

ARS VIVA 09/10 – GESCHICHTE / HISTORY:
MARIANA CASTILLO DEBALL
JAY CHUNG & Q TAKEKI MAEDA
DANI GAL

13th June – 1st August 2010

At a time of increasing media dominance, where we are exposed daily to ever greater amounts of data, even the most up-to-date things rapidly become outmoded. In this context, a preoccupation with history appears to offer a possibility to pause and slow down. This year the renowned *ars viva* exhibition, organized by the Kulturkreis der deutschen Wirtschaft, awarded prizes to Mariana Castillo Deball, Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda and Dani Gal, artists who have converged anew on the term “history”, accommodating societal developments not purely attributed to confusing and increasingly rapid forums of communication.

Mariana Castillo Deball, Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda, and Dani Gal examine historical fragments, documents, and objects in a new light. The artists take on the roles of amateur archaeologists as they work with found objects and fragments; even though it is clear that all display an obvious interest in historical objects, not one of them actually provides any sort of conclusion regarding history as a whole. Rather, they play an associative game, which formally resembles Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, while reflecting upon personal encounters with objects and places.

Of course, the exploration of history is not unknown to contemporary art. At the latest, the philosophical movements of the 1960s questioned the construction of history, its claims of truth, and its canonization. They developed narrative models that broke with the notion of linear history and its models. Conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s and Appropriation artists of the 1980s worked with these ideas and consciously veered away from the old strategies for writing history. Ever since then, previously ignored historical events and little-known narrative forms have become more interesting objects for artists. In the past, as well as the present, artists have employed media such as text collages, commentary, documentation, or interviews, but nowadays these methodical approaches are not primarily used as means for discovering the truth, or for didactic explanations.

The title of the total installation by **Mariana Castillo Deball** (born 1975, Mexico), *Between You And the Image of You That Comes To Me* (2010), points to memory deceptions and the discrepancies between remembrance and the object recalled. In her artistic work Castillo Deball takes as her subject various aspects of memory and history and the media for their storage. At the heart of the installation is the myth of the Aztec moon goddess Coyolxauhqui, who was dismembered by her brother the sun god for attempting to murder their mother, the earth goddess Coatlicue, after which he threw her head into the heavens. In 1978 an ancient disc depicting the fragmented moon goddess was found during construction work under a square in Mexico City. The then president, José López Portillo, implemented the accidental archaeological discovery for nationalist purposes, attempting to create a national collective identity out of the fragmented deity of Mexican creation mythology. Castillo Deball copied the forms of this archaeological find in her silhouette *The Stronger the Light the Shadow Cuts Deeper* (2010). The exhibition architecture incorporates the positive circular shape of the moon, as do the other negative remnants. In the video projection *There is a Space Later in Time Where You Are Just a Memory* (2010) Castillo Deball links Coyolxauhqui's story to a folk tale about a man who devoured himself. The themes of memory production and the writing of stories also run through the works *Do ut des* (2009) and *Stumbling Stones* (2009). In random selections the artist elevates waste products into artworks: the *Stumbling Stones* are simply what is left over from the castings of an arts

foundry, accrued remnants of molten metal and casting procedures. The waste products of art, what is left behind, becomes reconstituted – turned again into art. For *Do ut des* the artist cut holes into museum catalogues. The quasi-archaeological drillings, however, do not give an insight into hidden stories. Instead the holes put the relationships of museum order into question which, in this catalogue through illustrations of the artworks, are reproduced in human proportions.

The conceptual works by **Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda** (born 1976, USA, born 1977, Japan respectively) often feature immaterial components and investigate various aspects of the creation of myths in the arts system. The work *Hans Ulrich Obrist Interviews* (2010) consists of a transport pallet heaped with still-sealed editions of Maeda's Japanese translation of Obrist's book *Interviews: Volume I*. The book is a collection of interviews Obrist carried out with artists, curators, architects and thinkers, featuring an introduction on each interviewed person. Thus its promise is twofold; on the one hand an approach to the protagonists of cultural production of the present, on the other the consolidation of their positions in history. Both promises cannot be fulfilled, not only because the translation is into Japanese – a language unknown to Chung as well as the vast majority of the exhibition's visitors – but also as a result of the form of their presentation. *Modus Tollens* (2003) plays on individual and collective processes of repression and negation. Chung and Maeda put to the test the extent to which the act of an imaginary proposition – "just do, as if" – has the potential to rewrite history. For one month they behaved as if they had brought their many years of artistic partnership to an end, and that Maeda was returning to Japan. At the end of the month they drove to the airport and took one (seemingly) last photograph of themselves together. But Maeda didn't have a ticket – afterwards both artists began the process anew, and after another month drove to the airport to make their parting, and once again took a photograph. The title of the work is a term derived from classical logic, and describes a complex formula, which can be drawn up by means of deduction: from the supposition *if A, then B* (e.g. *if it has snowed, the ground is white*) and *not B* (*the ground is not white*) the conclusion *not A* (*it has not snowed*) can be drawn. The fiction, or for that matter rewritten reality, can be upheld only as long as the two artists perform their congruent imaginary condition.

Dani Gal (born, 1975, Israel) investigates the constructional character of history, in particular that recorded by media. Gal collects historical documents such as sound recordings, which he manipulates, and presents, and in this way activates in the present. He re-enacted, in the most precise manner possible, the first test broadcasts of Israeli television by using witnesses of the period and archival research. The installation *An Architecture Regarding the Future of Conversations* (2008) consists of a silk screen print and two plinths with built-in loudspeakers, upon which a turntable has been fixed. These turntables play the LP *Conversations Regarding the Future of Architecture* (1956), in which various great Modernist architects such as Walter Gropius, Eero Saarinen, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Richard Neutra express their thoughts on the future of architecture. This discourse on the forward-looking architectonic utopias of modernism, however, increasingly confuses the listener through incomprehensibility: as one steps towards the plinth, movement sensors lower the playback speed. The visitors become conscious through their relationship to one another that together they influence and manipulate the recording. They are thus challenged to talk to one another and coordinate their movements in the room if they really want to listen to the historical conversations. For the work *i.e.* (2008) sample sentences have been lifted from the *Oxford English Dictionary* out of their original context, and put together anew in random series. Based on our memories and experience we attempt to link these fragmentary texts and make a meaningful story out of them.

Curated by Heike Munder

ars viva-prize: since 1953 the *Kulturkreis der deutschen Wirtschaft im BDI* has awarded the *ars viva* art prize for the promotion of young artists. The thematic focus is changed each year to give it special contemporaneity. Further information can be found at: www.kulturkreis.eu

An exhibition of work by the prize winners of the fine arts of the Kulturkreises der deutschen Wirtschaft im BDI e.V., is held in cooperation with the Museum Wiesbaden, the Cologne Kunstverein and migros museum für gegenwartskunst, Zürich.

CATALOGUE: A catalogue has been published by Hatje Cantz in parallel to the *ars viva*-series of exhibitions at the Museum Wiesbaden, the Cologne Kunstverein and migros museum für gegenwartskunst, comprehensively documenting the prize winner's works.

PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS: Sunday 20th and 27th June, 11th and 25th July at 2pm, as well as Thursday 17th June and 29th July at 6.30pm.

OPENING HOURS: Thurs / Wed / Fri Midday to 6pm, Thurs Midday to 8pm, Sat / Sun 11am to 5pm. Entrance to the museum is free of charge from 5pm to 8pm every Thursday.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LÖWENBRÄU AREA: On 1st August 2010 the migros museum für gegenwartskunst will close its space in the Löwenbräu area due to renovation work. The reopening will take place during 2012. In the meantime the museum is keeping its diverse programme active and has obtained an exhibition space in Albisriederstrasse. The opening of the new spaces is taking place on **24th September 2010**, at 6pm. Hauser & Wirth, Galerie Bob van Orsouw and the bookshop Kunstgriff are opening their spaces at the same address.

VISITOR'S ADDRESS FROM 24th SEPTEMBER 2010

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The migros museum für gegenwartskunst is a Migros-Kulturprozent institution.
www.migros-kulturprozent.ch