

November 14 - December 22, 2001

Antoni Abad
Vito Acconci
Otto Berchem
Roland Boden
Mark Formanek
Christian Jankowski
Andreas M. Kaufmann
Antoni Muntadas
Begoña Muñoz
Gillian Wearing

Curated by:
Montse Badia

apexart curatorial program

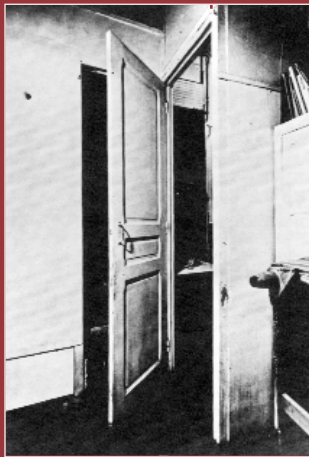
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Cover Image: Marcel Duchamp *Porc: 11, rue Larrey*, 1927
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Revolving Doors



The public sphere has been, and still is, a reflection—or a narration, according to Walter Grasskamp¹ - of political wills, social fabric, cultural dynamics and economic framework, as well as of the reorganization and the expansion of our cities. In this shared communal space, which is market place, site of affirmation of power, of political and economical manifestations, of religious commemoration and festive celebration, different forms of everyday use converge and overlap.

In a time defined by the end of ideologies, that comes together with the inability of political and religious powers to define the notion of the “public”, public space has become a domain of consumption. Shopping malls—where the commercialization of goods and entertainment responds to a promise of experiences—are the substitutes of the traditional *agora*. In spite of their apparent accessibility with their benches, walks and artificial gardens, they are private spaces that establish their own rules of access, surveillance and control.

This space discontinuity, with the blur of the boundaries between private and public life and the dispersion of the centers of production and of images² (the public spheres of industrialized production³) define our contemporary experiences. This fluidity of the limits is absolutely evident in the ambivalent notion of space, defined by the technologies of information and communication media. In this context, “place” becomes a precarious concept and public sphere is transformed into a “communicative spot” made of images and representations, which are fixed in time and space by the screen and linked to “real” and everyday life. Privacy becomes, then, a guarantee of identity.

In addition, the exponential growth of technology has led, in many areas of public and private life, to a dual and simultaneous existence—digital and real. The net brings also a new kind of ambiguity: the net activity of individual participants in a publicly accessible space, that is, a paradoxical longing for anonymity and communication.

The project **Revolving Doors** borrows its title from the renowned photograph that shows the door in Marcel Duchamp’s apartment in Paris (1927), which opens a space and simultaneously closes another one

and its reverse. This image evokes the notion of fluidity between the realms of the public and the private, that this exhibition sets out to explore. With their projects, the artists included in this show present a wide range of approaches related to the ambiguity and confusion between public sphere and private domain. With their critical, ironic, poetic or subversive proposals, they make statements or comments that alter the way we view or think about reality. Although the approaches can be very different, all the works have in common the fact that they become very individual gestures which define the relation of public/private in a human scale. Eventually, it is the individual who makes the door revolving.

Vito Acconci’s *Following Piece* documents a performance made by the artist in 1969. In the course of the action, the artist followed different people in the street. The action stopped suddenly, each time the person entered a private space.

With this simple gesture, Acconci transcends the relativity of the learned rules and behaviors concerning the distinction between private and public.

Public Monument: Carlos (1998-99) by **Andreas M. Kaufmann**, is a video shot on a busy shopping street in Cologne in which we see a handicapped person



Vito Acconci *Following Piece*, 3-25 October 1969 Black and white photographs with text and chalk, text on index cards, mounted on cardboard 30-1/4 x 40-1/4 in



Andreas M. Kaufmann *Public Monument: Carlos*, 1998-99 DVD, round TV, installation and Video still

balancing a ball in the air using his crutches and his head. Carlos, the main character of this video, integrates himself in the public space by making an intelligent use of his natural limits and the possibilities provided by the site. Instead of giving the impression of begging, he defines his own space and carries out an autonomous and authentic formulation of his existence in the public.

In **Gillian Wearing's** video *Dancing in Peckham* (1994), the artist dances alone in the middle of a shopping mall, completely concentrated on herself and ignoring the surrounding. In a time when one can only be a user of public space by consuming, Wearing's autistic dance becomes a real declaration of the definition of the individual presence in the public, completely detached from any consumer role.



Gillian Wearing *Dancing in Peckham*, 1994 Video still

Begoña Muñoz's flyer and photographs document one of her "spontaneous and not announced" performances. An intimate act—the kiss—is celebrated in a social space, a cafe, as an artistic statement. With the exclusive complicity of the closest friends of the artist, it evidences that private acts can still find a secret place, in a subversive but friendly way, in public space.

Saturday 21 June I will
be in the Right Cafe at
Silvianmarkt, Sankt-Andreasstr. 1,
week open 15:00 till 18:45 I want
you to kiss me



Begoña Muñoz *Kiss*, 1997 Flyer for performance

Christian Jankowski's *Let's get physical/digital* (1997) questions in a playful and unpredictable manner, the notions of time and space, illusion and reality, distance and intimacy and, of course, private and public. The



Christian Jankowski
*Let's get physical/
digital*, 1997
Video installation

starting point of the project was a personal situation: the artist was in Stockholm and his girlfriend in

Milan. For seven days, the couple communicated only through the Internet and imagined their own meeting places in cyberspace. During this time, the artist was searching the net for objects to arrange in interiors where, later, actors recreated his private dialogues. In a final twist, these performances were recorded and the video was shown, again, on the Internet.

Otto Berchem's projects also require the involvement and the collaboration of people in such a way that his proposals become on-going social activities in which the artist becomes a catalyst. *The Dating Market* (2000-01) focuses on inter-human relations in contemporary society. The visit to the local supermarket after work that Berchem defines as "the latest spin on a singles bar" becomes the core of the project.

Components of the project are presented in the exhibition space and in a real supermarket, where a series of shopping baskets with a flower motif, derived from the stage set of the 70s TV program "The Dating Game", are offered to the customers who want to label him- or herself as "available".



Otto Berchem *The Dating Market*, 2000-01

Mark Formanek's *Archive of 100 Statements* was started in 1991 and has since then continually endeavored to increase in size. A time limit for the archive has not been set. It consists of a preserved collection of statements from individuals with 100

remarks (c/o Mark Formanek, Schmale Strasse 26, D-48149 Münster) that are presented without any kind of censorship, translation or editing. The statements offer a variety of real and authentic "portraits", absolutely anonymous, that communicate a mixture of deep thoughts and banal ideas that draw an image of the personality of the contributors.



Mark Formanek *Archive of 100 Statements*, since 1991 Installation

When a visitor enters www.aleph-arts.org/1.000.000, the computer screen literally becomes invaded by a million kisses that behave like an uncontrollable virus. With a playful but absolutely critical attitude, **Antoni Abad** subverts the codes of some communication devices we are accustomed to: the promises of sex or love in exchange for a universal password—our credit card number. Instead of referring to an amount of money, as might be predictable, the title *1.000.000* (1999) quantifies the number of kisses the visitor receives. In this way, Abad makes a playful but strong comment to the mercantilist and aggressive vision that involves pornography on the Internet.



Antoni Abad *1.000.000*, 1999 still from net project

In *Personal/Public* (1979), by **Antoni Muntadas**, the juxtaposition/contrast of two screens, one of them tuned to a television channel, and the other returning the viewer's image by means of a surveillance camera, becomes an appropriate comment to the process of



Antoni Muntadas *Personal/Public*, 1979 Installationview

personal information (the individual) turning into public through the media and, its reverse, public information becoming personal through individual reception and interpretation.

The strategies of commercials are used by **Roland Boden** to present the *Urban Shelter Units™*, "the innovative solution in personal combination shelters, a modular system to improve passive safety measures in private and public space". As the brochure of this "product" announces, "civil war, disorder, criminality, vandalism and troubles, conflicts among neighbors and in the family are increasingly endangering society's peaceful coexistence". In this context, the *Urban Shelter Units™* system not only promises to satisfy our desires for individual solutions, according to our situations and requirements, but also to re-configure our domestic environment.



Roland Boden *Urban Shelter Units™*, 2000 Video still

Montse Badia
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1. Grasskamp, Wölter, "Art in the city", in *Sculpture Projects in Münster*, 1997 (catalogue) Gerd Hatje Ed., Münster, 1997 (p. 7)
2. Rosler, Martha, *If you Lived Here. The City in Art, Theory and Social Activism. A Project by Martha Rosler*, Bay Press and Dia Art Foundation, Seattle and New York, 1991 (p. 20).
3. According to the definition by Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, "The Public Sphere and Experience", in October # 46, MIT, Massachusetts, fall 1998 (p. 66).