WITHOUT

(JONATHAN MONK)

With

Olivier Babin, Pierre Bismuth , Christian Burnoski, Ryan Gander, Alek O., Dan Rees,
Ariel Schlesinger, Yann Sérandour, Markus Sixay, Ron Terada

& Featuring works from the collection of Jonathan Monk

Curated by Adam Carr

September 7 – October 27, 2012

Without takes as its starting point artist Jonathan Monk (born in 1969 in Leicester, UK, currently living and working in Berlin, Germany), yet this exhibition will be about the artist but without the artist.

The beginning of Jonathan Monk's work – and one of its primary points of investigation – typically emerges from the point at which other artists' ideas culminate into works of art. *Without* presents artworks by a number of international artists, which continue this process of, and approach to, the production of art. More significantly however, all of the artworks brought together for the exhibition address artworks made by Jonathan Monk, or that use his presence in various ways and in different circumstances directly.

Without makes a portrait of a particular artist through an exhibition of artworks by other artists. The exhibition speaks as much about Jonathan Monk and his approach to work, as well as its influence on others, than it does about the artists included and their individual practices. To extend the dialogue between Monk and the artists included, works from Monk's own collection will be interspersed within the display. The collection includes artworks by by artists Robert Barry, Alighiero Boetti, Chris Burden, Dan Graham, Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman, Allen Ruppersberg, among others, all of whom have had a pervading influence not only on Monk's own practice but also on the other artists involved in the exhibition as well.

While *Without* is without the participation of Jonathan Monk, it is also without any conventional reason or theme that commonly brings works of art together. It presents itself instead as an exhibition that collides the boundaries between solo and group exhibition, and reconsiders normative ways in which exhibitions are both constructed and presented.

Christian BURNOSKI, *FREEDOM*, 2012. Discarded canvas from Jonathan Monk, neon. 148 x 60 cm

Christian Burnoski's practice stands very much in line with that of Jonathan Monk's, turning, as Monk's does itself, to both art history and artworks by other artists for inspiration. His work also plays heavily with ideas of its own presentation and reception. Freedom uses a discarded work by Jonathan Monk that was used in part in preparation for another piece by the artist, which involved spraying dots of colours on a circular canvas over a set duration of time. Burnoski extends Monk's message of 'Free' with neon, accumulating in the word 'Freedom'. Burnoski's refashioning draws an analogy between using a work by Monk, which was free or open to both interpretation and use, and the idea of freeing the work from an owner or in this case a previous author.

Ryan GANDER, *Enough to start over*, 2006. Photographs and earings, 35 x 45 cm,.

Mining a unique approach to art making, Gander's practice has covered a vast artistic terrain to date, including installations, sculptures, drawings, films and lectures, and even gallery assistants. His works confront audiences with truncated and seemingly inconclusive narratives, which offer a tremendous sense of mental space for the viewer to explore. By foregrounding the allusive and the fleeting with elements of fiction and reality, he positions viewers to question their own roles in relation to acts of perception and interpretation.

Enough To Start Over makes use of a work by Jonathan Monk, entitled *To Tears*, which Gander purchased. *To Tears* is composed of a passport photograph of Monk taken at an early age and a pair of earrings piercing through the position of his eyes, resembling tears. Gander removed the earrings from his own edition of the work and sent them to this mother to have a passport photograph taken of herself wearing the earrings. Gander once remarked that the process of the work is "like appropriating one's legacy. It is a temporary undoing, it's using art as a material, but it's also a material that has a very good history".

Dan REES, *Variable Peace vs. Jonathan Monk*, 2006. Video projection, 9 min.

The work of Dan Rees is informed and shaped by the input of other artists. His desire to involve artists in the process of making work is founded upon an idea that an artist can be viewed as a medium in their own right.

Variable Peace Up to 21 is an ongoing series of works in which Rees challenges well-known conceptual artists to games of table tennis. The starting point for this work emerged after the artist encountered Alighiero Boetti's light boxes at London's Tate Gallery that flash Ping-Pong-Ping-Pong. This led him to consider table tennis as the perfect game for conceptual artists to play in their spare time: simple, quietly intelligent and elegantly controlled. Knowing Jonathan Monk's appreciation of Boetti's oeuvre he seemed like the perfect first opponent. The piece presented here comprises an audio recording taken during games played against Jonathan Monk as well as his second opponent Simon Starling, and a framed work decpicting the ball that was used during the game.
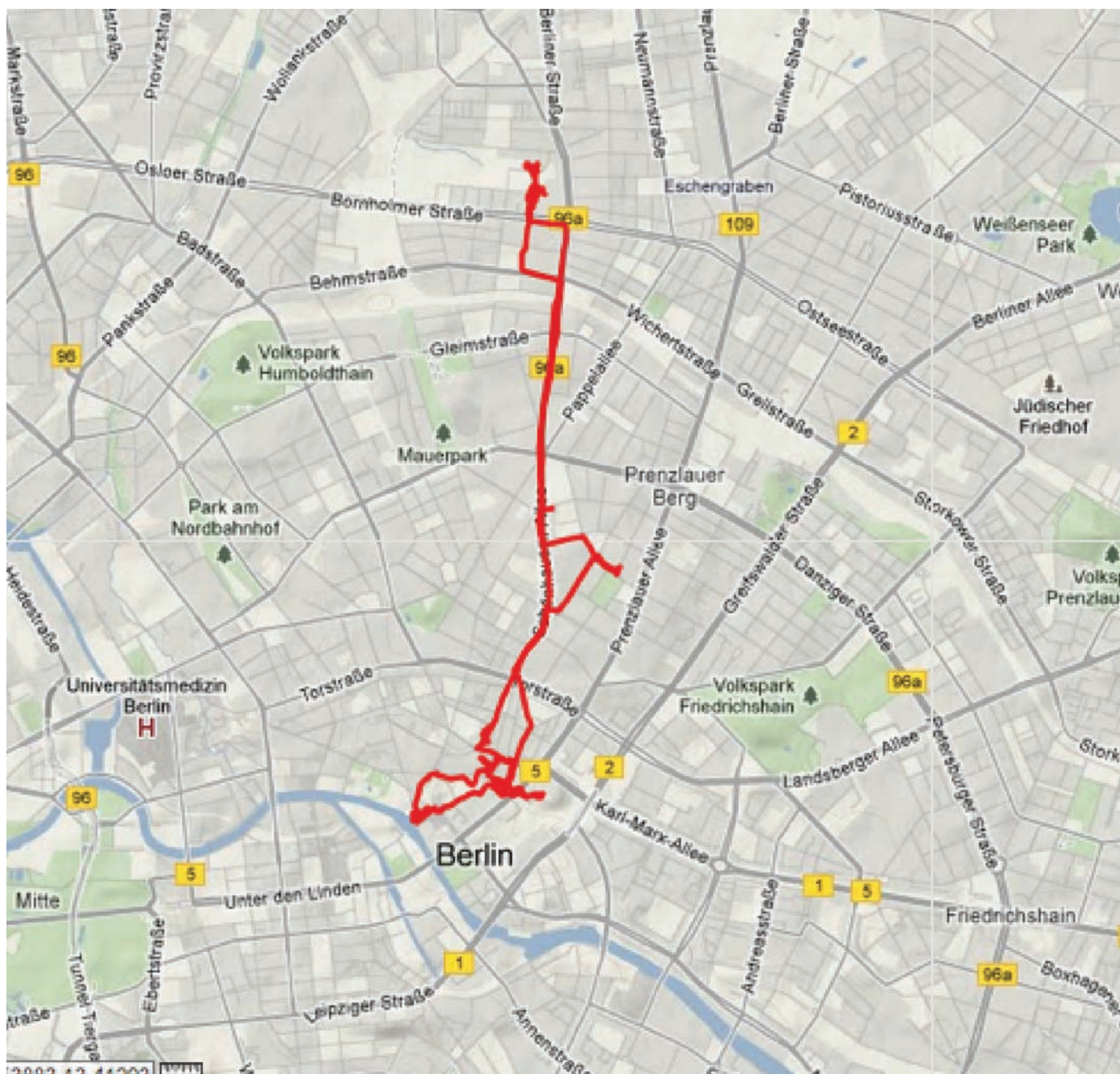.

(RUSCHA, EDWARD). Ruscha, Edward, Mason Williams & Patrick Blackwell. ROYAL ROAD TEST.
Los Angeles. 1967 (1971).: Self Published, Third Printing 1/2000. 8vo. Spiral Bound Wrappers. Artists' Book.
Very Good +.np (60pp), 36 b&w photographs. What happens when three artists perform and document a
Consumer Reports style crash-test involving a flying 90 mph typewriter and U.S. Highway 91..?
Edward Ruscha's wry collaboration is a must for road-trip and conceptual art enthusiasts alike! A handsome
copy of the third printing (entry B6 in Siri Engberg's "Edward Ruscha: Editions 1959-1999") showing only a
miniscule crease to the upper left corner, and a tiny spot near the bottom edge. Book Number: 004038

$325.00

Yann SERANDOUR, *Book Deal*, 2005. Vinyl lettering, dimensions variable.

Premised on the relationship between the artist, the collector and the interchangeability of their roles – and standing in a lineage of thinking synonymous with Serandour's practice, of which revolves around questions of reference, value, ownership and exchange – *Book Deal* takes its starting point directly from a work made by Jonathan Monk in 2005. Used as the basis for *Book Deal*, Monk's piece consists of a booksellers advertisement for a publication by Ed Ruscha – denoting its contents, year of publication, its condition, and pivotally in this case, its price. Part of the idea of Monk's work, it was sold at the same price as that listed within the advertisement, consequently enabling Monk to purchase the book. The works eventual purchase, and in turn its completion, went to the artist Yann Sérandour. Its presentation remains similar, although its price of sale might now be higher.

Markus SIXAY, *Jonathan Monk, September 7 - October 27, 2012*, 2012. 50 inkjetprints on paper, 21 × 29,7 cm(each).

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Ron TERADA, *The Sun Never Really Sets*, 2007. Silkscreen print on rag paper.

Terada's works are often produced specifically for exhibitions. His pieces address an exhibitions concept, its venue or history, but are also designed to challenge them, yet often disguised, or at least lead viewer to believe that they have been placed out of view. His work is informed by a tradition of conceptual artists disclosing the existence of mediation devices as functioning elements in their own right.

The work included in this exhibition was made for a group show in Lisbon investigating the issue of the art market and its current status. The foundations of the work began when Terada took part in a print edition in Vancouver whereupon each participating artist received a copy of every other participating artists' work. Jonathan Monk's edition, *The Sun Never Really Sets,* took a page from a Sotheby's catalogue that is offering an Ed Ruscha print for sale, thereby presenting an image of a print for sale as a print for sale – which Terada is now selling on.
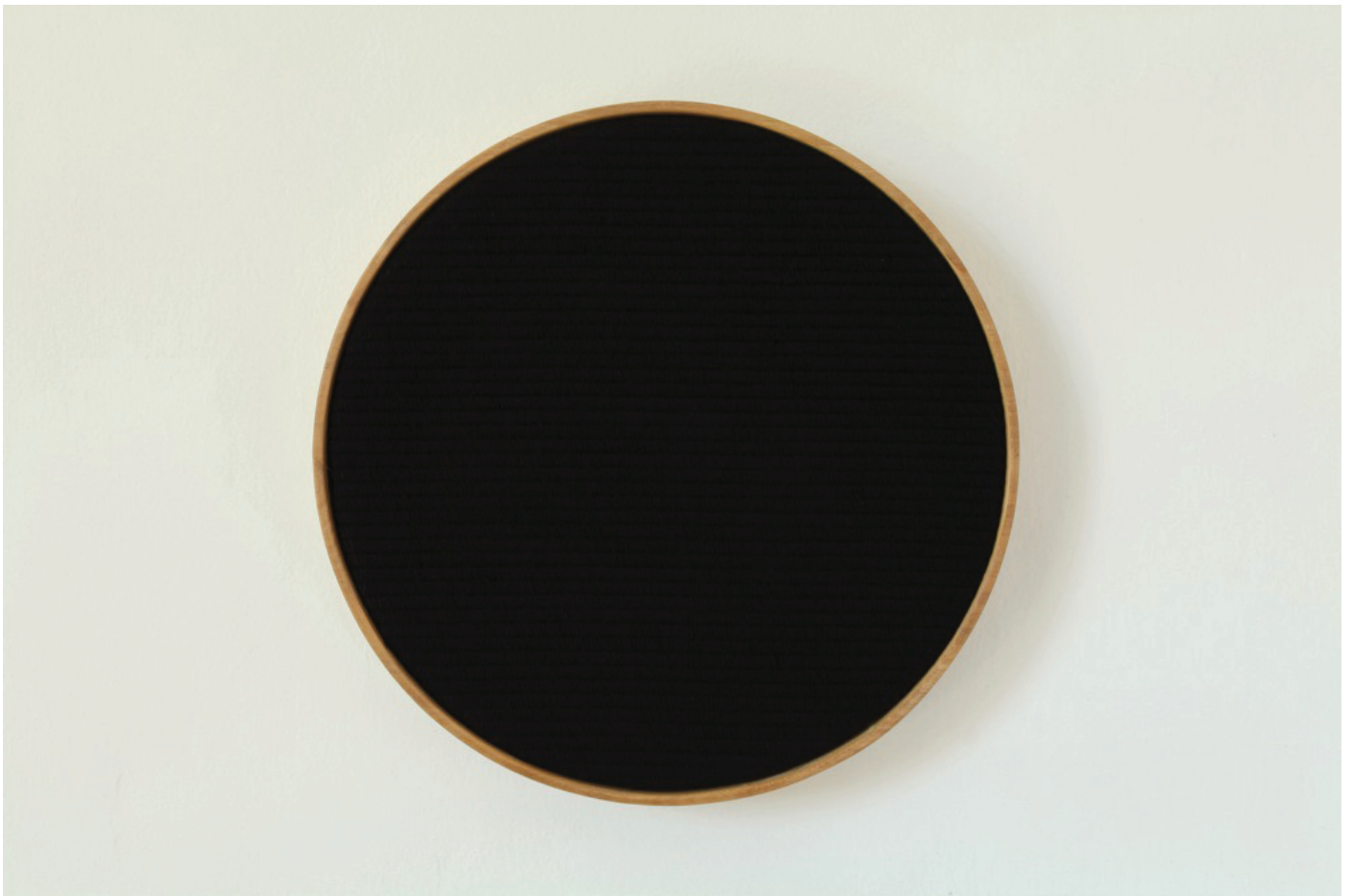
Alek O., *Jonathan Monk*, 2012. Embroidery on canvas. Diameter 37,5 cm (framed)

The starting point of Alek O.'s work is concerned with issues of memory and biography while it aims to investigate, reflect on and ultimately in print a particular moment of history by way of an object. The works she produces, often utilising ready-made objects and adopting traditional methods of art making such as painting, drawing and embroidery, are infused with a personal narrative that she transports to the arena of the exhibition space. Her work transfigures objects she has found or been given, objects that belong to her personal domain or those that belong to her friends or family. She changes their appearance and/or form in such a way that they appear to recall specific periods of art history, namely minimalism and conceptualism. With this process of transformation, she also chronicles the former history of that object, her friendship with others, the migration of her own family, or the memories she has of a particular person, all of which will be disseminated and pushed further. This work, produced specifically for this exhibition, uses a garment given to her by Jonathan Monk, and makes a portrait of the artist as well as a portrait of an exchange between two artists.

PRESS

'WITHOUT (JONATHAN MONK)'

Een tentoonstelling samenstellen over een kunstenaar wiens werk niet wordt getoond? Het is een interessant uitgangspunt, dat eerder onder andere al werd toegepast in 'I'm Not Here: An Exhibition Without Francis Alÿs' in de Appel in Amsterdam. Galerie Meessen De Clercq vertrekt van een gelijkaardig idee voor 'Without (Jonathan Monk)' en nodigde Adam Carr uit als curator. Het resultaat is een ambitieuze tentoonstelling van museaal niveau. De wanden van de galerie werden in de blauwgele kleuren geschilderd van Monks favoriete voetbalclub. Dat kleursysteem geeft aan welke werken uit Monks verzameling komen – kunstwerken of archiefmateriaal dat hij heeft gewisseld met bevriende collega's zoals Sol LeWitt, Martin Kippenberger en andere kleppers – en welke werken herinterpretaties zijn van zijn oeuvre. Door ook stukken uit zijn collectie toe te voegen wordt duidelijk met welke kunstenaars hij een band had en wie hem beïnvloedde. De nieuwe werken die voortbouwen op bestaande Monks getuigen dan weer van de invloed die hij op zijn beurt uitoefende op latere generaties.

Sommigen van die kunstenaars zetten het werk van Monk letterlijk verder. Monk schonk een met graffiti bespoten doek met de letters 'free' aan Christian Burnoski. Die breidde het uit door er het suffix '-dom' in neon aan toe te voegen. De installatie verwijst naar het idee hoe Monks werk een open systeem is dat men verder kan uitbreiden. Olivier Babin herneemt de reeks 'Waiting For Famous People' waarin Monk met een bordje de paus, Warhol of Duchamp opwacht in de luchthaven. Babin vroeg de kunstenaar zichzelf op te wachten aan het vliegveld. De tentoonstelling schetst als het ware een portret van de afwezige. Markus Sixay verwijst daar expliciet naar door de kunstenaar een gps-applicatie te laten installeren op zijn iPhone. Elke dag verstuurt Monk vervolgens de gegevens naar de galerie. Zo krijg je tijdens de duur van de hele tentoonstelling zijn dagelijkse trajecten te zien. 'Without (Jonathan Monk)' is een goed gemaakte, intelligente tentoonstelling die dan ook de nodige tijd en inspanning vergt van de bezoeker. Mensen die niet zo tuk zijn op zelf-referentiële kunst, conceptuele spelletjes, citaten en knipogen houden zich misschien beter afzijdig.

Sam STEVERLYNCK

Via een omweg tot de kern

BRUSSEL (BE) | Jonathan Monk (1969) werkt nooit in een
vacuüm. Zijn werk is regelmatig een commentaar op dat van
illustere voorgangers. Zo liet hij in een serie van vijf beelden het
opblaaskonijn van Jeff Koons leeglopen: als laatste beeld restte
slechts een fladderig omhulsel. Reclame-uitingen neemt hij op de
korrel, maar ook de waarde van kunst. Hij schilderde advertenties
voor vakantiereizen na. Die werken kostten precies evenveel als
de vakanties in de aanbieding. Zo knabbelt Monk, opgeleid aan
de Glasgow School of Art, aan het heilige aura van de kunst. Zijn
werk is kameleontisch, met de ambigue uitstraling van de eigen-
tijdse conceptuele kunst.

Maar als Monk zo vrijelijk de kunst van anderen kan aanpakken,
hoe zit dat dan met zijn eigen werk? In galerie Meessen de Clercq
in Brussel bestaat de tentoonstelling 'Without (Jonathan Monk)'
uit werk van gelijkgestemde zielen als Ryan Gander, Christian
Burnoski, Olivier Babin en Pierre Bismuth – alles behalve Monks
werk zelf. Kan je via een omweg tot de kern komen? Waarschijnlijk
wel. Monk wachtte in de jaren negentig bij de exit van vliegvelden
veelal dode beroemdheden – Duchamp, Warhol, Cobain – op,
naambordje in de hand. Babin vroeg Monk of hij met een bordje
met Babins naam wilde wachten. Zo geschiedde, een foto dient
als bewijs. Zo wordt de *appropriation art* van Monk ingelijfd door
andere kunstenaars en is de cirkel rond. **ML**

by MATTEO LUCCHETTI

September 24, 2012

"Without (Jonathan Monk)"

MEESSEN DE CLERCQ, Brussels

September 7–October 27, 2012

Share

With Olivier Babin, Pierre Bismuth, Christian Burnoski, Ryan Gander, Alex O., Dan Rees, Ariel Schlesinger, Yann Sérandour, Markus Sixay, Ron Terada, & works from the collection of Jonathan Monk

In *Ecce Bombo*, a cult, late-70s movie by Nanni Moretti, there is an iconic scene in which the protagonist, Moretti himself, is on his way to a party. He calls a friend and asks: "Will I draw more attention to myself if I actually come to the party and spend all night in a corner, or if I don't show up at all?" If Jonathan Monk were Moretti and the party in question were the exhibition "Without (Jonathan Monk)," the answer would be clear: by not participating in the show at all, Monk definitely stood out more than if he had actually been present.

At first glance, the curatorial structure dictated by the proclaimed non-appearance of an artist reminded me of the last Istanbul Biennial, in which curators Jens Hoffmann and Adriano Pedrosa wove together a group show that ultimately created an innovative retrospective of Felix Gonzales-Torres without there being a single work of his on view. But the connections between these two shows stop there, not only because Monk is very much alive and highly productive, but mainly because it is likely that this exhibition, curated by Adam Carr, is none other than a (meta)work by Monk himself. The other ten invited artists, it would seem, are mirrors of something deeply connected to Monk's practice and work on a similar conceptual level. Several recurring biographical elements function as entry points to the show: even the colors of the wall labels are the yellow and blue of Monk's hometown soccer team (in Leicester, England). The blue labels denote artworks made for the show and the yellow ones mark out those works that are part of Monk's private collection. The collection is introduced by a label written by Monk himself in which he specifies that the "multiples, editions, and ephemera… mainly invitation cards" he owns are "not necessarily meant to be seen as art." Yet it's "often a very fine line," he adds.

Taking a walk through the show, one gets the feeling that the "art world" as seen through Monk's eyes (he calls it a "multicolored swap shop") is like entering a nostalgic evocation of the conceptual milieu of the 60s and 70s. In Monk's world, time is kept by the minute movements of the clock hands in Alighiero Boetti's *Orologio Annuale* (1986), while invitation cards for Bas Jan Ader's *In Search of the Miraculous* (1975) are a memento of the perpetual *dérive*, in-between the conceptual, analytical approach and its subjective counterpart—the core of what conceptual art is all about. A sort of table tennis game, in other words, judging by the work *Variable Peace vs. Jonathan Monk* (2006), a video document of artist Dan Rees's habit of challenging his artist-colleagues to a game of ping-pong. Here we find a metaphor for the tension between control and brilliance, but it is also a piece that makes explicit the importance of rallying ideas and keeping in touch with the work of other like-minded characters. The audio recording of the matches, separated from the video itself and installed separately in another part of the gallery, functions as a reflection of that exchange, one that can resonate long after it happened, as the show seems to claim.

In fact, there is not a single work in the exhibition that hasn't been spurred on from a dialogue, a direct or indirect influence, a gift, a swap, a letter, a note. The work of art is here none other than an ephemeral witness of that exchange, fallout from the fine line that separates the artist from being a collector. If to Ryan Gander—whose piece *Enough to Start Over* (2006) made use of an earlier work by Monk—"appropriating one's legacy" is a dynamic reflection on the process of the work, then the whole exhibition can be seen as a refined appropriation of Monk's practice, here "shown" in its own primarily associative, appropriative form. And in the end, the whole system constructed by Carr's curatorial approach seems to dissolve in Markus Sixay's *Jonathan Monk, September 7–October 27, 2012* (2012). Here Google map print-outs, hung daily on a wall in the upper floor of the gallery till the end of the show, track Monk's movements via an app installed on his smart phone, reflecting that core conceptual tension of presence and absence; it's a kind of Bas Jan Ader 2.0, which at the same time brings back the presence (or the body) of the artist in his live yet spectral form. Despite Carr's stated aim to present a show that "collides the boundaries between solo and group exhibitions," the plurality of artistic voices in this particular exhibition

1 View of "Without (Jonathan Monk)," Meessen De Clercq, Brussels, 2012.

2 View of "Without (Jonathan Monk)," Meessen De Clercq, Brussels, 2012.

3 Dan Rees, *Variable Peace vs. Jonathan Monk*, 2006.

4 Markus Sixay, *Jonathan Monk, September 7–October 27, 2012*, 2012.

ultimately plays second fiddle to the dominant echo of Monk's figure and practice.

Matteo Lucchetti is an independent curator and art historian, currently based in Brussels. He is co-curator of the *Visible project* and his most recent exhibition, *Enacting Populism*, was on view earlier this year at Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, where he was a curatorial resident.

LEAVE A COMMENT

Name

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5 View of "Without (Jonathan Monk)," Meessen De Clercq, Brussels, 2012.

6 Ariel Schlesinger, *Nothing personal*, 2012.

7 Dan Rees, *Ryman vs. Mangold*, 2005.

1 View of "Without (Jonathan Monk)," Meessen De Clercq, Brussels, 2012. All images courtesy of Meessen De Clercq, Brussels.

2 View of "Without (Jonathan Monk)," Meessen De Clercq, Brussels, 2012. From left: Alighiero Boetti, *Orologio annuale*, 1986; Christian Burnoski, *Freedom*, 2012; Markus Sixay, *Jonathan Monk September 7–Ocotber 27*, 2012.

3 Dan Rees, *Variable Peace vs. Jonathan Monk*, 2006. Colour video with sound, 9 minutes.

4 Markus Sixay, *Jonathan Monk, September 7–October 27, 2012*, 2012. 50 inkjetprints on paper, 21 x 29,7 cm (each).

5 View of "Without (Jonathan Monk)," Meessen De Clercq, Brussels, 2012.

6 Ariel Schlesinger, *Nothing personal*, 2012. Mirror, aluminium, camping stove, gas, 50 cm x 70 cm.

7 Dan Rees, *Ryman vs. Mangold*, 2005. Colour photograph, framed, 4 cm x 4 cm.

frieze

IN REVIEW

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**BEIJING, CAIRO, LONDON,
NEW YORK, PARIS, SÃO PAULO** and more,
with reports on **LA MOCA** and the reopened
STEDELIJK MUSEUM

WITHOUT (JONATHAN MONK)
Meessen De Clercq, Brussels

'Without (Jonathan Monk)' was a stirring conversation around and about the artist Jonathan Monk, though neither he nor his work were present. Monk's voice, however, could undeniably be detected through the works of the ten selected artists, who conspicuously cited or appropriated Monk's own. Curator Adam Carr integrated these contemporary contributions with works he selected from Monk's personal collection, by artists including Robert Barry, Sol LeWitt and Allen Ruppersberg. Monk's practice creates a continuous loop of references to Conceptual and Minimalist works from the 1960s and '70s by these artists and their ilk, whom he humorously cites, so as to call into question originality and authorship. The exhibition reproduced Monk's gestures and strategies, resulting in a stream of echoes and overlapping conversations between Monk, his Conceptualist predecessors and his contemporaries.

As the works combined to represent the artist's practice through their own, the autobiographical component that typically underlies Monk's work was consequently displaced or redirected towards new narratives. Ryan Gander's *Enough to Start Over* (2006), for example, begins with Monk's *To Tears* (2006), a passport photograph of Monk at age 13 with teardrop earrings pinned to his eyes. Monk subsequently sold the art work to Gander, who removed the earrings from the photograph, sending the jewellery to his mother, who wears them in the passport photo that constitutes Gander's work. Similarly, in *Jonathan Monk* (2012), Alek O. embroidered a solid black fabric once belonging to Monk onto a canvas, transforming Monk's garment into a portrait of the artist. Alternately austere and poetic, O.'s work creates a new narrative that is both personal and conceptual.

Other works took inspiration directly from Monk's own. *What If, If So?* (2005) is a photograph documenting Olivier Babin's revision of Monk's performative series 'Waiting for Famous People' (1995), for which Monk waited at the airport holding signs with names such as Marcel Duchamp, the Pope or Elvis Presley. In 2005, at Babin's request, Monk found himself again at the airport, this time holding a sign with the name Olivier Babin. Ron Terada's *For Sale, Jonathan Monk, The Sun Never Really Sets* (2007) literally reframes Monk's *The Sun Never Really Sets*. The silkscreen print is Monk's copy of a page from a Sotheby's catalogue selling an Ed Ruscha print, which is here represented as a work of Terada's. The print appears faded by the many lives or layers of the image, giving it a quality of both artefact and art work.

The repetition and remixing in the show was incessant, with the theme resonating across the gallery much like the distant sound of a ping-pong ball bouncing back and forth on a table. This came from Dan Rees's *Variable Piece vs. Jonathan Monk* (2006), which immediately greeted you upon entrance to the gallery and lured you towards the back, where you found an audio recording of Monk playing table tennis with Simon Starling. The three-part piece also included a video projection of the game and a framed image of the ping-pong ball. Although the sound was seemingly monotonous, the ball's to and fro recalled the levity behind much of the show.

Pieces from Monk's personal collection, which includes many of Conceptual art's canonized artists, were interspersed throughout, suggesting a fluidity across pieces and artistic movements. For instance, Carr coupled Ed Ruscha's *Ed Ruscha says goodbye to college joys* (1967) and *Sweets, Meats, Sheets (from the tropical fish series)* (1975) with Terada's piece and Yann Sérandour's *Book Deal* (2005), another work recontextualizing Ruscha and Monk. Ruscha's dryly humorous photographs retained a certain aura in the face of Terada and Sérandour's attempts to resell an index of Ruscha's work. With the latter appearing to annex the semantic characteristics that so heavily defined Conceptual art, the juxtaposition of these four works served to reinforce the deeply rooted Conceptual legacy that informs Monk and his contemporaries. As much as the works included were source material for the artists in the show, however, letting the historical narrative unfold, the exhibition's concentration on Monk eclipsed other possible readings. Ultimately, his looming presence muted their impact and individuality.

ELIZE MAZADIEGO

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Dan Rees, *Variable Piece vs. Jonathan Monk*, 2006, performance documentation

HENRIK HÅKANSSON
Meyer Riegger, Berlin

I once saw a Henrik Håkansson film in which his camera tracked a bird through the sky so it appeared like a still image in the centre of the screen. Real time was framed as the cessation of time. In Håkansson's installation at Meyer Riegger, *Aug. 11, 2012 The Symptoms of the Universe Studies. (6 min 29 sec)* (2012), something like the opposite occurred. Four monitors and a large projection showed two black trees in a field in Sweden – from various angles, and at various film speeds – as they exploded, one after the other. Monitors showed the event in real time from a range of vantage points, like keys to the slow-motion spectacle that was displayed on a larger monitor and in a five-metre-wide projection. On one imageless monitor, a digital stopwatch running to twentieths of a second counted down. The front room of the gallery was rendered inaccessible by the strewn remains of the trees. Real time was atomized or fragmented, as in a Cubist painting, into a spectrum of perceptions and evidential modes, both real and mediated. Where the bird's image had neutralized time, the trees exposed its relativism – or should that be its relativity?

There is a minor cinematic tradition – including, for example, Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train* (1989) and the recent blockbuster *Source Code* (2011) – that trades on the illusion that the past can be seen more thoroughly, and from more perspectives, than could ever be possible in a single person's memory. Typically elusive, these movies reassure us with the illusion that the past is open to scrutiny. Håkansson's installation dramatized an empirical conceit, but not in order to bolster our sense of the past's knowability, but to disorientate it. All the facets – and the faceting itself – of the installation were pitched to undermine the authority of the scientific methodological model it adopted. That model is predicated

by Mousse. September 25, 2012

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at Meessen De Clercq, Brussels

until 27 October 2012

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For more info, click here

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Jonathan Monk "Without" at Meessen De Clercq, Brussels