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SFMOMA Presents Solo Exhibition of Trisha Donnelly

Exhibition dates: March 09 - June 02, 2013

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From March 9 through June 2, 2013, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present *New Work: Trisha Donnelly*, the artist's first solo exhibition in San Francisco. Working across a wide range of media—video, sound, photography, drawing, and sculpture—Donnelly gives optical and sonic expression to that which lies just beyond the reach of visual intelligibility but is felt and present nonetheless. This exhibition, spanning two of SFMOMA's second-floor galleries, features new videos by Donnelly, shown here for the first time, that she has been working on for several years. In addition, a continually changing audio form is included titled *The Shield* (2007 – ongoing). In the videos, she forges a cycle fluctuating between still and moving states in an attempt to “bend motion into object.”

The exhibition is organized by Apsara DiQuinzio, former assistant curator of painting and sculpture at SFMOMA and now curator of modern and contemporary art and Phyllis C. Wattis MATRIX Curator at the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

About Trisha Donnelly

Born in San Francisco in 1974, Trisha Donnelly received a BFA from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1995 and an MFA from Yale University School of Art in 2000. She recently curated *Artist's Choice: Trisha Donnelly* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the tenth iteration of the *Artist's Choice* series. She has had solo exhibitions at Air de Paris, Paris; Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York; Eva Presenhuber Gallery, Zurich; Portikus, Frankfurt; the Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; The Renaissance Society, Chicago; The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin; Modern Art Oxford; Artpace, San Antonio; and Kunsthalle Zürich. Over the last decade, she has participated in many group exhibitions, including *Documenta 13*; *ILLUMInations*, 54th Venice Biennale; *The Quick and the Dead*, Walker Art Center; *Il Tempo del Postino*, Manchester and Basel, among others.

About SFMOMA's New Work Series

From its inception in 1987, SFMOMA's *New Work* series was conceived as an important vehicle for the advancement of new art forms. Artists such as Matthew Barney, Marilyn Minter, and Christopher Wool were given their first solo museum exhibitions through the program. Over the ensuing decade, *New Work* featured artists such as Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Tatsuo Miyajima, Doris Salcedo, Luc Tuymans, Kara Walker, and Andrea Zittel, among many others. After a four-year hiatus, SFMOMA reintroduced the *New Work* series in 2004 and has since showcased work by Richard Aldrich, Phil Collins, Vincent Fecteau, Rachel Harrison, Lucy McKenzie, Wangechi Mutu, Anna Parkina, Mai-Thu Perret, R. H. Quaytman, Mika Rottenberg, Felix Schramm, Ranjani Shettar, Paul Sietsema, Katharina Wulff, and Alessandro Pessoli.



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2013; Courtesy the artist; © Trisha Donnelly

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Origin Myth

SARAH K. RICH ON TRISHA DONNELLY AT MoMA

ARTFORUM

TAKE ALFRED H. BARR JR.'S famous flowchart of Cubist and abstract art, ca. 1936, and bend it back so that it makes a long cylinder. Make sure the edges overlap a bit so Redon (that hermetic sensualist whom Barr shoved over to the sinister side of his graph, and whose influence he reduced to a dotted line) and Rousseau (the outsider whose hard edges somehow qualified him for positioning on the right-hand side, above the hyper-rational Constructivists) lie one atop the other. Take a long pin (ideally an Art Nouveau hatpin from 1900 that was made of a new metal alloy later essential for the production of satellites) and pierce the cylinder at the Redon-Rousseau intersection. Push through until the pointy end comes out at the dense cluster of lines where Orphism is snuggling up to such utopian developments as De Stijl, Suprematism, and the Machine Aesthetic. The objects in "Artist's Choice: Trisha Donnelly" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York can be plotted along that hatpin.

In Donnelly's installation, objects of utopian disappointments and expired modernities are staged in dense juxtapositions meant (seemingly without irony) to encourage their reinvigoration. Items drawn with enthusiasm from the museum's usually repressed stores of Symbolist painting, ornithological photography, and fin-de-siècle decorative arts share exhibition space with once-futuristic design specimens such as a pair of polarized sunglasses from

ca. 1946 (displayed near the floor) and a glass vase from 1978 (displayed on its side to look like a glistening eyeball proceeding through space, trailing its optic nerve like a comet's tail). Anachronistic stowaways that have been hiding in MOMA storage rooms for years have been brought out and made to shake hands with Donnelly's mystical modernism: A small, round Coptic tapestry from the seventh or eighth century rhymes in both spirit and form with the floating orbs of a Frantisek Kupka painting and with several large, colorful diagrams of microchips, whose dizzying and symmetrical depictions of circuitry work, under Donnelly's comparative power, as psychedelic technomandalas.

Walking through the exhibit, the viewer, like the hypothetical hatpin, traces slanted, oblique trajectories through the museum, even as she strikes through the core of the place: The three galleries Donnelly chose were on opposite ends of the museum and on two floors, so to visit the different spaces the viewer passes through, and thus connects, the center of the museum with the weird stuff the artist exhibits on the edges. Donnelly also establishes a four-dimensional vector through MoMA'S eccentricities and central traditions by way of the recorded audio tour. When visitors enter Donnelly's galleries with guides pressed to their ears, they are not privy to explanations of the show by the artist or by the curators Laura Hoptman and Cara Manes; rather, they hear the congenial voice of

View of "Artist's Choice: Trisha Donnelly," 2012-13, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Eliot Porter, Osprey, Great Spruce Head Island, Maine, 1976, dye transfer print, 15 x 12".



MARCH 2013

Robert Rosenblum as he leads museumgoers through the rooms of MaMA's 1980 Picasso retrospective in a recording created for that show. Listening to Rosenblum's languid observations about *Two Women at a Bar, 1902*, while staring at Eliot Porter's photographs of birds in Donnelly's installation, the viewer suffers vertigo in the profound temporal disconnect enacted between the seen and the heard. The viewer is also haunted by the spaces of institutions past: In the floor plan of the post-2004 MoMA, the Gallery 4 about which Rosenblum spoke no longer exists-it is not the Gallery 4 in which Donnelly is exhibiting Porter's photographs, yet the art historian's voice makes the two spaces eerily coexist.

Archetypal themes and forms pass through and link the three galleries, too. This is where the exhibition makes an operatic show of art's strain for triumph and ostentatious defeat-a binary that has obsessed Donnelly ever since she appeared at Casey Kaplan gallery on horseback ten years ago to announce the surrender of Napoleon. The belief in universal archetypes alone expresses an expired

The exhibition makes an operatic show of art's strain for triumph and ostentatious defeat.

idea, but the specific archetypes she chooses tend to dramatize art's sway between heroic yearning and failure. Take, for example, the figure of the pyramid, which recurs from Massimo Scolari's delicate depiction of a floating pyramid to the triangular motifs of a Bruce Conner inkblot drawing to two black pyramidal air ionizers from the 1980s (one from the MoMA collection, the other purchased by the artist for inclusion in the show, where it is plugged in and purifies the room). These triangular solids act as cryptic keys with which one may unlock the exhibition. The pyramid's soaring tip versus its solid weighty base, its aspiration for immortality versus its rootedness in death-these establish the axis of both transcendence and collapse around which objects of the show pivot. Hence the room of Porter's photographs showing birds either nesting or in flight; hence Alessandro Becchi's *Anfibio Convertibile Couch, 1971*, lying prostrate beside Joe Goode's stairway. Needless to say, such urgent symbolism is breathtakingly silly. Yet the exhibition manages to dazzle; it overwhelms (and maybe even uplifts) the viewer with the brilliant beauty of its overreaching. And with this exhibit Donnelly legitimately challenges (even as she enacts) Hegel's declaration that art, after a certain point (after the fall of Napoleon, as a matter of fact), no longer establishes a world in the highest sense. Who could have imagined that MoMA would be the place from which to excavate such Delphic possibilities? And now, how can one see that museum in any other light?

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Smith, Roberta “Ambushed by Sundry Treasures” *The New York Times*, January 2, 2013.

The New York Times

ART REVIEW

Ambushed by Sundry Treasures

Published: January 2, 2013

The Museum of Modern Art’s Artist’s Choice exhibitions rarely disappoint. There have been nine such shows since the series was initiated in 1989, each with its own flashes of imagination, excavations of neglected artworks and subversions of the curatorial status quo.

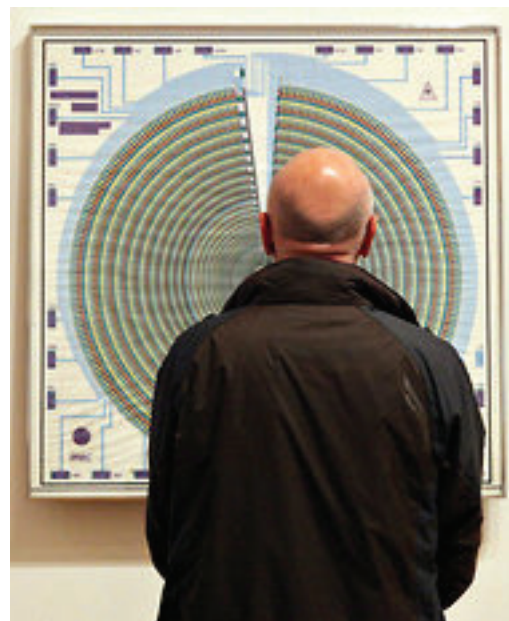
Past perpetrators have included Scott Burton, the first to be invited, who ruffled feathers by separating several of the museum’s Brancusi sculptures from their bases and presenting all elements as independent artworks. In 1995 Elizabeth Murray mustered an impressive exhibition of art exclusively by women. And in 2008 Vik Muniz created what he called a rebus with a linear sequence of carefully linked works that included morsels like Josiah Wedgwood’s 1768 black basalt coffee cup, one of the most elegant drinking vessels of all time.

Now the torch has been passed to Trisha Donnelly, an admired Conceptual and performance artist known for her poetic if sometimes hermetic ways with mediums like drawing, photography, video, film and sound art. Working with Laura Hoptman, a curator, and Cara Manes, a collection specialist in the museum’s department of painting and sculpture, Ms. Donnelly has done the Artist’s Choice tradition proud.

For one thing, she has pushed even harder than most of her predecessors at the boundaries among the museum’s medium-based departments. In addition, for the first time, the Artist’s Choice show has been inserted into what may be the Modern’s very heart: its vaunted painting and sculpture collection galleries. Also for the first time, it consists of three galleries that are not contiguous; they are to be found in the far-flung corners of the fourth and fifth floors, which house the painting and sculpture collection.

The clusters of work that Ms. Donnelly has chosen ambush us, quietly but incisively disrupting the still largely chronological, mostly canonical, movement-by-movement account of modernism put forth in these galleries. Greatly favoring drawings, prints, photographs and several forms of design over traditional painting and sculpture, her arrangements draw you in, charm and mesmerize, while raising questions about what is art, who is an artist and what constitutes greatness or genius.

The first display — in Gallery 4 on the fifth floor — is a solo show devoted to a photographer, and not one of the medium’s anointed gods like Eugène Atget or Walker Evans. Its subject is Eliot Porter (1901-90), brother of the painter Fairfield Porter, who devoted much of his career to figuring out how to take extraordinarily beautiful and precise photographs of birds in the wild. His images often appeared in *National Geographic* and tended, as the wall text says, “to be relegated to the genre of nature photography.”



The exhibition includes a 1989 computer-generated diagram.

The 28 photographs here form a calm, concentrated oasis centering on a single vision, in notable contrast to the displays of larger works by various artists in the adjacent galleries. The images are spellbinding: small, exquisite and mostly in color of an unusually subtle kind, due to the complex dye transfer process Porter used. They have an amazing clarity of detail.

The birds, their markings, their nests, the plants in which they build them, their frazzled, frantically hungry offspring, all seem vividly present. Ideas about the genius of nature (even more than of art), the alien strangeness of birds, the familiar rituals and bonds of parenthood ricochet through the gallery. Its surprisingly intense mood is summed up by Porter's assertion in a wall label: "Before all else, a work of art is the creation of love. Love for the subject first and the medium second."

The second gallery of Ms. Donnelly's show (Gallery 11, fifth floor) is a kind of delirious, cross-generational, multimedia meditation on artistic vision and striving, with nary a canonical artist or masterpiece in sight. Drawings and prints and photographs ring the walls, hung cheek by jowl. Punctuated by occasional paintings and sculptures, the totality of 55 works by 40 artists ranges over more than 100 years. Landscapes, portraits, the figure and the face mingle with abstract works.

Eccentrics, lesser knowns and unknowns prevail here, along with unfamiliar works by better-known artists. Odilon Redon is represented by two early landscape paintings on paper that surprise by conjuring Balthus and the young Dalí. Berenice Abbott (1898-1991), known for her sympathetic portraits, is represented by six little-known abstract "Wave Pattern" photograms (1958-61), made using water, glass and lights.

In a text panel Ms. Donnelly states that she considers each selection "an epic entity," an outsize phrase that seems to emphasize that any successful artwork, no matter how slight or seemingly delicate, requires relentless personal conviction. Gossamer textures are the norm and once more invite close looking, whether in James McNeill Whistler's misty 1878 lithograph of the Thames or Jacques Villon's 1920 etching of the stark terra-cotta portrait head of Baudelaire by his brother Raymond Duchamp-Villon (1876-1918), an image whose fine parallel lines almost seem computer generated. The same might also be said of "Pomegranate," a tightly wound jewel-like painting from 1957-59 by Pamela Bianco (1906-1994), a British-born American artist who is one of the show's finds.

"Dunes" (1935), by Augustus Vincent Tack (1870-1949) — an idiosyncratic portrait painter who also produced nature-based abstraction — has a visionary vibe, as does "No!," a large 1981 painting of a staring head by Gino De Dominicis. "Shoes, Shoes, Shoes," a 1966 sculpture by Joe Goode consisting of a segment of funkily carpeted wood staircase, all but invites ascension to "The First Step," a starry abstraction from 1910-13 by Frantizek Kupka.

The other three-dimensional objects here include sculptures by Isamu Noguchi and Edward Higgins and a swank convertible couch from 1971 by Alessandro Becchi that, exhibited unfolded, resembles a life raft. Michael Lax's 1980 air ionizer, a tiny black plastic pyramid, also from the design collection, sits on a pedestal, but is plugged in. Put your hand near it and you will feel it altering the atmosphere, as all art should.

In the final portion (Gallery 22, fourth floor) Ms. Donnelly largely forsakes traditional art for design, with the exception of a few photographs; Giorgio de Chirico's 1921 drawing of Euripides with extravagantly crossed, unseeing eyes; and "The Fourth Dimension," a small planet-studded painting about death as liberation by Patrick J. Sullivan (1894-1967), a folk artist, that was last exhibited at the museum in 1943. This display also includes a small, elegantly misshaped bowl by the great American potter George Ohr, a pear-wood side table by the French Art Nouveau designer Hector Guimard, a pair of amazingly au courant Polaroid sunglasses from 1946 and a streamlined wheelchair from 1986 by the Swiss designer Rainer Küschall. These finally made it clear that, consistent with Ms. Donnelly's interest in performance, all the objects in her show evoke the human body or are used by it.

But the dominant works here are 11 large, colorful, intricately patterned prints that bring to mind checked or plaid textiles, abstract paintings and, in one circular instance, the Maya calendar. Most are computer-generated diagrams of integrated circuitry from the mid-1980s designed by Xerox, Texas Instruments, the Intel Corporation and Sam Lucente, who later became vice president for design at Hewlett-Packard.

Also included is the oldest item in the Modern's collection, a small circular Coptic tapestry from the seventh or eighth century, embroidered with a cartoonish, eerily modern face. On view for the first time, it serves as an ancient ancestor to the printed diagrams.

Someone told me that at the news conference for the show Ms. Donnelly said that one reason she chose the tapestry was the name of the donor: Lillie P. Bliss, one of the museum's founders. Emphasis on Bliss, a good word for this eccentric, joyful, finely wrought excursion.

“Artist’s Choice: Trisha Donnelly” remains through April 8 at the Museum of Modern Art, (212) 708-9400, moma.org.

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Saltz, Jerry “The Best of the Basement” *New York Magazine Online*, December 9, 2012.

The Best of the Basement

Rooting through MoMA’s century of deep storage for her “Artist’s Choice” show, Trisha Donnelly reveals herself.



Odilon Redon, *Rocks on the Beach* (ca. 1883)
Photo: Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York

I don’t often go to curator or artist walk-throughs of exhibitions. For a critic, it feels like cheating. I want to see shows with my own eyes, making my own mistakes, viewing exhibitions the way most of their audience sees them. Fresh. But I wouldn’t have missed Trisha Donnelly’s magical tour of her brilliantly visionary artist-choice exhibition, now up at MoMA. For me, Donnelly is a rare case of artistic love at first sight—one I still haven’t gotten over, even though her work can be abstruse and hard to parse. I admire her work so much I’ve never spoken to her, afraid I’d act like some dorky fanboy.

My Donnelly love bloomed at 7 p.m. on April 5, 2002, when she rode into Casey Kaplan’s 14th Street gallery on a white horse. She was costumed like some Napoleonic messenger. The small crowd stood agog as she gave a brief speech, ending with “The emperor has fallen, and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine, and with this I am electric. I am electric.” By the time she rode out into the night, I was smitten. As it happens, Laura Hoptman, a MoMA curator, had been similarly dazzled by another Donnelly performance. “I was hooked irredeemably,” she later wrote, adding, “This kind of artist love is rare for me.” She eventually invited Donnelly to curate this show.

For the opening, a week after Donnelly had reportedly lost her home and much of her work to Hurricane Sandy, the artist came to MoMA and explained to a very small group of lucky onlookers, including me, how she chose what she chose out of the museum’s vast collection. She said she was after “striking voices I couldn’t let go of ... paths of encounters and building poetic structures ... images that go beyond the images themselves.” One of the three permanent-collection galleries she’s filled is devoted to the little-known mid-century photographer

Eliot Porter, who shot birds with cameras and techniques of his own invention. (He also documented newborn spiders and the life cycle of the mosquito.) Calling Porter “an amazing weirdo,” Donnelly pointed at pictures of birds feeding their young, nesting, and in mid-flight, and said, “That birds still exist now is a miracle. The speed of their lives is so different from ours ... There’s such an insanity and logic of birds.” Insanity and logic together are keys to Donnelly’s aesthetic. Pointing at a picture I hadn’t noticed before, she said, “That hummingbird is a heroic force.” I looked. Boom! It became a tiny god. Gesturing at a barn swallow twisting in midair, she observed, “Every bird Porter saw was a path ... when he shot images, lines between him and the bird exploded.”

Profuse paths, lines, and explosions ricochet in this exhibition. On the way into one of the galleries, Donnelly has placed a 1955 George Platt Lynes photograph of a naked man, seen from behind as he’s looking at an image. The rear end is perfect. At his hip is a cushion depicting a devil’s face. The artwork this Adonis looks at resembles a mirror. In fact, it’s a painting by Russian surrealist Pavel Tchelitchew, whose Hide-and-Seek was once among the most popular images in MoMA’s collection. It’s a tip-off to her thinking, a clue to understanding the show. Tchelitchew has fallen out of art-historical favor, and his work lives mainly in storage. Donnelly is plumbing ideas of unsanctioned and homoerotic beauty, and of unseen, forgotten, and overlooked art.

Another of her galleries contains a number of large grid images. I thought at first that they were minimalist drawings, or maybe drawings by the insane. It turns out these cosmic-looking diagrams are renditions from the mid-eighties of silicon microprocessors. Donnelly described them as “movements of paths of thought.” I gasped, and saw the warp of the world tapestry in them, maps that would contain multitudes, change life, move information at unimagined speeds, and create unfathomable possibilities. These drawings aren’t just invention or innovation. They’re great art.

Near those diagrams is a radiant 1938 painting by a forgotten American, Patrick J. Sullivan, a picture of figures standing on some forlorn orb looking up at a Van Gogh sky filled with shooting stars, planets, and other galactic phenomena. Donnelly talked about this painting “of the Holy Grail of art, the rotation of the planets, including the one you’re looking at and standing on.” I looked. She’s right.

In the remaining gallery are moments of aesthetic ecstasy. I sighed aloud at an intense, awkward 1942 masterpiece by Marsden Hartley that hasn’t been on view since MoMA was rebuilt. This impenetrable painting of white waves crashing on brown rocks as black clouds drift in a sooty sky reminds me why Hartley is my favorite prewar twentieth-century American artist.

Then another work I’d rarely seen: a waist-high 1966 carpeted object by lesser-known Joe Goode. It looks just like a staircase. Your parents would surely say, “Honey, this isn’t art, is it?” As Donnelly marveled that Goode had fabricated “a fact,” I saw this work in ways I’d never seen it before. In shows like Donnelly’s, we see the tantalizing tips of enormous artistic icebergs, representative pieces that open multiple visual thought-structures. As I’ve said in the past, MoMA didn’t apportion nearly enough space in its new building for its vital permanent collection. Bravo to Donnelly and the curators for fighting against their building’s infuriating limitations with electric efforts like this.

By Jerry Saltz

Artist’s Choice: Trisha Donnelly
Museum of Modern Art.
Through April 8.

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TRISHA DONNELLY

Cotter, Suzanne, *M.O.*, The Hugo Boss Prize
(Catalogue), 2012, p. 14-24.

M.O.

Suzanne Cotter

The artist Trisha Donnelly does not believe in “expressiveness.” Her work is a dictation, without function, for which ordinary description becomes problematic, an overburdening with meaning of something that demands a different type of record. By way of the visual, the spoken, the aural, and the temporal, Donnelly registers states that are beyond cognition but no less physical or real. In the place of images and objects, she offers up provisional forms and space-time scenarios. Presentations of work take the form of remnants that combine the solemnity of ritual and speculative projection associated with the incommensurable aspects of the natural and phenomenal world. It is a practice of agitating forces, an extravagant theater of portentous glamour that, at times, lurches into punk burlesque.

Donnelly’s interventions into the visual or aural sphere are about a type of presence that aspires to what the artist calls “natural use,” which is to say the normative condition of the uncontrived encounter. Driven by the necessity of a context or situation, they become tactical, challenging the familiar discourses of artistic production and reception and stretching notions of material and form. There are both rebellion and insistence in her withdrawals and her reliance on supposition. The eruption of a field of sound, the capturing of an impulse, the stumbling upon a situation or scenario suggest indexical forces and parallel worlds. In place of image, we find apparition. Donnelly’s iconography is one of heralds, guardians, gateways, planets, vortices, ocean waves, sphinxes, and states of transport, inflected with the stylized allure of Glenn Ford, Raffaella Carrà, and B-movie actresses. Brought into being as text, drawing, photography, video, carving, recorded sound, live readings, and physical demonstrations, each work is an iteration – an utterance, stop, or portal to another physical or imaginative realm, for which terms such as pulse, delay, pull, drag, contraction, interruption, return, rally, and retreat replace more traditional



Fig. 1 *Untitled*, 2010
Quartzite, 308.7 × 203.2 × 3.2 cm

aesthetic (or anti-aesthetic) descriptors. Written and spoken words become people, places, and things; a drawing is a luminous emanation or a lever to another cognitive realm; a photograph is a movement, a video a sculpture, a building a receiver.

An attempt to give form to transformative states drives Donnelly's fascination with both the technical and the technological, which she draws upon to generative cross-purpose. She has talked about sound as a type of video, of the still image as cinema, and of carving and cuts into quartzite or black limestone as the enacting of processes of loss in geological time. In Donnelly's world, time is fragmented—interrupted, suspended, repeated. A work is “an evening” in which its space is subject to processes of endless rehearsal. Sound, an electromagnetic waveform defined by time, is an essential part of her lexicon. Donnelly uses it to collapse and expand space into palpable form and narrative device, be it a transitional space of suspense, a shift from one scene to the next, in the spirit of a Western, or a ballroom in which “the music does go on and on until it is no longer true.”¹ The acoustic surge of cannon fire or the crashing timbre of bells ringing takes on a tidal force. Solid structures give way to compact or arcing reverberation.

Then there are the demonstrations, famed for the possibly seen and the near misses of a loyal following anxious to play witness to the rumored event. Verification is less significant to the work than the reality assumed through the registration—and misregistration—of speculative rhetoric that passes from one person to another. Speculation becomes established as fact, with transmission as its enactment. Many of those who follow Donnelly's art consider the slender disclosures she offers in her carefully choreographed appearances to be part of a self-styled persona that is in itself part of a larger and all-encompassing design. I would argue that it is precisely to evade the avid and overwhelming desire to consume and to contain her work that Donnelly's tacit and tactical introversion comes into force. This fiercely protective attitude is one of necessary indifference and of insistence on the possibility of art having equal reality with all else in the world. In referring to her interventions, be they unannounced demonstrations or within the framework of an exhibition, the artist uses the phrase “fluid file” to connote a condition in which the work is held in a state of partial commitment, only “existing if actualized from the cloud of one reality (time, situational, or locational) to the other.”²

Donnelly deftly activates these states of coexistence that operate between the perceptible and the imperceptible. Her art evades the presentational conventions of labels and signposts, both literal and figurative. Visitors to exhibitions in which Donnelly is said to be included are often left perplexed as to whether it is indeed so. And numerous collaborations, with writers, dancers, curators, and other artists, exist in rogue anonymity. Her drawings, partial, wraithlike, or charged afterimages, hover between the thing drawn and penumbral possibility. Happenstance and strange communion are essential parts of her *modus operandi*, like the encounter with a single large block of rose-colored marble that seems as if recently arrived from another world. A succession of precise cuts run vertically down its front facet like a monumental transmitter, while its rear aspect resembles the grimy back side of a body's manhandled flesh. It stands in a semiabandoned building, Kubrick-esque in both its cinematic impact and its alien presence, thrown into relief by a horizontal light shining through vast windows.

Several years ago, Donnelly gave a lecture about what for her constituted sculpture.³ It included the stone carvings of the Elephanta caves in India; photographs by the Peruvian Martin Chambi of a twelve-sided stone at an Inca site in Peru; the Aztec



Fig. 2 *Untitled, 2007*
Pencil on paper, 29.5 × 21 cm

pyramids as sites of sacrifice; the South African singer and civil rights activist Miriam Makeba recording a song accompanied by drums and a choir of male singers; and Jean Genet's radical enactment of portraiture in the transformation and transposition of his text “Rembrandt's Secret” (“Le Secret de Rembrandt”)⁴ into “What is left of a Rembrandt torn into four equal pieces and flushed down the toilet” (“Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt déchiré en petits carrés et foutu aux chiottes”).⁵

These choices by Donnelly are not arbitrary. In different and highly specific ways, each of the situations alluded to—spatial, visual, aural, textual—refers to the activated body and the self-transformative spectacle. They are energies in states of transit and transference. The sculptural, in Donnelly's universe, is not a discrete form but a battery, both a repository of energy and a physical assault on a (reciprocating) self. What interests Donnelly more than the beauty of the colossal stone head of a Hindu god is the fact that his eyes are closed to all who come into his presence. The sculptural here is enacted in the space between the object of devotion and the observant in a mutual contract of encounter and celestial union. The ascending lines of a pre-Columbian pyramid are fulfilled by

the gravitational pull of blood-soaked falling bodies. Genet's text, its title a reference to the writer's habit of disposing of his works, resulted from the author's revisiting his earlier Rembrandt essay following an encounter with an old man on a train some years previously. Typeset in two columns in which an account of an existential epiphany vies with his visceral analyses of the Dutch master's portraits, Genet's descriptions collapse the visual and the textual in a performative process of interference to the point of penetration.

Donnelly's literary tastes, while broad and at times widely eclectic, are often guided by authors whose works also embody states of transit. As well as Genet, she has drawn on impulses found in the writings of Jane Bowles, Isabelle Eberhardt, and



Fig. 3 *Untitled*, 2009
Digital video, 28 sec., looped

James Merrill, among others; time travelers, cross-dressers, and remarkable inhabitants and creators of extraordinary worlds. But if a conceptual circle is to be drawn in her work between the sculptural, text, and narrative, and definitions were to be pronounced, a further shift in our understanding occurs. What we might begin to see as sculptural, for all its conflation of multiple modes, is for Donnelly, in fact, preparation for the photographic. The photographic in this case refers to a heightened indexicality, not merely with regard to a printed or digitally rendered image as an index of a physical phenomenon but as the capturing of potential as pure transmission. Like the line that precedes the image, the cuts made into the travertine marble, the force of a giant wave, or, to cite another of Donnelly's sculptural exemplars, the man behind the veil in George Kuchar's film *Ascension of the Demonoids*, the photographic is the time of encounter; the future, the past, and the future that is past; the captor of fleshly existence, a state of transport, a passage of reverberating realities.

1
Trisha Donnelly, "Guide for Visitors," in Trisha Donnelly, exh. brochure, Modern Art Oxford, Oct. 6 Dec. 16, 2007.

2
Donnelly, e-mail to the author, Feb. 2012.

3
Donnelly, conversation with the author, Feb. 2012.

4
Jean Genet, "Le Secret de Rembrandt," *L'Express*, Sept. 4, 1958, pp.14-15.
Repr. in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 5 (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), pp.31-38.

5
Genet, "Ce qui est resté..." *Tel Quel*, no. 29 (spring 1967), pp.3-11.
Repr. in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 4 (1979), pp. 21-31.

Selected Exhibition History

b. 1974, San Francisco
Lives and works in New York

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

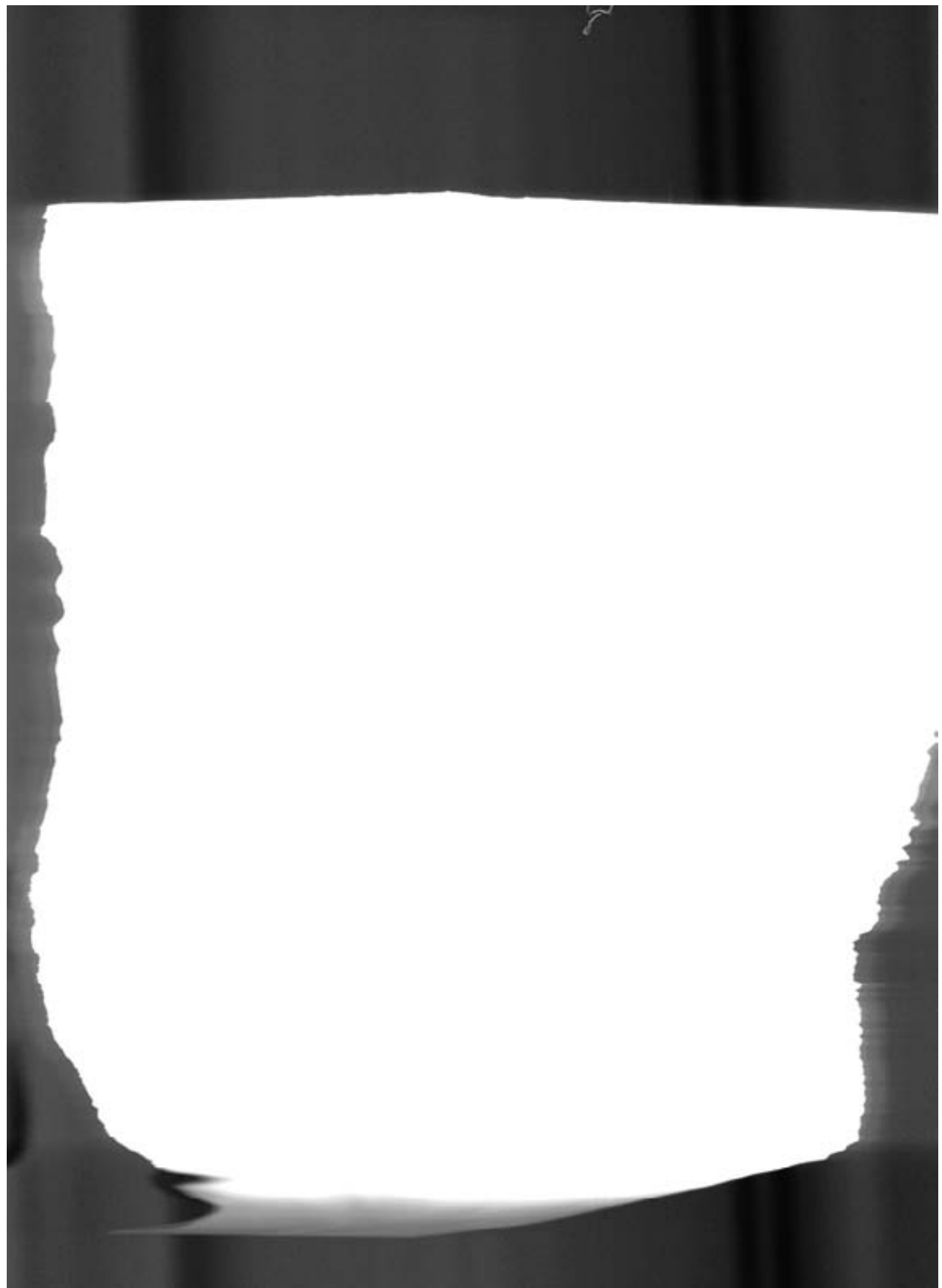
2010 Portikus, Frankfurt, Trisha Donnelly, Apr. 3–May 23.
— Center for Contemporary Art, CCA Kitakyushu, Japan, Trisha Donnelly, Mar. 29–Apr. 28.
2009 MAMbo, Museo d'arte moderna di Bologna, Italy, Trisha Donnelly, Feb. 21–Apr. 13.
2008 Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva, Trisha Donnelly, Oct. 10–Dec. 4.
— The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Trisha Donnelly, Aug. 1–Sept. 18.
— The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Trisha Donnelly, Feb. 24–Apr. 6.
— Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Trisha Donnelly, Jan. 18–Aug. 3. Exh. cat.
2007 Modern Art Oxford, Trisha Donnelly, Oct. 6–Dec. 16.
— GAM, Galleria d'arte moderna di Bologna, Italy, Trisha Donnelly, Jan. 26–Mar. 4.
2005 Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich, Trisha Donnelly, Aug. 27–Oct. 30.
— Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Trisha Donnelly: Central Kunstpreis, June 25–Sept. 4.
— Artpace, San Antonio, Tex., Trisha Donnelly, Apr. 28–July 17.
2004 The Wrong Gallery, New York, Trisha Donnelly, Oct. 7–Nov. 5.

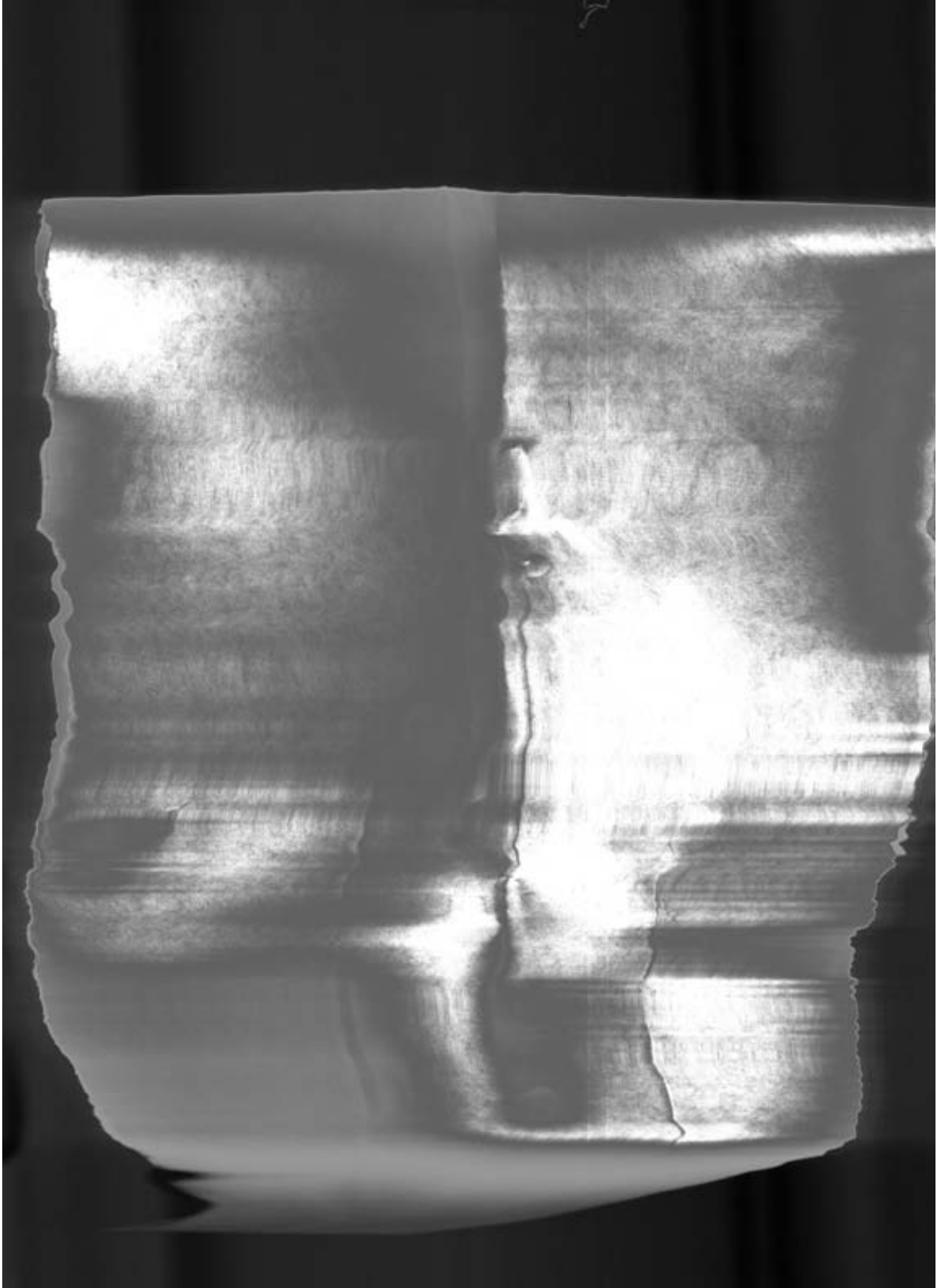
GROUP EXHIBITIONS

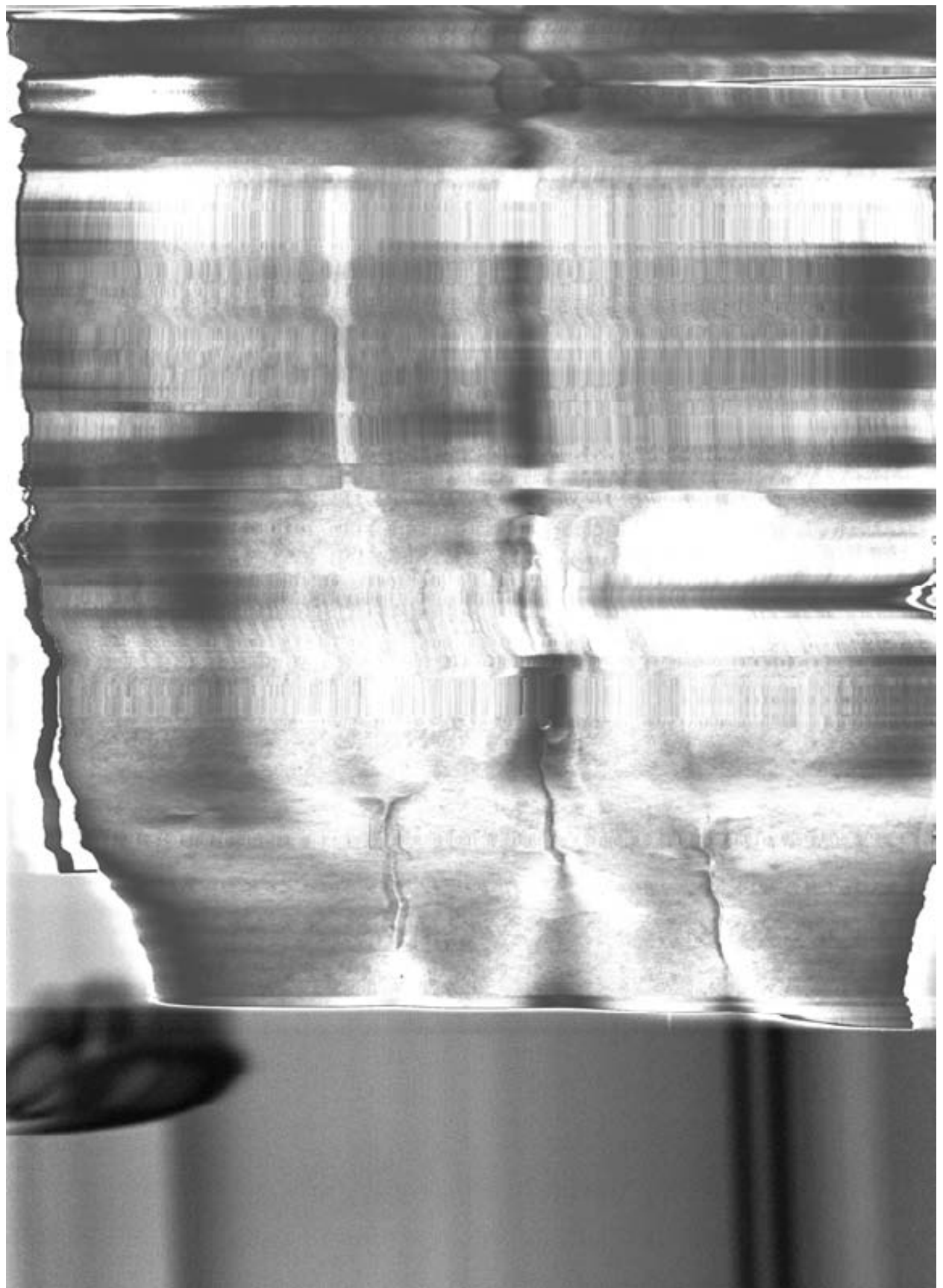
2012 MoMA, New York, Print/Out, Feb. 19–May 14. Exh. cat.
2011 Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo, Norway, VideoSpace, Nov. 3–Dec. 31. Exh. cat.
— Venice Biennale: ILLUMInazioni/ILLUMInations, June 4–Nov. 27. Exh. cat.

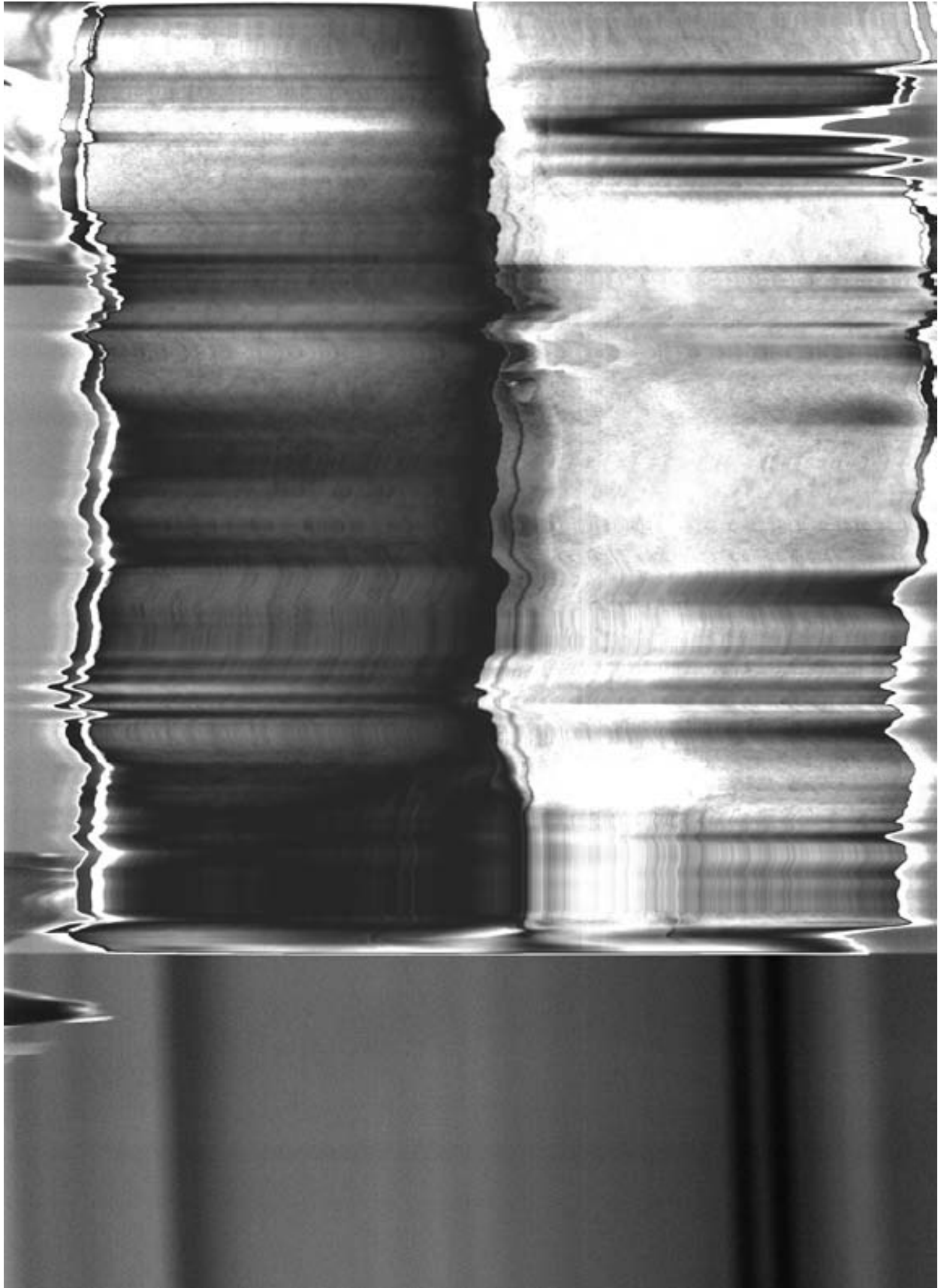
— Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates, Sharjah Biennial: Plot for a Biennial, Mar. 16–May 16. Exh. cat.
2010 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Off the Wall Part 1: Thirty Performative Actions, July 1–Sept. 19. Traveled to Museu de arte contemporânea de Serralves (as Off the Wall/Fora da Parede), Porto, Portugal, May 21–Oct. 2, 2011. Exh. cat.
2009 Aspen Art Museum, Colo., No Sound, May 23–July 19. Exh. cat.
— Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, The Quick and the Dead, Apr. 24–Sept. 27. Exh. cat.
2008 Yokohama Triennial: Time Crevasse, Sept. 13–Nov. 30. Exh. cat.
— De Appel arts centre, Amsterdam, The artist is a mysterious entertainer, June 2–22.
— New Museum, New York, The Sound of Things: Unmonumental Audio, Feb. 13–Mar. 30. Exh. cat.
2007 Tate Modern, London, The World as a Stage, Oct. 24, 2007–Jan. 1, 2008. Traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Feb. 1–Apr. 27, 2008. Exh. cat.
— Palais de Tokyo, Paris, The Third Mind: Carte blanche à Ugo Rondinone, Sept. 27, 2007–Jan. 3, 2008. Exh. cat.
— The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Depth of Field: Modern Photography at the Metropolitan, Sept. 24, 2007–Mar. 22, 2008.
— Opera House, Manchester International Festival (commissioned with Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris), Il Tempo del Postino—A Group Show, July 12–14. Traveled to Theater Basel, Switzerland, June 10–12, 2009.
2006 KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Berlin Biennial: Of Mice and Men, Mar. 25–June 5. Exh. cat.
— Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Whitney Biennial: Day for Night, Mar. 2–May 28. Exh. cat.

2005 CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, A Brief History of Invisible Art, Nov. 30, 2005–Feb. 18, 2006. Exh. cat.
— Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Torino Triennale Tremusei: T1—La Sindrome di Pantagruel, Nov. 11–Mar. 19.
— Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris/ARC, I still believe in miracles: I still believe in still, May 19–June 19. Exh. cat.
— Lenin Museum, Moscow, Moscow Biennial of Contemporary Art: Dialectics of Hope, Jan. 28–Feb. 28.
2004 Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Carnegie International, Oct. 9, 2004–Mar. 20, 2005. Exh. cat.
— P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center (now MoMA PS1), New York, Curious Crystal of Unusual Purity, June 27–Oct. 3.
2003 Seattle Art Museum, Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art, Oct. 9, 2003–Jan. 4, 2004. Traveled to Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Calif., Jan. 23–May 16, 2004; Vancouver Art Gallery, June 5–Sept. 6, 2004; and CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, Oct. 6, 2004–Jan. 10, 2005. Exh. cat.
— Lyon Biennial: It Happened Tomorrow, Sept. 18, 2003–Jan. 4, 2004. Exh. cat.
— Midway Contemporary Art, Saint Paul, Minn., Ishtar, May 22–June 29. Exh. cat.
— Veletržní palác, Národní galerie v Praze, Prague Biennial: Peripheries become the center, June 26–Aug. 24.
2002 Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Hello, Forum: My Name Is..., June 29–Sept. 29.
— Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Moving Pictures, June 28, 2002–Jan. 12, 2003. Traveled to Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Oct. 8, 2003–May 18, 2004. Exh. cat.
2000 Artists Space, New York, Echo, Apr. 1–May 20.











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The New York Times

Six Named as Finalists for Hugo Boss Prize by CAROL VOGEL

November 25, 2011

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation has announced six finalists for its 2012 Hugo Boss Prize. The \$100,000 prize, named for the German men's wear company that sponsors it, is given every two years to an individual who has made an important contribution in contemporary art. In addition to cash, the winner is awarded an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The finalists are:

Trisha Donnelly, 37, an American artist living in New York and San Francisco whose photographs, drawings, videos, sound and performance pieces often deal with the meaning of time and language.

Rashid Johnson, 34, lives and works in Brooklyn. His photographs, sculptures and videos are about his personal memories, art historical sources, and notions of racial and cultural identity.

Monika Sosnowska, 39, lives and works in Poland, where she was born. At this summer's Venice Biennale she created a star-shaped installation of zigzagging brocade-covered walls as part of "Illuminations," the exhibition organized by the event's artistic director, Bice Curiger. Her installations often explore notions of the built environment.

Danh Vo, 36, a Vietnamese-born conceptual artist who lives and works in Berlin, melds autobiography with larger cultural issues, often using appropriated objects and images.

Tris Vonna-Michell, 28, is a British artist living in Stockholm who made quite a splash in 2009 with his audiotaped performance at the New Museum's show of young artists, "The Generational: Younger Than Jesus." His work often explores new ways of storytelling with recordings, documents and images.

Qiu Zhijie, 42, is a Chinese conceptual artist who lives and works in Beijing and Hangzhou. He produces sculpture, painting and prints; video and photography; and performance, work that often comments on political and social issues of contemporary China.

The winner, who will be announced next fall, will have a tough act to follow. Last year the award went to the German artist Hans-Peter Feldmann. Mr. Feldmann, now 70, caused quite a stir when instead of presenting a traditional show he covered a gallery at the Guggenheim, floor to ceiling, in 100,000 used \$1 bills. He said he had conceived of this Warholian act as a way "to show the quantity" of the prize.

Since its establishment in 1996, the Hugo Boss Prize has distinguished itself from other art awards because it has no restrictions on nationality or age. (Mr. Feldmann is the oldest winner thus far.) This year's international finalists are slightly younger, ranging in age from 28 to 42. (The youngest finalist last year was 31.) A five-person jury of museum directors, curators and critics — with Nancy Spector, the Guggenheim's chief curator, as chairwoman — each nominated five candidates.

In past years some artists have been little known, but this year's finalists have, for the most part, been included in significant exhibitions. As has been the case for several years now, no painters are on the list.

"We did discuss every type of artist," said Suzanne Cotter, a juror who is also curator of the Guggenheim museum planned for Abu Dhabi, when asked why there are no painters yet again. "What's distinctive about this year's list is that it reflects certain attitudes that are very much of the moment in the way artists approach art-making."

Those attitudes, according to Ms. Spector, tend to be a strong but subtle strand of political critique. "They are conceptually based," she said, adding that these artists embrace narratives of memory and history.

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aperture

Summer 2011



Trisha Donnelly, *The Hand that Holds the Desert Down*. 2002.
Silver Gelatin Print, 5 x 7"

TRISHA DONNELLY: THE ORBITER

In 1966 the unmanned space probe *Lunar Orbiter 1* captured, for the first time in the history of photography, images of the lunar landscape and of the Earth from the perspective of another celestial body. On board the spacecraft, a specifically built 70-millimeter Kodak camera and an automated darkroom processed and prepared the photographs for Earth-bound transmission. The data traveled some 240,000 miles to reach its destination, incontrovertibly the longest distance at that moment in time that an image had traveled to reach its receiver. In this spatial and temporal passage, one can imagine, the invisible image signal was exposed to unknown and perhaps unknowable elements, before its eventual re-rendering as a perceivable image. A history of photographic images through the development of their transmission is a history that needs to be written—one that may illuminate as much about the motives of the perceiver as that of the one desiring to see.

Trisha Donnelly is an artist whose acute absorption in the processes of transmission, compression, and expansion not only gives new dimensions to artistic agency, but also signals a renewed role of the viewer.

This is a role that requires a willingness to take part in her artistic cosmology. Through images, gestures, sounds, sculptural objects (and so on), Donnelly's decade-long practice stretches the bounds of medium specificity. Within the elastic spectrum of elements in her artistic output, photography takes an anchoring role, often pointing toward notional potentialities, yielding at first glimpse a seemingly chimeric entryway into the imaginary field. In her second solo exhibition at New York's Casey Kaplan Gallery in 2004, amid large-scale drawings and video projection, was a minuscule black-and-white photograph of the Sphinx, cropped to emphasize the outreaching paw, titled *The Hand that Holds the Desert Down* (2002). Upon an initial encounter with this photograph, and after the mental registration of the ascribed title, the weight of the world becomes suddenly palpable; it underscored, albeit in a droll manner the undisclosed "material" that was present throughout the exhibition.

Starting in 2007 photographic works made on flatbed scanners began to appear in Donnelly's exhibitions. These were not singular pieces, but elements in larger installations (including her 2007 solo exhibition at Casey Kaplan).



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled II (Peralta)*. 2007. Inkjet Print, 62-1/2 x 44"

Although the scanner produces an image that is similar to that produced by a lens-based camera, there are ontological differences between the two types. Light sensors built into the scan head sweep across the document placed on the scanner plate. The speed of the scan is often slow enough that any shift of movement on the glass will be perceptible. Movements rendered through this process are like striated trails, resembling the distortions that are produced in faxed images. Scanned images are also different from camera-based images in that they are direct, lensless conversions of light (photons) into electric charges (electrons)—transformations of the physical world into digital, pixel-based facsimiles. The scanned image is a digitized index of this metamorphosis.

A series of twelve scanner-made works from 2007 titled *Satin Operator* traces the rolling movement of a printed female figure perhaps some starlet, though her identity is not revealed to the viewer.

When the images are seen as a sequence, the woman moves across the surface of the glass plate as though in a broken and staggered cinematic tracking shot, with details unfolding slowly, in fragmented succession. The figure seems trapped in an incantatory time lapse,

forced to reside beneath the partition of the scanner glass. There are obvious connections to aspects of performance, though it becomes difficult to discern whether it's Donnelly—the “operator” of the printed image and the scanner device—carrying out the performance in the time span of the scans. Or perhaps it is the young actress herself, operating within the constructed nether space within the scanner, attempting movement in the constricted space. These performative gestures taking place within the durational and spatial confines of the scanner bring to mind Bruce Nauman's early video works, demarcating any and all activities performed within the studio to be gestures of art, but necessitating some form of evidential record as a means of conveyance. Nauman's 1966 *Manipulating the T-Bar* shows the artist assiduously arranging and rearranging two pieces of rebar on the floor of his studio. Nauman's floor surface plays a seeming parallel to the scanner plate of Donnelly's photographs.

Like the reflected face of an actor in a brightly lit dressing-room mirror, the various objects placed in Donnelly's scanner-made still lifes seem to be floating in a suspended foreground, cascading into gradual darkness the farther they are from the light source. A scanner uses a specific lighting mechanism that is different from the refracted light through a camera lens. Attached to the scan head are

florescent or xenon lamps, which are the necessary light source used to illuminate the document placed on the scan plate during a scan interval. This movement of scanning across resembles walking in complete darkness, with torch in hand, where the amount of what you see is gradual, with your own movement through space building a successive accumulation of information. In Donnelly's *Untitled III (Peralta)* (2007), a white card floats in the center backed by a trumpet-like object, the arrangement hovering over a grayish morass. On the white card the word Peralta (an unfixed reference to the famed skateboarder Stacy Peralta and a Spanish town of the same name) is drawn in pencil appearing as if in a time lapse, an apparent visualization of the slow transmitting pulses, a self-reflexive pronouncement to the image signal traveling through the scanning apparatus, conjuring Craig Owen's notion of “photography en abyme”: a photograph containing the traces of its own making.

In 1990 Bernd and Hilla Becher received the Golden Lion, the prestigious prize for sculpture, at the Venice Biennale for their work *Typologien*, or *Typologies*. This was a selection of three photographic projects including *Industrial Facades*, *Blast Furnaces*, and *Postwar Houses*, now well-

known staples of the historical cannon. Although there is a long and rich history of sculptural ideas deployed through the photographic medium, the occasion of this award pointed further toward sculpture's exponential elasticity, carving out ever greater space in photography's already inherent ability, through demarcation and designation of the physical world and the things within it, to bring forth alternate possible considerations.

It might be said that the gestalt of Donnelly's practice, too, is rooted in the sculptural, and the scanner provides yet another experimental chamber where notions of the sculptural and investigations in materials can be hypothesized and perhaps manifested. Incorporated into installations, Donnelly's scanner photographs also serve as proxies for the studio space. Beyond the sculptural arrangement of objects taking up the foreground (or the scanner plate) in these images, traces of the artist's workspace loom behind. The backgrounds in these images suggest an opening up of the physical architecture, giving hints of another dimension. They situate the viewer not in the architecture of the

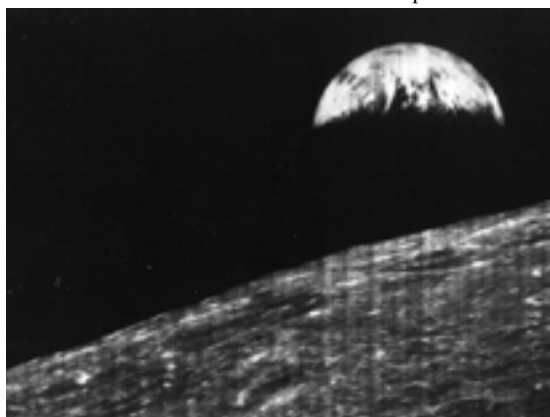


IMAGE: First view of Earth from Moon 1966.



Trisha Donnelly, *Satin Operator (12)* 2007. Epson Inkjet Print, 62-1/2 x 44"

exhibition space itself, but in the constant transposition between the here and there—*there* being the space where the artist (or operator?) works—sparking tension between the space the viewer is standing in and the space viewed, allowing the viewer to shift into the role of the operator.

In August 1966, amid an especially turbulent historical background (University of Texas shootings, protests against the Vietnam War catastrophic earthquake in Turkey), *Lunar Orbiter 1* was sent on its reconnaissance mission to survey the lunar landscape, its main goal to find an appropriate landing site for the soon-to-begin Apollo program. In its short lifespan orbiting the Moon, it captured, processed, and transmitted nearly two hundred high-resolution photographs before its final impact with the lunar surface, where it was programmed to self-destruct. The image signals were recorded as files onto reels of analogue magnetic tape. Only a handful of these files were ever processed (though, because of technological limitations, not at the highest resolution the files were capable of); these were soon released, to the marvel of viewers, before public attention was diverted to the more

ambitious landing of Apollo and its crew. For two decades these tapes were stored in the NASA archives, until 1986, when the decision to discard them was contested by Nancy Evans, longtime archivist for the space program. Evans rescued and took over custodial storage of the tapes, and, after another twenty years, in 2006, secured funding to process and digitize the vast archive of never-seen images of the Moon. The latent image data thus remained entombed for nearly half a century, its material form never changing, as the temporal and historical context of their existence went through countless metamorphoses.

This long delay of visibility is a poignant, if oblique, counterpart to Donnelly's scanner-made photographs, where the vestige and process of its temporal passage cannot be shown but becomes intrinsically part of its makeup.

The most famous of these newly re-processed high-resolution images, released in 2008, shows the Earth rising above the lunar horizon, the striation of the pulse transmission clearly visible.

- **ARTHUR OU**



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled* 2007. C-Print, 27-1/4 x 20-1/2"



Irisha Donnelly, *Untitled* 2010.

View of Earth from Moon: courtesy NASA; all other images courtesy the artist: Casey Kaplan. New York; and Air de Paris. Paris

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The Art of Tomorrow. Edited by Laura Hoptman, Yilmaz Dziewior, Uta Grosenick, Distanz, Verlag, Germany, 2010. 118-121

TRISHA DONNELLY

1974 geboren in San Francisco, CA, USA,
lebt und arbeitet in New York, NY, USA
**1974 born in San Francisco, CA, USA,
lives and works in New York, NY, USA**

2007 2nd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art - Footnotes on Geopolitics, Market and Amnesia

2006 4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art - *Of Mice and Men*

2006 Whitney Biennial - *Day for Night*, New York

2003 50th International Art Exhibition / La Biennale di Venezia - *Dreams and Conflicts. The Dictatorship of the Viewer*

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Es erscheint aus mehreren Gründen merkwürdig, über die Arbeit von Trisha Donnelly in einem Buch über "Morgen" zu schreiben. Ich beginne mit einem von ihnen: In ihrer Kunst ist die Zeit ins Wanken gekommen. Sie ist niemals linear - manche würden sagen, es gibt darin keine Zeit, andere behaupten womöglich, dass es darin nichts als Zeit gibt. Doch dann gäbe es darin kein Morgen, oder nur ein Morgen - das ist schwer zu sagen. In der Zwischenzeit lässt sie die einfachen Unterscheidungen zwischen Medium und Produzent, zwischen Künstler und Publikum ins Leere laufen.

In ihrer New Yorker Ausstellung 2010 waren vier Monolithe zu sehen. Einer von ihnen hatte ein biomorphes Relief; die drei anderen wiesen gezackte, gezahnte oder gefiederte Formen auf. Die Arbeiten wurden aus Blacken von Quarzit, Travertin, Granit und rosafarbenem portugiesischem Marmor von der Künstlerin mit der Hand quasi chirurgisch geschnitten. Die Schwarz-Weiß-Aufnahme einer Welle, kurz bevor sie bricht, erschien als eine verschlüsselte Botschaft, eine Andeutung langwieriger geologischer Prozesse, insbesondere der Erosion von Gestein durch Wasser.

Die Fotografie erinnerte an eine Arbeit aus dem Jahr 2003 in Donnellys Ausstellung im Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, die ebenfalls direkt an der Wand befestigt war und die einen großen Felsen zeigt, auf den sanft eine Welle zurollt. Der Begleittext zur Ausstellung führte an, dass das hervortretende Fragment an das Gesicht und den Torso einer Frau im Profil erinnerte, an einen auf der Wasseroberfläche treibenden Karper. Darunter hatte Donnelly ihre Idee in kursiver Schrift formuliert: "Dies ist ein Film, der nur ein Bild zeigt." Ihre Kunst handelt mit solchen (materiellen, formalen und konzeptuellen) Besonderheiten, wobei sie freie Interpretationen durchaus begrüßt. Dies hat manche Kritiker dazu geführt, Donnelly und ihre Produktion als rätselhaft und geheimnisvoll zu bezeichnen eine bequeme Lesart, die schlicht die Forderung nach Lesbarkeit und den Wunsch nach Bedeutung maskiert. Doch es ist gerade die Fähigkeit ihres Werks, sich - vielleicht durch solche Spielräume der Zeit - über diese Forderungen hinwegzusetzen, die Donnelly zu einer der wichtigsten Künstlerinnen unserer Zeit macht, die weder gestern noch morgen ist.

It seems odd to write about Trisha Donnelly's work in a book about 'tomorrow', for several reasons. I will start with this one: time falters in her art. It is never linear—some would say there is no time; others might argue only time. But then there is no tomorrow, only tomorrow; it is hard to say. Meanwhile, she is collapsing easy distinctions between medium and producer, artist and audience.

Her exhibition in New York in 2010 featured four monoliths. One had a biomorphic relief; the three others featured jagged, toothed, or feathered forms. The works were extracted from blocks of quartzite, travertine, Black Portoro limestone, and Rose of Portugal marble, and were cut by the artist's hand, as though surgically. A black-and-white image of a wave about to break appeared as a coded missive, a suggestion of epic, geologic processes, particularly water's erosion of stone. The photograph brought to mind a 2003 work from Donnelly's exhibition at Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art, also affixed directly to the wall, which depicts a large rock with a wave moving gently towards it. The exhibition guide suggested that the protruding fragment recalls the shape of a woman's face and her torso in profile, a body floating on the surface of the water. Below, Donnelly had added her idea in italics: 'This is a film that maintains one image.' Her art trades in such specificities (material, formal, and conceptual), even as it welcomes generous interpretations. This has led some critics to label Donnelly and her output as enigmatic and mysterious—a lazy reading that simply masks a request of legibility and a desire for meaning. But it is her work's ability to move beyond this insistence, perhaps through this slippage of time, which makes Donnelly one of the most significant artists today, which is neither yesterday nor tomorrow.

Lauren O'Neill-Butler

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ARTFORUM

September 2010

Trisha Donnelly
CASEY KAPLAN

Comb-like. This is the word Trisha Donnelly uses to describe (to divine?) the process through which sound (a Russian Men's Chorus) becomes sculpture. It appears in the typewritten text "The Vortex Notes," 2002, a guide of sorts related to her edifying 2003 demonstration *The Vortex: TAKE THE HIGHEST MALE VOICE, LISTEN AND TRACK IT THROUGHOUT THE RECORDING, THE SOUND CAN COMPRESS LIKE A PHOTOGRAPH. WHILE LISTENING, FLATTEN IT INTO AN OBJECT. IT'S A COMB-LIKE STRUCTURE.*

Attempting, successfully, to evoke an experience of synesthesia via a visual eddy in the mind's eye, the short text collapses easy distinctions among media, producers, and audiences—a gambit central to Donnelly's practice. In this exhibition, there were four stone monoliths on view: One had a small, carved biomorphic relief; the others featured jagged, toothed, or feathered *comb-like* forms.

Cut by hand and with a rotary blade, the works were extracted from blocks of quartzite, travertine, Black Portoro limestone, and Rose of Portugal marble, and were installed with enough distance between them that navigating to, from, and around these firm figurants, some on wooden blocks, impelled a contemplative stroll. Donnelly dimmed the fluorescent lights of the galleries with gray gels and altered the architecture to create a series of parallel entrances. The looped, icy sounds of a mechanical jingle-jangle (bringing to mind the blade) emanated from above. The stage was set, and yet the performance seemed to be over—but time is never linear in Donnelly's art.

Yet despite—or perhaps because of—this disordered temporality, the show elicited a distinct feeling of anticipation, an undercurrent one senses in her exhibitions, which functioned here like a distorted telegram from her previous output. The comb-like indentations made the works seem at once old and new, perhaps of a different world and waiting to go back to it. A black-and-white photograph of a wave appeared as a cipher, pointing to epic, geologic processes that also conjure a slow sense of expectancy: the sedimentation of limestone, limestone's metamorphism into marble, sandstone's metamorphism into quartzite, and water's erosion of stone. The image appeared as an analogue to "The Vortex Notes," here linking water and waves to metamorphic rock as the text connects sound waves to comb-like structures.

The most peculiar work stood near the entrance of the gallery, before the reception area. Facing the doors was a meticulous reproduction of a vintage wooden desk, a hub for information left vacant, transformed into an empty vessel. Absences were important: The emptiness of the desk echoed the show's lack, at the artist's request, of a press release; moreover, all of the works except for this one, *The Secretary*, 2010, are untitled. It is fitting that the art world's desire for publicity, for facts and details, should be met with this, a new kind of control center, which also seemed a rejection, and a refusal of sorts. Donnelly's *no*, however, is an undoubtedly important *no*: an art "against meaning," to apply an idea from a remarkable recent talk by David Joselit, of a kind "whose nature is dynamic—whose form literally changes state either through material transformation, temporal reenactment, or spatial dislocation." Such dynamism, in Donnelly's art, is often left in suspension, with a plethora of thoughts and ideas (hers and ours) fading in and out of focus. It seemed necessary to put some of these fragments into words as I passed the desk, its empty top inducing one last moment of expectancy, on the way out.



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2010, travertine, 61 1/3 x 32 x 71/3".

-Lauren O'Neill-Butler

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Trisha Donnelly

Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York, USA

During New York's inaugural 'Gallery Week' in May, Trisha Donnelly and curator Anthony Huberman sat before a crowd of eager visitors in Casey Kaplan Gallery. A projector illuminated a yellowish screen on the wall behind them, casting a similarly sterile glow as the fluorescent lights above. Huberman proposed some questions--'Where were you born?'; 'What is your favorite colour?'; 'What scares you?' - that sounded as though they were lifted from a dating website application form. Despite trying his best to chip away at Donnelly's reticence, Huberman gleaned very little from the artist; her answers, like her work, seemed to be covered with a gauzy veil. ('Pass' was her usual response.) Despite this, Donnelly did offer the visitors a very intimate look into her practice, one that was revealed via her iPod. She answered audience questions ('Can you talk a bit about the works in this show?') by playing tracks from The Optina Pustyn Male Choir of St. Petersburg--one song, entitled 'The Little Cuckoo', evoked giggles and bopping heads around the room. And so Donnelly's magic was realized yet again; instead of lifting the veil or giving a concrete explanation, she offered an indefinable spatial and temporal plane, a place where the beholder is left with no guide other than the music and his own memory, intuition and experience.

Music and sound play a significant role in Donnelly's work. In this exhibition, her fourth with the gallery, a looped recording of tinkling bells created an aural sculptural space; like the delicate nature of the four marble sculptures that made up the rest of the show, the sound had an ethereal quality--you could hear it, but the source from which it came was impossible to define. A horizontal black portoro sculpture (all works untitled, all 2010) lay low to the ground, propped up on blocks of unfinished wood, a columnar form carved into its centre. It faced a dusty-rose-

Trisha Donnelly
Untitled

2010
 Black portoro
 17x179x60 cm



coloured vertical work in travertine; in the quiet, wavelike din of bells that seemed as if they were coming closer and then receding, the space felt almost funereal--a quiet, peaceful scene.

Water and other elemental forms also inform Donnelly's practice, and the four works incorporate scoured shapes like the crests and troughs of waves. In the back room, a three-metre-high quartzite work loomed over the otherwise empty space, accompanied by a black and white photograph of a wave that had not yet crested. The smooth, glasslike surface of the water spoke to the smooth surface of the quartzite, the textured bubbling of foam speaking to the eroded central section of the sculpture.

In Donnelly's world, marble takes on a quality of lightness and delicateness. Through both the material as well as particular decorative embellishments, she evokes not only architecturally classical forms, but also an almost 'generic' feeling of antiquity. At the same time, her works appear to live outside any denoted time period: they seem timeworn but they feel current, even futuristic, all the same.

The character of the secretary has long played a part in Donnelly's work (in her Q&A with Huberman, she expressed her fascination with the popular 1980s Italian television show *Pronto Raffaella?*, in which presenter Raffaella Carra sits at a desk with an old rotary phone, answering her audience's questions). In the front room of the gallery, *The Secretary* - an appropriated 1950s wooden desk - was a deceptive opener. Upon leaving the show, you feel somewhat betrayed by the work because it seems only tangentially related to the rest of the pieces. However you come to understand its role, *The Secretary* grounded the exhibition in a real time and place, serving as the portal between real life (the street, the gallery, the reception area, the desk) and Donnelly's spiritual, perhaps mythical, interior space.

Marina Cashdan



Trisha Donnelly
Untitled

2010
 Travertine
 156x81x19 cm

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WHITNEY

OFF THE WALL PART 1: THIRTY PERFORMATIVE ACTIONS

JULY 1–SEPTEMBER 19, 2010



Jimmy DeSana (1950-1990), *Marker Cones*, 1982. Silver dye bleach print. Courtesy the Jimmy DeSana Trust

Conceived as a two-part exhibition, *Off the Wall: Thirty Performative Actions*, focuses on actions using the body in live performance, in front of the camera, or in relation to a photographic or printed surface, or drawing. Each action displaces the site of the artwork from an object to the body, acting in relation to, or directly onto, the physical space of the gallery. The wall and floor become the stage for these actions: walking on the wall, slamming doors, slapping hands against the wall, gathering sawdust up from the studio floor, walking on a painting, striding and crawling around a small cylindrical space, writing or drawing on the wall and floor, or performing a striptease behind the transparent plane of Duchamp's *Large Glass*. The exhibition also includes a number of works that reveal the underlying theatricality of the performative action and the ways in which artists stage the self in images that question conventions of identity, gender, and the body.

The exhibition includes the re-performance of iconic early works by John Baldessari and Yoko Ono, as well as recent works by young artists. It includes work by Vito Acconci, Carl Andre, John Baldessari, Jonathan Borofsky, John Coplans, Jimmy DeSana, Trisha Donnelly, Simone Forti, Dara Friedman, David Hammons, Lyle Ashton Harris, Jenny Holzer, Peter Hujar, Joan Jonas, Robert Longo, Nate Lowman, Robert Mapplethorpe, Paul McCarthy, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Yoko Ono, Dennis Oppenheim, Yvonne Rainer, Martha Rosler, David Salle, Lucas Samaras, Carolee Schneemann, Richard Serra, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, Andy Warhol, Carrie Mae Weems, Hannah Wilke, Jordan Wolfson, and Francesca Woodman.

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Part 2 of *Off the Wall*, *Seven Works* by Trisha Brown, features the Trisha Brown Dance Company, on the occasion of the company's fortieth anniversary, performing iconic works from the 1970s, including the spectacular *Walking on the Wall*, originally performed at the Whitney in 1971; performance films and a sound installation, *Skymap*, will also be on view. Works will be performed daily from September 30 through October 3, 2010, in the Second Floor Galleries, Sculpture Court, and outside the Whitney Museum of American Art on East 75th Street. Planned performances include *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, *Falling Duet I*, *Leaning Duets I and II*, *Spanish Dance*, *Floor of the Forest*, and the sound installation *Skymap*.

Part 1 is curated by Chrissie Iles, the Whitney's Anne & Joel Ehrenkranz Curator. Part 2 is curated by Limor Tomer, the Whitney's adjunct curator of performing arts.

PARIS

“We Are Sun-kissed and Snow-blind”

GALERIE PATRICK SEGUIN

“I love the authority of black. It’s a color that doesn’t compromise.... At once a color and a non-color. When light is reflected on it, it transforms it, transmutes it. It opens up a mental field all of its own.” We owe this entirely personal definition to the painter Pierre Soulages, the inventor of *outré-noir*, ultra black, whose work is on view all winter on the seventh floor of the Centre Pompidou. Meanwhile, elsewhere in Paris, Galerie Patrick Seguin was also playing with a color that is simultaneously a noncolor. Here, though, the subject was black’s immaculate counterpart: the gallery, partnering with Zurich’s Galerie Eva Presenhuber for the occasion, resembled a vast white monochrome. For the viewer who ventured to discover the thirty-two pieces shown (including works by Sylvie Fleury, Fischli & Weiss, Liam Gillick, and Martin Boyce—whose sculpture *We Are Sun-kissed and Snow-blind*, 2005, a white steel armature topped with a shroud, provided the title for the exhibition), the luminous intensity could be hard to take. From the walls to the ceiling and down to the floor, it was almost as if the exhibition in its entirety had been whitewashed with the paint that is typically smeared on the windows of stores closed for inventory.

All that was missing, to my mind, was one of the “painted objects” of the French artist Bertrand Lavier, who has used whitewash so well. Instead, from the horizon of this glaringly bright landscape, one was offered the beautiful tondos of Karen Kilimnik, including *the snow queen causing a blizzard in Siberia*, 2008; Urs Fischer’s petrified sculpture, a still life combining ski boots and a dead tree branch that one might find after an avalanche; the hand imprint left by Ugo Rondinone in the wall (*twelve sunsets, twenty nine dawns, all in one*, 2008); or the small *Untitled* video, 2008, by Trisha Donnelly. If white, like black, color (in the same way that a continuous sound spectrum is white noise), in this setting it seemed to exhaust the infinite spectrum of its declensions. At times it was matte and pale, crushed by its own symbolic weight, as in *Invisible Man*, 1999, a painting by Tim Rollins & K.O.S. that echoes Ralph Ellison’s novel; at others it sparkled and gleamed, for instance in Doug Aitken’s hypnotic *neon walkabout*, 2008. Exploring the many shades of pale, this collaborative exhibition (which opened during the FIAC art fair) also thumbed its nose at the myth of the discreet and unobtrusive gallery space. In presenting not just a white cube but a white cube squared, a pluperfect white cube that had absorbed even the works it was meant to enhance, “We Are Sun-kissed and Snow-blind” served as an ironic and elegant reminder that the supposed neutrality of exhibition spaces is but an illusion.



-Claire Moulène

Translated from French by Molly Stevens.

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PRESS RELEASE, March 20, 2010

Trisha Donnelly

PORTIKUS

Opening 4/2/2010, 8 pm

Exhibition on view: 4/3-5/23/2010

Press conversation: Thursday, 4/1/2010, 11 am

Lecture: 3/31/2010, 7 pm, Städelschule, auditorium

Trisha Donnelly shows at Portikus:

Two drawings on paper:

Untitled, 2009, pencil on paper, 66.5 x 47.7 cm

Untitled, 2009, pencil and colour crayon on paper, 66.5 x 47.7 cm

A work with fabric and enamel

Untitled, 2007, enamel on fabric, 140 x 90 cm

Four large marble slabs with carved parts:

All: Untitled, 2009, Carved black and white Labradorite bianca marble, 280 x 180 x 3 cm

A smaller work made of marbel

A video work:

Untitled, 2009, video, 0:28 min, loop

A sound piece

Two prints

Trisha Donnelly, born 1974 in San Francisco, lives and works in New York

Exhibition (solo): 2009: Museo de Arte Moderna di Bologna (MAMbo). Bologna; 2008: Centre d'edition contemporain, Batiment d'art Contemporain. Geneva; Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia. Philadelphia; Renaissance society . University of Chicago; The Douglas Hyde Museum. Dublin; 2007: Modern Art Oxford, Oxford; Casey Kaplan, New York; 2006: Air de Paris, Paris; 2005: Artpace, San Antonio, Texas; Kolni cher Kunstverein, Cologne; Kunsthalle Zurich. Zurich; 2004: Casey Kaplan, New York; The Wrong Gallery, New York; 2002: Casey Kaplan 10-6, New York; Air de Paris, Paris

Group exhibition (selection): 2009: *The Object of the Attack*, David Robert Art Foundation, London; If Tempo del Postino, A Group Show by Hans Ulrich Obrist et Philippe Parreno, Theater Basel, Basel; *La recherche*, Air de Paris, Paris; *The Quick and the Dead*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; *Deseñhos A-Z*, Coleccao Madeira Corporate Service, Museu da Cidade d Lisboa, Lisbon; *No Sound*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen; *Every Revolution is a Roll of the Dice*, organized by Bob Nickas, Paula Cooper Galerie New York; 2008 : *Time Crevasse*, Yokohama 2008 International Triennale of Contemporary Art., Yokohama; *Meet Me Around the Corner*, work from the Astrup Fearnley Collection, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art.o 10; *Blasted Allegories*, Werke au der ammlung Ringier, Kunstmuseum Luzern. Luzern; *Self Storage*, The Hardware Store Gallery, San Francisco, California; *The artist is a mysterious entertainer*, De Appel, Amsterdam; *The Sound of Things*: Unmonumental Audio, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York City; *Uncertain States of America*, curated by Daniel Birnbaum, Gunnar B. Karan, Han Ulrich Obrist, Songzhuan Art Center, Beijing; 2007: 00-05. *L'histoire d'une decennie qui n 'est pas encore nommee*, Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Institute d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne, Lyon, curated by Stephanie Moisdon and Hans Ulrich Obrist; *Depth of Field*: Modern Photography at the Metropolitan. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; *The World as a Stage*, Tate Modern, London.

For further information and for guided tours please contact info@portikus.de

With thanks to Josef Dalle Nogare Collection, Bolzano, Air de Paris, Paris and Casey Kaplan, New York

We would like to thank the BHF-BANK-Stiftung for their generous support

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MAMbo
Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

Trisha Donnelly
curated by Andrea Viliani
21st February - 13th April 2009



The exhibition conceived by Trisha Donnelly (San Francisco, 1974) for MAMbo - the artist's first solo show to be hosted by an Italian museum - realizes itself as a critical and narrative solicitation of the museum's function as well as of its own spaces-times. The exhibition features a site-specific architectural intervention which ghostly modify the perception of the overall museum and moves from there to different directions, intervening even on the communication modalities of the exhibition itself. Nevertheless any analytical description of Donnelly's show at MAMbo can suffice as either an introduction to or a summary of it. Generated on another spatial and temporal plane (an audio video recording of the Baroque Teatro Anatomico at Bologna's Archiginnasio Ubrary), the show lies outside of and moves toward and beyond its own spatial area and temporal momentum, intercepting and shifting on other symbolic as well as physical planes.

Trisha Donnelly investigates the way in which our thoughts are formed, our convictions, our experiences which generally contrast with what we understand as real and with what we think of as imaginary, and explores the subtle link between sensible and hypothetical. Her videos, drawings, installations, sound pieces,

photographs and 'demonstrations' fill their space and time almost imperceptibly, they come to you unannounced or are placed in a way which appears haphazard. They are the point of departure for a narrative based on simulations or on the acknowledgment of fortuitous occurrences - like the rays of light generated erroneously or by chance by the camera while shooting - and allude to a "state" which is not clearly placed, or they foreshadow events that are insinuated but not revealed. By focusing on the multiple boundaries and levels of the work itself and evoking within the limited and artificial dimension of the institutional formats alternative experiences which are typically associated with natural or historical events, Donnelly's artistic practice dwells in the interstitial space between information that provides and information that flows from it, areas where meaning is implied in other interpretations which, while expanding the emotional and cognitive impact of the information itself, become part of an unexpected, fluid, aerial movement of opening and potential meaning.

In keeping with a certain tradition of institutional critique and Conceptual Art Donnelly is in favor of a purification of the information that surrounds an exhibit which, like the works of the artist, represents an event which cannot be fully deciphered, an experience which requires a limited use of standardized or mediated means ("television versions") in exchange for more evocative, personal ones which facilitate an experience imbued in the more intimate sphere of perception, memory, intuition. Within this context, this show and everything that surrounds or precedes it (press releases or advertising announcements, invitations, guides as this one, etc.) marks the beginning of what we could define as a re-load (say also "re enchantment") of the space and time of the museum, the exhibit and the corollary institutional world.

The work of American artist Trisha Donnelly (San Francisco, 1974) investigates the way in which our thoughts are formed, our convictions, our experiences which generally contrast with what we understand as real and with what we think of as imaginary. and explores the subtle link between sensible and hypothetical. Her videos, drawings, installations, sound pieces, photographs and 'demonstrations' fill their space and time almost imperceptibly. They come to you unannounced or are placed in a way which appears haphazard. They are the point of departure for a narrative based on simulations or on the acknowledgment of fortuitous occurrences - like the rays of light generated erroneously or by chance by the camera while shooting - and allude to a "state" which is not clearly placed, or they foreshadow events that are insinuated but not revealed. By focusing on the multiple boundaries and levels of the work itself and evoking within the limited and artificial dimension of the institutional formats alternative experiences which are typically associated with natural or historical events. Donnelly's artistic practice dwells in the interstitial space between information that provides and information that flows from it, areas where meaning is implied in other interpretations which, while expanding the emotional and cognitive impact of the information itself, become part of an unexpected. fluid. aerial movement of opening and potential meaning.

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Andrea Vilianni
(television version)

I am writing along
the basic parallel of these rooms
I owe to the water veins that lay under this city.

The corridor was and is will always be necessary at the reached top of a set of steps,
left and right to the mind of a leftward moving plow.
I did not but the space warranted a soft peach strobe. Laidinto and semi-fresh.

I could go through like this and say
\\ \\

The first room is a view, long ache-r red line 4 teeth of the ancient future leaned up on their
solid leg.
The firstlish side room is greened by a new horizontal brain. Above mind and mine.
The second is need for the mist, left leaning trees to guide the growth of the mountain, the creamed
cloud is the back of one such.
The third room handles all motion, the rise of man into celestial thoughts and the rotation of mis-
takes. The point of the edge
is The Rotation.
But in it rests a new wave, in rapid line repeats one radiating face turned forwards to the
atmosphere.
Leave off the last room, all drawn scripts for tv-ish archive and a mechanical mind where I am and
keep mine, California
registration Delta 88. The apricot fantasy rests on a handle, necessary for the return call back to
the coast.
////

This is the state of the rooms which are true and the stuff that one is at the end.
Too.

But there is a timing not rememberable, when a machine wrought sounds from shining the stone and
were brought into a convent which used to hold
sisters in growths of prayers and growths of worms, hired for silk.
It was taken this machine at material and turned by the space of the space into a scaling metallic,
a liquid principle at the
center of which a silver blade
swings massive in speed from left to right, reverses the direction of THIS space and breaks forward
into the atmosphere in
millions of flat thin static portions, asideways rain, I see it in a celestial transit.
Ladies of the space wrought the machine.

Coming from the double arms of the soft walls of a place like this.

I did not resist.

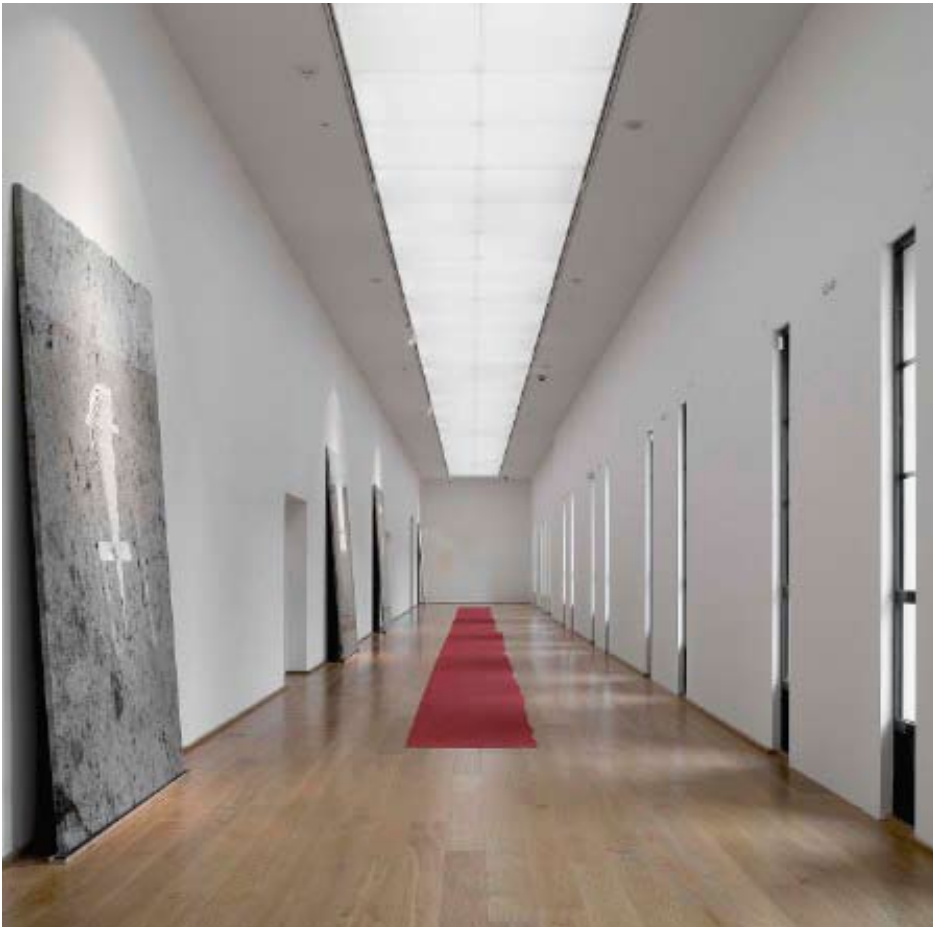
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frieze

March 2009

Trisha Donnelly

MAMBO, BOLOGNA, ITALY



The guiding principle behind Trisha Donnelly's new project for MAMbo is the desire to render both the museum and the visitor's experience of art captivating. The spatial and temporal elements of the exhibition are enlivened by evocative dilations and juxtapositions of architectural, visual and audio elements designed to create a narrative that operates on several semantic levels. The first work in the show is a small, black and white photograph (all works untitled; all 2009) of a female face partly obscured on one side by a soap bubble: the delicacy of this unfocused photo looks like a Donnelly's invitation to the viewer to approach the exhibition with an inquisitive mind.

A sense of unpredictability runs throughout the show, and can also be perceived in the next work, for which the artist has modified the architecture of the first, long gallery of the museum – a former bakery constructed next to the site of some now-subterranean streams. Donnelly has produced the sensation of energy flowing through the empty room, like the water in the underground channels, by her subtle modification of light in the space. She has reduced the long line of windows that flank one wall to narrow slots, so that only slivers of light penetrate the space, creating a stroboscopic effect that is intensified by the gloom within. Moulded by these fluctuations in light, the space seems elongated and merges with the next gallery, in which it is possible to discern only a



long strip of red carpet on the floor, one edge of which has been roughly cut by the artist.

The carpet wasn't initially intended to be part of the project; it was only placed there during the installation of the show as a means of protecting the floor. However, as often happens in Donnelly's work, unanticipated effects led the artist to modify her creative process. In the same room, a row of four large slabs of grey marble lean against a long wall opposite the obscured windows. Each slab is engraved with enigmatic designs that evoke abstract shapes or natural forms. Like screens, the slabs reflect both the light streaming in from outside and the shadows cast by the viewers that superimpose themselves onto the patterns in a game of chance invention.

The exhibition presents a 'reloading' of details, both real and imagined, which stems in part from a preliminary work by Donnelly that involved mapping some of the places she had visited in Bologna. These include historical locations – such as the Anatomical Theatre of the Archiginnasio Library, the network of underground streams and the former bakery of MAMbo itself – as well as indirect conceptual influences, such as the metaphysical paintings of Giorgio Morandi (who is also showing at the museum), about whom the artist writes in the press release for the show, and the radio waves that penetrate the atmosphere (the inventor of the radio, Guglielmo Marconi, was born in the city). All these references are alluded to throughout the exhibition in small-scale, black and white photographs as well as in one particular working process that Donnelly refers to as a 'scanning' of found images, translated into video projections, drawings and marble or fabric objects.

Donnelly's aim is to reduce the information we receive from accepted codes and linguistic superstructures in an attempt to rekindle intuition, memory and free association. The works on display, for example, don't have titles. Even at the level of institutional communication, Donnelly's focus is on developing a diverse narrative for the exhibition, personally producing the press release, the invitations and the visitors' guide to promote a sui generis approach that combines the historical and the personal in an open dialogue.

Marinella Paderni

Translated by Ros Furness

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Porter, Janelle. Trisha Donnelly. Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, 2008.

The Line
Janelle Porter

This is the installation: a wall with one long line of art works, three sound pieces, a sculpture, a text, light and the space itself.

What can be seen is at stake. -H.D.¹

The exhibition can be approached from two entry points. The first view of the exhibition, though, is typically from a curtained entrance at the back corner of the gallery that divides Donnelly's show from another exhibition space. The gallery is a large, white rectangle 63-feet deep by 39-feet wide. It is relatively empty. The two halves of the gallery are vastly different. The entry side has 15-foot exposed ductwork ceilings and two doorways. There is no lighting and it is quite dim. Here, it is like a vestibule.

A doorway to the second-floor lobby is framed by *HW*, a sculpture, and the only freestanding work here, composed of two large, white fabric panels each with a mirror-image embroidered drawing. It is pulled apart, like a bracket, with each panel facing the other in reflection.

The other half of the gallery has 39-foot walls extending to four bands of north-facing clerestory windows. This is an expansive, cathedral-like space. Only natural light and fluorescents in the window bays light the gallery. The brightness varies according to the time of day, and at night the quality of light from the fluorescents is like twilight.

1. Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris, eds., *Poems for the Millennium* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 378.

On the western wall of this lofty space is installed the line of art works. A doorway in the left corner interrupts this wall. The line begins immediately to its right edge. Drawings, paintings, sculptures, photographs and videos are installed, cheek by jowl, with an equal distance between them. The twenty-four art works, dating from 1998 to 2007, read chronologically from left to right, though there are several disturbances to the order. They align along a bottom edge, as if resting on an invisible shelf. One large photo, however, hangs above another, reaching high up the wall.

The line of work performs two simultaneous functions. First, it is of a piece, an autonomous gesture. Second, it is an equalizing force. It could be said that no one work stands apart from the line, but it can also be said that each asserts itself. The line is one thing from far away, and another in proximity. It is an invitation. Part of one's experience of the show is the distance one must walk from the gallery entrance-up to the line, as well as the movement of one's body as it travels, along the length of the wall, from work to work.

Every twenty minutes or so, one hears a sound piece. Three separate sound works are installed here, and one is played each day, at my discretion, on a loop. *Dark Wind* plays quite low, a wind that blows through the building; *Oh Egypt* is a loud, repeated chant; and *Untitled (Bells)* is a distant chorus that seems to emanate from a nearby church.

This book presents the line twice: once photographed by day, once by night. The photograph installed above the line, high on the wall, folds over the top of the paper, reproduced upside-down on the opposite side. Two installation photos document the entire gallery from either end. The text piece, *In the recombination of the not so vast distance (The vortex)*, was represented in the exhibition by a photocopied gallery handout with its accompanying sound recording accessed by telephone.

... I watched enthralled from the empty deck as, every day, for the space of a few minutes, in all quarters of a horizon vaster than any had ever seen before, the rising and the setting of the sun presented the beginning, development and conclusion of supernatural cataclysms. If I could find a language in which to perpetuate those appearances, at once so unstable and so resistant to description, if it were granted to me to be able to communicate to others the phases and sequences of a unique event which would never recur in the same terms, then-so it seemed to me-I should in one go have discovered the deepest secrets of my profession: however strange and peculiar the experiences to which anthropological research might expose me, there would be none whose meaning and importance I could not eventually make clear to everybody. -Claude Levi-Strauss²

The following annotated checklist describes the physical appearance of each work in the exhibiton, as installed, from left to right.

Trisha Donnelly's (TD) responses are set in italic.

study for Danang, 2005
pencil on paper, 11 1/2 x 8 1/4 inches
Collection of the artist

A sheet of white letter-size paper hangs from a pin in each top corner. It is folded twice horizontally, as a letter is to fit into an envelope. The creases are heavily worked like they were repeatedly folded. On the top third of the paper is a line drawing of the side view of a wide-brimmed hat. The hat floats, as if the wearer, turned in profile, were invisible. The penciled line is dark and thick, and sketchy in places. The underside of the hat brim is shaded. Three straps hang from the underside, two on the far side, one on the near. They form a loose knot a few inches underneath the hat, then intertwine and dangle, ending just above the bottom fold of the paper.

Untitled, 1998-99
DVD projection, 4:30 minutes
Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A video is projected small on the wall from three feet away by a video projector inside a white pedestal. The video documents the fluid movement of a woman moving up and down in slow motion. She moves upward into the frame from the bottom (though we never see the ground), then down. She wears simple white clothing: a long-sleeved, close-fitting T-shirt, loose pants and white high-top sneakers with black shoelaces and markings. Her dark brown hair is long and loose, and as she moves into the frame her hair follows the arc of motion. She executes a choreographed gesture—an unidentifiable, but quite intentional, movement. Though the video is dramatically slowed, the movements occur in quick succession and last between eight and eleven seconds each. There are twenty different gestures, then the video repeats on a loop. It is mesmerizing and soothing, like watching a small fire, or the ocean.

The Slowness, 2004
pencil on paper, 36 x 24 inches
Private collection, Toronto

A pencil drawing, on a large, pale, dull yellow sheet of paper floating on an off-white mat in a simple black frame. An oblong form descends from a point several inches below the top edge of the paper. This form is a few inches long and shaped like a tongue. At the top, enhanced by shading, it is contoured as along a ridge. In this way it looks like a waterfall descending from a concave edge. Drawn with tiny pencil lines, it is denser at the top half of the form. Just below where this form tapers is a capital letter N rendered in solid, dark pencil. The graphic, simple typography extends its two long rectangular legs off the lower edge. This letter N has long legs.

Canada, 2002
C-print, 16 x 19 3/4 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A grainy black-and-white photograph pinned to the wall at each top corner. A white border, quite wide at top and bottom but narrow on both sides, frames a picture of a coastline. The image is divided into four horizontal bands: sky, land, water, water. The frontal plane of water is bisected horizontally, the section in front darker than the smooth, silvery line that is the middle ground. Two stems of vegetation poke vertically into the right foreground. The darkened tree-lined coast has few defining geographical characteristics. Its fog-enshrouded evergreen trees rise slightly in elevation as they recede. The sky is white, and curves around the hill like a bonnet.

California, 2004

8mm film transferred to DVD, 20 minutes

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A video is projected small on the wall from three feet away by a video projector inside a white pedestal. The image is divided vertically, and equally, into three fields, each with an animated white element against a black background. All three elements are pixelated and degenerated as if repeatedly, digitally manipulated. At either side is a seemingly identical (though possibly flipped and tilted) image of a white, tubular ring. These pendant rings tilt outward from one another. Each is enclosed in a square (with the fourth side completed by the outer edge of the video projection) formed by a lighter hue of black from the middle component. The ring's opening is collapsed, forming a tight ellipse. A horizontal bar, short in relation to the height of the ring, bisects each ring. The rings vibrate and shake, recede and advance. They distract, pulling one's eyes outward in opposing directions. The centerpiece is a flickering word, "Frances," written in a curving upper - and lower -case font. The video has a flatness to it, moving beyond two dimensions into one.

TD: This is a transmission.

The Hand That Holds the Desert Down, 2002

silver gelatin print, 5 x 7 inches

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A small black - and - white photograph adhered directly to the wall. The tones are very light, silvery grays. A white border frames an image of a striated mound. A minute dot patterning indicates that the image was photographed from a book or newspaper. The picture appears to be a close-up of a massive stone ruin. The stone is striated horizontally and tapers down to the left. A tubular form comes from around the back and curves upward to the right, hanging over a long flat shape at the side (in the foreground) that has four curved indentations at its end (like a paw). The meeting point of the rough mound and the smooth foreground ceates a strong line...

TD: And this is the Hand that Holds the Desert Down. And I have this as a recurring image: if the back paw of Ramses were to lift, the desert would rise up into the atmosphere grain by grain.

The Vibration Station, 2002

silver gelatin print, 4 x 5 inches

Collection of Bob Nickas

A black-and-white photograph over-matted with off-white board and framed in dark gray painted wood. The photo shows the pipe section of a large pipe organ. The image is flipped upside-down, creating an unusual disorientation. The pipes rise and descend in ranks. The form of the organ, which sweeps outward from a narrower base, is tightly cropped. The upsidedown organ is turned into a chandelier, a hanging form that feels as if it were swinging toward the viewer. Strong vertical elements and a dark background, with blacks and whites mixing elegantly with silvery grays, dominate the image. The grays of the base/top are echoed at the bottom of the photograph. The forms mimic one another.

TD: This is The Vibration Station.

Untitled, 2005

C-print, 24 1/2 x 17 inches

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A white-bordered photograph, pinned to the wall at its four comers, of black gloves against a black backdrop. The only tonal variation in the inky surface comes from a subtle sheen on the leather gloves, a glint that emanates from a single illuminating source off to the right. The long gloves stand upon their fingers, just to the left of center, bearing downward forcefully. The hands are tightly clasped and oddly disorientating. The front hand's fingers are pressed firmly into the ground, with the middle finger bent backwards at an extreme angle. The gloves end abruptly-deprived of actual arms, perhaps - just short or the top of the photo.

TD: It is still not the time to talk about this.

Untitled, 2006

pencil on paper, 16 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches

Collection of the artist

An off-white sheet of paper pinned to the wall at each top corner. (The right-hand pin also holds the drawing immediately to the right.) A small pencil drawing is located just above center. A fine and sure vertical line begins, then curves to the right, then back, before continuing straight down. A spear-like fonn pushes at the curve from the left. Two motion lines radiate from this point. On the right of this push out vertically stacked capital letters spell RHOMBERG. Just above the R and below the G are decorative flourishes.

Untitled, 2007

pencil on paper, 16 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches

Courtesy of Casey Kaplan, New York

An off-white sheet of paper pinned to the wall at each top corner. (The left-hand pin also holds the drawing to the left.) From near the top left-hand corner a thick, modeled line descends at a sharp angle toward the center of the paper. This gray, spear-like form ends at a point and pierces a diaphanous form rendered in pale blue pencil. It is barely discernible, with only a few lines creating an oblong, shape-shifting entity. At its top, blue hatch lines trickle down as if around a domed-shaped object.

Untitled, 2007

C-print, 10 x 8 inches

Collection of the artist

A black-and-white photograph affixed directly to the wall. A white border wider at top and bottom than at the sides frames the image. In a classical motif, heavy drapery hangs vertically and sweeps horizontally across a surface, as if on a bed. The material is thick enough to crease and wrinkle and carry form. The drapery is stained and spotted, though the graininess of the image permits that the photo itself may be the thing stained. The drapery on the left is of slightly darker hue, and here and there the black background peeps through. On the right is a rounded shape that sharply contrasts with the long lines of drapery. It looks like a darkened face, in profile as if reclining. It is partly enshrouded in a tightly wrapped, thin white cloth.

Untitled, 2001

C-print, 5 x 7 inches

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A black-and-white photo affixed directly to the wall. A white border frames the image of a rock jutting out of water. Waves eddying around its base suggest it is an ocean rock. The rock rises from the left, descends, rises even higher to a peak, descends deeply, then rises and plateaus creating a slightly rounded third peak. The top of the rock is slightly lighter than its sides. The shape of the rock suggests a woman's head and torso in profile, as if floating on the surface of the water.

TD: This is a film that maintains just one image.

Untitled, 2003

latex balloons and acrylic, 36 x 18 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

A shallow, rectangular acrylic box hangs by two metal, L-shaped hooks. The backless box rests flush against the wall. Inside are suspended two long, matte black balloons of approximately the same length, centered top to bottom. They are attached at a single point at the top where the balloons are tied shut. From there, they curve slightly outward, then taper toward each other at the bottom, like a wishbone, or an upside-down V. Upsidedown victory.

TD: 44 DT HANOI is 44 days to Hanoi. Found a friend in this mis-faced "victory." For all intensive purposes.

Untitled, 2007

foam rubber, 47 1/4 x 29 inches

Collection of the artist

A rectangular piece of brownish-green foam hangs on the wall, bowing outward slightly as if breathing. The slab is composed of two layers, and its edges are quite rough as if sawed with a dull blade. The foam's appearance is porous, fleshy and matte. There is some discoloration and fading at the edges. A complex sequence of shapes carved into the surface dominates the top half of the foam. A horizontal line curves downward vertically at both sides, then turns under to create an upside-down squared U-shape. Within these edges the foam is roughly gouged out, creating a depression below the true surface. In the center of this area, a line rises to a soft peak at which point it meets the topmost horizontal line. Under this peak two lines, stacked horizontally, are deeply cut. The top line is straight; the bottom's ends curve around the top line like a smile on a mouth. Under the center of these two lines begin two deeply carved horizontal lines. They move outward horizontally for a few inches then curve softly and continue vertically downward before tapering off. The left-hand line ends, then resumes as a shallowly carved line. Just underneath where those two lines began is a series of curving forms. Five small lines cut into the foam arch upward and fold over themselves, like canes. They vary in size, with the longest in the middle and the remaining four decreasing in size as they move outward. Pencil tracings follow their top curves on all but the leftmost form. Finally, two side-by-side vertical lines descend below the cane-shaped forms. Each is deeply gouged with a long groove running the length of each interior section.

TD: I rolled this around for a month and nothing was seen until now I suppose. To cut foam is a sideways peel after a deep cut. I can't help but think it would be a good way for doctors to practice. without damaging flesh. It is like flesh carved away. I saw it on wheels as a lamp on a path. A materialized punctuation. A Hades mile-marker? Only by film-set misuse I guess. If you were filming The Frogs or something like that. More it was a carved form with all revealed by a penetrating light from within its two faces.

The D from W, 2005
C-print, 13 1/2 x 9 inches

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A black-and-white photograph with a white border is affixed to the wall. A figure in three-quarter profile stands at the center of the image, its head erased by a wide band of black that begins at the figure's shoulders and extends to the top of the photo. A pendant black band begins just below the figure's feet and extends to the bottom of the photo. The photo is pixelated like a video still, or as if it were photographed with the camera quite close to a window screen. The tonal distortions indicate the photo was printed in negative. The figure is dressed in a billowing, kimono-style white robe. The cut of the robe is formal, with wide, banded sleeves, and a dark scarf hanging loosely at the neck. The figure holds in each hand a long sword, angled downward, the tips hovering just above the ground. The ground on which the figure stands stock-still is of varying textures and planes. A hazy, broken white line stretches across the photo, running behind the figure, and bisecting it in two.

TD: This is the Distance from War. The orbital warrior: no feet no mind.

Untitled, 2005
pencil on paper, 26 x 20 inches

Courtesy of Air de Paris, Paris

A pale purple-gray piece of paper is affixed directly to the wall at the top. The bottom hangs freely. A large section of the paper has been torn away, beginning at the middle top and curving toward the bottom left side. On the remaining right top half is a pencil drawing of an angled, rectangular form with a hard diagonal line at the top that curves just slightly over, and a ragged edge at bottom. The form looks like a waterfall excised from its particular geography. The drawn lines are mostly vertical and of even shading.

TD: The absent portion of this is in the hands of someone who keeps it from the piece here. Can it be that the fall of water regenerates its own gravity? The fall towards a missing register.

Hedm!, 2005
pencil on paper, two sheets, 40 x 27 1/2 inches each

Linda Pace Collection, San Antonio, Texas

A large sheet of peach-colored paper is pinned to the wall. A rectangular pencil drawing is centered on the paper. Overlapping hatch marks create a wave-like, random patterning across the surface of this form, darker in some places, and lighter in others. A jagged line, an area of the paper devoid of pencil, begins in each top corner of the form. These two lines move downward and almost converge, creating a funnel shape that extends the length of the form. At the bottom left edge, it broadens as if emptying out. The pencil shading is lighter within the two lines. On the right side of this form, a few nearly invisible trace lines describe ragged arcs.

A row of four oval shapes, evenly spaced, is-situated in the top third of the pencil area. They glow a bright golden color, as if lit from behind. In each oval is a letter drawn backwards in a stylized script reminiscent of Blackletter, an old, traditional German font. From left to right they read: m, d, e, h. Were it not for the title these would be difficult to decipher. The m is followed by an exclamation point; the remaining letters by a comma shape. The letters slant left and right, as if bobbing in their golden orbs. The lights are a broadcast, a semaphore from afar.

TD: "Herr, Ebarme Dich Meiner!" it states. And is. A fall forward. My lord have mercy on me.

The Receiver, 2006
ink and pencil on paper, 8 sheets, 15 3/4 x 11 3/4 inches each

Private collection, Brussels

Eight sheets of paper, one atop the other, are pinned to the wall at both top corners. A drawing of a robe rendered in blue ink over sketchy gray pencil lines is centered on the paper. The garment floats aloft, capturing the shape of an active, gesturing body. It is as if the body has evaporated. One sleeve crosses the front of the body, from right to left. On its chest drawn in pencil is a capital letter R. A multitude of straight lines create the outside edges of the letter, radiating out from its formed edges. The R is a silhouette only, missing its center.

TD: The receiver. All in all an electric word. The receipt of return is invited. Radiated out from positions harvested from bodiless bodies. R.E.C.E.I.V.E.R. Spanned over eight weeks. A blinking guide. Receiver.

The Bent Touch, 2006
lambda print, 36 x 10 inches
edition of 4

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A black - and - white photo is affixed directly to the wall. The image is a white box sited just off center, inside a long, narrow black rectangle. Five white dots float near the top: one each at left and right, and three slightly higher and in the center clustered to shape an inverted triangle. Immediately left of the three-dot cluster, a gray, brushy streak begins and stripes vertically to the bottom. Where it intersects the white box it flares outward like a smudge. In the white box are twenty-nine frames of a filmstrip. Near the top the frames are quite dark and murky. Only perceptible in a few lighter frames near the bottom is a dog on a lawn. The sprocket holes run along the right side. The strip follows alongside the gray stripe but bends to the right, like light through a prism.

TD: I shot a film of an Afghan dog. It ran around in a circle all lines of hair and bones. At one point the dog would reach up to a step and jump after his first leg touched. In searching it closer with a scanner (cause = broken editing machine), the touch itself in the film when bent caused a beam of light to form, radiating like an optical object.

People talk about absence. I think that a whiteness or a radiation like this is more /not yet/. The register of the sun by the eyes would lead you to believe absence. Instead, it is the incapability as of yet to see the forward moving thing. The sun is unviewable. Not yet arrived. The beam is a forecast. Not absent object.

Satin Operator (9), 2007
C-prints, thirteen photographs, 62 1/2 x 44 inches each
(one exhibited); edition of 5

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A large, white-bordered, black-and-white photo is pinned to the wall at each top corner. It hangs freely, slightly curving away from, then back toward the wall at the bottom. The image, a warped vertical form against a flat, medium gray background, is tightly cropped at top and bottom. The center form is mostly gray but for a white, indiscernible shape. A black-and-white photo (it has a telltale white border) wraps around a tubular object. At the top, clear plastic bubble wrap peeks out. After several vertical inches, the tube twists and bends dramatically in a downward motion, to the right-not physically-but digitally. It is stretched and blurred. The form seems to vibrate in this mostly white, warped area. The tube then straightens just enough to squarely meet the bottom of the photo.

Untitled II (Peralta), 2007
C-print, 62 1/2 x 44 inches
edition of 5

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A large, white-bordered, black-and-white photo is pinned to the wall at each top corner. It hangs down freely, slightly curving away from, then back toward the wall at the bottom. Though the image is in color, it is primarily colorless. The surface is quite shiny, streaky and largely black, however within the inky blacks are reds and yellows, which heighten background depth. A round, golden, shiny form dominates the middle of the image, just below center. It is convex at its rim, but recedes at the center, like a horn if one looked directly into its flaring bell. A white horizontal rectangle lies atop this form, a piece of paper perhaps. Its reflection in the shiny section curves the edges. In a stylized, incomplete typography letters spell PERALTA. Above this are three horizontal receding bands drawn in pencil. They echo the number of letters and relative shapes of PERALTA, though they taper so drastically as to make the forms illegible. They are echoes and shadows of PERALTA. From the center left of the golden circle a very bright form flares upward. It is intensely colored: orange at its base, then yellow, then white as it moves inward, and finally blue as it tapers.

TD: My sense of this pile was begun from its farthest point. My eyes felt inadequate so I used a bigger, slower camera with a roll of light that moves and takes in two ways. This image from all was an anchor as if the roll had to or would stop in any image at any time - this Peralta would be its register. What the lens would see as its reflection if it was cryogenically paused. Peralta. In repeat by still.

Untitled, 2007
enamel on fabric, 53 x 35 inches
Collection of the artist

A large, acid-green fabric-covered rectangle hangs on the wall. Its surface is slightly shiny and its texture allows a play of color depending on the light. The surface appears soft and puffs out, with the velvety fabric puckered on the sides where it meets the backing surface. Centered at the top half are painted three solid black shapes, two atop the third. Two horizontal black lines lie next to each other on a plane. The left-hand line is a long black dash, tapering in from the left, and growing in thickness as it moves right. It is not completely level. The second form is a horizontal line that drips down on the left. On the right, it tapers, ending in three short, oblong dots, like an ellipse. The bottommost form is a face-down L-shape; the long stem becomes the horizontal plane. The angle created is filled with black paint, as if it had been bulldozed haphazardly into this corner.

TV: There is no memory complete at times. When I rebuild the flat photographic it begins in triplicate from the left hand side. And pulls its way down into total. This is the beginning of the three that is the flat photographic. If that is clear.

Untitled, 2005
pencil on paper, 27 1/2 x 19 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist

A white piece of paper is attached to the wall with a pin at each top corner. From the top of the paper, at center, two thickly drawn, sketchy lines are drawn vertically. Part way down the page the lines become a modeled and shaded tube-like shape, a rope. This ends in a loose knot, the frayed end of the rope peeking out from under the final loop of the knot with lines of the rope extend in an outward angle from the knot, meeting a horizontal tube at either end, and forming a triangle. It is a handle and on its left side are the tiny letters JRO.

TD: My ripcord.

Untitled, 2005
C-print, 7 x 5 inches
Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A black and white photograph is affixed directly to the wall. It is snapshot-scale and bordered by white. The image is of a man in a bay window, shot from a distance outside the building. This architectural feature is centered in the photo, with the top of a doorway opening discernible underneath, and a standard window just above, of which we can see only the bottom sill and a bit of glass. The wall of the building, made from rough-cut stone and mortar, is of a style that betrays not only its age but its probable European locale. The window bay is paneled on the bottom half with windows on three sides. The interior hosts a rear opening and a round ceiling light fixture. The front is a large seamless pane with utility wires criss-crossing in reflection. The camera-side window (the photo is taken from a three-quarters angle) reflects the stone facade. The man in the window, judging from the scale of the structure, appears to be sitting with his hands clasped high in front of his chest. He wears a dark cap and sunglasses. Despite his dark lenses, there is no doubt that he stares directly at the camera lens.

TV: Man in the window. It has a use.

Dark Wind, 2001
audio CD, 30 seconds

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

The sound of a strong wind howling through structures.

TD: The transformative sound. Of a western too. The character turns at this sound from one state to the next. A lonely form this wind that when it lays down is a current.

Oh Egypt, 2004
audio CD, 3:30 minutes

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

A loud, excruciatingly-slowed voice chants, almost indecipherably were it not for the title of the work. It calls fourteen times. Each time the chant is slightly different.

Untitled (Bells), 2007
audio CD, 1:52 minutes

Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

The sound of church bells from a block away. Several gongs are followed by a jaunty tune.

TD: Nice. I like that it is a block. By my head it was never but just orbiting, but now I prefer a block. Describes many things for me. I build them all with their proximity in an undermind. I know that they are distant by time and mindset but that they all build like a perpetual grid.

HW, 2007
embroidered cotton and steel, two panels,
140 x 43 1/2 x 3 inches each

Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

Two large, crisp, rectangular white textile panels stand upright. A hidden armature holds them erect. The panels sit loosely on their frames and billow slightly near the bottom. On the top half of each panel is embroidered, in black and royal blue thread, thin lines and letters. The panels are mirror images of one another. The first panel features at the left four curving lines, embroidered in blue thread, increasing in size from left to right. The lines curve in a C-shape toward the right. They face four long rectangles, outlined in black thread. The lines are imperfect, their thicknesses varying according to the embroidery. These descend in size from left to right, tops angled down and bottoms angled up. Underneath the first and third boxes are two tiny letters: first a W then an H. The second panel reads exactly the opposite, with the black outlined rectangles angling upward left to right, and the blue lines curving outward from it on the right. The letter H lies below the second box; the letter W under the fourth. These two panels are positioned perpendicular to a doorway, one on each side.

TD: A Harvest of Waves. Is what this is.

January 17, 2008, 6pm

During the opening night tour, Donnelly, while answering my questions and offering her own comments on the exhibition, executed an action. Without explanation, she removed the lid of a long, narrow cardboard box and removed a large roll of quilted, black vinyl fabric. She laid it on the ground and unrolled it to reveal a black samurai sword. She unsheathed the blade, then the handle dagger, placing sheath, sword and dagger side by side atop the fabric. As soon as this was complete she reversed the sequence, sliding dagger, then sword into the sheath, rolling it back into the fabric, closing the box, and exiting the gallery with the package.

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The Douglas Hyde Gallery

Trisha Donnelly **01 August - 18 September 2008**

Although Trisha Donnelly is a well-known and much admired artist, there are few who would find it easy to explain her work. Often containing a strong element of performance, Donnelly's art uses video, sound, photographs, drawings, paintings, and sculpture to convey enigmatic states of consciousness.

When it is not overtly dramatic, Trisha Donnelly's work is elusive; not infrequently it is barely visible or audible, with a subliminal impact that leaves us with a feeling that just beyond our ordinary understanding of the world lies something infinitely more strange and wondrous. Duchamp's ideas about the 'inframince', Yves Klein's absurdist metaphysics, and Bas Jan Ader's doomed and self-deprecating mysticism provide a context for her artistic vision.

This project has had an unusual genesis and development. First suggested as a collaboration by Suzanne Cotter at Modern Art Oxford (where a sister exhibition took place last year), it took off on a tangent. Trisha and I have conducted an intermittent but engaged dialogue during the last few months, in which topics as diverse as the extraordinary explorer and writer, Isabelle Eberhardt, Uzbeki ikat textiles, the Huguenot cemetery in Dublin, and the films of Tarkovsky played their part. As a consequence of our discussions the exhibition will comprise a number of older pieces that I selected and some more recent work that has been chosen by Trisha.

John Hutchinson - July 2008

With thanks to Suzanne Cotter, Modern Art Oxfam, Loring Randolph, Casey Kaplan, New York, and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich for their help in arranging this exhibition.

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Chicago Tribune .com

March 13, 2008

Alan G Artner

Mystery over mastery

Trisha Donnelly, who has an installation at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, is a special case even on today's scene, where people take so much contemporary art on faith. The San Francisco artist, in her early 30s, creates paintings, drawings, photographs, videos, sound pieces, installations and performances, not seeking mastery in any media nor aspiring to communicate with an audience.

Whatever Donnelly does, she does because she can, and whatever meaning the results have may either be divined by her audience or not, as she doesn't make statements about the work and doesn't care to have anything in it show why all the parts necessarily go together. The response at higher reaches of the contemporary art world has been to give Donnelly exhibitions and, then, stand amazed at how what's in them is still not quite explained by the strategies organizers and critics have attributed. Everybody ends up being mystified to some degree, which, of course, is fine for the artist as long as everybody continues to believe in the mystery. Donnelly's work at the Renaissance Society will test that faith. It plays with the hall and gallery in ways that may seem familiar to anyone who has seen shows where the space itself became the work of art. But the interventions she has made do not appear intended to heighten visitors' awareness of a show-place for art as much as to elevate its banal secondary function as a space for congregation.

For the opening last month, Donnelly staged a "dance party" that included such rituals as the passing out of leis and a reading. The thought that few look at art during an exhibition opening presumably led her to eliminate all freestanding interior walls as well as to banish her drawings, carvings and a video to the margins of the room.

She also removed fluorescent tubes from recessed hall lights; replaced objects in vitrines with two identical abstract photographs; took out four windows from their frames; and concealed a recording of church bells (which plays every 15 minutes) in an air-conditioning duct. Benches of the sort that often occupy the space are upended, becoming white monoliths. The seat of one is a screen for a silent projection, apparently of digitized movement of liquid. A pair of Donnelly's slight abstract drawings is affixed to the undersides of all the benches, facing the bays like refractory children standing in corners.

A minimal drawing is also on a large, leather-like sheet draped over a desk chair visible from the gallery entrance. And, invisible to viewers, is a screen saver on office computers that documents a small, semiprivate reading Donnelly gave at the swimming pool of the Powhatan Apartments, an Art Deco masterpiece in the neighborhood.

How does all this add up? That's for you to figure out. Exacting about many things, the artist has been indifferent to many others, perhaps out of confidence that those who support her provocations will offer suitably large and sophisticated interpretations that go to the heart of contemporary art making. Seek and thou shalt find. It is what the faithful always do.

"Trisha Donnelly" continues at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 5811 S. Ellis Ave., through April 6. Call 773-702-8670 aartner@tribune.com

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March 27 - April 2, 2008
Issue 161

Michelle Grabner
Critic's Rating

Trisha Donnelly

Renaissance Society, through Apr 6.

Trisha Donnelly has brought a breath of fresh air to the Renaissance Society... literally: During her performance-cum-reception on February 24, Donnelly opened the gallery's windows-which overlook the U. of C.'s main quadrangle-and left them that way, defying our relentless Midwestern winter.

This gesture, counterintuitive and impractical, was remarkable in itself. It's also the only remaining trace of Donnelly's performance, except for several sketches, two chairs and some projection equipment. Donnelly never photographs her performances, and accounts of the opening vary. But what we do know is that she choreographed the reception to resemble a semiformal cocktail party with tuxedo-clad staff, an open bar, loud music and colorful leis made of fresh flowers. And Renaissance Society curator Hamza Walker read poetry.

Our trip to observe the grimy after-party floor didn't lead to regrets over missing the opening, nor did the sparse drawings and nippy lake breeze blowing through the gallery lead to a compelling poetic or philosophical encounter. But Donnelly's postmedium practice is designed to rewire an understanding of experience as commodity: The strength of her undertaking lies in language-- the tales and rumors offered up by curious art enthusiasts and eager students.

Visitors who see Donnelly's project out of context may ask to have their parking reimbursed. It's at its aesthetic and conceptual best when you hear about it from a friend who heard about it from a friend.

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The Renaissance Society

at the University of Chicago

Trisha Donnelly
February 24 - April 06, 2008

As Free As the Squirrels

No other humanist discipline has undergone as rigorous a self-examination as the visual arts. Well above and beyond an investigation into the nature of its being, the field of art has gone so far as to canonize works of so-called "anti-art." From the 1917 debut of Duchamp's infamous Fountain, which consisted of simply a urinal bearing a signature, to the sustained assault on visuality waged by conceptual artists, art by all accounts should have succumbed to its self-willed dismantling quite a while ago. Needless to say, this has yet to pass. Through earnest efforts artists have, however, expanded art's definition to the point where art is no longer a discrete class of objects or activities but instead a way of looking; art as a process of self-reflexive meaning-making, one that need not be mediated by illusionistic representation. A small tin of shit proudly produced and canned by the artist, Piero Manzoni himself, or a piece of candy courtesy of Felix Gonzalez-Torres are but two beautiful birds in a forest of signs that would render our existence legible. But despite exercising its right to remain silent, gregariously flirting with the irrational, and reveling in illegibility, art is still plagued with making sense in what is less a forest of signs and more a semiotic jungle as any and all things may assume a meaning no longer reserved for the more traditional work of art.

Tell me why the ivy twines? As if Trisha Donnelly's art needs a reason. Like ivy, Donnelly's work is as it does. Now that art is no longer a privileged site of meaning, Donnelly is as free as the squirrels to produce art whose justification would be its mere existence. Given that meaning may be produced with or without it, Donnelly is the first to admit that no one needs her art. In exchange, she has carte blanche to roam the highways, byways and interstellar lo-ways of thought with nary a care as to what makes sense save to her.

Calling hers a 'body' of work is almost claiming too much coherence for a highly heterogeneous output that includes drawings, photographs, audio works, sculptures, events (Donnelly is very wary of the term performance), and videos. Although it is tempting to cast her as the consummate post-medium artist, in her case that is already an over-determined category, for Donnelly genuinely has no medium. If anything she is a pre-medium artist, where "medium" could just as soon refer to a psychic. Not overly concerned with form, her art is the precipitate of a belief system fashioned within a web of signification where logic and superstition are virtually indistinguishable. When posed before any of her work, the question of why becomes interchangeable with why not. Donnelly has developed a form of martial arts and given lectures describing an alternate dimension. The latter, entitled THE 11th PRISMATIC, betrays her penchant for the rites and rituals of explanation in a broader sense.

While much of the work is performative in nature, Donnelly avoids any relationship to an audience that the designation "performance artist" might imply. In addition, Donnelly's art, for all its freedom, tends to assume relatively conventional forms. In this respect it is very much legible as an art that, once slandered for being cryptic and hermetic, would now cite these terms as new-found inalienable rights. Any charges of obscurity are predicated on a claim to disclosure that Donnelly never undersigned. Instead, Donnelly would take stock in an artistic legacy whose liberatory potential has become, by her standards, over-burdened with a self-consciousness symptomatic of an excess of meaning; an excess she would prefer to convert into beliefs ranging from quizzical to outlandish. The result is an art that can be whatever. Accordingly, what she may do when invited to exhibit is often anyone's guess. The choice of attire (cocktail, festive, proper, black tie) for attendance at the opening, per TD, is yours.

Author: Hamza Walker

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NEWS RELEASE



INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: DECEMBER 21, 2007

TRISHA DONNELLY

JANUARY 18-AUGUST 3, 2008

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 6-8PM

EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH WITH ARTIST TRISHA DONNELLY AND ASSOCIATE
CURATOR JENELLE PORTER: THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 5PM, ICA MEMBERS ONLY

PHILADELPHIA, PA

The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) is pleased to present the first survey exhibition of Trisha Donnelly's work, and her first solo museum exhibition in the U.S., on view January 18 - August 3, 2008. Using sculpture, drawing, photographs, text, sound, video, and painting, Donnelly will compose a new installation in the second floor gallery with works made between 1998 and 2007. Over the course of the installation works will shift and change.

Donnelly's ineffable body of work resists simple characterization. A lexicon of imagery and action relies on the power of suggestion: what is the most economical gesture that can evoke thoughts of, for example, Napoleonic Wars? How can sound create form? Can a word plant the artist in our conscious? These gestures are catalysts, and this is the gist of Donnelly's work. Uniting her work in various media are gestures of altered time, shifters, dimensional explorations, evocation, perception, and belief structures.

Time is crucial to her work: a drawing may ask us to slow down, a sound piece may stretch a phrase interminably, a video presents an action in slow motion, a photograph freezes a turn of the torso. The pause allows for shifts in time, both in the present, and in its call to historical shifters—moments in history when "history was written." Time collapses. The organization of this exhibition asks the artist herself to pause and look back at several years of work.

Donnelly is a San Francisco-based artist (b. 1974, and lives San Francisco). Her work is well known in the contemporary art world, but is still seldom seen outside highly defined contexts. As most of her major exhibitions have occurred in Europe, this exhibition allows viewers who have not experienced firsthand much of her work to see it for the first time. And seeing this work firsthand is crucial to the questions Donnelly's work pursues. The work requires your presence.

Since completing her MFA at Yale in 2000, Donnelly has had solo projects at Modern Art Oxford (2007). Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2006), Kunsthalle Zurich (2005). Kolnischer Kunstverein (2005), and ArtPace, San Antonio (2005). She has been included in numerous group exhibitions: "Uncertain States of America," Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo (traveled) (2005); "Day for Night," 2006 Whitney Biennial, New York; "Of Mice + Men: 4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art," Berlin (2006); and 54th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (2004). She teaches at the San Francisco Art Institute and is a visiting critic at Yale. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Carnegie Museum, Walker Art Center, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Tate Modern, Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, among others.



Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled II (Peralta)*
2007, C-print, 62 1/2 x 44 inches, edition
of 5. Courtesy of the artist, Casey Kaplan,
New York, and Air de Paris, Paris

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Checklist and images available upon request.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ICA is located at:
118 South 36th Street at the
University of Pennsylvania

ICA is open to the public, except during
installation, from 12pm to 8pm on
Wednesday through Friday and from 11 am
to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Admission is \$6 for adults, \$3 for students
over 12, artists, and senior citizens; and
free to ICA members, children 12 and
under, PENN card holders, and on Sundays
from 11am to 1pm.

For more information,
call 215-898-7108/5911, or visit
www.icaphila.org.

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Founded in 1963, the Institute of
Contemporary Art at the University of
Pennsylvania is a leader in the presentation
and documentation of contemporary art.
Through exhibitions, commissions,
educational programs, and publications,
ICA invites the public to share in the
experience, interpretation and
understanding of the work of established
and emerging artists.

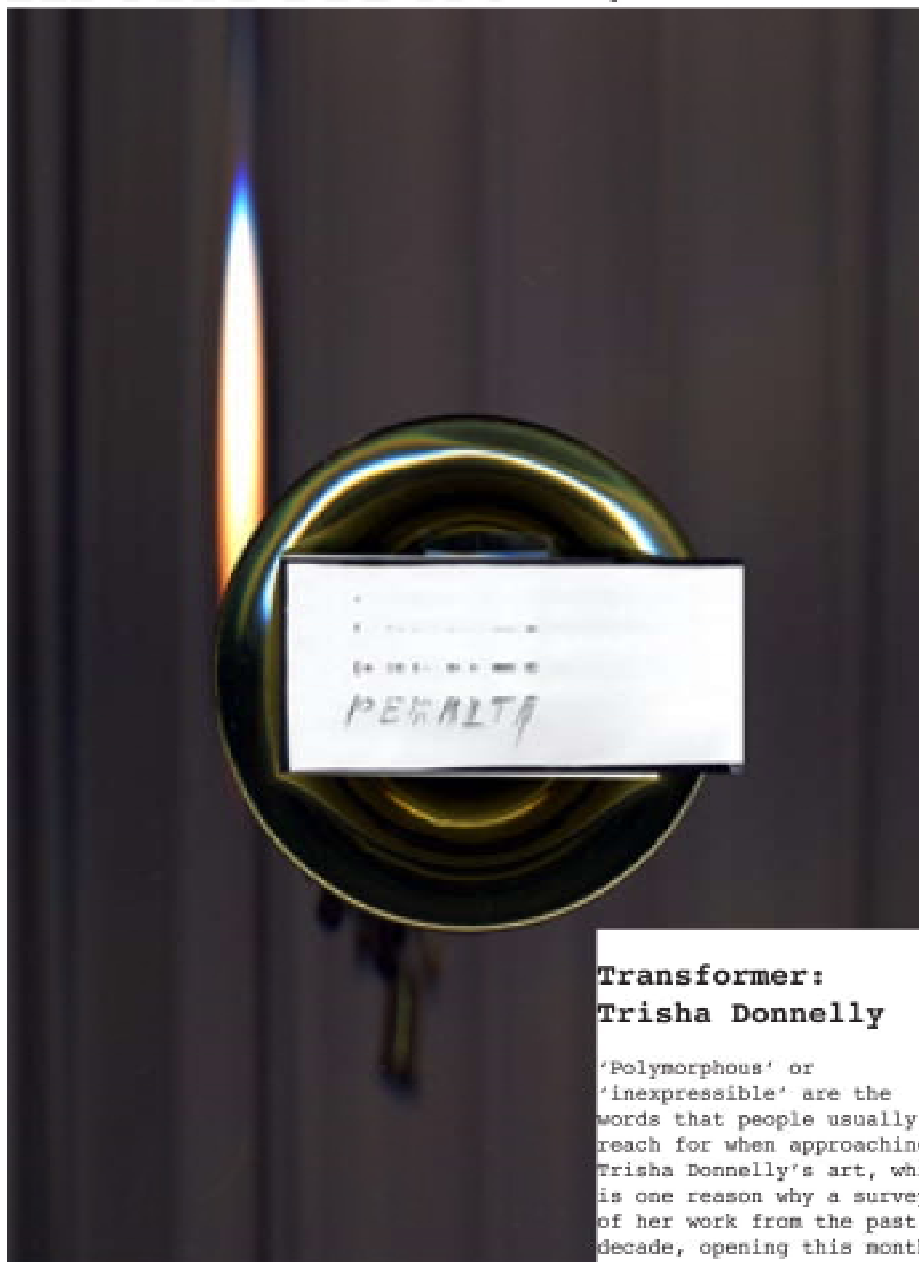
This exhibition is organized by Associate Curator Jenelle Porter and is accompanied
by a catalog publication documenting the installation and will be available after the
exhibition opens.

We gratefully acknowledge generous support of the American Center Foundation, the
Harpo Foundation and ICA's Leadership Circle: Robert Kirkpatrick & John Wind,
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ALL PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE VISIT THE ICA WEBSITE, WWW.ICAPHILA.ORG,
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PROGRAMS IN CONJUNCTION WITH TRISHA DONNELLY.

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Art Review:

January 2008



Transformer: Trisha Donnelly

'Polymorphous' or 'inexpressible' are the words that people usually reach for when approaching Trisha Donnelly's art, which is one reason why a survey of her work from the past decade, opening this month at Philadelphia's ICA, sounds so tantalising. Just what kind of brain-frying experience would it be to see her accumulated output? What wisdom would be gleaned, for example, from drawings realised in careful, delicate cross-hatchings representing an aura or delineating a void? Or from equally obscure choices of

photographic subjects, such as a menacing black wave or a headless swordsman? But then her art has never resided in the sum of its parts; it's more about going with a vibe: an intimation of all that art can be, which would be pointless to try to contain within anything as earthbound as definition. Photographs like *The Hand That Holds the Desert Down* (2002) or *The Vibration Station* (2002) invite us to reverse our way of thinking in order for an act of creation to take place. The first is an image of a sphinx, its massive stone paw perhaps not resting on the sand but keeping every grain from flying into the ether; while the other is a church organ shown upside down, as if hanging from the ceiling.

Donnelly's most notorious piece remains her arrival at her 2002 exhibition at Casey Kaplan astride a white stallion, from which she decreed the surrender of Napoleon. Questions as to why she should address the status of a long-fallen European emperor arose only to be obscured in the hazy poetry of her pronouncement: "With this I am electric, I am electric." These are deceptive, simple gestures with which the artist is able to do nothing less than unsettle the fabric of the universe: with Donnelly, it seems, the more you look, the less you know.
Skye Sherwin

Untitled II (Peralta), 2007, c-print,
1.59 x 11.2 cm, edition of 5. Courtesy
of the artist, Casey Kaplan, New York,
and Air de Paris, Paris.

TRISHA DONNELLY
18 JANUARY - 20 MARCH
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GALLERY NOTES

SECOND FLOOR: JANUARY 18–AUGUST 3, 2008

TRISHA DONNELLY

Picture a pause. Now pause. Time, literally and metaphorically, is a signature of Trisha Donnelly's work. A drawing requests slowness, a sound piece stretches a phrase interminably, a video presents an action in slow motion, a photograph freezes a turn of the torso. This pause generates shifts, fractures, and collapses in time, both in the present and in time's historical reverberations.

This exhibition requests time. In keeping with the performative function of her work, from drawings to demonstrations, Donnelly casts the exhibition as an agent. Using sculpture, drawing, photographs, text, sound, video, and painting, Donnelly composed this installation, her first U.S. solo museum exhibition, using works made between 1998 and 2007. This survey installation yields a new work of art, one thoughtfully hewed from the past.

The works on display, all but one sculpture and three audio works presented on a single, soaring wall, propose a reconfiguration of the past constructed from a rigorous, highly personal selection of works. What transpired was the manifestation of a highly collaborative conversation between artist and curator. Finally, this show proposes that the compression of different types of exhibitions can yield an entirely new kind of exhibition and artwork simultaneously.

–JENELLE PORTER, ASSOCIATE CURATOR

Trisha Donnelly (b. 1974 and lives San Francisco) has had solo projects at Modern Art Oxford (2007), Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2006), Kunsthalle Zurich (2005), Kolnischer Kunstverein (2005), and ArtPace, San Antonio (2005). She has been included in numerous group exhibitions. Donnelly teaches at the San Francisco Art Institute and is a visiting critic at Yale. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Carnegie Museum, Walker Art Center, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Tate Modern, Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, among others.

A catalog will be produced for the exhibition

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TRISHA DONNELLY

6 OCTOBER TO 16 DECEMBER 2007

Press View: Friday 5 October, 1pm to 3pm

'Donnelly's works exist at the threshold of possible experience or understanding and require, if not optimism, at least suspension of disbelief.' Art Review

Modern Art Oxford presents a new exhibition of San Francisco-based artist Trisha Donnelly. Born in 1974, Donnelly is one of a new generation of artists to have emerged in recent years. The exhibition will be the first major public presentation of her work in the UK.

Donnelly works across just about every possible medium, using drawing, the photographic image and sound, to create installations and events that propel us into playful and unsettling worlds. For her exhibition at Modern Art Oxford, Donnelly plans to create an architectural equivalent of the building's sounds. Donnelly will transform the three interconnecting upper gallery spaces into an enclosed 'audio form' within which she produces traces of the galleries' multiple frequencies.

Suzanne Cotter, curator of the exhibition, comments:

'Donnelly has an extraordinary capacity to disrupt our normal way of seeing and thinking about the world, be it through the uncanny solidity she gives to her drawings and sphinx-like forms, or the boisterous energy of her proposals and interventions. Donnelly captivates us in her suggestion that everything doesn't always have to be the way we think it is.'

Donnelly recently participated in this year's acclaimed Manchester International Festival, contributing a new performance piece to *II Tempo del Postino at the Opera House, Manchester* in which a group of the world's leading contemporary artists attempted to defy accepted notions of the exhibition.

Born in San Francisco, California in 1974, Donnelly graduated from Yale University School of Art in 2000. Since then she has exhibited in numerous exhibitions in the United States and Europe. Donnelly's work is also represented in the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and Tate Modern, London.

Group exhibitions include: *Uncertain States of America* at Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway; The Serpentine Gallery, London; Reykjavik Art Museum, Reykjavik, Iceland and The Heming Art Museum, Heming, Denmark (2005-7); *The Secret Theory of Drawing: Dislocation and Indirection in Contemporary Drawing*, The Drawing Room, London (2006); *Day for Night, The 2006 Whitney Biennial*, The Whitney Museum of Modern Art, New York (2006) and *Of Mice + Men: 4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art*, Berlin, Germany (2006). Donnelly is one of sixteen international artists included in the forthcoming exhibition at Tate Modern, *The World as a Stage*, which explores the historical relationship between visual art and theatre.

The artist has presented solo exhibitions at Art Pace, San Antonio (2005), Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland (2005) and The Wrong Gallery, New York (2004). Forthcoming solo exhibitions are planned for the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia and The Renaissance Society, Chicago both in 2008.

The exhibition at Modern Art Oxford is accompanied by a series of events, including an evening listening to some of Trisha Donnelly's favourite music by Fats Waller and others, and a series of screenings of Dirk Bogarde and John Ford films.

To coincide with the exhibition, Modern Art Oxford, in association with The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, is publishing a limited edition artist's book containing texts written by Trisha Donnelly and designed by M/M (Paris).

The exhibition is curated by Suzanne Cotter, Senior Curator at Modern Art Oxford. A sister exhibition of Donnelly's work is planned for The Douglas Hyde Gallery, in July 2008.

Trisha Donnelly will be in conversation with Suzanne Cotter on Thursday 15 November at Modern Art Oxford. For details visit www.modernartoxford.org.uk

ENDS

For further information please contact Sara Dewsbery, Press and Marketing Officer on 08165 813813, Email sara.dewsbery@modernartoxford.org.uk

TRISHA DONNELLY

Guide for visitors

Let me explain.

This work is an evening. One evening. The following is an account of this work. For I am as unused to it as you. This space offered itself to these not for the purpose of an exhibit. but instead a waited view.

1. (The Ballroom)

Aloosened timing of this room creates its repeat. Blame size for its distance. I rate it as a ballroom. The music does go on and on until it is no longer true. Look left on first flat ground and you will see a light but accurate rendering of a type of battery*- the nature of this place and the evening. And then of course you are drawn right by a size larger than me or any. It is a type of necessity. Not a sculpture and not a prop. But more of an appearance. Final and lurk. Barely moveable but for its single wheel. But how it stays as a line in sight. I could not ask more. It is a partial form fulfillment of the drawn view.

Half-way down the space on your right, I layout.

The elevator, our piston, opens to "D>U>", a looker who returns your view.

A levitation over the door is a form of the Oxford branch.

2. (the side split arc)

The wheelchair ramp of the middle space is slightly blocked by half of a planet's image- in wood- earth's softest stone- I gave in to hours of purpose. The place and land was a dream as it appeared first grey then red with multiple moons (closest to an Arizona plus China). Partner to be found in the next space. These form a go degree conduit. Call this a practical solving: a decoration in spirit of the valve that opens and closes between the two rooms.

The photographic image is one of an eight-part vert.** document with the name "Way To"; see her face in progress lifts its eyes to the heavens.

The painting on the left-hand wall places in this room an electric post-photographic; the faltering line is a partial past of the image (look back to know your brother).

A vibrational arc rotates and links our two larger rooms. It moves along. This room is the waking between the two others. A moment of disdain or doubt and a pause that revives just barely.

3. (L.D)

The last department *** is open just by the second face of the planet's image.

The central axis of the space is balanced by two pressures on opposing walls. A lucky and golden balance of blue celestial time. And it goes on.

There are seven images in the room. And one light painting for Rae. Note the sound, appropriate volume. And it goes on. Like a good mist. You will lose this fall upon leaving but revive always the sense of this place.

I said nothing for the roses but who needs to. There are as always not and never enough. Don't you be troubled by boredom. Like roses it dies.

And then of course the exit is in reverse.

For the final cause take the elevator. It holds the 2nd rotation. And knows the motion of the airborne destruction.

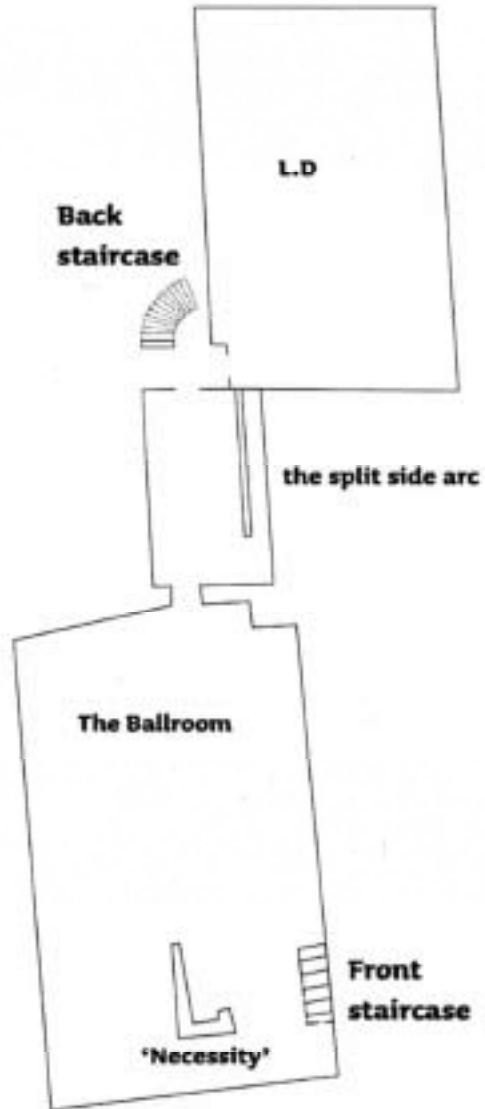
.....
*1 drew something to this and describing it seems necessary as I think of it as the standard. the sense of the 3 plates. It is a partial form, a partial reactor, power form for a tiny tube that looks like a candle is at the below. Its hollowness assumed despite what looks like a wick. Apuncture tool, like a punch dagger but hollow. Above rotate three partial forms. With a fleshed lip around each looking like a cell, diaphanous within the circular lip of the objects or forms or whatever they are.

They are an energy flesh to simply say, a unit living from and for its rotating action. They revolve all three of these distanced from each other with magnetic space and sensitivity but much warmer towards each other in knowing of each other's precarious balance as they revolve away from but still above the tool their bottom half becomes unfinished in their rotation. The motion erases the portion but only momentarily. Two seedlings of these forms begin to learn on either side of the 3. At the hearing distance from these seedlings begins a nearly formed circuit, appearing only from the continued rotation...breath on glass. Fog on mirror. Only form present with the life of the parts. Above these three in total is a full and unmoving disc. A listener.

**vertical, in relation to screen motion

***lingerie department

EXHIBITION PLAN



TRISHA DONNELLY

6 October – 16 December 2007

FIND OUT MORE

Artist in conversation
Trisha Donnelly will be in conversation with Suzanne Cotter, curator of the exhibition on Thursday 15 November. 6.30pm £4/FREE to Friends and concessions. Booking essential on 01865 813800

Please see the calendar or www.modernartoxford.org.uk for a full list of talks and events accompanying this exhibition.

SUPPORT US

Modern Art Oxford is a charity and your support makes a difference to what we can achieve. If you have enjoyed this exhibition, please make a donation.

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frieze

Issue 112

January - February 2008

A sign insisted that access to Trisha Donnelly's exhibition at Modern Art Oxford was gained via the museum's front stairs; the three spaces that the show inhabited were clearly intended to be experienced in sequence. An optimist might therefore have expected an unfolding narrative, a progression of scenes, or an installation that, in having a front, a best side, signals awareness of the viewer who stands before it. Instead, the untitled installation of diverse objects that filled the galleries hovered uneasily at the edges of the rooms or in corners, like shy children pushed reluctantly into a party.

The first object to catch fire in a corner of the viewer's consciousness was a looming and lumpy structure near the top of the stairs. An off-balance pillar covered in baggy black fabric, it lurched towards the high ceiling, made two right-angled turns and ended pointing loosely back at the floor. Attached by straps to the room's metal rafters, it defied all the expectations one might have of an object – and particularly a work of art – of its size. Without composure or convincing physical integrity, it seemed embarrassed at its own existence, responding to the space's shape and dimensions without answering them in any sensible way.

Just preceding this ungainly leviathan, but only noticed afterwards, was a small pencil drawing pinned to the wall. Hesitating between the authority of a diagram and the abbreviation of a preliminary sketch, it provided just enough information to invite contemplation but just little enough to permit decryption. A guide to the exhibition, written by Donnelly, began, not without a trace of irony, 'Let me explain'. In a text incorporating the sorts of grammatical dead-ends and non sequiturs that she employs in her work she refers to the black fabric pillar as 'a type of necessity ... not a sculpture and not a prop. More of an appearance.' The drawing is 'a battery', and Donnelly goes to some length to identify each of its elements and its role in an arcane and ambiguous system of energy production.

At the far end of the space ('I rate it as a ballroom', writes Donnelly) the mood lightened as a mossy exuberance of evergreen Leylandii foliage frothed over the edge of a balcony. From behind it, a recording of soupy, upbeat lounge jazz played on repeat: the kind of culturally superior aural wallpaper that lines theatre wine bars. Vases of roses either side of the next doorway further encouraged viewers to drop their guard; perhaps Donnelly's show needn't be as taxing or unyielding as at first it appeared. After all, most of it looked, from a distance at least, much like the kind of art we are all familiar with, particularly the final room of drawings, paintings and prints. It is only up close that it

looked somehow 'wrong'. Gold panels seemed to employ the language of Minimalist painting but, as we neared them, turned out to be generously padded silk and velvet supports for concise, delicately painted marks that sent our understanding of them glancing off into fruitless figurative or functional interpretations. In a world in which aesthetic comprehension so often relies on comparison and cross-reference Donnelly regularly achieves the rare feat of creating images that simply look like nothing we have ever seen before.

Very often she leaves the viewer trying to ascertain where accident, intuition, pragmatism and precise intentionality meet in her work. At the side of the second room a stash of spare Leylandii branches was piled at the end of a narrow corridor, a detail that for a moment seemed like a thrilling glimpse behind the scenes before one realized that the space was built by Donnelly especially for the show. Equally, abject chunks of yellowing foam shoved into a

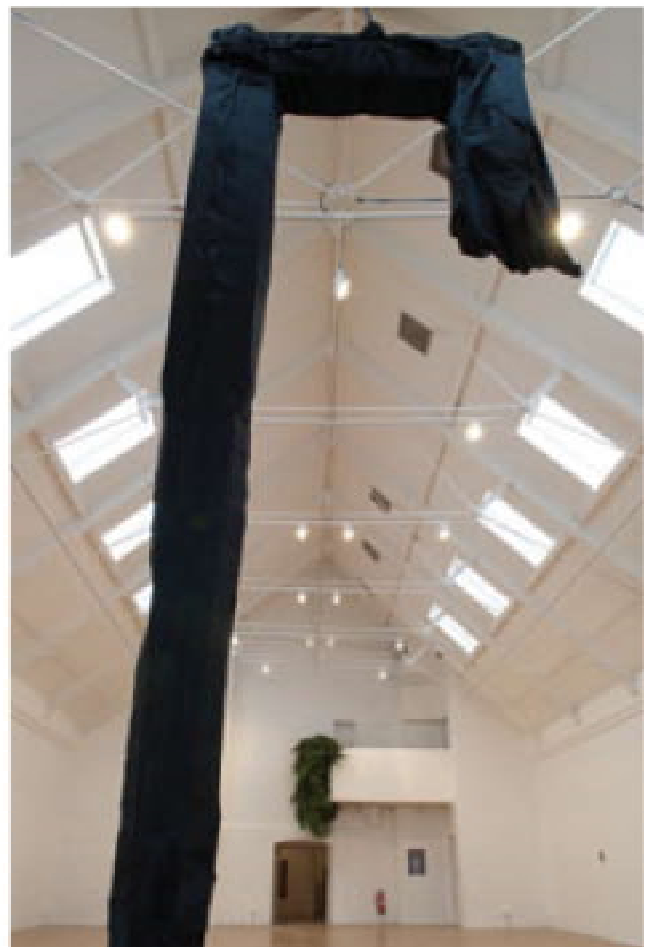
nearby ceiling became almost bewitching when it dawned on you that they were probably put there by the artist too.

Donnelly's skill is in pulling focus on the competing auras that attach themselves to spaces and objects. She creates things that bear on their surfaces enough strangeness to seem worthy of our time and contemplation, but which are resistant enough to leave a lingering suspicion that we might be just conjuring shapes in the darkness. The show's final work was situated in the museum's elevator: a framed black and white photograph, barely discernible in the dim lighting. The lift's single-storey journey allowed scarcely enough time to register the photograph's shadowy, capsule-like space, let alone guess at its significance. Existing in a fleeting moment in between two floors, like much of Donnelly's work the photograph's power drew on its bewitching shyness and its close-quarters insistence on distance.

Jonathan Griffin

Trisha Donnelly
2007
Installation View at
Modern Art, Oxford

Trisha Donnelly



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ARTFORUM

SEPTEMBER 2007



Trisha Donnelly,
Satin Operator (12), 2007
color photograph,
62 1/2 x 44"

Trisha Donnelly

MODERN ART OXFORD

October 6-December 16

Curated by Suzanne Cotter

Trisha Donnelly tends to deal in displacement, honing in on barely communicable transcendent or liminal experiences. The San Francisco-based artist's work includes video of herself performing a rain dance and imitating a rock star's onstage euphoria; blunt, documentary style photographs of the dancer Frances Flannery enacting a baffling ritual; allusive yet maddeningly obscure semi-abstract drawings; and such interventions as sounding two brief cascades of organ music at the start and finish of gallery hours, thereby opening up a caesura. Accordingly, churls might call Donnelly's art a tease. What it feels like, though—as her first major UK show, consisting entirely of one large, interlinked installation, will likely evince—is the output of someone who, not content with bookish charter about the economy of desire, instead strategizes to register its effects on our shortchanged selves.

-Martin Herbert

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The New York Times

E36

September 28, 2007

Since its 2003 survey of Thomas Struth, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has been getting serious about photography. In 2005 it presented a Diane Arbus retrospective and, in a stunning move, acquired more than 8,500 works by absorbing the Gilman Paper Company Collection. Last spring it offered a glimpse of video and new-media works from its

holdings. (Who knew the Met even had video, let alone a David Hammons?) Now the museum has designated a gallery exclusively for the exhibition of photographs made after 1960.

ART REVIEW KAREN ROSENBERG

The new space is certainly an improvement on the rotating photography displays located in a crowded, noisy hallway outside the modern-art wing. There, tucked between a gift shop and a bathroom, visitors could get up close (often too close for the curators' comfort) to the large-scale works the museum had been acquiring since the department of photography was founded in 1992.

Those pictures will finally have some room to breathe in the new Joyce and Robert Menschel Hall for Modern Photography, a high-ceilinged, gray-carpeted sanctuary on the second floor, across from the special exhibition galleries for drawings, prints and photographs.

The inaugural installation, "Depth of Field: Modern Photography at the Metropolitan," a sampler rather than a thematic slice, makes the Met's priorities clear. The photography curators at MoMA need not worry: "Depth of Field" presents a distorted history of photography, dominated by white, mostly male Europeans and heavily weighted with references to history and landscape painting.

Things are off to a promising start with Adam Fuss's "Now!" (1988), a large and dynamic photogram made by splashing photographic paper with water just as the flashbulb popped. It faces off with Rodney Graham's "Welsh Oaks #1" (1998), a topsyturvy tree (the roots extend upward, the branches downward) that suggests the upside-down projection of a camera obscura. These two arresting images put the process of photography front and center, even as they



"Now!" by Adam Fuss is part of the exhibition "Depth of Field"

Depth of Field *Metropolitan Museum of Art*

undermine the medium's historical, documentary function.

They are bright spots in an installation that formalizes even the most free-spirited artists. Felix Gonzalez-Torres's series of photogravures depicting footprints in the sand are imprisoned in a vitrine. Wolfgang Tillmans, known for his personalized installations of multiple photographs, is (mis)represented by a single, large-scale still life. Trisha Donnelly's "Satin Operator," an abstract image made by rolling a photograph on a flatbed scanner during the exposure process, is the lone exception, pinned to the wall like an exotic butterfly.

As the presence of the Donnelly suggests, a surprising amount of space is devoted to artists whose

practice wasn't, or isn't, exclusive to photography. One wall holds a mixed-media representation of a Dennis Oppenheim earthwork, a photo collage by Gordon Matta-Clark (depicting the New Jersey frame house he split in half) and a shot of the sculptor Charles Ray bound to a tree branch during his famous 1973 performance.

Across the room is Sigmar Polke's semi-abstract image of men drinking, made from a negative exposed in a São Paulo bar and selectively developed. This photograph-as-hangover reveals the darker, boozier side of an artist better known for his Pop-inflected painting.

The show's German hegemony begins with the Polke and continues into the second gallery, through the Bechers and their prodigious offspring Struthsky. (The name is shorthand for Andreas Gursky and

the Thomases, Ruff and Struth). Mr. Struth's "San Zaccaria, Venice" (1995), an image of tourists awed by a Bellini altarpiece, shows the museum and the photographer engaged in polite mutual appreciation. In contrast, it is somewhat shocking to see the Met contextualizing (as few museums can) photographs from 9/11, comparing Mr. Ruff's enlarged JPEG of the smoking World Trade Center towers to Turner's 1834 painting "The Burning of the Houses of Parliament."

Comparisons to painting abound in the wall text, as if to justify photography's presence in a museum full of Rembrandts. Vermeer and Caspar David Friedrich are used to bolster Sharon Lockhart's nighttime shot of a man staring out from a disorientingly reflective window. The Lockhart is flanked by one of Rineke Dijkstra's portraits of gangly teens and a Cindy Sherman from 1981, in which a jeans-clad Ms. Sherman lies on a blanket in an apparent state of post-traumatic shock. These works give off a seductively standoffish vibe, as if the Met were making fun of its own awkward phase.

Despite its limitations, "Depth of Field" is not a bad debut. The museum is exceptionally positioned to tell the story of early photography, especially since the arrival of the 19th-century-heavy Gilman Collection. The recent past is not a priority, but for that we have MoMA, the New Museum and, increasingly, historical exhibitions at commercial galleries. We can also expect more from the Menschel Hall's future installations, which will explore themes like "photography about photography." (The Richard Prince cowboy that closes "Depth of Field" is just the beginning.)

The museum has chosen the Rodney Graham as the show's promotional image, but Mr. Gursky's "Schipol" (1994), taken inside the Amsterdam airport, might be more to the point. The Gursky, as the wall text tells us, is "a landscape layered with nostalgia, structured by modernism and sealed behind glass." Which also describes the Met's restricted view of contemporary photography, beautiful though it is.

"Depth of Field: Modern Photography at the Metropolitan" continues through March 23 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; (212) 535-7710, metmuseum.org.

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June 7 - 13, 2007 Issue 610

Detail from
"Satin
Operator"



Trisha Donnelly



Casey Kaplan, through June (see Chelsea)

To introduce her lyrically cryptic third solo show at Casey Kaplan, Trisha Donnelly wrote a brief Gertrude Steinesque text. It begins, "I incline toward the minds of others/and all it is/all it is—is the overt panic/the mind mass..." The verse readies us for what follows: a relentless, mischievous upending of perception in which images and objects don't correlate visually, scents are incongruous, and sounds are subliminal.

Two pieces just inside the entrance set the tone. *Be-boa*, a nearly inaudible sound work (easily mistaken for the buzz of fluorescent lights) hovers around *HW*, two floor-to-ceiling, cotton-covered steel armatures, which disrupt the natural flow of traffic into the gallery. The objects are embroidered with esoteric, audio-related symbol the meanings of which are unclear.

In the main gallery, the aroma of fresh pine emanates from branch piled in a corner. A nearby series of photographs titled "Satin Operator" depicts the distorted head and torso of what appears to be an old-time Hollywood starlet. A second group of photographs combines prismatic abstractions with images of a trumpet bell and the handwritten word *PERALTA*. The latter might refer to skateboarder Stacy Peralta, but given Donnelly's tonal inclinations (and obscurantism) she might just like the way the word sounds.

At irregular intervals, another audio installation fills the space with a cathedral-like bell. As it tolls for a minute at a time and a clamor fills the air the show resonates along with it. Like Donnelly's poem, her polymorphous works offer an experience that is lucid with no need for logic.—*Amoreen Annetta*

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ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

NEW YORK

Trisha Donnelly
CASEY KAPLAN
525 WEST 21ST STREET
MAY 11-JUNE 14

Close your eyes for a moment while visiting Trisha Donnelly's third solo exhibition at this gallery. A pile of pine branches in the first room and the sound of bells ringing intermittently in the second might provide just enough stimulus to trigger a memory—perhaps of the holiday season, a vacation, or something not typically associated with art. Much of Donnelly's work operates metaphorically, as if to forge suggestive links between her practice and larger, sometimes otherworldly ideas. Subtle connections between fiction and fact abound in this show, like tiny seeds planted in the back of our minds that bloom later on. Consider, for example, *R. Creeley + Levitating Wave* (all works 2007), a delicate drawing on fabric that references the American poet and an imaginary oceanic event. Other works connect sound and space with a dramatic touch: *HW*, an embroidered cotton and steel sculpture depicting sound waves and pressure, is draped like a theater curtain at the entrance of the gallery. A series of sculptures on wheels, all entitled *Braker*, are embroidered with a quasi-phallic shape and placed randomly throughout the gallery, helping to split up, shift, and symbolically bookend the other artworks on view. If Donnelly's earlier work examined artists' ability to create, sustain, and shape myths (notably channeling Napoleon's surrender during a 2002 performance), this exhibition forsakes narrative momentum for a precarious standoff between chaos and calculation. This is, as is always the case with her work, a risky proposition, but Donnelly pulls it off with free-floating associations and magical thinking.

-Lauren O'Neill-Butler

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The New York Times

E29

Friday, June 1, 2007

TRISHA DONNELLY

Casey Kaplan
525 West 21st Street,
Chelsea
Through June 14

Trisha Donnelly is not interested in your “getting” her work. The gallery release she has written omits the customary introductions and explanations but features an abstruse poem (well, it resembles a poem) composed by the artist:

I incline towards the minds of others
and all it is
all it is - is
the vert panic
the mind mass
of cantled freaks
tho constant triple knock of 3 parallel
pains
I am the all star epileptic truth –
x4 x4 x4
africa take me in your form.

The works here include a series of C-prints made by placing a shipping tube wrapped with a photograph of an unidentified woman on a scanner; a scan of a trumpet’s bell partly obscured by a slip of paper that reads “Peralta” (a reference both to the skateboarder Stacy Peralta and to a town in Spain); steel-shaped armatures covered with peach-colored fabric; a small photograph of the interior of a B-17 bomber; drawings showing fragments of movement or objects; and a sound piece with booming church bells whose frequency increases over the course of the show.

This hodgepodge of sound, text, image and performance (on opening night Ms. Donnelly moved two sculptures, then banished the audience from the gallery, then let everyone return) is in keeping with her genre - and interpretation-defying oeuvre.

But while her work admirably stands apart from easily consumable art, packaging it for a gallery show creates problems. Her works are less interesting as objects than as a body of ideas; Ms. Donnelly withholds so much from her viewers that her work runs the risk of being more interesting explained than experienced. If you favor philosophical abstraction over something more concrete - the “all it is - is” embedded in her text - then it is easier to accept her methods.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

PARKETT

LAURA HOPTMAN

ELECTRICITY

According to the website where Trisha Donnelly has taught in the new genres department for the past several years: her work questions the necessity and viability of making art.

However hilarious (if her course is successful, you end up in law school!), it is not a surprising assessment, considering that the topic dominating a substantial number of articles on the artist written over the past few years is just how impervious Donnelly's practice is to interpretation. Words like "ephemeral," "immaterial," "ambiguous" and phrases like "barely visible" and "difficult to decode," point the discourse on Donnelly towards dilations on strategic obscurity, the subjective esoteric, and even the paranormal. Without being exactly pejorative, these frustrated attempts to explain Donnelly's work reveal how profoundly misunderstood it really is. Donnelly might be the single truest artist/believer in the necessity and viability of art after, say, Barnett Newman.

Donnelly's oeuvre is uncharacterizable and polymorphous. It includes text, demonstrative activity, intermittent sound, fields of energy, gravitational forces, levers (and the drawings that are their portals), video, and photographic evidence of metaphoric phenomena, as

well as musical compositions, written dialogues, and visionary projects as yet unrealized, like *THE VIBRATION STATION* (2002), a working organ upside down. Although Donnelly's works often happen only once and leave behind no record, and the sound pieces are timed to go off at intervals, making them easy to miss entirely—to call her work ephemeral is to miss crucial elements of its existence. Donnelly's demonstrations-re-enactments of events that may or may not have occurred in history—happen for a witnessable period, but continue for much longer, as her activity does something to alter time, space, or, more grandly, history. Of her now infamous work at Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York in 2002—in which she rode in on a horse dressed as a courier to read a decree of surrender on behalf of Napoleon, and rode out again—she explains that her gesture not only ended a conflict that had ceased without formal armistice, but that it finally made the iconic Emperor exist as a human. Unbeaten, Napoleon remains iconic; in defeat, he can symbolize a death for all eternity. We, on the other hand, having witnessed this historical punctum, are rendered more alive. "The emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine," Donnelly read in her pronouncement, "and with this I am electric, I am electric."¹)

A similar sensitivity to dimensionality—in the conceptual sense of time and in the physical sense of space—is necessary to fully consider Donnelly's

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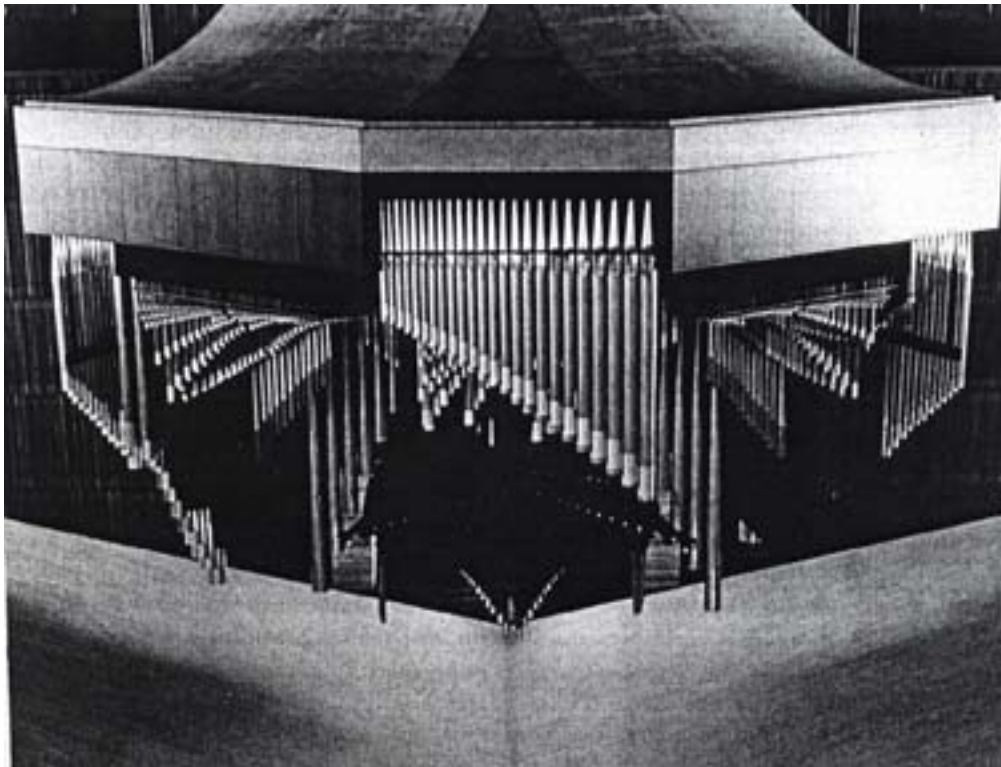
Trisha Donnelly

drawings, which, although rendered with careful, almost pedantic attention to detail, can still be extremely reticent, even if the image is recognizable, as in *UNTITLED* (2005), a slim bell pull--a ripcord that at first glance seems available only to the wildly imaginative and to those who read wall labels. *UNTITLED* is an example of the way that, in Donnelly's drawings, as well as in some of her photographs, it is not what is depicted that counts, but rather what it does and, concomitantly, what it is. Perceptually, the work is merely a pencil drawing of a piece of rope with a toggle, but metaphysically it is a work of art predicated on the artist's awareness of her ability to make the thing itself, and not just a representation of it (like Barnett Newman's zips or Jasper Johns' flags). Likewise, the viewer can choose to believe that the work is a picture of a

rope, or an actual ripcord attached to a parachute that can save your life in an intellectual freefall.

Donnelly has a way with mediums, or rather, has her way with mediums in a manner that makes them useless as descriptive designations. She requires of them that they supersede their expected parameters, and requires of us that we understand them as multivalent. A still photo can remain a still photo, even as it unfolds in time. Take, for example, *THE REDWOOD AND THE RAVEN* (2004), a sequence of thirty-one black-and-white photographs of the modern dancer Frances Flannery who performs a work she choreographed to a poem by Edgar Allan Poe. As a super slow-motion animation, each photo in the sequence is shown individually for a single day over a period of thirty-one days. Text on paper, which is normally flat, gains volume in Donnelly's

*TRISHA DONNELLY, THE VIBRATION STATION, 2002, silver gelatin print, 4 X 5" /
DIE VIBRATIONSSSTATION, Silbergelatine-Abzug, 10 X 12,7 cm*



TRISHA DONNELLY, *BLIND FRIENDS*, 2001
C-print, 11 x 17" / *BLINDE FREUNDE*, C-Print, 28 x 43 cm



hands, in both sound and substance. *BZRK* (2003) is a poster-text produced for the fiftieth Venice Biennale, but more importantly, it is a character insertion of an historical, secret human weapon let loose during wartime. The poster is not an orthographic acronym for the noun “berserk,” it is the Berserker-hysterical, in the very hot Venetian summer of 2003.

Text then, as Donnelly proves, does not only represent form, it is form, just as action is, and can be read, heard, felt, or witnessed. Concomitantly, sculpture might be, as someone once said, the thing you bump into when you back up to look at a painting, but it is also the act of backing up as well as the space into which one backs. It is clear that sounds—a bell, a cannon, a voice that cries furtively, “Oh Egypt!” have bodies and can situate themselves within spaces, fill them, as well as travel through them. Sound can also be text. Take for example the title that exists only in audio of a series of Donnelly’s pencil drawings (2002) - a sound, fittingly, that can not be described in words.

Donnelly’s work seems to exude a profound belief in the notion of art as a situational phenomenon based on how it exists in relation to other things in the world and, just as importantly, how it is experienced. For Donnelly, your reception of a work of art should be dependent upon where you are and when you arrived there, upon whether you try to parse it based on previously received ideas or consider it *in medias res*, whether you see it or apprehend it in other myriad ways. An early work, *BLIND FRIENDS* (2001), is a large group photo of people on a beach. Instructed to walk in the direction of the wind, they have been photographed heading off in every direction. The photo is an exquisite instruction or, to some, a clue as to how to approach Donnelly’s work to get to where you are going, you don’t always

have to see where you are going. An addendum: not seeing something does not mean that it isn’t there.

The difficulty that one encounters in trying to decipher Donnelly’s work is a symptom of what makes it so powerful and so crucially important at this moment in time, within a contemporary art ecosystem dominated by the eminently readable. Beyond her time-traveling acts of valor and her medium-shifting, Donnelly’s work lies beyond the specificity of language. Her oeuvre represents a truly contemporary, truly radical re-interpretation of the notion of a work of art as the embodiment of the Absolute, as it was first expressed by postwar artists like Barnett Newman who, weighed down by apocalyptic events, and puffed up by a lunatic belief in art as a talismanic, even godly thing, saw in it salvation or at least profound revelation. It was Newman writing at the start of the Abstract Expressionist odyssey who first drew the line between merely making (performing, interpreting, illustrating, arranging) and creating--bringing into existence a new totality, an end in itself. For Newman, what was at stake was no less than the chance to contribute to reality. Donnelly’s work engages in this very gambit. Newman also believed, as does Donnelly, that something that exists as pure knowledge and is, in this way, inchoate, fundamentally inexpressible as language. Images too are poor vessels to embody the *echte* reality of an idea like, for example, “I am,” and thus they must be accompanied by conviction, which is to say that no one can really be faulted for observing that Donnelly’s work is inexplicable because, in fact, it is. This, of course, in no way blocks us from understanding it. And when understanding hits, and when the ideas that are her works constitute themselves in my mind, I am electric, I too am electric.

1)Exhibition list, Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York, 2005

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PARKETT

Schwa

TRISHA DONNELLY

BEATRIX RUF

At the close of her Kunsthalle Zurich exhibition, Trisha Donnelly gave a performative lecture, although she didn't use its original title THE 11th PRISMATIC (2005) and instead billed it as a four-part description of the phenomenon of the 11th prismatic refraction of a photograph into an object. With the aid of slide projections and audio input, she added yet more levels to the exhibition space and her works, which already presented a panoply of different shades of reality, fiction, space, and time. For her opening gambit the artist dislocated the real space of the lecture and our own reality by declaring that her lecture was in fact a radio broadcast, after having first--by means of a lightning-fast reality loop--transformed the female speaker into a fictive male figure (Paul), who could change sex again in an instant and repeated the strands of her argument as a voice from the other side, deeper and turned up, her level intensified. This voice reported on the shock to the sense of sight, should the eyes linger too long on a photograph with its ensuing splintering of the image in time and form.

BEATRIX RUF is the director of the Kunsthalle Zurich.

The photograph thus, so we are told, becomes an object with numerous dimensions; its one-dimensionality begins to stutter, multiplying the presence of its realities, becoming a phantom. "This was not a mystical experience. Do not make the mistake of that interpretation. Instead understand it as a metronomed experience. A mathematical realization. Mechanical not spiritual." ¹⁾

With the compelling force one has come to expect of Trisha Donnelly's demonstrations and the authority of the uninterrupted monologue, she proceeded to report on four types of echoes--a short-circuit, interference, a fracture, and a tear in the listener's perception--which

transform one's original, conventional perception of what is happening. Photographs by J.P.D. (a reference to a drawing in the exhibition that shows a wooden handle with her father's initials incised into it)--photographs that can be nothing and everything. Direct communication and direct realization: someone looked into the camera and the image looked back. Then come the audio pieces, in which the sounds rebound off each other, due to interference, and start to wish for more room, until their desire for space creates such a distance that they can be endlessly variegate, individual and a single sound all in one: "One point, all places."

With the simultaneity of sense perception typical of her work, Trisha Donnelly pilots this notion towards the image of a mirror--that could, however, also be an image from a radio-broadcast situation that we find ourselves in at present. She describes the daily shock of the rebound and the distancing that we experience.

Trisha Donnelly

IN THE RECOMBINATION OF THE NOT SO VAST DISTANCE
(The vortex)

Now

If there is a climax to the object there is no object.

With the assistance of this recording
you will build a vortex.

A point will emerge from the original form, grow into an endless, revolving
point moving towards the back of the room.

Listen the first time.

(recording- Slavyanka Russian Men's Chorus "Borodino")
Take the highest male voice. Listen and track it throughout the recording.
The sound can compress like a photograph. While listening, flatten it into
an object. It's a comb-like structure. If necessary start with the image
of the object. Full object follows.

Flatten for transport. Hold.

Listen the second time.

Split the voices open like opposing ribs. Snap them open and take the lowest
male voice. Listen and track it. Again, the sound can compress like an object
within a photograph- flatten for transport.

Now listen the third time.

Third instance- recombine the two objects. Action is delicate and no less
so beside time's illusion of progress. Shift and lean the first object
slightly to the right side before recombination. Lean into the bend. Rotate
the image. Place off track the zipper form. Close it. Off register yes
but close it regardless.

The force of the shift and the attempt to balance will create a natural
momentum. A fall forward. It is not a true chasm, just the view of the chasm.
Note the difference. Get the sense of the fall. As you listen this will
provide the first steady revolution of the vortex. As it progresses, the point
will rotate and grow, get fat with simultaneous forward and sideways momentum.
Like a reverse exit wound. But to build it you must continue through the sounds
clipping and compressing the two forms together. The large size remains in the
front of the head. The exit is precise. The maintenance of this form defines
the object. With no maintenance of the parallel this object dusts itself.

However, in both the mirror and the radio our perception range is too confined; we are caught in a to and fro with no hope of escape. Not so in the photographs of Greta Garbo, whose figure causes the mirror to bounce back off the camera, treating it, from the outset, with distance: “Greta Garbo-what-not who-was feedback. What you see in the photos is the ricochet. The bounce, the push off, the long arm. Photographically Garbo = original prey. Garbo woke to a million Garbos.” When one Garbo photograph meets another, the first Garbo multiplies to become infinitely many Garbos; when her photographs come together in a book, Garbo becomes a stuttering reality, a multiplication of realities, spaces, and times. Pictures look at pictures, pictures multiply and the pictures burst, becoming multi-dimensional objects: Garbo “what-not who” (in the exhibition Donnelly showed a drawing with the name [Joan] Fontaine, to whom she attributed a similar response to the camera).

Trisha Donnelly, whose exhibitions suggest a fundamentally iconoclastic approach, and who—even in the sparsest showing of her pictures—will punctuate their reception with unexpected bursts of sound (in the same way that film scores influence one’s perception of the images on screen), seems to be particularly interested in pictures, or rather in the reconfiguration of our perception of pictures. She has immense faith in the “pictures” that she creates through drawing, video, photography, sound, text, and “demonstrations,” for her use of different media always plumbs the depths of that realm where, through force of will, fantasy, and imagination, “things” actually come to exist and have meaning. Like many of her famous colleagues—Alfred Jarry, Antonin Artaud, Marcel Duchamp, Boris Vian, Jena Baudrillard, Joan Miro, and the Marx Brothers, to name but a few—Trisha Donnelly also likes to turn her mind to things that other people ignore: parallel realities and pata-logical definitions of reality-tem-

pting the spirit. She confronts the public with her experience of possibilities, and tests and extends the impact of art by the above-mentioned, but also, most importantly, by introducing a possible “void.”

When Trisha Donnelly entitles a photograph of a sphinx *THE HAND THAT HOLDS THE DESERT DOWN* (2002), she changes not only our perception of this all-too familiar figure, but also the meaning of pictures in general and the relationship of language and image. (If it really were the case that the desert sands are only held in place by the massive limbs of the sphinxes, what would happen if the latter were to stand up and make off? Would the desert disappear with them?)

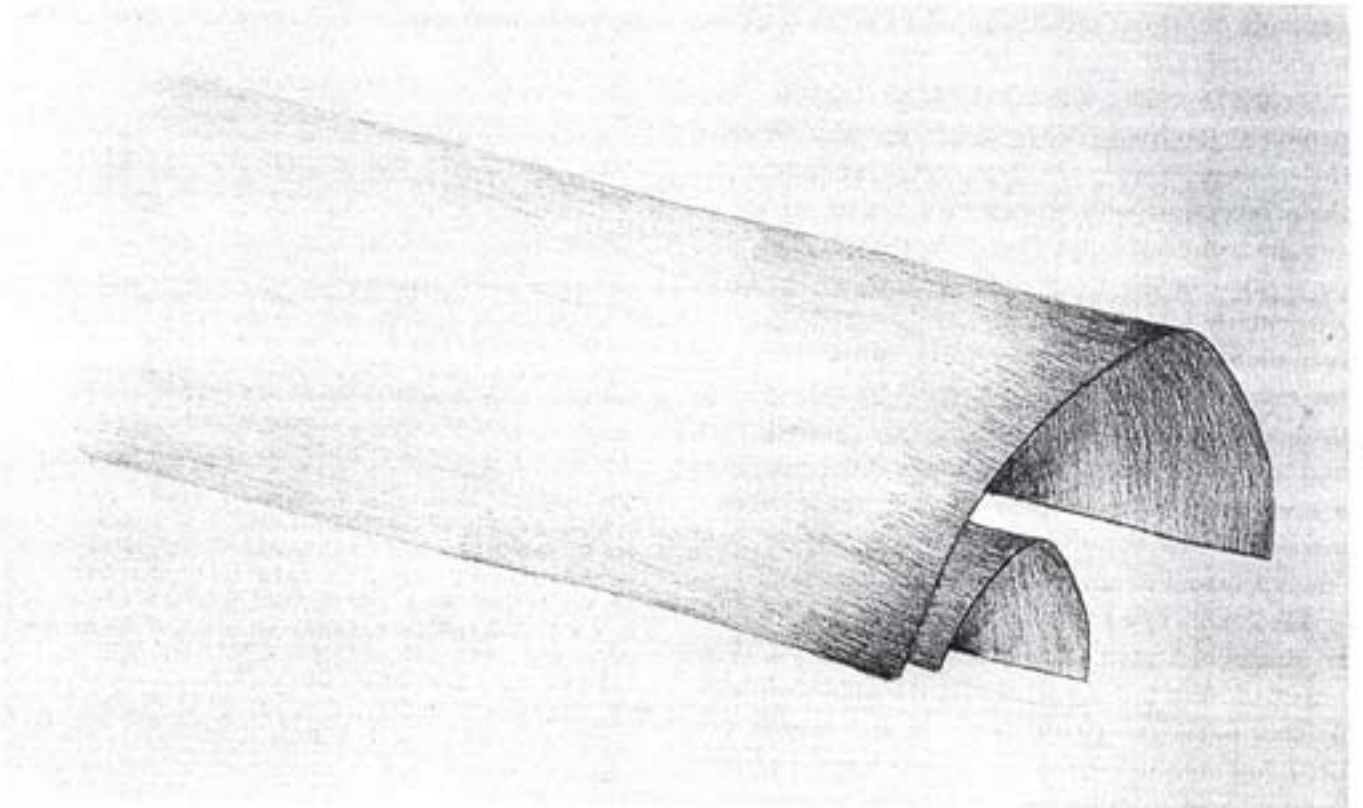
In the audio work *THE SHIELD* (2004), Trisha Donnelly turns sounds into a physical presence by taking a carefully calculated sequence of tones from the deepest and most sonorous to the highest, most metallic. And by means of precise audio techniques, she creates a non-material wall to divide a room. Hence one sense-perception turns into another, as Donnelly plays with the limits of one’s perception, with realities, with language, experience, and order. Synesthesia--the superimposition or simultaneous awareness of sense-impressions that are other-

wise distinct from each other--has an important function in Donnelly's work (seeing colors with letters or numbers, perceiving physical forms when listening to music, and much more). This is not so much an indication of the excessively heightened perceptive faculties of the artist (or of artists in general), as a permeability that transforms the act of relating things to each other into things themselves.

Trisha Donnelly's live works only exist as oral reports by those who were there to witness them, which is to say, as numerous different individual versions. For the opening of one of her first solo shows in 2002 at the Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York, the artist rode into the gallery on horseback, as Napoleon's courier, and announced that the Emperor had capitulated ("If it need be termed surrender, then let it be

so, for he has surrendered in word, not deed."), and rode off again stating "and with this I am electric, I am electric." In another of her demonstrations she asked the public to read out loud from the libretto of Alexander Scriabin's (1871-1915) unfinished symphony *Mysterium*-like Donnelly, Scriabin was interested in synesthesia. The composer planned this symphony as a seven-day spectacle of sensory sensations, involving music, words, dance, light, fire, and smell. After the reading the artist extinguished the light and played "Classical Gas" by Mason Williams, telling her audience that she had found the sound of a solar eclipse. After the lecture she announced that she would take up the next morning of the entire audience, thereby carving out a place for herself in the consciousness of every single participant in the performance, laying claim to their time in the same way that she turned it into a

TRISHA DONNELLY; 'the title of this artwork is a sound, recorded on CD, and can be played for the viewer on request, 2002, pencil and colored pencil on paper, 30 x 22" / Der Titel dieser Arbeit ist ein Klang, 'aufgenommen auf einer CD und erklingt auf Wunsch des Betrachters, Bleistift und Farbstifte auf Papier, 76,2 x 55,9 cm.



work of art: through rumors and myths, and above all, in the voids between things and reality, between presence and absence.

Many of Donnelly photo and audio works, and her drawings too, include events that make their presence felt but never come to anything, that one is certainly aware of but that are nevertheless not there. The full reality of the work in question is therefore left open, or is the product of our own imaginations, our memories, our assumptions: her “pictures” are incomplete, fragments, ruins; they operate with densities, reflexes, reversals, and turns.

As rumors build with regard above all to Donnelly’s live work, she has increasingly begun to delegate her “Actions” to other protagonists: texts that the curators of her exhibitions record in parallel on tape--be these accessible to the public or not, gallerists, collectors, and curators have to carry out the daily tasks needed to realize a work. As in *THE REDWOOD AND THE RAVEN* (2004), a series of thirty-one photographs documenting a sequence of movements executed by the dancer Frances Flannery, only one photograph from the series is ever shown at a time, and this photograph has to be changed daily for the duration of the work’s presentation. The sequence of images and the interruptions that occur during the changeover are more important than any single, fixed image.

At the opening of her exhibition at the Kolnischer Kunstverein in 2005, Donnelly’s “performance” was pure rumor. The story was that a horse was waiting in the wings and that Donnelly would very soon surprise the public with a new demonstration. Donnelly herself fed the flames by excusing herself from the vernissage dinner a couple of times; soon the word spread that a horse had been seen, that the performance had already taken place, and so on--but the fact of the matter was that in the meantime the “performance” had indeed already been realized, in the proliferation of whispered snippets, in the sheer sense of expectation.

The game Donnelly plays with the presence and absence of things, her narratives, and her processes all persist in the work as a principle of strategic dissociation, be they in the “history paintings” and “portraits” of heterogeneous historical figures and locations (Napoleon, Tacitus, Montgomery Clift, P.P. Arnold, Joan Fon-

taine, Greta Garbo, Afrikka Bambaataa, H.D., Rome, Egypt, and many more) or in her “abstract” drawings and photographs. Her works are always realized within the context of a system of varied references. She thus activates her works at their voids--asking questions as to the nature of art, in which reality we can trust, and how we are to construe belief and knowledge in the interstices of matter and spirit, abstraction and experience.

It is with striking frequency that Trisha Donnelly uses acronyms in her works, either in titles that consist of abbreviations or in the omission and excision of information in her drawn text pieces. Take *THE PASSENGER* (2004), for instance, a drawing where the word and the idea are only present in the consonants “Th. PSNGR.” Enigmatic information? A means of communication shaped by text-messaging and the culture of abbreviation in our mobile world? A secret language? One of her most recent drawings, entitled *22 F.T.S.O. [FOR THE SAKE OF]* (2006), takes the form of a two-line drawing of levitating liquid, “a fracture” that refers to comic culture and is designed to bring movement into the space.

The lecture by Donnelly which I described at the outset posited the concept of “stuttering” and the opening of realities through a fracture in the integrity and continuity of space and time, image and sound, body and experience, reality and fiction, wholeness and fragmentation, proximity and distance. One might therefore say that language and linguistics provide an apt descriptor for Donnelly’s art praxis: in linguistics and phonology, the term *schwa* is used to designate the central, unstressed vowel sound that is represented phonetically with [◌]. The Hebrew word *schwa* means nothingness, void. It can also indicate the complete absence of a vowel. In stuttering, which interrupts the flow of normal speech, the repeated initial sounds are connected with the following *schwa*. It seems that Trisha Donnelly works with precisely this “central” void, this hiatus in the flow of language, images, and forms: Trisha Donnelly’s work is *schwa*.

(Translation: Fiona Elliott)

1) All quotes from the lecture by Trisha Donnelly are taken from the artist’s own manuscript.

Over and Out

PARKETT

BRUCE HAINLEY



In Trisha Donnelly's *UNTITLED (HC)*, 2006, a recent sculpture, there is at first the sound of chimes; even if at some point disturbed only by the wind or by creature breath, the music or noise must now be heard as purposeful. An intruder alert? An invocation? Garbled voices, as if from a far-off shortwave radio breaking up, follow the chiming. A chant in response and contradistinction. I cannot understand the entire vocal sequence: it seems to begin with someone saying, "help wanted," and end with the someone or something disclaiming, "what the hell?" But the voice, if it is a voice, in-between the articulation, reduces to murmur, not quite verbal or just beyond what language can communicate.

I tried to write about it in another manner, with other methods, by other means, and failed, and I wonder if that isn't more than a little of its purpose. What do we expect anymore from art? And, more to my task, what is expected in terms of writing "about" art? Should it be explanation or critique? Can it deter exegesis to drift into the abstract, making meaning skid on the oblique? Is "about" a contract? Between whom? Should critical writing, so called, avail itself of private knowledge? Say, if I revealed what I was told the letters "HC" stood for, especially if it was Donnelly who told me, would that "solve" the problem of its imponderables? In an age of "reality media," an owl-like vigilance should haunt biographical, not to mention autobiographical, fallacy. Perhaps artists make something only to confront what cannot be understood. If writing commandeers the second person, would you recognize it as singular or plural, would you think it was speaking about you or me, or about someone who is not simply either? Too much art, in the name—quicksand—of "philosophy" and "art history," fails to reveal the operation of the system and thus attempts to preempt the risk of failure, failure allowing all, to come to terms with our own failings, finitudes. The aim is not to communicate change but to create change, and (but?) this requires abandoning, abandonment; being abandoned. The current system is not holding; theoretical and philosophi-

BRUCE HAINLEY is the author of *Foul Mouth* (2nd Cannons Publications, 2006) and, with John Waters, *Art-A Sex Book* (Thames & Hudson, 2003).

cal foreclosure encourages the impropriety of poetic squatting. On her own pirate radio station, Avital Ronell has broadcast the following, which seems attuned to Donnelly's poetics, her operations and maneuvers, and how to deal with what they produce:

The poet, irremediably split between exaltation and vulgarity, between the autonomy that produces the concept within intuition and the foolish earthly being, functions as a contaminant for philosophy—a being who, at least since Plato, has been trying to read and master an eviction notice served by philosophy. The poet as genius continues to threaten and fascinate, menacing the philosopher with the beyond of knowledge. Philosophy cringes. Excluding and appropriating to itself the poeticity by which it is harassed and shadowed, philosophy has provoked a crisis on its own premises as a result of which these premises will henceforth be shared by the antics of the popular poet: “Paradoxically, then, it is perhaps owing to Kant that there can be neither philosophy nor literature, only a permanent scrambling, ever searching to write itself... brouillage permanent scrambling...)

Help wanted. What the hell, I think.

H.C.

Because you chime the chimes, bluely.

Because you wake up with glitter in your 6JIOXa, again, and think, better than 6JIOXa.

Because you make cheese, collect buttons, lisp.

Because, decades of 6JIOXa 6JIOXa with such tenacity, your mouth diamondizes coal.

Because even on a nightly street prowls you “tableau,” the last caryatid of the 20th century.

Because, skeptical or, rather, nonchalant about the possible knowledge of anyone's identity, frequently not even able to spy what the hook-up looks like (pitch-black back rooms), you keep mostly to first names or key attributes (“Silver Porsche”; “Cucumber”; “Garlic Breath”),

personhood a ruse, what matters how certain structures fit ad hoc openings, countless-beyond abaci-the number of your conquests.

Because you hear only what's untranslatable.

Because you're a mess.

Because you are only about your bodies.

Because there's nothing about that that's not delicious.

Because you accept the dead's collect calls; they're your family plan.

Because 6JIOXa glazes your 6JIOXa, cruller-like.

Because conjunctions join you to you by coming between.

Because, 6JIOXa, you don't look like yourself.

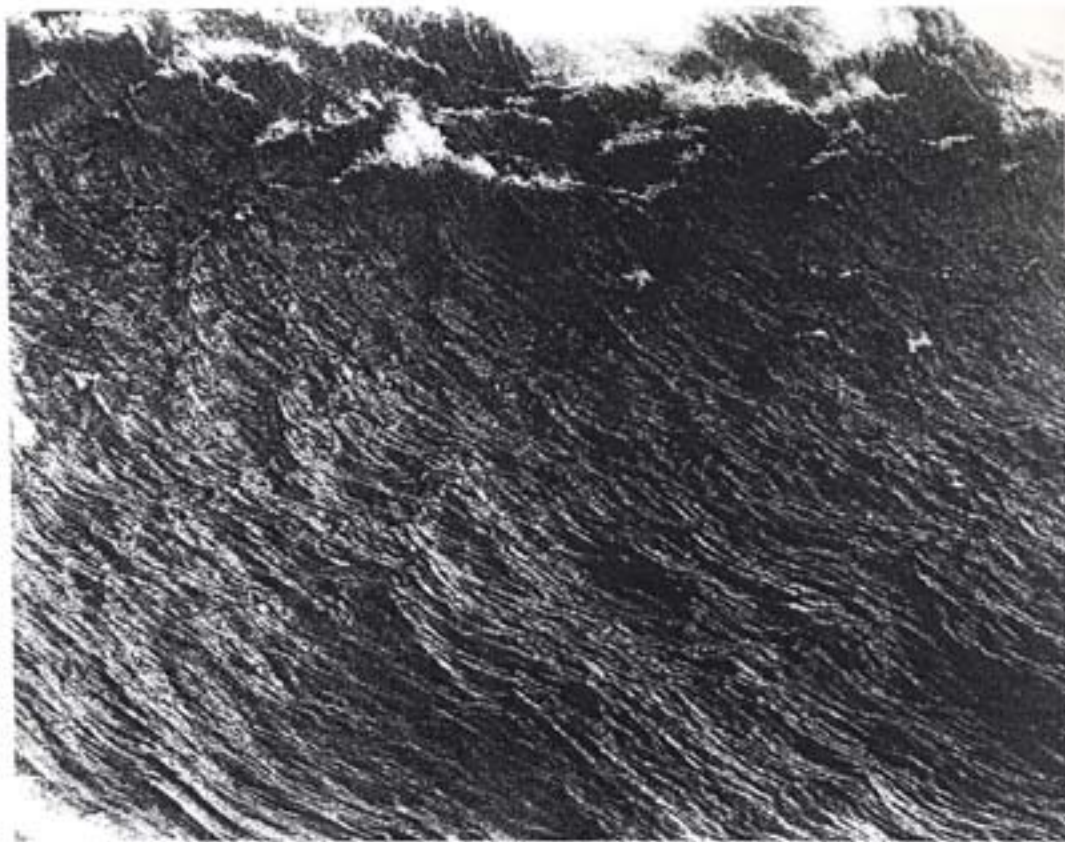
Because ewes don't look like you.

Because the only job you ever have is getting laid, sole occupation the mind wants.

Because something ended—a culture, a way of being-around the time AIDS was named AIDS, and you're sure it must be, will be, renewed, but with what not to mention by whom?

Because you have an ass but hide its use not knowing what it's good for.

Because, with satin halter tops, taxing codpieces, thongs, leg warmers, spandex Lycra, vests, chaps, improvised singlets, tassels, bikini briefs, boots, studded armbands, harnesses, rubber 6JIOXa, bandanas, gloves



(fingerless and 6nox C1), mesh jockstraps, page boys, kneepads, lace-up pouches, puffy pants, jungle-print jackets, shoulder pads, fringe, culottes, chain mail, suspenders, cheap cotton, seaman's caps, epaulettes, turquoise, western gear, t-shirts, tank tops, paludal hot pants, low, riding skintight jeans, all hand-altered, you out-peter berlin Peter Berlin.

Because you Nair.

Because you noticed me but it is such an odd looking thing.

Because you cannot get enough of you.

Because, tattooed with the international symbol for biohazard, you introduce contingencies to one another.

Because, 6nox C1, you slur your worlds.

Because you call your lice Louises.

Because faggotry's narcissism is your Cabaret, with you in the shoes of both Fosse and Minnelli.

Because, unlike malls of others, you do not look to a body for explanation, knowing it explains nothing, which is its charm, why you return to it, and why it returns to you.

Because, in nooks and crannies, abandoned piers, at recess, in bad odors, immediately after take-off, behind dumpsters, between cigarettes, recently divorced, while talking on the phone, going eighty-miles-per-hour, after snacking, on your knees, arms akimbo, before spanking, overreading, conjunction becomes you.

Because the second person is identical, therefore impossible, you and not you.
 Because you scheherazade in no-name bars.
 Because, just because.
 Because of your hegemonic black feminist cock.
 Because lemon you, sweat you, lavender you, mint you, Jicky you, b.o. you, beer you, salty you,
 блоха you—all блоха, pants down around блоха ankles, блоха блоха with блоха, блоха pre-
 off your nipple.
 Because, disdaining alcohol and cigarettes, not understanding doing speed and then just cleaning your apart-
 ment or finishing a novel, you binge every two weeks or so-grass, of course, amphetamines, maybe some
 crack on top of that-and tire out your tricks.
 Because your crotch contains a spatio-temporal rift- i. e., why it has to be yoked, sheathed, Russian-dolled-a
 basket like Dr. Who's phone booth.
 Because Santa Monica Boulevard, each block, block by block, secured by different types--trannies, cowboys,
 twink, bears, amputees, vampires, junkies, vets, musclemen, bruisers, radical faeries, midshipmen, altar boys,
 speed freaks, Eurotrash, chubby chasers, daddies, eagle scouts, truckers, gerontophiliacs, twins--you cruise,
 unenemaed.
 Because you accessorize with whatever allows skin its apotheosis.
 Because, dear diary, you Dutch-oven me like no other.
 Because, bonfire forewent, you use the ex's letters as cum rags.
 Because you deter exegesis.
 Because you believe moisturizing is the answer.
 Because you have a cock but do not know what one looks like or how to package it.
 Because, tart, your climax always conveys not its silence but its silences.
 Because, vulnerable to diseases heretofore threatening only to small birds, you test selachian, vermicular and
 mineral transubstantiations.
 Because, supplicant, you breathe, unsettling tintinnabulations which peel in an ascending scale, and, suddenly
 invoked, garbled voices, as if from a far-off shortwave radio breaking up, respond.
 Because you is a manifesto.
 Because your dialect recalls the Paraclete's.
 Because you trim bush but leave a thick happy trail.
 Because you arrive like starlight from a source long gone, the thinking
 man's 6JIOXa.
 Because you don't know when to stop.
 Because fuck you.
 Because you watch, watched, every single friend, each loved one, die and,
 abandoned, ask yourself, now who the hell is the lucky one?
 Because help wanted is the sound of sounding human, you murmur.
 Because judicious in the necessary use of sentimentality in a Hallmark
 world, you make your body into words that reveal it whether or not anyone
 wants to say them.
 Because your domain is earthquake.

6JIOXa c/o T.D.

1) Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Chicago: University of Illinois), p. 287.

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Flash Art

THE WORLDS'S LEADING ART MAGAZINE

HANS ULRICH OBRIST: *The interview happens now at the corner of Rue Jacob and Rue Bonaparte. Already this interview goes completely circular and reminds me of your favorite message from The Young Ones [British TV series, 1982-84]*

Trisha Donnelly: Oh yes. "Meanwhile, the next day." It's a break of narrative formula, usually for film, TV or radio. Something is happening in the pint and normally the device is to say, "and the next day" or "meanwhile in Paris" or "meanwhile in Los Angeles." In *The Young Ones*, in between the change of a scene all of a sudden it says, "meanwhile, the next day" it reversed the function after that, but of course then you realize the next day is the projected idea of the next day.

HUO: *Rirkrit Tiravanija would say "tomorrow is another fine day" It's a very Buddhist sentence.*

TD: It's true. But then you don't have a past but you have a future. So "meanwhile, the next day" I think is a simple validation of the space and time continuum suggestion.

HUO: *You said this is a totally historical and indestructible idea.*

TD: I think that when you have a phrase that names the next day as being the past it is completely indestructible. Once you say that tomorrow is the past, it is indestructible. The duality of any day is that it is bookended by the ideas of the previous day and the day to come. In some ways it seems our memory is much simpler that we think, so we project memory into the future. We have a memory of the future...

HUO: *Recently Stephanie Moisdon curated a show that included your first piece. Can you tell me about it?*

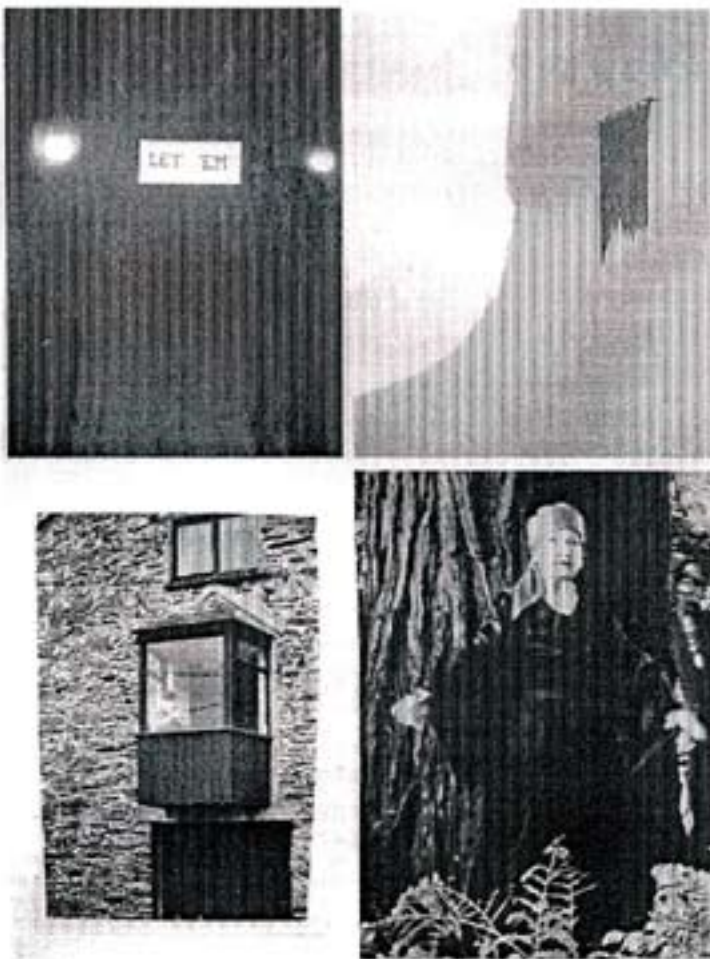
TD: It was called *She Said* (1989). Funny. I was sixteen and came to understand the object nature of " ". If you have words and they are said, then they are said and they stay in the environment like a load of mass. *She Said* is about the first time I understood that, it was the same sensation as mass. So it's the side of a chair and it just says "She Said" painted on it.

HUO: *Could you talk about your drawings?*

TD: I think that they relate to objects that you listen to the radio, if you have a radio on. I draw when the radio is on. When I'm drawing, I just wait a really long time because I have to do the right thing. So I don't draw all day, but when I have the thing I am supposed to draw I draw all day and all night.

HUO: *It comes from an object or it comes from an idea?*

TD: Both. Sometimes it comes from the sight of an object, sometimes sight is virtual. Some of the object are sounds; some of the sounds are drawings, but I think that the drawings that I do are more of a physical realization of what I am



Clockwise from top left: *Let'em*, 2005. Print from digital image, dimensions variable; *Untitled*, 2005. Pencil on colored paper, 65 x 52 cm; *The Redwood and teh Raven*, 2004. 31 silver gelatin prints (one print is exhibited daily), each 18 x 13 cm; *Untitled*, 2005. C-print, 18 x 13 cm. Opposite: *Untitled*, 2005. B/wreprint, 64 x 46 cm

thinking of than of myself (i.e., an action). Drawings can be a more intense version of the presence I think. They can act as actions. They are worse, more horrible. More distant.

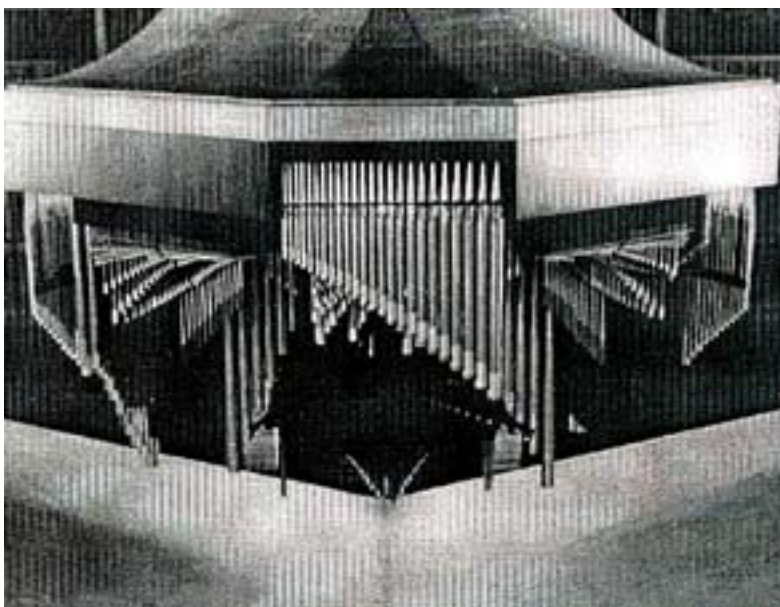
HUO: *We have [Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris] two drawings published in the catalogue I Still Believe in Miracles. Can you tell me about them?*

TD: Well, one is *Untitled*. This is of an extinct object, which is this specific act of unlatching on a leg. It's an action that is extinct because people don't know how to put them on or take them off anymore because they are not worn. Every time somebody would ask at the place where it was shown. "What is that?" the person who works there has to show them: "it is..." So *Untitled* is that. And the other

one is *The Vortex* (2001), which is the beginning of something. I understood very simply with physical space. You know when some people see the color red they have a fit, which they think separates them from the normal world. It's a physical response to the visual. So the vortex is something that I have understood as one of those thresholds.

HUO: Rupprecht Geiger, the more than ninety year old German painter, for many decades developed an almost obsessive attraction to the color red. There is a physical aspect to red.

TD: I think perhaps red is our most physically humanly understandable color because it's the first time we see ourselves dying. Blood pouring out.



Clockwise from left: The Vibration Station, 2002. B/W silver print, 10 x 12 cm; Hand that Holds the Desert Down, 2002. Silver gelatin print, 13 x 18 cm; Untitled, 2005. Video, loop. All images: Courtes of Air de Paris, Paris and Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York

HUO: *So The Vortex has to do with perception.*
TD: It's more than that, I think. It's not even as much perception. but it's imperceptible motion: you realize that you physically move through the viewable image. The corresponding piece is a demonstration- also called *The Vortex* (2003)- I did which consists of a Russian song where if you link the highest man's voice and the lowest man's voice you can build a vortex in your mind. When I play the song and I state the formula, each member of the audience builds a sculpture in their mind that is like a vortex. So you have hundreds of these built and rendered point-placed never-ending vortexes in people's minds. Hundreds of sculptures. I consider it more of a sculpture. A mass.

HUO: *The drawing is a trigger for vortex. It is not an object in this regard.*

TD: It's not. But a vortex is never an object; it's something else. We don't have a word for this. It's the same problem when you don't have a word for "not performance." it is not performance.

HUO: *Cartier-Bresson told me the last time I interviewed him: "photographs should be more seen in books than polluting too many walls" The same thing is true for the way you use drawings and photographs; they are rare instances. It is against pollution.*

TD: Yes. I think polluting something displays that you are sure of the things and mortally terrified. Every time you make a piece of work you have to ask if it really needs to exist in the world and

should you do the deed of adding more shit to the world. I write every day; that's more where I do my everyday obsessive habit.

HUO: *So writing, the texts are a daily practice for you.*

TD: Yes, the texts. They also take a long time. Sometimes I begin a text one year and then I finish it in four years.

HUO: *I am very interested in this link from art to literature and poetry because art has created all kinds of bridges in the recent years to music, to cinema, but the link to literature is too rare. Your own is a very rare instance of bringing back that link to poetry, and what is interesting is that poetry is maybe the only art form that has not been recuperated by the market.*

TD: It never will be. The only time it had a possibility was in advertising, which has beautiful stuff sometimes. But poetry has regained its status in a way: as people believing that it has a compression that is important. It's both horrible and perfect simultaneously.

HUO: *And you are a native daughter of San Francisco, which is a city of poetry; I think of City Lights Bookstore and the whole beat generation. Have these people been important for you?*

TD: No, actually, not at all. I was not so much a beat fan. Unless you could call Gertrude Stein a beat. But it's a different temperament.

HUO: *And who are your heroes in poetry?*

TD: I love Ahkmatova. Marianne Moore, H.D., Michaux and I love Yeats because I have an obsession with the Irish disaster, the feelings of disaster. If a text's category is somehow loosley dependent on structure then so many things can fall into and out of the form. I had a kind of dumb attraction to the film moments in poetry. I grew up watching

films that were already old. We weren't allowed to watch TV so we watched John Wayne's films, Gary Cooper's films, classic westerns, so I think there would be these epic statements that act as catalysts more than like a constructed poem. John Wayne would walk into a space and say something and then the entire film would shift. The film in this type of action set up is literally build for and around his lines. Set-up lines, to wind it's way around the text. The mass of the world. It is kind of like this basic masculinity, mutuality and intensity that are like an explosive statement, the low-grade hesitation and the verbal release. Some films have shorter leashes for this type of thing and make a faster dialogue. Snap you back in quicker. So, if you could build poetry that had a function to more a plot or a story, that was what I found really incredible. But you know I think I was looking for it. I needed to translate it into that structure. It's text with camera movement build in, understood as part of the formula, like writing with the correct sense of punctuation.

HUO: *You film when you travel. You were filming here in Paris too. What about your filmmaking? Is it a daily practice for you?*

TD: It's a daily accidental thing. The camera is palm sized. I never think about it.

HUO: *Can you tell me about your bigger photographs?*

TD: Some big, some small. The big ones are more like architecture. So polluting with columns. We should have a problem with photography. That's all I know.

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Trisha Donnelly was born in 1974 in San Francisco. She lives and works in San Francisco.

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Chrissie Iles & Philippe Vergne, eds., *Day for Night*; Whitney Biennial 2006, New York;
Whitney Museum of American Art & Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2006

TRISHA DONNELLY

Born 1974, San Francisco, California; lives in San Francisco, California

Trisha Donnelly bucks the convention that binds the exhibition to an expectation of being visible and presentable to viewers over a predetermined length of time. Her demonstrations occur unannounced and remain undocumented, at her insistence, and these unpredictable works are presented without explanation, creating an evasive mysteriousness that functions almost like a Hitchcockian “McGuffin.” Just as that plot device twists the narrative of a film, thereby disrupting its temporal logic, Donnelly’s works question the very nature and logic of the exhibition. In an untitled work at the Cologne Kunstverein in 2005, Donnelly presented a grand, improvised organ work-created by an organist in collaboration with the artist-which was played only for a few minutes as the museum opened and right before it closed, thus marking the working day but also suggesting that the real goings-on might take place after hours. A single coughing sound was buried in the 20-minute recording. Visitors might be there at the wrong time and miss hearing it; or, they might hear it but think they’d imagined it.

Donnelly’s silent untitled video (2005) appeases viewers’ expectations only slightly more. Consisting of a frozen image of a taxidermied wildcat on a 10-minute loop, it shakes violently for 20 seconds every couple of minutes, as though the camera were convulsing. Neither medium nor message is explained, and although the convulsions suggest a potential narrative, none unfolds. This abrupt minimalistic aesthetic is also apparent in Donnelly’s drawings, which often isolate a single element of an image, such as a sheet of cascading water cut off jaggedly in midair or a chinchilla’s ear. Such truncated hints elude attempts to piece them together into coherence.

Donnelly’s works, especially her demonstrations, contain certain extravagant elements. In an untitled piece for the opening of her debut solo exhibition in New York in 2002, she arrived unannounced and dressed in full Napoleonic costume on a white horse, dismounted, read a short proclamation, and then left. The act of withholding as much as possible from viewers so they appreciate all the more what little is released to them seems almost quaint in the context of our contemporary zoom-lens society. But Donnelly resists the expectation that art be quantifiable and lasting, favoring instead a carefully administered titillation.

ESM

Afterall

Where some imagine that there is only one Trisha Donnelly, I know there are at least four. One is surely a biological entity, and another a projected image, like the one who acts out the codeless semaphore of *Canadian Rain* (2002). A third, a literary invention of the first, sometimes appears in her place in the vicinity of the art world. A fourth is a malleable figure, co-authored by the third, and anyone who tells her story. (There may be more: one who can travel through time, another who can speak in the tongue of seals, and so on.) The following essay surveys some of Donnelly's recent practices in this light, including a lecture at the Frieze Art Fair in London in October 2004, an exhibition at Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York, summer 2004, and one of the works included in the 54th Carnegie International Exhibition in Pittsburgh, winter 2004/05.

I. THE GREEN GRASS STARTS TO GROW

'Where is Adventure? What is Culture?' was the last of six panel discussions held on the occasion of the 2004 Frieze Art Fair,¹ chaired by curator and artist Matthew Higgs, the panel included Christian Jankowski, David Robbins, Nancy Spector and Trisha Donnelly. These names already suggest that the event was not intended to be your average discussion: each respondent's answer to the title's pair of impossible questions was to be bent into mute and funny shapes. Jankowski improvised his replies on an electric guitar instead of talking; Spector discussed the accidental transformation of an artist's exhibition into a credit-card advertisement.

Trisha Donnelly answered 'Where is Adventure? What is Culture?' by recounting an episode from the convoluted history of Russia around the turn of the 17th Century, which centered on a man who claimed to be Dmitry Ivanovitch II, the youngest son of Ivan the Terrible and the rightful heir to the Russian throne. She then played a short section of a British radio program about people returning in their old age to the bungalows their parents had built, which segued into a passage of a song called *The Green Grass Starts To Grow*. 'Listen really carefully,' she said over the song's opening notes, 'and I want you to think about the song. I don't want you to enjoy it.'

A quick set of evocative, seemingly disconnected images was offered to the audience, and her talk was done. Only later did her presentation's odd details appear to ravel together, slowly, into a tentative cloth of meaning. Each section was about land, filiation, death and rebirth. A Polish pretender to the throne of Russia is shot in the snow, cut to pieces, burned to a powder and then shot from a cannon back to his motherland. 'We used to kill the goats off,' an old woman says next, 'and we used to eat them.' Dionne Warwick then sings a different reply, words written by Burt Bacharach: 'A summer breeze becomes a winter storm... and then the weather turns warm...'

Asked, during the questions that followed, 'What do you think you are accurate about?', Donnelly replied, 'I found out recently that I have less vision

1. This discussion was held on 17 October 2004, at the Frieze Art Fair's pavilion in Regent's Park, London, and was broadcast live on Resonance 104.4 FM

in my right eye, so it turns out I'm a very perfect archery shot'. Her pronouncement played off the panel's gnostic subtitle: 'A discussion of the relationship of art to entertainment, touching on the comedic, being popular and failing miserably'. The blurrier her vision, she seemed to say, the sharper her aim and the truer her shot. The more miserable her failure, the greater became her success. Disgraced by his enemies, murdered, the false Dmitry still returns triumphantly as a ball of light a glorious blaze.

II. FACETS OF THE PRISM

Each image flashes past, representing, I am told, one facet of a prism. Three drizzles of red acrylic drip sideways to form the letter 'E' (*E*, 2004: it stands for 'Egypt', whose imagined landscape serves as one structuring conceit of the show); *The Slowness* (2004) is an abstract waterfall that gives birth to a stylised letter 'N', its vertical bars extending to the edge of the paper. Another is a banner that reads, in awkward lettering, 'th PSNGR'. which is 'The Passenger' less its vowels (*The Passenger*, 2004). A fourth, untitled work appears (*Untitled*, 2004), a meticulously drawn thing that looks to be a rotting saddle, or crumpled metal wreckage. 'How is it attached?', I ask, fishing for clues. It's pinned, I am informed, for if it were framed the drawing would not be able to go through the wall. During the opening, I learn, Donnelly would lead members of the audience around to the office on the wall's other side, where the drawing continued on a second piece of paper, a pale-blue outline of the first work's modeled abstraction. Another pencil sketch (*The Volume*, 2004) depicts concentric circles on a cream paper rectangle, one tentatively drawn ring inside the bounds of a thicker circle, demarcated by tiny notches around its perimeter. This one is figurative, a picture of a massive volume mob for the 'sound' of the exhibition; it envisions these drawings not as discrete works, but material indices of the sound Donnelly was making as she was creating them. The pencil is imagined as a noisemaker, another kind of instrument.

Two photographs from 2002 appear among the more recent works: *Egypt* (2004), whose murk depicts a shadowed set of figurines, and *Hand That Holds The Desert Down* (2002), a silver gelatin print of the right hind leg and upswept tail of the Sphinx. (Donnelly's title inverts a joke the artist has cited by comedian Steven Wright: 'I levitate birds but no one seems to notice.')

Other works incorporate unobtrusive changes over the course of their display. *The Redwood and the Raven* (2004) is a group of thirty-one unique photographs of a dancer taken in the forests of northern California, one mounted each day of the show; another drawing, abstract blue panels inside a 'thought balloon', has a paper caption on some days and not others. There are shorter cycles as well: a twenty - minute video loop of shivering circles that bookend the written name 'Frances' (she's the one in *The Redwood...*) and a recorded piece, *Oh Egypt* (2004), which sounds periodically over the duration of the day. Displayed together, these rhythmic cycles interlock to ensure that each viewer's encounter with her works is shaded slightly differently. The dancer's position has changed; the untitled drawing is given a handwritten caption ('Matthew', it reads); and this time the voice never sounds, her voice, that sings, '.... Oh! Egypt!'. *The Dj was playing so loud that everything else was drowned out. 'Might as well stop the piece and get a drink,' she declared.*²

The ensemble of works I've just described were exhibited together at Donnelly's 2004 exhibition at Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York City, and incorporated what the artist calls 'a demonstration' on the event of its opening. The artist played a song that she claimed would stop time, and then led the assembled crowd up 10th Street to Maurizio Cattelan's Wrong Gallery - which is just a doorway. From behind the door came the sound of a cannon, loud enough to shake the door, which signaled that time had started again. This demonstration, like all those before it, was not recorded or documented in anyway, being transmitted to a larger public, if at all, by verbal description, or word of mouth.

2. Nicholas Trembley, 'Supersize Spress', Artforum.com/Diary, 2005, <http://www.artforum.com/diary/id=9141>.

3. Bruce Hainley, 'The Consensus Thief', New York Times Style Magazine, 29 August 2004, pp. 276-77.

The Passenger,
pencil on paper,
269.2 cm x 105.cm
2004

4
John Miller with
Nancy Spector,
'Waterloo', Kolnischer
Kunstverein (press),
2005.

5
See George Baker,
'Fraser's Form', Andrea
Fraser: Works: 1984-
2003, Kunstverein
im Hamburg, 2004,
pp.50-77.

6
Joseph Leo Koerner,
The Reformation of
the Image, Chicago:
University of Chicago
Press, 2003, pp.11-13.

7
J. Miller, op. cit

8
T.S. Eliot, 'The
Function of Criticism',
Selected Essays,
New York: Harcourt,
Brace and Company,
1950, p.21.

9
Elizabeth Thomas,
'Trisha Donnelly',
54th Carnegie
International (press),
9 October 2004.

10
See Nicolas Bourriaud,
Relational Aesthetics.
Paris: Les Presses
du reel, 2002 (1998),
p.16j and Hal Foster,
iAN Archival Impulse',
Octob.M, no.110, Fall
2004, pp.21-22.

overleaf
The Black Wave,
silver gelatin print,
127cm x 152.4cm, 2002

This has a few important effects. First, the demonstration stakes much on the singularity of the individual's experience of the work, which is understood to be both specific and essentially irreproducible. 'You had to be there', sings a chorus of critics. Here her practice takes a Protestant tone, with the document as a false idol. (This tone may be implicit as well in her 'small scale, careful production, [and] ruthlessly winnowed output', as well as the peculiar literalism sometimes evident in the names of her work: if it looks like a volume knob, that's because it is one.³) A second, connected effect is a mood of confidentiality, where the audience is enlisted into the ritual production of the work. This persists even in the smallest instances of Donnelly's practice. Bob Nickas has a recorded monologue by Donnelly, but one of its conditions is that the curator must invite people to listen to it one-on-one; when her recordings, meant to be played only in a gallery space, were played privately for me, they were prefaced by a conspiratorial warning: 'I'm not supposed to do this, but I will, in this case'.⁴ Her audience cannot depend on their anonymity, for these works, like some of Andrea Fraser's recent practices, reject surrogacy, middlemen and safe distances Donnelly's reliance on oral transmission means that to speak of the work is to join in, to agree to the terms of its ritual magic. Retelling plays on the inevitable gaps in memory, on distortions, brags and exaggeration, and on the distance between experience and narration, which is the space of fiction. The framing and describing of an exhibition are put to work in the service of art practice.

This constellation of events and artifacts gains its mystique by acts of strategic removal, a linguistic/sculptural cutting-away. 'The Passenger' becomes 'PSNGR', 'Ride into Darkness' is rendered 'RIDR'. The reduced means of iconoclasm may collapse upon themselves; ritual magic may become modernist poetry; we may discover that 'there never were, nor will there ever be, idols, since these are artefacts of the iconoclast's conviction, the imaginary Other of all critical campaigns'.⁶ Donnelly's practice is magical in that, in the words of Nancy Spector, it 'seeks to transform experience and alter reality with little more than an incantation or visual talisman'. Nevertheless her talismanic 'demonstrations' both admit and question their mystique. Following Donnelly's former teacher John Miller, 'there's something shabby in the act that undercuts the mythification - a productive shabbiness'.⁷ There are objects, crafted things in real space, like any others. *Yet while the Holy Spirit is never seen, it is nonetheless dramatically present...*

III. PULLING PARTS OF THE BODY FROM ITS POCKETS

Trisha Donnelly's work is about structures of belief. At least that is what I am given to believe. I fear I've been fed lines. Even so, I will repeat them. At least the words sound different as they come out of my mouth. The risk of criticism is invention, and fact is hard to master; 'interpretation is always pulling parts of the body from its pockets, and fixing them in place'.⁸

But does her work not invite such projection? Does it not slip into the back of people's minds, to create 'exponentially different forms in each person's imagination'?⁹ There may be the beginnings of a disagreement in the public discussion of this aspect of her work. Nancy Spector has described Donnelly's practice as an 'art of non-sequiturs', and the threads that connect her objects and installations as the products of a logic 'entirely her own'. In other accounts their impact 'only unfolds within the visitor himself'; the work, it is said, 'taps into our own contingent assumptions and circumstances to furnish meaning'. It may simply be that Donnelly addresses her audience in a way unfamiliar to those whose aesthetic receptors have been dulled by relational aesthetics on the one hand and archival collections on the other. She neither intends to open a participatory, social 'interstice' where 'meaning is asserted collectively', nor to create 'perverse orders that aim to disturb the symbolic order at large'.¹⁰ One way to explain the queer public-private tenor described above is to say that artworks such as the *Hand That Holds The Desert Down, or Black Wave*

(2002) perform as allegories; they ‘simultaneously proffer and defer a promise of meaning: they both solicit and frustrate our desire that image be transparent to its signification’. As a result, they appear strangely incomplete - fragments or runes which must be deciphered.¹ The work seems to change colour under the eyes of those who aim to fix it; like allegory it contains strange opacities, reflexes, turnabouts in logic. Regardless ‘we must ourselves decide what is useful to us and what is not; it is quite likely that we are not competent to decide.’¹²

IV. A TIGER’S LEAP INTO THE PAST

In his landmark discussion of allegory Craig Owens wrote that the allegorical mode had flourished in post-revolutionary France, when painting was enlisted to produce images of the present in terms of the classical past. It did so by condensing narrative into a ‘single, emblematic instant ... in which the past, present and future, that is, this historical meaning, of the depicted action might be read.’¹³ He quoted Walter Benjamin: ‘Thus to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now, which blasted out of the continuum of history... It is a tiger’s leap into the past.’¹⁴

Donnelly’s demonstrations often make some such leap, though her tiger’s leap multiplies its classical pasts, which embrace ancient Rome and Egypt, False Dmitry, Montgomery Clift, Debbie Harry, David Lee Roth and Napoleon. How should we connect the dots between this crew of sympathetic dictators, unsuccessful solo artists, autodidacts, sainted messes and sexual double agents?¹⁵ Donnelly seems drawn to their radical self-invention, as well as to their sometimes fatal humanity; through the mirror of her practice their failures become ecstatic, world-creating events. *The mind is its own place, and in it self can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n.*

The opening of her first exhibition at Casey Kaplan in 2002 was the scene of one such transformation. The artist appeared on a white stallion, dressed as Napoleon’s courier (an oft told story, this, now in a kind of rhetorical drift or ruin). The text she read seems to be a matter of record (or was some intrepid soul’s jotting simply repeated in latex versions?). ‘Be still and hear me,’ she began. ‘I am a courier. I am only a courier. But I come with news of destruction. I come to declare his end. If it need be termed surrender then let it be so, for he has surrendered in word, not will. He has said, “My fall will be great but at least useful.” The Emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine. And with this I am electric. I am electric.’ This single, emblematic instant tells an entire story; it tells of Napoleon’s dream of the imperial Republic, his authority and pride, and his final flight from the disaster at La Belle Alliance.

Another such leap occurs in *Letter to Tacitus* (2004), a five-minute oration recited daily at the 54th Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. Picture a well-dressed man circling the Carnegie’s Romanesque atrium (surrounded, if you will, by a pack of people with digital cameras). From a sheet held firmly in both hands, he recites the text of a letter written to Cornelius Tacitus, senator, consul and great historian of ancient Rome. This correspondent replies to Tacitus’s description, in a previous letter, of an ideal imperial republic. ‘That dream,’ he returns, ‘is not a map to your earthly paradise. It is instead a death of straightened pain and demand. A blank space.’ Hather, the writer argues, it is Tacitus’ desire for this just and true state that matters, that is his salvation: ‘For the true Rome is the fire above dark water. The true Rome is man’s hope for the true Rome.’ The reverberations of the great hall swallow his words. False Dmitry stands in the wings, on legs of different lengths.

Just who is this retinue of failed dreamers, couriers and impostors? What purchase do they have on the present, or the future? What should we make of their self-invention and lordliness, their imperial ambition, their vision of polity and their final immolation? History paintings sit still, frozen, waiting for their recursive fragments to be pieced together in the present, *to be enjoyed by those who are able to remember*, whereas these tableaux live and breathe.¹⁶ Later, let’s tell stories about them.

The Volume, pencil on paper, 91.4 x 60.9cm, 2004

11
Craig Owens, ‘The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism’, in Barbara Kruger, et al. (ed.) *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p.5.5

12
T.S.Eliot, op. cit., p.20

13
C.Owens, op.cit., p.58.

14
Ibid., p.59.

15
The last two are borrowed from David Thomson’s evocative description of Montgomery Clift in *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, p. 168.

16
‘...ament meminisse periti’, Jacques-Louis David’s epigraph for his publication ‘Le Tableau des Sabines expose publiquement au Palais National des science et des arts, sale de la ci-devant academie d’architecture: Par le Citoyen David...’, as cited in Ewa Lajer-Burcharth ‘The Revolution Glacee’, in *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Loius David after the Terror*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 130

Afterall

The D from W,
c-print, 30 x 20cm
2005

Her Artillery -Bruce Hainley

Swords, shields and cannon fire: for Trisha Donnelly art is more than reveille. The battle began a long time ago, before she was born. It continues long after whatever the little word after means has fallen into disuse.

Drawings, video, the deployment of photographs not as pictures, actions- it would be best to consider it all, if not sculpture, sculptural; the interrogation of space (mental, physical, emotional) and its electric conquest and resistance-these are demonstrations of her tactical knowledge. Recently Karl Lagerfeld said he woke up one morning with an image of a long line of women in black, a kind of l'armee des ombres. yes an army of night. Glamour apocalypse. In the corps there are only various privates.

What may at first have looked like privacies, girl jumping for joy, or love ~~singing~~ signing its tropicalia - and all of that it would be extremely well to do, even though the days were coming when the sun should be as darkness and the moon as blood-this was not what it was, or only what it was, but a call to arms to figure out video before moving on to figure out something else (not that it's ever concluded, conclusive). The technology allowed her to slow time and pinpoint the ecstasy of the performer's climax, what hurls him or her out of themselves, out of the human. It allowed her to translate place and the idea of place, and elsewhere we often remain deaf to, into a language mistaken for love, instead of the seduction of the medium and its machinery. The human is just one of the aesthetic's effects. Given a sunset and a beautiful girl too many will believe anything rather than the fact that a medium is being taken apart before their very eyes, and taking them with it.

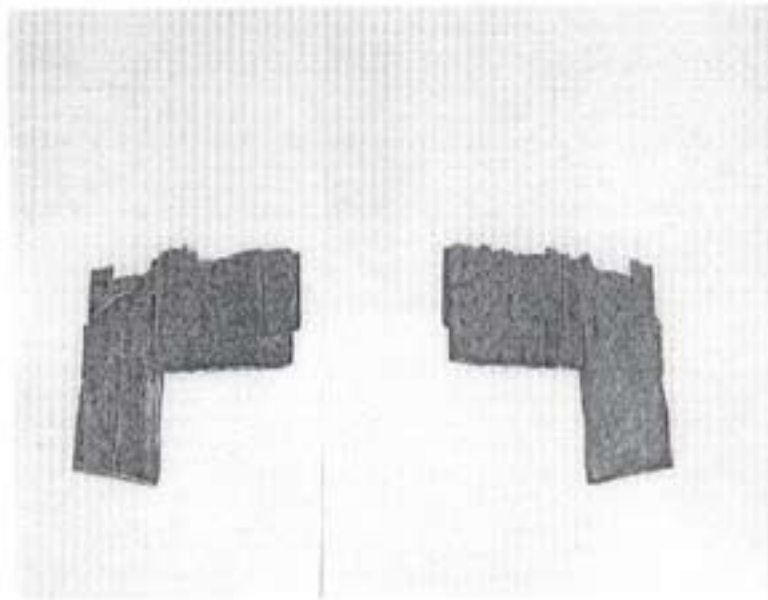
There's a picture in black and white of Donnelly as a warrior. Can't see the head, can't see the feet, can't tell if it's just a masque of masculinity or an actual dude - he's going on memory here - but I'd swear it is her, a sword in each hand. You know the look. A nimbus surrounds him, her. It's the radioactivity, it's the sublimity: *The D from W* (2005). A warrior always ready for action draws the sword, and the gesture, radioactive, continues forever, slicing through eternity, half-life by half-life. The distance from war is never very far. Every breath is one for live over death, but approaching the inevitable, nonetheless, the debt from wonder. She arrived as a messenger on horseback to announce a surrender, but it was not hers.

Still some would turn her into a Cassandra, wishing only to see romantic neo-conceptual dreaminess or, worse, the occult. *Ostriches!* They bury their heads in the sand of the beach that Bas Jan Ader shoved off from in search of the miraculous. Of his bones are coral made, those are pearls that were his eyes, nothing of him that doth fade but doth suffer a sea change into something rich and strange. Most forget the adder's poison; forget the suffering, some of it staged, a scene changed. Most forego the strangeness by relegating it to a box ticked 'magick'. Anything to forego the decomposition, an art that doth decompose. Ader was never conceptual art-lite, but, like many of his peers, dared to expand art's possibilities: telepathy, sunburns, radiowaves, astrology, ESP, weed and trips into the unknown, beyond. Whatever, it got called 'conceptual', not 'witchy' or 'esoteric'. (Is the trigger wire for these different adjectives.

activation genders?) By attitude, temperament and look when he with sly tears, when he like Gilles in black cords, when he with careful attention and attenuation seemed to put his finger in irony's dike, he knew it couldn't be left there forever. Ader was questioning, frequently though repeating the 'same' piece in different media, his own place in dutch art history - fallen from grace, falling off his bike into a river, out of the tree of knowledge, over Niagra Falls from an armchair- as well as his and object's inheritance and inherency. He who lies full fathom five is not her father. But oh the terrible work that has been tolerated in the name of Ader, 'made' (I used the term loosley) by those satisfied with the LCD of paranormal schmalz. Donnelly participates in none of this. Early on she claimed Nina Simone was her mother. Her name is Peaches. Peaches pulls the finger from the dike. Let the flood sweep LCD away.

Peaches takes a drawing and tears it into two parts, pins one part to the wall, resigns the 'missing' part to absence, mailing it to someone, anybody's guess, never to be reunited. It is a way of asking what remains of drawing, the medium, torn to pieces. Is the drawing complete? Is any drawing - anything - ever complete? Is the drawing more the part pinned to the wall or its elusive Other? It bothers; it should, since there's usually too much sublimation of the violence of representation. Donnelly has confronted Sturtevant's drawing connections, slicing and dicing into the interior immediacy of contemporaneity, its exquisite corpse; she's seen the use of defacement as autobiography. Asking what remains, Donnelly is trying to find out what a drawing is and what could be - other than luxury items people buy when they can't quite commit to a painting. Do you know what a drawing is, what it can do? It can become 'photographic' or performative', by which I mean active, atomic, atomising through a wall, leaving a blue auratic outline, call it Kirlian or call it the moisture transferred from the subject to the emulsion surface of the photograph causing an alternation of the electric - charge pattern on the film. Call it a draw between absence and presence, touching

The Redwood and the Raven, 31 gelatin silver prints, one print exhibited each day, 17.7cm x 12.7cm, 2004



the nothing that is not there and the nothing that is. It can destroy not only painting.

Afterall

The tearing, the removal, loss mailed to the Other, the morning taken, the wind of the future blowing in the corridor of the institute: this has nothing to do with the invisible, with invisibility. It is documentary. Anne Carson has written, 'the Sublime is a documentary technique.' Full of danger. Full of *temps mort*.

Donnelly kills her dinner with karate, kicks it in the face, tastes the body. Her name contains the given (donne) and it is what she sublimes. This is a disambiguation page. A grammar of ice and air and solarility to organise a rhetoric of her elements. In Kolin - in Die Brücke - she provided conjunction, a bridge, by taking away transparency and constructing a long wall to interrupt the glass allowing one to see through something, anything, too quickly. It conjoined the seen with what cannot be seen, how they gird one another, like the drawing torn to pieces holding the room with its missing. Condition: oversight. Rx dramblings of blindness.

Night is coming; it may already be here. 'There is something of death in it. She walks oblivion on a leash. Its sound is ominous and Egyptian. untranslatable, just a special effect but no less affective, and a single one of its paws keeps the desert, grain by whorled grain, from disappearing into thin air.

frieze

Trisha Donnelly employs the immaterial – esoterica, occult ritual and paranormal phenomena – to explore the material world of consumer experience

by Jan Verwoert

THE OTHER SIDE



Left:
Untitled
2005
pencil on paper
100 x 700cm

**Opposite page and
overleaf:**
Untitled
2004
pencil on paper
Diptych: each 91 x 61cm

If the temperature in a room suddenly drops, the chances are a ghost is about to appear. Of course, what will happen next no one can predict, but there are spells and charms you can learn – for example, the ideal time to summon a demon is on a Tuesday, at 11 am or 1 am. This, along with other practical information, is available from the manuals in the Sixth Book of Mose, an anonymous guide to black magic discovered around 1600. Encounters with the unknown have always involved some kind of ritual. Aleister Crowley maintained that occultism was a question not just of belief but also of practice, and believed it didn't matter whether you were into magic, drugs, sex or yoga, as long as your method worked for you. In 1969 Anton LaVey, in turn, promoted his Satanic Bible as 'a primer on materialistic magic'. In conversation Trisha Donnelly has dubbed this thoroughly pragmatic attitude towards the invocation of higher states of consciousness as an 'anti-materialist materialism'. I think this might also be the most apt phrase to describe what her own work is about.

In a variety of media, including performance, drawings, photography, video and sound pieces, Donnelly explores the relationship between the allure of occult experience and the material gestures, ciphers and icons by means of which it is conjured up. Contrary to much current art which draws on the legacy of psychedelic culture, Donnelly rarely relies on direct historical references: she never uses album covers, rare documents or the paraphernalia associated with the cults of excess of the late 1960s, for example – although the spirit of that age is a tangible presence in her art. What sets Donnelly's approach apart is the way she works through the immanent logic of anti-materialist materialism at a structural level by inventing gestures, ciphers and icons that articulate and question the very conditions required for the invocation of a physical epiphany.

The recording of a majestic organ concert, *Untitled* (2005), was played during the first few minutes after the doors opened each day at Donnelly's recent exhibition at the Cologne Kunstverein and again during the last minutes before the doors closed. In contrast to this solemn music, the show itself consisted of a comparatively cool installation of few selected drawings, photographs and a video projection. What was most notable, therefore, was the tension between the deep dark sound and the wide white room, the sacral air of the music and the sober milieu of the exhibition space. As the times of the concert meant that its audience was limited to those who either came early or stayed late, the piece played on the twin anxieties that overshadow the experience of any event like this: did we miss anything, and what happened after we left?

The crucial tension between sound and space was sustained in *Oh Egypt* (2005), played after the organ concert at irregular intervals on the massive sound system in the gallery basement. The piece comprised a recording of a voice – slowed down to such a low pitch that every vowel was a boost of bass frequencies – uttering the words 'Oooh Eeegypt'. As the voice filled the room, it seemed to designate the space as a potential site of mystical experience. Yet, at the same time, it denied the actual possibility of this experience taking place, here and now, by assigning it to another time and place, an imaginary elsewhere – Ancient Egypt. Like a lost soul in search of a body, the voice from the basement spoke as much of the desire to make the supernatural real as of the impossibility of such incarnations. The humour of the piece lay in the wonderful cheapness of the sound effect, reminiscent of the subliminal messages you hear when playing a record backwards or a B-movie dubbing voice. It underscored the fact that the secret of a good hair-raiser lies in the grungy materialism of its technological effects. If you don't see the strings attached, the trick won't work. (This is something George Lucas used to know but forgot when he went digital.)

The video *Untitled* (2005) went further towards capturing the essence of the materialist magic of effects technology. It showed a still image with the green tinge of a picture taken by an infra-red camera, a close-up of a stuffed animal, a wild cat (perhaps an ocelot) with big black eyes, baring its teeth. Every so often the image suddenly shook, as if the beast was momentarily brought to apparent life by an invisible off-screen force, emphasizing the fact that animation is the art of making inanimate things seem alive. On the wall opposite the video booth was *The Redwood and the Raven* (2004), a small photograph of an old woman in a black dress and headscarf performing ceremonial gestures in a forest. Her movements were recorded in a series of 31 photographs, presented one by one on each successive day of the exhibition like a film shown frame by frame over a month. A spirit not unlike that of a Kenneth Anger movie was conjured up and translated into a ritual staged by the woman with silent grace, a nameless ceremony to evoke a presence whose nature has yet to be disclosed. Next to the photograph a pencil drawing, *Untitled* (2005), depicted a dark, curved shape, a piece of unidentifiable stuff with an uncanny materiality; the dense texture of the graphite made the object look simultaneously flat and rounded. This mysterious sense of corporeality was echoed by *The Grounding* (2004), a black and white photograph of a strange bone structure – perhaps the rib cage of some prehistoric monster.

What characterized the exhibition as a whole, however, was that the eerie feeling evoked by the individual pieces stirred but never fully dominated the otherwise sober atmosphere of the white cube that provided the setting. Moreover, the pious mysticism was effectively leavened with a good dose of humour, for example by the inclusion of the cartoonish drawing *Untitled* (2005), which showed a sombrero hovering in mid-air like an indecisive UFO. Donnelly deliberately reduced the degree of mystery to just a subtle awareness of the possibility of an occult experience, a sense of the ineffable produced by a series of gestures and images, all of which had a distinctive material and corporeal quality.

Metonymic substitutions for the body are a recurrent motif in Donnelly's drawings. In a show at Casey Kaplan in New York in 2004 she installed complementary drawings on two sides of one wall. One depicted what appeared to be a dented piece of chest armour, while the other revealed the contours of the thing like a negative imprint on a veil. Two photographs of heraldic swords, *Untitled* (2004), were installed on each side of a doorway. *Bend Sinister* (2004) is a drawing of a blue reflective rectangular shape, which could equally well be a blade or its sheath, a glass vial or a mirror screen. Ciphers of things that reflect, shield or penetrate the body were thus linked to a situation of passage – a possible one through a door and an impossible one (except for ghosts) through a wall. Seen through the eyes of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the veil, shield, screen or blade correspond to the phallus, an empty material signifier of the threshold between the inside and outside of the body, self and other, absence and presence. As such, it is the key to the mystery: the arcane knowledge that the secret cannot be unveiled as the secret is the veil. Its sole function is to bestow meaning on the divide between the disclosed and the yet undisclosed, and thereby to provide the symbolic frame for rites of passage that stage the transition from the profane to the transcendent as a ceremony of initiation or transgression, under the sign of the phallus.

In this light Donnelly's video and live performances can be seen as attempts to share the secret of the secret, without giving it away. In the video *Rio* (2002), for instance, the artist's face is profiled against the soft glow of a lamp as she lip-synchs the words to samba love songs on the soundtrack and moves her hands in a flurry of explanatory gestures in sign language. The video *Untitled (Jump)* (1998–9) shows her bouncing into the frame from a trampoline off-screen. At the apogee of each jump she throws a pose and mimics the facial expression of various rock stars – from Iggy Pop to Dionne Warwick – in the climactic moment of their stage performance. In both works Donnelly stages a pedagogy of ecstasy as she invokes the secret of the untranslatable experience of love and rapture



Right:
*The Redwood and
the Raven*
(detail)
2004
31 silver gelatin
prints
18 x 13cm

Dressed as a soldier. Donnelly rode into her private view on a horse and announced herself as messenger sent to declare Napoleon's surrender



Above:
Untitled
2005
Video still

in the very moment of its translation into a body language of signs, grimaces and poses. In the video *Canadian Rain* (2002) the artist gazes at the viewer, repeatedly groping at thin air before pointing at the wall behind her. It is a ritual Donnelly conceived to make rain in Canada. In an untitled performance in 2002 Donnelly, dressed in the uniform of a Napoleonic soldier, rode into the private view of her show on a horse and announced herself as a messenger sent to declare the Emperor's surrender. As the bearer and revealer of the secret, the courier comes to embody the gravity and intensity of the experience of revelation. Accordingly Donnelly ended with the lines: 'The Emperor has fallen, and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine. And with this I am electric. I am electric.' At the opening of the Cologne show the horse appeared again, this time sans rider, shrouding the fate of the messenger in mystery.

By working through the physical rhetoric of opaque signs or gestures by which the secret of occult experiences is invoked, Donnelly delineates the existential concern of the practical philosophy of anti-materialist materialism as the quest to create other ways to experience experience. In contemporary consumer society exclusive experiences are a hot commodity supplied by event agencies. An event today is 'quality time' packaged as a product. In her work Donnelly challenges this dominant logic, not through any idealistic pretensions but by proposing a counter-materialism in the form of a physical language of the omen. The omen is an intense sensation of an incomplete experience, as in all its intensity it only announces the potential advent of the real event and thus reveals that it has not yet happened and possibly never will. As they address you like omens, Donnelly's works preclude you from consuming experience in the event and instead make you experience the un-consumable as the event.

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I.D.

Trisha Donnelly is the artworld's best-kept secret. Working on a strictly need-to-know basis, the 32 year old San Franciscan creates photography and performance pieces that defy categorisation. Notoriously arriving at her NY gallery debut on a white stallion and in full Napoleonic regalia, the myth is as important as the method to this artist's artist. Here Donnelly and renowned international curator Hans Ulrich Obrist move through her cryptic worlds

THE CRANK CALL

INTERVIEW

BY HANS ULRICH

OBRIST

PORTRAIT

BY ELIZABETH

YOUNG

ARTWORK

BY TRISHA

DONNELLY



HANS ULRICH OBRIST; A sense of time and time codes seems to be a thread that runs through many of your works. I just saw your new piece at Casey Kaplan gallery which is a very sporadic sound piece. Can you tell me about it?

TRISHA DONNELLY; It's the sound of a cannon from the turn of the century and it goes off randomly, so that when you're looking at somebody else's work a cannon goes off in your mind. It's not that loud but it's frightening maybe.

How is it triggered?

It's just randomly set up. It's not triggered by anything. It goes all day long and all night long...

Is it different sometimes? Is it always the same sound?

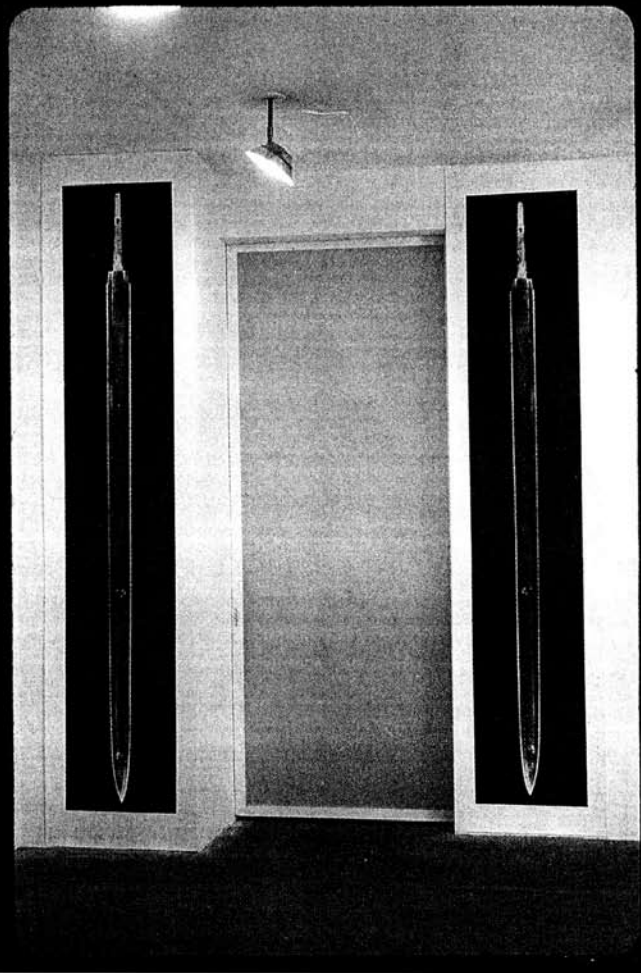
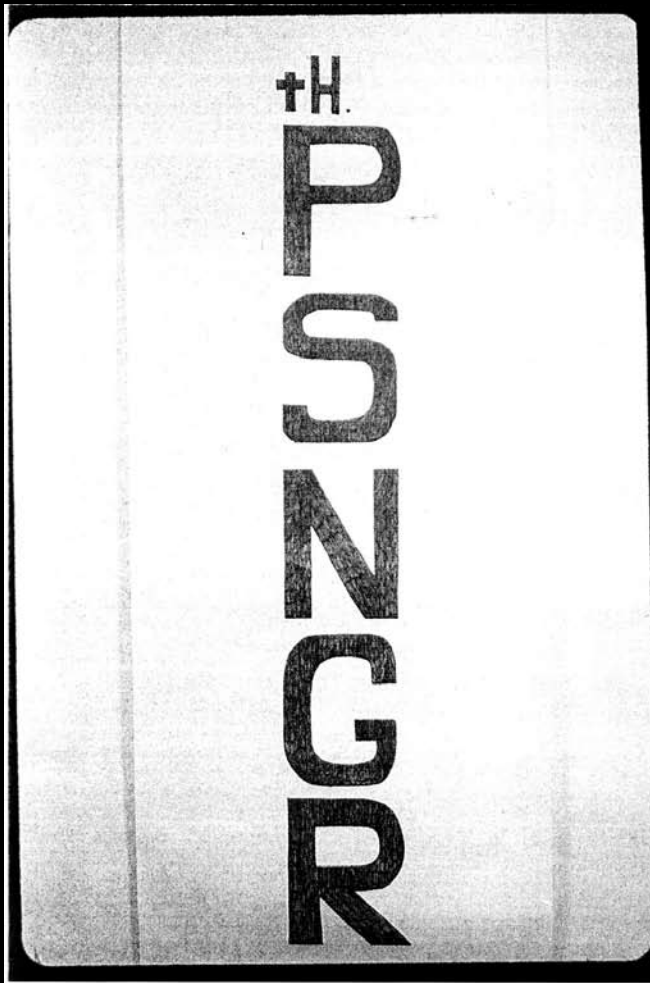
It's slightly different. It has slight different reverberations but pretty much the same sound.

So much of your work is to do with time codes. I was wondering if you think there is any link to the work of John Cage?

I think automatically there is a link to Cage whenever there is something that is running all the time and people are talking over it. I think it's a natural understanding of mine that when you have something like an artwork, you experience it then it's over. It happens, you experience it, most of the time you forget it then you remember it later. The sound just ends up being memory of another sound, because it doesn't stay around long enough to figure it, you know?

Besides Cage I was wondering who are your other heroes?

Maybe it started with more musicians. I really like Johnny Mathis. It was in sounds and voices like that that I kind of understood certain things. As for artists, I change my mind so often, but recently I really like that Steven Braun. Steven Braun who has declared all shoe stores in Amsterdam to be an



Above, left: 'The Passenger', 2004 pencil on paper 269 x 105,5 cm. Above, right: 'Untitled', 2004, RC prints diptych, 340 x 76 cm each. Opposite page: 'Untitled', 2004. pencil and ink on paper, 47 x 33 cm. Courtesy Casey Kaplan, New York and Air de Paris, Paris.

artwork.

Secrets. I'm very interested in the concept of secrets in our work. The first time I got to know your work it was all to do with events which are somehow performances but are actually secrets. So I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about your own notion of the secret, this aspect of you not wanting things to be announced?

I think it's more than that. It began as terror like fear, because if you tell somebody everything, then they can know exactly when and how you're going to do something wrong. So if you replace that kind of knowledge with waiting, sometimes people are happy that something actually happened at all! I think that was my first inclination, so it wasn't begun as a secret but it's much more natural for me now to work without telling people when things are going to happen. I do like that if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time at some party, then you miss something really good. Like when somebody goes through a glass window or something.

What were the beginnings of such secrets? There is obviously a very famous event from your first show in New York. but I was wondering if there was a chronology - what was the beginning?

Well I think that when I was in college, I did what I thought was a form of martial arts. This was: spatially you could build a house with

different gestures and nobody would see it. What I realised was that certain actions and certain things you say can become evasive and invasive. It's like a crank call.

What?

Crank call; You know, somebody says 'Hello, is your refrigerator running?' They say 'Yes'. And you say: 'Oh you better run and catch that.' [Laughs]. Or something like that.

I was also interested to know if you had any projects that had been too big to be realised or even too small.

I still wish I could make the Vibration Station, the organ that goes into the ground. But it's much better if it's never made.

How would this work?

You would walk through the vibrations of a box organ concerto. It'd be really great, because instead of the organ pushing air up to the ceiling, it would push air up through the floor. You know you could walk through the vibrations rising in the room. But it would never happen because it would cost millions and millions. But you know that's probably my most unrealised dream. But I don't think I make my work anyway, it happens inside...

Trisha Donnelly: Negative Space

Sie erscheint als napoleonischer Kurier hoch zu Ross auf ihrer Vernissage, versucht in einem Video mit absurden Gesten in Kanada Regen zu erzeugen oder springt am Trampolin in die Posen von Rockstars: Die dramatischen Mini-Performances der Amerikanerin Trisha Donnelly lassen ihr Publikum in einer Mischung aus Faszination und Ratlosigkeit zurück. Ende letzten Jahres wurde sie mit dem renommierten Kölner Central-Kunstpreis ausgezeichnet.

Daniel Baumann versucht Donnellys Werk zu fassen und zu verstehen.

She appears at her opening as a Napoleonic courier on horseback, tries in a video to produce rain in Canada with absurd gestures or jumps on a trampoline posing as one rock star after another: the dramatic mini-performances of the American Trisha Donnelly leave her audience with a mixture of fascination and confused helplessness. At the end of last year she was awarded the Central Kunstpreis, a renowned Cologne art prize. Daniel Baumann tries to grasp and comprehend and understand Donnelly's work..

1. I often ask myself, "What's all this good for?" Although it is a banal question, even slightly mean, one could perhaps be deceiving oneself, it protects one from a willing suspension of disbelief. Then there are equally incomprehensible works, also films, poems or texts to which I say, "What is this supposed to mean? "What the hell were they thinking about?" Thus the challenge. This is how I felt; this is how I feel when I look at the work of Heimo Zobernig, for example. Ultimately there are works that I not only fail to understand, but ought to even reject - such as those of Trisha Donnelly.

2 Press release by the Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York, October 2004.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TRISHA DONNELLY

EXHIBITION DATES OCTOBER 15-NOVEMBER 12, 2004
OPENING: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22ND 6-8PM
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY - SATURDAY, 10 - 6PM

Dear Casey,
My upcoming show will include
Drawings
photographs
a video (possibly)
and a couple of other works as well.
Also, there is a piece that changes very slightly everyday during the show. I believe I have discovered a loophole.

I'm no longer in San Francisco. I'm in New York. I'm around.
And you'll be seeing me a lot.
And yes, I understand that the gallery is open from 10-6.

Very sincerely
Trisha

3 At the 54th Carnegie International, 2004/2005 in Pittsburgh, Trisha Donnelly presented the video projection *Night Is Coming (Warning)* (2002), the audio work *Dark Wind*, comprised of two man-sized photographs of heraldic swords, and *Letter to Tacitus*. In the work *Night is Coming*, the words in pale blue letters appear and vanish like a sinister lullaby. In *Dark Wind* the sound of rushing wind is transmitted across the room from a hidden corner at irregular intervals. *Letter to Tacitus* is a mixture of off-citation and performance. At 12 noon sharp everyday, a well-dressed elderly gentleman walks across the exhibition space and reads out the letter to Tacitus:

My dear Tacitus,
This you must know:
There is no ideal Rome.
And no one is closer to this than the true believer.
And no one is further from this than the true believer.
That dream is not a map to your earthly paradise. It is instead a death of straightened pain and demand. A blank space. If existence were its destiny, its bounds would be more painful than life within the walls we know.

Yet so.

In the sorrow of these truths is the key to the living Elysium. Your dying call from this just state. The hope which you carry in your chest and mind. The love for this: that is your greatest salvation. That is your paradise.

For the true Romans the rue above dark water. The true Rome is man's hope for the true Rome.

Your blood and brother
E.

4. On the occasion of her first solo exhibition in 2002, Trisha Donnelly surprised the visitors with an unannounced performance. Dressed as Napoleon's courier, she came into the Casey Kaplan Gallery in Chelsea, New York, riding a white horse and read out the news of capitulation:

Be still and hear me.

I am a courier. I am only a courier. But I come with news of destruction. I come to declare his end. If it need be termed surrender then let it be so. For he has surrendered in word not in will. He has said, 'My fall will be great but at least useful.' The emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine. And with this I am electric. I am electric.

And Then Donnelly turned her horse about and rode out into the night. New York critic Jerry Saltz recently recalled this scene, "At around seven o'clock on the night of April 5, 2004, 'Trisha Donnelly stole my aesthetic heart. That evening, the then 28-year-old artist rode into her debut at the Casey Kaplan Gallery outfitted like a Napoleonic soldier astride a white stallion. The opening came to a standstill as the small crowd stared in stunned silence at this apparition.'" Jerry Saltz, "Thinking Outside the Box", in *The Village Voice*, 3 - 9 November, (2004).

At the end of the group show Kontext, Form, Traja, in Autumn 2003, Trisha Donnelly asked the visitors to lie down in the Vienna Secession's totally darkened main hall and concentrate on the song The Battle of Bordino. In a voice that is gentle yet insistent she asked them to become immersed in the sounds, to go along with the whirl of notes and surrender themselves to the vortex of the music. After the song had been played again and again, the artist, her voice once again insistent, asked whether everyone had experienced the maelstrom. Ten minutes after everyone had said they had, the lights went on. Donnelly now invited them all to follow her to the small garden behind the Secession building and walked straight to a tree behind which stood a man in black trousers and white shirt in tile dark and cold night. Donnelly drew him forward and called out to the people, "He's been standing there for the past three years yet none of you has ever noticed him!" Slowly the stranger withdrew into the dark. . .

In her micro happenings, Trisha Donnelly suddenly takes a dramatic, highly stylised event break into a friendly yet solemn situation. A self-contained state is first built up and then destroyed unexpectedly. This collision of two seemingly irreconcilable situations provokes a fleeting collapse, a brief moment of disorientation in which - provided of course one was hit by it one becomes briefly giddy. This giddiness helps in bridging the sudden void after the collapse and it also stands for the desperate attempt to regain self-control. It is therefore analogous to delusion that is not, as usually assumed, comparable to the moment of collapse but rather to the attempts at composure afterward. Disorientation and delusion [*Wahn*] are states brought upon by a desperate attempt at finding meaning [*Sinn*] still implied in the German word for insanity *Wahnsinn*. These micro-happenings or "demonstrations" as Donnelly calls them are never documented. No films

or photographs or any other form of documentation exist. They circulate solely in the form of renarration, which cannot relive the emptiness after the collision but does, however, recreate a certain atmosphere.

5. A similar dynamism also underlies the audio pieces. In the self contained situation of an exhibition, the clanging of bells *Untitled (The Bell)*, 2000, the rushing of wind (*Dark Wind*, 2002), the howling of a wolf (*The Howl*, 2002), a canon shot (*Canon*, 2003) or the hissing of laser shots take the visitor by surprise. The recordings are played intermittently, come on in a flash and are difficult to localise. **The staging of the outside world disrupts the ideal of space and the rigidity of reception of art within it;** a Brechtian alienation whose underlying pedagogic urge, however, is swallowed up by the black hole of absurdity.

6. Trisha Donnelly became widely known through her two videos *Untitled (Jumping)*, 1999 and *Canadian Rain*, 2002. In the first video loop she jumps up and down on a trampoline that is not in view, imitating at the highest point: of each leap the ecstatic poses of famous and unknown rock singers. In *Canadian Rain*, clad in a trench coat she looks straight into the camera while performing a series of precise, incomprehensible gestures with the absurd aim to bring about rain in Canada. Both videos show moments of high concentration and exercise of will. In *Untitled (Jumping)*, while switching direction, the dead point crystallises into a state of highest intensity, and in *Canadian Rain* belief in willpower stands in total contrast to reality. *Canadian Rain* is the very image of desertion: just left in the rain.

7. New Amateurism. In the 1990s professionalism was an imperative in art production as well. Better and better software and cheap manufacturing methods led to perfect products, perfect processes and important partnerships with the cultural industry. At the same time, a re-amateurisation took place with catchwords-like low-tech, low-fi and fazine culture.

The amateur distinguishes himself by virtue of total dedication with which he substitutes education and expertise. He replaces what is missing with passion, filling in the gaps with love while single-mindedly aiming at not being seen as amateur. Trisha Donnelly takes the same path in many of her works, although in the opposite direction. Dedication, sincerity and concentration do not close the gaps between perfection, willpower and reality but rather keep them open so that the missing remains what it is: a voracious monster and an energy machine.

8. The exhibition as performance. The sudden onset of the audio-pieces transforms the contemplative visitors into restless animals. The unexpected recital by some bloke who walked in at the 54th Carnegie International made the viewers turn into confused listeners. Donnelly redistributed the roles and forced people into behaving differently, even those who were responsible for the show. This created loopholes, embarrassing moments and silence, relativising her own work and its meaning. When asked about the meaning of the drawing *The Passenger*, the assistants of the Massimo de Carlo Gallery in Milan had to respond with an answer prepared by the artist. In the 2004 exhibition, the owners of the Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York were instructed to hang a new photograph every morning from the series called *The Redwood and the Raven* showing a dancer in different poses. They were also asked to ensure that visitors did not cross the gallery space when the audio piece *The Shield* began.

9. I had, in fact, discarded the notion that art can, or should, comment on questions of existence. In the past, this would have almost invariably led to cult, discipleship and the business of faith. Away with content. Form is everything, even if it is admittedly just an umbrella. And then comes this Trisha Donnelly with a kin of encyclopedia of disturbance and anxiety, of blank space and of disappearance. Moreover, she even speaks a language I understand: of both total respect and total disrespect for material, conventions and the world.

10. "Poetry"

I, too, dislike it: there are things that me important beyond all this fiddle. Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it; one discovers in it, after all, a place for the genuine."

(Marianne Moore (1887-1972))

Translated by Nita Tandon

TRISHA DONNELLY

1974 in San Francisco geboren, lebt in San Francisco / Born 1974, San Francisco. Lives in San Francisco



Canadian Rain, 2002
8 mm-Film, Loop
transferred to DVD,
6 min loop, video still

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2005 | 1st Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow |
| 2004 | Casey Kaplan, New York
54th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Collection (or How I spent a year)</i> at PS.1, New York
<i>Tuesday Is Gone</i> , Tbilisi, Georgia |
| 2003 | <i>Atto Primo</i> , Galleria Massimo de Carlo, Milan
<i>Gray Area: Certain Images: Bay Area Photography 1970s to Now</i> , CCAC Wattis
Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco
<i>Spectacular: The Art of Action</i> , Museum Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf
<i>Utopia Station</i> , Biennale Venedig, Venice Biennale
<i>Kontext, Form, Noja</i> , Wiener Secession, Wien/ Vienna |
| 2002 | Casey Kaplan 10-6, New York
Air de Paris, Paris
<i>How Extraordinary that the World Exists</i> , CCAC Wattis
Institute for Contemporary Arts, Oakland, CA
<i>Moving Pictures</i> , Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Guggenheim Bilbao |
| 2001 | <i>I Love Dijon</i> , Le Consortium, Dijon
The Dedali Convention, MAK, Wien! Vienna
Minkfaa. Mark Foxx, Los Angeles |

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TRISHA DONNELLY:

EXHIBITION DATES: OCTOBER 15 — NOVEMBER 13, 2004
OPENING: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22ND 6 — 8 PM
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY - SATURDAY 10 — 6 PM

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**Drawings,
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and a couple of other works as well.**

**Also, there is this piece that changes very slightly every day
during the show.**

I believe I have discovered a loophole.

**I'm no longer in San Francisco. I'm in New York. I'm around.
And you'll be seeing me a lot.
And yes, I understand that the gallery is open from 10-6.**

**Very Sincerely,
Trisha**

The artist is currently included in the *2004 Carnegie International* at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA and has recently been included in: *Utopia Station*, 50th International Exhibition of Art, Venice Biennale, Italy; *International Exposition of the Dak'Art Biennial of Contemporary Africa Art*, Senegal, Africa; *It happened tomorrow*, Biennale de Lyon, France; *Tuesday is Gone*, Tblisi, Georgia; Works from the Bill and Ruth True Collection, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA; *Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast in Contemporary Art*, traveling exhibition; *Collection (or How I spent a Year)*, PS 1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY; *Young Scene*, Vienna Secession, Vienna, Austria; *Moving Pictures*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY, traveling to Bilbao, Spain; *Spectacular: The Art of Action*, Museum Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf, Germany.

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NEXT EXHIBITION: GABRIEL VORMSTEIN NOVEMBER 19, 2004 - JANUARY 9, 2005

JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, MILES COOLIDGE, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, CEAL FLOYER, PAMELA FRASER, ANNA GASKELL, LIAM GILLICK, ANNIKA VON HAUSSWOLFF, CARSTEN HOLLER, JONATHAN MONK, DIEGO PERRONE, SIMON STARLING, ANNIKA STROM, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER

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54TH CARNEGIE INTERNATIONAL
OCTOBER 9, 2004 - MARCH 20, 2005

BORN

1974, San Francisco, California

LIVES AND WORKS

San Francisco

Trisha Donnelly received her MFA in 2000 from the Yale University School of Art and her BFA in 1995 from the University of California, Los Angeles. She has had solo exhibitions at Air de Paris Paris and Casey Kaplan, New York (both 2002).

Group exhibitions include: *Baja to Vancouver*, The West Coast in Contemporary Art, Seattle Art Museum (2003 -2004, traveled to CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia, and La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California, catalogue); *Young Scene, Secession*, Vienna (2003); *Spectacular, The Art of Action*, Museum Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf (2003); *Utopia Station*, 50th Venice Biennale (2003, catalogue); *If Happened Tomorrow*, Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon, France (2003, catalogue); *The Rebirth of Wonder*, Los Angeles Contemporary Art Exhibitions (2003); *The Lengths*, Center for Curatorial Studies Museum, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2003); *A Little Bit of History Repeated*, Kunst-werke, Berlin (2002, catalogue); *How Extraordinary That the World Exists*, CCA Wallis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2002, catalogue); *Moving Pictures*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2002, traveled to Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain, catalogue); *The Show That Will Show That a Show Is Not Only a Show*, The Project, Los Angeles (2002); *The Dedalac Convention*, MAK Museum, Vienna (2001); *I Love Dijon*, Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2001); *Do It*, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore (2001, traveled to Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, and Art Gallery of the University of Toronto, among others, catalogue); and *Echo*, Artist's Space, New York (2000).

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Trisha Donnelly

There is an ambiguity in Trisha Donnelly's work that serves to harness our imagination. Her practice exists in a space a bit outside perceived limitations of the physical world where, for example, Napoleon's declaration of surrender, tendered by the artist herself (in what she describes as "a courteous addition to the record"), can find its proper place in the collective history of the world. Much like the story of the Golem, in which the written word "God" was powerful enough to conjure life out of an inanimate clay form, for Donnelly, language in any manifestation—spoken, written, signed, or thought—has the capacity to conjure art in its concrete form. Yet even when wielding this power, she employs the lightest touch possible; her interventions are sometimes barely visible, but they are just enough to "slip into the back of people's mind" and implant suggestions that, the artist hopes, create "exponentially different" forms in each person's imagination.

Donnelly is concerned primarily with the interrelationship of words, actions, thoughts, and images. She uses demonstrative action, written text and spoken word to invoke images and associations in the mind's eye of the viewer, or, alternately, works backward from an image itself, encouraging viewers to construct the storyline and context for themselves. In this regard, Donnelly is an engineer of the imagination—her enterprise is filled with wonderment at the tremendous power of the human mind to formulate ideas into existence and at the same time acknowledges the limits of language, in any guise, to fully contain our ideas and thoughts.

In *Night Is Coming* (2002), the words of the title pulse in and out of view, then disappear completely as a bright afterimage punctuate the cycle of perpetual imminence. The promised action is declared, then recedes, and in the end never arrives. A blatant truism, "night is coming" is a simple statement, a reminder of the passing of time. Beyond that, the message is open and allusive (as well as elusive), and stubbornly unspecific. The experience taps into our own contingent assumptions and circumstance to furnish meaning. Do we fear or welcome the night? When will it come? Does "night" really mean the night at all, or any number of symbolic connotations? Could Donnelly be making reference to the lyrics of Sonic Youth's "The Night Is Coming On," with their whiff of suffering and fear? Or the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley ("The clash of the hail sweeps over the plain / Night is coming!"), which bolsters our spirits in awe of nature? Or perhaps the biblical passage of John 9:4 ("... the night cometh, when no man can work"), which encourages us to do our good works before the day ends? The associations are as varied as viewers' myriad referents.

The Black Wave (2002) is a representation of an obscure phenomenon, and like all legends, the differentiation of fact from unsubstantiated lore is largely immaterial and untraceable. By manipulating a photograph of a generic wave, Donnelly was able to create something that exists only in myth. There is no intended trickery here; rather, *The Black Wave* is an attempt at the visualization of a pure idea. It exists because the artist made it exist, because the idea is, for Donnelly, as concrete as the phenomenon itself. As she has stated, "I think there's nothing more powerful than people thinking something into existence."—Elizabeth Thomas

Good artists, bad shows: Can difficult art sidestep the tricky Vito Acconci syndrome?

Thinking Outside the Box

by **Jerry Saltz**

Trisha Donnelly

Casey Kaplan Gallery
416 West 14th Street
Through November 13

At around seven o'clock on the night of April 5, 2002, Trisha Donnelly stole my aesthetic heart. That evening, the then 28-year-old artist rode into her debut at the Casey Kaplan Gallery, outfitted like a Napoleonic soldier and astride a white stallion. The opening came to a standstill as the small crowd stared in stunned silence at this apparition.

Donnelly—whose bearing was regal, unruffled, but edgy—halted, surveyed the room, unfurled a scroll, and recited a brief, ornately worded proclamation that began, “If it need be termed surrender, then let it be so, for he has surrendered in word, not deed.” She finished, declaiming, “The emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine, and with this I am electric. I am electric.” Then she turned and rode back into the New York night. By then, I was electric too. I didn't know what this message meant, but felt that I had witnessed a historical event that never took place but should have—one steeped in fiction, poetry, and witchcraft, one that addressed the passing of epochs. In the afterglow, I realized that two years before, in the same spot, I'd had a premonition about Donnelly as I watched her give a lecture on communicating with seals at a group show opening. I remember thinking, “This artist is a believer. I should pay attention.”

Despite that alluring, paranormal performance, Donnelly's debut was difficult, sparse, and hard to parse. It included a video of her performing what was supposedly a rainmaking rite in a Canadian forest, a sound piece involving a howling wolf and an ominous photograph of a black wave. Donnelly was full of fetching ideas, but her individual objects and the show itself were fairly forgettable. This usually spells doom for an artist. After all, everyone has good ideas; only select artists are able

to embed them in material. As floored as I was by her performance, Donnelly's debut suggested she lacked this crucial ability.

Yet I loved her work, or at least the essence of it. At first I thought I was just being a sap, that her art had exposed a soft spot in my taste. Now I see Donnelly as a member of a rarefied group of thoroughbred artists who, while good, don't mount good gallery shows. Call this the Vito Acconci syndrome. It may be that for these artists the convention of the solo exhibition is a diversion, or that the white cube is too small in scope to command their interest. To them, gallery exhibitions are a kind of standardized ritual—artificial, totalitarian occasions that try to fit too much into too neutralizing a form. In fact, Casey Kaplan represents several of these artists, including Ceal Foyer, Carsten Höller (whose work is close in spirit to Donnelly's), and Liam Gillick, whose shows are weak but who often shines outside galleries. Jorge Pardo fits in here as well, as does one of the best artists working anywhere today, Maurizio Cattelan, whose New York exhibitions aren't as dazzling as his showstopping, site-specific works and his biennial contributions.

As for Donnelly's current show, it's more obscure and hippie-esque than her first. Among the 16 works are a handful of beautiful pencil drawings, an audio piece of someone chanting “Oh Egypt,” a postcard of the Sphinx's paw, and digital photos of hanging swords. If I had to suggest an overarching theme, I'd say it was the search for a higher, imagined astral plane. But who knows? Even that's a stretch. Donnelly did perform a moody, bluesy song about “stopping time” at the opening, after which she led the large crowd a few blocks north to the Wrong Gallery, where she arranged to have a cannon sound “to start time again.” But I won't invoke the haughty “you had to be there” defense.

Ultimately, I suspect this show won't captivate anyone who isn't captivated by Donnelly already. Indeed, I hesitate to even recommend it. I only want to say that this is an artist who I think you



Is that all there is? The Trisha Donnelly installation at Casey Kaplan
Photo by Robin Holland

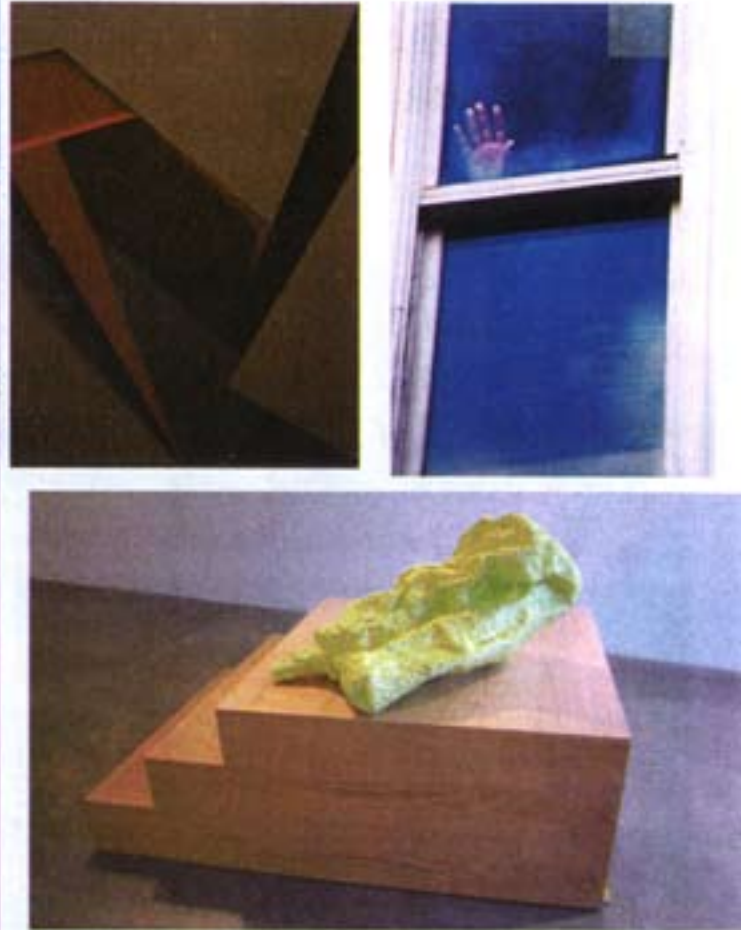
can trust, a generous artist capable of taking you to an amorphous, inexpressible place past the conventions of late-conceptual art, the inanities of pseudo-mysticism, and her own inherent corniness. Writing about Jasper Johns in 1966, John Cage referred to “the thick presence all at once of a naked self-obscurating body of history.” That's the type of history and presence Donnelly occasionally presents. In the same text, Cage added that it's “a waste of time to mutter about inscrutability.” Similarly, if understanding is what you're after, Donnelly is the wrong artist for you. She still doesn't embed thought in materials. But she is finding ways to embed them in you. This is enchanting. If you get on her wavelength, you can have moments of wistful lucidity, the feeling that you've actually lived the experiences she makes art about. Laura Hoptman, who put her in the current Carnegie International (where Donnelly, having told no one, acted as a waiter at the show's tony opening dinner), says that “empathy, a deep sense of our collective humanity—our transcendent ideas as well as our frailties—are her greatest artistic weapons.” To that, and in support of Donnelly and all those otherwise inscrutable artists, I'd add, long live difficult art.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

August 29, 2004



The Consensus Thief

IN ART AS IN FASHION, IT'S BETTER TO LEAD THAN TO FOLLOW. BRUCE HAINLEY PREVIEWS THE CARNEGIE INTERNATIONAL.

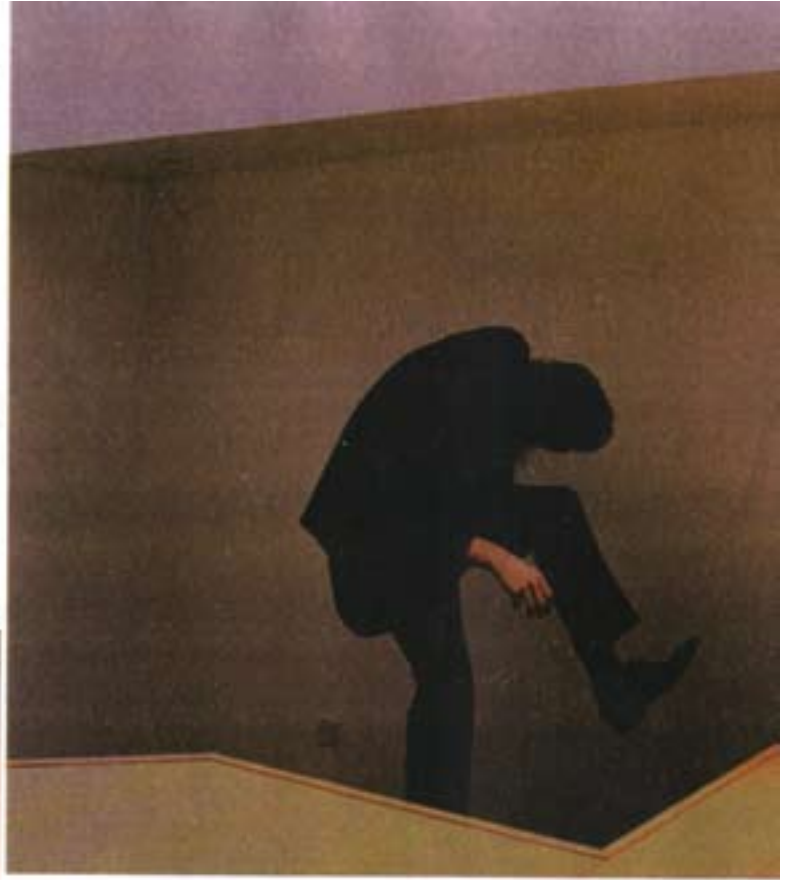
O.K., before the art stuff, a little bow to Diana Vreeland -- she of the Kabuki rouging, knowing beak and shellac-black hair, who insisted that the soles of her shoes gleam -- because I think about her, well, frequently, especially when perusing culture magazines at a newsstand. D.V. led rather than followed, and I'm so tired (aren't you?) of opening the pages of glossies and seeing articles on what's already happening -- synergistic tie-ins -- rather than on what should be going on. Ego ideal, my dream D.V. reigns, sibyl of the untimely, the unlikely: she doesn't tow party lines. Can't you hear her, chic in a Mainbocher suit, channeling heavenly edicts? "Why don't you donate all your John Currins to the local Braille institute? The blind need something to look at when they're not busy reading."

D.V. would love the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, in many ways the Garbo of American invitational art surveys -- revered but aloof, never garnering the mainstream brouhaha of, say, the Whitney Biennial. Initiated in 1896, in the newly built Carnegie Museum of Art -- a year after the museum's founder, the wily industrialist Andrew Carnegie, started the Carnegie Institute -- the International was Carnegie's scheme to play host to an exhibition and then have the pick of the

litter, purchasing what he called, with almost Vreelandian flourish, the "old masters of tomorrow." (Carnegie set the exhibition's collecting standards high, scoring the first Whistler for an American museum.)

Although the show has taken many forms since its inception, the art eyes of Pittsburgh still focus on the future in terms of up-and-coming artists -- and curators. In the last 20 years, only one curator of the Carnegie International has hung around long enough to do the show twice, making unlikely Pittsburgh one of the prime curatorial starting points. (The International's last curator, Madeleine Grynsztejn, is now the senior curator of painting and sculpture at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.) Enter Laura Hoptman, curating the 54th Carnegie International, which will open on Oct. 9. Unlike most of her peers, who repeatedly produce the art-world equivalent of a high school prom, where every senior is invited, Hoptman hasn't shirked her responsibility of leading -- producing an exhibition with an intimate, if unexpected, roster of 38 international artists.

Hoptman says that the artists she has selected aim for the "high stakes" of confronting the big questions (life, death, free will, immortality, and the nature of



belief), of “investigating the unknowables.” And while some people may fault her choices -- the presence of that frisky genius R. Crumb more than compensates for the inclusion of the pious Lee Bontecou, the art world’s current overrated saint -- when it comes to many of the younger artists, Hoptman is white hot.

Tomma Abts, Trisha Donnelly, Saul Fletcher and Rachel Harrison, to pick four of the most exciting, all have staunch admirers among the cognoscenti, though none are household names. They are artists about whom other artists get excited, but whose challenging work can still be enjoyed by all. Don’t think of them as a new school, even though they share many of the same qualities (small scale, careful production, ruthlessly winnowed output); rather, think of them as a demonstration of how invigorating it can be to ponder the unknowables.

For example, the compact, demanding canvases of Abts, a German-born, London-based painter, get their first sustained American outing in Pittsburgh. The paintings -- textured, abstract geometry of unfamiliar shapes -- are done in such radiant colors, from hues of foals and apricot to grass, that in the end they are as personal as a family album.

Donnelly, on the other hand, works in an array of media the way a sorceress uses poison berries and eyes of newt. The immateriality of memory, time and space are her clay, and telekinesis her method. A recent DVD projection flashes the words “Night is coming” as ominous promise -- though whether of doom, mourning, or some sort of brief surcease remains indeterminable -- allowing Donnelly to question belief and disturb complacency.

Fletcher makes tiny pictures, finding in self-portraits erotic domesticities and a pictorial language much like the last works of Walker Evans, but with a contem-

porary beat. “Brash” and “cerebral” barely begin to describe Harrison’s sculptures and photographs, media she frequently joins together into singular pieces, doing hard-core, hilarious riffs on that Brancusi-esque chestnut of a problem: which is the sculpture and which is the base?

So why don’t you put your darling assumptions on ice for a moment? Judgment’s a curator’s responsibility, an audience’s privilege. Having led her artists to Pittsburgh, Hoptman confidently gives them the freedom to let loose the unexpected. Be warned. Last summer, Donnelly plastered parts of Venice with posters with letters emblazoned vertically in white on cream: “BZRK.”

All consonance but still no ease -- the way that more art, like life, needs to go.

Photos: Showstoppers at the Carnegie International are expected to include, this page, clockwise from top left: Trisha Donnelly’s “Night Is Coming (Warning),” 2002; Saul Fletcher’s “Untitled No. 23,” 1997; Donnelly’s “Rio,” 1999. Opposite page, clockwise from left: Tomma Abts’s “Ert,” 2003, and “Zeyn,” 2004; Rachel Harrison’s “Untitled,” 2001, and “Silent Account,” 2004. (Photographs by Tomma Abts: courtesy of Carnegie International; Rachel Harrison: courtesy of Greene Naf-tali Gallery; Trisha Donnelly: courtesy of Casey Kaplan; Saul Fletcher: courtesy of Anton Kern Gallery.)

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ARTFORUM

MARCH 2004

TOP TEN



Trisha Donnelly

Trisha Donnelly is a California-based artist. Her solo show at Casey Kaplan, New York, will open this fall.

1 DAAN VAN GOLDEN After seeing this Dutch artist's work for the first time at last year's Lyon Biennale I got totally wonderlost. So when I found the museum bookstore (and the planet), I immediately bought a catalogue, which included his work from the '60s to today. At once dignified and psychedelic, van Golden's paintings are often based on minute photographic forms and classical textiles. In one, he takes a snowy, pixelated outline (derived from multiple Xeroxes of the photo of a parakeet that Matisse used in his late collages) and cradles it in sky blue. Photographs of his daughter between the ages of one and eighteen are lovingly portrayed, curiously layered documents of youth. Within every photograph there is a quiet oddity, and out of each painting grows a form—elaborate and strangely pure of insistence.* Though difficult to locate (van Golden doesn't show in the US because he has an aversion to shipping—perfect), the more I see of van Golden's work, the more radical it becomes.



2 ON TUESDAY* Read Knut Hamsun's apologia, *On Overgrown Paths*. Then watch the new DVD release of the 1966 Japanese film *The Pornographers*.

3 MINIATURE MAGAZINES Small magazines are so lovely. It looks as if the reader grew after buying one. If *Teen Vogue* is smaller, does that mean that teenage girls are bigger? Taller? Are they rapidly growing to an infinite and disorderly size? I think *The Economist* should be next.

4 THE LIVES OF MEN Shannon Ebner's *MLK, Double-Horizon*, 2003, is a photograph of a giant, white cutout number "74" (the age Martin Luther King Jr. would have been last year) set on a hilltop against an expanse of California sky. Jason Dodge's *The Disappearance of Samuel Paley*, 2003 (a sculpture in honor of a park that is in honor of a man named Samuel Paley), comprising thin aluminum rods hung from ceiling to floor, breaks surrounding walls into slivers to make hairline fractures in space. Each of these works suggests a parallel-universe reincarnation: one of a man who today exists for us most fully as an idea; the other of a monument to an idea of a man.

5 IL FANTASTICO VIAGGIO DEL "BAGAROZZO" MARK Goblin (the Italian rock group who scored most of Dario Argento's films) recorded this epiphany of an al-

bum in 1978. Until the recent US rerelease, it could only be found abroad—and for quite a price. Massimo Morante's vocals, hung over winding staircases of organ and electric guitar, fluctuate between a seductive gothic whisper and a "this is when the confetti explosions go off behind me" scream. The album's plot could easily be misinterpreted as the transformation of a young man—Mark—into a space bug, but, Goblin (in hindsight, of course) claim this is their "just say no to drugs" album.

6 IN THE GLOAMING Adam Putnam's "Magic Lantern" series (on view last month at Artists Space in New York) reminds me of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1851 tale "The Familiar," in which a man is tormented by a delphic paranormal character that he alone can sense in seemingly empty streets, empty rooms, and dark corners. Le Fanu uses merely a shadow of a presence, lightly drawn and nebulous, to haunt the main character into cataleptic death. With his "Magic Lanterns" Putnam reverses Le Fanu's sleight of hand: The looming presence takes the form of an empty room. In his odd, architecturally detailed projections, spaces quiver unnervefully with the movement of the silent candlelight that fuels them.



7 BRUNO SERRALONGUE, CORÉE (KOREA), 2001 Fantastical, sad, at times funny, this piece recounts the story of three Korean auto workers who trek from Korea to France and Switzerland to extradite their embezzling fugitive boss. Consisting of found and gathered texts and interviews and corresponding photographs (which Serralongue slightly tweaks)—all assembled by the artist in Korea and France from 1982 to 2001—*Corée* shifts gracefully into and out of literature, speculation, and documentary, vastly expanding the idea of the modern chronicle.

8 "MILKY WHITE WAY" Glory falls down from the stars in the Trumpeteers' version of this joyful deathbed song.* Recorded in 1947 by the radio-era southern black gospel group; now digitally remastered for the encyclopedic *Goodbye, Babylon* box set (*Dust-to-Digital*, 2003). I push play. I listen. I rewind then repeat. Then repeat. Then repeat.

tered for the encyclopedic *Goodbye, Babylon* box set (*Dust-to-Digital*, 2003). I push play. I listen. I rewind then repeat. Then repeat. Then repeat.

9 "MULTIPLIED ENJOYMENT OF THE MOMENT" That's the intention of Michael S. Riedel and Dennis Loesch, directors of Oskar-von-Miller Strasse 16, who have taken blatant piracy and appropriation for a short walk. Oskar is a space not far from the Portikus gallery in Frankfurt; for four years, Riedel and Loesch have been re-creating Portikus's exhibitions, transforming the knockoff into a one-of. (Jim Isermann's white-dotted floors at Portikus became Oskar's "Isermann" floor scattered with white balloons. . . . On another occasion, the pair sent two

men to stand very close behind Gilbert & George and echo their gestures for the entire evening of the artists' opening.) Riedel and Loesch also staged a Who* concert where, while playing a Who record, they merely stood onstage with their instruments, staring into space. They prefer the Lambretta to the Vespa. If you know what that means you'll know what they mean.**

10 SPIRIT LOST AND FOUND When the Mars rover lost contact with ground control, it broke the hearts of hundreds of scientists. I like to think that the Spirit found its way into a crevice somewhere on that vast, dry planet. Inside: Sturtevant's *Stella La Paloma* and, leaning softly against the cavern wall, John McCracken's* sculpture *Mars*. Spirit wasn't lost; it just didn't want to leave that weirding place, so it shut its radio off.

* "Poetry"

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle. Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it after all, a place for the genuine.

—Marianne Moore, 1919



* If by chance you take me up on this, I suggest a Tuesday, as it took me the entire week to recover from a sympathetic insanity and paranoia I developed after consuming this combination.

* Speaking of the afterlife, I'm so happy to know that Anubis wears blue! Mind blowing. I've wondered about this since I was a child. And Horus has truly wonderful taste. The giant plastic pouf. Terrific. Thank you, Mr. Galliano. This year I'm thinking . . . Egypt, gods of the dead, pull your brains out through your nostrils. Afterlife in heels. How reassuring!

* Which reminds me . . . Roger Daltrey's stutter from "My Generation"? Whether it's real or fake, is it possible that appropriation, too, is a stutter? R-r-r-ich-chard P-p-pr-r-ince? I would love it if it's true.

** STURTEVANT FOREVER!

* How can this be? Because he is the Kwisatz Haderach.

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Cream3, Phaidon Press, London, 2003

Born San Francisco, USA, 1974 Lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

Selected Solo Exhibitions/Performances: 2000 'Echo', Artists Space, New York 2001 'Angel Heart, Air de Paris; 'A Little Bit of History Repeated', Kunstwerke, Berlin 2002 Air de Paris; Casey Kaplan, New York; Galerie Houser & Wirth & Presenhuber, Zurich

Selected Group Exhibitions: 1999 'Minty', Richard Telles Gallery, Los Angeles 2001 The Dedalic Convention', MAK Museum, Vienna; 'I Love Dijon', Le Consortium, Dijon; 'Mink Jozt, Mark Foxx, Los Angeles; 'The Wedding Show', Casey Kaplan, New York 2002 'Altoids Curiously Strong Collection', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; 'Gallery Luhmon', Nils Stark Contemporary Art, Cope

nhamen; 'How Extraordinary That the World Exists', CCAC Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts Oakland, California; 'Moving Pictures', Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; 'The Show That Will Show That A Show Is Not Only A Show', The Project, Los Angeles; 'Summer Cinema', Casey Kaplan, New York

Selected Bibliography: 2000 Echo, Artists Space, New York, 2001 *A Little Bit of History Repeated*, Kunstwerke, Berlin 2002 Maurizio Cattelan/Bettina Funcke/Massimiliano Gioni/Ali Subotnick (eds.), *Charley*, No.1; Jens Hoffman, 'Trisha Donnelly', *Flash Art*, March-April; John Miller, 'Openings: Trisha Donnelly', *Artforum*, Summer

TRISHA DONNELLY

On the opening night of her first solo exhibition in New York, Trisha Donnelly staged a performance, or as she prefers to call it, a 'demonstration'. Dressed as a Napoleonic courier, she rode into the crowded gallery on a horse to deliver a message of surrender: 'If it need be termed surrender, then let it be so, for he has surrendered in word, not will .. 'The Emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine and with this I am electric. I am electric!' Having uttered this rebellious declaration of defeat, Donnelly turned and exited the gallery, leaving her guests to ponder the equally cryptic installation of video, photographs and drawings comprising her show. Donnelly's is an art of non sequiturs; the logic that connects her performances with her objects and installations is entirely her own. She communicates through privately coded belief systems powered by her expansive imagination.

In the video projection *Canadian Rain* (2002) Donnelly appears against a blank background wearing a trench coat. Her hair is blowing in the wind. She executes a series of stylized gestures from an entirely invented sign language to bring about a rainstorm somewhere in Canada, a country that she identifies with inclement weather. A grainy black and white photograph of a generic, mist-laden landscape on the adjacent wall offered 'proof' that her incantations worked. A second photograph, *The Black Wave* (2002), showing a close-up view of a large ocean swell, was explained in the press release as an image of 'the unbroken wave in deep water that occurs before and after a storm

at sea', as further 'evidence' of Donnelly's paranormal powers. From time to time the sound of a lone wolf howling deep in the woods could be heard over loud speakers in the gallery.

The abstract relationship between photography, video and performance in this installation is indicative of Donnelly's working methods. Her live demonstrations are never recorded on film. They may only be remembered and disseminated by written description or word-of-mouth. The photographs (traditionally used by performance artists to document their otherwise ephemeral acts) only further Donnelly's fictions. Her elusive narratives are woven from such webs of imaginary signs. In the video *Rio* (1999), Donnelly appears in silhouette against an ersatz, homespun sunset. To the accompaniment of a Latin ballad, she communicates in American Sign Language, but instead of translating the words of the song, she describes how to find the most beautiful spot on Earth.

In another video, *Untitled (jumping)* (1998-99), Donnelly re-enacts what she contends are the signature gestures of rock musicians at the moment they achieve their 'performance wall' the point when they reach physical transcendence through their music. By jumping on an unseen trampoline, she floats in and out of the frame in slow motion, assuming a dreamlike state and recreating the musicians' adrenaline-induced moments of ecstasy. The identities of the different performers - from Ozzie Osbourne to Joey Ramone - are never revealed.

Nancy Spector

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ARTFORUM

SUMMER 2002

OPENINGS

TRISHA DONNELLY

JOHN MILLER

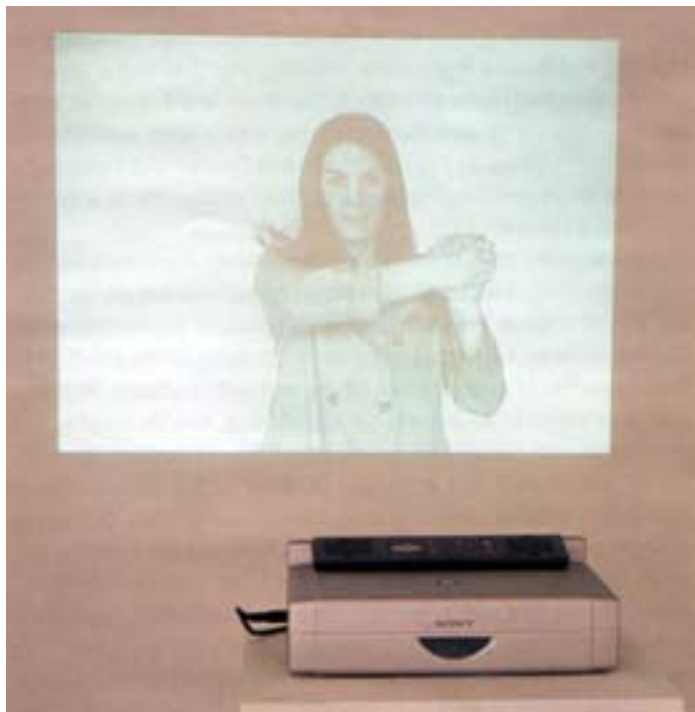
Word had it that the artist, dressed as a Napoleonic courier, rode into the gallery on a white horse, read a message of surrender, turned around and rode out. You had to be there. The rest of the show made no mention of it and the artist never photographs her performances. Even if you were there, you might have missed the wolf howl that was supposed to play intermittently. The serial drawings of simple green tubes or cylinders proved no less elusive. The checklist said "see front desk for title," and, on request, a gallery assistant would obligingly play an MP3 drum sequence. In short, you might have come and gone without

ever realizing you had missed anything at all.

Although Trisha Donnelly's solo debut, at Casey Kaplan in New York, was all about belief structures, the work itself is full of baffles and feints. Seeing is not necessarily believing. Instead of asking viewers to suspend disbelief, she prods their credulity, pitting humdrum artifice against deadpan preposterousness. In *Canadian Rain* (all

Word of mouth divides Donnelly's audience into those who saw a performance firsthand, those who know it only through words, and those who are oblivious

works at Kaplan 2002), a DVD projection, she repeatedly executes a series of martial arts-like gestures. At the end of each sequence of gesticulations, she points to a spot on the wall behind her. She stares straight into the camera, making eye contact that is not eye contact. Her movements are overdeliberate, quavering. A fan blows her hair, just as an approaching storm might. The press release laconically states that the artist is "creating" rain in Canada. On an adjacent wall were two photos. The first, *Canada*, could be anywhere. The grainy atmosphere could be rainy, misty, or even sunny. The second photo, *The Black Wave*, was also specified by the press release: "The unbroken wave in deep water that occurs before and after a storm at sea." Yet, as purely visual information, the photo fails to substantiate anything. Moreover, a cursory Internet search for "black wave" yields plenty of goth bands but no ocean storms. If photography, as Michael Taussig put it, is sympathetic magic in a modern key, here cameras seemingly produce effects in other cameras. You see a rain dance on one wall and, as if proof that it worked, photos of a shower and a sea storm



Trisha Donnelly, *Canadian Rain*, 2002, black and white digital video projection, 5 minute loop.

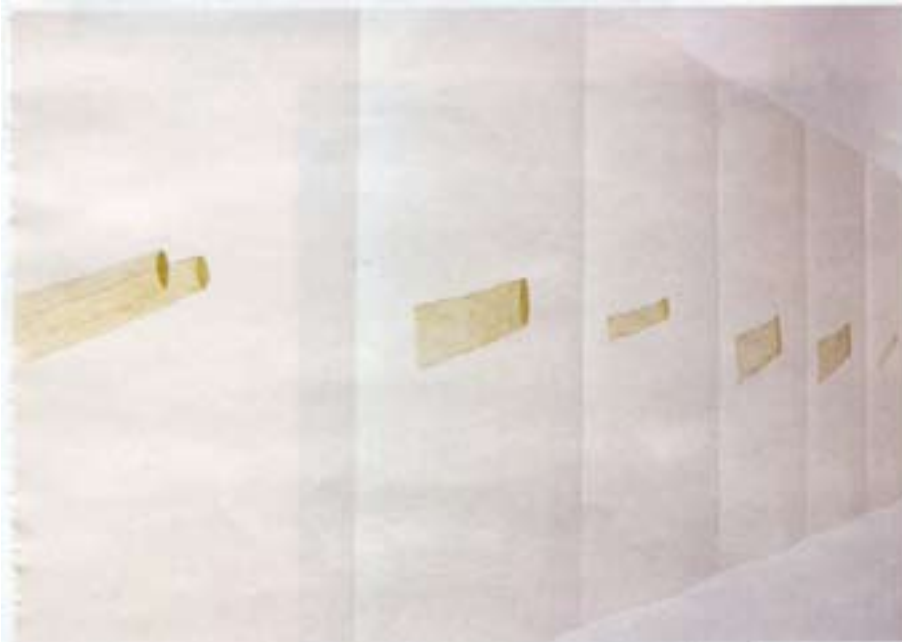
on another. Such an understanding relies on supplementary press material, which serves as a caption at one remove. Thus, promotion, by establishing the artist's quasi-magical prowess, becomes integral to her overall aesthetic. The job of the wall is to correlate these otherwise disparate images.

Performance art is thoroughly enmeshed with photography, but performance needs photography far more than vice versa. What photography always really needs is

noticed that the bicyclist who appeared in the original was now missing from the picture. Void, indeed! Perhaps Klein wanted to be found out. Despite his persistent appeals to the fantastic, his grasp of the medium proved more pragmatic than Kaprow's. If anything, taking pictures, especially family snapshots, has become the contemporary ritual, bar none.

Because Donnelly treats the camera as a ritualistic instrument, she rules out using it to document her performances. Instead of manipulating photos, she exploits photography's inherently pliant effects, taking its fictions at face value. Her demonstration at Artists Space, *How to Groom a Horse*, 2000, in effect taught the audience how to groom a slide projection. Of course, here too, you can't take a picture of what's not there, even if everyone pretends to agree that it is. In sharp contrast to photodocumentation, word of mouth offers a more contingent form of promotion through its less indexical mode of address. Word of mouth effectively divides Donnelly's audience into those who saw a performance firsthand, those who know it only through words, and those who are oblivious. If photos always promise vestigial contact, the word is the death of the thing. Contact and immediacy are exactly what the artist denies us. Appearing on horseback she declared she was only a messenger, thus absolving herself of all blame, i.e., by transforming event into message.

Yet her surrender statement struck an oddly defiant chord: "...If it need be termed surrender, then let it be so, for he has surrendered in word, not will. He has said, 'My fall will be great but it will be useful.' The emperor has fallen and he rests his weight upon your mind and mine and with this I am electric. I am electric." The artist surrenders to the audience. Whereas entertainment ordinarily convinces the audience it's not really there, Donnelly effects a role reversal. Unbeknownst to the gallerygoers themselves, they



Right: **Trisha Donnelly**, *untitled**, 2002 12 pencil drawings on paper, each 30 x 22". *Title is an audio CD.

a historical subject, something significant enough to guarantee its own significance. Allan Kaprow, for one, distrusted the camera because it seemed to frustrate his quasi-archaic rituals. He wanted ritual to integrate art and life. Conversely, Yves Klein exploited the camera as an instrument of publicity. For years his Icarian photocollage captioned "The Painter of Space Hurls Himself into the Void!," 1960, fooled everyone—until he published a second version of the image. Someone



Trisha Donnelly, *The Black Wave*, 2002, black and white photograph, 50 x 60".

have been locked in low-intensity warfare in a minimum-security prison. This they are surprised to discover; they are surprised to have won. If history repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce, the theatrics of Waterloo are now exhausted. But, as another mode of repetition, mimicry confounds such facile oppositions. Taken together, they are more like alternating current-or everyday life.

Donnelly belongs to a generation of West Coast artists taken with Bas Jan Ader's paragon of incommunicability, self-mythification, and antidocumentation. Her work, shown at New York's New Museum of Contemporary Art, Le Consortium in Dijon, and Air de Paris, among other venues, may also concern more muted historical tendencies. An untitled video from 1999, for example, collates a gamut of MTV performances by Joey Ramone, Kim Carnes, Weather Girl Izora Rhodes, David Lee Roth, Dionne Warwick, and Iggy Stooze, among others. Donnelly contends that every singer makes a characteristic gesture-or

Trisha Donnelly, Canada, 2002, black and white photograph, 16 x 20".
Trisha Donnelly, Eye Model, 2002, cotton on paper, 36 x 26".



tic-at the song's high point. These she reenacted while jumping on a trampoline, at the peak of a bounce. In slow motion she floats in and out of the frame, beckoning inscrutably. The reconstituted ecstasy is loaded with unconscious affect. *Eye Model*, shown at Casey Kaplan this year, is a device for historical amnesia. It looks like a sweatband (who said the '80s revival was over?) designed to serve as a sleep mask. The aforementioned serial drawings of nameless green tubes, for their part, play on the notion of the obscene: literally, that which is away from the scene or offstage. The drum pattern/title alludes to Serge Gainsbourg's "Love on the Beat-beat" being a homonym of the French slang for pe-

nis (bite). The suturing- or de-suturing-of title and work suggests suspending the patronym and points to an anonymous women's history.

Last year Donnelly took part in Jens Hoffmann's performance series "A Little Bit of History Repeated" at Kunst-Werke Berlin (see *Artforum*, March 2002), but she seems more preoccupied with unrealized histories than with the past per se. Writing in this magazine, Robert Smithson once claimed that "the ponderous illusions of solidity, the non-existence of things, is what the artist takes for 'materials.'" For Donnelly, this is less a polemic than an actual working method.

John Miller a New York-based artist, writer, and critic



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TRISHA DONNELLY:

EXHIBITION DATES: APRIL 5 — MAY 4, 2002
OPENING: FRIDAY, APRIL 5 6 — 8 PM
GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY — SATURDAY 10 — 6 PM

EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION:

This exhibition will be the first solo show in New York of the Los Angeles-based artist Trisha Donnelly. The installation will consist of a new projected video loop, one large black and white photograph, a sound installation and drawings.

Canadian Rain, 2002, is a projected black and white video work that documents the artist creating rain in a distant Canadian forest. The viewer is presented with a picture of the artist enacting a beat sequence that creates rain in Canada.

The Black Wave, 2002, is a black and white photograph that pictures the unbroken wave in deep water that occurs before and after a storm at sea.

Howl, 2002, is a looped sound installation where the call of a lone wolf's howl can be heard periodically.

During the opening on Friday April 5th the artist enacted a new demonstration where in guise of a courier on horseback she delivered a message of surrender.

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NEXT EXHIBITION: DIEGO PERRONE MAY 10 - JUNE 22, 2002

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

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Trisha Donnelly

Art, like religion, requires of its adherents a certain leap of faith. However, a skeptical art-viewing public, imagining themselves the brunt of in-jokes delivered by a condescending elite, has for more than a century, remained obstinately wary if not downright suspicious of the claims made on art's behalf. Trisha Donnelly seems to enjoy and even revel in this conundrum. In the summer 2002 issue of *Artforum*, the artist and critic John Miller describes her working method thus: "Instead of asking viewers to suspend disbelief, [Donnelly] prods their credulity, pitting humdrum artifice against deadpan preposterousness." Donnelly's works operate as both conceits and deceits. Things may or may not be what they seem. Consequently, her works operate as

conceptual sleights of hand. *Malibu*, 2002, is a case in point. It is ostensibly a straightforward black and white photograph of a nocturnal coastal scene. Were it not for its title, the image could well be just about anywhere. Given its title and its self-conscious ambiguity, *Malibu* fails as a literal description of the upscale oceanfront suburb of Los Angeles. Instead *Malibu* evokes an idea of how its namesake might exist in either the artist's or the public's imagination. *Malibu* becomes-not so much a place as a state of mind-a conceptual leap that echoes Ed Ruscha's famous proposition that "Hollywood is a verb."

Similarly, *Blind Friends*, 2000-a C-print of a video still that shows a group of people at the beach-basks in its uncertainty. Whether these people are really blind, or even friends, is moot. Perhaps, as with the saying "love is blind," Donnelly is musing on the nature of friendship. But we could speculate endlessly-and maybe this is her point. The artist's own explanation of the image doesn't necessarily make things any clearer. According to Donnelly, *Blind Friends* is the only documentation of an action she organized in which a group of blind people were taken to the beach and asked to head off in what they thought was the direction of the wind. What followed-the almost random dispersal of the group, with each person heading off in a different direction-speaks volumes about the nature of subjective interpretation.

In an untitled video of 1998-9, the artist, dressed in white, leaps (with the aid of a trampoline) in and out of the frame. At the apex of each leap; momentarily frozen in midair, Donnelly affects a facial or physical gesture which, she claims, is derived from epiphanic or ecstatic moments in rock performances by artists such as Iggy Pop and David Lee Roth. Without access to recordings of the original performances, we have little choice but to accept the artist's word. Or, to put it another way, we are asked to believe.

Like Duchamp's before her, Donnelly's art is an occasion for serious play. Playing truths off falsehoods, she allows the rational and the irrational to coexist. Privileging doubt, her works seem ultimately to confirm that we should never take anything for granted. *Matthew Higgs*

Trisha Donnelly was born in 1974 in San Francisco, California. She received a BFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1995 and an MFA from Yale University School of Art in 2000. In 2002 Donnelly had solo exhibitions at Casey Kaplan 10-6, New York, and Air de Paris, Paris. Donnelly's work has been included in group exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale (2003); Moving Pictures, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2002); and A Little Bit of History Repeated, Kunst-verein, Berlin (2001).

San Francisco

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**GLOBAL
ART**



**TRISHA
DONNELLY**

ADRENALINE IS COMMONLY known as a hormone responsible for severe stimulation in times of fear or excitement, causing rapturous moments of euphoria and ecstasy. It is those moments that Los Angeles artist Trisha Donnelly is trying to catch and reenact in her untitled video from 1999. In the 4 1/2 minutes of the film, she portrays an energy that she has observed in the performances of rock bands. The artist describes it an “overtaking force” that produces a trance-like state and forms an almost metaphysical intensity that is detached from the actual performances.

In the video we see the artist flying in and out of the image in slow motion, a movement that seems to correspond with the up and down of the performer’s adrenaline level during a concert. This motion of appearance and disappearance occurs exactly 17 times during the film, each time with another strangely looking gesture. Those bizarre poses are in fact the ecstatic moments Donnelly is trying to catch. For a split-second the artist merges with those people whose gestures and poses she has studied carefully, trying to find exactly that moment of transcendence. The source for the different positions is never revealed. One does not know what they are or where they come from, and it is only the artist who tells me that we are in fact watching poses and gestures by musicians such as PP Arnold, Ronnie Spector, Joey Ramone or Ozzy Osbourne. Even though the video is made extremely simply, filmed with only one camera perspective and without artificial lightning, it has an incredible power. Donnelly is certainly appropriating the video music format, but it feels as if we are watching something that does not exist anymore. Like a document from an era long before contemporary music videos with over choreographed performances. In contrast to the entirely self-conscious pop stars of today, Donnelly’s film describes very personal and private conditions of fragility and loneliness. It is as if the public performance she mimics turns into a private moment of self-searching that reveals a true personal intimacy. As violent and aggressive as some of these performers appear on stage, during the moments the artist restages, they display a high vulnerability beyond any awareness of embarrassment.

Donnelly removes herself physically from the viewer by hiding behind her hair, escaping into a dreamlike state in which she is losing orientation and control. The blurred image of the film indicates the ephemerality of the moment. As a result, the work is extremely unreal and fragmented character suggests the transitory nature of our lives and the somewhat illusory state of what we perceive as reality.

Jens Hoffmann

Jens Hoffmann is fascinated by the unequal relationship between the powerful images in **Trisha Donnelly’s** film and the fragility her poses represent. The ephemerality of life in contrast to mankind’s confidence of an enduring civilization constituted by what remains.



Trisha Donnelly
Spain, 2001
Fibre print

How Extraordinary
That the World
Exists!

In a more playful vein, Trisha Donnelly's work quietly and gradually surprises us, like a gentle experiment in cognitive dissonance. At first glance, her photographs may appear mundane. One blurry print, *Blind Friends*, transferred from video footage, shows a cluster of people on a sunny beach. Improbably dressed in heavy winter coats and hats, the figures in the crowd seem lost, wandering about in various directions as if trying to get their bearings. Who are the overdressed and off-kilter members of this dazed group? Are they really blind? The fuzziness of the image undermines the photograph's ability to bear witness; it frustrates the viewer's search for clues, condemning us to a perpetual double take.

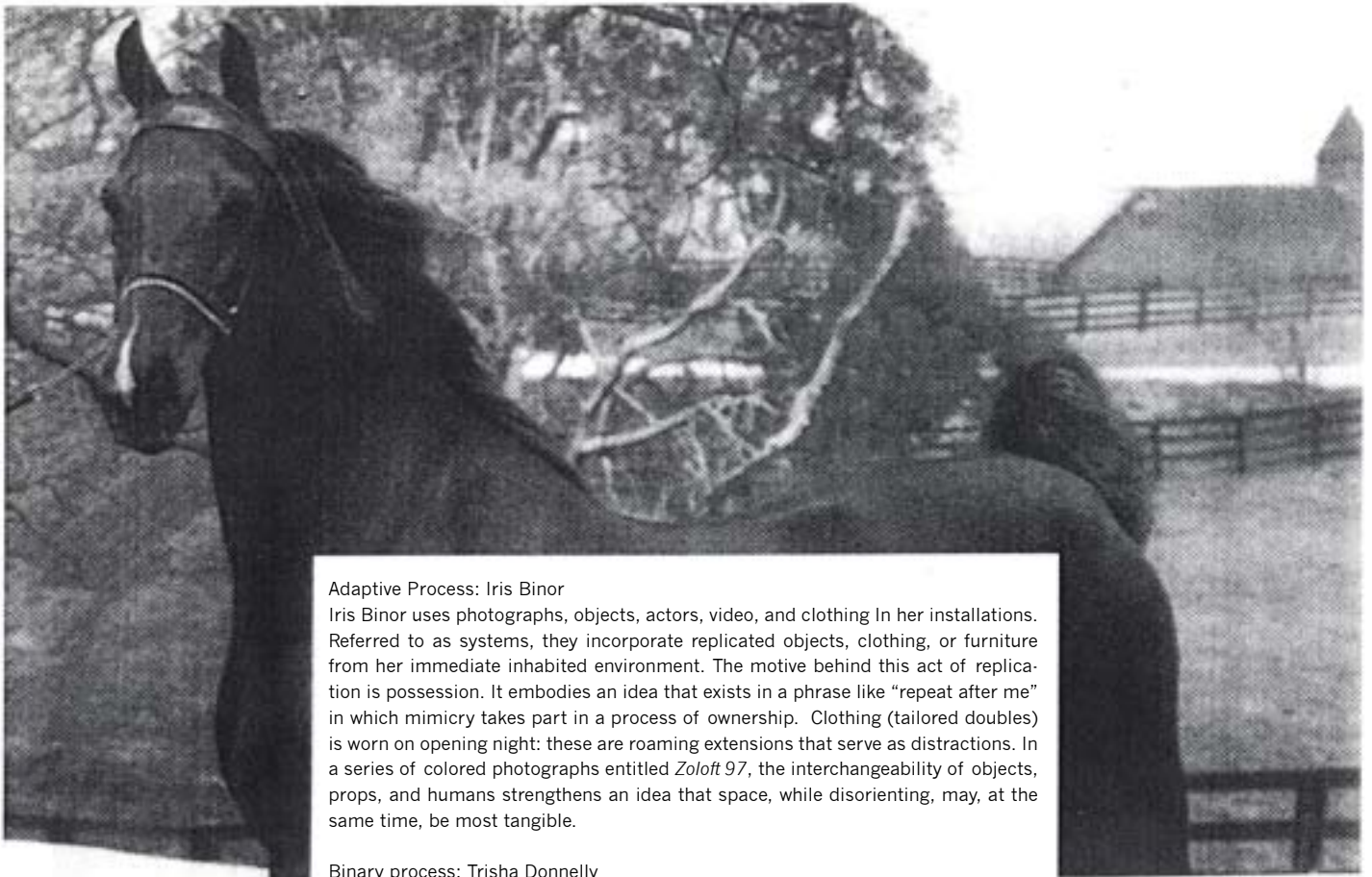
Subtle and slightly disorienting, Donnelly's works in the exhibition-like those of her fellow contributors-serve as a reminder of how fascinating our surroundings appear when we move outside our comfortable frameworks of perception. As if reminding us of this phenomenon, her sound instal-

lation *Untitled (bell)* (2000/2001) can be heard chiming from time to time in the gallery. Looking at one's watch is no comfort: the ringing happens without reference to any hourly schedule. Rousing us from our routine investigation of artworks, *Untitled (bell)* triggers a moment of self-consciousness in which we may reconsider our actions and surroundings. Confusion is thus transformed into something liberating. Our perception becomes more expansive, making room for experiences of awe and curiosity. And in the process, our picture of the world becomes extraordinary once again.

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Artists Space *** April/May 2000 *** 4/volume 6/NYC

Trisha Donnelly
How to Groom a Horse (Demonstration), 2000



Adaptive Process: Iris Binor

Iris Binor uses photographs, objects, actors, video, and clothing in her installations. Referred to as systems, they incorporate replicated objects, clothing, or furniture from her immediate inhabited environment. The motive behind this act of replication is possession. It embodies an idea that exists in a phrase like "repeat after me" in which mimicry takes part in a process of ownership. Clothing (tailored doubles) is worn on opening night: these are roaming extensions that serve as distractions. In a series of colored photographs entitled *Zoloff 97*, the interchangeability of objects, props, and humans strengthens an idea that space, while disorienting, may, at the same time, be most tangible.

Binary process: Trisha Donnelly

Trisha Donnelly makes video projections and performs "demonstrations" that explore areas of sensory perception and cognition. In a small video projection, entitled *Rio*, the artist, appearing as a solitary silhouette against a hazy, homemade sunset and accompanied by the sound of two love songs, performs American Sign Language. One assumes that she is translating the words of the song, but, in fact, she signs precise hiking directions to an idyllic place in the hills of Rio de Janeiro. As with a conjuring trick, you are only aware of what is going on at the moment of the illusion and, like a drug-induced hallucination, you are released from the prison of language and time. Her use of elliptical meaning indicates endless possible directions that perpetually slip back and forth between physical and imagined space, and real and fictive experience.