

The Secession begins a new season with "The Fifth Column," a group exhibition featuring work by seven international artists from three generations. They include: Welsh artist Cerith Wyn Evans, who presented the new safety curtain at the Vienna State Opera in the fall of 2011; Spanish artist Dora Garcia whose pavilion "The Inadequate" at this year's Venice Biennial divided critical opinion; and Peter Downsbrough, an American conceptual artist of the first generation, whose work has only recently begun to receive the attention it deserves.

With the deliberately enigmatic title "The Fifth Column", the show's curator, Barcelona-based Swiss Moritz Küng, alludes to the complete renovation of the Secession in 1986, and more specifically to the four central columns of the Hauptraum designed by architect Adolf Krischanitz. Originally, they were clad in chrome steel and brass, but three years later the distinctive presence of this ambiguous reference to Otto Wagner was neutralized and covered over on the occasion of the exhibition entitled "Das Spiel des Unsagbaren: Ludwig Wittgenstein" (The Play of The Unsayable). For 20 years now, since 1991, these four columns have been painted over, their striking impact concealed.

In the spirit of Krischanitz's renovation concept based on dismantling, Küng returns the four columns to their original state after two decades. As well as picking up on the reciprocity in American artist Joseph Kosuth's curatorial approach to the Wittgenstein show, Küng is also fundamentally questioning the "neutrality" of the white cube, for which the Secession is internationally considered the prototype.

The act of restoring or citing this architectural state is by no means romantically motivated. Instead, the aim is to refocus awareness on the specific qualities of the place itself—its *genius loci*—its history and architecture, but also its shortcomings. The curator achieves this in a way that is partly evident, partly highly coded: the show features 25 pieces by seven artists, most of which were produced or adapted specially for the exhibition. As a result, the works—light and sound installations, objects and furniture, murals and frescos, artist's books, performances and video—resonate not only with the historical culture and architecture of the building, but also with one another.

This resonance between place, work, and history is exemplified by the partial reconstruction of Heimo Zobernig's *Ohne Titel* (Untitled, 1995/2011). For his solo show in 1995, he used the wall system designed for the Secession by Krischanitz to build a labyrinthine installation. It was based on the year the work was made and the artist's initials: 95HZ. For the inner cylinder of the number nine, in fact a cube, Zobernig lacked sufficient wall modules and thus used four metal uprights from the frame structure, fitting them with four new untreated chipboard sections. In accordance with the

artist's usual strategies, this cube became an autonomous object within the installation as it had been devised by the artist himself. In the current exhibition, 16 years later, this cube stands at precisely the same spot in the Hauptraum, built using available wall modules from the depot at the Secession. As well as the history of the building, this "new" sculpture also incorporates and reflects the history of the artist himself. This is just one example of the complex layering offered by the exhibition.

But what is "The Fifth Column"? It is no coincidence that the publicity shot for the exhibition, based on historical photographs by the Secession's chronicler and photographer Margharete Spiluttini (who will also document the show for the catalogue) shows the column in all its glory ... but in a position where, on second glance, it cannot actually be. The author Ferdinand Schmatz, who contributed a text to the catalog, writes: "Look, the pillars of knowledge: Don't think, look!" Perhaps, then, the exhibition offers further opportunities for seeing: to see the building in a new present involving conservation, repair, additions, adaptations, and ultimately also a reassessment of postmodernism.

Text by Moritz Küng

LUZ BROTO (E, * 1982, lives in Barcelona)

Luz Broto's intervention *Right Cube_06: Der Aussentemperatur angleichen / to assimilate the exterior temperature* (Adjust to the Outer Temperature) – part of a sporadic work series from 2007 where the artist compares phenomena such as experience, privacy, security, value or chance with the apparatus of the White Cube – attempts to explore the surroundings in an inconspicuous and yet apposite fashion. With her sixth "directive", Broto had the normally constant temperature of the main room adjusted to correspond to the outside temperature, making her intervention more or less evident depending on the weather conditions. As simple and innocent as this intervention might seem, it is quite complex in the context of the Secession. On the one hand, the museum guards become performative accomplices by constantly monitoring something that is unpredictable and uncontrollable and incessantly having to adjust the analogue climate control system to match the outside temperature. Due to the age of the system, this results in a constant level of (white) noise. On the other hand, this directive provokes a cultural statement in that the institution is forced to incorporate and manifest a "general" climate – be it social, political or intellectual – in its own building. Part of the work is the artist's daily changing webpage (www.luzbroto.net), which analyses weather data in Vienna. *Right Cube_06* thus urgently questions the status, the politics, the spatial conditions and the legitimacy of an art institution.

PETER DOWNSBROUGH USA, * 1940, lives in Brussels)

In comparison, the four works by Peter Downsbrough fit rather discreetly into both the context of the exhibition and the institution itself. The two versions of *Two Poles* which are installed in the main space are a kind of sculptural drawing of two vertical parallel pipes painted black, making a very clear reference to the four central supporting columns of the Secession building. The words "but", "and", and "shift", made up of capital letters cut from steel, which are discreetly distributed on the floor of the gallery on the lower level, can be understood as an echo of the curatorial starting point. The adverb is synonymous with the back-construction, the conjunction for the new effect, and the verb for the shift in meaning.

In a similarly subtle way, the fresco *UND* comments on the artist's own work *Two Poles* by bringing attention to two identical columns at the entrance to the large gallery on the lower level. The conceptual references culminate in the twenty-page book *a place — Wien*, conceived for the exhibition, which is presented together with the only Secession catalogue designed entirely by Heimo Zobernig – the one where the institution's name is spelled with a "z" – and the artist's book by Joëlle Tuerlinckx in the Grafisches Kabinett. The volume continues the series already realised by Downsbrough in 1977, *a place — Düsseldorf*, *a place — New York*, and *a place —* , which alongside the words "a place" and "here" once again includes the "Two Lines" with a photograph of the city named in the title. The new version is identical in terms of layout to the three preceding, but now contains a current photograph of Vienna showing Karlsplatz, located near the Secession.

DORA GARCIA (E, * 1965, lives in Barcelona)

The two works by Dora Garcia reflect quite specific aspects of the Secession building which are already alluded to in their titles. In Josef Maria Oblrich's original plan, the rear *Apsis* – in which Zobernig's cube is found – could also be used as a theatre. Today, the two covered spaces on the sides of the room, behind which spotlights can be installed, still attest to this. *Just Because Everything is Different, It Does Not Mean that Anything Has Changed*: Lenny Bruce in Sydney refers indirectly to this performative set: a performance documented on DVD which was staged to mark the 2009 Sydney Biennial in the famous opera building designed by Jørn Utzon. Garcia's performance examines what happened when the Jewish-American comedian Lenny Bruce appeared at the Sydney Opera House on 6 September 1962. His act stopped immediately after his opening – and now legendary – words, "What a fucking wonderful audience!", at which point the comedian was led off stage by the police. Dora Garcia's "hypothetical" re-enactment – which never actually took place in that form – also refers in the present context to the "theatre" space that has seldom been used as such.

Her second work comes from the series *Golden Sentences*. At issue here are ethnological truths

which are written on the wall in gold leaf, for example: "Art is for everyone, but only an elite knows it"; "Life is only properly understood when rewound"; and "Reality is a very persistent illusion". The text fresco applied directly to the wall at the Secession *Die Zukunft muss gefährlich sein* [The future has to be dangerous] should not only be read as a commentary on the risks taken by a politically incorrect comedian, but also a counter position to the more optimistic motto of the Secessionists over the entrance, *Der Zeit ihre Kunst, der Kunst ihre Freiheit* [To the age its art, to art its freedom].

GUILLAUME LEBLON (F, * 1971, lives in Paris)

Two works by Guillaume Leblon reflect on their direct surroundings. In *Correction*, a corner profile made of bronze takes up both the materiality and the verticality of the Krischanitz columns, while *Les objets meurent aussi* [Objects Die Too] seems to want to substantiate the colour postulate of Joëlle Tuerlinckx's Kodak card with a display-like configuration. This artist's pronounced awareness of his surroundings is especially evident in the work *Catalogue*, which was produced for the main space. With haphazardly laid carpet fragments covered in white paint, Guillaume Leblon is referring, on the one hand, to a historic photograph which had previously inspired him to create an earlier work. The photograph, taken at the Secession in 1902 while an exhibition was being installed, shows fourteen local prominent figures standing on a rolled-up carpet posing for a group portrait. On the other hand, with the title *Catalogue* he is referring to diverse interests in his own work, such as levelness, volumes, folding, veiling, foundations, everyday objects, etc.

JOËLLE TUERLINCKX (B, * 1958, lives in Brussels)

With her four spatial interventions, Joëlle Tuerlinckx has created a colourful series in white, silver, grey and brown which she relates to four subjective "documents": the patterned logo of a paper maker (white), the packaging of a Belgian chocolate maker (silver), a colour card (grey), as well as an old construction plan (brown). The last reference is to the original plans for Adolf Krischanitz's columns as thematised by the exhibition. The plan is displayed in a small room on the lower level, which was painted by the artist with tea and according to the principle of "back-construction" now appears "historically" as *Salle x ans d'age* [Hall X Years Old]. *Salle gris neutral* [Grey Hall Neutral] refers to a Kodak grey card which professional photographers use as an aid: *pour faire des bonnes expositions*, which in French has a double meaning: both "for setting the right exposure" and "for staging a good exhibition".

The *Salle d'argent* [Silver Hall] is located in the third room on the lower level. The colour refers to the tinfoil packaging of Belgian Cote d'Or Mignonnette chocolates and also serves as a backdrop for Dora Garcia's film projection. The light reflections on the silver walls find their counterpart in the

photographic flash installation in the main hall, which bears the eloquent title *Flash Vision*. The rhythm of the flash is variable, but always longer than twenty-four seconds. By referring to the number of images per second shown in a film, the artist thus extends a fixed temporal momentum according to her whim. The fourth wall painting *Coin d'ombre SUPERWHITE* [Shadowy Corner SUPERWHITE] in the white main room consists of a corner painted in a whitish hue. The incremental transition from the one to the other colour seems to dissolve the existing spatial limitation. Finally, the artist's book *Moments d'espace* [Moments of Space] by Joëlle Tuerlinckx will be published especially to mark the exhibition; the "autobiographical" text of this book is based on a lecture performance given last year in Ghent which will be performed once more in the last week of the exhibition in Vienna. In this performance, she describes in minute detail – similar to Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* – her considerations on and experience of the phenomenon of space.

CERITH WYN EVANS (UK, * 1958, lives in London)

Probably the most monumental work in the exhibition, *C=O=N=S=T=E=L=L=A=T=I=O=N* [*I call your image to mind*] by Cerith Wyn Evans consists of a mobile hanging from the ceiling with sixteen chrome-plated discs that due to their highly polished surfaces and rotation seem constantly to refract the beholder's impression of the space. Loudspeakers included in the installation, from which a remix of various pieces of music can be heard, lend the space an unreal atmosphere, setting the "tone" of the exhibition in the truest sense. The apparently incoherent, fragmented and transient nature of the works shown is captured and consolidated by this ephemeral gesture.

A second work by the artist included in the exhibition – the smallest work on view – is a literal visual interpretation of the phrase "so to speak". An ellipsis in neon – this ellipsis is the work's title – serves not only the function of dim lighting of the gallery space painted silver by Tuerlinckx or as a response to the terms in Peter Downsbrough's work. As an adverb it embodies the real curatorial intention of the exhibition: the combination of a seemingly arbitrary constellation of works whose mutual interrelations allow the overall phenomenon of this specific location – and of course, not forgetting its surroundings – to be experienced.

HEIMO ZOBERNIG (A, * 1958, lives in Vienna)

The multiple reflections between location, work and history are exemplified in the three works by HEIMO ZOBERNIG. To mark his personal show in 1995, he had a labyrinthine installation – erected using the wall system developed by Adolf Krischanitz in 1986 for Secession – with open and closed spaces, the foundation of which was based on the year of its construction and the initials of the artist: "95HZ". For the (inner) "circle" of the number nine Zobernig used – due to a lack of any other boards – the vertical metal supports of the basic construction and inserted four new

particleboard walls. Entirely in accordance with Zobernig's intentions, the cube became the only autonomous object of the installation because it was "materialised" by the artist himself. Sixteen years later this "autonomous sculpture" was not only reconstructed but completed using the now available wall elements of the Secession.

His second work refers to his former commission to come up with a new corporate design at Secession, which was used between 1997 and 2007 for over a hundred catalogues. The central element in Zobernig's concept was to write the name Secession – which serves as an emblem for the museum – in Helvetica Roman capitals, while at the same time changing the spelling of the institution's name from "Secession" to "Sezession". The latter was rejected by the board of directors at the time and only used for a single catalogue, the 1998 catalogue for an exhibition showing work by Herbert Brandl, which Zobernig designed himself for his friend; it also proved to be the only catalogue that Zobernig produced in its entirety. With the aforementioned change of the letter "z", Zobernig was not referring, as is often mistakenly assumed, to the first letter of his own last name, but to a poster designed by the architect Friedrich Kiesler for the Internationale Kunstausstellung in 1924. Incidentally, in 2010 Heimo Zobernig was awarded the seventh Friedrich Kiesler Preis für Architektur und Kunst, making him the first Austrian to receive the prize. The cover of this catalogue takes up this *fait divers* anew.

With the third and most recent work of this artist, a link is indirectly made to art nouveau and Secession style and its call for ornament and symmetry as well as for the reintegration of art into the everyday. An object – as timeless as it is cobbled together – is placed in the entryway, consisting of an unclothed, white window mannequin with a light bulb placed on its head, covered with a pipe of transparent tinfoil. The sculpture is both functional design – a floor lamp which comments on its nature as a "standing" object – and a symbolic quotation referring to the worship of the ideal body.

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