

Growing Absence, 2010, pigment print on paper, Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

SLOW SEASON

MAHONY

—
Exhibition

from 13 June to 14 August 2013

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Opening

Thursday 13 June 2013, 6:30pm

—
Meeting with Mahony

Saturday 15 June 2013, 3pm at La Criée

—
Guided tours

Thursday 20 June 2013, 5:30pm at La Criée

Friday 28 June 2013, 5pm at La Criée

—
« 858 pages plus au sud »

Film by Gregory Buchert

Screening at Frac Bretagne

(as part of La Nuit européenne des musées)

Saturday 18 May 2013, 10pm

—
Curator

Sophie Kaplan

—
Production

La Criée centre for contemporary art

—
ULYSSES
un itinéraire
d'art contemporain
en Bretagne
L'AUTRE
MER un projet
à l'initiative
du Frac Bretagne

This exhibition is part of *Ulysses, l'autre mer*, a contemporary art itinerary in Brittany open to visitors from April to November 2013. The *Ulysses, l'autre mer* project was initiated by Frac Bretagne for 30th anniversary of the Fonds régionaux d'art contemporain in France.

Further information: www.fracbretagne.fr

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Press release

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From 13 June to 14 August La Criée is presenting «Slow Season», the first solo exhibition in France by Mahony, an Austrian art collective currently based in Berlin. «Slow Season» combines a variation on the theme of absence with an exploration of our cultural and economic models, past and present.

Different geographical and historical zones, different social and political contexts: Mahony's projects often start out with aspects –real or fictional, known or unknown– of our collective memory. The collective provokes confrontations, two-way trajectories and spatio-temporal connections between several strata and several interpretations of the same narrative; the upshot is a rhizomatic, constantly evolving work process whose issues lie neither in the trigger factor nor the ultimate purpose, but in the data constellation created in between.

Slow Season takes its inspiration from its La Criée context –the history, the space and the site of an art centre in a former fish market– and from the tutelary figures of the heroes of Homer and James Joyce.

The exhibition is built around a succession of reciprocally responding works and clues that form an assemblage made of scraps of a story –or maybe several possible stories.

Entering the exhibition space, visitors are confronted by *Slow Season* (2013), a large-format archival photograph of the covered market dating from the 1920s, repainted by hand. This work sets up an interaction between the space itself, its built environment and its history: a direct echo of La Criée, it makes the centre a full protagonist in the exhibition scenario.

References to the Ulysses of Joyce and Homer are everywhere. *Meeting of the Waters* (2013), for example, offers a map of the public garden in Dublin where part of Chapter 10 of Joyce's *Ulysses* is played out. A response in the form of *Swansong* (2013), a quotation from the same chapter, prompts interplay between the exhibition's historical roots and variations on its mythical theme.

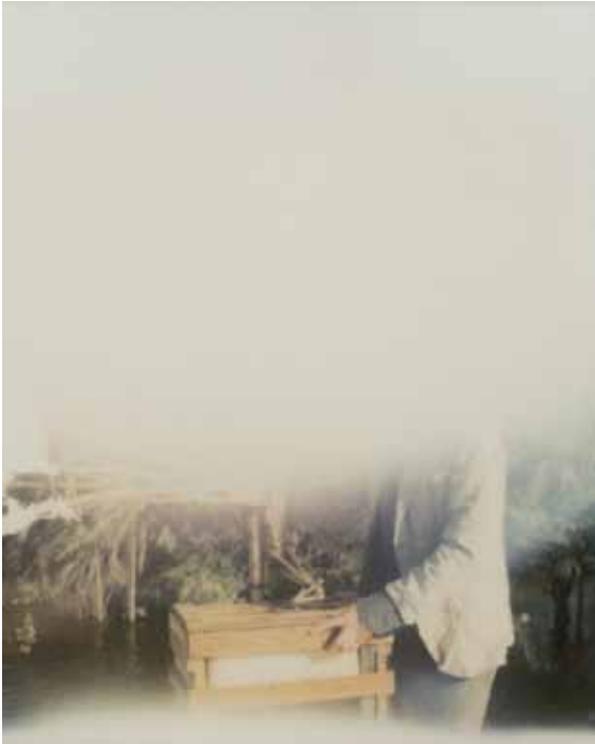
The literary allusions are paralleled by a close focus on the complexities and excesses of contemporary society. This leads Mahony to an emphasis on objects that channel conflict, and whose contradictory nature they spotlight: mass consumption items and archaeological artefacts treated and considered both as merchandise and as vehicles for meaning.

For Mahony these objects, which circulate on the global market, are inherently an expression of today's materialist culture. The installation *Gum - Paste Incident* (2011) contains a reference to a Mayan statue whose authenticity was recently challenged when it came up for sale: the installation questions its value as an (art) object and calls attention to the power struggles taking place between Old Europe and the 'other worlds'.

Slow Season's equilibrium is doubly underpinned by this subtle mix of the poetic and the political and by the artists' attentiveness to the exhibition's setting. Crucial here is the image of the sharp-eyed nomadic observer: the flâneur, from Leopold Bloom to Walter Benjamin, or the long-distance traveller, from Ulysses to Ernest Shackleton.

Visuals for the press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Growing Absence, 2010
Pigment print on paper,
Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna



Caruso Inverso, performance, 2010
Video still, digital photo
Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Visuals for the press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



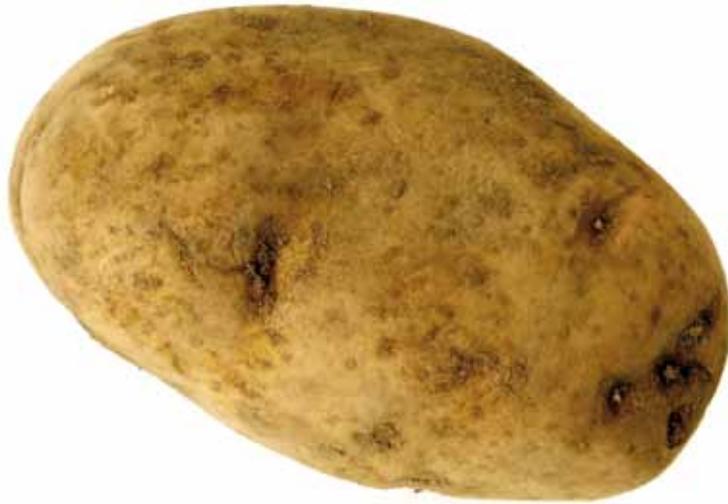
Interior view of the central market, Rennes, years 1920, Le Couturier (picture); Guy Artur (reproduction); Lambart Norbert (reproduction) © Région Bretagne, 1999



Untitled, 2013
Metal, white varnished
Courtesy Mahony et Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Visuals for the press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Model for the work *Poor Mamma's Panacea*, 2013
Wax
Courtesy Mahony et Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna



Gumpaste Incident, 2011
Wood, painted white cardboard, video-projection with sound
Courtesy Mahony et Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Works exhibited

Slow Season

Slow Season, 2013

Banner

Print on fabric, watercolours

220 x 400 cm

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

The Assembly, 2013

Floor installation,

Synthetic material, cord, newspaper

Variable dimensions

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

Meeting of the Waters, 2013

Floor installation

Fabric

approx. 180 x 200 cm

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

Gumpaste Incident, 2011

installation,

Wood, painted white cardboard, video projection

with sound

Approx. 120 x 70 x 90 cm

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

o.T., 2013

Sculpture

white varnished metal

27 x 4 cm

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

Swansong, 2013

Frieze,

White coloured concrete/cast stone

approx. 130 x 40cm

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

Being There is Enough, 2013

Sculpture

Metal and fabric

90 x 90 x 50 cm

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

Natural Loss, 2013

Wall painting

Variable dimensions

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

Poor Mamma's Panacea, 2013

Sculpture,

coloured wax, string

Approx. 10 x 5 x 5 cm

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

Caruso Inverso, 2010

video projection with sound

Courtesy Mahony and Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna

Production La Criée centre d'art contemporain

Biography and Bibliography

MAHONY

Artist group founded in 2002, Mahony's members are:

Stephan Kobatsch (1975)

Clemens Leuschner (1976)

Jenny Wolka (1978)

They live and work in Berlin (Germany) and Vienna (Austria)

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SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2013

Slow Season, La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes, France

NADA Cologne, Cologne, Germany

2012

Lone Wanderer, Natural History Museum, Vienna, Austria

Mahony and Jimmie Durham, The Artist's Institute, New York (NY), USA

2011

Gumpaste Incident, Ex-Garage, Maribor, Slovenia

Wunder & Krise, Ausstellungshalle für zeitgenössische Kunst, Münster, Germany

2010

Seeing Wrong and Not Seeing, Layr Wuestenhagen, Vienna, Austria

Kimm Sun Sinn, Factory / Kunsthalle Krems, galerie der Stadt Schwaz, Schwaz, Austria

Weite Welt Regal, Schloss Geymüller, Hollenburg, Austria

2009

Curated by_Vienna 09, Layr Wuestenhagen, Vienna, Austria

Liste 09, Basel, Switzerland

2007

Strategy of Action, Austrian Cultural Forum, London, United-Kingdom

Schäbiger Mond, Layr Wuestenhagen Contemporary, Vienna, Austria

2006

Leitermayerklasse, Space Invasion, Vienna, Austria

Bin ich Gärtner, bin ich Mensch, Galerie 5020, Salzburg, Austria

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GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2013

Home Stories, KFW Stiftung, en collaboration avec Städelschule Francfort-sur-le-Main, et Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin, Frankfurt, Germany

2012

DLF 1874 - Die Biografie der Bilder, Camera Austria, Graz, Austria

Uncanny, Corridor/Gangurinn, Reykjavik, Iceland

Elsewhere, Rotor, Graz, Austria

Utopie GESAMTKUNSTWERK, 21^{er} Haus, Vienna, Austria

2011

What's the measure?, Glockengasse 9, Vienna, Austria

San Jerónimo 31, San Jerónimo 31, Colonia Centro, Mexico D.F, Mexico

Partenaires Particuliers, CRAC Alsace, Altkirch, France

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER DOLLAR?, Proyectos Monclova, Mexico D.F, Mexico

Weltraum. Kunst und ein Traum, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria

2010

Crossing Limits. Art in Urban Transitions, Galerie Lust and Sammlung Lenikus, Vienna, Austria

Biography and Bibliography

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GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2010

Paradas em movimento, Centro Cultural Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Triennale Linz 1.0, OK Zentrum, Linz, Austria

«Mike, Alec or Rufus?» («Tom, Dick or Harry»), Vienna, Austria

Lebt und arbeitet in Wien III, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria

Solace, Austrian Cultural Forum, New York (NY), USA

In Between, Austria Contemporary, travelling exhibition, (4th Beijing International Art Biennale); *Perjanici*, royal Petrovic Palace, Podgorica, Montenegro, Old Pallouriotissa Market Hall, Nicosia, Republic of Cyprus, Janos Corvinus Museum, Gyula, Hungary)

2009

2nd Bienal al fin del mundo, Ushuaia, Argentina

Glanz und Verderben, Das blaue Licht, Medienturm, Graz, Austria

Subvision.kunst.festival.off, Hamburg, Germany

Every version belongs to the myth, Project Arts Centre, Dublin, Ireland

KUNST IM BAU, WAP-WOHNEN AM PARK, Vorgartenstrasse 122-128, Vienna, Austria

2008

(Not) a Photograph, Obalne galerije Piran, Piran, Slovenia

Am Sprung, OK Zentrum, Linz, Austria

Hotel Meridian, Spaceman Spiff, London, United-Kingdom

Horror Vacui, Layr Wuestenhagen Contemporary, Vienna, Austria

Edges of Darkness, Hamish Morrison Galerie, Berlin, Germany

La Petite Histoire, Artspace Lower Austria, Vienna, Austria

Paraflows, Flakturm, Vienna, Austria

2007

Science Fictions (The Lab, Part II), Czarna Gallery, Warsaw, Poland

Das Labor, Intoposition, Vienna, Austria

Olmoust 39° of feber, Marco, Dispari&Dispari Gallery, Reggio Emilia, Italia

Intrusion, the Loft, New York (NY), USA

SLOW exhibition, Plymouth Arts Center, Plymouth, United-Kingdom

2006

Der gelbe Stuhl, hasta la victoria siempre, schöner wohnen, Projektraum Viktor Bucher, Vienna, Austria

2005

November Rain, Layr Wuestenhagen Garage, Vienna, Austria

Der gelbe Stuhl - das Lager, Bétonsalon, Vienna, Austria

Der Berg, Palace of the Republic, Berlin, Germany

2004

Homerische Landschaften, Tiroler Kunstpavillon, Innsbruck, Germany

Wiener Linien. Kunst und Stadtbeobachtung seit 1960, Wien Museum, Vienna, Austria

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RESIDENCIES

2011

Mexico City (through Ministry of Culture, Austria)

2013

Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany

Biography and Bibliography

PUBLICATIONS

Seeing Sight, Vienne : Mahony ; Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2013

CATALOGUES (selection)

DLF 1874: Die Biografie der Bilder – The Biography of Images. Editor: Ruth Horak Fotohof, 2012

Utopie Gesamtkunstwerk. Editor: Agnes Husslein-Arco, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2012

Weltraum – die Kunst und ein Traum. Editors: Catherine Hug, Gerald Matt, Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2011

Lebt und arbeitet in Wien III, Stars in a Plastic Bag. Editors: Gerald Matt, Angela Stief, Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2010

Triennale 1.0, Linz. Contemporary Art in Austria. Editors: Stella Rollig, Martin Hochleitner, Martin Sturm, Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2010

Glanz und Verderben. Die unheimliche Konjunktur des Kristallinen. Editor: Vitus Weh, Folio Verlag 2009

Subvision. Kunst. Festival. Off. Editors: Martin Köttering, Brigitte Kölle, Material Verlag, Hamburg, 2009

Intempérie, II Bienal del fin del mundo. Editor: Alfons Hug, 2008

UTOPIA, paraflows 08. Editors: Judith Fegerl, Günter Feiersinger, Ed. Mono / Monochrome, 2008

Science Fictions. Editor: Severin Dünser, Czarna Galeria, 2008

Homerische Landschaften. Editor: Boris Manner, Beatrix Sunkovsky, Edition Selene, 2005

Wiener Linien – Kunst und Stadtbeobachtung seit 1960. Editors: Wolfgang Kos, Brigitte Huck, Lisa Wögenstein, Folio Verlag, 2004

ARTICLES (selection)

«the third season of the Artist's Institute», in *Contemporary Art Daily*, 19 mars 2012

Natalia Valencia, «What Happened to the other Dollar?» in *Kaleidoscope blog*, 28 mai 2011

Nicole Scheyerer, «mit dem Finger auf der weißen Landkarte», in *der Falter*, avril 2011

Katrin Fessler, «Und hinterm Horizont geht's weiter» in *der Standard*, 27 janvier 2011

«Mahony at Layr Wuestenhagen», in *Contemporary Daily*, 9 janvier 2011

«Christian Eisenberger, Mahony & Eva Schlegel», in *the arteview.blogspot.de*, 10 décembre 2010

Almut Spiegler, «about the artscene Vienna», in *Artmagazine Art*, août 2010

Anne Katrin Feßler, «Per Container zur Schiffswracktaufe», in *Der Standard*, 4 juin 2010

Nina Schedlmayer, «die Weltenbummler», in *Profil*, février 2010

Nina Schedlmayer, «Disparate Archive», in *artmagazine*, 23 novembre 2008

«Reizvolle Leere», in *der Standard*, 09 octobre 2008

Anna Hofleitner, «unter Kollegen», in *artmagazine*, 13 juillet 2007

«Mahony - Schäbiger Mond, leuchte», in *Spike*, novembre 2007

Nicole Scheyerer, «Schäbiger Mond, leuchte», in *der Falter*, Juillet 2007

Sandra Rehme, «Mahony», in *Timeout Magazine*, 21 mai 2007

Lupe Nunez-Fernandez, «Mahony at Austrian Cultural Forum London», in *Saatchi Online*, 9 mai 2007

Nicole Scheyerer, «Auf ihren Lippen blitzt und glänzt es», in *FAZ*, 3 mars 2007

«Entromantisierte Bilder», in *der Standard*, 22 février 2007

Nicole Scheyerer, «die Romantik ist tot es lebe die Romantik», in *Die Presse*, 8 février 2007

Text:

Lupe Nunez-Fernandez, «Mahony at Austrian Cultural Forum London»,
in *Saatchi Online*, May 9, 2007

SAATCHI ONLINE

Discover art. Get discovered.

Mahony At Austrian Cultural Forum, London

By Saatchi Online · May 9, 2007 · New Zealand ·

'What would happen if that actually happened?' seems to be one of the principal, whimsically rhetorical questions feeding previous works of Viennese artist group mahony, extensively recognised in their own country for their projects' playful response to the site in which they take place, about to have their first purposefully made-to-seem-simple actions in the UK at London's Austrian Cultural Forum.

In 'U5', a show at the Otto Wagner Pavilion in Vienna in 2004, the collective (founded in 2001 by Andreas Duscha, Stephan Kobatsch, Clemens Leuschner and Jenny Wolka) tried, as is customary for them, to get under the skin of the gallery space, here rather literally making a hole into one of its walls and exploring the threshold of that beyond (built up from scratch but made to look as if it had always been there) as a way of making a new, temporary experience, full of verisimilitude, but not quite firmly, entirely fact. Simple, right?

Within something that appears to be chaotic and 'found', there is something else – a real depth of thought for the idea of the temporary construction and the group's infectious, ironically all-encompassing, 'anything is possible' ethos, reaching beyond pure installation. The precariously-presented, short-lived art work has a longstanding connection to performance – I immediately think about Bruce Nauman's human fountain – and it's been going through a kind of resurgence over the last few years with a growing group of standard bearers leading more to come. Take Erwin Wurm's one minute sculptures, pieces in which he utilises the barest of found materials in conjunction with live participants – an upside down man holding an orange on his left elbow, eg – in order to make bursts of sculpture that exude ephemeral beauty, small glimpses into the possibilities of a make-believe, rearranged yet virtually unprocessed world.

Witnessing the widespread trend of making things that only exist for a little while is the yearly Berlin-based [Szpilman Award](#), which gives a prize for the best literally momentary work of art. One of my favourite books is the Jan Family's '[Plans for other days](#)', documenting a series of seemingly pointless acts as a call to savour the often-overlooked incomprehensible power of simplicity.

So here's another question: 'What would happen if that didn't happen?' Don't miss mahony's first London (and UK) show starting today at the Austrian Cultural Forum, a ten day residency during which they will develop 'a plan to achieve nothing in particular' in paradoxical response to that horrid, military sounding self-help buzzword, 'strategy'. Dr Andrea Phillips, Assistant Director of MFA Curating and Director of the new Curating Architecture project at Goldsmiths will lead a discussion during a special event this evening, 9 May, with the artists and curators Adriana Marques and Eva Martischinig. Their questions, straight out of a meditation primer but oddly refreshing when put within the fast-paced circus of the artworld – 'what happens when actions have no reason? How do we react to the meaningless? Can we live without goals?' -are worth keeping in mind, at least temporarily.

Lupe Nunez-Fernandez

[Mahony site](#)
[Layr Wuestenhagen Gallery](#)

MAHONY, 'STRATEGY OF ACTION'
9 May – 5 July 2007
Artist talk with Dr. Andrea Phillips: 9 May, 7 pm
[Austrian Cultural Forum London](#)
28 Rutland Gate
London SW7 1PQ
T: +44 (0)20 7225 7300

Texte:

Post Brothers, in *Seeing Sight*, Mahony; Verlag für Moderne Kunst : Vienna, 2013
Extract about *Caruso Inverso*

[...] Much of Mahony's journeys involve an odd "retracing of steps", adhering to the routes already trekked so as to resignify the path and elaborate travel as always a form of repetition. Following expeditions, history and narratives like one would follow the instructions of a map, the wandering the group employs is always a "mirror traveling" that exaggerates the reflection, refraction and reciprocity between the traveler and the cultural or physical site. By overlaying different forms of knowledge with one another, the artists find synthesis and dissonance in information, accounting for unknown territories by incorporating any semblance of evidence no matter how distorted it may seem. In their project *Caruso Inverso*, Mahony traveled through the Amazon by obliquely following in the footsteps of Fitzcarraldo, the protagonist from the 1982 eponymous film by Werner Herzog. In Herzog's film, a rubber-baron, Fitzcarraldo, dreams of building an opera house in the jungles of Peru and enlists a crew of indigenous tribespeople to carry his boat across land from one river to the next so that he can make enough money from rubber to finance his endeavor. In an impressive scene from Herzog's film, Fitzcarraldo rides on the roof of his steamer with the big horn of a phonograph in front of him, playing loudly an aria sung by his favorite singer, Enrico Caruso. For the character Fitzcarraldo, the aria sung by Caruso is the answer to the ominous drumbeats and howls from the impenetrable jungle, a means of "civilizing" the unknown terrain by exposing it to what he regarded as familiar. Fitzcarraldo equally capitalizes on the magical possibility of spatio-temporal collapse inherent in mechanical reproduction by bringing and playing his phonograph recording (the registration of a specific time and space) to this new space and transposing one space and time onto another.¹

Keen to the ways time and space are negotiated through mediation, Mahony took the scene of Fitzcarraldo's ride and broadcast as a locus to draw nuanced connections between both phonographic recording and radio transmission and between experiences of the familiar and the unknown. The group rented a boat and shot their own version of the scene in Brazil. Reversing the relationship between the site and the sound recording, the video features group member Stephan Kobatsch riding atop a boat down an Amazonian river with a handmade phonograph bell that has been converted into a radio receiver, reflecting the reciprocity of transmission and reception, the speaker and the microphone (which both convert sound into an electrical signal or vice versa). Rather than play a pre-recorded record, the phonograph conversely listens to the forest, registering the invisible radio waves that permeate all space (and reflect, in a sense, a completely conquered world where the transmissions of civilization exists everywhere). In the video, the discordant and static-filled communications merge with natural background noises, treating the hidden sounds of the jungle and the invisible waves as equivalent or at least engaging in a certain polyphonic harmony.

1. It is also important to recognize that not only was Caruso one of the first opera performers to tour South America but he also was one of the first to embrace early developments in recording technology (his 1904 recording of *Vesti la giubba* was the first sound recording to sell a million copies). Caruso even performed in the first public radio broadcast (in 1910), an experiment that, though historically relevant, was largely unsuccessful, as static and interference "kept the homeless song waves from finding themselves" (as *The New York Times* reported). He also has been credited with bringing opera to the western hemisphere.

Texte:

Post Brothers, in *Seeing Sight*, Mahony; Verlag für Moderne Kunst : Vienna, 2013
Extract about *Caruso Inverso*

Made of bamboo, their phonograph blurs the simple distinction between modern and “primitive” devices, just as the recording of the radio waves in the jungle asserts not only that no space on Earth is untouched by human action but also that radio technology rides already existing frequencies on the spectral bandwidth. Shifting the notion of “field recording” from the recording of “natural” environments to the recording of the electromagnetic transmissions that cross environments, Mahony’s appropriation is rooted in the here and now and articulates a certain contemporary experience of constantly reconfiguring spatialities.² This gesture illustrates Foucault’s assertion that “we are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.”³

As the project is wholly dependent on the site of its manufacture, the markers of the artists’ actions in the installation *Caruso Inverso* served only as detached evidence. The boat appeared in the exhibition as a cacophonous and protruding wreck of wooden planks, while the phonograph/radio bell reappears and continues to receive and transmit coarse messages from the ether. Appropriately accentuating this decontextualization, the radio played entirely different sounds, culling its information from its new environment just as it had registered the messages in the jungle. Just as the arrangements in the Yucatan appeared in exhibition only as mediated traces of actions done elsewhere, the disfigured boat and recontextualized phonograph/radio emphasize that the displacement of the evidence from the site changes its meaning and behavior.

Throughout all their projects, Mahony regards the transfer and transport of objects and information as a vital component in their work. Like the radio waves picking up different frequencies along the journey down the Amazon, objects receive and communicate divergent information depending on their location. The actual flow of the objects back and forth between sites, studio, and exhibition informs the works as much as any material process the group enacts. The journey between is perhaps even more important than the starting and ending points. When the works arrive at their destination, they are fundamentally changed and take on new characteristics. The trip along the Amazon and the transformed appearance of the related works and documents back in Europe are treated dialectically, each are temporally and spatially contingent processes that mediates the information in different ways. [...]

2. Anyone with knowledge of the physics of sound would attest that sound is always spatial: not only is it a wave, a displacement of matter, but also sound’s traveling is dependent on spatial mediums, surfaces, and fields to relate. A sound wave, we know today, is an electromagnetic process involving the rapid assembly and disassembly of geometrical configurations of molecules.

3. Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias*, 1967 (lecture).

Texte:

Post Brothers, in *Seeing Sight*, Mahony; Verlag für Moderne Kunst : Vienna, 2013
Extract about *Gum-paste Incident*

[...] Always searching for contentions in official explanations, Mahony's installation, *Gum-Paste Incident* (2011) considers what happens when an object purported to have historical and economic value is dethroned from its status and criticized as a fake. A simple installation made up of projected images, sound, and a puzzling object, the work befuddles and collapses hierarchies of imminent observation and secondary representation, identifying in both perceptual processes a speculative core. The installation concerns a sculpture of a Mayan warrior that sold for almost 3 million Euros at a Paris auction house that was later denounced as a forgery by Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History. The polychrome stucco stone figure, representing a masked person holding an axe and shield and sitting upon an absent throne, was billed as an impressive piece of Pre-Columbian art and was originally believed to be a unique work dating from around 550 A.D. Basing their decision on a series of photographs of the object, the Mexican experts argued that the work was an ahistorical imitation whose modeling and gum-paste technique did not present a specific cultural style according to the sculptural corpus (it was a combination of styles, some of which, they contested, had never been seen before), and was therefore not characteristic or stylistically adherent to any Mesoamerican culture (especially at the time it was claimed to have derived from). The authorities asserted that, while the figure attempts to recreate the features of Prehispanic representations made in the Maya zone in Southeastern Mexico, its unique height (165.5 cms), as well as the figure's bent-legged positioning, and the laces that tie the footwear, are not characteristic of this culture, and the apparent erosion, which can be observed from the images, was made to give it a deteriorated or antique appearance. The French auction house contrarily argued that not only was the object authentic and had been exhibited, exchanged, and reproduced by numerous venerated authorities without incident, but also, that the Mexican institutions wanted to discredit the statue so as to prevent the further sale and theft of historical artifacts. No compromise or judgment has been made, and therefore the unique object occupies a space between a great piece of art and a well-made forgery. For the auction house, the fact that it had circulated and accrued successive validation attested to its legitimacy. In the eyes of the auctioneers, the Mexican institutions were attempting to recast the object as a fiction so as to diminish the value of the work and introduce speculation into every potential artifact. The Mexican experts conversely believed that it was actually the auction house that was engaging in mythmaking, importing false artifacts so as to make a buck. For them, the artifact exists outside of time and place, an orphan in the historical narrative. Like the doomed barrel of sauerkraut, the transition of the external supporting language surrounding the object shifts the meaning, value, and ontology of the figure, though the physical thing itself remains unchanged. With each new analysis and description attempting to place and calcify the mysterious object, it moves back and forth through time. Both parties agreed it was unique but their conflicting interpretations continuously remade and dismembered the object. All of this secondary information concerning the statue becomes the only content; the thing itself is without a source or stable identity. It is as if the object is a puzzle piece that can fit into multiple yet mutually exclusive puzzles.

Texte:

Post Brothers, in *Seeing Sight*, Mahony; Verlag für Moderne Kunst : Vienna, 2013
Extract about *Gum-paste Incident*

Paramount to the story is that the Mexican researchers based their conclusions solely on images of the artifact, demonstrating a certain “truth” accessible through mediated representation (a truthfulness that accesses a fake). Likewise *Gum-Paste Incident* focused on the representation of the thing rather than the thing itself. A nod to the supporting structures that reify museological and economic value, the group constructed a modest wooden wall with a floating shelf, presenting a throne-like architecture for the absent artifact. Emphasizing the spectral presence of the figure (its elusive and ghostly identity), the group projected a flickering sequence of found images of the object onto the white form, haunting the display apparatus with representations rather than the artifact itself and essentially turning the neutral surface into a screen. The images fluctuate between scales and extend beyond the edges of the pedestal. Only parts of the images appear on the surface of the structure, creating a dialectics where the image on the display is partial while the remaining projection has equally lost a vital rectangular segment. Like the testimonies of the auctioneers and the anthropologists, each view is fragmentary, imperfect.

A haunting soundtrack plays throughout the room that, although it sounds like a Mesoamerican chant, is in fact a recording of the frenetic bid calling of auctioneers. Werner Herzog (who documented such auctioneers in his movie *How Much Wood Could A Woodchuck Chuck*, 1976), once commented that he believes auctioneering to be “the last poetry possible, the poetry of capitalism.” Given this, the artists’ addition of the sound component not only further asserts the object’s role in processes of both economic and symbolic speculation, but also points to such forms of exchange as replacing or extending the original mystical and social utility of the statue. Considering the skepticism surrounding the object and the way the object has been mediated through exchange, speculative analysis, and representation, one can assert that Mahony’s relaying of the object is as authentic an encounter of the “real thing” as any one of the interested parties. The images, the mutually exclusive definition of the object, the site of display, and the sound form an incantatory constellation of different forms of knowledge (each playing off of varied forms of mediated sense data), which produces a deformed gestalt of the object, registering its “truth” by interpolating the speculation and missing facts into its ontology and accepting its existence as both authentic and fake.

One must remember that the pilfering of the potentially significant object from its origin initially was a form of cultural and capitalistic poaching and derived from a self-proclaimed preservationist tendency towards both the under developed or “natural” world (that was rapidly being destroyed by the expansions of modernism and global capital) and the communities of indigenous inhabitants whose artifacts and images were stolen from. The narrative produced constructed a mythological image of certain groups of people as “primitive,” and “savage” points along the evolution of civilization that were arrested in time, and that the existent inhabitants were indifferent to their own history, thereby justifying the extraction of archeological artifacts and the cultural and political occupation of the land. This colonialist project drew from a “salvage paradigm” of representation, an arrogant preservationist tendency that not only declared the subject as dead or dying, but also sought to retain only the imaginary image of the subject, a distorted and mythologized “authentic” state that could be controlled and deployed ideologically. Either a fully contrived fiction or a fetishized, decontextualized, and denatured token, the figure is a coded myth residing in a series of abstract narratives that are deployed and reproduced for ideological and political purposes. [...]

Visiting information

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FREE ADMISSION

from Tuesday to Friday 12noon-7pm
Saturday and Sunday 2pm-7pm
closed on Mondays and public holidays
Easy access to people with restricted mobility

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VISITS

INDIVIDUAL

A «visitor document» explaining the exhibition is at your disposal in the art center. Visitor assistants from La Criée are very pleased to answer to your questions and talk about exhibitions.

GROUPS

Groups are welcomed to visit La Criée either freely or with our Visitor Service professional. Only upon reservation - From Tuesday to Friday :
Children : from 10am to 12noon
Adults : from 2pm to 6pm

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