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ISSUE 66

MARCH 2013

# Art Review:

Contains 5% BERLIN; 2% LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN;  
29% PANTONE808; 32% FUTUROLOGY; 2 COW LICKS

## Simon Starling

TIME, NARRATIVE  
AND TECHNOLOGY

## Future Greats

28 ARTISTS FOR TOMORROW  
SELECTED BY LEADING ARTISTS,  
CRITICS AND CURATORS  
OF TODAY

UK £5.95





## 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 phone-hacking 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



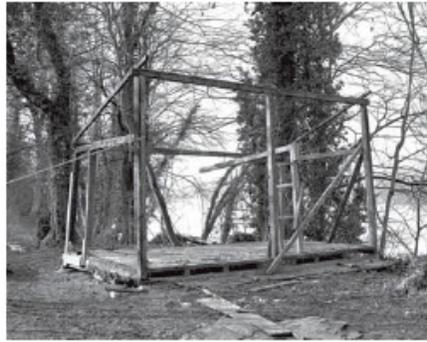


this page:  
Project for a Masquerade  
(Hiroshima): The Mirror Room,  
2010 (installation view, the  
Modern Institute/Toby Webster  
Ltd, Glasgow, 2010), 3 of 6  
wooden masks (carved by Yasuo  
Miichi), 2 cast bronze masks,  
metal stands, bowler hat,  
suspended mirror, dimensions  
variable. Photo: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





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-Internet world, with its increasingly interwoven issues of environment, ecology, capital and globalisation.

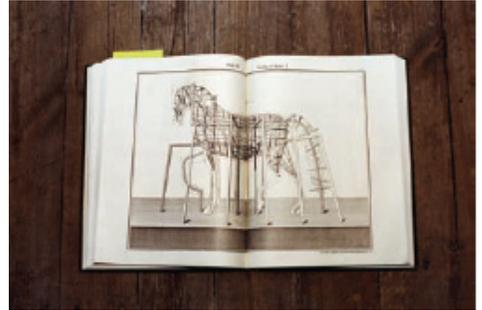
Starling’s work uses objects to generate sprawling tales – often concerning the fabrication, display and dissemination of art objects, woven together with their connections to the political, social and economic systems that more generally structure and locate the position of objects within the world. An early work, 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), 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 Potgieters, South Africa, produced using as many platinum group metal salts as can be produced from one ton of ore* (2005)

**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**

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 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)



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



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.

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

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 going 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.

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

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**SIMON STARLING**  
**Triangulation Station A (40°44'49.17" N 74°0'22.45" W)**

EXHIBITION DATES: SEPTEMBER 6 – OCTOBER 20, 2012  
OPENING: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 6-8PM

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce *Triangulation Station A (40°44'49.17" N 74°0'22.45" W)*, an exhibition by Simon Starling (b. 1967) that draws on two distinct historical narratives. The exhibition, which is Starling's fifth with the gallery, is based on the idea of the parallax error and runs concurrently with *Triangulation Station B (52°31'39.61" N 13°23'38.64" E)*, a presentation of the same works at neugerriemschneider, Berlin. Central to both exhibitions are two films presented separately, each in relation to a sculpture that reinforces the sense of mirroring and triangulation at the heart of their structure. Both films are set within the confines of a small working space in which a craftsman is hard at work, and investigate the relationship between the meaning of making and the making of meaning.

The newly completed film *Black Drop* (produced in association with Modern Art, Oxford and the Radcliffe Observatory, Oxford), unfolds in a 35mm editing suite as an editor tries to bring structure and understanding to a varied array of material including: footage made on location in Hawaii and Tahiti on the occasion of the June 2012 transit of Venus, archive material, and ultimately footage of himself editing. As the editor cuts and splices the complex narrative unfolds. The film tells the story of the relationship between astronomy, photography and the beginnings of moving image technology. Predicated on the idea that the 2012 transit may be the last to be recorded on celluloid (the next transit will occur in 2117), *Black Drop* tracks the development of the French astronomer, Jules Janssen's innovative photographic revolver – a device that was designed to counter human error in timing the crucial moments of Venus' contact with the edge of the sun, and was influential in the development of Etienne Jules Marey's photographic rifle and the Lumière Brother's cinematograph. The accompanying sculpture *Venus Mirrors (05/06/2012, Hawaii & Tahiti Inverted)* consists of two large telescope mirrors that represent the 2012 transit of Venus as it was observed in June of this year from two historically significant observational sites in the Pacific Ocean. The small differences in the position of the transit – as observed when the viewer overlays the reflection of one mirror onto the other – were the basis for attempts to calculate the mean earth – sun distance, the astronomical unit.

The second film, *Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)*, is a proposition for the performance of a play which collapses Eboshi-ori, the ancient Japanese tale of a young noble boy disguising himself to escape his troubled past, onto the Cold War saga that evolved around Henry Moore's 1965 sculpture *Nuclear Energy*. Installed at the University of Chicago, *Nuclear Energy* marks the birthplace of both the nuclear age and the so-called Manhattan Project, Enrico Fermi's first self-sustained nuclear reaction - Pile No. 1. Each role in the original Japanese play is taken by one of a new cast, including: James Bond, Anthony Blunt, Colonel Sanders and Joseph Hirshhorn, which was assembled through a web of connections that all lead back to Moore's monument. The film emerged as part of Starling's on-going interest in, and redeployment of, Moore's work which began in Toronto with the making of *Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore)*, 2006-08 (itself a Cold War drama involving rampant Russian molluscs invading the Great Lakes in the dying days of the Soviet Union), but was specifically inspired by the chance discovery of a smaller version of the Chicago monument that somewhat bizarrely ended up in the collection of the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art under a different name, *Atom Piece*.

Accompanying the film, and commissioned specifically for the twin exhibitions in New York and Berlin, are two wooden masks carved by the master mask maker Yasuo Miichi in Osaka. Standing face to face with each other, they present two sides of the same central character at the heart of *Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) – Atom Piece* and *Nuclear Energy*.

Simon Starling was born in Epsom, U.K. and lives and works in Copenhagen. A solo exhibition of Starling's work will be mounted at Tate Britain in 2013. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Reprototypes, Triangulations and Road Tests* (with Superflex), Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna; *Troiscent cinquante kilogrammes par mètre carré*, La Kunsthalle Mulhouse, Mulhouse Cedex, France (2012); Radcliffe Observatory, organized by Mike Stanley, Modern Art Oxford, United Kingdom (2012); Fondazione Merz, Torino, Italy (2011); Simon Starling, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, organized by Mark Sladen, Copenhagen (2011); *Recent History*, Tate St. Ives, St. Ives, United Kingdom (2011); *Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)*, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, curated by Yukie Kamiya, Hiroshima, Japan (2011); e.g. (with Superflex), Kunsthau Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria (2011); *Recent History*, CAC Malaga, Malaga, Spain (2010); *THEREHERETHENTHERE (Works 1997 – 2009)*, Musée D'Art Contemporain Du Val-De-Marne (MAC/VAL), Vitry-sur-Seine, France (2010); *THEREHERETHENTHERE (La Source)*, Parc Saint Léger – Centre d'Art Contemporain, Pougues-les-Eaux, France (2010); *Simon Starling: Under Lime*, curated by Julian Hevnen, Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin, Germany (2009); and *Simon Starling: The Nanjing Particles*, curated by Susan Cross, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2008). Simon Starling was included in the 2009 and 2003 editions of the Venice Biennale, and was the recipient of the 2005 Turner Prize. Additionally, Starling was a finalist for the Hugo Boss Prize in 2004 and received the first Blinky Palermo Prize in 1999.

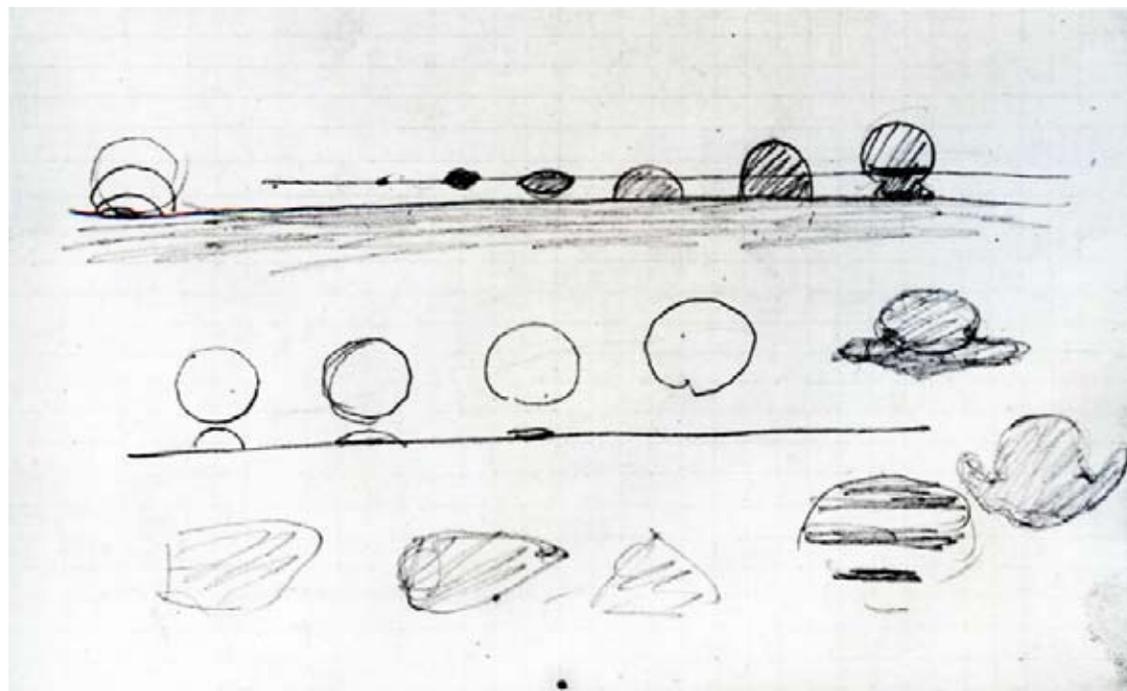
For further information about the artists or the exhibition, please contact Loring Randolph or Alice Conconi, [loring@caseykaplangallery.com](mailto:loring@caseykaplangallery.com) and [alice@caseykaplangallery.com](mailto:alice@caseykaplangallery.com).

Upcoming exhibition: GIORGIO GRIFFA: *FRAGMENTS 1968 -2012*, OCTOBER 25 – DECEMBER 22, 2012

GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10:00AM – 6:00PM  
HENNING BOHL, MATTHEW BRANNON, JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, GEOFFREY FARMER, LIAM GILLICK, GIORGIO GRIFFA, ANNIKA VON HAUSSWOLFF, BRIAN JUNGLEN, JONATHAN MONK, MARLO PASCUAL, DIEGO PERRONE, PIETRO ROCCASALVA, JULIA SCHMIDT, SIMON STARLING, DAVID THORPE, GABRIEL VORMSTEIN, GARTH WEISER, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER

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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, observed during the 1874 transit of Venus. 35mm film transferred 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 “nonphotographic” 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 of Venus 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](http://www.artforum.com/picks/section=it_ch#picks29963)>

## 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 Johanneson'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.

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 it is, 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

# ARTFORUM



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.

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# Simon Starling. The inaccessible poem

A cura di Maria Centonze  
mostra  
Fondazione Merz



An exhibition project conceived by Simon Starling.

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's 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 constant 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 showcased in the exhibition, and in particular with Mario Merz, with whom he shares that constant desire to act as a nomad.

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## Kunsthall Charlottenborg

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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. For more details see next page.

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).

# Kunsthall 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

# Kunsthal Charlottenborg

## **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).

## **Press**

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Press photos download: [www.kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk](http://www.kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk)

## **Opening hours and exhibition tickets**

Tuesday to Sunday 11-17.00 (Wednesday 11-20.00)

Adults 60 kr. Students, seniors and groups 40 kr. Children under 16 free. Free admission after 17.00 on Wednesdays.

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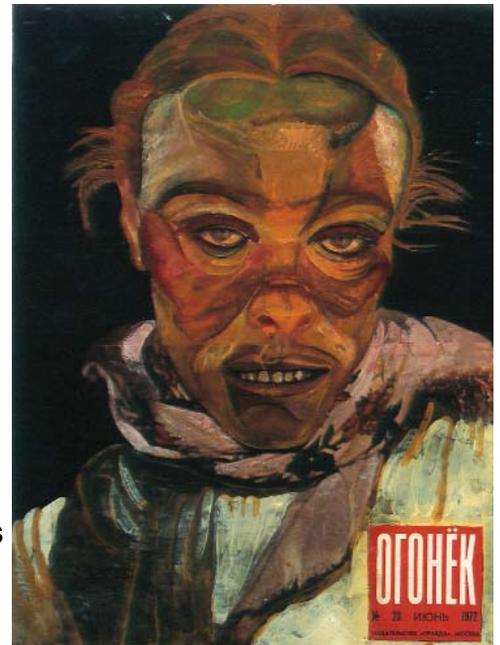
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 18, 2011

**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 jobless 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.



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

A remarkable group of Russian artists constitutes the core of the exhibition, 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 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 mock-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.

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 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.

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



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

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.



Miroslaw Balka, Black Pope and Black Sheep, 1987. Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York



Nikolay Bakharev, Relationship #14, 1989. Courtesy the artist



Victor Alimpiev, My Breath, 2007. Courtesy the artist and Regina Gallery, Moscow

### 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 Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding, dedicated building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of ongoing experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

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## Galleria Franco Noero

### **Simon Starling** ***F as in Foglia***

Site Specific—Piazza Santa Giulia 5  
May 27th—October 22ns, 2011

Galleria Franco Noero is pleased to present the fourth solo exhibition at the gallery by Simon Starling.

*F as in Foglia* continues Simon Starling's interest in the redeployment of the manufacturing and design history of Turin pursued over his 10 year long relationship with Galleria Franco Noero, as well as his ongoing interrogation of the processes used in the making of his own work—from the age-old crafts of boat building or mask making, to the high-tech world of steel fabrication or computer-guided milling.

In this new work produced specifically for the small shop-front space on Piazza Santa Giulia in central Turin, Starling has collaborated with the sign writer Laura Panfani, who is continuing to nurture the tradition of sign making established in large part by her teacher's, the celebrated sign makers Insegne Cucco who throughout the 20th century did much to shape the feel of Turin's characteristic retail signage.

Simon Starling's six hybrid glass 'signs' track the processes used in this traditional form of sign making. The six images that constitute the final work, document the initial production of a single black and gold glass panel that evocatively spells out the Italian word 'foglia' (leaf) in reference to the gold leaf (foglia d'oro) used in a process known as 'finta incavatura' (fake indentation) that creates elegant, seemingly three-dimensional letters on a flat sheet of glass.

Starling's somewhat abstracted photographic images have been "feed back" into the sign making process through the additional use of silkscreen printing that is in turn underscored by Panfani's subsequent application of layers of gold leaf and paint.

Simon Starling (Epsom, UK 1967), won the Turner Prize in 2005. He lives in Copenhagen and teaches fine arts at the Stuedelschule in Frankfurt. Among his recent solo exhibitions in public institutions: Tate St. Ives, St. Ives, UK, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan (2011), Recent History, CAC Malaga, Malaga, Spain, (2010) THEREHERETHENTHERE (Works 1997 - 2009), Musee D'Art Contemporain Du Val-De-Marne (MAC/VAL), Vitry-sur-Seine, France, and Parc Saint Léger - Centre d'Art Contemporain, Pougues-les-Eaux, France, Inverted Retrograde Theme, USA (House for a Song Bird), Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach (2009); Simon Starling: The Nanjing Particles, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA, Simon Starling: Three Birds, Seven Stories, Interpretations and Bifurcations, Ludwig Muzeum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, Hungary, and Galleria Franco Noero, Torino, Italy (2008).

Among his participations to biennials: 'Fare Mondi/Making worlds', 53rd Venice Biennial (2009), 26a Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2004), Biennale de Lyon e 8th Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE (2007), Individual Systems, 50th Venice Biennial, Venice, Italy

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# Universalmuseum Joanneum

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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  
Information: +43-316/8017-9200

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 pared-down 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

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

# frieze

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

## Simon Starling

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 multi-millionaire-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 re-contextualizations, 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 re-installed 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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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.; Isokon/Marcel 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 Alys, *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, futurobjects, (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 cura-

tor’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. \*

MARTIN HERBERT IS A WRITER AND CRITIC BASED IN TUNBRIDGE WELLS, UK.

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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.

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.



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

**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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Press Releases 2010.12

## 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.



<<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



## 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 Past)' at Camden Arts Center, London.



<<Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)>>  
2010

View of the work in production  
Photo: Simon Starling



<<Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore)>>

2007/08

Courtesy of the artist and Casey  
Kaplan, New York.

Photo: Steve Payne

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# Simon Starling

## Recent History

26 November 2010 - 23 January 2011

The starting point of the exhibition at the CAC Málaga of the work of the British artist Simon Starling (Epsom, UK, 1967) is the artist's direct intervention on the architecture of the building itself. On display are a selection of works, the majority in black and white and produced over the past five years, in which Starling reflects on the use of changes of scale, miniaturisation and magnification, and the transformation of data into physical or sculptural form, or, conversely, the translation of real forms into data.

Starling is an internationally renowned figure who belongs to the new generation of conceptual artists. His work is based on lengthy periods of research and the trips that he undertakes almost in the manner of pilgrimages. From them emerge a wide variety of ideas concerning nature, technology and the economy, and his output ranges from installations to elegantly made objects, assemblages, photographs, short films and books. Starling describes his work as "the physical manifestation of a mental process", revealing stories and hidden relationships. His creations, which are part utopian visions, part critical commentaries, are frequently the result of complex performative projects.

The central work in the exhibition, which has been specially made for this event, is entitled **1:1, 1:10, 1:100** (2010). It is a reduced scale model of the building that houses the CAC Málaga, the former Wholesale Market. The model is displayed in the Centre's main gallery, a triangular shaped room that replicates the building's overall groundplan. Inside that model is another, concealed one of the Centre, in the manner of a set of Russian dolls. The same materials have been used that were employed for the construction of the building itself.

Simon Starling is fascinated by processes and by the transformation of objects and concepts. **One Ton, II** (2005) focuses on the consumption of energy. The production of the five hand-made platinum/palladium prints on display required a tonne of platinum extracted from the South African opencast mines that are the subject of these photographic images.

Starling's work wittily explores the connections between craft, material and technique. His research and reflections on modern production and traditional craft reveal the numerous subtle nuances contained within the production of a unique object as well as his fascination with process.

**300:1 (After Wilhelm Wagenfeld)** (2010) involves various prints (of Modernist glass objects, located mid-way between mass manufacture and handcraft work), and a series of hand-blown, black glass balls of different sizes. These balls relate to the size of the holes made with pins in the offset prints hung on the wall, referring to the half-tone technique in printing (which imitates a continuous tone through the use of a series of dots of varying size). This work has its origins in another entitled *La Source* that was created in France in 2009.

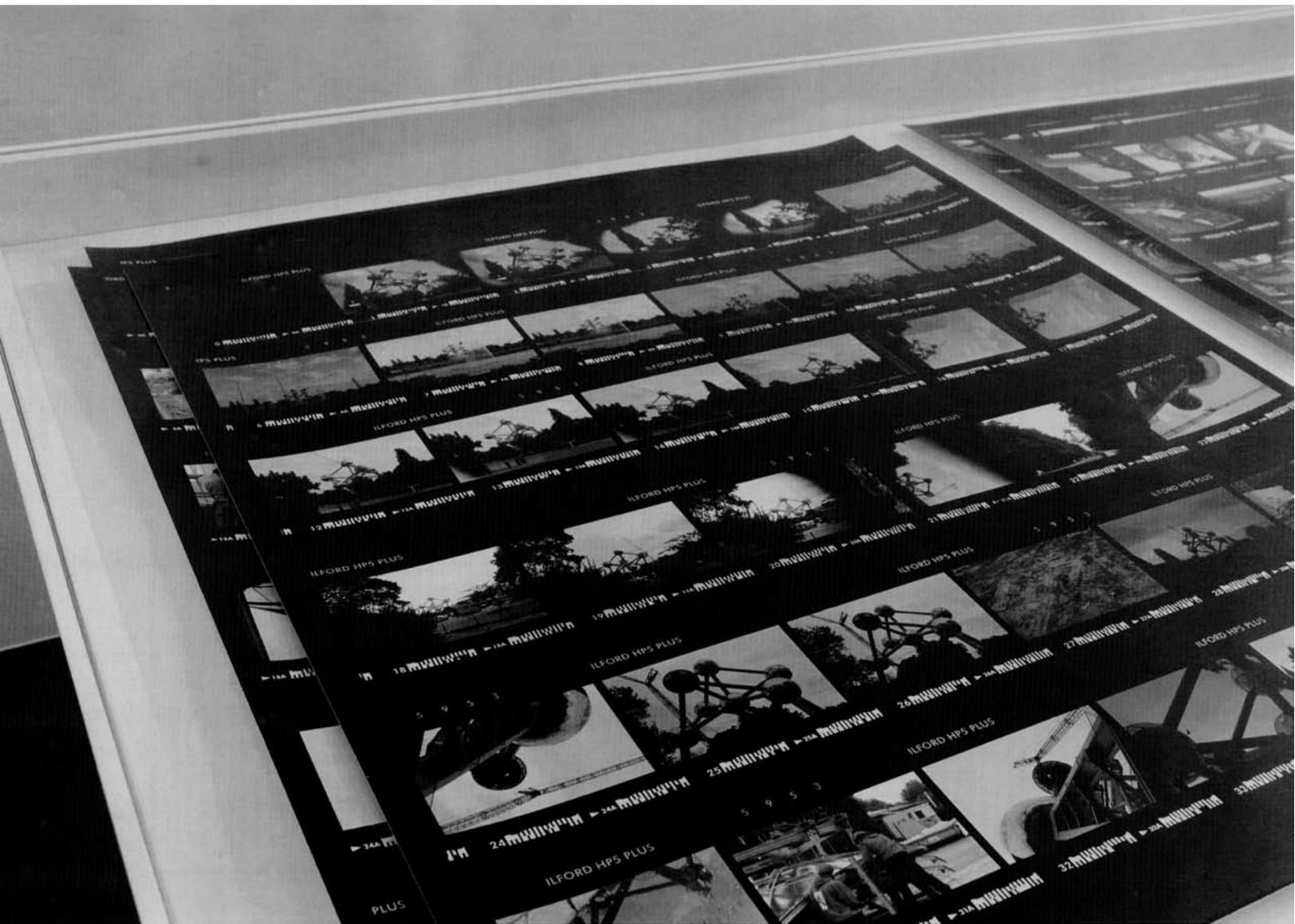
In **D1-Z1 (22,686,575:1)** (2009), Starling uses the latest computerised animation technology developed in Berlin to generate a 30-second animation sequence that he has transferred to traditional 35mm film and which is projected using another classic piece of mid-20th-century technology; a Dresden 01 projector. This runs continuously to project a small black and white image. The film is visible inside the projector, rising and falling. The 30-second loop sequence shows part of a complex piece of machinery in action. This is the Z1 of the title, a room-size object that is considered to be the first computer, designed by Konrad Zuse between 1936 and 1938 in Berlin. In order to introduce information into it, Zuse perforated 35mm film, which was fed into the computer to be read.

Two clichés of Belgian culture provide the starting point for **Particle Projection (Loop)** (2007): the Atomium Building of 1950 and the artist Marcel Broodthaers, who became a key figure within "institutional criticism". *Particle Projection (Loop)* has been devised to work both as a projection and an object. On this occasion it is exhibited as an object. In 1957 Broodthaers was employed as a labourer on the site of the Atomium Building, the design of which schematically represents a metal crystal, the abstract symbol for the concept of an atom. Broodthaers took a series of photographs of the building's construction. During the recent restoration of the building, Starling took black and white photographs that imitated Broodthaers' shots taken fifty years earlier. Viewed under an electron microscope, a negative of one of these photographs reveals silver particles. These fragments, with their sponge-like forms, refer to the origins of the Atomium. Greatly enlarged and returned to the celluloid film, they appear like animated ghostly figures.

**Project for a Meeting (Chicago)** (2010) is a series of three uranotype photographic prints that offers a fictitious encounter between two very similar sculptures by Henry Moore, albeit of different sizes: *Atom Piece* and *Nuclear Energy*. The sculptures are installed in two contradictory locations: the site of the first nuclear reactor at the University of Chicago, and the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art. Starling's photographs are made using a now obsolete photographic technique that involves a uranium composite.

**Archaeopteryx Lithographica** (2008) consists of a series of six lithographs, the starting point for which is a fossil of a feather of the *Archaeopteryx*, the earliest, primitive bird, discovered in 1860 embedded in a slab of limestone at Solnhofen, Bavaria.

Exhibition organised by the CAC Málaga in association with the Tate St Ives.



# 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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FEBRUARY '10 \$9.00





# SIMON MAKING CONNECTIONS STARLING

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 exhibition 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 Damage.

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 Musée 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 safe-light - 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 every-think 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 portman-teau 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 converted 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 gal-

lery 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, Pougues-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.

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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 7¼ 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 Léger.

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'THEREHERETHENTHERE' was at Musee d'art contemporain du Val de Marne, Paris, and Parc Saint Léger, 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.

WADE SAUNDERS AND ANNE ROCHETTE are sculptors who write about sculpture.





The Washington Post

# Arts & Style

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2009

## Head north and follow the signs of contemporary times

BY BLAKE GOPNIK

The term “contemporary art” no longer refers to the art of the moment. It refers to a certain kind of art, born in the late 1960s, that’s got a particular look and feel and way of doing things attached to it - every bit as much as “Renaissance” or “baroque” art do. Watercolors of boats at anchor, or even heartfelt abstractions, don’t really count as “contemporary art”; close-up photos of old pennies do.

Anyone looking for a crash course on the “contemporary” should head to New York City over the coming weeks. A recent blitz of the city’s non-profits and commercial spaces revealed one of the best seasons in years.

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BODY OF  
WOON: "Project  
for a Temporary  
Public Sculpture  
(Hiroshima)."

### Simon Starling at Casey Kaplan

The latest show by this British conceptual based in Copenhagen is titled “Red White Blue.” It focuses on a tangled web of connections between works by British sculptor Henry Moore at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington and at the Hiroshima City Museum in Japan. The heart of Simon Starling’s show is a huge, Calder-like mobile that balances a half-scale bronze model of Moore’s “Atom Piece” (from Hiroshima) against two half-size copies of Hirshhorn pieces known as “fallen Warrior” and “Bridge Prop.” The back story - about the Hirshhorn’s founding by a uranium tycoon, the origins of “Atom Piece” as a tribute to atomic fission and Moore’s role as a sponsor of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament - is as important as the objects on display.

Another piece takes the catalogues and booklets for Starling’s many shows and reproduces them as all-white mock-ups of themselves, as though the simple fact of their publication matters as much as what they are about. This is precisely the case.

Through Dec. 19. [www.caseykaplangallery.com](http://www.caseykaplangallery.com)

PHOTOS BY DAVID WHITEHEAD FOR CASEY KAPLAN



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 safe-light 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 Museum of Contemporary Art 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.

For further exhibition information please contact Meaghan Kent [meaghan@caseykaplangallery.com](mailto:meaghan@caseykaplangallery.com)

Next Gallery Exhibition: Marlo Pascual, January 7 – February 13, 2010

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

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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 architecture 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 Hochschule 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 the party 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](http://www.massmoca.org).



1040 MASS MoCA WAY NORTH ADAMS, MA 01247 413.MoCA.111 INFO@MASSMoCA.ORG

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# THE ARTS

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## 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.")

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.

# THE ARTS

The New York Times

continued...



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

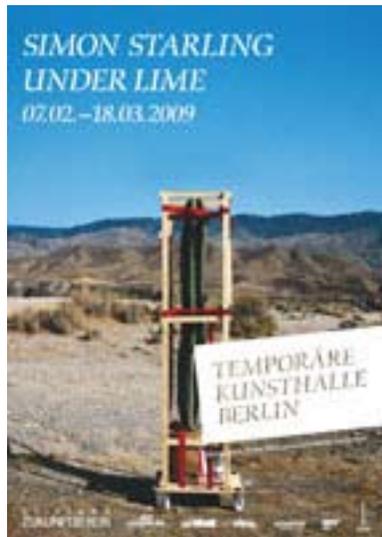
“Where are we going?” Mr. Starling called out at one point as Mr. Rowland served as the canoe-animal’s eyes, relaying the status of “walk” signs and cornering trucks and stopping the beast frequently so that Mr. Akhoj could take pictures for a film that will be made of the journey and added later in 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)



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# Richard Long and Simon Starling

*Spike Island, Bristol, 4 Oct-23 Nov 2008; [www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk)*

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

INTERVIEWS: *Jean Wainwright*



**R**ichard 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 sloped 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-turned-boat 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



## Review Exhibitions



*"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 Hobbler [a local mooring company] to ensure a safe arrival. The replica rock which came by road and ferry from Italy has an 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 Rockcraft?

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 (Mussel 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 a very 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 a walk, 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 in place, 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



*Floating and dead-weight.  
I liked the floated stone. The river  
brought us together, we both  
came up on the tide.*

R. L.



2008

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.

# Aesthetic Withdrawal in the Quest for Ideas



Balloons, empty frames and black crates: foreground, "Bicycle Grinder," an installation by Blake Rayne and Gareth James at Sculpture Center

Art objects are in crisis. Conceptualists and theorists say that there are too many of them and that we don't need them any more. Also, people buy and sell them like commodities, which devalues them as vehicles of thought and feeling.

If you are one of those who still believe in the object, you may be annoyed by Sculpture Center's confusing and misleadingly titled current exhibition. Organized by Mary Ceruti, the center's executive director, the eight-artist show "The Space of the Work and the Place of the Object" is meant, according to a news release, to address "the status of the art object within the context of its production."

But there is almost nothing in the exhibition that you would call an art object in the traditional sense of the term something in made by an artist, more or less skillfully, that is uncommonly interesting to look at because of its formal or representational properties. The exhibition is a disconnected assortment of primarily conceptual works, none of which say anything very illuminating about the status of the object or its context of production.

Consider an arrangement of partly broken glass boxes and the cardboard FedEx cartons in which the glass boxes evidently were sent through the mail. This piece by Walead Beshty is briefly amusing, but unless you read philosophical and political ideas into it, how different is it, really, from David Letterman throwing a watermelon off the roof? At least with Mr. Letterman you get to see the object bursting.

The most interesting piece is an installation by Michael Rakowitz documenting a project in which he opened a storefront in Brooklyn to sell food products from Iraq. It is almost impossible to find anything for sale in the United States labeled "Made in Iraq," Mr. Rakowitz said, because customs agencies here and abroad make it so difficult. So Iraqi merchants ship their goods to countries like Syria and Lebanon and have them labeled as made in those other places.

Mr. Rakowitz decided to try to import a ton of Iraqi dates in boxes labeled "Product of Iraq" to sell in his store. After many complications, he succeeded, much to the delight of his Iraqi customers. It is an excellent and affecting lesson in geopolitics. Less edifying is Gabriel Kuri's "That Runs Through,"

a presentation of objects on a sheet of white backdrop paper, including a bag of charcoal, a stone on a stack of Financial Times, a bag of kitty litter and a wastebasket with a mop head in it. A poor man's Robert Gober?

Also remarkably derivative are signs by Carey Young announcing various self-reflexive disclaimers, like "The artist does not guarantee that this piece can be sold as a work of art" and "The artist does not represent this to be a work of art." Ms. Young should know about Robert Morris's 1963 "Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal"

Another sort of aesthetic withdrawal is an installation by Blake Rayne and Gareth James consisting of big black wooden crates, a set of empty painting frames and a sheet of plastic and some balloons spray-painted green and gold the color of money.

Perhaps the most entertaining work - at least during the exhibition's first two weeks, when it was performed by live actors - is a short play by Melanie Gilligan. An art critic tells of a dream she had about wildly multiplying objects, and an artist in his studio gets all riled up about the obsolescence of the traditional art object. The piece is now being presented as a video.

A less exciting performance has been orchestrated by Karin Schneider. She built a second reception and ticket-selling booth of wood-framed transparent plastic and has the gallery's receptionist shuttle between it and the permanent booth, which serves as a studio where he makes paintings when not attending to visitors. Institutional critique feebly lives on.

One work that does resemble a fineart object is a squiggly, multi-lobed bronze sculpture by Simon Starling (winner of the 2005 Turner Prize). A wall label mystifyingly explains that it represents "a single silver particle from a vintage gelatin silver photographic print of 'Reclining Figure No.4, 1955' by Henry Moore" enlarged 300,000 times. So it seems that here, too, the idea is the real object.

## ART REVIEW

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## 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, Italy* (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.

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

# ARTFORUM

OCTOBER 2008



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

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Four Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty Five (Motion Control / Molino), 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 ("Cuttings," 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, Interpolations 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 Antonelli, 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 to a particular context or site. Quite 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 creating a 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 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 in Turin, shaped like a partially open book. Its structure perhaps kicks against the very near, often circular, structures I've deployed in the past. Its 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 journey ends up back where it started.

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

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 *Wilhelm Noack 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 right texts about my projects. I'm very involved in working on the publications that accompany particular projects. I'm a bit of a control freak 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 sculpture 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 from the young-British-artist wave that was hitting London then as well. What's your idea for 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 about 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 always 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 "gesamkunstwerk". 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 in the 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 beach 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 - soem 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 momentum 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 aesthetic 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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# Galleria Franco Noero

**Simon Starling**  
**Three Birds, seven Stories, Interpolations and Bifurcations**  
**exhibition opening at Galleria Franco Noero**  
**3 April - 28 June 2008**

For his third solo exhibition at Galleria Franco Noero in Turin, Simon Starling (1967 Epsom, England) winner of the Turner Prize 2005, opens the new gallery space in the 'Fetta di Polenta', with the project *Three Birds, Seven Stories, Interpolations and Bifurcations*.

The project draws on a number of different versions, both real and fictitious, of the same story - the story of a European architect being employed by a Maharajah to realise an ambitious building project in India. Central to the work is the "real-life" story of the German architect Eckart Muthesius, who was commissioned in 1929 to build a palace for the young, European educated, Maharajah of Indore, Yeswant Rao Holkar (1908-1961). What Muthesius and his patron achieved was an ambitious "gesamkunstwerk" (total art work) that represented the best of European modernist design and technology in the 1930's and, accompanying a large number of original designs by Muthesius himself, included countless examples of avant-garde art and design from many of the most celebrated practitioners of the day - Le Corbusier, Eileen Gray, Marcel Breuer, Uly Reich, and Constantin Brancusi.

The story of Muthesius' involvement in India parallels very closely three versions of two films originally scripted in 1921 by Fritz Lang and Thea Von Harbou, *The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The India Tomb*. The first two of these films was directed by Joe May in Berlin and begins with an Indian Yogi master "teleporting" himself into the home of an architect and persuading him to sail to India to work for the Maharajah of Eschnapur. The subsequent re-workings of the films were made by Richard Eichberg under National Socialism in 1938 and then finally in 1959 by Fritz Lang himself. The last of these films were shot on location in Udaipur, Rajasthan and Muthesius was brought in as a consultant on the film.

The *Three Birds* of the exhibition's title refer to the 'real-life' Maharajah's relationship with Constantin Brancusi that began in 1933 when the young prince acquired a bronze version of *Bird in Space* and the subsequent commissioning of two further *Bird in Space* sculptures in black marble and white marble, with the idea of bringing the three sculptures together in a meditation temple. This had long been a dream of Brancusi's and seemed to coincide quite perfectly with the Maharajah's desire to modernise the Hindu faith.

The discovery in Turin of a pair of photographic portraits of the Maharajah and Maharani of Indore in wedding dress was one of the initial starting points for the project. The other major source of inspiration for *Three Birds*... was the extraordinary house built on a tiny sliver of land in the centre of Turin by the architect Alessandro Antonelli, (around mid nineteenth century) and known locally as Fetta di Polenta, (Slice of Polenta). This audacious, joyful, assertion-of-abuilding, referenced in the *Seven Stories* of the title, seems to exist as a virtual projection of an impossible structure rather than real bricks and mortar, and its repeated triangular floor plan was key to the structuring of the work, which in part takes the form of three marble sculptures. The first of these, a rough-cut, quarried stone of now-rare Belgian black marble of the type used by Brancusi, has been laser scanned and using a computer guided milling machine, its form replicated in two subsequent types of stone, an India black marble and finally an Italian white marble. This transference of form from one material to another, from one floor to another, marks a vertical passage through the Turin house from bottom to top.

This journey is accompanied by a series of photographic images and texts, the 'interpolations and bifurcations' of the title, interjections that will collapse the aspirational architecture and design of Manik Bagh onto that of the Fetta di Polenta, and the fictional, cinematic narratives of May, Eichberg and Lang onto the real-life story of Muthesius in India. These photographs include a number made in a purpose built reconstruction of one floor of the Turin house fabricated in Berlin - adding another layer of geographical shifts to the project - folding Indore back onto Berlin and in turn Berlin onto Turin. As such *Three Birds*... aims to chart the transference and translation of ideas and forms through time and space, from Berlin to India, from celluloid to brick and mortar, from the virtual model to the stone replica, from the first to the seventh floor.

#### Opening hours

**From Thursday to Saturday 2 - 7 pm, upon reservation only**

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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 Stedelschule, in Frankfurt He has exhibited widely including the Bienal de Sao Paulo (2004) and the Busan Biennial (2006) and represented Scotland at the Venice Biennale 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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The Art Gallery of Ontario, the Henry Moore Foundation, Casey Kaplan Gallery

The Simon Starling Commission was initiated by Reid Shier, former Curator of The Power Plant We are grateful for the assistance of Hugh Macisaac, Professor Gerry Mackie, Jay McLennan (Spire Art & Design), Sherry Phillips and Or. W Gary Sprules.

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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 officials 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 *Infestation 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](mailto:pgoddard@thestar.ca)

## Just the facts

**WHAT:** Simon Starling'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 sculptures 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 submerged for 18 months in Lake Ontario, where it acquired 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 perhaps to a more modern artistic infestation



## 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 Sandals 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 the 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 Shield* 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 that it would be kind of nice to return that sculpture back into the 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 the 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 watch-

ing 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 Moors 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 concerns, and if people are upset by it then, 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](http://www.thepowerplant.org).

*National Post*

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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



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 importance 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 Moore), 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..

Special Issue on Replication

## 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.



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



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

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,<sup>1</sup> 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 four sets of film some sixty-five years after Renger-Patzsch himself clutched at his cable release and gazed into the 'ineffably luminous eyes'<sup>2</sup> of Paula Modersohn-Becker's *Self Portrait*, 1906.

### ***Infestation 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.



**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 department's 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.



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



Fig.5(b)  
Drop Sculpture (Work in Progress)

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 (Pleçnik, Union – the 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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**domus** 05

# Sim on Star ling

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](#)

July - August, 2007

*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 Coulport naval bases. Starting made a kind of self-destructive journey in a small, 23-foot wooden steam boat named Dignity, used as means of transport 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.



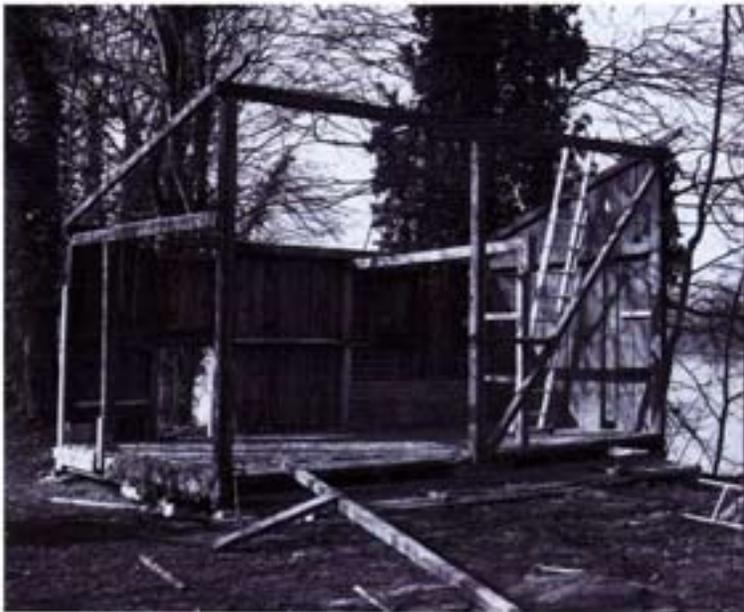


deux dorades  
une brème de mer

un pageot

deux rouges

trois poissons de roche



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# PHG

## Current Exhibition

Presentation House Gallery

**László Moholy-Nagy & Simon Starling | March 24 - April 29, 2007**



Opening Reception on Friday, March 23 at 8 pm

### LECTURES

Simon Starling Saturday March 24, 2 pm  
Vancity Theatre, 1181 Seymour (at Davie)  
in partnership with the Contemporary Art Society [casv.ca](http://casv.ca)

László Moholy-Nagy and Biocentrism  
by Oliver Botar Sunday March 25, 2 pm at PHG

This exhibition brings together two artists from different eras whose works reflect on modernity and technology. Early in the twentieth century, Moholy-Nagy claimed that: 'The reality of our century is technology: the invention, construction, and maintenance of machines. To be a user of machines is to be of the spirit of this century. Everyone is equal before the machine.' These prescient ideas have taken on new implications in the digital realities of the twenty-first century. The film projections that are featured in this exhibition reveal how the mechanical eye

of the camera creates a unique form of seeing. The exhibition offers reflections on the social impact of twentieth century machine culture.

László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) was born in Hungary in 1895 and lived throughout Europe before becoming the director of the Design School in Chicago in the late 1930s. A significant figure in the Weimar Bauhaus period, he was a pioneering innovator who worked with various mediums, including painting, sculpture, film and photography. He was also a graphic and stage designer, and an influential writer and teacher who published theories about perception - what he called "the new vision." Considered one of the most inventive artists of the 1920s and 30s, his experimental photography included cameraless photography (photograms) and colour work in slide form.

Running continuously in the gallery will be the 1930 film *Ein Lichtspiel schwarz weiss grau*, based on Moholy's kinetic sculpture, *Light Prop for an Electric Stage*. The film documents the play of light and shadow created by the mechanistic movements of the sculpture. Similar to the abstract effects in his photograms, this black and white film light is an investigation of light as material and transparent form.

The exhibition also marks the North American premiere of a new installation by the distinguished British artist, Simon Starling. Born in 1967 in Epsom, England and a graduate of the Glasgow School of Art, this multi media artist has quickly risen to international prominence. Winner of the coveted Turner Prize in 2005, he has exhibited widely and now, at Presentation House Gallery, for the first time in Canada.

Starling has described his artwork as a "physical manifestation of a thought process" that often involves transforming objects into new constructions through handmade production processes. The mixed media installation featured at PHG highlights this concern for mechanized and handmade production, and physical materials as histories of place. Produced in collaboration with the Berlin metal manufacturing firm referred to in the title, Wilhelm Noack oHG is a 35 mm., black and white film projection and projector construction. The relationship between the footage of the workshop with sounds of clanging metal and the endlessly looping projection apparatus are intertwined. Related to Starling's interest in icons of the modern, this work is a poetic reflection on a type of industrial production that is rapidly disappearing.

Curated by Helga Pakasaar

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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 steam-boat technology in the Clyde Estuary and in the brooding presence of the Trident nuclear submarines based at neighboring Couplort 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.



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# WIELS

## ***Particle Projection (Loop), 2007***

By Simon Starling

*Particle Projection (Loop), 2007* takes as its 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 Illustré'. 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.

# WIELS

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Simon Starling**

**Particle Projection (Loop)**

15/03 - 22/04/2007

Opening: 14/03 at 6.30pm

The installation is on view every day from sunset to midnight from the exterior of Wiels Avenue Van Volxem 354 - 1190 Brussels

From the 14th of March to the 22nd of April, Wiels presents a first artistic project of exception in its future location to announce its forthcoming opening.

Each night, from sunset to midnight, a new film by Simon Starling will be projected in the brewery room of the former Wielemans-Ceuppens breweries currently in renovation. The work was commissioned to the English artist Simon Starling from the start of the restoration of Wiels in 2005, with the rehabilitation of the "Blomme" - the corner building of the former Wielemans-Ceuppens breweries - into a center for contemporary art as the starting point of the work.

The artist, winner of the Turner Prize 2005, replied to the invitation of Wiels with a long aesthetic and historical investigation, which led him from the Atomium to Marcel Broodthaers. In the end, Starling has chosen to project a black and white animation film on a large screen as the hybrid fruit of his experimentations. The film shows the image of a silver particle derived from a negative of a photograph documenting the restoration of the Atomium produced by an electronic microscope. Reconstituted in celluloid and enlarged, the spectral figure of the particle will be projected on a black and white 35 mm film in loop in the brewery hall, illuminating the public face of Wiels.

With this gesture, the artist gives the opportunity to those who, by choice or by chance, pass by the building not only to experience a unique and fascinating artwork, but also to enjoy seeing this jewel of modernist architecture finally revived.

To accompany this event, Wiels organizes a lecture series by specialists of various disciplines examined by Starling in his work: architecture, photography and the relationships between the scientific optical tools and art.

A poster designed by the artist in collaboration with the graphic designer Sara De Bondt will be printed and distributed in Belgium.

**Preview and press conference in the presence of the artist:**

**Wednesday 14 March 2007 at 12am**

**Wiels - Avenue Van Volxem, 354 - 1190 Brussels**

For more information and press images: [www.wiels.org](http://www.wiels.org)

Contact: Devrim Bayar, [devrim.bayar@wiels.org](mailto:devrim.bayar@wiels.org), 02/3469024

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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 Triennial 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 by-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-Forêt 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 (1972-2000)* 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-made 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 in 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

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. He 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**



# 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 serv-

ing 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, apparently paints in an academic style, producing landscapes and portraits. But her works, though they look at first comforting 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 accompanies 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 a joint list: Louisa Buck, curator Kate Bush, critic Caoimhin Mac Giolla Leith and gallery director Eckhard Schneider.



**Simon Starling: Quixotic errands**

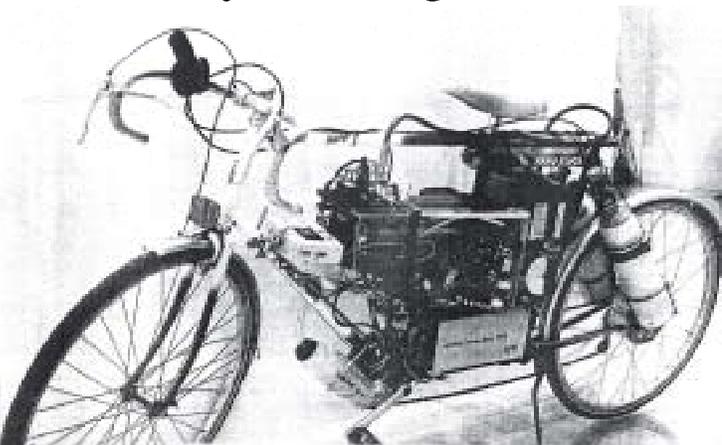
- Download our Turner prize podcast: an audio tour of the Tate Britain exhibition with the curators
  - What do you think of the result? Have your say on our blog
  - Take a virtual private view of the contestants with our gallery
  - Full coverage of the prize and its previous winners
- [guardian.co.uk/arts/turnerprize2005](http://guardian.co.uk/arts/turnerprize2005)

# the independent

p3

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2005

## Just an old bike? Or is it a poetic narrative? Either way, Starling flies to Turner Prize



**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 Epson 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 Modern 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



Simon Starling's submissions included an electric bicycle which he rode across a desert in Spain

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 angered 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

# 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 I* *Horizontal Modelj*, and *Rotary Cuttings I* *Vertical 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, Museullbrug*, 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 *Plechnik, 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 cross-overs 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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# ARTFORUM



## Basel

CRITICS' PICKS

<http://www.artforum.com/picks/place=Basel#picks9198>

## Simon Starling

KUNSTMUSEU BASEL, MUSEUM FÜR 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 so-called Young British Artists, but it's all interesting work."

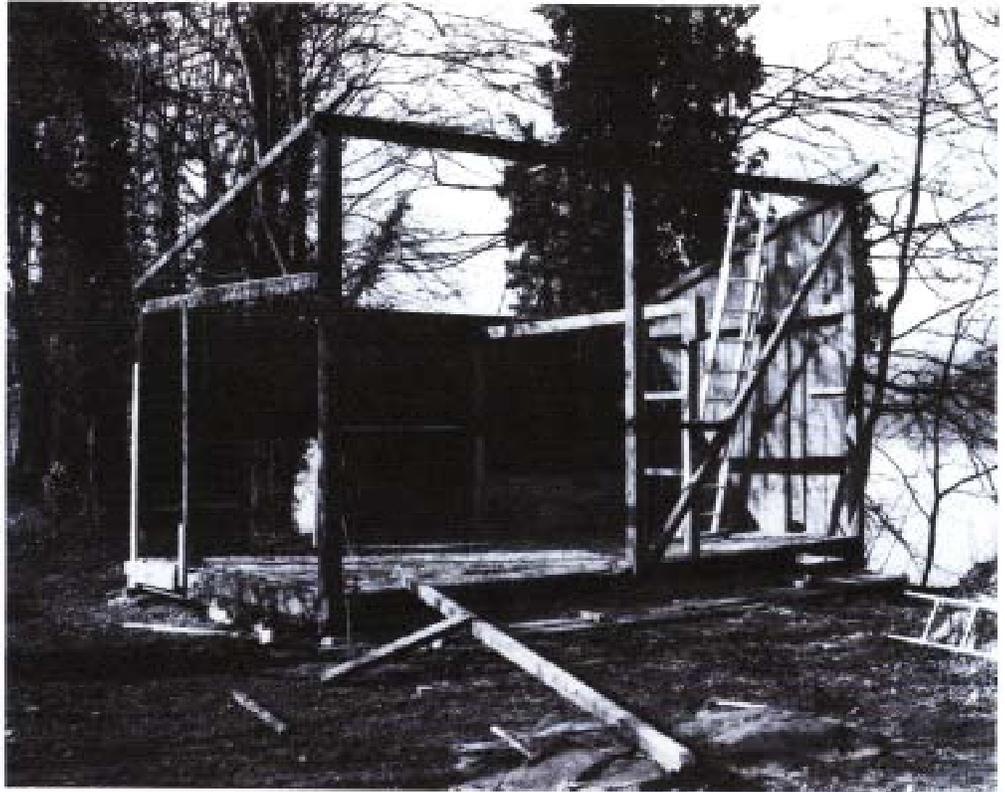
The award is given annually to a British artist under 50. The winner, who will be announced on Dec. 5, will receive about \$45,000 and each finalist, about \$9,000. An exhibition of the four artists' work will be on view at Tate Britain on Oct. 18.

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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 mid-career 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 8<sup>th</sup> - November 5<sup>th</sup>

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.

Starling's 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 'Djungle', 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 Paulo 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

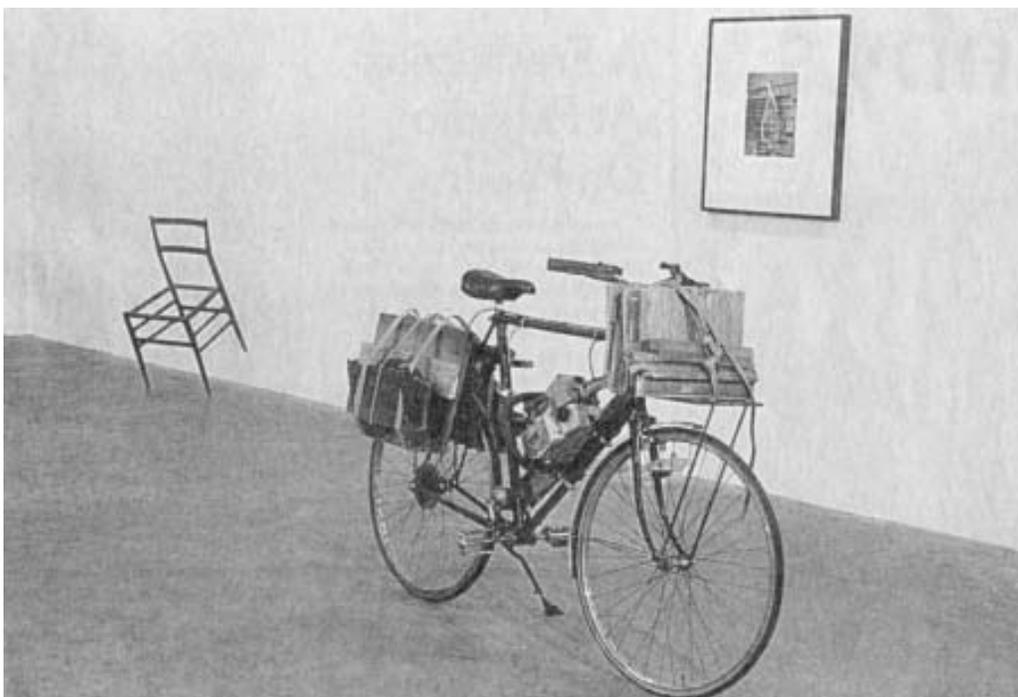
*Casey Kaplan Gallery  
416 West 14th Street  
West Village  
Through April 3*

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



A partial view of the installation by the British Conceptualist Simon Starling at the Casey Kaplan Gallery

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 it 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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March 11 - 18, 2004  
Issue 441



**Simon Starling,**  
Casey Kaplan, through Apr 3  
(see Chelsea).

**Simon Starling, *Bird in Space*, 2004**

Just as economics can foster creative innovation (writing was invented by ancient Sumerian businessmen to keep track of their livestock holdings), it can also force an inquiry into the nature of art. Take the 1927 court case *Brancusi v. United States*. Customs agents evaluating the Romanian artist's landmark sculpture *Bird in Space* (1926) determined it was not art because it left too much to the imagination (i.e., it was abstract). Therefore, they deemed it subject to tax under the 1922 Tariff Act. Brancusi objected and his supporters filed a law suit; they won the case, prompting changes in the legal definition of art in America.

British artist Simon Starling (a finalist for the Guggenheim's 2004 Hugo Boss Prize) uses this legal case as the starting point for his own *Bird in Space*, 2004, a 4,901 pound slab of Romanian steel supported by three inflatable rubber jacks filled with helium.

Starling's *Bird* also refers to recent international trade and steel tariff disputes- a brief history of which is outlined in the gallery handout.

Shown alongside *Bird* are two other sculptures: *Carbon (Urban)* (2004), a vintage Raleigh bike transformed into a moped with a chain saw for a motor; and *Ultrasuperleggera* (2003), a remake of a chair designed in 1951 by Gio Ponti, which used Italian folk design as its model.

Full of ideas about the connections between business, history and modernism, Starling's currentshow isn't as visually riveting as his last one: a complex of bird cages that appeared to be held up by thin saplings, based on a failed modernist housing project in Puerto Rico. But his rigorous, profound Conceptualism-where plenty is left to the imagination-delights the mind and demonstrates how history, economics and art are inextricably linked.

—Martha Schwendener

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## Boss Prize Finalists

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 represents 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 finalists 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

# The New York Times

Inside Art: Carol Vogel

FEBRUARY 6, 2004



"Songline," a mixed media work by Franz Ackermann, a 2004 Hugo Boss Prize finalist~

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.

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# ARTFORUM

FEBRUARY 2004

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



**FLESH & BLOOD**  
NEW FRENCH FILM

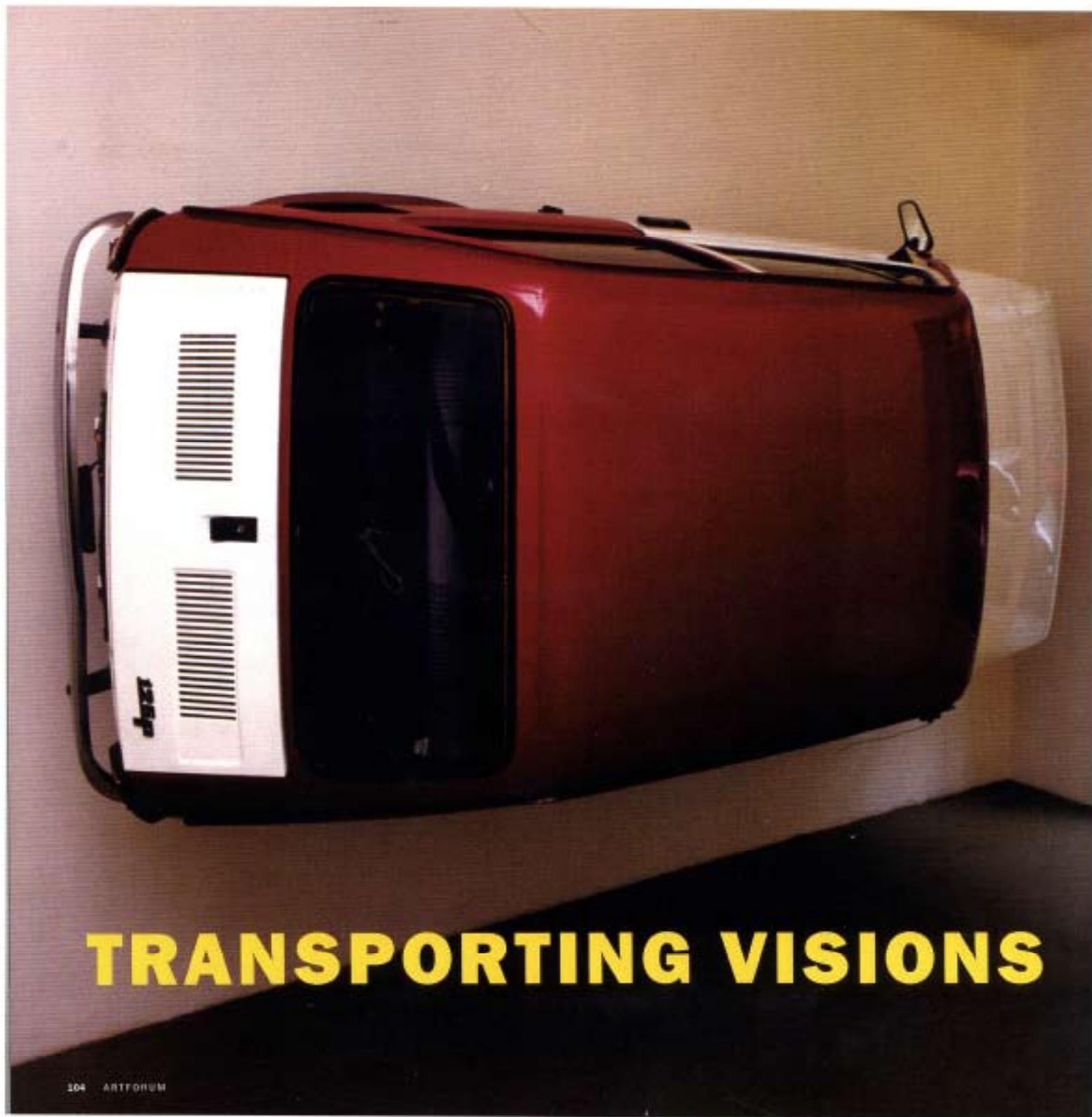
Judith Butler on  
**DIANE ARBUS**

**Simon  
Starling**  
TIME MACHINES



\$8.00





# TRANSPORTING VISIONS

## DANIEL BIRNBAUM ON THE ART OF

# S Simon Starling

Simon Starling presents deceptively common objects: air 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 für Zeitgenössische 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 II Karl-Tauchintz-Straße, 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



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 represented 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.



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.

**Views of Simon Starling's H.C./H.G.W., 1999, In progress and complete.**  
 From left: Oak tree trunk in garden of the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig. Work in progress. carpenter's shop, Leipzig. Installation view, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig. 1999.



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, neonationist 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.

Director of the Stadelschule art academy in Frankfurt, contributing editor Danie



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.



# 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

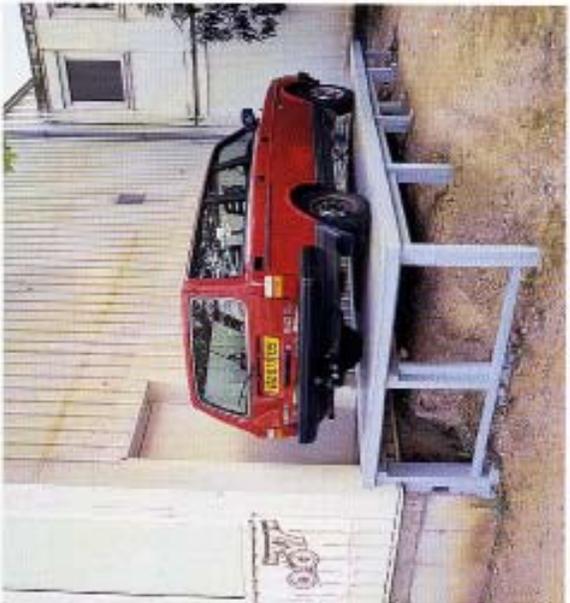
Alstoemer around 1750, *R. ponticum* was introduced to England in 1763) from its natural habitat in the hills between Cadiz and Gibraltar. I simply returned some unwanted "weeds" from Scotland to a place where they could live, once again, side by side with their Spanish ancestors. While I was doing research 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,



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-Victorian 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 Fiat 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 Portikus 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**



# THE STARLING VARIATIONS

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*TROY SELVARATNAM*

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Simon Starling would have been something of a poster boy to the existentialists. Here is someone who embraces the idea that two plus two equals five, who refuses to accept rigid ideologies at face value, and who attempts to order an increasingly impersonal world according to his own terms. Starling reflects on the world unburdened of dogma and makes connections between disparate schools of thought, historical trajectories, and natural phenomena such that they commingle in a meaningful way, at least in his eyes. His is an art marked by a constant rebellion against convenience, not only in that he refuses to accept that musical theory can never be applied to architecture, for example, but also in that his artistic gestures are the product of a hard-won individual process. Indeed, in executing his large-scale art projects, Starling has turned his hand to aluminum production, chair manufacture, printing, boat building,

and horticulture, and mercurially journeyed through Surinam, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, and Romania. Starling encourages the viewer to see the product as being much more than the sum of its parts, to explore the physical processes and ideas that were responsible for its creation. Each element possesses a fascinating narrative, each one indissoluble from the whole.

An artist prone to extended reflection and reverie, Starling cuts a resolutely solitary figure. He is a southerner from England who lives in Glasgow. Possibly this sense of displacement is critical to his stance as an itinerant artist. Physically and psychologically, he has not put his roots down. In *RESCUED RH DODENDRONS* (2000), Starling directly inverted a historical trajectory—a key element in this endeavor being a red Volvo 240 Estate. In the mid-eighteenth century, the plant *Rhododendron ponticum* was imported from the south of Spain to the north of Scotland, where it is now regarded as a nuisance weed. Learning that the plant would be eliminated as part of a large-scale

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*TROY SELVARATNAM* lives in Brooklyn, New York



landscaping project that sought to reinstate the original ecosystem, Starling counteracted by rescuing some of the plants and set off for Spain in his estate car. Equipped with a generator, sun lamps, plant food, and a pitchfork, Starling made photo-shoot stops along the way, in Elrick Hill, Scotland, Pays de Calais and Les Landes in France, and Moron de La Frontera and Parque Los Alcornocales in Spain, where, as Starling informs us in the accompanying text, Claes Alstoremer introduced the plants into cultivation in 1763. (Is Starling's use of a Swedish car then a deliberate gesture, or is it a reassuring coincidence?) The elements in each photo are immutable—there is the pitchfork leaning against the Volvo, the plants tied lip in burlap on ground sheets, the generator in the foreground. One gets the feeling that these plants are in loving, though not entirely competent, hands. Starling posits that the endeavor of reintroducing the plants in Spain controls the pursuit, and the expertise to do so, far from being insur-

mountable, will be acquired along the way. There is a credo at the root of this amateurism: "The important thing for me is that in each case it is a learning process within an expanded field of activity. I suppose in some sense I operate as a 'professional amateur.' Toying with things, with ways of doing things, but never getting really good at them."<sup>1</sup>)

A dignified work ethic pervades Starling's work. He is undaunted by the theoretical systems and machines of mass production that have diminished the role an individual has in giving meaning to his own existence. As a "professional amateur," Starling reclaims creative thought and manual craft and, in the process, he is able to demystify seemingly intractable ideologies and democratize production techniques. In the installation *INVERTED RETROGRADE THEME* (2001) at the Secession in Vienna, Starling took as his starting point the twelve-tone system of composition devised by Viennese composer Arnold Schoenberg. It is not surprising that Schoenberg's system



SIMON STARLING, *INVERTED RETROGRADE THEME*, USA, 2002  
 (HOUSE FOR A SONGBIRD, Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York /  
 UMGEKEHRT RÜCKLÄUFIGES THEMA USA (HAUS FÜR EINEN  
 SINGVOGEL.)

would strike a chord with Starling, grounded, as it is, in the principle that sequences of notes based on the twelve-tone scale can be inverted, reversed, and tied together to produce the final composition. Starling related Schonberg's system to the modernist architecture of the exhibition space and the way in which a piano is constructed. Twelve rows of neon tubes that were normally part of the central ceiling construction of the gallery space were lowered into the room below. Each row of lights was divided into seven sections controlled by time switches, flickering according to a programmed Schonbergian composition— a visualization of Schonberg's theories. Two nineteenth-century Bosendorfer grand pianos were placed on the floor of the space, one of which was disassembled and built in reverse. The altered components were ranged out across the space, along with inverted sections of the piano produced by Starling himself.

Starling reminds us that theoretical systems can never fully take into account the improvisatory nature of the reality they attempt to influence and shape. In transforming objects inspired by rigid systems of thought and reconfiguring them to different contexts and materials, Starling questions the over-

riding dogma of their design. In Starling's work, structures crumble under the continuum of history and its variations. But Starling is invoking something more than mere deconstruction here, as in many of his works; indeed, in order to defile the piano, he had to understand the minutiae of its construction, the essence of every individual element. By transferring the stringent organizational system of twelve-tone music to the architecture of the piano, he breaks down the method of producing such a bourgeois cultural artifact. He also emphasizes that craft goes into its production.

It's not such a stretch to think of Starling as a Luddite railing against machines of mass production and doggedly determined to prove that he can make objects by the sweat of his own brow. In his installation *WORK MADE-READY, LES BAUX-DE-PROVENCE (MOUNTAIN BIKE)* (2001) at the Cooper Gallery, University of Dundee, Starling produced aluminum from bauxite mined in France and forged a mountain bike frame from the metal. He has also produced homespun renditions of modernist objects, such as Eames chairs (*HOME-MADE EAMES*, 2001) and Poul Henningsen lamps (*HOME MADE HENNINGSEN*, 2001). *HOME-MADE EAMES* consists of a series of photographs depicting the molds and special apparatuses he constructed to produce a replica of the coveted Eames "DDS" chair. What is on display, in effect, is the negative space of the chair, the molds that give it shape and the formers that hold it together. Indeed, negativity is a recurring theme in Starling's works, and in this respect, his art bears comparison with that of Rachel Whiteread. Starling, however, takes the idea of negativity and runs with it—not only does he depict objects in their inverted state, but he also turns theoretical systems upside down and projects narratives in reverse.

Starling's cavalier attitude towards narratives reaches something of an apex in *BURN-TIME* (2000). In Bremen, a nineteenth-century prison designed by Frederik Moritz Stamm, which most recently detained illegal immigrants, was converted in the late nineties into a museum dedicated to the Bauhaus-educated designer Wilhelm Wagenfeld. Wagenfeld's most ubiquitous design was that of an egg-coddler, a uniquely heat-resistant convex glass dish ideal for

poached eggs. Starling built a scaled-down model of the prison in the form of a hen house using timber he collected from skips around his studio in Dundee. The house was installed at Stronchullin Farm, Strone, Scotland, where it proved a resounding success with the hens. Having collected a quantity of the fresh eggs produced by the hens, he built a stove in London made out of bricks culled from the Camden Arts Centre, where he had earlier heard a lecture on Wagenfeld. Using timber from the hen house, which had fallen into desuetude, as fuel, Starling cooked the eggs in Wagenfeld egg-coddlers that he had produced himself.

As is evident in *BURN-TIME*, nothing is straight forward in Starling's world. Detours are par for the course, and an almost absurd level of preparation goes into the consummation of the gesture. To Starling, the digressions are what invigorate the endeavor; the decisions made at crucial junctures must be bold to motivate both the producer and the consumer, who is encouraged to look beyond the mere utility of an object and seek pleasure in the historical rearrangements behind it. As he has said, "At the end, the object will be imbued with all the energy that has gone into making it."<sup>2</sup>) The object or gesture is granted a certain poetry, a poetry born of dissonances, failures, and implacable human determination.

One of Starling's most exquisitely realized projects is a recent work for Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York, *INVERTED RETROGRADE THEME, USA* (2002). The work is largely liberated from the extended titles, or "recipes" as Starling calls them, which accompany his installations. Indeed, the delicate beauty of *INVERTED RETROGRADE THEME, USA* is apparent even without a cursory knowledge of the ideas that inspired it. Whereas in *HOME-MADE EAMES* and *INVERTED RETROGRADE THEME* the elements of production are laid out for the spectator, here the processes behind the installation are less prominent. Nevertheless, the installation's aesthetic value accrues with an awareness of the stories behind each individual element.

Here, Starling merges Schonberg's twelve-tone system of composition with fellow Austrian emigre Simon Schmiderer's modular system of architecture. During the sixties, Schmiderer designed a series of

concrete houses built in Puerto Rico that were based on an open style of architecture, blurring the distinction between the interior and the outside environment. The openness of these homes, however, became impractical as crime increased in the country in the seventies and eighties. Occupants improvised by setting up metal grilles along the houses' facades, effectively caging themselves in. In Starling's piece, a one-fifth scale model of one of these houses and its mirror, or retrograde, image are turned upside down and pressed against the ceiling, held up by two branches of tropical hardwood from Trinidad. These inverted/retrograde models are a visualization of Schmiderer's design married with Schonberg's method of composition. Starling literalizes the cage-like element of the modified houses by fixing lattice grilles on the sides of the models and placing two parakeets in one. The gesture invokes, among other things, the Puerto Rican tradition of keeping caged songbirds and the random musical harmonies associated with Schonberg's compositions. Maybe he is also making a sly wink to himself, a starling considered a niggling, gregarious bird. Whatever the case, *INVERTED RETROGRADE THEME, USA* continues Starling's preoccupation with collapsing modernist theories, in this case architectural and musical, exploring how they interact with other phenomena in the world. To Starling, the "interest in using the remnants of Modernism is to try in a way to reintroduce that ideological impulse into the present day, to have a look at it and see whether it still has any relevance."<sup>3</sup>) As flawed as the ideologies concerned may be, with charges of cacophony being leveled at Schonberg's compositions and impracticality at Schmiderer's designs, they may be redeemed by intertwining their respective aesthetic manifestations. In this case, Starling's diligent work ethic has yielded something provocative and visually arresting, an embodiment of the Yeats dictum, "We must labor to be beautiful."

1) Simon Starling, (Leipzig: Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 1999), p. 43.

2) Susan Mansfield, "A Wing and a Prayer," *The Scotsman*, June 22, 2002, p.17.

3) Simon Starling, op. cit., p. 44.

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From *Artreview International Edition*, VIN06, 2004, p. 93



Above: Simon Starling. *Carbon*, 2003, bicycle 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 Ojungle - 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, principally 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 greens 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 you 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**

# The resurrection man

Simon Starling's new show highlights how man's dabbling in nature can be creative and corrupting, writes

**Iain Gale**

## **SIMON STARLING**

Dundee Contemporary Arts

Until 11 August

SIMON Starling is an alchemist. An explorer. A manipulator - of objects and of minds. To call him a visionary would be a slight exaggeration. He does nevertheless possess a rare ability to see beyond the immediate, specific, historic context and imbue the apparently mundane with new meaning. And it is this which, over the last 10 years, since his graduation from Glasgow, has brought

Starling increasing international acclaim. Starling's art is not perhaps the easiest with which to engage. For an exhibition last summer in Dumdee he rode an aluminium bicycle to an abandoned French bauxite mine, found Qauxite and, back in a laboratory, made it into aluminium, which was then made into... a bicycle. The evidence of the process was exhibited in a room lit by the iconic aluminium lamps designed by Danish modernist lighting guru Poul Henningsen.

One of his most memorable pieces was the project a year before in which he built a neo-classical coop for hens, modelled on the Osertorwache building in Bremen, now a museum of the work of the 'German modernist Wilhelm Wagenfeld. The hens subsequently laid eggs which were cooked in an egg codler also made by Starling, but based on one designed by Wagenfeld. Importantly, the fire for cooking the eggs was made from the wood of the, now destroyed, hen coop. Perhaps by now you're beginning to get the idea. Starling takes other people's designs, other people's aesthetics, and subverts and recontextualises them in order to generate an entirely different level of meaning.

His new work, 'Djungenl', which opened last week in Dundee, consists of an enormous, 11ft-high curtain, hung floor to ceiling from a gigantic pole. On it, in a multicoloured image on a cream background, Starling has hand-blocked a botanical furnishing print, designed in the 1920s by the designer Josef Frank, who spent most of his working career in Sweden,

(Djungenl is Swedish for jungle).

The design is bright, simple and hypnotically rhythmic. It consist of two halves, the one almost a mirror image of the other, which come at one another from the top left and bottom right hand comers of the curtain. The leaves and stems of plants in brilliant primaries, created by the gradual accretion of six single-colour woodblocks, reach out across the space of the fabric. Stare at it for a while and it becomes a visual interpretation of musical harmony, akin to movement across the sound monitor display of a stereo. Go behind the curtain though and you find the key to what really lies at the heart of Starling's art. He is fascinated by process. Here are the tools of his current trade - fabric printer - displayed on a huge workbench held up by six modest vernacular tables. Here are the pots of ink and the woodblocks, their heavy designs cut deep into the flesh of a West Indian cedar tree, felled, we are informed, in New Grant in Trinidad on March 22, 2002. And there, behind the table, is the tree itself - or rather what's left of it. In particular, what I presume are it's roots bear a curious similarity of form to the finished pattern on the curtain. The design of the print, with its frond-like leaves, echoes the organic form of the tree as recorded in Sarling's working photographs. And it does so in a way we might not perhaps realise when the print is seen for sale or in use in a domestic environment.

The message is this: in creating this print, with which to adorn sofas, armchairs and windows, bringing an apparently natural motif into the urban dwelling, man has echoed nature but not without changing it irrevocably in a process of destruction and resurrection. And perhaps here we get closest to what Starling is trying to say. Here is nature, given a quite different form though the intercession of man's imagination. And implicit too in this process is mankind's continuing, fatuously arrogant assertion of his superiority to nature.

This call to order is echoed in the gallery's two smaller rooms, where Starling shows photographs of tools used in his replication in fibre-glass of a classic Charles Eames chair. By portraying them with such care though, in detail emphasising the tactile qualities of

the objects, he bestows upon the humble materials the status of valued works of art.

I am not so sure that the third element of exhibition, a 1:3.5 scale model of the famous flower kiosk at Malmo, designed by Sigurd Leweorentz in the 1960's, works quite so well. Starling has hung it on the wall on its side and, true, it does begin to resemble a sculpture by the likes of Smith or Serra. And in this it reiterates a theme of the show in making us question where design ends and art begins. But for me the real star here is the curtain. Its genesis has a poetic simplicity which recalls the method of Ian Hamilton Finlay. More than this though. It is not just a question of conceptual beauty. It works because it is so utterly memorable. And perhaps this is what makes me feel that Starling is an artist on whom we might really want to keep a watchful eye. The Turner Prize beckons.

**Here is nature, given a quite different form and life through the intercession of man's imagination**

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## 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

# ARTFORUM

MAY 2002



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 15<sup>TH</sup>, 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.

FOR FURTHER EXHIBITION INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT THE GALLERY AT

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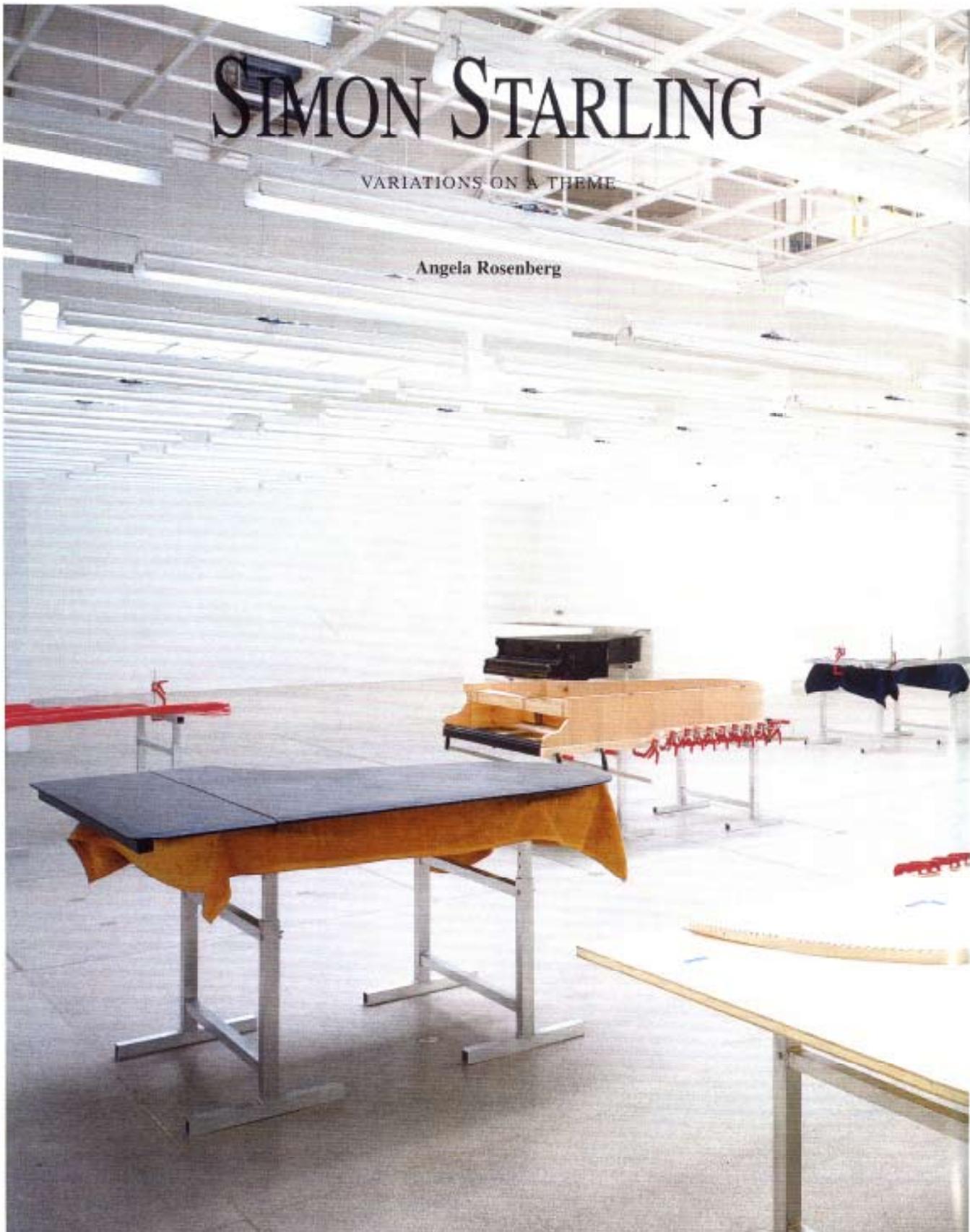
NEXT EXHIBITION: TRISHA DONNELLY

MARCH 28 - MAY 4, 2002

AMY ADLER, JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, MILES COOLIDGE, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, CEAL FLOYER, PAMELA FRASER, ANNA GASKELL, L1AM GILLICK, ANNIKA VON HAUSSWOLFF, CARSTEN HOLLER, JONATHAN MONK, DIEGO PERRONE, SIMON STARLING, ANNIKA STROM, JAMES WHITE & TIM SHEWARD

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Angela Rosenberg, Simon Starling, Variation on a Theme, Flash Art, Jul - Sep 2001, Vol. XXXIV, No 219



# SIMON STARLING

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Angela Rosenberg



Inverted Retrograde Theme, 2001.  
Installation view at Secession, Vienna.  
Courtesy The Modern Institute, Glasgow.

**B**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 Schoenberg's 12-tone-music. Bringing together the particularity of the site and the radical qualities of Schoenberg'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 inviolated. Value systems are constantly thrown into question.

**AR:** *Can you define your artistic strategy?*

**SS:** Shambolic!

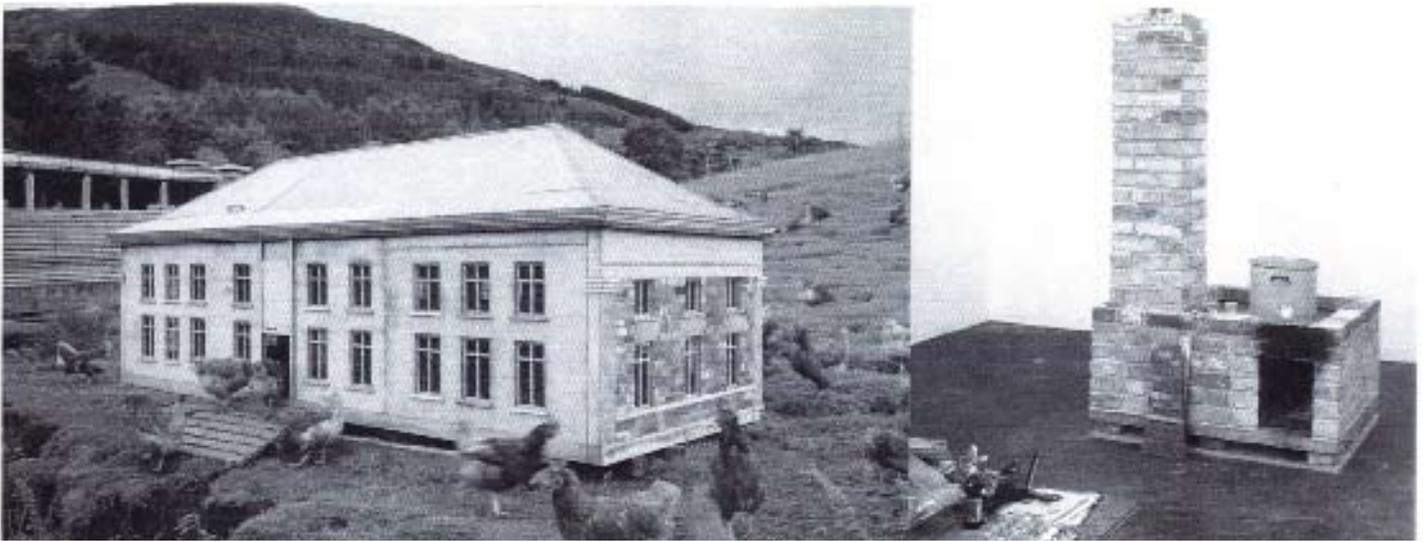
**AR:** *Okay, your work is not linear, but the complexity seems to be constructed - perhaps in the tradition of a dichotomic text?*

**SS:** The analogy to sentence structure feels very apt. Although to me, the word dichotomic 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 Leverkühn, 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 Leverkühn, who disintegrates into madness!

**AR:** *I am also thinking of the piano as a representative for bourgeois culture, discovered for the arts in the 1960s 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 Fluxus 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 12-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; Neugerriemschneider, Berlin; 2000: Camden Arts Center, London; 1999: Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig (Germany); 1998: Moderna 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, Moderna Museet, Stockholm; "The British An Show," 1999: Fireworks, De Appel, Amsterdam; 1998: "Reconstructions," Smart Project Space, Amsterdam; 1997: Kunsthalle, Bern.



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.<sup>1</sup> 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 duly 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 results, 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.<sup>2</sup>

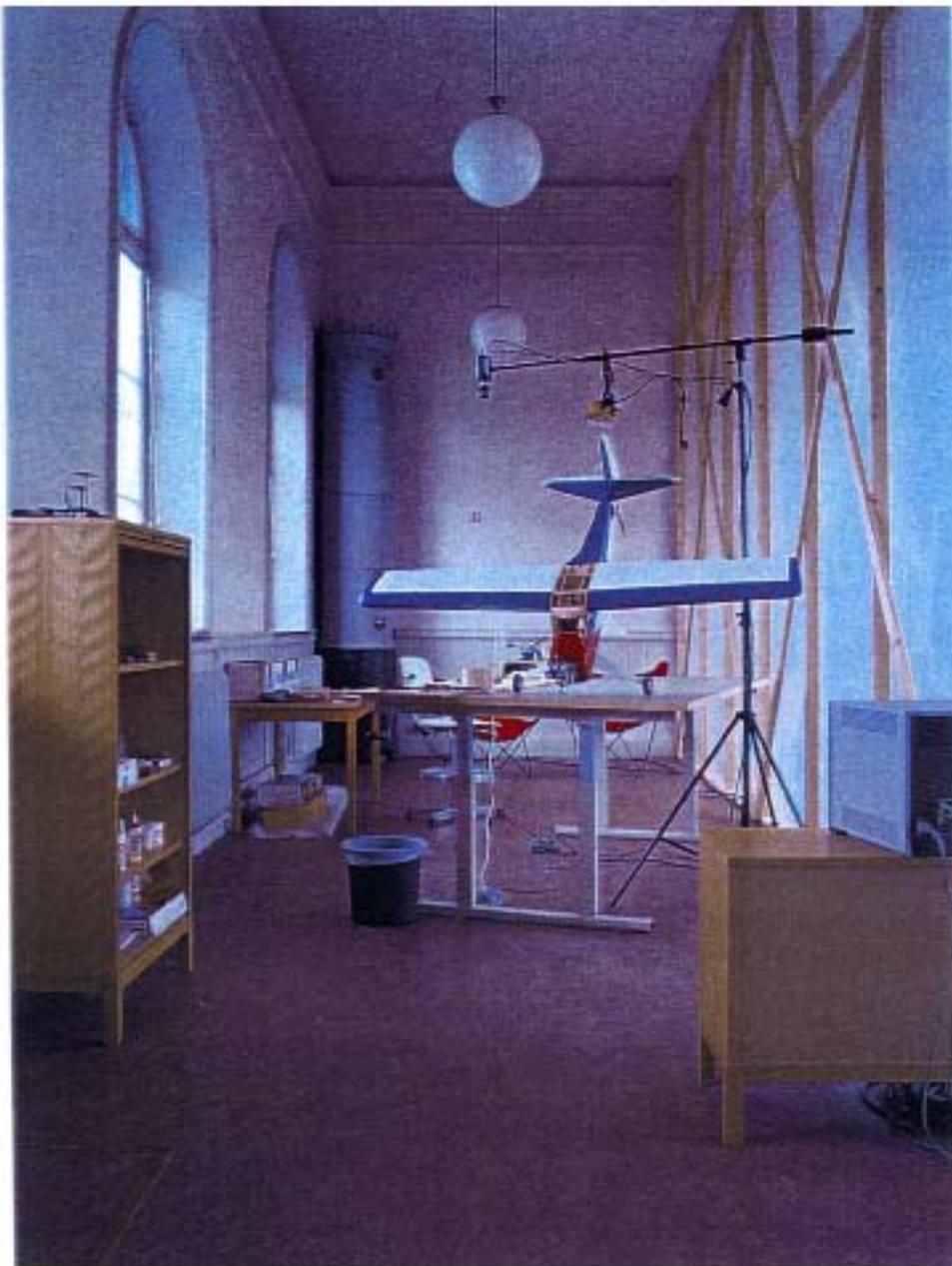
As Starling points out, he seldom creates a new object, preferring either to recreate an existing one or to fabricate a model of an existing structure. The quality of the making is always an important issue - it has an old fashioned amateurishness about it that is quite nostalgic in itself. Playfulness, 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 peculiar properties of the miniature, Susan Stewart points out that: 'The reduction in scale which the miniatæ

presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday lifeworld, and as an object consumed, the miniatæ 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 Modern 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 Skogskyrkogården 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 of the 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



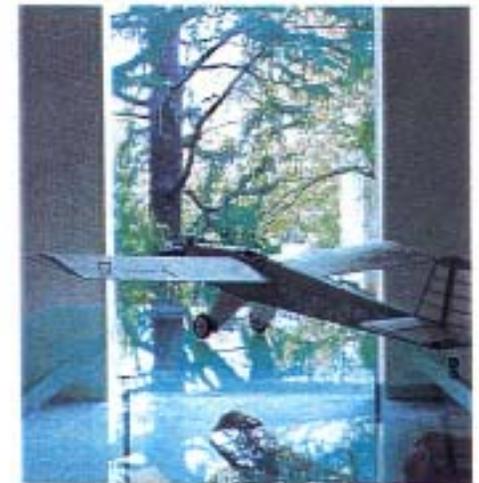


A skewing of time lies at the heart of Starling's projects opening channels to the past and cutting across history.

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 indi-

vidual 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.<sup>1</sup>



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 Chained: Science and the Contemporary Visual Arts*, ed. by Sian Ede, London, 2000, p.109.

2. Simon Starling, *Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst*, Leipzig, 1999, p. 43.

3. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, London, 1993, p. 65.

4. Simon Starling, *Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst*, Leipzig, 1999, p. 43.

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# CVA

CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ARTS

ISSUE 31

## Simon Starling

Camden Arts Centre, London  
10 November - 14 January

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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