism Gazing Into the Past

By JASON FARAGODEC. 29, 2016

Masks and Video From “Simon Starling: At Twilight,” an exhibition at Japan Society.

“Modernism is our antiquity,” the historian T. J. Clark wrote in “Farewell to an Idea,” his 1999 eulogy for the art of the last century. By which he meant: As Greece and Rome served as the base line for Western culture from the Renaissance onward, modernism itself had become our model and myth, to be reinterpreted at will but never really understood. Spend half a day in Chelsea, and you will see few gods and heroes — but you will trip over archives of failed utopian collectives, photos of crumbling tower blocks, rebooted avant-garde dances and all sorts of fragments of the recent past. Ulysses may be dead, but “Ulysses” endures.

Few contemporary artists have wrestled with the legacy of modernism as consistently as Simon Starling, a Scottish artist based in Copenhagen, whose previous projects have involved melting Bauhaus chairs down into beer cans or chucking a replica of a Henry Moore statue into Lake Ontario. Now, in an airtight but gratifying exhibition at Japan Society — his first at a New York City institution — he turns to William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound, two modernist writers who had their own ornery gazes on the past. Yeats’s “At the Hawk’s Well,” a 1916 one-act play indebted to both Irish folklore and Japanese drama, provides the tonic note for Mr. Starling’s “At Twilight,” a forking meditation — featuring both his own art and significant historical loans — on modernism’s cross-cultural power and contemporary resonance.

This is a rare outing for a non-Japanese artist at Japan Society, and it has been curated by Yukie Kamiya, the director of the institute's art gallery. It opens with a dark, spotlit gallery featuring exquisite lacquered masks, of the sort used in Japan's highly ritualized Noh theater, attached to charred tree trunks. (The masks were newly made from Paulownia wood by Yasuo Michii, an artisan with whom Mr. Starling has collaborated before.) Rather than recreate the props of "At the Hawk's Well," Mr. Starling riffs on its creators and their colleagues in wartime Dublin, Paris and Tokyo. One mask depicts Yeats with a swoop of lustrous white hair, his jaw shut by knotted strings. The one depicting Pound, who served as Yeats's secretary and translated Noh dramas, is all white and angular, repurposing the bust of the poet sculpted by Henri Gaudier-Brzeska in 1914. Already, then, Mr. Starling is both channeling Yeats's original play and improvising, to create a remake that chases its own tail.

Yasuo Michii's "Mask of Nancy Cunard (After Constantin Brancusi)" in the Simon Starling show at Japan Society.

There are other masks. A gilded one has just two slits for eyes; it represents Nancy Cunard, the hard-drinking heiress who opened her home to Yeats's performers and whom Brancusi sculpted in a similarly abstract way. Another draws on Jacob Epstein's "The Rock Drill," a classic of Vorticist machine romance that later came to symbolize the brutality of World War I. A stern bronze mask with long animal hair depicts Michio Ito, the Japanese dancer in "At the Hawk's Well"; he played the title bird, who protected a well of immortality. (You may have seen the dashing portrait of Ito on the poster for "Human Interest," the Whitney's current show of American portraiture.)

A video features the alluring Thomas Edwards, of the Scottish Ballet, in a hawk costume, as he reimagines the play's largely undocumented choreography. He swoops his arm down, in flight; he lunges backward, pushing his head to the ground; he bobs left and right, like a disco dancer, against a score of cymbals and horns that charges harder than the flute and drum backdrops of Noh. You can later see his ravishing steel-gray costume, which Mr. Starling designed with a Tokyo atelier.

Mr. Starling, who won the Turner Prize in 2005, first presented "At Twilight" in Glasgow, where the masks were used in a three-night performance of a new play whose characters included Yeats, Pound, Ito, Cunard and Mr. Starling himself. (A critic for the magazine Frieze called the performance "as much theatrical lecture as play.") At Japan Society, the new masks and costumes are instead placed in conversation with impressive archival materials from Yeats and his circle: letters from the poet detailing the preparations for "At the Hawk's Well," on loan from the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin; "The Rock Drill" from the Museum of Modern Art; and a newly cast edition of Brancusi's Cunard bust.

"At the Hawk's Well (Grayscale)," a mask by Yasuo Michii.

Half a dozen Noh masks from the 14th century, and woodblock prints of Meiji-era Japanese actors, reintroduce the theatrical tradition that Yeats and his collaborators — with the confident universalism that we later generations can find suspicious — actually understood rather poorly. And, a bit weirdly, there is a stuffed Eeyore, A. A. Milne's depressed poetry-writing donkey; Yeats and Pound waited out the war in the Sussex forest where Milne set "Winnie-the-Pooh."

In other, more nervous hands, the kind of archival project that Mr. Starling has undertaken could become defensive, an easy way to buttress one's own position in an art history that can seem infinite. (When everything's been done, isn't it safest to rework an older masterpiece?) What makes this project more engrossing — beyond the beauty of the masks and the elegance of the filmed dance — is Mr. Starling's understanding of historical modernism as a transnational condition, indeed the first such transnational style, which an Irish playwright, an American poet and a Japanese dancer could share even if they understood it with slight differences. That promiscuous approach is one the globe-trotting Mr. Starling adopts in "At Twilight," though here Noh theater and Irish legend have been supplanted, as source materials, by modernism itself: The recent past is our own mythology.

And yet gazing on Mr. Starling's masks and on the photos and letters from a century ago, I felt that the distance between the two bodies of work was not so great. The idea that modernism may be our very own kind of antiquity emerged in the 1990s during a moment of relative peace and permanence that some thought signified the end of history. Two decades later, the themes of Yeats, Pound and other modernists — themes of alienation, decay, a world in fragments — feel more current than anyone expected.

Farago, Jason, "Simon Starling: Modernism Gazing in the Past", New York TImes, December 29, 2016

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Art in America

Simon Starling
NEW YORK
at the Japan Society

by Charles Marshall Schultz

Simon Starling, in collaboration with (costume) Kumi Sakurai and Atelier Hinode and (stand) Simon Hopkins/Scott Associates Sculpture and Design, Glasgow: At Twilight: The Guardian of the Well (After Edmund Dulac), 2014-16, hand-painted cotton muslin, polyurethane, and painted steel; at the Japan Society.

The heart of Simon Starling's enchanting show "At Twilight (After W.B. Yeats' Noh Reincarnation)" was a play by Starling that was not presented. The exhibition consisted mainly of the research materials that informed the play and the costumes, masks, and props that were used in its only performance to date, which took place last summer in Glasgow. A video about that performance played in the final gallery, but it was a documentary rather than a straight recording. Initially, the decision not to stage the play in New York seemed like a misstep, but the absence ultimately united the show and gave it the clever depth one has come to expect from this Turner Prize–winning artist.

The conceptual origin point for Starling's project was W.B. Yeats's At the Hawk's Well, one of four dance-plays that Yeats wrote during World War I, while he was living with Ezra Pound (his secretary at the time) near Ashdown Forest. Yeats composed the play in the tradition of Japanese Noh theater but drew on Irish mythology for its plot, which centers on an old man and a young man hoping to drink the waters from a magical well guarded by a hawklike creature.

At the Hawk's Well was first performed at the residence of a wealthy patron in London in 1916, and figures associated with that event appear among the characters in Starling's version. Through his Mind Map (2014–16)—a large work on paper combining collaged imagery and handwritten notations—and other research materials, viewers learned how the various characters relate to Yeats's play. In addition to Yeats and Pound, Starling includes British activist and socialite Nancy Cunard, who was the original event's hostess, and dancer and choreographer Michio Ito, who played the guardian of the well. He also incorporates two more improbable characters: Eeyore from Winnie-the-Pooh and a personification of Jacob Epstein's menacing Vorticist sculpture Rock Drill (1913–15). Like Yeats and Pound, Winnie-the-Pooh author Alan Alexander Milne lived in Ashdown Forest during WWI, but he focused his writing efforts on propaganda for the British military intelligence department; when the war was over, he used Ashdown Forest as the basis for the Hundred Acre Wood, one of the settings in Winnie-the-Pooh. Rock Drill links to Pound through the poet's involvement in the Vorticist movement.

There is a unique mask for each of Starling's characters, and in the exhibition's first gallery, which was rendered as a sort of black-box space, these masks were displayed on short, charred trees that suggested the ravaged imagery of Goya's "Disasters of War" series. Starling's "forest" was dimly lit—one of numerous references to twilight, which here represents, as Starling explains in the documentary, a mythical passage between day and night when the realm of spirits overlaps with mundane reality—and was backed by a looping video projection of a dancer performing a newly choreographed interpretation of the "hawk's dance" from Yeats's play. In a narrow gallery between the first space and Starling's research room, the costumes were presented on simple steel-rod mannequins facing a mirrored wall. The reflection set up a conceptual doubling that corresponded with the relationship of mask to performer as well as with the pairings that presumably drive Starling's play: Yeats and Pound, old man and young man, peaceful donkey and violent machine.

To appreciate the absence of the play itself, it helped to keep in mind that Yeats had minimal exposure to Japanese theater when he wrote At the Hawk's Well, just as Starling had only limited archival sources to go on when reconceiving the production. Both the poet and the artist had to use leaps of imagination in their creative processes. By withholding the play, Starling set up a parallel situation for the viewer, creating a sense of circularity within the many layers of his project.

Schultz, Charles Marshall, "Review: Simon Starling at the Japan Society, New York", Art in America (online), March 3, 2017

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The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

Art Fall Preview: From East Coast to West Coast. From Concrete to Ethereal

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER | SEPT. 16, 2016

SIMON STARLING: AT TWILIGHT

Oct. 14-Jan. 15, Japan Society Gallery

A Turner Prize-winning artist turns the Japan Society into an immersive multimedia environment. Noh, the traditional Japanese theater using masks, is joined with “At the Hawk’s Well” (1916), a play by the Irish writer W. B. Yeats set in the middle of World War I. japansociety.org.

Schwendener, Martha, “Art Fall Preview”, New York Times, September, 18, 2016, AR 90

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

A Fiery Splash in the Rockaways and Twists on Film at the Whitney

By ROBIN POGREBIN MAY 26, 2016

Japan Society Show

When the Turner Prize-winning artist Simon Starling was preparing the piece he would exhibit at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art five years ago, he learned about masked Japanese Noh theater, which inspired W. B. Yeats’s 1916 play, “At the Hawk’s Well.”

Now Mr. Starling is building on that project with “At Twilight,” his first institutional show in New York and a rare solo exhibition at Japan Society that features a non-Japanese artist.

It is also the first exhibition by Yukie Kamiya, Japan Society’s new gallery director, who used to be chief curator at the Hiroshima museum.

The show is organized with the Common Guild of Glasgow, which will present Mr. Starling’s version of the Yeats play in July.

Mr. Starling said that he was intrigued by the idea of masked theater, “where nobody is who they appear to be.”

Pogrebin, Robin, “A Fiery Splash in the Rockaways and Twists on Film at the Whitney”, The New York Times (online), May 26, 2016

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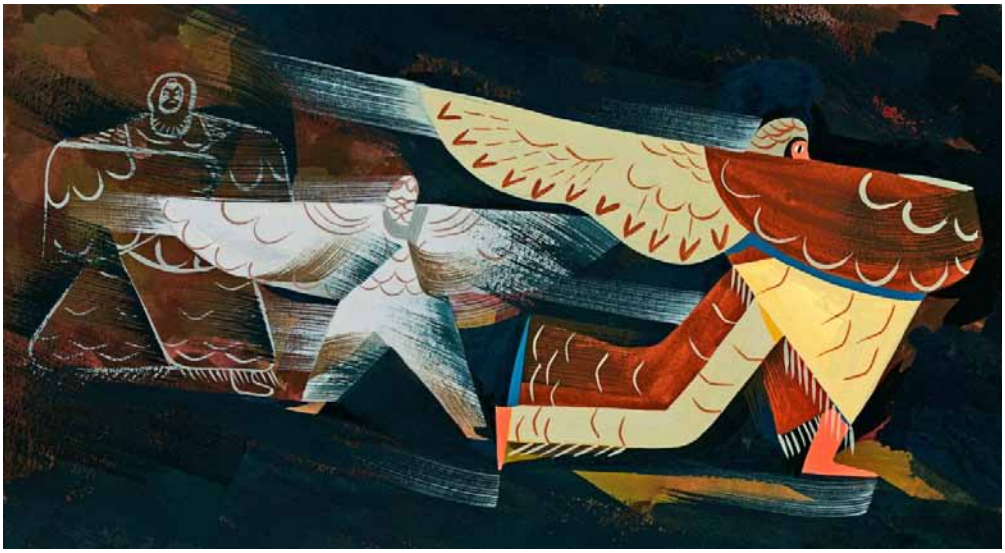

THE NEW YORKER

The exhibition "At Twilight" explores the 1916 play "At the Hawk's Well," written by William Butler Yeats, who was inspired by Japanese Noh theatre. Illustration by Ping Zhu

Simon Starling Revives the Spirit of Yeats

The British conceptual artist brings artifacts from a reinterpretation of "At the Hawk's Well" in Glasglow to Japan Society.

In the years before the First World War, many artists were trying to fight their way out of what they saw as the prison of realism, the requirement that their work deal with the plight of women or workers or whatever. They wanted to return to what they saw as the true source of art, the mind's dialogue with the soul. An especially exasperated participant in all this was the great Irish poet William Butler Yeats, who felt that Western drama, by cutting its ties with ritual, had lost its poetic and social force. Then, in 1909, Yeats met the American poet Ezra Pound, who would soon be working on translations of Japanese Noh drama, a highly stylized form dating back to the fourteenth century. Instead of parlors and social problems, a Noh play would have maybe a pine tree, some drummers, and one or two masked performers, sometimes representing ghosts.

Pound showed the Noh texts to Yeats, and the Irish master loved them, both for their austerity and, above all, for their inclusion of the immaterial world. He himself was in close contact with the beyond. Each Monday, he travelled from his home, in Sussex, to London, so that, with the help of his medium, he could have a talk with Leo Africanus, a sixteenth-century traveller and scholar whom he regarded as his spiritual alter ego. Inspired by Noh, Yeats, in 1916, created his play "At the Hawk's Well," for three characters: the Irish mythological hero Cuchulain, an old man, and a dancing hawk, gathered around a basin of holy water on a lonely mountainside.

Nearly a century later, "At the Hawk's Well" caught the attention of the British conceptual artist Simon Starling, who specializes in installations and performances invoking older artworks, often from early modernism, and reframing them in their historical context. This past summer, in Glasgow, Starling staged "At Twilight," a reinterpretation of "At the Hawk's Well," with masks in the style of the artists who were part of Yeats's and Pound's world—Brancusi, Jacob Epstein, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska—and a display of what Starling calls "mind maps," which are montages of materials (letters, photographs, etc.) from the period. Now artifacts from the Glasgow performances have been installed in four galleries at Japan Society, where they will remain until mid-January.

The star of the show is the grand and spooky first gallery, where, against black walls, the beautiful masks have been hung atop what look like dead tree trunks. These are backed by a video of the hawk's seven-minute solo, by the Venezuelan choreographer Javier De Frutos, from the Glasgow show. The dance is very stark. The hooded brown hawk (Thomas Edwards, from the Scottish Ballet) stamps and folds his wings in and out to the beating of drums and gongs. The dance then unfolds into turns, runs, dips, and swoops, but it ends as quietly as it began. We seem, like Yeats, to have met spirits from the next world.

Acocella, Joan, " Simon Starling Revives the Spirit of Yeats", The New Yorker, October 31, 2016

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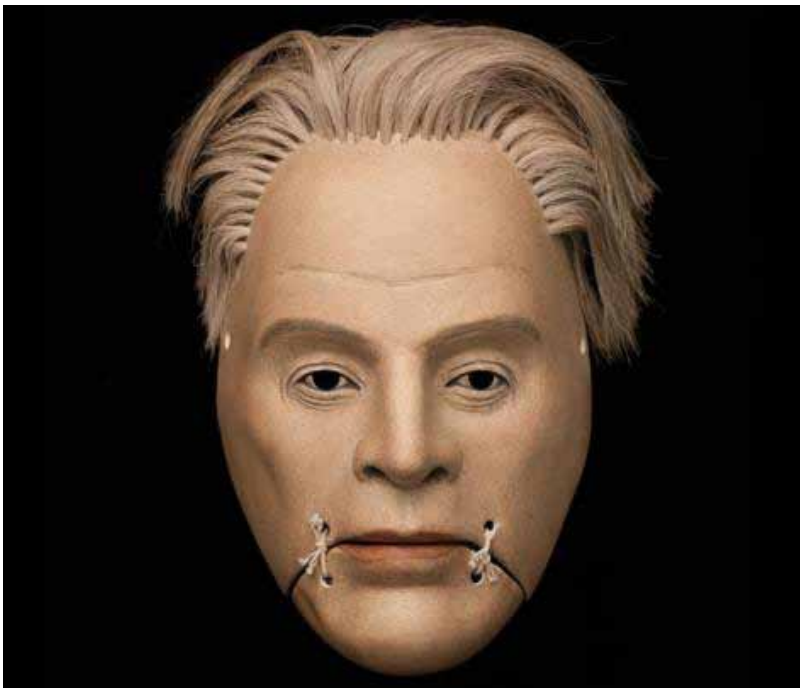
Simon Starling
‘A little knowledge is a powerful thing, and too much knowledge can stifle creativity’

The Turner Prize-winning conceptual artist underscores his first institutional show in New York with a meticulously researched multimedia installation based around WB Yeats’s 1916 play At the Hawk’s Well and Noh theatre

by ALLIE BISWAS

Since it was founded in 1907, the Japan Society in New York, which cultivates knowledge of Japanese culture, has displayed the work of just one non-Japanese artist, the American photographer Ansel Adams, in the 1980s. This month, British conceptual artist Simon Starling (b1967 in Epsom, Surrey) will be the second such artist to have his work presented by the society. To mark the occasion, Starling has focused his exhibition on Noh – Japan’s traditional masked theatre – specifically looking at its impact on western modernism, in the form of WB Yeats’s 1916 play At the Hawk’s Well, which was heavily influenced by Noh. Starling’s reimagining of Yeats’s original production is structured as an installation of newly recreated masks and costumes, a performance video, photographs and sculptures.

Starling, who was awarded the Turner Prize in 2005 for his exhibitions at the Modern Institute, Glasgow, and the Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, is based in Copenhagen, and will present a solo exhibition at Casey Kaplan, New York, in 2017.



Simon Starling, At Twilight / Mask of W.B. Yeats, 2016. Mask by Yasuo Miichi. Courtesy of Simon Starling & The Modern Institute.

Allie Biswas: How did you start researching for your show at the Japan Society? Did you come to the project with prior knowledge of Yeats’s play, At the Hawk’s Well?

Simon Starling: It’s been an ever-expanding interest of mine that took root six years ago when I started work on an exhibition for Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (Hiroshima MoCA). When I visited Hiroshima for the first time, I discovered the interesting story of a Henry Moore work, Atom Piece (1963-5), which the museum has in its collection. It’s a story of double identity and disguise that connects back to Moore’s monument to the world’s first nuclear reaction (at Enrico Fermi’s Pile Number 1 in Chicago), which is essentially a larger version of the sculpture they have in Hiroshima, but under a different name (Nuclear Energy). The cold-war intrigue that surrounds the evolution of these sculptures led to an interest in masked Noh theatre (Starling’s 2011 Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) at Hiroshima MoCA), which in turn led to the discovery that, 100 years ago, WB Yeats had similarly tried to co-opt this most traditional of oriental art forms to avant-garde ends. This led to a long period of research that culminated this summer in the realisation of At Twilight, a play for two actors, three musicians, eight masks and a donkey costume.

AB: I understand you worked with Yukie Kamiya, the director of the Japan Society, on two previous projects in Japan – the 2014 Yokohama Triennale and your show at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art in 2011. How would you say that these experiences impacted on the development of At Twilight?

SS: Yukie Kamiya worked for many years at the museum in Hiroshima and it was her invitation that led to this ongoing body of work. Yukie knew of my interest in Henry Moore and of my Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore), made in Toronto, and rightly hoped that I might find inspiration in Hiroshima and its very specifically focused collection. Neither of us could have anticipated quite how rich a seam of material that invitation would unearth. It's been a long and hugely inspiring journey, and one that will find a new focus in my exhibition at the Japan Society, which brings together material from the play realised this past summer with the Common Guild in Glasgow, as well as a host of historical material from North American museum collections.

AB: What are your personal experiences of Japanese culture, and were there any specific aspects that you wanted to draw out through your exhibition?

SS: I'd had an interest in Japanese photography early on in my career, but only started to visit Japan with the invitation from Hiroshima. One of the things that immediately struck me was the very special relationship between form and material in Japanese culture. When you start to visit historical sights in Japan, you soon realise that many are not as they first appear. Large numbers of the hugely important historical buildings are only decades old – their form having remained constant over hundreds of years, with their fragile building materials either burned or rotted. It's an utterly different approach to western modes of preservation, but is fundamental to everything, it seems. Even the mask-maker I worked with in Osaka for Project for a Masquerade and At Twilight is essentially involved in making what we might refer to in the west as "fakes" – lovingly replicating the look and feel of ancient masks with all their distressed surfaces and chipped paint. His masks are highly valued artefacts – the product of a rigorous, 20-year-long apprenticeship.

AB: What relationships between western modernist art and Noh theatre were you interested to explore?

SS: The play and exhibition At Twilight looks at a short-lived moment in the early-20th century when Noh theatre had a significant impact on the European avant garde. It was a moment when, for the very first time, a lot of Japanese culture was becoming available in the west. The poet and playwright WB Yeats discovered Noh theatre in 1915/16 through his then secretary, the young American poet Ezra Pound. Pound had something of a reputation as a translator and had been approached by the widow of [art historian] Ernest Fenollosa to complete a set of English translations of Noh plays that had been left unfinished at her husband's death in 1908. Fenollosa had been a hugely important figure in the opening up of Japanese culture to the west. For Yeats, who had grown tired of European theatre, the discovery of these aristocratic Japanese dramas with their spare economy and shape-shifting characters, captivated him, inspiring a string of neo-Noh plays that began with At the Hawk's Well. I became fascinated by this moment of cross-cultural misappropriation and monolingual translation. It soon became clear that it was precisely Yeats's lack of knowledge of Noh, the superficiality of his understanding, that allowed him to co-opt such a deeply entrenched Japanese cultural tradition to contemporary effect.

Simon Starling, Still from At Twilight / The Hawk's Dance (Choreographed by Javier De Frutos in association with Scottish Ballet), 2016. Courtesy of Simon Starling & The Modern Institute.

AB: The 1916 production of At the Hawk's Well was a collaborative effort, with Yeats bringing in other key writers from the period. Can you talk about your experiences of collaboration while creating At Twilight, as well as your references to the collaborators Yeats worked with, whom I understand you have represented in the show through Noh masks?

Simon Starling, At Twilight / Mask of Nancy Cunard (After Constantin Brancusi), 2016. Mask by Yasuo Miichi. Courtesy of Simon Starling & The Modern Institute.

SS: Yeats assembled an impressive team to realise the play. Key to it all was the émigré dancer and choreographer Michio Itō, who was the only person involved to have actually seen a Noh play. The costumes, masks and staging were all designed by the French émigré illustrator Edmund Dulac, who also wrote the music. As well as introducing Yeats to Noh, Pound had a peripheral role as stage manager for the first performance of the play at Lady Cunard's house in Cavendish Square, London.

Just as Yeats was dependent on his collaborators for the realisation of At the Hawk's Well, At Twilight was only really imaginable as a collaboration with people with theatrical knowhow. The involvement of Graham Eatough, a theatre-maker in Glasgow, was crucial. It was a hugely productive partnership, extraordinarily symbiotic and seamless – a real treat. From the outset, we both seemed to be on the same page and, in fact, the play that emerged is, in part, about our collaboration, and sits somewhere between his world and mine, part full-blown theatre production, part artist's talk. The two actors who play Yeats and Pound also play myself and Graham as we attempt to orchestrate the different layers of the story. I've learned a lot, and I suspect Graham has too. This self-reflexive aspect of the play is, of course, very much in keeping with my practice as a whole, with works that are often predicated on interrogating their own making.

AB: Your work to date could be termed as performative, in the sense that it relies on action and stages of process for the work to be created and completed. Is At Twilight the first time that you have worked directly with performance in the context of theatre?

SS: I did stage a piece of puppet theatre a few years ago that had certain connections to At Twilight, but, yes, this is the first full-blown piece of theatre I've made. In many ways, I've always had a strained relationship with theatre, finding that its modes and manners didn't rhyme with my own ways of telling stories. At Twilight is, however, a very logical outcome of a body of work that began with Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) in 2011.

AB: The show is your solo institutional debut in New York City. Are there any particular feelings or concerns that arise when you are debuting your work somewhere?

SS: I've made many solo gallery shows in New York, shows that have been very important to my career, but an institutional context is always a little different. In this case, I think I am the second non-Japanese artist ever to show at the Japan Society and when working on an explicitly Japanese subject, the legacy of that most rarified and traditional of Japanese arts, Noh theatre, there is always a sense of trepidation. The project has at its core the notion that a little knowledge is a powerful thing and too much knowledge can stifle creativity, which was certainly the case with WB Yeats and his foray into Noh theatre in 1916, but could equally apply to me, 100 years on, feeling my way through this complex web of cross-cultural exchange and mistranslation. It's also important to stress that the Japan Society exhibition is a collaboration in many ways and it's good to have colleagues in such instances. Choreographer Javier de Frutos plays a major role in the exhibition as he reimagines the central Hawk dance from Yeats's play. The wonderful Tokyo-based costume-maker Kumi Sakurai and the Osaka-based Noh mask-maker Yasuo Miichi have both contributed wonderfully to the look and feel of the exhibition, as have a number of collections and institutions that have loaned major works by the likes of Jacob Epstein, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Constantin Brâncuși that contextualise that 1916 avant-garde moment. In short, I'm in good company.

• *Simon Starling: At Twilight is at the Japan Society, New York, 14 October 2016 – 15 January 2017.*

Biswas, Alli, "Simon Starling", Studio International (online), October 10, 2016

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H is for Hawk: A Yeats Revival Takes Wing

BLOUINARTINFO

BY RACHEL CORBETT | OCTOBER 14, 2016

Works from Starling's 2014 rendition of "At the Hawk's Well," with masks by Yasuo Miichi and costumes by Kumi Sakurai/Atelier Hinode

What do you get when you cross W.B. Yeats, the cartoon donkey Eeyore, Jacob Epstein's "Rock Drill," and the aesthetics of Japanese Noh theater? It must look something like English artist Simon Starling's "play within a play within a play," "At Twilight," debuting in New York at the Japan Society, October 14 through January 15.

The immersive installation commemorates the 100th anniversary of Yeats's play "At the Hawk's Well," which was inspired by the Noh style of drama. "What is striking is the international nature of the team that Yeats pieced together in order to realize his neo-Noh production in 1916," Starling says.

That crew included the "American poet Ezra Pound, the French costume designer and composer Edmund Dulac, and the Japanese dancer Michio Ito. Starling followed Yeats's lead and hired a Venezuelan choreographer, Javier De Frutos; a Japanese mask maker, Yasuo Miichi; an American musician, Josh Abrams; and an English theater producer, Graham Eatough, to stage his reinterpretation of the work, which includes galleries filled with mirrors, masks, bamboo, archival documents, and a video of a performance from earlier this year of the Hawk character's seductive dance.

"While Yeats's play was staged at the height of World War I, my reprieve of this moment is being undertaken in a moment when the postwar formulation of Europe is dissolving and xenophobia is rife," Starling says. It is a fine time, then, to embrace cross-pollination in all its forms. "At Twilight," he adds, is "a truly hybrid concoction: part Noh play, part Irish folktale, part historical drama, part art history lecture."

Corbett, Rachel, "H is for Hawk: A Yeats Revival Takes Wing", Blouin Artinfo (online), October 14, 2016

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Exhibition

Simon Starling
'At Twilight'

21 Woodlands Terrace, Glasgow G3 6DF
2 July – 4 September 2016

'At Twilight' is an ambitious new project by Simon Starling, developed in collaboration with theatre director Graham Eatough, which revolves around a WB Yeats play, 'At the Hawk's Well'. Imagined as a play, the project first takes form as an exhibition, presenting the rich array of associations and remarkable stories.

'At the Hawk's Well' was written and performed in April 1916 in what Starling describes as "an odd cross-cultural mash-up in an English garden, at a traumatic moment in European history". The play was written by Yeats while working with poet Ezra Pound and was inspired by traditional Japanese 'Noh' theatre. It is a fusion of Irish folklore and what Yeats then saw as an exciting new possibility for theatre.

'At Twilight' encapsulates this dynamic discourse between tradition and the avant-garde, in a kind of absurd, dramatised tussle between history, mythology and Modernism. The inventions and innovations of Modernism have long been a source of interest for Starling, as has the trans-national movement of the people and ideas that shaped cultural history.

Extending from the core of the play through the circumstances of its coming into being, 'At Twilight' weaves together some surprising and significant inter-connections of influential figures and works through a particular time and place. This first presentation of Starling's project coincides with the centenary of the play's first appearance, in the middle of the First World War.

The exhibition at The Common Guild will include a group of masks and costumes for a performance, at the heart of which sits an imagined dialogue between Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats, to be enacted as a fencing duel (as well as introducing him to 'Noh' theatre, Pound taught Yeats to fence). Starling's masks, made by Japanese master mask-maker, each represent one of a range of inter-connected characters, both real and fictional. The nine characters represented include Yeats and Pound, as well as the 3 characters that appear in the original Yeats play, including and building on a work realised by Starling for the Yokohama Triennale in 2014 'At the Hawk's Well (Grayscale)', described as 'Three costumes designed by Edmund Dulac and Michio Ito for the 1916 London premier of W.B. Yeats' Noh-inspired play for dancers At the Hawk's Well, reproduced in a grayscale palette using available historical documentation'.

Alongside Yeats, Pound and the fictional characters are: Nancy Cunard (1896 - 1965), daughter of the host of the 1916 performance and an heir to the Cunard Line shipping business; Michio Ito (1892 - 1961), a Japanese dancer who played The Hawk in the 1916 performance and went on to work with Martha Graham later in his career; Jacob Epstein's 'Rock Drill' (1913 - 14), probably the sculptor's most radical work, a fore-boding man-machine that first came into being before the start of WWI but was radically amended in 1916; and Eeyore, the famously glum donkey from A.A. Milne's 'Winnie the Pooh' stories (first appearing 1926), set in the same Ashdown Forest where Yeats and Pound spent the winters of 1913-16, represented here in the form of a pantomime donkey costume for two actors.

The backdrop of the war and its devastation is evoked in the exhibition by a group of 'blast trees'. These highly figurative stands, on which Starling exhibits the masks, take the form of charred, black tree trunks, echoing the 'blasted landscapes' of WWI.

'At Twilight' includes a danced segment - presented as film in the exhibition - devised specially by renowned choreographer Javier de Frutos, working with Scottish Ballet and dancer Thomas Edwards using the 'grayscale' Hawk costume. The music for the Hawk's dance was created by Chicago-based musician Joshua Abrams and the Natural Information Society.

An exhibition of 'At Twilight' will be presented in the Japan Society Gallery, New York, in October 2016.

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REVIEW - 14 SEP 2016

frieze

Live: Simon Starling

BY CHRIS SHARRATT
Holmwood House, Glasgow, UK

'Knowing too much can stifle creativity – a little knowledge is perhaps more potent.' In a video on the Common Guild's website, Simon Starling discusses the genesis of At Twilight: A play for two actors, three musicians, eight masks (and a donkey costume) in W.B. Yeats's interest in Japanese 'Noh' – an ancient form of traditional Japanese dance theatre that was the inspiration for the Irish poet's short play At The Hawk's Well (1916). While the comment is in relation to Yeats's creative process, it could just as easily be applied to Starling's own play. This re-imagining/remix of Yeats's mythical production uses the original as a lens with which to focus on a pivotal moment in history, drawing a little from each of the many academic and literary texts that were the source material for its script and staging.

First presented in 1916, At The Hawk's Well was the result of a fortuitous meeting of minds. Introduced to Noh by Ezra Pound – who from 1913–16 was Yeats's secretary and lived with him at Stone Cottage in Ashdown Forest, Sussex – it was the arrival in London of Japanese dancer Michio Itō that provided the knowledge and skills to realize the performance. Itō performed the play's signature dance as the 'Guardian of the Well', wearing a patterned hawk costume designed by the illustrator Edmund Dulac – choreographed here by the Venezuelan dancer Javier De Frutos, with the recorded performance projected onto the back of the stage.

Yeats's play tells of a young Irish warrior, Cuchulain, and his search for immortality at a magic well, taking this hero of Irish folklore and imbuing his story with Japanese theatrical tradition. A hundred years after its first staging, At Twilight … incorporates sections of this theatrical curiosity while providing a window onto a 'twilight moment' in history. In 1916, Europe was on the verge of major change and the realities of war were violently encroaching on the art movements of the time, in particular the modernist vision of human progress in the machine age. Yet while that might suggest a rather downbeat, serious affair, it represents only half the story. There were dark moments in this clever and beautifully staged play, but At Twilight … was also gently funny, drawing much humour from the Yeats/Pound, mentor/mentee relationship and, in particular, Pound's energetic attempts to coach Yeats, 20 years his senior, in the finer points of fencing.

Presented on the lawn of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's mid-19th century Holmwood House in Glasgow's south side, with the audience seated on cushions as daylight faded on a late summer's evening, the combination of setting and staging made for a magical experience. With props and costumes 'borrowed' from Starling's equally engaging 'At Twilight' exhibition at The

All images: Simon Starling in collaboration with Graham Eatough, At Twilight: A play for two actors, three musicians, one dancer, eight masks (and a donkey costume), 2016, performance, Holmwood House, Glasgow. Performers: Adam Clifford and Stephen Clyde; musicians: Joshua Abrams and Natural Information Society; commissioned by The Common Guild in collaboration with the Japan Society, New York. Courtesy: the artist and The Modern Institute, Andrew Hamilton/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow; photographs: by Alan Dimmick

Common Guild, the simple set consisted of nine charred, 'blast tree' sculptures either side of the small stage, a reference to the scarred battlefields of World War I. Their black branches were adorned with eight masks – a fundamental element of Noh theatre. These masks were the play's key theatrical device, enabling the two actors – who, unmasked, introduced themselves as Simon Starling and the play's co-writer and director, Scottish theatre maker Graham Eatough – to step in and out of characters. More than this, the masks also acted as doorways to other people and stories that intersected the splintered narrative, with a particular focus on the short-lived vorticist movement.

The mask representing Pound, for instance, was based on a bust by the French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, who was killed in the trenches in 1915. Other masks represented the head of Jacob Epstein's brutally mechanistic Rock Drill (1913–15) – an embodiment of male aggression that Epstein dismantled in 1916. ('Violence was no longer an impulse to be celebrated,' concludes 'Starling' in the play.) The wealthy socialite and patron of the arts Nancy Cunard – who hosted the first performance of At The Hawk's Well at her London residence and with whom Pound had an affair – was represented by a mask based on Constantin Brâncuși's beautifully abstract sculpture, Portrait of Nancy Cunard (1925–27).

As all these references suggest, this was a historically rich production – as much theatrical lecture as play. (The inclusion of a blast tree lectern emphasized this point.) Densely packed with factual asides culled from letters, history books and biographies, it nevertheless possessed a delightful light touch thanks to its sprightly pace and the weirdly propulsive, Noh-style acoustic soundtrack provided by Joshua Abrams and Natural Information Society. And the donkey costume of the play's title? A glumly grey Eeyore of Winnie-the-Pooh fame, which the actors appeared from at the start and got back into at the end. A.A. Milne, we were told, based Pooh's Hundred Acre Wood on Ashdown Forest, and when Yeats and Pound were dabbling in Japanese theatre he was writing war propaganda for the British government. A little bit of information that brought another layer of intrigue and entertainment to this exploration of the half-light before the dark.

- Chris Sharratt

Sharratt, Chris, "Reviews: Live: Simon Starling", Frieze (online), September 14, 2016

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Nottingham Contemporary

Simon Starling
The Grand Tour Season Two
19 Mar 2016 - 26 Jun 2016

Nottingham Contemporary presents the largest ever exhibition in the UK of the works of Simon Starling – the Turner Prize winner who studied at Nottingham Trent University. This exhibition includes a new commission, and some of his major projects, most of which have never been shown in Britain before.

Industry is a theme running through the selection. Some of the works allude to different eras of manufacturing, from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, to the high-tech sector, and China's dominance today.

Starling is interested in physical, poetic and metaphorical journeys. These include the unacknowledged journeys of objects and materials – geographic, economic and through time – and their transformation. His celebrated 1997 work Blue Boat Black was originally a Victorian museum display case, remade by Starling into a fishing boat, and then burnt to create charcoal to cook the fish he caught.

This work is joined by Project for a Crossing (2015-16), a new work specially produced for Nottingham Contemporary for which Starling built a boat out of magnesium. This work grew out of Starling's interest in the British engineer Frank Kirk who built lightweight bike frames from magnesium extracted from seawater in the 1980s. The magnesium used for Project for a Crossing has been extracted from the politically contested waters of the Dead Sea. Starling intends to use his magnesium boat to cross the Dead Sea after this exhibition – a fraught geopolitical journey that may only be partially possible since the Dead Sea lies between Jordan, Israel and the Israeli occupied West Bank.

Other areas of investigation include lost histories of manufacture. This includes works referring to the manufacturing processes that anticipated digital systems. Red, Green, Blue, Loom Music (2015-16) is a new work previously unseen in Britain. This work began with a visit to Antica Fabbrica Passamanerie Massia Vittorio in Turin. This family run company produces high quality woven fabrics, brocades and decorative trimmings on looms dating back to the 1780s. Many of the looms are still automated using the once revolutionary late 18th century technology of Jacquard punch cards. In the context of Nottingham Contemporary, the work evokes the history of the Lace Market that surrounds the gallery.

Another of Starling's concerns has been the physical properties of photography, here recast as sculpture through epic distortions of scale. Two silver particles taken from 1875 photographs are enlarged a million times, while a floor of glass balls can be seen as half-tone printing dots that form an image when viewed from a raised platform.

In a special partnership with Derby Museums, the Simon Starling exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary will include The Alchymist Discovering Phosphorus (1771 – 1795), by Joseph Wright of Derby, the foremost painter of the Scientific Enlightenment. Derby Museum and Art Gallery will display daguerreotypes made by Starling.

More works by Simon Starling will be shown at Backlit Gallery, near Nottingham Contemporary.

Starling won the Turner Prize in 2005. He studied at Nottingham Trent University (then Trent Polytechnic) from 1987 to 1990 and graduated from Glasgow School of Art in 1992.

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LOK
KUNST
MUSEUM
ST. GALLEN

SIMON STARLING
ZUM BRUNNEN

February 27th - August 14th 2015, LOK

Sustainability, environmental and economic systems—these topics, which are not only relevant in light of the very current issue of climate change, are at the center of the works of the English artist Simon Starling. His idiosyncratic projects deal with cycles of use, the surprising transformations of everyday things, and the related ideological and aesthetic reevaluations.

The occasion for the exhibition in St. Gallen is an unusual art project by Starling that links Lake Constance with the city of St. Gallen. Entitled Fountain, this major public project redeploys original elements from the recently refurbished Broderbrunnen, a fountain located in the center of St. Gallen that was created by the sculptor August Bösch (1857–1911) in 1896 in memory of the establishment of a lake water supply system for the cantonal capital. Starling will produce selfcontained, climate-controlled units that will allow these fragile historical sculptures to be put back on public display and in turn trace the path from the water source at Lake Constance to the heart of St. Gallen.

In recent years, works by Simon Starling, who was born in 1967 in Epson, UK, and now lives in Copenhagen, have been shown in museums around the world. The exhibition Zum Brunnen (To the Fountain) at the Lokremise is his first solo show in Switzerland since his presentation at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel in 2005.

Curator: Konrad Bitterli

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CHICAGO

Simon Starling

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART/ ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO

"Metamorphology," the economical survey of Simon Starling's work at the Museum of Contemporary Art, comprised just eleven works. But complementing the artist's first retrospective at an American museum, an affiliated show that ran concurrently at the neighboring Arts Club of Chicago (titled "Pictures for an Exhibition") additionally presented a major new, site-specific installation. Only a dozen works all told, yet each represents such a dense network of material, geographical, social, and historical narratices that one hardly needed more. The MCA exhibition began, appropriately enough, with Flaga 1972-2000 (A Fiat 126 produced in Turin, Italy, in 1974 and customized using parts manufactured and fitted in Poland, following a journey of 1290 km from Turin to Cieszyn), 2002. Hung high overhead on the wall of the museum's central atrium, Flaga introduced from the outset some of the hallmarks of Starling's oeuvre —long journeys, often across international borders; the mutual imbrication of economic, political, and artistic histories; the elegant transformation of one thing (an Italian car) into another (the Polish flag). Likewise, the tragicomic masterpiece Autoxylopryrocycloboros, 2006, a four-minute sequence of thirty-eight color transparencies documenting the artist's voyage around Scotland's Loch Long in a small steamboat whose engine was fueled by wood from the ship's own hull (with predictable results), highlighted the rigorous yet often playful circularity that characterizes much of Starling's practice. Like the Ouroboros, the mythical serpent that devours its own tail, Starling's works have a way of looping back on themselves, in the process reviving and redeploying historical narratives and artifacts in ways that, while unexpected, demonstrate a clarity of purpose that can at times lend them the illusion of inevitability.

The centerpiece of "Metamorphology' was the (overdue) Chicago premiere of Project for a Masquerade(Hiroshima), 2010-11, a multimedia installation consisting of a digital transfer of a 16-mm film, a bowler hat, and eight exquisitely carved wooden masks displayed on specially fabricated sstands. The work centers on the creation of Henry Moore's monumental sculpture Nuclear Energy, 1964-66, installed on the site of Enrico Fermi's first sustained nuclear reaction on the campus of the University of Chicago. (Starling's piece was originally commissioned by the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art , which owns a smaller, prliminary version of Moore's sculpture, titled Atom Piece/ Working Model for Nuclear Energy], 1964-65.) Taking up the sixteenth-century Japanese Noh play Eboshi-ori (a tale of disguise and falsification of identity) as a narrative armature, Starling's installation weaves a mesmerizing tale of art, science, popular culture, and Cold War geopolitics with a cast of characters variously obvious (Moore, Fermi), surprising (uranium-mining magnate/art collector Joseph H. Hirshhorn, art historian/Soviet spy Anthony Blunt), and wholly fictional (James Bon).

Simon Starling, Bird in Space, 2004, Romanian steel plate, inflatable jacks, helium tank, hose. 6' x 20' 1/8" x 11 5/8"

Starling's stronest works tend to be highly responsive to their intial exhibition locales and are—Project for a Masquerade notwithstanding —consequently resistant to subsequent reintallations elsewhere. One that does travel well is Bird in Space, 2004, a massive, 4,900 pound slab of Romanian steel supported by three helium-filled inflatable cushions. Originally shown in New Yrok, the physically simple yet conceptually complex work collapses the famous 1927-28 trial that determined whether Constantin brancusi's 1926 bronze Bird in Space would be taxed as a "kitchen utensil" or exempted as an artwork into the once-controversial (and, ultimately, illegal) 40 percent tax imposed by the US government on imported steel in 2002.

Bird in Space was also among the eighteen works included in the Arts CLub of Chicago's 1927 exhibition "Sculpture and Drawings by Constantin Brancusi." Installed by none other than Marcel Duchamp, this spatially complex exhibition is today known primarily through a pair of photographs taken by the Chicago architectural photographers Kaufmann & Fabry. In "Pictures for an Exhibition, " Starling traced the history and movements of the eighteen works in Brancusi's exhibition, traveling the world and photographing them—using two large-format Dearforff cameras, the same type and manufacture with which the 1927 pictures had been made—in such a manner as to locate them in the exact position in which they appear in the original installation shots. Along the way, he chronicled a remarkable history linking Brancusi's sculptures to such seemingly disparate topics as Prohibition and the diamond trade, the Dallas Cowboys and the collecting of vintage cars.

As Raymond Chandler once put it: There are no dull subjects, only dull minds.

—Jacob Proctor

Proctor, Jacob, "Simon Starling," Artforum, November 2014, Vo. 53, no 3, p. 282.

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sculpture **September 2014**
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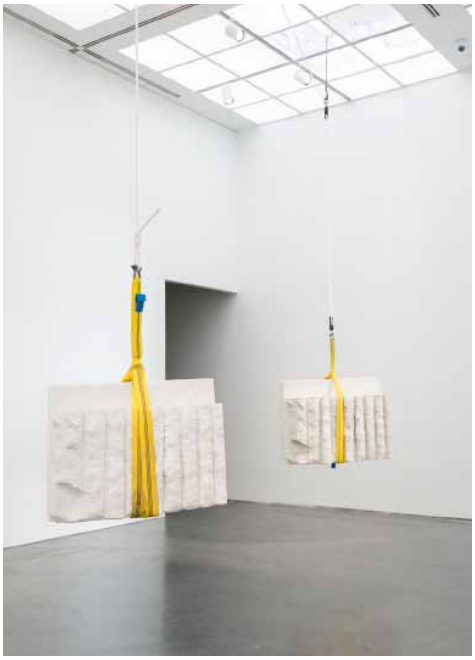
Actualizing Potential

A Conversation with Simon Starling

Simon Starling 's complex interdisciplinary practice draws from a vast network of successively interconnected parts. Between craftsmanship, industry, process, site, technology, and art history, it's immediately possible to get hooked on surface or superficial value alone—Starling's work is easy to digest, humorous, quick-witted, and materially lush. However, viewers who choose to dive more deeply are swiftly impressed by his ability to create an exquisite and intricate visual language.

Starling's projects make use of storied materials, expansive photographic and cinematic experiences, and artistic journeys to create spectacular re-imaginings of time and space. His work is both familiar and strangely unfamiliar at the same time. Borrowing images and titles from fascinating historical contexts, he masterfully morphs them into his own story, his visually arresting sculptures, however, require dedication to understand their iconography and origins. It is in those strange places that the beauty of Starling's creations can be found. "Metamorphology," Starling's first major American survey, is on view at two locations—the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (through November 2) and The Arts Club of Chicago(through September 26).



The Long Ton, 2009. Chinese marble block, CNC-milled Carrara marble block, pulley system, clamps, rope, and shackles, 2 elements: 90 x 120 x 50 cm. and 59 x 74 x 31 cm.

Joshua Reiman: Your show is called "Metamorphology." Goethe defined morphology as the science of the formation and transformation of organisms—to put it simply, to turn one thing into another. Can you describe metamorphology from a sculptural perspective? Is it art about art, or does it move beyond transformation toward something more spiritual or "meta" as a higher level of abstraction?

Simon Starling : Art about art for sure, but not only. In some respects, I would say that it's been an ongoing part of my practice, to use existing forms and existing images in order to rethink them—to reprocess or redeploy them, dragging them backwards and forwards through time, rethinking them in relation to contemporary issues, ideas, and concerns. It's an ongoing concern that is very much present in this show in Chicago.

One of the things that connects the works is a sense of recycling existing forms and reworking them. Consider the work that thinks about Bird in Space and the court case that followed Marcel Duchamp's attempt to bring it into the United States. My work looks at that art historical tale in relation to contemporary issues regarding steel production. Project for a Masquerade, on the other hand, thinks about the development of a double identity for Henry Moore's Nuclear Energy, which sits at the University of Chicago on the site of the first sustained nuclear reaction, but also exists, with a different name, in a museum in Hiroshima, Japan. These are two very different contexts for undetanding a sculpture, which, in Chicago, is a memorial to the beginning of the atom bomb project.

I suppose there is also the idea of making, which for me relates to the notion of metamorphology—the act of making as being a transformative act aesthetically, but also politically. For me, the transformation of matter into sculpture or image can be a potentially powerful process.

JR: Would you describe your projects using works by Henry Moore or Brancusi as reincarnations or stand-ins for their function within an art historical context? Take, for instance, your Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore) or Bird in Space.

SS: In a way, it's certainly a repositioning or reinterpretation of those things. It's very important that those works are not really about Bird in Space or Warrior with Shield, but that they're using those things to talk to my own moment, to engage with the world now. They are things that emerged from a direct engagement with a particular context. When I went to Toronto to make an exhibition at the Power Plant, I knew that Moore had had a huge impact on that city and was memorialized there in a purpose-built gallery at the Art Gallery of Ontario, so that became a way to orient myself as a fellow English sculptor.

JR: You've done work with the Henry Moore Institute. Was that research for this work?

SS: My contact with them came from working on Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore), as well as Project for a Masquerade, when I spent a week there going through the archives. The Moore work is in some ways iconoclastic— it takes a sacred figure of British Modernism and puts him through the ringer. But it's not about defacing Moore; it's about taking his legacy and reworking and reusing it in a way that potentially reinvigorates it.

JR: Within metamorphosis, there are unexpected or otherwise spontaneous factors, both internal and external. What have been some of the more unexpected or spontaneous occurrences in your life that are not exactly seen in your work?

SS: I really have a sense that my best work makes itself. There are so many instances where things have found me. There's maybe even a sense that these works were there before I arrived. A case in point would be Shedboatshed which I made in Basel. The project began as a half-baked idea of me using the river in some way, transporting something downriver. I guess there was also an echo of the Vikings using their long boats as buildings in the winter by turning them upside down and cladding the open sides with leather to form a hall.
Anyway, I made a speculative trip out of the city, away from the museum where I was to exhibit, which was right on the river. I cycled out through light industrial areas, past all of the pharmaceutical companies and the chemical plants, and at the beginning of the countryside. I rode into a clearing and saw a shed standing there with a paddle nailed to the side. I knew that the paddle was from a weidling, which is a traditional boat, almost like a gondola. Weidlings were once used to transport things on the river and are now used mostly for sport. Within what seemed like a blink of an eye, the project fell into place.

JR: Your works offer a wonderful entry point for the production of knowledge, but this one requires effort. Do the materials that you choose help with the entry point? You've said that these works just find you, but do you ever think about an audience?

SS: I think so. It's also important to think about the works as being simple models for making. Those models are generally very overt in the experience of the works, which are very open about their methodology. It's almost like you're offering a model to navigate through history. The new project for the Arts Club of Chicago, Pictures for an Exhibition, is clearly that. It's a very clear and systematic means of generating images. Once that system is in place, the work makes itself in some sense, or at least decision-making is very limited. I decided to remake two installation views of the 1927 Arts Club exhibition "Sculpture and Drawings by Constantin Brancusi," which was organized and installed by Marcel Duchamp. I transcribed an outline image of two installation views on the ground-glass screens of two old plate cameras. Then, I took those cameras around North America and Europe, found the original sculptures and re-photographed them in exactly the same place they were within the frame in the 1927 photographs, and collaged the images together. I noticed that a soon as those often cautious museums saw the camera with that image on the back of it, everything was fine. It's so clear. It has an immediacy as a process and model, which I hope has a certain generosity to it in relation to the audience. In a way, it becomes a tool for navigating the work, just as it was a tool for me to make the work.

JR: This makes me think of you as being like a contemporary explorer of sorts coming to the "art world" with your findings . Like Joseph Campbell's writings on the "hero's journey," your work relies on the transformation of character and the display of findings. What does the journey or expedition mean to you?

SS: On one level, without sounding too banal, it's just about making life interesting, the journey as an alibi for exploring the world. Then there's the idea of finding out how things are made, tracking certain processes and their geographies.

JR: Yes, but your work all relates to site and experience. Some artists make their work in a studio, but you go out to find things and respond to sites. Can you discuss this with regard to your understanding of the landscape? In Island for Weeds or Kakteenhaus, for instance, this relation relies heavily on the journey.

SS: Yes, there's the geographical journey, and on top of that, the temporal journey. The two things become completely intertwined. The journey back in time becomes completely intermeshed with the geographical journey. I've always thought about these two things as being almost interchangeable. You travel geographically in order to make the journey in time hold sway in some way. Does that sound a bit nutty?

JR: No, I don't think so. It sounds a bit spiritual.

SS: But I don't think that I mean it in a spiritual sense. I just mean there's a sense that you're asking people to come on a journey with you when you present a work to them, and somehow the fact of my geographical travels adds a sense of purpose or commitment to the works, which draws people in.

JR: Was Robert Smithson an inspiration? Do you see your work relating to his site/nonsite works?

SS: His notion of a post-studio practice was very important to me. That rang so many bells with me when I was beginning to form a sense of what my practice was or might be. I'm not so interested in Smithson the Minimalist, but in Smithson the filmmaker, writer, and mediator of his own work and life. For example, I'm far more interested in the film about Spiral Jetty than I am in the actual Spiral Jetty. I love that engagement with making. that sense of stepping back from the sculptural manifestation. That's what excites me about Smithson.

JR: You use film as a material in a few of your works, when you wont us to see what drives an image —for instance, in Wilhelm Noack oHG, with the use of a complex film looping kinetic sculpture, or in Black Drop, where you show us the physical nature of manipulating this material. How does film or a photograph operate for you as material?

SS: That's a complicated question. In many ways, my relationship to the photographic image goes back to the beginning of my creative life. At the age of 11 or so, I was allowed into a black and white darkroom to make a print for the first time. That experience was absolutely transformative for me. I guess when you experience it at 11, you really don't understand the chemistry, but the sense of wonder and magic, the almost alchemical sense of the process is something that stayed with me and has informed everything I've done. It also led to my interest in interrogating the matter of the image—like diving into the micro world of silver particles, which I've been doing.

JR : Do you mean One Ton, the work in which you photographed the platinum strip mine?

SS: Yes, exactly. It's somewhere between the image as a sculpture and the sculpture as an image. That interest developed into thinking about film, the mechanics of film, the particular speed of working with film, and the difference between working with a strip of celluloid or working with a digital stream of data, and how that brings a certain temporal trajectory to what you do. How the image you want is always in the wrong place on the spool and you've systems that allow you to drag the process into the viewer's experience. Wilhelm Noack oHG was a very important moment for me because it was the first time I ever really felt that the process of making the work was completely integrated. The form and the process that went into making it were hermetically sealed within that one piece. In a way, it was very hard to move on from that; it seemed to be the perfect structure to resolve what I was trying to do as an artist. But you have to try and explode it and find other ways forward. My biggest fear is to have a fixed methodology. That's really my worst nightmare. You have to find the next step. Project for a Masquerade took the use of film in a different direction, but it all developed out of Wilhelm Noack oHG.

JR: I saw a picture of this work in which you had a camera strapped to a tool to make the film. I love how you're using the motion of the tool to capture an image.

SS: When I started working on that piece, I didn't really know how it was going to evolve, and I took a Hi8 video camera into the space and started to think about how to record it. The camera was at odds with the situation. It made no sense in relation to the physicality of the workshop. Immediately, it seemed like it should be a big heavy lump of a 35mm movie camera. That is what in the end gave the film its aesthetic momentum. The camera was physically engaging as an object within that space, being spun on a drill or moved on a trolley.

JR: That mechanism or the loop was quite incredible. Did you make it yourself?

SS: No, the film is about the people who made it. The film was made in the workshop of Wilhelm Noack, and I commissioned them to make the loop machine. I made a design that was kind of speculative, to be honest, and I didn't know if it would work. But I saw an image one day when I was working on a project about the architect Carlo Mollino, who designed an equestrian center in Turin, which has now been demolished. It had a beautiful spiral staircase, and the banisters ran in a zigzag all the way up. I suddenly thought, "That is the way to route a piece of film." And it works perfectly because the arms of the loop machine create a little bit of tension, so you have a very smooth situation. It ran for six months in Venice without a hitch.

JR: Any thoughts on why sculpture is so important to your work?

SS: There is a slightly romantic notion that making sculpture is a way of affecting transformation of the world. It's a bit idealistic perhaps, but that's how I feel most able to affect things. I suppose the dynamic in the work is about trying to give rather intangible narratives, histories, and stories a gravitational center, something that holds them in sway for the audience. For me, making objects has that potential. It's not always me that's the maker. One of the most interesting things in recent years has been using the activities of skilled craftsmen as surrogates for your own activity. It's a way to step back and reflect on the meaning of making. It's been very important. To work with the mask-maker in Osaka on Project for a Masquerade was absolutely astounding. Those objects are so extraordinarily captivating. They do exactly what I dreamed they would do. They are able to carry a story and captivate an audience.

Bird In Space, 2004. Imported Romanian steel plate, inflatable jacks, and helium, 182.9 x 609.6 x 2.54 cm.

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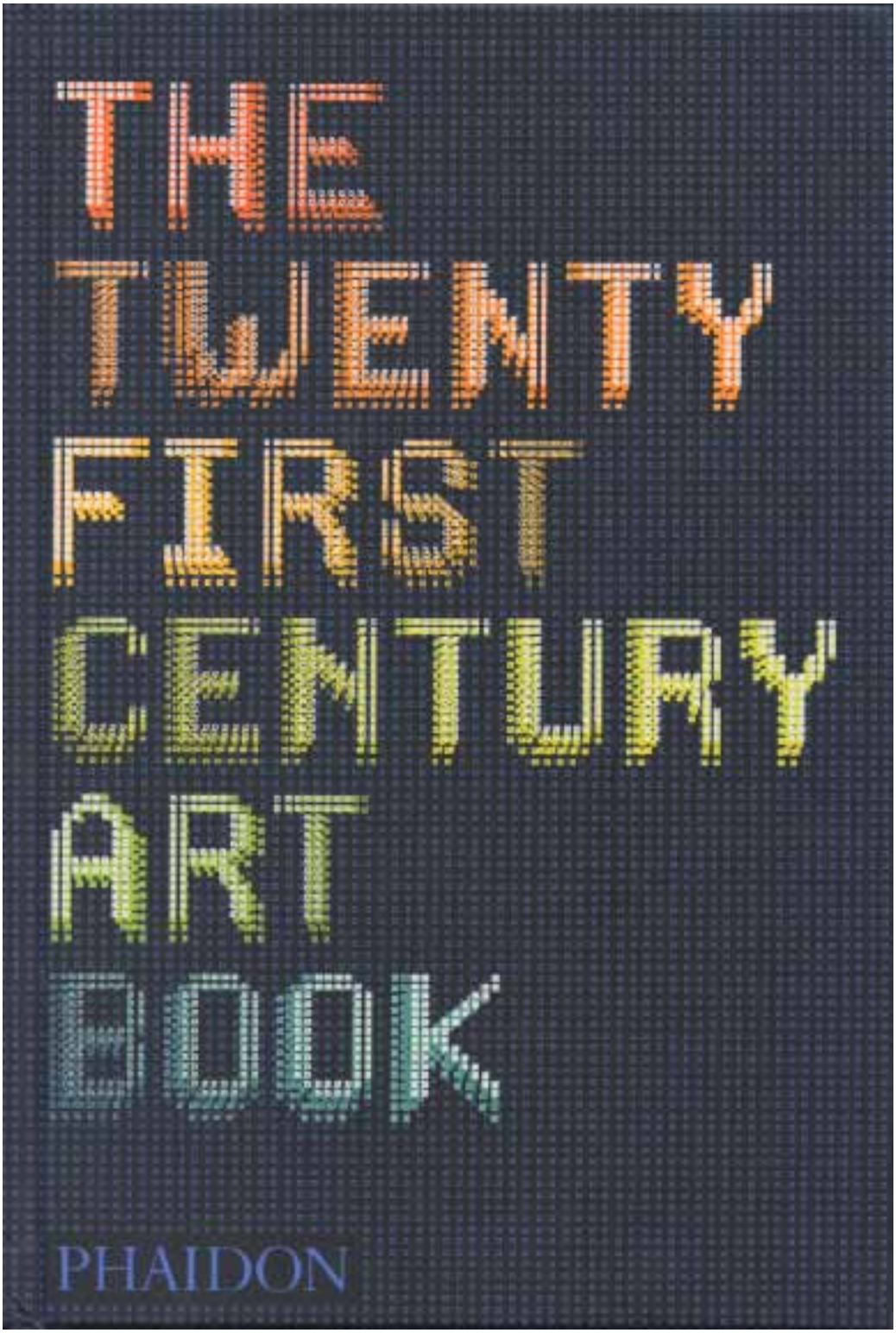

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Starling Simon

Autoxylopyrocycloboros, 2006

A set of thirty-eight slides are all that remain of this artwork, which began as a performance on 25 October 2006 when Starling took a small wooden steam-powered boat out onto Loch Long in Scotland. The boat, Dignity, had been salvaged from the bottom of Lake Windermere in Cumbria and restored to working order. In *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* it becomes fuel for an absurdist journey, with Starling slowly dismantling the wooden hull whilte motoring across the Loch and feeding it into the steam engine, until the boat inevitably sinks. The slides document this auto-destruction scene by scene. There is a political angle to this work, Loch Long being home to both the Trident submarine base and the peace camp opposing it. At the same time the work is about process, a theme Starling regularly returns to. His art often involves dismantling and remaking objects into eccentric forms as he traces the narratives contained within them.

Simon Starling, b. Epsom, UK 1967. *Autoxylopryrocycloboros*. 2006. Thirty-eight colour transparencies (h6 x w7 cm. h2 3/8 x w 2 3/4 in), GOtschmann slide projector, flight case. Dimensions variable.

Griffin, Jonathan, et al. ***The Twenty First Century Art Book,*** Phaidon Press Limited, New York, NY, 2014, p. 253

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FILMMAKER

Dying of the Light at MASS MoCA

by David Leitner | August 28, 2014

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
- Dylan Thomas

If you're anywhere near North Adams in the northwest corner of Massachusetts, close by the New York and Vermont borders, anytime between now and February 1, 2015, do yourself a favor and drop by the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art to contemplate their exhibition marking the last days of photochemical motion pictures: The Dying of the Light: Film as Medium and Metaphor.

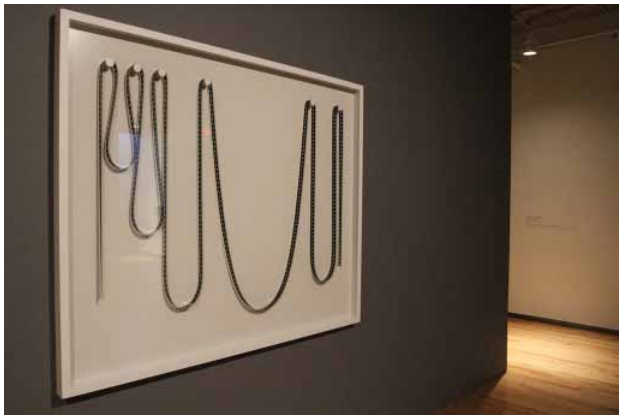
With the contraction of film manufacturing and virtual demise of laboratory services in the face of near-universal digital imaging, the medium of perforated, emulsion-coated film base — after a spectacular hundred-year run — is slipping into the special province of archives and museums, institutions that safeguard the past.

MASS MoCA however has taken a step to protect the future, gathering the work of six artists — Rosa Barba, Matthew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, Rodney Graham, Lisa Oppenheim, and Simon Starling — each a passionate advocate for the survival of light-sensitive film as a living medium "for its distinctive grain, texture, and luminosity — as well as its potent potential for metaphor," to quote MASS MoCA's exhibition notes.

Quoting further: "In a mix of atmospheric, sculptural, and documentary works, the exhibition includes a selection of rather pared-down, but powerful images – fire, smoke, the setting sun, a spinning chandelier, a racetrack, figures in motion, and the transit of Venus — all nods to the most essential elements of film itself – light, movement, and time."

Where did all this installation space come from? It may come as news, but MASS MoCA is the largest contemporary art museum in the U.S., with twenty-six interconnected buildings covering thirteen acres.

What you'll experience at this MASS MoCA exhibition are cavernous, formerly industrial spaces devoted to unattended 16mm and 35mm projectors whirring and clattering as they project ceaseless film loops against walls and suspended screens. You may find yourself alone in an installation space – for as long as you'd like, just you and a projector – a perk of MASS MoCA's sheer size that, unintentional or not, nonetheless privileges the act of private experience. It's like having your own screening room for art.



Simon Starling's "Black Drop/Transit Footage(Internal Contact)," 2012. Reminiscent of a wooden film drying rack from the turn of the last century.

Rosa Barba's "The Long Road," 2010. Looped 35mm deicting looped asphalt.

Where did all this installation space come from? It may come as news, but MASS MoCA is the largest contemporary art museum in the U.S., with twenty-six interconnected buildings covering thirteen acres.

Before MASS MoCA opened in 1999, North Adams was a depopulated former mill town on the Hoosic River named for Revolutionary patriot Sam Adams, namesake of the popular beer. Its central red-brick factory complex, which had sprung up before the Civil War to make printed textiles, was shuttered and decaying. The textile business had succumbed to the Great Depression, and the subsequent occupant, Sprague Electric Company, renown for electronic components, had hit the skids in 1985. Fortunately for North Adams, the former factory's sprawling network of handsome industrial outbuildings and endless supply of large, well-lit, open interiors proved the perfect fit for a world-class center of contemporary art.

In fact, one entire building is now given over to a monumental retrospective of the life's work of conceptualist Sol LeWitt – on view through 2033. Is it too much to hope that The Dying of the Light: Film as Medium and Metaphor might one day inspire a more permanent installation – perhaps fill an entire building – dedicated to the living, flickering light of the motion picture projector?

Metaphorically, an eternal flame arc lamp?

Leitner, David, ***Dying of the Light at MASS MoCA***, "Filmmaker, Magazine" August 28, 2014, Online.

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Recycled History

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A Conceptual Artist Who Inivtes Serious Reflection

by **RICHARD B. WOODWARD**
August 20, 2014

'Metamorphology," the needlessly forbidding title of Simon Starling's midcareer retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art, is a well-intentioned word designed to express what a shape-shifter the British artist has been.

His engagement with transformation was first widely observed in 2005 when he won the Turner Prize, in part for "Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No. 2)." A documented performance as well as a feat of carpentry, it involved his remaking an old wooden German shed into a boat, piloting it down the Rhine River, then hammering it into a shed again once he reached Basel, Switzerland.

There, in a museum, the leaky structure resides. (It hasn't made the Atlantic crossing. To plug this hole in the survey, Mr. Starling's first major U.S. museum show, the curators have substituted a more recent nautical adventure.)

As with many Conceptual artists, a lengthy wall text is required for his pieces to make sense. Some visitors may continue to feel, even after learning about all the Modernist art-history references that guided his hand, that the destination isn't worth the trip.

Not that you need a graduate degree to be impressed by Mr. Starling. Convoluted though his thinking can be, his art has evident respect for labor and skill, avoids sensationalism and mockery, and invites serious reflection, even laughter. The environmental warnings embedded in many pieces are never doctrinaire.

His primary concern is archaeological. He wants to expose, as senior curator Dieter Roelstraete puts it, "the accrued histories of things." The fewer than 20 works here—sculpture, photography, film and video installation—faithfully represent Mr. Starling's whirring, digressive mind.

Take, for instance, the five platinum prints in "One Ton II" (2005) in the first room. The scene in the photographs is a pit mine in South Africa. The weighty title, we are informed, refers to the amount of ore that must be disgorged from the earth to extract 28.3 ounces of the precious metal used to make these prints.

In other words, what we see in a work of art is, in part, the materials that compose it, and those in turn are the residue of human muscle and ingenuity, and of economic forces and industrial processes we should be more aware of.

Born in England in 1967 and living now in Copenhagen, Mr. Starling studied at the Glasgow School of Art, an institution famous for training artists to be attuned to the social context of making and exhibiting art. (During the past 15 years its graduates have dominated the annual Turner Prize. The list of others from there who have either won or been short-listed includes Douglas Gordon, Nathan Coley, Richard Wright, Martin Boyce and Karla Black.)

Mr. Starling tries to be cognizant of place when designing or installing his art. "Bird in Space" (2004), made for one of his New York gallery exhibitions, refers to a landmark legal case from 1926 when Constantin Brancusi's bronze sculpture was seized by U.S. Customs and taxed as a functional metal utensil. In 1928 a judge ruled in Brancusi's favor, a decision that opened the door to artists eventually having the right to declare almost anything a work of art.

Mr. Starling often tunnels so deeply into art politics that any chance of having a more direct communion with an audience is lost. "Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)"—an installation from 2010 combining a 30-minute narrated video projected on a screen with carved wooden masks on sticks—has more walk-on players and heavy themes than a PBS miniseries. Selected here for its relationship to local history, it alludes to Henry Moore's sculpture "Nuclear Energy" (1964-66) at the University of Chicago, installed to commemorate the site of the world's first nuclear reactor. Not content with that episode for drama, Mr. Starling braids it together with the stories of art historian and Soviet spy Anthony Blunt, Ian Fleming and James Bond, financier and art collector Joseph Hirschhorn, and Colonel Sanders. Interwoven with their biographies is a Noh drama about a 16th-century Japanese nobleman.

It's not that Mr. Starling fails to connect the dots between, say, Hirschhorn's shady uranium investments in Canada and Modern art and the atomic age; it's that the tale is better suited to an essay or a novel or a documentary film. The Japanese masks of the characters, which we see being carved in the video and which occupy one half of the room, are superfluous.

"Autoxylopyrocycloboros" (2006), among Mr. Starling's most popular works, is more effective and compact. Marking his return to the water and to reclamation, it's a 4-minute slide show that chronicles his 4-hour ride in a small wooden steamboat on Scotland's picturesque Loch Long.

He had rescued the antiquated craft from the bottom of the lake. During the course of his trip, Mr. Starling and his fellow crew member ruthlessly dismantle the boat, sawing off the gunnels and then working their way down, feeding boards into the stove that powers the engine. By the end nothing is left but the floor, and the boat sinks again to the depths of the lake.

With a title that joins Greek words for wood, fire and circularity, the piece has been read as a caution against our heedless use of the earth's resources. But it could just as easily be seen to be in favor of Cold War energy solutions; Loch Long is also home to two of Britain's nuclear submarine bases. Environmental politics aside, it's also like a silent film comedy: Laurel and Hardy go to sea.

Mr. Starling's career, according to the jargon of some curators, has been about "interrogating" Modernism. With its numerous allusions to Marcel Duchamp, Brancusi, Moore and other 20th-century artists and movements, his work is clearly well versed in the divagations of history. He has a scholar's nose for luminous facts that have been dimmed or buried by time.

But to walk through a show of his is like being assigned to read commentaries when you'd rather be spending a few hours with the original. Long before Mr. Starling and his mate burned their own boat, Buster Keaton stripped the wood off a train to power it in "The General," as did the Marx Brothers in "Go West." In the past, those who created funny bits about the paradoxical need to destroy things to survive were called entertainers, while anyone who does the same thing today, more self-consciously and less humorously, is called a Conceptual artist.

Woodward, Richard B., "Recycled History," ***The Wall Street Journal,*** August 20, 2014 Online.

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BLACK DROP:

Astral Observations In Spring, TX

BY PETER LUCAS | July 25th, 2014

Black Drop, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, joint acquisition of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, funded by the Anchorage Foundation; and the Dallas Museum of Art, funded by the DMA/amfAR Benefit Auction Fund. Image courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, NY. © Simon Starling and Casey Kaplan, NY.

The transit of Venus between the Sun and Earth is the rarest of predictable, observable astronomical phenomena, occurring in pairs eight years apart with more than a century gap between them. Beginning in 1639, observations of that planet's tiny silhouette passing in front of the Sun have been key in our understanding of bigger-picture spatial relationships, allowing us to estimate the size of the Solar System and the distance between the Sun and the Earth.

On the occasion of the most recent Venus transit in 2012, British artist Simon Starling documented it and created Black Drop—a film that explores the history and significance of Venus transit observations, as well as the nature of perception, observation, and recorded image technology. After premiering at Oxford's Radcliffe Observatory last year, Black Drop has made its Texas debut at the Pearl Fincher Museum of Fine Arts in Spring, Texas, alongside Starling's related sculptural work, Transit Stone. The show opened in mid-June and is now in its final week.

Starling's 28-minute film—an interesting, almost deceptive mixture of straight documentary and poetic meditation on its subject and itself—takes its name from the biggest puzzler of transit observations over the centuries—the distorted elongation of the planet's silhouette as it intersects the very edge of the sun. This stretched "black drop effect" has presented challenges in drawing accurate conclusions from Venus transits. The importance of this little visual distortion makes this history as much about our vantage point and modes of perception as it is about the movements and scale of the Solar System.

It was important to Starling to document the 2012 transit on 35mm film. Since celluloid will be a long lost medium the next time Venus comes back around in 2117, this filmed observation is the last in a long history of analog photographic methods connected to transit observations, including one of the earliest cinematographic cameras developed by astronomer Jules Janssen for documenting the 1874 transit. Black Drop addresses this history while simultaneously becoming part of it. There are recurring shots of a film editor working the tactile medium to shape the film that we're seeing, making the piece at once a film about particular observations and an observation of film and observation itself.

The collaboration of art and science interests that led to the creation of the piece are fitting for its subject matter, as are the intersections of Texas arts institutions that led to the work's first local exhibition at the suburban museum. Black Drop was jointly acquired last year by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Dallas Museum of Art—the first ever joint acquisition between the two Texas museums. This kind of collaboration is happening more frequently now with the collection of video works, as they're more difficult to exhibit (requiring a certain amount of space and good conditions for projected light and sound) yet lend themselves to easier transit between venues than traditional paintings and sculptures. The reason that Black Drop's Texas premiere is happening at a smaller museum rather than either of the larger institutions has to do with another collaborative relationship—that of the MFAH and Pearl Fincher Museum.

I spoke briefly with Alison de Lima Greene, MFAH Curator of Contemporary Art and Special Projects, who was involved in the acquisition of Starling's works and this collaboration with the Pearl Fincher. She informed me that the two institutions have worked closely since the opening of the Spring museum in 2008, and that loaning works from the MFAH's collection for exhibition has been opportunity for both reaching wider audiences and showing works that they don't have immediate space or time to exhibit. Showing collected contemporary works like this are a challenge for the MFAH (at least before their expansion is complete, but likely long after.) In this way, the relationship between museums occasionally provides local viewers with windows into the MFAH's more rarely seen collected works.

Greene also mentioned that, while perhaps not a key consideration, the MFAH does have Houston's long history with space exploration in mind as it collects a works that could be interpreted as "celestial," and that this was a part of their interest in acquiring Starling's work. These peripheral, behind-the-scenes details shed light on the complex and increasingly collaborative concerns of art collecting and exhibition, and at the convergence of ideas and institutions that have brought Black Drop to Texas.

Lucas, Peter, "Black Drop: Astral Observations In Spring, TX," Glasstire, July 25, 2014, Online.

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Philosophy Now
a magazine of ideas

Philosophy Now• Film Review • May/ June 2014

Reflections on the Death of the Celluloid

Thomas Wartenberg looks at philosophy literally on film.

Can films do philosophy? This question has been the subject of a rigorous debate among philosophers of film. Some take it that the answer is obviously "Yes" since a film can certainly be made of a philosopher making an argument, and the resulting film clearly shows philosophy being done. When we see the rotoscoped image of Robert Solomon discussing Sartre's philosophy in Richard Linklater's Waking Life (2001), these philosophers would say we are witnessing philosophy being done on film. For the most part, however, participants in this debate think the use of a film as essentially a recording device, as it is in Waking Life, is beside the point of the question. The real question, they maintain, is whether philosophy can be done using the particular technical capabilities of film as an artistic medium. A more refined version of the question at the heart of the film-as philosophy debate would be the following: Without resorting to the making of verbal arguments, can a film somehow do the sorts of things that philosophers do in their written texts?

Although most of the interest in this question has revolved around the question of whether narrative fiction in film is capable of making creative contributions to philosophy, there has also been some interest in whether avant-garde or experimental films can make such a contribution. Those who affirm this possibility, myself included, have held that such films can make a substantive contribution to the philosophical discussion of, in particular, the nature of film.

The Dying of the Light?

My own thinking about this issue was stimulated by a recent exhibition at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MOCA) in North Adams, MA, entitled Dying of the Light. The title is a self-conscious echoing of Dylan Thomas's famous poetic exhortation, "Rage, rage, against the dying of the light." However, here the phrase refers not to the death of Thomas's father but to the presumed extinction of celluloid as the medium of film. The six artists whose nine works were featured in the exhibition all employ celluloid as the medium for their cinematic works, and many of their works do specifically address the question of what might be lost through the evolution of the medium into a purely digital one. (By the way, two of the artists give the viewer a different understanding of film history than the standard story found in textbooks. Matthew Buckingham's False Future is about Louis Le Prince's invention of a film camera prior to anyone else, and Simon Starling's Black Drop argues that the technology necessary for the invention of the film projector was developed as part of the scientific project to photograph Venus's transit across the Sun in order to develop a more accurate measurement of the Sun's distance from the Earth.

Another work in the exhibition is Tacita Dean's work, The Green Ray. This 16mm film gives a clear example what would be lost through the death of celluloid The green ray is an optical phenomenon that occurs when the sun sets into the ocean. At the moment the sun disappears, a green ray of light shoots across the horizon. Dean's short film captures this phenomenon, while two digital recordings of the same event made at the same time do not replicate it. Here is a case in which the use of celluloid as the medium for making and projecting a film shows something that cannot be replicated by means of a digital film, or so Dean contends.

However, the work that captured my philosophical imagination was Rosa Barba's Stating the Real Sublime. Here a projector is suspended from the ceiling by a long transparent strip of film that weaves up and down through a series of pulleys connected to both the projector and the ceiling. The film itself moves through the running projector, which as a result projects a mostly white light onto the white wall of the gallery. But the image is not completely stationary, for the running projector exerts an uneven force on the suspending film, causing the part of the wall that is illuminated to shift slightly over time. There are also two slight deviations of the image from complete transparency. First, the ends of the film loop are joined by a translucent red piece of what I assume is the splicing tape that creates a continuous loop. Second, the pressure on the tape results in scratches along the edges of the celluloid that are clearly visible to the viewer. In fact, the pressure on the celluloid is so great that the entire loop has to be periodically replaced lest it break, resulting in the projector being smashed on the gallery floor. (Interesting idea there for the final day of the exhibition!) Barba's piece seems to assert that celluloid, rather than being just a particular medium by means of which films were once created, is the very basis of film. That is the significance I see in the work's having the projector suspended from the very celluloid strip whose image it projects onto the wall. In good philosophical fashion, we can call this the Celluloid Dependency Thesis (CDT).

Of course, many people, philosophers and filmmakers alike, would deny the CDT. They might say that the transformation of film from a celluloid-based medium into a digital one is not only an historical inevitability, but also just one of many such technological transformations in film's history. After all, film started out as silent and black-and-white. In its history, many technological changes took place that altered the nature of the medium, such as the introduction of sound and color. "Why should we view the use of digital technology as the means for recording and projecting the cinematic image as any more fundamental a change?" we can imagine such people asking. Silver Screen Reflections As a result of seeing Dean and Barba's pieces, and those of the other four artists, I found myself pondering that question after leaving the exhibition. I had already learned that celluloid will not be rendered completely obsolete by the spread of digital projection systems in theaters worldwide. Digital films will still be transferred onto celluloid, since it is the safest medium to ensure the preservation of film. But my concern moved beyond that, to the very question of how essential to film was its celluloid basis.

My reflections brought to mind Rudolph Arnheim, one of the influential early theorists of film. Writing shortly after the introduction of synchronous sound, Arnheim claimed that if film was to remain an artform, it would have to avoid the use of the new soundtrack. He argued that a 'talkie' was a hybrid of two independent rtistic mediums – the moving image and sound – whose tension would never allow sound films to rise to the artistic level of the silent cinema. Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, we can now see how misguided Arnheim's claim was. Although certain artistic possibilities achievable in the silent film may have been lost when films started talking, we now recognize all the artistic achievements that the introduction of synchronous sound made possible. To decry the talkie as causing the death of cinematic art was, simply put, a theoretical blunder.

I couldn't help but wonder whether the views embodied in the works of the six film artists exhibited in Dying of the Light would not in time come to be regarded as similarily nostalgic, and mistaken. Of course, there are other artforms where digital technology is no longer simply seen as a boon allowing more accurate transmission of what is recorded. Audiophiles often prefer the softer, warmer sound of vinyl to the cold accuracy of a digitally-rendered disc or mp3 file. But despite my interest in the works of the celluloid artists of Dying of the Light, I remain unconvinced by what I take to be their central philosophical contention. Nonetheless, seeing the exhibition was a stimulating philosophical experience for me. I do not have to agree with the thesis that animates it to have found it to be an example of how cinematic art can be philosophically significant. After all, we do not have to agree with, for example, Descartes' skeptical argument that all of our sense experience might be radically mistaken, in order to find it extremely stimulating and a genuine philosophical achievement. Why not say the same for philosophy done on film?

© THOMAS E. WARTENBERG 2014
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READER

VISUAL ARTS
JUNE 03, 2014

British conceptual artist Simon Starling's journey is the destination

His captivating research- and process-based work is on view at the MCA and the Arts Club of Chicago.

By Laura Pearson

A tricked-out Fiat is suspended from a wall in the Museum of Contemporary Art's atrium. "It's kind of a gravitational mindfuck," senior curator Dieter Roelstraete says of the piece, the entry point into "Metamorphology," the first major museum survey in the U.S. of the British conceptual artist Simon Starling, opening June 7. A stone's throw away at the Arts Club of Chicago, an associated Starling show, "Pictures for an Exhibition," debuts June 6.

Starling's attention-grabbing auto is bound to appeal to any visitor whose appreciation for an artwork directly corresponds to how Instagrammable it is. But Flaga, 1972-2002 isn't merely a spectacle. As Magritte might say, "Ceci n'est pas une ordinary car." In 2002, Starling bought a ruby-red Fiat 126—that emblem of Italian industry—and drove it from Turin, where it was originally manufactured, to Cieszyn, Poland, where production is now based. There he replaced the hood, doors, and trunk with Polish-manufactured white parts, so that the red-and-white car he drove back to Turin resembled the Polish flag. Displayed like a painting in the museum, the custom ride is a statement on corporate globalization, commercialization, and how modes of production determine meaning.

"There are strong gestures, big things, in Starling's work," says Roelstraete, who contributed to the artist's monograph published in 2009 by Phaidon. "But it's also very solidly conceptually grounded."

Starling often uses literal vehicles—bikes, boats, cars, canoes, trains—to transport his ideas. He won the 2005 Turner Prize, the UK's most prestigious art award, for his shape-shifting work Shedboatshed—a shed converted into a boat, paddled down the Rhine, and then reassembled into a shed. The sculpture-centric "Metamorphology" includes Bird in Space (2004), a two-ton steel plate shipped to the U.S. from Romania that nods at Brancusi's series of sculptures of the same name that were similarly shipped to America and subsequently landed the artist in a famous legal battle with the U.S. Customs Office about what constitutes art. Bird in Space was first exhibited in the 1927 Marcel Duchamp-organized Arts Club show "Sculpture and Drawings by Constantin Brancusi," which happens to figure into Starling's work at the Streeterville venue. Another of the 11 works exhibited in "Metamorphology," Autoxylopyrocycloboros (2006), is anchored by a boat. Starling and a colleague traveled in a small wooden steam-powered vessel across a lake in Scotland, all the while chopping up the boat and feeding pieces to the boiler that powered it. A "self-defeating journey," Starling has called it. A slide show recounts the futile, charmingly cartoonish exercise. (Spoiler alert: the boat sinks.) In both cases, the real artistry is in the transformative processes.

One can't look at Starling's research- and process-based works and immediately grasp the artist's many art-historical, social, political, scientific, and economic references. For the necessary context, there's wall text, which is part of each work rather than external to it, and which Starling writes himself. "There is a tendency in museums to want to dumb that down," the lanky, soft-spoken artist told me during a break in installation last week at the MCA. "I guess I've just been proactive. . . . They're kind of recipes in a way. It's not about telling people what the work is about; it's more mapping the connections that are there in a quite open way."

How deeply you examine Starling's research or probe the intricacies of his process is up to you. "Take the steam-powered boat," Roelstraete says. "The Scottish lake in question is home to the British nuclear submarine fleet, which the text says. Those who are interested will find out, and those who want to know more will find out. But of course it's also a really beautiful piece that's completely riveting and entirely self-explanatory in its unfolding."

Starling's site-specific exhibition at the Arts Club is a suitable complement to "Metamorphology." "Pictures for an Exhibition" is based on a pair of vintage installation photographs from the aforementioned 1927 Brancusi show. Eighty-seven years later, Starling traveled to track down and take his own shots of the 18 works by the Romanian-born master sculptor featured in those photos. For good measure, Starling used the same model of camera, produced in Chicago by the Deardorff Company, that was responsible for the original exhibition images.

"I'm particularly drawn to artists who engage with modernism's past, but add something new to it, like Starling does," Arts Club director Janine Mileaf says. She approached the artist to delve into the institution's archives even before she knew he would be exhibiting at the MCA. By opening concurrently, the two Starling exhibitions—which the globe-trotting artist describes as "a series of overlaying maps"—show off the range of his practice: some works are quiet; some have the quality of spectacle; all point to the workings of a spectacular mind.

Simon Starling and a colleague went on a "self-defeating journey" in a boat for ***Autoxylopyrocycloboros*** (2006).
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE MODERN INSTITUTE, GLASGOW

Pearson, Laura, “British conecptual artist Simon Starling ‘s journey is the destination” Chicago Reader, June 3, 2014, Online.

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CHICAGO

SIMON STARLING: METAMORPHOLOGY

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART/ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO

June 7 - November 2

Curated by Dieter Roelstraete and Janine Mileaf

Metamorphology, a term borrowed from Goethe's protoevolutionary theory, is a persuasive catchall for Simon Starling's practice, which is postmedium—and multimedia—yet full of research-heavy, labor-intensive, material transformations. This first major museum survey in the US will include, among eleven ambitious works from the past decade, a propped two-ton slab of Romanian steel titled after Brancusi's 1923 ***Bird in Space,*** which Duchamp had likewise shepherded through US customs, duty-free, some eighty years earlier—but only after a protracted court case over its aesthetic status. Another modernist giant hovers over ***Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)***, 2010, an installation marshaling complex cross-cultural narratives linking Henry Moore, early atomic research, and the provenance of materials. The catalogue includes contributions by Mark Godfrey, the curators, and Starling himself.

Travels to the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Feb.-Apr. 2015.

-Martin Herbert

Hebert, Martin. "Simon Starling: Metamorphology," Artforum. May 2014. P. 188

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Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Simon Starling: Metamorphology

Jun 7–Nov 2, 2014

Press Release

Since emerging from the Glasgow art scene in the early 1990s, Simon Starling (British, b. 1967) has established himself as one of the leading artists of his generation, working in a wide variety of media (film, installation, photography) to interrogate the histories of art and design, scientific discoveries, and global economic and ecological issues, among other subjects. The recipient of the 2005 Turner Prize, Starling has had major exhibitions in kunsthalles and museums throughout the world, and his work can be found in the collections of some of the world's leading art institutions; yet surprisingly, especially given the exceptional breadth of his practice and volume of his output, he has never been the subject of a survey in a major American museum—until now.

The title of the exhibition, *Metamorphology*—a collaboration between MCA Chicago and the Arts Club of Chicago—alludes to one of the fundamental principles of Starling's practice: an almost alchemistic conception of the transformative potential of art, or of transformation as art. Starling's working method constitutes recycling, in the most literally circular sense of the word: repurposing existing materials for new, artistic aims; retelling existing stories to produce new historical insights; linking, looping, and remaking. The exhibition unfolds roughly along two intertwining paths in which metamorphosis is intrinsic to understanding art.

The first of these trajectories concerns Starling's interest in art history, particularly the glory years of modernism, which in this instance firmly anchors the exhibition in the local context. Starling based the shape and form of *Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)* (2010), a complex multi-media installation, in part on a quintessential Chicago story concerning the early days of nuclear energy development and the monument designed by Henry Moore commemorating its discovery. The towering figure of Moore, whose work has for so long seemed to embody the very idea of modern art in Starling's native United Kingdom, likewise recurs in *Infestation Piece (Musseled Moore)* (2006–08). In *Bird in Space* (2004), named after a famous sculpture by Constantin Brancusi that was first shown at the Arts Club in the early 1920s, Starling's unorthodox reinvention of Brancusi's talismanic modernist masterpiece, re-presented in the work's original context, links the institutions' past and present. The second trajectory concerns the broader framework of geopolitical and socioeconomic fault lines within which such art historical narratives are construed, and is articulated in a series of works that demonstrates Starling's fascination with cycles of production.

The exhibition also features Starling's recent work in film, which often takes into account the very mechanics of the medium as well as its scientific prehistory. Functioning as 24-frame-per-second treatises in metamorphology, Starling's ventures into film provide further proof of the artist's attachment to the poetics of the loop.

This exhibition is organized by Dieter Roelstraete, Manilow Senior Curator, and Karsten Lund, Curatorial Assistant at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. A concurrent exhbition, organized by Janine Mileaf, Executive Director, will be on view June 5–September 20 at the Arts Club of Chicago, a short walk from the museum.

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THE ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO

Simon Starling: Pictures for an Exhibition

6 June - 26 September 2014

CHICAGO 14 MARCH 2014 - The Arts Club of Chicago is pleased to announce a newly commissioned work by Turner-award winning artist **Simon Starling (6 June – 26 September 2014)**. One of the leading artists of his generation, Starling is noted for his attentive treatment of objects and their stories. Often taking up key moments in the history of modernism, Starling generates elegant installations, films, photographs, or sculptures that unearth unacknowledged connections or migrations within the art world. The sculptor Constantin Brancusi was the subject of a breakthrough project by Starling in 2004, when he shipped a two-ton slab of steel from Romania across the Atlantic, echoing the movement of Brancusi's 1923 Bird in Space, which became the subject of a lawsuit between the artist and the United States Customs Office.

Returning to Brancusi for his Arts Club exhibition, Starling has addressed a pair of vintage installation photographs that depict the 1927 Arts Club exhibition *Sculpture and Drawings by Constantin Brancusi,* which was organized by Marcel Duchamp. Starling tracked down the current locations of the 18 Brancusi sculptures visible in these photographs and traveled across the United States, as well as to Basel, Switzerland, and Toronto, Canada to find them. Using two 8x10 cameras produced in Chicago by the Deardorff Company, the same brand employed for the original exhibition views, Starling has retraced and recorded the moves these sculptures made over the last 87 years. Along the way, he collected anecdotes of provenance that intersect with the diamond trade, Nazi appropriation of cultural goods, prohibition, and other incidents that point toward interconnections between art, economics, society, and history.

Simon Starling was born in 1967 in Epsom, UK, and graduated from the Glasgow School of Art. He won the Turner Prize in 2005 and was shortlisted for the 2004 Hugo Boss Prize. Starling was Professor of Fine Arts at the Staedelschule in Frankfurt from 2003 to 2013. He has exhibited widely, including the Bienal de Sao Paulo (2004), the Busan Biennal (2006), as well as representing Scotland at the Venice Biennale in 2003. In the past five years Starling has also made solo exhibitions at Villa Arson, Nice; Museum fur Gegenwartskunst, Basel; Mass MOCA, North Adams, USA; The Power Plant, Toronto; The Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art; Tate Britain, London; Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart; and MUMA, Melbourne. Starling lives and works in Copenhagen.
This exhibition will coincide with a display of Starling's earlier works at the Museum of Contemporary Art, curated by Dieter Roelstraete. A joint catalogue will be published by the MCA.

There will be an open house at The Arts Club of Chicago on Saturday 7 June 2014 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with a guided tour by Executive Director Janine Mileaf at 4:30 p.m.

There will be an artist's lecture co-sponsored by EXPO Chicago on Saturday 20 September 2014 at noon.

The Arts Club of Chicago is located at 201 East Ontario Street, on the southeast corner of St. Clair and Ontario Streets. Exhibitions are free and open to the public. Gallery hours are Tuesday - Friday 11:00 am - 6:00 pm, and Saturday 11:00 am - 3:00 pm.

For press and general inquiries, please contact Rachel Levin at 312.787.3997 or rlevin@artsclubchicago.org.

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Vdrome

Simon Starling “Black Drop”

24 JANUARY - 3 FEBRUARY

2012, 35mm film, color, sound, 27' 42"

In 2012 Simon Starling traveled to Tahiti and Honolulu to film the transit of Venus across the sun, which is only to be seen again in 2117. The 35mm film explores the parallel developments between the history of science and that of cinema, associating the evolution of moving image technologies with that of astronomic research.

Introduced by Adam Carr

Adam Carr: Your work often reveals the phenomena tied to an object, image or event, as well as the path of research, unearthing connections, coincidences and contradictions. Black Drop is certainly indicative of this approach. Watching it, I cannot help but ask the obvious: What was your starting point for the piece? What were its roots? Although commissioned by Modern Art Oxford in collaboration with Oxford University, and debuted at the Radcliffe Observatory, Green Templeton College, was it a response to the commission, or did it have its beginnings much earlier? Many of works of yours I’ve seen make me think about their existence in response to a site, time and place, and the genealogy of their process.

Simon Starling: It feels very much like a project that found me. I'm not known for my stargazing or deep knowledge of the heavens, but I guess Mike Stanley and Paul Bonaventura, who commissioned the piece for Oxford, had a sense that it might interest me, and they were right. As soon as I started digging into the history of scientific observations of the transit of Venus, a connection was made to my ongoing interest in early photographic and moving-image technologies, and to the relationship between still and moving images. So in that sense it was both a completely new area and an age-old preoccupation coming together. The key was to foreground the making of my film as a parallel narrative, and that notion came very early on in the development of the work. Explicitly unpacking the making of the film created a useful meta-narrative that seemed to reverberate in relation to the specific story of Janssen and the invention of his photographic revolver.

AC: Could you tell me about your journey to record the transit in 2012?

SS: For me, travelling geographically when making work is very closely linked to notions of time travel – the travel seems to add weight and significance to the films’ journey back in time to the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The journey to Hawaii and Tahiti directly echoes previous scientific expeditions made to try to productively record the transit of Venus for science and to establish an accurate calculation of the astronomical unit (the distance from the earth to the sun). Additionally, there were practical considerations that led to the decision to travel to the Pacific Ocean for the film. In order to capture the entire six-hour-long transit during daylight hours and in conditions that were almost guaranteed to be conducive to filming the transit, it seemed that the 4000-meter-high summit of the Mauna Kea volcano on Hawaii’s Big Island would be a safe bet. Following the successful high-altitude recording of the transit, our tiny film crew, consisting

of myself, cinematographer Christoph Manz, and the producer/sound recordist Annette Ueberlein, visited a number of historically related sites including the site of the 1874 British observation camp at Honolulu and the rocky shores of Kealakekua Bay where Captain Cook (an early observer of the transit of Venus) met his death. We then moved on to Tahiti and the black sand beach at Point Venus – named after Captain Cook's observations of the transit there in 1769. In the final film, this footage, made in these geographically remote locations, is seen being edited together in the rather hermetic context of a Berlin 35mm editing suite – this space, with its flickering ground-glass screen, becomes a kind of time and space portal through which to reconstruct the historical narrative.

AC: It would be great if you could list some of the equipment involved in the making of the film…

SS: We travelled with the most compact kit we could, but when you're trying to film a small black planet crossing the face of the sun over a six-hour period, things get pretty complex and heavy. We took a 35 mm movie camera and a specially adapted, very long telephoto lens which was covered with a Mylar filter to stop the sun frying the film, and then this was all mounted on an astronomical mount which moves the camera in time to the movement of the sun. Then there were the big batteries to run all that stuff for six hours, etc., etc. – quite some kit. It is amazing how, at 4000 m above sea level, everything seems to weigh twice as much as it would normally.

AC: While your previous work embraces and celebrates the medium of film and often discusses its production, film is slowly dwindling. For example, a number of 16mm film labs have been closed, as well as photographic labs, and the conversion from analogue to digital is almost complete. I wondered what your thoughts are about this, and what your opinion is in this light about an Internet platform such as Vdrome as a context in which to view film and video-based work?

SS: Making the film revealed just how fast that technology is dwindling – it was awkward and expensive as a result. In some sense, the real drama in the film comes with the realization that Black Drop's footage of the transit, filmed as it was on 35mm film stock, is very likely the last footage of its kind. With the next transit not due until 2117, it is highly unlikely that it will be possible to use that fast-disappearing technology then. In some sense, the transits of 1874 and 2012 form parentheses around the rather short history of pre-digital film technology of celluloid and its silver-based successors. Vdrome is a first for me. I have always shown my films in the hyper-controlled context of the museum or gallery, but actually, Black Drop has been interesting in that it's opened up to a whole new audience – a film-going audience. It has been shown in cinemas at film festivals, which is something I've enjoyed very much and feels very appropriate for what is very much a film about film. In many ways, Vdrome is a natural extension of that. I decided very early on in the making of the film that the end product would exist in a digital, post-celluloid form. Prior to the digitally produced end credits we watch the last frames of film run through the editing table – so perhaps it is fitting that it should find an audience through something like Vdrome. That always/everywhere sense of time and space that such technology enables certainly resonates in some way with Black Drop.

Carr, Adam. "Simon Starling Blac Drop." Vdrome. January 24, 2014. Online

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City Gallery Wellington

January 8, 2014

For the New Zealand Festival, City Gallery Wellington is excited to be presenting an exhibition by Turner Prize-winning artist Simon Starling, opening on Friday 21 February.
In Speculum is the first survey of the artist's work in Australasia, and brings together a major new commission alongside key works that explore the relationships between art, technology, history and modernity.

Starling is a British conceptual artist who won the coveted Turner Prize in 2005 with the work Shedboatshed that involved taking a wooden shed, turning it into a boat, sailing it down the Rhine, and turning it back into a shed. His works are always interested in the making process and in the craft of being an artist.

Starling was born in England, studied in Glasgow and is currently based in Copenhagen. Each of his works has an intricate tale to tell and a narrative to uncover. His research-based art is described as obscure, but fascinating - you have to untangle complex backstories knotted up within them.

Unusual journeys have featured within several of his works. He rode a hydrogen-fuelled bicycle across the Spanish desert, and then painted a watercolour using the water it produced. To mark the Transit of Venus, Starling made a film featuring footage he shot on a volcano in Hawaii. He travelled across a Scottish loch in a small steamboat whose boiler was powered by wood chopped from the sides of the vessel, until it sank.

The show comes to Wellington from the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane. Our incoming Senior Curator Robert Leonard describes Starling's projects as always having 'something unexpected, excessive, witty, perverse, serendipitous, convoluted, or crafty about them'.

Simon Starling is visiting New Zealand and will be giving a free lecture at City Gallery on Friday 21 February at 6pm.
In Speculum is a partnership project between Monash University of Art, Melbourne, IMA (Institute of Modern Art), Brisbane and City Gallery Wellington.

Simon Starling: In Speculum
21 February 2014 – 18 May 2014
City Gallery Wellington, Civic Square
www.citygallery.org.nz

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From the beginning Henry Moore seemed omnipresent - a state-endorsed, global player, the first of his kind perhaps. His huge bronzes seemed to drop from the sky in great meteor showers and felt in my young mind rather clumsy and anachronistic, even provincial. The Moore related antics of Bruces Nauman and McLean were more to my taste. I shut Moore out.

A few years ago Moore reappeared on my radar when I was invited to Toronto. That most anglophile of Canadian cities had embraced him in the 1950S and 60s and immortalised him in an elegant concrete exhibition hall at the Art Gallery of Ontario. This space was designed to house over forty works donated by the artist, in no small part it seems, to spite the British establishment. Currently, not more than forty metres from this space sits my ***Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore)*** which evolved from the collision of two stories of alien introduction: Moore's domination of Toronto's post-war art scene and, in the dying days of the Cold War, the apparently unconnected infestation of the Great Lakes with Russian Zebra Mussels.

In 1939 Henry Moore installed ***Reclining Woman*** 1930, now also in Canada, in the garden of the architect Erno Goldfinger's newly completed home at 2 Willow Road, Hampstead. The modernist house proved unpopular with many residents, most famously with the writer Ian Fleming whose wrath led him to recast Goldfinger as the Cold War villain par excellence. In Toronto, however, Moore's connection to international espionage was far more real: his work was first introduced to the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the AGO) by Anthony Blunt, the Director of the Courtauld Institute and now infamous spy. In 1955 Blunt, an advisor to the Toronto museum, had proposed Moore's ***Warrior*** with ***Shield*** 1953-54 for acquisition. Some 30 years later, undercover, in thousands of gallons of bilge water spewed out by cargo ships arriving from the Black Sea, came Zebra Mussels. Within less than two decades, the 'poster child' of invasive species, these shielded warriors from the East, have fundamentally altered the 'nature' of the waterways of North America. In 2006 a steel sculpture based on Moore's Warrior was tossed into Lake Ontario and for almost two years played host to a colony of Zebra Mussels - the shells of which still valiantly cling to its rusted surface.

While Moore was no doubt oblivious to his connection to international espionage, this most international of artists was not untouched by the machinations of global politics and appears to have become adept at balancing his interests with those of people with money and power. While Moore was a public sponsor of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament he was also happy to receive a commission for a sculpture (***Nuclear Energy*** 1964-66) to commemorate Enrico Fermi's first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction in Chicago in 1942. Even before that commission had been completed, Moore had, much to the distress of Chicago University, made an edition of a smaller working-model of the sculpture under the title ***Atom Piece*** (pun clearly intended) - one of which he later sold to the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art. And further still it could be observed that Moore amassed a considerable fortune from his association with Joseph Hirshhorn whose own vast fortune had in turn come from the phenomenally profitable sale of uranium deposits in Canada, a sale bolstered by the frenetic activities of the Atomic Energy Commission during the 1940s and 50s. It is at these points of intersection between global politics, big business and art practice, at a moment when the Cold War has morphed into something altogether more elusive and our understanding of nature is so radically that Moore seems to be once again a fruitful subject for further investigation and redeployment.

- Simon Starling

First published in Chris Stephens (ed.), Henry Moore, exhibition catalogue, Tate Britain, London, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto and Leeds Art Gallery 2010, pp. 64-65

Body and Void, introduction by Tony Cragg, The Henry Moore Foundation, 2014

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The Way of The Shovel curated by Dieter Roelstraate

November 9, 2013 - March 9, 2014
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Simon Starling (British, b. 1967, Lives in Copenhagen) has emerged as a major figure within a growing field of artists who base their work on historical research. Yet to define Starling's work as research-driven requires a fluid conception of what research entails and how the findings are conveyed. Most of his projects take shape as a journey, a cycle, a narrative in search of an ending, or a metamorphosis charged with meaning, culminating in photographs, films, enigmatic sculptures, or objects that the artist has recontexualized or transformed.

Starling regularly explores economies of production and patterns of circulation in the world at large, and the stories and structures behind much of his work are informed by ideas of ecology, or as the artist describes it a "realm of connectivity" in which historical, cultural, and political aspects converge.' As Starling himself has pointed out, many of these interests come together in Archaeopteryx Lithographica (2008-09); this set of lithographs, featured in The Way of the Shovel are inspired by "the moment [in history] when the desire to create lithographic images, to be able to create images and texts, collided with some very important paleontology." Perhaps the artist tells the story best:

At a time just after Darwin had published On the Origin of Species there was the discovery [in a German quarry] of a feather that came from a creature occupying an evolutionary halfway-house somewhere between a dinosaur and a bird. This important piece of evolutionary evidence was only discovered because of this drive to produce lithographs. The main source for this quality of limestone is Solnhofen in Southern Germany, which used to be an inland lagoon and consequently produced perfect seamless stone but also perfect fossils. The story folds onto itself once more when they published the results of the paleontological find. They reproduced the illustrations through lithography-they made a lithograph of the feather.

In his own set of lithographs (which further extend this cycle of objects and images), Starling offers a hint of this backstory by reproducing pictures of the feather, including one with a caption, and additionaL views that show its image on a lithographic limestone slab. Ultimately, the work might be less about a famous feather than the rock quarry where it was found, an excavation site where different histories collide. KL

Lund, Karsten. Edited by Roelstraete, Dieter. The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. pp. 214-217.

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The Telegraph

SIMON STARLING

by Alastair Sooke
March 11, 2013

'Since I won the Turner Prize, it's the first thing that's written about me, and probably will be for the rest of my life," says the 45-year-old British artist Simon Starling, with a rueful smile. "But when I do a talk somewhere, people come now – and they didn't before."

Eight years after he picked up the Turner Prize at Tate Britain, Starling is back – sitting in the members' room to discuss a project he has developed for the gallery, responding to its collection. "It will be called Phantom Ride," he says, "which is a term that was used in early cinema, where they put a camera on the front of a train or a car or a tram, and then you would sit in the cinema and watch the world go by. It was an amusement, like going on a rollercoaster… a white-knuckle ride for an audience unfamiliar with cinema."

Although Starling won't say much more for now, to avoid spoiling the surprise when the finished work is unveiled on Monday, it sounds as though Phantom Ride will pass through familiar territory for the artist. Journeys and cinema have proved important for Starling, who was born in Epsom in 1967, but now teaches in Frankfurt and lives in Copenhagen with his wife and two children.

Take his most famous work, Shedboatshed, which Starling showed at the Turner Prize exhibition in 2005. Invited to create an exhibition in Basel, Starling chanced upon a tumbledown wooden hut on the banks of the Rhine. Inspired by an oar hanging on one of its walls, he decided to dismantle the structure, turn it into a boat, and then paddle it down the river to the museum, where he reconstructed it as a shed. "You could read the existence of the boat in the shed," he says, "by looking at the way that the floorboards were cut in funny shapes, and there were holes in it."

This work is one of several absurd journeys that Starling has undertaken by boat, car or bicycle – many of which embody the madcap, idiotic spirit of Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton. In ***Autoxylopyrocycloboros*** (2006), Starling chugged up Loch Long on the west coast of Scotland in a small steamboat whose boiler was powered by wood hacked from the sides of the vessel. Eventually the boat sank.

Simon Starling, The Nanjing Particles (After Henry Ward, View of C.T. Sampson's Shoe Manufactory, with the Chinese Shoemakers in working Costume, ca. 1875), 2008..Commissioned by MASS MoCA in North Adams, MA

"It was a self-defeating journey," he says, when asked if the piece was a statement about global warming (there is often a political component to his work). "It's also about a culture of demonstration," he explains, referring to a peace camp outside the Faslane naval base a few miles to the east of Loch Long. "It was as much about nuclear submarines as it was about the atmosphere."

Last year, journeys and cinema overlapped again, in a film commissioned by Modern Art Oxford that can currently be seen at the Radcliffe Observatory. Set in a film-editing suite, Starling's black-and-white documentary tells a complex, ambitious story, interweaving information about Captain James Cook, who observed and recorded the transit of Venus across the sun from the island of Tahiti in 1769, and the French astronomer Pierre-Jules-César Janssen, who developed a chronophotographic device to monitor the transit of 1874 that is recognised as a precursor to modern cinematography. ***Black Drop*** also contains footage shot by Starling on a volcano in Hawaii while he observed last year's transit of Venus.

The density of references in ***Black Drop***, which blithely jumps about in time and space, is typical of Starling's art. Much of what he does is predicated upon research and ideas that, more often than not, he only hears about after accepting a commission. "Often you just stumble across things," he admits.

"When I was asked to mark the transit of Venus, I had no idea about Janssen, or any of that stuff. I'm not somebody who gazes at the stars all the time. But one project leads to another. A body of research will grow a little shoot and become something else."

In the past, this research-heavy approach has drawn criticism, since it is impossible to "get" Starling until you untangle the many backstories knotted up inside his finished work. According to one critic, his art is as "dull as a sixth-form geography project". "I don't worry about negative press," Starling says. "I worry that I feel confident about the work."

Does he worry people won't have the patience to unravel what he's up to? "You can't make art with that in mind," says Starling, who has the intelligent yet hesitant delivery of a postgraduate physics student (he isn't afraid of slipping words such as "rhizomatic" into our conversation over coffee and carrot cake).

"If it feels interesting and communicative to me, then I just presume that other people are going to be able to deal with it, too. I try to balance my work with a more lyrical, poetic understanding so it isn't just a pedagogical exercise. I'm not standing on a soapbox. It's more subtle than that, I hope – and much more complicated."

Sooke, Alastair. "Simon Starling: interview." The Telegraph. March 11, 2013. Online.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Simon Starling
Loft Lift (stacked)
December 11, 2013–January 1, 2014

Public Art Agency Sweden
In front of the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design
Exercisplan, Skeppsholmen, Stockholm
Sweden

www.statenskonstrad.se

Loft Lift by Simon Starling is an art project initially created for the H+ redevelopment project, a new urban residential area in the harbour of Helsingborg, Sweden. In this project, Simon Starling explores and critiques the meaning of displacement, and inserts resistance and reflexion in a process of urban development.

Loft Lift (stacked) is a further elaboration on the project Loft Lift where a prototype was built out of three found dovecotes, small, fragile houses made of recycled material, that were removed and transported from their original environment and stacked on top of each other.

In its use of relocation, recycling and reconfiguration, Loft Lift (stacked) could be described as a model and a poetic expression that explores questions on urban development, gentrification, home, displacement, mobility and migration. The prototype embodies a unique and absurd logic—while providing a new home for pigeons. The project highlights values, such as the social context of the pigeon-fanciers' association that previously owned the dovecotes, cultural heritage and architectural values, that are frequently overlooked in the development of new neighbourhoods.

Simon Starling's Loft Lift is also part of the project Samverkan om gestaltning av offentliga miljöer ("Collaboration on the Design of Public Spaces") in which artists, designers, antiquarians and architects engage actively together in projects around Sweden, alongside urban planners and engineers, to find new approaches and solutions for schools, travel centres, housing developments, urban spaces, hospital grounds and parks. The project is organised by the Public Art Agency Sweden, the Swedish National Heritage Board, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, and the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design.

Loft Lift (stacked) is placed outside The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design in Stockholm from December 11. More information about Loft Lift and Collaboration on the Design of Public Spaces will be available in the entrance area of the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design.

Simon Starling was born in 1967 in Epsom, England. He lives and works in Copenhagen and Berlin. His works can be found in the collections of distinguished museums such as the Tate Modern, London; Moderna Museet, Stockholm and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. In 2003, the artist represented Scotland at the 50th Venice Biennial. In 2005, he won the Turner Prize for the work Shedboatshed that involved taking a wooden shed, turning it into a boat, sailing it down the Rhine and turning it back into a shed.

Simon Starling's Loft Lift was produced by Public Art Agency Sweden, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design, the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning and the Swedish National Heritage Board, in cooperation with the City of Helsingborg.

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OPEN STORES #03
SIMON STARLING

ANALOGUE ANALOGIES
(UNDER SMALL YELLOW HORSES / DOUBLE PATTI/ CHRIST ENTOMED [IN AN ARCHIVAL ENVELPOE]/ETC.)

STAATSGALERIE STUTTGART

Photography is where it all started with him, according to Simon Starling. He equally uses film, video, slide projections and sculpture in reworking and transforming existing objects an architectural spaces by adding layers to their histories and creating intriguing narratives. Yet on invitation to work with and in the stores and archives of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart he deliberately took the museum's photo archive and the photo studio as a starting point to explore analogue analogies across time and space and between works in the collection. For his exhibition in the series *Open Stores* he as created a new installation, *Analgoue Analogies*, which is based on this research. In the following conversation he and curator Alice Koegel reflect on his approach to his selection of material from the photo archive, on photographic representation, repetition and transformation, and on critical revisions of collections.

Alice Koegel (AK): Your first solo show actually took place in Stuttgart. Can you reminisce about it?

Simon Starling (SS): It was a group show and the first one I made in Germany almost 20 years ago now. *Die Zweite Wirklichkeit, Aktuelle Aspekte des Mediums Kunst,* was at the Wilhelmspalais in 1994. I was proposed for this show by one of the other artists, Hinrich Sachs, who was a very important early supporter of my practice. I made a work with an object found at the Weissenhofsiedlung. As part of the work I remember sending a
wooden crate from Glasgow with some recycled aluminium that had been poured, molten, into the crate. When it arrived in Stuttgart the crate had been destroyed by the post office

AK: Your projects often evolve from previous projects You once described your situation as »always approach[ing] sites with very particular baggage, crammed with thoughts and ideas still in embryonic form« and when you look into it »scraps or snippets of information picked up along the way« appear. What was in your backpack when you came to Stuttgart again to look at our collection? How did the idea for your *Open Stores* project come about?

SS: I've always had an interest in museum photography, installation images, that kind of thing. After leaving art school I made a living at that for a while - making images for galleries and
museums. I've often thought there might be an interesting exhibition to be made about the history of that genre and how it has affected both the way we understand artworks and the way
artworks get made. In 2007 I made a work at the Museum Folkwang in Essen that focused on Albert Renger-Patzsch who was the museum's photographer in the late 1920s and early 1930s. We remade some installation images he had made in the museum by reconstructing the necessary rooms (that had been destroyed in World War II) and reinstalling the works exactly as they'd been previously. I also came to Open Stores on the back of two somewhat similar invitations from Camden Arts Centre in London, where I realised the exhibition *Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)* (2010) and from Tate Britain where I made *The Phantom Ride* (2013). Both these projects reactivated the exhibition history of those institutions. I knew from the beginning that it made little sense to me to simply rehang bits of the collection of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, but when I learnt a little about the photography department that became the focus of the project.

AK: In fact, on the other hand you almost exclusively work on site-specific projects. Each work is deeply linked to the space or to the place from which it is conceived. So is your Open Stores project rather one where you found a home for a project, for ideas you already carried around with you? Or in what way is it rather site-specific? Or how are both notions - continued research and site-specificity-linked with each other?

SS: It was a combination of an already, live thought process and then the particulars of the museum and its rather special photography department. The department is in a process of quite dramatic change as all the traditional silverbased facilities are being removed. It felt like an interesting moment to reactivate them, one last time - the copy camera, the processing lab, etc. I developed the idea that the copy camera would act as an interface between myself and the work of the photography department and also between the past and the present. Everything has been sucked through its tiny aperture, as if through a temporal portal of sorts.

AK: Delving into stores and archives might be quite abstract to some. You have worked in many already. Can you describe your experiences whenstarting to work here in our stores and archives
at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart? What struck you?

SS: I guess you're always looking for something that connects something that resonates in relation to your own interests. When I started the project I thought about an early trip I made to German museums with my fellow MFA students from The Glasgow School of Art. It was 1991 or1992 and we covered pretty much the whole of the West German contemporary art museum scene in a week and by the end of it you had the impression that you'd seen almost exactly the same thing a dozen times. The formula seemed somehow set in stone - a Richter here, a Polke there, LeWin, Long, etc. All wonderful stuff but by the end I was playing at guessing what would come around the next corner. I think that situation has changed in recent years but being let into the archives and stores allowed for a different kind of story to be told. I hoped that by focusing not on the works of art in themselves but rather the way in which they had been photographed or documented, I might be able to plot another path, create another map - one that makes one think about the works in the collection by thinking about when and how and where those things have been photographed.

AK: What particularly struck you about the structure and methodology of our museum?

SS: I was struck by the rhythm of the experience that you have as a visitor. It's partly a result of the unrelenting quality of the collection (although having been in the stores I know this is in part a fiction) but also of the nature of the spaces (which as Douglas Crimp pointed out in his book On the *Museum Ruins*[01]' have, despite all the postmodern affectations, a very classical
plan) and the particular journey they promote. You march from one masterpiece to the next on a perfectly choreographed historical trajectory and it seemed like it might be interesting to break that rhythm a bit. Clearly this was very much the aim of the *Open Stores* series as I understood it. While it is clear that working with appropriated images no longer presupposes criticality, using images of art works, rather than the works themselves seemed to offer me some form of freedom, a certain kind of license. My access to the collection was initially gained through the somewhat dusty but perfectly organised filing cabinets of the photo archive.

AK: Today these cabinets, some still from the postwar period, contain some 10,000 photographic images. Negatives, positives, transparencies, ektachromes, contact prints, etc. - almost the full spectrum of picture formats and print techniques, reflecting the gradual change from analogue silverbased to digital photography. We started browsing through the small but fascinating section of installation views taken in the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, some of them even dating back to the late 1920s. Thus, as you said, they also contain material for a hardly written history of the relationship between artworks and their documentation. Then you followed another trail . . .

SS: Not exactly another trail, no. What I have been doing in the photography department archives is to identify certain key works in the collection that by their very nature have a resonance in relationship to photography and to notions

of reproduction, repetition and appropriation. Works such as Marcel Broodthaers' *L'Ensemble des Plaques,* Duane Hanson's hyper-real *Cleaning Lady,* Franz Gertsch's huge painting *Patti Smith V*, made after a snapshot, or Giorgio de Chirico's *Metaphysical Interior with Large Factory*, a painting within a painting, a factory within a studio, all became key nodes in a rhizomatic web that connects one work to the next. The collection is thus reassembled as a kind of "exquisite corpse" a set of fragmented body parts momentarily and provisionally collaged together in light of both their relationship to photography and to their particular exhibition histories. *The Cleaning Lady,* who embodies both pure deadpan pop and classical poise, haunts proceedings throughout, popping up here and there as if she really is cleaning the museum. The photography department has this wonderful old copy camera that makes beautiful pin-sharp images of images. This has been the key tool in the making of the work - each image from the archive has been placed under the camera with a grey scale to ensure faithful copies. It's a great leveller - a black and white image from the 1950s can sit happily next to one made a few days ago. Time is collapsed. In a seemingly typical contemporary flic-flac between analogue and digital technologies, the resulting analogue large format black and white negatives have then been digitally scanned and printed as large scale inkjet prints which are ranged out around the wall's, salon style.

AK: The idea of collapsing time into a single moment is a recurring motif in your work. For example, in your exhibition *Never The Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)* you selected and re-installed 30 works by 30 other artists in the very same spot where those works had been shown in past exhibitions at Camden Arts Centre and thus collapsed fifty years of exhibition-making. You once mentioned that it is a model for making an exhibition with and about an institution such as
the museum. Can you extend on that?

SS: The idea for the exhibition *Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)* at Camden Arts Centre evolved from a very personal relationship to the place, both as an institution I had been repeatedly visiting since my early twenties and one housed in a former library built by my Great Great Uncle, the architect Arnold S. Tayler. When I developed the idea I was convinced that the model that I was proposing to employ would have been used many times before. It seemed so obvious for an institution to track and conflate its own history in this way, but when I went looking for similar examples they were hard to unearth. It seemed like such a useful, engaging and self-reflective model to think both about the institution but also what I described as the various
»temporal trajectories« of the exhibited works - their relationship to notions of time. I spent many days trawling through their archives in search of works that worried at the idea of time. These works were then reinstalled in the exact place they had been the first time they were exhibited. This process involved referring to installation views and gallery plans and of course resulted in a number of awkward overlays and collisions - the temporal polyphony occasionally becoming a cacophony.

AK: You made a connection to an »exquisite corpse«, a kind of collective collage of words or images, which helps to free oneself from imaginative constraints or habits. Each collaborator adds to a composition in sequence by following a rule or by being allowed to see only the end of what the previous person contributed. Can you further describe the rather editorial process of piecing your findings and selection of reproductions of works from our collection in our photo archive together in their installation in the exhibition space?

SS: I have again developed a model for approaching the institution, its collections and history, all be it rather different to the one deployed at Camden Arts Centre. In part it uses the Surrealist parlour game, the »exquisite corpse«, as a guiding principal, a way of getting from A to B, from head to toe, from here to there. One important thing is that the images from the archive are photographed in such a way that you start to understand their physical nature - their particularity as objects as well as images. They are scrutinised through the clarity and precision of the copy camera. Thus establishing a flic-flac from object to image to object and so on, from the material to the immaterial. This is often a simple re-doubling of what is already at stake in the chosen works, be it a slashed white canvas
(Lucio Fontana), a photograph of a curling piece of photographic paper (Wolfgang Tillmans) or the surface modulation of a painted white bed sheet (Wilhelm Trubner). They are all works that worry at their own materiality while simultaneously acknowledging their life as images. A Giacometti is at once a silhouette and a sculpture, or a work in a room among other works and an image in an archive among other images. In the exhibition itself these images of images of images are greatly enlarged, reiterating their source materials' physicality, and then arranged around the walls in a seemingly provisional relation to on'e another - forming an endlessly mutable body. As well as these somewhat formal concerns, there are also other associative systems at work in the selection and juxtaposition of the images, a Broodthaers' Plaque depicting a pipe, finds itself next to Kertesz' image of Mondrian's pipe and glasses, which is in turn juxtaposed with an image of a pair of Mondrian paintings hung in James Stirling's postmodern museum. These two systems are interwoven throughout the sequence.

AK: The notion of repetition is central in your work. Despite all its theoretical weightiness it also stands for the obsessive and humorous and your work reflects both these aspects. Within the act of redoubling, repetition, re-taking often »something e1se« occurs. It creates transformation. What tempted you to also reconstruct and transpose the darkroom of the photography department of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart into the exhibition space?

SS: Every corpse needs a mausoleum and what better mausoleum for a photographic »exquisite corpse«, than a soon-to-be defunct black and white darkroom. It's a »backstage pass« to the means of production - a frozen moment - like Duane Hanson's *Cleaning Lady* - a snapshot behind the scenes in the museum. My first solo exhibition at London's Showroom Gallery in 1995 involved building a replica of that very particular gallery space in Glasgow to use as a workshop

significance of the mediation of art. How does this influence your approach to collections and archives such as ours?

SS: Art's mediation has of course been a constant concern in my practice, in part due to my interest in photography, as I have already mentioned, and in part because of the sometimes »performative« nature of my projects. I've always liked the idea of my works being somehow materially uncontainable, or existing in many forms - sculptures, images, publications, anecdotes, and so on - the works existing in the ether between these things. There is often a deferral or even at times an imminence implied in the experience of the work and thus mediation is key. Similarly, I have always understood the »machinations of modernism« as being inseparable from a discussion about art's relationship to photography and to ideas of reproductions and appropriation in general. It is clear that modernism in the visual arts began with the self-conscious quotation, which of course was later reinforced through the direct reuse of images through mechanical reproduction. We function in an increasingly cacophonic visual echo chamber.

AK: Evidently photography and photographic reproducibility play their part in relation to artistic engagement with the past. Can you extend on how this influences your approach to collections and archives such as ours?

SS: Thinking about this project and its relationship to the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, I have begun to realise how my understanding of this particular institution is so marked by Douglas Crimp's writings on the postmodern museum, which was in turn so much bound up in a discussion about photography, reproductions and appropriation. It seems fitting that Louise Lawler, whose photographs where used to beautifully illustrate Crimps 1993 publication On the Museum); Ruins, is also represented as a position in my selection of images from the archive.

AK: By addressing the relationship between artworks and their documentation you are also referring to the relationship between photography and memory and also the power of memory. This also touches on the issue of installation design - as a medium that of course manifests aesthetics but also values, ideologies and politics - and the role installation views as a relatively recent phenomenon play in it.

SS: Yes, it's very interesting to look at how museums present themselves and their exhibition making through photography. I'm currently looking at images of early Constantin Brancusi exhibitions in the United States. In particular images of an exhibition he made at the Chicago Arts Club in 1927. These images, that were commissioned by Marcel Duchamp, who had actually installed the exhibition, are extremely interesting as they only document the exhibition as a whole and not individual works. They talk very directly to the type of images that Brancusi himself was making in his studio and indeed to his notion of the studio as a constantly evolving cityscape, an architectural model of sorts. They must be among the first images of their kind and still, it seems, influence the way Brancusi's work is presented today. It is clear that while installation views are a relatively recent phenomenon they have also played an important role in the reception and understanding of artworks and exhibition making alike. A »good« installation view will always echo or distill the particular ideology of the exhibition in question. Another very interesting early example of this is the exhibition Machine Art at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1934. A show that emphatically decontextualised machine made design objects (or fragments thereof) and presented them in highly controlled museum environments. While photographs were completely absent from the exhibition itself, it is clear that the highly refined and selective use of photography, both in the exhibition catalogue and through the installation views that followed, was a key ideological tool in the making of that exhibition. Of course these are just two examples from the interesting history of the installation view.

AK: Inviting artists to work with collections is not a recent approach. It at least goes back to Andy Warhol's exhibition *Raid the Icebox* in 1970, an invitation of the Rhode Island School of Design, which challenged art exhibition practices. The title of the show punned on the museum practice of keeping objects in cold stores locked up away from the public. However, the approach to invite artists to work with museum collections has recently become even more popular not only amongst art institutions but beyond, for example amongst ethnological museums. Would you say there is a current comeback of collections, e.g. as basis for exhibition programmes?

SS: It is certainly a common trope within museum culture at the moment. This is a complex question and has many possible explanations. It is certainly a response by curators to artist's recent preoccupation with the past - the retrospective gaze or »historiographic mode«,[02] as Dieter Roelstraete has called it.

AK: And, if I may add this, to the »archival impulse«,"[03] as discussed by Hal Foster, to »make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present«."[04] It is not even new but was already at work in the early 20th Century.

SS: Yes, many artists have long been busy with the past and with the redeployment of existing art works and there is no doubt that this has fuelled the present interest among institutions in reactivating their collections with the help of such artists. I think there is also an economic and perhaps political imperative at work. If museums no longer have the budgets to commission new work from contemporary artists and there are not pots of money waiting to be spent on new acquisitions, then of course it makes sense for them to reinvigorate what they have by inviting artists in. Museums' collections are also what separates them from all the other Kunsthallen and Kunstvereine clammering for attention in an essentially over saturated market. In the case of ethnological museums where the very fundamentals of their collecting practices have been brought into question, these kinds of projects have another potentially regenerative and/or critical role. Artists are often very good exhibition makers and for many working with existing artworks is a very short leap from

or part and parcel of, their practices as a whole.

AK: Several of your projects have taken artists (e.g. Marcel Broodthaers, Henry Moore), art history and art institutions as points of departure. Even though you focus on modern art, your references also include e.g. the terracotta sculpture *Atlas* by Artus Quellinus (1609-1668) for a project for the conservation department at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (2008). Recently you contributed to the exhibition *Spiel der Throne* (2013) for the Humboldt Lab Dahlem, where in your video installation *Screen Screen* you confronted a Chinese imperial throne made by the imperial workshops in the Kangxi era (1662 - 1722) from the collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin with its own image. Also, tackling the history and function of art institutions is a recurring motif in your work and you have worked as a curator on a number of occasions since 2007. We already touched upon your projects *Nachbau* at the Museum Folkwang and *Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)* at Camden Arts Centre. Recently, in *The Phantom Ride,* you revisited artworks and exhibitions that have occupied Tate Britain's Duveen Galleries since the Second World War, replayed in a looping video. Another project curated by you was *Inaccessible Poem* at the Mario Merz Foundation in Turin, combining works by Mario Merz and other artists with your own by focussing on connections between art and science over the centuries. Thus, sometimes you select and display objects directly. Sometimes you mediate them through your films, videos, photography and installations. But all your curated projects tackle the history and function of art institutions, make the past present and invite viewers to think of the passages of artworks and institutions through time and through changing contexts. What links and what distinguishes these projects from each other from
your point of view?

SS: I don't believe I have ever really worked as a curator. Perhaps I curated when I co-ran Transmission Gallery in Glasgow back in the early 1990s or maybe in some sense in the context of the exhibition *The Inaccessible Poem* at the Mario Merz Foundation, but it's more a sense that my activity as an artist includes working
with existing art works and design objects - it is one facet of the artistic language I have developed. It's not just my practice of course but art practices in general, it's a symptom of inhabiting that cacophonic echo-chamber I referred to earlier. I don't see there necessarily being a productive differentiation between the role of the artist as curator and an artist as an artist. Each of the projects you describe evolved out of very particular circumstances - I always try to address each situation openly and without a preconceived methodology - letting my relationship to a space, a collection or a particular object develop accordingly. Of course I come with certain interests and preoccupations. As I said, a recurrent interest has been in the documentation of exhibitions and with the collective memory of an institution. You might say
that *Nachbau, Never the Same River, Phantom Ride* and now the *Open Stores* project, are all in part invocations to institutional ghosts. In the case of Marcel Broodthaers, Henry Moore or Artus Quellinus, those artists and their work become a type of surrogate for and within my own practice, they are processed or transformed through my own making and thinking in order to address the present.

AK: Do you see the return to collections mainly as (legitimately) making a virtue out of a necessity? As a museum curator my hope and concern are that it is also a chance for museums for an increasing critical revision, a reflection of their origin and for re-positioning themselves.

SS: I'm sure that is true, but in recent years this return to collections has often been rather reactionary and largely free from an accompanying critical rhetoric that perhaps accompanied
such practices at other moments in history. *Open Stores* and other initiative like it can potentially reopen that can of worms in an interesting new way.

AK: Also, exhibitions curated by artists pose interesting questions regarding status, knowledge, perspectives and boundaries. For example, what does it mean for an institution, if artists take on
tasks and decisions of definition within the institution, which are traditionally the job of art historians curators and exhibition designers? (How) does 'this offer new perspectives on the acquired and exhibited works and the collection? (How) does this shed more light on the background of collecting, exhibiting and museums' strategies and visions? What tempted you (most)?

SS: Perhaps the important thing is to find something that resonates with me and my work -something productive and thought provoking. The rest - those issues you describe - are in
large part a by-product of the »making«.

AK: How do you see your practice, operating in this apparent field of tension between artistitc autonomy and institutional guidelines or expectations? How do you see the role of the »artist as curator«?

SS: Most of the projects you described above where [sic] in fact my own responses to particular exhibition opportunities. In each case I made a decision to shift the emphasis towards the curatorial tendency in my practice. However as interest grows for works made in this way, something changes and certain expectations creep in. Both the project for *Open Stores* and *The Phantom Ride* at Tate Britain evolved out of these more prescriptive premises. My hope with *Open Stores* was to win back some autonomy by not dealing directly with the collection but rather its mediated life as images, by producing something. While I'm not an artist who
has an inherent mistrust of institutions or a necessarily antagonistic approach to such invitations, I suppose the tension you describe is between being a »maker« and a »service provider« of sorts.

01 Douglas Crimp, On the Museum's Ruins, Cambridge! Massachusetts, London (The MIT Press) 1993. In particular: Douglas Crimp, »The postmodem Museum«,

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Simon Starling

The artist continues to test the limits of what one can squeeze into – and out of – a work of art

By Mark Rappolt
Portrait and studio photography by Andrea Stappert

Here in Britain we've been having a problem with our beef. You may have heard about it. It turns out that some of the stuff that's labelled 'beef ' in our supermarkets isn't beef at all. It's horsemeat. I know that in some countries the horse is the superior delicacy, but here, where we never eat what we ride, this is serious stuff.

The police have even taken time off from phonehacking investigations and the infiltration of suspect political groups to 'raid' several British meat firms. It also turns out that some of this horsebeef came from processing plants in France. And that those plants bought some of it from slaughterhouses in Poland. And that international criminal gangs are probably involved. And that it's all the fault of an EU law that changed the definition of meat on food packaging last year, forcing British meat firms to buy-in approved meat from foreign suppliers. I could go on here. Really. There's a new twist to this tale almost every day, and googling is a dangerously addictive thing. But the point I want to make is that for the past couple of weeks most of our newspapers have been decorating their front pages with photographs of 'beef ' lasagne ready meals. And how and why an apparently ordinary object can come to represent a sophisticated network of international intrigue is precisely the kind of thing that British-born, Copenhagen-based artist Simon Starling has been exploring during his 20-something-year career.
Of course revealing the intrigue contained within an object doesn't have to be couched in quite as much hysteria as this beef business.

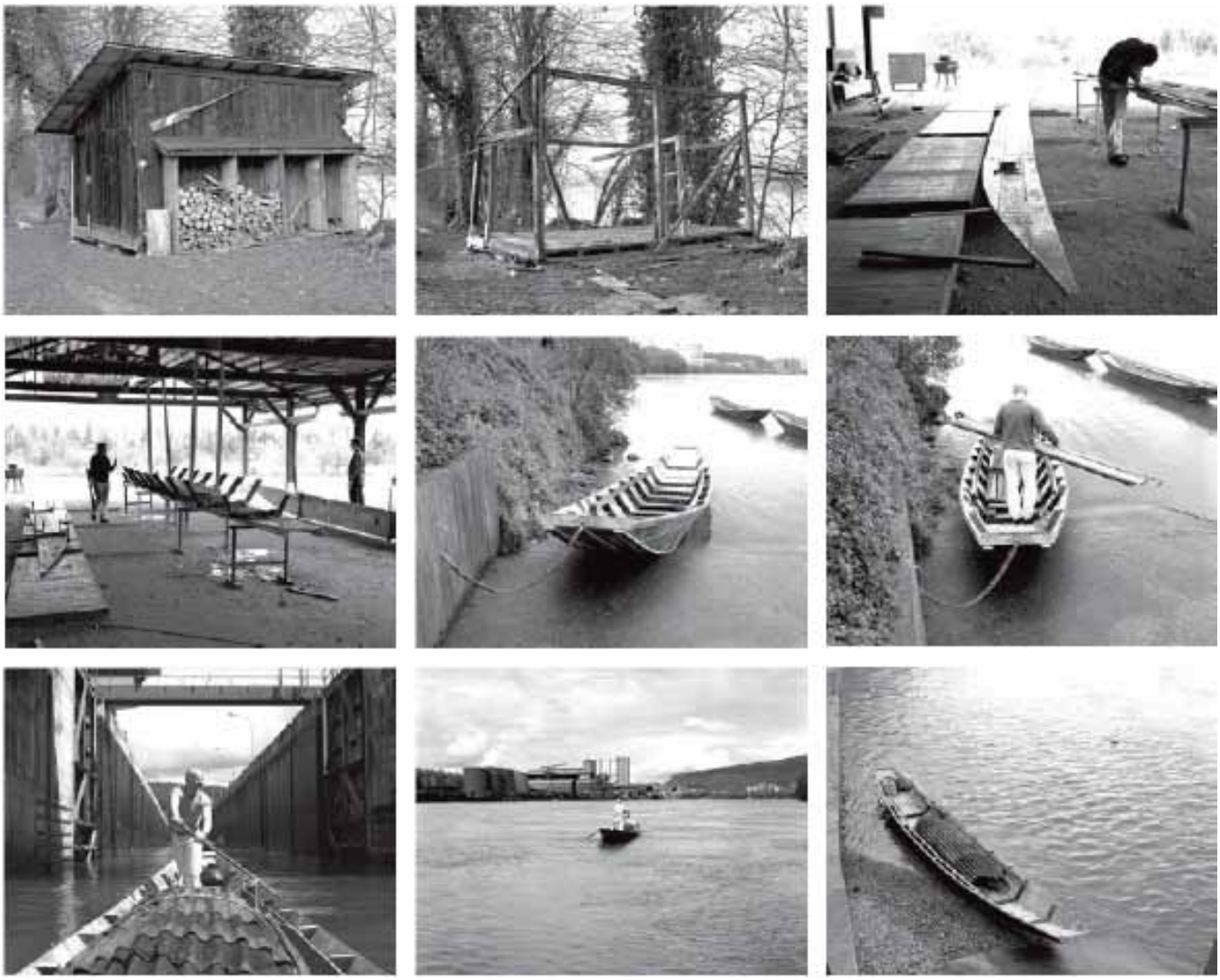
Starling first came to the attention of popular (as opposed to contemporary art) audiences when he won the 2005 Turner Prize. One of his prizewinning exhibits was Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No 2) (2005), a shed that he'd come across during a bike ride along the Rhine, disassembled (having persuaded the owners to let him have it), reassembled as a boat, rowed to a museum in Basel, then reassembled as a shed and exhibited. You might argue that this is a better story than it is a shed, but as a work of art, the shed offered up an object for ontological (what is the object, a shed or a boat?) and epistemological (how do we know this?) discussion, while celebrating human craft and ingenuity, and suggesting that objects don't endure with absolutely fixed identities and functions.

There are plenty of artists who have explored similar issues during the course of the twentieth century – from Magritte and his pipes to Marcel Duchamp and his readymades to conceptual artists such as Joseph Kosuth and his chairs – but Starling's work escalates such issues on a networked, more human and less strictly philosophical or linguistic register. Yes, it can be nerdily complex – and there's a certain pleasure to be had in tracing that complexity – and it can be just as absurdly simple (see the titles of the majority of Starling's works). But most of all it's work that chimes directly with our post-Intenet world, with its increasingly

this page:
Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima): The Mirror Room, 2010 (installation view, the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow, 2010), 3 of 6 wooden masks (carved by Yasuo Miichi), 2 cast bronze masks, metal stands, bowler hat, suspended mirror, dimensions variable. Photo: Keith Hunter. Courtesy the artist and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

facing page:
Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No 2), 2005, wooden shed, 390 x 600 x 340 cm, production photos, River Rhine, Switzerland. Photo: the artist. Courtesy the artist and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

preceding pages:
Work, Made-Ready, Kunsthalle Bern: A Charles Eames 'Aluminum Group' chair remade using the metal from a 'Marin Sausalito' bicycle / A 'Marin Sausalito' bicycle remade using the metal from a Charles Eames 'Aluminum Group' Chair, 1997, bicycle, chair, 2 plinths, glass, vinyl text, dimensions variable (installation views, Glasgow, Kunsthalle Bern, 1997). Photo: the artist. Courtesy the artist and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

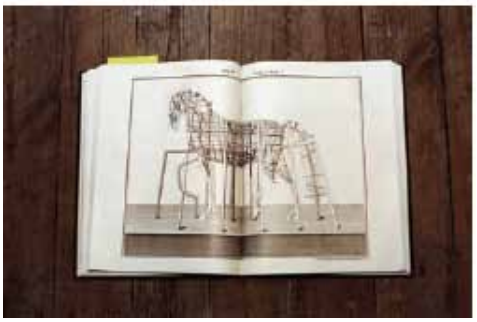


interwoven issues of environment, ecology, capital and globalisation.

Starling's work uses objects to generate sprawling tales – often concerning the fabrication, display and dissemination of art objects, woven together with their connections to the political, social and economic systems that more gene ally structure and locate the position of objects within the world. An early work, A Charles Eames 'Aluminum Group' Chair Remade U ing the Metal from a 'Marin Sausalito' Bicycle / A 'Marin Sausalito' Bicycle Remade Using the Metal from a Charles Eames ' Aluminum Group' Chair (1997), features objects designed to hold stationary and moving bodies. The bike (exhibited leaning against a plinth) looks like a bike, and the chair (on a plinth) looks like a chair. But we know, on some originary level, that the chair was once a bike and the bike was once a chair, and then start thinking about the similarities and differences between the pair of California-designed objects. The objects become subjects – or at least the two categories become blurred. Quite literally in *5 Handmade Platinum/ Palladium Prints of the Anglo American Platinum Mine at Potgieterus, South Africa, produced using as many platinum group metal salts as can be produced from one ton of ore (2005)*

for which Starling travelled to platinum mines to make photographs of the mines using platinum from the mines. Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) (2010–11) is a more complex and recent work that spans a set of Japanese masks, nine characters (icons of the Cold War), a film and a proposition for a theatrical performance. Like several of Starling's works, it also incorporates the story of an artwork – a Henry Moore sculpture that exists in different forms and contexts (Nuclear Energy, 1967, a large public monument in Chicago, and a small bronze edition, Atom Piece, 1964–5, acquired by the Hiroshima Museum in 1987, shortly after Moore's death, the first appearing to celebrate the dawn of the nuclear age, the second, to mourn it) – and then poses questions regarding how we know what this object is. 'I like the idea that works don't die but keep

STARLING'S ARTWORKS TEND TO OPERATE AS BOTH NARRATIVES AND OBJECTS; START THINKING ABOUT THE BOAT BIT OF THE SHED'S PAST AND YOU CEASE TO BE THINKING OF ITS SHEDNESS



this page, clockwise from top left: Simon Starling's studio, including sign by building entrance; two views of Denis Diderot, A Diderot Pictorial Encyclopedia of Trades and Industry; drawing table with catalogue from the Starlingcurated exhibition Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts), 2010, Camden Arts Centre, London, a working sketch for Starling's Trois Cent Cinquante Kilogrammes par Mètre Carré, Kunsthalle Mulhouse, 2012, 100 Chairs in 100 Days in Its 100 Ways, 2007, by Martino Gamper, conical borer and reamer

this page, from right:
interior view of Starling's studio, including, on the pinboard, a working sketch for Tate Britain Commission: Simon Starling, 2013, and the artist's Venus Mirror (05.06.2012), 2012; framed print from Illustrations for the Moon: Considered as a Planet, a World, and a Satellite, 1874, by James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, one of 25 prints exhibited in The Inaccessible Poem, 2011, Fondazione Merz, Turin, alongside work by Starling and other artists

being remade, reconstituted and retold in different ways,' Starling said in a recent interview with curator Francesco Manacorda.

It's tempting to think of Starling's work as the product of a postquantum (and with this, particularly for an artist who grew up during the last few decades of the Cold War, postnuclear) age, an age of uncertainty and instability. In 1927 the German theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg speculated that the more you know about the position of a particle, the less you know about its momentum (and vice versa). One could see Starling proposing something similar with regard to artworks. His artworks tend to operate as both narratives (velocity) and objects (position); start thinking about the boat bit of the shed's past and you cease to be thinking of its shedness.

The tricky thing, however, is judging to what extent the objects Starling displays are capable of divulging the narratives he conveys. Indeed many of his critics accuse him of loading objects with more ideas than they can communicate without the help of lengthy and involved background stories or explanations. But like the horsebeef (to take a relatively crude example), this is the case with most objects in the world, which are, in essence, accumulations of data tracing their passage through space and through time. Some of this data is obvious in the object, some of it isn't. It's a painfully cold January afternoon when I meet Simon Starling in Tate Britain's members' room. He's not allowed to discuss the specifics of why he is here. Not because he doesn't want to, but because exhibitions in these kinds of institutions need to be dramatic.

So no one can know the details until 12 March, when his instalment of Tate Britain's annual commission series opens to the public in the institution's neoclassical Duveen Galleries. The official press release (which I'm handed) promises an installation that's g ing to be ambitious, new and site-specific. That's the lot. It feels not a little ironic to be chatting around this void of information, given the centrality of data to Starling's work. Still, some of most intriguing projects have tackled the history and function of the art institution, the most recent example in London being Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts) (2010) at Camden Arts Centre, a show curated by Starling that featured 30 works by various artists installed in the exact positions they had been originally exhibited over 50 years of Camden exhibitions. That show made the institution's past present and invited the visitor to think of the passage of artworks and institutions through time and, like many of Starling's works, through changing contexts. If his project for Tate is anything like as good, it will be a show you won't want to miss.

IT'S TEMPTING TO THINK OF STARLING'S WORK AS THE PRODUCT OF A POSTQUANTUM AGE, AN AGE OF UNCERTAINTY AND INSTABILITY

Tate Britain Commission: Simon Starling is on view at Tate Britain, London, from 12 March to 20 October.

Mark Rappolt, *Simon Starling*, Art Review, March 2013, p.70-75.

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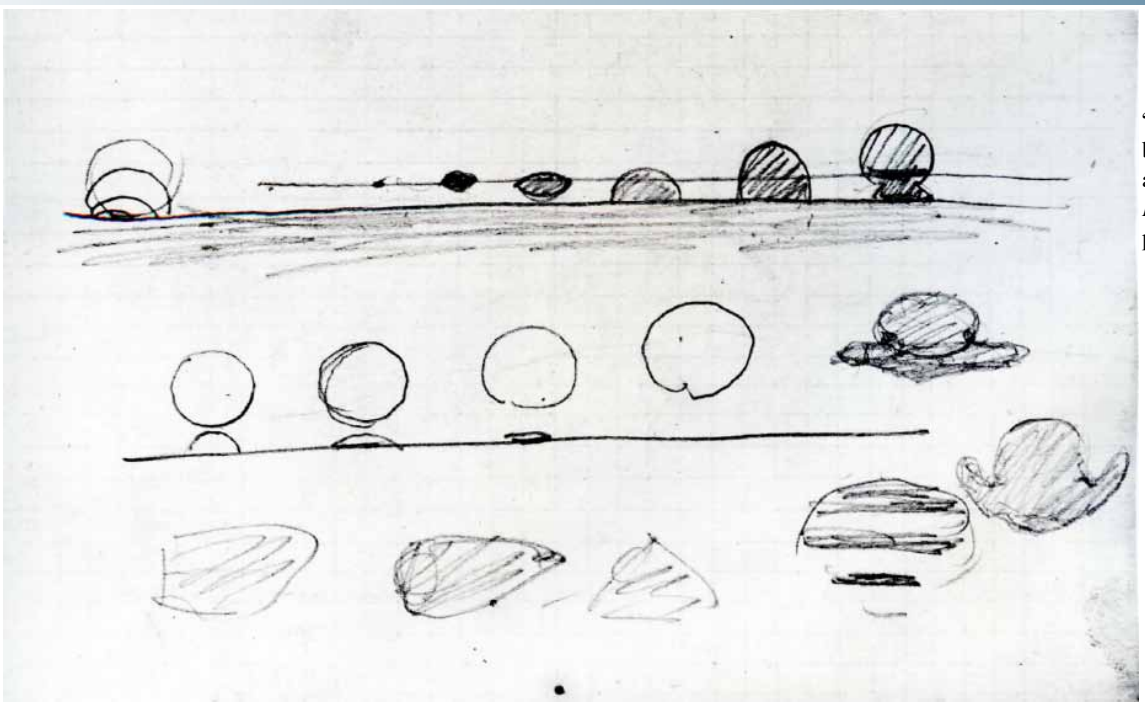

BIOPIC

"Simon Starling, The story behind an artwork, in the artist's own words" *Modern Painters*, September 2012, p. 43

Black Drop, 2012. Production still of a drawing from Jules Janssen's sketchbook depicting the black-drop effect. observec during the 1874 transit of Venus. 35mmfilm transterred to HD, 25 min.

Simon Starling

The story behind an artwork, in the artist's own words

THE ENTHUSIASTIC ATTEMPTS in 1874 and 1882 to use observations of the transit of Venus to refine the measurement of the mean sun-Earth distance, the so-called "astronomical unit," are perhaps best known for their failings. What is less well known is that cinema is, in large part, the illegitimate child of those 19th-century
scientific exertions.

For many, Etienne-Jules Marey's
invention of the chronophotographic gun, the photographic rifle, marks a key generative moment in the evolution of cinema. However, it is itself a direct descendant of an earlier device developed in 1874 by the French astronomer Pierre Jules Cesar Janssen: the revolver photographique. It was hoped that this telescope-cum-camera would allow for human-error-free analytical observations based on repeated timed exposures made of the transit of Venus in geographically remote locations. It soon became clear that the results of the 1874 observations were no more objective than those of the previous "non-photographic" ones, the various revolvers having produced very different and therefore incomparable results.

While the 1874 transit. itself a quintessential, if reductive, cinematic experience -a shifty planetary protagonist projected by a vast bulb-sun onto the imaginations of an earthbound audience-may not have impacted greatly on our understanding of the solar system, it could certainly be argued that Janssen's innovative approach to chronophotography had a huge impact on the future of cinema. It is little surprise, then, that one of the first films ever screened in public was the Lumiere brothers' footage of Janssen himself arriving for the conference of the Societe Française de Photographie in 1895. Filmed in Lyon by Louis Lumiere the morning of June 15 as the conference delegates arrived by riverboat, the film, screened for the first time that very afternoon. shows a stream of well-dressed people walking down the gangplank onto the quay. Fittingly, perhaps, the first delegate down the gangplank is Janssen.

The importance of this rare astronomical event to science has long since waned.
but we now-seemingly in the dying days of celluloid-based cinema-have a chance to reconsider the historical and technological impact of the transit. Together with a small film crew, I made a journey to the islands of Hawaii and Tahiti to observe and film the 2012 transit ofVenus as well as the sites of previous observations (Point Venus, Tahiti. in 1769, and Honolulu in 1874). Hawaii is also the death place of Captain James Cook (1728-79). who famously observed the distorting black-drop effect on the island of Tahiti in 1769-an effect that, in large part, led to Janssen's use of chronophotography some 100 years later. The recording of the event (almost certainly the last time this might be done using celluloid film stock) will form the basis for the production of a film, *Black Drop*, about the relationship between the transit of Venus and the history of cinema, framed by the parenthesis formed by the 1874 and 2012 transits. In the final stages of filming, this complex drama will be played out in a 35 mm film editing suite, as an editor attempts to bring structure and understanding to a rhizomatic array of geographical locations. historical information, and still and moving images. MP

Starling's work is on view at Casey Kaplan, NY September 6 through October 20.

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Menegoi, Simone "Critics Picks: Turin, Simon Starling," *Artforum.com,* January 6, 2012, <http://www.artforum.com/picks/section=it_ch#picks29963>

ARTFORUM

Turin

Simon Starling

Fondazione Merz
Via Limone, 24 10141 Turin
May 6—June 25

Exhibitions curated by artists who use appropriation pose interesting problems. The most compelling regards status: What is the boundary between a show curated by an artist consisting of works by others, and a show in which an artist appropriates others' work as part of his practice? Although appropriation is not at the core of Simon Starling's work, he often incorporates design objects and sometimes works of art in their own right into his pieces. Responding to the invitation to create a project at the Fondazione Merz, Starling has selected, in addition to his own works, a heterogeneous constellation of objects, among which are Sture Johannesson's experiments with computer graphics from the early 1970s, Faivovich & Goldberg's documents about an area of Argentina struck by a meteor shower, and the wonderful series "Illustration for the Moon; Considered as a Planet, a World, and a Satellite" created in 1874 by amateur astronomers Nasmyth and Carpenter, which features photographs of small-scale models of the lunar surface where Galileo meets Méliès. The selection overall orbits around the theme of astronomy, drawing parallels between creativity in science and creativity in art while touching on Starling's favorite themes: the interweaving of historical and cultural events that surround objects, as well as translation in the broad sense of the word—here, the displacement of artifacts or words from one system of cultural parameters to another.

Left: **Mario Merz, Movements of the Earth and the Moon on an Axis, 2003**, triple igloo: metal tubes, glass, stone, neon, clamps, clay, 19' 7" x 16' 4" x 9' 8". Right: **Simon Starling, 1,1,2, 2011**, carrara marble blocks, slings, pulley systems, rope, cable, shackles, dimensions variable.

The result, to return to our initial question regarding the distinction between artist and curator, is unclassifiable. Starling's exhibition can be considered a show "curated by" the artist (because it is a relatively traditional display of artworks) or, and with equal legitimacy, an exhibition "of" the artist (because of its ties with Starling's own work and its conceptual background). One might even think of "The Inaccessible Poem" as an artwork itself. Whatever is it, it's remarkable: The associations and comparisons presented within this body of work—which are as intellectually sophisticated as Starling at his best—marries, to paraphrase Nabokov, the precision of poetry to the imagination of science.
- Simone Menegoi

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Simon Starling. The inaccessible poem

A cura di Maria Centonze
mostra Fondazione Merz

From 29 October 2011 to 15 January 2012

An exhibition project conceived by Simon Starling

Featuring works by Faivovich & Goldberg, Sture Johannesson, Mario Merz, James Nasmyth & James Carpenter and Simon Starling

Curated by Maria Centonze

Looking through different generations of art production and scientific activity, the English artist explores the connection between art and science over the centuries. "All investigations into Simon Starling' multiple fields of interest converge - as curator Maria Centonze suggests - into a hybrid pace that is distinctive of his work. A pace that absorbs from science and feeds on technology but also attempts to redefine the boundaries of things and thought, to the point of generating microcosms of ideas that are to be connected or placed in contrast with one another. The entire exhibition unfolds as if the works, by narrating different stories actually revealed one canstant feature: the establishing of illusory distances-the altering of time and pace through empirical means that convey visions of a possible and just as truthful reality".

Starling offers a critique of technology, dismantling its very rule to ultimately deliver a transposition that has a rather poetic feel to it. In this perspective he highlights many points of contact with the work of the other artists.

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PRESS RELEASE

September 1, 2011

Simon Starling

South Galleries
7 October 2011 – 22 January 2012
Vernissage: 6 October, 19-22.00

This exhibition features two major works by Simon Starling (born in England in 1967, based in Copenhagen). Starling is one of the most significant European artists of his generation, and a master story-teller of a very contemporary kind. The jurors who awarded Starling the Turner Prize in 2005 singled out his "unique ability to create poetics, drawing together a wide range of cultural, political and historical narratives."

Both of the major works in the exhibition explore the notion of performance and one – which has been newly commissioned by Charlottenborg – involves a very special puppet play. The latter is a piece of theatre, The Expedition (2011), written by the artist and staged with the help of people from the Marionet Teatret in Copenhagen's 'Kings Garden'. To stage the performance Starling has built a replica of the marionette theatre and 'teleported' it into Charlottenborg. The Expedition is the latest in a group of works in which Starling has transplanted buildings and environments in order to play with space and time. It also reflects the artist's interest in re-presenting and transforming his own works, and acts as a kind of miniature retrospective – but one that is subject to hilarious distortions, and which is also highly suitable for children.

The exhibition also features an installation, Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) (2010-11), which centres on a group of carved Japanese Noh masks that represent the characters in a play. The scenario is based on an ancient Japanese story, Eboshi-ori, but Starling has peopled this tale with figures from a Cold War saga based around the British sculptor Henry Moore and his real and fictional contemporaries – including art collectors, historians and spies. The piece invokes the story of a sculpture, Nuclear Energy (1963–65), that Moore was commissioned to make in Chicago to mark the site of some of the earliest nuclear experiments. The commission was beset by political pressure – Moore even agreed to change its title – and when later another version of the sculpture found a home in Hiroshima it attracted its own controversies.

Starling's installation weaves together the stories of Moore's sculpture, and of this curious meeting of English, American and Japanese cultures. The group of masks faces a mirrored screen – evoking the 'mirror room', the dressing room in which Noh actors ritually assume their characters. On the reverse of this screen a film is projected that documents the making of the masks by a Japanese craftsman, interwoven with the stories of Eboshi-ori and of Moore's monument. All of the elements in this complex work demonstrate Starling's interest in the notion of shifting identities and material transformation, and reflect his sense of the inter-connectedness of past and present, and of the links that characterise our globalised world.

The exhibition is curated by Mark Sladen, Charlottenborg's director. It is supported by The Danish Arts Council (Committee for Visual Arts), Grosserer L.F. Foghts Fond and Neugerriemschneider (Berlin). Additional thanks to the National Workshops for Arts and Crafts (Copenhagen) and the Rennie Collection (Vancouver).

Kunsthal Charlottenborg

Puppet theatre performances
The Expedition follows a hapless adventurer as he attempts to get to New York by boat, a journey that is beset by calamities, and on which he meets a variety of characters such as an elusive zebra-striped beast and a sinister submarine. The work is based on four of Starling's previous pieces – each of which involve building, demolishing and sailing in boats – and which are here combined into a single slapstick narrative complete with a puppet version of the artist.

The play is 25 minutes long, and is suitable for children of three years and up. Admission for children under 16 is free. Adults accompanying children are admitted free (other adults pay standard Charlottenborg admission price: 60 kr / 40 kr concessions). No booking is required.

Performances are at 14.00 every Sunday afternoon from 16 October 2011 to 15 January 2012 (Not including 25 Dec and 1 Jan 2012; and please note that on Sunday 22 January the performance is at 17.00).

In addition there are special performances as follows:
· Open rehearsals: Sunday 9 October (14:00), Friday 14 October (18:30 and 20:00, Culture Night)
· Friday 21 October (14:00, school holiday performance)
· Special performances for schools (fully booked)

Puppet theatre talk
Wednesday 11.01.12, 19.00. Salon / Admission free.
Starling's The Expedition has been directed for the stage by Edward Lloyd Pierce, an American director and scenographer who is based in Copenhagen. Pierce has worked for many different companies in Denmark and abroad, and also has his own performance group, Krash Kompagni. For this evening's event Starling and Pierce are in conversation, discussing Starling's puppet play and its relation to his practice and to wider notions of theatre.

Sunday guide tours
There are guided tours of the exhibitions on various Sundays. The tours start at 13.00 and are led by young art historians. Tours are in Danish, and admission is included in the exhibition ticket. Tours are happening on 9 and 23 October, 20 November and 11 December.

Puppet theatre collaborators
Artist: Simon Starling
Theatre director: Edward Lloyd Pierce
Scenographer and puppet maker: Paul Arne Kring
Composer: Ole Højer Hansen
Puppeteers / actors: Peder Holm Johansen and Anya Sass
Coordinator at Charlottenborg: Liberty Paterson
Special thanks to: Jan Bleichner, Jan Dunkel, Uffe Holm, Maja McLaughlin, Carl Press, Marianne Tuxen, Annette Ueberlein and Lejf Nørst

Artist's biography
Born in Epsom, England, in 1967, Starling earned a degree in photography at Nottingham Polytechnic in 1990, and finished his studies in 1992 at the Glasgow School of Art. He had his first solo exhibition in 1995, and since then he has had more than 50 solo shows, including exhibitions at Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel (2005), The Power Plant, Toronto (2008), and Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima (2010). His recent group projects include Reality Check, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (2008), Altermodern, Tate Modern (2009) and Making Worlds, 53rd Venice Biennale, Venice (2009).

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Measuring the World

Heterotopias and Knowledge Spaces in Art

Kunsthaus Graz, Space01 & Space02, Lendkai 1, 8020 Graz
Duration: 11.06.–04.09.2011
Opening: 10.06.2011, 7pm
Curators: Katrin Bucher Trantow, Peter Pakesch

Museums classify, collect, group, consider and exclude. Reference systems are set up, and, with these, charts of an interpretable world are constructed. As part of their founding educational role, museums enlighten and, on a basis of facts and references, form an interpretation of their own existence given the conditions they find themselves in. Thus museums, like all exhibitions with the things they contain, set themselves up as pareddown portrayals of the world, becoming catalysers of a possible understanding and revelator of abstract realities, which – particularly in contemporary art – stand in a double Foucault-style space-time situatedness, and can be seen (both in terms of organization and inherently in the works) as part of a temporal and ongoing institutional debate. Particularly in recent times, artists have constantly and critically challenged this knowledge-storing duty of museums, examining it for its exclusiveness and excludableness, and have explored museum collecting as an artistic strategy of its own. People have endeavoured since primeval times to classify the confusing diversity and simultaneity of their impressions, observations and feelings, and to give them permanent shape and system. The earliest human systems artefacts are animal bones displaying regular, rhythmic incisions, and 'counting stones' bearing evenly applied ochre-coloured dots. Thus things were collected, processed and stored according to a defined pattern so as to save them from the depredations of time. The aim was (inter alia) to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the world around – in all its confusing and dizzying complexity – and in the best case pass that knowledge on so it would survive one's own lifetime and stand the test of time. The goal of the systematising principles was thus to expound knowledge and facilitate higher-level cognitive insight – knowledge about how the world functions, has functioned so far and will continue to function with logical consistency and maximum certitude. But making or inventing a system also constitutes a declaration as to what the world is and isn't like. Any attempt to design an ordering system thus has ontological implications. It sets up a viewpoint or outlook on the world. And this is the very point at which pictures play a key or crucial role in the design of ordering systems and the generation of an ontology. Images are views of the world whose specific structure generates, produces and renders visible a view of the world. Works of art that produce ordering systems or develop systematic structures generate an ordered image of the world. It is in this sense that the exhibition looks at the way contemporary art designs ordering systems and focuses on the act of measuring. This mapping process, which leads to a pareddown portrayal of connections and the interrelationship of meanings, acts as a symbol and the mirror of the human brain structure, with the analytical aim of discovering a single higher-level (ontological?) structure of knowledge.

Ultimately, this makes the question of a difference between scientific and artistic systematizations of knowledge the implicit theme of the exhibition, in that artistic systematizations endeavour chiefly to facilitate an aesthetic experience of ordering interconnections where on the one hand the world as it appears to artists in their work can be better understood and interpreted, and on the other hand the self, which is part of the world, acquires important aspects of its personal, social and cultural identity. In this way, connections to do with the intrinsic conditionality of the body, material, time, space – and also of an aesthetic experience – are gauged and measured in the works of the various artists. In a time frame from the late 1960s to today, cross-references open up in turn for the exhibition space that, retrospectively and in themselves, register whole cosmoses and mutually condition each other culturally and in terms of art history.

With contributions by Ai Weiwei, Alighiero e Boetti, Stefan Arztmann, Marcel Broodthaers, Wolfgang Buchner, Clegg & Guttmann, Hanne Darboven, Mark Dion, Charles & Ray Eames, Stephan Huber, Ulrike Königshofer, Peter Kogler, Joseph Kosuth, Zoe Leonard, Sharon Lockhart, Richard Long, Constantin Luser, Vera Lutter, Tobias Madison, Helen Mirra, Matt Mullican, Vik Muniz, Rivane Neuenschwander, Gabriel Orozco, Nam June Paik, Grayson Perry, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Dieter Roth, Ernst Strouhal, Thomas Struth, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Sofie Thorsen, Corinne Wasmuht, Christopher Williams, Terry Winters, Heimo Zobernig among others.

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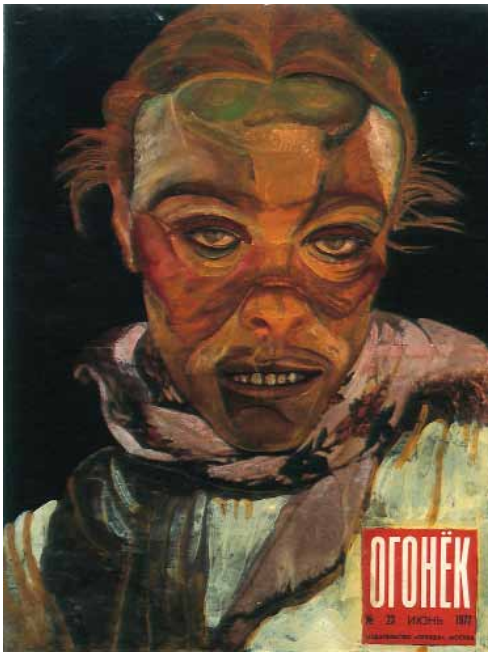
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2011

New Museum to Present "Ostalgia," a Survey Devoted to Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Republics
Multi-floor Exhibition Will Be on View from July 14–September 25, 2011

New York, NY… This summer, the New Museum will present "Ostalgia," an exhibition that brings together the work of more than fifty artists from twenty countries across Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics. Contesting the format of a conventional geographical survey, the exhibition will include works produced by Western European artists who have depicted the reality and the myth of the East. "Ostalgia" is curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Associate Director and Director of Exhibitions with Jarrett Gregory, Assistant Curator, and will be on view at the New Museum from July 14 through September 25, 2011, occupying all four gallery floors and the lobby.

The exhibition takes its title from the German word ostalgie, a term that emerged in the 1990s to describe a sense of longing and nostalgia for the era before the collapse of the Communist Bloc. Twenty years ago, a process of dissolution began, leading to the break-up of the Soviet Union and of many other countries that had been united under communist governments. From the Baltic republics to the Balkans, from Central Europe to Central Asia, entire regions and nations were reconfigured, their constitutions rewritten, their borders redrawn. "Ostalgia" looks at the art produced in and about some of these countries, many of which did not formally exist two decades ago. Mixing private confessions and collective traumas, the exhibition traces a psychological landscape in which individuals and entire societies negotiate new relationships to history, geography, and ideology.



Sergey Zarva, Ogonyok, 2001. Courtesy the artist and Regina Gallery, Moscow/London

Some of the works in "Ostalgia"—both from the East and West—describe the collapse of the Communist system and offer a series of personal reportages on aspects of life under Communism and in the new post- Soviet countries. Romanian artist Irina Botea, for example, re-enacts the 1989 revolution as it was broadcast on TV, while Phil Collins interviews teachers of Marxist theory who were left jo less and disoriented by the fall of the Berlin Wall. Legendary photographer Helga Paris presents her poignant portraits of female factory workers in divided Germany, while Vladimir Arkhipov displays photographs of his collection of found objects, improvised tools, and survival designs conceived by Russian citizens during the economic crash of the early 1990s.

A remarkable group of Russian artists constitutes the core of the exhibtion, presenting works that retrace the origins of Moscow Conceptualism, and others that point to new directions in contemporary art. Along with the austere paintings of Erik Bulatov, a site-specific installation by Andrei Monastyrski, the drawings of Dmitri Prigov, and the Andrei Monastyrski, the drawings of Dmitri Prigov, and the photographic interventions of Anatoly Osmolovsky, visitors will encounter the eccentric self-portraits of Alexander Lobanov, the everyday poetry of Olga Chernysheva's videos, and the ritualistic gestures of Victor Alimpiev and Evgeny Antufiev. The collective Chto Delat? will create a timeline of the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc. The portraits shot by Nikolay Bakharev on Siberian beaches will be presented along with the erotic fantasies of 14 year-old Evgenij Kozlov, collected in 150 pages from his Leningrad Album.

Composed as a visual archive, “Ostalgia” pays particular attention to the unique place that artists came to occupy in socialist countries, acting simultaneously as outcasts, visionaries, and witnesses. The miniaturized sculptural mocks-up by Hermann Glöckner will be shown next to the urbanistic fantasies of Pavel Pepperstein and the cosmic exploration of Stanislav Filko. The films by Polish workers rescued and archived by Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska will be presented in dialogue with Mirostaw Batka’s uncanny reinterpretation of religious sculpture. “Ostalgia” does not make a case for a unified history of art in the former Eastern Bloc: instead it illuminates similar atmospheres and sensibilities across nations, and points to dramatic differences, for “Ostalgia” is more about a state of mind than a specific place in time. history as represented by monuments and architectural vestiges; and an understanding of the artwork as a form of sentimental documentary that mediates between cultural pressures and individual anxieties.

Hermann Glöckner, Beam-Tree, 1970. Estate of Hermann Glöckner, Private Collection, Dresden

The video Dammi I Colori by Anri Sala—with his hallucinated vistas of the Albanian capital Tirana—chronicles the struggle to resuscitate a city with the collaboration of artists, while documentaries by Deimantas Narkevičius and

Some of the preoccupations that seem to unite the artists in “Ostalgia” are a romantic belief in the power of art as a transformative, almost curative agent; an obsession with language and particularly with its propagandistic use; the conception of a new aesthetic of the body to contrast with the heroic bodies of Socialist Realism; a fascination with the ruins of Tacita Dean depict the urban fractures caused by revolutions. Dean’s Palast is a visual eulogy for the imminent destruction of the Palace of the Republic, the Parliament of the former German Democratic Republic in Berlin. The divided city also returns in the 100 photographs that compose Michael Schmidt’s tour de force U-NI-TY.

Combining seminal figures and younger artists, “Ostalgia” does not follow a chronological perspective, establishing instead a series of dialogues between different generations and geographies. Focusing, for example, on the conceptual performances of artists as diverse as Ion Grigorescu, Andris Grīnbergs, Hamlet Hovsepian, Sanja Iveković, Július Koller, and Jiří Kovanda, the exhibition exposes local avant-garde practices and highlights international affinities, while questioning the centrality of Western paradigms. In the work of younger artists, many of whom grew up after the fall of the Iron Curtain, one can detect a tension to recuperate the past through individual perspectives. Andro Wekua, for example, reconstructs a mental panorama of his native Georgian town; Roman Ondák satirizes on what it means to wait in line in the East and the West. Andra Ursuta presents the interior of her house in Salonta, Romania, while Paulina Ołowska transports to New York the decorations of an old Polish puppet theater.

Zig-zagging across distant geographies and personal histories, “Ostalgia” composes an imaginary landscape, tracing the cartography of the dreams that haunted the East, for ultimately “Ostalgia” is an exhibition about myths and their demise.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue featuring contributions by Massimiliano Gioni, Boris Groys, Ekaterina Degot, Viktor Misiano, and others, as well as texts by a selection of the exhibiting artists.

Exhibition Support
Lead Producer: V-A-C, VICTORIA—the Art of Being Contemporary Foundation.
Additional support provided by Lietta and Dakis Joannou, and the Toby Devan Lewis Emerging Artists Exhibitions Fund. Artist travel is made possible, in part, by the Trust for Mutual Understanding. Support for Paulina Ołowska’s work is made possible by the Polish Cultural Institute Nikolay Bakharev, Relationship #14, 1989. Courtesy the artist in New York.

About the New Museum
The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art.
Founded in 1977, the New Museum was conceived as a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on

Tacita Dean, Palast, 2004. Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris

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Herbert, Martin, "Simon Starling: Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)," Artforum, March 2011, p. 259

ARTFORUM

Opposite page: View of 'Simon Starling: Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)," 2010. From left: Isokon/Marcel Breuer, Set of Three Nesting Tables, 1937' Isokon/ Marcel Breuer, Hat Box, n.d.; IsokonjMarcel Breuer, Long Chair, 1936. Left: View of 'Simon Starling: Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)," 2010. Background, from left: Graham Gussin, Fall (7200-1), 1998; Francis Alÿs, The Loop (Tijuana-San Diego), 1997; Andrea Fisher, Displacement III (Hiroshima), 1993. Foreground: Des Hughes, Norfolk Flint (with Prominance), 2007; Des Hughes, Norfolk Flint (with Boring), 2007 Right: Mike Nelson, A studio apparatus for Camden Arts Centre; an introductory structure: Introduction, a lexicon of phenomena and information association, futurobjectics, (in three sections), mysterious island*, or Temporary monument, 1998, mixed media. Installation view, 2010. All photos: Andy Keate.

"Simon Starling: Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)"

CAMDEN ARTS CENTRE, LONDON
Martin Herbert

FOUR TIMES SINCE 2005, Camden Arts Centre has crossed its fingers and handed the curatorial reins to an artist. After Tacita Dean, Steven Claydon, and Paulina Olowska, most recently it was Simon Starling's turn, and it was notable and apposite that this marked the first occasion when the neophyte curator's name surged above his or her chosen title, because "Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)"—mounted almost exactly a decade after Starling's own solo show here—was especially consonant with its selector's artistic practice: that of resituating and reanimating objects that have already lived one life.

This was a different kind of exhibition from its predecessors—and their own likely inspiration, Richard Wentworth's brilliantly idiosyncratic omnium-gatherum "Thinking Aloud," which toured to this venue in 1999-in another respect, too. Whereas Dean et al. plucked their selections from hither and yon, these thirty works by artists, designers, photographers, and architects had all been here before, with the exception of three new commissions making up the title's "Possible Futures." Starling immersed himself in Camden's archives, chose works from a half century of shows (the contents themselves dating back as far as the late nineteenth century), and reinstalled them, we're told, "in the exact positions they [previously] occupied." To traverse this spectral patchwork-cum-palimpsest was ostensibly to inhabit in microcosm the past fifty years all at once. And curating under these self-imposed constraints surely entailed a quietly audacious jigsaw-puzzling. It was a matter of both design and serendipity that Francis Bacon's searing Figure Study II, 1945-46, with its classically Baconian choreographing of screaming face, draped gray flesh, and obscurely ominous umbrella, spoke to Andrea Fisher's adjacent, near-abstract 1993 photograph of a burn victim from Hiroshima, given that the former artwork last occupied its spot in 1970 and the latter in 1993. Starling credited the nonlinear notions of history in the writings of Jorge Luis Borges and George Kubler as inspirations, and indeed, his show's splintering of time's arrow implied possible alternative trajectories for images and objects, and the eras they synecdochically represent. Aside from making the inclusion of a Mike Nelson installation almost inevitable—alternative realities and Borges being cornerstones of his labyrinthine propositions—this point was ventriloquized in Matthew Buckingham's 16-mm film installation False Future, 2007, whose narrative revolves around a lost progenitor of cinema working five years ahead of the Lumiere brothers. Elsewhere, an emphatic sense of the fundamental contingency that attends evaluating a historical moment through objects played off the Heraclitean idea behind the show's title: that the onward rush of water makes it impossible to step into the same river twice.

Previously on view at Camden in 1975, a platform brought together blueprints and promotional materials for Wells Coates's tautly modernist, early-1930s Isokon apartments in nearby Hampstead with a wooden reclining chair, a hat box, and a set of nesting tables designed for the project by Marcel Breuer. Opposite this ensemble was Keith Coventry's bronze cast, from 1994, of a sapling planted in 1983 in a park in an impoverished part of South London

and vandalized a few years later to such an extent that it couldn't survive: a shorthand for failures in the utopian social planning that loomed large in twentieth-century dreaming. This coupling might, under other circumstances, merely have abridged a well-rehearsed lament. But here, with multiple pasts pressing on it-hanging in the air was the question of how Breuer's work would have registered in the 1930s and in 1975, as opposed to now, juxtaposed with a post-utopian work from 1994—it felt precipitous and situational, less a fixed entity than a layering of interacting temporalities. Indeed, the exhibition was ghosted by a conception of objects in perpetual and articulate flux, of matter restlessly recomposing—not entropy, just change. The show thus mirrored the concerns of Starling's own art and its emphasis on transformation within specified boundaries: turning a wooden cabin into a working boat and back again, for instance, in Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No 2), 2005. The new pieces made for the show similarly addressed how meaning is modulated according to our knowledge of an object's history. In DeLorean Progress Report, 2010, for example, Sean Lynch paired handmade replicas of hoods, doors, etc., from DeLorean DMC-12 cars with photographs of marine life, to be viewed with the information that after the American-owned manufacturer went bust, the iron casts that had been used to stamp out body parts were reused as anchors for a fish farm in Ireland. In delving into Camden's archive and the wider past, "Never the Same River" seemed concerned not so much with arguing dogmatically for panhistorical connections as with a cheerfully amoral gaming with connotation, where a mixture of time, coincidence, and the curator's prestidigitations modulated how the dead speak. In this sense,

For Starling, curating under these self-imposed constraints surely entailed a quietly audacious jigsaw-puzzling.

Susan Hiller's slide projection with sound track Magic Lantern, 1987, effectively telescoped Starling's reflexive take on curating. This work consists of primary-colored circles overlapping on-screen, creating secondaries and tertiaries that suggest intersections between one world and another, as archival recordings play of Latvian parapsychologist Konstantin Raudive's "electronic voice phenomena": rhythmic static or stray radio signals that are supposedly the speech of the deceased accessible in the electronic ether. Noises are heard—one is allegedly the voice of Vladimir Mayakovsky pronouncing his own surname. The tape plays again, and we apprehend the sound as doubled: as the unfixed artifact that it is, and the way someone wants us to hear it. *

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Degen, Natasha, "Simon Starling: The Modern Institute and Camden Arts Centre," Frieze, March 2011, p. 133

frieze

Simon Starling

Simon Starling
Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima): Mirror Room
2010
Installation view at The Modern Institute, Glasgow

THE MODERN INSTITUTE AND CAMDEN ARTS CENTRE,
GLASGOW UK, LONDON, UK

Henry Moore's four-metre bronze sculpture Nuclear Energy was unveiled at 3:36pm on 2 December 1967, precisely 25 years after scientists at the University of Chicago achieved the first controlled self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction, the event which initiated the atomic age. It was a commemorative gesture, installed on the exact site where physicist Enrico Fermi staged the experiment. Although Moore had originally named the sculpture Atom Piece, he allowed the commissioners to re-title it; the university feared that 'Piece' might be misconstrued as 'Peace' and thus perceived as a political statement. In 1987, the city of Hiroshima purchased one of the working models for Nuclear Energy, which went on display at the entrance of the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, but was moved four years later when the Japanese Hydrogen Bomb Survivors' Committee objected to the sculpture as a monument to atomic bomb production.
In Simon Starling's Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima): Mirror Room (2010), the sculpture's various histories are collapsed into one polyvalent narrative (the exhibition toured from The Modern Institute to the Hiroshima City MOCA, where it is currently showing). Conflating references to Japanese Noh theatre, the Manhattan Project, Goldfinger (1964) and the Cold War-era art world, the installation comprises eight masks and a single hat (a replica of Goldfinger's henchman Odd Job's lethal steel-rimmed bowler) mounted like heads on anthropomorphic iron tripods (a booklet with the back-story also accompanies the exhibition). These objects tell a story based on Eboshi-ori, a 16th-century Noh play in which a young noble boy (named Ushiwaka) disguises himself to escape enforced exile and begin a new life in the east of Japan. Starling, however, assigns each role to one of the players in the Nuclear Energy saga – a motley crew of objects and personages, both real and fictional.

Nuclear Energy itself is given the role of Ushiwaka, the protagonist from Eboshi-ori. Moore is cast as the milliner who disguises the young boy by making him a highly encoded eboshi hat. The art historian and Soviet spy Anthony Blunt is given the role of the hat-maker's wife, who in the Noh drama reveals a startling secret past. (Blunt was also a staunch supporter of Moore. A second Moore sculpture features among the players: Warrior with Shield (1953–4), which was purchased by the Art Gallery of Ontario on the recommendation of Blunt.) Fast-food icon Colonel Sanders plays the Innkeeper, who welcomes Ushiwaka and warns him of imminent danger. (As the face of the KFC franchise, Sanders serves as a representation of American influence in Japan; KFC also makes an appearance in Goldfinger, in a scene set in Fort Knox, Kentucky.) In the role of the opportunistic bandit Kumasaka is Joseph Hirshhorn, the multimillionaire-cum-voracious art collector, who owned dozens of works by Moore and whose wealth was derived from uranium mining (the ore of which was used to produce nuclear weapons). In Eboshi-ori, the bandit Kumasaka is fought off by a gold merchant, Kichiji. Starling assigns this role to James Bond himself, as portrayed by Sean Connery in Goldfinger, who poses as a gold merchant to ensnare the film's eponymous villain.

Handcrafted by Yasuo Miichi, a master mask-maker from Osaka, the carved wooden masks make Starling's spatial and temporal compressions visually manifest. They are amalgams: their assigned identities are uncannily recognizable, yet they also look like traditional Noh masks, with real hair and meticulously applied pigment. Connery (as Bond) is given Asiatic eyes, arched brows and a bow-shaped mouth; Blunt is depicted with delicate feminine features, his eyes closed with only narrow slits for peep holes (characteristic of female Noh masks); Hirshhorn is shown as a fiery demon, with a face like a furious Fu dog (similar to the Kijin-kei, or Fierce God, type of Noh mask). Starling risks losing the viewer with these strange recontextualizations, but the work has striking visual impact, as arcane references coalesce into an elegant, minimal installation. Like an iceberg, the narrative is

mostly submerged, with the physical installation only alluding to the depth of Starling's discursive process as elucidated in the exhibition guide.

For a concurrent exhibition at the Camden Arts Centre, 'Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)', Starling reinstalled works by 30 artists and designers that were exhibited there sometime in the past 50 years in the exact positions they previously occupied. The works were laid out like a chain of digressive thoughts: John Riddy's photograph London (Willow Road 2) (1998), taken from the interior of Ernö Goldfinger's nearby house in Hampstead (a Modernist structure which so incensed James Bond author and neighbour Ian Fleming that he borrowed Goldfinger's name for his most famous villain), was hung near a Goldfinger-designed chair, which was juxtaposed with a late-19th-century Liberty & Co. chair. Erudite and playful, 'Never the Same River' presented time and space as fluid and mutable. Asserting the presence of history in exhibition-making, Starling again rendered history art and art history.

Natasha Degen

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St IVES
TATE

Simon Starling: Recent History

5 February — 2 May 2011

Tate St Ives presents the first major exhibition in the UK of the work of Simon Starling since he won the Turner Prize in 2005. The exhibition draws on important works made in the last five years; almost all previously unseen in the UK. In addition, Starling will create a major new site specific work, commissioned especially for the show.

Employing video, film, slide projections, photography and sculpture, Starling's work reveals rich, unexpected and complex histories, brought to light through his forensic—if sometimes elliptical—unravelling of an image, object or event. The exhibition's selection of works, in the very particular context of rural Cornwall, emphasises Starling's long-running interest in the relationship and interplay between culture and nature, and his ongoing examination, excavation and transformation of the material world.

Simon Starling
Autoxylopyrocyloboros 2006
© courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute, Glasgow

A major new commission will be created by Starling, further developing his interest in architectural spaces and their histories. He will recreate an exact, full size replica of a gallery space from the Pier Art Centre, Stromness —where he recently showed—in the spectacular curved sea facing galleries at Tate St Ives. Collapsing together two geographically disparate spaces—one at the northern most extreme of the British Isles and the other at the far South West—the work will appear as a kind of 'ship in a bottle', incongruously reconnecting two remote sites which share a strong cultural history and interest in post-war British art, and in particular the St Ives Modernists.

The exhibition will also include The Long Ton, 2009, a sculpture featuring two rough-cut white lumps of marble suspended in space. The larger of the two stones, an import from China weighing one ton, is counterbalanced by approximately 250 kg of Italian marble thanks to a 4:1 ratio pulley system that allows the two stones to sit in perfect equilibrium. On closer inspection it is clear that the two stones have exactly the same form, the Italian stone having been precision laser-cut to exactly the same, although reduced, specifications as the larger Chinese stone. Despite its long voyage to Europe, the Chinese marble has a similar market value to the European stone one-quarter its weight.

Also on display will be his work Red Rivers, 2008 a video work which brings together the stories of two journeys made a century apart: the first a nineteenth century anthropological expedition into the Congo to capture and document the elusive and little known Okapi; the second a journey made by Starling down the Hudson River in a handmade strip canoe, culminating at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City where specimens of the Okapi finally ended up in a famous 'diorama'. Taking the form of a series of still images, the video is as much a meditation on the fast disappearing processes of photography itself.

One Ton II, 2005 deals very directly with the material world. Making explicit the huge amounts of energy used to produce tiny quantities of platinum, one ton of ore, mined from the South African open cast mine pictured in the images, was needed to produce the five handmade platinum prints that comprise the work. In this way a simple but intrinsic relationship is established between the processes and economics of mining and refining platinum, the images of the site itself, and the chemical photographic process used in the production of the work. Inventar Nr. 8573 (Man Ray) 2006, is a slide projection that performs and documents a similar material excavation—this time at a microscopic level—on a photograph by Man Ray. The camera slowly zooms in on the photograph until it moves into the very surface of the print itself, finally revealing the individual silver particles that make up the image.

Continuing this interest in mining, excavation and geology, Starling will produce a new work, drawing on recent research into the Cornish China clay mines, emphasising the contemporary use of China clay in the paper industry as a glossy coating for fine papers.

British artist Simon Starling was born in 1967 and studied photography and art at Maidstone College of Art, Trent Polytechnic Nottingham and Glasgow School of Art. In 1999 he was the first recipient of the Blinky Palermo Grant, open to artists from all over the world. In 2005 he won the Turner prize. Starling lives and works in Copenhagen and Berlin. He is a professor of Fine Art at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main.

Simon Starling: Recent History is a collaboration with the Contemporary Art Centre, Malaga, Spain; a full colour publication will accompany the exhibition.

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PROJECT FOR A MASQUERADE (HIROSHIMA)
By Natsuko Odate

Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) (2010–11), with hand-carved Noh mask for the character Kichiji the Gold Merchant/James Bond in foreground and, from left to right in background, masks for the Hat Maker's Wife/Anthony Blunt, the Hat Maker/Henry Moore, and the Innkeeper/Colonel Sanders. All images: Photo Keiichi Moto (CACTUS), courtesy Simon Starling and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow.

In early 2011 Simon Starling's Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) was unveiled in an eponymous exhibition at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art. The project linked Cold War intrigue, James Bond characters and art history through the commissioning of a group of new masks for the Noh drama Eboshi-Ori (16 c), for which figures such as the British sculptor Henry Moore and the pioneering nuclear physicist Enrico Fermi were inserted into the traditional roles. The completed masks were then displayed alongside a film documenting their making.

In Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima), Starling tests the limits of two highly formalized expressive languages - Noh theatre and contemporary sculpture - through the delirious layering of multiple narrative relations among the objects he has created, simultaneously expanding and exploding their capacity for communicating meaning. For its ingenuity and delicacy in manipulating different cultural references, and its combination of sheer physical presence with deft conceptual subversion, this stands out as one of the most memorable projects of 2011.

As part of our year-end special issue, ART iT presents an interview with Simon Starling, conducted in Hiroshima earlier this year, as well as an excerpt of an artist talk with additional context about the conceptualization and production of the work.

ART iT: It was very interesting to see the film and the masks for "Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)." When I first heard about the project concept, I anticipated the work would end up containing an element of exoticism, but you managed to create something entirely unexpected.

(SS): Yes, it was very important to do something different. When I started the project, I was quite happy when I visited the Noh mask maker Yasuo Michii in Osaka. Because mask making is a traditional craft, I had imagined he would work in an old, elegant Japanese house, but he

Installation view of Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art.

actually works out of one room in a tiny apartment in a rather unglamorous part of town - the complete opposite of my expectations. And during filming it was really nice how the funny wallpaper gave everything a different atmosphere.

That was a good experience, because there is always a danger when you deal with historic material of falling in to the trap of exoticism. My work is about the mask making, but it's also not about the mask making - it's a device to tell the stories, in a way. I love this idea that Yasuo's tiny room where the whole film was made becomes a portal into this global, historic set of events. It seemed like a good dramatic model for the film. It was also good that Yasuo is such a passionate baseball fan. The most exciting thing for him was making the Colonel Sanders/ Innkeeper mask, with its underlying reference to the Hanshin Tigers, and going to Hanshin Koshien Stadium to make photographs of it. It was a nice hook to get him involved as well - he was understandably quite reserved when I first approached him.

ART iT: A major factor in the project is the idea of site-specific context, and the connection between Henry Moore and Hiroshima, and Henry Moore and the sculpture commissioned by the University of Chicago to commemorate the anniversary of the world's first self-sustained nuclear chain reaction. What happens with this work when it is exhibited outside of its specific context? Can it still achieve a similar effect?

SS: Yes. I already showed the masks in late 2010 at the Modern Institute in Glasgow in an exhibition titled Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima): The Mirror Room, conceived as a notional antechamber to the exhibition here in Hiroshima. There's always this process of rethinking the projects every time they're shown, and one of the nice things about making these bigger exhibitions is that you get to reinvent the older works in relation to the new works, so you can piece together a series of projects, which start to have different resonances when abstracted from their original contexts.

I've done quite a few works that have been proposed for one place and then ended up somewhere completely different.

ART iT: In the works there is a kind of intersection or contact point between time and distance. Is that something that happens by chance or through design? What is the relationship between the temporal axis and the spatiality or physicality of the works?

SS: I don't have a very structured methodology for generating the work. Of course it involves a fair amount of research, in the sense of sitting in libraries and reading books, but there's also a lot of serendipity involved - accidents and collisions that happen along the way - and it's just about having a nose for when those connections start to make sense, and hold two things in some kind of equilibrium for a moment.

Sometimes it's a conversation in a pub, or even an article in an in-flight magazine. Projects evolve, and then one project evolves from the other. In a way, the Henry Moore project in Toronto, Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore) (2007/08), triggered these initial thoughts about Moore as a player in the Cold War and how he functioned in that situation. There's a connection between the British art historian Antony Blunt and Moore in Toronto: Blunt was the man who initiated the first North American purchase of Warrior with Shield, by the Art Gallery of Ontario. But Blunt was also a spy working for the Soviets, while the zebra mussels infested the great lakes at the end of the Cold War, when the whole system broke down. These are the kind of absurd, fragile connections to which one has to give some sort of form.

I often discuss the idea that eachwork is a constellation of things that are spinning around each other. It's a bit like the logos for the US

Installation view of Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission or the Atomic Energy Commission, with these atoms spinning around. It's about making the gravitational force of the project strong enough to hold those things in some kind of orbit.

In the case of this current project, Yasuo's craftsmanship is one of the things that cements everything together. The intensity of those masks as objects is extraordinary - they are amazing sculptures - and that somehow allows all the fragile links to hold, even though everything's vibrating and could fall apart at any moment. Somehow the things have to be objects. Ultimately it's still about making sculptures, about getting that right, and if it's not right, then it doesn't function.

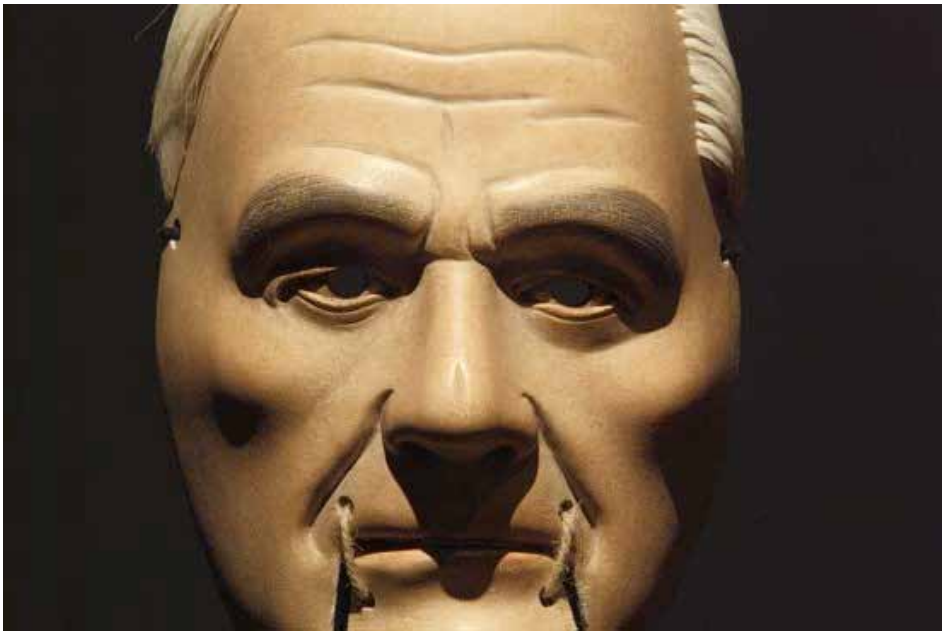
ART iT: In general, as you start to visualize the material, how do you determine the form it will take?

SS: This is slightly disingenuous, but I think the best work makes itself. If the concept is right, then the rest follows: it's about me not making decisions. That's an oversimplification, of course, but I think there is an element of that. Things have to be the way they are, somehow.
If you go looking for something with a clear enough idea, everything falls into place. When I made the Moore piece with the mussels, I went to Toronto with very little idea of what I would do. I knew there was a big Henry Moore collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and I thought that might be an interesting thing to see. But before visiting the gallery I took a ferry to these islands on the lake where there's a hippy commune, and on the ferry there was a bicycle that somebody had pulled out of the lake, completely covered in mussels. I thought, wow, that's an amazing thing. Then later on in the day, when I went to the museum and saw Warrior with Shield, I suddenly realized, what if these two things can be made to collide? So it's sort of thinking and not-thinking at the same time.

ART iT: With your work on Moore it's interesting because there is a kind of duality to it through the presentation of multiple realities. Yet although Moore comes off in a somewhat negative light, you seem to refrain from denouncing him.

SS: In a way, Moore is a surrogate for myself as an artist who has been confronted with similar problems and issues in navigating his career. I do not wish to portray him as evil or deceiving, nor do I wish to judge him, even though the project highlights a duality that is apparent in his work. We all make business-oriented decisions in our lives, and then balance those with ideological decisions; I do that, too. It's just been a very fruitful way to continue my own investigation into site-specificity and context and thinking about how to deal with that in a critical way. I suppose I hope to problematize my own practice through looking at his. Of course, I'm completely colluding: I went to the Henry Moore Foundation in the summer and spent a week in their archives, and I've had significant contact with Mary Moore, his daughter. If what I'm doing is a critical practice, it's also very much made from the inside.

In fact, there's a very nice story that Mary Moore told me. She came to the opening of the exhibition in Glasgow, and there was this amazing moment when she met the mask of her father, which was installed at just about his height. She was quite taken aback, but she told me afterwards that her son, Gus, an actor and Moore's only grandson, was in a BBC film about the bombing of Hiroshima, in which he played the bombardier who pressed the button. She sent me an image of Gus in this costume standing in front of a replica Enola Gay, and it was so strange to see. She was so excited to tell me this because she knows how crazy I am for these kinds of weird connections between things. It's funny how these things grow when you put them out into the world, like a strange fungus or something.



Detail of the hand-carved Noh mask for the character of the Hat Maker/Henry Moore.

ART iT: What is also impressive about the work is that despite containing such an amount of information, it avoids being didactic.

SS: For me it's important that there are different levels of engagement with the work, and various ways to navigate it. You can go deeper and deeper into the project, but it's important that there's at least an initial phenomenological, direct, haptic experience, a touchy-feely experience of a "thing," which you either take or you leave. And then that experience leads you to navigate what's there and maybe sit and watch the film for 25 minutes or read the texts related to the different characters. Everybody comes to the work with a different knowledge and understanding, and of course there are aspects to which viewers will respond differently when it's shown here as opposed to, say, in the US. The Colonel Sanders-Randy Bass subplot has a resonance here that it might not in Washington, DC, whereas the figure of Hirshhorn will immediately elicit some recognition in Washington and less so here.

To make work that is so heavy with information is difficult to pull off, but I think this time I've got it just right, given the balance between the film and the masks. I also like the idea that there's no beginning or end. The masks are the end result, but they're also a proposal for something that might happen in the future; the film that concludes the work is also a look back at how it began - it's a rather unstable structure. Looking at it, you're always thrown back on yourself.

I don't know what is the work. It's quite exciting to me that the work could be the play being performed in a temple somewhere, that it's not just about the objects being on display. I like works that get tested in the world, that have a life outside the gallery space. That generates the aesthetic of the work as well. You make a mask in a particular way so that it can be worn for an hour-and-a-half-long performance. It's stuff to be used and tested; it's a kind of prototype.

Simon Starling's exhibition "Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)" was on view at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art from January 22 to April 10, 2011.

"Odate, Natsuko, Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima), Art-IT Asia (http://www.art-it.asia/u/admin_ed_feature_e/dzQ72G4gJpFcV0Rk6s5P/), 2012"

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Hiroshima MOCA
Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art

Simon Starling
- Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)

Saturday Jan 22 - Sunday Apr 10, 2011

Exhibition outline

Simon Starling: Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) will be the first exhibition in Japan to present a range of major and new works by the British artist, Simon Starling. Starling's artistic practice investigates the passage of time and processes latent in objects. Embodying the rigorous approach to research of an academic, the exploratory practices of an adventurer, and the rich imaginative sensibilities of an insightful artist, Starling's works break new ground in artistic expression. The artist's methods of production involve extraordinary endeavours, and rising to the challenge, he immerses himself fully in the journey, on occasion literally travelling great distances by such means as canoe, bicycle and automobile.

Exposing the historical depth of place-specific events in the process, he charts ways in which the global trends of our times create overlaps in different societies, seen through the complex relationships between phenomena, people, and time periods evident in his works. The rich and varied world found in the explorations of Simon Starling adds an important perspective to the continuing focus on process-driven art as a representative form of contemporary expression.

This exhibition includes a display of new works created as an extension of the artist's research project on the theme of Hiroshima. The works are based on Starling's research on Henry Moore (1898-1986), inspired by his sculpture Atom Piece owned by Hiroshima MOCA. Creating their masks, Starling sheds light on people related with Moore, fusing them with characters from the Noh play 'Eboshi-ori'. The works also address topics such as the Cold War structure and cross currents in sociopolitical and cultural history linked to the Moore sculpture and Hiroshima, exploring the international ties and narratives connecting these areas.

About the Artist

Born in 1967 in Epsom, England, Simon Starling currently resides in Copenhagen, Denmark. A graduate of the Glasgow School of Art, he has been exhibiting internationally since the mid-1990s. Among his many solo and group exhibitions, Starling participated in the Venice Biennale in 2003 and the Gwangju Biennale in 2006. He was shortlisted for the Guggenheim Museum's Hugo Boss Prize for contemporary art in 2004, and was recipient of the prestigious Turner Prize for his outstanding achievements in contemporary art practice in 2005.He also curates and is currently preparing an exhibition entitled 'Never The Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)' at Camden Arts Center, London.

<<Autoxylopyrocycloboros>> 2006
Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York. Photo: Ruth Clark

<<Island for Weeds (Prototype)>> 2003
Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow.
Photo: Jeremy Hardman-Jones

<<Tabernas Desert Run>> 2004
Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow
Photo: Simon Starling

<<Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)>> 2010
View of the work in production
Photo: Simon Starling

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ARTFORUM
DECEMBER 2009 INTERNATIONAL

Film BEST OF 2009

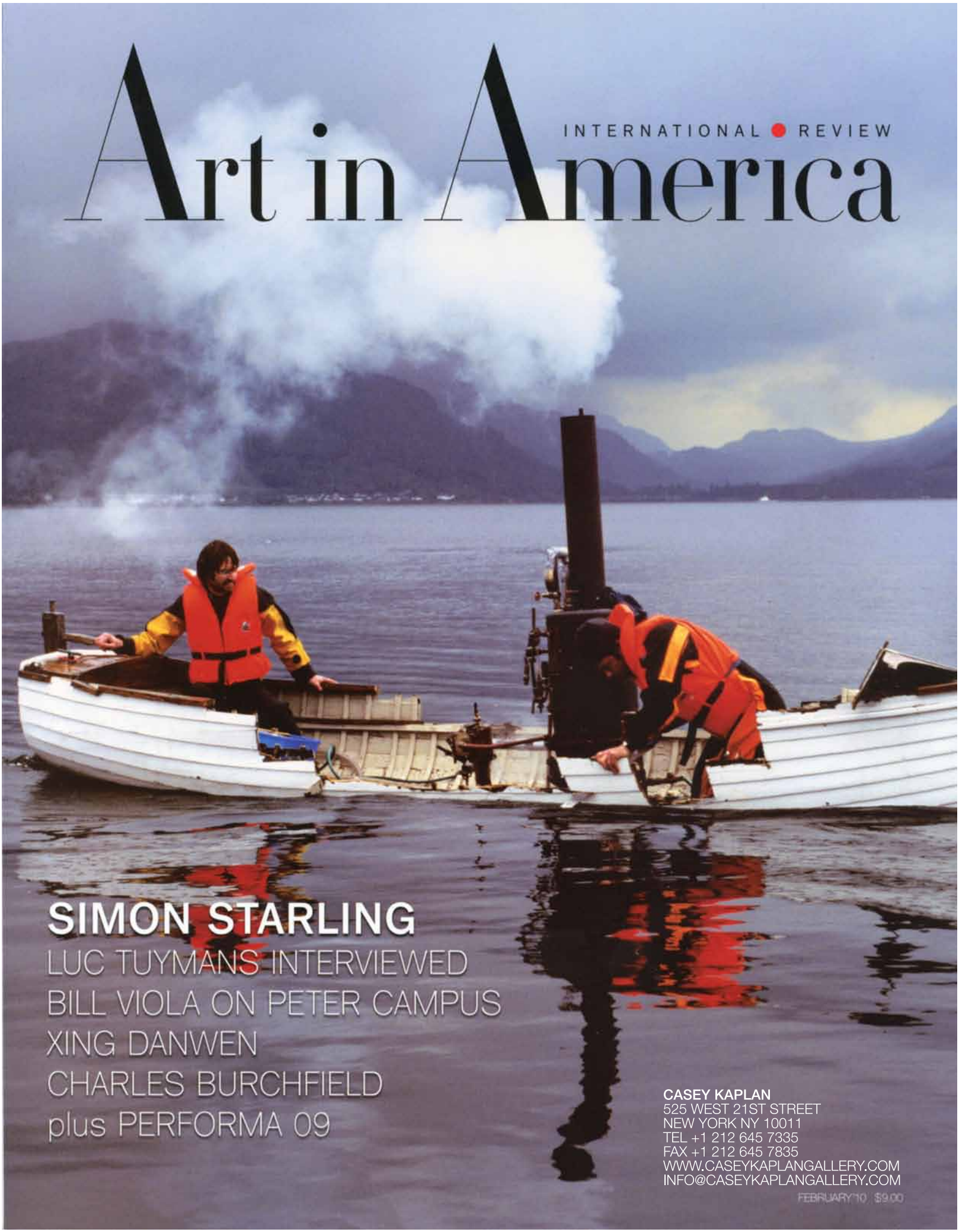
James Quandt

JAMES QUANDT, SENIOR PROGRAMMER AT TIFF CINEMATHEQUE IN TORONTO, IS THE EDITOR OF *APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL* (WALLFLOWER PRESS, 2009) AND OTHER MONOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF FILMMAKERS, INCLUDING ROBERT BRESSON, KON ICHIKAWA, AND SHOHEI IMAMURA.

1 Wilhelm Noack oHG (Simon Starling) Metacinema machine to end all others: a projector whose celluloid elaborately loops into a helical, neo-Tatlin sculpture while its film presents a record of the mechanism's fabrication in a Berlin metalworks associated with both the Bauhaus and the Third Reich. Ideal companions: Rodney Graham's Rheinmetall/Victoria 8, 2003; Moholy-Nagy's Lichtspiel Schwarz-Weiss- Grau (Lightplay Black, White, Gray, 1930).

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW



SIMON STARLING

LUC TUYMANS INTERVIEWED
BILL VIOLA ON PETER CAMPUS
XING DANWEN
CHARLES BURCHFIELD
plus PERFORMA 09

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SIMON STARLING

MAKING CONNECTIONS

In his antic romps through history, Simon Starling sometimes takes chancy leaps of logic. His installations are all the more vivid, and elegant for the risks he courts.

BY WADE SAUNDERS AND ANNE ROCHETTE

HUMOR IS LITTLE DISCUSSED in art criticism, though funny art abounds, Many of Simon Starling's projects have been comic - slapstick and harebrained, funny ha-ha and funny peculiar - at the same time that they have been unimpeachably erudite. In his thought and work processes, Starling generally follows one thing with another, a third and a fourth . This shaggy-dog-story method places him in danger of establishing connections that come to feel contrived or attenuated - a risk of failure that he willingly assumes.

Born in Epsom, England, in 1967, Starling earned a degree in photography at Nottingham Polytechnic in 1990, and finished his studies in 1992 at the Glasgow School of Art. He had his first solo exhibit ion in 1995 in London, followed by one in Glasgow in 1997; since then, he has had more than 50 solo shows. In 2003, he was one of three artists in the first Scottish pavilion at the Venice Biennale, and he won the Turner Prize two years later.

Peripatetic (he now lives in Copenhagen) and formidably inventive, Starling ranges widely among installations, elegantly fab-

View of the exhibition "THEREHERETHENTHERE," 2009; at MAC/VAL, Paris. Photo Marc Domage.

All photos this article courtesy the artist and, unless otherwise noted, Casey Kaplan, New York

POSSESSED OF A STORYTELLER'S KNACK, A RESEARCHER'S ZEAL AND A TRAVELER'S NOSE FOR LUCKY FINDS, STARLING NIMBLY LINKS PRESENT AND PAST IN BACKSTORY NARRATIVES.

ricated objects, rough-and-ready assemblages, photographs, short films, books and more. He is comfortable at diverse scales, keeps a big toolbox of conceptual and technical strategies, and is equally adept with the obvious and the obscure. Ecological concerns are pervasive. Possessed of a storyteller's knack, a researcher's zeal and a traveler's nose for lucky finds, he nimbly links present and past in backstory narratives that are typically posted on gallery walls and/or printed in handouts. Among the artists with whose work Starling's practice intersects, Ronald Jones is notable for having based his mixed-medium projects as early as the 1980s on complicated fact-based scenarios accessible only in their titles, which can run a page or more. But neither Jones nor Starling is a historian, and both shape their narratives to suit esthetic ends.

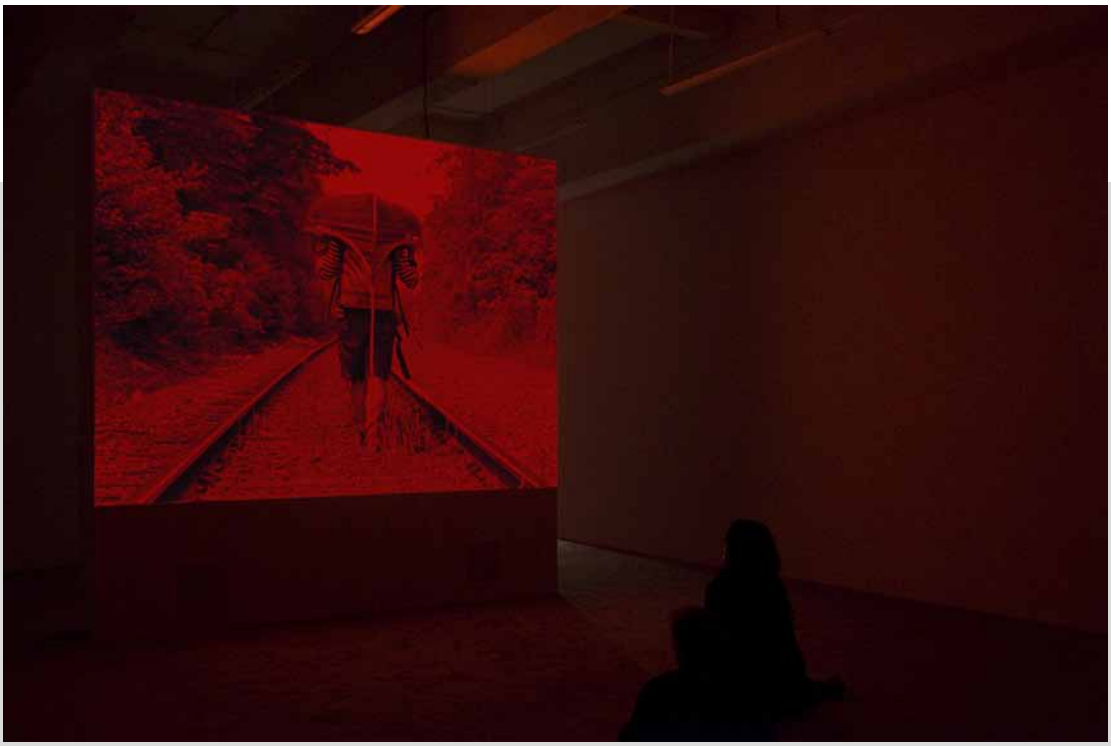
"THEREHERETHENTHERE," a large exhibition of Starling's work, opened in France in September 2009. It was split between two venues: the Musee d'art contemporain du Val de Marne, known as MAC/VAL, in Paris's southern suburb of Vitry-sur-Seine; and the Parc Saint Léger, a contemporary art center in Pougues-les-Eaux, 120 miles farther south. He also had a piece in a group exhibition at the Kadist Foundation, which collects and shows art, and sponsors residencies for artists and critics in Paris and San Francisco. The easily misread exhibition title was written in large capital letters on a wall at MAC/VAL. (For the past 30 years, the Los Angeles-based sculptor Peter Shelton has used similar run-on titles; *SWEATHOUSEandlittleprincipals,* 1977-82, is an early example.) Running words together and playing with capitalization is one of the ways Starling forces close attention to language, which is of particular interest to him.

So is site specificity. Starling often develops his projects in relation to the venues where they will be first displayed, and as a result some pieces lose impact when shown elsewhere. The books published in connection with exhibitions are well suited to his discursive method, and help us relate works to their initial contexts, as do other accompanying texts, putting Starling's work in a long tradition of art whose full appreciation relies on a corpus of knowledge outside the frame. Many a Starling critic has been sucked into a vortex of exegesis (an effort that tends to take a toll on one's sensitivity to the artist's humor).

STARLING'S ENTERPRISES have repeatedly involved his getting from one place to another, with the means of conveyance and the journey being as important as the destination. In this respect, the 2005 *Shedboatshed* (not shown in France) is paradigmatic. Having spotted a wooden shed near the Rhine, Starling labeled the planks, disassembled the shed, then built a

SIMON STARLING AT CASEY KAPLAN

IF SIMON STARLING DIDN'T have much to work with in terms of site-specificity at this simple white-cube space, he did manage to make local history resonate with particular force. The centerpiece of "Red White Blue" was Red Rivers (In Search of the Elusive Okapi), 2009, Starling's 24-minute film whose voiceover narration is based on an account of an expedition in the Belgian Congo undertaken a century ago by one Herbert Lang. A German mammalogist whose trip was sponsored by New York's American Museum of Natural History, Lang



This spread, views of *Red Rivers (In Search of the Elusive Okapi)*, 2009, HD video, approx. 24 1/4 minutes. Photos Cary Whittier.

was also an amateur photographer and diligent diarist. His pursuit of the legendary giraffelike animal is evoked in Starling's film by two men paddling a canoe down waterways that course mostly through wooded terrain.

Until it nears its completion and various familiar structures loom into view, the trip looks like it could be almost anywhere, including deepest Africa; in fact, it took the artist and a friend down the Hoosic River and the Hudson, starting at Mass MoCA in North Adams, Mass. (where Starling had an exhibition in which the boat, handmade from African wood, was shown for the second time; its maiden exhibition was at Casey Kaplan, New York, in 2007). The weeklong journey ended at the natural history museum - in front of a diorama containing a spectacularly graceful (and superbly camouflaged) okapi, to be exact.

In its false virginity, the passing landscape encourages reflection on the complicated history of the U.S. - particularly along its Eastern seaboard - as both subject and agent of colonial conquest. But the film's most interesting subtext is about photography as a tool of power. The canoe-trip footage is intercut with scenes shot in a darkroom (in the German town where Lang lived, a gratuitous detail you wouldn't know unless told), and every bit of darkroom apparatus is made to carry metaphoric weight, from the interrogation-room-like light with which the film begins to the flash of exposure and the guillotine-sharp blade of a paper cutter, and including the ominous ticking of a timer, amplified with gleefully contrived menace. There is, too, the martial business of aiming a camera and shooting, and the whole dark science of making images appear from nothing. While Starling keys photography to Lang's yearning to reveal - and exploit - his quarry ("I am one of the very few white men ever to lay hands on an okapi," the movie's explorer says), the artist also quite precisely rhymes a print coming up in a developing tray with a voiceover passage about the magical beliefs of "the Congo native."

Most symbolically freighted of all is the red tint that throws a sanguinary cast over the entire film - the conceit is that it is from the darkroom's safelight - turning the pictured waterways into rivers of blood. But the implicit message is pressed gently; the movie's politics have a kind of tidal flow that urges you on with sneaky force.

Starting from here, it was possible to follow a concern with antiquated representation technologies throughout the exhibition, for example in an appealing suite of brain-teasing prints. A block of limestone bearing the impression of a 150-million-year-old fossilized leaf was replicated, in the 19th century, on a similarly ancient block of limestone to create a lithograph; Starling's own lithographs ("Archaeoptryx lithographica," 2008) derive from photographs of the earlier print: history carved in stone, over and over. Less satisfying are the works illustrating a connection Starling has pursued between Henry Moore, museum namesake Joseph Hirshhorn and Hiroshima (uranium comes into it). The web of relationships was laid out in a timeline near the gallery's entrance, and expressed in an imposing 2009 mobile. Suggesting Calder crossed with Bruce Nauman, the sculpture involves half-size replicas of three Moore bronzes. A greatly enlarged photo of the sky above - and top portions of - the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, where a survey of Starling's work opens in 2011, spanned one big wall.

The long list of artists playing history as a Google game, in which everything is a click away from something else, includes, among those lately seen in New York, Matthew Ritchie, Mark Leckey, Terence Koh, Matthew Buckingham and the Bruce High Quality Foundation. Starling is very good at this sport, and best - like his peers - when he makes it seem to matter.

-Nancy Princenthal

skiff with the dismantled wood, loaded it with the remaining material and, assisted by a boatman, navigated downstream to Basel, where he reconstructed the now-scarred shed for an exhibition at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst. The lively work shown at the Kadist Foundation, *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* (2006), is also boat-based. A 7-minute-long projection of 38 images documents a three-hour-plus voyage taken by Starling and a boiler man in a 22-foot-long steamboat on the photogenic waters of Scotland's Loch Long, which joins the Firth of Clyde. Starling generally steers while his mate saws up the craft and feeds the wood into the firebox; both men wear life preservers. As the sides of the hull get consumed, the boiler becomes increasingly visible; when the sawing reaches the waterline, the vessel swamps and vanishes. The last slides show floating remnants. Like a similar project undertaken by Michael Sailstorfer with Jürgen Heinert in 2002, in which the wooden clapboard of a rural cabin in Germany was fed into its own fireplace, *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* is the stuff of Tom and Jerry cartoons, Friz Freleng's narratives for the Pink Panther and myriad sawing-the-limb-on-which-one-sits tales. We laugh at the catastrophe wrought by the two men's industry. The images are sweet and fully satisfying.

And there are submerged narratives. The rhythmic portmanteau title says it all: the staccato cycle of wood-fired generation and destruction is a quixotic enactment of the Ouroboros, the snake swallowing its own tail. James Watt was born by the Firth of Clyde and worked in Glasgow, and his improvements to steam engines ushered in the industrial revolution; further developed, such engines powered the locomotives and ships whose building underwrote Glasgow's economy. England's nuclear-missile-armed Trident submarines, propelled by steam turbines linked to nuclear reactors, navigate Loch Long. Starling is attentive to such details and lets us know, in an accompanying text, that the old vessel he purchased had been convered from steam to diesel power, had sunk, and then been re-floated and rechristened *Dignity* by a local craftsman. The artist reinstalled a steam engine akin to the boat's original. This construction-destruction story mirrors the carbon-neutral cycle of the project's journey, which sends the vehicle up in smoke.

FOR "THEREHERETHENTHERE," Starling configured MAC/VAL's cavernous, 13,000-square-foot rectangular gallery as a subtle grid within which he showed nine works, most of them recent. Four equally spaced rows of single-tube fluorescent fixtures, wired end to end, were hung halfway down from the high ceiling, parallel to the room's long sides. In the front part of the gallery, three freestanding walls stood perpendicular to the lights and demarcated four equal and open areas; the rest of the room was left unobstructed. The wall-to-wall lines of lights tied the five spaces together. Seven pieces were installed in the front section, and as the viewer wound around them, the rest of the gallery opened out like a vista. There Starling placed the two pieces that conjure physical travel.

Both monumental and childlike, *Rockraft* (2008) consists of two white plywood platforms, each 10 feet square and 20 inches high. One is weathered and has non-skid paint on its top; strapped to its center is a sizable quarried limestone block, a visibly used nylon sling pinned under it. A skinny 12-foot wooden pole stands close to the rock; topped with a radar reflector and a yellow-and-blue striped signal flag indicating "failed engine" or "out of control," it ironically affirms the craft's former seaworthiness, though it's hard to imagine raft and rock bobbing merrily along. The second, pristine platform, placed about 75 feet away, carries a single, centered block. Fairly quickly, one realizes that this block is a near-perfect double of the first one, down to the drill holes from the quarry and assorted scrapes. The eye travels back and forth between the original raft, with its allure of boyish single-mindedness and efficiency, and the minimalist doppelgänger.

Starling's uncharacteristically direct accompanying text tells us that a platform was built to float the one-ton, locally-sourced stone 12 miles upriver from Avonmouth to the heart of Bristol, riding one of the world's larger tides on an especially powerful day. The stone was then unloaded, scanned and reproduced by a computer-guided milling machine, and the cloned block placed on a platform visually identical to, but structurally different from, the original. The platform's proven ability to float, the rock's weightiness, the vast space the work commandeered and the absurd duplication form a strange and buoyant ensemble.

D1-Z1 [22,686,575:1] (2009) features a modified, mid-20th-century

Above: *Autoxylopyrocycloboros,* 2006, color transparencies, medium-format slide projector, vitrines, steel trestles.

Right, exterior view of the Parc Saint Léger, Centre d'art contemporain, showing an altered and enlarged reproduction of an early 20th-century photograph, 2009. Photo Aurélien Mole. Courtesy Parc Saint Léger, Pouges-les-Eaux, France.

IN *AUTOXYLOPYROCYCLOBOROS*, STARLING GENERALLY STEERS THE STEAMBOAT WHILE HIS MATE SAWS IT UP AND FEEDS THE WOOD INTO ITS FIREBOX. WHEN THE SAWING REACHES THE WATERLINE, THE VESSEL SWAMPS.

Dresden D1 35-mm film projector set atop a looping apparatus. Positioned close to one of the freestanding walls and running continuously, it threw a small black-and-white image; the film's down-up, down-up course was fully visible beneath the projector. The 30-second-long loop shows a complex bit of machinery in action. In the center of the image is a jerkily advancing piece of film, 35 millimeters wide as shown: life size. The shallow depth of field - the image is blurry at the top - suggests a tight close-up of a physical object, though the machinery appears weirdly immaterial. Near the work one heard an even mix of the projector's hum and the soundtrack's clickety-clack, the sound balance changing as one moved.

Watching machines work is hypnotic, but there is also a formalist kind of wit in a projected film of a piece of film moving through a machine; this sort of reflexivity is a hallmark of Starling's work. The Z1 of the title was a room-sized machine - arguably the first computer - built by Konrad Zuse in his parents' Berlin apartment between 1936 and 1938. Allied bombings destroyed the apartment building and the machine with it, but Zuse and assistants reconstructed the Z1 in the late '80s. To enter data, Zuse punched holes in 35-mm film stock, which he fed through the computer to be read. Starling used complex software to make a black-and-white animation that was transferred to color film, which accounts for the movie's peculiar tint. Starling's *D1-Z1* celebrates Zuse's wily, against-the-odds inventiveness; it also has a rich, subtle period-piece humor, playing with nostalgia for a time when machines had material substance against today's etherized and miniaturized technology.

Sometimes, Starling's ideas are more satisfying than the work they generate. At MAC/VAL, his current interest in Henry Moore (also manifest in work recently on view at Casey Kaplan in New York) was seen in *Silver Particle/Bronze (After Henry Moore)*, 2008. A smallish, black-and-white photo taken by Moore of his roughly 2-foot-long *Reclining Figure No. 4*- an image that makes the sculpture seem larger - hung on the wall, a circle cut out of its center. Nearby, a modestly scaled, biomorphic cast-bronze object finished with Moore's familiar yellow-brown translucent patina rested on a white wooden base. As in a photo-based project at Mass MoCA last year, a silver particle from the cutout circle was, Starling writes, "repeatedly scanned in an electron microscope to generate a 3D model which was then out-put at a hugely modified scale and cast in the same material as Moore's original reclining figure." Although he neatly parodies Moore's method of making small maquettes that assistants enlarged into imposing

AN IMAGE OF THE BUILDING WAS REFLECTED ON EACH SPHERE'S SURFACE AS THOUGH ALL WERE EYES, AN EFFECT BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND UNSETTLING.

sculptures, Starling's own bronze casting suggests he doesn't have the older sculptor's subtle feeling for form, and we see and learn little of interest on this big-to-minuscule-to-medium-size journey.

POUGUES-LES-EAUX, where "THEREHERETHENTHERE" continued, was once a thriving spa town, and its Parc Saint Léger art center occupies a small, churchlike building that has a high central space flanked by two aisles. Decades ago, the structure housed a bottling works for water from a nearby spring. Starling developed a new piece for Pougues, titling it *La Source (demi-teinte) [The Spring (half tone)]*, 2009, as well as showing three other works in the small second-floor spaces at either end of the building.

Starling led viewers into *La Source* by placing a roughly 6-by-8-foot enlargement of a small halftone reproduction of an early 20th-century photograph on the exterior wall to the left of the entrance doors. The picture shows the building's floor covered by neat rows of bottles, with workers in the background; a white circle, 2 feet in diameter, blanks out part of the image. Inside the building, Starling constructed a low boardwalk that ran the length of one of the narrow aisles. Viewers were instructed to remain on this walkway, which placed them within and slightly above the work. Ramps connected the boardwalk with staircases leading to two upper rooms.

Laid out on the gray concrete floor, *La Source* comprised 1,036 black hand-blown glass spheres of six distinct sizes (3, 6, 9, 12, 15 and 18 centimeters in diameter, or from roughly 1¼ to 71¼ inches). Each was set on a small rubber washer. Starling positioned the spheres at the vertices of a virtual orthogonal grid oriented diagonally to the boardwalk; the great majority were concentrated at one end of the space. In the rest of the room, the floor was mostly open, undermining one's perception of the grid; the balls in this area were like little points of darkness. A distorted image of the building was reflected on each sphere's surface, as though all were seeing eyes, an effect both beautiful and unsettling.

The abstract quality of this baroque installation made it hard to see what it represented: Starling had isolated a tiny detail from the disk he cut out of the water-bottling photo, enlarged it to the scale of the gallery and rendered each halftone ink dot with a corresponding-size sphere. Seen from the second-floor space at the gallery's far end, the arrangement produced an image that remained frustratingly unfixable, elegantly in tune with the site's long, rich and mostly lost history.

Poised on the brink of legibility, La Source was a chancy project, and as such indicative of Starling's approach at its best. Artists tend to forget about loving risk when recognition comes knocking. The connections Starling weaves in his works may seem arcane or forced, and some works are visually unconvincing. But it is courting failure that gives Starling's works vitality and, like his humor, takes us to unexpected places. o

View of the installation The Spring (half tone), 2009 wood and hand-blown glass. Photo Aurelian Mole. Courtesy Parc Saint Leger.

'THEREHERETHENTHERE' was at Musee d'art contemporain du Val de Marne, Paris, and Parc Saint Leger, Pougues-les-Eaux, Sept. 18-Dec. 27, 2009. Autoxylopyrocycloboros was at the Kadist Foundation, Paris, Sept. 12-Nov. 8, 2009. A public sculpture by Simon Starling has been commissioned by the city of Lyon for 2010; a solo exhibition of his work will open at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art in 2011.

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ARTFORUM

NOVEMBER 2009 "The Fantastic Tavern" by Caroline Busta

"The Fantastic Tavern"

CASEY KAPLAN

This summer's "Fantastic Tavern: The Tbilisi Avant-Garde" made the case for Tbilisi to be known as one of the principal enclaves of the early-twentieth-century avant-garde. It focused on the cultural energy of Georgia's capital city in its independent, postrevolutionary, pre-Bolshevik period (1918–21), though it spanned from documentary photographs of the city at the beginning of the twentieth century to set designs and films made there in the 1920s and '30s.

You'd imagine finding this kind of exhibition at an artist-run space like its curator Daniel Baumann's own New Jerseyy in Basel, if not at a government-funded institution (e.g., the Austrian Cultural Forum), but it was instead staged in the forthrightly commercial Casey Kaplan gallery. With its poured concrete floor, whitewashed drywall, and fluorescent tube lighting, the setting couldn't have been farther from the bars and back rooms that—as suggested by the show's books, photographs, and sound recordings—had housed the readings and performances that brought Symbolism into Acmeism, Futurism, and Dada, as well as numerous other offshoots and factions.

The spirit of the exhibition nonetheless felt aligned with its subject matter. Take, for example, the curator's installation ethos: In collaboration with one artist and three art historians at the Tbilisi-based Arts Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory (AIRL), Baumann presented a lucid outline of the period by casually substituting digital reproductions of any journal, photograph, or painting for which the original was unavailable. Given such disregard for auratic value, the embrace of technological mediation, and the break with commercial imperatives, one could imagine the likes of "Zaum" poet Ilia Zdanevich approving.

The exhibition opened with a recording of Zdanevich reciting his 1918 "Donkey for Hire," and a turn-of-the-century handwoven carpet, which led to a room of photographs of cityscapes and interiors (from circa 1900) and artist Levan Chogoshvili's *A Bit and It Is Already Art*, 2009, a montage of two maps of Georgia shortly after its takeover by the Soviet Union in 1921. Chogoshvili's title comes from his translation of the Georgian map's key: IN 1921 THE BORDERS OF GEORGIA CHANGED A BIT. The inclusion of this single contemporary work suggested a political subtext to the show, engendering reflections on Georgia's continuing uneasy relationship with its large and powerful neighbor.

Beside a recording of Russian composer Alexander Tcherepnin's *Rhapsodie georgienne* (ca. 1922), scans and photographs of journals, posters, and manifestos extended horizontally along the wall into Casey Kaplan's largest gallery, which contained films, lithographs, drawings, photographs of Tbilisians, and, on an extended roll of printer paper, reproductions of paintings, collages, costume sketches, and stage designs representing many of the city's artistic groups. Bisecting the space were lengths of heavy theatrical drapery, which suggested an empty theater but had, on the show's opening night, framed an experimental electronic music performance given by Tcherepnin's grandson Sergei.

In the rear gallery, a wall-size Xeroxed reproduction of Irakli Gamrekeli's stage set for a 1933 production of Schiller's *Robbers* extended the exhibition into the pictorial space of the theater, with the surface of the page serving as proscenium. The image is evidence for the longevity of Tbilisi's generative period, which continued until the late '30s, when a number of the figures making up the Georgian avant-garde had left the country and many of those remaining were shot.

Levan Chogoshvili, *A Bit and It Is Already Art*, 2009, ink on paper, 16 x 21½". From "The Fantastic Tavern."

Narrative guidelines for the show were provided in the form of handouts written by AIRL, whose tone at times veered into a nostalgic nationalism, again bringing to mind Georgia's current status as a strategically important country for both NATO and Russia. In a text accompanying the show, AIRL's Nana Kipiani contrasts the "Western avant-garde," for which "the present is the starting point of the future and the future is the determiner," with "the Georgian/Tiflis avant-garde," which is built upon "the idea of non-linear time, of spatial unification and integration of the past, present, and future." Although this show was hard-pressed to make such arguments self-evident, it left no doubt that Tbilisi, in its heyday, must have been nothing short of fantastic.

—*Caroline Busta*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SIMON STARLING
RED WHITE BLUE

EXHIBITION DATES:	OCTOBER 29 – DECEMBER 19, 2009
OPENING:	THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 6 – 8PM
GALLERY HOURS:	TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10 – 6PM

Casey Kaplan is pleased to present Simon Starling's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery. Starling's practice unfolds as a rich, web-like narrative through means of intensive research, process, performance, and production. Best described as a "physical manifestation of a thought process," Starling's work continues to illuminate significant connections between economic, political, social, and artistic practices.

Initially prompted by an invitation to mount a solo exhibition at the Hiroshima City Art Museum for 2010, Starling's show in New York consists of a large-scale mobile entitled, "Project for a Temporary Sculpture (Hiroshima)" hanging from the gallery's ceiling in our middle gallery. This installation continues the artist's research into the history of art institutions, and more specifically the work of British sculptor Henry Moore. Previously Starling has made connections between Moore and the Cold War through Moore's relationship with Sir Anthony Blunt (1907-1983, a double agent working simultaneously for the NKVD in the Soviet Union and MI5 of the British government, Professor of History of Art at the University of London, Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Surveyor of the King's Pictures, and an art critic).

Starling's new work focuses on specific Henry Moore sculptures in the collection of the Hiroshima City Museum and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. that create key links to the politics associated with atomic energy in the 1940's and 1950's. Moore was a public sponsor of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) yet he received and accepted a commission to create the artwork "Nuclear Energy", 1964-66 which commemorates Enrico Fermi's first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction in Chicago in 1942. Prior to the commission's completion, Moore additionally created an edition of a smaller working-model of the same sculpture ironically entitled, "Atom Piece", and then sold one edition to the Hiroshima City Art Museum. Due to Moore's obvious ambivalence to his subjects, "Atom Piece" has always been a controversial inclusion in the Japanese museum's collection. During the same period, Moore sold a total of 55 sculptures to Joseph Hirshhorn who famously donated much of his collection of 6000 artworks along with a 2 million endowment to the United States government whose Smithsonian Institute then established the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in 1966. Hirshhorn made his fortune in the oil business and the sale of his gold and uranium prospects in Canada in 1960. The 100 million dollar sale of his uranium stock was bolstered by the frenetic activities of the Atomic Energy Commission and the beginning of the nuclear arms race.

Starling's mobile, "Project for a Temporary Public Sculpture (Hiroshima)" pits two half scale model bronze Moore sculptures: "Fallen Warrior", 1957-59 and "Three-piece Reclining Figure no.2: Bridge Prop", 1963 from the Hirshhorn Museum against a half scale model of Moore's "Atom Piece", 1964-65 from the Hiroshima City Art Museum, hung in finely balanced equilibrium.

In the new film, "Red Rivers (In Search of the Elusive Okapi)", Starling conflates the stories of two journeys made 100 years apart and completes a cycle of almost three years of research, travel, and production. Here, Starling brings full circle the journey of a handmade strip canoe originally exhibited in his 2007 solo exhibition at the gallery.

The story begins in 1909 with Herbert Lang, the German born mammalogist and photographer, and his Congo Expedition organized by the American Museum of Natural History in New York. While collecting plant and animal specimens, Lang made thousands of extraordinary glass-plate negatives in a makeshift, improvised darkroom/tent, including the first ever photographs of a live Okapi (a mammal closely related to the giraffe). Earlier this year Starling created a new series of contemporary still images charting a second journey – a 7-day-long canoe trip of over 150 miles from North Adams, Massachusetts to New York City in a hybrid strip canoe, the design for which was originally based on the Native American birch bark canoe, fashioned from dark brown African Walnut interspersed with Okapi-like ash stripes. Removed from Starling's current solo exhibition at MASS MoCA the canoe was paddled down the Hoosic and Hudson Rivers to New York City, and on arrival was carried up through the city to the steps of the Museum of Natural History where Lang's celebrated Okapi diorama now holds a prominent position in the African Mammals Hall. At a moment when the still magical technology of silver based photography is rapidly disappearing, the photographs documenting the contemporary voyage have in turn been filmed under the red safelight of a traditional black and white darkroom as they were printed, toned, washed and trimmed.

In addition to the above-mentioned solo exhibitions at the Hiroshima City Art Museum and MASS MoCA (through October 31st), Starling currently has a solo exhibition on view at MAC/VAL, France and the Parc St. Léger, Centre D'art Contemporain, France. He is also included in "Making Worlds" at the 53rd Venice Biennale, Italy (through November 22nd). Past solo exhibitions include the Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin, Ludwig Muzeum: Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, Hungary, The Power Plant, Toronto, Canada, Kunstverein Heidelberg, Germany, and the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel, Switzerland. Starling was a finalist for the Hugo Boss Prize in 2004, and won the Turner Prize in 2005. He lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.

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THE ARTS
The New York Times
TUESDAY, JULY 29, 2009

Curious (New York) Natives Greet a Canoe From Afar

Simon Starling, fore, and Dante Birch, aft, simulating an okapi, a giraffelike creature, on the Upper West Side on Monday.

by RANDY KENNEDY

In a city of islands outlined by almost 600 miles of coastline, it should not be such a strange thing, the sight of two men portaging a canoe through the streets. But on Monday morning, when the English artist Simon Starling paddled into the West 79th Street Boat Basin and he and a traveling companion hoisted his canoe — a lovely 16-foot striped vessel Mr. Starling had made from African walnut — on to their heads for an upland trek to the American Museum of Natural History, Manhattanites stopped to stare as if they had spotted some kind of large, undomesticated animal on the loose.

And in some sense, at least in Mr. Starling's conception, they had. The canoe is not just a canoe but also an insured art object and a sort of walking stick figure representing an elusive relative of the giraffe known as an okapi. Growing out of Mr. Starling's career of history-obsessed artwork that has taken him around the world, the canoe — which until a few days ago was on display in an exhibition of his work at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Mass. — refers to an expedition to the Congo begun in 1909 by the scientist Herbert Lang. Lang used his camera and his gun to help the American Museum of Natural History put together many of its dioramas, and is known in particular for taking some of the earliest photographs of the okapi, which lives in the Ituri Rainforest in the northeastern part of the nation now known as Congo.

Four days ago Mr. Starling and a fellow artist, Tyler Rowland — accompanied in a second (regular, nonart) canoe by another artist, Kasper Akhoj , and Dante Birch , a production manager at Mass MoCA — began enacting a kind of reverse expedition, taking not rare animal trophies but a load of complex cultural baggage and post-colonial inquiry back to the history museum. In May Mr. Starling put his canoe into the Hoosic River, whose south and north branches run through the Mass MoCa complex, and paddled and drifted to the Hoosic's junction with the Hudson. Then, last Thursday, he picked up the journey in Albany, relying on tides, elbow grease and the kindness of strangers as he and the three other men made their way to Manhattan. ("Last night we had sushi, in Beacon," Mr. Starling said when asked how they had been sustaining themselves along the way. "It's been quite civilized, actually.")

continued...

A canoe carried by artists created a sensation as it made its way up the West Side on Monday

On Monday morning, in the final eight-block stage of the 125-mile journey, the upended and slightly battered art canoe was transformed into a kind of conceptual okapi, with its striped hull serving as the body and Mr. Starling and Mr. Birch supplying its four hairy legs. A frayed rope hanging from the canoe's stern added to the effect, becoming a tail that swung to and fro with the men's loping, dromedary pace as they trudged up West 79th Street, past a Duane Reade and a liquor store.

"Where are we going?" Mr. Starling called out at one point as Mr. Rowland served as the canoe-animal's eyes, relaying the status of "walk" signs and cornering trucks and stopping the beast frequently so that Mr. Akhoj could take pictures for a film that will be made of the journey and added later in the summer to the Mass MoCA exhibition, which is up through Oct. 31. (The canoe was trucked back to Mass MoCA at the end of its travels on Monday.)

At the corner of West End Avenue, as Mr. Starling and Mr. Birch took a breather, a man and a woman approached and asked casually — so casually that it seemed at first as if they were a part of the performance — for directions to the Museum of Natural History. They seemed a little confused when everyone started to laugh.

"I kind of thought that it must be something artsy," said the woman, Audrey Andrews, from North Brunswick, N.J., who was showing a friend around the city. "I mean, you don't see someone carrying a boat around this neighborhood very often."

At five minutes to noon the sweaty boat bearers paused in front of the museum's steps and dipped the canoe down so that its prow — serving as the beast's mouth — appeared to take a drink from a puddle of gray-green rain water near the curb. And then it mounted the steps, past the heroic statue of Theodore Roosevelt, before coming to a befuddled stop, and the end of its journey, at a set of revolving doors. High above, a huge sign announced an exhibition inside: "Extreme Mammals."

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February 7 - March 22, 2009

Simon Starling - Under Lime

The installations of Simon Starling (b. 1967, Epsom/GB) deal with natural and cultural processes of transformation. Each installation develops from a series of mental and practical steps that recall an experimental setup and at the same time describe a metamorphosis. The objects in space and the artist's comments on their history constitute a unity. Central to the exhibition Under Lime at the Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin are plants and depictions of plants, motors and energy sources, physical and cultural transfers. In three installations machines unconventionally used illustrate locomotion and energy flow. The ensembles show how vital a stable room climate is for the natural cycles of plants and for the presentation of artworks and just how delicate the balance is.

In one installation the artist has transplanted a cactus from the Andalusian Tabernas Desert to Berlin's winter, converting the vehicle used to transport it into a heater to provide the right climatic environment (Kakteenhaus, 2002). In another a mud-brick chamber provides the appropriate conservational conditions for the presentation of sensitive historic plant photographs by Karl Blossfeldt (Plant Room, 2008). For the title work (Under Lime, 2009) the artist cut a lime branch from the nearby Unter den Linden boulevard with a chainsaw, then used the saw as a means of fastening the branch under the Kunsthalle ceiling girders. The result is an absurd reciprocity of interior and exterior, culture and nature, technology and art. The link Starling forges between the temporary, artificial art space and Berlin as a place is itself almost organic.

Exhibition curator: Julian Heynen (K21 Kunstsammlung)

TEMPORÄRE
KUNSTHALLE
BERLIN

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January 29, 2009

The New York Times

Swiss Institute
495 Broadway, at Broome Street, SoHo

Two solo projects take a fashionably contingent approach to sculptural installation. Marlo Pascual's installation achieves greater coherence. (It probably helps that she has the smaller project gallery.) Enlarged prints of vintage black-and-white photographs — a yearbook-style portrait, a still life of potted plants, a shot of a chicken — become a kind of stage set with the addition of a lamp, some cacti and judiciously placed sheets of plywood. Color is kept to a minimum, blurring real and photographic space. The strategy is familiar, but executed with aplomb.

- KAREN ROSENBERG

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Richard Long and Simon Starling

Spike Island, Bristol, 4 Oct-23 Nov 2008; www.spikeisland.org.uk

Long and Starling - Turner Prize-winners of very different stripe- recently staged a joing show at Spike Islands lofty riverside gallery. They discuss their art, their responses to nature, and how the river Avon brought them together

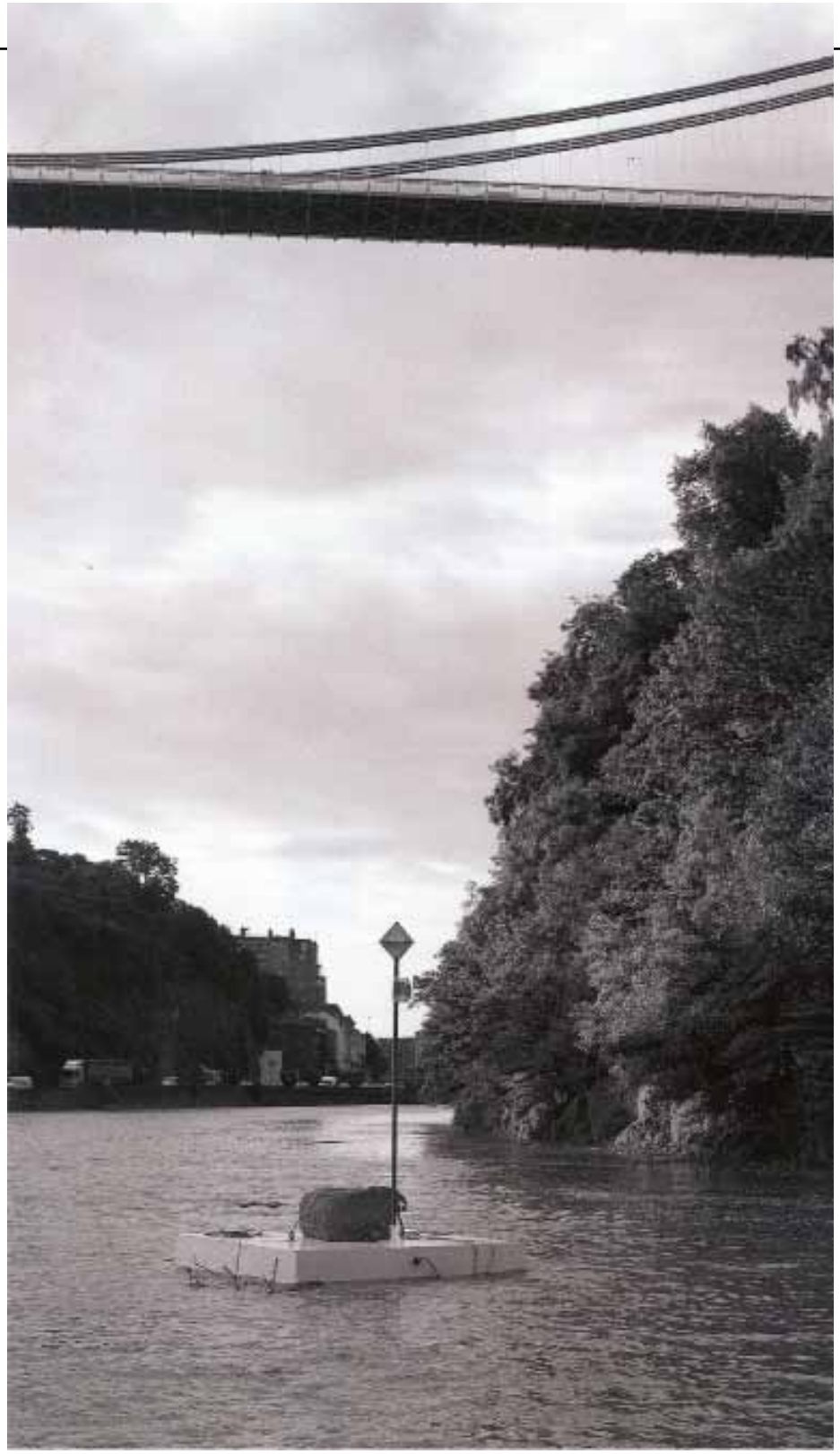
INTERVIEWS: Jean Wainwright

Richard Long and Simon Starling's pairing at Spike Island, a handsome studio complex beside the River Avon, was an inspired one. Though from different generations and with very different practices, both artists are known for deploying journeys and transmutation, and both made full use of this strongly tidal waterway. Long's relationship with nature and Land art is manifested in mud works, texts, sculptures and photographs; he presents an artistic mapping of the world, which takes shape using archetypal forms. Starling also uses displacement and transformation, but often with an ironic twist, as in his best known work Shedboatshed (2004) - a shack converted into a boat, sailed down the Rhine, then rebuilt as a shack - which helped him win the Turner Prize, 16 years after Long had done the same.

For this show, both artists produced work celebrating the Avon's tidal force, the energy of Long's mud drawings complementing the spare aesthetic of Starling's sculptural relics in unexpected ways. Throughout his career, Bristol-born Long has used mud from this historic river as a material, travelling with it around the world, then fashioning it with his hands on gallery walls - but here, it was right at home. Starling, who cites Long as one of his influences, created a typically ingenious work that harnessed the river and quoted two of Long's favoured materials - rock and mud - by the simple expedient of sailing a piece of local rock on a raft to the gallery.

The gallery's nine metre-high spaces were dominated by two of Long's rhythmic wall works, Whirlpool and Earth (both 2008), accompanied by a classic text piece from 1990 (also distributed to visitors as a free limited edition poster). The geometry of black stripes in Earth echoed Spike Island's ceiling design, its splattered, splashed and slopped mud forming delicate trails and chaotic markings. Whirlpool had a more totemic presence, Long's familiar muddy handprints gathering optical power as they spiralled outwards. Their visual energy was in lively counterpoint to the stasis of Starling's Rockraft (2008), which consisted of two white plinths bearing boulders, one accessorised with a ramshackle mast and rigging, and topped with a limp but jaunty pennant. The pair of Jurassic-era limestone rocks (technically known as Inferior Oolite, a traditional local building material) looked almost identical, but their journeys had been very different. As a muddy tidemark testified, the rigging-equipped plinth had once acted as a raft, delivering its ton of stone from Avonmouth to Spike Island on a surging spring tide (the extra-high tide of full moon). The other hunk of rock, meanwhile, owed its weathering not to the forces of nature, but to the wiles of man: its striations were a mechanical reproduction of the "natural" stone on the raft, created in Italy from a digital scan of its twin.

The dialogue between the wall drawings and the floor sculptures, between the artists and their materials, engaged both visually and intellectually - and on Starling's part, offered an undertow of wit. The simplicity and effectiveness of the pairing was reflected in Richard Long's haiku-like response when asked for a statement about the project: "I liked the floated stone. The river brought us together, we both came up on the tide."



SIMON STARLING

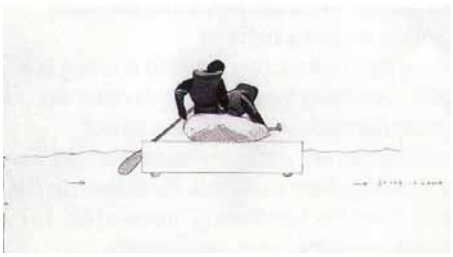
on Rockraft

How did the idea for Rockraft come about?
You carry around a rucksack of half-baked ideas and you pluck them out and they suddenly make absolute sense. Strange and particular bodies of knowledge that you gain from one project will suddenly resurface in another. The idea for Rockraft gestated in many ways: research and questions about Stonehenge and how the stones got there - one speculation was that the stones were floated up the Avon on the tide. It is also linked to other works that I have been doing over the years, which deal with notions of energy transfer and
with journeys of different kinds. I have made solar-powered moped trips across France and navigated the Rhine in a shed-turnedboat in Shedboatshed (2004).

How did you feel about your work being paired with Richard Long's?
I was excited to be exhibiting with Richard Long, because his practice has been extremely influential to me. I am interested in his idea of a kind of nomadic art practice, getting out of the studio and engaging in a direct way in the world. For the exhibition in Bristol it was interesting to engage in that tradition, to understand my own work in relation to that and how it influenced me.

What's the story behind the two rocks?
Recently I have been working on collapsing very basic technologies onto high-tech production techniques - in this case, the"dematerialisation" of the form of a rock in to a stream of digital data and then back in to a rock again. For Rockraft there was the physical movement of one stone - a ton of local Inferior Oolite - from Avonmouth to the gallery; and the transposition of the form of the second stone, milling it via scanned data. They look exactly the same, but have undergone very different kinds of shifts. The raft is part plinth, part raft and has gained a history as it floated up the River Avon. The mud and scars picked up en route are readable

Left: Rockraft making its way through the Avon Gorge en route from Avonmouth to Bristol's Floating Harbour on the spring tide of 1 Sep 2008
Below: A preliminary sketch for the project



"I was excited to be exhibiting with Richard Long, because his practice has been extremely influential to me"

SIMON STARLING

in the plinth in the gallery, as is its nautical flag, signifying" I am manoeuvring with difficulty; keep clear". We chose the spring tide and were assisted by Pill Hobblers [a local mooring company] to ensure asafe arrival. The replica rock which came by road and ferry from Italy has asimilar plinth, but it's in apple pie order, white and pristine.

So there is evidence of transformation in Rockcraft as there was in Shedboatshed?
With Shedboatshed, what was important was that if you looked at the structure in Tate Britain, you could almost start to piece the boat together in your head from the cut sections and the holes. I am
interested, as Richard is, I think, in the idea of the gap between the art gallery and the outside world, and the mediation process that occurs in between. However, I think Richard and I have quite a different relationship to ideas of nature and landscape - we are definitely from different generations in that respect.

What was the gestation period of Rockraft?
In this case there was about a year from formulating the project to the gallery show. Some projects evolve over a much longer period. I made a work in Canada recently, Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore) (2007-08), which involved growing mussels on a copy of a Henry Moore sculpture - that took years.

All your projects are very different - and there is always a twist.
I am a little restless. I am not good at sitting in a studio and doing the same thing day after day. I really like involving new techniques and technologies and that is one reason the work has this slightly erratic sense to it. For Richard, on the other hand, the "unrelenting" nature of his practice gives it its sense and strength.

RICHARD LONG
on Earth and Whirlpool

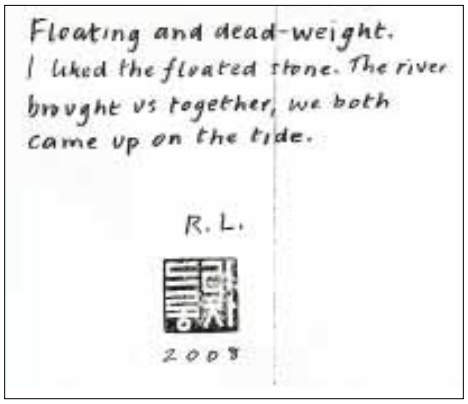
Why do you like working with Avon mud?
It's very good quality tidal mud. So the work has a lunar energy, the physical energy of my hands, and the manifestation of gravity in the mud as it falls down the wall. Over the years I have learnt how to control the amount of water I put with the mud, recently adding more water so it gets increasingly splashy. Earth was made swiftly; the mud is very fluid so it falls, drips and splashes down the wall. I often think that the mud works demonstrate the essence of water, with the mud adding body and colour. Whirlpool is aspiral of handprints like a flow; it's a more deliberate work, where the mud is thicker. I have over many years taken mud from the Avon to different places around the world, so it was very nice to be able to use the same material but literally from"just over the fence". The two works I have at Spike Island represent the material characteristic of my work, rather than the dimension of time which is represented in my walks.

Your work seems extremely physical ...
That is avery important aspect for me: personal hands-on engagement with my materials, whether pouring water down a rock face, or putting stones down on the ground, or levering them upright, or putting pebbles in my pocket and carrying them on awalk, or throwing mud on the wall.

What state of mind are you in when you're making your mud drawings?
A strange state of being relaxed, not thinking about anything but at the same time concentrating on what I am doing. With Whirlpool it is organic- I start in the middle and go towards the outside, there is no drawing and I do each work completely in one go. Because it is handmade it can absorb various inconstancies along the way. Every handprint is different from the last one. All walls are different and that affects the contrast in the work. This was a new wall and obviously I was attracted by its nine metre height.

Did you find any connections with Simon Starling's piece in the gallery?
Our work does have connections - we both in different ways used the river and the tides, there is a synergy. The river brought us together.

How do the mud works relate to your walks?
I work in a variety of ways, in the locality with the stones of aplace, or taking mud from the river to make a work on a wall somewhere else, or I can use words or language. One of the central ideas of my work is where very precise geometric human ideas meet the reality, circumstance and natural chaos
of nature. On my walks I am engaging with the landscape in its totality, like the size of the



country, the roads, the mountains, the streams, the weather - so walking is away of engaging with time and space and limitless distance. Each walk is about a different idea. The text piece on the wall at Spike Island is a walk on Dartmoor combined with the walk from the mouth of the Avon at low tide to the tide head at high tide - a walk which lasts for the whole length of one tide. Over the years I have used rivers as a form of measurement I have walked between the sources of different rivers; I have carried mud between different rivers. I have also used tides themselves as a measurement of a walk, a lunar cycle as opposed to the solar cycle.

What does it feel like when you step back and see that your work is finished?
Quite often it is a sensation between exhaustion and elation and satisfaction, and that's the best feeling.

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MASS MoCA

Simon Starling: The Nanjing Particles

Dec 13, 2008-Nov 1, 2009

A new element of this exhibition is on view from Monday, October 19 through Sunday, November 1. The new work, titled Red Rivers (In Search of the Elusive Okapi), is a film that conflates the stories of two journeys made a century apart and completes a cycle of almost three years of Starling's research, travel and production, which began in 2007 with the building and exhibiting of a strip canoe at Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York. Strip Canoe (African Walnut), which has been on view at MASS MoCA since December 2008, references the 1909 expedition to the Congo by scientist and photographer Herbert Lang. Sent on a biological survey by the American Museum of Natural History, Lang is now perhaps best known for his photographs of the Okapi.

In the new film, a series of contemporary still images charts a seven-day trip Starling made in the sculpture/canoe, which he paddled down the Hoosic and Hudson Rivers from North Adams, Massachusetts, to New York City. Four hundred years after the "discovery" of the Hudson River by English explorer Henry Hudson, Starling's voyage was made in a purpose-built strip canoe of the type made in North America since the 1880s and originally based on the Native American birch bark canoe. This hybrid canoe was fashioned from dark brown African Walnut interspersed with ash, mimicking the Okapi's stripes, and when carried overhead by two canoeists the boat became a kind of pantomime animal. The final destination of Starling's journey (and the starting point of Lang's epic voyage) was the Museum of Natural History where Lang's celebrated Okapi diorama now holds a prominent position in the Akeley Hall of African Mammals.

Starling filmed the photographs of his trip under the red safelight of a traditional darkroom, at a moment when this somehow magical technology is rapidly disappearing. In Red Rivers (In Search of the Elusive Okapi) the story of Starling's voyage to New York City unfolds as images are selected from contact prints, enlarged, developed, washed, dried, toned and trimmed.

The voiceover for the film tells the story of Lang's Congo expedition in his own words. It is the story of the hunt for the world's most elusive animal, the Okapi, in the rainforests in the heart of Africa. While collecting thousands of plant and animal specimens during his six years in Africa, Lang also made thousands of extraordinary glass-plate negatives in a makeshift darkroom/tent, including the first-ever photographs of a live Okapi.

In his award-winning practice Simon Starling investigates the social, cultural, and material implications of object-making, examining how his own artistic processes overlap with industrial production. Engaging with MASS MoCA's industrial past, Starling's installation began with an 1875 photograph of a group of Chinese immigrant workers brought to North Adams to break a strike at the Sampson Shoe Company (once located on what is now MASS MoCA's campus). Literally and figuratively mining this image, Starling extracted silver grains from the photograph and presents these particles as stainless steel forms enlarged one million times their original microscopic size. Forged and hand polished by workers in Nanjing, China, the sculptures connect the museum's past and present to global economic conditions. the shiny forms reflect the museum's historic arcitecture as well as the visitors who have replaced workers in the space.

MASS MoCA Presents an Ambitious New Installation by Simon Starling

Exhibition opens December 13, 2008

(North Adams, Mass.) - Continuing his investigation into manufacturing processes and labor, Simon Starling will create a major new work for MASS MoCA's Building 5 as part of an exhibition entitled The Nanjing Particles which opens December 13, 2008. The installation will address a particularly poignant socioeconomic moment in North Adams' history - the period during which the town was, surprisingly, home to the largest population of Chinese immigrant workers east of the Mississippi. Overlaying local labor history onto current and historic practices in art production and presentation, the installation draws surprising connections between art, industry, and, global economics.

The jurors who awarded Starling the prestigious Turner Prize in 2005 singled out Starling's "unique ability to create poetics, drawing together a wide range of cultural, political and historical narratives." Engaging directly with the sites where he exhibits, Starling often retells the stories of a particular place while making revealing - and often unexpected - connections to distant times and places. Invited to take on MASS MoCA's largest and most dramatic venue, Starling employs an extraordinary economy of means, choosing to animate the enormous exhibition space with sculptural forms derived from microscopic particles. In doing so Starling offers an elegant, if provocative, critique of recent museum trends that embrace size and spectacle. At the same time he continues his exploration of labor and materials and their geographic, political, and cultural roots and repercussions.

In an adjacent gallery at MASS MoCA, Starling will exhibit Strip Canoe (African Walnut), a continuing project begun in 2007 which will be seen in its next iteration at MASS MoCA and will involve a journey down the nearby Hoosic River. Starling is known as much for his elaborate and performative working process - and the complex narratives he weaves together - as he is for the exquisitely crafted objects he produces. Travel and various forms of transport play an important role in the artist's work: his own pilgrimages mimic or re-trace the paths of the resources and stories that drive his investigations and illustrate the collapsing nature of the globe. His work frequently addresses colonial histories and the relationships between first-world economies and the communities that provide an increasing percentage of global resources. Other works track the physical transformation of objects and materials as well as their changes in meaning, function, and value as they cross and re-cross borders.

Photography figures prominently in Starling's work and is the starting point for the main work in the exhibition titled The Nanjing Particles (After Henry Ward, View of C.T. Sampson's Shoe Manufactory, with the Chinese Shoemakers in working Costume, ca. 1875). The installation began with two very small albumen prints - each measuring roughly 3 x 3 inches. This pair of stereographic photographs depicts a group of Chinese laborers in work clothes posed in front of the Sampson Shoe Company (a factory once located on what is now the MASS MoCA campus). The Chinese men, who were reportedly more productive in the factory than their American counterparts - and who worked for far less money - were brought to North Adams in 1870 to break a strike and stayed in North Adams for roughly ten years. While the nearly identical photographs were originally meant to be viewed using a stereoscope - an optical device which produced the illusion of a single three-dimensional picture - a fleshed-out image of the Chinese immigrants' presence in North Adams remains elusive. A collection of photographs and a handful of newspaper articles are mostly all that remain of their time in North Adams. By 1880, the group had largely evacuated the area, most returning to China, some to California.

As Starling has done in several previous works, for The Nanjing Particles (After Henry Ward, View of C.T. Sampson's Shoe Manufactory, with the Chinese Shoemakers in working Costume, ca. 1875), he literally and metaphorically mines the history captured in the two photographs. Interested in the photographs as a receptacle for meaning as well as their physical existence as repositories for metal grains used in forming the images, the artist extracted silver particles from the prints' emulsion in order to present their three-dimensional, sculptural characteristics. Working with scientists in nearby Albany, New York, Starling created 3-D images of two particular silver particles with the aid of a one million volt electron microscope which magnified the particles 25,000 times. Starling translated scanned images of the particles into computer renderings from which three-dimensional models were produced. These models of the tiny image fragments were then replicated as immensely enlarged sculptural objects, scaled up one million times their original size. At this point the story comes full circle: economic imperatives took Starling to present-day China where the enlarged particles were fabricated into sculptures, forged in stainless steel and polished to a seductive, reflective sheen, reminiscent of works by sculptors such as Jeff Koons and Anish Kapoor. By juxtaposing historical material with contemporary modes of production and market conditions, Starling's project draws attention to economies of labor both past and present. The works will be presented in a manner that thwarts visitors' expectations of a dramatic view of the cavernous gallery.

The second part of the The Nanjing Particles exhibition features Strip Canoe (African Walnut), a work that references the 1909 expedition to North Eastern Congo by scientist and photographer Herbert Lang. Sent on a biological survey by the American Museum of Natural History, Lang is now perhaps best known for his photographs of the Okapi, an elusive animal related to the giraffe. The Okapi's black, brown, and white markings are referenced in the stripes of Starling's canoe which was constructed in the manner of typical New England cedar strip canoes (derived themselves from Native American birch bark canoes.) Using African hardwoods instead of cedar, Starling has transformed the canoe into a hybrid: part African, part American, part camouflage, part sculpture, part vessel.

In an extension of Strip Canoe Starling will juxtapose Lang's expedition with a journey in a different time and place. Next spring the artist will remove the canoe from the exhibition in order to travel down the Hoosic River - the south and north branches of which run through the MASS MoCA campus - to its junction with the Hudson River in the township of Schaghticoke (named for the Tribal Nation). The artist's travels will be filmed, and a new work made from the footage will be added to the exhibition in Summer 2009. Conflating his own excursion on the Hoosic (in a type of boat the European colonists borrowed from the Native Americans) with Lang's journey on the Congo and Ituri rivers (made during Belgium's violent rule over the African region), Starling seems to raise questions about New England's own colonial past and the relationships played out in the Hoosic region between the Dutch, British, and French, and their Native American allies and enemies.

About Simon Starling

Born in 1967 in Epsom, England, Starling attended Nottingham Polytechnic and the Glasgow School of Art. His work is in the permanent collection of distinguished museums, such as the Tate Modern, London; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Kroller Muller Museum, Netherlands; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Museum Folkwang, Essen. Starling has had solo exhibitions at numerous international venues including the Power Plant, Toronto (2008); Städtischen Kunstmuseum zum Museum Folkwang, Essen (2007); Kunstmuseum Basel Museum für Gegenwartskunst (2005); Museum of Modern Art, Sydney (2002); Portikus, Frankfurt (2002); UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2002); Kunstverein Hamburg (2001); Vienna Secession (2001), Museu Serralves, Porto (2000); Camden Arts Centre, London (1998); and the Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1998), among others. In conjunction with the exhibition "Cuttings", the Kunstmuseum Basel and the Power Plant co-published a two-volume catalogue featuring a selection of Starling's works made between 1994 and 2008. In 2003, the artist represented Scotland at the 50th Venice Biennial. He has received many awards, including, most recently, the Tate's Turner Prize in 2005. Starling was short-listed for the Guggenheim's Hugo Boss Prize for contemporary art in 2004. Starling is a Professor of Fine Arts at the Staatliche Hochscule für Bildende Künste, Städelschule, Frankfurt, and currently lives in Copenhagen.

Opening celebration

The opening reception for the exhibition will be held on Saturday, December 13, 2008 from 5:30 - 7:30 PM. All MASS MoCA members will receive an invitation and will be admitted free to the opening. Not-yet-members may attend theparty for $6. Following the opening and starting at 8 PM, there will be a performance of a new work-in-progress collaboration between Toshi Reagon and Sarah East Johnson and her dance troupe LAVA.

Exhibition catalogue

MASS MoCA will publish an illustrated catalogue featuring an essay by exhibition curator Susan Cross as well as a contribution from Mount Holyoke College Professor of Art History Anthony W. Lee, the leading expert on the photographs, which act as the exhibition's foundation and the author of A Shoemaker's Story: Being Chiefly about French Canadian Immigrants, Enterprising Photographers, Rascal Yankees, and Chinese Cobblers in a Nineteenth-Century Factory Town (published by Princeton University Press, 2008). The exhibition catalogue will also include photographs of the new installations as well as archival photographs and documentation of the works' fabrication.

Exhibition sponsorship

The exhibition is supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and The Henry Moore Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. Karolyn Buttle, David Barnard, Christian Renken and, especially, Samuel Bowser, contributed generous technical support and expertise.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) is one of the largest centers for contemporary visual and performing arts in the country and is located in North Adams, Massachusetts, on a restored 19th-century factory campus. MASS MoCA's galleries are open 11 - 5 every day except Tuesdays. Gallery admission is $15 for adults, $10 for students, $5 for children 6 - 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members admitted free year-round. For additional information, call 413 662 2111 or visit www.massmoca.org.

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ARTFORUM
OCTOBER 2008

TURIN, ITALY

Simon Starling

GALLERIA FRANCO NOERO

Nicknamed the Fetta di Polenta ("slice of polenta"), the eccentric yellow palazzo housing Franco Noero's new space, Casa Scaccabarozzi, is meant to serve as an experimental architectural laboratory and point of departure for the gallery's artists. The inaugural exhibition, Simon Starling's "Three Birds, Seven Stories, Interpolations and Bifurcations," engaged the building as a character in an epic architectural drama that collapses time and place by merging different spaces and contexts, fact and fiction.

Seven stories high, with only one room per floor, the wedge-shaped nineteenth-century palazzo was designed by Alessandro Antonelli to fit the seemingly impossible site on a bet. Within this eccentric space, Starling evoked the spirit of a very different one by displaying photographs of Manik Bagh Palace, a modernist masterpiece in the unlikely setting of India, furnished with design classics by the likes of Eileen Gray, Marcel Breuer, and Le Corbusier; commissioned by the Maharajah of Indore, it was built in 1929 by German architect Eckart Muthesius.

Just inside the door the artist placed a piece of Belgian black marble, a stone of about three by three feet of the type used by Brancusi for his sleek Bird in Space sculptures, of which the maharajah owned three. Now very rare, the stone was commonly used in luxurious staircases, floors, and fireplaces in Europe as well as for decorative inlay in the Taj Mahal. Together this stone block and two others on higher floors-one of Indian black and gold marble and one of pristine white Italian Carrara Caldia marble-functioned as cornerstones, equivalent in form and material, yet from different geographic locations. This work, Three Birds, Seven Stories, Interpolations and Bifurcations, 2008, served to anchor the ghostly and disembodied images of Manik Bagh.

Farther on were a negative photographic print of the marble block-Rough-Cut Block of Belgian Black Marble, Catella Marmi, Moncalieri, Jtaly (Negative), 2008-rendering it white, and two images of details from Manik Bagh: a swirling metal Usha umbrella stand, which adorned the entryway and echoed the spiral staircase in the Italian palazzo, and the main staircase, with a geometric balustrade punctuated by a shiny cylindrical column with a ball on top. Sunlight coming through the windowpanes projected grid patterns that mimicked the geometry of the Indian palace's staircase.

Moving to the back of the room, where the interior narrows to less than two feet wide, the walls closed in and beckoned toward claustrophobic ascent. The building's constricted verticality and its dizzying staircase, combined with the pace of the twenty-one framed images, each adding a new layer, produced a certain momentum. On the next floor, two photographs of the Indian palace-depicting its ballroom and its exterior-and one of the Italian palazzo's interior (actually a studio replica) further intertwined the representation of the two structures. Another photo showed a tower of film canisters. These contain the three films based on Thea von Harbou's story The Indian Tomb: One was directed in 1921 by Joe May from a script by von Harbou and Fritz Lang; the other two are Lang's own version in two parts (1958 and 1959). The story concerns a strangely familiar handsome German functionalist architect who attempts to modernize an Indian city.

Simon Starling, Rough-Cut Block of Belgian Black Marble, Catella Marmi, Moncalleri, Italy (Negative), 2008, platinum palladium print, 16 x 20".

Alternating between present and past, real and imagined, the references accumulated along the climb to the remaining four upper floors (including a photo of Jag Mandir Island, one of the locations for Lang's two films), constructing a hallucinatory parallel reality—just as Muthesius's fictional version of the palace, in a retouched photomontage on the seventh floor, represents the architect's unrealized ideal. Finally, at the top, a small set of stairs led to a splendid mosaic bath of blue and gold—an incongruous vision more suitable to an Indian palace—bringing full circle the oddly touching relationship that Starling wrought between the two unrelated and equally unlikely architectural wonders.

-Cathryn Drake

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'Cuttings (Supplement)' is Simon Starling's largest exhibition since winning the 2005 Turner Prize and his exhibition 'Cuttings' at Museum für Gegenwartkunst in Basel (a catalogue co-produced by The Power Plant accompanied the exhibition) 'Cuttings (Supplement)' features nine major works from 2002-07, including The Power Plant's new Henry Moore-related commission *Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore)*, that in different ways address the various ecologies (environmental, political, economic, cultural and art historical) that Starling's works engage. Also Included is *Island for Weeds*-Starling's work from the Venice Biennale in 2003 when he represented Scotland-as well as *Bird in Space* 2004, *By Night, Nachbau, Autoxylopyrocycloboros, Tabemas Desert Run, 24 hr Tangenziale*, and *Los Angeles*, *3rd-5th March 1969 II to indefinite expansion.*

"When I'm making art," says Starling, "I'm thinking up novels in a way.. I'm involved in an activity which is similar to that of a narrator." This approach of active narration epitomizes his new commission for The Power Plant The work alludes to the close relationship between English sculptor Henry Moore and Toronto, which has one of the most significant collections of Moore's sculpture in the world and commissioned *The Archer* (1964-65), one of Moore's most important public works. The proposed sculpture provoked an outcry in Toronto, due in part to nationalist opposition over foreign artists receiving public funds. The objections were thwarted by enthusiasts who raised private money to purchase the sculpture, thereby cementing a relationship between Moore and Toronto that resulted in Moore awarding the Art Gallery of Ontario a significant selection of his plaster originals and works on paper.

Previously, a small number of Moore's Sculptures entered the AGO's collection at the recommendation of gallery adviser Anthony Blunt, the art historian and member of the infamous spy ring that betrayed British secrets to the Soviet Union during WWII. They included the bronze *Warrior With Shield* (1953-54) that evolved, In Moore's words, from "a pebble I found on the seashore in the summer of 1952, and which reminded me of the stump of a leg, amputated at the hip." Moore's fascination with the suggestive formal possibilities of natural Objects particularly interested Starling, and provided a jumping off point for his new commission.

Subsequently Starling became fascinated with the invasion of the Eastern European zebra mussel throughout the North American Great Lakes Marine biologists speculate that the zebra mussel entered the Great Lakes in 1988 in ballast water from large ocean-going trading vessels. Native to the Black Sea, the mussels have become a dominant aquatic species in North America, with both beneficial and destructive ecological repercussions, through filtering pollutants from the lakes while also eliminating many native species. Starling combined his interests in Moore and the zebra mussel by creating a steel copy of Moore's bronze sculpture Warrior with Shield and submerging it into Lake Ontario for eighteen months where it became colonized by zebra mussels The recently removed sculpture, covered with dried mussel shells, is the centerpiece of Starling's exhibition.

This dialogue with Moore is both an engagement with an artistic legacy and an examination of larger social. cultural and environmental contexts. The exhibition includes recent works that expand on these concerns. *Island for Weeds* (2003) alludes to the migration of the rhododendron and proposes a floating island to contain the non-native plant that is now being eradicated in Scotland. *Bird in Space* (2004) refers to Marcel Duchamp's importation of Brancusi's *Bird in Space* to the United States in 1927, when customs deemed it not art and imposed an import tax Starling's work uses a large block of steel exported to the US from Romania, Brancusi's homeland, shortly after George Bush dropped tariffs designed to protect the US steel industry. As with the new commission, these works refer to multiple journeys - those that are constricted and even moulded by the processes of culture.

Born in 1967 in Epsom, England, Simon Starling is a graduate of the Glasgow School of Art. He won the Turner Prize in 2005 and was shortlisted for the Hugo Boss Prize in 2004. Currently, he lives in Copenhagen and is Professor of Fine Arts at the Staedelschule, in Frankfurt He has exhibited widely including the Bienal de Sao Paulo (2004) and the Busan Biennal (2006) and represented Scotland at the Venice Blenniale in 2003. In the past five years, Starling has also made solo exhibitions at Villa Arson (Nice, France), Dundee Contemporary Arts (Dundee, Scotland), Museum für Gegenwartskunst (Basel, Switzerland), and Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney, Australia). Solo exhibitions In 2008 include MASS MoCA, Kunstraum Dernborn, The Modern Institute, and Galleria Franco Noero. The exhibition was curated by Director Gregory Burke. The commission was initiated by former curator at The Power Plant Reid Shier. The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication, Cuttings (Supplement), with essays by Gregory Burke, Mark Godfrey, Reid Shier, and Sarah Stanners.

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Four Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty Five (Motion Control / Mollino), 2007, film still - Courtesy: Galleria Franco Noero, Torino

SIMON STARLING

Edoardo Bonaspetti

English artist born in 1967, winner of the 2005 Turner Prize, after spending the most part of his career divided between Berlin and Glasgow, Simon Starling currently lives in Copenhagen. His practice reveals a deep interest in design, that the artists uses to analyze the histories and consequences of globalized systems of production. consumption and transport of objects. At the moment, he has a solo show at The Power Plant in Toronto ("Cut-tings," through May 11) and several group exhibitions throughout Europe. But what we especially care about is his solo show now on display at the Franco Noero gallery in Turin ("Three Birds, Seven Stories. In-terpolations and Bifurcations", until June 28), which inaugurates the new gallery space located in the legendary building called Fetta di Polenta. designed in 1840 by the Italian architect Alessandro Anto-nelli, the same as the Mole Antonelliana.

To begin, I would like you to talk to me about the origin of your works. Does it exist a starting point? How do they begin?

The projects begin in many different ways. New projects often evolve from old ones, from scraps or snippets of information picked up along the way, which suddenly make absolute sense in relation ro a particular context or site. Quire often things get interesting when two such snippets collide. The Story of Sergio Leone filming in the cut priced 'Wild West' in Spain and a half clear idea about creatinga heating system with a disemboweled car engine suddenly became Kakteenhaus in 2002. My most recent project Three Birds, Seven Stories, Interpolations and Bifurcations evolved from a previous project, Bird in Space (2004), and from a conversation I had with Pierpaolo Falone from Galleria Franco Noero during our drive around Turin for 24hr Tongenziale (2004) about a palace in Indore, India built by a young German modernist architect in the early 1930's. There's always a lot of serendipity involved, more that than hard-graft anyway - the hard-graft comes later.

I remember that once you compared your works to constellations of elements that melt into one structure. The ultimate result, the interface with the public, becomes just one of many components of the project.
That's something that I've suggested in the past, yes. The idea is that the work is somehow illusive, uncontainable. The final manifestation of the work is indexical to some extent. In fact a few recent projects have surprised me by their sense of completeness, They are rather resolved and hermetic as objects - even though they still refer very clearly to very particular and in some sense 'performative' production processes.

Your work also has a recognizable literary spirit. Particularly in your most recent project where the narratives structure adopts more fragmented and non -linear characters.
I've used many kinds of narrative structures as the backbone of my projects, but as its title suggests, the new project ***Three Birds, Seven Stories, Interpolations and Bifurcations*** (2008) is perhaps the most complex, and layered example of this use of narrative structures to date, and on certain levels, it is an attempt to allow the " literary" complexities of the project, which might ordinarily only be present in a catalogue, to live with the work when exhibited. Perhaps it is, in some sense, an exhibition as a catalogue and what's more, realised in an exhibition space inTurin, shaped like a partially open book. Its structure perhaps kicks against the very near, often circular, structures I've deployed in the past, It's title was in part inspired by Jacques Roubaud's novel ***The Great Fire Of London, A Story with Interpotations and Bifurcations*** (1989) which can be read and re-read in a seemingly infinite number of ways. It's an extremely interesting idea and one that I can only touch upon in my exhibition but never the less represents a new approach for me. It's an approach that allows for the multiple versions of a single story both real and fictional to co-exist. The project still has a very reduced, sculptural core, the 'Three Birds' of the title, a series of marble blocks cut by a computer guided milling machine, but from this central core a web of associated material starts to unfold in the form of photographs and texts, it is a network where as in the past the narrative structures have been more linear, even if that joumey ends up back where it started.

In fact despite the infinite possibilities of variations, the start ing point of your "journeys" often correspond with the arrival point.

I guess perhaps that sense of a resolved, clear, condensed I guess perhaps that sense of a resolved, clear condensed structure is akin to a kind of poetry. While that might sound pretentious, I think its what holds everything together in the end. It's crucial.

But now you are becoming more interested in a new approach that allows multiple versions of a story to co-exist. Can we delve deeper into this subject?
I've always been interested in the role of contextual information in the making of my projects. In general that kind of information has existed in catalogues but recently in thinking about how to integrate that information into the work. To some degree it began with ***24 hr. Tangenziale*** in Turin but became most elaborated in the project ***WilhelmNoack oHG*** (2006). Like many of my projects this work had, on one level
at least, a simple rhetorical structure, a kind of box with the sound of its own making' idea. What I decided to do was to incorporate the production of the final work very directly in the end result. I created a film that documents both the history of a company of metal fabricators in Berlin and their involvement in the production of a loop-machine to display that film. The film included many photographs and plans from the company archives, as well as sequences shot in the workshops during the building of the loop machine, It creates a very hermetic final work, which was something quite new for me. The new project, ***Three Birds***... for Turin is an extension of that thinking in many ways but is dealing with a much more fractured and layered history, one that slides from truth to fiction in a very fluid way.

In the light of such multiple readings and different levels of communications what kind of authority or control do you claim for yourself on the meaning of the work?

In one sense I am happy for the work to be read in a number of ways, even co-opted at times to suit people's whims. That can be interesting. I've never been interested in making didactic statements. On the other hand, I have been very involved in the mediation of my own work. I often write texts about my projects. I'm very involved in working on the publications that accompany particular projects. I'm a bit of a controlfreak when it comes to the way the works are photographed and the process documented. For me it's all part and parcel of the work. What is always funny is how certain facts get confused or displaced from one project to another. People inevitably start to imagine
their own version of the works- it's like Chinese whispers. But that's a universal problem. Perhaps that's why I agree to make interviews?

Once you declared: "My work is about material on a very fundamental level--about stuff about atoms" What can you tell me about that?
I have been very preoccupied with the 'stuff' of sculp ture and indeed photography, in trying to strip things back to their very fundamentals, to go to source or to interrogate materials, on a microscopic level as well. As we all grow more and more distant from the means of production, I've felt the need to get closer
and closer. It's a concern that evolved out of an acute awareness of geography I developed while I was living in Glasgow, It's about questioning the specificity of the

Autoxylopyrocycloboros, 2007 - Courtesy: the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

places you stay or the materials you use. In general, it's about not taking anything for granted.

In this issue we have published a focus on Glasgow by Martin Boyce. If I am not wrong, you moved there in '90, maybe to get away form the young-British-artist wave that was hitting London then as well. What's your idea fo the city? In which way has it influenced your work?
Glasgow was a fantastic place for me for a long time - I learnt so much there. I miss it now I'm there so rarely. or perhaps it's really the people I miss more than the city - the art scene was always abou the people - there wasn't so much else in the early 90's when I moved there. For me the sense of thinking about an art practice outside the conventional centers of art production was very important to the development of my ideas. the notion of being very pro-active about ones own geography really shaped so much of what I do now.

In fact, you almost exclusively work on site-specific projects: each work is deeply linked to the space or, to the place form which it is conceived. Why? In what way does the specificity of each place influence your works?
I think I would in part describe the process more as finding homes for projects. I tend to carry around a bunch of half-baked ideas for things that for some reason or other suddenly find their place or are triggered by a particular set of circumstances. It's a question of joining the dots. I always approach sites with very particular baggage but I guess you develop a noise for the global int he local or something like that. What I try to resist though is a formula, the process should be responsive and not systematic. It also can't aways be like that - its just not physically possible or even desirable to incessantly be chasing the local angle. That becomes trite and unproductive.

I would ask you how important it is that you personally expose yourself in your works and what relationship do you establish the audience. it seems to me that your projects are never concentrated on it.
I like whenever possible, to keep myself at arms length from the final work. There is one recent instance where my image is present in a final work (Autoxylopyrocycloboros, 2006) but then it's really as the anti-hero, a kind of self-defeating fall guy with a equally ridiculous accomplice. It's kind of Laurel and Hardy go boating., but in general there is only distraction and deviation in foregrounding or mythologizing the artist. It's an idea that perhaps relates to the way I've dealt with the work of other artists and designers too. to me the slippage that occurs by keeping the action or process at arms length from the audience is very productive. Perhaps I find Robert Barry's low-key inert gas releases more persuasive than Chris Burden's endurance tests in small shorts, I'm not sure.

Many of your projects make reference to the works by Carlo Mollino. You once defined him as a very good editor of his own story. Can you tell me about your interest in him?
My initial interest in Mollino was of course as a designer and architect, who was until recently rather unknown to most people outside Italy. The more I investigated Mollino the more I began to understand his life and work as a very carefully articulated "gesankunstwerk". He was never interested in mass-production--very little remains of his furniture for example--yet he had a restless energy and was constantly on the move, but at the same time he was very preoccupied with his own position in history, with his legacy. This of course led to the rather obsessive decoration of his apartment in Turin (now Museo casa Mollino), somewhere he never actually lived but rather that he was preparing for the afterlife, a kind of tomb. I started to understand certain parallels between his desire to control the reception of his work and my interest in mediating my own projects - in one sense perhaps I used Mollino as a foil for something rather introspective.

You recently opened Cuttings (Supplement), your big show at the Power Plant in Toronto. Could you talk about it? What's its relationship with the one you had in Basel in 2005 before you won the Turner Prize?
The show in Toronto was initially planned to be a tour of the Basel show but then I made a proposal for a new work which involved nature, zebra mussels to be exact, and it became clear that time was required and so now its almost three years between the two shows. I was still rather keen to hold on to some of the ideas I had developed in Basel related to the way existing works could be seen again in a new constellation, how threads could be followed through a number of different projects so we kept the title and even created a supplement to the Basel catalogue with the same designers, Norm from Zurich - an update if you like. The choice of works for Toronto evolved from the new commission ***Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore)*** but also from a desire to continue the concerns and logic of that first, for me very important, exhibition in Basel. The same concerns for energy and entropy, for a global frame of reference, for dealing with material in a very direct way, all recur in the new exhibition.

For Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore), you immersed a steel replica of 'Warrior with Shield' by Henry Moore from 1955 in Lake Ontario for one and a half years in order for a community of zebra mussels to install on it. Can you discuss it further?
The project picks up on two stories of infestation, the inundation of the Toronto art scene by Henry Moore from the late 50's onwards and the arrival of Zebra mussels inthe Great Lakes in the late 1980's. Moore was introduced to the city by the art historian and spy, Anthony Blunt, while the mussels came in cargo ships arriving from the Black Sea at the end of the Cold War. Warrior with Shield is one of those sculptures that Moore linked to finding a pebble on a beech in England whose form triggered a particular figure - we replicated the piece in steel, bronze being toxic to mussels, and then tossed it back into the water for 18 months. It now wears the patina of those months in the water - some rust and a covering of mussels.

In this case, is it safe to say that the project had its own original logic from which, as often happens in your works, the form resulted spontaneously?
There was a strange sense that it was a little bit out of my hands, once the choice of sculpture and material was made (for very pragmatic reasons) and the location for the sculpture in the lake selected, then nature, or whatever that is in the Great Lakes these days with their 180 introduced species, just had to take its course. It made itself in some sense, yes. I think that is true of many of the most successful projects - once they gather mementum there seems to be only one way for them to go. Of course I'm over simplifying but the sense of the thing being beyond aethetic decisions is quite exciting. Someone recently asked me about the constant use of colour in my work and I was a little taken aback. The colour appears in the work in such a pragmatic fashion - I rarely think about it. The red and white car in ***Flaga*** (2002) was exception of course but there aren't many others.

To finish, can you give me a simple definition of "metamorphosis"?
I would say an abrupt and painful change.

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Goddard, Peter. "Starling: Moore than meets the eye". Toronto Star, March 13, 2008. Page E10

Starling: Moore than meets the eye

Britains provocative conceptual artist chooses to solve mysteries where there are none

PETER GODDARD
VISUAL ARTS CRITIC

If Simon Starling hadn't established himself as an artist - winning Britain's prestigious Turner Prize in 2005 in the process - he might have made it as a classic English detective, beginning with his rather dour oh-the-horrors-I've seen expression.

Or maybe he'd be a crime writer. "When I'm making art." he says, "I'm thinking up novels in a way." There's his name, Simon, reminding us of the suave British private eye, Simon Templar. Starling suggests the darker side of the British sleuthing trade, with its mischief and chicanery.

Then there's his art practice where he puts together pieces of a puzzle that never required solving in the first place.

Take "Cuttings (Supplement)," Starling's show at the Power Plant with nine pieces from 2002 to last year. The main gallery has a huge rectangle of rusted steel tilted toward one wall. A suite of photographs is located high on another wall across the way. Near the centre there's a tiny portable island supporting some real, if scrubby, plant life surrounded by small stones. Everything rests on pontoons. A guard must constantly mist the plants with water.

In another space, there's a crudely realized scaled-down figure of a man holding a shield with a stump of one arm, while missing the other arm entirely. Most of the surface is dotted with nasty-looking zebra mussels, their jagged shells poised open like moth wings.

As objects, this collection would more likely be found in a science museum. Indeed, a third space is given over to schemata for a car design. Only *Infestation Piece (Muss elled Moore*), as Starling calls the mussel man. gives much in the way of old-fashioned aesthetic pleasure, a response further heightened by a nearby evocative black and white photograph of the critter-covered steel object.

So you can understand why the 41 year old artist triggered such media uproar with his Turner-winning piece, *Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No.2* in which wood taken from an old shed was reconfigured into a small boat. After a row down the Rhine the wood was reassembled into its shed shape. "A thumping bore," the Independent's description of the artist, was one of the more charitable portrayals he received.

Conceptual artists often get this sort of rough critical ride. But the Copenhagen-based Starling shouldn't. His art-morphing practice mirrors contemporary culture's remix mentality. His environmentalism is au courant. Yet his thinking is entirely rooted in a wide spectrum of art history.

Infestation Piece - destined for the Art Gallery of Ontario as its permanent residence - is based on Henry Moore's bronze sculpture, *Warrior With Shield* (1953-1954). *Bird in Space* (2004), the rusted piece, channels sculptor Constantin Brancusi's soaring work of the same name. Starling's work, made from Romanian steel imported into the United States, refers to the 1927 decision by American customs offidais to tax the Romanian-born Brancusi's sculpture as a chunk of raw metal, not as art.

Every solid Starling object - a really old-fashioned concept for a conceptualist - begins with one very crucial intangible, the time needed for the trip taken to make the thing possible in the first place.

With *Island for Weeds* (2003), the portable island piece, the migration of the rhododendron into its non-native water in Scotland provides the basis for our understanding of the work. Ditto for the 18-month dunking Irifestation Piece enjoyed under the surface of Lake Ontario six months longer than expected due to the paucity of attaching mussels. Moore's original piece itself evolved from a pebble the sculptor found during a seashore walk he'd taken in 1952. The zebra mussel itself found its way from Europe into our waters.

Starling's labour-intensive methods likewise have their roots in the most romantic 19th-century nations and rival all of Charlton Heston's teeth clenching as Michelangelo in the 1965 film The Agony and The Ecstasy. And no one ever called Heston a thumping bore.

pgoddard@thestar.ca

Just the facts

WHAT: Simon Starlin's "Cuttings (Supplement)" with Sadie Benning's "Play Pause"
WHERE: The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery at Harbourfront Centre, 231 Queen's Quay W.
WHEN: Until May 11

THE MOST SUBVERSIVE FORM OF FLATTERY

Simon Starling's Infestation Piece, right, has a lot to say about Henry Moore's Warrior With Shield, left, upon which it is based

•Toronto's love affair with Moore: You can spot his sculputres outside city hall and the Art Gallery of Ontario *Warrior With Shield* (1953 - 54) itself was on display at the Four Season Centre for the Performing Arts until last month. It is one of 900 works by the British sculptor in the AGO collection.

•Invasion 1: Starling's piece, newly finished, looks the worse for wear since it was sub merged for 18 months in Lake Ontario, where it aquired a colony of zebra mussels. Like Moore, the mussels are native to Europe, not North America.

•Invasion 2: Starling himself is a British import, alluding pershaps to a more modern artistic infestation

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Questions & Artists

Henry Moore and more

Cover versions of a song - from Hendrix's version of Dylan's All Along the Watchtower to Soft Cell's redo of Gloria Jones's Tainted Love - can be much better, or better known, than the original. It seems the same may soon apply to British artist Simon Starling's reworking of a well-known Henry Moore sculpture. In 2005, Starling plunged a replica of Moore's Warrior with Shield into Lake Ontario to cover it with zebra mussels. With the work now on land and on view in Toronto's Power Plant, Starling tells Leah Slindals how he made this older artwork (among others) sing a new tune.

Q Why did you throw this replica of a Henry Moore sculpture into Lake Ontario?

A I've been interested for many years in the way some plants and animals have moved around the world in relation to globalization. Other projects in the show refer to that process, this idea of the introduced species and how they can radically alter ecosystems. So when making all artwork for Toronto, I picked up on this story of the Great Lakes' zebra-mussel infestation. It started as recently as 1988, coinciding with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the establishing of new shipping routes into tile Black Sea.

I also knew about English artist Henry Moore's relationship to Toronto, his commitment to the city. And I saw his sculpture Warrior with a Sheild at the Art Gallery of Ontario. There's this anecdote Moore told about this piece, about finding a pebble on a beach and how it reminded him of a torso with a truncated limb. He worked up this sculpture from that pebble. It occurred to me tilat it would be kind of nice to return that sculpture back into tile lake, as it were. Also this notion of the shielded warrior seemed to have a lovely poetic relationship to the mussels, who are also kind of shielded warriors. So it was a collision of these two stories: the introduction of Moore's work into Toronto and introduction of tile zebra mussels into the lake.

Q A lot of your artwork references global economic or environmental problems. Does that concern extend into other areas of your life?

A One of the things that's really important about the Moore project is a sense of trying to slow things down. It's anachronistic in a late-capitalist kind of situation to stick a sculpture in a lake for 18 months and let nature do what it does. It's sort of about trying to make a different kind of speed for life. So I guess it has a political sense in that way. .

Of course I'm very interested in environmental things, but I'm also interested in how they can talk about human things. For example, I was just watching this fantastic documentary Darwin's Nightmare. It's an incredible kind of global story from this very specific and seemingly innocuous introduction of two fish into a lake, which leads to a crumbling of an ecology and fishing industry, which in turn connects to gun trafficking. For me, that's when it gets interesting, when those stories start to talk to a more global political and social sphere. So this piece is as much about people as it is about mussels.

Q How would you deal with someone who is upset about this work, who feels it's disrespectful to Moore?

A This was never about defacing but rather enriching a story about an artist's relationship to a city. At the same time, people were upset when the original Moores were brought in; there were all these nationalistic concerns about having a British artist be so prominent in a Canadian city. So people are upset all the time, but they get over it. I don't set out to upset people, but it's also OK to poke a little bit and scratch under the surface. I guess that's part of my job as an artist, to raise issues and concens, and if people are upset by it them, well, maybe they'll grow to appreciate it in 50 years.

Q One thing you do quite a bit is work off of other people's artwork. Has anyone tried to do the same thing using your work?

A Interestingly, I recently had email contact with a French artist who wanted to remake a piece of mine for an exhibition, take it one step further. For the first time, that's happened.

Q How did that make you feel?

A I suppose it's quite nice; it's actually a work that's been talked about and written about quite a lot so maybe there's an inevitability about it somehow. It made me feel rather old, to be honest! But I'm very happy he asked me, somehow.

Simon Starling continues to May 11 at the Power Plant in Toronto. For more information, visit www.thepowerplant.org.

■

National Post

Starling, Simon. Interviewd by Leah Sandals. "Questions & Artists: Henry Moore and more". National Post [Canada], March 6, 2008, page AL7

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Balzer, David. "Not-So-Simple Simon". Toronto Life, February 2008, page 126

Not-So-Simple Simon

Britain's Starling brings his provocative conceptualism to the Power Plant

BY DAVID BALZER

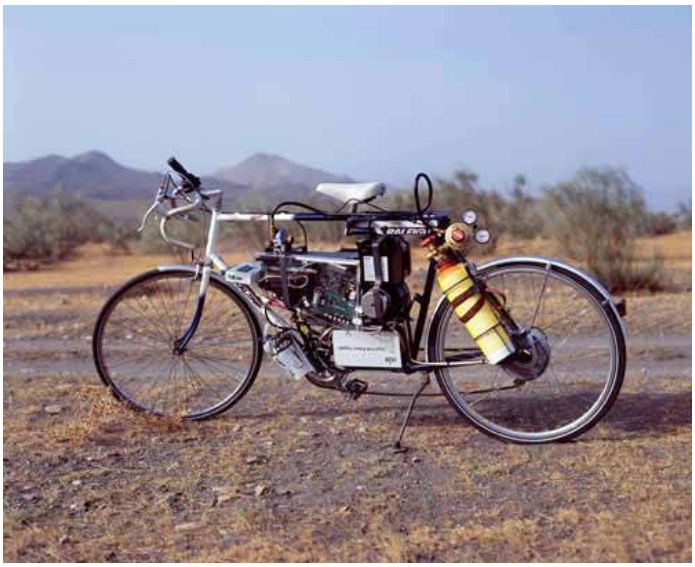
No one raises ire quite like a Turner Prize winner. British artist Simon Starling is a crashingly good case in point: his work is equal parts opaque, compelling and infuriating, its impor-tance lying as much in its making as its completion. In honour of the Power Plant's unveiling of a new $40,000 Starling commission, a breakdown of his greatest hits, and what they may or may not mean.

Infestation Piece (Musselled Mooore), 2007-08

Genesis: Intrigued by Toronto's storied relationship with English modernist Henry Moore, Starling immersed an iron copy of Moore's Warrior With Shield in lake Ontario, and allowed it to collect zebra mussels, a species not native to Canada and thus, like Moore, imported.
Simon says: "I thought it would be nice to throw it into the lake, leave it for six months, grow lots of mussels on it, then hang it in a gallery."
We say: Given that Starling is also an import, we suspect he may be having a bit of an ideological laugh at our expense.

Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture no. 2), 2005

Genesis: Starling spotted a shed on the Rhine near the Kunstmuseum Basel, turned it into a boat, rowed it to the museum, and reconstructed it once inside.
Simon says: "I deliberately make things myself and tend to take the long way around."
We say: A self-evident recasting of Marcel Duchamp's readymades. Anti conceptualist Stuckist Charles
Thomson said it best: "Starling should get his craft badge, first class, but not the Turner Prize.·



Tabernas Desert Run, 2004

Genesis: Influenced by artist Chris Burden, who crossed Death Valley on a petrol-powered bike in 1977, Starling traversed Spain's Tabernas Desert on a fuel cell-powered electric one. He then used the only byproduct, water, to paint a picture of an Optunia cactus, introduced into the area by director Sergio Leone.
Simon says: "It's ultimately wonderfully contradictory."
We say: Art about art that doesn't quite cohere. Sounds like a fun trip, though.

Rescued Rhododendrons, 1999

Genesis: Originally brought to Scotland from Spain, rhododendrons are now considered a threat to the heathland's ecosystem. In 1999, Starling drove a bunch of them back to Spain, taking photos along the way. In 2003 he asked permission to place a self-sustaining flotilla of the "weeds" on Loch Lomond, but was refused.
Simon says: "It brings with it a load of notions about alien species, indigenous cultures and migration."
We say: A mildly interesting statement on the colonialist character of ecosystems that's pretty earnest for Starling..

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ARTFORUM
SEPTEMBER 2008

GLASGOW

Glasgow International

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

As Glaswegian novelist Alexander Trocchi wrote in his spellbinding essay "The Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds" (1962), "There is in fact no such permanence anywhere. There is only becoming." His words reflect a city that was once "the workshop of the world"-but has in the last twenty years emerged from industrial decline as a post Fordist shopping and services center. This spring, the already vibrant art scene in Glasgow was electrified by the third and largest installment of Francis McKee's Glasgow International.

In many of the Glasgow International projects and events, McKee's loose curatorial theme of "public and private" translated into an imaginative interrogation of the history of Glasgow. An atmospheric remapping of the city occurred in Raydale Dower and Judd Brucke's walking tour The Secret Agent, 2008, commissioned by the artist-led gallery LowSalt and inspired by Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel. Audiences were led through alleyways and into private derelict grounds, their progress arrested by artworks, puppetry, projections, and a live musical score. The Modern Institute presented a new work by Simon
Starling, Project for a Public Sculpture (After Thomas Annan), 2008, in semiderelict former public baths in the Saltmarket. Starling scanned silver particles from a reprinted 1866 Thomas Annan photograph of a Glasgow slum and built a virtual model of their form-result~ng in a large, amorphous, pale gray sculpture that resembled an unpainted Franz West. However, Starling's work also describes how technology and gentrification have erased a complex history of communal domesticity. This interplay of public and private was also meaningfully explored in Polish painter and filmmaker Wilhelm Sasnal's 16-mm film The Other Church, 2008-a song tribute to murdered Polish student Angelika Kluk-shown in the darkened basement of a disused printing works on Osborne Street.

There were also high-octane exhibitions, such as Catherine Yass's High Wire, 2007, at the Centre for Contemporary Arts. Yass's film documented tightrope walker Didier Pasquette's failed attempt to cross a wire suspended ninety feet above the ground berween Glasgow's iconic Red Road flats. More dizzying spectacle awaited visitors to Jim Lambie's solo show "Forever Changes" at the Gallery of Modern Art. Lambie cleared the neoclassical interior of partitions as well as a section of the gallery's education department and paved the floor with The Strokes, 2008-a flat ocean of shiny monochrome waves arrayed with sculptures displaying his knack for pop culture bricolage like Warm Leatherette, 2008, made from the stuffed arms of leather jackets and a bowling ball. Of the group shows, the most notable were curator Daniel Baumann's Fluxus-like "Records Played Backwards,"

View of "Ernst Caramelle," 2008. From "Glasgow International," Mary Mary.

at the Modern Institute, and Sorcha Dallas and Alex Frost's "Run Run," at the Collins Gallery, which positioned local artists, including Laura Aldridge, Gregor Wright, and Rob Churm, alongside more established figures like John Latham and Richard Deacon.

Mary Mary presented a geometric watercolor wall painting and understated drawings by Austrian artist Ernst Caramelle. Caramelle's vivid and minimal painting elicited a curious sense of fluctuating space and light, which framed and intensified the effects of the other works on display, such as Untitled, 2000, a drawing made using sunlight on paper. Masking off sections of the small purple page, Caramelle created jagged lines and flat layers of yellow, gray, lilac, and violet. The graduated colors of this small yet beautiful work mapped a process of gradual change. On a wider scale, this is what Glasgow International has achieved: encouraging both a heightened sense of the city's history and of its becoming.

-Sarah Lowndes

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Tate Papers Online Research Journal

Autumn 2007

Replication: Some Thoughts, Some Works

Simon Starling

The following illustrated texts flag up a number of works from the last ten years, some of which are still in production, that take as their starting point existing objects or artworks and deploy processes of reproduction or replication as an investigative tool. All of these projects engage (to a greater or lesser extent) in, and have been generated through a close collaboration with, the mechanisms and culture of the museum.

Fig.1
Simon Starling
A Charles Eames 'Aluminium Group' chair remade using the metal from a 'Marin Sausalito' bicycle / A 'Marin Sausalito' bicycle remade using the metal from a Charles Eames 'Aluminium Group' chair
1997
Bicycle, chair, two plinths, glass, vinyl text
Installation view, Kunsthalle Bern
© Simon Starling

Work, Made-ready, Kunsthalle Bern

Work, Made-ready, Kunsthalle Bern 1997 (Fig.1) inverts the notion of the ready made in a simple but labour-intensive act of transmutation. Two aluminium objects were reconstructed using the metal from the other. What resulted were two handcrafted, degraded, mutations of their former manufactured selves, scarred from their genetic transfer and separated by a sheet of glass that supported a recto/verso text, a recipe for the work.

Nachbau

The Museum Folkwang was founded by Karl Ernst Osthaus in Hagen in 1902 and was one of the first museums of its kind. After his early death in 1921 large parts of his collection were moved to Essen. From 1929 they were exhibited in the new Museum Folkwang in Essen, which comprised two existing buildings, the Goldschmidt Villas, as well as a significant extension by the architect Eduard Körner on the Folkwang's present site. In 1944–5 both the Villas and Körner's building were destroyed by bombing.

The photographer Albert Renger-Patzsch (1897–1966) worked in and for the Museum Folkwang for a number of years before the outbreak of the World War II. Best known for his work documenting the industrialisation of the Ruhr in the 1920s and 1930s and for his book Die Welt ist Schön (The World is Beautiful) 1928, Renger-Patzsch was given a studio at the Folkwang in return for his occasional work as museum photographer. For almost ten years he regularly photographed objects from the collection as well as documenting the various installations within the museum. Since Renger-Patzsch never signed a contract formalising this arrangement, the largely unknown body of work made for the museum is now under the control of the owners of his estate. Nachbau (Reconstruction), 2007, conceived in relation to the impending demolition of the newest part of one of the oldest modern art museums in Europe, was developed as a partial corrective to this situation and involved the rebuilding of a part of the 1930s Museum Folkwang and the subsequent re-installation of the 1930s period hang.

The 'stage set', which eventually facilitated the 'remaking' of Renger-Patzsch's images, was built in large part by stripping out and reconfiguring the mobile wall system in the museum's so-called Neubau (New Building), for which this exhibition was the last. Nachbau also involved the 'faking' of a number of works from the collection that had been confiscated under National Socialism – a Giorgio de Chirico now in Switzerland, a Franz Marc and a Erich Heckel both in the US. Apart from some speculative use of colour and a single missing sculpture, the reconstruction was exact in every detail, even, it was observed, down to its smell. What will remain of Nachbau, once the Neubau is demolished to make way for a building designed by David Chipperfield Architects, are about 16 seconds of diffused light captured, as if in a rare moment of reverse time travel, on fourets of film some sixty-five years after Renger-Patzsch himself clutched at his cable release and gazed into the 'ineffably luminous eyes' of Paula Modersohn-Becker's Self Portrait, 1906.

Fig.2
Simon Starling
Nachbau Installation view 2007
Courtesy Museum Folrwang, Essen
© Simon Starling

Fig.3
Simon Starling
Nachbau 2007
Courtesy Museum Folrwang, Essen
© Simon Starling

IInfestation Piece (Work in Progress)

This ongoing work commissioned by The Power Plant, Toronto, conflates two stories of inundation and domination. The first involves the dominant role played by Henry Moore in the development of late-modernism in the city of Toronto, the realisation of a number of ambitious public sculptures in the city and his eventual donation of a large number of key works to the city. The second story is that of a small mollusc accidentally introduced into the Great Lakes in the late 1980s by cargo ships from their original habitats around the Black Sea. The Zebra mussel has proved extremely successful in its new environment and has radically altered the ecosystem of the Great Lakes and beyond. Following extended negotiations with the Henry Moore Foundation a sculpture 'based on' Moore's 1954 sculpture Warrior with a Shield, a sculpture that evolved from a stone Moore found on the beach in England, was produced in steel (bronze being toxic to mussels), and then thrown into Lake Ontario, where, for the past year and a half, it has played host to a thriving colony of Zebra mussels.

Drop Sculpture (Atlas), A Project for the New Conservation Department, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Taking as a starting point the terracotta sculpture of the mythological figure Atlas made by Artus Quellinus as a model for a decorative figure that can today be seen on the exterior of the New Town Hall (1648), Drop Sculpture (Atlas) which has been developed for and with the Conservation Department at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, deploys both the architecture of the departments new building and use of that space as generative factors in determining its form. The work has evolved in close collaboration with the people who will pass it everyday.

The choice of Quellinus' Atlas figure is simple and playful, and relates directly to his mythological role as the carrier of the weight of the world or supporter of the heavens – and it is gravity that will be the chief architect of this project. The figure was also chosen for its base materials (terracotta) and appropriate size (75 cm high). Three terracotta replicas of the Quellinus original have been produced using industrially developed laser scanning technology and 3D printing, transforming Atlas momentarily into a stream of numbers. The resulting copies, on which the sculptor's fingerprints are still clearly visible, will be dropped from various heights, repaired and then displayed in the lobby of the Conservation Department at the height from which they were dropped.

The project for the Rijksmuseum picks up on ideas developed in many previous works. Works that have similarly involved collaboration (for example, CMYK, RGB – the production of a catalogue that documented its own making in a print works in Romania) attempted to reverse entropic trajectories rebuilding of a glass lamp and the beer bottle used to smash it) or have deployed existing sculptures in new roles and relationships (Bird in Space, 2006: the importation of a massive slab of Romanian steel as an art work during the steel import tax controversy in the US). All of these ideas and methodologies appear in this raw new work.

Just as the film Robert Smithson made to document Glue Pour, his ode to entropy, cites Humpty Dumpty as a key influence, Drop Sculpture (Atlas) sets itself up as a counter-entropic work, and, as such, as a celebration of the conservator's art.

Notes

1) Albert Renger-Patzsch's original title for the book had been Die Dinge (Things) but his publisher forced him to change the title for fear a book with that title would not sell.

2) See Bruno Haas, Institution and Place: Nachbau, Museum Folkwang, Essen and Steidel, Göttingen, 2007. Tate Papers Autumn 2007 © Simon Starling

This paper was written as a short discussion document for the Inherent Vice: The Replica and its Implications in Modern Sculpture Workshop, held at Tate Modern, 18–19 October 2007, and supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Other papers produced for this workshop can be found in issue no.8 of Tate Papers.

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Starling, Simon. "Replication: Some Thoughts, Some Works," *Tate Papers*: Special Issue on Replication, Autumn, 2007

Special Issue on Replication

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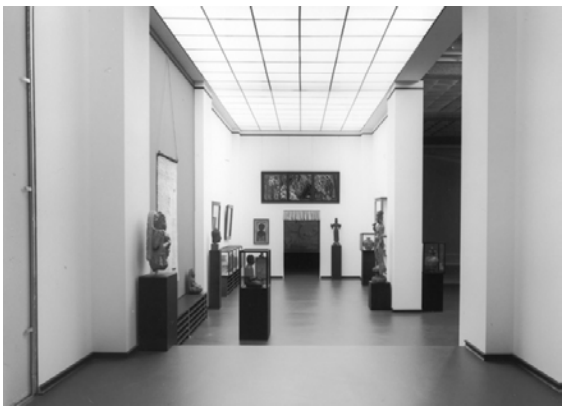

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Fig.4(a)
Infestation Piece, proposal for Lake Ontario, 2006
This work will go on show at The Power Plant in Toronto in February 2008.
Courtesy The Modern Institute, Glasgow
© Simon Starling

Fig.4(b)
Infestation Piece, proposal for Lake Ontario, 2006

Drop Sculpture (Atlas), A Project for the New Conservation Department, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Taking as a starting point the terracotta sculpture of the mythological figure Atlas made by Artus Quellinus as a model for a decorative figure that can today be seen on the exterior of the New Town Hall (1648), *Drop Sculpture (Atlas)* which has been developed for and with the Conservation Department at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, deploys both the architecture of the departments new building and use of that space as generative factors in determining its form. The work has evolved in close collaboration with the people who will pass it everyday.

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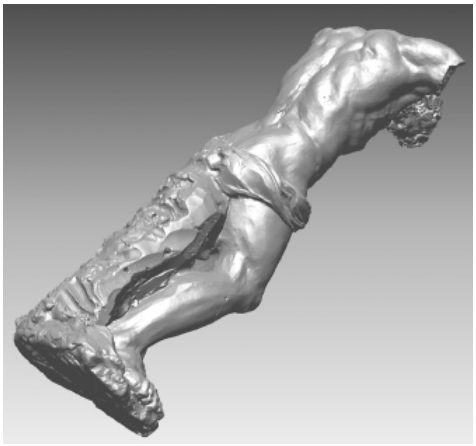
Fig.5(a)
Drop Sculpture (Work in Progress)
Courtesy The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
© Simon Starling



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Simon Starling

Transformation, movement and regeneration. The english artist's entropic journeys put the infinite circle of life on centre stage Thanks to it's symbolic element water

Autoxylopyrocycloboros is a very new word with ancient origins. With the help of a classics scholar, it was built, so to say, from a number of Ancient Greek building blocks, some of which were functional and descriptive and others rather fanciful. This rhythmic amalgam of a word refers to a strange kind of sea creature, a distant relative of the Ouroboros, that mythical tale-eating serpent of alchemy, the symbol for eternal rejuvenation. ***Autoxylopyrocycloboros*** was a creature whose tragi-comically short life was spent on and ultimately in the submarine-infested waters of Loch Long on the west coast of Scotland, the home of Britain's increasingly decrepit nuclear deterrent, Trident. ***Autoxylopyrocycloboros*** was born out of the very particular history of that deepest of fingers of the Clyde Estuary, the birthplace of the steamship and the subsequent home to its distant cousin, the steam-powered nuclear submarine. One of the most picturesque corners of Scotland, whose mountains have in places been hollowed out to contain the nuclear arsenal, Loch Long's banks are also home to the now famous peace camp, a fluctuating community of protestors who have for over 30 years kept the secretive activities of Faslane and Coulport naval bases firmly in the media glare-chivvying probing, worrying their way under the skin of her majesties men and women in blue. In 2004 I visited both the peace camp and Faslane with a group of students from the Staedelschule in Frankfurt while we were staying at Cove Park, a residency programme for artists. At Faslane we were greeted by Commander Bill, a former submariner who had spent much of his adult life in a three-inchthick steel tube close to the bottom of one or other of the world's oceans, but now headed up the base's PR department. What we got from Bill was essentially the "party line" on the functioning of the base and Britain's nuclear deterrent. Half way through his PowerPoint presentation, however, quite to our surprise he played a short sketch from a much loved British situation comedy Only Fool's and Horses, a slap-stick moment clearly designed to break the ice, show the human side of the Navy, that kind of thing. The largely German audience looked on bemused and unsmiling.

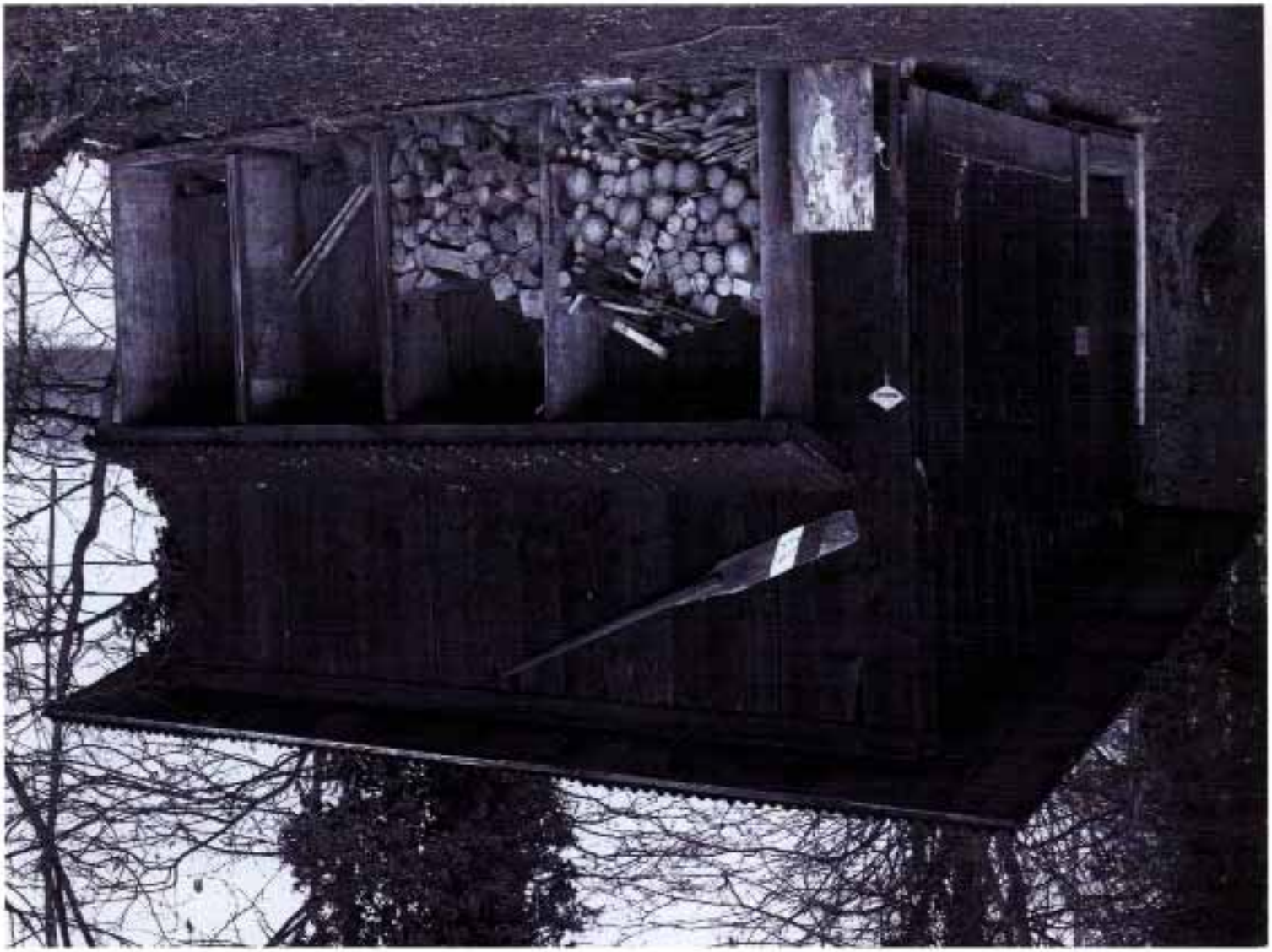
This bizarre insert, this somewhat existential plea, comedy turned tragedy, lodged in my mind and later resurfaced when I was invited back to Cove Park last year to work on a commission to produce a new project in the area. My early love for the more violent, self-destructive moments of classic cartoons, the unending abuses of Tom and Jerry, for example, also came into play, combined with a sketchy knowledge of the early days of steam on the Clyde Estuary, an ongoing interest in the endless "conflagration" that has marked civilisations' development since the first fire was lit in the first cave dwelling, a love of the tragicomic works of the '70s conceptual fall guy Bas Jan Ader, and for the anarchitecture of Gordon Matta-Clark. Coupled with a constant use and abuse of defunct technology, allied to the formulation of ***Autoxylopyrocycloboros*** and to a three-hour-long entropic voyage on the waters of Loch Long in

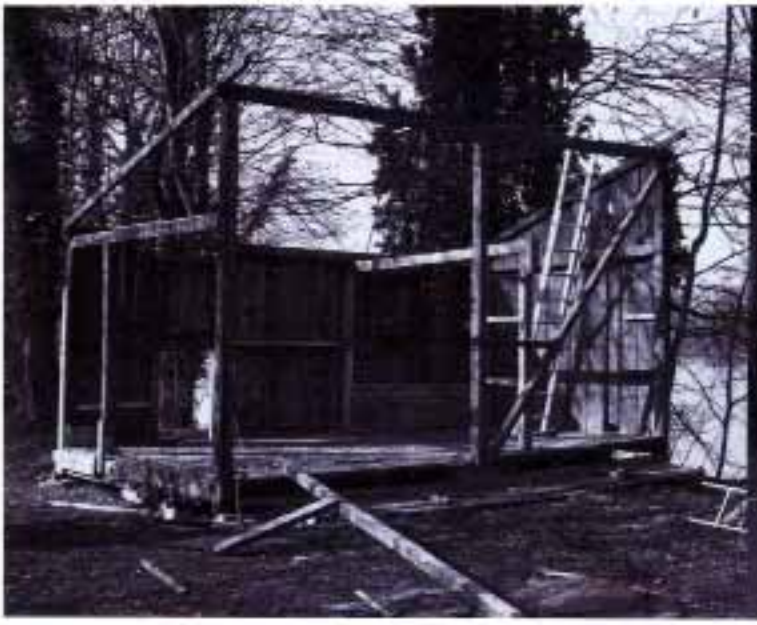
October 2006.

• *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* (2006) is an "act" commissioned for Cove Park taking place on the waters of Loch Long, Scotland, where the first steamboats were built and home to the Faslane and Coulporl naval bases. Starting made a kind of selldestructive journey in a small, 23-feet wooden steam boat named Dignity, used as means of transportat and fuel at the same time. The journey literally consumed itself and ended in the submarine-infested depths of the lake

This project, realised on a residency in Marseille, took the form of a convoluted act of unsustainable provision. A disused museum display case from the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, was transported to Marseille and resurrected, temporarily at least, in the form of a small fishing boat, a traditional barque. The reconfigured vitrine was then put to sea and used to fish in the waters around Marseille. When several fish had been the boat was then further transformed into charcoal in order that the catch might be cooked and consumed. Coming full circle, the remains of the boat returned to the museological realm in the form of the charred remains, testament to the cycle of construction and deconstruction, use and re-use.

un pageot
deux dorades
une brème de mer
deux rougets
trois poissons de roche





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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SIMON STARLING

EXHIBITION DATES:	FEBRUARY 16- MARCH 24, 2007
OPENING:	THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 6 – 8PM
GALLERY HOURS:	TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10 – 6PM

For his third solo exhibition at Casey Kaplan, Simon Starling continues to develop an interest in the fundamental building blocks of art practice, the stuff of making, and attempts to link particular materials to their geographical, political and cultural roots. Selected for their connections and contradictions, the exhibited projects all resurrect outmoded or obsolete forms of technology and link the micro world of the electron microscope, of chemistry and physics, to the wider world of objects and images, a world in which processes of creation and destruction, and energy and entropy appear inevitably linked. This constellation of works is typical of recent developments in Starling's practice as they shift between process, performance, sculpture and photography.

Commissioned by Cove Park, Scotland, *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* has its roots both in the pioneering development of steamboat technology in the Clyde Estuary and in the brooding presence of the Trident nuclear submarines based at neighboring Coulport and Faslane. Realized in October 2006, *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* began with a circular, entropic voyage on the waters of Loch Long. The boat that made the voyage, a 20ft long, clinker-built wooden craft named Dignity, built around 1900 as a steam launch on Lake Windemere, was salvaged from the bottom of Loch Lomond by its previous owner and restored to working order. Newly fitted with a single cylinder, marine steam engine, Dignity served as both vessel and fuel for *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* as, piece-by-piece and plank-by-plank, the boat was fed to its own boiler. Like the age-old alchemical symbol for eternal renewal, the Ouroboros (the tail devouring snake), the boat, in an attempt to keep moving, consumed itself and ultimately returned to the deep, submarine infested waters of the Loch Long. The resulting work documents this event in 38 medium format transparencies exhibited on a resolutely mechanical projector.

In *Gold Toned Okapi*, Starling utilizes existing source material to create a new series of photographic prints. Starling looked to Herbert Lang, a scientist and an accomplished field photographer who's perhaps best known for producing the first photographic images of the Okapi, an ancient relative of the Giraffe, while on a biological survey of North Eastern Congo for the American Museum of Natural History. The images of the creature were made in the Ituri region of the Congo, which is now infamous for its conflict over the regions' gold deposits, which are mined in unregulated artesian mines, and illegally traded to American and European gold refiners. Lang's photographs of the Okapi were produced using glass-plate negatives and printed using the then standard technique of POP (print out paper) printing. This method of printing requires a gold toning process to fix the image. In *Gold Toned Okapi,* Starling worked with a single image originally produced by Lang in 1913. The gold toner used to fix Starling's images was produced using part of a 1oz bar of gold manufactured by the Swiss gold refiner, Metalor, who was recently found to be exporting large quantities of gold from Uganda - gold that has subsequently been traced back to traders in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Starling's gold tainted photographs conflate different geographical points and moments in history, offering a subtle comment on recent international trade.

Paralleling *Gold Toned Okapi*, Starling has transformed a traditional strip canoe (akin to those built in North America since the 1880's that were in turn derived from the Native American birch bark canoe) by using African hardwoods in its construction. The resulting stripped markings on its exterior allude to the camouflaged skin of the Okapi. In this way, the work becomes a hybrid object: part African, part American, part working-canoe, part sculpture, part pantomime costume. While clearly referencing Lang's Congo expedition, the canoe proposes a modern day journey out of New York, back up the Hudson River and beyond.

Simon Starling was the recipient of the 2005 Turner Prize by Tate Britain, London, and was short-listed for the 2004 Hugo Boss Prize by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY. A solo show at Städtischen Kunstmuseum zum Museum Folkwang in Essen, Germany opens in April 2007. His 2005 solo exhibition "Cuttings" which was on view at the Kunstmuseum Basel, Museum für Gegenwartskunst will travel to The Power Plant in Toronto in 2007. A solo show is also planned with M.I.T. & Mass MOCA, North Adams, MA in 2008. Other solo exhibitions include: Villa Arson Nice, France; MACRO, Rome, Italy; Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, Scotland, and Museum of Modern Art, Sydney, Australia. The artist represented Scotland in the 50th International Exhibition of Art, Venice Biennale, Italy, 2003.

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WIELS

Particle Projection (Loop), 2007

By Simon Starling

Particle Projection (Loop), 2007 takes as it starting point two 'cliches' of Belgian culture, a diagrammatic 1950's building and an artist who became a seminal figure for what is now referred to as 'institutional critique'. The project, commissioned to coincide with the transformation of a derelict brewery into a contemporary arts centre, appropriates these two phenomena and uses them as the 'raw material' to produce something new, albeit an image of a fast disappearing technology.

In 1957, Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers worked as a labourer on the building of the Atomium. Designed by Andre Waterkeyn for the 1958 World Fair in Brussels, the building is a simplified diagrammatic representation of a crystallised molecule of iron by the scale of its atoms. Broodthaers recorded the fabrication of this pavilion in a series of photographs that were later published in the newspaper 'Le Patriote Illustre'. Almost fifty years later the Atomium has been restored, its corroded aluminium shell replaced with a shiny new set of triangular panels. During the restoration a series of black and white photographs that directly mimic those made by Broodthaers were produced by Belgian artist Benoit Plateus following my instructions. Collapsing the moment of the original building project onto that of its subsequent restoration, looping back in time, these new images shadow their 1950's precursors frame for frame.

Across town an elegant concrete brewery is under renovation. Completed in 1931 for Wielmans-Ceuppens, the building was designed by Belgian modernist architect Adrien Blomme. This building was very much designed from the inside out. Once the eye-catching centrepiece of the brewery, the large brewing hall projected a sense of well-ordered, spotlessly clean, industrial production to passerby, while at night, the interior flooded with light created a kind of negative image of the building its concrete and metal exterior dissolving into the surrounding night, as the period photographs of Willy Kessels clearly show.

In a Berlin laboratory, a negative from one of the photographs documenting the renovation of the Atomium has been stripped of its gel coating, uncovering the developed silver particles that held the image of their diagrammatic big brother on the Heysel Plateau. Under an electron microscope, these sponge-like image-fragments reveal their true and ghostly complexity. The electron microscope images (synthesised equivalences generated from the accumulated scatterings of a pencil-beam of electrons moving across the surface of the silver particles) hint at an altogether different kind of 'architecture' - one of seemingly infinitely variable, labyrinthine structures more in tune with our newly 'complex' understanding of the world. Returned to 'celluloid', held once more in a field of tiny silver particles, hugely amplified and feed-back into the system from where it first came, this animated spectral figure will be projected into the brewing hall from a constantly looping 35mm black and white film, like a vast, amorphous chandelier, illuminating once more the public face of Wiels.

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simon starling

wilhelm noack ohg

exhibition opening
11 november, 6 - 9pm

exhibition duration
14 november 2006 - 13 january 2007

We would like to inform you of our third solo exhibition with Simon Starling (born 1967) which will open on 11 November and be on show in our gallery until 13 January 2007.

Starling's new work "Wilhelm Noack oHG" is a 4 minute long, 35mm film loop, made with and about the company of Berlin based metal fabricators. The original company of blacksmiths was founded in Schöneberg in 1897 by Carl Wilke. His son later took over the company after qualifying as a master craftsman in 1910. Born in Bukarest in 1902 Wilhem Noack joined the company in 1925 as a draughtsman. In 1930 he married Hildegard Wilke, the boss' daughter, and in 1931 Dieter Noack, the current owner of the company was born.
The company's work is everywhere in the city and is closely tied to the political and cultural history of Berlin in the 20th and 21st centuries. They had connections with the Bauhaus, with International Modernism, worked on projects for the Third Reich and were heavily involved in the post war boom in architecture and exhibition making in West Berlin. Since the mid nineties they have been fabricating more and more for the resurgent art scene in the city. As well as working on local projects they have made fountains in Brasilia, exhibition architecture in Osaka and Cairo and street lamps in Liverpool.
The camera was mounted and moved on a number of tools, trolleys and rollers in the workshop. The result is a bumping and grinding, rattling and vibrating, roller-coaster ride through their workshops and archives covering 100 years of metal fabrication - a short story about the fabric of Berlin in the 20th century. The film is looped on a purpose built stainless steel machine, equivalent to a staircase originally built by the company, that carries the film up and around the projector in a spiral. The loop machine supports both the film and the projector, and was naturally built in the workshop of Wilhelm Noack oHG.

Solo exhibitions by Simon Starling will be on show at Heidelberger Kunstverein (24. November 2006 - 14. January 2007), at Wiels in Brussels (December 2006 - January 2007), and in 2007 at The Power Plant, Toronto. Furthermore he has works at Busan Biennial in Southkorea (until 25. November 2006) und in "Ecotopia", The Second ICP Trienial of Photography and Video, International Center of Photography, New York (until 7. January 2007).

For further information please contact Salome Sommer telephone: 030 28877277, fax: 030 28877278 or bye-mail: mail@ neugerriemschneider.com

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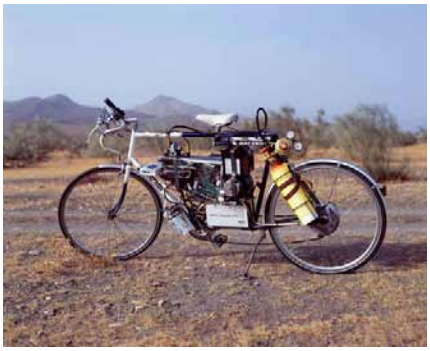
Lizzie Carey-Thomas, Martin Myrone, & Robert Tant, eds., Turner Prize 2005 Catalogue
London: Tate Publishing, 2005.

Simon Starling

1967 BORN EPSOM
1987-90 TRENT POLYTECHNIC, NOTTINGHAM
1990-2 GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART
LIVES AND WORKS IN BERLIN AND GLASGOW



Simon Starling creates installations and objects, and documents pilgrimage-like journeys, bringing into the world absurd and convoluted narratives. He manipulates, recreates and re-locates often obsolete examples of architecture, design and technology, usually from the period of early Modernism (around 1900 to 1950). These transformations draw out an array of issues and ideas about nature, technology and economics, revealing hidden, invisible or mystified relationships and histories.

The resulting works are characterised by an apparent, but incomplete or futile, circularity, the narrative qualities of which can be associated with the experimental tales of Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), *Trek 'Unite d'Habitation de Briey-en-Foret to Unite d'Habitation de Rezel*, 2000 saw Starling make a solar-powered moped ride between two identical Le Corbusier buildings in France. The long journey to see and photograph both buildings may be taken as an absurdist deadpan lampooning of the uniformity of Modernist design, or as expressing nostalgia for the universalising aspirations of such buildings. In *Flaga (l972-2000)* 2002 a red fiat car, produced in Turin in 1974, was driven to a fiat production plant in Poland, where the doors, bonnet and boot were replaced with white elements. The car, returned to Italy and mounted on the wall, took on the resonance of the red-and-white Polish flag. The fiat, symbol of Italian style, is revealed as a hybrid artefact, making visible the multi-national dimension of the industrial economy.

Often, the narratives arranged by Starling will bring nature and human technology into revealingly awkward relationships. With *Burn- Time* 2000, the severely neoclassical Ostertorwache building in Bremen was scaled down into a working hen-house, and then burnt in order to provide the fuel to cook the eggs laid in it. The actual Ostertorwache building, originally designed as a prison, has since been used as a museum dedicated to the work of the Bauhaus designer Wilhelm Wagenfeld (1868-1940); the eggs were cooked in coddlers designed by Wagenfeld, so the work mimicked the sort of utopian, self-enclosed economic system associated with the most idealistic kinds of Modernism. Yet the potency of the series of photographic images that documents the life of the hen-house comes from the frankly comical juxtaposition of chickens and a tiny building designed on epic proportions.

In *Shedboatshed Mobile Architecture No.21* 2005 Starling transforms and re-transforms a utility structure. A shed from Schweizerhalle on the Rhine was dismantled by the artist and turned into a boat in the local style; loaded with the remains of the shed, the boat was paddled down the river, dismantled and re-rnade into a shed for display at the Museum for Gegenwartskunst in Basel. The boat and the shed are each supremely utilitarian structures and the mode of mobilising this piece of architecture obviated the need for further transportation. Moreover, boats and buildings are closely related structurally and through a shared terminology, suggesting the possibility of their mutual transformation. Yet this pilgrimage is poetic rather than purposeful, convoluted for all its imitation of efficiency.

The disruption of the natural order has become the motivation, and motif, for several such circuitous projects for *Kakteenhaus* 2002, a cactus was dug up from the Tabernas Desert in Spain - Europe's only 'true' desert - where cacti had been introduced partly as props to provide a suitably Wild West look for the 'spaghetti' westerns filmed there in the 1960s and 1970s. The specimen was transported to Frankfurt, where it was exhibited in a space heated to the appropriate temperature by improvised use of the engine from the car used for its journey. For *Tabernas Desert Run* 2004 Starling has returned to this setting, crossing the desert on an improvised and awkward but highly efficient electric bicycle. The only waste product produced by the hydrogen and oxygen-fuelled bicycle was water. This was used to paint a botanical illustration of an Opuntia cactus. There is a comic quality bin the contrast between the weird-looking improvised bicycle, and the supremely 'ergonomic' cactus, between the great efforts of man and the ready solutions of nature. But this may be further complicated by the contrived presence of the cactus in the Tabernas Desert (where the 'natural' is in some sense 'artificial'). and by the further allusion to artist Chris Burden's 1977 desert crossing, *Death Valley Run*.

Starling's journey parodies that more macho artistic effort, where Burden crossed the 'real' Wild West on a bike powered by an undersized engine. Starling's work is distinctive in its concern with the making of objects. for each project, he has learned particular skills - model-making, boat-building, engineering, lampshade-fabrication, horticulture - but always stopping short of complete mastery. We can sense, in the visible fissures and joins of his works, the signs of a paradoxical 'amateur professionalism'.

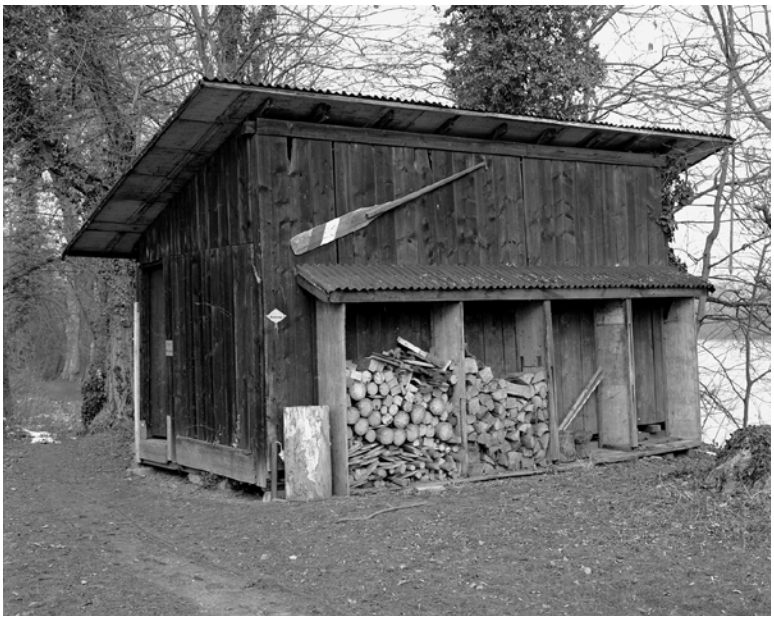
As Starling comments: The investment on a physical level energises the work and draws people in. It is the physical manifestation of a thought process: And he recalls being enchanted with conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner's idea that an artist is someone

‘who is unhappy with the relationship between people and things, and ultimately seeks to alter that relationship’ Starling’s pilgrimages similarly provide, in their combination of lengthiness and needlessness, a buttress against the compression of time and space characteristic of modernity and of global capitalism His describes his work as offering ‘a kind of parallel universe operating in the realm of the outmoded or obsolete’.

Such statements suggest a pragmatic role for the artist; a direct and causal relationship between the artist the artefacts he issues into the world and the people who see those artefacts. Starling’s opposition to the alienation arising from globalisation and industrial capitalism connects with Marxist tradition, and more practically to the idealistic socialism of John Ruskin (1819-1900), William Morris (1834-96), and the Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century. Starling has acknowledged his debt to ‘the more radical aspects’ of this movement ‘with all its wonderful contradictions’. With this nineteenth century idealism, his work is optimistically poised against the dead-end or destructive emptiness of the modern economy.

Starling’s work brings together the universalising and the particular in strange fact-filled fictions which, for all the literalism of their presentation, resist being reduced to a simple and complete point of instruction or information. He mimics some of the characteristic strategies of postmodernity - deadpan, inversion, repetition - but without archness or irony. The bald facticity of Starling’s art - ‘When I say I do something I do it’ - may instead serve to counter the illusory nature of globalisation and capitalist exchange. It also rests on a bond of trust a perhaps fragile belief that the artist’s ambitious vision has transformed these objects, that what he says he has done to the objects we may encounter in a gallery display really happened, that we can really believe what we see. That bond, and that fragility, helps define an unresolved but indissoluble link to the critical traditions of idealist thought and an art that may extend, as well as comment on, the pragmatic optimism of Modernism’s heroic early phase.

MM



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theguardian
Tuesday, December 6, 2005, P. 3

It's a shed, it's collapsible, it floats and (with help from a bike) it's the winner

Even-money favourite scoops £25.000

'Physical manifestation of thought process' praised

Charlotte Higgins
Arts correspondent

An artist who has said of himself: "I have a bad record with destroying things," has won this year's Turner prize.

Simon Starling is no provocateur. Nor was he a shock winner - the bookies made him the even-money favourite. But none the less, it will come as no surprise to those who regard the Turner prize with disdain that the softly spoken, slightly geekish, rather skeletal figure of Starling has won £25,000 for dismantling and assembling a wooden shed.

Starling, who was born in 1967, found it on the banks of the Rhine, took it apart, made parts of it into a boat, and used the vessel to carry the remaining parts of it downriver to Basle. It was then reassembled as a shed in a Swiss museum.

The display of his work at the Turner prize exhibition at Tate Britain also includes a makeshift motorised bicycle, which Starling used to ride across the Tabernas desert in southern Spain. It was powered by hydrogen in lightweight canisters that reacted with oxygen in the atmosphere to produce water as a byproduct. The artist used that in turn to paint a simple watercolour of a cactus he found en route. The watercolour is installed alongside the oversize, makeshift bike. Starling calls his work a "physical manifestation of a thought process". According to Tate curator Rachel Tant : "He's interested in the creation of objects; he is a researcher, traveller, narrator. He looks at how things got to be the way they are, and reasserts a human connection between processes we take for granted ."

The prize was awarded last night by arts minister ·David Lammy, at a ceremony which one prominent artist referred to as a "school dinner for the British artworld", Mr Lammy said of the prize: "Its true genius is that for a couple of days every year, everyone gets to be an expert, no matter what they think about art ."

Sir Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate and chair of the judges, praised all four artists for a "powerful presentation of contemporary British art" - but he also took the opportunity in his speech to defend the Tate against the recent allegations of corruption surrounding the purchase of Chris Ofili's installation The Upper Room, criticised in some quarters because of Ofili's status as a trustee of the Tate . "Tate has been acquiring works by serving artist trustees since the 1950s but in recent years we have decided to do this only in exceptional circumstances," said Sir Nicholas.

He admitted that "there may be room for further improvement" in the practice. But, he added : "I defy anybody who has actually taken the time and trouble to see the work not to agree with the trustees' decision to acquire this most extraordinary and important piece of work. And in making this possible, I would like to thank most particularly Chris Ofili, who could have easily sold this work abroad, but chose instead to offer it at a greatly reduced sum to Tate and who has also pledged [to donate additional work."

Traditionalists will be disappointed that the only painter (and, as it happens, the only woman) on the shortlist was denied the top prize. London-based Gillian Carnegie, an early bookies' favourite, ap-' parently paints in an academic style, producing landscapes and portraits. But her works, though they look at first comfortingly old-fashioned, are often disturbing on second view.

Jim Lambie was the artist who many artworld insiders favoured to win though one distinguished sculptor has dismissed him as a "glorified interior decorator". Whereas last year's Turner prize winner, Jeremy Deller, infuriated some by announcing that he could neither paint nor draw, Lambie has drawn criticism for saying he loved drawing and painting as an art student, but now prefers to stick vinyl tape on floors and make oversize versions of kitsch ornaments.

A gentle, banal piano melody accom- . panies the installation by Darren Almond, which, with its film of his grandmother watching the dancing in the ballroom at Blackpool and film of a gently bubbling fountain provide, according to Ms Tant, "a space where everybody can tap into their own memories".

This year's judges were . journalist Louisa Buck, curator Kate Bush, critic Caoimhin Mac Giolla Leith and gallery director Eckhard Schneider.

Simon Starling: Quixotic errands

• Download our Turner'prize pod- . cast: an audio tour of the Tate Britain exhibition with the curators
• What do you think of the result? Have your say on our blog
• Take a virtual private view of the contestants with our gallery
• Full coverage of the prize and its . previous winners
guardiart.co.uk /arts/turnerprize2005

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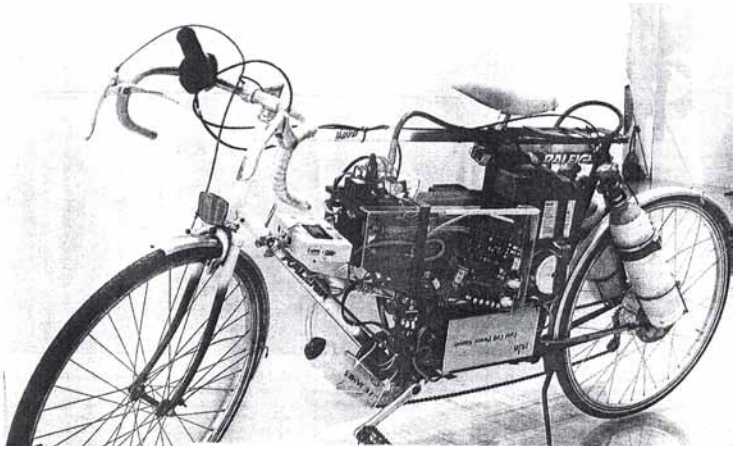
the independent

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2005

Just an old bike? Or is it a poetic narrative?

Either way, Starling flies to Turner Prize



Simon Starlings submissions included an electric bicycle which he rode across a desert in Spain

By Louis Jury
Arts Correspondent

For some men, their shed is a haven, a home for prized objects and a space in which to dream For Simon Starling, it has given him a ticket to £25,000 Turner Prize success.

The 38-year-old artist last night beat the critics' favourite, Jim Lambie, the painter Gillian Carnegie and video artist Darren Almond to take Britain's most prestigious prize for contemporary art. Just as Martin Creed is famed for presenting a room with a light switch turning on and off for his winning Turner Prize exhibit four years ago, Starling will be remembered for his shed - or more precisely *Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No 2)*.

For this, he dismantled a shed discovered on the banks of the Rhine river, transformed it into a boat to float the wooden planks down river and then reassembled it on land. But as part of what one critic described as Crusty Conceptualism, Starling's environmentally friendly art also involved a 41-mile journey on a home-made electric bicycle across a Spanish desert. He then produced a watercolour painting of a cactus using the water that was the only waste product from the trip.

A Tate spokeswoman said: "The jury admired his unique ability to create poetic narratives which draw together a wide range of cultural, political and historical references." But the jury, which included the critic Louisa Buck and the Barbican gallery's head, Kate Bush, with Sir Nicholas Serota, the Tate's director, as chairman, expressed their "admiration" for all the artists and stressed the strength of the exhibition at Tate Britain.

Explaining Starling's work when his nomination was announced, Martin Myrone, a Tate curator, said that his art involved pilgrimage like journeys. "Starling's pilgrimages ... in their combination of lengthiness and needlessness, a buttress against the compression of time and space characteristic of modernity and of global capitalism," he said.

But not all the critics were convinced. In the words of the sceptical Daily Mail: "To the casual observer ... it is a shack."

And even more considered observers were frustrated. The Sunday Telegraph liked the "naive but contemporary political flavour" and said such madcap projects should generate interesting adventures, "the problem is we don't get the adventures".

The more sympathetic ArtReview described Starling as "a nomadic, pioneering soul possessed of energy and determination and an admirable respect for the land through which he passes. He leaves little trace of his presence, save the documentation of his passage, a physical residue that constitutes the basis for the work itself."

Simon Starling was born in Epsom in 1967 and studied at Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham and then Glasgow School of Art. He now lives and works in Glasgow and Berlin. He was nominated this year for his exhibitions at The Modem Institute, Glasgow, and the Fundacio Joan Miro in Barcelona. He has said of his work: "I have searched for a language that conveys the 'concept' of things and doesn't simply illustrate them."

His victory may surprise the art world, who had made the psychedelic pop-influenced installation of another graduate of the Glasgow School of Art, Jim Lambie, the popular choice for this year's prize. Lambie, Carnegie and Almond each receive a cheque for £5,000, thanks to sponsorship from Gordon's Gin.

The Turner Prize, which was first presented in 1984, is awarded to a British artist under 50 for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of his or her work in the 12 months to May.

It has become an enormously popular part of the annual exhibitions calendar at Tate Britain, where queues have formed to see the works of previous winners such as Damien Hirst, Anish Kapoor and Chris Ofili. This year's ceremony was held there last night. The prize has its detractors, however. The Stuckists, who dislike the conceptual art they claim is championed by Sir Nicholas Serota and the Tate, were demonstrating outside last night.

They have been particularly agered by a recent decision of the Tate trustees to buy a work by former Turner Prize winner Chris Ofili, who is himself a Tate trustee.

BIRTH OF THE TURNER PRIZE. PAGES 40·41

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ARTFORUM

BASEL

SIMON STARLING

MUSEUM FUR
GEGENWARTSKUNST

The Museum fur Gegenwartskunst in Basel is sited directly on the Rhine. Upriver, Simon Starling took apart a wooden shed used by boatmen and reassembled all its pieces again as a *Weidling*, a kind of skiff traditional to the locality. After its maiden voyage downriver, it was again reduced to boards, taken into the museum, and rebuilt as the original wooden shed, carefully edged and placed diagonal to the museum's architecture. Whether *Shed-boatshed (Mobile Architecture No.2)*, 2005, would once more take to the river as a barge after the exhibition, continuing the ecological cycle, was a question left to the imagination.

With this performative sculptural act, Starling set an otherwise static architectural environment into motion and played with the very idea of the exhibition object, even while preserving its mass and materials. The research and artisanship needed to effect this transformation bear a perverse relationship to the economy's daily increasing demand for greater productivity. Starling conducts his interventions as a kind of slicing into chemical-physical, economic, ecological, and artistic processes.

"Cuttings," the title of this first comprehensive exhibition of his work, describes both his conceptual process and his concrete interventions (*Rotary Cuttings IHorizontal Modelj, and Rotary Cuttings IVertical Modell*, both 2005) in the newly restored exhibition rooms of the museum: From two walls, on each floor of the exhibition, two circles of equal diameter were cut out and, through a simple rotation in space, exchanged for each other. Here, again, the circles designate a cycle, or at least a reversible process.

What passes along global lines of circulation as pure information is made into a material certainty by Starling: In the former Dutch colony of Surinam, permanently damaged by the overmining of bauxite (aluminum ore), he collected solar energy in a battery that he then used to power an aluminum boat through the canals of Amsterdam until its stored energy was spent. In the resulting sculpture, *Quicksiluer. Dryfit, Museulllbrug*, 1999, the battery, part of the boat, and its remaining metal "melted down and cast into the form of a lump of bauxite ore found in a Surinamese mine" are put into relation with one another. The transfer of matter and energy parallels the transfer of knowledge, the moment of enlightenment sparked by this constellation of the traces of a performative act.

A beer bottle smashes into a street lamp in a park across from the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana. This nightly act of aggression in a public space has been remitted, at least partially, in that the artist painstakingly reassembled the remaining shards of the bottle and the lamp to make *Plecnik, Union*, 2000. Cause and effect, action and reaction enter into a fragile sculptural equilibrium. Among the individual works Starling has exhibited here there exists a complex web of discourses, a tapestry composed of numerous small stories. One narrative thread leads to the concepts, the documentary strategies, while another important strand leads to the crossovers between craftsmanship and industrial production. Without any economic calculus in its outlay, artistic energy becomes in its own right a concretely physical phenomenon. And a political one, too.

-Hans Rudolf Reust
translated into German by Sara Ogger

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Basel
CRITICS' PICKS
http://www.artforum.com/picks/place=Basel#picks9198

Simon Starling

KUNSTMUSEU BASEL, MUSEUM FUR GEGENWARTSKUNST
St. Alban-Rheinweg 60
June 11 - August 08

Simon Starling's exhibition is called "Cuttings," but "Global Transplants" would have worked too. By excising pieces of information from their original contexts, traveling with them and reconfiguring them somewhere else, Starling layers and conflates stories from different geographical points and different moments in history. A section of the sky over Spain's Tabernas Desert, for instance, rematerializes on the museum's ceiling (Three Day Light, 2004): Over a period of three days, the artist "stole" energy via solar panels from the sunniest place in Europe, just outside the secure confines of the Almeria Solar Platform, and brought it to Basel in two big batteries. The two hundred amp-hours of energy translated into one hour of power for a spray gun, with which the ceiling was colored blue. The relics of such circuitous yet poetic transformations are rather minimal, closely related to the Conceptual idea of dematerialization (think Robert Barry's Inert Gas Series, 1969), but with a certain geopolitical/ecological twist. For Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No.2), 2005, a wooden shed found some distance up the Rhine was dismantled and used to fashion a boat, with which the remaining wood was shipped to the museum, where the hut was reassembled in its original form. The absurdity of such excursions, fueled by various (art-) historical and local cross-references, playfully proposes basic questions about energy and entropy that are relevant not only to ecology but to the practice of art.

-Eva Scharrer

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The New York Times

June 3, 2005

Inside Art

By Carol Vogel

Turner Prize Finalists

The Tate in London announced the finalists for its prestigious Turner Prize yesterday. Unlike past years when the selection was hotly criticized - women were excluded, video artists were favored over painters, too many nominated artists were not British-born - this year's list seems tame. It includes a still-life painter, as well as artists whose work is not necessarily restricted to one media.

The finalists, none of whom have obscure names, are: Gillian Carnegie, a painter; Darren Almond, whose work deals with themes of geography, time and memory, primarily in photography and in video; Jim Lambie, an installation artist and sculptor known for his psychedelic floor works; and Simon Starling, who transforms and reframes existing objects in complex sculptural installations.

"It's not simply that these artists have been around for a bit but the fact that they are making very serious work," said Sir Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate and chairman of the Turner Prize jury, of the selection. "It's not sensational, a term that has been so overused for the socalled Young British Artists, but it's all interesting work."

The award is given annually to a British artist under 50. The winner, who will be announced on Dec. 5, will receive about $45,000 and each finalist, about $9,000. An exhibition of the four artists' work will be on view at Tate Britain on Oct. 18.

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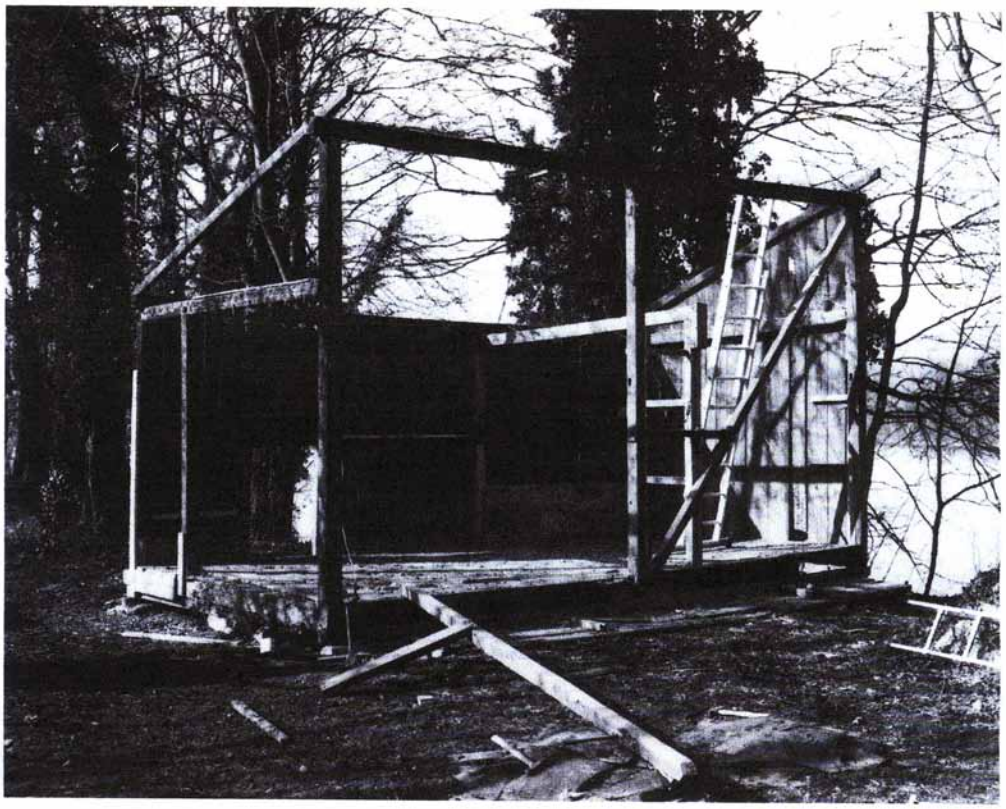
ARTFORUM
MAY 2005

PREVIEW



BASEL

Simon Starling

Museum für Gegenwartskunst

June 11-August 7

Curated by Philipp Kaiser

Simon Starling, master of productive detours and delays, is up for a midcareer retrospective and wants to slightly alter the museum itself. The exhibition not only displays nine important works made since 1993 but remains true to the artist's way of working by featuring two large, site-specific installations that involve architectural interventions (in one instance, Starling even cuts into the walls of the newly renovated building). The show, accompanied by a catalogue that includes a long interview with the artist, also contains an appropriated photographic work by American artist Christopher Williams. Everything, the artist seems to promise, will be different yet remain exactly the same. *Travels to the Power Plant, Toronto, Dec. 10, 2005-Mar.5, 2006.* -DB

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THE MODERN INSTITUTE

Simon Starling

'Tabernas Desert Run' October 8th - November 5th

Simon Starling's current exhibition at the Modern Institute in October is in some sense an extension of ideas developed for 'Kakteenhaus' (Cactus House) realised at Portikus, Frankfurt in 2002. Starling has returned to the Tabernas desert in Southern Spain to generate both his new projects. The two projects are both a kind of process painting, the route taken to get to those paintings is however circuitous to say the least.
The Tabernas Desert in Andalucia is the only 'true desert' in Europe. It is a small area of undulating terrain bounded to the North/East by the Sierra de Los Filabres and to the South/West by the Sierra Nevada. The desert, which is growing in size each year due to climate change and poor land management is home to both the film studios where Sergio Leone made many of his most celebrated Spaghetti Westerns and the 'Solar Platform of Almeria', a research facility developing the use of solar energy for the desalination of sea water (a possible way of stemming the tide of 'desertification' in the region).

On the 9th September 2004, Starling travelled 41 miles across the Tabernas Desert on an improvised, fuel cell powered, electric bicycle. The bicycle was driven by a 900 watt electric motor that was in turn powered by electricity produced in a portable fuel cell fitted into its frame, generating power using only compressed bottled hydrogen and oxygen from the desert air. The only waste product from the moped's desert crossing was pure water of which 600ml was captured in a water bottle mounted below the fuel cell. Starling has used the captured water to produce a 'botanical' painting of an Opuntia cactus. The painting of this most 'ergonomic' of plants refers back to the site of the journey and to film-maker Leone (who introduced cacti into the area as part of the film sets), while also parodying the somewhat clumsy prototype moped. Sealed in a perspex vitrine, the project has become a kind of closed, symbiotic system, referring in part to Hans Haacke's 'Condensation Cube'. The work makes a direct reference to Chris Burden's 1977 'Death Valley Run', a desert crossing made in the real wild west on a bike powered with a tiny petrol engine.

Starlings ceiling painting 'Three Day Sky', exhibited in relation to 'Tabernas Desert Run' reuses convoluted means and a great deal of time to create a simple painting. The painting is a dislocation of a 'piece of sky' from the Tabernas Desert to the ceiling of the Modern Institute. Using two large solar panels, 200 amp hours of energy were harnessed just outside the secure confines of the 'Solar Platform of Almeria.' This stolen energy from the sunniest place in Europe was then transported to an autumnal Glasgow in two batteries that will be used to power a spray gun to roughly recreate the sky over the Spanish desert.

Simon Starling was born in 1967 in Epsom, England and studied at Glasgow School of Art, he currently lives and works in Glasgow and Berlin. Recent exhibitions include 'Djungel', South London Gallery 2003; 'Island For Weeds' Venice Biennale 2003; solo exhibition at Casey Kaplan, New York, 2004; 'One Ton', Neugerriemschneider, Berlin, 2004 and Sao Paolo Biennale, 2004. Simon Starling was nominated for the Hugo Boss prize to be announced November 2004.
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simon starling

one ton

exhibition opening

23 april, 6 - 9 pm

exhibition duration

24 april - 22 may 2004

We would like to inform you of our second solo exhibition with Simon Starling (born 1967) which will open on 23 April and be on show in our gallery until 22 May.

Starling's new photographic work "One Ton" proposes a relationship through time and space between the mining of lead in Scotland in the early 1900s and the mining of platinum in South Africa today. An image depicting a group of thirteen Scottish miners, circa 1910, has been reproduced using the photographic process of platinum printing that was popular at that time. The platinum used in the production of the prints comes from the vast open cast mine at Potgieterus, South Africa. Huge amounts of energy are needed to produce tiny quantities of this metal - one ton of ore was needed to produce enough platinum to make the 5 prints in the show. Accompanying the prints are large transparent negatives of the type required to make these prints; ghostly negative images which document the South African mine, the source of the ore.
To see "One Ton" the audience is asked to make a journey of their own. On entering the main gallery space they will pass under a piece of minimum energy architecture: a bridge created using impregnated hemp rope. This structure, which must be crossed in order to enter the adjacent gallery/office space, is inspired by structural engineering systems developed by pioneers such as Antoni Gaudi and Frei Otto and sets up a counterpoint to the high energy, unsustainable activity of the South African platinum mine. It involves the inversion of a suspended structure created with flexible rope and hung from the ceiling of the gallery which finds its form through the influence of gravity. This suspended structure made from a web of fast growing, strong, hemp fibres is then "frozen" by impregnating it with resin. The now stiff structure can be simply inverted to become a load-bearing bridge. The difficult and perhaps perilous crossing from exhibition room to office can perhaps be seen to dramatise the ambiguous relationship between the public and private spaces of the gallery while presenting a literal bridge between the out-dated mining practices in South Africa and the energy-efficiency of modern architectural developments.

Works by Simon Starling have, amongst others, been on show in Villa Arson Nice, F; MACRO, Rom, I; Museum of Modern Art, Sydney, AUS. This year he will be showing at Miro Foundation, Barcelona (Spain) and at Biennial in Sao Paulo (Brasil) and he is nominated a finalist for the Hugo Boss Prize in New York 2004.

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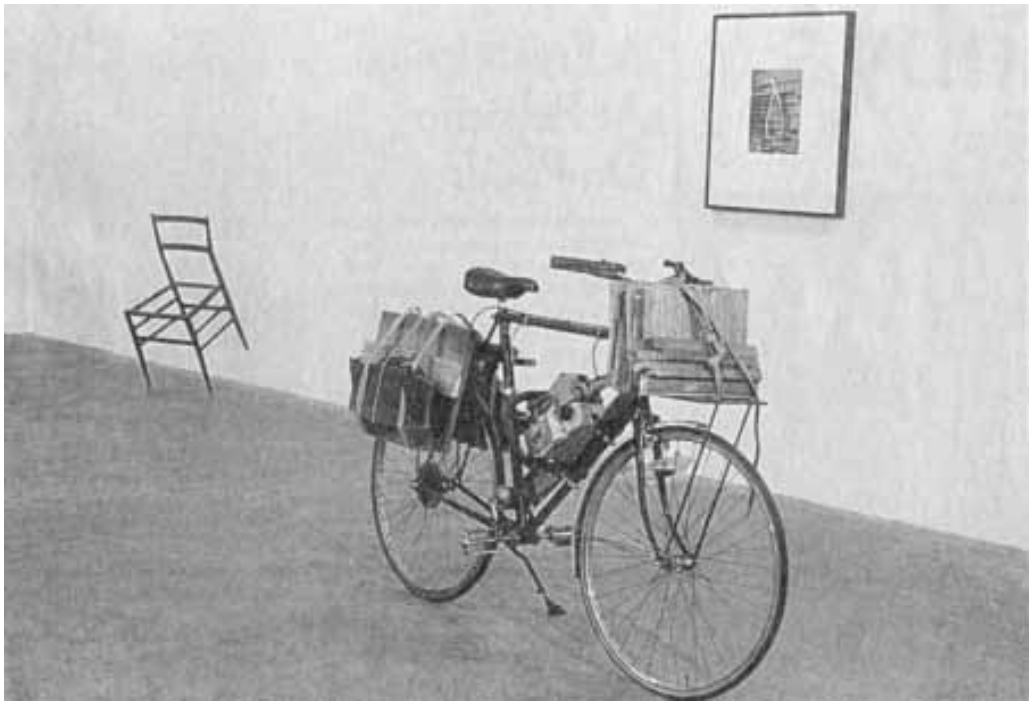
The New York Times

FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2004

Art in Review

Simon Starling

Casey Kaplan Gallery
416 West 14th Street
West Village
Through April 3



A partial view of the installation by the British Conceptualist Simon Starling at the Casey Kaplan Gallery

For his second solo show here Simon Starling, a clever, compelling 36-year-old British Conceptualist, lately short-listed for the 2004 Hugo Boss Prize, has devised a new suite of obscurely related objects and photographs whose theoretical interest is high but visual appeal low.

A massive sheet of steel, imported from Romania, rests on three air cushions. A chair titled "Ultrasuperleggera," based on a 1951 design by Gio Ponti for the chair called "Superleggera," is made using space-age carbon fiber; it leans on three legs against a wall, mimicking the chair's appearance in 1950's advertisements.

A bicycle with a chainsaw for a motor - scraps of furniture-, including a wood stool, are lashed by bungee cord to the bike - balances on its two wheels and a kickstand. Mr. Starling calls it a "self-contained unit," meaning wood can hypothetically fuel the saw. In the past, he has melted an Eames chair and a mountain bike and recast them as reproductions of each other. He has transplanted rhododendrons from Scotland, where they are considered weeds, to Spain, where they came from.

He once obtained balsa wood from Ecuador to make a toy model of a French Farman Mosquito airplane, which he flew around Australia. And he drove a 1974 red Fiat from Fiat's Turin plant, where the car is no longer made, to a plant in Warsaw, where he switched red parts for Polish- made white ones, then drove the car back to Italy. He displaces, inverts, reserves and remakes existing things with self-conscious, ironic amateurishness. He is a tinkerer with objects of design and bits of history, an alchemist of arcana and late modernism.

The obscure British word "boffin" meaning odd-ball scientist, comes to mind. He has also built a prototype for a five-man bicycle based on some lightweight bridge designs by a pioneering Danish engineer, Mikael Pederson. The first test run failed. Mr. Starling presents a photograph of the bike's bent wheel, and also a sculpture based on its frame.

Exegesis, as usual, is required. United States customs agents in the 1920's threatened to tax a Brancusi sculpture, brought into the country by Duchamp, because they did not deem it art. A landmark trial ruled that is was. Brancusi was Romanian. Duchamp made a sculpture out -of a bicycle wheel attached to a stool.

The recent repeal of steel tariffs facilitated the importation of the steel sheet from a company in Romania whose owner, Mr. Starling says in a printed statement, has contributed money to President Bush.

Unpacking all this is the essence of Starling's labyrinthine work which 'although a gift to extrapolating art writers, does not really look like much, aside from the photograph and the sculpture of the bicycle frame. It is not clear that Mr. Starling, whose aesthetic is jerry-built to begin with, even cares much about looks. People coming in cold to see the show may.

It's the old Conceptualist's dilemma, which Mr. Starling, an artist with an original imagination and an eccentric touch, might want to think more about.

MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

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Boss Prize Finalists

The New York Times

Inside Art: Carol Vogel *FEBRUARY 6, 2004*

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation announced the finalists for its Hugo Boss Prize this week. The $50,000 award, named for the German men's wear company that Sponsors it, is given every two years to an artist whose work repre sents a significant development in contemporary art.

"Since we don't do a biennial, this is our barometer of what's happening in the art world globally," said Nancy Spector, curator of contemporary art at the Guggenheim, who oversees the six-member jury 'of museum directors and curators from around the world.

Two years ago all the fin alists worked in film, video and installation. This year's list is more varied and includes Conceptual, artists, a filmmaker and a painter. Curiously, no American artists are included.

"This is not a predictable list," Ms. Spector said.

"You never know what happens when you get a jury together," she added. "This year's short list shows that painting can be equally as provocative as video."

These are the finalists:

• Franz Ackermann, 40, a German painter who lives in Berlin and Karlsruhe. His work often deals with his impressions of the cities he visits.

• Jeroen de Rijke, 33, and Willem de Rooij, 34, Dutch artists who have been collaborating since 1994 on films and video installations, which are meditative, ephemeral and often deal with the nuances of nature.

• Rivane Neuenschwander, 37, a Brazilian installation artist known for poetic works dealing with language and emotion.

• Simon Starling, 36, a British-born Conceptual artist who lives and works in Berlin. He often explores the history of modernism.

• Rirkrit Tiravanija, 42, an Argentine-born Conceptual artist who divides his time between New York, Berlin and Bangkok: He is known for exploring the social role of the artist.

• Yang Fudong, 32, a Beijing-born artist living in Shanghai, who makes films about contemporary China and its relationship to Chinese history, philosophy and the environment.

Ms. Spector said the finalists represented a good cross section of contemporary art.

The museum plans to publish a catalog of the finalists' work, which will be available at the museum store and at other bookshops this spring. The winner will be announced in October and have a solo exhibition at the Guggenheim in New York next winter.

"Songline," a mixed media work by Franz Ackermann, a 2004 Hugo Boss Prize finalist~

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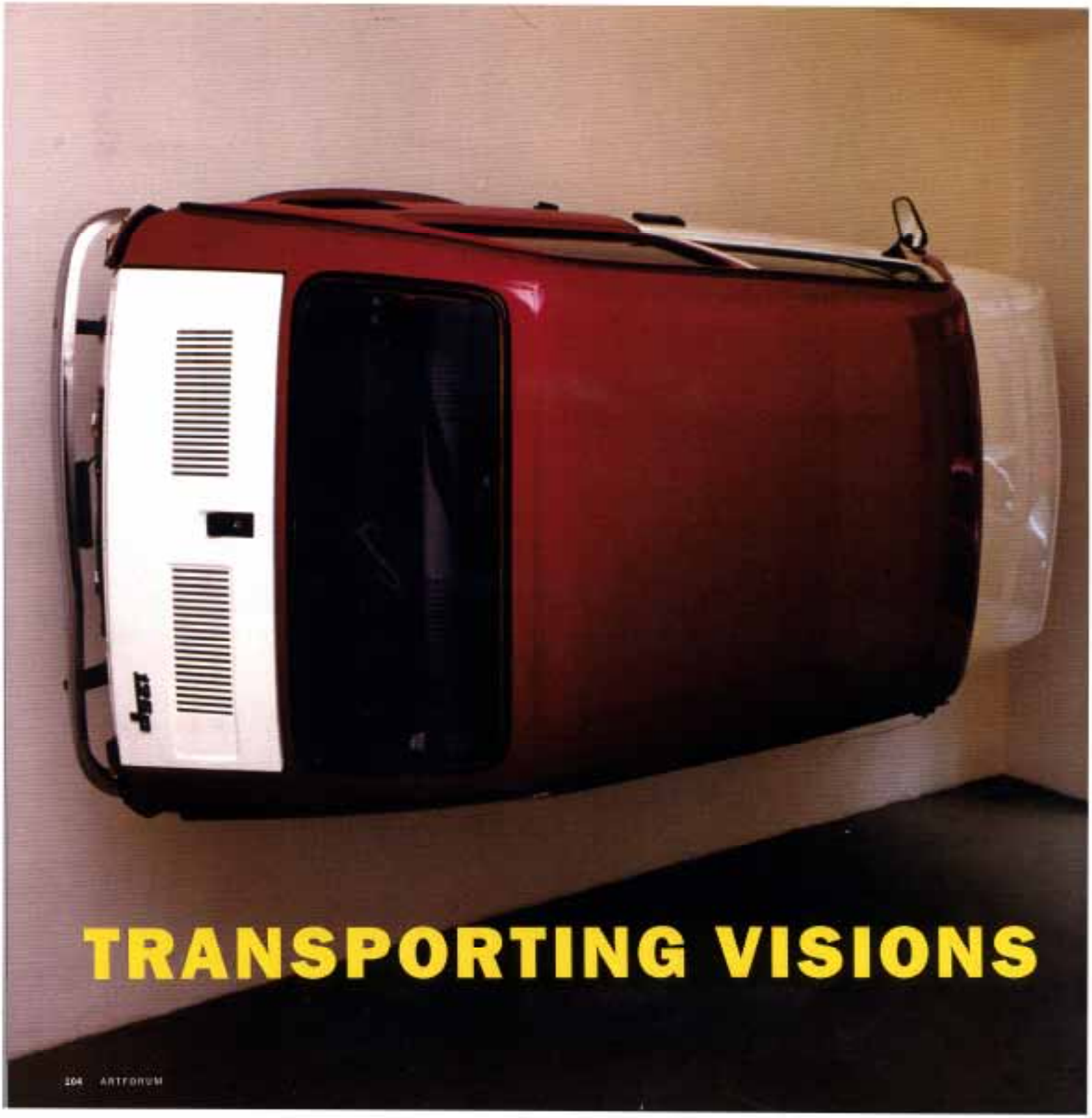

TRANSPORTING VISIONS

DANIEL BIRNBAUM ON THE ART OF

Simon Starling

Simon Starling presents deceptively common objects:airn planes, lamps, chairs, plants, and cars. Altered or taken out of context, they lose their muteness, and elaborate yarns spin from them: stories linking the heroic or eccentric endeavors of individuals to larger, more complex and abstract economic and social processes of transformation. Often his works concern geographical displacements and historical repetitions. And they always look good. I mention this immediately in order to avoid giving any sense that the projects I am about to describe are merely dreary institutional critique or appropriation art arriving more than two decades late.

Starling, born in Epsom, England, and now based in Glasgow and Berlin, is a traveler and an alert observer of forms, both natural and man-made. He brings material as well as ideas with him on his long journeys, and the most varied of these connect in curious chains. The final outcome is usually an object, like H.C./H.G.W., 1999, the wooden chair presented at Leipzig's Galerie fiir Zeitgeniissische Kunst that same year. Like the majority of his works, this one has a long subtitle, which condenses the wideranging physical, historical, and cultural conditions behind its making into one entity: "A replica of a 'Swan Chair' designed in England in 1885 by Charles Francis Ainsley Voysey, built using the wood from an oak tree from the grounds of the Villa at Il Karl-Tauchintz-StraBe, Leipzig, designed in 1892 by Bruno Eelbo and Karl Wichardt for the geologist Herman Credner." "They aren't strictly titles; they are just one more element in the work," Starling explained in a 1999 discussion with curators Stefanie Sembill and Jan Winkelmann, and added, "not the name of the dish, but the recipe, if you like."

Before analyzing the narrative ingredients of the piece, let's take a look at the chair itself: It's a beautiful object, rather wide and offering enough space for two not-too-large people, a grown-up and a child perhaps. Its wooden legs and curved back make it quite clear why it's called a swan. The long, elegant neck on each side terminates at the top in a small bird's head, bowing. There is nothing missing; the chair seems to be complete. But some of the devices used during assembly-clamps and straps, for instance-are still attached, emphasizing that the chair is not simply a given but is rather inhabiting a phase in a process not yet concluded. Displaying the mechanics of construction, as Starling often does, seems to suggest that the chair serves some technical purpose in addition to being a piece of furniture. What could that be? Reproduced from the past and pointing to an as yet unknown future use, it's certainly a kind of time machine.

The designer of the chair, C.F.A. Voysey, whose handiwork here is so typical of the Arts and Crafts movement's ambition to integrate organic forms into cultural artifacts, was also designing a house for H.G. Wells, author of the novel The Time Machine (1895). Through its title, H.C./H.G.W., Starling's work links the venue where it's shown, the Leipzig villa originally built for Credner and later turned into a gallery for contemporary art, to that other house, built for the science-fiction pioneer with money generated from sales of The Time Machine. The chair is an alien-a guest from another era and from a different place. But the material out of which it is built is site-specific in the strictest sense: The wood was taken from an oak tree that once grew in the villa's garden. In fact, that very tree is responsible for the strange position of Credner's villa; he didn't want to remove the tree, so the house had to be built at a curious angle to the street. Eventually, when the villa was refurbished into an art gallery in the '90s, the tree had to be cut down, since its roots were threatening to damage the foundation of the building. Its trunk is still kept in the garden, where Starling found it and where this labyrinthine story started to unfold for him. He created the chair from a piece that he removed from the trunk. The sitting, however, takes place not in the chair but in the negative space the removed piece has

Spread: **Simon Starling, *Flaga (1972–2000)*, 2002.** Installation view, Galleria Franco Noero, Turin, 2002.

left, turning the trunk into a bench. Practicing his own craftsmanship in homage to past craftsmen, constructing narratives that stretch across countries and continents, drawing attention to the economic elements of manufacture (sometimes by destruction), Starling layers meaning in his sculptures in a way that grants the medium both power and playfulness.

"Coming late to the field of modernist critique, the work of Simon Starling occupies a fascinating position," writes curator and critic Charles Esche in the Leipzig catalogue. "Perhaps sitting on the cusp of a redefinition of value systems, it looks back with sympathy and knowledge at the work of the early twentieth century, while allowing the audience sight of its failure." What kinds of failure? For one, the wide gulf between the modernists' original will to improve life for the masses and their productions' ultimate incarnation as collector's items for a socially disinterested financial elite-a predicament that many Scandinavian design classics share, including, for instance, lamps by Paul Henningsen. The Danish designer once famously declared, "It doesn't cost money to light a room correctly, but it does require culture." These days, however, a real Henningsen is beyond reach for all but the very well off, providing the occasion for Starling's ongoing project "Home-made Henningsen," whereby the artist retroactively fulfills the designer's democratic vision by composing versions of his lamps from found materials. Attractive in themselves, the objects-Starling has made fifteen since beginning the series in 2001-proclaim that in principle we can all construct our own designer lighting out of flea-market finds, such as wok lids and old lampshades. Another project circling around a modern design classic that initially representated a progressive vision but later degenerated into a luxury item for wealthy"neo-moderns" is Home-made Eames (Formers, jigs and Moulds), 2001. This series of photographs shows the tools and gadgets the artist used to create a number of replicas of Charles and Ray Eames's classic 1948 DSS, the first industrially produced plastic chair, an item for the masses which became a symbol of fashionable

Although Simon Starling's objects invariably do have eye-catching qualities, the sculptural aspect is only one facet, and the pieces are always part of a larger economy that reaches far beyond what meets the eye.

Views of Simon Starling's H.C./H.G.W., 1999, In progress and complete. From left: Oak tree trunk in garden of the Gaterie für Zeitgenossische Kunst. Leipzig. Work in progress. carpenter's shop, Leipzig. Installation view, Galerie für Zeitgenossische Kunst, Leipzig. 1999.

metropolitan life. Starling has turned to the Eameses in several projects, among them Work, Made-Ready, Kunsthalle Bern, 1997, a clever meditation on the Duchampian readymade and on the concepts of uniqueness and the mass-produced. Separated by a glass wall, two objects are displayed: on one side a bicycle leaning against a white painted pedestal, and on the other a white swivel chair set on a lower support. Each side holds an explanatory text. About the bicycle, one is informed, "A 'Sausalito' bicycle remade using the metal from a Charles Eames 'Aluminium Group' chair." And regarding the chair, one reads, "A Charles Eames 'Aluminium Group' chair remade using the metal from a Marin 'Sausalito' bicycle." A similar transformation takes place in the recent Work, Made-Ready, in Light of Nature, 2003, a project connecting the cities of Rome and Berlin through an intricate narrative involving photographer Karl Blossfeldt's bronze models of plants, a Roman foundry, a brown aluminum bike frame, and a deconstructed green-upholstered aluminum chair. The result of this alchemical experiment is presented in four elegant glass vitrines.

Starling shares an interest in modern design with a large number of artists of his generation (born in the mid-'60s), such as Jorge Pardo, Andrea Zittel, and Tobias Rehberger. But it is important to point out that his work is never about stealing the look or borrowing the glamour of high-modernist style. Although his objects invariably do have eye-catching qualities, the sculptural aspect is always only one facet, and the pieces are always part of a larger economy that reaches far beyond what meets the eye. Sometimes his work specifically addresses the destabilization of fixed high-low hierarchies, as in the Henningsen series or, even more explicitly, in a 1995 piece that used the metal from a Jorge Pensi aluminum chair to produce nine solid replicas of a beer can of the German brand Eichbaum found on April 6, 1995, on the site of the Bauhaus in Dessau. The location of such found objects and their movement from one place to another crucially inform his practice.

Indeed, in order to follow their movements and map them onto his work, Starling often composes itineraries for himself that take him far away from the world of art and design-so far, in fact, that one often

wonders how the artist manages to return us, as well as himself, to the starting point and to somehow pack all the experience gathered during the journey into a physical object on display. He digs into history like an archivist to find neglected connections, but he doesn't stop with documentation; he works not just intellectually but with the hands. A case in point: a functioning model aircraft shown on a glass table at the Heide Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne. Not just any aircraft, it's a Farman Mosquito-the very epitome of aerodynamic efficiency celebrated by Le Corbusier in Towards a New Architecture, where he famously asserts that buildings should be "machines for living" just as airplanes are "machines for flying." The full narrative that makes sense-is sense the right word?-of this project, titled LeJardin suspendu, 1998, involves not only Starling's ongoing investigations into modern design and the worldwide spread of International Style architecture but also a number of time-demanding practical tasks, such as a trip to Ecuador, home of the balsa tree, and the transportation of a large quantity of wood across the globe.

Starling airs the globalized economy's various conditions of production, which are sometimes portrayed in the media as taking place in a world where all disturbing and unproductive differences have been once and for all leveled.

Similarly, in Blue, Red, Green, Yellow, Djungel, 2002, Starling brought back to London a large cedar tree from the jungle of Trinidad and cut woodblocks from it, using them to print re-creations of the famous exotic "jungle" pattern of Viennese designer Josef Frank, who derived his knowledge of the wild from illustrations in children's books. Starling is always more than willing to explore the most distant of regions; his travels are as much a part of the work as his finished objects. To fantasize about exotic places, make imaginary connections, and press everything into a fascinating title is one thing. To actually undertake the journey, collect the materials, and build, for instance, a flying machine is something quite different.

Two recent projects widen the circles his works invariably describe to more directly involve themes of nationality and political borders. This is most obviously the case in Flaga (1972-2000), 2002, a work that entails, in the words of the artist, "a Fiat 126 produced in Turin, Italy, in 1974 and customised using parts manufactured and fitted in Poland, following a journey of 1290 km from Turin to Cieszyn." Starling himself drove the red car from Italy to Poland (in 1974, Fiat moved a production plant there from Italy) and proceeded to reveal aspects of the fabrication normally unnoticed by the average customer. In Poland the artist substituted the boot, bonnet, and doors for white parts produced at the Fiat Poland factory. What could be more Italian than a Fiat 126? Well, this car doesn't look Italian at all-in fact, it's been turned into a Polish flag. Upon arrival in Turin, the now white and red car-stripped of its engine and mounted on the wall-was displayed as an artifact, "emblematic of the shared industrial and political histories of Italy and Poland," as the small booklet accompanying the project explains. Perhaps even more urgent if read in relation to recent political developments in Europe is Rescued Rhododendrons, 1999, which also required quite a journey-this time in a Swedish car. In his Volvo, Starling delivered seven rhododendron plants from northern Scotland to southern Spain, reversing the introduction

of these plants to England in 1763 by a Swedish botanist. Considered weeds in England, the plants were due to be removed by government agencies from an environmentally "pure" zone of native vegetation and destroyed. The work is slyly political, referencing the xenophobic, neonationlist ideas of ethnic purity found across Europe today. The artist's intervention not only saved the plants but also, in a way typical of his work, completed a circle.

What looks like a final homecoming, however, soon turns out to be a short pause in an uninterrupted voyage: One loop connects with another, crossing and continuing, as in the symbol for infinity. Soon some of those rhododendrons were off on a new ride, this time to Venice, where Starling installed Island for Weeds (Prototype), 2003; a model plane similar to the Farman Mosquito was circling the city of Stockholm, filming for a project at the Moderna Museet; and that same Volvo was transporting a South American cactus from Spain to Frankfurt. Now and then, there are breaks in this activity, and the things being transported are on display-never permanently and always in a way that makes it clear the expedition will go on. No doubt they can teach us a thing or two about globalism: Starling airs overtly the globalized economy's various conditions of production and the friction in the manufacturing processes, which are sometimes portrayed in the mass media as taking place in a world where all disturbing and unproductive differences have been once and for all leveled.

For some viewers, Starling's work seems to reinvigorate the past and impart some utopian energy to the present. Others see the very concept of sculpture getting a second chance. For me, his objects are talismans of time that enable us to contemplate again the conditions of modernity. "I have attempted to investigate an underlying relationship between modernism and nature," says Starling, invoking the era of the Swan Chair and its kin. "By forcing objects, structures, and phenomena together, by transforming modular concrete houses into birdcages, by creating a hothouse for a cactus with an internal combustion engine, or by making one thing from another and vice versa, I have searched for a language that, like Blossfeldt's models, conveys the 'concept' of things and doesn't simply illustrate them." Indeed, Starling's works don't just illustrate, they become time and space machines, taking indirect routes to redefine our notions of history, narration, and result-sculpture as productive detour.

Opposite page, top: **Simon Starling, Blue, Red, Green, Yellow, Djungel,** 2002. Installation view, Dundee Contemporary Arts Center, Scotland, 2002. Bottom: **Simon Starling, Le Jardin suspendu**, 1998. Installation view, Villa Arson, Nice, 2003. This page. top: **Simon Starling, Island for Weeds (Prototype)**, 2003, Installation view. Scottish Pavilion, 50th Venice Biennale. 2003. Bottom: **Simon Starling, Rescued Rhododendrons**, 1999, Installation view, Camden Arts Centre. london, 2000.

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ARTFORUM
MAY 2003

Simon Starling **TALKS ABOUT *KAKTEENHAUS*, 2002**

A THOUSAND WORDS

Strangely enough, the idea for a project involving the Tabernas Desert came from my work with rhododendrons. In 1999 I was making a piece that reversed the historical trajectory of Rhododendron ponticum-namely, the plant's introduction into Britain (discovered by Claes Alstoemer around 1750, *R. ponticum* was introduced to England in 1763) from its natural habitat in the hills between Cadiz and Gibraltar. I simply returned some unwanted "weeds" from Scotland to a place where they could live, once again, side by side with their Spanish ancestors. While I was doing research for this project, a friend told me about the film director Alex Cox, who had been working at a film studio in Andalusia, shooting footage of a "Mexican village" in the Tabernas Desert that was originally constructed for Sergio Leone in the late '60s. Cox mentioned the cacti that were planted on the sets as props, so I traveled there and found a wonderfully complex mix: a desert growing rapidly year by year, a huge solar energy research center, and sixty-four thousand hectares of plasticulture-fruit and vegetables sustained by water from artesian wells. And, finally, there were these bizarre film studios, where someone was shooting a French western when I arrived. Somehow, Kakteenhaus tries to force all this stuff into a little white cube in Frankfurt.

The cacti I found at "Texas Hollywood," as the film set is now called for the benefit of tourists, were a strange grouping of agaves and other succulents, many prickly pear cacti, plus a number of cereus cacti, which are native to much of Central and South America. I chose a cactus that I felt would have a visual "weight" similar to that of the engine from my old Volvo 240 Estate, which I would use to transport the plant to Germany-and which would eventually become the cactus's life-support system. Some money changed hands, and I started digging. The journey of 1,333 miles from Spain to Germany took two and a half days. I avoided passing through Switzerland so I would not have to cross any controlled borders.

The installation in Portikus set up a kind of theatrical dialogue between objects-one a fantastically efficient living thing, and the other a fantastically inefficient piece of engineering. The cactus has developed complex strategies for surviving in the harshest of environments, while the internal combustion engine-largely unchanged since Gottlieb Daimler and Wilhelm Maybach patented it in 1885-is at best 30 percent efficient at turning fuel into locomotion. The project created this strange sense of mutual dependence between these two "organisms," on both a local and global level. The Volvo engine, separated from the car by eighty-five feet of exhaust. water, and fuel pipes and placed in the gallery, heated the space to desert temperatures. There was a lot of speculation on everyone's part about how to make this elongated system function, and we really didn't know until two days before the exhibition's opening whether an exhaust pipe that long would still draw, or whether the water returning to the engine from the radiator in the car outside would have cooled things too much, In the end, it all functioned just as I had hoped. if not better: The engine generated so much heat that it was often necessary to open the windows to cool the space.

I guess that globalization is becoming more and more of a preoccupation in my work. Projects like *Flaga* (19722000), 2002, for which I drove a Fiat from Turin to Warsaw, come directly from thinking about such things. My interest is primarily in an "everything,

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everywhere, all the time" kind of global culture-the kind of culture that makes farming the desert pay, in the short term. I try to get under the surface of this situation'a little bit, unpack the processes, flows of energy, the ways and means of it all. Most important, I always choose to look at things on a very personal or human level-taking the vantage of the individual, the artist, the amateur, whomever, against the world, Perhaps my decision has something to do with the Marxist notion of estranged production, the abstraction of human labor, I try to take responsibility, whether that means harnessing solar energy on the Suriname River to power a small aluminum boat on the canals of Amsterdam or documenting the production of a catalogue in Romania for an exhibition in France. Still, the important thing is that the work remains somewhat contradictory or problematic in relation to all these questions, it is never "correct." It should make you smile or gasp before the notion of "global culture" enters your head,

For me, the Andalusian desert brings up so many ideas: It is a kind of microcosm, with a probably unsustainable agriculture manned by migrant workers; it's alternative-energy research; and, of course, it's the entertainment industry! The odd thing is that the reasons for making Fiats in Poland and for making spaghetti westerns in Spain are not really very different at the end of the day. □

Born in Epsom, England, in 1967 and trained at the Glasgow School of Art, Simon Starling mingles the grand tradition of the British boffin, forever tinkering In the basement, with heady neo-Vlctorian science, re-creating lost histories and divining the invisible global traffic of everyday life. He plunges head-on into those nebulous topographies social scientists like to call the "space of flows," casting abstracted labor Into relief and putting commodity fetishism before the fun-house mirror: Starling has obtained balsa wood from Ecuador to make a model of a French Farman Mosquito airplane, which was then flown In Australia; built a scale replica of the Wagenfeld Museum-a former prison that also served as production site for egg coddlers, among other things-to be used as a henhouse; melted down and recast (as each other) an Eames Aluminum Group Chair and a Marin Sausalito mountain bike; and driven a red 1974 Italian Flat from Turin, where it is no longer made, to the Fiat plant in Warsaw, where he added new white Polish parts before returning the car to Turin. For one of his latest works, Kakteenhaus, 2002, Starling transported a nonIndigenous cactus from the Tabernas Desert of southern Spain to the Portlkus gallery in Frankfurt, where he kept it alive using the surplus heat generated from his Volvo. As Starling explains, "The show is now over, and the cactus Is safely stored In a warm space for the winter. After that, who knows where it will go?" **-TOM VANDERBILT**

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From Artreview *International Edition, VIN06, 2004, p. 93*

Above: Simon Starling. Carbon, 2003, bicyde with chainsaw motor, in "DJungel"

Simon Starling

29 Jan-16 March

South London Gallery, SE5 (020 7703 6120)

An enormous curtain snakes its way across the whole space, completely capturing your attention on entering the gallery. But even as you're taking in the spectacle, process is already being revealed. A dense pattern of a simple, repeating, tropical flower-and-leaf motif gives way to a central clearing of white linen. The four colours of the title - Blue, Red, Green, Yellow Ojungel - are removed one by one, so that working back from the blue-fringed white centre you can see how the full design at the curtain's flanks has been made up.

A label on the wall reveals that Simon Starling has appropriated Josef Frank's 1928 design Aralia. But you have to go behind the stunning curtain to get the full picture of what the artist is up to. Which is no less than an attempt to enlarge our understanding of the world, pnncipally as it is now, but also how it was in a pre-ecologically conscious past.

On a long, flat work surface cobbled together from various tables are materials and tools that have been used to hand-print the curtain: paint, stencils, blotters and printblocks. You can follow what Starling - the contemporary artist - has done, and this prompts you to take an interest in what Frank - the early 20th-century designer - once did. Apparently, Frank was in turn influenced by William Morris, and was trying to reinvigorate a pre-industrial mode of manufacture with the help of flamboyant and innovative designs.

The laser-cut print-blocks have been made from a West Indian cedar, and the remains of this tree form the third major component of the show, dominating the back of the gallery. The tree's sensually textured bark is a myriad of colours - mostly shades of grey and brown, but greeens and purples are there too. And with the back the curtain being white, and the workshop being pretty boring visually, there's little to distract your from the simple shapes, subtle colours and weighty presence of the wood for as long as you stay in its vicinity. But ultimately it's not enough just to focus on any single facet of the installation, and the visitor is impelled towards a synthesis. So you walk around the curtain, the table, the tree, and your mind circumnavigates too. Nature and culture complement each other in this work, but they're also in competition. By the hand of man, the one - nature - is transformed into the other - culture. And if an artificial beauty is gained, another kind is lost - for where are real leaves, and blooms that actually smell? However, you can't help thinking that the artist - in both making a field trip to tropical Trinidad, and in researching the history of European interior design in the 20th century - ensures that he hasn't lost out on anything.

Carbon, the supporting piece in the South London show, is a bicycle which functions as a moped thanks to the Incorporation of a chainsaw's motor which drives the back wheel. At hypothetical journey's end, the chainsaw can still be used as such, as the blade and the stack of cut wood on the back of the bike indicates.

The Irony here is that Josef Frank, based in Sweden (djungel is Swedish for 'jungle'), took his motifs from secondary sources and was a city-based designer. The piece could be seen as mocking either Frank or Starling himself, depending on how you read it.

Duncan McLaren

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ARTFORUM
MAY 2002

SIMON STARLING
CASEY KAPLAN

Simon Starling's recent installation looked back at the modernist attempt to dissolve the barriers between art and the environment while recasting modernism itself as a cage. A well-orchestrated hybrid of disciplines and references, the work fell into the categories of painting, sculpture, industrial design, architecture, and music without fitting into any of these.

The show, titled "Inverted Retrograde Theme, USA," was arranged in two parts. Hanging at eye level near the entrance were three lamps with stacked red, white, blue, and green metal shades, based on Paul Henningsen's '50s pendant lighting designs. Beyond the lowered lamps, in the main gallery, two large plywood architectural models of modernist homes with metal grates covering the windows were pressed to the ceiling by bare tree branches braced against the floor. The models appeared slightly flattened from being pushed upward. Each housed a live bird. (One hoped they were starlings, but evidently they were a pair of conspicuously quiet parakeets.) While the lowered lamps made you feel taller within a domestic environment, the "birdhouses" and trees made you feel much smaller, almost removed, as if you were looking up at the birds through the "worm's eye" of an Auguste Choisy drawing. From this vantage the most visible aspect of the birdhouses were the undersides, which are made of joining panels and look like washed-out Theo van Doesburg paintings. The reference to De Stijl, which attempted to destroy the pictorial frame and blur distinction between painting and architecture, is apt. At the same time Starling subverts the De Stijl spatial paradigm by adding a pronounced wooden molding around each model's base, framing the houses like paintings.

Starling is explicitly referencing two modernist projects of different disciplines: the housing projects of architect Simon Schmiderer and composer Arnold Schonberg's serial dodecaphonic system of composition. Under the slogan "One House in One Hour," Schmiderer designed a system of prefabricated concrete paneling that was that was used In simple, airy public

SIMON STARLING, "INVERTED RETROGRADE THEME, USA", 2002
Installation view

housing projects in Puerto Rico during the '60s. His utopian social agenda of extreme openness failed, however, as residents were obliged to cover the large windows with steel grilles against intruders, resulting in a certain birdcage effect. Starling's models reproduce two Schmiderer structures from 1964. They are nearly mirror images of each other, and Starling has turned them upside down. Thus they are "inverted-retrograde"- a term that, as it happens, also refers to a technique used in Schonberg's twelve-tone system, a structure that can be manipulated (inverted, reversed, or both) to enable a variety of sounds. For Schonberg, as for Schmiderer, it is the serial structure that provides freedom, while for Starling its legacy is a cage.

Essayist Lewis Hyde once described irony as the song of a bird that enjoys being in its cage. Starling, a bird's namesake, seems to sing the praises of modernism while lamenting its failures, but like many artists today, he works with a retro modernism: His ironic play with exile and inclusion at times feels more like the product of self-conscious, nostalgic longing for an unattainable past than the claiming of a critical position.

-Michael Meredith

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SIMON STARLING *INVERTED RETROGRADE THEME, USA*

Opening: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH, 6-8 PM
EXHIBITION DATES: FEBRUARY 15 - MARCH 23, 2002
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY - SATURDAY 10 - 6 PM

EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION:

This exhibition will be the first solo show in New York of the British artist, Simon Starling, who lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. *Inverted Retrograde Theme, USA (House for a Songbird)*, takes as its starting point two modular systems developed by two Austrian emigres, the architect Simon Schmiderer, who designed a series of modular concrete houses built in the 1960's in Puerto Rico, and the composer Arnold Schonberg, who developed twelve-tone music in the first half of the last century,

While Schmiderer worked for the IBEC (International Basic Economy Corporation) he designed numerous housing projects in the suburbs of San Juan, Puerto Rico, Using progressive pre-formed concrete technology, Schmiderer developed architectural ideas that he had first seen used in Vienna in the 1930's for housing projects such as the Werkbundsiedlung, and applied these techniques to both the climatic and the economic conditions in Puerto Rico, Schmiderer's houses were built in an open fashion, blurring the division between the inside and the outside, However, the design of these houses became unworkable as crime in the Puerto Rican suburban areas increased throughout the 1970's and 1980's, forcing the house residents to cage themselves in behind elaborately designed steel grills.

The structure of Schonberg's twelve-tone compositional system is based around a single twelve note sequence that appears in a musical piece in original, retrograde, inverted or inverted retrograde form.
For this exhibition, Starling is using Schonberg's musical methodology in relation to Schmiderer's Puerto Rican modular buildings to present models of two new structures where one building is the mirror or retrograde image of the other, inverted and held against the gallery's ceiling by two branches of tropical hardwood, In their modified form, with replica steel grills, Starling's model buildings serve as birdcages, following the common Puerto Rican tradition of keeping caged songbirds.

Inverted Retrograde Theme, USA (House for a Songbird), follows various concerns investigated in other of Starling's recent works, This exhibition continues to develop the idea of collapsing musical structures with architectural ones, as seen in his solo exhibition, *Inverted Retrograde Theme*, at the Secession in Vienna in May 2000. There Starling also proposed model-making as a fundamental part of the practice, which additionally refers to his other projects, *Le Jardin Suspendu* and *Burn Time*, In *Le Jardin Suspendu*, a radio-controlled balsa wood airplane was built with wood cut from a tree in Ecuador to fly above a modernist villa in Melbourne, Australia, In *Burn Time*, a model of a former prison in Bremen, Germany was built as a hen house to produce eggs to cook in egg-cookers designed by the Bremen born designer, Wilhelm Wagenfeld, whose work is now celebrated in a museum housed in the converted prison, In the past year Starling also has had one-man shows at the Kunstverein in Hamburg, Frac Languedoc-Rousillion, John Hansard Gallery, and the Camden Art Center.

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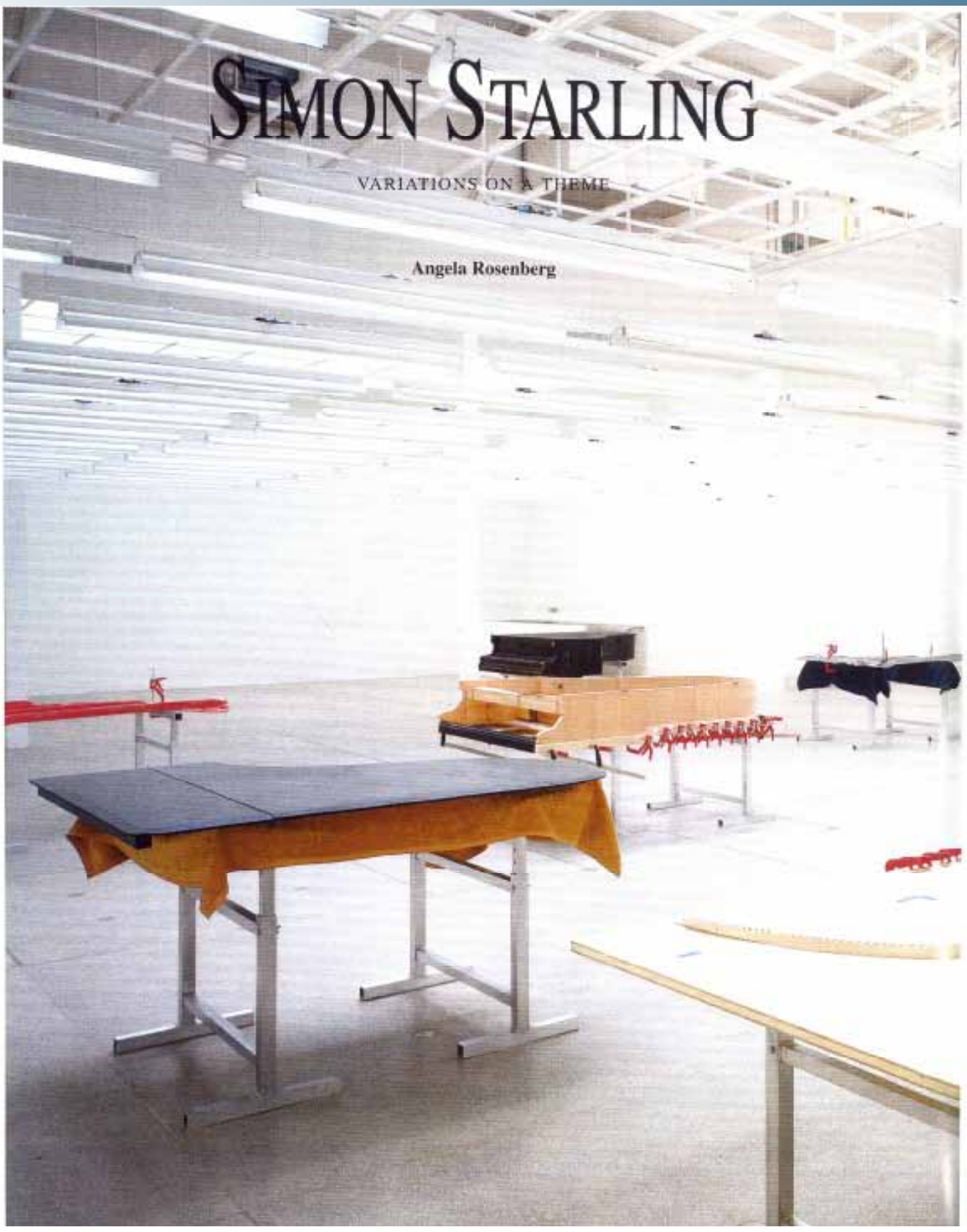
Angela Rosenberg, Simon Starling, Variation on a Theme, Flash Art, Jul - Sep 2001, Vol. XXXIV, No 219



Inverted Retrograde Theme, 2001.
Installation view at Secession, Vienna.
Courtesy The Modern Institute, Glasgow.

BRITISH ARTIST SIMON STARLING has a particular interest in the construction of meaning. In his work he develops complex narratives by employing a net of cultural, modernist references, that he deconstructs, thereby decoding the individual components of object and context, allowing him to create new configurations. This interview was conducted on the occasion of Starling's newest work at the Vienna Secession, Inverted Retrograde Theme, an installation consisting of the deconstruction of two pianos in ten steps (inverting the keyboard, exchanging high and low notes, etc.), reflecting the revolutionary concept of Arnold Schonberg's 12-tone-music. Bringing together the particularity of the site and the radical qualities of Schonberg's idea, the lowered 12 rows of fluorescent lights carried the direct transcription of an exemplary piece of 12-tone-music.

Angela Rosenberg: *What would you think if you were named a "reconstructivist," in the sense that you are reconstructing history?*
Simon Starling: The work I make is certainly concerned with reconfiguring things. I'm not interested in making new things as such but rather new configurations of pre-existing elements. Constellations, perhaps. Just like with stars, sometimes the patterns are clear, the plough is clearly the plough, etc. and then sometimes the links disappear. The configurations are fragile in this way.

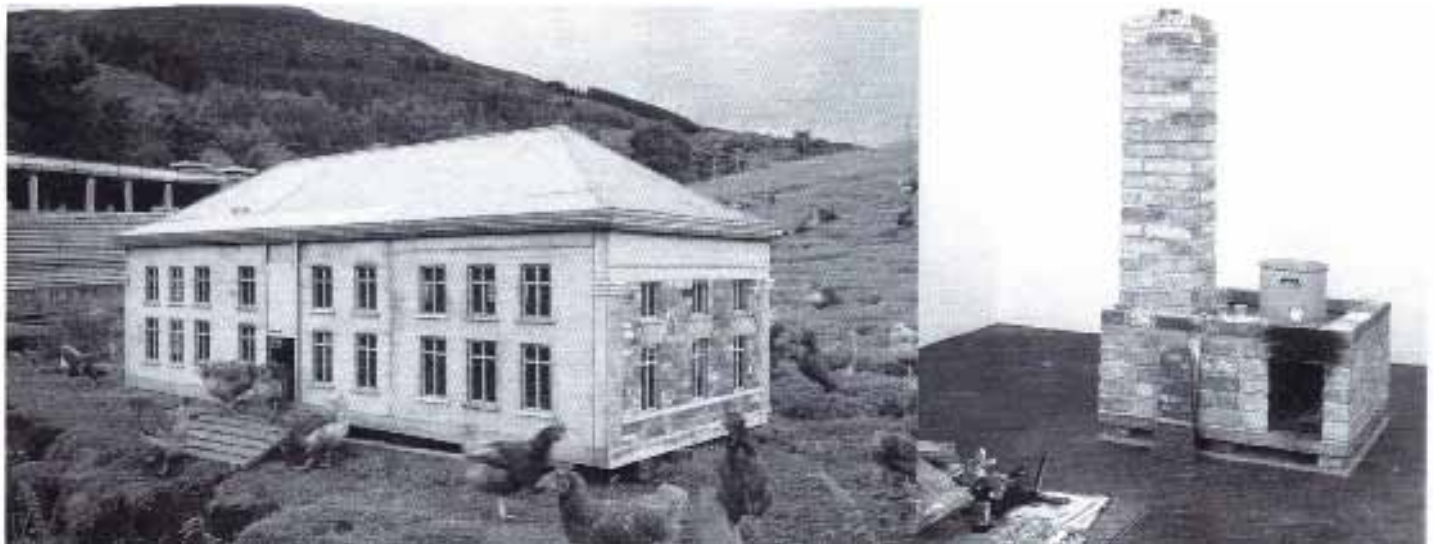
AR: *Is there a parasitic aspect to your work?*
SS: Yes, perhaps I live off the past. It's nourishment for dealing with the now.

AR: *How do you select the objects or contexts that in your work are re-introduced and recycled as representatives of our cultural heritage?*
SS: The reasons are varied, sometimes they are practical:
a radio controlled plane to make an aerial view possible
a boat to fish from etc. Sometimes the objects or structures have a certain financial or cultural value that can be played with or deployed within the project. Often they have a particular relationship to the geography of a project or the dissolution of that geography perhaps. The idea of recycling is often central, but the anticipation that something of value will be created from something of low value, i.e. rubbish, is invelted. Value systems are constantly thrown into question.

AR: *Can you define your artistic strategy?*
SS: Shambolic!

AR: *Okay, your work is not linear, but the complexity seems to be constructed - perhaps in the tradition of a dichotomic text?*
SS: The analogy to sentence structure feels very apt.
Although to me, the word dichotornic suggests two opposing elements, whereas I tend to work with three, four or more elements within a single work. The structures aim to be more multifaceted than a simple opposition or comparison. There is definitely no formula! There is on the one hand the simplicity of a project like Rescued Rhododendrons, which is, in effect, a direct inversion of a particular historical trajectory. And then on the other hand, projects like Burn-Time, that was recently shown at Neugerriemschneider in Berlin, which deals with many different time frames, geographies and scales. Perhaps the dichotomic structure exists be

A wooden shed on the banks of the Rhine was dismantled and converted into a traditional Wiedling boat, in which Starling drifted downstream to the centre of Basel, Switzerland in this new location he turned the boat back into the original shed. The transformation process lasted one month.



From left: Burn Time, 2001. Installation view at Stronchullin Farm, Strone (Scotland); Burn Time, 2001. Exhibition view. Courtesy Neugerriemschneider, Berlin.

tween a simple gesture on the one hand (the return of some plants or the cooking of a few eggs) and on the other, a somewhat absurd production process, a 2,500 mile journey, or the construction of a hen-house. This is where the energy in the work comes from.

AR: *Why did you choose the piano and Schonberg's theory as a starting point for your new work Inverted Retrograde Theme in Vienna?*
SS: Via architecture and an interest in inverted/reversed narratives. I came across two Doppelhaus buildings by Adolf Loos and Heinrich Kulka in Vienna. I then found a picture of the interior of the house, which included a piano. I started to think what the piano might look like in the house next door, its mirror image. That brought Schonberg into the picture. And from there it became a question of orchestrating a coalescence between three structures, three architectures if you like; the Secession space, with its normally invisible lighting system; Schonberg's in-audible 12 tone architecture and the architecture of the conventional grand piano. I also came to Schonberg via Leverktihn, the composer in Mann's *Dr. Faustus*. In that novel, Mann took Schonberg's development of 12-tone music and used it as a tool to look at German history, the fundamentals of creativity, the subjective vs. the objective etc. Chapter 12 is as good a description of the development of 12-tone music as you can find anywhere. Schonberg of course hated that his ideas should be used in relation to Leverktihn, who disintegrates into madness!

AR: *I am also thinking of the piano as a representative for bourgeois culture, discovered for the arts in the I960s for Fluxus actions, as for Nam June Paik, who claimed 'The piano is a taboo, it must be destroyed!" or by the Vienna Group's violent smashing of a grand piano...*
SS: A trip to the Bosendorfer factory in Vienna is enough to confirm the status of the grand piano as a bourgeois cultural artifact. # 1 I imagine only a tiny percentage of their pianos ever get played, the rest are status symbols.

Of course, all that history from F1uxus to the Vienna Group actions surrounds the work; perhaps, it occupies the spaces I left empty at the Secession? My approach is simultaneously destructive and affirmative: it exists between the two positions, between the complete piano and the disassembled, inverted piano. An understanding and respect for the instrument was necessary to facilitate its rupture. I was interested in the idea that perhaps Schonberg, before Cage, Paik, and Beuys, had started to outgrow the instrument. Compositionally he created a structure that was contrary to the notion of musical progress, and this broke from the historical trajectory of composition up until that point. Its structure was almost an anathema in relation to the structure of the piano, hence dissonant. Of course, he was a transitional figure within this history, part traditionalist and part radical.

AR: *"The emancipation of dissonance" What relevance do aspects of democracy, emancipation, and dissonance have in this particular work?*
SS: There is the notion of the amateur in my work that has strong links to ideas of emancipation or democracy. It's perhaps clearer in certain other works, the home-made Eames fiberglass chairs from 1996, for example, or more recently the production of aluminium for Work Made Ready. These pieces are fundamentally about demystifying and democratizing production. Inverted Retrograde Theme follows from these.

AR: *What is so important about I2-tone-music for you?*
SS: Schonberg's musical ideas were fundamentally about freedom through formal constraint; by creating clear structures for composition you liberate the music, creating dissonance and atonality. He of course hated the idea that these structures should be audible; he didn't want people to understand the composition in this way. I'm presenting in a very explicit way the underlying structure of the music, which was in itself a partially traditional form.

I have created a kind of prepared piano for Schonberg. It's about a transitional moment - we are caught in between.

AR: *What is the relation between the legend of the work and the object on display, is one more important than the other?*
SS: The legend has a huge weight of history behind it, my work - although it exists in this loaded exhibition venue - aims to be ultralight, playful, to defy the gravity you feel in Vienna perhaps. Opening up the roof structure was very important in this respect.

AR: *Are transformation and magic important aspects in your work - cultural transfer as a perpetuum mobile?*
SS: Magic not, but people often refer to alchemy in relation to the work; but it's a strange comparison. Of course, the act of art making is fundamentally linked to something approximating alchemy: you take a lump of something and transform it, or you take something out of the ordinary and put it somewhere else (the museum), and it becomes extra-ordinary. These ideas are also, of course, relevant to my practice, but I attempt to constantly question these premises, turn them on their heads! Taking the value system of the art world and throwing it into the same cooking-pot as those of economics, design, industry, etc. That's when it gets interesting for me!

Angela Rosenberg is a critic and an art historian based in Berlin.

Simon Starling was born in 1967 in Epsom (England). He lives and works in Glasgow and Berlin.
Selected solo shows: 2001: Secession, Vienna; Neugeniemschneider, Berlin; 2000: Camden Arts Center, London; 1999: Galerie fur Zeitgenossische Kunst, Leipzig (Germany); 1998: Modema Museet Projekt Room, Stockholm; 1997: Transmission Gallery, Glasgow; 1995: The Showroom, London. Selected group shows: 2001: Tirana Biennale, Tirana; 2000: "Micropolitiques," Le Magasin, Grenoble; PlayUse, Witte de With., Rotterdam; "Manifesta 3," Ljubljana: "Artifice," Deste Foundation. Athens; What if, Modema Museet, Stockholm; "The British An Show;" 1999: Fireworks, De Appel, Amsterdam; 1998: "Reconstructions," Smart Project Space, Amsterdam; 1997: Kunsthalle, Bern.

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frieze

no. 56
January-February 2001

Burn-Time Mould for production of egg-coddler 2000

On 8th November 2000, Simon Starling began cooking the eggs for an exhibition which would open the next day... but this is a long story, and it starts further back in time.

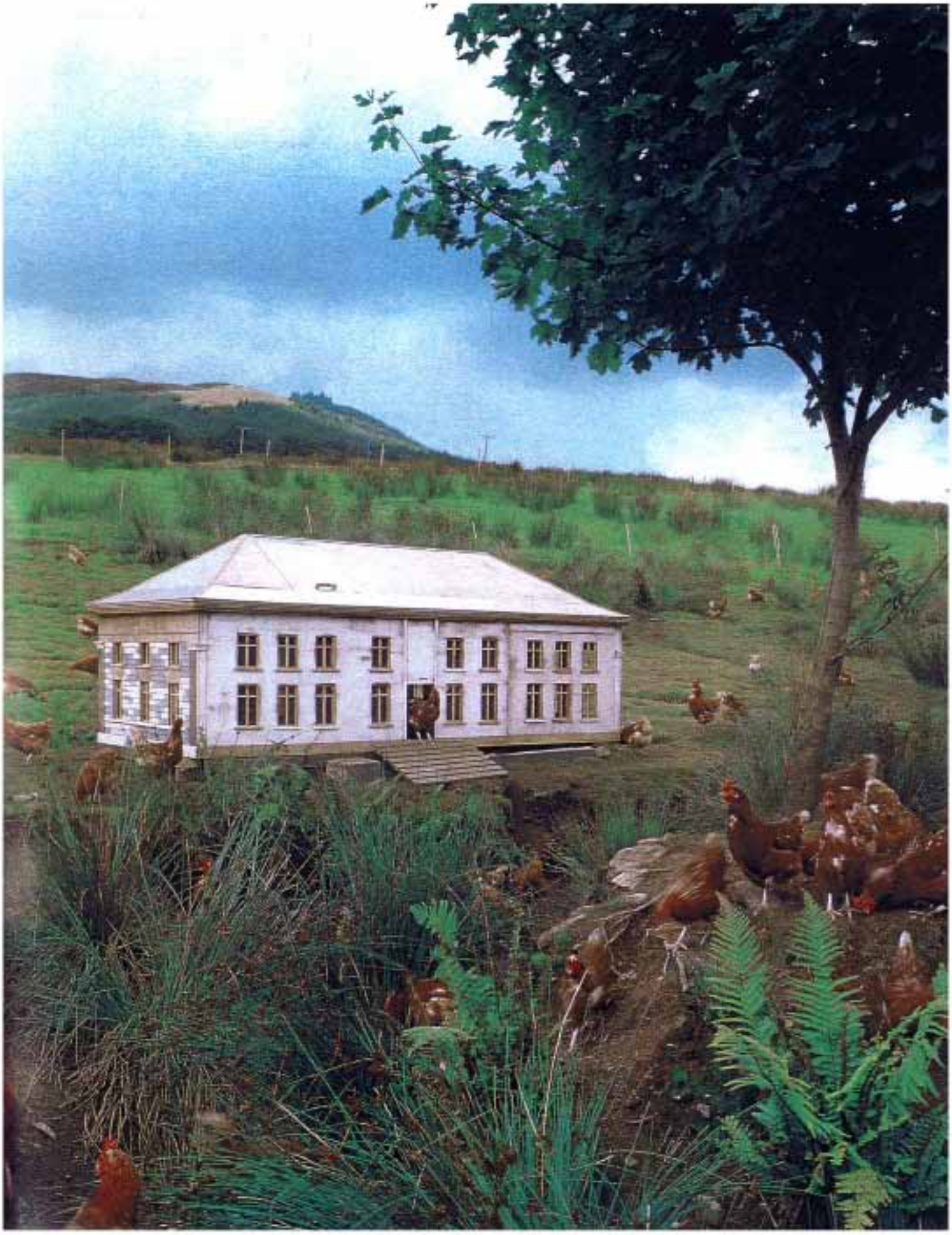
CHICKEN OR EGG?

Francis McKee on Simon Starling

In the 1820s, Frederik Moritz Stamm designed a prison to be set into the new city walls of Bremen. The prison formed one of the gateways to the town centre, standing opposite an identical building which housed the municipal administration. The facade was stylishly neoclassical, concealing more austere quarters where the prisoners were billeted - a function the building continued to serve until quite recently: during the 1990s it was used to detain illegal immigrants. By this time, the architectural fabric had deteriorated badly, a process accelerated by the regular fusillades of eggs and bricks unleashed during protests by the Green Party and the Anti-Fascist Alliance. The interiors were also damaged in the fires started by rioting inmates.

It was finally closed in the late 1990s, sumptuously refurbished and then reopened as a museum dedicated to Wilhelm Wagenfeld, a Bremen-born designer who had studied at the Bauhaus. Returning to Bremen, Wagenfeld had worked closely with the Jenaer Glas company, which specialised in developing scientific and household products that were formidably resistant to heat. Perhaps his greatest success with the company came with the design of an egg-coddler a convex glass dish with a clip to keep the lid on during cooking. It was a mini-casserole, ideal for poached eggs or desserts, and quickly became a design classic.

Starling first saw one of these objects during a symposium held at Camden Arts



Centre in London. One of the speakers illustrated a point concerning the connectionist modelling of human memory by rolling a marble around the inside of a Wagenfeld poacher. [1] Reminded of this during a visit to Bremen, Starling decided to rebuild the Wagenfeld Museum - scaled-down and in the form of a hen-house - and began to collect timber from skips around his studio in Dundee. The completed model resembled a run-down doli's house and was du1y installed on a free-range chicken farm near Dunoon. It proved a success with the hens, and the artist was able to collect a sizeable quantity of fresh, free-range eggs from the stark interior of his building. In London, Starling built a make shift stove with bricks from the Camden Arts Centre (once a public library), and cooked the eggs in Wagenfeld egg-coddlers over heat fuelled by the burning timbers of the now derelict hen-house.

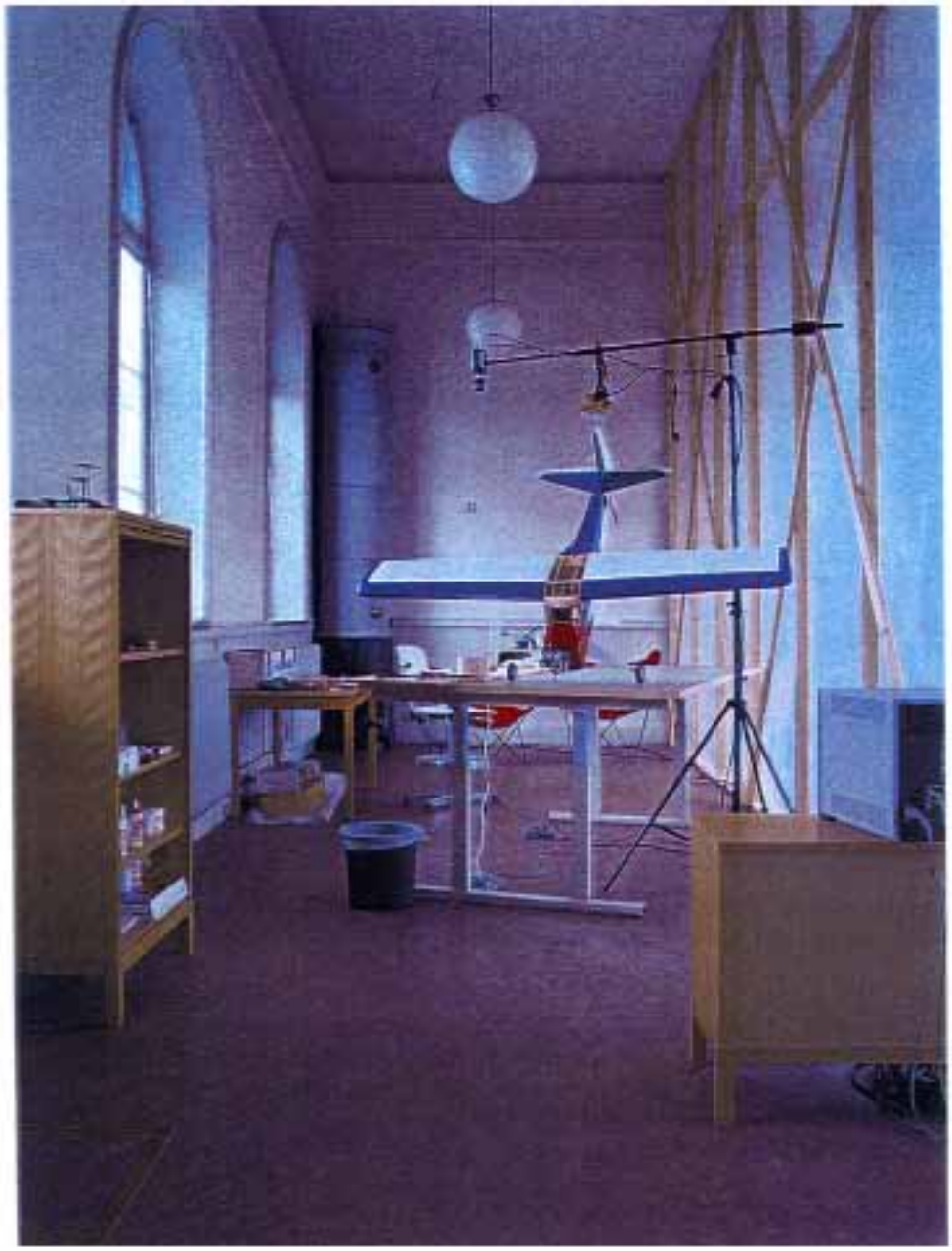
This work, *Bum-Time* (2000), is typical of the trajectory followed by many of Starling's creations. In the Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne, for instance, *Le Jardin Suspendu* (1998) had the following subtitle: 'A 1:6.5 scale model of a 1920s French "Farman Mosquito', built using the wood from a balsa tree cut on the 13th May 1998 at Rodeo Grande, Baba. Ecuador, to fly in the grounds of Heide II designed in 1965 by David McGlashan and Neil Everist: Like the tip of an iceberg, this description only hints at Starling's epic sequence of preparations for the flight of his model plane: the discovery of a gum tree with a canoe-shaped scar in its trunk in the grounds of the museum; his journey to Quayaquil, Ecuador to select a balsa wood tree; and the making of the model by hand. Likewise, the title barely suggests the hinterland of research for the project. which touched on the 8,565 mile voyage of explorer Vita Alsar from Quayaquil to Brisbane; Le Corbusier's interest in 'flying machines' as models for his buildings; indigenous Australian technologies; and the Modernist origins of the museum at Heide.
These are formidable lists, but they are offset by the lightness of touch Starling brings to the outcome of his projects. The hard-won process that characterises each of them has a complex effect on the end resu1ts, collapsing historical time through its reanimation of various events, and underscoring the absurd and playful dimensions of the works. The obsessive and convoluted stories that emerge from the process spawn endless alternative narratives that mutate as often as the objects he makes. Describing the interrelationship of these two aspects of his artistic practice he says:

I feel much more comfortable with a way of operating in which creativity is about the space in between the fragments that you bring together, rather than actually creating something new. You create new relationships, not new objects. But, taking a step back, I think the malting is in some way very important, because the kind of narratives and the links in the work are very fragile. It is very important that there is commitment from me towards the realisation of these things. Their production values allow people to immerse themselves in these fragile stories. You have to go the whole way. [2]

As Starling points out, he seldom creates a new object, preferring either to recreate an existing one or to fabricate a model of an existing structure. The quality of the making is always an important issue - it has an old fashioned amateurishness about it that is quite nostalgic in itself. Playfulness, rather than technical perfection, becomes the priority, and this toying with things - a refusal to aim for mastery - prompts us to consider a value for these models beyond mere utility. Discussing the pecu1iar properties of the miniature, Susan Stewart points out that: 'The reduction in scale which the miniatae presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday lifeworld, and as an object consumed, the miniatae finds its "use value" transformed into the infinite time of reverie.' This skewing of time lies at the heart of many of Starling's projects - opening channels to the past and cutting across historical boundaries. By instigating a kind of perpetual motion, these works forestall the deadening of ideas and constantly modify experience.

In another recent work, *Project for a Modem Museum, Moderna Museet, Stockholm* (1999), Starling tests this more acutely by setting the project in the landscape of a Swedish crematorium built by the functionalist architects Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz. In the Skogskyrkogarden crematorium complex, Northern Modernism attempted to streamline death through a symbolically constructed network of buildings, paths, and lawns. Developing some of the ideas of Le Jardin Suspendu, Starling invited an elderly model maker, Kurt Mellander, to build a radio-controlled model aeroplane, intended to fly over the area and film it, simulating a 1:600 scale view ofthe complex. Mellander was born in the 1930s, a time when Swedish functionalism became recognised as an important visual embodiment of the country's welfare state, and his life paralleled the development of that system. The construction of a model aeroplane within the perimeter of this architectural complex-echoed the inspiration Le Corbusier derived from aviation, the passing of the utopianism implicit in Modernism, and a sense of the soaring of the spirit after death.

In the event, the model crashed on its maiden flight. The subsequent modifications of the enterprise brought a model flying enthusiast into the museum to repair Mellander's plane throughout the remainder of the exhibition. Meanwhile, a video



A skewing of time lies at the heart of Starling's projects openingchannels to the past and cutting across history.

camera surveyed a model of the crematorium in a neighbouring space separated only by a transparent plastic wall. This evolution of the project illustrated perfectly the principles of mutation that are always at work, morphing Starling's ideas from one situation to another, evading death.

The salubrious quality of this process can be found in the texts that accompany each piece in the gallery. Starling often refers to these extended titles as 'recipes' and the cooking metaphor holds true, even becoming literal in Blue Boat Black (1997) and Bum-Time. The various elements of his work are mixed, cooked up, and consumed by individual readers to their own taste, and, as the story of each project becomes known, it is embellished, edited, and emended in the retelling. The texts, for all their loquacity, never succeed in circumscribing the object on view. The handmade nature of Starling's copies of mechanically manufactured commodities - imperfect and 'professionally amateur' objects - make us ever more aware of the gaps between their reality and that of the original.[1]

1. The speaker was Mike Page from the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit at Cambridge University. He later summarised his argument in Strange and Channed: Science and the Contemporary Visual Arts, ed. by Sian Ede, London, 2000, P.109.

2. Simon Starling, Galerie fiir Zeitgenossische Kunst, Leipzig, 1999, p. 43.

3. Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives ofthe Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection, London, 1993, p. 65.

4. Simon Starling, Galerie fur Zeitgenossische Kunst, Leipzig, 1999, p. 43.

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Simon Starling

Camden Arts Centre, London
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Simon Starling's practice revolves around the idea of transformation, both physical and contextual. Often taking an object with an aura of cultural significance as a starting point - such as a disused display case from the National Museum of Scotland, or an Eichbaum Pils can found in the grounds of the Bauhaus - Starling subsequently sets about converting that object into something else, or recreating it in new materials. Believe it or not, the display case became a small boat which Starling took fishing off the coast of Marseilles (and later burnt to provide enough heat to cook the fish he caught), whilst nine Eichbaul11 cans were reproduced using metal from another object to which we would attach much more value - a Jorge Pensi cast aluminium chair. This transformation, especially of functional objects so as to deliberately obscure their 'use' values as well as their market worth, is recorded and the documentary material shown alongside the finished work.

Two entirely new projects will be shown at Camden, including Rescued Rhododendrons and a piece based on the Wagenfeld Museum in Bremen. Like his other works, Rescued Rhododendrons plays with displacement, but this time it's geographical. Three rhododendrons were dug up in Elrick Hill, Scotland, where the local inhabitants consider them weeds, and videoed on their long journey to their place of origin - Parc Los Alcornocales, Spain. The work thus not only addresses issues of repatriation but also logs the changes in the plants' status which result from their shifting context. Starling's Wagenfeld project traces the history of the building in Bremen now dedicated to modernist designer Wilhelm Wagenfeld. The neo-classical structure used to be a prison and, inspired by stories of the public pelting eggs at it, Starling decided to construct a hen house which is in fact a scaled-down model of the museum. (It's currently on a free-range chicken farm in Scotland, but will make its way to Camden for the show's opening.) Echoing his National Museum of Scotland project. the minutely detailed hen house will be burnt to cook the eggs laid by its former inhabitants. They'll be served sporadically to audience members. OF

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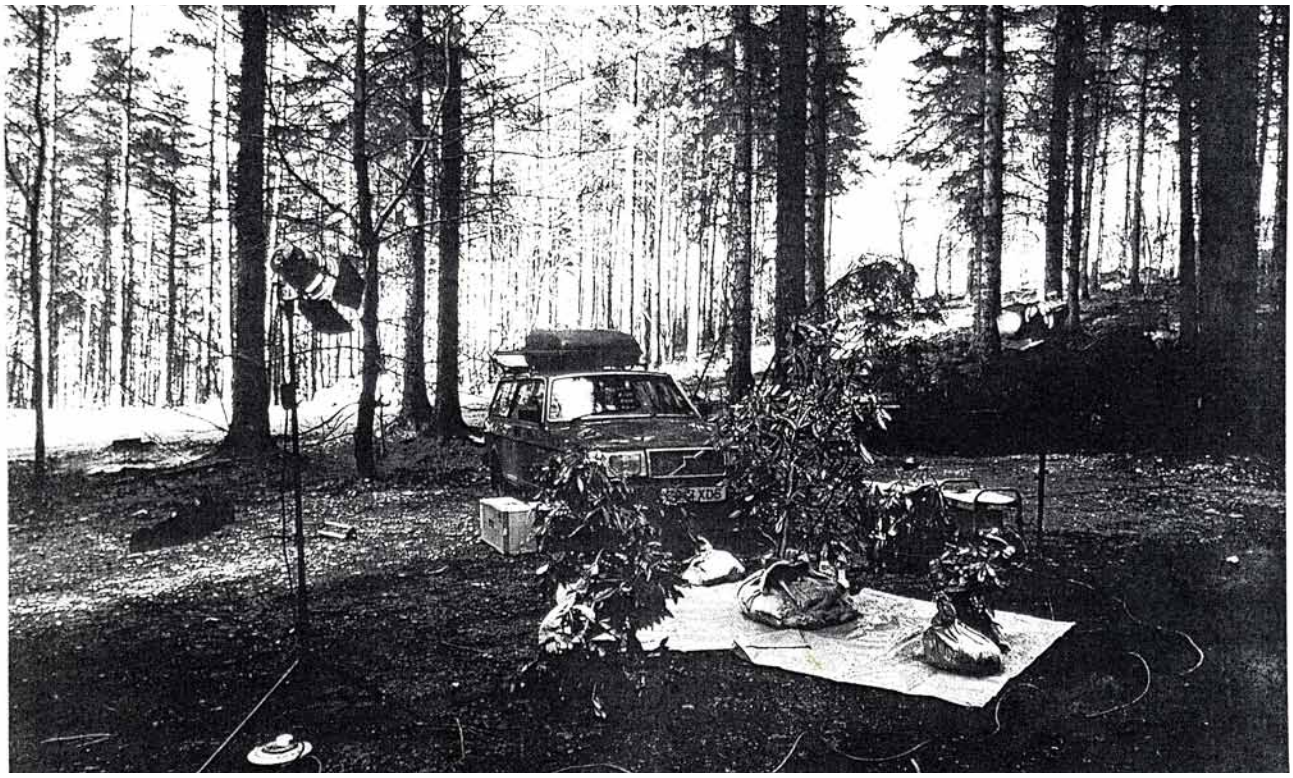

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Simon Starling: Apprentice of the Sun

By Juliana Engberg

The clinamen is a slight deviation of that which is at once particle and wave - atom and energy It is the creative principle. Is every artist not pedalling away in the nucleus of an atomic bicycle, crashing into other atoms, producing the clinamen - the chain reaction that gives off radiation, aura and shock? Saturate each atom: convert your medium into energy and irradiate the world with art.

Keith Seward - Atomic Bicycle

Rhododendron ponticum;foliis nitidis lanceolatis utrique gladris, racemis terminalibus. (forwards)

Syd Edwards, 1803 Published by T. Curtis, London.