

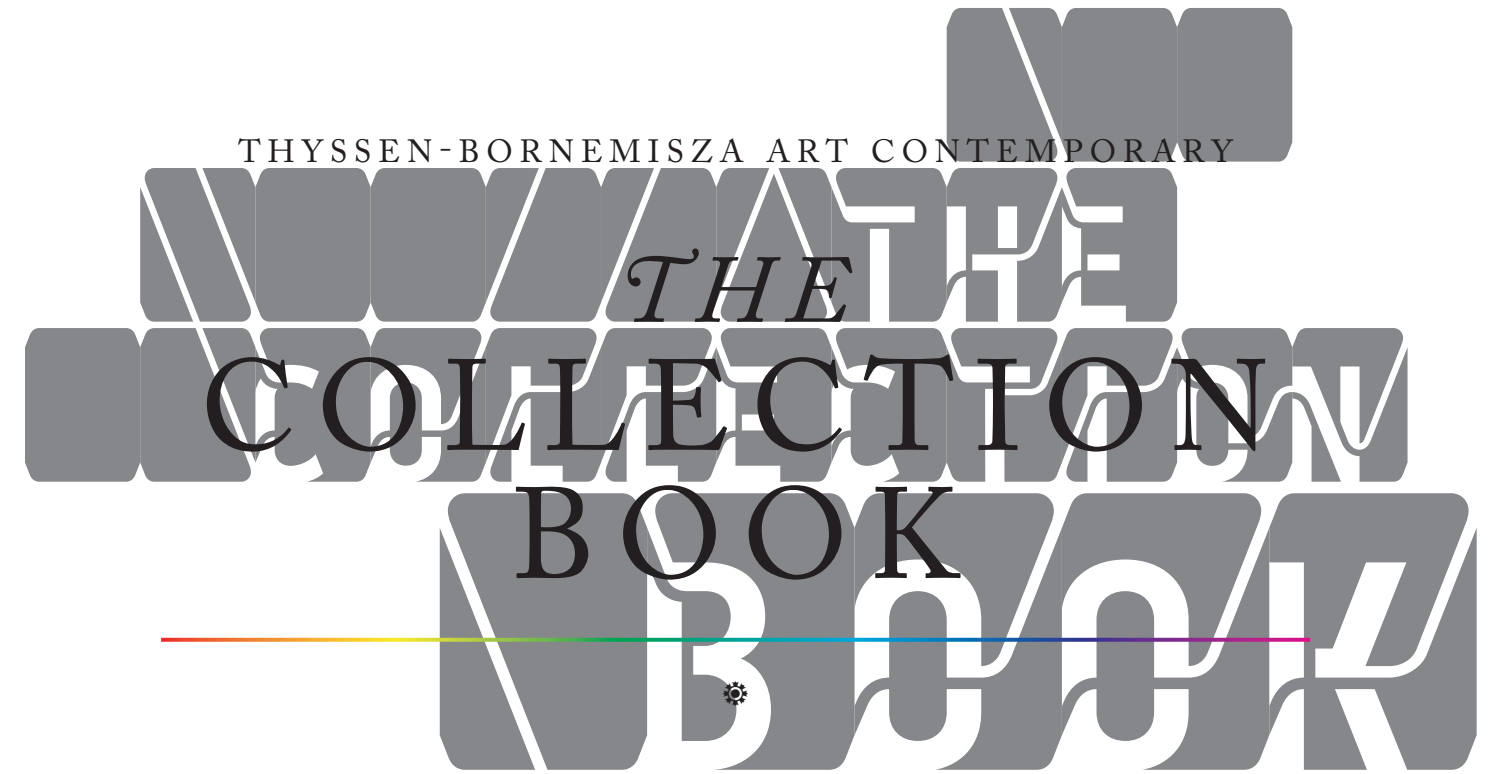
THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA ART CONTEMPORARY

THE
COLLECTION
BOOK



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COLLECTION
BOOK



VERLAG DER BUCHHANDLUNG
WALTHER KÖNIG, KÖLN

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“The value of a whole must not be assumed to be the same as the sum of the values of its parts.”

[George Edward Moore, *Principia Ethica*]

I have been privileged to be part of a process that has reaffirmed these words in a most remarkable way. Over the last few years Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary has evolved into a compact institution, keeping its dynamics primarily through its core team and the talented individuals who contribute to the projects that we commission and produce in-house. The team’s clearly defined sense of purpose raises confidence and trust within the organization, two precious ingredients that generate the collective courage to take the risks that we do. Invariably it is the leap of faith that both the artists and the foundation must take in unison that makes the journey of the creative process so worthwhile. We have had the honor to undertake it with some of the most brilliant traveling companions that the world of contemporary art has today. This would never have been possible without an exceptional level of mutual trust, and we take pride in the fact that, as a rule, these encounters leave behind not only distinguished works of art but also lasting and special relationships.

Curiously, G. E. Moore demonstrated the above assertion (in 1903) through the example of “consciousness of beauty,” the intrinsic value of which exceeds that of both the consciousness itself and the actual object. A century later one might speak of emergent qualities of the experience of art. If they truly exist, and if we have helped bring them about, I’m even prouder of how far Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary has come. Today it is much more than a service to the collection: our pavilion projects have become increasingly ambitious, and another direction that the foundation has taken is its commitment to numerous commissions, productions, and site-specific projects. Some of them are vividly described in a wonderfully humorous chapter in this book, and I am particularly fond of them. Although quite a few involve music and theater, both of which are big passions in my private life, I think I call them performative much more with reminiscence of the term’s linguistic meaning—a statement that *is* the act, just like a project that *is* the actual work of art, rather than the manufacturing of it—and it’s all happening *now*. The temporal quality of these projects inevitably makes them more imme-

diately and vibrant, and it has been a particular joy to dedicate as much time and energy to the performative works as we have.

Two and a half millennia ago, the great Thales taught his students an odd lesson, remembered even today: that their understanding of landscaping was and would remain limited until they realized that not only the cultivation of plants but also everything else that affects our perception of the landscape logically belongs to the art of shaping what was back then pretty much humankind’s environment. It is not difficult to see similarities to the liberating redefinition of art that took place thousands of years later. And yet freedom to evolve brings new complexities, demands new tool sets and concepts. Never has art had so much new potential, but its expansion over numerous fields of expression has led to ventures that involve interfacing with many areas of knowledge considered remote and alien not so long ago. In a dizzying tangle of human needs and interests that makes our world today, this interaction has become a necessity.

Together, as a team, we at Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary have been involved in a number of projects that employ a cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach, which the foundation has taken increasingly seriously over the last few years. The variety of experts engaged in our projects probably matches the brain trust of some government. Since the very beginning the foundation has been committed to international collaborations, and sustainable projects that involve contemporary art are certainly an avenue that we shall continue to explore, confident that our expertise, as well as the collection itself, can energize communities in an extremely positive way. I truly hope that this book achieves what we have hoped it would—to bring the reader in the most transparent way closer to the experiences that we have exposed ourselves to. We have attempted to share the creative process, not only through its final results but also through the challenges and humor that it generates.

To this end, I have to celebrate this book together with Daniela Zyman, who has always miraculously added flesh to all the bones I have thrown her (and has a habit of throwing a few back at me in exchange). Working with her over the few years that this foundation has been in existence has been a wonderful experience, a path of wisdom, maturation, and vision. With her stands, since the inception of the foundation,

Eva Ebersberger, who has carried the heavy burden of all our numerous publications, some of which have won prizes for their innovative qualities. For this, I would like to add thanks to Walther König Verlag, our most enthusiastic publishers and supporters. Eva has also worked wonders with most of our performance-related works, demonstrating a truly multitalented dedication to some of our most visible activities.

As most galleries, artists, museums, and begging and borrowing institutions have discovered, our back-room girls are really our front-line girls. Nothing ever happens without their seal of approval, and as many have learned, winning this may require a feat of perseverance. Barbara Horvath with Andrea Hofinger and Verena Platzgummer, in charge of collection management and registrarial responsibilities, are simply unique and have won us much favor with the artists with whom we work. If they were in another business, they would be referred to as defenders of the faith!

I want it also to be known that there are ladders to climb within our mini-organization, and no one has done so better than Alexandra Hennig, who has displayed numerous talents—from making the best coffee in the office to running the biggest exhibition project that we have ever undertaken, with the Mori Art Museum in Japan. She passed all the dubious tests of organizing various events (including several of my notorious birthday parties) with her capability, her patience, and most importantly her diplomacy.

Daniela has been supported over the years by a few uniquely gifted young ladies. Gabrielle Cram and Gudrun Ankele, in particular, have immersed themselves in research and pumped much-needed spirit, energy, and wisdom into our experiments.

Now before you confuse us with a stem-cell research lab, please let me introduce the administrators who hold a lot of these experiments together by creating at least one stable environment (not quite laboratory-style yet, but they are working on it...): Samaela Billic-Eric,

our Celtic leader in the field of correctness and accuracy; Barbara Simma, our administrator and project manager; Elisabeth Mareschal, who keeps everyone and everything under meticulous control; and Angela Hirsch, who manages the office with a great sense of humor. These ladies are the yang to our yin and vice versa—a solid rock of common sense and reliability.

But I would hate to give you the impression that we are a matriarchal society (I understand that the amazon.com domain name is already taken), so I confess to hiring a few men, the most impressive of whom is our exhibitions architect, Philipp Krummel. His attention to detail and his understanding of what our collection is and can be are extraordinary. Together with Stefan Breuer, Walter Kräutler, and Markus Taxacher, he maximizes every aspect of the collection as well as working on all the pavilion projects, which represent major challenges, possible and imaginable. To this long list I would also like to add Markus Schlüter, who manages our exhibition space in Vienna, supported by David Weidinger. Our PR lady, Christina Werner, has done a particularly good job at keeping the focus on the real issues.

I am particularly grateful to the Vienna Insurance Group and Mr. Fink for supporting the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary exhibition program since 2004. Without their faith in our activities, some of our projects would have not been possible. I want to thank all the other people who have come and gone over the years, because there has never been one who did not add value and contribute from the heart to one aspect or another of the foundation. We are a team, and we have built something unique together. This book is a celebration of what we have achieved. And you—our audience, our critics, and our supporters—you are as important as the art and the artists that we celebrate in this book and all that we believe in, because we do it for you as much as we do it for ourselves! Thank you for being part of these first five years!

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WAYS BEYOND OBJECTS

FRANCESCA VON HABSBURG in conversation
with HANS ULRICH OBRIST

HANS ULRICH OBRIST: *I think what is interesting is that many artists who emerged in the 1990s have questioned whether we really should add more objects to the world. I remember that this was a topic of our discussion when you visited our show “La Ville, le Jardin, la Mémoire” in 1999, which Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Laurence Bossé, and I curated for Villa Medici in Rome, whilst we looked at Olafur Eliasson’s *Well* and went on Janet Cardiff’s *Villa Medici Walk*.*

It’s an interesting topic. But if you look at most collections, they revolve around objects. Throughout the twentieth century, artists have questioned the objects they’ve made or they even completely stopped making them. A quasi-object is no longer an object in a strict sense of the word. If I actually look at your collection, there is a very interesting trajectory. From the very beginning you’ve not really accumulated objects. I always felt that in your collection something was different from most other collections and that it wasn’t just about adding objects.

FRANCESCA VON HABSBURG: *It’s true. Of course, in the very beginning, it was. But quite soon I realized that I was more interested in the creative process than the product. I was also fascinated with the artists themselves, and following some ongoing dialogues that took each and every one of us in a different direction, that was where I wanted to go: into production. The early part of the decade was a boom era, and everyone was talking about investing in art, art funds, and art collecting for corporations—that also prompted me to react differently. I felt uncomfortable in that environment, as did the artists, I have to say. So I felt like slipping away with T-B A21 into an area parallel to the market-oriented collectors and artists who were playing that game, and I found a strange vacuum there that was somehow extremely fertile ground to think about what I really wanted to do. Suddenly I was number thirty-nine on the *Art Review* Power 100 list, and that was just at the time when I started pulling back. We did some of our best work then. The performances by John Bock and Gregor Schneider were both absolutely genius productions, and I really felt that we were on the edge and was quite satisfied when I fell from grace down to number eighty something! It meant to me that I was on the right track. We started to work with Christoph Schlingensief in Iceland in 2005 and that was the beginning of our learning what it meant to be supportive without interfering too much in the artistic process. That’s crucial. Frequently we give artists encouragement, confidence, and courage to go further than they would otherwise with only gallery backing. This is not to take away from the very diligent role that galleries play in the development of an artist’s career, but they have another agenda. Ours is just dedicated to the furthering of the ideas and the experimentation of media or expression. We can afford to take chances, and we can make quick decisions. Daniela Zyman and I work really well together in that respect. She knows how to push an artist whilst making sure that he/she feels safe. T-B A21 prides itself in having fantastic working relationships with artists. It’s all about trust.*



OLAFUR ELIASSON, *Well for Villa Medici*, 1998



JANET CARDIFF, *Villa Medici Walk*

[p. 138 Eliasson,
Olafur]

[p. 97 Cardiff,
Janet]

[p. 56 Bock, John]

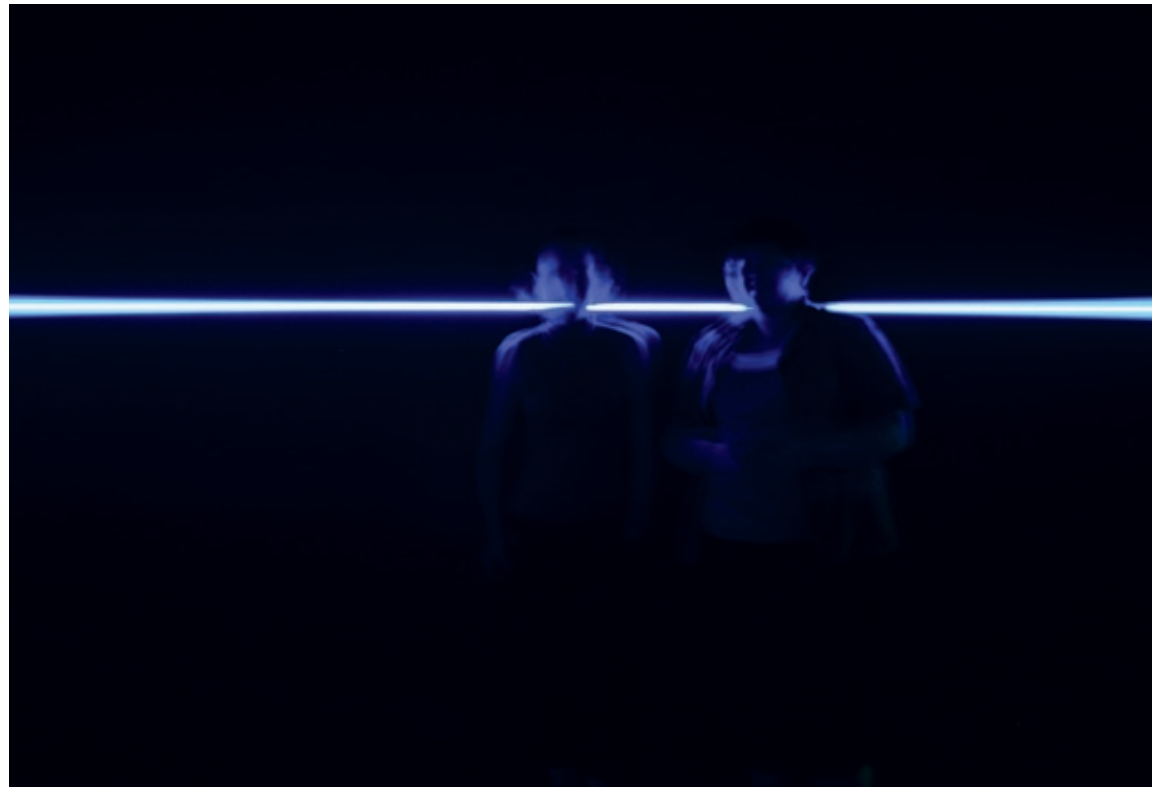
[p. 398 Schneider,
Gregor]

[p. 390 Schlingensief,
Christoph]



top: JOHN BOCK, *Malträtierte Fregatte*, 2006

bottom: CHRISTOPH SCHLINGENSIEF, *The Animatograph—Iceland Edition. Destroy Thingvellir*, 2005



OLAFUR ELIASSON and DAVID ADJAYE, *Your black horizon Art Pavilion*

HUO: *Then there are the projects that are obviously more related to architecture. I've always worked with architects on exhibition architecture and invited them to design spaces: Zaha Hadid designed part of our Villa Medici Garden project and Rem Koolhaas, Kazuyo Sejima, and Shigeru Ban worked on "Cities on the Move," for example. So it was always this idea of exhibition design. In 2006 I moved to London and started to co-direct the Serpentine Gallery with Julia Peyton-Jones, and we continued the pavilions for the Serpentine Gallery, which Julia invented in 2000 with Zaha Hadid's pavilion. In 2006 we invited Rem Koolhaas and Cecil Balmond, then with Olafur Eliasson and Kjetil Thorsen in 2007, and in 2008 with Frank Gehry, and I've actually figured out that this idea of commissioning architecture is a really interesting kind of process and that it's very different from doing exhibition architecture.*

*The pavilion is a particularly interesting kind of medium, because it is a building, it's a production of reality, and it can be used. However, it is not a permanent building. It's a temporary building and—if you look at the Barcelona Pavilion of Mies van der Rohe or the House of the Future by the Smithsons—throughout architectural history pavilions have been an amazing medium for invention and innovation in architecture. Beatriz Colomina writes about it beautifully in your book about *Your black horizon Art Pavilion*. A lot of great buildings have been invented not through big, permanent structures, but through these kinds of pavilions. Mies van der Rohe is a great example. It was just a temporary pavilion and was then rebuilt later as a twentieth century masterpiece.*

FvH: *I think there's quite a difference between the experiments that you're making with architecture and the ones we're doing. What I find fascinating about the ones at the Serpentine is that they've become the birthplace of something even more interesting, which are the marathons. They have taken on a new twist, which is this idea of inviting people to talk in experiments. What you've generated out of those pavilions is this incredible dynamic that emerges from putting people under pressure to perform an experiment in public as opposed to just living a lecture or a talk. Even if they know the experiment and how it will work out, it's very performative, and that gives it the edge I am always looking for. It's combining performance and the intellectual investigation of various topics, which can be extremely varied, and which is really much more exciting than sitting through any kind of symposium. Somehow it has generated a space that encourages some level of conversation, communication, which would never happen, never...*

HUO: *We developed the content with the architects in a holistic way, creating a new public place of debate. Rem did it really like a speech bubble for conversations. The pavilion had flexible furniture and allowed many constellations of conversations. We continued a project that had started in Stuttgart in 2005 and did a 24-hour non-stop Interview Marathon, a portrait of London, including Doris Lessing, Richard Hamilton, ... seventy-two speakers in all. Olafur created a sort of laboratory, a place for experiments. There was this beautiful curtain, and then you were inside the laboratory in a way. Now Gehry designed the pavilion as a street, so it's been quite a challenge to come up with a new marathon because the structure is completely open.*

But I think your pavilions are also extremely interesting because there's something completely else that you are aiming at. I remember when we started to talk about your idea of pavilion architecture—it was at the moment when



OLAFUR ELIASSON and KJETIL THORSEN, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion* 2007



FRANK GEHRY, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion* 2008



REM KOOLHAAS and CECIL BALMOND, with ARUP, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion* 2006



ALISON and PETER SMITHSON, *House of the Future*, 1956

[p. 28 Aitken,
Doug]

we did the *Doug Aitken* → show at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris. I was curator there, and we did this exhibition of Aitken at the Couvent des Cordeliers, which was this strange convent from the French Revolution. Doug, as always, came up with extraordinarily complex technological displays and new inventions of display features for video and film.

I remember that when we spoke about this idea that you would produce this key piece that was actually not only a piece of the show, but it was the idea to become somehow an exhibit of one of your pavilions. You somehow elaborated on the concept of a mobile kunsthalle. I thought that was extremely interesting because you wanted to bring art to places where art usually wouldn't go. One of the great examples is obviously the realized one [*Your black horizon*], which is in Lopud in Croatia with David Adjaye and Olafur Eliasson.

I wanted to ask if you could talk a little bit about this vision of a mobile kunsthalle?

FvH: These were experiments in view of hopefully building a slightly larger network of pavilions very much inspired by the Louisiana Museum in Denmark, which I love.

HUO: Wow, I didn't know that the Louisiana was the trigger.

FvH: Really, you didn't? Somebody once asked me what was my favorite museum in the world, and I had to say that it was the Louisiana because it is extremely personal as a place, and there was this experimentation with architecture. Every time the collection grew, they decided on an architect, and the museum just expanded. I wanted to create individual spaces like those but spread further apart and not connected by underground corridors but connected by a much broader network. We have projects in the pipeline with François Roche/R&S&S, → Hernan Diaz Alonzo, and Neri Oxman. Since *The Morning Line* by Matthew Ritchie → and Aranda\Lasch has become dedicated to contemporary electronic music composition, we realized that the purpose of the pavilions could be more varied than just having art in them. François's *the garden of art hlydelights* is dedicated to a toxic garden and all the poisons, antidotes, and remedies that can be extracted from plants, Hernan's project for Patagonia may play a role in the environment, and Neri's project has more to do with health and pleasure. I am discovering the creative side of architecture, and I find it as creative and fulfilling as developing art projects! But it is a lot more expensive! So I have to be careful where my passions lure me! And the energy it takes to make things work on the four corners of the globe can become somewhat overwhelming...

HUO: Yeah, because it's a lot of energy. The distances make things difficult, but one can do it. At that certain moment you wanted the pavilions to travel. Pavilions on the move!

FvH: How do you know when not to really invest that much time and effort and energy in something? It's more difficult to judge from a distance, plus you do have to take into consideration the huge cultural boundaries. And, of course, these places are not always on the same wavelength when it comes to planning something truly experimental. Finding another partner that's as willing to take the same types of risks is quite difficult and rare.

HUO: It's not that it didn't really happen. It's just—like always—that it did not happen in a linear way. It was transformed into something else. Your kunsthalle idea—to actually have this incredibly energetic place—it didn't happen the way that it was planned in Central Asia and elsewhere, but suddenly



MATTHEW RITCHIE with ARANDA\LASCH and ARUP AGU, *The Morning Line*

[p. 362 Monu-
MENTAL]

[p. 344 Ritchie,
Matthew]

it happened in Lopud and Venice. Then at the same time, you still maintained the idea of the pavilion with the Matthew Ritchie pavilion, which focuses on sonic dimensions. So maybe that's something we should discuss.

FvH: Exactly, at the end of the day, a pavilion needs to have a purpose; otherwise, it's just a folly. That's something that I've learnt from your pavilions because I can see that you've clearly given a sense of purpose to them as well.

So, in the case of Matthew Ritchie it was within the development process that we began to discuss performance and another dimension within the project. I discovered interdisciplinary work when we did the puppet rock opera *Don't Trust Anyone over Thirty* — with Dan Graham, Tony Oursler, Rodney Graham, Japanther, and Philip Huber, and I was fascinated by the way Matthew actually could visualize multi-dimensions. Through him I met the physicists Neil Turok and Lisa Randall who are working on the big bang: parallel universes and multiple dimensions far beyond the three that we are overfamiliar with, and the world of physics played a major role in the development of this project as well. We had a great time “performing” our experiment at the 24-Hour Experiment Marathon in 2007 at the Serpentine Gallery pavilion! But what became very real and important to me has been the development of a music program because as much as I enjoy music, commissioning new music became a real challenge! I really had to start listening “out of the box” big time! Russell Haswell and Florian Hecker — assisted me in freeing my mind in that respect a lot. They are extremely talented composers who have galvanized all of my attention of late, and I cannot get enough of this emerging new music scene. It's very exciting to be part of the new world of composition and electronic music at a time when the music industry is going down the drain. *The Morning Line* has become a new platform for new music. It has a parallel architecture, one made of aluminum, which is very aesthetic and spectacular, and the other is sonic, with six surround-sound spaces, clearly defined by the space that they occupy, and the compositions can absorb them simultaneously or play them like an instrument, one by one. The compositions are specially mastered by the technical lab in York University headed by Tony Myatt, who has developed a program that makes music sound completely different. Since the invention of MP3 we have compromised what we listen to so much, it's fascinating to reach deeply into the other extreme of listening to sound not through tiny little iPod implants in your ears, but through forty Meyer speakers that tickle every organ in our body. Now that is another experience!

HUO: It's an unbelievably exciting context because so many visual artists are now experimenting with sound. I was just in Yokohama for the Triennale, where we showed of the new sound piece by Cerith Wyn Evans, — which he does with *Throbbing Gristle*. Many visual artists are venturing into sound, and historically many sound artists have actually ventured into this idea of spatializing their kind of sonic experience.

The first one who really made me aware of this is Iannis Xenakis, a hero of Hecker and Haswell and many others. I should send you my interview with Xenakis. We can maybe quote it here. I should find a nice quote. We could glue it to the copy, place into the interview.¹ — He talked about polytopes, and I think what you describe has actually a lot to do with this idea of the polytopes, of the multiple spaces for sound. He had this idea of opening a museum that would become a big sound installation with different islands, which has obviously been realized a couple of times but never permanently.

HUO: You speak about music as a science in the same way that Georges Seurat used to compare painting with science. Could you further expand upon the idea of music as science for me?

IX: Some types of music consider that every musical scale is linked to the previous ones. The scale is a continuation of tone and half tone. Thus, there was a link between science and music. There always was. But composers have always been transported by music; even though they had an interest in its scientific characteristics which consequently had been neglected.

HUO: Could you tell me about your dialogues with Le Corbusier that started in 1948?

IX: Le Corbusier had an interest in the subject. He was a scientist in a way. He wanted everything to be based on something positive. When a project dealt with the sciences, it was handed over to me.

HUO: Nowadays, architects are starting to work with musicians to create multidisciplinary buildings that are as synthetic as possible. What did the idea of the Philips Pavilion mean for you?

IX: The pavilion project was accepted by Le Corbusier, and that was the first step. The constructions of space are similar to those of sound. We decided to work together

on this, but the idea was going nowhere fast. The works I did were structurally viable, and though we could have done colossal things, those with the money to finance the project—i.e., the State—were not interested. Neither the idea nor the interior design was new. Other projects with Michel Guy did not succeed either.

HUO: Can you tell me about the polytopes?

IX: One can see in the etymology of the word that the polytopes refer to several “topos,” that is, to different spaces. They can be inside the buildings, but on the outside as well. But the project has never been realized. It was more of a sculpture than a construction. There was music inside and nothing outside. The lights were very important because without light there is nothing. Only three polytopes have been built: one in Montréal, one in Cluny, and Beaubourg. The red polytope of Beaubourg can be taken apart; it was supposed to be nomadic.

Michel Guy and Bordas had commissioned me to do something, and this gave me the opportunity to create Cluny, which was a great success. People were coming to lie down and listen. But many more projects had to be abandoned. It costs a lot of money, and very few people are interested in them.

[p. 129 Don't Trust
Anyone over
Thirty]



Artists and commissioners of
Don't Trust Anyone over Thirty

[p. 172 Hecker,
Florian]



24-Hour Experiment Marathon 2007

[p. 446 Wyn Evans,
Cerith]

growing laboratory activity. The laboratory is not something that can be frozen. The laboratory only lives if it is permanently reinvented or changes itself.

FvH: Well, you question and you re-perform the experiment under different circumstances and then you constantly question it again and again.

HUO: And that's, I think, similar to Cedric Price's idea. The Fun Palace was an entirely flexible building. One night there could be a theater performance and the next day an exhibition, and prior to that it could be a sonic environment. I think this kind of institution has never really existed on a larger scale. It has existed very often in a smaller format. I do believe that with your and our experiments we are producing a Fun Palace reality, with your and our programming in the pavilions or other contexts. It's also creating the situation in a microscopic scale. But in a larger way, with a big, big, big institution, it has never really happened. The Fun Palace remains the great unrealized project for the twentieth century.

That leads me to the very last question, which I always ask in all the conversations at the end, and I'm going to ask you. What's your dream? Is there any unrealized project, any utopian aspect that you could talk about?

FvH: An utopian project? I suppose that would be to find the solution of not having a stagnant institution. I think that my biggest obsession at the moment is looking and finding a new interesting Fun Palace type of museum—I mean using the word "museum" here doesn't work. A pavilion is very temporary, and that's really if you want to put a collection of ideas and of artworks together and to nurture a production department. Not to have a curatorial department that rules the entire institution, but just to have people to teach the type of development that we do. That would be one idea.

To share how T-B A21 functions and what drives us and how we actually develop a project and nurture it and see it through, as we've been describing until now. I'd love to pass it on to other people. That would be total joy. And also to get new, young, interesting people to show me and teach me new ideas because they're much more innovative and inventive than I am.

To build an institution that never stagnates, to break all those rules: indeed, I've broken all the other rules so far. It would be the biggest challenge of them all to create just such an institution.

