

Fabricateurs d'espaces

Björn Dahlem, Jeppe Hein, Vincent Lamouroux,
Guillaume Leblon, Rita McBride, Evariste Richer,
Michael Sailstorfer, Hans Schabus

October 17, 2008 - January 4, 2009

Fabricateurs d'espaces (spacemakers) assembles eight artists of the same generation, who have worked on broadening practices in sculpture and who show recent or special works for the occasion.

In contrast with the sculpture of recent decades that was drawn essentially from 'post-ready-made' practices, relational approaches (interactive installations) or assemblies of recycled material, their work uses space as the raw material for plastic

volumes and as the very foundation of the work.

More or less affirmed heirs of the avant-garde movements of the late 1960s (Minimal art, Land art), the artists showing here have the common feature of being sculptors determined to explore the multiple meanings of space: that generated by the spectator's body, architectural volumes, mental and imaginary space, the expanse of the cosmos, etc., by probing and forcing it, but



Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne

going beyond it and reinventing it. Each in his or her own way wants to push back the physical limits of space and investigate all its dimensions, including the temporal ones. The artists are thus interested in formal and mental quests for hypothetical kinds of space and in the manipulation of the idea of universes, driven by the attraction of the non-representable.

They are both deconstructors and illusionists, and 'makers' in the sense that they invent strange spaces at the boundary of the irrational—nonetheless with lucidity—by freely adopting both scientific models and artistic references. Remembering the fundamentals of twentieth century sculpture sheds light on the issues of the exhibition and underlines the maturity of the work accomplished by these young artists and their capacity to reuse radical artistic research.

Speculative material, space is often made theatrical by the fabricateurs, with finds, stories, demolitions and transformations. Wishing to call stability and gravity into question, the artists create works that combine thinking and experience of space. The narrative power of the works can thus lead to new representations of space, and their kinetic potential calls for fresh perception

by the visitor.

Fabricateurs d'espaces means a search for weightlessness and new expression in sculpture using broad imagination; but with a fibre that is sometimes critical and sometimes playful with regard to human and terrestrial limits. This is clearly a question of utopia, with that of a future to be reinvented, that runs through this exhibition.

Hans Schabus [frontage]

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

The works of Hans Schabus (sculptures, interventions, videos, installations) usually refer to the artist's immediate surroundings and to the materials that make them up. In particular, the artist's studio appears as the matrix of his work, where his life and thought are spatialised.

Hans Schabus engages in physical and mental experiments with spaces, radicalising the notion of the "inhabitable sculpture", going as far as peregrinations with an initiatory dimension (running down a tunnel, expedition through sewers, etc.). He is also known for producing a monumental wooden structure taking in the Austrian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2005.

Demolirerpolka (2006) is a work rethought specifically by Hans Schabus for the Institut d'art contemporain. He has designed a wooden fence that covers the entire façade of the building as seen from the street, thus concealing the possibility that it opens towards the outside and its reception function.

The idea of the work lies in the history of the city of Vienna and particularly the demolition of the medieval walls that started in 1857, that turned the whole city into a vast building site

The Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne

A facility for creation and research in contemporary art, the Institut d'art contemporain holds exhibitions and meetings in situ. This is combined with the assembling of a collection of internationally reputed works. Its research activities are extended outside its walls by the dissemination of the Rhône-Alpes Collection throughout the region and the holding of exhibitions of work by up-and-coming artists. The Institut works with numerous partner establishments, thus strengthening the contemporary art network in the Rhône-Alpes region.

and inspired many artists. Johann Strauss thus composed his *Demolirerpolka* in 1862.

Hans Schabus has chosen to make each board in the fence a different height, corresponding to each note in the composer's score.

The artist uses this strong gesture to extrapolate the building site fence and removes any identification of place for the duration of the exhibition. Preoccupied by the idea of demolition, that 'also reflects modernity', Schabus gives us the sign of the building site as the possible continuation of construction.

Demolirerpolka (2007) is a colour print on paper made by Hans Schabus in an edition of 20. The artist uses the score by Johann Strauss and replaces the notes by points, thus creating a concrete drawing, the score of his own sculpture.

Vincent Lamouroux [rooms 1, 7]

Born in 1974 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Vincent Lamouroux lives and works in Paris.

The space is all at once the medium, the frame and the generator of Vincent Lamouroux's works. Most often produced in situ, the artist's pieces are "sculpture-places", in which the very air can become a material in itself. They materialise his thinking on

space and explore the notion of instability. The floor series with random different levels in space is emblematic of this.

The question of moving round is central to his arrangements, whether it be that of the sculpture in the space (*Scape*) or of the visitor in the environment (*Hélicope, Grounded*).

Fuelled by references to architecture, inspired by technological advances and also by the world of entertainment and the imagery of science-fiction, Vincent Lamouroux creates works that are veritable "springboards for the imagination".

Vincent Lamouroux is showing two closely linked projects in the exhibition *Fabricateurs d'espaces*. 'AR.09' (2008) is a set of hollow forms distributed in the first exhibition space in a practically theatrical layout, and the spatial and sculptural echo of *AR.07* placed at the precisely opposite end of the exhibition space of the Institut d'art contemporain. The sculptural modules assembled to form a kind of incongruous decor, an artificial landscape, are the result of the break-up of *AR.07*, of which all that remains is the frame divided into several entities. Although the form of each of the modules is derived from the geometrical agglomeration of *AR.07*, they have nevertheless become independent entities that are both autonomous and indissociable, having separated at right angles to

their original matrix. The two works reply to each other and cancel each other out and the spectator has to go back and forth to fully apprehend them: indeed, the visit begins with emptiness that leads to solid and then results to emptiness.' (Vincent Lamouroux)

'**AR.07** (2008) is a sculpture made up of a supposedly random agglomerate of cubic forms. This massive, invasive work is an kind of growth from white walls, a deviation of the 'white cube' that, under spatial/geometrical constraints, has freed itself of its inherent rigour. The cubes clustered at different heights seem melted into each other inextricably, like a half-geological, half-artificial growth that could have pushed out from the ground just as well as from the lateral surfaces.' (Vincent Lamouroux)

Rita McBride [rooms 2, 10]

Born in 1960 in Des Moines (Iowa), Rita McBride lives and works in Düsseldorf.

Of a different generation, Rita McBride has a clearly different approach to sculpture from that of the other artists shown here.

Rita McBride practises an art of sculpture bordering on architecture and design. The simplicity and seriality of industrial forms place her work in

the Minimalist tradition. Above and beyond this historical reference, Rita McBride reconsiders our everyday objects and architectures, diverts their functions and highlights their social effects.

In Rita McBride's works, the spatial relation is a part of this critical review of the basics of modernist architecture. Thus, for her, beyond the reality of the work, the exhibition venue is a part of the reality of the world.

National Chain (1997, Collection Rhône-Alpes) is a contextual installation (that can be adapted to any space) as shown by the system used: false ceiling fixation bars whose assembly area can be extended or reduced as desired. Here, in the centre of the exhibition, the work is suspended at a height such that the visitor's body has to take a constrained, unusual position. The squaring gives an immediate overall perception and, like all systems of this kind, makes it possible to measure space and direct one's vision in a methodical, almost Cartesian manner. The modular logic serialises space, organising the latter by measurements and regular proportions. This system of globalisation of space is used in false ceilings all over the world and, although it is omnipresent it often remains unnoticed and has even gained a certain invisibility. Presented here in an unexpected manner, the modular approach—making perceptible the orthogonality of practically any constructed space and

seemingly contaminating the exhibition rooms—and the standardisation of materials are diverted from their utilitarian purpose to become a critical investment in sculpture.

Guillaume Leblon [rooms 5, 6]

Born in 1971 in Lille, Guillaume Leblon lives and works in Paris.

Guillaume Leblon's sculpture integrates existing materials and is closely articulated with the exhibition space at the venue. Using a minimal vocabulary and heterogeneous references, Guillaume Leblon shows architectures of space that play on the relation between empty and solid, changes of scale, expansion and unfolding or folding back that accentuate the physical impression felt by the visitor.

An approach using clues tends to be used, with what is perceived being part of a whole that engulfs it. Thus the sign generated by the work induces the visitor to make a mental reconstitution of the larger ensemble that it is set in, taking him or her beyond the space-time framework of present perception into narrative hypotheses.

In *Four Ladders* (2008), Guillaume Leblon has positioned real windmill sails in space. The wooden structures have become sculptures that invade the

exhibition space and cross it, going beyond the walls. Part of a building that is now obsolete, the wings have a dynamogenic function and a deep-seated relation with nature, here placed at the service of a paradoxical relation between construction and destruction. Guillaume Leblon plays on contrasts. Although they are monumental and massive, the sails seem to defy the law of gravity and float in space in a delicate balance.

In *Landscape* (2003), smoke is released steadily from the base of one of the walls, as when a fire is beginning to spread. Here, the artist works with suggestion, making a hypothetical space that is hidden and that may stimulate the visitor's curiosity or even concern.

Björn Dahlem [room 8]

Born in 1974 in Munich, Björn Dahlem lives and works in Berlin.

Björn Dahlem devises sculptures from contrasting salvaged objects and materials (wood, neon, etc.) which when assembled seem to be completely weightless. His aim is to present in the actual exhibition space the largest formations in the universe and our questions as to its origin.

Björn Dahlem sets a distance with the scientific models that he transfers to the sphere of art, expressing the limits of science as regards its capacity

to describe or translate the world. He sees his work as 'models of thinking' and cosmological speculations as much as formal, enigmatic constructions that can encourage both metaphysical reflection and dreams, like the artists of the Romantic movement. The titles of his exhibitions and his works are fairly eloquent—the exhibition *Utopia Planitia II* held in 2004 in Berlin was in four sections: *Melancholy, Consolation, Joy* and *Death*.

Schwarzes Loch [Black Hole] (2007) is an aerodynamic sculpture by Björn Dahlem; it is made up of wooden sections and lights that fill the whole volume of the exhibition room. A complex construction of attachments and wooden strips together with parallel neon lights traces a cosmic phenomenon that can nonetheless never be observed directly (in astrophysics, a black hole is a massive object whose gravity is so intense that it does not emit any radiation or let any form of matter escape). Here, Björn Dahlem has invented a formulation of the non-representable.

Michael Sailstorfer [rooms 9, 11]

Born in 1979 in Vilsbiburg (Germany), Michael Sailstorfer lives and works in Berlin. Fuelled by the constant search for energy, the work of Michael Sailstor-

fer brings into play actions involving transformation, deconstruction and reconstruction. He attaches great importance to the exhibition site, whether indoors or outdoors, public or private. His work confronts intermediate, transient spaces, non-places, areas we walk through without noticing on our way to some destination. With his broader view of sculpture, the artist uses materials taken from his immediate surroundings, notably heightening their qualities in terms of sound, light and smell. Michael Sailstorfer's work marks the exhibition space with a power of energy that seeks to give the viewer a phenomenological experience of the space.

In addition to the political consciousness that it may contain, Michael Sailstorfer's work marks the exhibition space with energy and power that seeks to give visitors a powerful physical experience of space. Three pieces are shown in the exhibition *Fabricateurs d'espaces*.

Consisting of a car tyre mounted on an electric motor, the installation **Zeit ist keine autobahn** [Time isn't a Motorway] (2006) is described as follows by the artist: 'I built a machine to use up tyres. A motor endlessly turns a tyre that is pressed against a wall. The tyre wears slowly and has to be changed after a certain time. The floor is covered with rubber dust. You can smell the rubber.' The work literally attacks the wall of the exhi-

bition space. The erosion of the 'turning wheel' is shown by the heaping of dust and the smell of rubber in the air. Visitors are physically seized by the work and there is no way of modulating its reception. A magnificent confrontation with a contemporary allegory of time.

Unendliche Säule [Endless Column] (2006) is a column of light that is seen most at night. Beyond the obvious reference to Brancusi (*The Endless Column*, 1918-1938), it summons up a whole portion of contemporary sculpture (potential infinity, the importance awarded to the perception of space, the notion of energy generating form, etc.).

Michael Sailstorfer made the work ***Top of the Syrian Reactor before Concrete Poured*** (2008) for the exhibition. Its form was inspired by a photograph published in a German newspaper of a Syrian nuclear reactor after its destruction during fighting and before it was fully covered with concrete. The sculptor occupies space beyond the physical presence of a sculpture and creates here a sound image of architecture by a system for detecting the vibrations of the building.

Jeppe Hein [rooms 4, 12]

Born in 1974 in Copenhagen (Denmark), Jeppe Hein lives and works in Berlin and Copenhagen.

Jeppe Hein's work openly refers to Minimal Art, calling upon its aesthetic (autonomy of the work, importance of the viewer's perception). However, in his sculptures and actions, the artist diverts this language by taking it to its paroxysm. The cube shakes, moves, burns and melts.

Jeppe Hein's works rely on the presence of the viewer and on both his physical and intellectual experience of it.

Changing Space (2003) uses a spatial operation around an additional wall. The first feeling on entering the room is that of being in an empty white space that is cube-shaped and static (the character of a constructed, inhabited space before gaining the 'white cube' character in the field of art). However, the imperceptible movement of one of the walls contradicts this habit of perception. The device, blended into the architecture, leads visitors to observing and accepting that their position in space is determined by the work itself as the latter manipulates volume.

Smoking Bench (2003)

'The work consists of a large mirror hanging at one end of the space and a small bench set before it. When

visitors sit on the bench, they just watch themselves seated in the centre of a large empty space, but shortly afterwards they find themselves in a cloud of smoke.

A small mechanism triggers the smoke machine inside the bench, sending out small circles of smoke around the visitor. When they watch their reflections in the mirror, they see themselves disappear in a cloud of smoke. They reappear a few minutes later when the smoke has cleared.' (Jeppe Hein)

Playing on the relation between absence and presence, *Smoking Bench* gives the illusion of a possible switch and perhaps the experience of an 'elsewhere'.

Evariste Richer [rooms 1 bis, 3]

Born in 1969 in Montpellier, Evariste Richer lives and works in Paris.

Evariste Richer's approach is based on notions of matter, space and time, and the different conceptions they entail. In a kind of scientific exploration, the artist questions our measuring systems and spatial conventions. The exhibition space becomes a place for experimentation for the artist as "geometer", who makes systematic use of the methods of the inventory and the grid to exhaust his study subjects.

Evariste Richer proposes among other things interpretations of natural phenomena, whether observable or mythical (aurora borealis, green ray etc.). In their relationship to the universe, the artist's works disturb the perception of the viewer, caught between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

Les Sondes [Probes] (2006) by Evariste Richer are graduated avalanche probes (for finding buried persons or objects) used here as a tool for investigating space. Geometrical instruments, evocation of space that is out of range and the setting of the scene of a possible burial, Evariste Richer's probes are objects that modify the visitor's landmarks and become true devices in spatial reconfiguration. The Institut d'art contemporain shows two of Evariste Richer's pieces in the exhibition *Fabricateurs d'espaces*.

In *Ecran* [Screen] (2008), a screen print made from a cinema projection screen is hung on the four walls of the exhibition room. The uniform borderless repetition of the motif and the vibrating effect that this generates submerge the visitor in a cosmic interpretation.

L'Œil du perroquet [The Eye of the Parrot] (2008) is a 'minimalised' artificial aircraft set in one of the walls of the room. This spatial landmark too, from which the artist has removed

the graduations, has a rotary movement that makes it absurd. The setting of the somewhat malfunctioning measuring instrument in a 'panorama' with no limits other than those of the exhibition room contributes to a perceptive confusion in the spectator and the experience of a degree of emptiness or absence. This is what Evariste Richer said about parrots in a 2007 video :

' I filmed an African Grey Parrot, a species said to be particularly good at talking. I tried to make it say a lot of things and a parrot is not an easy thing to master. It tends to be off-beat. For me, it is an incarnation of the off-beatness that gives texture to our reality. The parrot is a stereotype of repetition and repeats the words that it hears, as the cinema reproduces the world. Parrots sometimes live longer than humans and might be a delayed echo in the way a stalagmite might be the off-beat memory of a stalactite'.

[frontage] Hans Schabus

[1] Vincent Lamouroux

[1 bis] Evariste Richer

[2] Rita McBride

[3] Evariste Richer

[4] Jeppe Hein

[5] Guillaume Leblon

[6] Guillaume Leblon

[7] Vincent Lamouroux

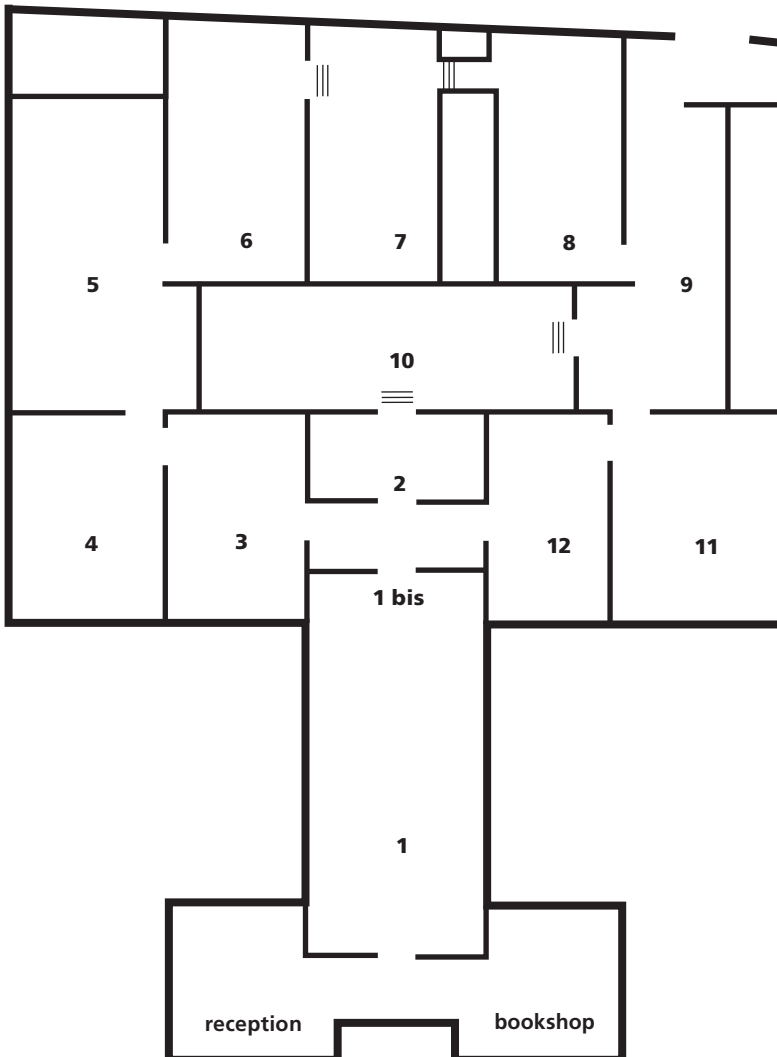
[8] Björn Dahlem

[9] Michael Sailstorfer

[10] Rita McBride

[11] Michael Sailstorfer

[12] Jeppe Hein



Practical information

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Exhibition from October 17, 2008 to January 4, 2009

Opening times

Wednesday to Sunday – 1pm to 7pm

Admission

Full price € 4 / Reduced price € 2.50

Guided tours

Free on Saturday and Sunday at 3pm or with advance booking
Group tours with advance booking

Information centre open with advance booking

Bookshop specialising in contemporary art, open during exhibition opening times

How to get there

Bus C3 to Institut d'art contemporain

Metro line A to République

The Institut d'art contemporain is near Lyon Part-Dieu station and a minute's walk from a Vélo'v bike-hire station

This exhibition is the fruit of a partnership with the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Siegen, within the framework of the series of exhibitions entitled European Partners initiated by the Goethe-Institut and Kunststiftung NRW (North Rhine-Westphalia Art Foundation).

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