

it is the first instance in which the bare exhibition space was presented as a work of art. In this vein, artists such as Dan Graham (*Public Space/Two Audiences*, 1976), Hans Haacke (*Condensation Cube*, 1963-1965, and *Polls*, 1967-1971), Mel Bochner (*Measurement: Room*, 1969), and Michael Asher, among others, made works in which the gallery space as well as the public became the work of art itself. In Rosario, Argentina, artist Graciela Carnevale staged an action titled *Encierro*, in 1968, where she locked the public inside the empty gallery space provoking an aggressive participation since the public had to break the glass façade of the gallery space in order to get out. These works, among many others, are important references for this exhibition, and the ways in which the works exhibited here all integrate, physically and/or discursively, the exhibition space into the work. Allan McCollum's *Surrogates*, 1982-1992, interpellate ideas such as context and the exhibition space, functioning as tools that allow us to interpret the exchange of meaning that occurs in the relation between art and the context where it is exhibited. Meyer Vaisman's *Painting Without Context*, 1986, operates in a similar way and is related to another series of works by the artist titled "Fillers" that Vaisman conceives of as paintings to be placed in the space between other paintings; these only depict an amplified image of the canvas fabric printed on the canvas. The work of John Baldessari, *The Battle of San Romano*, 1975, inscribes the exhibition space within the frame of the "painting", evoking the history of representation and of painting itself. The participatory nature of the experiences that analyze and subvert the notion of the "white cube" are evident in the works of Olafur Eliasson, Hélio Oiticica and Neville d'Almeida, Karin Schneider, and Félix González Torres. When we enter the space illuminated by Eliasson's *Mono-frequency lamp* (2004) we experience ourselves seeing. Eliasson employs this type of light in order to highlight the fact that the convention of the "white cube" is culturally conditioned. For Eliasson, the modification of vision effected by this type of light alters the exhibition politics of the institution and subverts the notion of the "white cube" privileging the subjective experience of the spectator. Oiticica and d'Almeida's *Cosmococa I: Trashisapes*, 1973, invites the spectator to lie on the mattresses and experience the image projection and soundtrack as well as the space that contains them in a manner radically different from the traditional experience of looking at artworks in a museum or a film in a cinema. Karin Schneider's *Slide Projector with 80 Fragments of One Photograph*, 2007 is part of the artist's installation at Orchard gallery --a collaborative artist-run gallery in which Schneider participated--in which she publicly exposed the mechanisms of production, installation and deinstallation of an exhibition and engaged in a reflection on the nature of collaboration, since each module was a collaboration between Schneider and another artist she invited. By presenting a fragment of the work, decontextualized from its original location and conditions of display, certain elements reflect its current context and through this reflection establish a dialogue with the ideas that inform this exhibition, especially the notion of the structure of an exhibition or the dispositif. Félix González Torres' *Untitled (Ross in LA)*, 1988, is a paper stack sculpture which gradually dematerializes as the spectators take the sheets of paper that constitute it. An outstanding aspect of the work of González Torres is the artist's democratic approach to the object that subverts notions of uniqueness and irreproducibility. As volumes, the stacks share the aesthetics of minimalist sculpture and its particular relation to the exhibition space and the audience. However, González Torres was actively engaged in AIDS-related activism (both he and his partner Ross succumbed to the illness in the nineties), and these stack pieces, as well as the candy works, also function as a metaphor of the body that gradually fades away, wasted by the disease.

Art and context IV: the market, the galleries and the art-world scene.

The art market and its particular discursive network is at the foreground of the last show, art and context IV: the market, galleries, and the art-world scene, in which some of the works comment wryly on the commodification of art and the ever-increasing power of the art market, while others have themselves been the object of the current speculative drive of the art market. The works of Yael Bartana (*Odds and Ends*, 2005), Josephine Meckseper (*Untitled (50% Off)*, 2005), Matthieu Laurette (*David Hockney / Eduardo Paolozzi / Bridget Riley / Andy Warhol Ready to Hang (from the Ideological Shopping series)*, 2006), Danica Phelps (*January 2-8, 2005, January 9-15, 2005, 2005, January 16-22, 2005, January 23-29, 2005, and January 30-February 5, 2005*, 2005), Maurizio Cattelan (*Errotin, le vrai lapin*, 1995-1999) and Christian Jankowski (*Flock*, 2002) articulate a critical commentary on contemporary consumer culture and the role of the artist within it. Some works refer specifically to the commodification of art, (Matthieu Laurette and Josephine Meckseper), others, such as those of Jankowski and Cattelan, provide ironic insights on the herd-instinct that seems to guide art audiences and the market and the the submission of the dealer to the whims of his artists and clientele. The art-world scene has also been in the critical eye of some of the artists in this exhibition. Jesús (Bubu) Negrón's *VIP Sketch*, 2004-2006, drawings come across as field renderings portraying the typical parties and cocktails of art fairs and openings, while Reena Spaulings' *Christopher Williams STF Dinner*, 2006 functions as an index of one of these VIP events; it is the wine-stained tablecloth from one of the tables at the dinner celebrating an opening of a Christopher Williams exhibition. Douglas Huebler's *Crocodile Tears*, 1994, also reflects on the dynamics between art-world, dealer, fame, and status. The works of Aaron Young (*I.P.O. (35 offerings)*, 2006), Vik Muniz (*Bette Davis, Diamonds*, 2004), and Reena Spaulings (*Money Painting*, 2005) allude to the art work's status as a luxury-object and investment. The inclusion of works by Josh Smith and Anselm Reyle in this exhibition responds more to the fact that the work of these artists has been the object of speculation in recent times and, as such, they are evident manifestations of the critique established by the other works in the exhibition. Ultimately, and seen from an ethnographic perspective, many of the works in this section, and indeed throughout the exhibition, function as cultural artifacts, giving us an insight into some of the dynamics of contemporary society, its rituals and customs, particularly those regarding art.

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art and context

a selection of works from the berezdivin collection

art and context II:

cultural artifact and museum, an ethnographic perspective

lothar baumgarten fernando bryce mark dion juan downey mario garcía torres christian jankowski louise lawler mateo lópez jesús[bubu] negrón rosangela renno simon starling christopher williams

art and context III:

beyond the white cube

richard artschwager, john baldessari, olafur eliasson, félix gonzález-torres, allan mcollum, hélio oiticica & neville d'almeida, karin schneider, meyer vaisman

art and context IV:

the market, the galleries, and the art-world scene

yael bartana, maurizio cattelan, matias faldbakken, douglas huebler, christian jankowski, matthieu laurette, josephine meckseper, vik muniz, jesús [bubu] negrón, danica phelps, josh smith, reena spaulings, anselm reyle, aaron young

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art and context a selection of works from the berezdivin collection

art and context aims to examine, through a series of exhibitions, the relationships between art and context, as well as the representations that arise from the diverse modes of production and exhibition of the work of art. The first exhibition in the series, *art and context I: leave your mind and come to your senses* addressed the redefinition of the notion of spectatorship and reconsidered the spectator's relation with the exhibition space and the artwork. Many of the works presented in *art and context I* evidenced a departure from the object and focused on the experiential aspect of art, challenging traditional conventions of display and engaging the public in an awareness of the exhibition space, its dynamics and discourses. This "dematerialization" of the work of art -- a clear legacy of conceptualist strategies of the sixties and seventies-- plays an important role in the shift towards the work's transformation into a semantic object and its agency in the production of meaning; where object, context, and audience become the constitutive elements of the work of art. The very definition of context has also expanded to imply not only the physical location of the work but the cultural, social and economic milieus that inform art's production and circulation.

On this occasion the exhibitions that comprise, *art and context*, II, III, and IV, examine institutional and commercial contexts and their logics of display and representation; inviting the spectator to become a keen observer, an ethnographer of sorts, in order to better assess the complex negotiations of meaning that take place between art and context.

Art and Context II: cultural artifact and museum, an ethnographic vision

This exhibition introduces the spectator to the ethnographic shift in contemporary art, and the way artists have appropriated ethnographic practices in order to blur the distinction between work of art and cultural artifact. In the mid-nineties Hal Foster wrote an essay titled "The Artist as Ethnographer" in which he identified a trend in contemporary art towards the appropriation of practices and methodologies of the social sciences especially ethnography and anthropology. This tendency, according to Foster, is a result of the increasing relevance of context in contemporary art. Field work has been one of the more common strategies employed by artists when addressing the issue of context in their work and a part of this exhibition is devoted precisely to the idea of field work, as well as related notions of travel and exploration. The work of Mark Dion, *Desk of a Tropical Ecologist (Guyana Field: Semang Creek)*, 1999, is indicative of this type of strategy, in which the artist takes on the role of the field scientist, in this case an entomologist, to actively engage in field work. Dion's work, in general, addresses the way in which knowledge is classified and exhibited by institutions. In Lothar Bumgarten's photographs, from his series *There*

I Like It Better Than In Westphalia, El Dorado, 1968-1976, the artist prefigures the jungles of the Amazon basin in a forest on the banks of the Rhine in Germany, photographing found or placed objects in the midst of the wilderness. Juan Downey's drawings on maps of South America are related to his series titled *Meditaciones*, executed during his stay in the the Venezuelan Amazonian forest between 1976 and 1977, and consisting of drawings that reflect on the Yanomami cosmogony but that at the same time act as field drawings that document his experiences. The encounter between the Western subject and the Other is also present in the drawings of Fernando Bryce, titled *Tarzan* (2006), based on the covers of the homonymous comic books; even if Tarzan has been raised by the apes in the jungle, he still embodies the figure of the West; the white man who is in constant struggle against Arabs, Africans or even extraterrestrials, who respectively take on the role of the Other in this series. The work of Rosangela Rennó, *Bibliotheca*, 2002, alludes to the idea of the archive as well as to a random anthropologic field work by collecting these photo albums found in flea markets or on the streets all over the world. Ideas related to travel are also present in the work of Mateo López, *Pulsar Project*, 2006, although this particular piece could best be inscribed in the tradition of portable museums initiated by Marcel Duchamp and his *Boîte en valise*, made between 1936 and 1941.

The museum and its modes of representation are addressed by many of the works in this exhibition, and in the process, they call into question the distinctions between cultural artifact and work of art. Simon Starling's *Pink Museum*, 2001, is an installation of photographs that depict objects belonging to the collection of an ethnographic museum in Porto. Starling participated in an exhibition organized by the Fundação de Serralves in which the artists were invited to intervene or occupy locations all around the city, noticing that the Serralves and the ethnographic museum shared the same pink color Starling decided to photograph the objects against a pink background, virtually recontextualizing them in the space of the contemporary art museum. The work of Jesús (Bubu) Negrón, *Honoris Causa*, 2006, operates in a similar way, recontextualizing the work of the hot dog and African mask vendors, who have worked for decades outside the Whitney Museum of American Art, inside the museum space during the Whitney Biennial. Christopher Williams' photograph *Njiram Issah*, 1998, depicts an African artisan with his sculptures outside a van on a street. Williams, whose work addresses the complexities of photography's indexical nature --and who never takes his photographs but instead directs a professional photographer-- questions photography's claim to objectivity and its instrumental role in the human sciences such as ethnography or anthropology. The cultural conditioning of the museum and its modes of representation --most of all in regard to the artistic production of the third world, which generally is classified into categories such as handicrafts or cultural artifacts in the space of the ethnographic museum rather than the art museum-- makes us see in this image an artisan and not an artist, the objects he creates as utilitarian objects or handicrafts and not as works of art; a similar situation to that faced by Mr. Ibrahim who sells his masks outside the Whitney Museum. The ethnographic gaze is also present in Fernando Bryce's *Museo Hawai Internacional*, 2006, a miniature museum of colonial and postcolonial histories that define present-day geopolitics.

The works of Louise Lawler (*Blue Line*, 1984 and *Untitled (Theodate Pope Riddle)*, 1984) and Mark Dion (*Rescue*

Archaeology 3, 2000-2004) focus on the idea of museum as mausoleum discussed by Theodor Adorno in his essay Valéry Proust Museum, where he states that "museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchers of works of art." *Untitled (Theodate Pope Riddle)*, 1984, alludes to private residences and collections that become museums after the death of their owners. Mark Dion's *Rescue Archaeology 3*, 2000-2004 consists of fragments of John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s townhouse, which was demolished to make way for the Museum of Modern Art's twentieth-century buildings, found by Dion while excavating under the museum's garden during its expansion. Both *Fragment/Frame/Text; "Served the Needs of Northern European Grand tourists*, 1984, by Louise Lawler and *Título prestado*, 2007, by Mario García Torres, focus on museographic devices and their function in the representations articulated by the museum. In the case of García Torres, the artist intervenes the space of the museum by asking for the title of a work on loan (William Harnett's, *Materials for a Leisure Hour*, 1879) from the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid. The title and the act of requesting it on loan was presented as a work by García Torres in a commercial gallery in Madrid as part of a solo show of his works. What we see here is the work that was presented in the gallery space accompanied by the label that was placed next to Harnett's work during the time the title was on loan.

The specular image of the museum reflected in the aforementioned works by Lawler and García Torres is reiterated in Christian Jankowski's *Group of Naked Women*, 2007. This painting is part of the "China Painters" series, made by Jankowski in Dafen, a town on the outskirts of Shenzhen, known for its painting sweatshops. These workshops reproduce works from the repertoire of Western classical painting, for interior decoration of hotel lobbies in the United States and Europe, accounting for almost 60% of low-cost paintings in the world. With China's capitalist transformation, some of these artisans have become entrepreneurs, and in recognition of their growing industry the Communist Party decided to build them a museum. Jankowski visited this museum, as of then unfinished, and photographed its empty spaces. He then invited some of these painters to paint their favorite work in the context of the museum spaces he had photographed. This work not only reflects the image of the museum and its modes of representation but also some of the ideas addressed in this section of the exhibition, such as the distinction between cultural artifact and work of art, notions of authorship, mass production and contextualization of objects in the museum space.

Art and context III: beyond the white cube

The works in *art and context III: beyond the white cube* are located on different floors since the works establish a dialogue with the different exhibitions. The exhibition space as part of the work of art has been addressed by modern and contemporary artists throughout the twentieth century. Modernist references include Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau*, of the 1920s, El Lissitzky's *Proun* and *Demonstrationsräume*, and Marcel Duchamp's installation at the International Surrealist Exhibition in 1938. another important precedent is Yves Klein's *Le Vide*, staged at the Iris Clert gallery in Paris in 1958. Even if Klein's original intention was not to make the exhibition space into his work,