

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRINT DECEMBER 2002

DANIEL BIRNBAUM

DANIEL BIRNBAUM



1 **Matthew Barney** (Museum Ludwig, Cologne) There are any number of breathtaking moments in Matthew Barney's *CREMASTER 3*, the most extravagant artwork I've come across this year (and not just this year)—like the sequence in which a skeletal zombielike body emerges from the mud in a tunnel beneath the Chrysler Building and is placed in the backseat of a '38 Imperial New Yorker parked in the lobby. And who could forget the scene at the track? I for one can't get those disgusting "dead" horses out of my mind.

2 **Documenta 11 (x 2)** One unbearably hot afternoon in Kassel I was thankful that two great projects were served up alfresco. Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's *Park—A Plan for Escape*, indeed a park within a park, consisted of elements that had nothing in common before they were invited to play a role in the artist's slightly melancholic escapism: a large lava rock from Mexico, a telephone booth from Rio, a rosebush from Chandigarh. In the butterfly-shaped pavilion erected on a grassy lawn, cinematic ghosts appeared through the windows, shadows from Antonioni's *La Notte*, Tsai Ming-liang's *Vive l'amour*, and Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad*. Less melancholy but just as crazy, Thomas Hirschhorn's bizarre *Bataille Monument* turned out to be an entire jerry-built village devoted to spreading the philosopher's message through all possible media, including that of Turkish cuisine. Excellent Bataille Döner Kebab.

SUBSCRIBE NOW and get immediate digital access to the current issue, our complete archive, and a year of Artforum delivered to your door—starting at only \$50 a year.

3 **Tobias Rehberger** Thanks to Rehberger, the Dresdner Bank cafeteria in downtown Frankfurt now has several time zones. You can have an appetizer in Shanghai, main course in Milan, and dessert in Dubai. Chairs, tables, and lamps on the various “islands” are designed to reflect the artist’s personal (mis)conception of these and other cities where the bank does business. The lighting in a given time zone continuously adjusts to match the intensity of sunlight registered on photovoltaic cells and then “streamed” via the Internet from one of the bank’s foreign offices—turning an otherwise dull space into a Babel of imaginary journeys.

4 **Spencer Finch** (Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris) This New York–based artist’s lighting devices are even more complex. A recent example: Based on the molecular structure of the blue pigment that corresponds to the color of the sky (on a particular day in May) over Los Alamos, site of the first nuclear bomb explosion, Finch designed a radiant sculpture incorporating hundreds of lightbulbs. A fascinating and perplexing object but also a real beauty of a chandelier.

5 **Dieter Roth, *Gesammelte Interviews*** (Edition Hansjörg Mayer) These 350 pages of conversation with the late great artist about virtually everything can be read aloud (I tried) as a curious marathon theater piece reminiscent of Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape*—but considerably longer. I had the pleasure of seeing Dieter Roth in action only once, and this book brings back the memory (of a very long dinner with red wine and monologues . . . and more red wine) so vividly that I keep waiting for a second helping.

6 **Eva Hesse** (Museum Wiesbaden) I went to see the Hesse retrospective thinking I would get an art history lesson. How wrong I was. The show, organized by SF MoMA’s Elisabeth Sussman and the Museum Wiesbaden’s Renate Petzinger, was one of the summer’s great contemporary-art experiences, and not just for academic reasons—a lesson in itself.

7 **Philippe Parreno** (Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris) Invited to mount a midcareer show at a major museum, artists tend to present the pieces they’ve done over the years. Philippe Parreno, however, has made so few artworks in the traditional sense that this wasn’t really an option. Parreno’s “Alien Seasons” in Paris this summer set new standards for strangeness—in a good way: It was all about unexpected connections and the ambient spaces they produce. Every time a computer-generated cuttlefish appeared in an underwater video projection, some event was triggered in a different part of the exhibition—a somewhat fishy curatorial innovation.

8 **Dan Graham** (Kunsthalle Düsseldorf) “Droll thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself—that comes too late,” wrote Joseph Conrad. Many artists have worked with delays and with the psychology of belatedness, but no one with the precision of Graham, who’s always right on time.

9 **Eija-Liisa Ahtila** With new pieces at Kiasma (Helsinki), Tate Modern (London), and Documenta 11 (Kassel), Ahtila convinces again: Why her stories about psychological disintegration fascinate so much I don’t know, but I can’t get enough of these Finnish voices, so lyrical and yet so frenzied.

10 **Marcel Odenbach** Sooner or later everything turns to video, but how did we get here? Without an understanding of Odenbach’s evolution from the mid-’70s to the present, one can’t really claim to know much about the development of video as medium on the European continent. It seems that most technical innovations were first put to artistic use by Odenbach; a few years later, others would follow. With a very selective retrospective at the Frankfurter Kunstverein and a brand-new installation a few yards away at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Odenbach makes his case. I’m still dizzy from the double projection *Mir hat es den Kopf verdreht* (It turned my head), 1996, but now at least I know what I’m talking about.

Daniel Birnbaum, a contributing editor of Artforum, is director of the Städelschule art academy and its Portikus gallery in Frankfurt.



Daniel Birnbaum

Daniel Birnbaum, a curatorial and writer at Artforum, is director of the Stedelijk Museum and its Parkhuis gallery in Frankfurt.

1. **Matthew Barney** (Museum Ludwig, Cologne) There are any number of breathtaking moments in Matthew Barney's *CREMASTER 3*, the most extravagant artwork I've come across this year (and not just this year)—like the sequence in which a skeletal zombie-like body emerges from the mud in a tunnel beneath the Chrysler Building and is placed in the backseat of a '68 Imperial New Yorker parked in the lobby. And who could forget the scene at the track? I for one can't get those disgusting "dead" horses out of my mind.
2. **Thomas Hirschhorn** (Stedelijk Museum, 2009) Installation view, Photo: Thomas Hirschhorn, Right: Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, *Paris—A Place for Everyone*, 2002, Installation view, Photo: Thomas Hirschhorn, *Art and 3*, Tobias Rehberger, *Untitled* (Tampa), 2002, Installation view, Christian Baki, *Frankfurt*, Photo: Wolfgang Tillmans, 4. **Spencer Finch**, *Blue Sky over Los Alamos*, New Mexico, 8 1/2 x 10, *Seeing Offsets*, 2005, Installation view, Photo: Thomas Hirschhorn, 5. **Dieter Roth**, *Gesammelte Interviews* (Edition Hansjörg Mayer), 2002, 6. **Eva Hesse** (from left), *Box*, 1969, *Box R*, 1969, and *Violation I*, 1969, Installation view, 7. **Philippe Parreno**, *Alien Seasons*, 2002, color video projection, 7 minutes 30 seconds, Installation view, Photo: Marc Strengel, 8. **Marcel Odenbach**, *Wie hat er den Kopf verbrocht* (It turned my head), 1996, two-channel color video projection, 3 minutes, 8 seconds, Installation view.

Documenta 11 (x 2) One unbearably hot afternoon in Kassel I was thankful that two great projects were served up all at once. Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's *Paris—A Place for Everyone*, indeed a park within a park, consisted of elements that had nothing in common before they were invited to play a role in the artist's slightly melancholic escapism: a large lava rock from Mexico, a telephone booth from Rio, a rosebush from Chandigarh. In the butterfly-shaped pavilion erected on a grassy lawn, cinematic ghosts appeared through the windows, shadows from Antonioni's *La Notte*, Tsai Ming-liang's *Vive l'Amour*, and Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad*. Less melancholy but just as crazy, Thomas Hirschhorn's bizarre *Ratatouille Monument* turned out to be an entire jerry-built village devoted to spreading the philosopher's message through all possible media, including that of Turkish cuisine. Excellent *Ratatouille Döner Kebab*.

Tobias Rehberger Thanks to Rehberger, the Dresden Bank cafeteria in downtown Frankfurt now has several time zones. You can have an appetizer in Shanghai, main course in Milan, and dessert in Dubai. Chairs, tables, and lamps on the various "islands" are designed to reflect the artist's personal [mis]conception of these and other cities where the bank does business. The lighting in a given time zone continuously adjusts to match the intensity of sunlight registered on photovoltaic cells and then "streamed" via the Internet from one of the bank's foreign offices—turning an otherwise dull space into a Babel of imaginary journeys.

Spencer Finch (Galerie Yves Lambert, Paris) This New York-based artist's lighting devices are even more complex. A recent example: Based on the molecular structure of the blue pigment that corresponds to the color of the sky (on a particular day in May) over Los Alamos, site of the first nuclear bomb explosion, Finch designed a radiant sculpture incorporating hundreds of lightbulbs. A fascinating and perplexing object but also a real beauty of a chandelier.

Dieter Roth, *Gesammelte Interviews* (Edition Hansjörg Mayer) These 350 pages of conversation with the late great artist about virtually everything can be read aloud (I tried) as a curious marathon theater piece reminiscent of Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*—but considerably longer. I had the pleasure of seeing Dieter Roth in action only once, and this book brings back the memory (of a very long dinner with red wine and monologues... and more red wine) so vividly that I keep waiting for a second helping.

Eva Hesse (Museum Wiesbaden) I went to see the Hesse retrospective thinking I would get an art history lesson. How wrong I was. The show, organized by SF artist's Elisabeth Sussman and the Museum Wiesbaden's Renate Pettinger, was one of the summer's great contemporary-art experiences, and not just for academic reasons—a lesson in itself.

Philippe Parreno (*Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris*) Invited to mount a midcareer show at a major museum, artists tend to present the pieces they've done over the years. Philippe Parreno, however, has made so few artworks in the traditional sense that this wasn't really an option. Parreno's "Alien Seasons" in Paris this summer set new standards for strangeness—in a good way: It was all about unexpected connections and the ambient spaces they produce. Every time a computer-generated cuttlefish appeared in an underwater video projection, some event was triggered in a different part of the exhibition—a somewhat fishy curatorial innovation.

Dan Graham (Kunsthalve Düsseldorf) "Devil thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself—that comes too late," wrote Joseph Conrad. Many artists have worked with delays and with the psychology of belatedness, but no one with the precision of Graham, who's always right on time.

Eija-Liisa Ahtila With new pieces at Kassaa (Helsinki), Tate Modern (London), and Documenta 11 (Kassel), Ahtila convinces again: Why her stories about psychological disintegration fascinate so much I don't know, but I can't get enough of these Finnish voices, so lyrical and yet so frenetic.

Marcel Odenbach Sooner or later everything turns to video, but how did we get here? Without an understanding of Odenbach's evolution from the mid-'70s to the present, one can't really claim to know much about the development of video as medium on the European continent. It seems that most technical innovations were first put to artistic use by Odenbach; a few years later, others would follow. With a very selective retrospective at the Frankfurter Kunstverein and a brand-new installation a few yards away at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Odenbach makes his case. I'm still dirty from the double projection *Mir hat es den Kopf verbrocht* (It turned my head), 1996, but now at least I know what I'm talking about. □



All rights reserved. artforum.com is a registered trademark of Artforum International Magazine, New York, NY.

