# *Where Do Images Come from? On the aesthetics of artistic work*

Roman Kurzmeyer, 2013

When French author Honoré de Balzac wrote his novella *The Unknown Masterpiece*, which appeared in the magazine *L'Artiste* in 1831, the outline of a new epoch was emerging.[1] In this novella, a key text for our understanding of modernism, the reader encounters painter Frenhofer, an admired older artist and painting critic feared by many of his fellow artists. He has been painting the same portrait of a woman for ten years; a work the painter hopes will surpass all other works ever painted with its lifelike quality. People know about the work but as yet no one has seen it. His refusal to show it remains unbroken until he meets the young painter Poussin. Poussin is clever and offers the ageing painter his girlfriend Gillette as a model, but only on the condition that he and his fellow painter Porbus are permitted to see the painting. Seduced by the "incomparable beauty" of the young woman, Frenhofer agrees. After he has compared his painting to the naked young woman, Frenhofer opens the door to his studio and shows the two young painters his work, with the words: "You are looking for a picture, and you see a woman before you. There is such depth in that canvas, the atmosphere is so true that you can not distinguish it from the air that surrounds us. Where is art? Art has vanished, it is invisible! It is the form of a living girl that you see before you." Initially, Poussin sees only "confused masses of colour and a multitude of fantastical lines that go to make a dead wall of paint", but then Porbus draws his attention to "a bare foot emerging from the chaos of colour, half-tints and vague shadows that made up a dim, formless fog. Its living delicate beauty held them spellbound. This fragment that had escaped an incomprehensible, slow, and gradual destruction". The two young observers' emotional reaction and in particular Poussin's ill-considered remark that sooner or later the painter would notice "that there is nothing there" trigger shock and despair in Frenhofer. During the following night Frenhofer dies, having destroyed his paintings. This encounter with his young colleagues in front of the painting on the easel in his studio reveals his own failure to him.

*On the Impossibility of Perfecting Art*

Balzac does not write as other 19th century authors did of "perfect art". Rather, as Hans Belting recounts, he "speaks of the impossibility of perfecting art. The small shift in meaning that he undertakes changes everything. Other authors sensed their own failure when attempting to describe such perfect art. But Balzac causes the artist to fail because he attempts such art."[2] The novella *The Unknown Masterpiece* depicts a struggle for absolute art, "it deals with a masterpiece that can no longer be completed but merely conceived".[3] In an article about the "Masterpiece" Hans Belting describes how, in the course of the 19th century, the understanding of art as a technical ability changed into a concept of art focussing on conceptual achievement – one that is valid to the present day.[4] In the character of the painter Frenhofer, Balzac imagined an art-

1 Cf. Honoré de Balzac, "The Unknown Masterpiece", quoted in German from: Georges Didi-Huberman, *Die leibhaftige Malerei*, Munich 2002, pp. 142–171.

2 Hans Belting, *Das unsichtbare Meisterwerk: Die modernen Mythen der Kunst*, Munich 1998, p. 151.

3 Same author., „Meisterwerk", in: Anette Selg and Rainer Wieland (eds.), *Die Welt der Encyclopédie*, Frankfurt am Main 2001, p. 255.

4 Ibid., pp. 253–256.

ist whose understanding of self remained true to his epoch but whose painterly practice, or so the modern interpretation of this text, anticipated the notion of abstraction that marked, in the art of the 20th century, the beginning of a radical and still enduring process of change – a process to which artists now subject the pictorial form and the work concept.

The sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), who had a keen interest in Balzac and worked on a memorial to the writer from 1891 to 1898, tendentially separated sculpture from its descriptive and narrative functions. Contemporaries were already aware that Rodin was taking new paths as a sculptor with his extensive fragmentation of the figure, which heightened the expressive power of the corporeal. Poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who worked as Rodin's private secretary for a short time, wrote to his wife Clara after his first visit to the studio on 2nd September 1902: "All one can see are long lines of fragments, one after another. Nudes the size of my hand and bigger … but only pieces, hardly any are complete: often there is only a piece of arm, a piece of leg, beside one another as if walking, and the fragment of torso that best matches them. Once I saw the torso of a figure and the head of another pressed onto it, the arm of a third … as if a dreadful, incomparable wave of destruction had passed over this work. And yet, the closer one looks the more deeply one feels that all this would be less whole if each single body was complete. Each one of these scraps has such eminent, compelling unity, which makes it possible to forget that it is often only *parts* and often *parts* of *different* bodies that cling together so passionately."[5] Often a fragment can stand for the whole, without its fragmentary nature being a continuing theme. Rodin marks the start of a new understanding of sculpture. The "non-finito", the replacement of the harmonious whole by the fragment in order to generate an imagined form in the viewer's mind, plays a key part in this. "Non-finito" signifies the obvious incongruency, the non-agreement between an incomplete state and the imaginable final form – an incongruency, however, which we experience as artistically meaningful.

When Balzac published the novella *The Unknown Masterpiece* in 1831, artworks like those that would be created in the 20th century were utterly inconceivable. Artworks that consisted of a single colour, that focused on the process, or as in the case of Bruno Jakob, who we have invited to Siegen in order to paint in front of an audience in the exhibition and in the collection, works that form open structures allowing the viewer to clarify his or her relationship to what is visible. Jakob, who grew up in Switzerland and has lived in New York since 1983, describes his own creative work as "invisible painting". On 29th May 2011, on the occasion of the 54th Venice Biennale, Bruno Jakob painted in front of paintings by Tintoretto (1518–1594), which were exhibited in the main Biennale pavilion in the Giardini. In this context his materials, as he claimed, included water, steam, tears, ice, pain, thoughts, light, energy, touch and joy on paper and canvas. But he also worked on the wall and the air in the room. Music by Hans Witschi accompanied his action on site. For the duration of the performance, Jakob had moved his studio into the exhibition. The work that he performed in Venice is entitled *weisses lächeln* (*white smile* 2010/11). Its visible components are oriented on the conventional qualities of artistic works and make painting appear credible as a consciously realised action. It would probably be misleading to describe Bruno Jakob as a conceptual artist, but without the Concept Art of the 1960s his painting would

5 Rainer Maria Rilke, quoted from: *Das Fragment – Der Körper in Stücken*, exhib. cat. Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt et al., Bern 1990, p. 26.

not be perceptible as art;[6] a painting created with "energy" and "touch" would remain an unpainted canvas, since the painting process does not show itself on the picture carrier. Early on, Jakob developed an interest in elements of reality that are invisible, concealed, latent, lost, unrealised and impossible to depict, and since then he has worked on those aspects of the image in a painterly way: in his art work he combines Concept Art with painting through the actual use of invisible painting materials. The conscious rejection of a method of depiction, as American philosopher Arthur C. Danto writes, includes the "rejection of an entire mode of reference to the world and to humanity".[7] In the case of Bruno Jakob, such rejection would mean criticising the painter for withdrawing behind his own working method, but would also cast doubt on the structural openness of his painting, which particularly interests us in this exhibition about the aesthetics of artistic work, and thus also about a painterly practice that regards the painting as a conceivable form, defining it as a space of resonance for the viewer.[8]

In 19th century literature and art the study of failure with respect to the ideal work was moved into the artist's studio. The common factor in these texts and visual works – also shared with the artists' biographies, developing tragically as a consequence of this unattainable work ideal – is that they conceived art from its end, starting out so to speak from an ideal state of perfection, which could neither be described by art historians nor be achieved by artists in their own works. In the 19th century the studio, as Oskar Bätschmann describes it, was a cult space into which the artist either withdrew for isolated work or which he used in a complementary manner, like Hans Makart in Vienna, for example, as a space for exhibiting and representative receptions.[9] This latent conflict can be followed on the basis of the history of the studio painting. In the 18th century, the studio is still first and foremost a workshop for the cooperation of artists, pupils and technical assistants. In the German-speaking countries it was not until the 19th century that the French term "atelier" became established for the artist's working space.[10] In German Romanticism it was thematised by artists like Caspar David Friedrich, Carl Gustav Carus or Georg Friedrich Kersting as a place of inner contemplation, as an empty, sparse, sacralised space protected from any diversions created by the outside world. From contemporary texts we know that not only pictures of the studio followed this ideal but also the reality of the working spaces: painter Wilhelm von Kügelgen characterises Caspar David Friedrich's studio as being "of such absolute emptiness that Jean Paul might have compared it to the disembowelled corpse of a dead prince. There was nothing in it apart from an easel, a stool and a table, above which – as the only wall decoration – a solitary T-square hung, although no one could understand how it had earned this honour. Even the quite legitimate paint box, oil pots and paint rags were relegated to the anteroom, as Friedrich believed that all external objects would disturb the world of images inside."[11] The studio

6 Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object*, New York 1973; more on this in: Catherine Morris and Vincent Bonin (eds.), *Materializing* Six Years. *Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art*, exhib. cat. Brooklyn Museum, Cambridge, Mass./London 2012.

7 Arthur C. Danto, *Die Verklärung des Gewöhnlichen. Eine Philosophie der Kunst*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, p. 87.

8 Cf. more detail on this by this author, „Unsichtbar/Ungesehen", in: same author. (ed.) *Bruno Jakob*, exhib. cat. Kunsthaus Langenthal 2007, pp. 14–21.

9 Oskar Bätschmann, *Ausstellungskünstler: Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem*, Cologne 1997, p. 94f.

10 Eva Mongi-Vollmer, „Das Atelier als ‚Anderer Raum': Über die diskursive Identität und Komplexität des Ateliers im 19. Jahrhundert", in: *KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL* 208, May/June 2011, pp. 92–107.

11 Uwe Fleckner, „Die Werkstatt als Manifest: Typologische Skizzen zum Atelierbild im 19. Jahrhundert", in: Ina Conzen (ed.), *Mythos Atelier: Von Spitzweg bis Picasso, von Giacometti bis Nauman*, exhib. cat. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart and Munich 2012, p. 34.

is shown as a hermetically protected space reserved for painting. It is neither a place where it is possible to watch the artist at work nor a space for the presentation of his works. Frenhofer's tragic end in Balzac's text is directly connected to the opening of his studio forced upon him by his two young colleagues, for that is what first causes the demystification of the work and the artist: only public presentation of the *incomplete* work in the artist's studio triggers the crisis that makes it unmistakably clear to him that his leaning to the absolute and the public's expectations cannot ever be in accord. As evidence for his thesis Bätschmann presents the drawing *Frenhofer shows his masterpiece* (1867/1872) by Paul Cézanne, whose meaning lies in its portrayal of just that "critical moment of presentation, when there is sudden divergence between what the artist shows and what the viewer sees".[12]

*Studio and Exhibition*

Irish-American artist, art critic and author Brian O'Doherty published an essay in 2007 entitled *Studio and Cube*, which was concerned with the relationship between the studio and the exhibition.[13] Here he supplements the ideas unfolded in his early collection of texts about the relations between the work and the exhibition space from the 1970s, *Inside The White Cube* (1986), with observations regarding the artist's workplace in the 20th century. O'Doherty shows how the studio has changed in appearance and equipment over the course of history, becoming an important motif of artistic self-reflection in the 19th century and, since Duchamp, occasionally being regarded as a work of art in itself.[14] O'Doherty, who followed contemporary affairs as an art critic particularly in New York as from the early 1960s and was editor of the art magazine *Art in America* in the 1970s, places New York at the centre of his deliberations. He recalls Lucas Samaras, who transported the contents of his studio/apartment from New Jersey to the Green Gallery, New York in 1964, where he set it up once again for an exhibition. The ambience in which the artist lived and worked could now be viewed in a place where art is exhibited and sold. O'Doherty believes he can discern the prototypes of the "White Cube" in the studios of Piet Mondrian and Constantin Brancusi, who laid them out according to artistic principles and composed them like works of art. He goes on to describe how painter Lowell Nesbitt visited the studios of his New York artist friends together with a photographer in order to paint pictures based on the photographs taken, which document situations from the studios. O'Doherty also mentions Yuri Schwebler, who exhibited painted sections of canvas from Sam Gilliam's studio as his own works. He discusses the importance of the studio for Pop Art, in particular for Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg. The modern "studio" lacks the intimacy and emptiness that had been characteristic qualities of the artist's studio since Romanticism and above all in the early 20th century, corresponding to the image of the artist as a lonely figure, part of an elite on the edge of society, a living pioneer of innovation – an image that was valid even for the American Abstract Expressionists – or, for example, as a Bohemian. In New York the studio was now called the "Factory" and it became a public, soon even legendary place: Andy Warhol turned an

12 Bätschmann 1997 (see note 9), p. 101.

13 Brian O'Doherty, *Studio and Cube: On the relationship between where art is made and where art is displayed*, New York 2007 (= A FORuM Project Publication); on this, cf. this author, „Atelier und Galerie: Über Brian O'Doherty als Künstler, Schriftsteller, Kritiker und Autor", in: *KUNSTFORUM INTERNATIONAL* 208, May/June 2011, p. 63–65.

14 Herbert Molderings, „Nicht die Objekte zählen, sondern die Experimente. Marcel Duchamps New Yorker Atelier als Wahrnehmungslabor", in: Michael Diers and Monika Wagner (eds.), *Topos Atelier: Werkstatt und Wissensform*, Berlin 2010 (= VII Hamburger Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte. Studien, Theorien, Quellen), pp. 21–43.

invitation to visit the studio, long understood as a privilege, into the very opposite by withdrawing into the background as an artist and a person but staging the studio as a media-effective place to live with an ever changing cast. He himself observed it from a distance. In the same place, New York, and in the same decade but in a different artistic milieu, the debate began on post-studio production, which we will go into in more detail below. While artists of the western world put the function of the studio up for discussion, in the countries of Eastern Europe it developed into a more and more important place – one that made it possible to generate a limited public for work forms that could not be shown in exhibitions. For example, there was the film *The Studio* (1978) by Rumanian artist Geta Bratescu, who used her studio in a performative way in the 1970s.[15] The studio of Edward Krasinski in Warsaw was not primarily a place of production, even during his lifetime, but a place for thought and a space for the artist's self-historicisation.[16] O'Doherty omits these (political) aspects of the studio's more recent history from his essay; instead, he is concerned with New York as a centre and with its radiation, placing the studio in the context of the history of art and exhibitions, and attempting to understand its constantly changing function up to the present day. In *Studio and Cube* O'Doherty leads the reader back to the artist and his work and corrects the still decidedly viewer-oriented picture, accentuating the aesthetics of reception, painted by *Inside the White Cube*.

The installation *The Studio Visit* by Rita McBride, an early work that appears as a reconstruction in our exhibition, should be seen within these conflicting relations. This work made in New York for an exhibition in the Michael Klein Gallery was the young artist's response to frequent requests to visit her studio, which rather surprised her initially but soon struck her with their full significance, although she was unable to meet them at the time. She had no studio; she did not need one for her work. So that she could show new and current works to critics and curators who insisted on a visit to the studio, she took objects into one of her friends' studio on such occasions, where they were examined like traditional sculptures and discussed and evaluated in ignorance of the context for which they had been made; a context that was essential to any understanding of her work as it was emerging at the time. Rita McBride is convinced that visits to the studio, then and now, serve as a means of getting to know the artist better and, above all, of seeing the ambience in which he or she lives, and how. But what if the artist invites us to a studio visit in a different studio? The installation *The Studio Visit* was exhibited in the gallery's display window. At the opening, McBride, her artist friends and Michael Klein boisterously sang sea shanties. The seating was on the installation's wooden benches, solid and elegant as a ship's fittings, and together they handled blue ropes that ran over rollers fastened to the ceiling by the artist. Using these ropes it was possible to lift up a spiral – roughly cut from packaging cardboard and lying on the gallery floor – into the space in front of them. McBride was interested in the flexibility of this sculpture that could be hoisted like a sail, thus maintaining the image of the ship evoked by the work. Those who can sail are also able to change course. From today's standpoint, she sees the installation as a naive attempt at institutional criticism. Criticism of curators who wish to keep a ritual alive with the visit to the studio, which has become pointless because the image of the artist and the static work ideal behind it appear out-of-date today. For a long time now the methods of the post-war avant-garde, once

15 I am grateful to Adam Szymczyk for this information about the situation in Eastern Europe and Bratescu's work in particular.

16 On Edward Krasinski cf. Gabriela Switek (ed.), *Avant-garde in the Bloc. Aspects of the oeuvre and the studio of Henryk Stazewski (1894–1988) and Edward Krasinski (1925–2004)*, Warsaw 2009.

practised in a pure form and differentiated theoretically from other processes, have been combined. McBride, like other artists of her generation, works at this kind of interface: the one between object art and Concept Art. Her work therefore brings together two understandings of art that were once regarded as mutually exclusive methods: for example, she has investigated the object art of Donald Judd, but has done so with a conceptual awareness shaped by other American artists such as Michael Asher or John Baldessari. Rita McBride produces objects and constructs spatial installations, but she also appears with performances in public and as an author. She works in a genuine modernist visual language, concerned with form, which she also reflects upon critically in her work by incorporating elements from urban architecture and everyday design.

Pictures of the studio provide information about the conditions under which artists work but they are also manifestos, in which the artist's social role is represented – his relations with collectors, clients and the public – as well as visualising the art concept of a specific epoch.

*Courbet*

One such manifesto is Gustave Courbet's painting *The Artist's Studio, a real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life* (1855), which the French painter created for the World Exhibition in Paris taking place that same year but then presented together with around 40 other works in a pavilion of his own that he financed and organised parallel to the major exhibition.[17] The painting shows a situation in the artist's studio. At the centre of the image Courbet sits painting in front of a small landscape, a model standing behind him; diagonally in front of Courbet there is a boy watching him work, as well as a dog at play. On the right-hand side, behind the painter and therefore with a view of the evolving painting, we can discern his friends from the cultural and social spheres. Behind the painting, at the left-hand side of the picture, Courbet shows losers and profiteers: to use his own words, "the world of ordinary life, the people, the misery, the poverty, the wealth, the exploited, the exploiters, those people that live off death"[18]. They cannot see the painting that Courbet is completing in their presence. The painter is the only one who is active, as Werner Hofmann notes: "The painter at the easel stands out. He acts as a moral figure, conscious and determined, neither hindered by deliberations (like his *actionnaires*) nor troubled by his private egoism (like the *exploiteurs*) or bereft of initiative like the *exploités*). But what is the purpose of this self-imposed, enlightening commission? We see Courbet painting a landscape in Jura. Let us suppose that the 'message', the heart of the pictorial idea lies in this bright spot: then surely it is not simply in the sense of a romantic reversion to nature as a (still) unviolated entity, born of weariness with the big city? The landscape, the half-naked model (a secularised *Veritas*?) and the two boys are related in a reciprocal way, which is conveyed by the painter. In the landscape, man assimilates nature as a whole, humanising it by making it into his creation. This should not be understood as the invention of a hybrid or imaginary counter world, a refuge, but as making us aware of the naturalness of nature, heightening it into a striking and elementary power potential."[19]

Adam Szymczyk sees the small landscape of Jura on which Courbet is working, surrounded by the world, as "the artwork's subject matter and the proper cause of the improbably trans-historical gathering" that is represented

17 Bätschmann 1997 (see note 9), p. 124f.

18 Gustave Courbet, quoted from Werner Hofmann, *Das Atelier. Courbets Jahrhundertbild*, Munich 2010, p. 12.

19 Ibid., p. 51.

in the *Studio*.[20] Szymczyk explains that the continuing (even today) impact of the painting – in a comment referring to Polish artist Paweł Althamer – stems from "movement towards the limits of the known world, a journey inward in search of the origins of the real world (but also its spiritual dimensions)" set out in the image.[21] Althamer himself describes his working method as "reality-related".[22] He studied with Grzegorz Kowalski at the art academy in Warsaw. In his younger days the latter was an assistant to architect and artist Oskar Hansen, who taught the principles of "open form" from 1955 onwards and, over the decades, developed a teaching method oriented on joint, processual work in the class. His students do not work according to self-imposed tasks but participate in exercises that are part of the fixed teaching programme. Here, being aware of the artist's origins, it is understandable why others among the Polish artists of the middle generation also known internationally today – like Artur Żmijewski, whose video work *Blindly* (2010) can be seen in the exhibition, or Katarzyna Kozyra – seek cooperation, have a performative approach, and regard the process as a work of art in itself.[23] Żmijewski invited blind people to paint pictures. The video documents work in his studio. While the blind people are painting, the artist converses respectfully with them about their painting, colours and images that *he*, by contrast to the authors of the works, can see and describe. This very beautiful, suggestive, elegiac and highly emotional film prompts some fundamental questions: Who should be permitted to express him- or herself artistically? Is sight a precondition to images? How is artistic work judged? Is the visual in art overvalued, perhaps? This last question in particular is posed by other works in our exhibition. The film succeeds in showing artistic experience, although its protagonists are not artists. Żmijewski radicalised his position as curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale (2012), which he presented under the title FORGET FEAR. In the foreword to the catalogue he wrote: "Art is a mechanism which works by combining the powers of intellect and intuition, with a desire for dissent. It might give rise not to strange and somewhat inscrutable artworks, but to substantive tools for acting on the world."[24] Is this what Szymczyk means when he attempts to characterise Althamer's art as art that "must be consumed by the real"? Szymczyk is convinced that artworks must "literally dissolve and germinate in society through the practice of teaching, thinking, and making. By means of individual or collective actions, his art becomes part of a reality that can be defined, following Courbet's understanding of art as a powerful agent of social change and nature as ‚the ensemble of men and things,' and not a subject of mystic contemplation. Only when art effects the transformation of lived experience can the allegory become real and the quest for origin be abandoned."[25] Paweł Althamer's graduation piece at the Warsaw academy comprised a *Self Portrait* (1993) and the video *Master's Project* (1993). He formed the life-sized, naturalistic self-portrait as a naked young man from grass, hemp, animal intestines, wax and hair. The video shows the student graduate as he leaves the academy, gets into a bus and travels to the edge of the city. The camera follows him into a forest where he takes off his clothes and disappears naked into the natural surroundings. Surely the heart of sculpture is an investigation into the

20 Adam Szymczyk, "A Real Allegory and the Origins of the World", in: *PARKETT* 82, 2008, pp. 102–107.

21 Ibid., p. 103.

22 Cf. in more detail Roman Kurzmeyer, Adam Szymczyk and Suzanne Cotter, *Paweł Althamer*, London 2011.

23 On new Polish art, cf. the volume of interviews Tomasz Dabrowski and Stefanie Peter (eds.), *Zeitgenössische Künstler aus Polen*, Göttingen 2011; also Jola Gola (ed.), *Oskar Hansen. Towards Open Form/Ku Formie Otwartej*, Warsaw and Frankfurt am Main 2005.

24 Artur Żmijewski, „Foreword", in: *FORGET FEAR. 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art*, Berlin 2012, p. 10.

25 Szymczyk 2008 (see note 20), p. 114.

body within space? Certainly in his creative works Althamer has followed this creed since the very beginning. They reveal an understanding of reality oriented on action and an enthusiasm for participatory and performative art forms. Travel, walking and exploring with others – with the family, with neighbours he does not know, with curators or artist friends, or with art students in Swiss Jura, not far away from Ornans, Courbet's city of birth in the French part of Jura in the spring of this year – are all possible forms of artistic expression. Althamer turned our stay in Saignelégier from 15th to 18th April 2013, a few days after the snow had thawed and the vegetation period had begun, and in particular the day-long, silent hike we shared into a video that can be seen in the context of this exhibition.[26]

*Thinking Art from its Origins*

Today, in the early 21st century, the absolute idea of art as the precondition to its perception and handling as a work of art, still valid in modernism, exists merely as a memory, appearing rather like a spectre from a different age. Many works of contemporary art examine the artistic process as their theme without relating to a final work necessitating creation, to an open end or open horizon of meaning in Umberto Eco's sense – but the other way around, with a view towards an open initial situation.[27] This is *one* thesis of our exhibition, which I now wish to examine in more detail and visualise with examples of work. In my subsequent deliberations, therefore, I will no longer refer to modernism's accompanying fear of the "impossibility of perfecting art"[28] but to our contrary observation that *many* contemporary works, as already visualised by the works in the exhibition presented exemplarily up until now, are concerned with the beginnings. How does artistic work begin today – and where, and why? In our exhibition it is possible to see present-day works that attempt to conceive and develop art from its beginnings; however, and this should be emphasised, not in the sense of an ideal, (in turn) unachievable per se state of openness but as a possible practice to be tried out anew. In 2006 Karin Sander sent a white primed, manufactured canvas to an exhibition unpacked. Since then, the artist has sent many more such canvases all over the world. They are covered on the reverse, and the addresses of the sender and recipient are written on this protective cover. Transportation and the predictable but also contingent manipulations of the unpacked canvas on route leave various traces behind. The artist accepts every state as an image; there are no formal criteria for the evaluation of each individual image. The starting place and destination of the canvas sent become components of the work title. Sander calls these works created during and through their transport, a few of which can also be seen here in Siegen, *Mailed Paintings*. Sander is producing new works for the present exhibition by buying canvases on her travels in the run-up and sending them to the museum. *Mailed Paintings* are not created in the studio; they evolve in public life. They show what has happened to them; traces of usage and handling. Every state remains permanently temporary, for in principle it is dependent on a process that remains open into the future. The

26 In spring 2013 the following students of the Master of Fine Arts course took part in the small symposium with Pawel Althamer in Saignelégier, run by the Art Institute of the Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst Basel: Iris Baumann, Keunhyung Cho, Daniela Brugger, Caroline von Gunten, Marc Hartmann, Adrian Kaeser, Jeannice Keller, Chantal Küng, Andreas Mattle, Kathrin Siegrist, Angelika Schori, Andreas Thierstein, Evelina Velkaite, Tim Wandelt, Nicole Wietlisbach, Johannes Willi, Maria Zimmermann and Claire Zumstein.

27 "The open work assumes the task of giving us an image of discontinuity. It does not narrate it; it *is it*." Umberto Eco, „Das offene Kunstwerk in den visuellen Künsten", in: *Das offene Kunstwerk*, Frankfurt am Main 1977, pp. 154–185, here: p. 165; Eco developed his poetics of the open artwork on the basis of informel works in post-war European and US-American art.

28 Belting 1998 (see note 2), p. 151.

work shows the process of production as an anonymous process, escaping the artist's control and influence and yet consciously triggered by her. Here, one is reminded of *Free Running Rhythms and Patterns: Version II* (2000), the protocol of self-observation by Andrea Zittel in which the artist reports on the period *before* the actual production of a work. Katrin Grögel connects Zittel to Allan Kaprow and develops an affinity between the artists with respect to "recognizing and revealing how art is conditioned by the life context in which it is created ".[29] In the case of the work comprising 27 wall boards, *Free Running Rhythms and Patterns: Version II* (2000), it is the interpretation of the results of an experiment that the American artist carried out in Berlin from 30th October to 7th November 1999. It consisted of living and working for a whole week in an underground room without daylight or any means of measuring time. The course of the days was recorded by a video surveillance system with a time calculator. Later Zittel used graphic means to represent her sequence of activities (work, eating, household chores, personal hygiene, communication and sleep) on boards. From them we can discern the slight changes in the artist's life rhythm during the experiment.[30] At a moment of great rage and frustration over the art scene, Katharina Grosse moved her painting from her studio into the bedroom of her Düsseldorf apartment in order to "produce a work in a place that did not belong to any institution, that would have no audience or public and would not require any consideration of its reception, either".[31] She sprayed the room and everything it contained: her bed by Jasper Morrison, clothes, books and even the artworks that were in the room. "With this work," Grosse writes, "I began to experience illusionism in a new way: as a process with which I could reconceive space and time. For me, illusionism does not represent a strategy of deception but the opening of endless possible ways to experience reality."[32] Using the example of Bruce Nauman, Rosalind Krauss refers to the studio as the setting of an extended sphere of creative activity, which in his case could take place for a long time without the need for materialisation or even documentation.[33] Following this idea, art was no longer dependent on an institutional context (galleries, museums) like the ready-made or on public recognition (audience, critics, collectors). Bruce Nauman said in an interview: "What you are to do with the everyday is an art problem."[34] An eloquent comment on this attitude is made by his late video installation *Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)* (2001), in which he orchestrated recorded images of his studio in Galisteo, New Mexico over the course of 42 nights, including visits by mice, insects and a cat, into a work about the artist's absence in the studio, and the visual and acoustic life that takes place in front of the camera on site.

If there are parallels to Courbet, then perhaps in the fact that our deliberations and observations are focused on the artist's activity as a "conscious subject" and thus directly on the question of how this can be revealed by the

29 Katrin Grögel, "'Performing Life' – Andrea Zittel and the Mission of the Everyday", in: Annamira Jochim and Theodora Vischer (eds.), *Where Does Art End, Where Does Life Start? Proceedings of the conference on September 12 and 13, 2008, on the occasion of the exhibition ‚Andrea Zittel, Monika Sosnowska: 1:1' at Schaulager Basel*, Göttingen 2009 (= Schaulager-Hefte), pp. 96.

30 Cf. the chapter „A – Z Time Trials" in: *Andrea Zittel. Critical Space*, exhib. cat. Contemporary Arts Museum Houston et al., Munich et al. 2005, pp. 152–159.

31 Katharina Grosse, „Das Schlafzimmer", in: *Boden und Wand/Wand und Fenster/Zeit*, exhib. cat. Helmhaus Zürich 2009, p. 107.

32 Ibid.

33 Rosalind Krauss, „Fat Chance: Bruce Nauman (2002)", in: *Robert Lehman Lectures on Contemporary Art*, ed. by Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly with Barbara Schröder, New York 2009 (= Dia Art Foundation, New York, No. 4), pp. 137–146.

34 On the general significance of the studio for Nauman, cf. MaryJo Marks, „Seeing through the Studio: Bruce Nauman", in: Wouter Davidts and Kim Paice (eds.), *The Fall of the Studio: Artists at Work*, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 93–117, quotation on p. 114.

artwork today.[35] By posing this question we are operating in the current field of tension between studio, production and exhibition, whereby the qualities represented by each of these three concepts are overlapping without ever being fully congruent.

*Studio/Production/Exhibition*

British artist Elizabeth Wright is showing a two-part work in the exhibition that is concerned with photographic perception without involving or producing photographs in any way. What we see are a camera and a tripod. These are plaster casts of an analogue photographic camera (Ricoh XR-2 SLR) and a Velbon tripod, similar to the equipment used towards the end of the 20th century by artists (including this particular artist) to document work in their studios. Wright left fingerprints in specific places on wax casts of the camera and the tripod, approximately where the hands of the photographer would have held the camera while working. The wax positive with the fingerprints was recast in a new stage of work, this time in plaster. The artist painted the surface of the sculpture to correspond to the original, so making the cast appear as close to reality as possible. In the sculpture the plaster also takes up the empty space (the void) inside the camera that is necessary to expose the film. As a sculpture the camera – which plays an important part in the dissemination, documentation and production of modern art – is no longer able to fulfil this function; it is no longer a working apparatus but has become an image in itself.

The camera – used in the studio mainly after the completion of the artistic process to document the finished work before it leaves the studio to be sold, exhibited or stored away – itself becomes the starting point of a traditional plastic process. The epitome of possible technical reproducibility, it is subject to a mechanical reproductive process and therefore becomes discussable within the history of sculpture. The preconditions have been established for the reconception of the terms "original" and "origin" with the reproduction of images, starting with photography and film, and in the meantime also of multidimensional objects by means of digital technology. Walter Benjamin lent a decisive, still relevant impulse to this process with his essay that appeared in 1936, *The Artwork in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility.* Georges Didi-Huberman recalls that Benjamin had already, some years before in 1928, introduced the dimension of time into the discussion of the concepts "original" and "origin". He did not use origin as a synonym of "source" but wanted it understood as a "maelstrom in a current", as a process.[36] In his deliberations on the relevance of printing processes Didi-Huberman asks: "Does the imprint constitute *a contact with the origin* or the *loss of origin*? Does it express authentic presence (like a gesture of *contact*), or is it just the contrary: a sign of the loss of uniqueness and a starting point for reproduction? Is it an origin of the oneness or of the dispersed? Of the auratic or serial? Of the similar or different? Does it mean identity or the lack of identification? Is it a decision or a coincidence? a desire or mourning? a form or shapelessness? The same or different? Is it familiar or foreign? a contact or a separation … The imprint seems to function here as a type of 'dialectical image', which is both an affirmation and a negation of all of the qualities mentioned above. It suggests both the *contact* (a foot leaving a trace in the sand), as well as the *loss* (the absence of the foot in the imprint); it suggests equally *a contact with the loss* and *the loss of contact*."[37]

35 Hofmann 2010 (see note 18), p. 41.

36 Georges Didi-Huberman, Ähnlichkeit und Berührung: Archäologie, Anachronismus und Modernität des Abdrucks, Cologne 1999, p. 9.

37 Ibid., p. 10.

*Ricoh XR-2 SLR Camera and Velbon Tripod* (2013) corresponds to this "dialectical image" introduced by Didi-Huberman, not only because the work's content brings together mechanical and technical reproduction and thematises them alternately but also because the artist used a tool that promoted the distribution of images as a starting point for the production of a plastic object, which can be termed an original in the language of art theory. Inasmuch as the artist modified the wax cast of the camera with fingerprints, she personalised the technical apparatus and simultaneously – not without irony – took a stance in an age-old conflict within sculpture: it is true that she worked with the cast, which is not a process of imitation and therefore not a recognised artistic process, seen historically, but the subtle plastic manipulation of the wax model transforms the cast and so categorises it as sculpture.

In our exhibition the works by Adrian Schiess, Paul Sietsema, Mai-Thu Perret and Sarah Rossiter also belong in this discussion context. How to begin? And why? With what legitimation? Where do images come from? How does one arrive at language? Modernism is a sphere of resonance for these artists. To them, beginning means creating a distance and using the work to draw attention to it. It means showing that they understand themselves as the work's first critical observer on the basis of that very work. Here a further aspect of the aesthetics of production is brought to light in this exhibition. Their works convey themselves as an echo of modernist methods, themes and expressive forms.

It is possible to see photographs of paintings by Sarah Rossiter taken by the artist, although the originals are not exhibited. She refers to her work in the studio as investigation into the making of art. What might abstraction look like in the digital age? How is authenticity possible in an epoch in which digital technology allows modularisation and permanent reconstruction? These are some of the questions that concern Rossiter as an artist. Expressive, non-representational paintings evolve in a first phase, a performative process that she likens to free improvisation. In a second phase she examines these paintings, photographing portions of the images digitally and then processing the files. The digital image is regarded as material with which she can continue working in every sense, without needing to reference the original composition of a painting. Separating the painting process conceptually from the making of art, she attempts to experience painting as a pure action, as a state of freedom that can exist, perhaps, apart from the exigencies of art production. The other way around, the contemplation of the digital image and its subsequent processing is a possible way of investigating her own authorship, subjecting it to criticism and reconstructing it. The work is a digital photograph, considerably larger in format than the painting on paper. The viewer is given additional, free access to a moment that was very personal as a painterly act and that remains invisible. During the digital processing, traces of the painterly process in time and space are omitted, as well as various elements in which Rossiter can recognise herself, elements which connect her emotionally to a moment in the past – elements that point to authorship. Thus the work in the studio is the actual theme of her works, as the stages of work described above make it possible for her to introduce distance between herself and the finished work of art.

Understanding one's own work as a way of revealing methods and themes and their artistic realisation to oneself, and so developing a reflective distance to one's own artistic production in order to go on working and making fresh starts: this approach can also be found in the work of Mai-Thu Perret. Her installation *Donna Come Me* (2008) refers to her own film made in New York, *An Evening of the Book* (2007), stimulated by Varvara Stepanova's stage set

for an agit-prop play with the same title.[38] The display dummy sitting in front of a painted carpet in *Donna Come Me* wears the same blue overall covered in paint stains that the performer Fia Backström wore when she cut a piece of cloth to shape in the film and then hung it on the wall. It is the same overall that Mai-Thu Perret put on some months later in order to paint the painting on the carpet in front of which the dummy is sitting now: this carpet is reminiscent of a Rorschach test, or Andy Warhol, or one of Yves Klein's *Anthropometries*, as the artist herself says. She does not slip into different roles: instead, she locates her work in different places in art history by having the overall covered in paint stains worn by different characters, each one an artist, in different contexts. Perret understands *Donna Come Me* as an installation that poses the question of the relationship between author and object and stimulates its viewers to imagine and think about artistic processes, first of all and most decisively from an artist's perspective. In the exhibition *Example: Switzerland* in the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in 2011, in collaboration with the artist we designed a kind of "period room" around her work *Donna Come Me* showing artworks from Switzerland that shared, as the artist writes, a "domestic or utilitarian quality": a scarf by Camille Graeser, clothes by Sophie Taeuber-Arp from her period at Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, jewellery by Dieter Roth, furniture by Max Bill, and lamps by Valentin Carron, to name but a few of the objects exhibited. Perret described the room as an "attempt to spell out something about the promises of geometry and modernity, and their links to something more obscure or maybe more familiar, the body and the psyche, how these fit inside and go hand in hand with the desire for clean lines and analytical clarity".[39]

Jonas Zakaitis said of *Figure 3* (2008), a film by Paul Sietsema, that everything becomes so concentrated in it "that it's hard to discern between the act of looking and the things themselves".[40] The 16-mm, silent film by the American artist is 16 minutes long; as is always the case with this film, it is looped and shown as an installation with a projector. It comprises black and white images that appear and fade out again as if in a slide show. Initially, one is immersed in an *informel* world, in which only fragments of fragments are visible. This is both a view into the artist's studio and into nature. In both cases the camera is too close to the objects to make them discernible. "As the film progresses," Zakaitis writes, "it turns into something like an archaeological presentation of various artefacts excavated from somewhere deep and far."[41] Plates, pots, coins, spoons, nets and ropes enter into the picture and are shown from different perspectives: a slow current of images in which the objects called up appear as both the memory *and* the idea of things. The material one believes one can discern is porous and fragile. There are places where the images turn orange and appear over-exposed. One of the objects thematised in the film is a key. Not the key to the film, as Sietsema explains, but a symbol of explanation as such. What we see is an image of a cast of the key to the studio where the film was produced. This key, the artist says, would open the door to the studio, where answers to all the questions posed by the film might be found.[42] Studio work has a central importance in Sietsema's creative pro-

38 Julien Fronsacq, „Medium – Botschaft", in: *PARKETT* 84, 2008, p. 129.

39 Mai-Thu Perret, „My Sister's Hand in Mine", in: Roman Kurzmeyer and Friedemann Malsch (eds.), *Example: Switzerland. Unbounding and Crossing Over as Art,* , exhib. cat. Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein Vaduz, Ostfildern 2011, pp. 197–200.

40 Jonas Zakaitis, „Portrait Paul Sietsema: A Certain Kind of Realism ", in: *SPIKE Kunstmagazin* 31, 2012, pp. 72–83.

41 Ibid., S. 81.

42 Bruce Hainley, „Skeleton Key: A Conversation with Paul Sietsema", in: *Figure 3. Paul Sietsema*. Exhib. cat. Museum of Modern Art, New York 2009, pp. 41–51.

duction, both as an ambience and also with respect to motifs and themes. The objects to be seen in the film are not digital images but analogue recordings of objects that he produced in the studio together with his assistants especially for the film recordings. In the case of Sietsema's drawings, as in the one presented in this exhibition, the dripping edges of the paint tins, even the folded newspaper on which the tins seem to have left marks, are the result of specific manual techniques of imitation. The text is legible, the newspaper can be placed in a context of date and place. He cuts up paintings into their individual components in order to understand what a painting is, and what an image is – and he thematises this process in his works. He paints not only the individual parts but also the tools that were used for the work. There is the object, Sietsema says in a conversation about *Figure 3*, and there is a depiction of the object. But he is interested in a third category, which is not simply material or image but in a certain sense both.[43]

Adrian Schiess is known for his panels, painted using industrial varnishes and exhibited lying flat: the shining, coloured surfaces reflect the fall of light on them as well as their surroundings. As early as 1989 the artist also concerned himself with digital works, initially with monitors; soon he was showing their colour patterns in his exhibitions as well – as projections onto the walls and in space. In addition, his work encompasses abstract painting on canvas, watercolours, photography and figurative drawing.[44] Around 1997 he took up the material picture as another work form. These are multilayered, voluminous, and simultaneously extremely dense images into which the artist works leaves and flowers from his garden, sand, painted papers, cardboards, dried paint, empty paint tubes and other studio refuse. Alongside these material pictures, he has been producing Polaroids and photographs since 1986: depicting, for example, the remains of dried paint on the studio floor or the surfaces of his paintings, which the artist has also been having reproduced on panels and canvases on various scales in recent years. In the case of his metal sheets, Adrian Schiess minimizes the pictorial information, emptying the surface of the technical carrier apart from the colours and the shine. By contrast, his assemblages are dense, opaque images. The contingent loading of the picture carrier with many layers of material and paint results in relief-like, dense, misshapen wall objects. As he not only uses studio refuse for these works but also displays the materials like refuse quickly swept together on the floor of the studio, a dimension of failure is inscribed into these pieces despite all their beauty, reminiscent of baroque paintings of ruins: by contrast to early work by John Chamberlain, who varnished sheet metal he acquired from scrap dealers, forming and pressing it into coloured volumes, the minimalist creed – according to which, as Judd wrote in 1964, the work should be an indivisible whole and no more[45] – is expressly no longer relevant to Schiess's material pictures. He uses processes for the two contrasting groups of work that revolve around the concentration and scattering of meaning, but artistically – as he sees it, too – lead to similar results nonetheless. The result is the "remnant of an image", as Adrian Schiess said when I asked him about his material pictures some years ago, "as accidental and as fleeting as the images that emerge in their high-gloss surface".[46]

43 Ali Subotnick, „1000 Words: Paul Sietsema Talks about *Figure 3*, 2008", in: *Artforum*, March 2008, p. 340.

44 These comments on Adrian Schiess follow the author's deliberations in: Stephan Kunz and Roman Kurzmeyer (eds.), *Adrian Schiess. Werke/Works 1978–2012*, exhib. cat. Kunstmuseum Chur, Chur/Heidelberg/Berlin 2012, pp. 252–259.

45 Donald Judd, „Specific Objects", in: Thomas Kellein (ed.), *Donald Judd: Das Frühwerk 1955–1968*, exhib. cat. Kunsthalle Bielefeld and Menil Collection, Houston, Cologne 2002, pp. 86–97.

46 Adrian Schiess in conversation with the author, in: *Adrian Schiess. Flache Arbeiten 1987–1990. With a conversation between Roman Kurzmeyer and Adrian Schiess and a postscript by Beat Wismer*, Aargauer Kunsthaus Aarau (Schriften zur Aargauischen Kunstsammlung), Aarau 2007, p. 57.

As history teaches us, work forms are always tied to a specific artistic practice. In the case of Schiess's panels this practice is determined by the White Cube and the medium of the exhibition. In Siegen a panel conceived for the exhibition can be seen in the rooms of the collection, where it interacts with the paintings of various Rubens Prize winners displayed there. By contrast, the material pictures and the overpainted photographs of the studio floor remind us of the studio in the era of the conceptual image and the exhibiting artist and thus of a fundamentally different practice. They point to the painter's field, telling of (artisanal) work achieved and entropy (inevitably) created in the process. Schiess directs attention towards the meagre, desolate traces of the artistic process in *his own* studio. As if naturally he brings this remnant, which is incapable of making any statement about the processes themselves and their success or failure – meaning that there would be no sense in differentiating its various components – into an arbitrary, casual, and aesthetically indifferent form in his material pictures and in the painted-over photographs of the studio floor. Schiess refers to the assemblages as models that help us to grasp visually and reflect upon those "remnants of an image". On the *informel*, painted-over photos showing the view of the studio floor, by contrast it is the colour itself – both the material applied as well as the colouring – that creates a place of living painterly presence. Adrian Schiess has always held on to colour in his oeuvre because colour, as he never tires of emphasising, evades abstract concepts.

*The Exhibition as Place of Production*

In her Ästhetik der Installation, Juliane Rebentisch emphasises that installation is an art form "that is in itself essentially exhibition".[47] A work form that ideally and typically facilitates the "unity of space and time, and place and work" that was already the foundation of Brancusi's concept of the studio, and which stimulated Brian O'Doherty to refer to his Paris studio, rebuilt in the meantime as a reconstruction in front of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, as a prototype of the modern exhibition space.[48] Understanding the exhibition itself as a place of production is an approach often taken since the late 1960s in order to generate this unity at least on a temporary basis. The most frequently discussed example, in all probability, was the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) in the Kunsthalle Bern, no doubt because it was not a project by a single artist but was conceived as a group exhibition, the manifestation of a generation of artists.[49] Harald Szeemann, director of the Kunsthalle Bern since 1961, did not select, transport and present works; instead, he invited a young generation of mainly little-known artists to realise their ideas within the exhibition. Before, and even during the exhibition the Kunsthalle was a place of work, a studio where artists worked on site and also placed their works within the space. Even after the opening, new works were still being added to the exhibition.

In the subsequent reception of this exhibition, however, interest and discussion shifted further and further away from individual works and production conditions to the curatorial idea and the curator himself.[50] The reconstruction of the exhibition in the Fondazione Prada, a baroque palace beside the Canal Grande in Venice during the 2013 Biennale was based on views of the installa-

47 Juliane Rebentisch, Ästhetik der Installation, Frankfurt am Main 2003, p. 265.

48 Michael Diers, „atelier/réalité: Von der Atelierausstellung zum ausgestellten Atelier", in: Topos Atelier 2010 (see note 14), p. 5.

49 Cf. Christian Rattemeyer et al., *Exhibiting the New Art: ‚Ob Losse Schroeven' and ‚When Attitudes Become Form' 1969*, London 2010.

50 Cf. Harald Szeemann, Tobia Bezzola and Roman Kurzmeyer, *Harald Szeemann: With By Through Because Towards Despite: Catalogue of All Exhibitions 1957–2005*, Zurich et al. 2007.

tion, which have been what has largely shaped our image of that exhibition to date. Exhibitions are passed down to us in photographs and television reports. For a few years now, we have been provided with such images even before the end of the exhibitions. These images are more powerful than the personal memories of those who saw the exhibition. WHEN ATTITUDES BECOME FORM Bern 1969/Venice 2013 investigated the significance of documentary photography for recent art history and first and foremost, it was the exhibition of an exhibition.[51] The intentions originally linked with the show in Bern, as documented in the archives, are longer recognisable in Venice.

The new definition of the studio's function made it possible to move it temporarily into a factory, onto the street, into the desert, into a university, or as then, into an exhibition. Since then the exhibition itself may turn into a space in which the work is developed and realised. Caroline A. Jones uses the example of Robert Smithson to describe how cooperation with other artists, delegating the implementation of a work to construction companies (in his case using heavy construction plant to realise the Land Art projects), and the use of third party labour became a central theme in American art after 1970.[52] The art evolves outside of the studio and the idea represents the foundation of artistic authorship. The realisation of the work can be placed in the hands of others. In 1971 Carl Andre commissioned a photographer in New York to take photos of minor construction sites and the material lying about them, and published these images in place of his own works in *The New Avant-garde*.[53] In a footnote to his seminal essay "Notes on Sculpture, Part IV: Beyond Objects", which appeared for the first time in *Artforum* in April 1969, Robert Morris reports his observation that artisanal and industrial production sites were being moved from the city into the peripheries and thus evading future perception: "It is interesting to note that in an urban environment construction sites become small theatrical arenas the only places where raw substances and processes of its transformation are visible and the only places where random distributions are tolerated."[54] At this moment the importance of the studio as a personal place of refuge and work is hugely relativised. In Europe this development can also be observed and is being thematised by artists themselves. The French artist Daniel Buren wrote an essay in 1971, frequently cited since then, about the function of the studio: he criticises the notion that the studio is the only place of production as well as the assumption that exhibitions of contemporary art can only take place in a museum.[55] He expressly refuses to discuss artists who transform parts of their studios into an exhibition space and those curators who view the museum as a studio.[56] But this was precisely what had occurred two years earlier in Bern: the Bern exhibition was concerned with a new work concept and a corresponding work ethos among the young participating artists.

In an interview that Artur Żmijewski, curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale (2012), held with Joanna Mytkowska, he called Szeemann's exhibition "a breakthrough in exhibition strategies", but added immediately: "But today we no longer need such transformations; to the contrary, we need to support the status of ideas. We need to exchange them not for objects, but for politically

51 Cf. WHEN ATTITUDES BECOME FORM Bern 1969/Venice 2013, exhib. cat. Fondazione Prada, Venice 2013.

52 Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio. Constructing the Postwar American Artist*, Chicago and London 1996, above all pp. 362–373.

53 Dietmar Rübel, *Plastizität:Eine Kunstgeschichte des Veränderlichen*, Munich 2012, pp. 236–251.

54 Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture", in: *On Art. Artists' Writings on the Changed Notion of Art After 1965*, ed. by Gerd de Vries, Cologne 1974, p. 238.

55 Daniel Buren, „Fonction de l'atelier", in: AA Bronson and Peggy Gale (eds.), *Museums by Artists*, Toronto 1983, pp. 61–68.

56 Ibid., S. 62.

oriented action."[57] French philosopher Jacques Rancière has pointed out that the positive evaluation of work is a relatively new phenomenon, and that art has also played a part in this: "Romanticism declared that the becoming-sensible of all thought and the becoming-thought of all sensible materiality was the very goal of the activity of thought in general. In this way art once again became a symbol of work. It anticipates the end – the elimination of oppositions – that work is not yet in a position to attain by and for itself. However, it does this insofar as it is a *production*, the identification of a process of material execution with a community's self-preservation of its meaning. Production asserts itself as the principle behind a new distribution of thesensible insofar as it unites, in one and the same concept, terms that are traditionally opposed:the activity of manufacturing and visibility."[58]

In the 19th century it was the studio that could be simultaneously a place of production, presentation, reproduction and representation; today, this is the exhibition.[59] But what is the effect of this long-established practice on *our* exhibition of art, whose subject is the studio and production? In addition to Bruno Jakob, already mentioned above, two other artists are participating in the exhibition with works that are being realised on the spot and so exhibit their own production: Giorgio Sadotti and Katharina Grosse. The work by Sadotti, realised on the day of the opening in his presence and in front of an audience, shows how an ordinary object can be transformed into a work of art by means of performance. The contribution by Katharina Grosse, on which I would like to focus below, reveals deep theoretical relevance because it also takes up an earlier work for a second time, presenting it for fresh debate in this context.

British artist Giorgio Sadotti is a few years older than the artists of Young British Art. His concept of art is rooted in American "Conceptual Art" as opposed to Young British Art, which – like Pop Art – sees the border to the consumer world as an interface that should be worked on and actively exploited. In Sadotti's work I would be inclined to refer in this respect, as in the case of Duchamp, to a literal cut-off point, a severing. Although Sadotti has an extremely analytical understanding of art, his work is characterised in a very personal way, oriented on the individual, and full of humour and irony, not dissimilar in turn to the previously mentioned work of Marcel Duchamp. One thread running through his work is an interest in the unintended and unpredictable encounter. *Be Me* was an exhibition shown in the gallery Interim Art, London in 1996. As the title indicates, the exhibition focused on the artist himself. He invited friends, artist and critics to be him for a day. It was left entirely up to them how they undertook to play this role and in what form they wished to be represented in the exhibition. In Siegen he will be realising a new performance of *Entre le désir et l'accomplissement, la perpétration et son souvenir* (2010). As on the first occasion, the work will be realised by a circus horse trainer who is an exponent of the art of bullwhip cracking. A black grand piano with an opened, illuminated lid stands in the space. The bullwhip cracker appears in front of the piano and begins to use her black leather whip – in open space initially. Later she beats the piano with a faster and faster rhythm until the lid snaps closed after a final lash and the light goes out. It is an extremely aggressive visual and acoustic process, during which concentrated energy becomes visible and audible. In a conversation about the idea behind this work that took place before the first realisation of the per-

57 „One Hundred Thousand People. Berlin, November 25, 2010. Joanna Mytkowska in Conversation with Artur Żmijewski", in: *FORGET FEAR* 2012 (see note 24), p. 189.

58 Jacques Rancière, *Die Aufteilung des Sinnlichen. Die Politik der Kunst und ihre Paradoxien*, Berlin 2008, pp. 68–69.

59 Michael Diers, in: Topos Atelier 2010 (see note 14), p. 5.

formance Sadotti explained that he was interested in how to create art that remains ambivalent.[60] When the performer realising the work in place of the artist steps in front of the instrument at the beginning, it is a silent instrument, a piano that has potential to be played. In the course of the performance there is a magical transformation of the instrument into a work of art. She uses skillful and controlled lashes of the whip to tease sounds from it that resonate, and her whip leaves expressive traces on the beautiful, perfectly pristine and polished black lacquer; in this context Sadotti mentions the *drips* by Pollock. He is interested in the transformation of the instrument into a different state that could be termed art, one that is triggered by him as an artist but carried out by another person in his place. The sleeping instrument is awakened and thereby changed into a different state, one that recalls a living creature. The surface of the instrument that was perfect at the beginning, which might be reminiscent morphologically of an animal, seems like ethereal or otherworldly skin after the transformation. In the exhibition it is only possible to see the piano and the whip; no documentation of the performance will be shown.

Direct painterly acts in space are characteristic of Katharina Grosse's painting. Since the late 1990s the artist has been using a spray pistol. In her work she abolishes the hierarchy between wall, ceiling and floor that remained valid for so long without question in the history of painting and image perception. Because of the artist's extended concept of the work and of painting, today there are no preferences for specific technical carriers or forms of presentation in her creative work. It develops in the field of tension between coloured surface, space and object. She creates large-format panel pictures as well as spatial installations using the medium of painting. Alongside her work in the studio and the pictures painted there, there are numerous works that she realises on the spot, creating them on a purely temporary basis. These are interventions in and on the existent architecture as well as with and on objects, e.g. items of furniture, which she brings into the exhibitions for this purpose. She sprayed the first work in the Kunsthalle Bern in 1998.[61] The mural picture *Inversion*, a temporary work planned as such, used the architecture as a carrier, certainly, but was not laid out as an architecture-related work. Grosse sprayed green acrylic paint directly onto the wall and ceiling in one corner of the room, without any preparatory drawing. The monochrome painting represented the wall in its surface and was at the same time a specific form in a specific place. But these features of the work in the Kunsthalle Bern, which I would describe as its quality, also provoked criticism: the sprayed form was arbitrary. It was an artistic act employing colour in space, which seemed to suggest that it might be possible to abolish the architectonic dimensions of space through painting. Since then numerous works have been produced, some with monumental dimensions that encompassed the entire building, but without the works being situation-specific in Richard Serra's sense or critical of institutions like those by Michael Asher. A particularly important work in this context is *Another Man Who Has Dropped His Paintbrush* (2008) in the Palazzina dei Giardini Estensi in Modena, an 18th century building.[62] This work fulfils what Armin Zweite already fittingly explained as Katharina Grosse's method in 2003, i.e., the "synthetising of different aesthetic problem situations".[63] Usually, painting

60 "Interview with the Artist and Anthony Spira, May 2010", in: *THE THE THINGS IS (FOR 3)*, exhib. cat. Milton Keynes Gallery, Milton Keynes 2010, p. 17.

61 Cf. by this author, „Katharina Grosse: Der Malerei gewordene Blick", in: this author (ed.), *Erlebte Modelle. Projektraum Kunsthalle Bern 1998–2000*, Zurich et al. 2000, pp. 43–45, fig. pp. 36–40.

62 Katharina Grosse, *Another Man Who Has Dropped His Paintbrush,* exhib. cat. Galleria Civica di Modena, Palazzina dei Giardini, 2009.

63 Armin Zweite, „Laudatio auf Katharina Grosse", in: *Katharina Grosse. Fred Thieler Preis für Malerei 2003*, exhib. cat. Berlinische Galerie, Berlin 2003, p. 14.

and exhibiting are two mutually independent activities, at different stages in time and divided between separate people; in the work of Katharina Grosse painting and exhibiting may merge into one. When I told the artist about the planned exhibition on the aesthetics of artistic work and discussed the possibility that she contribute to our theme, she suggested we could re-examine our first joint project, the work in the Kunsthalle Bern from the year 1998. The form this would take remained open for some time. But the starting point and the associated questions were obvious: Is it possible to embed a new work into an existent concept? Can one build upon a past experience without negating and overwhelming that experience with the new work? Can an artwork show that a development of thought lies in the formulation of difference rather than contradiction? According to Grosse, renewing something should not mean simply changing its appearance. Is it possible to enter one's own work again, to refer to one's own canon, to continue working in the same place without repeating oneself?

I believe that Richard Serra asked himself a similar question when he was invited, in 1996, to realise a *Splashing* in the Hamburger Kunsthalle.[64] He accepted the invitation. And in debate with his Hamburg piece, I believe that I also understand why *Splash* (1969) was missing in the reconstruction of *When Attitudes Become Form* in the Fondazione Prada, although the work had been the heart of the Bern exhibition. Serra's '*Measurements' of Time* in Hamburg, by contrast to the works that he realised in the 1960s, is conceived for permanency. On eight consecutive days he poured liquid lead into the corners of the floor and walls in a workroom specially constructed so that this work could be produced within the museum. In this way he made five lead angles each eleven metres long, weighing between two and three tons. While the angle that was created last remained where it had been cast, the others were taken out and lined up parallel to each other in the room: the smooth, right-angled corner pointing upwards in each case. While the early *Splashings* thematised the moment of realisation as temporarily limited works, *'Measurements' of Time* moves "into the temporal depth of the museum".[65] Serra now insists on the permanence of the work. This enables the perception of a different process, connected to the material qualities of the lead. Corrosion alters the surface of the metal. The material becomes weaker. The lead angles collapse under their own weight. Today only the institution of the museum still maintains an understanding of time according to which a place can be found for such processes, planned for permanence and pointing towards the future. A repetition of the *Splashings*, 30 years on, was possible in Hamburg because Serra had found a way to give the idea fresh relevance as an artwork through its new orientation and had not simply tried to document it as a sculpture.

Katharina Grosse's first suggestion for Siegen was impressive – it reminded me of a conversation I had with the artist in South Korea a long time ago. During work on her solo exhibition in the Artsonje Museum in Kyongju she expressed the theory, on 13th May 2001, that two overlapping flat areas were always necessary in order to create a pictorial space resting in itself: a powerful coloured surface and one that is more redolent. In 1998 the sprayed green paint and the white colour of the wall's own paint in the Kunsthalle Bern filled one level. The green colour created a self-contained form within the surrounding white space. The first idea for a readoption of the concept envisaged initially fixing scraps of cloth onto two places on the longer of the two walls and only then spraying the green paint. Due to the sharper accentuation of the

64 Rübel 2012 (see note 53), pp. 288–292, and same author, „Fabriken als Erkenntnisorte. Richard Serra und der Gang in die Produktion", in: Topos Atelier 2010 (see note 14), pp. 111–135.

65 Ibid., p. 291.

edges, the two areas that remained white would enter into a different spatial relation, along with the green image field, to the surrounding wall zones. In a further step, a more massive figure by comparison to this discrete first form would be painted onto the first version, which would be perforated where cloth had been stuck over. Thus there would be three visually distinct layers of colour, so that the reproduction of the first work would come to rest between the white surface of the wall and the new layer of paint. The mural work *Inversion* (1998) would be separated from the wall using the *illusionist* possibilities of painting in this way. The project soon developed in an unexpected direction and led to a surprising solution. Like Serra (and many other artists who work in a site- or situation-specific, or time-based way) Grosse faces the question of what possibilities there are to repeat works: works that cannot be re-experienced and seen in the original because they no longer exist and are thus only passed down to following generations via photography. Moving production into the exhibition, one of the innovations in art after 1945 with the biggest consequences, makes it possible to work in the present and in a way that takes the situation into account – however, it makes it more difficult to create tradition. The work in Bern, which has a similar iconic quality in the artist's creative work as the *Splashings* in Serra's oeuvre, can be seen in Siegen as a reproduction on a silk "curtain", presented as a corner piece in a comparable spatial situation. At first glance it is a matter of true-to scale documentation, but here too, a very well-known work is in fact re-interpreted: the piece of silk is the work and not a representation of the work from 1998. The hanging cloth is larger than the work reproduced on it and also too big for the wall that it is installed in front of. The curtain brings the after-image of the Bern work back into the space, but the space is now less clear and made softer; not only because of the fine material that creates folds but also because the reproduced, perspective photograph of the painting at that time and the real space in situ are impossible to reconcile.

I began these deliberations with a 19th century text that examines the "Impossibility of Perfecting Art". The contemporary works that were discussed subsequently, some of which can be seen in the exhibition, were produced against a very different background: the re-orientation of artists in the past century has expanded the space for artistic action. Surely there have never been as many studios as there are right now. They are places of reflection, planning, research and production. Contemporary artists, the focus of our interest in this exhibition, reflect this situation in their works. There could hardly be more contrast to the 19th century images of *empty* studios.[66] Artistic activity in itself, which is a theme of today's works, was not depicted at all in pictures at that time: the canvas stands on the easel with its back to the viewer. It remains the artist's secret what exactly goes on in the studio when he is present. Images of artistic work, its processes and materials, have largely pushed aside the classic image of the studio from former eras. It is possible that the answers to many questions posed by artworks are still hidden in the making, in the studio and production. An ethos and aesthetics of artistic work exist in contemporary art: I am referring to works that show and make legible the fact that their authors also regard themselves as the first critical viewers of the work, and thus involve the observer. This metadiscursive dimension of a work, which may be expressed in very different ways, emphasises the relational nature of art. Studio and production are mirrored in the work, so that the conceptual preconditions to art and the conditions of its production are visualised. This deliberate ref-

66 Rachel Esner, „Presence in Absence. The Empty Studio as Self-Portrait", in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. by Josef Früchtl and Maria Moog-Grünewald, Issue 56/2, Hamburg 2011, pp. 242–262.

erence to the artistic process first leads, so to speak, to a shadow of art, from which its contingent presence in space and time becomes discernible.

First published in: Roman Kurzmeyer, “Where Do Images Come From? On the aesthetics of artistic work”, in: *At Work. Studio and production as a subject of today’s art*, ed. Roman Kurzmeyer / Eva Schmidt, cat. Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, 2013, p. 33–52.