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EXHIBITION

HANS SCHABUS

NICHTS GEHT MEHR

25 FEBRUARY - 24 APRIL 2011

INSTITUT
D'ART CONTEMPORAIN
Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes

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The Institut d'art contemporain has invited Hans Schabus for the first large exhibition of his work in France.

Born in 1970 in Watschig in Austria, Hans Schabus lives and works in Vienna.

Solo exhibitions were held in particular in 2003 at the Secession exhibition in Vienna (*Astronaut*) and in 2007 at SITE Santa Fe in New Mexico (*Deserted Conquest*). Hans Schabus was particularly remarked for his monumental wooden structure encompassing the Austrian Pavilion at the Venice Biennial in 2005. In 2008, he designed '*Demolirerpolka*', a wooden fence that covered the entire façade of the IAC for the exhibition '*Fabricateurs d'espaces*'.

The exhibition at the Institute consists of existing and new works by the artist—installations, videos, sculptures and collages.

Hans Schabus performs radical acts—digging, filling, encircling, cutting—to deconstruct and restructure space, changing our references and movements. His works generally refer to his immediate environment and the materials that form it. The artist's studio appears as the matrix of his work, where his life and thinking are spatialised, the first place in which the relation between mental space and physical space is materialised.

Entitled *Nichts geht mehr* ('Rien ne va plus') by the artist, the exhibition at the Institute creates tension at the venue. In addition to referring to the suspense and feverish intensity of casinos, the title summarises the pressure exerted by a steel chain on the space itself and its components.

Hans Schabus questions existing spatial data and creates new spaces that give a bash to the '*white cube*' neutral exhibition space. However, unlike previous generations, the artist works above all with the site; he questions the space as such and not the museum.

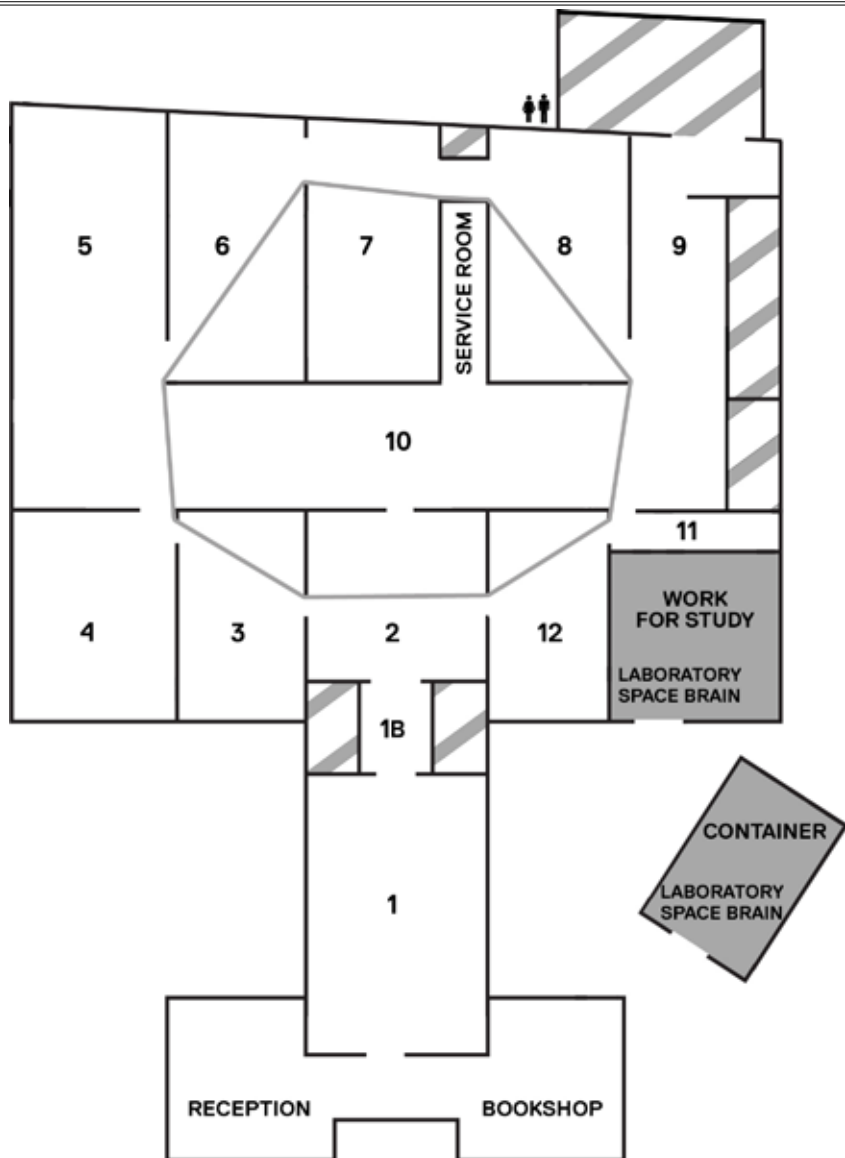
The sculptures, architectural volumes, objects, videos and photographs presented result from both physical and mental experience of the space by the artist, who aims at smashing all kinds of frontiers and countering the authority of architecture.

This spatial thinking materialised by the works forges new pathways and new routes. These are visible in particular through symbolic spaces of stairs, tunnels, corridors, etc. whose layouts are meticulously fitted out and presented by the artist in a continuous to and fro movement with their source place, the studio.

Hans Schabus' work, presented here with its formal diversity and in all its aspirations puts the notions of threshold and passage into play, staging them. He starts from objects, facts and real places to approach a lyrical, imaginary dimension.

By recovering and using remains in a new way, by changing circulation, Hans Schabus continues along his path and transcends experiences.

Exhibition spaces



- 1 VOYAGE ATOUR DE MA CHAMBRE
- 1b UNTITLED
- 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 METERRISS
- 3 ECHO
- 4 WELT
- 5 KLUB EUROPA
- 6 HELP

- 7 ATELIER
- 8 HAAANS
- 9 REPUBLIQUE
- 10 DER LETZTER DRECK
- SERVICE ROOM PHOTOGRAPHS
- 11 BETON
- 12 MAPS
- BOOKSHOP VOGELTRÄNKE

room 1

Voyage autour de ma chambre, 2010 **[Voyage around my room]**

The title of the work refers to a piece by Xavier de Maistre in 1794 in which the writer, a punished soldier, described his forced stay of forty-two days in his room. He thus creates an anti-travel story.

First invited into an inside environment—a caravan—the visitor starts by leaving this installation, a paradox that sends him straight into the artist's mental field.

For Hans Schabus, empty space makes it possible to destroy, design and build again to join spaces, to create new physical and mental circulation for the visitor. Using this standpoint, the artist installs the components of a caravan, cut up, and then refitted, to create other walls 'to block the movement, to wrap up the movement and then open it up again'.

As with the wooden palisade (*Demolirerpolka*) in front of the façade of the Institut d'art contemporain in 2008, the assembled wall, floor and ceiling of the caravan allow the emergence of a frontier, a threshold between inside and outside the exhibition, like a 'kingdom of transition (...) neither here nor there but somewhere between'.

The installation announces in a way what awaits the visitor when he walks through the exhibition: invited to ask himself questions about the space around him, to conquer this environment by both physical and mental appropriation, his body will sometimes be constrained by obstacles when it does not witness the placing under tension of the space itself.

The caravan is a European version of the mobile home, a very widespread architectural form in the United States and one that Hans Schabus used at the exhibition *Deserted Conquest* at SITE Santa Fe in 2007. In the tradition of the pioneer wagons used during the conquest of the West, of an image of the western and of travelling, this light mobile architecture with its simple form (whose principles should also be seen together with European modernist theories, according to the artist) inspires him to examine the relationship between architecture and landscape, from nomad dwellings to areas that are hostile for human life.

Astronaut, 2003

Astronaut as a title represents the conquest of space. It is a jacket covered with dust hanging from one of the metal rails holding a plasterboard wall. The piece of clothing is presented as a relic of the work of a sculptor or architect in the exhibition space.

Although the visitor's route is central to Hans Schabus' preoccupations, his works should also be seen in relation to his personal artistic environment. His posture of 'artist-explorer' leads to the frequent presentation in the exhibition space of traces of his own wanderings and research that generally take shape in his studio. He calls the latter 'the kingdom of experience' and it makes recurrent contribution to his work with multiple narrations.

Untitled, 1977-2009

The letter presented here is a sort of relic of childhood, like the stamp collection (room 5). It is a letter that he wrote to his parents when he was seven years old and in hospital. The writer probably begged to leave the hospital and go home. But the artist likes the idea that it should not be entirely comprehensible. Obviously having written it in his mother tongue, he has never shown it in a German-speaking country (the last exhibition was in Italy). The language gap is thus important for Hans Schabus, with the idea of meaning that stumbles or information that comes through only partially.

Hung on a wall in a windowless space and protected by an ordinary glass mount, the letter is both rendered sacred and shown more as a domestic document (of the souvenir photo type) than an art object. On a white sheet that seems to have been folded again and again, as a child might do (a kind of message in a bottle), broad, round childish handwriting in blue ink is framed by the signature 'Hans' and by a drawn figure with all the features of a child's drawing: an enormous head dominated by a big mouth (indicating the urgency of the message?), a smaller body and minute arms and legs, the latter being almost nonexistent (perhaps symbolic of the frozen situation or even imprisonment suffered by the child).

Present as a clue in the artist's exhibition, the child's letter introduces a biographical element, it holds a thread that goes back in time, indicating one of the paths followed, one that fades but does not disappear.

IAC, 2011

A small black metal plate just marked '5972 kilo air', *IAC* is a project that is closely linked to the place where it is shown. With the acronym of the Institut d'art contemporain as its title, the work indicates the weight of the air between the walls of the exhibition space. Calculated using the volume of the rooms, this weight indicates an imperceptible physical feature and is doubtless more abstract than any other information concerning the space.

A formal echo of the identification plates affixed to industrial machines, *IAC* is intended to be a cold, austere translation of emptiness converted into a physical indication. Close to aesthetics that could be described as conceptual, the work similarly has a tautological dimension: it indicates with mathematical accuracy what is present in the exhibition space, even when this cannot be apprehended directly.

IAC is like a statement of intent punctuating the visitor's route on leaving the caravan, in which Hans Schabus sees the space as a whole through one small thing .

room 1b

Untitled, 2009

Placed directly on the wall at head height, a word in aluminium—'mistral'—is supported by two almost identical brooms, differing mainly in the colour of their bristles. The font, a homonym of the word spelled out, is tilted slightly to the right as if it were handwriting.

A combination of substance and form, the idea of movement given to the mistral—a north-west wind that sweeps the Mediterranean basin—is corroborated here by the appearance of the work. The juxtaposition of brooms from Hans Schabus' old and new studios also suggests this movement, this force created by air that causes matter to move.

Similar to a type of lettering used in public places, to the lettering of a commercial sign shifted into an exhibition space, this untitled work is a different way of approaching the questions of circulation that are very present in the artist's work. It is also an extra way of envisaging the authority of architecture or the presence of an urban framework through reference to the action of a free natural force that escapes this control.

rooms 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Meterriss, 2011 [Level line]

When Hans Schabus installed the palisade *Demolirerpolka* in front of the façade of the Institute for the exhibition *Fabricateurs d'espaces* in 2008, he set a new way for visitors to apprehend the exhibition space. He created a threshold, induced different circulation and established a transgressive situation.

In a similar relation to the place, the chain *Meterriss*, a work made for the exhibition, addresses the space physically and mentally. Clamped, crushed, encircled, broken, disintegrated, the space leads the visitor to an original relation between an object and its environment.

Increasing the tension in this chain some seventy-five metres long caused the plasterboard partitions walls and the wood and aluminium structures supporting them to gradually bend, break or even collapse. Running around the central part of the exhibition space a metre above the floor, the chain imposes its trajectory on the constructions that usually determine the framework for the display of works, thus revealing the hitherto invisible structure of the building.

Designed specifically for the Institut d'art contemporain, *Meterriss* subjects the space to a destructive embrace that keeps visitors at a distance from the central heart of the edifice.

room 3

Echo, 2009

A black screen gives way to a long still shot of a natural landscape: a forest border at the edge of a pond. A damp winter atmosphere, absolute peace with just a few notes of birdsong. A different sound is heard halfway through the film, soon sounding like a race on broken branches. Hans Schabus falls for the first time and gets up, with a brittle sound of broken branches.

The tempo of the video then changes. The image is slowed from the second fall of the person, into the water. He gets up again with difficulty and starts running again, quickly leaving the field of vision after a close-up of his legs among dead leaves. The final minute of this very short video is devoted to wild nature (reeds, etc.) filmed close-up, and then the screen goes black, punctuated with birdsong.

The video is projected on a linen canvas stretched on a wooden chassis. This very pictorial appearance has as a counterpoint the aesthetics of the artist portrayed in the film, in a grey suit, an improbable adventurer in a wild natural setting, becoming muddy and almost animal, caught up in matter.

The artist provides a metaphorical concentrate of the human condition: framed by unchanging, vertical nature, the artist lives his horizontal, stumbling quest, like Sisyphus endlessly performing his task.

room 4

Welt, 2008 [World]

Übrig geblieben (Welt), 2008 [What remains (World)]

Leer (Welt), 2008 [Empty (World)]

Hans Schabus presents a work that is very important for him in its biographical and symbolic scope and whose generic title, 'World', indicates its dimension. In three parts, shown here together for the first time, the work follows on from the stamp collection assembled by the artist until he was fifteen and succeeds in setting out in a few complementary components all the motivations and problems of a collection, and especially of a stamp collection: a to and fro movement between the infinitely small and the infinitely large, the question of choice, of counting and of classification, the dialectic relation between container and content, between ordering and infinite, between process and finiteness.

Welt is a monumental 123-piece collage assembling on pages of albums a large number of postage stamps to create a vast shading off from warm colours to cold tones. Hans Schabus abandoned the traditional philatelic classification system—by country and by year—in favour of a chromatic system with a random mix of subjects and their seriousness in the order of history: politicians, flowers, animals, anniversaries, etc.

In addition, the composition draws attention by both its anecdotal patterns and iconography related to a collective consciousness.

Übrig geblieben (Welt) is a 'picture' framed with duplicate stamps pasted back to front. An alignment of tiny white papers, these 'remains' (of the collection)

are a materialisation of an erasure, a renouncement or perhaps what is unsaid (unseen) in the collection, what can be neither presented nor thrown away. It is in a way the other side of the world, the hidden part of life, that of irresolution, impossibility or secrecy.

Leer (Welt) stacks eight albums of Hans Schabus' stamp collection, used before he made the works. The resulting simple, discreet sculpture condenses the mechanisms of the collection: compilation and classification, accumulation and miniaturisation and the arbitrary limiting of infinite potential.

room 5

Klub Europa, 2010

Two imposing prehistoric monsters made of resin encumber this room, to the extent to which one wonders how they got there. A stegosaurus identifiable by its characteristic dorsal plates, blocks the path of a mammoth lying on its side. Un-reassembled fragments (feet and dorsal plates) of the animals are shown in a corner.

Hans Schabus bought them from the owner of an amusement park in Berlin where they were exhibited. The two animals had no maintenance for several years after the park closed. The traces of this neglect can still be seen today. The dinosaur's head—carefully cut off, like the mammoths feet—has disappeared, some of the dorsal plates were removed and small patches of moss surround deep cracks in the resin, which has lost its original colour. Partially torn off parts such as the mammoths tusks and trunks, and other damage such as tags on the shoulder of the dinosaur, show that there was clandestine occupation of the park after it closed.

In addition to the monumental size of the components of the installation, *Klub Europa* enables Hans Schabus to address indirectly the problems involved in globalisation and cultural imperialism.

First shown in the Paris suburbs and then moved to different places in Europe, these prehistoric figures were first abandoned after Disneyland was opened in 1992. This is the first time that the artists has shown them indoors.

The prehistoric park then benefited from the enthusiasm generated by Steven Spielberg's film *Jurassic Park* and was set up in former East Berlin. Success was fleeting as it went bankrupt for the second time.

By choosing these creatures to address political questions, Hans Schabus established a symbolic link between the extinction of prehistoric fauna and the disappearance of amusement parks to the benefit of a form of amusement tending towards global uniformisation.

room 6

Help, 2006

Neon bulbs fixed to a grid of metal bars hanging from the ceiling on thin chains mark the word 'HELP' in the exhibition space.

As under weightless conditions, reading the word means that visitors have to look up. This demand to visitors once again encourages questioning of their point of view as regards the exhibition space and their position as visitors to become more involved in a personal appropriation of the works and of their environment.

The word 'HELP' is usually shouted. The verticality imposed on the body of the visitors questions our relation with transcendence, with what is above us and remains unreachable.

Shown for the first time in 2003 at the exhibition entitled *Astronaut (komme gleich)* at the Secession in Vienna, *Help* thus refers to spatial space and cosmic space, to the vain conquest of a beyond that is as attractive as it is disturbing. However, 'In space, nobody hears you shout' (*Alien*, 1979, Ridley Scott).

Dumme Leiter, 2007 [Stupid ladder]

The artist shows a broken, twisted ladder in the exhibition. It is described as 'stupid' because it can no longer serve its prime function, that of making it possible to reach a higher level. Like *Gegen die Wand* (room 10), the ladder is in the tradition of the *ready-made*. This everyday object thus moved and placed on display questions once again our relation, as visitors, with the exhibition space.

Although the purpose of the ladder is to form a path between point A and point B, it also gives the idea of elevation, of height and ascension. In a way its use changes our view of the space around us.

In a universal manner, in spirituality and psychology, the ladder is also a symbol of the ascension of the soul, an allegory of transcendence attained by overcoming successive obstacles. Taking inspiration from the Byzantine iconographic tradition of the celestial ladder of Saint John Climacus (John of the Ladder), Constantin Brancusi made his *Colonnes sans fin* (Endless Columns) with the approach of 'entering the Kingdom of Heaven'. This series of sculptures inspired Hans Schabus in a set of mapped itineraries shown in the exhibition (room 12), and might also appear as one of the references of this 'Jacob's Ladder'.

room 7

Atelier, 2010 [Studio]

The question of the studio is fundamental for Hans Schabus and runs through all his work. A matrix, the studio materialises the incessant links between mental space and physical space.

Also interested in 'empty space' as sculptural material, Hans Schabus combines both these preoccupations here by transforming the studio space and its environment into a film set and drawing a strong fiction potential from it.

The film begins with a succession of broad outdoor shots with the camera seeming to move in gradually to set out to conquer a place: the artist's studio in a rear courtyard.

The artist makes us test the surroundings of his studio by a dynamic hand-held camera movement that seems to cover all the architectural volumes (streets, buildings, roofs, walls, passage, openings, etc.) and approaches space in both its psychological and physical dimensions.

The spectator finds himself in the position of a watcher who is above, comes close, observes, circles or intrudes. This impression is accentuated by the sound track that plunges it in cinematography. The recording of a western can soon be identified: horses, Mexican singing, a village band, fragments of dialogue, etc.

room 8

HAAANS, 2009

Hans Schabus made a self-portrait by assembling different fragments of his face taken from portraits published in the papers. In 2008, with four other artists, he responded to a commission from Tanzquartier in Vienna by making advertising inserts of various forms in journals and newspapers—bundled here.

Thus pieces of posters—flat or marked by the folds of the newspapers—make up the main areas of the artist's face while keeping it entire.

A front view in large format, the portrait is akin to German 'objective' photography in its documentary attention to detail (bristles, pores, the grain of skin ...) and its comparative lack of expression or at least a concentrated gaze and a serious pose.

Without deconstructing it, the different strata suggested by the collages and joins of the self-portrait combine with its hieratic nature, generate a portrait that is above all symbolic, and a touch of the dimension of an icon.

The title can be understood as the artist's first name stretched into a cry, accentuating the graveness of the self-portrait and its naturally introspective temptation.

Editing of the shots becomes faster, alternating inside and outside views. Images follow each other at the rapid rate of the sound track, with the dramatic progression of a western. The true entry to the studio is like a break-in or at least an incursion into a space charged with intensity as it is accompanied by the sounds of the denouement of the western, with action at its peak: shouting and shooting at the moment when in the mythology of the Far West everything is massacred and wrecked. The violence of the sound contrasts with the views of the studio, which is more like a researchers' premises than the lair of a traditional sculptor: shelves, chairs, a desk, doors, windows, an empty wall, a staircase ...

The artist's studio, the main character in the film, is used here for an enigmatic screenplay, between a whimsical daydream and the showing of emptiness—emptiness as absence to be occupied and as a passage to be crossed.

**Up Side Down (on knees and nose),
2008**

Hans Schabus 'recycles' once again the mobile home that he showed at the exhibition *Deserted Conquest* at SITE Santa Fe in 2007, here extracting the door of this nomadic dwelling and subjecting it to a sculptor's treatment. The artists cut up the wooden door and then reassembled the elements, respecting the proportions of the mobile home and keeping the components that indicate the value of use of the object: hinge, lock, spyhole and handle.

The door turned upside down by the hand of the sculptor responds to the cut up caravan, *Voyage autour de ma chambre*, by its upsetting of space and the unusual mental circulation that it generates. It also belongs to the same 'family' of *readymades* as *Gegen die Wand*, 2008 [Against the wall] (room 9) and *Dumme Leiter*, 2007 [Stupid ladder] (room 6), essential everyday objects related to architecture and movement and that become divested of all function.

The raw or even brutal diverting of forms and postures underlines the metaphor of the object. What has become of the threshold, inherent in the notion of door? What passage is possible? What passage from inside to outside or vice versa? The subtitle of the sculpture confirms its effect of stylised anthropomorphism: a body on the floor, thwarted, inept.

room 9

République, 2010 [Republic]

A banister—horizontal—from the artist's studio, République is a structure in metal and wood that seems to be folded in on itself. It rests partly on plaster components that are in turn juxtaposed in twos. Placed in the centre of one of the most frequently used lines of circulation in the IAC, it partly obstructs passage. The wall behind the object is pierced with sixteen prints of identical cores that reveal the architectural structure of the building to visitors.

In a way different to that of *Meterriss*, the presence of the object and the accompanying holes give tension to the place in a play of destruction of dummy walls, of the revelations of the original architecture, of opening to the outside and of the occupation of empty space. Held at a distance once again, the visitor's body confronts this everyday object whose primary function of steps to reach an upper level is diverted. From verticality to horizontality, from passage to obstruction, the architectural element of circulation now take the form of a monumental structure on makeshift pedestals torn from the '*white cube*'.

Hans Schabus keeps on going back to staircases. Whether they are the old circular staircase in his parents' chalet, entitled *Of the principle of hope when one digs a tunnel*, or labyrinthine staircases inspired by sketches by Piranesi (eighteenth century), with Schabus taking his mountain of wood to Venice in 2005, these displacement structures crystallise subjects with which the artist is preoccupied: the notions of movement and walking, symbols of the threshold between two places and, like *Republic*, the complex systems of the insertion of a

hierarchical organisation in spaces and bodies.

***Leck mich am Arsch, 2006* [Kiss my arse]**

Presented for the first time in a vertical mode, a carpet that would be six metres long when unrolled and would reveal a disparate multicoloured assembly of fragments of cloth. It is installed in a corner of the exhibition space.

Made using the traditional patchwork technique with pieces of used material sewn together, Hans Schabus' carpet is made of his old clothes.

This is an example of a recurrent practice by the artist, in which he takes components from their initial context, changes their form and organises them differently. It is also once again a way of keeping the traces of a history (a body, movements, a life...) or even recycling them.

As a sculptor, Hans Schabus is extremely interested in the relations between a body and its environment, its volume, its movement in space, its physical sensations... The artist examines our relationship with space, as 'a place frequented' (Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, 1990), as a world that we explore and change and in which we can unfold or, in contrast, curl up. By its nature and texture, the carpet oscillates between a cylindrical volume (sculpture) and a flat support. When rolled up it seems to store the history of the artist, ready to be shifted or ready for a move. The carpet can unroll and display a kind of inverted puzzle with each fragment containing an entire possible combination, a memory.

The provocative title can be construed in several ways: from the servile object, the

carpet, whose task is to lie on floors that are walked on, to the ironic exceeding of its own fetishism (whatever their use, clothes are always more directly carnal than symbolic), by way of a salutary upgrading of the human condition (for as Montaigne said, '... on the highest throne in the world, we just sit on our own arse!').

***Gegen die Wand, 2008* [Against the wall]**

Gegen die Wand is a blind window with a broken pane. The object leans against one of the walls of the exhibition room. Removed from its original context, the window has already joined the tradition of the *ready-made*: a found object whose form is of no particular interest but that is nonetheless moved symbolically from reality to art space.

By means of this poetry of recycling, Hans Schabus addresses an everyday object that has become useless, a relic that harbours various levels of cultural and semantic appraisal.

The window ('open to the world', Leon Battista Alberti, *De pictura*, 1435) has been a common metaphor in art since the Renaissance and linked with awareness and knowledge of oneself and what surrounds us. Here, the *veduta* ('view') effect is reduced to nothing. The breaking of the pane, in the precise case of Hans Schabus' work, changes the spectator's vision: transparency is not total and the eye has to handle obstacles, stumbles and perceives only what the frame encloses. But the visitor comes up against the white wall every time, with reference to the German expression 'a race against the wall' indicating an enterprise doomed to failure.

Showing a certain blindness of the visitor or the artist's wish to engender a more

lucid gaze, *Gegen die Wand* stimulates reflection on the exhibition space: the way works and bodies are set out and its relation with the outside and with the real.

room 10

Der Letzter Dreck, 2007 [The last dirt]

The title of the work is a literal description of what is shown. A small pile of waste is heaped on the floor, a mass formed of thick dust enveloping pieces of cardboard and plastic, a film canister, a few cigarette stubs ... It is all from Hans Schabus' former studio and was recovered by the last sweep of a broom before the artist left for good, leaving a clean space behind him.

Letzter Dreck is also an expression used when talking about the trace remaining after various passages, movements and ephemeral acts, the physical witness of the use of a place.

Simultaneously reporting the past occupation of a place and the creation of art from rubbish, *Der Letzter Dreck* gives a clue to the artist's previous works. The work is the subject of transfiguration in the exhibition—precious, artistic material emerges from this sum of negligible matter.

Service room

East River, New York, March 26th 2002, 2002

Main Frankfurt, 17 Mai 2002, 2002

Bodensee, Bregenz, 9 November 2004, 2004 [Lake Constance, Bregenz, 9 november 2004]

Mare Adriatico, Venezia, 13 Maggio 2005, 2005 [Adriatic Sea, Venice, 13 may 2005]

Europahaven, Rotterdam, 17 juni 2009, 2009 [Europahaven, Rotterdam, 17 june 2009]

At his exhibition *Astronaut* at the Secession in Vienna in 2003, Hans Schabus had presented a video called *Western* (2002) in which the artist is filmed in a small improvised sailing boat called 'Forlorn' on a trip through the sewers of Vienna. In this work, Schabus refers to Bas Jan Ader a 1970s Dutch conceptual artist who disappeared without trace when crossing the Atlantic in a small boat.

'Like Bas Jan Ader, I seek to carry out projects that are sensitive, poetic and even poignant.'

Interested by voyages, the notion of points of departure and arrival, of destinations and the experience of movement, Hans Schabus reused his sailing boat—rebuilt on the plans of the *Optimist*, a small dinghy designed in the USA and sold from the 1950s onwards—to create a fiction in which he moored in various towns.

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room 11

Béton, 2008 [Concrete]

Displayed at the end of a corridor, *Béton* is a video showing Hans Schabus in his studio. It is a place for work and for reflection and cluttered with miscellaneous objects (books, computers, furniture, tools). There is a hole that the artist is filling in: bringing aggregate, making cement-water grout and using a trowel to model the resulting material. The 'kingdom of experience' that the studio forms for Hans Schabus is the 'brain space' for the presentation of solitary, meticulous work by the sculptor: preparing the material, filling, spreading, tamping and smoothing.

During the final minutes of the video when Hans Schabus moves out of the field of the camera several times, it becomes more clear that the subject of *Concrete* is the mark left on the floor by the filling of the mysterious hole. It was the *Shaft of Babel*, a tunnel 5 metres deep that the artist dug in 2003 to get from his studio to the underground sewers of Vienna on the occasion of the exhibition *Astronaut* at the Vienna Secession.

While the visitor is physically present in a corridor that might bring to mind the entry to a shaft, Hans Schabus closes the opening in his studio when he moves out, a symbolic gesture of the erasure of his passage and a kind of renunciation. However, as with *Der Letzter Dreck* (room 10), the art object is a pretext for conserving a trace of his experience in this studio.

The series of five photographs all show him from the same angle: from behind, alone in his boat, wearing a red check shirt and pointed towards the shore with various types of architecture that is more or less recognisable according to the city. From one image to the next, the variations thus depend on the configuration of the port and the weather conditions. New York is misty, it is sunny and clear in Frankfurt, Bregenz is cloudy, Venice of pointillist and vaporous and Rotterdam grey and industrial.

Set off-centre in the image, the artist as a single-handed yachtsman handles his frail vessel as an anti-hero in the vastness of maritime and urban landscapes.

This series of photos by Hans Schabus and its underlying artistic intention indicates the lineage of a certain history of art—nineteenth century German Romantic landscape painting that highlighted human solitude and man's powerlessness in the face of the grandeur of nature, and that saw landscape or wandering above all as the expression of a deep feeling (Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above a Sea of Clouds*, 1818; Arnold Böcklin, *Isle of the Dead*, 1880 and subsequent years).

room 12

Auf der Suche nach der endlosen Säule (zwischenbrücken), 2010 [In search of the endless column (between bridges)]

Untitled, 2008

Auf der Suche nach der endlosen Säule (Following the Santa Fe Trail), 2007 [In search of the endless column (on the Santa Fe trail)]

Deserted conquest (New Mexico map), 2007

Mobile Home (six pack), 2007

Auf der Suche nach der endlosen Säule (Atlantik), 2006 [In search of the endless column (Atlantic)]

Auf der Suche nach der endlosen Säule (Polen), 2004 [In search of the endless column (Poland)]

Auf der Suche nach der endlosen Säule (LA River), 2004 [In search of the endless column (LA River)]

Erschließungsplan für Schacht von Babel - Atelierbergwerk, 2004 [Map of the layout of the Shaft of Babel – Studio mine]

The room is organised in such a way as to show several aspects of Hans Schabus' topographical work. To literally spread out his projects, the artist uses a large portion of wall to assemble maps, surveys, diagrams, etc. This shows his rigorous, almost scientific approach to sites. The collection of information reveals various features related to the exploration of a territory. This presentation can therefore be related to the studio work that is essential to the construction of Hans Schabus' work: a place where the

conceptual approach and anticipation of physical experiment join forces, an exchange necessary for designing a route before the actual activation of the sites. The eight maps displayed can be classified in two main groups, each corresponding to projects designed specifically from information related to the territory.

The first set, consisting of works of the series *In search of the endless column* and *Deserted conquest*, consists of several geographical maps under glass. By making explicit reference to the work of Constantin Brancusi, Hans Schabus transposes the vertical elevation of the Romanian artist's columns to a horizontal quest extended over the surface of the territory. Similarly marked by its vain aspect, the enterprise is to be understood first and foremost as an attempt at extracting and displaying data for discovery at the site.

The two large reconstituted maps in the centre of the assembly (*Zwischenbrücken* (2010) et *Los Angeles River* (2004)), thus bring together topographical components and all kinds of notes made by the artist (photos of areas crossed, route to be followed to reach point x, etc.). The second set is more confusing and introduces an (auto)fictional digression using information related to the site. The prior geographic framework is thus erased in stages—a blank map, *Untitled* (2008), where the only remaining reference is its bale, is supposed to be a map of the town where the artist was born, or imagined so, as in the project drawn from the *Babel Shaft* where a connected network of underground installations linking different cities in Europe started at the studio.

Finally, the screen print *Mobile Home (six pack)* (2007) refers to the exploration of the American West, describing an improbable map made from the unfolded cardboard wrapping of a six-pack.

A theoretical counterpoint to the chain lacerating the central part of the exhibition space, this installation contrasts the abstract reality of topographical indications to the testing of the place, its actual exploitation.

La Repubblica, 2005

A sculpture on the floor, *La Repubblica* consists of an assembly of numbered wooden members taped together in places, like an uncompleted puzzle. The labyrinthine design of the whole may evoke an abstract form with a geometrical type structure, architecture, a plan or a circulation diagram.

Indeed, this sculpture materialises the directions of the accesses at the Austrian pavilion of the Venice Biennial in 2005 whose façade was enveloped by Hans Schabus in a mountainous wooden structure entitled *The Last Land*. By materialising the lines of circulation of the pavilion (1932) designed by the architect Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956), co-founder of the Vienna Secession with Gustav Klimt in 1897, the artist makes a homage to one of the initiators of modernist architecture whose work tended towards freedom from academic constraints and towards the handling of the plastic by geometrical forms. A touch of Piranesi's tortuous prison representations can also be seen here.

Repubblica ('public thing' etymologically) is a materialisation of the lines that can be followed by everybody in the public place. Free of its façade, its walls and its envelope, this movement can then be

reproduced in any space, be it physical or mental.

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Vogeltränke (to cast one's mind back into mould), 1998 - 2008 [Drinking bowl for birds]

A cast-iron object filled with water and placed on the ground, the title *Vogeltränke* indicates that it is a drinking device for birds. The special shape, the unfinished appearance of the whole and the burrs in the material give notions of moulds and matrices that thus refer to the gestures of sculpture.

This work is also in the sculptural tradition of the death mask, the moulding of the face of a person—living or dead—that will be a 'portrait' (souvenir) of its volume. Intrigued by the notions of threshold, limit and frontier, Hans Schabus made a mould of his face that was then to be cast in iron, making a death mask, an object crystallising the swing from life to death, from the ephemeral present to eternity. However, he did not complete the experiment and chose to use part of this aborted process, a mould of the back of his head, to give it new energy, to give it another function that is just as vain.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

HANS SCHABUS *Nichts Geht Mehr*

Exhibition from 25 February to 24 April 2011

OPENING HOURS

Wednesday to Sunday from 1 pm to 7 pm
Free guided visits
on Saturdays and Sundays at 3 pm and by appointment

ACCESS

Bus C3 (stop: Institut d'art contemporain)
Bus 99 (stop: Ferrandière)
Metro Line A (station: République)
Station vélo'v (bicycles) 1 minute on foot
The Institut d'art contemporain is 10 minutes from Lyon Part-Dieu railway station

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