

COLLECTION ON DISPLAY

Emmanuelle Antille, Christoph
Büchel, Angela Bulloch,
Phil Collins, Alicia Framis, Olaf
Nicolai, Cady Noland, Costa
Vece, Stephen Willats

November 23, 2013–February 02, 2014
Opening: Friday, November 22, 2013, 6–8 pm

Collection on Display presents selected works from the collection of the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst. The current cycle focuses on functions, models, and interpretations of space and interiors in contemporary art. The installations, shown in three parts, address specific spatial arrangements and their conceptualizations. In the second part, works by Emmanuelle Antille, Christoph Büchel, Angela Bulloch, Phil Collins, Alicia Framis, Olaf Nicolai, Cady Noland, Costa Vece, and Stephen Willats are on display. They examine the participatory potential of architectures and the viability of social community and the individual in space.

Curator:
Judith Welter,
Collection Conservator,
Migros Museum
für Gegenwartskunst

In recent decades, artistic involvement with issues of space has seen profound engagement in terms of both content and form. In installational formats, very different spatial models are transferred from the private as well as public domains into the exhibition space.

The works shown in the second part of the exhibition are closely related to the forms of institutional self-reflection that characterize the history of the museum. In the 1990s, the era in which the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst was founded, an important debate took place in the form of spatial settings created by artists. The goal was to dispel fixed notions of the traditional museum via artistic interpretations of what a museum should look like "today." Great importance was ascribed to the idea of involving the observer. This effort is evident, on the one hand, in spatial settings that prompt the observer to carry out a particular activity or action. Many of the installations exhibited here are examples of practices that can be grouped together under the term "participatory art." On the other hand, the works on display reflect on the social connection between spaces and their occupants as well, while also referring to the concept of participation with this community interest on a meta-level.

Videolounge I (1998/2013) by **Costa Vece** (b. 1969) invites visitors to linger and serves as a setting for a video library in which a video program related to the respective context and co-curated by the artist can be viewed. This work was shown in the exhibition *Freie Sicht aufs Mittelmeer* (Unobstructed view of the Mediterranean) at Kunsthaus Zurich, where friends of the artist were invited to present their videos. In our presentation, selected video works from the collection of the Migros Museums für Gegenwartskunst are shown. This installation models the manner in which ideas regarding collective work were implemented in the time-specific context of the work's creation, ideas that demand an active observer while also recognizing artistic work to be a collaborative process. Like the functional aspect of an artistic video library, the title of "lounge" picks up on a time-specific functional-spatial context from the 1990s and moreover opens up another field of reference via the significant materiality and aesthetics. The improvised architecture made of used cardboard boxes, a material that Vece used frequently at the time, refers very different transitional spaces, bringing to mind, for instance, the dwellings of social outcasts or the nomadic existence of artworks in the flow of international trade. But it also associates the snug hideaways playing children build from the same material.

In the 1990s, **Alicia Framis** (b. 1967) likewise created artistic spatial models that serve as platforms for interaction between work and recipient. The smokers' cube *Contemplation Room* (1998) replicates a setting that is familiar from everyday life, while simultaneously commenting on our customary manner of observing art, which is often based on contemplative models of reception.

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In Framis's minimalist glass cube positioned in the middle of the exhibition space, the visitors can smoke and observe art at the same time. The artist also refers to the design of smoking lounges such as those that have been set up in airports in recent years. The transfer of comprehensive social and cultural circumstances to the museum institution is a time-specific phenomenon of 1990s art.

In contrast to the functionality of the settings by Vece and Framis, **Cady Noland** (b. 1956) defamiliarizes real spatial elements and reduces them to form and surface. In her oeuvre, Noland uses and reproduces various iconographic sources, for instance, from Pop art and Minimal art, as well as elements from everyday life or public space. Another central interest of Noland's concerns the political and social dimension of this public space. In her artistic practice, she engages in a form of social archaeology and staging of reality. For example, *Ohne Titel (Brick Wall)* (1993–1994) is a silkscreen print of a brick-wall motif. It is the image of a wall and at the same time an aluminum plate simulating the function of a wall. The brick wall, a symbol of the working class to this day, is formally reduced to a pure decorative element, suggesting a parallel development in urban space, where many former working-class neighborhoods have been upgraded. The work *Ohne Titel* (1999) likewise assimilates an element from the public space. In the exhibition space, road barriers that serve to condition the residents of urban space become a sculpture devoid of purpose.

Since the 1960s, British artist **Stephen Willats** (b. 1943) has addressed socio-scientific theories and methods, studying ideologies of social communities by reflecting on, but also applying, these approaches. Much like a sociologist, he assembles project teams, conducts interviews that inquire into the ways of life, living environments, dreams, and realities of a community, analyzes them, and presents his (partly subjective) findings in the form of questionnaires, audio tapes, Super 8 films, photographs, collages, and texts. The diagrammatic collages *Learning to Live within a Confined Space* (1978) address the conditions of council housing and its restrictive effect on the residents of the Friars Wharf Estate in Oxford, a residential building complex geographically isolated from the surrounding neighborhoods by a river, roads, and parking lots. In interviews and photographic documentation, Willats brings the individuality of the occupants to the fore and asks where the singularities and freedoms of the individual reside. Willats is interested in the mechanisms the residents have developed to express their individuality within the uniformity of the buildings as well as the resulting forms of self-organization. In addition to the collages, documentary evidence from the artist's work process and interviews with selected residents are shown in a display case.

The video works of **Emmanuelle Antille** (b. 1972) relate mysterious disturbing episodes and stories and are characterized by a strange atmosphere. Her oeuvre revolves around existential emotional themes and situations such as love, death, family, coming of age, and sexuality. *Radiant Spirits* (2000) tells a dreamlike episode that takes place in a deserted hotel and is woven into a narrative in various projections in the darkened exhibition space. The work is about desire and a bored, disoriented bourgeoisie's search for intimacy and human encounters. The barely perceptible moments of contact and erotically connotative gestures build up a tension that is never released in the film and reinforced by the uncanny aspect (in the Freudian sense of residing in the border zone between reality and fantasy) of the empty and shadowy architecture. At the center of *Radiant Spirits* is a voyeuristic element that is examined in the film itself, but also suggested by the display. In supposed intimacy, the observer can view details of individual scenes on a lounge using video glasses. The architectural structure of the film is extended into the space and suggests the inclusion of the observer in the narrative.

Dresden 68 (2000) by **Olaf Nicolai** (b. 1962) consists of a honeycomb structure of interconnected lampshades the artist borrowed from a 1970s Dresden department store facade in order to make them into a sculpture that resembles a piece of interior décor. In his oeuvre, Nicolai addresses techniques of referencing, copying, sampling, reproduction, and rearrangement, examining questions of authenticity and artifice as well as the unique item and the mass product. Alongside references to very different contexts, such as fashion and design, Nicolai's works from the 1990s and early 2000s are also characterized by an interest in participation. His art surveys the capitalist world of consumption and its manipulation mechanisms: on the one hand, his works arouse the desires of the exhibition's visitors or attempt to seduce them. On the other hand, Nicolai plays with direct references to the world of commodities. In contrast to the unspectacular cardboard packaging of everyday goods in the former East Germany, the ornamental glossy aluminum façade of the Centrum department store in 1970s Dresden visualized a concept of consumption resembling that of the West's capitalist market economy. Nicolai's reference is not a form of mimicry: the material is subjected to alterations that cause a shift in meaning. With *Dresden 68*, a piece of architecture from the former East Germany becomes a chic lamp. Presentation in a museum subjects the supposed design object or lifestyle accessory to another defamiliarization and contextual shift, just as the museum space, which here becomes a living room, is also subject to constant questioning.

Club Berlin (1994–1997) by **Angela Bulloch** (b. 1966) invites the visitor to spend time in oversized soft beanbags, between which a music listening station is situated. A compilation is played that was produced in collaboration with various DJs and combines the soundtracks of opening parties from earlier presentations of the work. *Club Berlin* was created for the exhibition *Flexible*, which took place

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at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in 1997, and so also bears witness to the museum's own history. The work paradigmatically reflects on experimental artistic engagement with club culture that took place back then. The spatial setting of *Club Berlin* also refers to the concept of the lounge—here as a form of relaxation zone, like that which established itself in the techno scene at the time. Through the transfer of design objects, but also a particular habitus of club culture, into the museum space, the work enters into the intended interaction with other domains of life and culture.

Phil Collins (b. 1970) similarly focuses on public space as a place of human interaction. The artist first attracted notice with photographs and video works that examined different political and social realities while always referring to the media representations of the same realities. Many of his semi-documentary film and photographic works are created in conflict-laden regions like the West Bank, the Balkans, or Northern Ireland and address themes of violence, destruction, and loss. They sometimes reflect on public space as a place of social participation in a political sense. The title *Holiday in Someone Else's Misery* suggests that the relationship between society and such conflict situations is voyeuristic in nature. The artist debunks clichéd media images by displaying the unspectacular and atypical, such as Muslim protests in Los Angeles, the hometown of the Western “dream factory.”

Christoph Büchel (b. 1966) became noted for large-scale installations that completely pervade existing architectural structures and, via precise arrangements of objects and materials, reproduce realistic spatial models. His mostly large-scale installations refer to known media images of social situations or political realities, reflecting conditions and features of specific social strata or groups. The installation *Minus* (2002) is an industrial deep-freeze container that resembles a minimalist sculpture from the outside. In its interior, which houses a frozen still image of an improvised concert venue, the temperature is minus 24 degrees. Instruments and speakers distributed across a stage, but also full ashtrays and half-empty beer crates, covered with a thick layer of ice, bear witness to the presence of the audience and performers, who have only just left. The frozen traces of human presence are real, albeit staged. Before the opening of each exhibition, a concert takes place in the container, with a local band. Afterward, the setting of this performative action is frozen in the state in which it is left. The process of freezing acts as a metaphor for the “freezing” of artworks that occurs, for instance, in the assimilation into a collection. *Minus* thus becomes a miniature museum that stores residues of civilization from a particular cultural act: in this case, a homage to the musical subculture of the punk scene, the aesthetics and improvised nature of which are referred to in *Minus*.

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Emmanuelle Antille
Radiant Spirits
2000
5-channel video installation on 3 projections and
1 monitor (color, sound), 2 video glasses, 2 reclining
chairs
54:38 min.



Christoph Büchel
Minus
2002
Deep freeze unit, concert equipment, lighting
system, decor, concert trash, beer, water
280 x 540 x 400 cm



Angela Bulloch
Club Berlin
1994 - 1997
3 beanbags (cotton), Perspex cover, DVD
player, amplifier, 3 headsets, audio-distributor
box, audio files
Dimensions variable



Phil Collins
Drumcree
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
52 x 64 cm



Phil Collins
Drumcree (Oranges)
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
52 x 71 cm



Phil Collins
Face Value
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
52 x 76 cm

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Phil Collins
LA Protest
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
52 x 71 cm



Phil Collins
LA Protest
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
52 x 71 cm



Phil Collins
LA Protest
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
52 x 71 cm



Phil Collins
Ohne Titel
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
32 x 41 cm



Phil Collins
Holiday in Someone Else's Misery
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
52 x 76 cm



Phil Collins
You're Not the Man You Never Were
2000 - 2002
Color photograph
52 x 76 cm



Alicia Framis
Contemplation Room
1998
Metal frame, glass, chairs, ash tray
300 x 300 x 300 cm

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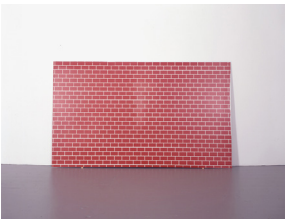
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Olaf Nicolai
Dresden 68
2000
Polystyrene, light bulbs, cable
230 x 165 x 135 cm



Cady Noland
Ohne Titel
1999
Plastic, acrylic, wood
103 x 74 x 306 cm



Cady Noland
Ohne Titel (Brick Wall)
1993 - 1993
Silkscreen on aluminum
153 x 306 x 1 cm



Costa Vece
Videolounge I
1998/2013
Cardboard boxes, printed foils, adhesive tape,
cable, fittings, light bulbs, plugs, videos on
monitors
Dimensions variable



Stephen Willats
Learning to Live within a Confined Space
1978
Collage (gouache, b/w photographs) on photo-
graphic paper
4 parts: each 132 x 100 cm

Stephen Willats
*Archive of Learning to Live Within a Confined
Space*
1978
B/w photographs, A4 photocopies (texts and
interviews), audio files with interviews and talks
by various persons

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