

Immersed in partial darkness, the gallery was further enlivened by a slide show in which, by way of a mirror, images of the house were projected onto a sixteen-part paper screen. In the adjoining room, the lighting was exclusively furnished by a system of hanging paper lamps made from photocopies of the sources gathered together by Rönicke. On the walls was a quiet display of images extracted from the Bauhaus archives, and from the history of photography and choreography, among them a reproduction of *The Mirror Room*, 1893, a drawing by the pioneering American modern dancer Loïe Fuller, showing a patented device meant to multiply the performer's image onstage. Also on display was a photographic self-portrait of Hannah Höch reproduced five times. Höch, of course, was a key figure in the Dada movement who was, at the time, too quickly eclipsed by her companion Raoul Hausman, although today it is Höch who is more renowned. This story of transparency that Rönicke recounts is also the story of art history, which has only recently begun to revisit its shadowed areas and finally to cast light on the works and heritage of numerous women artists who have fallen into oblivion or who are underrecognized.

—Claire Moulène

Translated from French by Molly Stevens.

“Le Sentiment des choses”

FRAC ÎLE-DE-FRANCE/LE PLATEAU

A completely delightful mental exercise was offered by the curatorial team Yoann Gourmel and Elodie Royer: Take an artist unjustly relegated to obscurity by art history because unassimilable to a particular medium or movement; revisit his multifarious oeuvre, measuring it by the yardstick of contemporary standards; then peer into the cracks thus opened to illuminate, by the light of a new day, many of today's works and practices. This magic formula is that of “*Le Sentiment des choses*” (The Feeling of Things), the stunning “prospective retrospective” not so much *of* as *around* the work of artist and designer Bruno Munari, who was born in 1907 in Milan and passed away there in 1998. The brilliant inventor of many surreal treasures for daily use—talking forks, mobile sculptures, knitted lamps, unreadable books—Munari was also one of the pioneers of Concrete art and the author of books for children, many examples of which are included in the exhibition. “Munari has constantly eluded all forms of classification and, therefore, in a way, art history as a whole,” Royer explained in an interview for French public radio. “He's turned curiosity into a method.”

Curiosity, the penchant for play and sharing, and the willingness to situate oneself at the margins of the art market, are also qualities that motivate the seventeen artists and collectives here gathered around this figure. Munari and his work served as a filter through which to (re)discover the performative furniture of artist and designer Martino Gamper (based in turn on works by Giò Ponti); the wall drawings, as beautiful as Japanese wallpaper, by Bruno Persat, which result from a series of arbitrated penalties (in which the ball, replaced by a truncated icosahedron, is projected onto a wall covered in charcoal); or a fragment of Mark Geffriaud's imaginary house, for which he produces one of the architectural elements at each of his exhibitions (here, a stone step). In the midst of this merry band, Munari's anachronistic contemporaries, a couple of “historical” artists were also examined: the ingenious Robert Filliou, seven of whose pieces were presented here, including a 1962 attraction, *Danse poème aléatoire collectif* (à performer deux par deux, chacun[e] tournant une roue) (Collective Shuffling poem dance [to perform two by two, each turning a wheel]), and one of the pioneers of mail art, Ray Johnson, another free electron orbiting at the margins of the Fluxus movement.



Bruno Persat, *Trying to make a work of art by thinking of Babylon . . .*, 2011, charcoal on wall, dimensions variable. From “*Le Sentiment des choses*” (The Feeling of Things).

The title of the exhibition, which is a rough translation of the Japanese concept of *mono no aware*, manages to say a lot about the ambitions of these two young curators. For them, “the feeling of things” is what comes to us immediately in front of a work of art and allows us to weave a conceptual approach to it, whether at once or with some delay. “The affective, the felt are notions generally banished from the discourse on art,” Gourmel says. “We believe, on the contrary, that this could be used as a critical and theoretical tool to reflect on artistic practices that tend toward a dematerialization of the art object.” Taking their cue from Munari, they've made a good start.

—Claire Moulène

Translated from French by Jeanine Herman.

BERLIN

FORT

EXILE

Near the end of Wong Kar-wai's 1990 film, *Days of Being Wild*, the character Yuddy invokes the legend of the bird with no legs for a second time: “I used to think there was a kind of bird that, once born, would keep flying until death. The fact is that the bird hasn't gone anywhere. . . .” Meanwhile, the camera peers out over lush Philippine jungle, from the same vantage as during the film's opening credits. The legend of the bird without legs was not invoked by the artist collective FORT in their recent exhibition “Lou,” yet the show's stylized, meandering approach seemed to invite such a capricious association. The artists converted Exile's new gallery space into a theater using four elements: a purple carpet, a collection of brown, one-legged stools, a wall-mounted light reading LOU, and a structure supporting motorized blinds to open and close in front of the space on the wall where a sequence of three videos was projected. Together, these elements make up the work *Lou*, 2012. The extreme attention to detail—the vibrant color palette, the stools' eccentric design, and the synchronization of sounds, lights, and mechanical movements—bordered on excessive while generating a palpable sense of the artists' control over the setting.

At the outset of the work's cycle, the blinds opened to reveal a video of a large indoor pool with swimmers doing laps at different paces. Suddenly, all of them dropped below the water's surface. The murmur of voices and lapping waves went silent, and the first video came to an end. A Muzak-style sound track filled the gallery, the blinds slowly closed, and the light reading LOU blinked on. LOU, it turns out, is a reference to the name in some children's games for the safe area where one can't be tagged, but which one has to leave to reenter the game.

FORT, Lou,
2012, color HD
video projection
(19 minutes 15
seconds), electric
vertical jalousie
in carpeted room,
twenty handmade
one-legged stools,
light sign, musical
intermission score.
Installation view.



After a short interval—the light having been turned off, the music having stopped—the blinds reopened. The second video consisted of a close-up on the face of an orangutan as it fell asleep. After the end of that video and after another interval, the third part began: From a point soaring through the air, the camera peered out over a dense forest and then arrived at a patch of treeless land where a circle of people held a firefighter's life net outstretched. It was white with two parallel black lines in the center, like a pause button, as if inviting viewers to leap into a suspended state. The blinds closed shortly thereafter, and the cycle began again.

In fact, this sequence had no progression in a traditional narrative sense. Instead, it perpetually suspended any progress in an attempt to give viewers pause. For their part, viewers could bear witness only from a position balanced, ever precariously, on the one-legged stools. With no plot arc to rely on, we were left feeling like the bird with no legs—nothing gained after prolonged drifts in the slipstreams, no closer to concrete meanings than at the beginning. At best, the theatergoing experience could be seen as an end in itself. With an overabundance of style, some humor, a bit of mild excitement, and a ponderous effect, the exhibition developed an odd and appealing type of substance.

—John Beeson

MUNICH

Björn Dahlem

GALERIE RÜDIGER SCHÖTTLE

"Artistic research" has become a buzzword—as if art could imitate or incorporate methods of the natural and social sciences and the humanities. The scholarly, intellectually conscientious artist seems to be the new ideal, not least because it is easier to gain support for training and resources from academic establishments when artistic production is couched in terms of research. Yet many artists resist such labels and interpretations of their work. Björn Dahlem's works, for instance, are undeniably involved with physics, astronomy, and philosophy, yet he nonetheless shuns the overly positivistic paradigm of the researching artist—without, however, falling into long-outdated stereotypes or backward ideologies.

Dahlem's recent exhibition "Voyager" was something of a follow-up to his 2010 show *"Die Theorie des Himmels I—Die Milchstraße"* (Celestial Theory I—The Milky Way) at Kunst im Tunnel in Düsseldorf. There, the separate drawings and sculptures coalesced into a delicate *Gesamtkunstwerk* amid a fractured white crystalline landscape in which models of constellations and spheres, refractions, and branching

diagrams of trees merged into an almost otherworldly panorama atop their pedestals. "Voyager" continued Dahlem's investigation: The piece *Sonnen* (Suns) (all works 2011), for example, consists of a wall-mounted display case with six glass pedestals of various heights (some of them candleholders that have been cut to size), each bearing a ball representing a phase of the sun's life cycle, from creation to death. To represent these phases, Dahlem used found objects such as a Styrofoam ball and a dried lemon, rejecting the conventions of scientific modeling and drawing an immediate connection between the banal objects of daily life and the larger cosmic significance of the solar system. It's as if, through metamorphosis and alchemical conversion, the one transforms into the other and vice versa. In this way, Dahlem consciously refers to Romantic, essentialist ideas, but he does so without falling into a reactionary or esoteric stance that plays up a one-sided mystical connection between man and the cosmos. Dahlem seems rather to be interested in the intermingling and confounding of scientific positivism with other worldviews. On the one hand, his choice of materials disrupts such connections, while on the other, his intentionally beautiful staging confirms and supports it. The airy brightness of many works seems to imply a certain progressive stance, which should not be confused with faith in positivism.

Some works diverge from this almost cheerful lightness, and even in *Sonnen* the burned-out sun foreshadows the demise of our solar system. *M-Konstellation*, which shows the unusual and therefore fateful con-



Björn Dahlem, *Sonnen* (Suns), 2011, glass, wood, Styrofoam, steel, lemon, velvet ball, lacquer, shellac, 27 1/2 x 59 x 19 1/2".

figuration of planets in a continuous row, is completely covered in India ink. *Apokalyptische Kapsel* (Apocalyptic Capsule), also dreadfully dark, strikes a rather pessimistic tone as well. Fascination and horror, beauty and danger are simultaneously on display, two sides of the same coin. The intentional openness to interpretation in Dahlem's work points to the risk of limiting comprehension to either aesthetic experience or scientific categorization alone.

—Daniela Stöppel

Translated from German by Anne Posten.

ZÜRICH

Oscar Tuazon

GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER

Oscar Tuazon's invasions of space—which he improvises on-site, working them out as he goes—have been much discussed lately. One hears talk of "structural tension" (Julian Rose in *Artforum*) or a "palpable miss" (Philippe Pirotte in *Parkett*). Tuazon's topography of smaller structures in the spacious new rooms of Galerie Eva Presenhuber opened up yet another perspective on his work. To begin with, there