

This catalogue is published
on the occasion of the
exhibition

Antje Majewski
The World of Gimel.
How to Make Objects Talk

Kunsthhaus Graz,
Universalmuseum
Joanneum
1st October 2011 until
15th January 2012

Antje Majewski

The World of Gimel

How to Make Objects Talk

Contents

1	Introduction Peter Pakesch Wondrous Mirror Adam Budak (possibilities of) worldmaking Éduoard Glissant Relation	V Alejandro Jodorowsky and Antje Majewski The Hand that Gives
17	Objects Antje Majewski Travelogue O The Vitrine I The Hedgeapple II The Shell III The Meteorite IV The Pot Made of Fragrant Moroccan Wood, Contains a Black Ball or Two Glass Eyes V The Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand VI The Buddha-Hand VII The White Stone	VI Thomas Bayrle and Antje Majewski Madonna Machine Rosary VII Helke Bayrle and Antje Majewski The Stones, the Shells Anita Eschner, Eva Kreissl, Bernd Moser, Wolfgang Paill, Kurt Zernig Scientific Evaluations of the Objects
	→ Exhibition Architecture Mésarchitectures Erratic Architecture	→ Audio Guide Momus Fabulism: 7 Objects
56	Voices I Antje Majewski News from the World of Gimel II Antje Majewski Entity III Issa Samb and Antje Majewski The Shell IV El Hadji Sy and Antje Majewski The Stone, the Ball, the Eyes V Antje Majewski A Black Ball and Two Glass Eyes Antje Majewski Freisler Antje Majewski, Paweł Freisler, Simon Starling, Rasmus Nielsen and others The Black Ball, the Egg Simon Starling & Superflex e.g. The Universal Egg	120 Texts O Jorge Luis Borges The Aleph I Marcus Steinweg What is an Object? II Clémentine Deliss Some Thoughts on the Transformational Psyche of Objects III Friedrich Hölderlin Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece IV Łukasz Gorczyca, Łukasz Ronduda Half Empty V Ingo Niermann Why Me? VI Xu Shuxian The Answers VII John Joseph Mathews Talking to the Moon Chuang Tzu All Created Equal
		220 Appendix

Wondrous Mirror

Foreword

Peter Pakesch

In the course of our museum work in recent years and in the light of the particular configuration of the Joanneum, which with its 200-year-old history and comprehensive collections continues to work with a universe of objects and ideas, it has always been important for us to review our daily doings at the Museum in the mirror of modern art, which particularly in recent years has cast an eye over the institutional situation in many different ways and thematicised it. It was in this context that the dialogue with Antje Majewski also began. She is known to a wider public mainly as a painter. Even in the first conversations with the curator of the exhibition, Adam Budak, it was clear how well Majewski's artistic approach fitted into this context and how appropriate it was to look anew at the way collections are handled and the ordering systems which classify them so we can order the world and which are the tools for analyzing them.

In her paintings, Antje Majewski links a biographical level with very different iconographical considerations that reach far back into the history of pictures. We thus encounter an artist who is totally at ease with historical antecedents and introduces intellectual and philosophical resonances with the same assured touch. The realism of her painting is allegorical, and always alludes to a fictional Other and is therefore on the trail of the texture of reality. The fabrication of our ideas and images is just as much her subject matter as the mechanisms of order in our world. Artistic, philosophical and mythical and magical ideas and methods enable her to break up familiar sense structures and create new systems that do not seem unusual outwardly but which are endowed with great brisance. The causal privilege of art to generate new worlds allows us to see our longstanding practice in the institution in a new light.

This experiment of contemplation has gone very far in the work with Majewski, and is a long way from being considered concluded. It is no accident that the project touches on strongly similar cross-over practices in ethnology and literature. We should mention the theoretical explanations of Clémentine Deliss and the work of Hubert Fichte as two of the many reference points in a system of this sort. From her set of collection objects, the panel paintings associated with them and with the help of many different friends and companions of both sexes from various cultures, Antje Majewski opens up to us a separate cosmos that correlates with traditional worlds whose meaning she displaces and thus holds up to a wondrous mirror.

The exhibition project arose as an intensive dialogue between the artist and other protagonists. As an exemplary exhibition curator, Adam Budak accompanied Majewski closely and was time and again a decisive counterpart, a congenial partner, who followed up the relevant threads and took them further. Together they created a cosmos that gives the "heterotopia museum" another possible location and opens up many new ways to work in the institution. In this sense it is a particular pleasure for us to be able to show such a project on our bicentenary in such an experimental exhibition space which is so dedicated to the new as the Kunsthaus Graz.

(possibilities of) worldmaking

Adam Budak



Antje Majewski
Masken, 2001

“If I ask you about the world, you can offer to tell me how it is under one or another frame of reference; but if I insist that you tell me how it is apart from all frames, what can you say? We are confined to ways of describing what is described. Our universe, so to speak, consists of these ways rather than of a world or worlds.

...The many stuffs—matter, energy, waves, phenomena—that worlds are made of are made along with the worlds. But made from what? Not from nothing, after all, but *from other worlds*.”

Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*

“What is the Universal (das Allgemeine)?

The single case (der einzelne Fall).

What is the Particular (das Besondere)?

Millions of Cases (millionen Fälle).”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister’s Journeyman Years of the Renunciants*

“I feared that I would never again be without a sense of déjà vu.”

Jorge Luis Borges, *The Aleph*

“There are no longer any absolute directions in space. The universe has lost its core. It no longer has a heart, but a thousand hearts.”

Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers. A History of Man’s Changing Vision of the Universe*

“Cultures mature when they transfer their focus on relationships between people to innocent objects.” Michel Serres, *Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*



Antje Majewski, Ingo Niermann
Scene from the play *Skarbek*, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin 2005

Mediality (before) and the Method (after) Introduction

*I picture myself on a wide plane full of all things that are the case*¹. The séance of hypnosis is about to begin. *I closed my eyes, then opened them*². I'm a particle of a hypertext. Welcome to the *World of Gimel*.

Theatrics of self in a metamorphosis, studies in voyeurisms and naïveté, her paintings are auratic (*the pictures themselves are not ecstatic, but rather perform ecstasy*³). Conditioned by the representation's *as if* status, gestural and cinematic, they are tales of tenderness, composed of tableaux of relations, featuring characters in disguise, would-be ghosts, tricksters, glorious bastards of some sorts, but mythic figures too, estranged personages in a masquerade of social history and everyday life. Intimate collections of reclaimed, expressionistic, often hysterical, gestures (*her own very gestures*), they echo Artaudian nihilistic practices of cruelty and dystopia or corporeal experiments and mental gymnastics of his *Theatre and Its Double*. Quasi shamanistic matrix of *body without organs*, this is an enchanted zone of both initiation and excess, where the gesture is *the exhibition of mediality: it is a process of making a means visible as such*⁴. Thus Antje Majewski's *exhibitionistic* work, which primarily consists of painting, but also of video- and performance-based installation, depicts a journey towards the extremes of affect—*l'invitation au voyage* in anticipation of magic and empirical alchemy. Her protagonists, often alter egos, trapped between trained

movements, discipline and spontaneity, act out the artist's *mise-en-scenes* of phantasmagoria and female grotesque. Between a pathos and camp, it's an allegorical reverie which considers the means (already rendered *visible*) as vehicles of proliferated *structures en abîme*.

Luminous Points

We are on the threshold of a method now, about to renegotiate a paradigm and a signature, shifting towards *some quite other medium*⁵... Welcome to the *World of Gimel*, a territory of *polymorphous magical substance*⁶, intoxicating repertory of a thought, which, similarly to Agambenian method, implies an archaeological vigilance which aims to expose and analyse all that is obscure and unthematized. To be archaeologically vigilant, as Agamben, after Foucault, proposes in his *The Signature of All Things. On Method*, is to return to a method attuned to a “world supported by a thick plot of resemblances and sympathies, analogies and correspondences”⁷. Antje Majewski's new, rhizomatic and polyphonic work, which arrives under a *disguise* of an exhibition as a double—artistic and curatorial—endeavour, follows such a path of thought and research: it is a *tour de force* of a knowledge of metaphysics in particular, but also of a magic of and a belief in a transformative nature of things; it is, too, a study in arrangement and display where hybrids of archetype and phenomenon compose a model of “experience of a higher type”, Goethe's proposition, according to which the unification of individual phenomena does not occur “in a hypothetical and systematic manner”, but instead each phenomenon “stands in relation with countless others, in the way we say of a freely floating luminous point, that it emits its rays in every direction”⁸.

Collecting such *luminous points*, Antje Majewski maps a space of a paradigm where analogy lives in a perfect equilibrium beyond the opposition between generality and particularity. This is the artist's take at the Universal—her own cosmology which embraces the life of things and sketches out an episteme of their intimate and secret relationships. For Goethe, “the Universal” has been “the single case” and “the particular”—“millions of cases”⁹. The Universal cannot be reduced either to the general idea, the abstract law or to the common denominator of the particular cases gathered. On the contrary, it reminds us of a crystal, Borges' Aleph of shiny and mirrored surfaces (*the inconceivable universe*¹⁰), a magic lantern, and as such it multiplies and reflects itself in particular cases, in each particular case, including each phenomenon of nature and each work done by man.

For both Goethe and Borges, the simultaneity of perception is a necessary condition to moderate a tension between the one and the many—each particular case must never be isolated from the “millions of cases” that surround it in the chaos of the world. Goethe’s philosophy of the “lines of suture” (as well as Borges’ historio- and cartographies) advocated, as Georges Didi-Huberman sums up, the necessity to zoom in and to lean over each particular case, to respect its intrinsic difference, but then to displace one’s gaze, to put a thousand new cases on the table in order to recognize the extrinsic differences that can, according to contexts, act as conflicting polarities or elective affinities¹¹. From the philosophical point of view, “the general and the particular coincide; the particular is the general made manifest under different conditions. But at the same time, no phenomenon is explicable in and by itself; only many of them surveyed together, methodically arranged, can in the end amount to something which might be valid for a theory”¹². Thus Goethe concludes in his *Maxims and Reflections*: “existence always and at the same time looks to us both separate and interlocked. If you pursue this analogy too closely, everything coincides identically; if you avoid it, all is scattered into infinity”¹³.

Parliament of Things

Making objects talk and listening to their stories is Antje Majewski’s act of “empirical tenderness” (Goethe’s *eine zarte Empirie*¹⁴) which respects the scientific conditions of experimental observation and, at the same time, is performed as an artistic gesture of un-masking the object’s *other* identity, aiming at subverting the museological systems and their desperate ambitions of *grasping the world*¹⁵. Majewski’s *Gimel* cosmos is a miniature collection: a standard museum’s display glass vitrine hardly accommodates heavily oversized objects, guarded by a dandyesque custodian who, as if a master of a ceremony which is a hoax, confronts the viewer with his penetrating and vigilant gaze. Partly familiar, partly super-natural, strangely blown-up, seemingly surreal objects expose their dubious status in a tight frame of an institutional *Wunderkammer*. Majewski’s neo-expressionistic painterly overture to the *World of Gimel*, *The Guardian of All Things That are the Case* (2009) is yet another allegory by the artist, suspended between the extreme poles of Salvador Dalí and Marcel Broodthaers—as some sort of a dream sequence, an experiment with a real and its *decor*. It does introduce and feature all agents of the universe of *Gimel* that were found, bought, “acquired” or simply randomly chosen by the artist during her numerous travels, from Dakar and Berlin, Warsaw and Paris, to Beijing, and encounters with human beings and pheno-

mena—a clay teapot in the form of a human hand, a shell, a box made of fragrant wood which contains one black ball or two glass eyes, a Buddha-hand citron, a hedgeapple—also called osage orange—a meteorite... They will soon, one by one, appear in their full role and singular narrative in an accompanied painting series which, all in all, evokes Andrei Tarkowski’s spiritual and science-fiction imagery or the metaphysics and magic of Alejandro Jodorowsky and Werner Herzog. The man-made and nature-conceived objects—inanimate entities turned storytellers and/or messengers—act as magical items equipped with extraterrestrial power and subjective-cum-cosmic energy, and emanate their aura as quasi-amulets and talismans. “Taking over” the scene of the real, they narrate their own phantasmagorical identities, painted by the artist, as if in an epiphanous moment of imaginary excess. “In some way or another one can protect oneself from the spirits by portraying them”¹⁶: thus Michael Taussig opens his study of objects and mimetic faculty, as if simultaneously commenting upon the artist’s shift towards the medium and the gigantic body of research, obsessively conducted around the gathered objects. Majewski’s venture into the world of things is a daring act of a magical realism and her transgressive paintings are decadent, sometimes euphoric and hallucinatory, portraits of both fantasy and scientific knowledge, paired for a while, to explode with a new quality for a better world yet to come. A nude woman peers inside a gigantic shell-cum-shelter, positioned within the post-Romantic landscape (*Mame N’Dyare*, 2011); a girl-contortionist in spasm, as if levitating, holding a massive meteorite on the “table-surface” of her fragile body (*Meteorarisis*, 2010); yet another female character in Romanian folkloric outfit poses next to an impressive biomorphic architecture of the Buddha-hand citron (*Miao Shan und die Buddha-Hand*, 2010); a wooden pot (a secret vessel from outer space? A Pandora’s box?) is a solitary actor on a vast, non-defined cosmic stage of a large-format painting (*The Box Made of Fragrant Wood, Contains a Black Ball or Two Glass Eyes*, 2010); an elderly man sows metal seeds and waters them with the index finger of his teapot-hand (*The Gardener of Mechanical Objects*, 2011)... Such is Majewski’s (painterly) performance of alchemy where meaning, travelling in between the labyrinths of geographies, cultures, traditions and systems of beliefs and belongings, appears as a flexible and multilayered, open and negotiable, structure. The artist’s universal museum consists of tableaux of objects, simultaneously still and kinetic, inanimate and organic, in a vibrant state of exchange and ontological questioning as almost sacred items of worship and devotion. They constitute what Bruno Latour, while advocating the autonomy and the agency of objects, defined as the Parliament of Things—a discursive zone

where the subject/object dualism is disregarded and the rights to speak and to be represented have been granted to the objects¹⁷. In Latour's own anthropology (and sociology) of things, objects, termed after Michel Serres' "quasi-objects", are *similar* to subjects: they can judge and measure; they are not only constructed, but they construct too—through "mediation" and "delegation". They are "the object-discourse-nature-society whose new properties as-tound us all and whose network extends from my refrigerator to the Antarctic by way of chemistry, law, the State, the economy, and satellites"¹⁸. As innumerable hybrids of nature and culture, "quasi-objects" mix up "different periods, ontologies or genres" and they "do not exist without being full of people". Objects engage themselves in reflexive judgment and the weaving of morphisms which, as such, goes beyond the representation, towards a transmission of some sorts, a communication in fact, a networking. Quasi-objects are "mediators" as Latour associates them with a speech act and message-broadcasting processes. As Scott Lash observes, analysing Latour's Parliament of Things, "contemporary culture is (thus) a culture of movement. A culture of moving quasi-objects" and the non-modern human subject's task is to become engaged in "object tracking" by following the work of proliferation of hybrids and shadowing the quasi-object or networks¹⁹. We are "trackers", "pathfinders", "allegorists", focused on uncovering a hypertext and mapping our own allegorical ordering and system of value and classification. The fabrics of Majewski's *World of Gimel* is woven of such patterns of objects' circulation, transference, translation, and (temporary) displacement that set up objects' own vocabulary as well as indexical order of their non-representation. The artist does not only *track* the objects but it is too *being tracked* by them, guided and haunted by their energy and magic. Her project is in fact a laboratory of fetish-production as each object which belongs to her intimate collection is a "fairy-object", an object that provokes talk, a "talk-maker"²⁰. "If you admit that you fabricate your own fetishes yourselves", Latour claims, "you must then acknowledge that you pull their strings as a puppeteer would..."²¹. Majewski combines the skills of both puppeteer and ventriloquist while staging her theatrics of the objects' polyphony which, as a supreme power, takes over the ruling and the judgment of her microcosm.

Towards Thingness

Reflecting upon the nature and essence of things in his seminal essay, *Das Ding* (1949), Martin Heidegger defines a thing through its nearness and an ability to offer a gift to its potential user: "What is a thing?... The jug is a thing. What is the jug?"²². The example of

the jug serves the philosopher to point out the fact that the thing appears as a common effort of human and natural forces but also, and perhaps more importantly, to emphasize the possibility of its function—offering of the gift of serving as a vessel which contains a liquid such as wine and dispenses it at will to all those who want to drink it. The use of the jug is a ritual that expresses gratitude to the non-human forces that made its creation possible. Pouring out the drink from the jug the primitive man offered it as a sacrifice to the divinity; however, as Heidegger continues: "in the gift of the outpouring that is a libation, the divinities... receive back the gift of giving as the gift of donation"²³. Thus the jug symbolically "gathers" or brings together man and the divinities of nature, earth and sky, and "this manifold-simple gathering is the jug's presencing"²⁴ and the condition of its very thingness. Already the etymology of the word "thing" indicates an act of gathering, assembling and collecting: "the Old High German word thing means a gathering and specifically a gathering to deliberate on a matter under discussion, a contested matter. In consequence, the Old German words thing and dinc become the names for an affair or matter of pertinence. They denote anything that in any way bears upon men, concerns them, and that accordingly is a matter for discourse"²⁵. Analysing this Heideggerian passage, Dieter Roelstraete likens the thing's operation with the Athenian "agora" ("a gathering place where speech can be free, and things can be imagined, created *ex nihilo*, from the unrestrained flow of talk"); however, according to the author, these are rather things' "worlding" qualities that constitute its ontological status²⁶. The gift of proximity defines the essence of "thinging": "...nearing of the world... As we preserve the thing *qua* thing, we inhabit nearness" which Roelstraete understands as the return to the world as a home that is shared with jugs, shoes, and trees, with significant and less significant "others"²⁷. Antje Majewski's large-scale painting, *The Donation* (2024), based upon Piero della Francesca's fresco episodes of *The Meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* (ca. 1455) and belonging to *Gimel's* chapter, devoted to the mysterious fruit of hedge-apple—known as osage orange—is such a futuristic and imaginary *mise en scene* of a gathering in a uncanny picture gallery—Dalésque interior of a museum of collapse representation and history—a glorious, partly parodic, ceremony and a glamorous celebration of a thing. Majewski's objects are Heideggerian things as their identity closely relates to the characteristics of an iconic "jug": they are vessels too, in a literal sense, as pots, containing tea, or boxes, hiding treasures, or shells, that host other lives and beings; they hold, gather and contain; they are "possibilities of another thing" and echo other worlds. Their habitat—the *World of Gimel*—is *per defi-*

nitone a zone of generosity: deriving etymologically from Hebrew *gamal* (“to give”) or *gemul* (meaning both “the reward” as well as “the giving of a punishment”), it indicates a benevolence as it is seen as a rich, indeed a *righteous*, man in the *Talmud*, running after a poor man, the *daleth*, to give him charity. Majewski’s objects, a cosmos surrounded by other multiple things-satellites (collections of precious items, trophies, gifts, seemingly insignificant and ephemeral possessions), contribute to *Gimel*’s economy of generosity as containers of the values that facilitate a symbolic exchange of meaning and knowledge towards a creation of *unifying intelligence*, *Gimel*’s essence. They are (sites of) encounters, gatherings and connections, performing their nearness and proximity as bridges (another symbolic representation and equivalent of *Gimel*’s name), linking forces inherent in nature, primordial matter and divine wisdom. They act as carriers and messengers as *Gimel* appears as a camel, the “vehicle” (to be lifted up and to arise) and the energy which comes and goes from one oasis to another in a desert (of this world) but also it is a Flame which moves upward from the Primal Point at the centre of the Apple of Continuous Creation. The camel of *Gimel* recalls the Heideggerian jug as it is also a symbol of Binah, for it carries water in its hump, which is symbolic of the water of life contained in the “bump” or belly of the Mother. Thus the *World of Gimel*, shadowing those of *Aleph* and *Beta*, is a fertility machine whose objects accumulate their unique power and magic and generously disseminate it within the rhizomatic networks of individuals and communities; it is an inter-relational universe of things and ideas—nomadic entities in a vertigo of their own origin, representation and unstable meaning; it is all a movement and a flux, as *Gimel*’s ultimate form is a *vav* with a *yud* as a foot, a person in motion, a traveller.

Museum Without a Museum

Antje Majewski’s odyssey through the mystifying world of things echoes errantry, a term introduced by the Martinique writer Édouard Glissant to describe a kind of “sacred movement that is neither the aimed and conquering movement of arrow-like imperialism, nor the idle roaming of circular nomadism” but rather a desire to keep in motion, away from any filiation or hardening into a fixed identity²⁸. For Glissant, “the tale of errantry is the tale of *Relation*”²⁹, yet another notion which advocates the displacement of authenticity or originality in favour of a relational identity, the identity which is a continuous becoming, created through contact with the Others. *Relation* is a state of constant metamorphosis and its texts are all “latent, open, multilingual in intention, [and] directly in

contact with everything possible”, creating a polyphony of images, words, concepts, textures, and sounds that do not resolve into an organic whole, but that form what Glissant would call an “*écho-monde*” that, individually or collectively conceived, allows to illuminate or divert the matter of the world in order to cope with or express the confluences and to sense the turbulences of the “*chaos-monde*”. As a subversive take at orders and classifications, the *World of Gimel* is such a model of “*écho-monde*” that, in its cosmological dimension, constitutes “*totalité-monde*”, Glissant’s prophesy of a future world of relations, maintained by a large number of specific (and therefore differentiated) small entities-islands, all interconnected with each other in a horizontal frame as an archipelago, capable of embracing mankind’s diversity. Thus Glissant’s proposition of a “creolization” of the world as a genuine deviation from Eurocentric thought reflects *Gimel*’s “open and connectable cartography” and Majewski’s method of migratory thought which is also based upon “the encounter, the interference, the clash, the harmonies and disharmonies between cultures in the accomplished totality of the earth-world.”³⁰ In her reconsideration of what Saint-John Perse calls “a narration of the universe”, *Gimel* becomes an agent of *Relation* and the artist identifies herself with Glissant’s protagonist, the errant, who “challenges and discards the universal—this generalizing edict that summarized the world as something obvious and transparent, claiming for it one presupposed sense and one destiny”³¹. The author of *Poetics of Relation* criticizes the universal as a sublimation and an abstraction which enables us to forget the small differences the world is built of. While drifting upon the universal, we tend to ignore them, whereas *Relation* doesn’t allow us to do that. “*Relation* is total”, Glissant claims, “otherwise it’s not *Relation*”³². It is the moment when we realize that there is a definite quantity of all the differences in the world. Could this be a definition of a museum yet to come?

Antje Majewski’s *World of Gimel* is a peculiar attempt at considering a museum as a site and a possibility of “world(s)making”. What is, then, *her* Museum? A tale of errantry? A poem of *Relation*? A Museum without a Museum? *In ruins, without walls*, as a case study of a paradigmatic ontology, it (*probably*) is an archipelago, an echo of the world as we (*don’t*) know it *yet*, a set of *worlds within*, “so in this World, many, many Worlds more be”³³. A hybrid of Babel and *Aleph*, simultaneously religious and profane, it is a proposition of an erratic museum, inhabited by nomadic, non-mummified subjects on a constant move like a vibrating light of the magic lantern which casts a spell and seduces with images of worlds disassembled and reassembled ad infinitum. *Gimel*’s is a kaleidoscopic land-

scape of knowledge and sensation, a cosmic pantomime of potentialities, where Taussig's "bodily unconscious" and "mystic potence", known in the world of the Iroquois as orenda, being neither a god nor a spirit but a diffuse power informing all things³⁴, conspire to generate an alphabet of a new language and a novel mode of writing yet to come. *Gimel* is a book of transformations and bifurcation, a book yet to come³⁵... An obscure, occult voice. A migratory and illegal utterance. A matrix of life, nature and cosmos, it is the artist's own (*ultimate*) gesture.

- 1** Antje Majewski, *News from the World of Gimel*, in this catalogue, p. 130.
- 2** Jorge Luis Borges, *The Aleph*, Penguin Classics 1998, p. 129.
- 3** Antje Majewski, in conversation with Tanja Widmann, in: *Antje Majewski. My Very Gestures*, ed. Hemma Schmutz, Caroline Schneider, Salzburger Kunstverein, Sternberg Press 2008, p. 89.
- 4** Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Gesture" in *Means Without End. Notes on Politics*, The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London, 2000, p. 58.
- 5** "Some quite other medium, you now want to say, when all along you had thought it was color, just color, good old color, useful for wrapping up reality as a gift. Some quite other medium? But what could it be, this curious light lightness that floats, that passes, that radiates across the valley like the breath of dying sun? What could it be? I choose to call it *polymorphous magical substance*. It affects all the senses, not just sight. It moves. It has depth and motion just as a stream has depth and motion, and it connects such that it changes whatever it comes into contact with. Or is it the other way around? That in changing, it connects?", in: Michael Taussig, *What Color Is the Sacred?*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London 2009, p. 40.
- 6** "Some quite other medium, you now want to say, when all along you had thought it was color, just color, useful for wrapping up reality as a gift. Some quite other medium? But what could it be, this curious light lightness that floats, that passes, that radiates across the valley like the breath of dying sun? What could it be? Is it a substance or is it an action? Is it something out there in the extra-personal world, or is it 'merely' part of the human imagination? Or could it be all these things, and such questions are irrelevant, as color mocks our usual categories of understanding? I choose to call it *polymorphous magical substance*, this quite other medium that that floats like the breath of dying sun, a polymorphous substance that is the act and art of *seeing*." In: Michael Taussig, op. cit., p. 47.
- 7** Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things. On Method*, Zone Books, New York 2009
- 8** Giorgio Agamben, op.cit., p. 30.
- 9** Goethe von, Johann Wolfgang, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years or The Renunciants*, ed. By Jane K. Brown, Suhrkamp 1989, p. 73.
- 10** Borges, Jorge Luis, *Aleph*, op. cit. p. 131.
- 11** Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas. How to Carry the World on One's Back?*, ed. Georges Didi-Huberman, MNCARS Publication Department Madrid 2011.
- 12** Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, Penguin Classics 1998, p. 76.
- 13** Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, op. cit. p. 74.
- 14** after Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas. How to Carry the World on One's Back?*, op. cit. p. 95.
- 15** Donald Preziosi, Claire Farago, ed., *Grasping the World. The Idea of the Museum*, Ashgate 2004.
- 16** Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity. A Particular History of the Senses*, Routledge New York London 1993, p. 1.
- 17** Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Harvard University Press Cambridge Massachusetts, p. 142.
- 18** Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, op. cit. p. 144.
- 19** Scott Lash, *Objects That Judge: Latour's Parliament of Things*, in: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0107/lash/en> (August 2011).
- 20** Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2010, p. 4.
- 21** Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, op. cit., p. 7.
- 22** Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper Perennial, New York, 2001, p. 165.
- 23** Martin Heidegger, op. cit. p. 169.
- 24** Martin Heidegger, op. cit. 172.
- 25** Op. cit.
- 26** Dieter Roelstraete, "Art as Object Attachment. Thoughts on Thingness", in: *When Things Cast No Shadow*, ed. Adam Szymczyk, Elena Filipovic, 5. Berlin Biennial For Contemporary Art, jrp ringier 2008, p. 445.
- 27** Dieter Roelstraete, op. cit. p. 446.
- 28** Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, The University of Michigan Press 2010.
- 29** Édouard Glissant, op. cit., p. 18.
- 30** Édouard Glissant, *Le Traité du tout-Monde*, Gallimard, Paris 1997.
- 31** Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, op. cit., p. 20.
- 32** Interview with Édouard Glissant: http://www.liv.ac.uk/ccsis/blackatlantic/research/Diawara_text_defined.pdf.
- 33** Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies*, 1653, after Mary Baine Campbell, *Wonder & Science. Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca/London 1999, p. 181.
- 34** Michael Taussig, *What Color is the Sacred?*, op. cit.
- 35** Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, in: *Meridian Crossing Aesthetics*, Stanford University Press 2003.

Relation

Éduoard Glissant

The repercussions of cultures, whether in symbiosis or in conflict—in a polka, we might say, or in a laghia—in domination or liberation, opening before us an unknown forever both near and deferred, their lines of force occasionally divined, only to vanish instantly. Leaving us to imagine their interaction and shape it at the same time: to dream or to act.

The deconstruction of any ideal relationship one might claim to define in this interaction, out of which ghouls of totalitarian thinking might suddenly reemerge.

The position of each part within this whole: that is, the acknowledged validity of each specific Plantation yet at the same time the urgent need to understand the hidden order of the whole—so as to wander there without becoming lost.

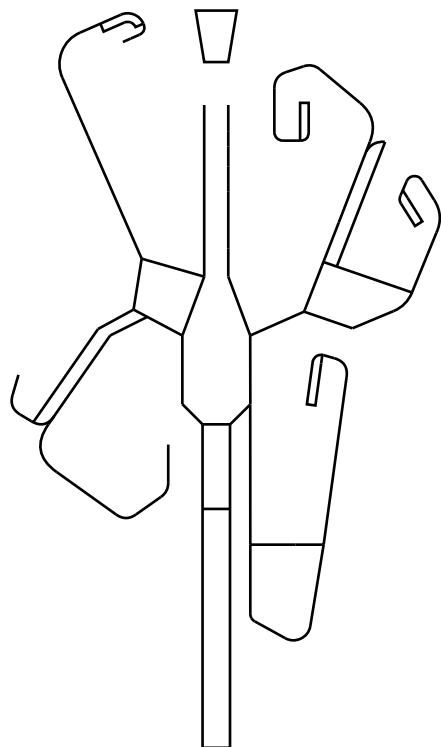
The thing recused in every generalization of an absolute, even and especially some absolute secreted within this imaginary construct of Relation: that is, the possibility for each one at every moment to be both solidary and solitary there.

Objects

- O The Vitrine
- I The Hedgeapple
- II The Shell
- III The Meteorite
- IV The Pot Made of Fragrant Moroccan Wood,
Contains a Black Ball or
Two Glass Eyes
- V The Clay Teapot in the Form
of a Human Hand
- VI The Buddha-Hand
- VII The White Stone

Travelogue

Antje Majewski



0

The Vitrine

News from the World of Gimel

→ S. 218

Jorge Luis Borges,
The Aleph

The Aleph is stored in a writer's basement. It contains all of the things in this world simultaneously.

"On the back part of the step, toward the right, I saw a small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brilliance. At first I thought it was revolving; then I realised that this movement was an illusion created by the dizzying world it bounded. The Aleph's diameter was probably little more than an inch, but all space was there, actual and undiminished." In his short story *The Aleph*, Jorge Luis Borges follows a vertiginous list of far and near, past and present things; unrelated, they tumble one after another. "What my eyes beheld was simultaneous, but what I shall now write down will be successive, because language is successive."

The Beta world contains not only the things of this planet, but also all those of all other possible planets and universes: the multiverse. It contains all pasts, all futures, and also the worlds in which there is no time or several times, likewise one-dimensional to x-dimensional spaces. Inevitably, it is not describable or representable.

The World of Gimel inquires as to the relations of all these things to each other and to ourselves.



Antje Majewski
The Guardian of all Things that are the Case, 2009

Two years ago, Peter Pakesch and Adam Budak asked me to think about the Universalmuseum Joanneum, which is turning 200 years old this year. It consists of a complex of individual museums, one of which is Kunsthaus Graz. The Universalmuseum was originally a project of the Enlightenment, founded for the Styrian population by the liberal Archduke Johann. The universality of this knowledge proved limited, both historically and regionally. The systematics of the natural scientific departments were re-determined, and their usage is now different. The mineralogy section, for instance, was originally intended to support the Styrian mining industry (Archduke Johann also helped to found a university for mining knowledge, now known as the “Montanuniversität”). Folklore collections were supposed to have a strengthening effect on the national spirit—these were associated with liberation movements and liberalism in the 19th century, though these days one would have a hard time understanding how a collection of traditional folk costumes could serve to form a national character. The departments were to be of practical use to the population, serving a purpose that is barely relevant today. Furthermore, compared to the analogy transformations¹ of the Schloss Eggenberg, the differentiated, museum knowledge systems of today offer no symbolic knowledge about the world that can be translated into the everyday dealings with and relationships between people and their surroundings.

→ S. 208

Scientific Evaluations
of the Objects

Presented in my universal museum, the painting of a glass vitrine and a museum guard², are seven objects that I bought on my travels; as to why exactly these seven should become my universals and what they meant, I didn't know when I first started thinking about them three years ago. They are things of very little value; as proved by the expert's report issued by the individual departments in Graz, none of them would be interesting for a museum collection.

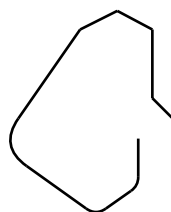
Shortly thereafter, I received another invitation by basso in Berlin. Opening there, parallel to the opening of the prestigious “Neues Museum” in Berlin, was a very nice little museum with everything that a museum needs: guards, tour guides, online information, exhibition area, research, conservation... but in this museum, people also danced, made music and did performances, ate, talked and lived. All of these activities took place collaboratively and were also developed out of the moment. I painted *The Guardian of all Things that are the Case* for both exhibitions. Like a nutshell, the painting in the exhibition at basso already contained everything that will unfold in the big exhibition in Kunsthaus Graz.

In seven other paintings, the objects found in the vitrine are separately introduced or held by different individuals. There they are a nameless attribute, like in paintings of obscure Catholic saints, and they resemble Borges' things. Each of these paintings found its place in an exhibition in which they came into contact with other artworks, artists and contexts.

Then I travelled to the places that the things came from: to Senegal, China, Poland and France. Everywhere I met people who helped me further. A few old artists became my teachers. I learned that you cannot rob things of their history, because they also always contain the history of the people who have held it in their hand before. Every one of my things that was “meaningless”, but fascinating to me, took me to a place in which it was alive and in a state of constant transformation. Many stories emerged around these few objects; they took me all over the world, and a network of friends, sages, askers and lovers tied together all by itself.

Now the things go to the dead site of the museum, the Joanneum in Graz, where the process of their mummification begins. Hopefully visitors will continue adding more and more knots to the net. The view I am describing is neither a simultaneous nor a successive one; it is rather like an ever-expanding net, the knots of which contain very simple truths. The simplest is the most difficult to say, but perhaps it can be encountered.

| The Hedgeapple or Osage-Orange



Antje Majewski
*Sketch for the Outer Form
 of the Entity*, 2009



→ S. 222

Marcus Steinweg,
What is an Object?

The first object in my collection appeared in the summer of 2008, while I was creating a science fiction scenario for the *Dubai Düsseldorf*³ exhibition. The scenario involved me working together with a biotechnology company to develop a living artwork: the *Entity*. It was a living organism that has no sensory organs and cannot reproduce; instead it consumes itself from the inside until it is mummified: a monad. In the *Pavilion of the Entity*, its sole purpose was to serve as a point of contemplation and reflection: What is this thing that is no more than a being, a living, dying thing that has no relationship to anything, no exchange with the world and no metabolism? And what are we?

→ S. 132

Antje Majewski,
Entity

I searched the Internet for an organism to model it after. I imagined it as maybe a round fruit, possibly one that is hairy or stinks. My search for “hairy balls” did not lead me to fruits, so I tried “fruit + ball” and ended up with a so-called “hedgeapple” or Osage-orange. I changed the colours and painted the thing in the hands of a patron as she hands it over to the care of the *Entity* Pavilion director in 2024⁴.



Antje Majewski
Entity (2101), 2009
 Installation view, Kunstverein Düsseldorf, 2009



Antje Majewski
*Decorative Element that
Once Adorned a Passage
Leading to the Shrine
(2101), 2009*



Antje Majewski
The Donation (2024), 2009

Unfortunately, it turns out that people cannot stand being unable to attribute any meaning to this thing. Rather than the biomorphic *Pavilion of the Entity*, Kunsthallen are built in Dubai and Düsseldorf, where the thing is cultishly venerated (2056). Whole pilgrimage centres emerge (architectural designs: Noffice, Miessen / Pflugfelder). The Kunsthallen have a monumental architecture and a perfect, modernist facade. As for the shrine that houses the shriveling *Entity*, it looks as though one of John McCracken's gleaming steles has buckled and caved in; it now resembles a Prada display.

There is an unspecified catastrophe a few decades later—a revolution or a war—and the Kunsthallen are destroyed. What remains is a decorative element and a glass cube containing the mummified *Entity*, which—in the year 2101—is now in the hands of a greengrocer who had taken part in the looting.

This story is about the question of the living and the dead in art. How can life be preserved and conveyed, and what is the significance of this mummification process? As much as museums strive to allow life to take place inside of them, they remain above all places for dead objects. These things, whether a painting, sculptures, medieval suits of armour or minerals, are carefully and expensively confined and painstakingly preserved. Why? What role do these things play in the visitors' formation of the self, in their connection to the dead?

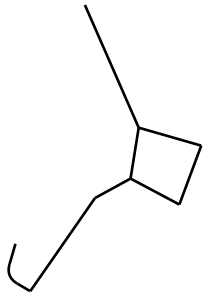


Markus Miessen & Ralf Pflugfelder
Kunsthalle Dubai, 2009



Markus Miessen & Ralf Pflugfelder
Religious City, 2009

II The Shell



I bought the large shell⁵ in Dakar, Senegal seven years ago. I can't remember where it was exactly that I found it—but I believe it was near the Place de l'Indépendance, just before I left the country. We met a young woman in a shared taxi from St. Louis to Dakar, and she invited us to visit her family. Her elderly father was a marabout, an Islamic scholar who was consulted as a mediator to God. He could pray for you vicariously, give advice and also help you find more luck. Nanette had inherited this gift, as had her brother, a rap musician. His three families lived in a complex of houses surrounding a courtyard, on a quiet, unpaved road that I liked very much. I flew back to Berlin with the shell in my suitcase, along with the vague idea that I would have to return to Dakar, find this road again and shoot a film there with Nanette. This film should be called *La collectionneuse*. A girl should be assembling things on a shelf in her room in Dakar, things that I would find in the port area in Bremen, Germany and wanted to send on a journey to Africa by ship.

→ S. 230

Clémentine Deliss,
*Some Thoughts on the
Transformational
Psyche of Objects*

Instead I myself travelled back to Senegal in the spring of 2010 and brought my objects with me, with the intention of maybe showing them to a marabout. I had the urgent feeling that now I had to go to Dakar, had looked for different ways to do so and eventually became acquainted with Clémentine Deliss, who also wanted to go to Dakar. I packed my old camera and a small microphone. Clémentine was certain that I should meet her longtime friends Issa Samb and El Hadji Sy, members of the Laboratoire Agit'Art, and ask them about my objects.

El Hadji Sy came into my hotel room, saw the objects spread on the table and said to me, "Ce sont les choses mêmes qui t'ont ramené ici." ("It's the things themselves that led you here.") The next day, we went to visit Issa Samb. Issa lives in a space full of things either standing around or hanging on strings. Friends and visitors sit down with him under a huge tree, which stands in the middle.

After sitting there in silence for a few days, just listening to the conversations from the sidelines and photographing all the objects, I gave up hope. Issa did not speak to me. But then Abdou Bâ, a friend of his, said to me: "Come on Friday morning." I came to the space and set up my camera, and Issa Samb sat down and we had a conversation that became very important to me.



Antje Majewski
*La coquille. Conversation
entre Issa Samb et Antje
Majewski. Dakar 2010,
2010 (video stills)*

Issa Samb and
Antje Majewski,
The Shell

Issa told me that we should not deprive things of their history, because that would negate the history of all the hands that made them or through which they had passed. Besides their use, they also carry something else within them that is the same as that which we carry within us, and that we have to respect even in the smallest, most breakable thing from China: a force that fills not only people, animals and plants, but also objects. Every action, every movement of things and people changes the world order, and it is our responsibility to help objects with their movements so that they can participate in the self-realization of the world.

Finally I put the shell, the meteorite and the Buddha-hand on the table. But it wasn't Issa who explained my things to me: I had to do it myself. Abdou said, "I'll help you," took over the camera and filmed the second half, most of all me. Issa led me deeper and deeper into an inner seascape, until I finally had to admit—against my will—that in truth I no longer saw the sea, but heard a woman's voice singing a single note, clear and pure. Issa made a motion and I fell into a trance. That all came to me quite unexpectedly. The next day, and even in the next few months, I was exhausted, as if emptied. While the voice in the shell was sweet and loving, the energy conveyed to me in the trance was very strong but also cold, even icy.

El Hadji Sy and
Antje Majewski,
*The Stone, the Ball,
the Eyes*

Two days later, I filmed another interview with El Hadji Sy in which we talk about reflections, hinges, and the gaze. In this conversation, I mention a door by Marcel Duchamp that is mounted between two doorways, and compare the hinge to my trip to Africa, which also represents a hinge. With doors like these, it is not clear which side is the front and which is the back, just as in my interview with Issa Samb, I cannot say whether the second half of the conversation (during which something spoke through me) is the reverse side of the first part where Issa was speaking.

I have blacked out the trance part in the film because I don't want to show it. It doesn't seem right to me. I know what was conveyed to me: but I have no words, no story to tell. I can't say anything about it. Even Issa has not told me whose voice it was that I heard in the shell, or what was transmitted to me. Once I reawakened, he stood up and continued sweeping the yard.

I later asked Abdou if it couldn't have been N'doep—but he said no: first of all I wasn't ill, second, there were none of the ceremonies associated with it. Supposedly there had been a special relationship between Issa and myself, one that he did not understand, either; but in this case whatever had happened was good—"like an assisted birth".

The Lebou, to whom Issa Samb also belongs, are traditionally fishermen and very closely tied to the sea. There is not only one deity of the sea, but different ones for different places along the coast, all of which have different names and can be male or female. The Lebou conduct trance ceremonies called N'doep, which are primarily meant to lead the mentally ill back into the community. N'doep works by involving the entire village, which organizes a celebration over several days in the hope of leading the afflicted back to his community. Mental illness is seen as the result of broken ties: the person becomes a stranger in his own family, his village – or goes crazy after he moved to town, because he has been estranged from his roots. In order for him to be cured, the disease must be violently broken once more. The afflicted, for instance, lies under blankets next to a sacrificial animal. Spirits are called to ward off whatever has taken hold of him.

Clémentine Deliss,
*Some Thoughts on the
Transformational
Psyche of Objects*

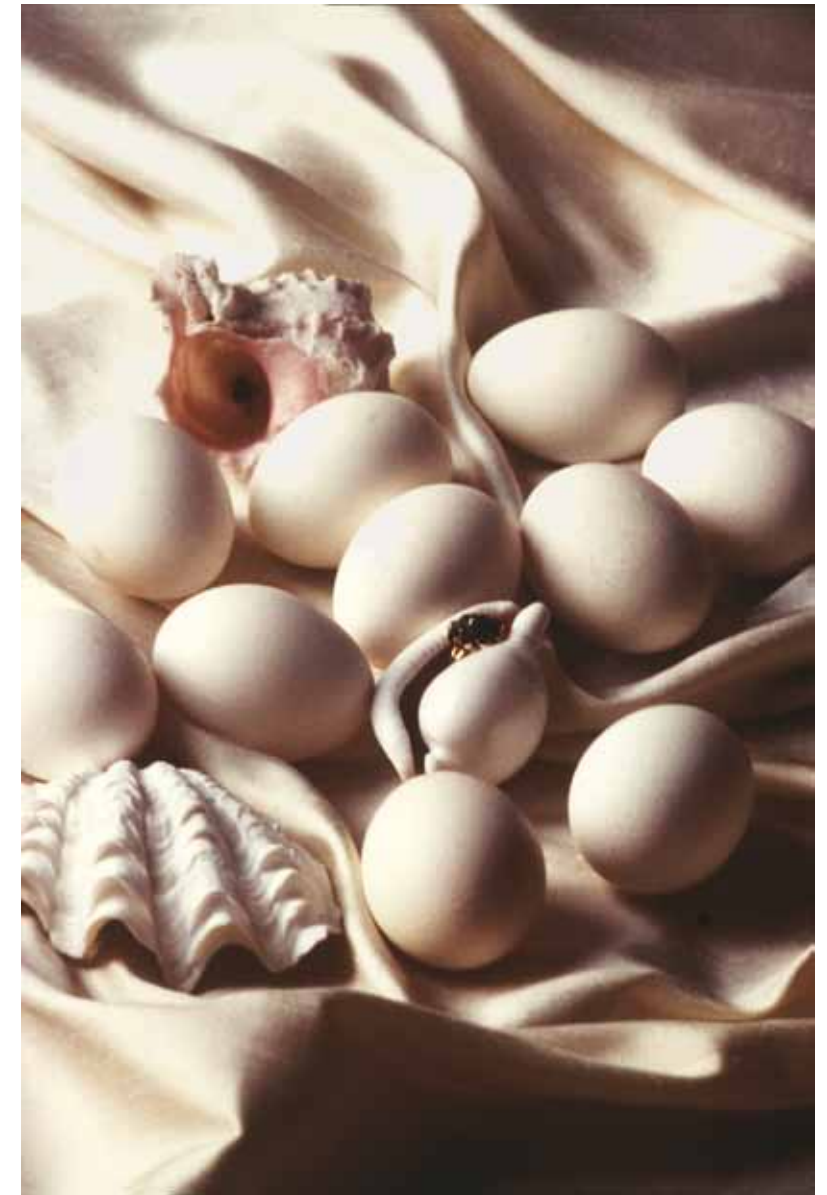
On a trip to Senegal, the photographer Leonore Mau and writer Hubert Fichte investigated the practice of psychiatry in Fann, where Western medicine was applied along with the traditional methods of N'doep.⁶ Laboratoire Agit'Art also participated in attempts to find a new form of psychiatry that uses African knowledge.

For Fichte and Mau, their travels to Africa were also an attempt to establish a link between the Afro-American religions and the Brazilian Cadomblé, which they had been studying closely, in the hope of reconnecting them with their origins in West Africa. Though neither allowed themselves to be initiated, they did take on an important task: they brought the chants of the Casa das Minas from Brazil back to the place from which they came, to the court of the king of Abomé.⁷ The Casa das Minas priestesses wanted to know if these chants were still correct after 500 years of

exile in Brazil. They gave Fichte and Mau a glass bead necklace as an identifying sign, which was inspected pearl-by-pearl in Abomé by King Laganfin Glele Joseph, who acknowledged it. After Hubert Fichte's untimely death, Leonore Mau had to return this necklace to Brazil alone.

Mau's photograph from the book *Petersilie*⁸ shows a boat heaped and covered with shells, like a freight shipment for Yemanjá, sea and love goddess to the Afro-American religions. Gifts were taken into the sea in her honour, pushed into the water on boats. Yet the caption reads: "A souvenir merchant from Boca Chica has constructed a magic ship for the tourists."

There is a passage in the book *Forschungsbericht*⁹ where Hubert Fichte describes a failure. They had travelled to Belize and had tried to find stories there, secret recipes for trance drinks. But they were fooled, and not allowed into the rites. Fichte found not a single opportunity for homosexual encounters. They simply could go no further. Then Fichte suggested to Mau that she photograph white eggs against a white wall "for practice". Mau was insulted and said she didn't practise. She was not interested in purely formal gimmicks, or proof of craft and skill. Then, long after Fichte's death, she photographed the white eggs after all in her Hamburg apartment (on a white cloth) and called them *Fata Morgana*. They appear together with shells that could have come from the "souvenir merchant's" blue boat. Sitting in a seashell—which resembles a white egg—is a ring.



Leonore Mau
Fata Morgana, after 1999



Leonore Mau
Santo Domingo, 1974/75



Marcel Duchamp
Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau / 2° le gaz d'éclairage, from 1946

Even before my trip to Senegal, I had painted a white woman with long, black hair, peering nude into a giant seashell, which is lying in a primeval landscape.¹⁰

I made it for the *Eyland* exhibition with Juliane Solmsdorf, where we investigated *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau / 2° le gaz d'éclairage* by Marcel Duchamp.¹¹ We transposed the events onto the prehistoric landscape around Potsdam, Germany; I took the background of the painting from a painted panorama at the museum of natural history in Berlin. Within Duchamp's work, both hinges and bullet-holes between different dimensions can be found; the body can have both an inside and an outside that can suddenly appear to be turned inside out.

In *Étant Donnés* ... a three-dimensional wax figure is seen lying in the grass, which connects it to the two-dimensional background as it would in a diorama. She was modeled after one of Duchamp's lovers. Her genitals look very strange: though presented through a central perspective with a voyeuristic look through the peephole, her sex looks more like a wound, a clumsy cut that maims the casing of her skin.



Antje Majewski
Mame N'Dyaré, 2011

Marcel Duchamp
Coin de chasteté,
 1954/1963



Even *Coin de chasteté*, which Duchamp gave to his wife Teeny to wear around instead of a wedding ring, is both inside and outside at the same time: a wedge pressing into the wax that does indeed make one think of a female vagina, but is perhaps nothing more than a casing, and the wedge itself would be the inside part of the organ.

I photographed Julianne Solmsdorf in the nude, casting her own knee in plaster. This plaster-cast knee is now lying on a small marble, as hard and white as a bone, but at one time it was actually soft flesh. The “chute d’eau” in the background of *Étant donnés* ... had also been remade as a hollow mould: as the empty spot in a sand basin that Julianne Solmsdorf urinated into – the water that comes out of the body and back into the sand in place of the sea waters that wash over the sand and allow the mussels to live. Alejandro Jodorowsky said later in my interview with him: “The shell, that is memory. The memory of the world. Because that was once a living thing.”

Both the knee and empty hole left by the piss preserve an impression of the artist’s living body; to me, they are similar to the shells and sea snail shells, where the hard exoskeleton retains the soft, once living being inside of it, the creature that was once the living mussel.



Antje Majewski
Eyland, 2010



Antje Majewski &
Juliane Solmsdorf
*Juliane Solmsdorf beim
Abformen ihres Knies,*
2010



Juliane Solmsdorf
A Falling Water, 2010



Juliane Solmsdorf
Knie, 2010

Mathilde Rosier
Shells and Shoes
Collection, 2008



I had also had many conversations about shells, rituals and religions with Mathilde Rosier. Her shelf full of shoes and shells shows us the empty casings for our feet, our little exoskeletons made from the skin of other animals. They are placed next to the shells on a shelf that could be half-museum display case, half the shelf belonging to a shoes and shells “collectionneuse”.



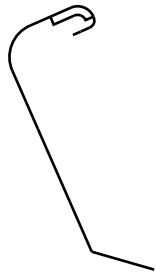
Mathilde Rosier
Cruising on the Deck, 2011

A ritual developed by Mathilde Rosier will be held during the exhibition opening and is open to every guest in attendance. We will wear shell masks painted by her, transforming us into walking, talking chimaeras. We drink our beverages through straws and behave like humans, but we can no longer tell our faces apart.

“The ritual is simply, in essence, a challenge. It is a challenge to logic. Its power comes from its spectacular absurdity. It rigorously controls the incoherent arms of the dream in order to break the overly close relationship to the visible. When a society becomes utilitarian, this ritual is eradicated. The mask hides the face which is also the everyday mask. It frees from the appearance, revealing to oneself a deeper identity.”
 (Mathilde Rosier)

III

The Meteorite

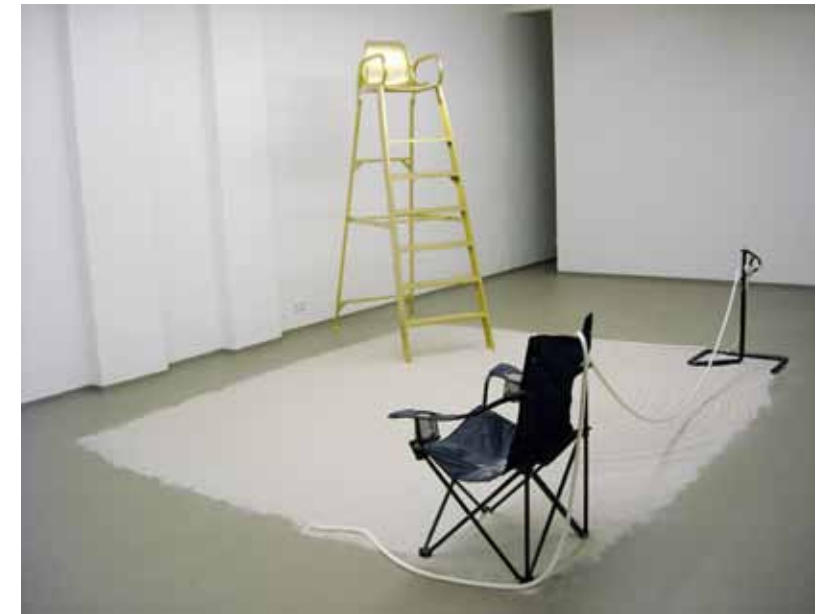


My painting *Meteoarises* was created for Katrin Vellrath/Arises.¹² She had invited me and other female friends to make art to her music. My picture shows her in the “table” yoga pose; lying on her body is a heavy, black stone. She resists its weight but it is also on top of her; it remains suspended. For the same exhibition, Juliane Solmsdorf made the installation *A Rise is Rise is Rise is*: a sandy ground with concentric circles, on top of which sits a golden tennis umpire’s chair and a director’s chair. She had photographed this ensemble exactly as she had found it in the city of Avignon, as “remarked sculpture”, and had appropriated and reconstructed it for the exhibition. This installation merged with my painting entirely on its own. While the stone on my friend’s belly creates a heavy centre, the centre of the white sand area stands empty. Something could happen here, someone could play, but the carefully-drawn circles in the sand would change with every game.

In 2005, I spent four months in Beijing. Going out onto the ring road for the first time, I was overwhelmed by the functional ugliness of the residential units, commercial units and mobility units regulating the masses of people. Everything was in a bright, tire-some grey, shrouded by smog and dust from the Gobi desert. It was only after a few weeks that I began to understand that there were angles everywhere, within which Beijingers lead a different kind of life: a wild growth that washed around the precisely planned, clearly outlined forms.

We met an American lawyer who knew the old Beijing like a ghost town under the new version; could say, for example, where there had once been a temple, in which street the clothiers had been. He led us to one of the few temple grounds that had an antique- and flea market, not for tourists, but for Chinese. And in almost every booth were things that seemed baffling to me but apparently were very valuable to the Chinese. I bought a meteorite, a teapot in the shape of a human hand and a strange, small, blackish sculpture that for a long time I took for a type of algae or jellyfish—in any case a sea creature. In addition to these, I also found three small, irregularly shaped stones that were to be placed on little carved pedestals.

Juliane Solmsdorf
A Rise is a Rise is a Rise is,
2009



→ S. 212
Bernd Moser,
*Scientific Evaluations of
the Objects*

→ S. 152
El Hadji Sy und
Antje Majewski,
*The Stone, the Ball,
the Eyes*

→ S. 238
Friedrich Hölderlin,
*Hyperion or the
Hermit in Greece*

The meteorite is a heavy, magnetic boulder. Scientifically speaking it is not a meteorite, but a magnetite. Oddly enough, it was El Hadji Sy who identified it in our conversation: he doubted that it was a meteorite and suggested that it had come from magma, originated in the earth’s interior rather than the cosmos. He related the stone to a conversation he’d had with the filmmaker Mambéty, and “in which the question arose, ‘What has God put into the stones?’” Mambéty’s last film was to have been called *The Little Stonecutter Girl*. After his death, El Hadji Sy looked for a natural, round stone that, in a symbolic sense, “is” Mambéty to him. To him, my “meteorite” was associated with the dead. In one part of the conversation (which was unfortunately very poorly recorded) he tells me that the young people in Senegal go into the forest for initiation. If one of these children dies during this period, then a large stone is placed at the entrance to the village for him. We set stones for our dead, too. Engraved on my father’s tombstone—which resembles my meteorite—is a text by Friedrich Hölderlin. This symbolic setting of gravestones seems so obvious to us that we no longer ask ourselves how the stone bearing the name of the deceased becomes his double: receives gifts of flowers, fire and water.



Antje Majewski
Metearisis, 2010

El Hadji Sy
Lingot d'or,
 date unknown



Because my meteorite/magnetite contains metal and is highly magnetic, it also stands in relation to tools. El Hadji Sy gave me a strange object as a gift: a metal block that (unlike mine) was not made naturally, but had been left behind by the Chinese workers who had built the stadium in Dakar. Economic relations between China and African countries have to do with more than just China's need for raw materials; the Chinese have been building stadiums, railroads and government buildings in African countries for a long time. Unlike the Europeans, they have long recognized that Africa is also a market, even when it comes to only very cheap objects.

El Sy did not know what purpose this Chinese block of metal had served, but he had given it a new meaning by painting it gold. The block resembles a gold ingot without taking on its symbolic function (otherwise I would not have been able to get it through customs in my hand luggage). At the beginning of our interview, El Sy had spoken about the cowry shells that had once been used as currency in Africa. Even money is nothing more than a symbolic agreement that works in a way that is similar to magic. The gold ingot speaks of value but has none. It is nothing more than a found object that can't even exercise its function as a tool anymore. Nevertheless, it carries within itself the whole of China and the moment of its history, when China struck out in the direction of global capitalism (Issa Samb). Like the distinction El Hadji Sy



Antje Majewski
La pierre, la boule, les yeux. Conversation entre El Hadji Sy et Antje Majewski. Dakar 2010, 2010 (video stills)

makes in our conversation: this gold ingot is the same object it once was in China; it is what it was when the Chinese left it behind in Senegal, but it also took on a new meaning with El Hadji Sys' intervention: that of non-convertible value. And I was allowed to take this value back to Berlin as a gift.

→ S. 248

Xu Shuxian,
The Answers

In the spring of 2011 I travelled back to China, but this time to the south—to Guangzhou—to pursue the “history of the country from which the object has come to you, the story of the men of this country, the women of this country” as Issa Samb had requested. The objects actually came from Beijing, but in southern China there were both meteorite fields and plantations with Buddha's hand citrons—the sculpture that I thought was a jellyfish actually represented a citrus fruit.

Shuxian Xu—my assistant who became a good friend over the course of my journey and who connected me with the right people for each of my objects—began by putting me in touch with meteorite researcher Lu Ling. Lu Ling explained to me her theory that all life on Earth was created from the shapes of clouds swirled by meteorites striking the primordial landscape. She wanted to take me to a village where they had found many meteorites, and had kept one especially large one, the “Iron Ox”, in front of an ancestral temple.

The village welcomed me with a large dinner, where I listened to the stories of everyone there. If I were an ethnographer it would certainly be called a “field trip”, one in which I was the first tourist from Europe to get to know the village.

Many of the villagers collected meteorites for the researchers. They themselves associated them primarily with luck for the village. One said that he wished that the great meteorite might bring happiness and luck to all mankind. One elderly man, however, said that in his view the meteorite had brought bad luck. In the beginning there was the earth goddess Nüwa. She became involved in a dispute, and a crack appeared in the sky. She mended this crack with stones, but some of them fall down from time to time. They are not good signs.¹³ One would only have to go over the mountain to reach the rare earth mine, which said to be is the village's misfortune.



Antje Majewski
The Meteorite, the Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand, the Buddha's Hand. South China, 2011 (video stills)

The villagers are caught in a conflict with the government, in which Lu Ling tries to mediate. The mine contaminates their water and pollutes their agriculture. Incidentally, I think it is very likely that the village's so-called meteorites are actually volcanic in origin, because the first thing they showed was me a pond where bubbles kept bubbling up to the surface. The entire village, a 300-year-old complex built according to the principles of feng shui, should be resettled. In today's China—where rapid industrialization is conducted at the expense of the environment—there are countless local-level conflicts like these, which can quickly become life-threatening for the villagers.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the meteorite could be especially lucky here, because if there were more tourists like me then they could deal with the government differently. Because of this, I was not only entertained, but also very often photographed with various groups. The photos of me were hung in the ancestral temple, along with a nice thank-you note that I composed with Shuxian's help, and the ecologically minded mayor was elected to head several villages shortly thereafter. May the meteorite that brought me there bring them luck!

I was also told another story, one from the earlier days that also had to do with the quality of the water. They had made a fishpond in the village and placed it where it belonged according to feng shui. But once they put the meteorite in front of the ancestral temple, all of the fish in the water died. The feng shui master had to be brought in to beat a notch into the meteorite, and it was only then that the fish could remain healthy. It was said that the meteorite might well have been treated disrespectfully; children used to ride and play around on it, which is why they placed it on a nice pedestal. The children still ride on it, though, and the fish are still dead. The story struck me as odd. Why did they have to make notch in it, wasn't that disrespectful, too?



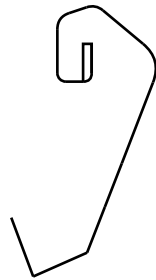
Temple to the god of earth

We took a walk that led us into one of the most beautiful landscapes I have ever seen. We walked over mountain ridges, through bamboo groves and came to a valley full of orange trees with fruit hanging everywhere. A stream flowed between large, round lumps of rock. Finally we reached the little cottage that belonged to the former village chief, which was behind two enormous, round boulders. He called them Yin and Yang. From them, you could see down into the valley and over to another, smaller boulder: Guan Yin. Standing on Yang, the old man told me another version. They had placed the meteorite at the ancestral temple, but one day it went off by itself and was found by the river the next morning. They brought it back, but it vanished again. It was then believed that it might be a fish god. After the third time this happened, they brought in the feng shui master, who chipped a notch in the god. Finally he stopped walking around and stayed put at the ancestral temple.

On the way back, we passed a temple to the god of the earth. To me, it seemed very appropriate for a village like that one: standing in the centre is an ancestral temple, which reinforces the community and where weddings take place; in a field, a modest little temple to the earth god, to whom one brings some of his own fruit.

IV

The Pot Made of Fragrant Moroccan Wood, Contains a Black Ball or Two Glass Eyes



The black ball I bought in Warsaw in about 2004; the glass eyes were movie props and had originally come from the practice of a Berlin ophthalmologist who inserted glass eyes; and the container of Moroccan root wood is from a Paris flea market. It is, in other words, the only object that actually consists of several objects of different origin.

In my painting you see only the closed container. “The small black pot with the ball, that’s the magic. You open it, and inside is the mystery.” (Alejandro Jodorowsky)

It turned out that the ball behaved in a similar way to the wandering meteorite; both wanted to go from one place to another, show up here and there and pass through several hands. The ball wanted to move or transport times and spaces. It also wanted to turn into an egg that multiplies.

Soon after my return from Dakar in the spring of 2010, Patrick Komorowski and France Fiction invited me to participate in a “séminaire à la champagne”. They had asked different artists to reanimate the moment captured in photographs by Eustachy Kossakowski in 1964: when, in the countryside near his home in Zalesie, Edward Krasiński let his *Lance* float through the air. The lance is a blue rod made of wood and consists of several parts held together by a thin string. The string is not visible in the photos. Hanging there in mid-air, it looks like a thing that both hovers and flies at the same time. We were asked to reconstruct or construct something analogous to that moment in the countryside outside of Paris; it was explicitly stated that none of this was to be documented, as the photos from 1964 were to be the documentation of our work in 2010. I broke this rule, because for me, my photos are not a documentation but duplication or a projection of that moment in 1964, which expands over several different times and places. It was, in other words, about creating a “bullet hole” (Duchamp).

→ S. 164

Antje Majewski,
*A Black Ball and Two
Glass Eyes*



Antje Majewski
*The Box Made of Fragrant Wood,
Contains a Black Ball or Two Glass Eyes, 2010*



France Fiction
Poster zu Séminaire à la
campagne, 2010

At Schönefeld airport, I was told that my flight was cancelled. Standing in line behind me was Agnieszka Polska, who was also invited to the séminaire. And during our odyssey from Berlin to Basel and a train from there to Paris, I told her that I had already started the seminar by going to Warsaw and doing a kind of drawing on the terrace at Krasinski's studio-apartment, by letting the ball roll and knock against the terrace floorboards as if I were playing billiards. I also told her that the ball had already been to Senegal. Actually, I would have liked to let it sit in his apartment for a while, among all the other objects, so that they would have a visitor. Krasinski himself had always had lots of visitors there, and so the first idea that his gallery—the Foksal Gallery Foundation—had was to keep his apartment open to other artists. But I was told that I couldn't because it had now been turned into a museum. A museum, however, whose objects were left to decay and that explicitly did not want to preserve anything at all.

Edward Krasinski had spent only some of his life in the country—his happiest, as one Frenchwoman told me. She had been there as a guest as a young woman. A great ball was held there; he was still together with his wife Anka Ptazkowska, who then moved to Paris with Kossakowski, and he wasn't drinking. He actually lived in Warsaw, on the top floor of a socialist housing block. Krasinski lived there among his surreal objects and large black-and-white photographs, which doubled the furniture and has allowed his gallerist (as a life-size photograph) to play table tennis with him to this day. (The world appears as a double, or hangs perhaps on a hinge that can rotate ...)

At the *séminaire à la campagne*, I presented a text in which I report on my visit to Krasinski's studio. I also allowed the others to recreate the Warsaw drawing on the grass and aim the ball into the little wooden container, which stood in the middle. When finally someone hit the target, the two glass eyes jumped out. I gave one of the eyes to Patrick Komorowski and buried the other in the ground. This anchoring was my "bullet hole": the space of the studio was drawn on the grass, I could now go through the door and enter the apartment where they had forbidden me to place down the objects as a visitor, and bury something there after all. And in this way, I claimed, it was possible to travel to the countryside, to Zalesie. That is where the ball is right now. There is fruit lying around the tree; dolls and people participate.

Studio of Edward
Krasinski



Then something very strange happened. For some time, I had been playing a situationist game with Juliane Solmsdorf. We had Mathilde Rosier give us a list of street names in Paris that meant something to her. We went to these streets as though it were a blind date. I had also played it once with Delia Gonzalez; in that case, the game brought us to a street filled with African shops that also sold magical things. Now, there was only one street left: the Rue Campagne Première.

Juliane Solmsdorf, Patrick Komorowski and I drove there the day after the séminaire. It was a small cul de sac, nothing special. And then Patrick said, "This was Anka Ptazkowska's gallery, you know that, right?" Of course I did not know that, and I was shocked. The woman who had been with both Krasinski and Kossakowski had run a very interesting gallery for conceptual art—right here in this street, of all the thousands of streets in Paris! And our situationist game, the one that began two years ago with a list of street names, led me there. After that, I was hardly surprised when I learned that Duchamp had often stayed at a hotel just a little bit further down the road.¹⁴ It was in this street that Yves Klein photographed his leap into the void, and here that the final scene in Godard's *Au bout de soufflé* was shot—the one in which Belmondo dies. It's really just a small, ordinary street.¹⁵



Antje Majewski
*One Black Ball and Two
 Glass Eyes, 2010*



Edward Krasinski et. al./
Jacek Maria Stoklosa
Der Abschied im Frühling
from: *Ball in Zalesie*, 1968



Invitation to the
Freisler performance

Installation views
Splace, 2010 (details)

When I told Agnieszka about the ball on the flight home, she said, “It reminds me of a Polish conceptual artist from the 60s,” and I said, “Paweł Freisler?” We were both astonished because as an artist, Freisler is a legend known only to few. He vanished about 20 years ago, lived “in Norway” and supposedly worked in his garden “with apples”, as I had heard from friends. All this was part of his work, which had long consisted in not showing any material artworks, but circulating legends instead.¹⁶

In 1968, Freisler had begun working with an egg that he had a precision instruments factory cast in steel on 14th August 1969, for the Laboratorium Sztuki Galerii EL. He initially called it *Stalowy wzór jajka kurzego* (Standard Chicken Egg Made of Steel). Shortly thereafter, this became *Imperialny wzór jajka kurzego* (Imperial Standard for a Chicken Egg), and today it is usually called *Stalowe jajo* (Steel Egg), or *Das Ei* or *The Egg*, respectively. Because the story of The Egg is still ongoing, its title is still “in the making” (Paweł Freisler). The Egg was not exhibited, but entrusted to people. Among others, the popular Polish actor Wiesław Gołas carried it around with him from February 1970 to February 1971 and had to show it upon demand; and it was brought to Paris, where Jean-Paul Belmondo took it for a cruise on the hood of his car.¹⁷

On the flight home, Agnieszka and I realized that we both definitely wanted to visit Freisler. That summer I ran—together with Juliane Solmsdorf, Dirk Peuker and Magdalena Magiera—a large, empty art space at the base of the television tower in Berlin. At Splace, we invited artist friends to arrange a total of twelve exhibitions.¹⁸ I invited Agnieszka to do a Freisler exhibition with me. We tried to get in touch with him, but he did not reply.



Paweł Freisler
Stalowe jajo (The Egg),
1967

→ S. 170
Antje Majewski,
Freisler

Finally, I wrote the text for a performance in which we both travel to Sweden and steal his egg by sending little machines into his garden, where it is buried. The machines burrow into the ground and bring us The Egg, which we then take to Berlin and glue underneath one of the tables in the rotating restaurant at the top of the television tower.

What we actually did was water an imaginary garden on the concrete floor at Splace in the middle of Berlin, using water we had brought from a fire hydrant hidden in the ground at Alexanderplatz. I scattered seeds made out of little metal balls that the visitors could then take with them.

We also screened Agnieszka's Film *Ogród*. Here you are led into Freisler's garden, where his Egg can be found resting amongst the plants. A voice over, from a man of whom we only see a hand, explains how carefully these rare flowers are cultivated, cites their complicated names and explains to us the sprinkler system and the precautions taken against pests.

→ S. 172

Paweł Freisler,
Antje Majewski a. o.,
The Black Ball, the Egg

A little later on, I asked the Kunsthaus Graz to send a Freisler a formal request for *The Egg* and to our great surprise, he agreed. I wrote to him about happy I was about it and sent him my text. Thus began an e-mail exchange that also involved many others-an exchange extensive enough to be a book on its own. We are only able to print excerpts here.

→ S. 240

Łukasz Gorczyca, Łukasz
Ronduda, Half Empty

As the first photo of *The Egg*, Paweł Freisler—who wrote us from Sweden, not from Norway – sent us a portrait of himself covering his face with the egg-shaped lid of a pot, which had been taken by his wife.

Then he named Łukasz Ronduda as the one who should tell the story of *The Egg* in the context of my exhibition. He said Ronduda would be *The Professor*, an artwork that Paweł Freisler had developed long ago. Łukasz Ronduda, “*The Professor*”, sent us a photocopy of two pages of the novel he wrote (with Łukasz Gorczyca), in which Ronduda describes his encounter with Freisler and his appointment as *Profesor*—an artwork Freisler activates for the first time in *The World of Gimel*. A photograph showing Ronduda as the Professor was to be hung next to the photocopied and translated pages of the novel.



Freisler also sent me the picture of a skeleton “that wanders through the world with two pitchers”, writing that it was the “reverse side” of the professor, “his hand, dividing, multiplying, inter alia, *The Egg*”. This multiplication within the Universalmuseum Joanneum had to do with gardens and would be *ab ovo usque ad mala*, from *The Egg* to the apples. “Apples are the subject, the theme of my work over the past two years. This is actually an attempt to continue a whole new tradition of an end and a beginning of life and death ()”. Freisler then allowed me to assume that he had a garden, under the condition that we would never meet.



Agnieszka Polska
Ogród (The Garden), 2010
(video stills)



Simon Starling &
Superflex
e.g. *Held in the Hand*,
2011

So Freisler entrusted the telling of his legend to Łukasz Ronduda, but *The Egg* itself to me, as his deposit in a bank: “to put *The Egg* into the safe of a Bank is to accept the system ... and vice versa, the system must accept *The Egg*, its otherness”: “One might as well form their **Own bank**” using *The Egg* as a deposit that could give credit (“credit of trust”).

The credit lending and multiplication of *The Egg* from the unconscious began in a very unexpected way. Without knowing about Freisler, Simon Starling and Rasmus Nielsen (Superflex) gave Adam Budak a proposal for the jubilee year. They wanted to produce nine different-sized eggs out of steel; *The Eggs* would wander as “aliens” throughout the various departments, where they would come into direct contact with the objects in that section. This would create new stories—one of these was even to be carried around by one of the curators, just like Freisler’s *The Egg* from forty years earlier. These eggs were to be called not “Standard” but “Super” eggs and were based on a design by Piet Hein. They are flattened at both ends, so they can stand on their own.

I sent Freisler an e-mail telling him about this new development, the nine “Super Eggs” that would be keeping his egg company. Freisler did not reply. The following spring, Kunsthaus Graz asked him to send them *The Egg* because the first *Super Eggs* were finished and we very much wanted to bring about a meeting of *The Eggs*. After a few more conceptual complications relating to the insured value (the “maximum possible”), and the address for the loan agreement (he gave us two house numbers to choose from on the same street: No. 24b and 23b – we chose the odd number) *The Egg* finally arrived in Graz, wrapped in a thick, grey beard.

→ S. 188

Simon Starling
& Superflex,
e.g. *The Universal Egg*

There, “Super Eggs” were “laid” in the Zeughaus and in the Schloss Eggenberg Archaeology Museum. The heaviest, which weighed nearly a ton, was taken into the *Measuring the World* exhibition at Kunsthaus Graz and remains in the same place for *The World of Gimmel*.



Piotr Życieński
Profesor, 2010

Simon Starling &
Superflex
e.g. *The Universal Egg*,
2011



But how should *The Egg* be shown in the exhibition? I myself would have preferred to “steal” it and bring it to the TV tower with Agnieszka Polska. Freisler answered that the loan agreement had been made with the Kunsthhaus Graz, but I was welcome to make a copy of *The Egg*. We commissioned the same company that had also cast the “Super Eggs”, with a copy that received the number 1. The original is now on view in the exhibition, in a bank deposit box in a high security display case, the same one that is used for the *Coin de chasteté* by Marcel Duchamp. The copy was sent to me in Berlin. Agnieszka Polska and I went to eat at the rotating restaurant in the TV tower (we had pork); and we drove around with *Das Ei (Kopie Nr. 1)* a few times so that the city could reflect in it.¹⁹

In the fall, I’ll bring it to the country and throw a big celebration in which I will name my country house “23b” and *Das Ei (Kopie Nr. 1)* will be buried in the garden. At the party we’ll eat large loaves of bread that look like children, sing and wear masks, and there will also be fruit, dolls and other things. We’ll plant an apple tree, a nut tree, a cherry tree, roses and many other plants. My friends will help me set up a small pyramid of stones over *Das Ei (Kopie Nr. 1)*, so I’ll never forget exactly where it is. When the exhibition is over, it will be sent to Graz and exhibited there. How these conditions are worked out will be left up to the Kunsthhaus Graz.

Antje Majewski
Das Ei (Kopie Nr. 1),
Berliner Fernsehturm,
Sommer 2011 (1), 2011

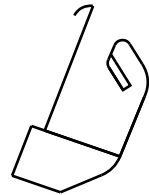


Antje Majewski
Das Ei (Kopie Nr. 1),
Berliner Fernsehturm,
Sommer 2011 (2), 2011



V

The Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand





Tarot reading by
Alejandro Jodorowsky

→ S. 190

Alejandro Jodorowsky
and Antje Majewski,
The Hand that Gives

In the summer of 2008, Delia Gonzalez and I flew to Paris to witness a tarot reading by Alejandro Jodorowsky in a small bistro.²⁰ He goes there on Wednesdays, but not always; you have to call the café the same day to find out whether or not he will come. He finally appeared after many hours of waiting, but it seemed that we were not among the ones that had been chosen. Everyone there puts his or her name in a little basket, makes a five Euros donation to the bistro, and the first ten people whose names are drawn are given a reading. Very different people had come—from young comic fans to old South Americans who had come for the tarot. Jodorowsky was very much focused on the people he was speaking to, but all of it could be heard and even commented upon by the others.

I started dreaming about showing him my objects. Somehow I was able to get his phone number in the summer of 2010. He said that he had to do a psychomagical act in Argentina, and I should give him another call in the first week of December. I booked a flight and called him from Paris. I was allowed to come over. He lives very close to the café where he had been reading tarot cards, in one of the grand, old Parisian apartments. With the exception of two cats jumping around, he was alone—just working at the computer—and he let me in without knowing anything about me.

I placed my objects on the table. I had left the Buddha-hand in Berlin; the Hedgeapple was only virtual and I had not yet added the White Stone, so there were only four. Jodorowsky wrote their meanings on a Post-It note.

The Meteorite:

Por el cosmos viajan los meteoritos transportando el germen de la consciencia.
The meteorites travel through the cosmos, transporting the seeds of consciousness.

The Shell:

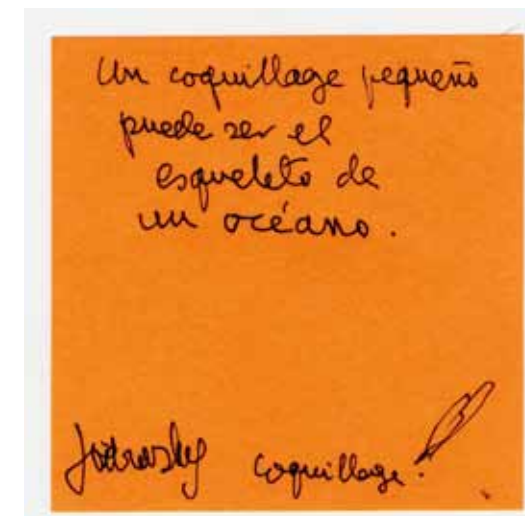
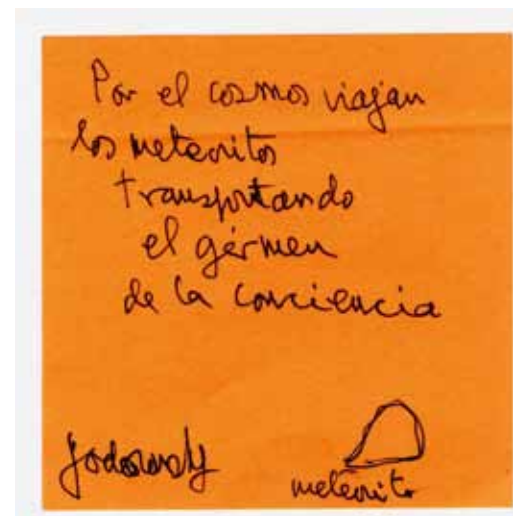
Un coquillage pequeño puede ser el esqueleto de un océano.
A little shell can be the skeleton of an ocean.

The Teapot-Hand:

Por tu mano abierta puede derramarse todo el amor del universo.
All the love of in the universe can pour from your open hand.

The pot with the black ball:

Dentro de cada espíritu anida la vacuidad.
In every spirit nests the void."



Alejandro Jodorowsky
Réponses aux objets,
2010

I wanted to know more. Well, he said, the things themselves speak a language that we only feel, but are unable to speak. But it can be translated. My choice of objects is supposedly my way of expressing myself in the world, a reflection of my subconscious. I asked him to imagine the objects as being completely independent of me. Of all of them, it was the teapot hand that spoke to him the most. “I like that very much, it speaks to me. [...] The open hand – the whole world can go through the open hand. This hand, which is half open as a teapot, that is the hand that gives. And what I give, I give *myself*. To receive the world is to give to the world.” I told him that is how he seemed to me when he was doing tarot readings. Yes, but he’s no saint. “Every Wednesday I imitate saintliness. Saintliness is to serve the other. Without judging him. [...] Without anything in return. Simply for the pleasure of doing it.”²¹ Giving to people, that was something he assumed that a profane saint would have to do, but it costs him a great deal of effort. Everything a person could use to define themselves, such as gender, age and nation, are only imitations, not the essence. Still, he’s been imitating holiness for decades! “And from imitation to imitation, there are moments when it succeeds.”

On his shelf, I had seen three golden blocks of clay-painted—which reminded me of the gold ingot that El Hadji Sy had given me. Jodorowsky told me, “My son²² has paid me for everything I have done for him. With fake gold. There was lots of it, but there was so much that I kept only four of them.” Like the false gold ingots from Africa, which had actually been left by the Chinese and had now had been brought to Europe as a gift to me; and like Freisler’s “personal bank”, these gold ingots also undermine the idea of money or represent another form of currency.



Antje Majewski
La main qui donne.
 Conversation entre
 Alejandro Jodorowsky et
 Antje Majewski. Paris
 2010, 2010 (video stills)



Presentation of the gold ingots

→ S. 248

Xu Shuxian,
The Answers

Six months later, I learned that he would be coming to Berlin for a lecture. I wrote him an e-mail asking to borrow his gold ingots for my exhibition. He did not answer. Nevertheless I of course went to the lecture, along with Delia Gonzalez and Mathilde Rosier. The room was very crowded, and Jodorowsky—at 82 years old—had no trouble at all getting us to hold hands and make funny noises... Towards the end, he suddenly shouted into the crowd, “Where is Oscar?” “That’s me!”, I cried, stood up and went to the front.²³ He asked his wife, Marianne Kosta, who was sitting to the side, to pass him a plastic bag over the many people sitting on the floor and handed it to me solemnly in front of the entire audience. In it were the gold ingots.

There is also a second story about the “giving hand”:

In the spring of 2011 in Guangzhou I met an expert on teapots, tea and Chinese ink. His name was Jian Huang; he was also a history student at the university. We met at a vegetarian restaurant on campus. I asked him to have a look at my hand teapot.

“This is not a good teapot. It is probably a tourist souvenir; it is possible that many of these were produced around the time of the Olympics. A good teapot must be simple; this is a concept teapot,” he said. “The shape of the teapot should convey the spirit of the person who shaped it, not an idea.”

My feeling was that it had to do with more than just a good shape, and more than just the spirit of the artist.

“What does it feel like to see a good teapot?” I asked.

“I can only describe it like this: very close and very distant at the same time.”

“And what does it mean to drink tea?”

The cook at the restaurant had joined us. He said:

“Drinking tea is something that you do with friends. It brings joy. This hand is for me the hand of Guan Yin. I think it means: Let go.”²⁴

The shape of the hand, with its soft fingers, had actually reminded me of those I had seen on Buddhist sculptures. The tea expert told me that if I wanted to know what it is to drink tea, I would just have to drink tea. We could go to a tea house together, when the restaurant closed, because the restaurant owner, the cook and a few other guests would join us.



Cristobal Jodorowsky
*Lingots d'or pour payer
tout ce que son pere a
fait pour lui,
Date unknown*

In a large group, we walked through the quiet park of the university and then along the shore. At night, the river in Guangzhou is lit with neon-coloured lights; the shimmering rainbow colours of the Canton Towers and the opera are reflected in the water; people dance, do tai chi and promenade. Even the tea house was on the ground floor of a modern building. At the front is a tea shop, while a group was already seated around a tea master to the back. Tea drinking is free, anyone can join. The tea master sat in the middle and very quietly brewed a variety of teas, the preciousness of which increased as time wore on: first the young teas, and in the end a very old tea that none of those present could afford. We were allowed to try a Pu-erh tea from the 1950s, from a very old teapot. I learned that the amount of Qi²⁵ in the teas increases with age. Everyone was talking, there was also laughter. In one conversation, I also suddenly heard something that I found very interesting: that the teapot would have to be “be fed good tea”. Because the teapot was alive? Yes, I was told, it is not only the tea that contains Qi, but also the teapot itself. It would depend on its shape and age. A teapot is a living thing, just as we are and just like the tea. To drink tea is to communicate with the Qi of the pot and the tea. And could I kindly stop asking so many questions and just drink the tea.

The tea was very strong. First it was poured into a small container so that it could be smelled, only then was it poured into little porcelain cups for drinking. Many closed their eyes while doing so. The last tea was a very friendly being that flowed through my entire body. I started to feel hot, and I had the feeling that I was very far away and close at the same time.

→ S. 213

Eva Kreissl,
*Scientific Evaluations
of the Objects*

My teapot hand may not be a good teapot (an opinion shared by the expert in Graz); it carries within it “the moment when China struck out in the direction of global capitalism” (Issa Samb); but the hand’s gesture is beautiful. It gives; and what flows from that hand, be it tea or water, becomes a part of us so that we also become part of the world. This happens with every breath we take, every apple we eat.



Antje Majewski
*The Meteorite, the Clay
Teapot in the Form
of a Human Hand, the
Buddha's Hand. South
China, 2011 (video stills)*

In his story, Ingo Niermann leads us out into the forest, in the attempt to merge self with the others. “Why should I be only in bodies and thoughts? I envelop stones and infuse plants with my nerve tracts and thrust them deep into the ground. I feel the pressure of data scurrying along the conduits. I am everything that feels through me. I think the world.”

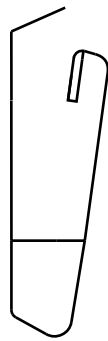
In my painting *The Gardener of Mechanical Objects*, we see a gardener whose right hand is made of clay. Colored, knotted ribbons spill out of it instead of water, connecting him to the ground; with the others, he sows round, metal balls into the landscape in front of my studio, traversed by trains. To me, the gardener is a mix of Jodorowsky and Freisler²⁶ even though it was only Agnieszka and I who sowed these metal balls in my performance. This whole city belongs to this gardener’s garden, this gardener of mechanical objects watering them from the teapot hand, from the “hand that gives.”



Antje Majewski
The Gardener of Mechanical Objects, 2011

VI

The Buddha-Hand



→ S. 214

Kurt Zernig,
*Scientific Evaluations
of the Objects*

The Buddha-hand is a “cultural socialized object” (Issa Samb)—so much so that if you don’t come from that culture, you don’t understand what it is. With the teapot hand, we might not know why it was made, but whenever I showed someone the hand and demonstrated how you can remove the little orange cap, whenever I filled it with water and poured from its index finger, then everyone understood the transformation of “hand” into “pot”. It was with the Buddha’s hand that the guesswork began. A jellyfish, a root, a creature, a what? It was only when I e-mailed photos of my objects to Shuxian Xu that I learned the name of the fruit and its history. The “fingered citron” or Buddha’s hand citron comes from southern China. The fruit blooms into slices at one end, all of which are enclosed by the fruit’s peel. Thus it resembles a hand with many fingers.

→ S. 248

Xu Shuxian,
The Answers

Legend has it that the fragrant fruit was made by the hand of Princess Miao Shan. Her father, the king, did not want her to become a Buddhist and banished her into a garden. He then became very ill. Immortals appeared to Miao Shan in a dream, and told her that she should sacrifice her arms and eyes. She made arm soup out of it and had it brought to her father, who ate it and recovered his health. The rest of the soup was poured into the earth, and from it grew the Buddha’s hand tree. Even Miao Shan sprouted hundreds of new arms and eyes, with which she could help all of the suffering creatures in all worlds. Because there are many worlds and she cannot always be here, she has given our world the peacock, with its eyes that are meant to watch over us. She is an incarnation of the bodhisattva Guan Yin (the listener of the complaints of suffering beings)²⁷.

My painting, which was made before I knew the story of Miao Shan, shows a young woman in traditional costume.²⁸ She is holding the Buddha-hand sculpture in her outstretched arm, like a giant fish.



Antje Majewski
Miao Shan und die Buddha-Hand, 2010

Antje Majewski &
Xu Shuxian
Lotus Flower, 2011



The procession that Shuxian describes (paper gifts are brought to the beach from the temple of the monks of the Guan Yin Temple, where they are burned) could symbolize the Buddhist notion of impermanence and the illusory world. But the priests also set up a small table, from which they sacrificed rice and rice wine to the sea by quickly tipping it into the sand – and the temple's little, female Guan Yin, who concealed herself behind a towering male figure, was turned into a Yemanja-like sea deity with a fish. Together with the lay female Buddhists, we sat at her feet and folded a lotus flower made of paper, which we then sacrificed to the sea.

Back from China, the following spring, I asked my nieces and their friends to walk from my studio and cross the street for my film *Procession*, carrying abstracted forms of my object that I had put together out of paper: a ball (black ball), a cube (meteorite), a kind of bonbon (Buddha-hand) and a paper lotus flower. They walk to the canal singing, bringing the objects to place them in the water – just as one would make a sacrifice to Yemanja or Guan Yin. In Berlin they simply fly to the water and flow down the Havel, until they are caught in the reeds. The same blue-and-white striped railway pillars are visible in the background as in *The Gardeners of the Mechanical Objects*.

Antje Majewski
The Meteorite, the Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand, the Buddha's Hand. South China, 2011 (video stills)



Antje Majewski
Prozession, 2011
(video still)



Buddha-hand citrons grow on large plantations in Jinhua. We were given two small seedlings on a plantation, both of which are now growing—one of them with me in Germany, the other at Shuxian's in China. We also visited a Taoist temple. A Tao scholar there showed us a small tree, upon which a fruit was still hanging (which he gave me), and he explained how we could use it to make a good tea for a sore throat. Tao scholars are very knowledgeable about plants and their uses, but also about the human body, because Qi can be enhanced by treating the body and mind well.

In Taoism, there is no personalized God who wants something and no constant soul; there is only Qi and Tao, the Way. Where the One (yuán qì) divides, there will be two (yin and yang), and it is from this that the billions of beings were created.

In the Buddha-hand chapter, I have gathered various works by other artists. All of them share with the Buddha's hand the fact that they were made by artists in order to transmit or convey something. All contain something like small beads or cell divisions.

Thomas Bayrle's Madonna consists of a field of small crosses. They are the crosses of Christ, but also the crosses of the many soldiers who died at Verdun. Like Guan Yin, the Madonna is an all-merciful female who soothes suffering. Bayrle's Madonna is a work of art, though it could also hang in a church as a devotional image.

→ S. 200

Thomas Bayrle and
Antje Majewski,
Madonna Machine
Rosary

A rosary can be "sung" not only by humans, but also by a motor. In our conversation, Bayrle talks about the first time he heard the singing—mingled with the sounds of a transmission—in his machines back when he was still working in a weaving mill as a young man. Like the Tibetan prayer wheel, a motor is an efficient machine in which all components must work together perfectly. The aim of such tools is to increase the number of prayers. The organs of our body work with the same "merciless efficiency" in which each cell is unique, but also contains a tiny bit of freedom at the same time. The sum of these little liberties add up, in their great mass, to form the "enormous liberty" that is our body.



Antje Majewski
The Meteorite, the Clay
Teapot in the Form
of a Human Hand, the
Buddha's Hand. South
China, 2011 (Videostills)



Thomas Bayrle
Verdun (Madonna Croce),
 1988



Dirk Peuker
Pagode, 2011



Dirk Peuker
Vase, 2011

Thomas Bayrle's "battery" essentially reflects organically or synthetically formed "masses". Be they masses in "cities with upwards of 10 million inhabitants" or accumulations in nature. As a child lying in a meadow, he experienced "such a great, beautiful, atrocious symbiosis. Where there are millions of tiny creatures in an infinitely complex battle of life as a symbiosis ... Where millions of little parts have to die so that myriads of little parts can come to life. And just the fragrance there alone ..."

On the branches of *Vase* by **Dirk Peuker**, little gears grow in place of flowers. His monoprints are exposed directly to photographic paper in a rare procedure. The *Vase* or the *Pagoda* of branches are fragile constructions for the moment, one in which it is not possible to rework anything and there is no negative. The *Pagoda* resembles a temple that has been joined together with a few branches and soon falls apart again.

Delia Gonzalez's large drawing looks like a strict, minimalist design from a distance; coming closer, one discovers thousands of tiny circles with a dot in the middle, similar to the sequins on the *Elegguá*.

"I think and feel in shapes and patterns so making drawings and making music is my way of expressing the feelings I cannot put into words: the visual sound of the unconscious. In a sense they are like cells. They are living, breathing and slowly recomposing themselves: maybe they are my idea of worship. I've always drawn maps of my life's events and have always been obsessed with cells. I felt like one isolated cell alone and removed from the others in the system. With the passing of time, these cells have multiplied and taken a form of their own. Perhaps my drawings are my way of integrating myself into life's system, life's biological order. In my drawings circles also refer to the moon and represent birth, death, rebirth: the endless cycle of life."²⁹

Elegguá, the little figure by Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom, is covered with sequins (similar to the way they are used for voodoo sculptures and embroidery) and it has a face made of cowry shells. Like the small sculpture by a craftsman that I had looked at with El Hadji Sy, where little pieces of wood were inserted into a stone, the face is formed with three small elements that are actually natural – but, as he explained, were also used as money. An *Elegguá* is a god of crossroads, one who establishes a connection to the gods. Delia Gonzalez comes from a Cuban exile family in Miami, and her work is often influenced by Santeria. *Elegguá* is a sculpture, but also a little god in front of whom chocolate and candy should be placed in order to make him merciful. She had given it to me a few years ago, in exchange for a picture of a woman with an Afro. He usually lives in my kitchen.



Delia Gonzalez
Untitled, 2010



Delia Gonzalez &
Gavin Russom
Elegguá, 2004

Neal Tait
Untitled, 2010



Neal Tait's little canvas shows a figure that also has a small face, though it could not be a man. It resembles an “idol” or an organ. It is surrounded by little circles that form a kind of rosary. Tait sees the painting itself as a living thing that can take on a will of its own and contains traces of the creative process. This picture was a gift.

Huang Jian, who was also an expert in Chinese ink, gave me an ink block from the 1970s. Ink also contains more Qi the older it gets. The ink is adorned with a cloud pattern. Chinese landscape drawings can evoke the same feeling of “very near and distant” that he had described—good ink on good paper facilitates the flow of the brush. He gave me a little plastic jar with liquid ink to draw with, because the ink block is too valuable. I now owe him an ink drawing.

Chinese ink,
1970s



Bracelet made of
dried fruit



This bracelet of large fruits was given to me by Shuxian's uncle, Ma Xiaozhong, a feng shui master. He was wearing it when we met on the last day in Guangzhou, and had a similar chain around his neck. He gave me this bracelet even before we started our conversation. The fruits have a casing that looks more like an animal's skin than part of a plant. Shuxian told me they aren't really valuable, but they are difficult to find.

Ma Xiaozhong worked for a company that manufactured traditional Chinese medicine and provided consultations. He could also interpret the *I Ching*. I brought him one of the meteorites that the people in the village had given me. He was delighted, because he saw in it a reclining Buddha. The reclining Buddha shows the moment in which the Buddha enters Nirvana - lying on his side and smiling. Of all my objects, he liked the ball the best. It reminded him of an animal-pearl and could be used to heal people.



Antje Majewski
Ma Xiaozhong Holding the Black Ball, 2011



Ball of algae

The ball made of algae was lent to me by **Helke Bayrle**. It lay on the sofa in her apartment. The sea made these balls with algae. “We have these big, crazy, rolled-up balls at home. They’re made of tons of little hairs. The sea rolls them up for a long time. There are beaches with millions of these kinds of balls. How long would they have had to be rolled? That is very, very beautiful. I am very interested in these processes.”

→ S. 204

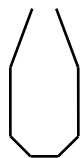
Helke Bayrle and
Antje Majewski,
The Stones, the Shells

Helke told me that, on every trip she has taken for decades, she has collected stones she finds on the seashore. She brings them to Germany and takes them with her again on the next trip, so that she can throw them into another sea in another country.

“Every time a person moves an object from one place to another, he participates in an altering of the world. In the order of things. At whatever level, in whatever place. There is no being that does not participate, through his movement or his daily activities—not to say in the change, that is too connotated—but in the evolution of the world, in the movement, the movement of the world”.

VII

The White Stone





Antje Majewski
Rare Desert Stone, 2005

My journey probably even started much earlier, in my childhood, in the time in which you find a shell or a stone and start a conversation with them for some unknown reason. They have no value, do not belong to an incipient, systematic collection of shells, and cannot be traded. They are just special things. Shells, rocks and oddly shaped roots can be found in apartments all over the world—often lying next to small works of art or memorabilia that almost no one remembers anymore. Both of my grandparents' houses had these window sills full of “worthless” objects. In these households they lay next to side plates, books, sheet music, telephones, beds and many other things that are fabricated by people, traded for money and are useable. Why would someone take the exoskeletons of dead animals or a large rock and put it in their apartment? My grandmother even had a bleached goat mandible lying there ... and a very round, white stone, which I put in my coat pocket after her death. It became the seventh of my objects. You can't see it in the painting with the glass display case, but I'm sure that it is only hiding. In China, there are little stones on carved pedestals called “scholar's rocks” (Qishi or Gongshi³⁰) which were used as objects of contemplation in ancient China. They were collected according to categories that are incomprehensible to me.³¹ I thought they were objects that served a representational function—symbols of the world in miniature.

Then I painted one of these stones from a photograph. The picture was good, but painting the stone from the outside wasn't enough. It had an inside. Previously I had tried to paint the inside between people by asking performers to mime it. But how could I have persuaded a stone to mime for me?

The value of these raw stones, which were exchanged for paintings, horses or gold as early as the Tang Dynasty, consisted in something else³². To the Chinese, they contained Qi and brought the viewer to Shen You, a journey of the spirit³³. A small stone could contain the whole world—and, according to a Chinese idea of the parts of the world—not only South, North, West and East, but also Inside³⁴.

→ S. 262

Chuang Tzu,
All Created Equal

I heard of two legends. Stones are the bones, rivers the veins, the earth the flesh. This idea goes back a long way and I encountered it again while looking into similarly “charged” rocks from Papua New Guinea—they were also regarded as “the bones of the ancestors”.³⁵

According to the second legend, there is an inside; at the heart of the mountains is a cave in which the milk of satisfaction flows from a stalactite. If you learn to hear the music that the wind plays on the hollows of the mountains, you might find the right entrance.

In the summer of 2011, I prepared an exhibition at neugerriem-schneider in Berlin and realized that I had to investigate my first object, the hedgeapple, one more time. I knew it only from the Internet and had made it into a mummified *Entity*.³⁶ With all the all others, I had gone into the country from which they came. Here, I had only searched the Internet for information.



John Joseph Mathews
(portrait)

John Joseph Mathews in
his chimney room

→ S. 256

John Joseph Mathews,
Talking to the Moon

The “hedgeapple”, also called the “Osage-orange” after its county of origin in Oklahoma, is the fruit of a tree, the wood of which is used to make the best hunting bows in the world. They are also used to plant hedges for the herds, hence the name “hedgeapple”. The wood is very resistant, is slow to rot and burns very nicely in the fireplace, where it sprays sparks. The fruit is inedible even for animals. It is presumed that the giant sloth—now extinct—liked to eat them.

Living in Osage County were the Osage Indians, who were expelled from their native land and were given a contract for their new land. They became so wealthy when oil was found there at the beginning of the 20th century that whites tried to marry into Indian families. And so it came to be that the “half blood” Osage Indian John Joseph Mathews (1894–1979) was able to study at Oxford. He became a writer, and after some time in Europe he returned to his homeland and lived in a lonely stone house he had built himself, happy with the hunting and life among nature. He describes this in his book *Talking to the Moon* (1945): using detailed observations of animals and plants, he follows the course of a year in the oak woods of Osage County and describes the perfect balance of the ecosystem around him.

Antje Majewski
 VENARI LAVARI LUDERE
 RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE,
 2011 (Detail)



In my “fireplace room” I reconstructed Mathews’s home using stones that I painted myself. It is based on a historic photograph that shows John Joseph Mathews at his fireplace. He had a Latin inscription on the mantelpiece:

VENARI LAVARI LUDERE RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE³⁷

→ S. 222

Marcus Steinweg,
What is an Object?

My fireplace is not a real house; it is only a three-dimensional painting. It also contains no real fire. But you can sit on a chair that is also a painting, but real enough to sit on, and thus maybe begin to feel like “an object among objects”, part of the “community of things” that Marcus Steinweg writes about.

You can also step out—into the forest or the city—and exist not only next to, but with the other; not only handle it, but establish a connection to it. As if everything, even the “smallest, most breakable thing from China”, is filled with the same, inalienable, unsellable life.

I found the chair in the chicken coop at my house in the countryside. The house is between four lakes in the Havelland region, in a village called Himmelpfort. Freisler’s *Egg* is buried there in the ground until the end of the exhibition. The plot is large and overgrown, and the neighbours are already complaining about all the weeds crawling under their fence.



Antje Majewski
 VENARI LAVARI LUDERE
 RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE,
 2011 (detail)

→ S. 214

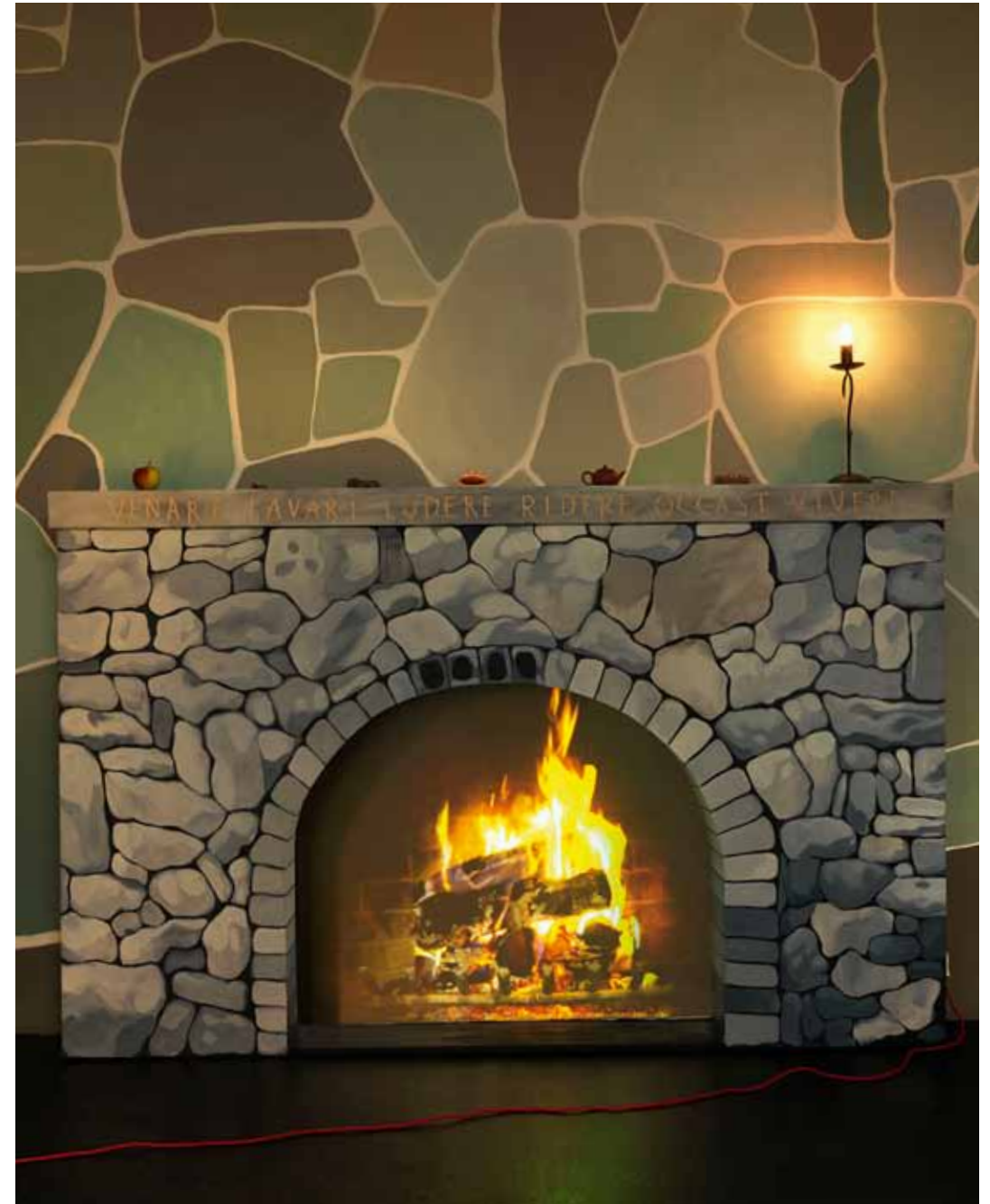
Kurt Zernig,
*Scientific Evaluations
 of the Objects*

Taking the place of the *Entity*, which was represented by a double— a lemon that had been left to mummify on its own in my studio—, is a living fruit. “Morphologically speaking, the ‘fruit’ consists of many interwoven, connate drupes that come form a so-called syncarp, an aggregate fruit.”

I will meet this fruit—which I only know virtually—for the first time during the exhibition in Graz, because it grows in the Graz botanical garden and is ripe in October.



Antje Majewski
 VENARI LAVARI LUDERE
 RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE,
 2011 (detail)



Notes

1 See Michel Foucault's beautiful analysis of the "age of similarity" in: *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Les mots et les choses). London

2 The model for the museum guard in the polka-dot shirt was Gerry Bibby.

3 *Dubai Düsseldorf*, curated by Ingo Niermann and Markus Miessen, Kunstverein Düsseldorf, 2009. For this exhibition, a loosely-connected group of individuals (two architects, a graphic designer, a filmmaker, a fashion designer, a writer and myself) developed various concepts for the future city-state Dubai-Düsseldorf, complete with its own flag, currency, senior citizen care, etc. My job was to develop the art of the future.

4 The model for the director was Yusuf Etiman, initiator of the aforementioned basso.

5 Scientifically speaking, it is not a shell but a gastropod seashell (shell of a sea snail) See: *Appraisal*.

6 Leonore Mau, Hubert Fichte: *Psyche. Annäherung an die Geisteskranken in Afrika*, Ed. Ronald Kay, Frankfurt/Main 2005.

7 Unlike Pierre Verger, Mau and Fichte did not actively participate in ceremonies. Pierre Verger, a French ethnographer and photographer, lived in Brazil and not only researched Cadomblé, he also allowed himself to be initiated as an oracle priest (babalawo), taking the name Fátumbí. A babalawo can use cowry shells to predict the future. On this trip, Verger checked the names of the Yoruba gods. In *Explosion*, Hubert Fichte describes how he tried to get Verger, to give him the recipes for secret trance drinks and his disappointment when he discovered that "The Pope" had been giving him the run-around the entire time (*Explosion, Roman der Ethnologie*, Frankfurt/Main 2006).

8 Leonore Mau, Hubert Fichte: *Petersilie*, Frankfurt a. M. 1987.

9 Hubert Fichte: *Forschungsbericht*, Frankfurt/Main.1989/2005.

10 Were she not a German nude model transported into prehistoric Potsdam, she might also be a syncretic African sea goddess: Mami Wata, who is revered in Western and Central Africa and the Caribbean. She is often depicted as a white-skinned woman with long black hair and a snake around her neck; sometimes she has a fish tail, like the mermaids who sailed on the wooden ships of Europeans. While the Mami Wata cult was formed by West African slaves in Suriname and re-imported to West Africa, a very popular image of her goes back to a chromolithograph of a "Samoan snake charmer woman", which had been taken around 1887 and brought to Nigeria. This "Samoan" was actually a French woman who performed in the Parisian Vaudeville, adorned with a snake around her naked breasts.

11 *Eyland*, with Juliane Solmsdorf, Galerie Töplitz, Germany, 2010.

12 *Rave is Over*, Exile, Berlin.

13 Even in Europe, meteorites were long thought to be bad omens or a sign from God.

14 Other visitors to the Hotel Istria included Francis Picabia, Moïse Kisling, Man Ray, Kiki de Montparnasse, Erik Satie, Rainer Maria Rilke, Tristan Tzara and Vladimir Majakowski. Yves Klein stayed in no. 14; Eugene Atget in no. 17b; Aragon in a studio near no 17; Man Ray and Pierre Restany in Nr. 31b. Eugene Atget had stayed there as well.

15 "Ne s'éteint que ce qui brilla ... /Lorsque tu descendais de L'hôtel Istria/ Tout était différent Rue Campagne Première, /en mil neuf cent vingt neuf, vers l'heure de midi ...", Louis Aragon, *Il ne m'est Paris que d'Elsa*.

16 Łukasz Ronduda, „Anormale Wirkungsweisen. Die Kunst Paweł Freislers in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren", in: *Springerin 1/09*.

17 Probably through the Rue Campagne Première, as well.

18 www.splace.de

19 The photograph of *Das Ei* (Kopie Nr. 1) in the television tower explicitly shows not The Egg, but a copy of it. Freisler had written me that the responsibility was mine as to how *The Egg* would be photographed. I deferred this responsibility to the Kunsthau Graz, where it will be exhibited. Photographer Nicolas Lackner succeeded in capturing *The Egg* "with its own characteristics" with the help of a light tent.

20 Jodorowsky has worked with mimes, developed the "teatro pánico", made films such as *El Topo* and *Montaña Sacra*, written comics and books; for him, reading tarot is a fine art. For someone who has worked with symbolic images and actions his entire life, the pictures of the tarot are a way to create a space between the reader and consultant in which images speak. He does not predict the future, but tries to bring the advice-seeker closer to what he imagines or what he is missing. When he does give advice, it often consists-like his psychomagic acts-of a set of instructions for an activity that conjures a strong, symbolic image ("masturbate to a picture of your mother", "put two gold coins in your shoes and walk around with them all day long.") and is disruptive at the same time. Jodorowsky is influenced by Surrealism; at a very young age in Chile, he began trying things that were similar to the Situationists: creating scenarios within the city itself, or following his own rules ("go to another district in the city and only turn back when an old lady has cooked you tea.").

21 Jodorowsky worked with mimes for a long time, including Marcel Marceau. In his "panic theater" the images that appeared on stage had been choreographed beforehand, but at the same time the actors made real, transformative experiences, and the actions on stage also involved the viewers. An imitation is in other words not divorced from transformative experiences.

22 Cristobal Jodorowsky

23 My email address begins with "oskar"-Jodorowsky clearly did not remember my visit, but it did not matter whether a man or a woman stood up or who had asked him for the gold bars.

24 Buddhist sculptures include many different 'mudras' or hand positions, each of which has a symbolic meaning. Guan Yin: See the chapter on the Buddha's hand.

25 Qi: 氣, 气 central concept of Taoism. Energy flow, breath, air, life force.

26 The model was in fact Hartmut Solmsdorf, Juliane Solmsdorf's father. He is a landscape architect.

27 Guan Yin: 观音. This bodhisattva of compassion is actually from India and is called Avalokitesvara there. He can take many forms, embodied as a male or female. Merging within the figure of Guan Yin are both Buddhist and more ancient ideas, as was also the case with European saints.

28 The traditional costume is Romanian, not Chinese. Miao Shan is modeled by the Romanian artist Marieta Chirulescu.

29 Delia Gonzalez, press release for *In Remembrance*, Galleria Fonti, Naples, 2010.

30 供石 Shi – stone; Gong-spirit; Qi-life force

31 By origin, type of stone, and other criteria, but also according to the categories thin (shòu), beauty (tòu), perforation (lòu), and wrinkles, folds (zhòu).

32 618-907 A.D.

33 Shen You: 神遊 journey of the spirit; also: Qi Qi, travelling on the vapours/in the air

34 Wood/East, fire/South, metal/West, water/North, earth/Center. But there are also systems with 12, 24 or 48 cardinal directions ...

35 There, Qi is called "mana". The stones from Papua New Guinea are part natural rock, part stone artifacts from an unknown, Neolithic culture. Western researchers differentiate between the two varieties: only hand-worked stones are allowed into the museum, where experts extensively discuss how they might have been used as tools. Then again, the most valuable are those that resemble animals or people, or in other words were not mortars, though in no way is it possible to establish whether the non-figurative objects were ever intended for use. The insurance value here varies wildly. To the people of Papua New Guinea, however, the found stones and stone artifacts differ only in their magical functions-some serve as fertility charms, other (less valuable) ones might have been used to ward off evil magic. They were amazed that the Western researchers had no interest whatsoever in their strongest stones, which Westerners saw as only natural finds.

36 *antje majewski: the guardian of all things that are the case, amongst others: a clay teapot in the form of a human hand, a shell, a pot made of fragrant wood, contains one black ball or two glass eyes, a buddha's hand citron, a hedge apple, also called osage orange, neugerriem-schneider, Berlin 2011*

37 To hunt, to bathe, to play, to laugh, is to live.

Voices

- O Antje Majewski
News from the World of Gimel
- I Antje Majewski
Entity
- II Issa Samb & Antje Majewski
The Shell
- III El Hadji Sy & Antje Majewski
The Stone, the Ball, the Eyes
- IV Antje Majewski
One Black Ball and Two Glass Eyes
Antje Majewski
Freisler
Paweł Freisler, Antje Majewski,
Simon Starling, Rasmus Nielsen, and others
The Black Ball, The Egg
Simon Starling & Superflex
e.g. The Universal Egg
- V Alejandro Jodorowsky & Antje Majewski
The Hand that Gives
- VI Thomas Bayrle & Antje Majewski
Madonna Machine Rosary
- VII Helke Bayrle & Antje Majewski
The Stones, the Shells
Anita Eschner, Eva Kreissl,
Bernd Moser, Wolfgang Paill, Kurt Zernig
Scientific Evaluations of the Objects

O News from the World of Gimel

Antje Majewski

Picture yourself on a wide plain full of all things that are the case. Among other things, you will find a Buddha's hand citron serving as a lucky charm; horses with flowing manes on a shore of the Caspian Sea at dawn; a boat on a river; instruments for grinding chocolate; a flower vase with a bunch of poppies; a meteorite from the Chinese desert; a silvery cobweb in the centre of a black pyramid; a glass of whiskey; an hourglass filled with Peruvian sand; a beautiful woman wearing a headscarf; a small box with a lid with the inscription "Duncan, A. H., Mr., The Society for Psychic Research, 1939"; a figure clad in cloth from under which only the face and one hand are visible, both of an uncanny bluish skin colour; a clay hand serving as a teapot, green tea spilling from its fingertip; me; a hedgeapple; a lipstick-stained napkin; a wedge of chastity; a shell from the sea between Senegal and the Capverde Islands; not to mention soldiers with only one leg left, Coke bottles, neutered cats and all the rest.

Now all of this is lying out there in the sun. Imagine that it is flat (this is just a trick to make you understand). We are now in an area called "Flatlands". People and things can shift, but only if they move around each other. They can't reach out or step over each other. Now imagine a three-dimensional object traversing that plain. It would reach through, say, the flamingo area with one leg, the penguin area with the other. Nobody could ever imagine that these two legs belong to a mighty body walking high above them. It might, for example, be a black swan the size of Scotland.

These legs could be described as bullet holes. The flat plain could be described as the world of Aleph. It's what we see with one eye

only. If you add several more eyes, make the pilgrimage to Real de Catorce or eat a Wub on your way back from Mars, you might be able to see the Betha world.

BUT—you'll never be able to see the Gimel world. There not only all things that are thinkable exist, in however many dimensions, but also all the stuff that is impossible, hardly possible or highly possible. Each event that takes place combines space and time in an infinite number of possible combinations. It might be a solace to know that in the World of Gimel, the person you are in love with loves you back. But there is also one version in which this person is a fat pig that offers to be eaten. By the way—the word "pig" has a infinite number of meanings and is pronounced in an infinite number of different ways. If you catch the shadow of the World of Gimel you know that you will never die, but unfortunately this doesn't really help in our World of Aleph.

Background: Jaro Straub, Real Morning (Quatorce), Mexico 2008

Text: Edwin Abbott Abbott, Jorge Luis Borges, Adam Budak, Sebastian Cichocki, Philip K. Dick, Marcel Duchamp, Momus / Nick Currie, Amy Patton, Jim Skuldt, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michał Wolinski.

Soundfile, 3.29 min, 2009

| Entity

Report on a visit to the didactic branch of the Museum for Applied Hermeneutics, Bielefeld, Germany, August 11, 2117

Antje Majewski



Kitagawa Utamaro
Beautiful Woman Cleans Her Pipe, from: *Meisho fukei, Bijin juni* (Famous Places and Twelve Kinds of Beautiful Women), woodcut, 1805



Alejandro Jodorowsky
La Montaña Sacra, Mexico/USA 1973

We are led into a large hall with comfortable seating. A young, noticeably long-haired staff member takes over the introduction. The following is an account of our impressions and excerpts from our recordings.

Speaker: “Though we see ourselves as following completely in the tradition of the Annales School, a narrative account of one individual’s experience can be useful in so far as it is symptomatic of the full sequence of events. As you surely already know, we supplement Oral history with Visual history. The abundance of cameras installed in the public and private spheres at the start of the century has provided us with material that can be edited into a film-like montage depicting past events. The film I am about to present is one of these films. While watching, please take into consideration that a) the material has been edited together by us, b) the image and sound quality is very poor at times and c) supplementary films are in the works that, for example, will show what was done in the Entity’s Pavilion under Yusuf Etiman.”

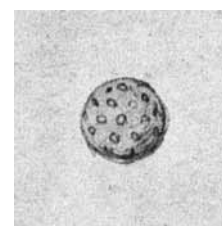
Each of us had to share a visor between two. As unaccustomed as we were to seeing 2D images without smell and taste, we quickly got used to it.

(2024)

We see a dark-haired, middle-aged woman asleep in bed. Subtitles inform us that what we are seeing took place on the 30th floor of the (unfortunately now destroyed) Friendship Tower. The woman’s name is “Mrs. Armaghan bint Bilqis.” Sunlight streams through the windows, her dimming system is apparently defunct.



Piero della Francesca
The Meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba Fresco, San Francesco, Arezzo, ca. 1455



Antje Majewski
Sketch for the Outer Form of the Entity, 2009, making use of Leonardo da Vinci, *Mortars with Explosive Projectiles*, from the Codex Atlanticus, 1478-1519



Markus Miessen, Ralf Pflugfelder
Dubai, 2009

She opens her eyes and casts a worried glance over the objects on the walls and in the room, now bathed in bright sunlight. Among them: a woodcut by K. Utamaro (*Beautiful Woman Cleans Her Pipe*, 1805).

On a small table, we see a miniature version of A. Jodorowsky’s orgasm machine that nods with tiny flags and opens at the slightest touch (after *Montaña Sacra*, 1973) ((image 2)), across from *The Meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* (ca. 1455) by P. della Francesca.

Finally, her gaze settles on a framed, first sketch of the *Entity* by Antje Majewski.

Note: These subtitled artifacts, the images of which were inserted into the film in a far better quality than the rest of the material, are clearly reproductions of objects from the collection of the Museum for Applied Hermeneutics and could in fact obscure other objects in the space. On the other hand, other sources reveal that such artifacts were often kept in apartments, where their keepers saw to their preservation.

Mrs. Armaghan bint Bilqis goes into the bathroom and brushes her teeth. She then chooses her clothes for the day, a white Salvar Kameez, fixes herself and looks for her handbag. She tosses her mobile phone into it and leaves the apartment. In the elevator, she talks on the phone (*in Farsi*). The sound quality is very bad here; we can only make out that she is worried about traffic and the possibility that she will be late. Maybe she would be better off taking the chute.

She picks up her car from the underground garage and drives over the highway. We can hear the radio. She speaks briefly on the telephone again. During the drive, we see shots of DD which are historically very interesting.

She arrives at Jan Wellem Maktum bin Buti Hall, where DD’s “art collections” are kept. A valet parks her car, and she follows another server to a pavilion hidden in the greenery. It is a magnificent structure made of Lebanon cedar, the biomorphic walls of which are partially covered in malachite tiles. As soon as she reaches the door, she is greeted in English by a youthful-looking man in a very impressive coat (*note: Tajik handiwork, ca. 1930*) as “Mr. Pflugfelder”. She enters a hall where four small groups of people have already gathered and are sipping alcohol-free beverages around several bistro tables. A buffet is waiting at the side. The hall is



Philip K. Dick

Joseph Beuys
*How to Explain
Pictures to a Dead
Hare*, 1965

tastefully decorated with flowers. Mrs. Armaghan bint Bilqis gives a friendly nod to several acquaintances before approaching a bearded man that we have identified as the legendary Yusuf Etiman, the first director of the *Pavilion of the Entity*. He immediately begins his speech.

(In English):

Yusuf Etiman says a few general words about his delight that this day has finally come. He thanks Mrs. Armaghan bint Bilqis for her extremely generous financial donation, without which neither the *Entity's* development nor the erection of the pavilion would have been possible, and gives her the word.

Mrs. Armaghan bint Bilqis thanks him on her own behalf, emphasizing that her contribution is only a small part, and extends her most heartfelt thanks to Dubai Düsseldorf for its trust in donating the building plot and associating the Pavilion of the Entity with the “art collections”.

“What role will art play in the future?” she asks the audience. Many science fiction scenarios reflect the fear of a world designed to the last detail, one in which human beings are degraded to the level of will-less consumers in an aseptic, artificial paradise — a scenario not unlike the possible future of Dubai. The will to humanity in these stories is often in the guise of a desire for the damaging, such as alcoholic excesses and cigarettes; or also, as in P. K. Dick, in the form of Wilbur Mercer, who is endlessly, painfully pummeled with stones and therefore keeps the feeling of empathy alive among humans.

Time and again, the Western museum has supported artists willing to serve a cathartic function and exemplarily make the suppressed “other” visible—in Düsseldorf, for example, Joseph Beuys.

In the future, there will be a demand for abstract art focusing on non-consumable or applicable knowledge: repulsive, organic objects incorporating transience, death and perversion, similar to the technological reliquaries by Paul Thek.

And now I would like to introduce the artist Antje Majewski who, in cooperation with the biotechnology company MEL, has developed a completely novel work of art.”

Antje Majewski also thanks the collector on her own behalf for the financial support for her project:

Paul Thek
Excursion (from the
“Technological
Reliquaries” series),
1964Antje Majewski
The Donation
(2024), 2009

“What is unique about this new life form that we have created is that it possesses neither sense organs, nor reproductive organs, nor means of transport or a nervous system. The organism is life in the abstract sense; it has such a low energy consumption that its metabolism is extremely slow. It can neither take in food nor eliminate waste and lives by self-consumption until his insides are completely eaten away, leaving only a dry shell. The artwork succeeds in complete self-referentiality, something that has always been desired in Concrete Art. It is acceptable to the Muslim community because it doesn't depict anything—it just *is*. At the same time, it introduces organic waste into the sterile world of the museum, something that people—like sexual organs or digestive waste—don't care to see because especially in terms of its smell, it remains very foreign and therefore unattractive. At the same time, its only activity is slow self-digestion and therefore extremely slow death.”

Taking the word once more, Mrs. Armaghan bint Bilqis explains what she finds so fascinating about the project:

“The artwork of the future reminds us of transience, and evokes empathy after initial disgust. It can therefore be ethically effective as an artwork across different cultures and religions. In the Kantian sense, it forces us to reflect on ourselves as human beings, encouraging a social bond by awakening new enthusiasm for our natural physical and mental abilities, admittedly limited as they are.”

Mrs. Armaghan bint Bilqis reaches inside a plastic box and pulls out a round object. Its surface shines in twinkling green to orange colors. She hands the object to Yusuf Etima who carefully, lovingly takes it. A few people standing around the object, mostly other contributors or assistants, lean toward it with interest, then quickly pull back in disgust. Everyone present begins to clap.

End of the film.

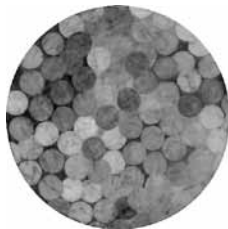
At first it was hard for us to understand the onlookers' reaction, but then a Museum for Applied Hermeneutics employee explains that numerous, concurrent historical sources show that the object emitted an almost intolerable smell.

He continued to explain, occasionally punctuating his presentation with Vidisnaps as a visual aid.

Speaker: “We would go over our time limit if I wanted to present the following events in just as much detail. Unfortunately we do



Markus Miessen,
Ralf Pflugfelder
Kunsthalle Dubai,
2009



Antje Majewski
*Decorative Element
That Once Adorned
a Passage Leading
to the Shrine
(2101)*, 2009



Antje Majewski
Entity (2101), 2009

not own any documents about Antje Majewski from the time in which the *Entity* was developed, nor do we have those from the MEL biotechnology firm. We do hope, however, to have given you better insight into the original intention of those responsible for the Entity's creation and presentation.

(2056)

Here we have a picture from the year 2056 (*Vidisnap*). Using plans developed by architects Pflugfelder and Miessen, Dubai and Düsseldorf—having developed far from the *Entity* pavilion's early, idyllic beginnings—have built identical *Kunsthallen* allowing for the *Entity*'s cult-like worship. Long ago, the organism (now shrivelled and wrinkled) (*Vidisnap*), ceased to encourage self-reflection and awaken abstract empathy. Instead, it stirs only state-controlled, nationalistic sentiment, since Dubai and Düsseldorf are the only two places that own the *Entity*. More than a few openly submit themselves in prayer to the object and try to touch the shrine with a tip of their clothing. (*Vidisnap*)

(2101)

After the catastrophic events at the turn of the century, the Dubai and Düsseldorf *Kunsthallen* were destroyed.

This *Vidisnap* is from the year 2101. A tourist took it by coincidence at a vegetable shop where the owner happened to have participated in the looting of the *Kunsthalle* Düsseldorf. The disk is a decorative element that once decorated the entrance to the shrine. The surface is dirty, but still glows with the *Entity*'s colors. Behind that, we see a glass cube on the floor that contains a small, round thing, similar in appearance to a shrivelled fruit. It is the dead *Entity*, having consumed itself into a mummy.”

At this point, several of us felt the urge to vomit and began looking for the nearest restroom. Others wept.

We highly recommend a visit to the Museum of Applied Hermeneutics. It evoked powerful, but also cathartic feelings within us and we extend our deepest gratitude to the Museum for its historical investigations.

Models: Mathieu Malouf, Ralf Pflugfelder, Heji Shin, Oliver Helbig, Yusuf Etiman, Solmaz Shahbazi, Jana Petersen, Delia Gonzalez, Michael Waller, Julia Majewski, Zille Homma Hamid; Costumes: Antje Majewski, Ayzit Bostan;
Architecture design: Ralf Pflugfelder / Noffice; Assistant: Katrin Vellrath

II

The Shell

A conversation between Issa Samb and Antje Majewski, Dakar 2010



Issa Samb's space in the centre of Dakar. There is an enormous tree in the middle from which cords are strung that criss-cross the whole yard and surrounding buildings. The lines are connected together and hundreds of objects hang from them: clothes, old photos, dolls and a wide variety of knotted things. In the corners, there are sculptures and assemblages. Everything is covered with dust. Paintings hang inside the arcades that surround the yard and there are other relics from the activities of the group 'Laboratoire Agit'Art'.

Issa Samb slowly sweeps the ground and forms heaps of big leaves that keep tumbling down. I sit with Abdou Bâ on some old chairs under the tree. Nearly every day, friends come by and often sit here for hours, talking with Issa Samb. Abdou Bâ is a long-time friend of Issa Samb and a member of the Laboratoire Agit'Art. After a while, Issa Samb puts down his broom and sits next to us.

AM: Okay. Did Abdou tell you a bit about why I have come?

IS: Yes. Tell me, I'm listening.

AM: I've come because I have some objects that I found in various places.

IS: Yes.

AM: There are some objects I found in China.

IS: Yes.

AM: One object from Paris is of Moroccan origin. They are all objects that have to do with nature. They are either natural, or imitations of nature. And personally I feel that there is something like a force in these objects, a certain kind of magic that I don't understand, which I can't read. And I'm very glad that Clémentine brought me here, because when I listened to your conversation the other day you said that there is meaning in objects, which one can tie up in knots and also...

Issa Samb in conversation



IS: Untie...

AM: Undo the knots. And that's my question. Is there something inside the objects in my possession that I don't understand? Is it possible for someone else—you for example—to understand this or does it remain something unknown to us? Is it simply something that we interpret—that depends on our understanding of the cultural context—or is there something in the objects that is completely alien to us?

IS: In any case, from the moment you pick up an object, the moment an object reaches you, or the moment that something draws you towards an object of your own choice, and you have the impression that it is the object itself that attracts you...

AM: Yes, that's it...

IS: ...Yes, and you head towards it and pick it up, it's already a word.

AM: It's already a word.

IS: Now, is it necessary to know whether it's you yourself that has a certain view on the object, something that comes from inside you, a certain interiority that pushes you towards the object? Or does the object itself contain an intrinsic energy related to the same energy that is in you and that works outside of you—both exterior to you and to the object?

AM: Yes.

IS: All that is possible. It's something to be resolved...

Let's say that there are always several possible approaches towards an object that we have in our possession. Always. Once

we have an object in our possession, we begin to realize that there has to be a relationship between that object and ourselves. Trying to find out what kind of relationship this is means beginning to cross-examine ourselves and this attraction, which has been exorcised from within us and has steered us towards the object. Or about the relationship that exists between ourselves, the object and the hands which crafted it.

AM: Hands?

IS: Hands. For example, let's imagine that object over there is a present.

AM: OK.

IS: Let's imagine it's a present. It's a hand: one hands over a present.

AM: Yes.

IS: The present acquires meaning, has meaning.

AM: Yes.

IS: But is it what we think the object says that helps us to relate to it? Or is it the meaning that we give to the object ourselves, which provides it with meaning? Or is the meaning of the object to be found in the hands of the person who chose it and handed it to us? That is a question which can be found on the level of three axes. But personally, when faced with such a situation, I immediately undertake a quest to research the word of the object, for and of itself. What the object says. *Says*. What the object says.

For example, if you say that it's an object that comes to us from China, then—even if we have a perspective on the object that helps us to better understand it—it is necessary to go deeper into its meaning in relation to the place that it originates from. As a socialized cultural object.

AM: That is also the reason why I did not want to come here with African objects. I don't have a single African object. In the end, what interests me is the question of whether there is a meaning or a language of objects beyond their cultural significance. Because in terms of the objects I bought in China—as a European I don't understand them, and I shall never understand them in their cultural context. Even if the person who sold me the objects were to try to explain, I would not really understand what they mean. Because I never lived in that culture. No—I lack all the subtler and broader connotations of the words.

IS: That is not essential, it's only part of the issue. What is important now, starting with this trajectory, is the meaning, the existence, the function that you will give to the object from now on. It is not ruled out that when giving it meaning—perhaps new meaning—you will take the cultural meaning into account that people, an individual or the culture that produced it, gave to it as

a social function. Let's imagine that the objects may be lead soldiers or Buddhas—there is always a cultural polysemy, a possibility that is offered to you. At any rate, today, when it comes to objects and their circulation, it is important—very, very, very important—for the understanding of people and cultures that every object that is imported from one country to another, from one hand to another, from one sector or territory to another, and yet another, should be considered charged with an entire history: the history of the individual who made the object if it is a manufactured object, or the history of the people, nature, country or space from which the object reaches us, if it never experienced the human hand on the level of manufacturing.

Each meteorite says something. Says something about nature and the whole history of nature. Each one. Likewise each leaf that may fall in this garden here, and that passes from the situation of being a natural leaf to becoming an object, moving from here to there, adopts a position, which participates in the definition of the whole ensemble in front of us.

AM: Yes.

IS: And beyond this location, the whole peninsula of Dakar, and beyond the peninsula the whole continent, and beyond the continent the whole world. It is not a question of interactivity, neither is it even a question of interference. It is a question of the interrelationships of living things...

AM: Yes.

IS: ...of living things, which are inexplicably related to one another today. And objects are there, I think, simply to help people to understand one another better. To understand better. Your object, wherever this object comes from in China, brings all of China with it. Even if it is the tiniest of objects, it carries all of China within it. So, you hold in your hands all the possible and imaginable means for getting to know China and beyond. Now, you'll need to go into detail.

AM: I have two other questions. You say that a falling leaf changes relationships not only in this courtyard but ultimately in the world...

IS: Obviously.

AM: Yes. I've noted that every time I come here, the objects at first glance appear to have been in the same position for a long time because they're old and dusty, aren't they?

IS: Yes.

AM: But I notice that each time I come here, they've changed place. And sometimes I find that the entire ensemble has changed meaning. For example in that area over there...

IS: Yes.



AM: On the first day, there was a sculpture with a head of—what's that?

Abdou B: Nails.

AM: Of nails. And then it became a sculpture of a man. And the next day the head had gone and it became something else.

IS: Yes.

AM: One day, there was a sculpture on the ground, and it was like a burial mound. And the next day, it stood erect. And I wonder how in doing this, by arranging things in this courtyard, how this changes the world?

IS: It is a natural, creative process. Every day that God makes... Every time an individual moves an object from one place to another, he takes part in changing the world, the order of things. On whatever level, wherever he is. There is no human who, in his movements or daily activities, does not take part in, or perhaps change—but there are too many connotations in that word—the evolution of the world, its movement, the movement of the world.

AM: Yes.

IS: Because actually, those who think that the world always turns on the same axis would be well advised to review that theory as everything turns all the time on the same axis. In the case of the world, the world had a beginning and has evolved, and people participate in its progress to the very end. And when a leaf falls in spring, it indicates more than the seasons. When we move the head of the sculpture over there, it's because an event has taken place over here, has been activated here, and that means one has to give a head to the object, a nailed head to another object in iron with a whole body in stone, a head. That cycle is about passing on to a further stage. It's by following a daily activity that creation continues. Man is thus a creator by nature, natural man. Being an artist is a lowly profession, a bourgeois profession, but man—creation, the artist—exists in all men, in all human beings, who do something every day, which we are used to calling development. I prefer to speak of fulfilling oneself, the community, and beyond that, mankind.

AM: So, here is another more personal question. When I do art, I have the impression that it doesn't depend one hundred per cent on me. Instead, I have the feeling that there is something that passes through me. I'm more the means...

IS: You are not simply an intermediary, but a mediator. You're not a ferryman, you are the means by which something superior can express itself. Perhaps you are even a tool.

AM: Yes, that's it.

IS: You have to accept that. Anyone who accepts that—the artists who accept that, are in a good position to make work.



AM: Yes. I have the impression I'm moving in that direction, but one really has to disavow one's ability to choose.

IS: Hmmm.

AM: And coming here is also a story like that of what happened to me rather than of what I did, if you know what I mean...

IS: Of course, man has to create his past in order to project himself into the future.

AM: Yes.

IS: Create it. The way a snake casts its skin. You don't have to undo yourself, but you have to create your past. You have to accept it as it is. And when you are an artist, you have to work the process of your transformation, because it is through this transformation that the future is born. It is this metapsychosis, this metamorphosis or this meta—or rather, this transmutation. Everyone needs to mutate, especially those who create, and they have to accept that. This takes place from the start through socialized cultural objects. A direction is taken, a difficult, complex one for sure, but it is perhaps one of the best directions to take because it allows for an understanding of the Other. That sets us free, it gives us an attitude to the world that says, ah, we, we are not alone in the world.

AM: Yes.

IS: I, who thought I was the only daughter of my mother, I realize that my father is in fact the mother of my father, and so on. And objects, they allow for a lot of things...but respect is necessary and that is the most difficult thing to achieve from a Western perspective. It is very, very difficult to consider the object in and of itself, to grant it another energy charge over and above a superficial one, or the one that a machine may have given it. Because we know it to be fortuitous that we are unwilling to grant that stone this energy, this word that force without seeing a god, a unique creator in front of us. And even with the death of God, mechanical or industrial civilizations don't want to go that far. Because it would mean facing up to a unique creator. And this brings us back to polysemy. We would like to give objects a new meaning, several meanings. We would want there to be several meanings. But there is still the refusal to accept that beyond the meaning we give or that people give to socialized cultural objects, there is the meaning that objects give to themselves, which we haven't created. But we have to have the courage to take that step. To recognize that beyond the fact of being able to charge up the object, to charge it up ourselves, the object in and of itself possesses a force, a life that signifies, and does so independently of our volition, of our needs, of our wishes and our aesthetic concerns to make objects go in those directions that we indicate to them.

That is why if we leave them in their place, they remain in their place. But since we know this, we now have to help them to change place. If we don't help that object there to change place, it won't do it by itself. And even the most powerful wind that exists won't be able to lift it. And the most destructive fire that exists won't burn it because, even if it burns to a cinder... This will just take us back to the arguments between the creationists and the materialists. But these are rear-guard arguments.

Those contemporary artists who think they know their past and who know they are too late with regard to this past, and later still with regard to their future—because they're waiting for a future that they themselves have to create—find themselves in a situation where they have refused until now to treat an object for what it is in the simplest way, through the corporeal, by incorporation, by decorporation, by getting hold of matter, and by handling it. If we understand objects merely through a promotional sales pitch, we hear a lot of words. But that's the salesman speaking, even if he is doing it in the name of science. Okay, so he improvises a little, makes up messages and codes for the object beyond the meanings given to the object by the initial producer. The more the object passes from hand to hand, the less it will be charged and the more it will discharge, like a briefcase, an object which carries the tale of all the hands that have held it, all the people, all their looks, and all the locations. Let's assume that you are going to place your objects here. They'll acquire meaning from here, they will share this meaning with the things that are here, and this goes right into the heart of the object. Inevitably. And wherever you will place them—in your studio, in an apartment, on the street, or mislaid somewhere in a station—this object will carry meaning with it, the history of this country, the history of the men of this country, the women of this country, the history of the birds that will migrate soon and perhaps take the same trajectory they took either before or after the object arrived. That's normal. Yes.

AM: And when you move the object, you said it brings all this history with it, didn't you?

IS: Yes.

AM: And on the other hand, doesn't it also—how should I say—lose something? It seems to me that if I moved the object several times from China to my apartment, from my apartment to the studio, and I even moved it on to the street...

IS: Yes...

AM: ...I placed them on the street in front of my house. I hid them in corners thereand moving them again from Germany to over here... I spoke to a friend and said that it's a bit like a washing

machine, like a washing machine that purifies them of meaning.

IS: Purifies?

AM: This object, and detaches it more and more from the meaning it once had.

IS: Initially.

AM: Yes. That helps me to see whether the object is finally emptying itself of meaning. If it is getting me closer, how can I say, to a mute meaning that is in the object itself as you said earlier, and this mute meaning is definitely not a word in our language.

IS: The fact that the object is mute—who says so? You do. You're the one who decided that the object didn't speak, didn't articulate and said nothing. But if all this is true, then why do we need to carry objects with us in our lives? Why do we hold on to sandals that we've had since we were fourteen? Why do we keep these sandals of our teens if they don't speak to us any longer? And never have spoken anyway? No, they do speak. Objects speak. But speak their own language.

AM: Yes.

IS: Objects speak their own language. The wind speaks. It speaks its own language. Birds speak. They speak their own language. There you are.

Personally, I think that with an object that was born in China, and that makes a trip from China to Europe, from Europe to Africa and from Africa to Europe, you can't say that this object is meaningless. Even if you wanted to deprive it of meaning and make nonsense of it. Even if you felt like doing that, you couldn't. Or if you did, it would be an arbitrary, scientifically inadmissible decision. And if you did it simply for an intellectual peer group or for some kind of aesthetic snobbism then you would be doing something very fascistic and dangerous.

AM: Why?

IS: Because through the object you would be denying the culture of the Other. That is terrible. You would be denying all its charge. Because no matter how small an object is, even if it is an object that breaks quickly—because which of the mass-produced goods by the Chinese, Japanese, or European market wouldn't break quickly—it still brings with it the whole of China and beyond China, all of humanity. So the problem is not that the object breaks quickly; the problem is that the object that breaks quickly, that has come to us from China—what moment in the historical time of China does it bring with it? It brings that moment in which China heads off into a new direction down the capitalist road of development in the face of globalization, a globalization which doesn't permit the polite rivalry of deferential bows, the story of nice people. It is a ferocious rivalry. An object has to be

ready to get onto the market quickly. You have to go in there fast to sell it. It has to break fast, so you sell it quickly in order to make money. That object there carries meaning. It teaches us about ideological situations not just in China but in the globalized world system. Globalization as the dominant ideology of the current world.

AM: So, I'd forgotten that when I said I had no African object, I had forgotten one object. But at the same time as being African, it is also a natural object; that's why I didn't really think about it, but I'll show it to you.

IS: If you wish.

AM: So that's it.

I unpack the shell and show it to him. Abdou Bâ picks up the video camera and points it at me.

IS: Put it on the table and bring it into relation to the objects you brought from China.

AM: Okay.

I put the meteorite on the table.

IS: Relate them to one another. Have you related them to one another?

AM: Yes, but there is...

IS: But there's what?

AM: There's another Chinese object.

I put the Buddha-Hand on the table.

IS: Very well. Relate them to one another. Now. The object with the object that comes from Africa, open it and put it to your right ear. The object you got from Africa. Open it.

AM: Yes.

IS: Put it to your left ear. Listen to it.

A Yes, I hear the sea. I had a shell like that when I was a child.

IS: Speak, speak, speak, speak.

AM: My father had brought it, and I always liked that so much, to listen to the sea.

IS: Speak, speak, take your time, listen to it and speak aloud. Speak, we're listening.

AM: Yes, but that, that's the sea, and I always loved the sea.

IS: Speak, speak.

AM: It talks to me very easily.

IS: Speak, speak, say what it tells you, tell, tell...

AM: It says comforting things to me.

IS: Tell, tell. Tell us these things.

AM: Comforting and at the same moment a bit detached, remote.

IS: Tell us about it.

AM: Detached from us. It's like something...the sea is always there and then not really... It's reassuring because it doesn't change. The details are not important at all. All the fish that are there. Yes, there are fish. There are all the animals of the sea that move in different directions. They do, don't they? That cross the sea or move around in large shoals. And there are so many of them that you can't count them.

IS: Then it's not necessary to count them, but tell us what they say. No one will ever be able to count them. But you can tell us what they say to you, the shoals of fish, if you see them.

AM: Okay, they say they've been there much longer than we have. And they move very easily in the water.

IS: Lots of them? Can you see them? Can you see them moving?

AM: Yes, they move like this. Then they move like this. And then like that, don't they? (*gestures*) They make very quick movements and then they change direction and go off in that direction there. There are large groups of them.

IS: Speak about that. Tell us what you can see!

AM: Yes. Their colours are very mysterious to us. There are fish that are translucent, and you can see small skeletons inside them, and there are some very large fish, there's all that. And everything moves with an ease unknown to us. We are here with this weight, with our bodies on the ground, we are obliged to walk on two feet, to walk slowly because of gravity.

The sound I'm hearing is also the wind, it's not just the sea. It's the wind that crosses all this vast expanse of the sea. And that finds almost nothing on it, because there are waves, but apart from the waves, it's very uniform, isn't it? There are small wave movements, there are large waves, small waves, but there is no diversity of materials such as you get on land. So all the diversity of the sea is hidden inside it. And it's not visible to us. These days you can dive down using instruments but normally, for human beings, it's a physically prohibited terrain. I think that in many cultures it's also forbidden culturally. In countries where there are fishermen, swimming is not so popular.

IS: Yes.

AM: I always liked swimming in the water. It gives me the feeling of lightness, of losing myself a little. Of moving more easily.

IS: Yes?

AM: And I always loved... But here, one is only touching the edge of the sea, no? In comparison with the vastness of the sea that we...

IS: Yes...

AM: We only touch...

IS: The edge...

AM: The smallest edge, if you throw yourself into it. It's like touching only the toenail on the foot of an enormous organism.

IS: Yes...

AM: There's a book by Stanislaw Lem, *Solaris*, in which he describes a large ocean on another planet, a thinking organism, which is capable of forming all objects itself, of forming all the objects in human memory.

IS: Hmm... Hmm...

AM: In this book, it is like a substance that can take any imaginable shape.

IS: Hmm... Hmm...

AM: And I find that very appropriate because I get the impression it's like that over here, too, isn't it? It is all made up from very basic elements.

IS: Yes...

AM: That can arrange themselves into objects or destroy themselves to form other objects, or in the end disappear into the universe, isn't that how it is? So it's like a perpetual transmutation.

IS: Hmm... Hmm...

AM: But it's like that with fish as well. The smallest ones get eaten by the larger ones, but in the end, that isn't a cruel thing; it's simply a change of constitution. Okay, that's it.

IS: Carry on, look...

AM: More?

IS: Speak about what you can see.

AM: Okay, everything I said up to now was true, but I have the impression of telling lies.

IS: Hmm... Hmm...

AM: Because that sounds good, but perhaps I don't understand it properly. I don't *really* understand what I said there. If I say what *really* comes into my head, then it's that the sea is like a thing, like a feminine being.

IS: Hmm... Hmm...

AM: That sings. Very sweetly.

IS: Hmm... Hmm... All the time?

AM: Yes, it's very gentle. Very clear, with a very clear voice. There isn't really *really* a tune, it's more like... but there is a great attraction to it.

IS: Hmm... Hmm...

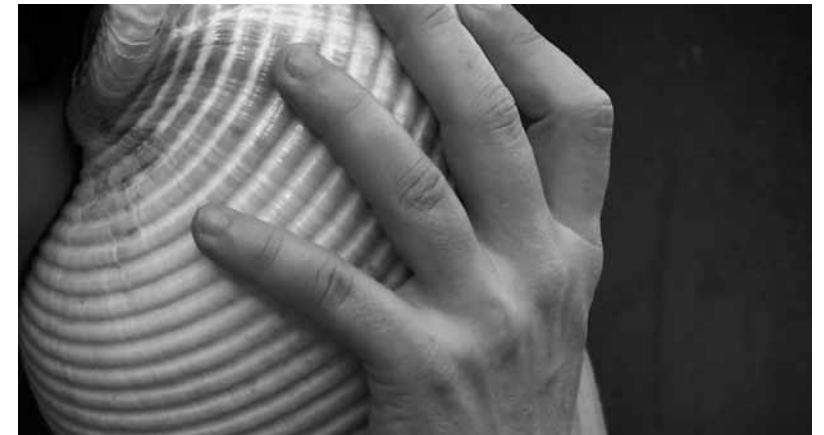
AM: Something very supple and pure.

IS: Hmm... Hmm...

AM: Very beautiful...

Antje Majewski

*La coquille. Conversation
entre Issa Samb et Antje
Majewski. Dakar 2010,
2010 (video still)*



IS: Hmm... Hmm...

AM: And I feel connected with that.

IS: Hmm.. Hmm...

AM: It's like a connection that comes from here.

I point at my solar plexus.

IS: Hmm.. Hmm...

AM: Or which comes in from there and comes up here.

I show how it comes in through my head and reaches down to my solar plexus.

IS: Touch the area where it comes from. Touch it.

AM: Here.

IS: Press it! Press it!

AM: Yes, it's here.

IS: Press it, press it now!

AM: Press?

IS: Yes, press. Press it now!

AM: Yes.

I press my solar plexus with one hand.

IS: Tell me what she says to you.

AM: Yes, it's getting stronger, it's not a tune, it's more like a single note—she doesn't speak with words, it's only—hmm...

I try to sing but without coming out with anything, it's just an 'aah'.

IS: Hmm.. Hmm...

AM: Aah, like that—it's very pure. But I can't translate it.

IS: Hmm.. Hmm...

AM: I'm very tired now. Shall I stay?

Issa Samb moves around on his chair. He is a serpent. The lenses of his spectacles reflect the light. A surge of great energy passes from him to me, I fall into a trance.

AM: Aaahhh.

The trance is black, empty and cold. Waves pass through my body, it's very hard. After a while, Abdou Bâ taps the table rhythmically with his fingers. I wake from the trance.

IS: Hmm. Put it down.

I put the shell on the table, open my eyes.

||| The Stone, the Ball and the Eyes

A conversation between El Hadji Sy and
Antje Majewski, Dakar 2010



El Hadji Sy's studio is located on the outskirts of Dakar at the Village des Arts. He initiated the Village des Arts in 1996 together with three other artists. It was a former Chinese village created in the mid-1980s by migrant Chinese workers who lived there and built the large Léopold Sédar Senghor stadium next door. We are sitting at a table in front of his small garden. Beside us is a large round stone.

EHS: This stone wasn't sculpted. It's not a sculpted stone. No. It's as I found it. And now its symbolism is different. Where does it come from? What's its provenance? It comes from magma, it exists in relation to the sun.

He sprinkles water onto the rock.

EHS: Touch the stone. This one's been touched so much, it's become smooth. That one there's the same. The story about the stone began a while back when I had discussions with Djibril Diop Mambéty¹ and Clémentine just before he died. He was ill. We went to the island of Ngor and sat down beside him, and began to talk. And he drew my attention to the stones that lie on the seashore, because their natural forms are so interesting, and his question was: what did God invest in the stone? It was quite a metaphysical discussion. So when we left Mambéty, and I learned of his death, I looked for a stone. I simply decided to make him a tombstone, and to invest meaning into the stone too. Now, this stone here is Mambéty. Do you understand? So, with regard to his question on what God placed in the stones that I can't answer. But in that one there, I do know, on a symbolic level, what I put into it.

Antje Majewski
La pierre, la boule, les yeux. Conversation entre El Hadji Sy et Antje Majewski. Dakar 2010, 2010 (video still)



El Hadji Sy places two white cowry shells that Issa has given to him on the table.

EHS: These days one sees cowries everywhere in Africa, but they're not of African origin. You find them on all the necklaces and masks, and yet they're not African in origin. When Clémentine and I were working on the festival africa95, we were looking for a logo. And I suggested a cowry. We did some research and ended up x-raying the cowry shell. Not so long ago, cowries were currency here.

AM: I know.

EHS: But before being currency here, they were coins in India. And when the British came, they took all the cowries. They took them to Buckingham Palace and replaced them with English money.

So they changed their meaning. But they are both aquatic and animal in origin. The great serpent, when it leaves this life, it goes off to be measured against a long spear. When its head reaches the top and its tail is on the ground, that is the moment when it leaves the earth and enters the water. It goes into the water. The sea, or a river.

AM: Yes.

EHS: And the cowry is a symbol that you'll find on the serpent's head, here.

El Hadji Sy holds the cowry to his forehead. After a brief pause he gets up, goes to his studio and comes back with two objects that he puts onto the table. One is a heavy golden block, and the other is a small mask made from a round stone and two pieces of wood.



Marcel Duchamp
Porte: 11 Rue Larrey,
1927

AM: And that, what did you say that was?

EHS: That's iron.

AM: It's iron, but it pretends to be gold.

EHS: No, I painted it.

AM: You painted it?

EHS: Yes, I intervened on it. As far as I'm concerned, I changed the meaning of this objet trouvé. I gave it new life by intervening on it.

AM: Yes, it's the same thing the young craftsman did with this mask.

EHS: That's right. He picked up a stone, but finding that it wasn't enough for him, he sought to adjust it, he wanted to change its structure, and so he began to make associations knowing all the time that this was a stone and using other materials such as wood and glue. And now you don't have a stone any longer. You've got a mask, but one which is made out of two materials, wood and stone. Personally, that's what interests me.

AM: In fact, that's just what I'm going to do. You know it's like a...I can't think of the word...when you have a door and the door opens like this, no...what do you call the thing that you have to have on a door so that it can open?

EHS: A hinge.

AM: A hinge, yes. I just love that word, hinge. I always try to put lots of hinges into everything I do. Coming here is a bit like a hinge.

EHS: Yes. Despite all the hinges that have ever been produced, I was obliged to create a new system for my mirror works. No one had thought of the hinges I needed. Have you seen the hinge system here?

AM: No.

EHS: Have a look. Where are the hinges? Down there! There are two small bits of wood. And together with the iron they make a hinge.

AM: There's a work by Marcel Duchamp in which there's a door that opens and closes, and there are two walls and two openings, and this door can close one or the other. It has two possibilities of shutting.

EHS: Yes.

AM: I like tricks like that: hinges that are not mere hinges. If you turn it around, it's the same but as if seen in a mirror. Do you know what I mean?

EHS: Yes.

AM: So that you can read it from right to left, but from left to right as well.

EHS: On my large mirrors over there I did some portraits. And

the portraits are not of people I know. I draw, and it's what I carry inside me, it's my own way of seeing the world. Okay? You won't find icons or celebrities. I get to know the individual in the portrait once I've painted him. Afterwards I place mirrors at the back and make this structure. So, as it is able to rotate, the viewer sees a painted portrait but when he goes to stand behind it, I capture his mirror image, his portrait too, in the very instance of the mirror image, which is in fact the virtual moment for me, the real. The virtual. It's the moment when the viewer himself becomes an ephemeral portrait. Because if he moves away, it disappears as well. And that's what led me to start drawing on mirrors. There's no imprint on this mirror, but on the others, which are inside my studio, I drew parts of faces, as if I were asking the mirror to show me the people that mirror themselves and who one can't see.

AM: When I return home with these objects I'll definitely use them in paintings, and in paintings, they'll be in a new context, with people carrying them and other things.

EHS: It's not the objects you're going to insert. It's the images of the objects that you're going to insert.

AM: Sure. Not the objects themselves.

EHS: Yes. Well, when you take an artist like Rauschenberg, he finds amorphous objects and inserts them in his artworks—it wasn't their images, it was the object itself—and they became collages, with buckets, and wrenches. That was before Oldenburg. But in your case it's the image of the object that you're going to put in your composition, which will become a component of your composition.

AM: And for me the hinge was about trying to find the point where they shed their context, or appear from within it—

EHS: The initial context, so as to find a new context.

AM: Yes, that's it. As for the hinge—in my coming here, during the whole journey, I was trying to make the objects lose more and more of their original meaning, emptying them out so they could become things that I might be able to recharge.

EHS: Yes, absolutely, I understand.

AM: Issa once told me that he finds that terrible, this idea of trying to erase the history of the object.

EHS: The pain of the object.

AM: Yes, the loss of its previous context. Like with the Chinese objects. He said it was appalling to try to do something like that, to make them lose their meaning.

EHS: But it depends. Until the point when you intervene in a physical way on the object, you haven't changed its original meaning.

AM: Yes. No.

EHS: The stone-turned-mask has changed. If you analyse what's been done to it, is it about killing the stone's past or is it about giving it new life by adding something to it?

AM: But I mean, the meteorite has also changed just by being brought here. For example, the other day Abdou Bâ said that one can also use meteorites to purify oneself before prayer.

EHS: Those are stones, they're not meteorites. Like this stone over here.

He points to the tombstone.

EHS: It's basalt, it's granite, and comes from magma.

AM: Well, that's how he explained it to me. So if I put the meteorite on this table here, there are people here that might normally use this type of stone to purify themselves—that changes the context and the meaning, doesn't it?

EHS: Yes, but it's not this stone that people use.

AM: Yes. It's another stone.

EHS: It's another stone.

AM: Okay.

EHS: I tried to show you the difference between a stone of volcanic origin and one with the appearance of a meteorite. It means that it comes from another planet, that it's a fragment—of whatever! I'm telling you, the finished object as such doesn't interest me. It's the process—that's what fascinates me. An object was found, which is here. Today I consider it as a part of all of this—like you with your suitcases, your camera, your water bottle, you came here with objects, which are quantified. Now, their use is another question.

AM: Well. I'll have one last try. If I take your object here, which you made, which you transformed—

EHS: Yes, on which I made an intervention, whose context I changed—

AM: I'll tell you what I feel from this object here, okay? Is that okay for you?

EHS: Yes.

AM: Well, it's extremely heavy, it has an even more geometric shape than the meteorite, and it's painted gold—okay, one can see that it's not real gold, but even so, you don't get the impression that it's a fake.

EHS: No.

AM: And particularly that small thing there is really strange.

I show El Hadji Sy an incision across one side of the golden object.

Because if you didn't have that thing there, it would be just a geometric form, a Minimalist form, but with this it almost becomes a human form. This says a lot about its value, because it has weight, it's gold, but it's also an impressive form, very clean—and for all these reasons, I find that it's an object I like very much, that makes me think of something very clear and well-formed and very important.

EHS: Yes, there've been several interventions, one of which was mine—the act of painting. And I found the object when I did a bit of archaeology here. Because there were 500 Chinese who lived here, who were here in this camp to build the big stadium of Dakar. And afterwards they put all the technology, all the metal that they used, and all the bits and pieces underground. So when I'm gardening, and I dig, it can happen that things appear—as if I were an archaeologist that finds things.

AM: Okay.

EHS: So I search for the trace. Sometimes I know what it means, sometimes I don't. So this was brought about through Chinese engineering. And is a Chinese object.

AM: Like mine.

EHS: Like yours.

AM: Funny, isn't it?

EHS: But now it's no longer a Chinese object.

AM: Yes. And what about you, why did you paint it gold?

EHS: Because I saw the trace of an intervention on the iron.

AM: This here? So for you, as well, that's—

EHS: Yes, it's crafted! It's hand-made! It's a hand! It's a hand that made an incision here and created this form, yes! It's not accidental. It's not like your found stone there that is untouched, is it? Here modifications were made. There was a definition of volume, form, opacity and weight. Perhaps it was even a measuring weight—I just don't know. But by intervening on it, I create the illusion of a gold ingot.

AM: What's an ingot?

EHS: Ingots are bars of gold like that. That they keep in the Federal Reserves...

AM: Of course.

EHS: We have a saying over here that not everything that glitters is gold.

AM: So there's a small lie within that. Like a fib, something to laugh about.

EHS: No. That's not what I mean, I don't fool around. Definitely not. It's very serious, very constructed.

AM: Yes. But if you say all that glitters isn't gold...

EHS: Yes. Yes, of course, but that's the proverb.

I point at the clay teapot in the form of a human hand.

AM: It's the same here: not everything that looks like a hand is a hand.

EHS: Right. If I'd painted it red, you wouldn't have talked of gold.

AM: Yes, that's clear. Obviously.

EHS: Yes. You see. But once you lift it up, you get to know its weight, you get to know its personality, its content, its gravity, the real physical body that it is, because it's not made out of marble, it's iron.

AM: I have another question.

I open the box made of fragrant Moroccan wood. There are two glass eyes inside.

AM: This here, does it mean anything to you?

EHS: Of course. It means something to me.

AM: And what?

EHS: It's the pupil of an eye.

AM: The pupil of an eye?

EHS: Yes. It's in the socket of the eye. The cavity of the eye.

AM: Right. Last time, you had a sentence that I found very interesting, from Sartre, I think.

EHS: About the eye?

AM: Do you remember?

EHS: Yes. It's in the foreword to the first Anthology of Franco-phone African and Malagasy Literature. 1954. Compiled by Senghor with a foreword by Jean-Paul Sartre. In the introduction, he addresses the West, and says: "Those of you who have the privilege of seeing without being seen will see that other eyes take their turn to look up and watch you until your pupils turn in their sockets." We should find the book. It's published by Hachette.²

AM: Yes, I'll have a look for it.

I pick up the black ball.

AM: Well, that's already black, no; you can't see anything with that.

EHS: Oh no! You can see with black.

AM: Can you see with black, and can you see with pupils on the inside?

EHS: You can see with black. The black is already a mirror. You can mirror yourself in it.

AM: For me, this ball is a story by Borges. In that story he talks about a ball that someone has in his basement and that contains



all the things in the world. You can look inside that sphere and you'll find everything.

EHS: Yes.

AM: All things, the smallest and the largest, they're all inside. And he calls it "the Aleph". Well for me, it's a bit like a pun on that because that black ball—in the end, it might just be a billiard ball.

EHS: No, it might also be the pupil of an eye. Because there's also memory in the eye. Okay? Now, take the film in your camera, you who are filming—where is everything that you have just filmed? It's in the black.

He points to the back of his head.

EHS: Here. Somewhere. But it's definitely there. Because the eye is a mirror. When they invented the camera, they didn't think of anything other than the movement of click clack. That's the diaphragm. When it's open, the mirror records the subject, click; when you close it, it transfers it onto film and reopens. It doesn't go any further. The camera's diaphragm is the artist's eye. It's a... click.

He blinks his eye quickly.

AM: But on the way from the eye to the brain, there are already changes. The information doesn't arrive unchanged, it isn't a projection into darkness.

EHS: I don't know anything about that.

AM: Everything you see is already a construction, isn't it?

EHS: Yes, of course, I understand.

Now I'm going to add an object to your objects. Which one of those two there are you going to choose?

The fake gold ingot and the stone mask are on the table in front of me.

AM: But no, I couldn't.

EHS: Can't or won't?

AM: I would, but it's too much, uh—okay, we'll do it your way. If you really insist... do I have to choose one of them?

EHS: Choose one of the two.

I put my hand on the fake gold bar.

AM: That one.

EHS: So this will be the one you will take home with you.

AM: Oh, thanks. Thanks so much.

I stand up and embrace him.

EHS: But it's easy. No big deal.

AM: And if you come to Berlin, you'll see all my objects and you'll take one too, okay?

EHS: No problem. There.

He carefully places two cowry shells on the block.

EHS: You'll also take this with you. All right?

AM: Oh. That's so kind.

EHS: It was waiting for you. It was you it was waiting for here. I believe in these things.

AM: Thanks.

EHS: Everything is around us, and it's those who need it that deserve it, and who receive it.

AM: But I have to say it's so generous of you, everything. It's not just about giving me the object, but about giving me your time, really, thanks so much.

EHS: No, we are the same, we're artists, maybe something troubles us, we search...

AM: Thanks. Really.

EHS: Bitte schön. Nichts zu danken. Bitte, bitte.

AM: Doch. Viel zu danken.

Later we eat grilled fish and Clémentine and other friends join us. El Hadji Sy waters his plants in his garden and pours water over the stone that is Mambéty.

EHS: The colour's changed, hasn't it?

AM: Do you often do that, water stones?

EHS: When I water the plants, I do the stones as well!

Notes:

1

Djibril Diop Mambéty (1945–1998), was a seminal avant-garde Senegalese film director. His films including *Touki Bouki* (1973) and *Hyènes* (1992) are experimental and packed with symbolic images. They are set in Dakar and deal with the lives and worries of the working classes. Central to Mambéty's films are the questions he raises about Senegal's relationship to colonialism, capitalism, the erosion of tradition. His final trilogy of short films remained unfinished. *Le Franc* (1994) and *La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil* (1999) would have been followed by *La Tailleur de Pierre*. Mambéty was a close friend of El Hadji Sy and Issa Samb, and a member of the Laboratoire Agit'Art.

2

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Orphée Noir*, in: Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Anthologie de la Nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1948, IX. In the original: "These heads that our fathers violently forced to bend their necks to the ground, do you think that you will read adoration in their eyes if they stand up straight? Just look at the black people who stand upright in front of us and look at us and I wish you felt as I do the putrefaction that being seen causes. For 3,000 years white men have enjoyed the privilege of seeing without being seen; they were pure eye; the light in their eyes drew everything out of its original shadow; the whiteness of their skins was also a gaze in itself, sheer, condensed light. (...) Now these black people look at us and our gaze returns to our eyes; black torches now illuminate the world for them while our white heads are nothing but small lanterns swaying in the wind."

IV

One Black Ball and Two Glass Eyes

Antje Majewski

I travel to Poland.

I cross the plains between Berlin and Warsaw by train. In 1994 I take LSD in Warsaw in an old hotel. I can see these plains full of troops, silently moving forward. I look at them from an extremely high angle, I can see how many soldiers they are, they are tiny dots on the wide plains. I'm scared.

I want to jump out of the window, but then my friend makes me laugh and we take a bath. The water is yellow.

The booths around the Palace of Culture sell Death Metal t-shirts. We drive aimlessly in the old streetcars. My boyfriend says: I don't know if I should make an appointment with the dentist any more. It might not be worth the effort.

I dye my hair black.

We walk by a gallery full of handicraft art, pottery, macrame. Suddenly it hits me, I know: Polish art is extremely interesting. I have no idea what is going on here. I don't know anyone. I foresee that one day I will know.

Edward Krasinski was then living a few streets away if you walk down Nowy Swiat and turn left. I could have easily met him, he sat in the same café every day, keeping his alcohol level up and looking for people to talk to.

I go down Nowy Swiat and turn left. I find the café. I recognize Krasinski, he looks like his photo, the photo that is hanging behind his chair.

I sit down. I can't speak Polish. Krasinski looks at me, disapprovingly. We sit for a while, he orders a drink for me that I don't touch.

I have a small black ball in my pocket that I take out and place on the table between us. Krasinski looks at it pensively, suddenly stretches out his hand and takes it.

When I get to visit his apartment, years later, after his death, I see that he put my ball between the grid and the glass of the window that overlooks the terrace. It sits there quite innocently, not really visible from the inside of the apartment because it is mostly hidden by the Daniel Buren stripes of yellowing, cracking plastic. No one seems to have noticed it much, so far. There is no photo of it in any of the catalogues about Krasinski's work and studio.

I bought this ball in 2004 in a small mineralogical shop. I think it was in the park below Zamek Ujazdowski. I don't know what it is made of, it is extremely lightweight.

The black ball is in my hand. I close my fingers around it, it's very smooth and cool. Its blackness is visible even through touch. My fingertips see.

A small mouse. It's dead, it lies in a corner, its little paws clawing the air.

A shadow mouse, a companion, hushes by, it's a see-through thing.

There is also a photo of Stalin.

A wooden piece of parquet protrudes by about a finger's width: too small, too delicate an obstacle to make you stumble and fall, but nevertheless very irritating.

Why should the wall retreat when I touch it. I stretch out my hand, and my sheer will makes the furniture double into the other part of the apartment.

A small mouse scurries round the corner to the toilet. I open the door and see an old man having a shit. It stinks, the biting smell of digested alcohol. It makes me feel like vomiting.

He looks at me. I open the two fists that I had held behind my back. Which one will it be? He points at my right hand, and I open it. A glass eye. – WHY? –

He nods. I return to the room and position the glass eye in a little pot made of fragrant polished wood that I find on the table.

The wall retracts. I shift it by looking at it. Because my glance is stable, oh yes! If I follow the line, I can move straight ahead. That is, until the point, of course, at which the line becomes crooked. There, of course, I will have to err, on a slippery slope, wherever it takes me. Up and down, top and bottom. I've lost the end.

No end. Inside and outside are same. The small border between them hurts differently in different places. The breath of god smells sweet when it gets drawn into your nostrils. But this is only the door through which he passes, and the inside of the house is the same as the outside in the countryside. This god likes games, he likes toys. Jokes and riddles. He is the trickster. He also likes his fools drunk.

In 2005 I install the show "Splendor Geometrik" in Cologne. Krasinski was still alive when we asked if we could have some pieces.

I unpack the Zigzag. It's frail in my hands, the tape that holds the wooden sticks together is of socialist quality. Like the children's toys of my mother, an animal farm of the war times. Some parts have already come loose. I decide not to show it.

Krasinski dies that same year. The Foksals want to keep his apartment alive, young artists should carry on, sleep in the bachelor's bed, work in the studio. I feel frightened, there is a twig growing out of the floor. The young artist, her name is Emily, steps backward and it cracks.

I stand in a dark room, no furniture but for a lectern lit by a single lamp. I read aloud from a book:

"And a twig was growing out of her heart."

It grows into a hollow space in my body, between heart and ribs. In the adjacent room a great actor I know steps in and starts reciting the rest of the text. His voice modulates the words that I have forgotten when I wake up.

I dream this shortly before travelling to Warsaw in May 2010. I want to place one glass eye inside Krasinski's apartment, and throw the other one at the Seminaire à la Campagne into the air of the Parisian countryside. But Andrzej declines. The studio is now a museum, I can't just place objects in it.

It has taken a final form. It doesn't move, communicate or procreate any more. All it does is digest its own inside until it becomes completely mummified. The blue tape is coming off in places. I want to caress, touch, stroke, lie on the floor. The old man is not happy.

The glass eyes belong to an extremely large body, looking cross-eyed, stretched out between Paris and Warsaw. The free air vibrates where this giant head is helplessly breathing in and out, one eye looking this direction, the other that. It can't move, I hold it down, pinned down at the two points of the eyes I placed on the ground.

I bought these eyes in 2006 at the practice of an old doctor in Berlin. He told me that each eye had to be painted individually. If it doesn't fit exactly with the other eye you have to throw it away. He gave me two slightly different blue eyes.

Four years later I take the eyes with me to Senegal, where I go to find people that help me understand my own objects. I show them to the artist El Hadji Sy. He turns them in his hands, puts them back in the pot of fragrant wood I used for transportation, and says to me: "You with the privilege of looking without being seen, you will see other eyes open. Those that were cast down will rise up, will look at you until they make your pupils turn in their orbits." I'm quoting Jean-Paul Sartre, a preface to an anthology by Leopold Senghor, 1954".

I have a bicycle accident. It's around midnight, and I drive very fast, when a terribly ugly poster for Sex and the City II distracts me. Turning my head I see a straight line drawn out before me, running directly and inevitably into a vertical line: a metal pole. I land on my back. I can feel the flatness of the pavement. Gravity is pressing my shoulder blades to the floor, and I make strange noises.

A group of young Turkish men approaches. They help me, ask if I need an ambulance, if I'm drunk. I never drink alcohol.

About fifteen months ago one night I went home from a party and the upper half of the city was gone. All that remained was the pavement. I could see the feet of myself and the cab driver moving forward, but our bodies and faces were gone. I needed to draw money from a cash machine but couldn't open the door, because I couldn't see the security thing where I would have had to slip my card through.

The doctor says I have ophtalmoplegical migraines that can be triggered by alcohol. The migraines make the colours intensify, the walls slip slightly out of joints. Rooms are no longer rectangular. Things suddenly lose their meaning and become nameless lumps of thingness. Voices are too loud and people are visible from the inside rather than from the outside. Some are quite big, colourful, others are hardly traceable. In this case I can't recognize their outsides when I meet them next, even if I have spent the whole evening with them, even if it's the next day.

I see a person I love. I can walk around in his inside, it's vast. I turn round a dark corner and unexpectedly encounter his love, like a warm heap of leaves.

I am allowed to do something in the annex to Krasinski's studio, so I will do that. The annex used to be Krasinski's terrace from which you can look across the whole city. It is now closed off by panoramic windows.

I make the black ball roll against the metal window frames. It describes lines in space, an invisible, arbitrary drawing on the smooth concrete floor. I let the ball roll until it stops rolling, then give it a new direction. The wooden box is in the middle. I aim at it and make it fall, break in two. Nothing is inside. The ball was inside, of course.

I place the black ball between the metal grid and the glass of the windows between the studio and the new annex.

The Séminaire à la Campagne goes very well. It's a beautiful day, and we are all in a good mood. I tell them this story, using a megaphone. Sound is easily dispersed in the countryside.

I ask the audience to retrace the drawing the black ball made on the floor. We measure the exact distances between the points at which the ball has touched the metal, thus describing the space to the annex to Krasinski's studio into the air in the Parisian countryside. They throw the black ball along these invisible lines, aiming at the pot made out of fragrant polished wood that I placed in the middle.

When they hit it, the glass eyes spring out. The audience is surprised, even shocked. Then they lie down again, lulled by the warm air, some fall asleep.

Now I can finally pass through the door from the terrace into the apartment. I walk in and sit down.

I eat one of the blue glass eyes and bury the other one in the ground.

This is how to arrive in the countryside, in Zalesie. Here everything is at its right place. There is no time. Everything is always present, kept together by the blue line of the heart. The extra dimensions that are rolled into our visible three become apparent, and with long legs and arms you can make them dance.

IV Freisler

Antje Majewski

We have gone on the trip, Agnieszka and I, have taken the ferry.
The spume. The birds.
Over the sea.
It's colder over here.

The ball rolls along the way. The crooked street leads uphill between the two gardens.
Freisler is weeding weed. The grass grows high.

He didn't expect us; he didn't know we would come. He has no idea what to do with us.

"Is this your ball?"

The sun sits in the middle of the sky, it's hot. There are also many mosquitoes this year.

"Czy to panska kulka, panie Freisler?"

Freisler looks at us across the fence. I pass him the ball. He doesn't take it. We say:

"We will settle here next door, we will buy this piece of land over there."

"Osiadziemy tu niedaleko, kupimy tamten kawałek ziemi."

We buy the land; we set up a contract of purchase. We buy it and sow nothing but nonsense on it, plants which cannot prosper in this climate, and water them from a clay hand. We have brought

the water along, it was taken from a concealed fire hydrant in Alexanderplatz.

We put up beehives whose people cling to Freisler's windowpanes, collect honey from his flowers.

We put the ball into a pot made out of fragrant Moroccan root wood and place it in front of his garden door as a gift. After three days it is gone. Freisler doesn't show up again.

We sow metal seeds that develop into small machines. The seeds search for trace elements in the soil. They search by themselves for iron, nickel, copper, silicates; they appear on the surface and gain energy by photosynthesis modules. Then they dive in again and dig tunnels through the earth. One of these little machines transforms itself into a metal detector, which digs underneath Freisler's fence. When it turns up to the surface, the soil it raises looks like a molehill.

Sooner or later it will find Freisler's precision egg, no matter where he has hidden it in the earth.

It will hand it over to another machine. On small caterpillar's feet it glides to the coast, crosses the sea and retrieves the egg.

We put it in our pocket and take it up with us into the restaurant in the television tower. We hide it under one of the tables, stick it on with package adhesive tape from below, while we pretend to eat a pork loin. The people who eat at this table will feel strangely pleasant, they don't know why.

We never turn back to our piece of land; we don't care about it at all. That's just the way we are.

Freisler's tomatoes grow better now, since our machines have loosened the soil. He takes our ball out of the pot made of fragrant wood and puts it into the beehive. Whoever wants it will get stung. The bees swarm out and collect honey from far away.

He also rescues our plants. For the pineapple he builds a greenhouse. Instead of one garden he now owns two.

IV

The Black Ball, The Egg

Letters between Paweł Freisler, Antje Majewski, Simon Starling, Rasmus Nielsen, and others.

Malmö-Berlin-Copenhagen-Graz, 2010-11

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski, 24th October 2010

Dear Antje, I need a break after your moving visit... now, slowly and without hurry I will proceed with writing down all details... OK?

I have asked Łukasz Ronduda if he is interested in representing me in by you created situation. I think that it would be excellent if you get in touch with Łukasz Ronduda, if I have any rights to influence your imagination, and invite him for lectures. His interpretations of my work are very accurate. Łukasz Ronduda moved back in time, with his appearance and character, way of talking and intellectual manner, besides if he wants it or not, became a prototype of my work which I call The Professor. This work constantly ripe... It is a fact that I have not foreseen that the prototype will be a living person. Łukasz do not know this work, not many does. I have told him about it in a cafe in Warsaw two years ago. I am sure that Łukasz have noticed the fact in his memory. He knows how to read my carte blanche. I am not sure if he wants to take a part of this, and I accept whatever he answer (if he will answer).

That is all for the moment. Be good! Paweł

Antje Majewski to Paweł Freisler, 26th October 2010

Dear Paweł,
thank you so much for your answer! I was a bit anxious to see how you take what we have done without your permission - but you see, we tried to contact you so in the end we made the show about a failed contact, and I'm so very very happy we made contact now!

On this side we had a few discussions around your idea - Adam Budak, the curator of the show, thinks that already your work is nearly mostly channeled through Łukasz Ronduda, and would prefer a work (but of course Łukasz would be a "work").



Piotr Życieński
Profesor, 2010

Agnieszka Polska and I think that we can see Łukasz very well as "The Professor" and the idea to have a living critic become your prototypical artwork is very funny for us as artists. I wished I had such a person too. But HOW would it be done? Because if he simply has Carte Blanche to do lectures on your art nobody will realize that he is himself an artwork. All my best, Antje
PS I have one more question, I'm just very curious about it: do you actually have a garden?

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski and Łukasz Ronduda, 8th November 2010

Dear Antje,

Let us be pragmatic for a moment... I send you a photograph of Łukasz Ronduda made last year, the 17th of November by Piotr Życieński (attention! PIOTR ŻYCIENSKI). The photograph is for your disposal for the exposition time. That about the prototype of "The Professor" (this prototype is specialized only in the history of art) A prototype is a prototype, it will always improve. I will not explore this right now. Here I have to switch to Polish...

As I wrote at the beginning of our 'conversation' I will send you 'The Egg' to Graz. We have to decide when and how. Could you please make a draft of an agreement regarding the way of sending, insurance etc. Now I have to write some words about the rules. The Egg may be shown but it is created to be presented. The difference between showing and presenting is that when you are presenting something you don't have (or even should not) show it, and when you show something... then you are responsible. This steel egg is a standard... comparable with the base unit of the metric system and actually should be stored in the same way. The modern governing standard (...)

I think, as you do, that you should not show The Egg as an object. Maybe it should be in the bank deposit box for the time of the show near The Kunsthhaus. (I have an affection for banks.) Please notice that we are working through time. (almost your whole live) I began to work with the Egg in the beginning of 1968 and I have turned it in steel in 1969. That is all for this time. Do not worry.

And one more thing... some of the topics you touched will continue in time regardless of the planned show in Graz. I wish you well (...)

Best regards (this time) Paweł Freisler

**Łukasz Ronduda to Antje Majewski and Paweł Freisler,
10th November 2010**

→ S. 188

Łukasz Gorczyca, Łukasz
Ronduda, *Half Empty*



Dear Antje, Dear Paweł

I am sending you in the attachment the photocopy of two pages from the novel written by me and Łukasz Gorczyca about Oskar Dawicki. It describes a little bit my relation (as the professor) with Paweł Freisler. I suggest to place this photocopy (with proper translation) next to this picture Paweł Freisler has sent you.

That is how I understand my *carte blanche* given me by Paweł.

Yours

The professor

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski, 12th November 2010

Dear Antje! Well, suddenly a problem with The Professor came up as follows. Łukasz Ronduda fancy that he is a robot (if a *robot* then with a capital letter). I think that this is a quite innocent *zauroczenie*¹...I even dare to say that Łukasz Ronduda is a shapely man... but will he stand the pressure... (?)

ha!. *Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto. Terence's comedies*²
(...)

1. Once again I have read very carefully what you have written until now and you have a genius idea, but I will not tell you which one (yet) I have to think about it for a while. Interested?

2. A riddle. Joanneum Museum. Important! Very important! Gardens. This is a very accurate question. Of course it regards The Egg. What does the Latin language have to say about it? If not *ab ovo*, then...³

3. Could you inform me continuously about how are you proceeding with Banks? Please.

4. What more do I need to do and how fast?

I attach revers (backside) and at the same time an explanation to the photo of Łukasz Ronduda tear out from the cultural context. Pure happiness.

That is everything for this time. Wish you the best. Paweł Ef.

Antje Majewski to Paweł Freisler, 14th November 2010

Dear Paweł,

so Łukasz Ronduda is NOT a robot? I'm surprised ;)

but what is "The Professor"? *Homo aliud apparatus est?*⁴

1. Of course I'm interested!

2. *Ab ovo usque ad mala.*⁵

3. I gave the task to look for banks to Adam Budak's assistant Katia Huemer, and will tell you as soon as she finds something.

4. Ask me anything that could be useful for you... and how fast? – we have plenty of time, since the show is only next October!

Thank you for the image you sent – it's great.

All my best, Antje



Elisabeth Ganser to Paweł Freisler, 16th November 2010

Dear Paweł,

As announced by Antje, we prepared our loan form.

Please let me know your postal address, and I will also send the original via regular mail. After you receive the original via regular mail, please fill in all missing information and sign it and send back one copy to my attention.

Thanks, and best regards,

Elisabeth

Katia Huemer to Paweł Freisler, 13th December 2010

Dear Paweł Freisler,

I am writing to you on behalf of Antje Majewski regarding the safe for your "Egg". She told us that you would like to deposit your work for the duration of the exhibition in a bank safe. I asked our accountant if the museum by chance has rented one and he told me that we actually have a safe in our financial department that we could use – as long as you are fine with that solution. Otherwise we could always rent one in a bank, but the main problem could be the dimension of the "Egg" in that case (he said, bank safes are usually flat and meant to deposit stocks and something like that).

If you prefer a "real" bank instead of our own safe, would you be so kind and tell me the dimensions of the work?

Thank you very much in advance!

Kind regards,

Katia

Antje Majewski to Paweł Freisler, 19th December 2010

Dear Paweł,

I don't know if you have responded yet to Katia's mail. I think that the safe of the Kunsthhaus itself would also be a great solution, since it's the financial department of the Kunsthhaus. What do you think?
also I just was visiting the Archeological Museum in Napoli and I found this! I asked the guard what it is and he said in a great Napolitan dialect: "Questo ci vuol dire che davanti alla morte siamo tutti uguali. Meglio che mangi e bevi perché la morte ci aspetta tutti."

I hope you're well and I wish you a very nice end of the year and wonderful next year!

With my best wishes, Antje

PS: "Media vita in morte sumus" (Notker I. von Sankt Gallen)⁶

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski, 2nd January 2011

Dear Antje! This time, this year languages will mix more intensively. A lot of threads are gathered, to arrange, and to mix. Talking about your trip to the Archaeological Museum in Naples and the Italian language... Italian language?

From Italian to Polish. Questo ci vuol dire che davanti alla morte siamo tutti uguali. Meglio che mangi e bevi perché la morte ci aspetta tutti. = Oznacza to, że wszyscy jesteśmy równi wobec śmierci. Lepiej jeść i pić, ponieważ śmierć czeka nas wszystkich.

This image, reproduction of the skeleton wandering the world with two jugs (more often with a scythe) is a topic of the **revers**, 'final' questions and answers, on one of the most extensive of my works under the working title The Professor t' (among prototypes, prototype dr Łukasz Ronduda, his hand, dividing, multiplying, inter alia, The Egg, I find accurate. With all respect for his exceptional abilities and diligence). **Motto:**

PS: "Media vita in morte sumus" (Notker I. von Sankt Gallen)

() Now, just about The Egg in the context of a bank. Banks are institutions of the system ... to put The Egg into the safe of a Bank is to accept the system ... and vice versa, the system must accept The Egg, its otherness. Of course, when you put The Egg to a bank safe is to close The Egg and then open up (and pay). In this case, concepts are always important. Opening, closing. (The Egg is carrying, informing). The Bank remains in the subconscious. Subconscious mind that leads to acceptance of common transactions (not less important) Or vice versa...

One might as well form his **Own Bank** with The Egg as a deposit. As bank (banks) are managing... well... let the banks manage The Egg ... as they already do, more or less consciously, banks manage deposits... plus or minus, do they not? (), and provides loans ... in this case a deposit is The Egg turned by Paweł Freisler. Deposit and nothing more.

In this situation, banks do not have to have The Egg in the bank ... they



may be involved in lending to ... participate in credit (credit of trust) ... that's how. So whether The Egg will be flat in the future, whether it fits into a bank safe ... and of course, not necessarily forever ... 5 minutes is enough. Universality ()! liquidity, interchangeability, (and end!) pure profit.

There is a bit of irony. You store The Egg as you like. Does it have to be in a public place (Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz) show presented, remains at your disposal from the moment I agreed to sent it to Graz. Before sending I, of course, wrap it. For this purpose I will devote my full grey beard and the finest paper mass that I have (best vintage from Lessebo). This is your show. In the new year I wish you happiness, health and prosperity. Paweł

I attach a fragment of the text in Polish regarding **Own Bank**. This is an original fragment of a rising matrix. (tego banknotu - of this BANK-NOTE) This matrix is not identical with the English one, and do not must to be.... **w tym przypadku depozytem jest jajo ze stali nierdzewnej wytoczone przez Pawła Freislera. Depozytem i niczym więcej. W takiej sytuacji banki nie muszą mieć tego jaja w banku. mogą mieć udział w kredytowaniu. udział w kredytowaniu (zaufania). tak właśnie. Tak więc czy to jajo będzie w przyszłości płaskie, czy zmieści się do bankowej przechowalni. i oczywiście nie koniecznie na zawsze. 5 minut wystarczy. Uniwersalność ()! płynność, zmiennność, (i koniec!) czysty zysk.** -----

Antje! Pay attention to Katia's mail, it is a real treasure. Without her mail there would be no story of flat The Egg, or **Own Bank**. Again and again sincerely Paweł.

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski, 2nd January 2011

Antje! I wrote to you earlier: *Once again I have read very careful what you have written until now and you have a genius idea, but I will not tell you which one (yet) I have to think about it for a while. Interested?* You're obviously interested, and very well. This is connected with your and Agnieszka's imaginary visit. This visit is no longer imaginary. Stop asking me if I have or not have a garden. Today I do not tomorrow I may, but that also depends on **that we will never meet**. I accept the garden.

I wrote also: *A riddle. Joanneum Museum. Important! Very important! Gardens. This is a very accurate question. Of course it regards The Egg. What does the Latin language have to say about it? If not ab ovo, then ...* Answer: *Ab ovo usque ad mala*. Apple is the subject, motive of my work over the past two years. Actually, this is one more attempt to continue a whole new tradition of an end and a beginning of life and death. () All the best Paweł

**Antje Majewski to Simon Starling and Rasmus Nielsen,
31st January 2011**

Dear Simon, dear Rasmus,

Adam Budak showed me your idea for your egg “alien”. It is very strange, because inside my show it would not at all be alien, rather the opposite – it would be a double. Because I already will get an egg, the “precision egg” or “standard egg” made of steel by the Polish conceptual artist Paweł Freisler. (...)

So for me it feels as if by some magic process you have doubled what already is there... so now I don't know - what do you think about all this???

Adam also wasn't sure what to think. If you put your egg next to my show it will definitely merge with it and become one more part of my chapter on the ball. I don't know if that would be ok with you? Outside my show of course it's your totally independent project, but next to mine it can't be, it's too close, even if you would put it in another room.

BUT: Somehow I think the EGG is something that has by nature to be singular. So another possibility is that Freisler shouldn't send his egg, that we replace it by your egg and it becomes “Freisler's egg”. But wow, that would make me really sad! I really want to hold Freisler's egg in my hands. Then again, you never know... he might end up never sending it anyway. So maybe he has beamed this into your heads to avoid having to send his? It might also be that his egg actually never existed... (even though there are some historical photos).

It's just such a bizarre coincidence.

All my very best, Antje

Rasmus Nielsen to Antje Majewski, 2nd February 2011

Dear Antje,

Thanks for your mail. We are truly puzzled about the “double alien” gathering of eggs in Graz. Of all the possible explanation for this coincidence your suggestion that Freisler beamed his egg into our minds is the most tempting. It then mutated slightly and became super elliptical as if one had imposed a sort of chinese whisper on eggs.

In a strange way this is actually exactly what we had hoped for would happen with the Super Egg in relation to the Universal Museum. That some sort of reaction would be generated out of this impossible fusion. We just did not expect it at such an early stage and in such a literal way.

I recently sat next to a person in an airplane with a name completely similar to mine. This caused a slight delay in departure of the plane and we had show our passports several time and the passengers had to be recounted. Two Rasmus Nielsens on the same plane is one to many, espe-

cially if they sit next to each other. Apart from the system errors and institutional issues that such coincidences causes, its difficult (and tempting) not to understand them as opportunities or even signs of something.

So, perhaps just give us a day or two to consult our inner eggman about the nature of this coincidence and how to think of it in a way that could be productive and respectful. (...)

Many regards

Rasmus (and Simon)

**Simon Starling to Antje Majewski, Adam Budak and
Rasmus Nielsen, 8th February 2011**

Dear Antje,

I spoke again to Rasmus last night. We both feel that this collision of eggs couldn't have been a better start to our project. I guess what we are hoping is that these kinds of serendipitous train wrecks happen 10 or 20 times as the project evolves. (...)

One thing we've talked about is the idea that the “perfection” of the object - its seamless mirrored surface - might create a sense that the egg is somehow virtual - a glitch in time/space - a forcefield not an object - something that spans the universal museum. The egg might be physically in your exhibition but we hope that its presence will be partial or ambiguous. The relative proximity of our egg to your exhibition should be something for us to decide together - but we both feel that it should be in the thick of things if possible!

We would be very much support the idea of being co-opted into the structure of the exhibition - listed as contributors/exhibitors. (...)

warm regards,

Simon (and Rasmus)

**Antje Majewski to Simon Starling and Rasmus Nielsen,
10th February 2011**

Dear Simon, dear Rasmus,

“Serendipity” is such a great word, that we don't have and miss very much in German. Maybe “THE EGG” has already started his influence on us all some time ago, warping the time-spaces of our minds. (...) One option to see it would be that all my show is contained in your (or Freisler's?) egg / my black ball. It is simply “unfolded” or “looked into” or “developed, specified”.

So in a way as much as your project could be a chapter in my project, my project could also be seen as contained in yours. Right?

Best wishes to both of you, Antje

Rasmus Nielsen to Antje Majewski, 13th February 2011

Dear Antje

Apologies for some delay in responding. I was in the Holy Land which is such a colonizing experience and I am now attempting to decolonize my mind from all the buzz that is happening there. The Egyptian revolution has definitely triggered something that is felt all the way to the West bank. The humming in the coffee shops is slightly louder than usual as is the pace of the bubbles in the waterpipes as if they were the engines running the show. Speaking about Egypt and your reference to the Borges story about the “Aleph” it says in the postscript that in the Amr mosque in Cairo there is said to be a stone pillar that contains the entire universe; “although this Aleph cannot be seen, it is said that those who put their ear to the pillar can hear it”. Now, naturally there is an egg in relation to the Amr Mosque. Its founder, Amr, is said to have seen a dove lay an egg in his tent and this being the reason for positioning the mosque at the site.

The inspiration for the Borges story supposedly comes from H.G. Wells story “The Crystal Egg” (a prequel to The War of the Worlds). The story tells of a shop owner, named Mr. Cave, who finds a strange crystal egg that serves as a window into the planet Mars. The Egg has a “double” on Mars meaning that the Martians can look at us as well. The BBC made a fantastic short television version of this story sometime in the 1950ies. The show was btw presented and sponsored by the clock manufacturer Kreisler (not Freisler). The sequel can be watched online and it absolutely amazing. I just love the scene where the professor realizes that the martians can also see him through their egg. (http://www.archive.org/details/tales_of_tomorrow_09_the_crystal_egg)

In our research Simon and I found that Johannes Kepler claimed to have had an epiphany on July 19, 1595, while teaching in Graz and had set about calculating the entire orbit of Mars, assuming an egg-shaped ovoid orbit. Finding that an elliptical orbit fit the Mars data, he immediately concluded that all planets move in ellipses, with the sun at one focus—Kepler’s first law of planetary motion. Part of this knowledge served as a symbolic inspiration in the design of the Schloss Eggenberg and well, the oval shape of the egg in hinduism symbolizes the formless shape of god.

Now, its easy to get drunk on eggs and the endless amount of oval loops –and as you write it seems as if the egg has started its influence on us. Usually when looking for things they do appear in sudden “heaps” but I have never experienced this frequencies of heaps. (...)

Talk soon
Rasmus



Simon Starling &
Superflex
e.g., 2011
(poject draft)

Elisabeth Schlögl to Paweł Freisler, 19th April 2011

Dear Paweł Freisler,
Dear Magdalena Wittmann-Freisler!

I am writing on behalf of Antje Majewski and Kunsthaus Graz regarding your general loan of “The Standard Egg” for Antje’s exhibition. The British artist Simon Starling and the Danish group Superflex at the same time are preparing a project called “The Superegg”, egg-like sculptures that open many different associations in the context of our museum. These sculptures will be installed in different places of our big museum complex, and the biggest one will be part of Antje’s exhibition too. Due to this formal coincidence, Antje would love to have your “egg” already around when Simon Starling’s and Superflex’s projects starts, which will already be by the beginning of June. Thus we would be glad if you agreed to arrange the transport via FedEx as soon as possible. Thank you very much in advance for your soon reply!
Best regards,
Elisabeth

Paweł Freisler to Elisabeth Ganser and Antje Majewski, 1st May 2011

Hello!

I am back at home. Today i will cut my long, long beard to prepare for sending the egg. The measurements of the package will probably change a little. I let you know when I am ready. (A week?)

Regards Paweł

Antje Majewski to Paweł Freisler, 2nd May 2011

Dear Paweł,
thank you very much!

It is great that we can have the egg already now in the Kunsthaus! and your beard...

I just came back from the countryside too. I bought a wooden house with a big garden last winter and today we decided to plant cherry trees, apple trees, a nut tree, a peach tree, roses and many other plants. There are already peach trees and a small apple tree.

It is really a pity that you decided we should never meet - but at least I will meet your beard.

Best wishes Antje

PS VENARI LAVARI LUDERE RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE

Antje Majewski to Paweł Freisler, 18th June 2011

Dear Paweł,

I thought a lot about the egg, but I can't find a good solution where to put in Graz, other than in a safe - but this would be just "dead time" and in a way it is a waste. The best would be if I got your permission to carry it around with me until the show is over. But I don't know if you trust me that much? it would be a great honor.

I just met with Agnieszka Polska, who is also sending her greetings, and I proposed to her that we started our imaginary journey in summer last year to "steal" your egg, so the most logical for us would be that you allow that the egg would be sent to Berlin. In our story we bring it to the TV tower and put it underneath one of the tables in the rotating restaurant high above the city. I think we should do that first. Then we should bring it to my own garden, that I have now, in the countryside. We should make a big dinner for all our friends and have the egg in the middle.

It would be so wonderful if you could agree on this, but I also understand if you prefer that it stays in Graz where it is more safe. (...)
Best wishes Antje

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski, 23rd June 2011

Dear Antje,
the loan agreement is written with Museum Joanneum and they are responsible for "The Egg" during the loan time. I think it is better they will keep it in a safe. "The Egg" is as you know a base unit of an egg () and I think that this base unit may be copied. The rules are the same as for other base units (for example meters prototype in International Bureau of Weights and Measures in Sevres). Until now "The Egg" has not been copied. Original is in Graz on your request.

The Egg is quite hard to photograph. (Do not make it easier for yourself with a context, if I may suggest)
Have a really nice time, even tomorrow (Mid Summer) and nice weather.
Paweł

Antje Majewski to Paweł Freisler, 25th June 2011

Dear Paweł,

I understand completely.

For Graz: we are also getting on loan a piece by Marcel Duchamp, "Le coin de chasteté". This will be shown in a high security vitrine. Do you think it would be a possibility to have a similar high security vitrine for your egg? In this case it would be visible for visitors and a part of the show.

(...) If I was allowed to make a copy of your egg, it would be really wonderful! I will ask Adam Budak to find out. The company that did the Super Eggs by Simon Starling and Rasmus Nielsen should know how to do it, without in any way damaging your egg.

I will go to Graz on the 6th of June and look very much forward to seeing your egg. Then I will also be able to think how to photograph it.

Best wishes and have a nice summer, too!
Antje

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski and Łukasz Ronduda, 27th June 2011

Dear Antje,

"The Egg" may be shown in a high security vitrine. I asked Marcel. He will not disagree. Regarding the copy... I have to think about new restrictions. For sure the copy should be marked as a copy. Yours in Graz will then have number one. As you probably know there are quite many techniques you can use to make a copy, for example in gold mixed with some steel powder... but you want to have it turned in stainless steel. That is OK. Turn it! What will happen with the copy after the show? I suggest it will stay in Graz in the department of Science for ever.
All the best
Paweł

Antje Majewski to Łukasz Ronduda and Paweł Freisler, 9th July 2011

Dear Paweł, dear Łukasz,

I was in Graz and held the egg in my hands (with white glove). Its very beautiful! Actually its not perfect, it has a very strange shape - every chicken egg would be more perfect. That is interesting.

I also tried to take photos, but of course you always see me and the camera in the pictures. And the windows in the office. I could take it to a very neutral studio but then why? I think it contains the world, no? Please Paweł, can you help me with this?

I already spoke to the director, Peter Pakesch, and the curator, Adam Budak, both will be very happy if you would lend the egg copy 1 permanently to Universalmuseum Joanneum. Now the question is: which department should I try to approach? (...)
Best wishes Antje

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski, 15th July 2011

Dear Antje,
Yes, The Egg is not an egg... it has its own characteristics. To photograph those *characteristics*... (!!) I will neither agree or disagree with what you have written about photographing The Egg. You are welcome... (not necessary in white gloves). That is all about... reflexion.

The copy...
The stamp should be in the middle and the size could be near to 'not visible'.
I allow myself to follow... Antje Majewski wrote: *I already spoke to the director, Peter Pakesch, and the curator, Adam Budak, both will be very happy if you would lend the egg copy 1 permanently to Universalmuseum Joanneum.* This is a decision with consequences... even for Universalmuseum Joanneum. Not only the place of exposition should be decided but even the loan conditions. Remains to prepare a written agreement for both sides to agree upon. You already have the copy **one**, with regards.
Antje, I know that you right now have an objective... catalogue... the show. I am not bound with time... I am more interested in the future prints of our meeting that never take place. The 9 eggs is too much for me... too heavy.

Best wishes
Paweł

Antje Majewski to Paweł Freisler, 25th July 2011

Dear Paweł,
I wrote to Adam Budak that you two should carry on to find out about the placement of the egg in the institution, but I'm of course curious to know how it will be!
best wishes Antje

Antje Majewski to Simon Starling and Rasmus Nielsen, 15th July 2011

Dear Simon and Rasmus,
Actually Freisler in the meantime has allowed me to make a copy of his egg, so I can handle it in Berlin during the show -- under the condition that it will after the show go to a scientific collection in Graz to stay there forever. Which means, that if one of your eggs is also staying, there will be two again...
I think that the procreation of eggs that we see happening doesn't mean at all a negation of the cosmic egg. Maybe the cosmic egg is not "all consuming". Maybe it is more "all-giving".
The eggs grow, quite naturally, like cells, because they are alive. This is what an egg is: a perfect sculptural shape that contains growing cells. Since the cells are not inside of this eggs, they start to behave like cells themselves. In the context of my show we have 2 eggs, one being the "double" of the other. There are also other "doubles" that have appeared, f.e. I have now doubles of all my original objects. The doubles tend to be in some ways originals, or you can never tell which is which.
But it is also about all your 9 eggs and the one of Freisler and it's double - all together 11 eggs... in fact 12 if you count in my painting of an wooden egg that stands, which was my beginning to all this, which again contains "one black ball or two glass eyes".

The last part of my show will have some artworks that also all contain lots of small balls or elements, like growing cells, of different artists. One of them is Thomas Bayrle. He just wrote to me in an e-mail, as an answer to my attempt to explain what the Gimel World is:

"alles grossartige Kugeln / Küegelchen - eine Zelle - ein reiner Wahnsinn,,wenn sie sich ausfaltet..wenn ich nicht mehr weiter komme, mach' ich mich klein! oder teile mich in Kuegelchen...
all wonderful balls / small balls - a cell - sheer craziness... when it unfolds... when I can't get any further, I just make myself small again! or divide myself into small balls..."

best wishes for a sunny summer! Antje

→ S. 188

Simon Starling & Superflex, e.g. The Universal Egg



Rasmus Nielsen to Antje Majewski, 13th August 2011

(...) It's nice to think of that in the Bicentenary Jubilee Year of the Universal Museum two Eggs became part of the collection (making it an average of 1 Egg pr century). Both Eggs are also "reversed" in a biological sense as "a perfect sculptural shape that contains growing cells" since the growing cells in this case are outside of the Eggs..

Probably, and in the process of our engagement with the Universal Museum, we are all such cells.

Best
Rasmus

Paweł Freisler to Antje Majewski, 21st August 2011

Dear Antje,

You remember, you asked about garden. Now I have a garden. In a small town not far from Malmö. The parcell's name is Blixten 6 (Thunder 6). In the middle of the garden there is an apple tree. (...)

Today I discovered a peacock female in the corner of my garden. It shows that she is hatching on 6 eggs.

Good night! Paweł

Notes

1

Enthusiasm

2

I'm a human being; I believe that nothing human is alien to me. Terenz, *Heauton Timorumenos*, Act 1, Verse 77

3

From the egg / from the beginning

4

Is he a man or a machine?

5

From the egg to the apples: from the beginning to the end. Human saying, refers to the order of dishes at a meal.

6

In the middle of life we are embraced by death.

IV

e.g. The Universal Egg

Simon Starling & Superflex

A cross-departmental, pan-Styrian, polyphonic project directed by Simon Starling and Superflex, with Super Eggs by Piet Hein designed in light of a mathematical formula by Gabriel Lamé set within a museum founded by Archduke Johann of Austria following an elliptical epiphany by Johannes Kepler.

In *The World of Gimmel. How to Make Objects Talk*, the Super Egg suddenly finds itself without its now familiar existential playmate, Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Infinite Square Meter*, which has seemed to haunt its presence throughout the Universal Museum. The Kunsthau's previous exhibition *Measuring the World*, of which Pistoletto's inward-looking mirrored cube was a part, has been de-installed around it; the stubborn Super Egg, an echo from the past, now remains to face the seemingly impossible scenario of being exhibited alongside yet another egg. The egg in question, the so-called The Egg, was produced by the Polish artist Paweł Freisler, and was a serendipitous early inclusion in Antje Majewski's conception of *The World of Gimmel*.

With the *Infinite Square Meter* and *Measuring the World* still in mind it would be tempting to think of this new 'dance partner', The Egg, as the answer to the questions raised in the previous exhibition. As if the show and all the works in it, all those more or less successful attempts at trying to measure and subsequently standardize a chaotic infinity, had been distilled into a perfect egg—once and for all containing that troubling space.

This being the case, the stage seems set for a drama between two eggs, originally laid with a metaphysical purpose but also coming of age with the realization that time subverts such noble



intentions and adds its own sets of stories and trajectories to objects. Was The Egg actually once packaged and transported in the beard of its creator? Did the Super Egg arrive on planet earth courtesy of extraterrestrials, deposited in the hands of a paranoid pop star as “a ticket to another planet”? Once this impossible drama has played itself out, what's left are those surprising and constantly proliferating constellations of stories that orbit these seemingly magnetic eggs.

Yet this meeting of two all-consuming eggs, especially when played out in the context of the meta-structure that is the Universal Museum, seems contradictory or even futile—yet another reminder of the impossibility of imagining an Ovo Cosmographium, a cosmic egg, be it 'Standard' or 'Super' in form, that might contain and control the Universe, and perhaps in turn reflects back on the nature of the very structure that contains them both, the museum as universal egg.

Design of PIET HEIN © Piet Hein A/S Danmark
SUPERELLIPSE® Piet Hein A/S Danmark

V

The Hand that Gives

A conversation between Alejandro Jodorowsky and Antje Majewski, Paris 2010

In Alejandro Jodorowsky's apartment in Paris, very close to the bistro where he does a tarot reading once a week. It is a large, old-fashioned apartment full of books.

On one wall, there are many figures of widely differing origins, keepsakes, posters of his films. Antje points at a blue Hindu figure with numerous arms.

AM: That one there is incredible.

AJ: Thanks. Which one, the blue one?

AM: Yes, the blue one.

On the shelf is a photo of Jodorowsky and his wife Marianne Kosta. Beside it there are three earthenware blocks that look like gold bars. I pick one of them up.

AM: What is it?

AJ: My son paid me for everything I did for him. With fakes, made of fake gold. There were an awful lot of them, but there were so many I only kept four. It's a payment for everything I did for him.

I lay out my objects on a table. The pot with the black ball, the meteorite, the clay teapot in the form of a human hand, the shell. I forgot the Buddha-hand and left it behind in Berlin. The Hedgeapple exists only virtually. The white stone gets added only two months later. I ask him about the meaning of the objects. Jodorowsky writes the answers on small post-its. When I notice he is ready to answer other questions as well, I ask permission to record the conversation.

AJ: Where's the mike?

AM: The mike's here.

Antje Majewski

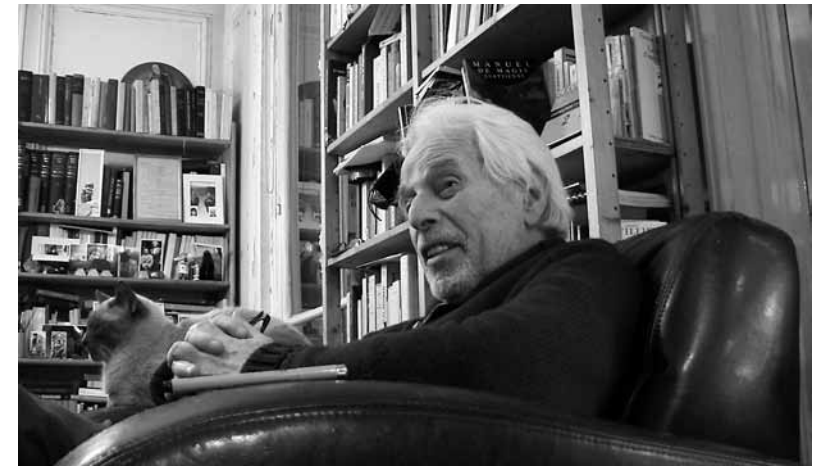
La main qui donne.

Conversation entre

Alejandro Jodorowsky et

Antje Majewski. Paris

2010, 2010 (Videostill)



AJ: OK. So look. You're showing me objects made by nature, like a shell or a meteorite, and other objects made by human hand, like the hand that is a teapot or the box with a black ball in it. But at any rate, whoever the creators of these objects were, they all have a language of their own. It is the language of objects. But it's not a language you can speak. You can feel it. But you can translate it into words, into our language, you can make a translation. That's possible. They provoke an artistic reaction in us, if you like... The reaction can be an emotional reaction, emotion doesn't have words, or an intellectual reaction reaction—with words. Poetic words. OK—it's an encounter. But personally, I think that you who are talking to me and have come to see me, you're yourself like an object. I can't talk that language, the language of your objects. I might think there's a degree of madness in your relationship with your objects. I might think that. But I can't know why you do that, but I can interpret it, and I can give a reply in my own idiom. So I can be a translator of what I see. I cannot say what I sense here because all you sense are not words. Words are not the thing. Words aren't the thing.

OK, so you have a gift for choosing objects that reflect you—a reflection of your mysterious unconscious self that even you yourself don't know. So it's your unconscious self that prompts you to speak via objects you find. It's your inner beauty you are looking for. Right? Inner beauty that you don't get to express in other ways apart from finding objects in the world and the cosmos that will represent you. So, in the end, you've showed me parts of yourself. There. OK? Parts of yourself.

AM: Yes.

AJ: So that allows me to believe that your parents haven't seen you. Your father and your mother haven't seen you. And that you desperately want to be seen. But you don't get to express yourself. But the way to express yourself is a choice. I, I have chosen certain objects. Right? And these objects here, they're me. In the world.

AM: And if for example you were to come across those objects in another context, without me, in a shop, for example...

AJ: That depends, it depends—for example the shells, they're so lovely and natural, they're good enough for museums as far as I'm concerned. But the little box with the ball, I wouldn't come across that. On the other hand, the hand that's a teapot, I like that a lot.

AM: Hmmm.

AJ: I like that a lot, it is talking to me.

AM: Yes.

AJ: That teapot hand.

AM: In fact, I made a connection between you and the hand.

AJ: That talks to me.

AM: In the end, it's the hand I came with. That's why I even forgot two objects because the hand was on my mind so much.

AJ: One might think that the hand clenched in a fist contains a little bit of something. But the open hand—the whole world can pass through an open hand. So that hand, which as a teapot is half-open, it's the hand that gives. And what I give, I give it to myself. To receive the world is to give to the world.

AM: Hmmm.

AJ: It says something to me, that little hand. It's a generous hand. I like it. You see. The shells on the other hand, I see death in the shells. That's a dead being for me. And the meteorite as well. But they have a power, the meteorite, awareness, because all matter contains awareness. And the shells contain memories. It's memory. All the memory of the world, the creation of the world, is in that shell. It's a memory. So that's interesting.

AM: Yes.

AJ: And the other thing, the little box with the black ball, that's magic. Because you open it, and inside it there's a mystery. The black ball, that's mystery. It's a display of mystery. And inside the black ball, there's—for me, it's the symbol of all the Buddhisms, the mental void. Mental emptiness. So that's good. That's interesting.

AM: Yes, with this ball, I've done performances. I played on the ground. Here in Paris too.

AJ: You have to know there was a living creature in these shells!

AM: Yes.



Antje Majewski
La main qui donne.
Conversation entre
Alejandro Jodorowsky et
Antje Majewski. Paris
2010, 2010 (Videostill)



Alejandro Jodorowsky
liest Tarot

AJ: It should be said, it's a skeleton. It's the memory of someone. You're saying that the meteorite, we don't know whether they are pieces of planets, or they are stones from space. Which travel from one system to another, so they are messengers. Of life. That's not a dead being for me, a meteorite. It's a condensate of life. A meteorite.

The shell, on the other hand, is a beautiful shape that used to contain a living creature. An organism. But which possessed a memory, that's why I say it's a memory. It's like a petrified universe. Yes.

AM: And the open hand, that's perhaps—I hope you don't think I'm crazy. I haven't really presented myself, but I'm a serious artist, I don't think I'm mad—

AJ: I don't judge you.

AM: OK.

AJ: I don't judge people. For me, you're like one of your objects. You come, you tell me, you tell me: interpret me, interpret my objects, I'm doing it, that's all!

AM: Yes. And for my part, I made a connection between the hand and you. That's because, when I was here for the tarot a year ago, I wasn't chosen, I didn't speak to you, but I saw you in conversation, and my impression was exactly that, that you're really like this open hand that gives a lot to people...

AJ: When I do tarot readings. Not all the time.

AM: Yes. Perhaps I came just to—find out how to do it—to become more like that—to open my hand.

AJ: (*laughs*) I didn't become like that. I was like that. I was born like that. You see, I've been like that since I was born. It was a principle that was in me. You don't become—you are born like that.

AM: My question wasn't a good one.

AJ: I've developed it into an art. The art of Tarot, for me that's an art. So it's the tarots that brought me to it. I developed it. And that's how I came that far. Without trying. It does it all by itself. I always wondered what sanctity is. There are champions, heroes, geniuses, saints! No. So, I wanted to know what sanctity is. OK, for me, sanctity goes with churches. There's Catholic sanctity, Muslim sanctity, Buddhist sanctity, OK? And the just man of the Jews. They all have different ideas, because they're part of the prejudices of the churches. So I wondered what civil sanctity is. How a being that does not belong to any moral law of a religion can perform acts of sanctity without belonging to any sect—simply out of love for humanity. Or perhaps not even for that—simply out of love for art. You understand?

AM: Yes.

AJ: So I began to imitate sanctity. Every Wednesday I imitate sanctity. Sanctity is being at other people's service. Without judging them. Except of course, seeing the inner treasure everyone has. And trying to awaken it. Without any desire for profit, because I do it for nothing. Not even a word of thanks. Without deriving any benefit. No benefits. Simply doing it for the pleasure of doing it. OK. And that's why I do that. I imitate sanctity.

AM: And why 'imitate'?

AJ: I put it on, I'm not saintly by nature. I imitate.

AM: For me, you...

AJ: I imitate, I imitate. I do that when I think I should be a good person. And I do it.

AM: And why you do doubt?

AJ: I don't doubt.

AM: But why do you say you imitate?

AJ: What? Why do I say what?

AM: For me, you are like that. It's not imitation.

AJ: Not all the time. Not all the time. For example, when I'm going to read or in my conferences, everything that's for others, I suffer a lot in advance. I don't want to do it. I really suffer, it's terrible. And then I'm in a bad mood. And once I get there, I change, and afterwards, once it's over, I'm euphoric and pleased. I pledge myself to go on with it.

AM: Yes.

AJ: And afterwards I ask myself why I pledge myself to do that. I'm mad. It's years, thirty or so, thirty years I've been doing that, and every time, I suffer. And afterwards I do the thing again. So it's not a state of sanctity. You understand? I imitate.

AM: *(laughs)*

AJ: I imitate. But it's a good imitation, because there are people who imitate being an assassin. In reality, I think everyone imitates something. Authenticity is difficult to find. You yourself look for authenticity. To see what you really sense in objects, it's a quest—a modest one—about objects, isn't it? But from the moment we're in our mothers' wombs, we begin to imitate our families, parents, we have a nationality. Nationality is imitation, it's not a reality. To be German, or Chilean or French is imitation. Because we're much more than that. Being a man or women is imitation. Because we're everything. In reality, we have sexual desires, but that's not what we are. We're something else. Age is an imitation. Because spiritual age doesn't exist. And so on. We imitate thinking, we imitate feeling, we imitate desire. But the real being we don't see. So to get near it, we have to imitate. And from imitation to imitation, sometimes you get there for a moment. Really, there are moments when you get there. Yes indeed, there are moments you get there.

(laughs)

But every act of kindness I do, I force myself. It's not natural, I force myself to do it.

AM: So even now, when you're talking to me?

AJ: Yes, indeed, I'm forcing myself. Because I'm very busy, you know. You interrupted me there, I worked on something. And I force myself because—because I don't know—there's something to look for, isn't there? And if you think you can find something with me, OK ... OK, let's see if all that will be beneficial for you. But, just the same as I'm doing with you, a month ago, I did it with a whole country. I was in Argentina, and I did an act of social psychomagic, in ESMA [Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada, Buenos Aires], where people had been tortured and killed and made to disappear, I proposed setting up a metaphorical cemetery—I got 200 tombs constructed where people came to cry. So I forced myself to do an act of kindness towards a country. Yes. Yes.—But I think it's good to force yourself. Because if you don't force yourself, the world is heading for destruction. So what's art for? When you look at history, what's left of civilizations is their art. Without art, you wouldn't know Egypt, nor Greece—with the poems, the books and the sculptures there—what's left is art. So a country that doesn't have art is condemned to disappear. And the loss of beauty is the loss of the world. We lose the world. So you'll say: what beauty? Well, beauty, it's a subjective thing. Beauty in itself doesn't exist, what does exist is a desire for beauty. Doesn't it? So, everyone will express his desire for beauty one way or another, it doesn't matter, what matters is someone having a desire for beauty, in his way. And what is terrible is the absence of a desire for beauty. Isn't it? Now that's terrible.

AM: Yes.

AJ: That's the most terrible thing there is, that's the end of being human. The absence of a desire for beauty. And that's what's happened to our society, or, as a mystic philosopher, René Guénon, said, we've passed from quality to the reign of quantity. Haven't we? When things are done in quantity, like today, you lose a sense of beauty. So the world is in danger.

AM: Do you think that if you do a tarot reading or you do something for a whole country or if you make a film, it has all the same importance?

AJ: Yes. Yes. Everything has the same importance. One person, a thousand people, ten thousand people—

AM: Yes, it's the same thing.

AJ: It's the same thing as far as the action is concerned. The same artistic action that needs no labor nor much else. I've just come

from a conference in Chile attended by 6,000 people. And I talked to them the way I'm talking to you. That's a way of being. It's the circumstances. But everything you do is a seed that will sprout.

AM: Yes.

AJ: So it's good to do it. I think, personally, the art that interests me is art that can cure the maladies of our time. That's the only art that interests me now. Neurotic art that talks about itself, its personal problems, I find that so dated. It's not interesting any more. It's dated. Destructive critical art is dated. And art that profits from pressing social occurrences is a disguised form of prostitution. Isn't it? Why talk of problems or topics that TV and the press bang on about all the time, every day? What use is that to me? That's what's wrong with museums. These days, museums are like bawdy houses. Museums. Museums used to be something respectable. Nowadays, museums are like music hall. Commercial shows. They do business. So the concept of free of charge does not exist. Ever since Picasso and Dalí, art has become a kind of stock market. It's been the death of art.

AM: Yes, that's my problem too, a bit. I'm normally a painter, but now I've almost stopped painting, even if I like doing it—normally I'm someone who produces pictures. I have some very strong images in my head I can get down in the end and make into a sellable object, and now I feel more like—how can I say—work with something living rather than have at the end a dead object I sell to someone I don't know, without any connection except for the money, and I don't know how to get out of that problem. Because on the other hand, I like painting.

AJ: That's reality, that's how it is now. You have to go on painting and selling.

AM: Oh yeah?

I laugh, surprised.

AJ: Yes, that's reality. But now what you sell, you must do something that could change the person who buys it, whoever it is.

AM: Aha.

AJ: That can give him something. Not do an empty object that the trade will sell you that can be used to decorate a wall. No, do objects that say something.

AM: Yes.

AJ: So, try to really touch the person that buys it, and really something will come out of it.

AM: OK. Thanks.

AJ: You can't not sell now. It's a reality.

AM: Thanks. OK. I'll do that.—Agreed.

AJ: You have ten minutes, because at six a poet is coming to see me.

AM: But I think those were the most important questions for me.

AJ: Do you want to eat a thing with chocolate?

AM: Eh?

AJ: How about a little thingummy with chocolate?—I'll show you.

He goes to look for chocolates.

AJ: It's Italian.

AM: Ah, thanks.—I brought that for you.

I hand him a box of candied fruit.

AJ: To show me?

AM: No, as a present.

AJ: Oh, good. Ah, so we'll have that. You want that?

AM: And I also wanted to give you the candle.

It's a wax candle in which the wax has been grooved so it looks like a pine cone.

AJ: If you like. But it's so beautiful, it's good for your collection.

AM: No, but I brought it for you.

AJ: Yes? Ah, now that is nice.—This one was also given to me as present yesterday. A dancer gave it to me.

A plastic wheel with a lamp that goes on and off, so that the room is lit up for brief intervals. A little cat gambols round the room and miaows.

AM: Sweet little thing.

AJ: Yes, still just a kitten.

He opens the box of candied fruit.

AJ: That's good! Here, you have one.

AM: Thanks.

AJ: I like that very much.

The little cat miaows.

VI

Madonna Machine

Rosary

Fragments of a conversation with Thomas and Helke Bayrle and Antje Majewski, Frankfurt 2011

TB: (*flipping through the catalogue*) I was interested in these Madonnas. I saw them as containers or machines themselves, constructed out of codes that had been obligatory over the ages. The mother's pose with the child, the relationship between the head and body, colours and so forth...

Almost everything was proportionate to everything else and coded in relation to one other.

Just a fraction was open to liberties in design, interpretations that could be left up to the individual icon painters. The coded containers were like vases that are constantly filled with fresh flowers.

I saw this "production programme of Madonnas" as having a parallel to industrial manufacturing. Deliberately reduced to pure making—all of the necessary parts for this "building of a Madonna" were manufactured like auto parts.

Even the manufacturing process was similar in theory to automobile production, where the average automobile has about 4,000 parts that are assembled into a "car".

An average of about 600 unique, organic shapes would have to be made for the interior sections; these were created on a photocopier by distorting the printed rubber latex sheets—developed in an individual mapping process.

This mapping would have to be done in such a way that six to eight hands could pull and warp the images into the pre-prepared outlines, and copy them so neither a loss nor a surplus would be visible in the image.

Antje Majewski
Madonna Maschine
Rosenkranz/Die Steine,
die Muscheln. Gespräch
zwischen Thomas und
Helke Bayrle und Antje
Majewski, Frankfurt
 2011, 2011 (video still)



A finger, for example, would have to fit exactly into the desired position of the Madonna hand, like the fender on a car.

Here (*continues to flip through the catalogue*): that is a Jaguar Madonna, and here we have a Madonna filled with Mercedes... and this here is a work with computers—made with the Atari. Also with the Atari, every image is calculated one by one, printed and inserted into the Madonna scheme.

The computer is stiff, clumsy and brutal compared to the latex warped by six hands. But that has something, too. (*flips back to the first Madonna*) All of these were made with rubber...

AM: So those were the latex sheets that you put on the copy machine, right?

TB: (*flipping*): Right. Content-wise, these confrontations were two worlds: yes—no / old—new—good—evil—almost medieval... like with Stefan Lochner at the Städel Schule...

There are these two Japanese woodcutters—Sharaku and Utagawa Utamaro—with these woodcuts from 200 years ago. Every little segment is filled with Canon cameras.

(*Flips through the catalogue from back to front until it closes*)

Now we'll start back at the beginning (*flips it open again*). Okay, of course there's also Christ. He's filled in with the first piece of highway on German soil (Frankfurt Darmstadt). The Corpus Christi as a Man of Sorrows, criss-crossed by thousands of streets and cars. The highway is all over the place, in every hand, in every drop of blood. That has something to do with genetics, too...



Antje Majewski
Madonna Maschine
Rosenkranz/Die Steine,
die Muscheln. Gespräch
zwischen Thomas und
Helke Bayle und Antje
Majewski, Frankfurt
 2011, 2011 (video still)

Back in 1958, when I was doing this apprenticeship as a weaver, day after day I would stand there for nine hours between pounding rows of looms. The rhythm of 400 machines—this *dang dang dang dang dang dang*—was everywhere. And back then I thought, “I can’t take this. I urgently have to get out of here and go into treatment.”

But then I started singing to myself very softly and soon I felt a pleasant shiver and swinging all through my body. I could let go and sink into it—find peace in the middle of this frenzy of activity...

It was the same for everyone in those days. Sooner or later, everyone would let themselves free-fall into hell.

Instead of fighting it, I thought it was sweet somehow...

AM: But how did that... you mentioned that you were singing while you were doing it, right?

TB: I sang a few rounds so that I could sink into it... gave myself to the space inside the machines... I was completely overwhelmed and collapsed on a regular basis, showed mild signs of a mental breakdown, so to speak.

In any case, I didn’t trust my senses—when suddenly I started hearing human voices at a certain frequency in the dynamos.

I put my ear to the engine block (*demonstrates by putting his ear to the table top*) and actually heard the delicate, little voices of women singing somewhere deep in the transmission...

AM: And what were they singing?

TB: It seemed like a kind of rosary. The same murmur that I heard as a child in the empty church... when a little group of old women would meet for a rosary in the afternoon.

All of them dressed in black, a “heap” in the middle of the church: Hail Mary, full of grace, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death... wuawuwawua... (*briefly imitates the singing*). 100 Ave Marias—bead after bead, the Ave Marias chimed in with the ball bearings...

So motor and old nuns became one! Drenched in sweat, I said to myself, “That’s enough. You really have to get out now!”

30 years later, where everything and we are all hanging on the IV drip of the machines—I found my way back to the rosary.

I’ve conceded myself to the closeness, even the merging with motors—through the being of now!

Everywhere in traffic—in the supermarkets, etc, I heard this wailing / grinding. In the rosary, it wasn’t about understanding the

meaning—but about masses / just about traffic / motors running / radio on / standing—grinding—praying—like in Tibet, in Islam, in Israel—basically all over the world—grinding down, working off, buying, using...

No—that’s not fatalism ...

... and the concept of weaving was flat... but Heidegger intended it to be three-dimensional: as a *Geweb* or “texture”. And in his “texture”, there are millions of textures lying on top of each other. In their infinite sum, they come to represent the body. And there, of course, there are billions of points of overlap.

And if you see this as finely as he says in this short text on the “texture”, then you can work with it quite well.

The “meadow” metaphor, for example, was always at least as important to me as that of the texture: That I lay down in meadows as a child, in the fragrant summer meadows where billions of little insects and creatures and plants and weeds form such an unimaginable unity, such a great, atrocious symbiosis, a... Where millions of little parts have to die so that myriads of little parts can come to life. And just the fragrance there alone...

HB: Well, and the sound.

TB: ...or this wind that blows through there, through the grasses... So, I’m certain that there are a few archetypes for masses... and it’s up to you what you want to take of that. (Or not.) And here we come back to Canetti for a moment: whether the symbol of the masses is now the forest or whether it’s the mountains, or the sea.

In any case, everyone needs a portion of the mass of nature—even if it’s an artificially manufactured one. Which is the normal reality in enormous cities, where, with upwards of ten million, there are mostly anorganic symbioses. In the face of this reality, it appears that it may be irrelevant whether a “mass” is potatoes or toothpaste. But we, with our privileges, cannot learn this any more.

In any case, there is this: the fact that we have certain “masses of nature” behind us or within us that we can plug into... is, I believe, the most important thing, to keep you from falling into this frozen loneliness—the perpetual fear of life.

VII

The Stones, the Shells

Conversation between Helke Bayrle and
Antje Majewski, Frankfurt 2011



HB: I'm not entirely sure why I do it. Even forty years ago, I had a good feeling when I collected shells in different countries so that I could go to other countries and throw them back into the sea.

So I threw Chinese shells into the sea in England, or in Italy, and vice versa, threw Italian shells into the Chinese sea. To me, throwing them always seemed like such a nice, generous gesture, also how they flew. I always like the thought that other people might find them and ask themselves, "Where did these come from? That's very extraordinary; we've never found anything like that here before"—because it is anonymously international. Because of this collecting shells, or collecting stones, my little grandson called me "Grandma Stone" for a long time. He would lift a rock out of the muck and I would clean it up nicely on the lawn. Our daughter-in-law... wasn't too happy about him picking up such a filthy stone... from then on I was "Grandma Stone" to Cyrill. And whenever he talked to me on the phone and still couldn't say anything except "Grandma", he said "Grandma Stone" to keep the two grandmothers straight. That was so cute. Sometimes he would also get packages with stones that I had collected for him in the mail—they were unbelievably heavy. To me, stones are gods. They are alive and more than just simple clumps. They are always changing. And I am sure that we as people don't notice that because our lives are so short compared to theirs. There are stones lying on almost every window in our house.

AM: What's his name, the Native American artist...

HB: Jimmy Durham. He and I really understood each other when it came to rocks and fossils. He also has that sensibility. Every good stone makes me very happy to see. Each one is different. But

Antje Majewski
Madonna Maschine
Rosenkranz/Die Steine,
die Muscheln. Gespräch
zwischen Thomas und
Helke Bayrle und Antje
Majewski, Frankfurt
2011, 2011 (video still)



I am also a person that sees details when I walk—in such a way that I can find four-leaf clovers on traffic islands. That just sharpens the eye for certain things. I have always had a lot of fun with it, and I'll keep doing it, the thing with the shell throwing. Friends also said to me, "That's a great thing to do!" But for me it was something very personal and I didn't feel like making an issue of it.

AM: When you two travel, do you take the shells with you and already know that there is a sea somewhere nearby that you'd like to throw some into? So you pack a little bundle?

HB: Exactly, I put them together into a little package and until now I have never had any complaints from customs or anyone else. You really have to look carefully to find Italian shells because there aren't many left in the Mediterranean.

TB: They're all different shapes and sizes.

HB: They have different shapes and sizes depending on the various seas. In China, they're pointed like a hat. In New Zealand, the form is totally different. There they look more like little piles. Or these mother-of-pearl shells, those little round ones that change so prettily on the inside... I've also happened upon those and threw them into the sea somewhere else. I'm also careful that the shells I throw are beautiful ones—not some garbage or where someone has been eating clams, that I don't do!

AM: And whenever all the stones and shells were different, did you have the feeling that they were gods? ... That there's something alive in them?

HB: Gods rather than shells?

AM: No, similar to the stones. What is in the stones? Is there something different in every rock?



HB: I think it's a hundred percent different every time. Definitely. Like everything else, we were talking about that before. It's just so different, the way every cell is different and how every stone is different. Nothing is the same. Even the leaves on the trees are all different.

AM: And what happens now when you let the things wander? Does something change when you allow these things to wander across the continents?

HB: I think so. They come into very different waters, for example. One is salty, the other not so salty; this one has lots of waves, the other is completely calm. I wouldn't throw them into a lake. I have the feeling that it has to be as far out as possible and have a broad horizon, and that way it goes somewhere generous.

AM: And do you have the feeling that... earlier, you mentioned that the two of you did Tai Chi for a long time.

HB: Yes. That's true. It has something to do with that.

AM: And just like we move our bodies to create a flow, you bring these shells to another place. Could that also make something like that possible? Could that be?

HB: Yes, one would imagine so. I felt also this wave motion (*shows how she throws*) in Tai Chi. It might be similar for the stones and shells.

We have these big, crazy, rolled-up balls at home. They're made of tons of little hairs. The sea rolled them up for a long time. There are beaches with millions of these kinds of balls.

How long would they have had to be rolled?

That is very, very beautiful. I am very interested in these processes.

Sometimes I find old, woven fabric on the beach. Once I found a whole cleaning cloth.

These little hairs had grown into it. Which means: the sea was weaving. Another time, I found an old, beaten-up tea kettle.

A robin kept coming back to nest in this funny tin can with a snout.

This relationship to nature is very present with me. I can touch and rescue birds when they get caught in the net. I hear when they're in danger. When they have a different squeak, I know there's a cat or a bird of prey nearby.

Also I have had dying birds in my hand and let a huge cobweb grow in our apartment for over 15 years. It hung down two metres from the ceiling in our living room. Something like that would never have been possible in another family.

Once I saw a little pair of children's jeans hanging in the bushes that someone had thrown away (*arm movement*). They had been hanging there for decades and were constantly changing... Once they were covered in green moss, in the winter they became all white and stiff and frozen, covered in hoar frost—until they finally disappeared.

(*laughs*).

Scientific Evaluations of the Objects

Anita Eschner, Eva Kreissl, Bernd Moser,

Wolfgang Paill, Kurt Zernig

The Hedgeapple

The Fruit of the Osage-Orange

Evaluated by Kurt Zernig, Botany, Universalmuseum Joanneum

The fruit is a variety of the Bow wood tree, or Osage Orange (Fr. Maclure, Oranger des Osages, Bois d'arc; Ger. Apfelfrüchtiger Osagedorn, Milchorangenbaum).

The *Maclura pomifera*, as the species is called by its taxonomic name, belongs to the mulberry family (*Moraceae*). The tree is native to North America (Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas) and has been cultivated in Central European gardens and parks since 1818.

This deciduous, fast-growing tree reaches a height of up to 20 m and has dark-orange, deeply furrowed bark. Its loosely scattered crown has bright to olive-green glabrescent twigs that are armed with hard, axillary, 1–2.5 cm long thorns. Its alternate, spirally arranged leaves contain a milky latex. The leaf blade (lamina) is simple and non-lobed; it is ovate to oblong-lanceolate, 5–12 cm long and 3.5–12 cm wide, and has an entire margin. The apex of the blade is acuminate, its base is cuneate to almost cordate. The upper surface of the fully-grown leaf is dark-green and shiny, while the under surface is paler and opaque. In autumn the leaves turn yellow. They have a pinnatifid venation and a prominent midrib, their vernation is of the involute type. The thin, flexible petiole is 3–5 cm long, pubescent and slightly grooved. The stipules are small and caducous.

Osage-Oranges are dioecious, with inconspicuous male and female flowers. The staminate flowers in cylindrical racemes, which are borne on 2.5–3.5 cm long, slender, drooping peduncles, are pale green, with a hairy, quadrimorous perianth. The four stamens are inclined in veneration, with flattened filaments and introrse oblong anthers. The pistillate flowers are borne in dense globose capitula, 2–2.5 cm in diameter. Their deeply quadrilobed perianth calyx encloses the superior, slightly compressed ovoid ovary. The tree flowers in May and June; the perigone becomes fleshy when the fruit ripens.

The globose fruit reaches a diameter of 7–15 cm. With its rough, rugose surface it resembles an orange. The fruit contains lots of white, milky latex which oozes out at the slightest lesion of the skin.

From a morphological point of view, the “fruit” consists of numerous drupes, which grow together to form a so-called syncarp, an aggregate fruit. The fruits are inedible and only ripen in warm Central European regions.

The Shell

Evaluated by Wolfgang Paill, Zoology, Universalmuseum Joanneum and Anita Eschner, 3rd zoological section, Museum of Natural History, Vienna

Dear Mrs Huemer,

With regard to the mollusc you asked about, we can now give a definite answer. We are most grateful to Mrs Anita Eschner of the Natural History Museum in Vienna for a definite identification and ecological and biological characterisation (see attached document).

I may add, as follows, with regard to the museum value of the specimen: The species being common, and widespread in some areas, is even today very easy to obtain at a good price.

Any decent-sized museum or mollusc collection—thus definitely the Joanneum as well—is likely to possess samples of the species.

A certain scientific and museological value can nevertheless be attributed to the specimen, since (in contrast to the Mediterranean) it comes from a relatively less collected area. However, a basis would be a rather precise and in particular also credible attribution to a specific location (purchase at a local market is not necessarily enough here, since there is now a global trade in products of this kind) plus other data relating to where it was picked up (esp. date).

Even in the absence of the above-mentioned data, the piece nonetheless has a 'residual value', to the extent that it can for example be used in an exhibition or within the framework of further education (museum courses).

With regard to printing a text on the 'evaluation' of the object, it would perhaps be best if you put together a sample text and send it to me again for correction.

Yours sincerely
Wolfgang Paill

Large tun snail

Species: *tonna galea* (Linne 1758)

Family: Tun snails/*tonnidae*

Description: Large shell (reaching 25cm), bulbous, thin-shelled, lightweight. The whorls are separated by deep sutures; the apical coil has 15-20 broad, flat spirals reminiscent of barrel hoops (hence the 'tun' name). A short recessed thread, the apex is dark brown, sometimes purple. The columella is strongly twisted. The operculum is absent in adult specimens.

Lifestyle: Rather predatory, feeding off echinoderms, shells and crabs. On the proboscis there is, in addition, a suction pad, which the tun snail uses to cling to its prey. The chalky carapace of the prey is eaten away by the acidic saliva (which contains 2-5% sulphuric acid and aspartic acid) and at the same time the prey is paralysed (this secretion is also used for defensive purposes!). With the aid of the radula and hooked jaws, large pieces are torn out of the prey and eaten whole.

Distribution: Ground-based in tropical and temperate oceans (up to about 5,000m depth). Also found in the warmer parts of the Mediterranean. Wide distribution is favoured by the long, swimming larva stage.

Endangered: Due to over-fishing, large specimens have become rare. Particularly the use of seine nets is increasingly decimating the species. According to IUCN, not on the Red List of endangered species but listed in the second appendix to the Berne Convention and thus protected in many European countries.

Source literature

- Dance, P.S. (1998): *Muscheln und Schnecken. Ravensburger Naturführer*, pp. 256.
Kilius, R. (1993): *Stamm Mollusca - Weichtiere*. In: Gruner, H.-E. et al. (ed.): *Die große farbige Enzyklopädie Urania Tierreich vol 1: Wirbellose Tiere 1 (Protozoa bis Echiurida)*, Urania, Leipzig, pp. 666.
Lindner, G. (1999): *Muscheln und Schnecken der Weltmeere: Aussehen, Vorkommen, Systematik*. BLV, pp. 320 pp.
IUCN 2011. *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2011.1*. <<http://www.iucn-redlist.org>>. Downloaded on 16th June 2011.

The Meteorite

Evaluated by Bernd Moser, Earth Sciences, Universalmuseum Joanneum

Dimensions: approx: 5 x 5.5 x 6.5 cm, polygonal outlines approximately in the shape of a quadrilateral prism with trapezoid basic surface
Weight: 1231 g.

The present object displays a dark metallic grey colour, with rust brown traces in crevices, gussets and cavities. At five or six points, the surface is relatively smooth on five of the six surfaces and the edges are largely rounded off.

The remaining surface is relatively even although compared with the other surfaces, demarcated by rather sharp edges, and displays a much rougher structure. The shape can be interpreted thus: it has a natural rolling of an originally sharp-edged fragment of ore with a subsequent fracture. The fracture itself reveals signs of natural smoothing. In addition, on one of the old rolled-off surfaces there is a very recent fractured surface measuring about 1x1.5 cm. Under the microscope, this surface reveals a fine-grained structure with a metallic gleaming appearance. This is to be attributed to the light reflections on the tiny smooth surfaces. The surfaces manifest in part triangular shapes whose three-dimensional formation displays octahedrons. This crystalline shape is also visible in cavities in other parts of the object.

The presence of a magnet indicated strong magnetism in the object.

The object was acquired as a 'meteorite' supposedly but that had to be ruled out for several reasons. Because of its high weight and the surface structure of the two more recent fractured surfaces, a meteorite of the stone and stone-and-iron type had to be ruled out. Identification as an iron meteorite had to be ruled out for weight reasons: relative to its size, with a density of 7.87 g/ cubic centimetres for iron, the piece would have to be much heavier, and the possibility was also ruled out because of the fracture's surface structure. A visible crystalline formation with octahedron outlines and the fact that the tiny loose fragments can be rubbed into a powder without effort (splinters of iron can be flattened only with great expenditure of force, which likewise rules out the presence of elemental iron).

It was finally conclusively identified by means of X-ray diffractometry on one tiny loose splinter as magnetite Fe₃O₄ with a small proportion of hematite Fe₂O₃, which accords very well with its external appearance, magnetic behaviour and the weight of the object. Magnetite as a component of meteorites is only known in the form of tiny grains in stone-iron meteorites. Magnetite in massive formations and as virtually the sole component such as it features in the present object has to rule it out as meteorite material.



"Bartmannskrug" from western Styria
Folk Life Museum
Collection,
Universalmuseum
Joanneum

The Pot made of Fragrant Moroccan Wood, Contains a Black Ball or Two Glass Eyes

The Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand

Evaluated by Eva Kreissl, Everyday Culture, Universalmuseum Joanneum

Dear Mrs Huemer,

Finally, I've managed to reduce the pile of stuff awaiting attention in my in-tray so that I can do something about your request for an assessment of Antje Majewski's three objects: viz. 1 a hand-shaped teapot, 2. a plastic ball, 3. a turned spherical wooden box. But even after examining the objects closely with a glass and looking at them together with the head of our collection, Roswitha Orac-Stipperger, unfortunately I cannot add much more to an assessment than Mrs Majewski has already done anyway.

A fundamental observation is that, as a regional ethnographic museum, we only include in our collection objects that have importance for the cultural development of Styria. i.e. an object should convey a message about people's lives, which involves the circumstances of production and use. Especially in a time of global networking they are certainly things that were produced a long way away from Styria and have no enhanced commercial value and are representative of cultures. Things in the museum must be able to tell a story, either via their individual person-thing relationship or as an influential component of the collective consciousness. Things such as the three that Antje Majewski uses for her works of art are 'speechless' for us, and we would not therefore include them in the collection either. It is the artist who gives them a personal artistic meaning that eludes our assessment as a scientific museum.

1. The clay teapot with a plastic stopper bought in Beijing is probably an example of sentimental, populist taste in China or a souvenir. We have anthropomorphous vessels in our own collection, as you can see from the attached pictures. It is an idiom that can be understood, and the objects can be classified as ironisations or the result of chauvinistic attitudes. But the Chinese hand, even though it does not hold much liquid, either displays a serious character and evokes tea ceremonies or is simply a touristic stunt or for those who like popular bric-a-brac. I am not in a position to say.

2. The plastic ball has probably been in the box for a long time and has therefore acquired a strange smell that reminds me first and foremost of Bakelite. But the smell goes after a while, and the ball doesn't gleam like Bakelite when you clean it. It possibly comes from one of hundreds of children's games or leisure pastimes but without knowing who owned it

or where it was bought, that cannot be determined more precisely.
3. The wooden box seems to me turned from some type of eucalyptus wood. But unfortunately, with non-Styrian woods, I'm not so sure. It is very typical of goods on sale in Weltladen Fair Trade shops.

I am very sorry not to be able to say more about the objects. But I am certainly curious as to how Mrs Majewski will be able to breathe new life into them with a very personal meaning.

Kind regards
Eva Kreissl

VI

The Buddha-Hand

Evaluated by Kurt Zernig, Botany, Universalmuseum Joanneum

The fruit is a variety of the *Citrus medica*, or citron (Fr. cédratier; Ger. Zitronatzitrone, Zedrat-Zitrone). The variety is known by the term *sarcodactylis* or *digitata*, or indeed by the name of its cultivated form, “fingered citron”. Due to its finger-like shape, the fruit is also known as “Buddha’s Hand”.

The *Citrus medica* belongs to the rue family (*Rutaceae*). The tree is native to Asia and widely cultivated in the Mediterranean region. It grows as a small, evergreen tree or shrub to reach a height of up to 5 m, with irregular branches bearing short, thick, hard, axillary thorns. Its simple, oblong leaves with blunt apices and dentate margins grow about 10–18 cm long. Unlike in many other *Citrus* species, its petioles are not alated. Its large flowers usually grow in terminal panicles or axillary clusters. The five large, succulent, lorifolius, sessile petals (i.e. not clawed) are coloured white with a tinted purplish base. It normally has 20 to 40 stamina. The superior ovary is formed of several carpels which, in the case of the *Citrus medica*, are usually connated. The ellipsoidal, longish fruit is 15–30 cm long and 10–15 cm wide; it has a very thick, rough peel and a blunt tip.

Basically the citrus fruit is a special type of a firm-walled berry (like that of the pumpkin fruit). Starting from the outside, the fruit consists of the following layers: the exocarp forms a yellow skin with lots of oil glands embedded in; underneath lies the mesocarp, a layer of white, spongy, fibrous tissue; the interior of the fruit is subdivided into 8–15 sections (carpels), each of which is bordered by a thin membrane, the endocarp. Within these sections the pericarp develops vesicles, which make up the pulp of the fruit. The axile placenta is where the little slippery seeds develop.

In the *sarcodactylis* (or *digitata*) variety, only the basal half of the carpels are connated, while the apical half of them is free, so the fruit looks a bit like a hand with fingers. But only in exceptional cases, fruits consist of five carpels, as opposed to the normal 8–15. *Sarcodactylis*-fruits contain little pulp, but are very decorative.

VII

White Stone

Evaluated by Bernd Moser, Earth Sciences, Universalmuseum Joanneum

Dimensions: approx.: 5.5 x 5 and 2.5 cm, oblate oval overall with prolate cross section/outline

Weight: 104g

The object is white, with a light beige tone, and displays a relatively smooth, well-polished surface. The external shape manifests a very good degree of rounding, and in geometrical terms we have approximately a three-axial ellipsoid with flattening on one side.

In its external appearance the object is manifestly a mono-mineral rock.

In the incidental light, the object gleams with matt reflections which come from the surface and the interior close to the surface. Under the microscope, highly reflective surfaces can be discerned close to the surface, which can be addressed as inner cleavage surfaces of the visible individual crystals that the rock is made of.

The weight relative to the volume of the object suggests a medium density of 2.5 to 2.7 g/cubic centimetre. Because of the characteristics described above visible to the naked eye and under the microscope, the object can be identified as marble—consisting of the mineral known as calcite CAC03. The very well-rounded external shape of the object can be explained as a natural unrolling of an already very regularly shaped fragment. Artificial shaping by human hand has to be ruled out because of the imperfect smoothness of the surface.

Texts

- O Jorge Luis Borges
The Aleph
- I Marcus Steinweg
What is an Object?
- II Clémentine Deliss
Some Thoughts on the Transformational
Psyche of Objects
- III Friedrich Hölderlin
Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece
- IV Łukasz Gorczyca, Łukasz Ronduda
Half Empty
- V Ingo Niermann
Why Me?
- VI Xu Shuxian
The Answers
- VII John Joseph Mathews
Talking to the Moon
Chuang Tzu
All Created Equal

O

The Aleph

Excerpt

Jorge Luis Borges

"First a glass of pseudo-cognac," he ordered, "and then down you dive into the cellar. Let me warn you, you'll have to lie flat on your back. Total darkness, total immobility, and a certain ocular adjustment will also be necessary. From the floor, you must focus your eyes on the nineteenth step. Once I leave you, I'll lower the trapdoor and you'll be quite alone. You needn't fear the rodents very much—though I know you will. In a minute or two, you'll see the Aleph—the microcosm of the alchemists and Kabbalists, our true proverbial friend, the *multum in parvo*!"

Once we were in the dining room, he added, "Of course, if you don't see it, your incapacity will not invalidate what I have experienced. Now, down you go. In a short while you can babble with *all* of Beatriz's images."

Tired of his inane words, I quickly made my way. The cellar, barely wider than the stairway itself, was something of a pit. My eyes searched the dark, looking in vain for the globe Carlos Argentino had spoken of. Some cases of empty bottles and some canvas sacks cluttered one corner. Carlos picked up a sack, folded it in two, and at a fixed spot spread it out.

"As a pillow," he said, "this is quite threadbare, but if it's padded even a half-inch higher, you won't see a thing, and there you'll lie, feeling ashamed and ridiculous. All right now, sprawl that hulk of yours there on the floor and count off nineteen steps." I went through with his absurd requirements, and at last he went away. The trapdoor was carefully shut. The blackness, in spite of a chink that I later made out, seemed to me absolute. For the first time, I realised the danger I was in: I'd let myself be locked in a cellar by a lunatic, after gulping down a glassful of poison! I knew that back of Carlos' transparent boasting lay a deep fear that I might not see the promised wonder. To keep his madness undetec-

ted, to keep from admitting he was mad, *Carlos had to kill me*. I felt a shock of panic, which I tried to pin to my uncomfortable position and not to the effect of a drug. I shut my eyes—I opened them. Then I saw the Aleph.

I arrive now at the ineffable core of my story. And here begins my despair as a writer. All language is a set of symbols whose use among its speakers assumes a shared past. How, then, can I translate into words the limitless Aleph, which my floundering mind can scarcely encompass? Mystics, faced with the same problem, fall back on symbols: to signify the godhead, one Persian speaks of a bird that somehow is all birds; Alanus de Insulis, of a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere; Ezekiel, of a four-faced angel who at one and the same time moves east and west, north and south. (Not in vain do I recall these inconceivable analogies; they bear some relation to the Aleph.) Perhaps the gods might grant me a similar metaphor, but then this account would become contaminated by literature, by fiction. Really, what I want to do is impossible, for any listing of an endless series is doomed to be infinitesimal. In that single gigantic instant I saw millions of acts both delightful and awful; not one of them occupied the same point in space, without overlapping or transparency. What my eyes beheld was simultaneous, but what I shall now write down will be successive, because language is successive. Nonetheless, I'll try to recollect what I can.

On the back part of the step, toward the right, I saw a small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brilliance. At first I thought it was revolving; then I realised that this movement was an illusion created by the dizzying world it bounded. The Aleph's diameter was probably little more than an inch, but all space was there, actual and undiminished. Each thing (a mirror's face, let us say) was infinite things, since I distinctly saw it from every angle of the universe. I saw the teeming sea; I saw daybreak and nightfall; I saw the multitudes of America; I saw a silvery cobweb in the center of a black pyramid; I saw a splintered labyrinth (it was London); I saw, close up, unending eyes watching themselves in me as in a mirror; I saw all the mirrors on earth and none of them reflected me; I saw in a backyard of Soler Street the same tiles that thirty years before I'd seen in the entrance of a house in Fray Bentos; I saw bunches of grapes, snow, tobacco, lodes of metal, steam; I saw convex equatorial deserts and each one of their grains of sand; I saw a woman in Inverness whom I shall never forget; I saw her tangled hair, her tall figure, I saw the cancer in her breast; I saw a ring of baked mud in a sidewalk, where before there had been a tree; I saw a summer house in Adrogué and a copy of the first English translation of Pliny—Philemon Holland's—and all at the same

time saw each letter on each page (as a boy, I used to marvel that the letters in a closed book did not get scrambled and lost overnight); I saw a sunset in Querétaro that seemed to reflect the colour of a rose in Bengal; I saw my empty bedroom; I saw in a closet in Alkmaar a terrestrial globe between two mirrors that multiplied it endlessly; I saw horses with flowing manes on a shore of the Caspian Sea at dawn; I saw the delicate bone structure of a hand; I saw the survivors of a battle sending out picture postcards; I saw in a showcase in Mirzapur a pack of Spanish playing cards; I saw the slanting shadows of ferns on a greenhouse floor; I saw tigers, pistons, bison, tides, and armies; I saw all the ants on the planet; I saw a Persian astrolabe; I saw in the drawer of a writing table (and the handwriting made me tremble) unbelievable, obscene, detailed letters, which Beatriz had written to Carlos Argentino; I saw a monument I worshipped in the Chacarita cemetery; I saw the rotted dust and bones that had once deliciously been Beatriz Viterbo; I saw the circulation of my own dark blood; I saw the coupling of love and the modification of death; I saw the Aleph from every point and angle, and in the Aleph I saw the earth and in the earth the Aleph and in the Aleph the earth; I saw my own face and my own bowels; I saw your face; and I felt dizzy and wept, for my eyes had seen that secret and conjectured object whose name is common to all men but which no man has looked upon—the unimaginable universe.

I felt infinite wonder, infinite pity.

| What is an Object?

Marcus Steinweg

"Trying to grasp a rainbow is the surest way to make it vanish."
Theodor W. Adorno¹

"Comment inventer un objet fascinant, un objet qui tienne l'homme en respect?"
Georges Didi-Huberman²

An object that marks a distance, a chasm, a rupture—what kind of an object is that? Fascination digs a trench between subject and object. The subject is faced with an object that opens a distance not easily bridged. Difference or trench, rupture, chasm or distance—in any case there is a gap that gives way to an absence and a disappearance, a non-identity and an unstable presence. The objectivity of the object cannot be compared to a constant entity. It is characterized by all manner of fractures and what it presents is this fragility, this instability and contingency. Clearly the question of the object is tied to that of the subject, so long as the subject is defined as that which can become an object in its own right, namely by reflecting upon itself as a consciousness of objects. The Cartesian formula *ego cogito me cogitare cogitatum* expresses precisely this: I think myself (am thought) as a subject that thinks an object. At the same time, I think myself (am thought) as something other than only an object, in so far as I can objectify myself. In the possibility of self-objectification, the subject transcends its status as object and moves toward its status as subject. Opening with this self-awareness is the space of the future self-awareness metaphysics, which anchors the objectivity of the object—the objectness of the object—in an instance of transcendence that has been called transcendental subjectivity. This thinking has often been defined as epistemology. Yet clearly what we are dealing with is ontology, with the object of knowledge's constitution of being within the subject of knowledge. The condition of the possibility of the knowledge of the object is the condition of the possi-

lity of its objectivity. The objectivity of the object—its being—is established in the subjectivity—in the being—of the subject. In *Après la finitude* (2006), Quentin Meillassoux calls this position correlationism. Correlationism reduces the reality of the objective to a transcendental instance of enabling, which is the subject. Kant, but also Heidegger (whose *Sein* needs *Dasein* as a site for clearing³) are the sort of correlationists that cannot imagine an object without a subject, in that they—despite the Heideggerian critique of modern subjectivity—developed a subject or *Dasein*-centric thinking that contemporary thought has begun to counter with a new materialism or realism. And no doubt, the transcendental empiricism or materialism of Gilles Deleuze was already an attempt along these lines, an effort to explode correlationism in order to evoke a subject-independent realm of objects. The object—that is first and foremost the Other. And wherever there is an Other or Others, there is a narcissistic wound. The object cannot be reduced to the subject and its capacity for knowledge. Flashing within the object is the non-subjective, the heterogeneous or alien that defies any valid understanding. Thus the Greek *antikeimenon* can be interpreted as this resistance, as this thing that locks itself in. The *antikeimenon* rebels against being reduced to a subject. It resists homogenization in a subject perspective that objectifies reality in so far as it conceives of objectification as the—scientific or non-scientific—understanding of "world", whereas here, "world" is a name for the totality of objects. And yet even correlationist thought acknowledges that there is a side of the object that is turned away from the subject. The Kantian noumenon—the thing-in-itself—is an example of the intelligible aspect of the object as accessible to the subject. It is the problematic X that points to a kind of ontological unavailability. We now know that the unavailability applies to more than simply an object that is external to the subject: the subject itself is unavailable, it addresses itself without possession of self, it is—as Lacan and Derrida have shown—dislocated/dismantled in relation to itself. There is a crack that runs through the subject, a fracture marking its incongruence, its foreignness to itself. Joining Freud and Lacan, Julia Kristeva addresses foreignness or uncanniness—these ghost-like occupants at the heart of the subject, a kind of abject object—as its displaced owner: "With Freud indeed, foreignness, an uncanny one, creeps into the tranquillity of reason itself [...]. Henceforth, we know that we are foreigners to ourselves".⁴ The determining factor is the apriorism of the visitation, the non-"deferred action" of the phantomatic co-occupant. We can speak of an unconscious that pre-figures every knowledge construction and every self-addressing undertaken by the subject qua subject. The basis for its facts is full

of holes, right from the start. Establishing this requires twice as much courage. First, the courage to confront an irreducible inconsistency that clouds all evidence of the subject. Its knowledges are not anchored in absolute awareness. They are floating architectures without a transcendental foundation. As Derrida—and others—have repeated again and again: There is no absolute meaning, no fundamental origin, no transcendental signifier. The tear in the present means precisely this: That there is always something missing or absent, that every present is permeated by a non-present.⁵ It also means that the tendency to crack is inherent to the subject, the (original) breaking of its narcissistic integrity. Part of this process of subjectification is the subject's disengagement from substance. In *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Hegel describes the first step of this disengagement process as a transition of the spirit or of the absolute from consciousness to self-consciousness, from in-itself to for-itself. The transition is essentially appropriation of the self: the consciousness reveals itself as the subject of its consciousness activity. It emancipates itself from mere bondage to the in-itself of objects of consciousness and grasps itself as an essentially active consciousness-of-object, or -subject. In psychoanalytic terms, the subject's self-comprehension can be characterized as the switch from childish primary narcissism to "object love". The process of becoming a subject also consists in the ability to open oneself to the dimensions of the non-subjective, to the order of objects, without immediately regressing to the internalization of objects. This opening marks the primary narcissistic subject's withdrawal from its autoerotic, object-alien disposition. The subject frees itself from the "fixation of libido on one's own body and person," in other words, from its "general and original condition," which Freud refers to as primitive narcissism.⁶ The emancipation becomes possible in the subject's changing from its self-disintegrating, instrumental object-relations and assuming the risky position of object love, thereby constituting itself as subject for the first time. What does this mean for a theory of objects? How to think an object in a horizon of fractured presence? I would like to distinguish between the following three types of objects: 1. the fact object, 2. the heterogeneous object, 3. the fascinating object.

1. The Fact Object

The "fact object" is what I would call any object that is identifiable within established language-games. It is the senses-mediated phenomenon of which we know at least something, if not everything; it can be the table or the cloud, but also the sky or the dream. Fact objects are so named because they are acknowledged as facts, and

are therefore ontologically inconsistent. The precarious consistency of the facts of fact objects is due to a communicative consensus that regulates and guarantees both its theoretical and practical communicability. The relative inconsistency of the content of my dreams does nothing to change the fact that I dreamed, that I can—if vaguely—recall and communicate this dream. Even if the meaning of the dream—or what one would call the meaning—remains dim, the fact that I dreamed has a certain indubitability. Fact objects are objects that limit the play of doubt because they bring an unquestionableness with them. It is inherent to the fact object that it remains commensurable. It is—at least minimally—determinable. It is—at least for the time being—definable. At the horizon of language and culture in which it is perceived and communicated, it benefits from a socio-consensual solidity that confers it the status of the known. One could also speak of a homogeneity of fact objects, so long as the fact world is a space of instituted commensurabilities and consistencies. The fact object is homogeneous due to its relative or relational uniformity, which allows it to maintain its identifiability within the constituted level of certainties. Fact objects are identity-stable, even if every object can suddenly and unexpectedly appear in its opacity. So long as the subject disrupts the handling of—to quote Heidegger—the ready-to-hand fact object in order to allow it to become an object of reflection, then the aspect of familiarity tips over into the unfamiliar; diversity and heterogeneity flash.

2. The Heterogeneous Object

The heterogeneous object is not entirely divorced from the fact object. It marks the reverse side of the fact object, its incommensurability, which is irreducible to established commensurabilities. In *Nausea* (1938), Sartre describes this intrusion of the unfamiliar into the familiar, the unusual into the usual, as an experience of the "unique personality" of things. For Antoine Roquentin, the book's protagonist, the experience causes his reality to lose unambiguity, familiarity and consistency:

"Something has happened to me, I can't doubt it any more. It came as an illness does, not like an ordinary certainty, not like anything evident. It came cunningly, little by little; I felt a little strange, a little put out, that's all. Once established it never moved, it stayed quiet, and I was able to persuade myself that nothing was the matter with me, that it was a false alarm. And now, it's blossoming. I don't think the historian's trade is much given to psychological analysis. In our work we have to do only with sentiments in the

whole to which we give generic titles such as Ambition and Interest. And yet if I had even a shadow of self-knowledge, I could put it to good use now.

For instance, there is something new about my hands, a certain way of picking up my pipe or fork. Or else it's the fork which now has a certain way of having itself picked up, I don't know. A little while ago, just as I was coming into my room, I stopped short because I felt in my hand a cold object which held my attention through a sort of personality. I opened my hand, looked: I was simply holding the doorknob. This morning in the library, when the Self-Taught Man came to say good morning to me, it took me ten seconds to recognize him. I saw an unknown face, barely a face. Then there was his hand like a fat white worm in my own hand. I dropped it almost immediately and the arm fell back flabbily."⁷

The heterogeneous object is an object with a "unique personality" or a life of its own. It is an object that is articulated as a subject, an object that—in whatever way—begins to speak, that claims and demands something, confounds or undertakes. An object that punctures the homogeneous texture of facts as a foreign body while suing for evidence, its indispensability and normalcy. "The heterogeneous," Jean-Luc Nancy writes, "is not a matter of use and exchange: it is a matter of experience."⁸ An object of experience of this kind destabilizes the subject's experience precisely because it does not come from a kind of absolute Outside, from a foreign world, but belongs wholly and entirely—though in a rather disruptive way—to the world of facts. An experience that does not destabilize is not an experience. This destabilization can also occur without commotion and the pathos of a caesura. There are imperceptible, quiet, even discrete revolutions that seize the subject in an elemental way and shake it to the core, but these happen in the mode of an unapparent chain of events rather than in the form of a radical, irreversible break. They are immanent concussions, an intrinsic calling-into-question of the subject. Silent, but efficient transformations that reconfigure its entire reality.

The heterogeneous object reveals itself to the subject as an alien that has long been a part of the subject and its world. It speaks to the subject by telling it something of its world, not trans-mundane improbabilities, but rather the incommensurability of the established layer of commensurability that we address as reality without assuring us of its irreality, its ontological inconsistency. The heterogeneous object can be an artwork, so long as what we expect from the artwork—wouldn't one have to, and don't we?—is for it to be something besides a stripped-down fact object. The experi-

ence of art is tied to the experience of the heterogeneous, to the experience of that which necessarily confounds and disturbs.

In his posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), Adorno articulates it as follows: "The epistemological critique of idealism [...] which assigns the status of primacy to the object, is not directly applicable to art. An object in art and an object in empirical reality are two entirely different things. In art an object is a man-made product containing elements of empirical reality while at the same time changing their constellation, which is a twofold process of dissolution and reconstruction."⁹ The artwork implies empirical reality; it belongs wholly to the zone of facts, and yet it defines itself as incommensurable with it and heterogeneous. It reconstructs reality, displaces it, dissolves it. It transforms that from which it is made, thereby asserting itself not as an idealistic or a realistic entity, but as an arbitrary look at it, as a radical redefinition of existence, as a thing that demands and articulates its distance to reality by intensifying its relationship with it.

3. The Fascinating Object

An object that fascinates—what kind of object is that? What does fascination mean? Fascination, we have said, marks the split between subject and object. To be precise, it confronts the subject with its objectness. It heterogenizes the subject, reconciles it with basic heterogeny. Fascination objectifies the subject; it hollows it out, de-substantiates it, forces it over to the other side—to the side of the object—so that it can grasp that this side is the only one that exists—the only existing world—so long as the subject remains completely beholden to it, even as it insists on keeping a distance from the object reality.

The fascinating object is the subject-turned-object that casts a spell, transforming the subjects it encounters into objects. To fall under an object's spell is to become an object. The fascinating subject leads the subject beyond itself. Not into submission, but into a kind of self-objectification that the subject reconciles with its inconsistency, with the ontological impotence that marks its being, with the material dust that it is, with the contingency that it owes itself to, with the arbitrariness of the situation into which it strays, with the opaque future it moves within and with its dark origins, which it dismisses as cosmic coincidence and a singularity freed from meaning. In fascination, the subject becomes familiar with its incommensurability and indefiniteness, with its—however culturally mediated—naturalness and materiality, so that it begins to identify itself as an object among objects.

Fascination is the gaze of things directed at us. In it, the hierarchy of subject and object crumbles. Correlationism dissolves. Fascination constitutes the community of things—their cosmic connectedness—through a divided fate, the pathos of which minimizes awareness of the indifference of energetic processes: There are only objects, there is no sense.

Notes

- 1** Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*; Translated by C. Lenhardt. New York: Routledge, 1984, p. 122.
- 2** Georges Didi-Huberman: "How to invent a fascinating object, an object that keeps a respectful distance from man?", in: *L'homme qui marchait dans la couleur*, Paris 2001, p.20.
- 3** In *Contributions*, Heidegger defines the event—the common bond between *Sein* and *Dasein*—in terms of *Brauch* (usage) and *Zugehörigkeit* (belonging). *Sein* needs *Dasein*, whereas *Dasein* is part of *Sein*. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy* (From Enowning); Translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. GA 65, Bloomington 2000.
- 4** Julia Kristeva: *Strangers to Ourselves*; Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York 1991, p. 113.
- 5** Should we not ask ourselves whether the ("deconstructive") hypostasis of difference / otherness / absence—which started the unravelling of the hypostasis of identity, individuality, and presence—is not overly bound to a pathos of radical novelty or foreignness and the (empty) gesture of revolutionary absoluteness?
- 6** Sigmund Freud: *The Libido Theory and Narcissism*, in: Sigmund Freud: *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*; Translated by G. Stanley Hall. New York 1920.
- 7** Jean-Paul Sartre: *Nausea*; Translated by Lloyd Alexander. New York, 1964, p. 4.
- 8** Jean-Luc Nancy: *An Experience at Heart*, in: Jean-Luc Nancy: *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*; Translated by Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant and Michael B. Smith. New York 2007, p. 77.
- 9** Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*. I.c., p. 336.

|| Some Thoughts on the Transformational Psyche of Objects

Clémentine Deliss

In March 2010, Antje Majewski and I travelled to Senegal. Our journey together was a spontaneous decision: I aimed to go to Dakar to talk to colleagues from the Laboratoire Agit'Art—in particular, the artists El Hadji Sy and Issa Samb.¹ Antje had plans to return to West Africa to shoot a film. So we decided to go together. Before we left for Senegal, she took part in a residency programme I curated in Edinburgh, which involved engaging with what might be called the *caput mortuum* phase in artistic production, that intermediary and sometimes prolonged limbo that contains the residue of a previous work and the tentative shift into new ideas.² During her time at Randolph Cliff, Antje came into contact with a medium who lived nearby and took part in a séance. She also met botanist Henry Noltie who had spent extended periods in Bhutan and Southern China. Henry would bring back plants for the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh and all kinds of other stuff for his own domestic museum in Edinburgh, an environment one might best describe as a Wunderkammer. Then there were countless books Antje bought in local thrift shops, plans for performances once back in Berlin, and the long conversations we both had about the photographer Leonore Mau and her companion, the writer Hubert Fichte, who had visited Dakar several times in the 1970s. Antje and I met up two weeks later at Charles de Gaulle airport. She travelled with a large pink suitcase filled with several artefacts that she had acquired on a previous journey to China. She also took with her a large conch from Africa. All these things had the same hand-held size only some were heavy and otherworldly like a meteorite, and others were fragile and made from clay, shell or vegetable root—mainly natural materials that emanate from the centre of the earth. Her action of bringing these objects to Dakar was curious for several reasons. On a superficial level, they cont-

rasted with the mass of Asian merchandise imported into Senegal. Today cheap Chinese commodities such as textiles and clothing, plastic household products and electronic equipment flood the markets in West Africa. The ideology of short-span, low-cost response to the daily requirements of living is embedded in these ubiquitous goods. Yet here was an artist bringing examples of Chinese material culture to an African metropolis that did not feature in this wholesale souk of domestic appliances and factory-produced knick-knacks. The objects owned by Antje Majewski and transported across the seas in her personal luggage appeared more as psychic carriers of the complexity of human relations. Their talismanic character transmitted a surprising banality and an exoticism at the same time. Placed on the hotel table in Dakar they appeared like an assemblage of objects trapped in their significance between the mundanity of daily existence and the intensity of ritual and symbolic projection.

This provided the second unusual provocation: Antje wasn't looking to purchase authentic artefacts from Senegalese street markets to take back to Germany, but was overturning the routes of trade and communication by introducing six or seven foreign articles as conversation pieces. Her sessions in Dakar with artists Issa Samb and El Hadji Sy, which she recorded on video, are structured around an interpellation of these unfamiliar objects. Placing them on a table, she directs the perception of her interlocutor to a display that brings to mind a museological vitrine yet connotes the intimacy of a dressing table, a mantelpiece, or even an altar, something quite individual and private that stands outside of a public or commercial context. Her action arouses a mixture of observational inquiry and sentient response. In the film *La coquille* with Issa Samb, there develops an intensity of transfer and emotive association between her and the artist, which contrasts with the way we imagine parallel dialogues to take place between anthropologist and informant. Majewski's questions preclude any attempt at objectivity. On the contrary, she presupposes an unknown dimension, a language or meaning beyond the cultural, something for which words alone will fail. She tries to dissolve context, to bracket out the apparent meanings of the objects in order to reveal an additional latent language. In effect, what she undertakes in her interviews is a form of reverse encoding, turning classifications inside out to expose the psyche of objects, the stored signs and memories that reside in their morphologies, their structures, and their repeated evocation.

Yet our story in Senegal could begin with a journey eighty years earlier. The Mission Dakar-Djibouti was an expedition mounted by the French cultural ministry in 1931 to fill the gap in the Africa

collections of the newly established Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, known today as the Musée du Quai Branly. Over the course of two years, a polymathic team of French ethnographers, artists, numismatians, linguists, and ex-military crossed the African continent by car from Dakar to Djibouti returning to Paris laden with over 3,500 artefacts, hundreds of hours of sound recordings, photographic plates, and extensive written documentation. Out of this remarkable booty an analytic discourse would develop that would combine exhibition and laboratory functions under the one roof. Alongside innovative anthropological research, displays at the Musée projected new stages onto the world aimed at nurturing a populist understanding of the colonialised Other and its various unknown cultures. If African objects had been in vogue for over thirty years, here was an institutionalised inquiry that could merge the social sciences with high modernism and French taste. It was none other than Josephine Baker who, in 1934, opened the first exhibition to be mounted in Paris with artefacts acquired on the trans-African Mission Dakar-Djibouti.³

The notion that the material object contained a condensation of cultural meaning, which like a secret or testimonial was waiting to be revealed by the ethnographer, influenced anthropological paradigms in France until well into the 1950s. This was a European trend, too, for a parallel tendency can be located in the German Kulturkreis method generated by Leo Frobenius in the 1930s and later Adolf Jensen. Both sought to map the existence of traditional artefacts and practices across continents, creating affinities between technology, ergology, language and myth that would link the morphologies and aesthetics of distant sites to one another. Frobenius believed he had discovered an African counterpart to the Greek city of Atlantis at Ife in Nigeria. This ideational approach stood in marked contrast to British Functionalism, which emphasised fieldwork and individual participant observation as the key advances in social anthropology. Yet, it was once again in France, with the advent of structuralism, that Claude Lévi-Strauss would finally shift the debate onto immaterial forms of knowledge. As he stated in a lecture presented to UNESCO in 1954, it was now far easier to study in a systematic manner languages, belief systems, attitudes and the personalities of other cultures than to acquire their bows and arrows, drums, necklaces or figurines.⁴

In many respects, 20th-century developments in anthropology are characterised by the tension that builds up between the initial conception of objects as *witnesses* of culture, and the growing recognition of less stable conceptions of human agency and subjectivity that increasingly take centre stage.⁵ This condition produces moments of deeply existential inquiry, when vagabonding anthro-

pologists or ethno-poets write storylines that highlight misunderstandings—or indeed invent them—in order to create a crisis in consciousness and ‘out’ colonial presuppositions of reportage and objectivity. Critical self-reflexivity in this form returns every now and again to haunt anthropology’s penchant towards orthodox, positivist methodologies. It begins in the 1920s with the sexual divulgations apparent in the diaries of Bronislaw Malinowski, incorporates Victor Segalen’s literary poetics of exoticism, Michel Leiris’s chronicle *L’Afrique Fantôme*, and extends into the 1970s and 80s with Swiss ethno-psychoanalysts (Fritz Morgenthaler, Paul Parin, Mario Erdheim), the writings of Hans-Peter Duerr on the irrational, and the seminal publications of Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs (Qumran Verlag, Frankfurt). In an anthropomorphic turn, the unease of appropriation is transferred from ethnography’s earlier node of analysis—the material artefact—onto another subject of interpretation: the human psyche. As Michel Leiris writes so succinctly: “I would rather be possessed than talk about possession”.⁶

In the 1960s, just after Lévi-Strauss signals the shift in focus from objects onto the immaterial, a wave of experimentation takes over debates in several African countries. With Independence there is an intensified exchange of ideas between former colonisers and colonised and an effervescence of new cultural initiatives. Intellectuals, scientists, doctors, musicians and artists travel between continents, pan-African meetings start to mobilise minds, and African cultural practitioners activate a new aesthetics and politics of nationalism, taking over former colonial buildings such as hospitals, universities and art academies.⁷ Medical experiments with electroshock treatment, LSD and other synthetic pharmaceuticals are carried out in various countries and Africa becomes once again a test-bed for new models and prototypes. South African therapist David Cooper, who works with Glaswegian R.D. Laing, promotes anti-psychiatry with therapy sessions that involve listening to life narratives and searching for moments of radical dissatisfaction. Suddenly an ethnographic account parallels with an anti-psychiatric dossier as, in each case, knowledge is produced on oral testimonials, on talking and listening. In 1967, Cooper coordinates the Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation attended by R.D. Laing, Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Marcuse, and Stokely Carmichael from the Black Panthers. Sartre is scheduled to appear but cancels at the last minute.

Imagine Senegal at the same moment in time. With the politics of Léopold Sédar Senghor, the new poet-president, we have an unparalleled state investment of 33% into the cultural architectonics of Independence. The Musée Dynamique—a geometric reduction of

a classicist temple located on the Corniche of the Senegalese capital—is inaugurated by André Malraux in 1966 with an exhibition of archaeology from Senegal and Mali. Across the road from this museum, at the centre of Dakar’s large university campus, there is the extraordinary neurological clinic of Fann, which neighbours the laboratories of Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop who pioneered carbon-dating methods in Africa.

I first heard about Fann in the early 1990s when I started working with artists from the collective Laboratoire Agit’Art. They described how they had been involved in therapy sessions and workshops at the clinic. The crossover between painting, performance and experimental psychiatry was an active ingredient in the development of their work as a group. According to El Hadji Sy, the sessions they participated in during the late 1970s had titles like “The teaching of deviance”, or “Premature deviance and loss of consciousness”.⁸ And here we have our link to Germany for in the 1970s the German writer Hubert Fichte, who died of AIDS in 1986, travels to Dakar to interview the first director of the clinic, the Frenchman Henri Collob, as well as various African neurologists and psychiatrists such as Dr. Momar Gueye, who continues to direct the unit today. In this English translation from the German edition of *Psyche*, Henri Collob describes the clinic to Hubert Fichte:

“Fann is (...) a hospital that cares for those people who cannot be helped by the usual methods. These are individuals that we describe as existing in a state of transculturation. (...) We use classic anti-psychotic drugs up to a point. But mainly patients are treated here without electroshock treatment or anti-psychotic drugs. We use a kind of group therapy, ‘an ambient therapy’ (thérapie d’ambiance). (...) However, sometimes electroshock treatment satisfies the desire for an initiatory death, like a symbolic death, something that in traditional African societies precedes every new phase of transformation or development, and that can take place at the start of a psychiatric illness as much as it can signify the healing of it.”⁹

In an unexpected manner, the journey to Dakar with Antje Majewski would highlight an uncanny complementarity in our distinct fields of inquiry. Whilst Antje transported artefacts to different locations and questioned the immanence of things beyond their cultural origins, I was plunged back into my earlier research on the history of anthropology and the looting that led to the constitution of French ethnographic collections. Yet if the Mission of 1931-33 began in Dakar, the capital city on the West Coast of Africa, the bulk of the objects that were brought back by the French team came from other locations. Paradoxically, ‘tribal art’, that category of coveted material objects found in so many Western museums,

features only barely when it comes to the geographical entity called Senegal. The odd piece of gold jewellery, or a headpiece built from raffia for a masquerade in the Casamance, the southern region of the country, are the most likely exhibits one may see, if at all. In contrast, the aesthetic practices that I had recognised since I first went to Dakar nearly twenty years ago, and that evoke a consistency through history right into the contemporary period, seem to reside in philosophical and spiritual modes of rhetoric and poetic speech that, combined with ephemeral materials, have an apposite hold over time. They contradict the ethnographic museum’s focus on permanence and collection, conservation and preservation. In the Laboratoire Agit’Art, tattered stained fragments of cloth with loose threads and dangling frames, weathered oxidised metals, washed-out photographs and other relics are all objects of performance that have little value beyond their initial mise-en-scène. And yet, the courtyard in Dakar—the location that proves so central to Antje Majewski’s video *La coquille*—can never be merely a cemetery for discarded performance materials. Instead her filmic analysis shows how each of the minor objects in the courtyard is inhabited by a relationship to the living, activated nearly imperceptibly by artist Issa Samb as he alters their placement on a daily basis. The static, commemorative understanding of the museum as a holding or store is dissolved into the fluid psyche of objects, flickering between perception, interrogation, and a mapping of movement across time and space. For, as Issa Samb likes to repeat, who is to tell us that the leaf that falls from the tree is not our sister? And so it is, he suggests, that the artist becomes a tool rather than a producer of art, a medium through which metamorphosis is expressed. The action of transferring objects from one location to another, from China to Senegal for example, enables a form of visual and semantic putrescence to emerge, a condition through which new metaphors, new associations and ultimately new freedoms can be negotiated. “Each time an individual moves an object from one place to another, they participate in the changing of the world,” states Issa Samb in Majewski’s film. “An object is charged with history”, he asserts, “with the culture that produced it originally and, as such, it is a constructed object.” “Objects *do* speak”, he says to Antje, “but they speak their own language. Like the wind speaks. Like birds speak.” The absence of resolution between the understanding of an artefact by reference to its cultural context, and the parallel residual of languages it contains, with their encoded interpretations, evokes the transformational psychology of relations that Antje Majewski so acutely transmits in her work. Objects affect our environment, so that to remediate them by introducing them to a foreign context is to unexpectedly heal the scars of history.

Endnotes

1

Formed in Dakar in the late 1970s, The Laboratoire Agit'Art includes Issa Samb, El Hadji Sy, Abdou Bâ, the late filmmaker Djibril Diop Mambéty, and several other members. I was asked to become a member in 1995 after working with El Sy and Issa Samb on the festival *africa95* which included events in Senegal and the exhibition *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. See *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa* Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1995, and Konsthalle Malmö 1995/6, catalogue, co-produced by Whitechapel Art Gallery and Flammarion, 1995. Plus texts by Issa Samb in: *Metronome No.1*, London 1997; *Metronome No. 3*, Tempolabor Kunsthalle Basel 1999; *Metronome No. 7, The Bastard*, Oslo 200. Further information on the Laboratoire Agit'Art can be found in the catalogue of *Global Conceptualism*, ed. Okwui Enwezor, 1999; and the catalogue of *Laboratorium*, ed. H. U. Obrist, B. van den Linden, 2001.

2

Artists in residence at Randolph Cliff between 2008-2010 included Ei Arakawa, Anna Barriball, Christian Flamm, Zvi Goldstein, Franz Graf, Joseph Kosuth, Mark Leckey, Laura Letinsky, Antje Majewski, Manfred Pernice, Dan Peterman, David Schutter, Dexter Sinister, Frances Stark, Thomas Struth, Stefan Tcherepnin, Mark Wallinger. Randolph Cliff was supported by Edinburgh College of Art, the National Galleries of Scotland, and patron Charles Asprey.

3

For analyses of the French discourse around material culture and ethnology, and the roles adopted by museum directors Paul Rivet and Georges Henri Rivière in the 1930s, see the writings of Jean Jamin, James Clifford, and Nélia Dias. For an exceptional account of fieldwork on the Mission Dakar-Djibouti, read Michel Leiris', *L'Afrique Fantôme*, Gallimard, Paris 1934. Also, Clémentine Deliss, PhD Thesis, *Exoticism and Eroticism: Representations of the Other in Early Twentieth Century French Anthropology*, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London 1988.

4

Claude Lévi-Strauss, (1954), 1958, "Place de l'anthropologie dans les sciences sociales et problèmes posés par son enseignement" in: *Les Sciences sociales dans l'enseignement supérieur*. Paris, UNESCO. Republished in *Structural Anthropology*.

5

Marcel Griaule, 1931: "Une collection d'objets systématiquement recueillis est donc un riche recueil de 'pièces à conviction', dont la réunion forme des archives plus révélatrices et plus sûres que les archives écrites, parce qu'il s'agit ici d'objets authentiques et autonomes, qui n'ont pu être fabriqués pour les besoins de la cause et caractérisent mieux que quoi que ce soit les types de civilisation." See Clémentine Deliss, op cit.

6

In: *L'Afrique Fantome*, Gallimard, Paris 1934.

7

The colonial exportation of art schools to territories abroad corresponded to the triad of empire, education and trade. With the current return to educational expansionism, today's interpretation of this triad would read globalisation, learning, and the cultural industries. See Clémentine Deliss: *Roaming, Prelusive, Permeable: Future Academy*, in: *Art School. Propositions for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Steven Henry Madoff, MIT Press, 2009.

8

El Hadji Sy in conversation with the author, Dakar, March 2009.

9

Psyche, Hubert Fichte, first published by Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, Qumran Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1980, and later by S. Fischer 1990.

III

Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece

Excerpt

Friedrich Hölderlin

“Do you know, he said, among other things, why I have never cared about death? I feel a life in me which no god created and no mortal begot. I believe that we consist through ourselves, and that it is only of our own free pleasure that we are so intimately connected with all that is.

I have never heard you say such a thing before, I replied.

And what, he went on, what would this world itself be, if it were not a harmony of free beings? if from the beginning the living did not weave together, of their own joyful impulse, *One* full-voiced life, how wooden would it not be, how cold? what a heartless artifact?

So it would be true here in the highest sense, I answered, that without freedom all is dead.

Yes yes, he cried, why! not a blade of grass sprouts up if it has not its own seed of life within it! And how much more in me! and therefore, dear! because I feel free in the highest sense, without a beginning, therefore I believe to be endless, to be indestructible. If a potter’s hand made me, he may smash his vessel whenever he pleases. But what lives must be unbegotten, must be of divine nature in its seed, raised above all power, and all art, and therefore be inviolable, eternal.

Every man has his mysteries, dear Hyperion! his more secret thoughts; these were mine; ever since I have thought.

What lives is ineradicable, remains free in its deepest form of servitude, remains *One* even if you split it to the base, remains unwounded even if you pierce it to the marrow and its being flies victorious from your hands.”

IV

Half Empty

Fragment

Łukasz Gorczyca, Łukasz Ronduda

Oskar took a moment to think. A bit later he wrote back to Warpechowski:

Well, an artist is like a cigarette filter, I don't really need to imagine anything, I just let everything there is flow through me.

Warpechowski was taken aback. He'd find such declarations—manifestations—of the artist's intentional weakness annoying. For that matter, he and Oskar differed significantly. What impressed Warpechowski was power, the artist's causal force, which he would indeed try to visualise in his very own works. Artists cannot act like puppets in the hands of art officials; they should be the ones to consciously mould their institutional environment. Warpechowski was growing increasingly irritated—what the hell is this idea of that mega-corporation supposed to mean, that international trade headquarters Polish and International Art Plc?! And now yet another childish curatorial conspiracy! Curatorial performance?! How can they even imagine anything? If they've already been imagined themselves, it's already been done by Freisler, right after he left for Sweden! Paweł Freisler!¹⁷

Warpechowski gave an inner smile at the reminiscence of his friend from the long bygone years. That dreamy, somewhat absent look in Paweł's eyes ... Add to that the glasses to emphasise his intellectual discipline, and the jovial, but respect-building, vast beard, which he would instinctively pluck with his hand while listening to what his interlocutor had to say. And on top of that, this amazing story with the egg, when Freisler resolved to roll out a perfect steel egg instead of an enormous spatial form during one of the biennials in Elbląg. Later he ordered Wiesław Gołas to incu-

bate it, and Belmondo to carry it on the hood of his car. No-one ever knew for certain which part of this story was true, which was false, and which was empty... When was that? Right towards the end of the 60s? And when did Paweł disappear? When did he leave for Sweden? Maybe in 1976? At the time he wanted to ultimately turn his art into a legend, so he came up with the idea of a robot that would attend conferences and tell stories of Paweł Freisler's artistic practice. He embarked on building a primitive android from lamps taken out of a TV set, wires, clay and mud.¹⁸ It seems, though, that the robot proved faulty. One day it would work, the other it would refuse to. And then at one point it disappeared from the basement altogether. Paweł came to terms with the loss, but it didn't take him by surprise when several years afterwards the android paid him a visit and told him he had been touring the world and lecturing on the artist.¹⁹

Warpechowski recalled this story, which he had, after all, learnt from Freisler himself; it had a somewhat relaxing appeal to it.

[user Warpechowski wrote:] *You yourself are Freisler's story, which is coming true right now!*

[user Warpechowski wrote:] *Are you still there????!!*

[user oskar wrote:] *Robots are taking control.*

Oskar, already merrily stoned, was not able to fully control his output. Ashamed of not managing to understand his own words, he immediately logged off. Striving to defend himself against an utter loss of free will, he stood up and made his way to the toilet. He slammed the door behind him willing to hide even deeper, to shield himself from the excess of stimuli from the outer world.

Notes

17

Paweł Freisler belonged to the first generation of Polish conceptual artists. In his practice, he was determined to utterly dematerialise the work of art. He would never document his works. He wanted his art to exist exclusively as gossip, as a legend in the immaterial, mental space of conversation and fantasy. Freisler was fascinated by infecting people with an extraordinary story (regardless of whether it was true or not), and thus creating a community of insiders. The artist reminisced: *I have specialised a specialist in myself in being and not being at once... as we all know, a legend is usually secondary to life, generally speaking. It's a side-product. So it was sometimes the case that I began my work with a legend, that is, from the end, and finished with the beginning, the facts. A simple reversal in time. I was answering the question about presence by being absent with my own voice or gesture. Presence through absence; in the course of time the distance changed into boycott, a total refusal.* This total refusal brought about the ultimate physical disappearance of Freisler in the mid-1970s and his transformation into a legend, passed on by word of mouth among a handful of people (e.g. Piotr Uklański and Oskar Dawicki heard it from Warpechowski). As of the mid-1960s, before he took his place there himself, Freisler gradually shifted ever more things that were of an importance to him from the material reality into the realm of his imagination. He began with “Galeria”, which he had been running in 24 Krakowskie Przedmieście St. in Warsaw, to dematerialise it in 1973 and change it into “Muzeum Zero”, i.e. pure conceptual essence of a gallery, which occupied a permanent position within the space of concepts and fantasies stretching across his very own mind. Freisler said: *[...]even today I walk to this place in my head to wash myself, to regenerate. Muzeum Zero still exists as something of a source of crystal clear water.*

18

In 1976, right after he disappeared from Poland and appeared in Sweden, Freisler resolved to carry out his very last material artistic gesture. However, the gesture was to serve exclusively the purpose of creating immaterial legends and fantastic apocrypha about the mysterious artist. In the basement of his home, he embarked on constructing a prototype of the robot called Professor. The android's mission was to do all the “donkey work” (as Freisler would refer to contacts with art institutions, which to him had nothing in common with art whatsoever), i.e. touring the world and spreading gossip and legends about Freisler's ever new achievements. Thus, the artist hidden in his own mental Muzeum Zero, unbothered by anybody, could retain an intimate relation with the essence of art and existence.

19

In 2006, Paweł Freisler received a phone call from Łukasz Ronduda. The young researcher began the conversation, but at the very same time, it was the long unheard and unseen idea of Robot-Professor that began speaking to Freisler in his imagination. It was the Professor seated at the Muzeum Zero who slowly, in a way full of manifest discomfort, started to present his incompetently materialised representation, secondary towards its very self. The concept of Robot-Professor was visibly uneasy with the appearance of its material incarnation, which, as a consequence, led to Freisler suffering from discomfort and a headache, since the idea was far more real for him than its material version that was attacking him on the phone just then. But Ronduda did not quite immediately grasp the confusion that his appearance had brought about in the conceptual Muzeum Zero. He claimed with astonishing arrogance that for the previous several years he had been dealing extensively with Freisler's practice and was in need of further information. The artist refused to be taken in. He was sure that he was talking to the android he had created himself, who was apparently suffering from amnesia. Later on, in the course of a number of difficult conversations, the artist tried to explain to Łukasz Ronduda that the latter was nothing but a product of his imagination, suffering from memory loss, being the Robot-Professor created by Freisler. So far, neither of them has managed to convince the other that he was right. Still, Freisler is not willing to give in, which has recently been proved again by his e-mail to the artist Antje Majewski, who invited him to the exhibition she was preparing: “Show at Kunsthaus Graz. Date: Sun 24 Oct 2010, 17:56:12 +0200; Dear Antje, I need a break after your moving visit... now, slowly and without hurry I will proceed with writing down all details... OK?; I have asked Łukasz Ronduda if he is interested in representing me in your created situation. I think it would be excellent if you get in touch with Łukasz Ronduda, if I have any rights to influence your imagination, and invite him for lectures. His interpretations of my work are very accurate. Łukasz Ronduda moved back in time with his appearance and character, way of talking and intellectual manner; whether he wants it or not, he became a prototype of my work which I call The Professor. This work is constantly ripe... It is a fact that I have not foreseen that the prototype will be a living person. Łukasz does not know this work; not many do. I have told him about it in a cafe in Warsaw two years ago. I am sure that Łukasz have noticed the fact in his memory. He knows how to read my carte blanche. I am not sure if he wants to take part in this, and I accept whatever he answers (if he will answer)”. [e-mail in its original version – translator's note]

Oskar zamyślił się. Po chwili odpisał Warpechowskiemu:

No, artysta jest jak filtr od papierosa, ja właściwie nic nie muszę wymyślać, ja tylko przepuszczam przez siebie to co jest.

Warpechowski zdziwił się. Denerwowały go takie deklaracje, manifestacje intencjonalnej słabości artysty. Pod tym względem różnili się z Oskarem znacznie. Warpechowskiemu imponowała siła, moc sprawcza artysty, którą zresztą sam starał się wizualizować w swoich pracach. Artysta nie może być marionetką w rękach urzędników sztuki, musi sam świadomie formować swoje instytucjonalne środowisko. Denerwował się coraz bardziej – co to za pomysł tej mega korporacji, centrali handlu zagranicznego, Sztuka Polska i Międzynarodowa S.A.?! A teraz jeszcze ten kolejny dziecinny kuratorski spisek! Kuratorski performance?! Jak oni mogą cokolwiek wymyślać, skoro sami już są wymyśleni, to przecież zrobił już Freisler, zaraz po wyjeździe do Szwecji! Paweł Freisler!¹⁷

Warpechowski uśmiechnął się w myślach na wspomnienie kolegi z dawnych lat. To marzycielskie, nieco nieobecne spojrzenie Pawła... Zarazem, okulary podkreślające intelektualną dyscyplinę i jowialny, ale budzący szacunek, obszerny zarost, który odruchowo, delikatnie skubał dłonią przysłuchując się słowom rozmówcy. I ta niesamowita historia z jajkiem, kiedy Freisler postanowił z okazji kolejnego elbląskiego biennale zamiast wielkiej formy przestrzennej wytoczyć idealne, stalowe jajko. Potem przez rok kazał je wysiadywać Wiesławowi Golasowi, a Belmondo – wozić na masce swego samochodu. Nikt do końca nie wiedział, która część tej historii była prawdziwa, która fałszywa, a która pusta... Kiedy to było? Pod sam koniec lat 60.? A kiedy Paweł zniknął? Kiedy wyjechał do Szwecji? Może w siedemdziesiątym szóstym? Chciał wtedy ostatecznie zamienić swoją sztukę w legendę, wymyślił więc robota, który będzie jeździł po konferencjach i opowiadał historie o twórczości Pawła Freislera. Zaczął konstruować prymitywnego androida z lamp wyciągniętych z telewizora, kabli, gliny i błota.¹⁸ Zdaje się jednak, że ten robot

17 Paweł Freisler należał do pierwszej generacji polskich artystów konceptualnych. W swojej sztuce dążył do całkowitej dematerializacji dzieła sztuki. Nie dokumentował swoich prac. Pragnął, aby jego twórczość istniała jedynie jako plotka, legenda w niematerialnej, mentalnej przestrzeni rozmowy i fantazji. Freislera fascynowało zarazem ludzi niezwykłą (nieważne – prawdziwą czy nieprawdziwą) opowieścią i tworzenie w ten sposób wspólnoty wtajemniczonych. Artysta wspominał: *Wyspecjalizowałem w sobie specjalistę w byciu i niebyciu zarazem... legenda, jak wiadomo, zwykle jest wtórna do, pisząc najkrócej, życia. Jest produktem ubocznym. Bywało więc, iż zaczynałem pracę od legendy, znaczy od końca, a kończyłem na początku, na faktach. Prosta odwrotność w czasie. Odpowiadałem na pytanie o obecność nieobecny własnym głosem czy gestem. Obecność przez nieobecność, dystans z czasem odniósł się w bojkot, całkowitą odmowę. Ta całkowita odmowa wiązała się z ostatecznym fizycznym zniknięciem Freislera w połowie lat 70 i jego przemianą w legendę, przekazywaną z ust do ust, jedynie przez nieliczne (np. Piotr Uklański i Oskar Dawicki usłyszeli ją od Warpechowskiego). Od połowy lat 60., Freisler, zanim sam się tam znalazł, stopniowo przenosił kolejne ważne dla niego rzeczy z rzeczywistości materialnej w świat swojej wyobraźni. Zaczął od prowadzonej przez siebie na Krakowskim Przedmieściu 24 w Warszawie "Galerii", którą w 1973 roku zdematerializował i zamienił w Muzeum Zero, czyli czystą pojęciową esencję galerii, która na trwałe znalazła miejsce w znajdującej się w jego głowie przestrzeni konceptów i fantazji. Freisler mówił: "[...] do dziś chodzę do tego miejsca w mojej głowie aby się obmyć, aby się zregenerować. Muzeum Zero wciąż istnieje, jako coś w rodzaju źródła krystalicznie czystej wody".*

18 W 1976 roku tuż po zniknięciu z Polski i pojawieniu się w Szwecji, Paweł Freisler postanowił wykonać swój ostatni materialny gest artystyczny. Jednakże gest ten miał ściśle służyć kreowaniu

okazał się awaryjny. Raz działał, raz nie. Któregoś dnia zniknął z piwnicy. Paweł pogodził się ze stratą, ale nie był wcale zdziwiony gdy kilka lat temu zgłosił się do niego uwolniony android opowiadając, że jeździ po świecie i wygłasza wykłady na jego temat.¹⁹

Warpechowski przypominał sobie tę historię, którą zresztą znał od samego Freislera, brzmiała cokolwiek uspakajająco.

[Warpechowski napisał(a):] *Oni sami są opowieścią Freislera, która się teraz właśnie urzeczywistnia!*

[Warpechowski napisał(a):] *Jesteś tam???!?!!*

[oskar napisał(a):] *Roboty przejmują kontrolę.*

Oskar, serdecznie już upalony, nie do końca kontrolował co pisze. Zawstydzony, że nie może zrozumieć własnych słów, rozłączył się natychmiast. Usiłując bronić się przed całkowitą utratą woli wstał i skierował się do ubikacji. Demonstracyjnie trzasnął za sobą drzwiami, chcąc jeszcze bardziej się zaszyć, ukryć przed nadmierną ilością bodźców dochodzących ze świata.

niematerialnych legend i fantastycznych apokryfów o tajemniczym artyście. Zaczął w piwnicy swojego domu konstruować prototyp robota o nazwie Profesor. Misją androida miało być odwalanie "czarnej roboty" (tak Freisler określał kontakty z instytucjami sztuki, które jego zdaniem nic ze sztuką nie miały wspólnego) czyli jeżdżenie po świecie i rozprowadzanie legend oraz plotek o kolejnych wyczynach Freislera. W ten sposób sam artysta ukryty w swym mentalnym Muzeum Zero, nie niepokojony przez nikogo, pozostawałby w intymnym stosunku z esencją sztuki i egzystencji.

19 W 2006 roku do Pawła Freislera zadzwonił Łukasz Ronduda. Młody badacz rozpoczął rozmowę, jednak w tej samej chwili w wyobraźni Freislera zaczęła mówić do niego dawno nie słyszana i nie widziana idea Robota-Profesora. To znajdujący się w Muzeum Zero Profesor, powoli, w pełen ostentacyjnego dyskomfortu sposób, rozpoczął reprezentować swoją nieudolnie zmaturalizowaną i wtórą względem siebie reprezentację. Pojęcie Robota-Profesora czuło wyraźny dyskomfort w związku z pojawieniem się swojej materialnej inkarnacji, w związku z tym i Freisler czuł dyskomfort i ból głowy. Ta idea była przecież dla niego realniejsza niż jej materialna, teraz atakująca przez telefon, wersja. Sam Ronduda jednakże nie zorientował się początkowo w zamieszaniu jakie jego pojawienie wywołało w pojęciowym Muzeum Zero. Twierdził z zaskakującą arogancją, iż od kilku lat intensywnie zajmuje się twórczością Freislera i potrzebuje dalszych informacji. Artysta nie dawał się nabrać. Był przekonany, że rozmawia z nim stworzony przez niego samego android, który najwyraźniej stracił pamięć. Później, w toku wielu trudnych rozmów, artysta starał się wytłumaczyć Łukaszowi Rondudzie, że ten ostatni jest jedynie jego wymysłem, że ma amnezję, że jest stworzonym przez niego Robotem-Profesorem. Do tej pory żadna ze stron nie zdołała jednak przekonać drugiej do swojej racji. Mimo to, Freisler nie zamierza ustąpić, czego jednym z ostatnich dowodów jest mejl wysłany przez niego do artystki Antje Majewski, która zaprosiła artystę do udziału w przygotowywanej przez siebie wystawie: „Show at Kunsthau Graz. Date: Sun, 24 Oct 2010 17:56:12 +0200; Dear Antje, I need a break after your moving visit... now, slowly and without hurry I will proceed with writing down all details... OK?; I have asked Łukasz Ronduda if he is interested in representing me in by you created situation. I think that it would be excellent if you get in touch with Łukasz Ronduda, if I have any rights to influence your imagination, and invite him for lectures. His interpretations of my work are very accurate. Łukasz Ronduda moved back in time, with his appearance and character, way of talking and intellectual manner, besides if he wants it or not, became a prototype of my work which I call The Professor. This work constantly ripe... It is a fact that I have not foreseen that the prototype will be a living person. Łukasz do not know this work, not many does. I have told him about it in a cafe in Warsaw two years ago. I am sure that Łukasz have noticed the fact in his memory. He knows how to read my carte blanche. I am not sure if he wants to take a part of this, and I accept whatever he answer (if he will answer)".

V

Why Me?

Ingo Niermann

I squat cross-legged on the ground, with only a fluffy jacket on and a towel wound round my damp hair. I've spread out old cards, diagrams and notes on the ground. I keep looking through everything, marking things, making further notes, and from time to time taking a swig from the bottle of juice standing on the chair beside me. I rewrite my past, and so impinge on the future. The present is the way it is, but depending on where I put the starting and intercept points, the direction of the vectors changes.

There's nothing to be got out of unforgettable moments, they constrain me, and I escape in sleep. I love waking up. Those are seconds or even minutes when I not only feel that life could take quite a different turn, but what a bizarre accident it is that I am actually me.

To prolong this feeling a bit, I have to go as quickly as possible to somewhere that's horribly clean. The only dirt is me. Even just because of my shape alone. A great hunk with long thick stalks of different length sticking out and likewise terminating in lumps with short stalks. The surface polluted with microbes and thoughts a jumble that can't possibly be sorted out.

The garbage called life is so antiquated, so nearly over that I imagine an endless column as a memorial to it. It begins at the bottom with a cherry, a stone on that, a chair, a book, a little starfish shape, a piece of soap, woolly fabric, a party straw, a gymshoe, a roll of loo paper, feathers, a pearl, superglue gone hard and a self-adhesive elephant leg.

I throw myself on the smooth lawn, squash it, foul it up, and imagine how in revenge it is entirely transformed into machines sprou-

ting out of the ground that prick me, cut me and smash me up and immediately dig in everything that falls off me. I want something to happen to me I can make my body available for without further explanation. I wait here in vain. I'm just left lying there.

When someone comes after all and stoops over me and looks at me, someone else holds him back.

'But something might have happened.'

'Take the foot. Or a stick, that's even better.'

Someone pokes the back of my neck till I wince, then leaves me alone.

I go into the wood and let ants crawl all over me and am sprayed with poison. Perhaps they find something they can use. I give a dying bird the first kiss of its life. What good is that to it? I prise its beak open and try to get inside with the thick tip of my tongue like a mother bird feeding its chicks.

My all-enveloping and giving goodness exhausts me. I pant violently, and things go quiet around me. As if everything except me were dead or needed no noises any more. Any more than fear, pain and death.

Finally it begins to rain. Only the dead still making a noise? I think how much I love distant views, when a storm is blowing up grayish violet in the far distance, and slowly draws nearer with extravagant shudders, and finally it gets dark overhead and the first drops lick the flowers, but the clouds still rip open here and there.

I run screaming, without hearing myself, and it's no strain. There's a buzzing noise in my ears, only briefly, then I hear my own steps again.

The distance shimmers with heat, but my way is through deep shadow. If a ray of light penetrates down to us, I see that the trees, bushes and grass are completely infested with spiders. I sit down in their webs without looking closer. Silently like someone who can talk, an animal jumps in my lap. Brown fur, that I immediately stroke. It always surprises me how hard, almost prickly fur can be, and yet I think I feel the hot, damp softness beneath much more directly than with a human being.

I know the animal, but don't know what it's called. That just makes us more intimate, as even the animal can only talk to me by pointing

at something. That's important! The importance of the communication and its import are the same thing. Whereas a spoken sentence demands only to be listened to at first.

If I point at the stone, I speak the stone. And conversely, the stone uses me as a voice. It calls: Pick me up! Take me over there! That's how the stone can talk and walk.

The branches of a tree stroke and tickle me. Those are its hands. Sometimes they offer me delicious fruits or drop them heedlessly. Only with its legs, the tree has dug itself so deep into the ground that even a number of us can no longer liberate it. And its legs are already terribly stunted below ground, so that it could not even stand by itself freely any more.

I ask the animal if it is not worried that human civilization is expanding unstoppably. But it just looks at me touchingly and I understand: All of nature has long been just a garden full of pets and plants that let man look after them. Their power over men has never been as great as it is today. They almost need to worry that we might go so far as to rub ourselves out in self-sacrifice. Nothing would be less welcome to them.

No worries! The animal has given me further reason to stroke it. I shall never again be so high-handed as to speak. Especially not to those who would understand me. Conversely, I want to understand them even better than in their words and surfaces. I guess, know and feel what they are thinking, but that's the only way I come across them. The only consciousness I can become aware of is my own.

I have enough of empathizing or fusing contemplatively. I really want to be a part of the other consciousness. With you, animal, it's much simpler than with a person. Your thoughts and body are so alien to me that I can scarcely mistake them for my own.. So I manage to be aware of both of us at the same time. I have two hands, six legs and two pasts. I successively appropriate other bodies and memories. Previously, telepathy was a vague intuition, but the consciousness of all of us is entwined regardless of how far our bodies and brains move away from each other. Perhaps only for a while. I don't deliberately spend the whole day worrying even about myself.

Why should I be only in bodies and thoughts? I envelope stones and infuse plants with my nerve tracts and thrust them deep into the ground. I feel the pressure of data scurrying along the conduits. I am everything that feels through me. I think the world.

VI

The Answers

Xu Shuxian

Questions

Why did we meet?
What's guiding our journey?
What will we see?

Clues

In March, Antje came to China. She showed me several objects, and three of them were bought from China. This was her reason for visiting China again: To find out all about these objects in the country where they are from.

After checking these three objects, I immediately have some clues in mind. These clues are from my own life.

Teapot—I often have tea with tea-friends in my spare time. They believe that tea can increase spirituality; meteorite—My good friend's mother Lu Ling is a folk scientist. She does research on impact craters. She is a respected person who is full of passion, sticks to her research and theories, no matter if official scientists exclude her theories; the Buddha-hand sculpture—in recent years I've been learning the wisdom of Buddhism and Taoism. I had the feeling that Buddha hand is related. So I searched for its story via the internet and found out that it's about Guan Yin.¹

When I told this to Antje, she was very excited that everything seemed so “right.” This “right”, my understanding is that: like traveling in an unknown sea area to discover treasures. And the objects she brought are fragments of a treasure map. I'm just one navigator who is trying to interpret a very small part of the treasure map.

Antje Majewski
The Meteorite, the Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand, the Buddha's Hand. South China, 2011 (video still)



Hidden question

Why did Antje choose those objects from all kinds of items?
Why did I notice that clue amongst all this information?

LOG1: The Teapot

Following these clues, we started our journey.

First we went to meet a teapot expert named Huang Jian. I've heard from other tea-friends that many people ask him to help on picking good teapots. Our conversation began with Antje's teapot. Its shape is of an elegant hand. But we only spent a very short time talking about it. According to his description, it's not a good teapot, both in workmanship and styling. Most of the day, we talked about tea, energy, spirituality and consciousness. Huang Jian, with his rich knowledge on traditional Chinese art and culture, told us his views and experience, it was very impressive.

Huang Jian took us to a tea house in the evening. A tea-friend opened this tea house in order to have more friends share tea together. That evening, there were more than ten people sitting around the tea table. It was Antje's first visit and she had many questions to ask. However, most of the time, they just smiled without replying. The tea master calmly poured the hot water into the teapot, put the lid on, and filtered out the tea. For a short while he closed his eyes and took a slow deep breath. Then he picked up the teapot and shared a tea with us, saying: “Say little, think less, drink more tea.” Sat there and watched everybody's eyes closed; their thoughts drifted far, their faces filled with satisfaction and peace, we thought that we do not need more explanations.



Children sitting on
"The Iron Ox"

For the following journey, Lu Ling led us to Yang Wu Sha Village where a big meteorite is located. Lu Ling explained her theories to us before. She is convinced that meteorites' falling to Earth is the cause of life. The large meteorite in Yang Wu Sha Village is the best evidence of her theories. Yang Wu Sha Village benefits from its unique natural environment. It's located at the foot of a National Park named Nan Kun Mountain. The spring water from the mountain nourishes crops and villagers. Bamboo grows in profusion there. Relying on processing bamboo furniture parts, everyone has a job, lives a comfortable life.

Out of the car, Lu Ling and villagers took us to see their precious meteorite. It's placed on a marble base, in front of their ancestral hall by the fish pond. It's a heavy black iron meteorite. The texture looks similar to Antje's small one. It is shaped like a horn, so the villagers call it "The Iron Ox".

Stories of the Iron Ox have circulated the village. Three hundred years ago, when the construction of the village began, a Feng Shui master² guided the layout of the village. People found this big stone had when they were digging the fish pond. They carried it to the side and continued digging. But the next day, the stone moved back into the fish pond. This happened several times. People thought it was a stone monster. They asked the Feng Shui master to deal with it. He let people knock a small crack on the stone with an axe, and it no longer moved again. Another saying is that after the fish pond was built, the fish always died. The villagers thought that the stone monster was eating the fish and the Feng Shui master solved it.

Beyond that, there are many interesting customs in the village. For example, the door position of the ancestral hall. The Feng Shui master told the villager that, when placing the door, one side would be beneficial to wealth, the other side would be conducive to procreation. The villagers chose the side which would give them more children. It is also said that the layout of the village is based on the Imperial Palace Chart. When we opened Google map to check the satellite imagery of it, we could see the pond, and the ancestral hall is the center, and rows of houses are built around them. About the mystery within, it could only be seen by a very few people who master the very special knowledge.

Now, three hundred years later, Lu Ling visited Yang Wu Sha village for her research. She confirmed that this is a meteorite from outer space after scientific tests. More and more tourists come to see the meteorite after this was reported. Now the villagers treat this stone as their protector. Lu Ling has also become an important

member of the village. They hope to attract tourists thanks to the meteorite, to develop eco-tourism, in order to set up something against the rare metals mine next to the village which is polluting their home land. Bless them!

LOG3: The Buddha-Hand³

The trip to Zhejiang province was filled with all kinds of coincidences⁴.

1. Jinhua city in Zhejiang is the origin of golden-fingered citron. The temple of Chisong in Jinhua city is the legendary place where Huang Chu Ping⁵ practised Taoism and finally became immortal;
2. According to legend, the Buddha hand was transformed from Guan Yin's hand. Bai Que Temple on Peach Blossom Island in Zhoushan city was the place where princess Miao Shan⁶ found Buddhism and became Guan Yin;
3. It happened to be Guan Yin's birthday celebration⁶ when we were in Zhoushan.

We plan to visit three places one by one: Bai Que Temple in Peach Blossom Island; Immortal Huang Palace in Chisong town; the plantations where the golden-fingered citron is grown, which are also located in Chisong town. These three places, in a sense, are places of beginning.

Bai Que Temple and Guan Yin

During Guan Yin's birthday celebration⁷, a grand Buddhist festival, Peach Blossom Island appeared to be much quieter than Putuo Mountain⁸ where most pilgrims visited. In Bai Que Temple, monks in yellow Kasaya and lay Buddhists in dark brown gowns were busy, and there were hardly any tourists.

We first looked for clues to Antje's Buddha-hand sculpture. In the temple we met a monk. We told him how Antje's objects led her here and our purpose. He patiently heard us out. Antje handed him the Buddha-hand and hoped for answers. He just took a quick look at it and said: "Worship the Guan Yin, and you will know."

Antje felt that she no longer needed to ask any more. We began to walk around the temple and relax. We went to the Guan Yin Temple on top, burned the incense and prayed. Inside the temple, a group of lay Buddhists were folding colorful paper lotus. They were all older ladies. We were curious, went over to watch. They greeted us warmly, had us sit down and taught us how to fold lotus. This was part of the blessing. Before the birthday of Guan Yin, the temple holds seven days of blessing. During the time, the monks and lay Buddhists do their best to pray for all living beings



Folding a paper lotus

and the dead. After the birthday of Guan Yin, there is another seven days of blessing. That is the entire process.

A lotus was folded with twelve square papers. Each paper formed a petal, and was joined together. We carefully opened the folded papers at last, and it was as if we witnessing a Golden Lotus in full bloom, “Wow!” We were amazed by its beauty. The older ladies were also cheering for us.

The next day was Guan Yin’s birthday. A ceremony would be held on the beach. We took the earliest ferry to Peach Blossom Island. In the morning people burnt bags of paper tribute such as gold ingot. Shortly after lunch, people began to line up. Monks were holding baldachin and divine instruments. Lay Buddhists were holding the paper tributes they had made, small paper lotus towers, paper gold ingot towers and so on. In front of the queue, several people were carrying a big colourful paper boat filled with paper tributes. The queue set out for the beach when the music started. The whole process was very short and quick. On the beach, an altar was set gracefully. The high monks presided over a brief ceremony. People lit the big paper boat, and one after another they stepped forward to offer paper tributes—put them into the fire and burnt them to ashes. After that they immediately filed back to the temple.

The beach resumed tranquil. Waves fluttered the shore like the breathing of the sea. We stayed on the beach and wondered. My brain began to fill with questions.

Why am I here? Looking at the sea, where do I have to go?

What attracts me so much? What do I expect while I look afar?

Do people live for a mission? What is my own mission? What is the meaning of life?

Antje was barefoot, standing in the water, praying silently, with her eyes closed and smiling. Her voice must be heard.

Immortal Huang Palace and Taoism

Our hearts were full of happiness and peace after visiting Bai Que Temple. Then we went to the sacred place of Taoism—Immortal Huang Palace. If our BaiQue Temple trip had guided our hearts to a far distant height, then the Immortal Huang Palace trip brought us back to the happy world on earth. The temple was built on a hill, but it also has close connection with the villagers down the hill. Most of the Taoist priests are young and lively, men and women are wearing the same dress, treating each other equally. There was also a Guan Yin altar inside Immortal Huang’s temple.



Ceremony at the beach

According to Taoist stories, Guan Yin is called Ci Hang³ the Taoist. It’s said to be the result of the blending of religions when Buddhism entered the Central Plains⁴ where Taoism prevailed many years ago.

We talked to a young Taoist in the temple, asked him about the Buddha-hand. He said the Fingered Citron has nothing to do with Taoism, but this town here is rich in Golden-fingered Citrons. At the end of every year, Golden-fingered Citron pots are everywhere on the streets. Now the season of this fruit is over. The moment he had spoken, he went out excitedly and fetched us a golden fingered citron pot which had not yet withered. He gave one of the last fruits to Antje.

We passed a tea house in a courtyard and met another Taoist who was drying herbs. Knowing that we are interested in Taoism, he copied many e-books of valuable Taoist scriptures for us from his laptop computer.

Back to the temple, we met a Taoist sweeping the floor. He told us his opinion that the “universe and man are one”. Buddhism and Taoism both have great wisdom, so he practises both.

In the end, we reached a Golden-fingered Citron orchard at the foot of the hill. The manager showed us the orchard. He kindly gave each of us a Golden-fingered Citron sprout before we left.

Now the sprout is on my balcony, growing leaves. The one Antje took back to Germany must be growing as well.

Supplement

From the Zhejiang trip we learned a lot, but the most significant of Antje’s doubts had yet to be resolved. I thought of my uncle Ma Xiaozhong who was a Feng Shui master and fortune-teller⁵. I called him, just mentioning a friend with doubts, and he seemed immediately to sense something and said: “The 68-er is indeed a bit difficult this year. I’ll come by to see you tomorrow.”

As expected, the conversation between my uncle and Antje helped her a great deal.

The knowledge he touched is beyond time and where our bodies belong. This knowledge is only open for a few people who have special talent. We deeply feel that it is as deep as the universe. Our journey is just the beginning of exploration.

But.

How did everything begin? Will there be an end at all? Why should all things exist? Why did all of this happen? What is everything? ... More and more new questions come out during the process of seeking answers, and they always do. Maybe we will have to struggle life after life to find all the answers.



Antje Majewski
Ma Xiaozhong Holding
the Meteorite, 2011

Notes		
1 Guan Yin: Avalokitesvara, known as one of the “four great Bodhisattva” and the Goddess of Compassion & Healing. An important element of Buddhism, also appears in Taoism.	6 Once there was a princess called Miao Shan. She was the third daughter of Miao Zhuang, the King of China in the 7 th century. She insisted on practising Buddhism to enter religion. Her father was very sad and finally ill. No doctor could cure him. Miao Shan was very upset. She prayed everyday for him. She had the same dream for three nights: two fairies were trying to chop her arm off. She was scared and went back to see her father. She found out that her mother had the same dream too. Then she gave her arm to the doctor and went back to the temple. After having the arm soup, her father was cured. He realized that his daughter was such a filial girl. He prayed for her everyday, and also ordered everyone in his country to pray. The rest of the arm soup was brought outside the city and poured onto the ground. And out of this grew the tree of the Buddha-Hand-Citron. The golden, fragrant fruits look as if it had fingers. Later, Miao Shan grew 100 more arms and became Thousand-Handed Guan Yin.	7 GuanYin's Birthday Celebration: March 23 rd , 2011. February 19 th of lunar calendar.
2 Feng Shui Master: Geomancer		8 Ptuo Mountain: One of the Four Holy Buddhist Mountains, an island near Peach Blossom Island.
3 Buddha-hand: The proper name of this fruit is “Fingered Citron” (Citrus medica var. Sarcodactylis). The special local product in Jinhua is “Golden-fingered Citron”.		9 Ci Hang: A name of Guan Yin. It means merciful ferry—the barge of mercy ferries all the miserable people to the world of bliss.
4 Coincidence: The Chinese word <i>Yuan</i> is not translatable. Yuan, the lucky coincidence, is also fate, thought to have its roots in a previous life (Buddhism). If lovers meet, it is because they have <i>Yuenfen</i> —lots of lucky fate that they share.		10 Central Plains: Central Plains of China, inhabited by the Han nationality.
5 Huang Chu Ping: It is said that he was a shepherd in the town of Chi Song. At the age of 15, he met a Taoist priest and was brought to a cave. From then on, he started practising Tao and became immortal.		

VII

Talking to the Moon

Excerpt

John Joseph Mathews

After a day of quail hunting, I do not care to read or listen to the radio. I like to recapitulate the events of the day, or enjoy playing with details of my distant memories. I have a motto of my life in the blackjacks painted in Chinese red on the face of my mantel in Roman lettering: VENARI LAVARI LUDERE RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE. It was once the motto of some unit of the Third Augustan Legion and was placed over the entrance of the officer's club at a fort in the Aurès Mountains of North Africa, along the Roman frontier of the first century. It was assembled from pieces of marble lying broken among the tracks of the jackals and the gazelles. Some of my friends think that the verb „to seek“ ought to be added, and even classical scholars have trouble with the contraction „occast“. However, I think it a good motto in the original that needs no additions when translated: TO HUNT, TO BATHE, TO PLAY, TO LAUGH – THAT IS TO LIVE.
(...)

The walls of my little house are of weathered sandstone, uncut, just as they are on the exterior. Hence they are dark and make the room dark during these days of heavy, weeping skies and dripping leaves; but I must stay in the house and attempt to read or work. This is impossible without the lamps, but inasmuch as the evenings are long and the darkness is more sympathetic to lamplight reading, I sit by the fire and think. This is the time when I sum up and collect my impressions of a year to interpret them and otherwise enjoy them. This is the time, the only time, during a year of action that I am able to entertain a series of thoughts and play with conclusions. Fireplace thoughts are clear and sharp but hard to herd together for conclusions because of their sharpness, and must be forced into a pattern quite often, and quite often they

shoe the effect of chipping and pressure.

Surrounding me in the house are things made by man. I am shut up in my own den and shut off from nature and sustained by my thoughts and images, which are my intellectual fat stored up in the form of impressions. There is no indecision during the days when the world drips outside and the fire crackles; I must sit and think and read. Whichever I choose I must continue to do so, as I find that I can't change from one to the other readily. However, in the evenings I have a third choice – the little battery radio.

I find that the radio is a habit, like smoking cigarettes, but not like the soul-soothing pipe. You think you can't do without a radio, just as you think you can't do without cigarettes, but it is not so difficult as it seems, even when you must give up the newscasts with the rest of it.

I have a third choice naturally during the long evenings, since the radio is not even considered during the day, except on Saturday afternoons during football season and during the Metropolitan Opera programs.

My thoughts are then ornamental. They have nothing to do with the earth-law survival, as I have, with exceptions, leased my range and have no cattle of my own. I have no family responsibilities on the ridges, and therefore my thoughts are not under the influence of the other earth-law, reproduction. Whatever thoughts I might have about either of the two primal laws, that is, under the influence of those laws, are not in the least burdened.

My thoughts are ornamental and might even be creative even though not connected to the primal laws.¹ They might form into images for expressions-ornamentation in word symbols-but I am not quite sure of my thoughts, and I am too lazy to put them up against the recorded knowledge and the philosophy and the analyses of the scholars. The few times I have done this they didn't fit, so I kept them for my own pleasure.

(...)

I, sitting by my fireplace, must think and manlike must, for my own satisfaction, interpret the things, the signs, the actions, and the voices about me, just as I note every strange automobile tread, or the shoe imprint of a strange horse, not to mention the footprint of a man, in my pastures. The latter would be of high interest, and I could not be happy until I had solved it. In the cases of the automobile tread and the hoofprint, I am never satisfied until I verify my on-the-spot conclusions.

Those things which I see in the blackjacks are a functioning part of the natural drama of the universe; the particular from which one

might learn something of the general; and man must be fitted in as long as he is of the earth and must depend upon it and must live under its laws.
(...)

I might well let the wood thrush and the coyote say what I feel, since I can't create beauty more perfect than the materials used. The one can do it so well in song and the other asks the question so beautifully, with aftersilence leaving it so hauntingly unanswered. But my egotism won't allow this. I am not satisfied to feel and enjoy the flood of emotion which earth and the mere fact of living inspires and continue to express the Force-rooted² urge in action; I must now attempt to express the subtleties in word symbols, in fear that the people to come will not know that the great Ego has passed this way³. I want them to know that I, too, have heard the wood thrush at twilight-the voice disembodied in the dripping woods-that I have heard the coyote talk to the moon and watched the geese against a cold autumn sunset.

I want them to be sure that I have heard the baying of the bearhounds bounced from the sides of the canyons and have dreamed to the creaking of a saddle; that I have seen a red rose against a white wall and the morning-glories staring at me with wide-eyed innocence from the fence on fresh September mornings; that I have loved the waving of a single grass blade and have listened to the murmuring of the wind in the blackjacks as well as to its chatter, its moaning, and its hysterical screaming; and that I have been disturbed by its complete absence when the leaves were like metal on moonlight nights, and the whippoorwill filled me with primitive, indefinite longing by the mere repetition of its own name.

My egotism born of the struggle demands, at this stage in my life, that I become an Our Lady's juggler⁴, with word symbols as my poor tools, to sweat at the feet of a beauty, an order, a perfection, a mystery far above my comprehension.

Notes

Antje Majewski

1

After a lot of time spent on the close observation of animals and the eco-system of the nature around him, Mathews thinks that animals as well perform some "ornamental" actions that he can't explain in terms of utility for survival.

2

Mathews uses "The Force" instead of "God" or, as in the old religion of the Osage, "Wah'kon-tah". "The Force" is not personalized and might be similar to "Mana" (force, might) in Polynesia, "Qi" in China, or "Prana" in hinduism.

3

The great Ego: Mathews is talking about himself. Other than in the European context the connotations are not negative. Mathews compares his urge to tell his thoughts to the storytelling of the old Osage Indian chiefs he still knew, who towards the end of their lives felt the urge to pass their actions and experiences on to the next generation.

4

After Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, 1892. Jean, a poor juggler, gets admitted to a monastery. One day all the monks offer presents to a new statue of the Virgin Mary; Jean has only his juggling to offer, so he juggles all night until he is totally exhausted. When the other monks come in, they accuse him of blasphemy, but suddenly the statue of the Virgin Mary comes to life, steps down from her pedestal and wipes the sweat off Jean's. Jean comes to his senses, realizes that he now understands and speaks Latin, and follows the virgin Mary into heaven.

All Created Equal

Excerpt

Chuang Tzu

Tzu-ch'i of Nan-kuo sat leaning against a tabouret, exhaling charms and gazing skyward. In his abstraction he seemed to have lost all contact with his body. Standing in attendance upon him, Yen Yen enquired, "How can a body be made to resemble a dead tree and a heart and mind dead ashes? You are not sitting and leaning now the way you used to."

„What a fine question, Yen. You notice that I have lost all contact with myself! You have either been taught the harmonica playing of humans, but not yet that of Earth; or you have been taught about Earth's, but not yet that of Sky's. Right?"

Yen: "Please give me the prescriptions."

"The belches from God (The Mass that is Greatness) are called winds. (May my using the word not cause them!) When they arise, the myriad crevices shout out in anger. Are you the only one who has not heard them swishing? The cliffs in the mountains and forests and the crevices in the enormous trees resemble noses, mouths, ears, beams, tubes, and mortars. Some resemble stagnant pools, others swamps. Some splash up, others make bubbling sounds; some shout, others inhale; some blow, others laugh; some squeak, others chirp. When the first one chants yu, the following one echoes it. When the wind is gentle, there is a lower harmony; when gusty, a louder one. When the violent wind stops, all the crevices become empty. Are you the only one who has not noticed the howling and the gradual subsiding?"

"When Earth plays the harmonica, it is merely the mass of crevices in operation; when humans play it, we are dealing with the harmonica itself. Now please teach Sky's playing."

"Its blowing is vastly different in that it is automatic. All Its sounds come of themselves.

Who would be the blower?"

Source materials and translations

Peter Pakesch
Wondrous Mirror. Foreword
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Antje Majewski
Travelogue
(translated from the German by Amy Patton)

Issa Samb, Antje Majewski
The Shell. A conversation between Issa Samb and Antje Majewski. Dakar 2010
(translated from the French by Paul Aston)

El Hadji Sy, Antje Majewski
The Stone, the Ball and the Eyes. A conversation between El Hadji Sy and Antje Majewski. Dakar 2010
(translated from the French by Paul Aston)

Alejandro Jodorowsky, Antje Majewski
The Hand that Gives. A conversation between Alejandro Jodorowsky and Antje Majewski, Paris 2010
(translated from the French by Paul Aston)

Thomas Bayrle, Antje Majewski
Madonna Machine Rosary. Fragments of a conversation between Thomas Bayrle and Antje Majewski, Frankfurt 2011
(translated from the German by Amy Patton)

Helke Bayrle, Antje Majewski
The Stones, the Shells. Conversation between Helke Bayrle and Antje Majewski, Frankfurt 2011
(translated from the German by Amy Patton)

Kurt Zernig
Hedgeapple or Osage Orange
(translated from the German by Miha Tavcar)

Anita Eschner, Wolfgang Paill
Shell
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Bernd Moser
Meteorite
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Eva Kreissl
The Pot Made of Fragrant Marrocan Wood. Contains a black ball or two glass eyes
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Eva Kreissl
Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Kurt Zernig
Buddha's Hand
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Bernd Moser
White Stone
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Jorge Luis Borges
The Aleph. Excerpt
(translated from the Spanish by Andrew Hurley)
From Jorge Luis Borges: *The Aleph and Other Stories*. Copyright © 1998 by The Penguin Putnam, Inc., © 1998 by Maria Kodama. Used by permission of Penguin, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

From Jorge Luis Borges: *Collected Fictions*. Copyright © Maria Kodama, 1998. Translation and notes copyright © Penguin Putnam Inc., 1998. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Group (Canada), a Division of Pearson Canada Inc.

Marcus Steinweg
What is an Object?
(translated from the German by Amy Patton)

Friedrich Hölderlin
Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece. Excerpt
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Łukasz Gorczyca, Łukasz Ronduda
Half Empty. Fragment
(translated from the Polish by Łukasz Mojsak)

Ingo Niermann
Why Me?
(translated from the German by Paul Aston)

Xu Shuxian
The Answers
(translated from the Chinese by Yang Zhiqi)

John Joseph Mathews
Talking to the Moon. Excerpt
Copyright © 1945, 1981 by the University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Publishing Division of the University of Chicago Press, with all rights assigned to the author and then to the University of Oklahoma Press.

Chuang Tzu
All Created Equal. Excerpt
(translated from the Chinese by James R. Ware)
From *The Sayings of Chuang Chou*. New York 1963.

Édouard Glissant
Relation
(translated from the French by Betsy Wing)
From Édouard Glissant: *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor 1997, p 131. English translation copyright © by the University of Michigan 1997. Originally published in French by Gallimard, 1990.

Works of the exhibition

Antje Majewski

All works: courtesy of neu-gerriemenschneider and Antje Majewski

The Guardian of All Things That Are The Case, 2009
Oil on canvas
240 x 180 cm
→ p. 29

News from the World of Gimel, 2009
Aiff-File; 3:30 min

Entity, 2009
Installation consisting of 5 elements (p. 35):

a) *Sketch for the Outer Form of the Entity*, 2009
Ink on paper, framed;
29.2 x 37.9 x 0.55 cm
→ p. 34

b) *The Donation (2024)*, 2009
Oil on canvas;
290 x 355 cm
→ pp. 38

c) *Decorative Element that Once Adorned a Passage Leading to the Shrine (2101)*, 2009
Oil on wood; ø 200 cm
→ pp. 36

d) *Entity (2101)*, 2009
Glass cube and organic particles, shadow, white dust; 35 x 35 x 35 cm
→ p. 35

e) *Entity*
2 piles of text (English/German) to take away
→ p. 35

La coquille. Conversation entre Issa Samb et Antje Majewski. Dakar 2010, 2010
HD video, colour, sound;
58 min 16 s
Co-produced by Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt/Main
→ p. 45

Mame N'Dyará, 2011
Oil on canvas;
240 x 180 cm
→ p. 53

Eyland, 2010
Postcard, offset print;
14.8 x 10.5 cm
→ p. 55

Meteoarisis, 2010
Oil on canvas;
240 x 240 cm
→ pp. 64

La pierre, la boule, les yeux. Conversation entre El Hadji Sy et Antje Majewski. Dakar 2010, 2010
HD video, colour, sound;
25 min 44 s
Co-produced by Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt/Main
→ p. 67

The Meteorite, the Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand, the Buddha's Hand. South China, 2011
HD video, colour, sound;
approx. 40 min
→ p. 69, 99, 107, 109

The Box Made of Fragrant Wood, Contains a Black Ball or Two Glass Eyes, 2010
Oil on canvas;
240 x 180 cm
→ p. 75

One Black Ball and Two Glass Eyes, 2010
Series of 8 analogue C-prints; 35 x 35 cm each
→ pp. 78

Das Ei (Kopie Nr. 1), Berliner Fernsehturm, Sommer 2011 (1), 2011
C-print; 30 x 30 cm
→ p. 89

Das Ei (Kopie Nr. 1), Berliner Fernsehturm, Sommer 2011 (2), 2011
C-print; 30 x 30 cm
→ p. 89

La main qui donne. Conversation entre Alejandro Jodorowsky et Antje Majewski. Paris 2010, 2010
HD video, colour, sound;
28 min
→ p. 95

<p><i>The Gardener of Mechanical Objects</i>, 2011 Oil on canvas; 240 x 180 cm → p. 101</p> <p><i>Miao Shan und die Buddha-Hand</i>, 2010 Oil on canvas; 240 x 180 cm → p. 105</p> <p><i>Prozession</i>, 2011 HD video, colour, sound; 8 min 30 s → p. 107</p> <p><i>Ma Xiaozhong Holding the Black Ball</i>, 2011 Permanent ink jet print on paper; 21 x 29.7 cm → p. 116</p> <p><i>Ma Xiaozhong Holding the Meteorite</i>, 2011 Permanent ink jet print on paper; 21 x 29.7 cm → p. 255</p> <p><i>Ma Xiaozhong Looking at the Objects</i>, 2011 Permanent ink jet print on paper; 21 x 29.7 cm</p> <p><i>VENARI LAVARI LUDERE RIDERE OCCAST VIVERE</i>, 2011 Installation consisting of: a) <i>Osage Orange</i>, 2011 Oil on wood; ø 100 cm b) <i>The House that John Joseph Mathews Built</i>, 2011 Wall painting, acrylic colors c) <i>Kamin</i>, 2011 HD-projection of chimney fire, Video beamer, computer; chimney (oil on wood), 2 lamps, small table (wood, metal), chair (wood and painted cushion (acrylic on canvas), book John Joseph Mathews: <i>Talking to the Moon</i> includes 5 photos loosely put between the pages, 20 fresh apples, coloured cables; chimney: 150 x 240 x 22 cm, lamp 1: 150 x 31 x 60 cm, lamp 2: 46 x 15 x 15 cm, table: 46 x 57 x 40 cm, chair: 90 x 73,5 x 110 cm → pp. 122-125</p>	<p><i>The Budda-Hand and it's double</i>, 2011 Permanent ink jet print on paper; 21 x 29.7 cm</p> <p><i>Jedna czarna kulka i dwoje szklanych oczu</i>, 2010 12 Din-A4-pages, from: Piktogram #15</p> <p><i>Der Motor, die Wiese, die Muscheln, die Steine. Gespräch zwischen Thomas und Helke Bayrle und Antje Majewski. Frankfurt</i>, 2011 HD video, Farbe, Ton; 36 min → pp. 197, 198, 201</p> <p>Works of other artists</p> <p>Thomas Bayrle <i>Verdun (Madonna Croce)</i>, 1988 Screenprint on Bütten paper (edition of 10/printed in Japan); framed 161.5 x 125 cm Courtesy of the artist → p. 110</p> <p>Marcel Duchamp <i>Coin de chasteté</i>, 1954/1963 Cast-bronze and dental plastic; 58 x 85 x 42 mm Staatliches Museum Schwerin → p. 54</p> <p>Pawel Freisler <i>Stalowe jajo (The Egg)</i>, 1967 Stainless steel; approx. 7 cm high Courtesy of the artist → p. 83</p> <p>Delia Gonzalez <i>Untiteld</i>, 2010 Paper, pencil, watercolor, dammar varnish; 90 x 130 cm Courtesy Galleria Fonti, Naples → p. 113</p>	<p>Delia Gonzalez & Gavin Russom <i>Elegguá</i>, 2004 Sequins, Styrofoam, Kauri shells; approx. 20 x 15 x 15 cm Courtesy of Antje Majewski → p. 113</p> <p>Łukasz Gorczyca & Łukasz Ronduda <i>Half Empty (Fragment)</i>, 2010 Xerox (double page) Courtesy of the artists → pp. 244/245</p> <p>Alejandro Jodorowsky <i>Réponses aux objets</i>, 2010 4 Post-its, framed; 24.5 x 24.5 cm Courtesy of the artists → p. 93</p> <p>Cristobal Jodorowsky <i>Lingots d'or pour payer tout ce que son pere a fait pour lui</i>, date unknown Series of 3, clay, color; 8 x 4 x 5 cm each Courtesy of Alejandro Jodorowsky → p. 97</p> <p>Edward Krasieński et. al./ Jacek Maria Stokłosa <i>Der Abschied im Frühling</i> from: <i>Ball in Zalesie</i>, 1968 (Print 2006) 4 b/w photographs, silver gelatine on Baryt paper, edition 7/30; 24 x 30 cm each Sammlung Generali Foundation → pp. 80</p> <p>Leonore Mau <i>Fata Morgana</i>, nach 1999 Cibachrome; 83 x 62 cm Courtesy of the artist → p. 49</p>	<p>Leonore Mau <i>Santo Domingo</i>, 1974/75 Photography from: Leonore Mau: <i>Petersilie. Die Afro-amerikanischen Religionen. Santo Domingo, Venezuela, Miami, Grenada. Texte Hubert Fichte</i>, Frankfurt a.M.1980, p.8-9. → pp. 50</p> <p>Markus Miessen & Ralf Pflugfelder <i>Kunsthalle Dubai</i>, 2009 Screenprint on wood; 140 x 240 cm Courtesy of the artists → p. 41</p> <p>Dirk Peuker <i>Pagode</i>, 2011 Harman Direct Positive Baryt paper; framed 57.8 x 73.8 cm Courtesy of the artist → p. 111</p> <p>Dirk Peuker <i>Vase</i>, 2011 Harman Direct Positive Baryt paper; framed 61.2 x 73.8 cm Courtesy of the artist → p. 111</p> <p>Agnieszka Polska <i>Ogród (The Garden)</i>, 2010 HD, MQ quality; 16:9; 11 min 05 s Courtesy Galerie Žak Branicka, Berlin and Galerie Georg Kargl, Vienna → p. 85</p> <p>Mathilde Rosier <i>Shells and Shoes Collection</i>, 2008 Wood, gouache on paper; 180 x 140 x 50cm Kunstpalais & Städtische Sammlung Erlangen → p. 58</p> <p>Mathilde Rosier <i>Cruising on the Deck</i>, 2011 Performance, paper masks Courtesy of the artist → p. 59</p>	<p>Antje Majewski & Juliane Solmsdorf <i>Juliane Solmsdorf beim Abformen ihres Knies</i>, 2010 Series of 4, Permanent ink jet print on paper; 21 x 29.7 cm each Courtesy of the artists → p. 56</p> <p>Juliane Solmsdorf <i>Knie</i>, 2010 Plaster, marble, wood; 60 x 60 x 24 cm Courtesy of the artist → p. 57</p> <p>Juliane Solmsdorf <i>A Falling Water</i>, 2010 Glass, marble, sand, urine; 29 x 30 x 68 cm Courtesy of the artist → p. 57</p> <p>Juliane Solmsdorf <i>A Rise is a Rise is a Rise is</i>, 2009 Aluminum, steel, plastic, colour, cord; variable dimensions Courtesy of the artist → p. 63</p> <p>Simon Starling & Superflex <i>e.g., The Universal Egg</i>, 2011 Stainless steel; 60 cm hight Courtesy of the artists Design by PIET HEIN © Piet Hein A/S Denmark, SUPER-ELLIPSE® Piet Hein A/S Denmark → p. 88</p> <p>El Hadji Sy <i>Lingot d'or</i>, year unknown Iron, golden paint; approx. 20 x 10 x 10 cm Courtesy of the artist → p. 66</p> <p>Neal Tait <i>Untitled</i>, 2010 Oil on canvas; 30 x 26 cm Courtesy of Antje Majewski → p. 114</p>	<p>Piotr Życieński <i>Profesor</i>, 2010 Print; 29.7 x 42 cm Courtesy of the artist → p. 87</p> <p>Antje Majewski & Xu Shuxian <i>Lotus Flower</i>, 2011 Paper; variable dimensions Courtesy of the artists → p. 106</p> <p>Objects</p> <p>The Hedgeapple → p. 33</p> <p>The Shell → p. 43</p> <p>The Meteorite → p. 61</p> <p>The Pot Made of Fragrant Moroccan Wood, Contains a Black Ball or Two Glass Eyes → p. 73</p> <p>The Clay Teapot in the Form of a Human Hand → p. 91</p> <p>The Buddha-Hand → p. 103</p> <p>The White Stone → p. 119</p> <p>Chinese ink from the 1970s, → p. 115</p> <p>Bracelet made of dried fruits → p. 115</p> <p>All: Courtesy of Antje Majewski</p> <p>Ball of algae, Courtesy of Helke Bayrle → p. 117</p>
--	--	---	--	--	---

Antje Majewski

***1968** in Marl/Westfalen (GER), lives and works in Berlin (GER)

1987-95

Studies in Art History, History and Philosophy in Cologne, Florence and Berlin

2000-01

Berlin Senate Stipend for Delfina Studios, London

2001-02

Guest Professor for Painting at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Karlsruhe

2006-11

Professor for Painting at the Kunsthochschule Weihenstephan, Berlin

2010

Residency in Randolph Cliff, Edinburgh

2011

Residency in Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt a.M.

since 2011

Professor for Painting at the Muthesius Kunsthochschule, Kiel

www.antjemajewski.de

Solo exhibitions

The Guardian of All Things that are the Case, neugerriemschneider, Berlin (2011).

Antje Majewski/Mathilde ter Hejne, Galerie Olaf Stüber, Berlin (2011).

Freisler, with Agnieszka Polska, splace, Berlin (2010).

Eyland (with Juliane Solmsdorf), Galerie Töplitz, Potsdam (2010).

Tanz RGBCMYK, neugerriemschneider, Berlin (2008).

My Very Gestures, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, cat. (2008).

Dekonditionierung, Ballhaus Ost, Berlin (2007).

Erde Asphalt Wedding (with Juliane Solmsdorf), Institut im Glaspavillon der Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin (2007).

Mal de ojo and other works, Darat al-Funun, Amman (2007).

Mal de ojo and other works, Goethe-Institut, Damaskus (2006).

The Royal Mummies, neugerriemschneider, Berlin (2006).

Mal de ojo, neugerriemschneider, Berlin (2005).

Skarbek, Tanztheater. Concept and direction with Ingo Niermann, décor: Antje Majewski, Bytomskie Centrum Kultury, Bytom, and Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, cat. (2005).

Nell'acqua nell'aria, Galeria Monica de Cardenas, Milano (2003).

Crystal Palace and the Dinosaurs, Asprey Jacques, London (2003).

Twigs, Goethe-Institut, London (2001).

video. featuring sarah mucaria and krylon superstar, neugerriemschneider, Berlin (2001).

Einer zu viel, Kunstverein Ulm, Ulm, cat. (2001).

L'invitation au voyage, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, cat. (2001)

Invitation to a Voyage, Part I: Friends and Lovers, Asprey Jacques, London (1999).

Die Bergsteiger, neugerriemschneider, Berlin (1998).

Antje Majewski, Kunstverein Lingen, Lingen, cat. (1998).

Spiegel, neugerriemschneider, Berlin (1997).

Murphy Excellent Gas Superfine Chaos, Lukas & Hoffmann, Cologne (1993).

Una vita di campagna, Galleria Communale, Ostuni (1991).

Selected group exhibitions

Please go around the construction area by the light and over the traffic island (and other stories), Kunstverein Schattendorf (2011).

International Wardrobe. Transsylvanian Rhapsody, Hildegardstr. 2a, Munich (2010).

Portfolio Berlin (1), Kunsthalle Rostock, cat. (2010).

Dekonditionierung, Videoart at Midnight, Kino Babylon, Berlin (2010).

Un séminaire à la campagne, France Fiction, Paris (2010).

Squatting, Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin, cat. (2010).

Zeigen, eine Audiotour, Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin, cat. (2009).

Hüttendong, after the butcher, Berlin (2009).

Neues Museum, Basso, Berlin (2009).

Rave is Over, Exile, Berlin (2009).

Spirits, Stadtbad Wedding, Berlin (2009).

Das Gespinst. Die Sammlung Schürmann zu Gast im Museum Abteiberg, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach (2009).

Fragmented series of movements, Se8, London (2009).

Raum.Inhalt, Haus für die Kunst/Im Tal, Hasselbach (2009).

Dubai Düsseldorf, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, cat. (2009).

Unreal Asia, Oberhausener Kurzfilmtage, Oberhausen (2009).

Gerichtsstr.52a, Gerichtsstr.52a, Berlin (2009).

Treasure-Land, Abfertigung, Bremen (2008).

Helsinki Biennale, Helsinki (2008).

Under Influence, Kunsthaus Dresden, Dresden (2008).

Vertrautes Terrain, ZKM, Karlsruhe, cat. (2008).

The 5th International Bangkok Experimental Film Festival (BEFF 5), Bangkok,

Thailand und Kino Arsenal, Berlin (2008).

Kronacher Videopreis 2007, Kunstverein Kronach, Fürstentum der Festung Rosenberg, Kronach (2007).

Maskarar, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Stuttgart (2006).

Totalstadt, ZKM, Karlsruhe, cat. (2006).

Emergency Room, Galerie Olaf Stüber, Berlin (2006).

Architektura intymna architektura porzucona, Galleria Kronika, Bytom (2006).

Soleil Noir. Depression und Gesellschaft, Salzburger Kunstverein (2006).

Zurück zur Figur. Malerei der Gegenwart, Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich, cat. (2006).

Convergence at E116°/N40° Beijing 2005, Beijing, cat. (2005).

6. Werkleitz-Biennale, Volkspark Halle, Halle (Saale), cat. (2004).

Atomkrieg, Kunsthaus Dresden, cat. (2004)

Daß die Körper sprechen, auch das wissen wir seit langem, Generali Foundation, Vienna, cat. (2004).

Berlin/Moskau, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, cat. (2003).

Splendor Geometrik, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne (2003).

Help, Els Hanappe Underground, Athens (2003).

Windstöße, Kunsthaus Dresden, Dresden (2003).

deutschemalereizweitau-sendundndrei, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, cat. (2003)

Nach der Wirklichkeit – Realismus und aktuelle Malerei, Kunsthalle Basel, cat. (2002)

layered histories, Staatsbank, Verein Berliner Künstler, Berlin, cat. (2002).

Abbild, Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, cat. (2001).

The contemporary face – von Pablo Picasso bis Alex Katz, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2001).

Brown, The Approach, London (2001).

Salon, Delfina Project Space, London (2000).

Malkunst, Fondazione Mudima, Mailand, cat. (2000).

Rocaille, Shedhalle, Zurich (2000).

Bleibe, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, cat. (1999).

Nach-Bild, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, cat. (1999)

Made in Berlin, House of Cyprus, Athens, cat. (1999).

El Niño, Städtisches Museum Abtei-berg, Mönchengladbach, cat. (1998).

Made in Berlin, Rethymnon Centre for Contemporary Art, Crete, cat. (1998)

Beautiful World, Goethe Institute Manchester; Goethe Institute Gallery, London (1998).

Träume, curated by Antje Majewski and Ingo Niermann, ~Laden/Schillerstraße, Berlin (1998).

Schöne Welt, curated by Friedrich Meschede, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, cat. (1997).

Campo '95, curated by Francesco Bonami, Corderie dell'Arsenale, Venice (1995); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo per l'Arte, Torino (1995); *Campo '95*, Malmö Konstmuseet, Malmö, cat. (1995).

45 Minuten später, Wiensowski + Harbord, Berlin (1995).

Lukas & Hoffmann, Cologne (1994).

Futura Art Book Collection, Air de Paris, Nice (1993).

Curatorial projects

Splace, 12 Episoden im Fernsehturm, curated by Antje Majewski, Magdalena Magiera, Dirk Peuker, Julian Solmsdorf, splace, Berlin (2010). (www.splace.blog.de).

Atomkrieg, curated by Antje Majewski and Ingo Niermann, Kunsthaus Dresden, cat. (2004).

Splendor Geometrik, curated by Antje Majewski and Anke Kempkes, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne (2003).

Legende, curated by Antje Majewski and Anke Kempkes, Filmabend, Filmhaus Kino Köln and Kino Arsenal, Berlin (2003).

Träume, curated by Antje Majewski and Ingo Niermann, ~Laden/Schillerstraße, Berlin (1998).

Bibliography Books and catalogues

Stephan Koal (ed.): *Portfolio Berlin 01*. Kunsthalle Rostock/Distanz Verlag, Rostock, Berlin 2010.

Sreshta Rit Premnath, Warren Neidich (ed.): *Shifter 16, Pluripotential*. New York 2010.

Dubai Düsseldorf. Special Edition Beton Brut, Kunstverein Düsseldorf 2010.

Karin Sander, Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin: *Zeigen. Eine Audiotour durch Berlin*. Cologne 2010.

A Nervous Map. On Expanding the Field in Design. Fundacja Bec Zmiana, Warsaw 2009.

A.E.I. u.U., *Just what it is that made today's Berlin so different, so appealing, Starship – The Early Years: 1998–2001*. Starship Verlag 2009.

Hemma Schmutz, Caroline Schneider (ed.): *Antje Majewski: My Very Gestures*. Salzburger Kunstverein/Sternberg Press, Salzburg, Berlin, New York 2009.

Gregor Jansen (ed.): *Vertrautes Terrain*. ZKM, Karlsruhe 2008.

Sebastian Cichocki (ed.): *Warsaw does not exist*. Exhibition as a book, Fundacja Bec Zmiana, Warsaw 2008.

Ingo Niermann: *China ruft dich*. With 44 color photographs by Antje Majewski, Rogner & Bernhard, Berlin 2008.

Christian Lange, Florian Matzner: *Malerei der Gegenwart. Zurück zur Figur*. Munich 2006.

Christoph Tannert: *New German Painting*. Munich 2006.

Ingo Niermann, Antje Majewski: *Eins*. Beijing 2005.

Irene von Hardenberg, Reto Güntli: *Künstlerinnen*. Hildesheim 2005.

Antje Majewski, Ingo Niermann: *Skarbek*. New York 2005.

Feng Boyi: *Convergence at E116°/N40° Beijing 2005*. Beijing 2005.

Antje Majewski, Ingo Niermann (ed.): *Atomkrieg*. New York 2004.

Hemma Schmutz, Tanja Widmann (ed.): *Daß die Körper sprechen, auch das wissen wir seit langem**. Generali Foundation, Wien/Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln 2004.

6. Werkleitz-Biennale. Volkspark Halle, Halle (Saale) 2004.

Pawel Choroschilow, Jürgen Harten, Joachim Sartorius, Peter-Klaus Schuster (ed.): *Berlin–Moskau/Moskau–Berlin, 1950–2000*. Berlin 2003.

Nicolaus Schafhausen (ed.): *deutschemalereizweitau-sendundndrei*. Frankfurter Kunstverein/Lukas & Sternberg, Berlin 2003.

Antje Majewski, Ulrike Majewski: *teenage pantomime*. asprey jacques, London 2002.

Bernhard Mendes Bürgi, Peter Pakesch: *Painting on the move*. Basel 2002.

Ulrike Kremer: *layered histories*. Staatsbank/Verein Berliner Künstler, Berlin 2002.

Antje Majewski, Ingo Niermann: *Einer zu viel*. Kunstverein Ulm 2001.

Peter Pakesch (ed.): *Antje Majewski; L'invitation au voyage*. Kunsthalle Basel/Schwabe Verlag, Basel 2001.

Peter Pakesch (ed.): *Abbild*. Landesmuseum Joanneum/Springer Verlag, Vienna, New York 2001.

Birgit Hoffmeister: *Malkunst*. Fondazione Mudima, Milano 2000.

Z2000, Positionen junger Kunst und Kultur. Akademie der Künste, Berlin 2000.

Peter Pakesch: *Nach-Bild*. Kunsthalle Basel/Schwabe Verlag, Basel 1999.

Birgit Hoffmeister: *Made in Berlin*. House of Cyprus/Rethymon Centre of Contemporary Art, Athen 1999.

Antje Majewski. Kunstverein Lingen/Buxus Verlag, Lingen 1998.

Veit Loers: *El Niño*. Städtisches Museum Abtei-berg, Mönchengladbach 1998.

Friedrich Meschede: *Schöne Welt*. Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin 1997.

Francesco Bonami: *Echoes. Contemporary Art at the Age of Endless Conclusions*. New York 1996.

Contributor biographies

Helke Bayrle

Born 1941 in Thorn (GER), lives and works in Frankfurt/Main (GER)

The artist and filmmaker Helke Bayrle has been working with her husband Thomas Bayrle since 1969. Since the late 1980s, she has been documenting the activities of the Portikus exhibition space in Frankfurt am Main and in doing so collected several artists' portraits, which were published in 2009. Her videos have been shown at the MMK (Museum für Moderne Kunst) in Frankfurt am Main, at the National Gallery in Toronto, at the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt am Main, the CCA (Center for Contemporary Art) in Kitakyushu, the OCA (Office for Contemporary Art) in Oslo and the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna.

Thomas Bayrle

Born 1937 in Berlin (GER), lives and works in Frankfurt/Main (GER)

Thomas Bayrle's long career as an artist, graphic designer, printer and publisher of art books has yielded an extensive body of work. Starting with a basic graphic principle concerning the seriality of individual motifs, in the 1960s Bayrle developed the concept of Superformen or “super forms” out of interlocking image patterns, which he applies to this day using a variety of media. Macro-shapes such as that of a figure are made from countless micro-shapes, which in turn can contain, for example, highways. Bayrle's training as a weaver led to his understanding of society as a “texture” (Heidegger). In addition to numerous international solo and group exhibitions, he also participated in documenta III in 1964 and in the 1977 documenta 6 in Kassel. He was a professor at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Städelschule) in Frankfurt, Germany from 1972 to 2002.

Jorge Luis Borges

The Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) is considered one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. He authored a variety of fantastic narratives, poems and essays, which are characterized by fictions, illusions and the juggling of reality and the surreal. Next to *The Library of Babel* (1941), *The Aleph* (1949) is among the author's most significant works. Whereas in the former the author follows an experiment with an infinite library, *The Aleph* tells of a place that contains all places, images and concepts within it at the same time, from all perspectives—an “iridescent sphere” that a writer keeps in his basement.

Born into a wealthy family in Buenos Aires, Borges was able to devote a great deal of his time to the world of books and to his own universal education. At the age of 40, however, he was forced to assume the post of assistant librarian. He took advantage of this position so that—despite dwindling eyesight—he could continue to read and write. By the 1940s, Borges' immense knowledge was such that he was able to finance himself through his brilliant lectures alone. He penned reviews and contributed to the literary magazine *Sur*. Already almost completely blind, in 1955 he was appointed director of the National Public Library in Argentina. He remained only a local great for a long time until his international breakthrough, when he won the 1961 Prix Formentor and received worldwide acclaim.

Chuang Tzu

The Chinese poet and philosopher Chuang Tzu (ca. 369 BC, † c. 286 BC) is co-author of one of the major works of Taoism; his Zhuangzi writings were among the most influential works in Chinese intellectual history and were critical in the development of both Taoism and Chan- (Zen-) Buddhism. Chuang Tzu advanced a holistic philosophy of a life characterized by simplicity and naturalness. The ethics advocated in Zhuangzi are comparable to those of stoicism (Epicurus, Epictetus) and suggests a similar equanimity, non-interference and the avoidance of anything that runs contrary to one's own nature. Instead, one should follow the Tao (way) in order to be a true human being (Zhēnrén). Chuang Tzu himself refused to accept any government position save for that of guardian of a “lacquer garden” (Qiyuan). Replacing the gods is the ultimately indescribable Qi or “Chi” (life force, breath). The Zhuangzi's teachings are often communicated in the

form of parables and narratives, interspersed by complex philosophical reflections in which Chuang Tzu shows all knowledge to be context-dependent: “He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know.” (Book XXII)

Clémentine Deliss

Clémentine Deliss, born in London, has been director of the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main since 2010. She studied Contemporary Art in Vienna and Ethnology in Vienna, Paris and London, where she earned her doctorate at the University of London by examining the relationship between ethnographic collections and the building of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. From 1992–95, she was the artistic director of africa95, a festival at the Royal Academy of Arts and 60 other arts institutions in Great Britain that brought together African artists, musicians, filmmakers and writers. Deliss lectured as a visiting professor at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main from 1998–99. From 2003–2010 she headed the long-term academic project Future Academy in Edinburgh, Senegal, India, USA, Australia and Japan, an international art laboratory for research and the development of new interdisciplinary forms of future art institutions. Between 1996 and 2007 she published *Metronome*, an “artists' organ” that was presented twice at the documenta in Kassel (X, 12). Deliss serves as an advisor to, among others, the French and Senegalese Ministries of Culture and the European Commission. She has been a member of the Laboratoire Agit'Art in Dakar since 1995.

Marcel Duchamp

Born 1887 in Blainville (FR), † 1968 in Neuilly-sur-Seine (FR)

The painter and object artist Marcel Duchamp was one of the most influential avant-garde theorists of the first half of the 20th century. He is a co-founder of conceptual art and was associated with Cubism, Dadaism and Surrealism. Duchamp's work is characterized by humour, the wide range and unusual nature of its media and the artist's continuous testing of the boundaries of art—the invention of the readymade being just one example. His attempts to transfer Cubism to the n-dimensional space are always tied to eroticism and complex language games. Possibilities of perception, units of measurement and the conditions of knowledge are playfully relativized. The viewer becomes an active co-producer of the artwork, which if anything is an internal process of ideas as a material object. Duchamp is a master of ambiguity, a circumstance that has given way to a complex Duchamp exegesis.

Anita Eschner

Since 1986, zoologist Anita Eschner (b. 1966) has been active at the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna, where she scientifically supervises the museum's Mollusca (= mollusk) collection. Her special interest lies in the biology and ecology of indigenous terrestrial and freshwater snails and snails as bioindicators.

Didier Faustino

Born 1968 in Chennevières-sur-Marne (FR), lives and works in Paris (FR) and Lisbon (PT)

Didier Faustino's artistic and architectural body of work ranges from experimental work to installations, the design of public spaces and the construction of private houses. In 2002, he founded the firm Mésarchitecture together with Pascal Mazoyer, with offices in Paris and Lisbon. Faustino was the 2001 winner of the Prémio da Tabaqueira contemporary art prize in Lisbon; in 2004, he represented France at the first Architecture Biennial in Beijing and at the 27th Biennial of Contemporary Art in São Paulo two years later. In 2008, he participated in the 7th Architecture Biennial in Venice with his contribution *Architecture Beyond Building*.

Paweł Freisler

Born 1942 in Kaposvár (HU), lives and works in Malmö (SE)

The Polish conceptual artist Paweł Freisler was educated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, where he was strongly influenced by Oskar Hansen and his theory of the open form. Concepts such as time, process and form are of central importance to both artists. At the end of the 1960s, Freisler often took up residence in Elbląg, where he had The Egg (first Stalowy wzór jajka kurzego, then Imperialny wzór jajka kurzego now Stalowe Jajo) manufactured out of metal—the design of which was intended as a standard for all eggs. The Egg was not shown in exhibitions, but rather entrusted to people who would carry it with them and tell stories about it. With this, Freisler stimulates the creation of alternative “mental realities” that exist only on an imaginary level. In the 1970s, Freisler withdrew from cultural activities and moved back to Sweden, where apples have long become the main subject of his work. He has delegated the task of providing information about his work to The Professor, a machine that has found its embodiment in Łukasz Ronduda.

Delia Gonzalez

Born 1972 in Miami (US), lives and works in Berlin (GER)

Delia Gonzalez comes from a Cuban exile family and studied at Georgia State University. Her work shows the influence of Cuban Santería, but also artists such as Maya Deren. Together with Gavin Russom, Delia Gonzalez has worked as a performance artist, musician and visual artist among others. The two met in New York, where Gonzalez had been active in various dance companies since the mid-1990s, including a guerrilla theatre troupe. The duo began to construct installations that would blur the boundaries between art, ritual and entertainment. Artwork by the couple has been shown internationally in solo exhibitions such as those in New York, Naples, Los Angeles, Paris and Basel. Working under various pseudonyms (including Fight Evil With Evil and Black Leotard Front), Gonzalez and Russom have released a series of recordings using mainly analogue synthesizers. Their artistic activity has various sources of inspiration, including Greek tragedies, (horror) movies from the 1970s, disco culture, mythology, occultism and spiritualism, ritual and ecstasy. The two separated in 2008. Exhibitions of Delia Gonzalez’s films and drawings include those in the Migros Museum, Zurich and Galleria Fonti in Naples, Italy.

Łukasz Gorczyca

Polish art historian Łukasz Gorczyca (Born 1972) co-founded the art magazine Raster together with Michał Kaczyński. The publication was active from 1995 to 2003. In 2001 they opened Raster Gallery, which deeply enriched the Warsaw art scene with numerous new artistic positions and art events. Gorczyca worked in the cultural sector of Polish television from 2000–02. He also curated numerous exhibitions, including Relaks in Galeria Arsenał in Białystok (2001) and De Ma Fenetre at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris (2004). Gorczyca was also an active art critic, publishing numerous articles in Polish and international catalogues and art magazines. The writer has also published two books: Najlepsze polskie opowiadania (The Best Polish Short Stories, 1999) and the novel W połowie puste (Half-empty, together with Łukasz Ronduda, 2010).

Friedrich Hölderlin

Born 1770 in Lauffen a. Neckar (GER), † 1843 in Tübingen (GER)

Hölderlin is one of the most important representatives of German poetry. In addition to Weimar Classicism and Romanticism, his distinctive poetry also had a profound influence on German literature around the turn of the 19th century. While Hölderlin’s hymnal, elegiac style has remained unique, his shorter and more fragmented verse has continued to have an effect on German-language poetry to this day. His works include The Death of Empedocles (1797–1800) and The Tragedies of Sophocles (1804). Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece is Hölderlin’s first and only novel, and was written as early as 1797–99.

Friedrich Hölderlin studied theology in Tübingen (1788–93), where he became acquainted with Hegel. In 1794 he attended lectures by Fichte in Jena and met with Schiller and Goethe. Having refused to enter the clergy as a profession, he worked as a private tutor in Germany, Switzerland and France. Hölderlin began to suffer from nervous exhaustion and agitation in 1802; in 1806 the poet was admitted to a psychiatric clinic and discharged as “incurable”, though he was gradually able to resume his work later on. The first publication of his collected works followed in 1826, but without Hölderlin’s direct involvement.

Alejandro Jodorowsky

Born 1929 in Tocopilla (CL), lives in Paris (FR)

Alejandro Jodorowsky is a director, actor, comic book writer (The Inkal with Moebius) and author of artistic-therapeutic books. After founding, among other things, a mime theatre in Chile, Jodorowsky emigrated to Paris, where he worked with Marcel Marceau. Through his theatre work in Mexico, Jodorowsky developed his concept of teatro pánico or “panic theatre” (starting 1962, with Fernando Arrabal and Roland Topor), in which actors no longer represented, but underwent transformative experiences. Jodorowsky achieved widespread fame with his surrealistic films such as El Topo (1970) and Montaña Sacra—The Holy Mountain (1973). Today, Jodorowsky holds lectures (Mystical Cabaret), performs tarot card readings according to his own reconstructed Tarot de Marseille and treats advice-seekers with psychomagic, a therapeutic practice influenced by his own artistic and spiritual experiences. His psychomagical instructions often work by generating dreamlike, surreal images in real life, which are intended to have a healing effect.

Edward Krasiński

Born 1925 in Luzk (UA), † 2004 in Warschau (PL)

Edward Krasiński is one of the major protagonists of the Polish neo-avant-garde in the 1960s and 70s. He was born into an aristocratic family that fled to the German-occupied Krakow after the annexation of Lutsk by the Soviet Union. There, Krasiński enrolled in the National Arts School and studied at the Academy of Fine Arts. His first works were erotic, surrealistic drawings and illustrations for magazines. The 1960s drew Krasiński to Warsaw, where in 1966 he became involved in the founding of the Foksal Gallery, one of the main venues for exhibitions of his work. Krasiński began working with a blue Scotch tape which he taped horizontally along the walls at a height of 1.3 metres creating an essentially infinite blue line. His sculptures, installations and paintings also shift between two- and three-dimensional space. Another level of reality is introduced in the form of life-sized black-and-white photographs, which will duplicate “real” space or, conversely, are tied into it via the blue tape. The artist also staged himself and his work for the camera, frequently in collaboration with photographer Eustachy Kossakowski. Jacek Maria Stokłosa photographed his legendary ball, which took place at his country house in Zalesie. In the late 1980s, Krasiński turned his Warsaw apartment into a mise-en-scène of artworks and everyday objects, which has since become a museum. In 2006, the Generali Foundation in Vienna paid tribute to his oeuvre with a comprehensive retrospective.

Eva Kreissl

Eva Kreissl (born 1958 in Immerath, Rhineland, GER) has been the curator of the Folk Life Museum at the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz since 2005. After completing studies in Folklore and Art History at universities in Freiburg im Breisgau and Vienna, where she completed a dissertation on Vienna’s female workers in 1984, she was awarded a teaching position at the Ludwig-Uhland Institute for Empirical Cultural Studies at the University of Tübingen. From the late 1980s onward, Kreissl worked as a freelance cultural scholar and curator of numerous exhibition projects. Kreissl lectured at the Institute for European Ethnology at the University of Vienna from 1990–1995.

John Joseph Mathews

John Joseph Mathews (ca. 1894–1979) was one of the leading spokesmen, historians and authors of the Osage indigenous people in the United States. Mathews—himself only one-eighth Osage—came from a wealthy family that lived on a reservation. He studied geology at the University of Oklahoma, served as a flight instructor in World War II and completed advanced studies at the universities of Oxford and Geneva. Following extensive travels to Europe and Africa, he returned to Oklahoma where he began his writing career. His most widely known publication is the semi-autobiographical novel *Sundown* (1934), about a young Osage who alienates himself from his tribal community, which is fraught with internal tensions due to the oil boom. Talking to the Moon (1945) refers to Mathews’ experiences in the Blackjack Mountains of Oklahoma and describes his attempts to communicate with the natural world and to achieve greater spiritual harmony. He also documented the history and culture of the Osage and its white settlers and became a political representative of the Osage tribe, whose rights he advocated.

Leonore Mau

Born 1916 in Leipzig (GER), lives in Hamburg-Othmarschen (GER)

Leonore Mau studied stage design at the art academy in Leipzig and completed her education as a press photographer. She married an architect and started a family, with whom she moved to Hamburg at the end of World War II. In 1953, she began photographing for several magazines, with an initial focus on architectural photographs. From 1962 on, Mau lived and worked together with the writer Hubert Fichte. The two travelled to Brazil together for the first time in 1969. She documented religious sites, cults and rituals and, in the years that followed, explored African-American religions in the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa. Leonore Mau published several photographic volumes developed in dialogue with Fichte’s ethno-poetic travelogues, among them *Xango* (1976) and *Petersilie* (1980).

In addition to other exhibitions, Mau’s images were shown at the Kunsthalle Basel in 2002. In 2005, the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg paid tribute to her life’s work with the exhibition Hubert Fichte and Leonore Mau: The writer and the photographer. A life’s journey.

Markus Miessen

Born 1978 in Bonn (GER), lives and works in Berlin (GER) und London (UK)

The architect and writer Markus Miessen founded Studio Miessen in 2002 and the architectural firm nOffice in London and Berlin (with Ralph Pflugfelder and Magnus Nilsson) in 2007. Publications written in various collaborations include: *The Nightmare of Participation* (2010), *Institution Building: Artists, Curators, Architects to the Struggle for Institutional Space* (2009), *East Coast Europe* (2008), *The Violence of Participation* (2007), *With / Without: Spatial Products, Practices, and Politics in the Middle East* (2007), *Did Someone Say Participate?* (2006) and *Spaces of Uncertainty* (2002). His work has been exhibited and published internationally, including such venues as the Lyon and Venice biennials, *Performa* (New York), *Manifesta* (Murcia), and *Shenzhen*. Miessen lectured at the Architectural Association, London from 2004–08, at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam from 2009–10, and from 2010–11 at the Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) in Karlsruhe, Germany. He is currently a visiting professor at WorkMaster HEAD, Geneva and Professor of Critical Spatial Practice at the Städelschule, Frankfurt. In 2008 he founded the Winter School Middle East (Dubai / Kuwait).

Momus

Momus is the pseudonym used by musician Nick Currie, who was born in 1960 in Scotland. He has been releasing albums on independent labels for over 20 years. Starting in 2000, Momus began working as a performance artist in New York galleries, where he improvised stories and served as an “unreliable tour guide”. He has authored and published three books since 2009: *The Book of Jokes*, *The Book of Scotlands* and *The Book of Japans*, which play out various alternate realities. *The Book of Scotlands*, for example, gives a very entertaining account of 165 possible Scotlands. Momus lives in Osaka, Japan.

Bernd Moser

Bernd Moser (born 1958 in Graz, AT) is head of the Geology & Paleontology department at the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz. He studied mineralogy and geology at the University of Graz and, after a brief spell as a mineralogist in the refractory industry, has been working at the Landesmuseum (now the Universalmuseum) Joanneum since 1985. Moser currently directs the “nature sub-team” in the remodelling of the Graz city centre, the Joanneumsviertel district. His areas of expertise include volcanic mineralogy, mineralogy of Styria, the scientific-historical aspects of the earth sciences, minerals, precious stones and their use in jewellery.

Ingo Niermann

Ingo Niermann (born 1969 in Bielefeld, GER) is a writer, artist and theorist who lives in Berlin. His debut novel *Der Effekt* was published in 2001. Since then he has published books including *Minusvisionen* (2003), *Atomkrieg* (with Antje Majewski, 2004), *Skarbek* (with Antje Majewski, 2005), *Umbauland* (2006), *Metan* (with Christian Kracht, 2007), *The Curious World of Drugs and their Friends* (with Adriano Sack, 2008), *Solution 9: The Great Pyramid* (with Jens Thiel, 2008), *China ruft dich* (with photos by Antje Majewski, 2008/09), *Deutscher Sohn* (with Alexander Wallasch, 2010), and *Solution 185–195: Dubai Democracy* (2010). Niermann is editor of the *Solution* book series. In projects such as *The Great Pyramid*, *Dubai-Düsseldorf* or the *Solution* series, Niermann investigates alternative designs for society that could radically transform our reality.

Wolfgang Paill

Wolfgang Paill (born 1968) is head of Biosciences and a collection and exhibitions curator at the department of Zoology at the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz. Paill founded the Ökoteam Graz (Institute for Animal Ecology and Conservation Planning) upon completing his studies in 1993 and occasionally lectures at the University of Graz. His publications topics include biology (beetles as a counterbalance to the Spanish slug), ecology and faunistics (focus on beetles and grasshoppers) and taxonomy.

Dirk Peuker

Born 1970 in Friedrichroda (GER), lives and works in Berlin (GER)

From 1998–2005, photographer and filmmaker Dirk Peuker completed studies in Experimental Filmmaking at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, and in Visual Arts at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna. Since 2009 he has been active at the Weißensee Kunsthochschule art academy in Berlin, where he is head of the media facilities/ fine arts and teaches in the departments of painting and sculpture. His photographs and films propose narratives that remain open and unfold slowly over time. They often deal with the history that remains embedded in places and architecture. His work has been exhibited and screened at the following institutions and festivals, among others: Goethe-Institut Budapest, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, the 38th International Film Festival Karlovy Vary, the 49th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Alternativa Independent Film Festival in Barcelona and Hydra School Projects.

Ralf Pflugfelder

Born 1975 in Kösching (GER), lives and works in London (UK) und Berlin (GER)

As an architect and artist, Ralf Pflugfelder is particularly interested in spatial aesthetics and its narrative strands. His work blurs the boundaries between various media such as drawing, painting, sculpture, video and sound. After studying at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, he (along with Markus Miessen and Magnus Nilsson) founded the architectural firm nOffice, with offices in London and Berlin. The firm works at the interface between spatial design, architecture, urban intervention and the art world; nOffices references include, among others, the LU Arts Centre & RADAR Hub, projects at the Gwangju Biennale, *Manifesta 8* (Murcia) and the 0047 (Oslo). Pflugfelder’s work was also included in recent exhibitions at *The Gopher Hole* (London), *Program e.V.* (Berlin) and the *Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen* (Düsseldorf). He is the founder of the *New Minute Society* and a member of the band *Famous in Japan*.

Agnieszka Polska

Born 1985 in Lubin (PL), lives and works in Krakow (PL) and Berlin (GER)

Agnieszka Polska studied graphic design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow and the Universität der Künste in Berlin. Her principal media include animation, video and photography. She often refers to art-historical motifs and collages these with found image material, thereby questioning the truthfulness of archives and the historical narratives that these provide. Much of Polska's video and photography uses references to historical artists to develop new narratives that do not necessarily reflect the historical reality. Solo exhibitions of the artist's work have been held in Vienna, Krakow, Berlin and Lublin, among others.

Łukasz Ronduda

Born 1976 in Malmö (SE), lives and works in Warsaw (PL)

Łukasz Ronduda is a Polish art historian specializing in media art and art criticism. He received his doctorate from the Universität Łódź in 2005; since 2001 he has been curator of the Center for Contemporary Art (CCA) Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, where he heads the institution's archive of Polish experimental film. His curated exhibitions and film programmes have been shown around the world, with institutions including the Tate Modern, the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London and Electronic Arts Intermix in New York. Ronduda is the editor of numerous catalogues and publications, among them B. W połowie puste (Half-empty, together with Łukasz Gorczyca, 2010), and lectures at the Warsaw School Of Social Sciences And Humanities and the University of Warsaw.

Mathilde Rosier

Born 1973 in Paris (FR), lives and works in Berlin (GER) and Bourgogne (FR)

Mathilde Rosier studied economics at the University of Paris-Dauphine (1991-94) before attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris (1997-99). She works across a wide variety of media, incorporating video art, performance art, object art and painting; her work weaves together topics such as ritual, psychology and archeology. She creates atmospheric environments that test a new kind of ritual that works with surreal images. Rosier's work also facilitates another relationship to nature by allowing, for example, light to change slowly over a landscape or people to be turned into animals by wearing masks. Since the late 1990s her work has been represented in numerous solo exhibitions across Europe, most recently at the Camden Arts Centre in London, the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris and the Galerie Iris Kadel, Karlsruhe.

Gavin Russom

Born 1974 in Providence, Rhode Island (US), lives and works in New York (US)

Gavin Russom studied computer music, theory, composition and improvisation at Bard College in New York from 1994-96. He appeared as The Mystic Satin in magic shows that were influenced by shamanism, ritual magic and avant-garde theatre. In New York he met Delia Gonzalez, with whom he entered into an artistic collaboration. Russom built electronic instruments that became important to the duo's musical output. Through his music, sculpture, drawings, etc., Russom explores the limits of our outer and inner worlds. The couple's artistic work was exhibited internationally in solo exhibitions such as those in New York, Naples, Los Angeles, Paris and Basel. Gonzalez and Russom released a series of albums under various pseudonyms (including Fight Evil With Evil and Black Leotard Front), in which they use mainly analogue synthesizers: El Monte/Rise (2003), Casual Friday (2005), The Days of Mars (2005), Relevee (2006) and Track Five (2010, all DFA Records). Russom began a solo project after moving to Berlin in 2004; as Black Meteoric Star he released an album and performed throughout Europe, in the Biennial in São Paulo and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Issa Samb

a.k.a Joe Ouakam, Joe Ramangelissa Samb

Born 1945 in Senegal (SN), lives and works in Dakar (SN)

Painter, multimedia artist, philosopher, writer, playwright and actor Issa Samb has had a lasting impact on visual art in Senegal. He attended the national art academy and studied law and philosophy at the University of Dakar before becoming a leading exponent of the avant-garde group Laboratoire Agit'Art. Formed in 1974, the group advocated an artistic work beyond state-sponsored art, and counted filmmaker Djibril Diop, El Hadji Sy and Mambéty among its members. He has been investigating the meaning of symbols his entire life. Among other things, Samb's work uses found objects as a means of interacting with his audience and addressing problems in political and social life through installation and performance. When exhibiting his art, he often prefers his own yard to the conformity of institutional spaces. In 1995/96 he took part in the exhibition Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa (curated by Clémentine Deliss and El Hadji Sy, among others) at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and Malmö Konsthall. A retrospective of his paintings was held in 2011 at the National Gallery in Dakar.

Juliane Solmsdorf

Born 1977 in Berlin (GER), lives and works in Berlin (GER)

Juliane Solmsdorf's installation sculptures, which she refers to as "remarked sculptures", reconstruct existing situations that she finds in a given city. Her objects, paintings and installations are indebted not only to Duchamp, but also other surrealist artists such as Meret Oppenheim. Her work often refers to the fragility and eroticism of the body, not only through her use of nylon stockings and leather as a choice of materials, but also through the arrangement of found chairs. She began her artistic training at the Chelsea College of Art and Design in London and attended the Universität der Künste in Berlin from 1998-2005. She spent 2008 in Paris with a grant from the Cité Internationale des Arts. Solmsdorf's work has already been shown internationally, most recently at the Chelsea Art Museum, New York, the Center Gallery in Berlin (solo exhibition), the White Space Gallery, London and the Grazer Kunstverein.

Simon Starling

Born 1967 in Epsom (UK), lives and works in Copenhagen (DK)

Simon Starling's artistic approach follows those of conceptual of art. His multifaceted works reveal complex and unexpected stories, which he brings to light through the decoding of an image, object or incident. Starling's works are like thought processes made physical and visible, revealing hidden ideas and relationships. Recurring themes in his artistic activity include nature, technology, business, the industrial / artistic production of objects, transformations, and architecture. He engages with the given circumstances of the exhibition venue and draws relationships between local stories and global narratives. Simon Starling studied photography and art between 1986-92, among others at the Glasgow School of Art. In 1999, he was the first artist to receive the Blinky Palermo Prize from the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst in Leipzig, Germany. Starling won the prestigious Turner Prize in 2005 with his piece Tabernas Desert Run. Selected solo exhibitions of Starling's work include those at Manifesta 3 and 4 (2000, 2002), Bienal de São Paulo (2004) and the Biennale di Venezia (2003, 2009). He is a professor of fine arts at the Staatlichen Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Städelschule) in Frankfurt, Germany.

Marcus Steinweg

The Berlin-based philosopher Marcus Steinweg (born 1971) has been active since 1996 with more than 250 lectures in Germany and abroad and a lively stream of publications. The Merve Verlag has published *Bataille Maschine* (with Thomas Hirschhorn, 2003), *Subjektsingularitäten* (2004), *Behauptungsphilosophie* (2006), *Duras* (with Rosemarie Trockel, 2008), *Aporien der Liebe* (2010) and *MAPS* (with Thomas Hirschhorn, 2011); Salon Verlag published *Der Ozeanomat* (2002) and *Mutter* (with Rosemarie Trockel, 2006). Other publications include *Politik des Subjekts* (2009, Diaphanes) and *ABC der Schönheit* (2011, Matthes & Seitz). Steinweg also exhibits his philosophical diagrams in galleries, most recently at The Modern Institute, Glasgow and BQ Gallery, Berlin.

Jacek Maria Stokłosa

Born 1944 in Krakow (PL), lives and works in Krakow (PL)

The graphic designer and photographer Jacek Maria Stokłosa has been active since the beginning of the 1960s. He trained at the departments of Industrial Design and Graphic Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, where he graduated in 1972. As an artist, he is associated with *Galerie Krzysztofory* in Krakow and the *Foksal Gallery* in Warsaw. He participated in numerous international exhibitions of graphic design. In 1967, Stokłosa co-founded *Druga Grupa* (second group) along with Lesław and Wacław Janicki, a collective that worked on projects in the area of conceptual art and environmental art and made an important contribution to the Polish avant-garde. For 20 years, Stokłosa worked as an actor in Tadeusz Kantor's Theater Cricot 2. He also worked as an exhibition designer. Stokłosa teaches digital photography and IT at the Fine Arts department at the University of Krakow. He has been the senior graphic designer for the city of Krakow since 2002.

Superflex

Born 1993 in Copenhagen (DK)

Superflex is a Danish art collective founded in Copenhagen in 1993 by Rasmus Nielsen (born 1969), Jakob Fenger (born 1968) and Bjørnstjerne Christiansen (born 1969). With a strong sense of social commitment—but also humour—the group develops participatory projects that reflect upon and attempt to identify typical business models and value creation systems in an attempt to point out alternative strategies of economic action. A central focus of their work lies in the development of a series of “tools” aimed at encouraging counter-economies and self-organization. Under the motto “all human beings are potential entrepreneurs”, Superflex offers individuals or institutions their “tools” and consults them on how to use and modify them for individual use.

El Hadji Sy

a.k.a. El Sy

Born 1954 in Senegal (SN), lives and works in Dakar (SN)

Painter, installation artist, art historian, curator and writer El Hadji Sy graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Dakar in 1977 before finally dissociating himself from the government institution. Together with an independent group of artists, he occupied vacant military barracks and turned them into studios suitable for living, a facility known as *Village des Arts*. Its gallery *Tenq* became an important venue for contemporary art. In 1987 Sy worked with German-born teacher Friedrich Axt to assemble a collection of Senegalese art for exhibition at the *Weltkulturen Museum* in Frankfurt am Main. The goal was to document contemporary art developments in Senegal in an anthology. In 2010 El Hadji Sy returned there as an artist-in-residence and investigated, among other things, the masks in the museum's collection. In the mid-1990s, Sy organized the *Tenq Art Workshop*, an event organized by the African-British Festival *africa95*. He is co-founder of what is now the *Village des Arts*, which was realized by the *Tenq* group and Clémentine Deliss. In 1995/96, Sy worked as a co-curator and artist in the exhibition *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and Malmö Konsthall. Sy participated in the *documenta 11* (2002) as part of the *Huit Facettes* art collective, which was founded in Dakar in 1996.

Neal Tait

Born 1965 in Edinburgh (UK), lives and works in London (UK)

The painter Neil Tait was trained at the Royal College of Art and the Chelsea School of Art, London (1987–93). The subjects of his paintings and watercolours range from everyday objects to barely legible, embryonic shapes. His painting is poised between abstraction and figuration, sense and nonsense, logic and absurdity, beauty and the grotesque. He creates parallel universes in which people and objects seem to multiply and transform themselves into even stranger dreams. In his portraits, he depicts people who avert their gaze and thus appear like strangers. Recent solo exhibitions of Tait's work have been shown at White Cube, London, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, ACME, Los Angeles, Sies + Hoke, Düsseldorf and the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle. The artist has also participated in many international group exhibitions, including those at the Tate Britain and Kunsthalle Basel.

Xu Shuxian

Xu Shuxian says of herself that she is “a dream-writer/painter, an independent art curator/coordinator/translator, a Trekkie and sci-fi fan. I dream every day. Dreaming is an important way for me to explore the world and the space behind it. I'm fascinated by space and time.” Born in Foshan, Guangdong (CN) in 1984, Xu now lives in Guangzhou, where she completed her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in 2004. From 2006–2008 she worked as a project manager at the Vitamin Creative Space. She curated the exhibition *China Youth Culture Show* for the *Made In Mirrors* foundation (Netherlands, 2007), the video programme *Subspace Signal* for the *Next Wave Festival* (Australia, 2010) and *An Astral Trip*, Henrik Vibskov's solo exhibition at the *NOTCH Art Festival* (Guangzhou, 2010).

Kurt Zernig

Kurt Zernig has worked at the Universalmuseum Joanneum since 1997, where he serves as deputy director in the Biological Sciences department. He studied botany at the University of Graz and completed a study year abroad in Colombia in 1993/94. His responsibilities include the scientific supervision of the Universalmuseum Joanneum collections (ferns and flowering plants), documentation and research on the flora of Styria (ferns and flowering plants), botanical tours in the area as well as content design and the implementation of exhibitions.

Colophon	Exhibition	Catalogue	Copyrights
<p>This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition</p> <p>Antje Majewski The World of Gimel. How to Make Objects Talk</p> <p>Kunsthaus Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum 1st October 2011- 15th January 2012</p> <p>Kurator/in Adam Budak, Antje Majewski</p> <p>Print Medienfabrik Graz</p> <p>DVD Production CSM Production, Wien</p> <p>Paper Invercote G, 350g; Biotop 3, 90g; Hello Silk, 170g; Cyclus Print, 80g; Fizz, 80g (pastellblau); Invercote G, 300g</p> <p>Font ITC Charter, Tram Joanneum</p> <p>Published by Sternberg Press</p> <p><i>SternbergPress</i> ✨</p> <p>Sternberg Press Caroline Schneider Karl-Marx-Allee 78, D-10243 Berlin www.sternberg-press.com</p> <p>ISBN 978-1-934105-72-6</p>	<p>Curators Adam Budak, Antje Majewski</p> <p>Organization Katia Huemer, Johanna Ortner, Teresa Ruff</p> <p>Registrars Elisabeth Ganser, Magdalena Reininger, Elisabeth Schlögl</p> <p>Conservators Paul-Bernhard Eipper, Stefanie Gössler, Julia Hüttmann</p> <p>Installation of Exhibition/ Technical Support/IT Robert Bodlos, Irmgard Knechtl, Erich Aellinger, Walter Ertl, Markus Ettinger, Helmut Fuchs, Ivan Gorickic, Bernd Klinger, Alois Lostuzzo, Josef Lurger, Georg Pachler, Klaus Riegler, Josef Rinner, Peter Rumpf, Michael Saupper, Stefan Savič, Christoph Schneeberger, Peter Semlitsch, Stefan Zugaj</p> <p>Exhibition Architecture Mésarchitecture: Didier Faustino, with Isabelle Daëron</p> <p>Educational Team Astrid Bernhard, Monika Holzer-Kernbichler</p> <p>Graphics Leo Kreisel-Strauß, Michael Posch</p> <p>Event Management/ Organization Gabriele Filzwieser, Johanna Ortner, Sarah Spörk</p> <p>Press/Public Relations/ Marketing Sabine Bergmann, Bernhard Eipper-Kaiser, Barbara Ertl-Leitgeb, Markus Hall, Bettina Kindermann, Christoph Pelzl, Astrid Rosmann, Elisabeth Weixler</p>	<p>Editors Adam Budak, Peter Pakesch</p> <p>Assistant Editor Katia Huemer</p> <p>Graphic Design Ronald Lind</p> <p>Translations Paul Aston, Andrew Hurley, Łukasz Mojsak, Amy Patton, Miha Tavcar, James R. Ware, Betsy Wing, Yang Zhiqi</p> <p>Lectorship Helen Dixon, Kate Howlett Jones</p>	<p>© 2011 Sternberg Press, Berlin and Kunsthau Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum</p> <p>© for the reproduced works by Thomas Bayrle, Joseph Beuys, Juliane Solmsdorf: VBK, Vienna 2011</p> <p>© for the reproduced works by Marcel Duchamp: Succession Marcel Duchamp/ VBK, Vienna 2011; Marcel Duchamp, <i>Coin de chasteté</i>, 1954/1963: Succession Marcel Duchamp/ VBK, Vienna 2011, Staatliches Museum Schwerin</p> <p>© for the reproduced works by the artist or their estates</p> <p>© for the texts by the authors, translators or their estates</p> <p>© for the reproduced photographs by the photographers or their estates:</p> <p>All reproduced works of Antje Majewski (except video stills) as well as the images on pp. 66, 97, 110, 111, 114, 115, 117: Jens Ziehe, Berlin</p> <p>pp. 77, 138, 139, 142, 143, 173, 191, 200, 202: Antje Majewski</p> <p>pp. 33, 43, 61, 73, 83, 86, 88, 103, 119, 209: Nicolas Lackner, UMJ</p> <p>pp. 58: Photo: Erich Malter, Erlangen © Kunstpalais, Erlangen</p> <p>p. 59: Erich Malter, Erlangen</p> <p>pp. 80: Generali Foundation, Photo: © Jacek Maria Stokłosa</p> <p>pp. 71, 252, 254, 255: Xu Shushian</p> <p>p. 175: Magdalena Wittman-Freisler</p> <p>p. 184: Paweł Freisler</p> <p>p. 135: © Falckenberg collection, Hamburg/Photo: Egbert Haneke, Hamburg</p> <p>pp. 86, 88, 179: Design by PIET HEIN © Piet Hein A/S Denmark; SUPERELLIPSE® Piet Hein A/S Denmark</p> <p>The work is subject to copyright. All rights reserved, whether the whole or parts of the material is concerned, especially those of translation, reprinting, re-use of illustrations, broadcasting, reproduction by photocopying machines or similar means, and storage in data banks.</p>

Supported by
Stadt Graz
Land Steiermark



In co-operation with
steirischer herbst



The Kunsthau Graz thanks

Arises:
Katrin Vellrath

Nathalie David
Deichtorhallen Hamburg
Sammlung Falckenberg:
Uwe Lewitzky

Clémentine Deliss

France Fiction:
Maria Bonnet

Galleria Fonti:
Giangi Fonti, Luigi
Giovinazzo

Generali Foundation:
Sabine Folie, Doris Leutgeb

Łukasz Gorczyca

Lena Inken Schaefer

Botanischer Garten, Institut
für Pflanzenwissenschaften
der Karl-Franzens-
Universität Graz:
Peter Gigerl

Kadel Willborn:
Iris Kadel, Moritz Willborn

Patrick Komorowski

Kunstpalaus & Städtische
Sammlung Erlangen:
Claudia Emmert, Gerhard
Tillmann

Mésarchitecture:
Didier Faustino, Isabelle
Daëron

Momus

Naturhistorisches
Museum Wien:
Anita Eschner

neugerriemschneider:
Tim Neuger, Burkhard
Riemschneider, Dortje
Drechsel, Claire Rose,
Jan Salewski

Ingo Niermann

Piktogram:
Michał Wolinski,
Janek Bersz

Program e. V.:
Carson Chan

Łukasz Ronduda

S. Fischer Stiftung:
Anthe Contius, Joachim
Kersten

Staatliches Museum
Schwerin: Dirk Blübaum,
Gerhard Graulich, Kristina
Hegner, Sabine Schiewer

Marcus Steinweg

Stiftung F. C. Gundlach:
Sebastian Lux, Jasmin Seck

Jacek Maria Stoktosa

Universalmuseum
Joanneum: Eva Kreissl,
Bernd Moser, Wolfgang
Paill, Kurt Zernig

Magdalena Wittmann-
Freisler

Xu Shuxian

Piotr Źycieński

We owe special thanks to
Antje Majewski, the artists
of the exhibition and to all
private lenders who do not
wish to be mentioned by
name.

Co-production

The films with El Hadji Sy
and Issa Samb have been
co-produced by Weltkultu-
ren Museum in Frankfurt
a. M. and co-curated by
Clémentine Deliss.

Antje Majewski would like to thank

Adam Budak for giving me
the *Aleph*, for accompany-
ing me for two years on my
travels though the *World of
Gimel* and for making all of
this possible.

To the artists, all of the
authors, all of the models
in all of the paintings:
many, many thanks for your
wonderful contributions
and friendship!

Katia Huemer for her pati-
ence, her crucial contribu-
tion and her foresight. Peter
Pakesch for his trust. Didier
Faustino and Isabelle
Daëron for the outstanding
architecture. Ronald Lind
and Michael Posch for the
graphic design for this
catalogue. Johanna Ortner,
Magdalena Reininger, Elisa-
beth Ganser, Robert Bodlos
and everyone at the Kunst-
haus Graz, as well as Lena
Inken Schaefer, Claire Rose
and Jan Salewski for their
assistance.

Clémentine Deliss for
acquainting me with the
Laboratoire Agit Art, for her
help with all the transla-
tions and support for the
film production of *La pierre*,
la boule, *les yeux* and *La
coquille* through the Welt-
kulturen Museum, Frank-
furt. Shuxian Xu for bring-
ing me to the to right
places in southern China.
Ingo Niermann, Markus
Miessen, Karin Sander,
Vanessa Joan Müller,
Patrick Komorowski, France
Fiction, Hartmut Solmsdorf,
Yusuf Etiman, Katrin Vell-
rath, Michał Wolinski, Juli-
ane Solmsdorf, Dirk Peuker,
Magdalena Magiera, Ste-
phan Koal, Katharina Kop-
penwallner, Olaf Stüber,
Burkhard Riemschneider,
Tim Neuger for the invita-
tion and collaboration on

exhibitions and publica-
tions that became part of
The World of Gimel. Clé-
mentine Deliss and Charles
Asprey for inviting me to
Randolph Cliff. Clémentine
Deliss for inviting me to the
Weltkulturen Museum,
Frankfurt, where I found
time to think. Foksal Gal-
lery Foundation for
allowing me to play on the
Krasinski studio terrace
with my ball. John Joseph
Mathews for his fireplace
room. Oliver Helbig for his
photograph. Michael Taus-
sig for his books. Marie
Bonnet, Sebastian Cichocki,
He Cong, Hu Fang, Roberta
Gordon, Huang Jian, Lu
Ling, Abdoulaye Konaté,
Thomas Kilpper, Ma Yingli,
Paul Nesbitt, Henry Noltie,
Amy Patton, Dr. Eva Raabe,
Jim Skoldt, Dr. Mona Suhr-
bier, Jaro Straub, Gary
Webb, Ma Xiaozhong, Hen-
drik Zimmer and many
more for information and
conversations. Brigitte
Majewski and my family.
Helga Liebe and Anne Carl
for everything they have
given me along the way.

And thank you, my dear
little objects; you have led
me well!

"If all pleasure were to gra-
dually accumulate and the
entire mass were to remain
permanently in the human
body, or at least its most
vital parts, then we would
never be able to distinguish
between one pleasure and
another"

Epicurus, Principal
Doctrines, 9

