



BEYOND GROWTH AN IDEAL CAPITALISM...

Michel Blazy, Maxime Bondu, Simon Boudvin,
Mark Boulos, Blanca Casas Brullet,
Charlie Jeffery, Toril Johannessen, Gustav Metzger,
Dan Peterman, Thorsten Streichardt,
Simon Starling, Superflex, Lois Weinberger

EXHIBITION MARCH 24 - JULY 22, 2012

Sunday June, 17 at 3 p.m. : lecture and screening by Simon Boudvin

Contemporary Art Center La Ferme du Buisson

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BEYOND GROWTH : AN IDEAL CAPITALISM...

« Anyone who believes in indefinite growth in anything physical, on a physically finite planet, is either mad
- or an economist.»

Kenneth Boulding, *The Economy of Love and Fear: A Preface to Grants Economics*, 1973

« Though this be madness, yet there is method in't »
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, circa 1599

A model farm, La Ferme du Buisson fed for almost a century a model factory, The Menier chocolate factory, which was one of the great industrial empires of the nineteenth century. In 1848, sensing that the industrial revolution would come along with a social revolution, the Menier dynasty attempted to establish a form of “ideal” capitalism, unique in the history of industry. The production of chocolate grew at a spectacular rate due to technical, architectural and commercial innovations, the invention of advertising and a multinational strategy. Concurrently, Menier campaigned for a tax on capital and built a workers housing development for everyone’s well being, including lodging, a cafeteria, free health care, a school, co-op stores, a savings bank, etc. “It is thus that all of us, leaning on one another, will move forward with an undivided driving force towards progress. It is thus that revolutions and revolts will give way to a constant evolution, continuously replacing the good with the better.”

In the midst of a worldwide economic and ecological crisis, can we still believe in unlimited growth? The notion of growth, inseparable from the ideas, laws and practices of modernity, is generally perceived as positive, associated with prosperity and progress seen from the perspective of western humanism. Profit, productivity, accumulation and expansion became established fundamental values and the myth of growth and development spread throughout five continents. But it is interesting to remember that at the same time as the world shifted towards a system founded on productivism and excess, one part of artistic modernity endorsed an altogether different creed: less is more.

A century later, how do artists address this idea of growth? Many artists investigate the idea of growth, whether in relation to economics, urbanism, physics, biology or botany, but they also use it as a way to question their own working methods. Echoing a series of exhibitions in Switzerland and Germany in 2011*, Beyond Growth brings together artists who explore the ambivalence of this notion through experiments in physics, biological cycles, mathematical formulas and critiques of the globalized economy.

Watching a famous American fast food chain being gradually swallowed up by water, we catch sight of a boat slowly crossing a lake as it self-destructs; while exogenous plants overrun the ruins of western cities, fishermen in the Niger Delta attempt to protect their resources from the havoc wreaked by oil companies and Danish households invest in real estate thanks to hurricane Katrina...

Recalling what Naomi Klein termed “disaster capitalism”, these works deal with local as well as international crises while simultaneously reflecting on production and artistic productivity. The artists appropriate the rationale of growth, exploiting its possibilities, such as organic processes of mutation, movement, excess, desire for proliferation and self-creation as well as its limits, such as saturation, overflow, pollution, loss of control and alienated work. While neoliberal economics ignore the phenomena of unproductive expenditure and entropy, i.e. the irreversibility of transformations in energy and matter, these artists place them at the center of their preoccupations to raise questions which are as aesthetic as they are economic, ecological and political.

**On the Metaphor of Growth*, Kunsthalle Basel (Basel), Frankfurter Kunstverein (Frankfurt), Kunstverein Hannover (Hanover)

Julie Pellegrin

MICHEL BLAZY

Born in 1966 in Monaco, France. Lives and works in Paris, France.

Michel Blazy's work is experimental and ephemeral. He takes his materials from nature as well as from supermarkets, home improvement stores and gardening stores. He subjects these materials to natural processes of deterioration. His works depend on uncontrollable factors such as chance, temperature, light, and the biological and physical properties of the materials which help to form them. These processes create micro-events such as germination, molding, rotting, and transmutation, which attest to both a decay and energy of the living. These operations are necessary to activate the work and to its development in the most concrete sense of the word. Though appearing static at first glance, Blazy's work is in reality filled with a multitude of moving forces that constantly form and deform them.



Le Mur de Pellicules [The Wall of Dandruff], 2012
Agar-agar, food coloring, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist and Art : Concept, Paris

Le Mur de Pellicules is a variation of *Murs qui pèlent* [Walls that Peel] that Blazy makes with potato starch. Here, the wall is covered with a mix of agar-agar, the vegetal gelling agent used in Asian cuisine, and orange food coloring. With time, the coating dries and decomposes, scale by scale, giving the impression that the wall is wrinkling and aging like skin after a sunburn or the bark of an acacia tree. Unstable evolution and biological alterations give form to this mutant artwork for which time and chance play a principal role.



Fontaine de mousse [Foam Fountain], 2012
Garbage cans, bubble bath, compressor, hoses, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist and Art : Concept, Paris

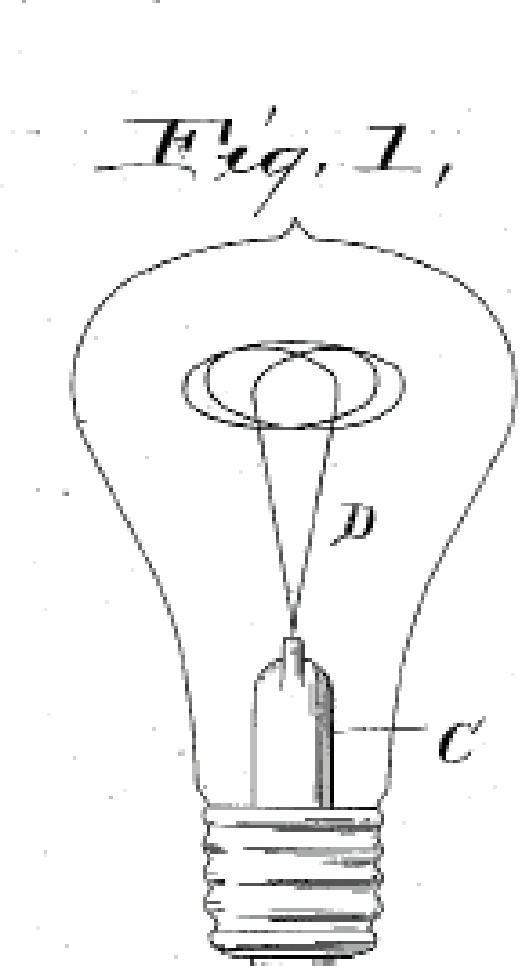
In the 1990s, Michel Blazy began experimenting with bubble bath, which he used in numerous sculptures and installations. Contained in garbage cans or tanks, spewing out of walls or shelves, the thick foam grows into a sculptural form that then dissolves instantaneously. The containers used here, garbage cans, are usually filled up with trash and then emptied. The circular form of the foam, produced in a closed circuit, portrays a state of permanent change in which becoming and disappearance are caught in an infinite cycle, evoking both the natural cycle of growth and the artificial cycle of consumption.

MAXIME BONDU

Born in 1985 in Saint-Maurice, France. Lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland.

Maxime Bondu's work often deals with the archive. Like an archeologist, he digs through the strata of the past to uncover images (e.g. of Operation Greenhouse, the fifth series of nuclear tests run by the United States, or of Guam, the seventeenth century Spanish colony turned American military base in 1950) from which he extracts different elements that he dislocates or interprets. He thus questions the status and the role of the document by using it as a basis for new speculations. Whether by reworking photographs or by setting up installations and sculptures, Bondu revisits, replicates and subverts historical references to confront them with new sociological and cultural contexts.

(No Model.)



Adolphe Chaillet, lettre patente (réplique) [Adolphe Chaillet, Letter patent (replica)], 2012

4 sheets of paper format A4, ink on paper, each 29.7 x 21 cm

Courtesy of the artist

At the end of the nineteenth century the French engineer Adolphe Chaillet invented a lightbulb that still shines today. Since its installation in 1901 in a fire station in Livermore, California, it has never gone out. Even if little by little its brightness fades, some people estimate that it will continue to work for another 80 million years. Now legendary, the lightbulb is filmed 24 hours a day by a webcam. It therefore represents the quintessential counter example of programmed obsolescence, i.e., the premature death of the object which allows for an increase in its production and consumption. In 1924, a committee of industrialists and scientists came together in Geneva to set the lifespan of incandescent lightbulbs at 1000 hours, a lifespan which still prevails today. Questioning the processes through which objects are fabricated, Bondu attempted to reproduce Chaillet's patent in the most mimetic way possible. Subsequently, the artist as "re-inventor" recreated the lightbulb by hand, following the engineer's indications through means inevitably ill-adapted to our era.

MARK BOULOS

Born in 1975 in Boston, USA. Lives and works in London, UK and in Amsterdam, Holland.

Mark Boulos deals with the relationship between ideas, ideologies and materiality through documentary film. He travels around different regions of the world that are difficult to enter or correspond to societal enclaves where he collects documentary material that he edits poetically or in a deliberately exaggerated fashion. The resulting films and video installations reveal the critical potential of the medium. For Boulos does not confront the spectator with linear narratives but rather with a filmic process of analysis, interpretation and evaluation.



All That Is Solid Melts into Air, 2008

Video installation, double synchronized screening, color, sound, 15 min

Courtesy of the artist

All that is solid melts into air a quote by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* shows how the exploitation of oil in Nigeria created an economic and cultural clash. Here, two factions that never meet are put face to face. In the Niger Delta, the villagers take arms against the multinationals who are destroying their natural resources. At the stock exchange in Chicago, brokers speculate on the legal tender of oil. The films shift from media clichés to a kind of parallel trance that reduces the space which separates them. The two parties appear like a “theatre” in warfare, with their rituals, their beliefs and their respective fetishes. This parable follows the journey of raw material from its production in the Nigerian swamplands to its abstract dissolution on the computer screens of the money market in the global capitalist order.



BLANCA CASAS BRULLET

Born in 1973 in Mataró, Spain. Lives and works in Paris, France.

Blanca Casas Brullet creates installations with various media such as photography, video, drawing and objects which set up associations between diverse elements in which she questions the representation of the body and its relationship to its social and human environment. She pays special attention to language, to the polysemy of words, to the poetic license that prevents translating one language into another, and to the strangeness of literally translating certain metaphors into images. Her works often render visible certain images inscribed in language. For Casas Brullet, failures like successes are often the fruit of mixing chance and method, creating a tension between the unexpected and the controlled.



Reprises économiques [Economic Recovery], 2008-2012
Sewing on accounting books, variable dimensions
Courtesy of Galerie Françoise Paviot, Paris

In 2008, reacting to the subprime mortgage crisis, Casas Brullet endeavored to recover the accounting books of different countries (France, Portugal, Greece, China, Korea, Spain, England, etc.). Recovery designates a carry-forward in accounting or the return of growth, which has become a veritable magic spell for the market economy.

Playing with semantic misunderstandings, the artist learned an outdated alteration technique of the same name (“reprise” in French), used to mend shabby clothing so that they would last longer. She thus demonstrates a real economic concern in a world where the disposable takes precedent while also referring to the covering up of accounts, since the weaving hides holes and accidents in the paper. This amateurish but carefully thought out gesture implies a loss of time or an excess of useless material offering a derisory form of resistance to the demands of productivity and economic rationality.

CHARLIE JEFFERY

Born in 1975 in Oxford, United Kingdom. Works and lives in Paris, France.

Charlie Jeffery's practice deals with processes that exploit the fragility of materials and states of transition. He puts into play a series of shifts between studio and exhibition, action and sculpture, inanimate objects and organic bodies, each form deriving from the other. His works always carry a trace of energy that can be reactivated, an energy understood as pure spending that opens a space between (re)production and an unproductive act. Whether through bricks of dust shaped by tea boxes, snippets of sentences inscribed on scraps of wood, or manufactured objects splintered into thousands of pieces with an axe, Jeffery strikes at material to better extract all of its possibilities. He thereby highlights the precariousness of all forms and the ease with which they can be transformed and reorganized, divided and multiplied.



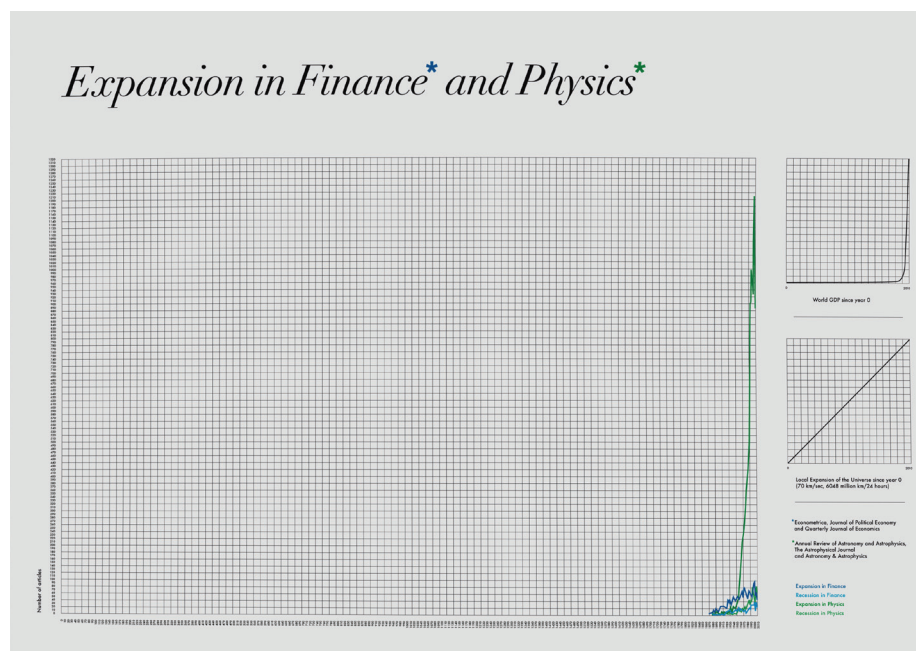
The Office of Imaginary Landscape, 2012
Installation, diverse material, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

Here the artist designs an environment where forms are contaminated by other organisms or pair up together, and manufactured objects seem to return to the state of nature, afflicted with some sort of wildness. The work presents a mixed vision, a “bureaucratic landscape” combining abstract forms with living plants growing out of furniture, defying all attempts at categorization. His paintings, for example, form a tension between the reproduction of the same motif such as halls in an office building and variations of simple shapes and solid colors. Each object produces different results from something similar. The mirroring device which (falsely) repeats space doubles this impression of proliferation in the same way that cells divide and multiply. Out of control and willingly going in all directions, this work evokes the growth of plants as much as the expansion of the universe.

TORIL JOHANNESSEN

Born in 1978 in Harstad, Norway. Lives and works in Bergen, Norway.

Toril Johannessen works with diverse media such as photography, drawing, sculpture, installation and narrative. Her eclectic practice allows her to explore the relationship between art and science from an empirical and theoretical point of view. She speculates on, studies and develops these connections referencing methods of classification and demonstration used by pedagogical models and scientific analysis. She applies her knowledge of art history to reconsider the history of science. In 2012, she initiated a research project called Word and Years (2010) which consists of diagrams documenting the appearance and evolution of certain words in the general and academic press. She therefore studies the prevalence of certain terms in the way that we describe critical situations.



Expansion in Finance and Physics, 2010

Courtesy of the artist and LAUTOM Contemporary, Oslo

Expansion

Digital print, 105 x 145 cm

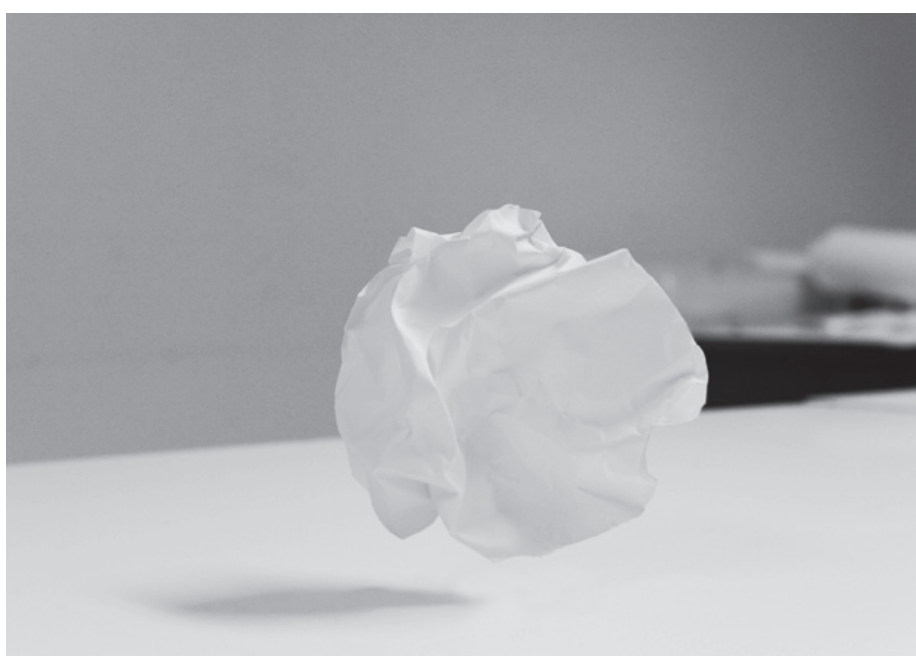
Abstraction

Digital print, 105 x 145 cm

A4 Models : Flat, Curved, Spherical

Print A4, 2000 copies each

In *Expansion in Finance and Physics*, Johannessen explores concepts of expansion and abstraction as seen by both scientists and financiers. The graphics recall the possibility of infinite growth. Our conception of the size of the universe has considerably changed in the modern era and the conviction that the universe is expanding is relatively recent. The artist questions whether it is a coincidence that the idea of perpetual growth is also at the center of our economic conceptions. She discovered that in the 1980s, several physicists left academia for Wall Street where their methods and theoretical tools considerably influenced economics.



GUSTAV METZGER

Born in 1926 in Nuremberg, Germany. Lives and works in London, United Kingdom.

Marked by the history of the twentieth century, Metzger takes a critical look at the violence of our societies, the consequences of economic and industrial development, the nuclear weapon and the technology that he himself uses while warning of its dangers. In 1959, he published his first manifesto for “a self-destructive art” which denounces the capitalist model and the overproduction which caused an attack on nature and the human race, itself profoundly self-destructive. He places his practice under the sign of destruction. In fact, one of his first works consisted of a series of nylon canvasses covered in acid, works which were created as they were destroyed. Preoccupied early on by environmental questions, Metzger warned of the threats weighing on the future of our planet, changes in climate, pollution, exhaustion of natural resources, seeing art as a means of awakening awareness.



Mirror Trees, 2012

Trees, concrete, each 100 x 100 x 400 cm

Courtesy of the artist

“Self-destructive art replays the obsession with destruction, the volley of blows to which the individual and the masses are subjected. Self-destructive art demonstrates the power of man to speed up and carry out the processes of the disintegration of nature. (...) Self-destructive art is an attack on the values of capitalism [...]” Three uprooted trees are turned upside down, their tops buried in concrete. The artist subverted the natural order by placing the organic on top and the inert on the bottom. Mirroring the load-bearing columns next to them, the trees appear architectural. But through his radical gesture, the artist undermines their functionality and all risk of being “exploited” as, for example, a construction material. Over the course of the exhibition, the trees evolve, shrivel up and die. At a time when forests are being destroyed by machines in the name of growth and productivity, Mirror Trees reflects on both the beauty of nature and the violence to which it is inflicted. The work thus acts as a catalyst for debate and a plea to defend the environment.

DAN PETERMAN

Born in in 1960 in Minneapolis, USA. Lives and works in Chicago, USA.

In the work of Dan Peterman, growth is closely linked to the processes of the decline of consumer society. Since the 1980s, alternative energy sources and recycling have been at the heart of his work which employs a large range of materials including plastic and metal, organic and industrial waste. Most notably, he developed a series of display furniture, chairs, tables, shelves, floors, etc., in recycled plastic where the size of each component corresponds proportionally to the average rate of plastic consumption in the country of its making. As the subject of a particular reuse and an aesthetic presentation, this waste turns into cultural goods. Their artistic value cannot be separated from their ecological value, for they belong to the same cycle of material production. Peterman questions the durability of both.



Things that Were Are Things Again, 2006
21 elements, aluminum, variable dimensions
Courtesy of Klosterfelde, Berlin

Things that were are Things Again forms a collection of objects that run along the wall in a decorative border. He melted down the remains of old aluminum objects to design unclear shapes, reminiscent of tools whose status remains mysterious once their function has been liquefied with the material. The result reflects on museographic presentations as well as the logic of interpretation. Are these new objects or do they refer to their original recycled forms? Are these contemporary artifacts or archeological tools? Are these objects, drawings or hieroglyphics?

THORSTEN STREICHARDT

Born in 1967 in Harsewinkel, Germany. Lives and works in Quimper, France and in Berlin, Germany.

Thorsten Streichardt uses drawing, video, and performance to address the relationship between nature and culture, growth and construction, chance and control. Favoring action over results, he depends on the constraints and conditions of production. He pays close attention to epiphenomena such as the noise of tools, the characteristics of the milieu, and the resistance of his materials which guide his creative process. Though unintentional and repetitive, these gestures tend towards representation, whether it be portraiture or landscape. A number of his works oscillate between formed and formless, communicating the entropic nature of alienated work. He presents his artistic activity as a willful automatism characterized by a pure expenditure of energy and by the pleasure of producing something from whatever is handy.



CRSS, 2012

Drawing, pencil on paper, 150 x 280 cm, sound device, 30 hours

Courtesy of the artist and Ursula Warbröl gallery, Düsseldorf

Considering that the famous blank page does not exist, the artist is guided by the sound of his pencil on the sheet of paper used as a field for his drawing “to grow”. A large life-size curb appears as the pencil moves across the paper like a windshield wiper. The pencil strokes of various lengths cover each other up, and now and then, the corrected mistakes create denser zones of shading. The artist thus questions the conditions under which an image appears. Does the pencil maintain a certain amount of control over the pattern or does the image form itself as the layers accumulate? Does all of this change according to the perception of the viewer? What do we see when we get closer and progressively focus on the sound of its making? Caught in the ensemble of these movements, the form is created at the same time that is erased in an infinite cycle.

SIMON STARLING

Born in 1967 in Epsom, United Kingdom. Lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.

For Starling, nothing disappears, nothing is created, everything is transformed. The artist continuously prompts an unexpected circulation among objects, materials and events from various sources. In one work, for example, he used an Eames chair to make a Sausalito mountain bike and vice versa. His works involve quasi-alchemical processes of metamorphosis and a cyclical approach to time, physics and economics which give rise to narrations and networks of complex and surprising meaning.



Autoxylopyrocycloboros, 2006

Slideshow, silent 3' on a loop

Courtesy of the artist and Neugerriemschneider, Berlin

© Ruth Clark / Simon Starling

After buying a little wooden steamboat fished out of the bottom of a lake and restored by its previous owner, Starling set about to cross the Long Loch, a Scottish lake known to be ridden with nuclear submarines. He uses it both as a means of transportation and as fuel, because he dismantles it plank by plank to fuel his motor.

The boat slowly moves forward towards its double destruction. Literally going up in smoke, it ends up sinking to the bottom of the lake. The slideshow plays on a loop, presenting a motionless and entropic voyage similar to Ouroboros, the mythological serpent that eats its own tail, a symbol of self-destruction and renewal.

SUPERFLEX

Collective formed in 1993 by Bjørnstjerne Reuter Christiansen (born in 1969), Jakob Fenger (born in 1968) and Rasmus Nielsen (born in 1969). Live and work in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Superflex is considered an open group sharing common ideas and an enterprise creating films and artistic and social projects that attempt to depict the power relations between the economic, the political and the social. Following their wish to intelligently intervene in the real, they develop concrete measures called “tools” designed by experts in different disciplines and capable of being modified by their users. Superflex intervenes where it is necessary to implant a “counter economic” solution. For example, they experimented with methods of alternative and self-managed energy production such as Supergas, a gas produced from cow dung or Guarana Power, a drink produced with small Brazilian farmers, methods which both denounce and subvert the existing economic structures.



Flooded McDonald's, 2009

HD video, color, sound, 21 min

Courtesy of Superflex and Galerie Jousse Entreprise, Paris

The films of Superflex are more metaphorical than their projects and “tools”. For *Flooded McDonald's*, they built a set that reproduced every detail of the interior of a McDonald's. Emptied of its clients and its employees, it is progressively inundated with water. In an eerily calm atmosphere, the plastic cups, the chairs and a replica of Ronald McDonald capsize and sink. This staging of the sinking of a big chain famous for its prosperity and its global expansion brings to mind recent natural catastrophes as well as *Sweet Porridge*, a Brothers Grimm fairy tale, or even the explosion and sinking of the BP oil rig in 2010.



When The Levees Broke, We Bought Our House, 2008

Black and white photograph, 130 x 180 cm

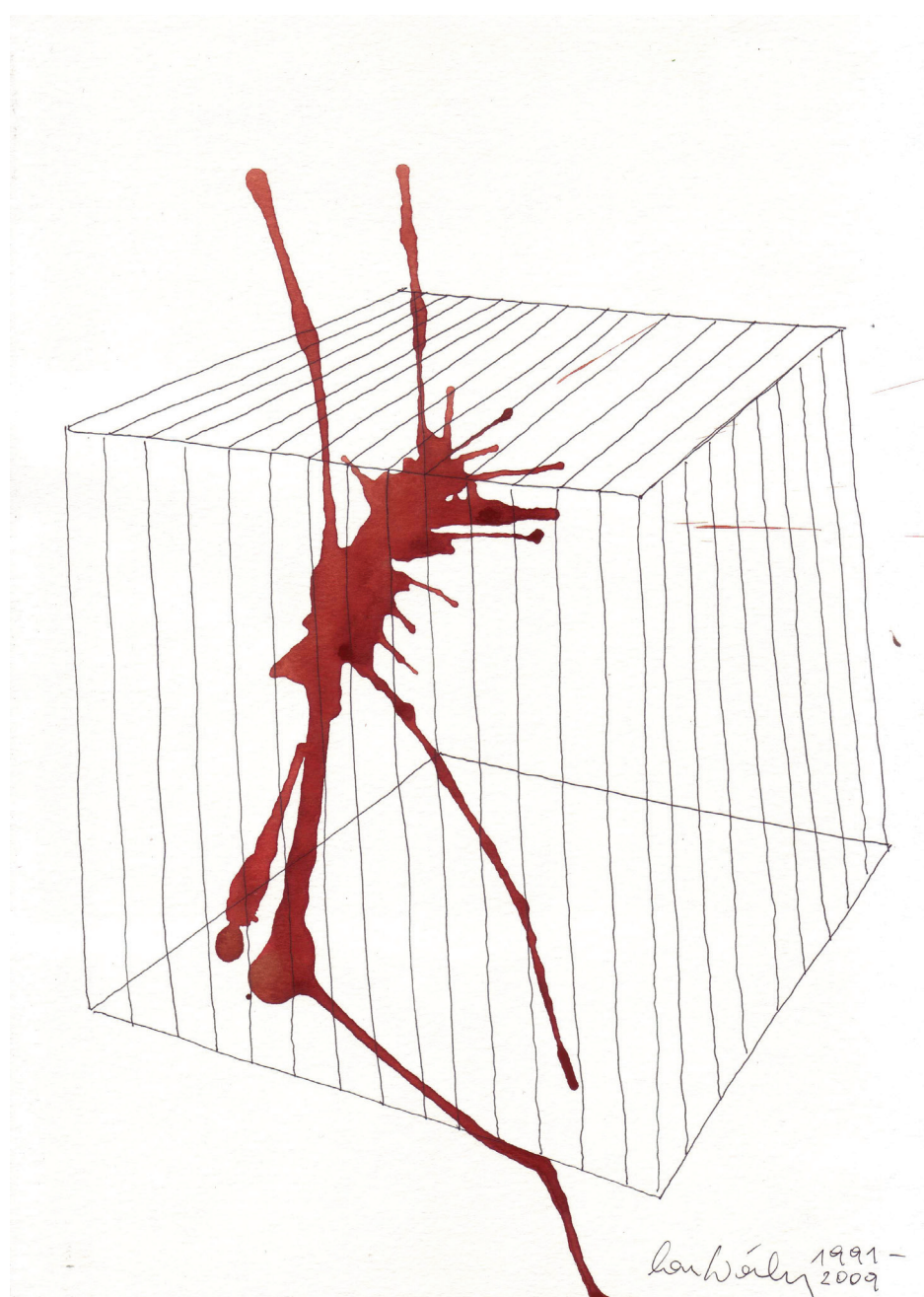
Courtesy of Superflex and Galerie Jousse Entreprise, Paris

This work was made for the New Orleans biennial in 2008. Inspired by a real event, it refers to the consequences on the global economy caused by the flooding after Hurricane Katrina. Anticipating a decline in the real estate market after the disaster, Danish banks temporarily lowered their interest rates. This decision allowed a family of friends of the artists to borrow money to buy a house in Denmark. The photograph of their house was first shown in the Lower 9th Ward, one of the most stricken neighborhoods in New Orleans where the residents are still without shelter. It is priced at \$ 20,000, the same amount of money that the Danish family saved on their loan. The money from the sale will help to buy construction material (wood, roofing materials, paint, etc.) that will be distributed to families by a community organization.

LOIS WEINBERGER

Born in 1947 in Stams, Austria. Lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

Son of a farmer and a farmer himself, Weinberger considers himself a fieldworker who mixes agricultural and artistic practice, biological, ecological, sociological and economic knowledge. Made of objects, drawings, mock-ups, gardens and interventions in urban space, his approach offers a rhizomatous organization of knowledge. This organization serves as a method to resist hierarchical models or categorizations in which each element can contaminate another. In numerous works, Weinberger uses ruderal plants (from the Latin “rudus” meaning rubble) which he removes or lets grow in spaces outside of human control. He values weeds as much as he does marginal places. The artist proposes a change in the critical evaluation of reality by presenting possible links between different spheres through subtle acts that slowly but surely transform conventional situations.



Wild Cube, 1991-2010

2 steel, each 100 x 100 x 100 cm, 19 drawings, indelible marker and watercolor on paper, each 40 x 30 cm

Courtesy of the artist

© Yves Bresson, Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Etienne Métropole

For this installation, Weinberger refers to a project that he made in a public space in Innsbruck in 1991, a 40 meter long steel cage that created a kind of “hole” in the city. This prison, open to all directions, let seeds and pollen enter and leave at their will but banned access to humans. The pen demarcated a preserved space where vegetation could grow spontaneously and anarchically. Weinberger used this “ruderal society” as a starting point for his formal practice which also developed in different directions, e.g., drawings, texts, photographs, mockups, etc. Here he presents two smaller models of the cage as well as a series of drawings where watercolor drips form tree-like shapes that attempt to break away from cages drawn freehand with indelible marker.

THE CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE OF LA FERME DU BUISSON : AN EXPERIMENTAL SPACE AT THE CROSSROADS OF ARTISTIC FIELDS



The Contemporary Art Centre of La Ferme du Buisson was created in 1991. It belongs to the national network of art centres and is part of the multidisciplinary project of La Ferme du Buisson (“scène nationale” of Marne-la-Vallée). Located on an exceptional site, typical of industrial architecture of the late 1800s, it has been committed for almost twenty years now to a policy focused on exhibition, production and publishing showing active support to contemporary creation.

Since February 2008, it is host to a new program. By contrasting widely varied disciplines and points of view, this program facilitates a multidisciplinary and critical approach through which we can see contemporary art in its relation to other ways of acting and thinking (showcased at La Ferme du Buisson in the shape of theatre, dance and cinema, but also through philosophy, economy, anthropology, etc.), and as a special tool enabling us to comprehend our physical, social and political environment.

The Art Centre of La Ferme du Buisson is basically organised as an interactive platform. It forms a fertile ground for experimentation for artists as well as spectators, by favouring a vision of art as an experience in a shared space, rather than as a finite, autonomous object. Resolutely prospective, the current program is designed to discover young artists or artists who are seldom presented in France. By developing a unique, cross-disciplinary approach, this venue combines solo and group exhibitions, fringe events, performances, editorial projects and projects by guest curators.

The Contemporary Art Centre of La Ferme du Buisson is supported by Drac Ile-de-France / Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, SAN Val-Maubuée and Conseil Général de Seine-et-Marne. It is a member of the Tram and DCA networks.



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hours

wednesday, saturday, sunday from 2 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
until 9 p.m. when there is a performance and by appointment during the week

directions from Paris

by train : RER A : direction Marne-la-Vallée / Chessy, Noisiel stop (20 min)
by car : A4 Autoroute : Porte de Bercy, direction Marne-la-Vallée, exit Noisiel-Torcy then Noisiel-Luzard (15 min)

admission

general admission : 2 €
reduced rate : 1 €
free entrance : groups, "Buissonniers", children under 12, artists, press