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Press Release

**Quién esta? he said, but no one spoke back.
There was someone there and they had been there. There
was no one there. There was someone there and they had been
there and they had not left but there was no one there.**

Cut through the fat, push aside the parsley and get to the real meat of the meal.

Time and again we attempt to locate the limits of an artwork's discrete limits. By now it is old hat to acknowledge the permeable conditions of the frame, the willing introduction of context is as standard a material as a stretcher bar. Still, we undervalue the artwork's immense gravitational pull which risks the assimilation of not only the social and physical parameters of its presentation, but also all the catalysts and fallout of its past and future. The artwork cannot help but to absorb in part the influences upon it and the resulting impressions it makes on others - that which it critiques and that which in turn criticizes it - but at the risk of replacing the actual with the auxiliary some artists have aggressively collapsed their own nucleus in favor of murkier waters.

To claim such acts as simple collaboration would risk narrowing an understanding of the events transpired by the artists in "*Quién esta? he said, but no one spoke back. There was someone there and they had been there. There was no one there. There was someone there and they had been there and they had not left but there was no one there.*" The artists span four generations and four nationalities, and as such they vary in their procedures and outcomes, yet to the point there is always an overlap. The exhibition provides a rare opportunity to paraphrase techniques from the recently historical to the contemporary, occasions when the supplement, which is to say the preface and postscript are taken as objects of study in their own right.

The Belgian Marcel Broodthaers (1924-76) stands out as a towering figure whose deconstruction of art's markets and symbolism remains as pronounced a model for thinking and making today as anyone. Running rampant through out his labyrinthine oeuvre we find the recurrence of phrases such as *fig. 1, fig. 2, fig. 3, fig. a, fib. b, fig. c* and the use of signs, labels, show cards and wall texts for objects sometimes present and sometimes not. His is a catalogue of cataloguing; he consistently illustrates the treachery of illustration. His very emergence and existence as an artists appears like a stagehand in the wings, questioning the autonomy of the stage and stealing the eyes of the disrupted viewer out of the spotlight so that we might take note of just how dependent the illusion of the drama is on the ropes and levers which rise and fall the curtain. It was Broodthaers afterall whose *Musée d'Art Moderne* as early as 1968, consisted only of crates, postcards, slide projections, lectures and performances, with the conspicuous lack of paintings or other objects accepted as works of art. Just imagine the poor fool of tradition who throws aside one of Broodthaers' catalogues or invitations in favor of something more real. So wide reaching is his material charisma for conferring speculation onto the prosthetic, as his *Tractatus Logico-Catalogicus* (1972) on view here makes clear, that even the uncut proof of a catalogue, reprinted in negative, is worthy of consideration. It is not simply that Broodthaers' casts a spell transforming ordinary apparatuses into the magical, but rather the inverse is true, that even the mystical tokens of aesthetic appreciation are just commonplace devices serving as illustrations for someone or some institutions' needs or pedagogy. Everything is a supplement to something.

The Dutchman Jan Dibbets (1941) is an ambassador for the pronounced role of documentation within the history of Conceptual Art. Dibbets produced no fewer than five editions of the Art & Project Bulletin, a landmark venue for new forms of art, printed from 1968-1989, consisting of only a single sheet of paper, folded in half, printed on both sides according the creative visions of its guest artists, and sent to a mailing list of several hundred persons. Crucial to Dibbets' output is his manipulation and mastery over the reproduction of an idea, object or happening onto the printed sheet, be that a photograph, artist book, mailer, or magazine. Consider his historically quintessential *Perspective Corrections*, in which an oblique trapezoidal shape is marked onto the walls or ground of an actual physical space. Upon photographing these in-situ drawings, Dibbets takes advantage of the controlled perspective of the camera lens, and from the perfected frozen angle makes the same shape now appear as a perfect square. His exercise is to demonstrate how grounded in a continuum of equivalence are both performance and documentation. It is with a mind attentive to the resulting book or image that the act is crafted, and we become aware of just how great a misnomer a term like ephemera truly is. The case

of Dibbets' *Robin Redbreast's Territory/Sculpture* (1969) is even more dynamic for it not only deals in the condensing of real space, but also real time and even real life. In the piece Dibbets re-choreographs a bird's flight path through a park by slowly putting up poles that gradually attract and coordinate the bird's movements, like suggested hubs on a repeated daily commute. The unfolding of Dibbets' artwork goes beyond the enlistment of a bookbinder and reader, and reaches backwards into the participation and collaboration of as unlikely a performer as a lil' birdie. The artwork is no axis but the graph upon which it might sit.

Further frustrating attempts at discreteness is Chicago's own Gaylen Gerber (1955), a maverick of participation who over the course of the past twenty years has devised a unique formula for challenging neutrality and autonomy. With an ever expanding yet connected repertoire of means Gerber prompts interactions with other artists at the sake of his own authorship. The way in which he critiques the institution of the gallery wall is to act like one. Gerber effectively takes up the tasks of the institution, providing the physical support and selecting the artists to be exhibited, and in so doing he draws our attention to these potentially overlooked pillars. He subverts the traditional organization of exhibition production by pulling the collaborator into the grunt of the image making as he recedes into the role of the architect or the curator. As Gerber offers to another painter his own painting for them to 'riff' on, the very notions of inspiration are laid bare, as what his collaborators receive is a canvas only as galvanizing as any gallery wall, no more or no less. In *Untitled Support # 2* Gerber enlists the talents of the well-regarded assembler of minutiae B. Wurtz (1948), who dangles by wire three plastic utensils over, but tellingly not actually on, a painting. There remains a minute distance between figures and ground, but nevertheless they appear unified. The artwork conveys the ambitious power of the gestalt that combines for the viewer all that hangs before her. Our recognition that no field of vision is so scrutinizing or narrow as to isolate the artwork is the catharsis that Gerber promotes. By focusing in upon the periphery scenery we realize just how much we didn't realize we were seeing.

German based David Lieske (1979) is well aware of how he will be received, though it should be written that his interest lies precisely in the *how*. Lieske has deliberated a post-medium practice, trans-medium really, invested in acts of filtration which process and refine images and theories as they progress or regress from realization to realization, from fabrication to fabrication. In an ongoing project for the inestimable art and theory journal *Texte Zur Kunst*, Lieske has been called upon to produce the images for its front cover. In this project Lieske leapfrogs over the processes whereby he might be featured or reviewed inside the journal's pages (although he has been found there too) and furrows himself within the machine of the periodical. Through out most of his work, Lieske demonstrates the ability of art to infiltrate and impersonate a well-designed smorgasbord of distribution modes. With *Untitled* (2008), in which neon letters spell out "WRITE ABOUT IT", Lieske directly indicts the critical acts of reception within the artwork's own sphere. Furthermore, the conditions of the artwork, which is an unlimited edition, dictated in its certificate allow for the collector to determine the color and size of the neon tubes so long as the letters are capitalized Helvetica. Instead of producing a retroactive object that refers to some past subject, Lieske's piece is twice over an open yet specific prescription. Too well poised to come across as a cat chasing his own tail, he carefully ferments the stakes for the viewer to get caught up in a tug of war with their own agenda. His address to us is not loaded enough for us to find some fault, and even if we do we are still just acting out the part in his script. Lieske's work is one of incorporation, in which no media or spectator can stand outside. Artworks know no bounds beyond the way we bind them.

We might go so far as to consider the exhibition itself and our difficulties in defining and distinguishing between what we are presented with. It is a testament to the power of art that everything must be accounted for, but to prioritize as such, we risk leaving some information shortchanged. Can we disarm the taxonomies of viewership? Which part?

-Maxwell Graham