

LISSON GALLERY

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Trevor Shimizu on Dan Graham

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Installation view of **DAN GRAHAM's** *Cylinder Bisected by Plane*, 1995, stainless steel and two-way mirror, dimensions variable, at the Benesse House Museum, Naoshima. Copyright the artist. Courtesy Lisson Gallery, London/New York/Shanghai.

For those of you who do not know me personally this may come as a bit of a surprise—Dan Graham is a big influence. Dan, his words and his work, helped inform much of what I made in previous years. His statement, “my work is for children and parents on weekends,” however, has the most resonance for me today. Three favorites relating to this idea are his *Children's Day Care* (1998–2000), *Girl's Make Up Room* (1998–2000), and the Met Rooftop Commission in 2014, all of which are two-way mirror-glass pavilions that inspire play and social interaction.

To backtrack a little, in a video art class at the San Francisco Art Institute sometime around 1999, I was introduced to the early video works of Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy, and Dan Graham. For a class assignment, I was asked to record a video using a black-and-white camera made by the school's AV director. Loosely inspired by Dan's *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1975)—in which he alternates between describing the perception of himself and his audience as reflected in a mirror—I placed a used cardboard toilet-paper tube in my boxer shorts and recorded a video

of myself looking at my fake erection in a bedroom mirror. This actually has little in common with Dan's video, but was more of a hybrid of what I saw in class and an early example of “performative masculinity.” I've never mentioned this video to him, but we both agree that most great art is humorous and that the humor in one's work is best appreciated by close friends—and not always by collectors.

I met Dan while I was working as a technical assistant at Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) in 2006. We hit it off almost immediately after discussing our shared astrological signs. Dan told me that I happen to share the same birthday as Francisco Goya and Vincent Van Gogh. Our shared interest in astrology is rooted in an appreciation for clichés—we both keep up with the latest country music and collect refrigerator magnets. While recording Dan's voiceover for his video *Yin/Yang* (2006), I heard him relate his work to the Hudson River School, another kind of cliché that made a lasting impression on me.

The humor in Dan's work is not immediately apparent, nor is the humor in Goya's. And if I continue to only paint

landscapes, as I've been doing recently, one might say the same about me. For this reason, my birthday often brings about a personal crisis. I've noticed that on the Twitter accounts of major American museums, Goya's birthday is always overshadowed by Van Gogh's. Yet Goya had a great comedic range. Dan observed a small detail in a painting by Goya at the Met: working mostly on commission, Goya painted his business card in a bird's beak. Another work features a man bending over to look into a peephole while a woman peers at his fully exposed arse protruding through a large hole in the seat of his pants.

In 2007, the artist Antoine Catala and I were asked to revise the graffiti on Dan's *Skateboard Pavilion (model)* (1989) for his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The act of drawing miniature examples of graffiti was both refreshing and fun. Before this job for Dan, I had pretty much given up making paintings and drawings. Working on the *Skateboard Pavilion (model)* motivated me to rent a studio and to try to paint again.

This was also around the time when Dan curated “Deep Comedy,” a group show at Marian Goodman Gallery, with Sylvia Chivaranond. The show featured Dan's favorite New York artist, Michael Smith. I was starting out in my first studio, pretty uncertain about the medium and what to make of it. Humor wasn't something I wanted to explore, even though my favorite videos in the EAI collection were funny. I was, for the most part, embarrassed by my previous “performance” videos. I was even becoming interested in dry neo-conceptual work. “Deep Comedy” inspired me to reconsider humor. Looking back at a painting I made in 1999, *Self-Portrait with Molly Ringwald*, I thought that maybe it was a good idea to use my likeness as a character in comedic situations. I returned to the studio and painted myself as a physically fit jogger, the “third wheel” at a beach, and a lonely bachelor whose only friend is a cat. A year later, I painted *Girlfriend Wants a Baby* (2010), which eventually led to my becoming a dad. Dan Graham and “Deep Comedy” saved my art, and my life.

Financial Times
9 June 2020

FINANCIAL TIMES

Schlossgut Schwante Sculpture Park: ‘We have so much space – soul space’

Loretta Würtenberger and her husband have created a new sculpture park in a grand estate near Berlin, and are opening to visitors next week despite Covid-19



Aerial view of the Schlossgut Schwante Sculpture Park

Jan Dalley JUNE 9 2020

“Everything is going to be alright” reads the glowing neon text of a work by British artist Martin Creed. It was first created in 1999, but it seems to hold a particular message for the moment. Especially in a new location, gleaming beside a lake in the lush grounds of a brand new initiative, a sculpture park at Schlossgut Schwante in Brandenburg, 25km from Berlin.

The lights are going on, all over Europe — especially in Germany, where most galleries and museums are cautiously reopening after their Covid-induced hibernation. Even so, it seems bold to contemplate a completely new venture just now. But Loretta Würtenberger, who with her husband Daniel Tümpel acquired the grand 18th-century house and estate less than a year ago, seems undaunted. Their opening date, June 19, is going ahead with little delay.

In fact, she tells me, in the Corona-dominated world, “the whole project has taken on a new importance. For me, the works seem to question everything so differently now, take on new meaning. The work by Martin Creed, for example — does it have an exclamation mark or a question mark?”

The 25 pieces of large-scale sculptural work in the opening display, entitled *Sculpture and Nature*, are set through 10 hectares of parkland around the

house. Some are by big-name artists such as Dan Graham and Tony Cragg; others are fresh commissions for the place, from artists such as Carsten Nicolai and Maria Loboda, and a new neon work by Björn Dahlem, intended to resonate with the surroundings. Some are owned by the couple, who together set up and run Fine Art Partners, a financial services provider specialising in the art market. Others are on loan: “It was wonderful how artists and collectors responded to our plans,” Würtenberger says. She envisages a two-year rotation of pieces with a continuing programme of commissions, all in consultation with artistic adviser Joost DeClerck.



Martin Creed's 'Everything Is Going to Be Alright' (2011) © Hanno Plate

The speed with which the project has taken shape — just nine months from acquisition of the Schloss to opening — seems astonishing, especially with virus-induced restrictions. As Würtenberger explains, though, “We didn’t have to make changes to our original plans for the park because everyone involved in it was outdoors all the time. So they could all keep working.

“Even,” she laughs, “even the works coming from London have arrived.”



Loretta Würtenberger and Daniel Tümpel with Dan Graham's 'Play Pen for Play Pals' (2018) © Leo Pompinon

“We want people to wander, and linger. We’ve put Hängematten — do you call them hammocks in English? — between trees.”

And if the place has a guiding spirit, it’s perhaps that of the French-German artist Hans (Jean) Arp, whose work in the 1920s and ’30s centred around “biomorphic” sculpture, aiming to create parallels and echoes between human creativity and natural creation. Würtenberger and Tümpel have managed the estate of Arp, and that of his wife Sophie Taeuber-Arp, since 2009; a highly successful lawyer (she was the youngest ever judge at Berlin’s district court), she has applied her skills to advice for others in the sometimes tricky position of managing artists’ estates, in her 2016 book *The Artist’s Estate: A Handbook for Artists, Executors, and Heirs*. The same year, the couple also founded the Institute for Artists’ Estates, which focuses on managing and consulting, but also acts as a centre for research, resources and networking.



Katja Strunz's 'Kreatur des Einfalls' (2020) © Hanno Plate;

Since Würtenberger is a lawyer, and Tümpel an economist, what sparked their joint immersion in art and the art world? “Art is my passion,” she says, “but my husband was raised with it.” By this she means that Tümpel’s father and mother were both art historians — a Rembrandt scholar and a museum director, respectively — and his grandfather was a student at the Bauhaus. He oversees the family’s Bauhaus archive and collection.

““

Artists come here and it’s very calming, everything can be in a new perspective

The point of acquiring Schlossgut Schwante, she says, was “to create something close to our hearts”. The huge house, built in 1741 by Frederick the Great’s architect, Georg von Knobelsdorff, was luckily (and unusually) preserved

intact as an entity, with its 20 hectares of parkland and its farms, in the days of the DDR. Now the couple live there with their four children: “Half the house is used privately,” Würtenberger explains, “and half is offices, plus salons that are semi-public — they will be a place for private collections, and to show the work of other artists.”

So the sculpture park, ambitious though it is, is not all. “The park is at the heart of something bigger,” she says. “We have so much space — soul space. Artists come here and it’s very calming, everything can be in a new perspective. For visitors too. We want to convey the full spirit of what we create. Even if it’s just getting a wonderful potato salad!

“It’s a place to dream dreams.”

Some of the dreams have had to be put on hold until 2021. Würtenberger and Tümpel have plans for a full-on programme that will include music, movies in the park, dance and photography, a Yoga & Arts Festival, artist-led talks and tours, and much more. Even the cattle on the farm have a place in their art/nature ecosystem. But there are still a number of restrictions in place, and events are not yet possible. There’s a restaurant, of course — “Everyone will need a coffee” — and for the park itself, does she have an idea of the number of visitors they might expect on their opening?

“When we had some open days in May,” she says, “800 people came. It was amazing. So we have no idea. I wish we could predict it. It would be so much easier to calculate how many pieces of cake we have to make.”

LISSON GALLERY

The Art Newspaper

01 November 2018



THE ART NEWSPAPER

It's only rock 'n' roll but we like it at the Lisson

LOUISA BUCK

1st November 2018 16:36 GMT



Dan Graham watching as Thurston Moore and Debbie Googe perform Photo: Louisa Buck

Given that the title of Dan Graham's current Lisson Gallery show (which ends on Saturday 3 November) is *Rock 'n' Roll*, with its underlying theme the relationship between performance and audience, it was only fitting that it be activated by some real-live music. At its Frieze week private view there was a special set by fellow Lisson artist Rodney Graham; on 30 October, the final days of Graham's tenth show at the gallery were serenaded with a vengeance by a double-whammy of gigs, which took place within the reflective glass curve of Graham's special new pavilion-cum-stage set.



Dan Graham and the musicians Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

The artist and his wife Mieko Meguro were in attendance throughout as the evening kicked off with a memorable double guitar performance by Graham's old friend and now London resident Thurston Moore, formerly of Sonic Youth, who jammed brilliantly for an hour with his frequent collaborator Debbie Googe, bassist for the bands My Bloody Valentine and Primal Scream. This was followed by a second set from seminal British punk trio The Raincoats, who fired up everyone present—from the Serpentine Galleries' artistic director Hans Ulrich Obrist to the conceptual artist John Hilliard—despite the fact they were winging it without a set list and there was a small hiatus until the bassist and lead vocalist Gina Birch realised that

she had tucked her plectrum inside her sock. Eclectic, original and influential, The Raincoats' many fans have included the late Kurt Cobain, who famously declared: "When I listen to the Raincoats I feel as if I'm a stowaway in an attic, violating and in the dark."



On Tuesday night, however, the mood was more celebratory than dark or violating, with Birch rocking a pair of trousers emblazoned with the slogan 'UNFUCK THE WORLD' and advising the audience that "We are now very mature and only throw tantrums occasionally." As an encore, Graham requested they perform his favourite Raincoats song "In Love". With Moore summing up the evening as "insanely awesome", the art-music love-in was complete.

Rodney Graham performing in Dan Graham's Stage Set for *Music no 2 for Glenn* 2018



Dan Graham: Rock 'n' Roll

Rodney Graham: Central Questions of Philosophy

Lisson Gallery London 3 October 3 November

Dan Graham and Rodney Graham are friends, paired in a double show where Rodney Graham played guitar and sang in Dan Graham's pavilion. Dan Graham has frequently engaged with performance, and his pavilion will also host a gig by Thurston Moore; but this show's double focus invites reflections on the Dan/Rodney Graham relation. Dan Graham's two-way mirror pavilions dispose viewers' images of themselves amidst others in amusing but often disconcerting ways. It is not just that we see ourselves as others may, but also as other than we have supposed. In his *Book of Disquiet*, Fernando Pessoa wrote: 'Each of us is several ... a profusion of selves.' Dan Graham's mirror-windows induce such profusions, and as much as his pavilions enact what Thierry de Duve called a 'critique of artistic autonomy' – they cannot be reduced to minimal objects – they also disturb participants' confidence in their sense as stable subjects. De Duve was describing Dan Graham's *Performer, Audience, Mirror*, which used a feedback loop to loosen his audience's certainty as to who was producing the affect of their mutual presence in the event. As I observed in my feature 'Looping The Loop' (AM406), it might be in Dan/Rodney Graham's common use of looping that their affinity originated.

But there are differences. Dan Graham works socially, mediating relations of subject-object and subject-subject amid webs of feedback and reflections. Rodney Graham, too, has worked by staging reflexive mediations; yet his subjects have not been social but recondite and romantic: an errant melancholic in 'Lenz' was looped into a circular labyrinth of repeating text, and his *How I Became a Ramblin' Man* set a wandering cowboy in a video palindrome. Gradually, however, the motifs that Rodney Graham caught within loops, interpolations or cultural clichés shifted from nature – a waterfall in *Two Generators*, inverted trees in camera obscura, or textual and musical systems in *Landor's House*, or *School of Velocity* – towards himself as others, in images of what Pessoa called 'Heteronyms' (personae staged amid their worlds, in meticulous

detail). Already, he appeared on the cover of his *Verwandlungsmusik* CD as if on a 1950s LP of a Viennese modernist composer like Anton Webern. Since then, Rodney Graham has staged himself as, amongst others, a 17th-century sailor, prisoner, barfly, 'gifted amateur' painter, 'avid reader', skuller (after Thomas Eakins), concertinist (after Georges Braque) et al ... 'Amongst others' is where Rodney Graham has dispersed – but not disguised – himself. We can't say 'disguised' because, as if among mirrors that never quite displace him, Rodney Graham is always recognisable. This double-take has been emphasised by his virtuoso use of high-definition lightbox photos. The photos, like 19th-century 'problem paintings', provoke minute scrutiny of details that leave nowhere to hide yet expose Rodney Graham to plain sight. His heteronyms as such present no problems, for their premise is as evidently sham as their 'gifted amateur' was ham. Nor is Rodney Graham's self involved. These are not Rembrandt costume self-portraits; and not like Cindy Sherman's studies in identity. Droll and arch, their play is with media images from mid-brow culture, as in the title work here, *The Central Questions of Philosophy* – adapted from a paperback cover of AJ Ayer's popular summary. Four photos show Rodney Graham as Ayer sitting with his dog, as Ayer without dog, the dog, and the empty chair. Shelved behind him are Ayer's works with others by JL Austin. Maybe among these is dispersed an allegory of Ayer's account of the problem of induction: 'the problem of finding a way to prove that certain empirical generalisations which derived from experience will hold good also in the future.' Or maybe not. But to decide that would require a reading of Ayer as close as our gaze into Rodney Graham's four lightboxes.

Moreover, Rodney Graham's recent works disperse his subjects even further, by fabricating props from their ostensive worlds. They appeared as actual paintings by Rodney Graham's fictive artists, and continue here with *Vacuuming The Gallery 1949*, a four-part lightbox showing a gallerist (based on New York dealer Samuel Kootz) preparing a show of abstract paintings in a style adapted from Alexander Rodchenko. Around this at the Lisson are actual paintings like those in the lightbox. The temporal looping in Rodney Graham's earlier works has now become a spatial circulation of actual and represented things, reminiscent in form – not content – of Joseph Kosuth's 1965 *One and Three Chairs*. Ezra Pound said that 'Art is news that stays news'; but in times of 'fake news', Rodney Graham's works make faking it into a comedic and elaborate capriccio. ■

Brian Hatton teaches at the Architectural Association in London and Liverpool John Moores University.

studio international

Dan Graham on Rock'n'Roll

As Dan Graham's new show opens at the Lisson Gallery in London, he talks about his early days as a New York gallerist, his love of music and why he doesn't believe his famous pavilions are important



Dan Graham (b1942, Illinois) has had a varied and fascinating career. A self-taught artist, his first real engagement with the world of contemporary art was in 1964, when he and some friends opened the John Daniels Gallery in Manhattan. Here he put on Sol LeWitt's first one-man show and exhibited works by Donald Judd, Dan Flavin and Robert Smithson. It was common at that time for all artists to consider themselves artist-writers, he says, and he rapidly established a name for himself as a social and cultural analyst, reviewing everything from rock music and TV shows to architecture and urban planning. He has kept up his writing while developing a multimedia practice that includes photography, performance, installation and sculpture.



Dan Graham. Two V's Entrance-Way, 2016. Laminated glass, stainless steel, 235 x 827 x 508 cm (92 1/2 x 325 5/8 x 200 in). © Dan Graham. Photo: Jack Hems. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Over the past three decades, his two-way mirrored or half-mirrored glass and steel pavilions – often described as halfway between architecture and sculpture – have become familiar sights on the rooftops and in the landscapes of leading cultural institutions, including the Dia Art Foundation in New York, Documenta, the Hayward Gallery in London and Hauser & Wirth Somerset. Combining the glassy perfection of corporate atria (another topic Graham has written about) with the inviting curves and tactility of children’s play equipment, and the optical illusions of fairground mirrors, he has described his more recent pavilion series – including *Child’s Play* (2015-16) for the Museum of Modern Art’s Sculpture Garden – as “fun houses for children and photo ops for parents”.



Dan Graham. Play Pen for Play Pals, 2018. Stainless steel, glass and two way mirror, 230 x 233.4 x 308.4 cm (90 1/2 x 91 7/8 x 121 3/8 in). © Dan Graham. Photo: Jack Hems. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Graham, who is based in New York, talked with Studio International in London as his 10th exhibition for the Lisson Gallery opened. For this show, he presents a new curvilinear stage-set along with oversized models that demonstrate his work within both urban and natural landscapes, and a courtyard pavilion, all of which are designed to interrogate the relationship between audience and performer. He is also showing a video of a puppet show he devised 12 years ago, called *Don't Trust Anyone Over 30*. He devised the piece, which is set in the 1970s, as a conversation starter for grandparents to reminisce with their offspring over the hippy heyday in the 1960s. It was produced by Sandra Antelo-Suarez, with set design by Laurent Bergen, music by Japanther and the theme tune was by Rodney Graham. The puppet master was Phillip Huber.



Dan Graham. Don't Trust Anyone over 30, 2004. Video. © Dan Graham. Photo: Jack Hems. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Dan Graham: Rock'n'Roll

Lisson Gallery, London

3 October – 3 November 2018

Interview by VERONICA SIMPSON

Filmed by MARTIN KENNEDY

LISSON GALLERY

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01 October 2018

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1 October 2018 by Mark Westall

Dan Graham: Rock 'n' Roll

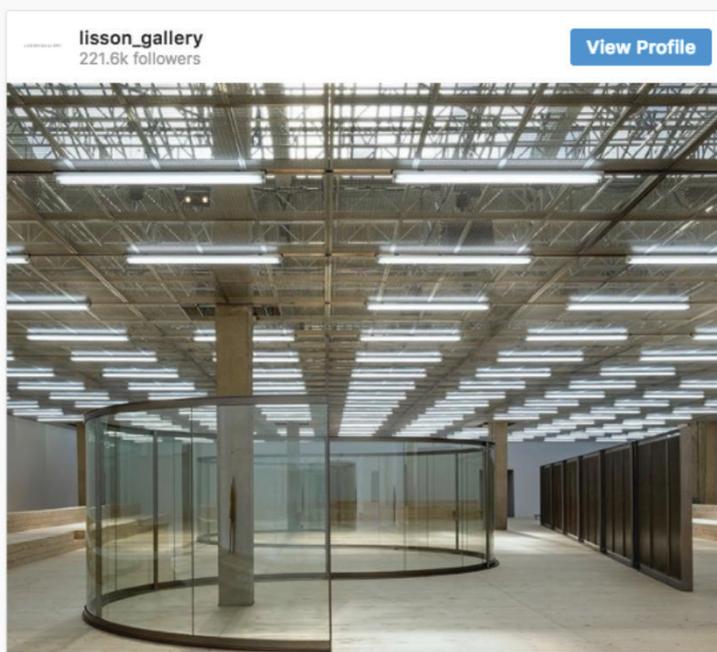
For his tenth exhibition with Lisson Gallery, Dan Graham draws on his long-standing history working with music and performance to present a new stage-set design, alongside over-sized models, video and a courtyard pavilion, exploring the relationship between audience and performer.



Based in New York, Graham is an icon of Conceptual art, emerging in the 1960s alongside artists such as Dan Flavin, Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt. A hybrid artist, he has been at the forefront of many of the most significant artistic developments of the last half-century, including site-specific sculpture, video and film installation, conceptual and performance art, as well as social and cultural analysis through his extensive writings. Delving into the performative in the early 1970s – exploring shifts in individual and group consciousness, and the limits of public and private space – Graham's practice evolved into the installations and pavilions for which he is famous internationally. Today, his work continues to evolve with the world around it, taking on a different reading in the age of social media, photography and obsessive self-documentation. A recent work such as *Child's Play* (2015-2016), which was on display recently in Museum of Modern Art's Sculpture Garden, is from a group of works that Graham describes as fun houses for children and photo ops for parents.



The artist's latest presentation of work focuses on the relationship between musical performance and audience. The space at 27 Bell Street will be occupied by a curvilinear stage-set which visitors will be able to walk around. Blurring the line between art and architecture, Graham's pavilions – or 'quasi-functional spaces' as he describes them – are optical illusions, mirroring and distorting reality. Simultaneously evoking corporate architecture and playgrounds, these spaces are activated by the presence of the viewer who becomes both performer and spectator, creating a voyeuristic space for watching one-self and others. Playing in the stage is the recording of his 1983 installation/ performance work with composer Glenn Branca, presented at Graham's retrospective exhibition 'Pavilions' at the Kunsthalle in Berne, Switzerland. *Musical Performance and Stage-Set Utilizing Two-Way Mirror and Time-Delay* involves both the performers and the audience members' self-awareness of their perception process.



The film work, *Don't Trust Anyone Over 30*, will be presented downstairs in the gallery. The piece was originally presented as a live rock 'n' roll puppet show, written by Dan Graham. Set in the 1970s when hippies moved to the country, it was first conceived by Graham as a conduit for grandparents or older parents to share memories of the 1960s hippie era with their offspring. The piece was produced by Sandra Antelo-Suarez in collaboration with puppet master Phillip Huber, with set design by Laurent Bergen, video projections by Tony Oursler, music by Japanther and the theme tune composed by Rodney Graham.

Throughout the gallery space a new group of models will be displayed, underlining Graham's work within the urban and natural landscape, culminating also with the presence of a new pavilion in the courtyard and documentation of his work in varied locations.

Graham's exhibition at Lisson Gallery will be activated through musical performances on the evening of 30 October, hosting special guests Thurston Moore, of Sonic Youth, and The Raincoats.

Alongside the exhibition, Graham's *London Rococo* is on view in Regents Park as part of Frieze Sculpture 2018.

Dan Graham: Rock 'n' Roll 3 October – 3 November 2018

LISSON GALLERY

Interview Magazine
December/January 2018

Interview



THE ART ISSUE
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and a SPECIAL
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on THE VERGE

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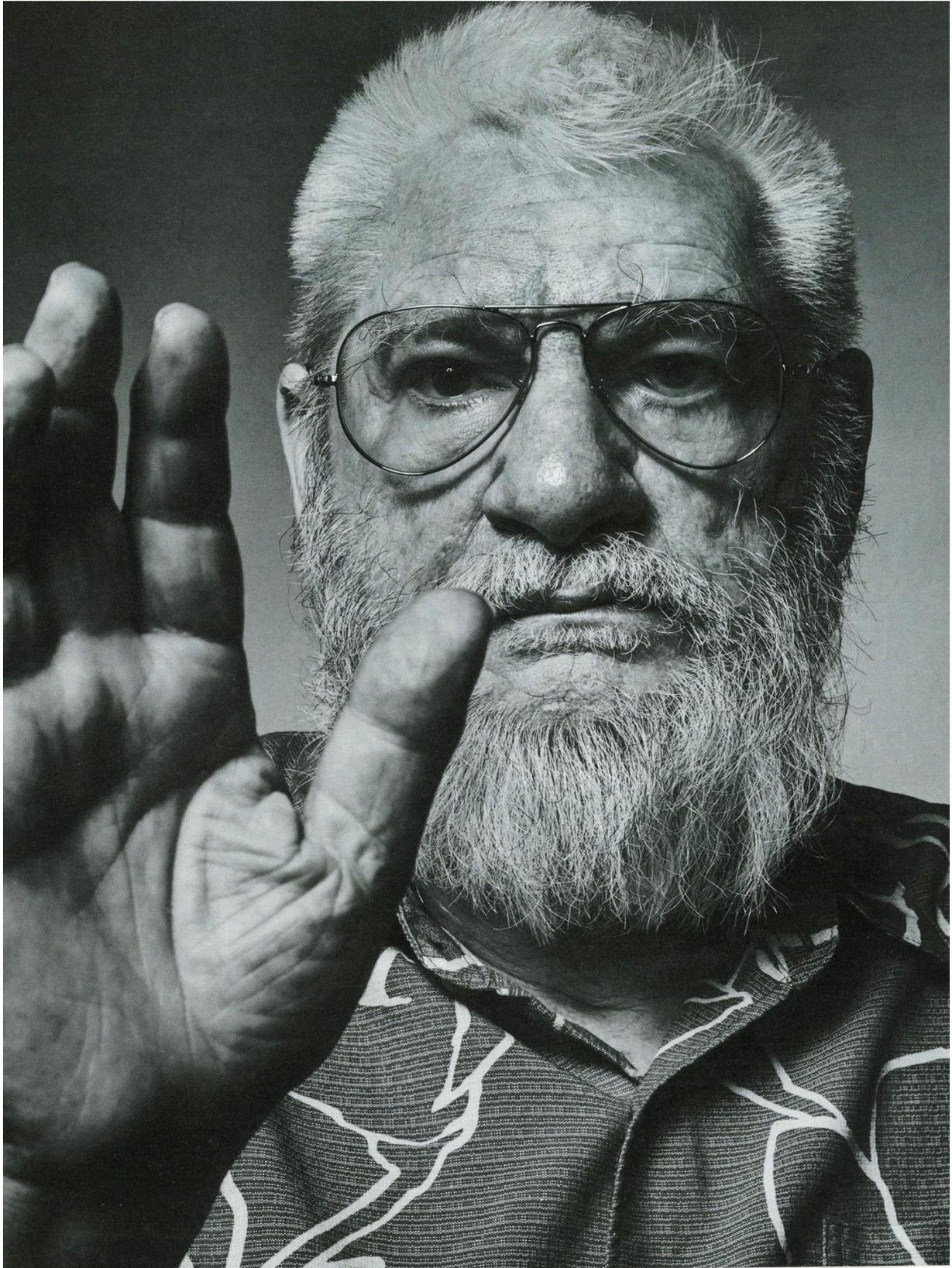
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Dan
GRAHAM

NO OTHER AMERICAN ARTIST HAS DECONSTRUCTED
AND RECONSTRUCTED THE MANY FRAMES OF
PERCEPTION QUITE AS RADICALLY AS THE LEGENDARY
NEW YORK MULTIMEDIA MAESTRO, POP-CULTURE
ENTHUSIAST, AND ALL-AROUND MAD GENIUS.
BY MICHAEL SMITH *PHOTOGRAPHY* SEBASTIAN KIM

DAN GRAHAM IN NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2017





Since the late 1990s, the artist Dan Graham has worked out of his loft in Nolita, a New York neighborhood that has undergone extensive gentrification over the last two decades. On a recent visit, I spotted a pop-up skateboard-and-backpack store teeming with young shoppers a few steps from Graham's door. Maybe Graham likes it this way, as he's written so much on rock music and youth culture, and has even designed public structures for children. You never know what his frenetic mind is going to latch on to next. Whether it's a spontaneous evocation of David Koresh and Waco during a quiet walk through Donald Judd's Marfa compound; bringing up an anecdote at the most inappropriate moment; or his amazing, almost encyclopedic recall of information that would give most savants a run for their money, Graham, now 75, never ceases to surprise.

He's deeply into astrology. Anyone who meets him almost always enters into his constellation of astrological annotations. He's an Aries, indicating spontaneity. He's also into clichés, architecture, music, art, puppets, mixtapes, and TV comedy. I've known Graham since the mid-'80s, when the art world was a much smaller place. Today, of course, most people know Graham as an icon, the quintessential hybrid artist whose practice has encompassed a range of media, disciplines, and contexts, including video art (of which he was an early pioneer), architecture, performance, photography, literature, and most notably, a series of steel-and-glass pavilions. This past summer, one such pavilion, *Child's Play* (2015–16), went on display in the sculpture garden at New York's Museum of Modern Art. In spite of all that, Graham occasionally insists his work will be forgotten and that no one wants his archive.

His anxiety is understandable. The past couple of years have been intense ones for a man with so much spirit. A seizure while on a site visit in Philadelphia put him in the hospital for months, and it was touch-and-go for a while. But now Graham is back, home with his wife, the artist Mieke Meguro, and doing well—busy with rehab, overseeing operations of his studio, and thinking about the possible uses of television, a favorite subject of his, for a series of future works.

MICHAEL SMITH: Okay, Dan. Let's start with your childhood in New Jersey.

DAN GRAHAM: I remember being fascinated by this cartoon show on TV, with Uncle Fred. I was utterly fascinated by how TV was produced. Uncle Fred not only showed cartoons, he was also a ventriloquist. I saw that the puppet could be worked mechanically. Later, there was *Howdy Doody* with its Peanut Gallery. I liked how these shows integrated the spectator—in other words, the studio audience—and how that interaction became part of how the whole thing worked.

SMITH: We had *Howdy Doody* growing up in Chicago, but not Uncle Fred.

GRAHAM: It was on a local station in Newark. I knew that I'd have to understand the medium of television much better after watching Uncle Fred—for my career. By the way, what I really love is Canadian humor.

SMITH: Didn't you go on a family trip to Canada when you were a kid?

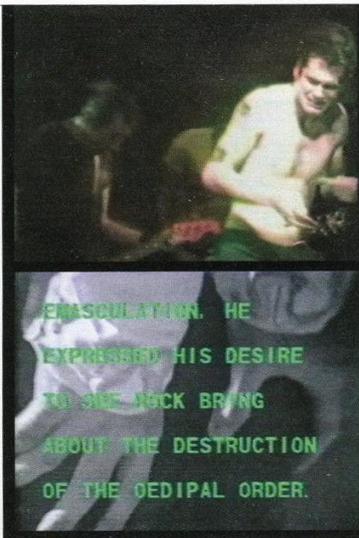
GRAHAM: Yes. Nova Scotia was unbelievably good. It's a little bit like Scotland. They had bagpipes there. But that family trip was a little traumatic. I was thrown out of the car for arguing with my father.

SMITH: Thrown out of the car?

GRAHAM: I think my father gave me an ultimatum. So, actually, I got out of the car. I had a very troubled childhood.

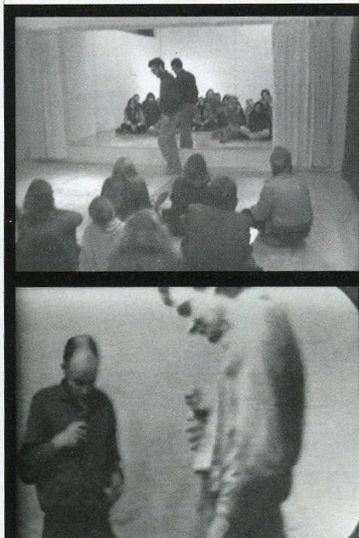
SMITH: Until what age?

GRAHAM: Until I decided I would stay with a friend in the East Village in New York.



EMASCULATION. HE
EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE
TO SEE ROCK BRING
ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION
OF THE OEDIPAL ORDER.

“MY WORK IS NOT
A SOCIOLOGICAL
CRITIQUE OF
ALIENATION.
IT'S THE EXACT
OPPOSITE.
MAYBE PEOPLE
MISUNDERSTAND
IT THAT WAY.”



SMITH: How old were you then?

GRAHAM: Around 13 years old. But I was never on the streets. I never smoked dope. In fact, my first impressions of New York City were of when my mother took me to Gimbel's to buy stamps.

SMITH: I assume you finished high school in Jersey?

GRAHAM: Honestly, I wanted to drop out. I was bad in all my classes—actually, I did very well in English. SMITH: I would imagine, because you're a great writer.

GRAHAM: Thank you. I had a very good English teacher in school named Mr. Donnelly. He was a kind of freethinking semi-intellectual. He allowed all the kids to make out in his classes.

SMITH: Excuse me?

GRAHAM: It was called “petting” back then. I later learned what that word meant from the Beach Boys album *Pet Sounds*.

SMITH: Did you finish high school?

GRAHAM: Yes, I never actually dropped out. I'm fuzzy about that time, though, because I almost had a schizophrenic breakdown, and they decided to give me Thorazine. I stopped taking it because it was making me feel too weird. That's when I started reading science fiction instead.

SMITH: That's an interesting pathway to science fiction.

GRAHAM: Oh, here's another thing about my childhood: I was a paperboy. I remember I went to collect the money, and I noticed one of the housewives was watching Liberace. I never knew that Liberace's best friend was Elvis. They both apparently were mama's boys and Liberace took Elvis under his wing and taught him how to dress for Las Vegas.

SMITH: Did you ever go to Graceland?

GRAHAM: No, the furthest South we ever went when I was a kid was Kentucky. I think the Everly Brothers were from Kentucky. It was totally wild there. Everyone was playing rock 'n' roll on the radio. I really got into it. Of course, we had Alan Freed on the radio when I was a kid. He was from Ohio.

SMITH: Let's go back to TV, since some of your work reflects television and the suburbs. What sitcoms did you watch?

GRAHAM: I want to go back a little earlier and stay on the subject of radio. I wasn't intellectual enough to understand Ernie Kovacs at the time, who did radio before he did TV, but someone told me he was the founder of video art.

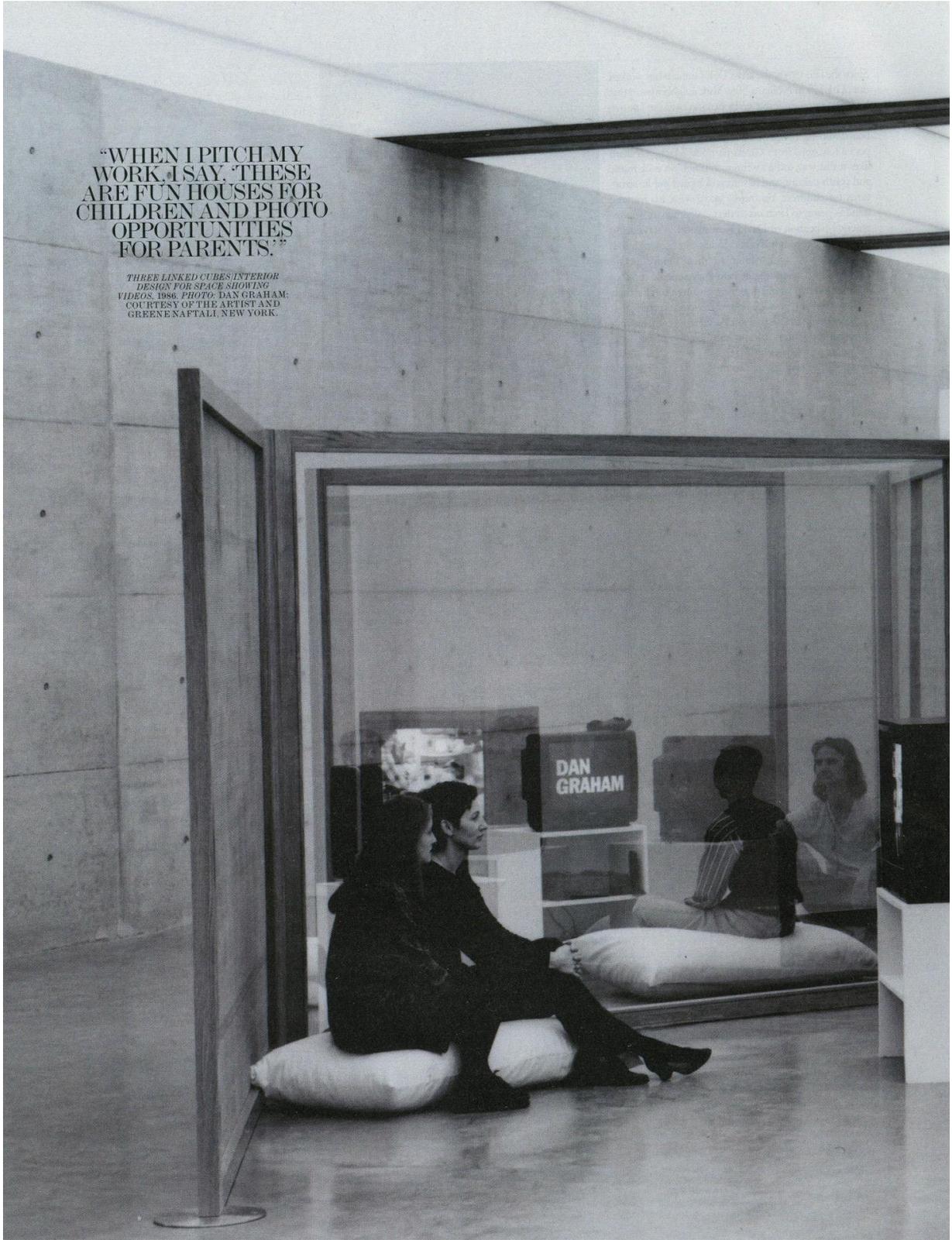
SMITH: I read somewhere that Kovacs was the historical link to William Wegman. Since you're a fan of Wegman's, Kovacs should come easy to you.

GRAHAM: I've been trying to do a trade with Wegman for a long time. I just don't know what to take because they're all good. The reason I like him is because he thinks everything is funny and on the edge of being offensive. One of my favorite works of his is not a drawing or a photograph. I gave a talk once at UCSD, and I looked around at their outdoor project collection. Wegman did a project that was like one of those overlooks where you drive the car for scenic views. The boundary was made of stone, and there was a telescope aimed at a fake rendition of the Salt Lake City Mormon Temple. I guess it also appealed to me because I had a telescope club. I built a telescope with my dad when I was

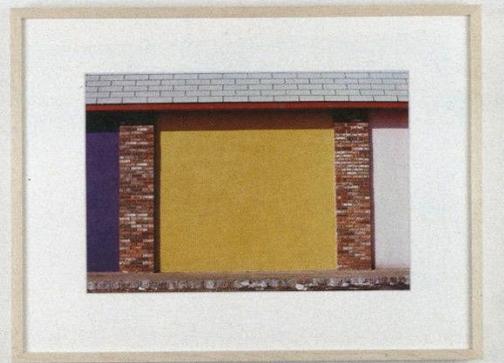
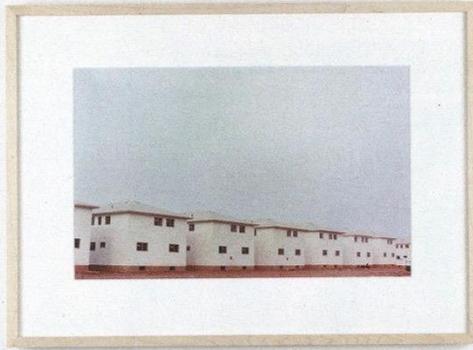
THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: *ROCK MY RELIGION*, 1983–84, VIDEO, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GREENE NAFTALI, NEW YORK; *ROCK MY RELIGION*, 1983–84, VIDEO, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GREENE NAFTALI, NEW YORK; *PERFORMER, AUDIENCE, MIRROR*, 1975, © DAN GRAHAM, COURTESY OF ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX (EAI), NEW YORK; *PAST/FUTURE SPLIT ATTENTION*, 1972, © DAN GRAHAM, COURTESY OF ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX (EAI), NEW YORK. OPPOSITE, *BEHOLD TWO-WAY MIRROR WALKABOUT*, THE ROOF GARDEN COMMISSION, DAN GRAHAM WITH GUNTHER VOGT AT THE MET FIFTH AVENUE, 2014. PHOTO: HYLAKOPITZ, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

“WHEN I PITCH MY
WORK, I SAY, ‘THESE
ARE FUN HOUSES FOR
CHILDREN AND PHOTO
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PARENTS.’”

*THREE LINKED CUBES INTERIOR
DESIGN FOR SPACE SHOWING
VIDEOS, 1986. PHOTO: DAN GRAHAM.
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND
GREENE NAFTALI, NEW YORK.*







13 years old. I was very shy around girls. Normally, my father and I didn't get along, but he helped me assemble a telescope from a kit. I showed all the boys and girls the planets. I kind of lectured about the planets.

SMITH: Perhaps that was your introduction to astrology.

GRAHAM: Well, I did take some students to the Princeton observatory. That was the beginning of my teaching experience. Men always use optics. It probably goes back to when I had a magnifying glass and killed ants. Ants remind me very much of Martians.

SMITH: Sci-fi seems to have figured prominently in your life.

GRAHAM: I guess because it was aimed at my age group, which was 12- and 13-year-olds, and to kids who think they know a lot about science. My hero was Einstein. But then I discovered [the German physicist Werner] Heisenberg, who I thought was better than Einstein. There was also a magazine called *Astounding Science Fiction*. The editor was named John Campbell. A friend and I visited him in Mountainside, New Jersey, near the cutting-edge technology institute Bell Labs.

SMITH: Didn't Bell Labs do E.A.T.? [Beginning in the '60s, Bell Labs researchers collaborated with artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage on tech-centered art projects under the auspices of Experiments in Art and Technology.]

GRAHAM: Yeah, Bell Labs came out of telephones and went into a lot of other things. Anyway, for us to meet an editor of a great science fiction magazine was thrilling. But he lived in a drab suburban home and was wheezing all the time. I guess he had asthma. I realized then that maybe science fiction writers were

actually kind of semi-creeps. Later, when I was interested in art, all the artists I knew would go to paperback stores and read a bit of science, particularly the so-called minimal artists. Carl Andre subscribed to *Scientific American* as did Lee Lozano. I think a group of British science fiction writers, like Brian Aldiss and Michael Moorcock, were doing a lot of LSD, and they had a lot of time paradoxes. A piece of mine, *Past Future Split Attention* [1972], owed a lot to *Cryptozoic!* by Brian Aldiss, about time going backward.

SMITH: There were two performers in *Past Future Split Attention*, one predicting the other's movements in a continuous feedback/feed-ahead loop. I always liked the pieces where you appeared as a performer. I'm thinking, in particular, of *Performer/Audience/Mirror* [a 1975 video-documented work in which Graham performs for an audience in front of a mirror].

GRAHAM: I didn't want to use myself as a performer. I was interested in the spectator.

SMITH: Well, what about the piece where you're naked with a woman in a cylinder, both of you holding cameras?

GRAHAM: Oh, that was a publicity shot. I refused to be in the actual film [*Body Press*, 1970-72, two films projected on opposite walls].

SMITH: You got naked for the publicity shot? Who was in the film?

GRAHAM: The male in that film was a boyfriend of Bernadette Mayer, Vito Acconci's collaborator. I was directing it. The photo was picked up later by the internet. Now, you mentioned *Performer/Audience/Mirror*. That was originally a slight attack on Joseph Beuys, who was a guru performer.

SMITH: An attack on Beuys?

GRAHAM: He was doing performance in New York. I guess the community was suspicious of him. He was German, he was political—maybe it had something to do with Nazism. In *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, I was like a political figure, as Beuys was. When you define the audience, the performer becomes what the audience wants. Politicians do that all the time.

SMITH: My fantasy is to redo that piece with you, somehow.

GRAHAM: What I like about the piece is that feeling of the amateur. But neither of us are amateurs anymore.

SMITH: I was thinking about Acconci's whole practice in relationship to yours. He talked about transitioning from writing to performing, moving from the space of the page to the space of performance. I am curious if this is also true in your work.

GRAHAM: Vito used to call me up and say, "Dan, I have no ideas. Give me some ideas."

SMITH: And did you?

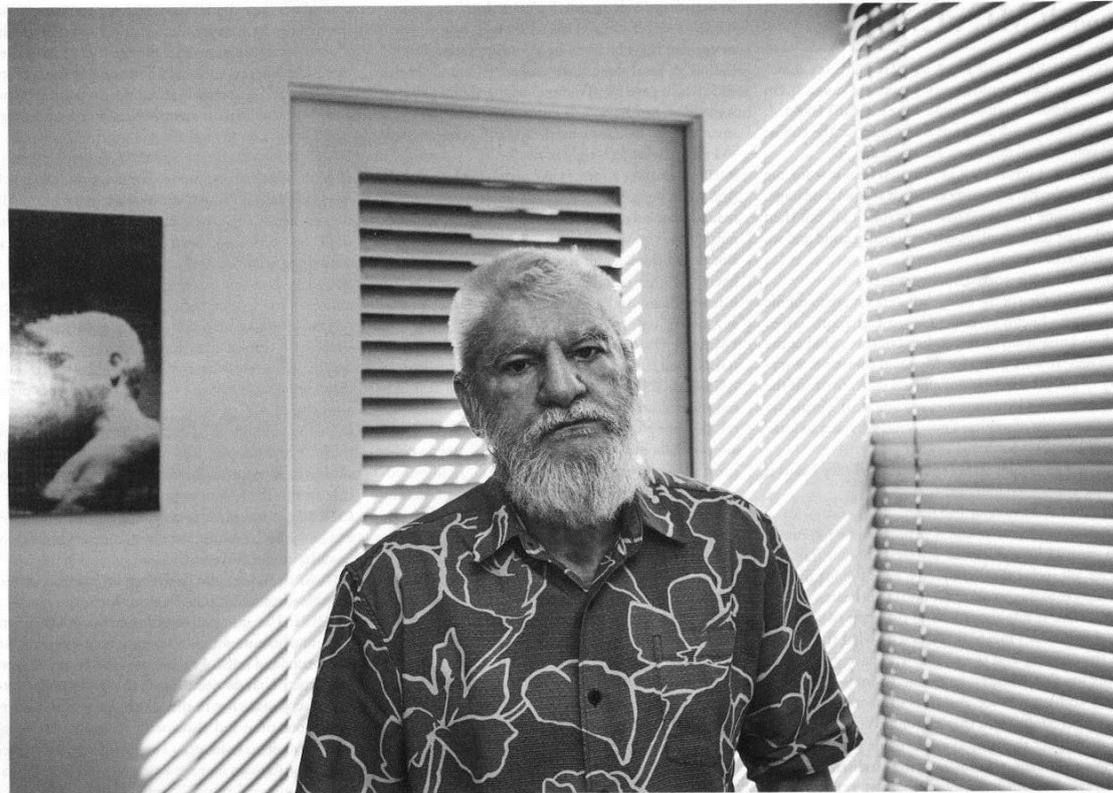
GRAHAM: To a certain extent. But when he got into architecture, he didn't know what the hell he was talking about. See, my understanding of architecture is when you actually go inside and experience it.

SMITH: He was a great performer.

GRAHAM: *Seedbed* is quite good. I think he was a man of theater.

SMITH: Can we talk about TV and sitcoms now?

GRAHAM: I didn't see many sitcoms. I remember Robert Cummings [star of *The Bob Cummings Show*, among other sitcoms]. He was a very '50s white guy who was always making mistakes. He was very much like this music group, the Four Freshmen,



who influenced the Beach Boys.

SMITH: The Beach Boys represented everything I knew I'd never have. The world that Brian Wilson constructed intimidated me.

GRAHAM: When I was compiling *Dan Graham's Greatest Hits* [Graham's mixtape series, which has now run to six volumes], I remembered "Add Some Music to Your Day" by the Beach Boys, which almost sounds like a commercial. It's absolutely brilliant. The form comes very close to a simple advertising slogan. Brian Wilson was extremely original, but he also stole a lot from Jan and Dean. What interests me, as a Jewish fellow, is the kind of white Protestant church music you can hear in the rock of the time. Many people came out West to California from the Northeast and got very into Protestant hymns. That is the voice of Karen Carpenter—totally white, with a strange kind of spirituality that is actually hard to understand. Also, utter naïveté. All the Beach Boys songs are about how we can get married and be happy—a kind of '50s dream. The group I was very close to, because I am a New Jersey boy, is the Four Seasons.

SMITH: I want to leave the Garden State and ask you about New York City. Could you talk about your gallery, John Daniels, which was up on East 64th Street? You were really young when it opened in 1964. It seemed very ambitious.

GRAHAM: That's a bit of a myth. I was what they call a slacker. I had no job, and I had two friends who wanted to social climb because they were reading *Esquire* magazine, and a gallery looked like a cool place to social climb. They put in some money and my parents put in some money as a tax loss. I knew nothing about art.

SMITH: And the artists you brought in just thought,

"Okay, well ... why not?"

GRAHAM: No. The first show I did was a Christmas show where anybody who came in could exhibit.

SMITH: An open call?

GRAHAM: I don't think I advertised. The artist I bonded most closely with was Sol LeWitt. He wanted desperately to have a gallery because he was not in the Green Gallery, where all his friends were. The reason I liked Sol LeWitt is that we had the same favorite writer, Michel Butor. And [Donald] Judd liked Alain Robbe-Grillet. We were all reading French novels and watching Godard films. People who came to the gallery were young artists who wanted to make it. So they would find any gallery they could that wanted to show them.

SMITH: You were showing incredibly cutting-edge artists, but you make it sound like another telescope club.

GRAHAM: Well, I didn't even know what was going on. All I know is that we all wanted to be writers. Other shows there were group shows. One was called "Plastics." We had a Judd plastic piece and a [Robert] Smithson.

SMITH: It's funny how these artists were gravitating to you.

GRAHAM: I think artists were looking for galleries.

SMITH: It's no different today.

GRAHAM: The personalities were very different. There was even a period a bit later where artists wanted to destroy value.

SMITH: Speaking of value, how was business?

GRAHAM: We hardly ever sold any work. We went out of business at the end of the season. Afterward, I did small jobs. I was very good at lighting.

SMITH: You were an electrician?

GRAHAM: No, the lighting was for installations for art

shows. That's part of doing a show. I was also briefly knocking down walls in Roy Lichtenstein's studio.

SMITH: Are you speaking metaphorically?

GRAHAM: No, that's all I did. I wasn't very good at it. Lichtenstein impressed me enormously. He was shy, a workaholic, and I could detect he was interested in a kind of Jewish sense of irony.

SMITH: I imagine his use of clichés also made an impression. Pop artists really put cliché in people's faces. Allan Kaprow wrote about America's attraction to melodrama.

GRAHAM: About four years ago I saw a show of artists in New Jersey at Princeton University. I realized Kaprow was, like me, also taking photographs on highways. At that show, there were some big surprises. There could be a great little documentary on how all of these artists were teaching at terrible schools, then went to Rutgers and discovered each other.

SMITH: Speaking of clichés, what's the deal with astrology?

GRAHAM: I think astrology was important to me when I was teaching. It allows you to create a bond with students very quickly. "What's (CONTINUED ON PAGE 127)

MICHAEL SMITH IS A BROOKLYN AND AUSTIN-BASED ARTIST. HE RECENTLY EXHIBITED THE INSTALLATION *NOT QUITE UNDER GROUND* AT SKULPTUR PROJEKTE, 2017 MUNSTER, GERMANY. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: UNTITLED, JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY, 1966, C-PRINT; 17 1/8 x 22 1/2", *HOUSING DEVELOPMENT*, BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY, 1966, C-PRINT; 17 1/8 x 22 1/2", *WAREHOUSE IN NEO-CLASSICAL STYLE*, WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY, 1978, C-PRINT; 17 1/8 x 22 1/2", *ROW OF NEW TRACT HOUSES*, BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY, 1966, C-PRINT; 17 1/8 x 22 1/2". ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GREENE NAFTALI, NEW YORK. PRODUCTION: 860PM. PRODUCERS: BO ZHANG + ANASTASIA BLADES/860PM. DIGITAL TECHNICIAN: NATALIA READ-HARBER. PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT: JOEY TRISOLINI.

That excites me because I think, "Oh, cool, I never thought of that."

JAGGER: What do you want to accomplish now? What are your goals for the future?

CHIURI: I would like for the new generation to see Dior as a house that reflects all types of women, because Dior is a worldwide brand. I think that all people, men and women, want to be unique in some way, but at the same time, they would like to belong to a community. I would like if they could find in the Dior house a community where they can express themselves in a personal way.

JAGGER: Tell Rachele that she shouldn't be so tough on you. She should allow you to use a kimono in your fashion show.

CHIURI: [laughs] I wear a lot of kimonos myself.

JAGGER: I love kimonos, too.

CHIURI: [laughs] I'll have to think about this, Bianca.

more GRAHAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 125) your sign? What's your birthday?"

SMITH: I really liked your *Architecture/Astrology* book [a collection of astrology-informed analyses of artists and architects, co-authored with Jessica Russell, with illustrations by Mieko Meguro]. Now, I want to ask you about your pavilion, *Child's Play*, which was recently installed in the sculpture garden at MoMA. Is that tide a comment on sculpture, or do you actually think of it as a place for children to play in?

GRAHAM: When I pitch my work, I say, "These are fun houses for children and photo opportunities for parents."

SMITH: It doesn't look at all childproof.

GRAHAM: I made sure that the framework was rounded.

SMITH: I was very impressed when I got the invitation to the opening last summer. Not long before that, you were in the hospital recovering from a very serious illness. And only a week or two before that, you were going on about how no one is interested in your work.

GRAHAM: First of all, it took a while to make happen. It's very bureaucratic there.

SMITH: So, a few years ago they said, "We'd like to purchase—"

GRAHAM: No. Ann Temkin [MoMA's chief curator of painting and sculpture] asked me to do a piece. She's a Capricorn, so I talked to her about that. I told her that because I'm Capricorn ascendant, I'm becoming more like a Capricorn. One thing I didn't realize—I should have—is that the location of the sculpture garden is great because you can see all the glass office buildings.

SMITH: A friend told me about a romantic moment with a girlfriend in your pavilion when it was on display at the Walker [Two-way Mirror Punched Steel Hedge Labyrinth, 1994-96]. They played with their reflections, as their faces merged and disappeared. Later that day they went their separate ways. I'd think the old MoMA sculpture garden would have been more conducive for those kinds of connections.

GRAHAM: I think that work has to be in relationship to corporate buildings, because it's basically a corporate situation. My work is not a sociological critique of alienation; it's the opposite. Maybe people misunderstand it that way.

SMITH: I still liked the old MoMA sculpture garden. It was much more intimate. I do want to men-

tion you were in rare form at your opening there. You really turned some heads when the microphone was handed over to you, and you started your speech by saying that your favorite museum is the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. I was not expecting toastmasters [Graham laughs], but to be honest, I did not expect that.

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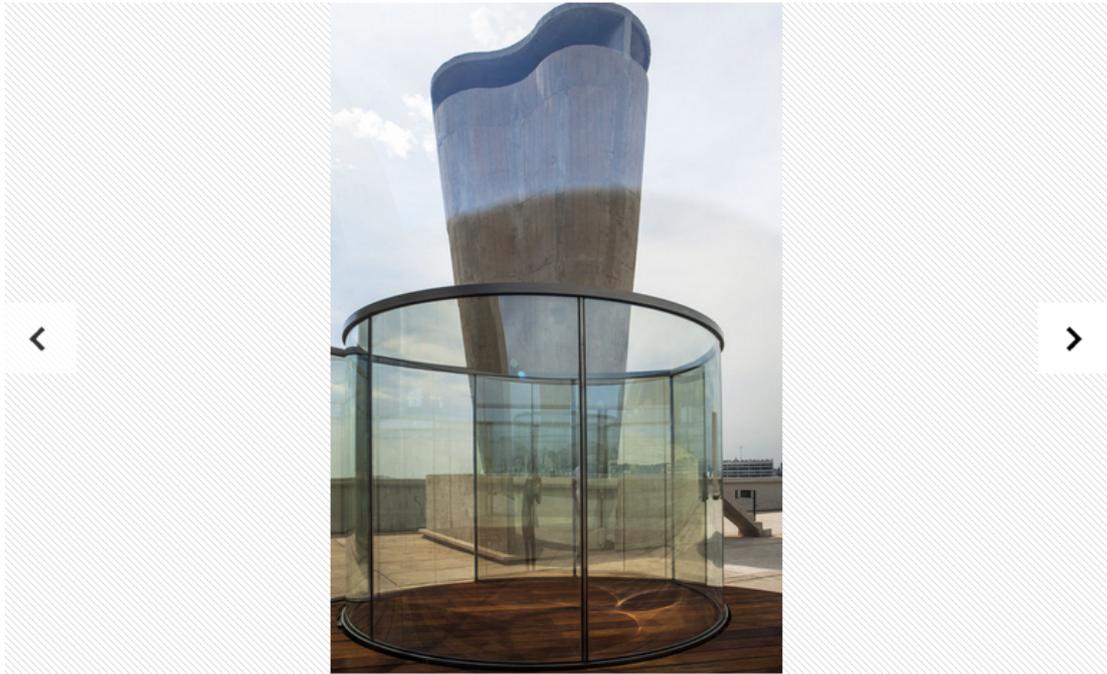
Glass act: Dan Graham's latest installation offers a new perspective on Marseille

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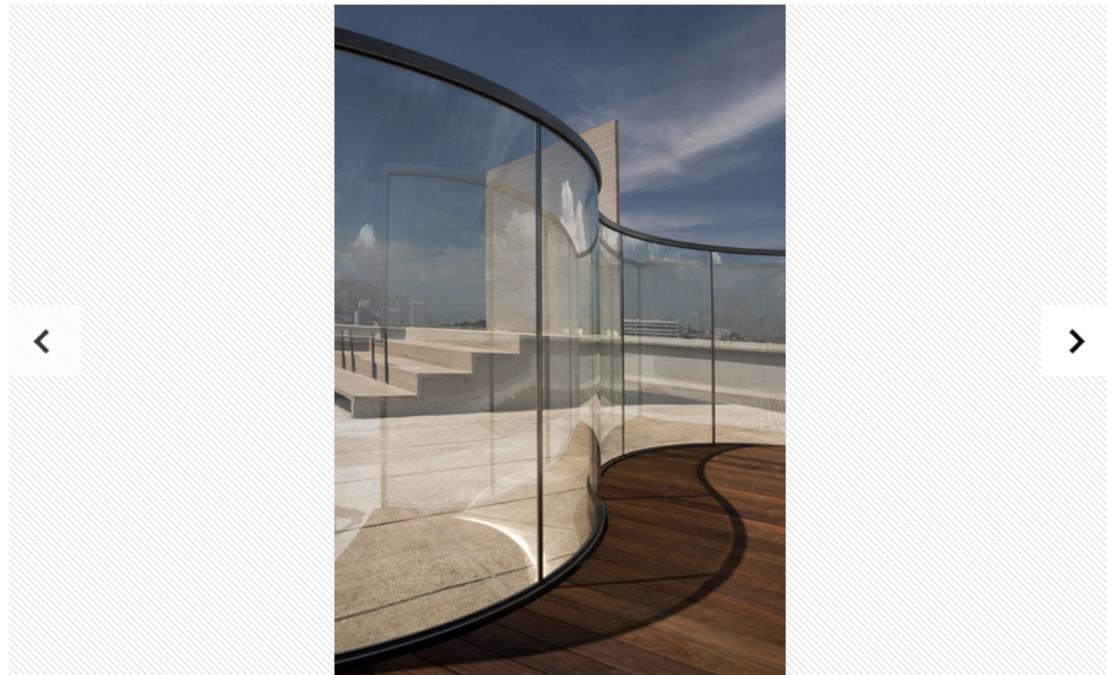
Dan Graham's latest exhibition, 'Observatory/Playground', is the final instalment in a trilogy of shows curated by French designer Ora-ïto atop Le Corbusier's Cité Radieuse in Marseille

▶ ↗ 1 OF 5



Graham's almost phantom pavilions survive Le Corbusier as they blend in with the mod concrete curves and pillars. *Photography: Sébastien Veronese*

▶ ↗ 2 OF 5



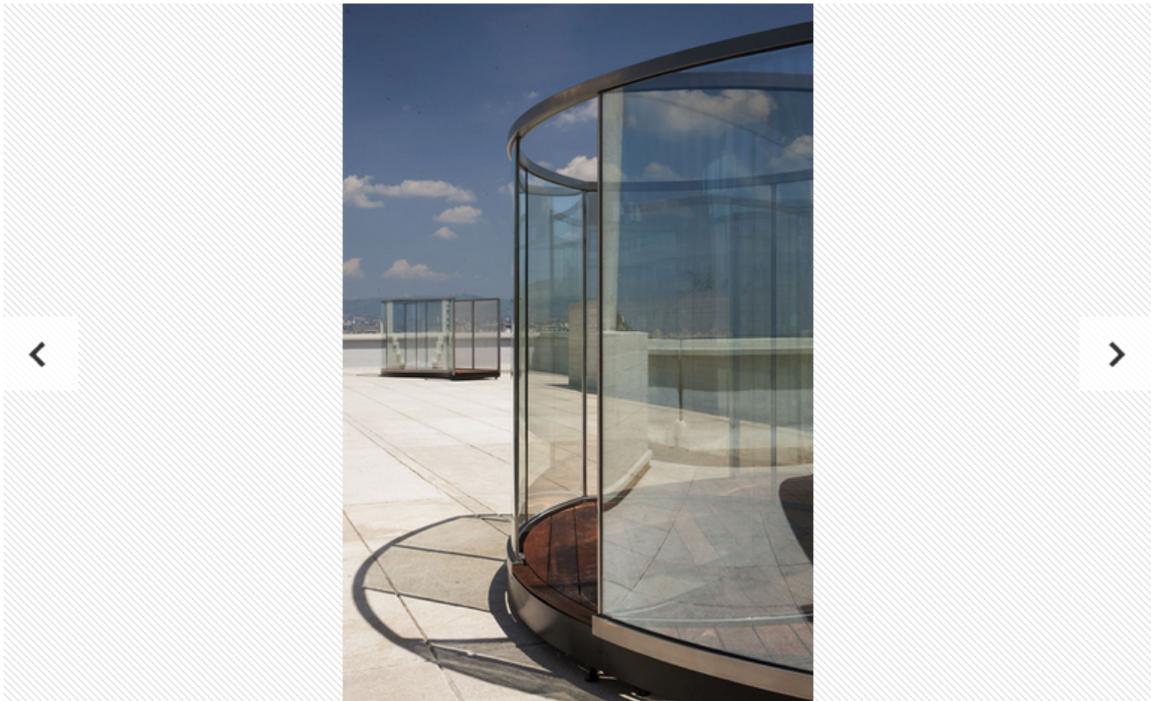
The structures teleport the surrounding cityscape sprawling out to sea and mountains directly to the rooftop in faint hologram-like images reflected in the pavilions' undulating glass. *Photography: Sébastien Veronese*

▶ ↗ 3 OF 5



The private rooftop wading pool on one side of the MAMO makes the Cité Radieuse a literal playground for inhabitants

▶ ↗ 4 OF 5



Graham's pavilions expand that play area for resident children, as well as their perspective on the city. *Photography: Sébastien Veronese*

▶ ↗ 5 OF 5

ADDRESS

MAMO

Centre d'art de la Cité
Radiuse
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13008 Marseille
France

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American artist [Dan Graham's](#) favourite [Jean-Luc Godard](#) film *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* is set in an ancient city dotted with high-rise buildings. So there's no venue more fitting than the Marseille Modulor (MAMO) to unveil his latest pavilion installation. In the exhibition 'Observatory/Playground' atop [Le Corbusier's](#) towering residential [Cité Radieuse](#), [Graham](#) adds a thoughtful, reflective touch to the roof.

French designer and MAMO curator [Ora-İto](#) says [Graham's](#) exhibition is the final instalment in the trilogy of his 'first vision' for the space, which launched in 2013 with [Xavier Veilhan's](#) homage to [Le Corbusier](#). [Daniel Buren](#) took over the rooftop last year with his black-and-white stripes in what [Ora-İto](#) says was an 'emancipation' from the imposing austerity of the building's modern architecture.

When he decided to make the rooftop a public gallery rather than pursuing his original plans of a private penthouse, [Ora-İto](#) said he had to show artists with a strong vision or risk MAMO falling flat. 'It's like putting someone in the arena with lions,' he said. 'They would just get eaten by [Le Corbusier](#). You cannot escape [Le Corbusier](#).'

[Graham's](#) almost phantom pavilions survive [Le Corbusier](#) as they blend in with the mod concrete curves and pillars. The structures teleport the surrounding cityscape sprawling out to sea and mountains directly to the rooftop in faint hologram-like images reflected in the pavilions' undulating glass.

[Graham](#) said he was not a [Le Corbusier](#) fan at first, but grew to like his work. He can rattle off astrological signs of actors, artists and architects and said that [Le Corbusier's](#) Libra tendency to balance male and female aspects comes through in his designs.

One pavilion is an existing structure originally submitted to and rejected by the Bronx Botanical Gardens. [Graham](#) chose the other piece in the exhibition to evoke waves. Seven models of his other designs - including his well-known 'Skateboard Pavilion' (1989) - and two films accompany the two full-size structures.

Even though Graham has been making his glass and steel pavilion series since the 1980s, well before today's social media explosion, the reflective walk-in sculptures seem made for the modern vanity of the selfie. Despite the funhouse mirror images begging for a quick snap, the pieces respectfully demand the viewer to observe the scene morphing before them even if only to slow down so as not to walk into the wall.

The private rooftop wading pool on one side of the MAMO makes the Cité Radieuse a literal playground for inhabitants. Graham's pavilions expand that play area for resident children, as well as their perspective on the city.

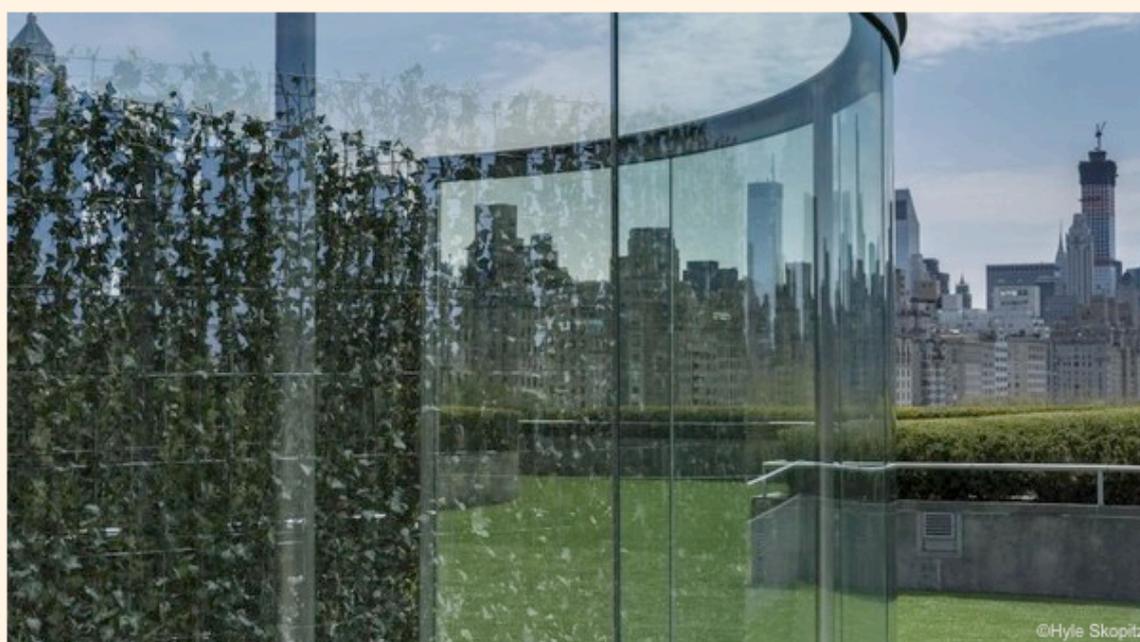
In October the wave pavilion will be installed at Place Vendôme in Paris during FIAC, which is a much safer choice than last year's controversial inflatable tree sculpture that provoked a physical assault on artist Paul McCarthy and an early dismantling of the piece.

With Graham's exhibition closing MAMO's first cycle in September, Ora-Īto promised surprises to come with a teasing mention of opening a new part of the Cité Radieuse as part of plans to expand the gallery.

Hedge Two-Way Mirror Walkabout, Metropolitan Museum, New York – review

By Ariella Budick

A seriously charming and richly allusive installation has appeared on the roof of the Met



'Hedge Two-Way Mirror Walkabout' sits on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum in New York

The Metropolitan Museum's remote rooftop garden has always offered savvy visitors respite from hall after hall of sublime majesty. Right now, it opens on to an artificial-grass oasis that hovers like a magic carpet above the edge of Central Park. Lawn chairs are temptingly scattered about. The view beckons. And off to one side, a mirrored pavilion perches on its glowing patch of green, catching the kaleidoscopic tumult of the city and playfully casting it back.

Dan Graham collaborated with landscape architect Günther Vogt to transform the Met's severe space into "Hedge Two-Way Mirror Walkabout", a seriously charming funhouse. It's a mind-bending piece of walk-in sculpture, a two-chambered bubble of mirrored glass and steel that invites viewers to glimpse themselves in its reflective surfaces. However we look at it, we see ourselves askew – here, sleekly thin; there, grotesquely fat, mixed up with the people on the other side of the transparent wall and a flickering melange of sky, leaves, buildings and passing clouds.

More

IN VISUAL ARTS

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Graham's rooftop pavilion teems with allusions. It invokes, first of all, the extravagantly ornamental structures – faux Greek temples, mock gothic ruins – designed as picturesque points of interest in 18th-century English gardens. At Stowe, Lord Cobham hid a "Temple of Ancient Virtue" among the vegetation, honouring the greatest Greeks and expressing his yearning for Hellenic antiquity. Graham has fallen under a more modern version of the neoclassical spell: he finds inspiration in the stripped-down austerity of Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion, which he admires both because it

was always meant to be temporary, and because it effectively blends vegetation and reflective glass.

Graham has merged that picturesque fantasy with the midtown skyline. His twisty mirror reflects the gleaming necklace of skyscrapers around Central Park, many of them glass boxes in the spirit of Mies. Those ever-taller towers project an air of elegant efficiency while offering excellent camouflage: the reflective façades of high-rise headquarters and plutocrats' pads provide their occupants with limitless views yet shield them from observation. "Surveillance power is given to the corporate tower," as Graham notes in the catalogue. At the Met, he has created a miniature office building with a diabolical twist. The architecture of corporate modernism was developed to maximise productivity and embody egalitarian transparency, but Graham's glass geometries are deliberately labyrinthine and confusing, an exercise in rationality gone nuts.

If his shiny glass-and-steel structure echoes midtown Manhattan's extravagantly vertical skyline, the emerald plot miniaturises the awesome expanse of the Great Lawn, which unfolds just below the roof's parapet. Graham plays off the idea of Central Park as New York's backyard, installing a high box hedge like those that marked off the subdivisions of his youth.

Graham grew up across the Hudson River in New Jersey and he describes the suburbs as “an ambivalent arcadia”. One of his most famous pieces is the 1967 “Homes for America”, a grid-like photo essay on the prefab insta-towns that mushroomed along the peripheries of American cities. The houses look like serialised containers by Donald Judd, though Graham christened them with such allusive names as “The Sonata”, “The Serenade” and “The Nocturne”. In the generic repetitiveness of suburban homes, he found the democratic promise of social mobility. He recognises, though, that the orderly chequerboards of houses and lawns can feel confining, even prison-like. The Met’s rooftop hedge is an equivocal symbol. “Good fences make good neighbours,” Robert Frost wrote, with more than a pinch of irony. Here, Graham elaborates a similar idea, marking off boundaries between properties that nobody owns.

His charming burst of greenery belongs to a long tradition of picturesque illusion, intertwining artifice and nature. The landscape designers of the 18th century groomed hillsides to look like paintings. In the 19th century, Frederick Law Olmsted sculpted Central Park with that romantic example in mind. In the 20th, Kevin Roche, the architect who for decades supervised the Met’s expansions and renovations, also designed the Ford Foundation Building, where great pillars enclose a verdant paradise. And in the 21st, this Day-Glo clearing appears atop a museum that is both a corporate intrusion into the urban wilderness and another kind of indoor Eden.

Graham has summed up this lineage by drawing an explicit analogy between the urban museum and the bucolic estate: “Contemporary art museums function as locations for romantic rendezvous, just as 18th-century landscape gardens encouraged purposeful strolling, punctuated by pauses at pavilions and arbours.” The Latin phrase for the country in the city is *rus in urbe*, and “Hedge Two-Way Mirror Walkabout” is a fresh iteration of that old idea, spiced with subtle trickery. A parody office sits on a synthetic lawn at the edge of a man-made wilderness in the centre of a great metropolis. No wonder the reflections in its mirrors look so strange.

frieze

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

NO. 147 MAY 2012



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S O C I A L S P A C E S

Dan Graham discusses sci-fi,
dance, model-making and the 'just-past'
with Turkish artist **Can Altay**



'Dan Graham: Beyond', installation view,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles,
2009

CAN ALTAY *My first real appreciation of your work was in Berlin several years ago, when I came across Elliptical Pavilion (1995) on the Spree river.*

DAN GRAHAM I first got the idea for that work when I was walking along the Spree: the elliptical form of the pavilion would be reflected in the water next to the reflections of three new elliptical buildings on the other bank. But Kasper König, who had commissioned me, said no to the proposal, because he wanted Per Kirkeby to make a work on that particular site. Instead we made an artificial pond, but it didn't work as well; in the end, the water had to be drained because people were pissing in it.

CA *When I went into that pavilion I was really amazed to see what I'd been missing – that crucial aspect of 'being inside' your work.*

DG Early on, my gallery [John Daniels Gallery, New York, which Graham opened in 1964] showed artists like Sol LeWitt, Dan Flavin and Don Judd, but at a certain point I came out of Minimal art. In Minimal art there is no inter-subjectivity, and my work came to be based on it. For example, my work is also about how corporate buildings use two-way mirrored glass in a one-way mirror situation. Two-way mirror-glass cuts down the air conditioning costs because the reflective side deflects the sun's heat, but it also reflects the sky and so identifies the corporation with the natural environment.

CA *It's also a shift from the Modernist ideal of transparency to a kind of corporate ideal of surveillance.*

DG Yes, though the Modernist building's transparency – which claimed to show the transparency of the corporation's operations – was an alibi. The view of the people working on the ground floor was only of lower-level functionaries; on the upper floors, people who had the power could look down, unobserved, at the surrounding cityscape, which the corporation dominates.

CA *Your work requests a kind of 'dwelling in', rather than a 'gazing upon' – viewers have to go inside to fully appreciate the alternating perception.*

DG It's always at human scale. While I'm not necessarily a humanist, I think that your body is so important. Minimal art was about instantaneous present time – that was the 1960s idea. But I was more interested in the sun setting, clouds changing, as people moved their bodies in time. So that became a critique of Minimal art; time became important. Of course, that was a little influenced by marijuana, but also by LaMonte Young's and Steve Reich's music and the idea of process or duration – Minimal art was not durational.

CA *Late modern architecture, and the birth and growth of corporate culture, coincided with a very particular mode of urbanization and sense of public spaces. Since the late 1990s, when I first started showing my work in Istanbul, the city has been getting a new skyline, especially on a large strip called the Büyükdere Axis. They've been building high-rise office blocks, which have generated a so-called plaza culture, but the plazas here are badge-access corporate high-rises. The buildings always come first in Istanbul; infrastructure is more like 'inter-structure' – life has to fill in the gaps. Your work relates to the city both as the immediate context for the actual work and as a reference material.*

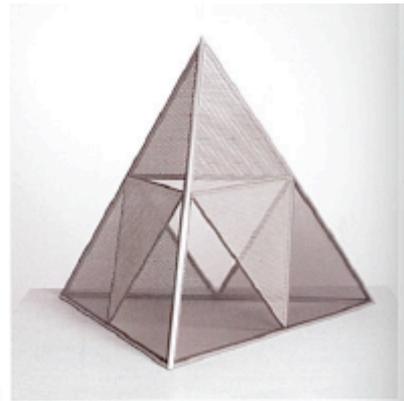
DG My experience in seeing New York's shopping streets was very important to me. When I was 14, I read Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943) and I think my interest in the inter-subjective gaze comes from his idea of the child's 'mirror stage' in terms of cities. Showcase windows use 'mirror stage' optics: when you're looking at a display you see both the products and – on fragmented mirrors – distorted images of yourself as an un-whole body. A ghost image of yourself is displayed, superimposed on the product; if you buy the product then you can become whole again.



*'I was interested in the sun setting, the clouds changing,
as people moved their bodies in time.'*

Dan Graham

- CA** *That sounds very much like the inter-subjectivity you were examining in the early video works.*
- DG** Walter Benjamin's idea of the 'just-past' has been important to me. In other words, you don't have just the present time or neo-1960s, but an extended present time that is a continuation of the 'just-past'.
- CA** *In 2005, I did a piece at Platform Garanti in Istanbul that was very much related to this idea. Over the course of several exhibitions, I reconfigured and combined all the exhibited works in one gallery. So the new show would open but the old shows would still linger in the corner, growing and growing. I was working with extracts and samples from the works by artists who were shown as listed in the title of the piece, along with documentation of the ways in which the artists themselves installed them. But it was obviously becoming something else; both the exhibition and the exhibited were being reconfigured.*
- DG** A piece that you might not know I did was in an alternative space called the Franklin Furnace in SoHo. In the shopfront, I projected slides of the entire exhibition space taken from the front window view of every gallery exhibition concurrent with my show [1979].
- At the time I was very inspired by drug-influenced science-fiction writers such as Brian Aldiss, as well as by Gregory Bateson's writing, especially his 'double-blind' theory of schizophrenia. Bateson was married to Margaret Mead, whose books on matriarchal societies in primitive culture I read when I was only 13, which is why I became a feminist. All of my undocumented early video pieces were about learning processes and public access television. But I have one critique about my work: it's very male voyeuristic. And I'm a feminist, so I'm a little embarrassed about that.
- CA** *Another thing about the video-based installations is that they somehow remind the viewer that they are part of a group. The audience always forms a group, a contingent community.*
- DG** In the early 1960s, a great influence on me was Anna Halprin's dance group in San Francisco, which was something like a psychologically therapeutic body workshop. The participants included Reich, Simone Forti, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman and Yvonne Rainer. The Halprin group was interested in the physical aspects of body movement but also in the dancers' interactions in communal, social situations. Her workshop came out of a kind of early, hippie communal, psychological mind set. Its influence came to New York through the transplanted San Franciscans, Reich and Richard Serra, both of whom I met shortly after they arrived in the early '70s. When I first met Richard, he told me that Simone's work was a big influence on his sculpture, especially her use of gravity in human movement.
- CA** *I'm interested in how function clashes and/or overlaps with meaning. I deal with this question a lot in my work, increasingly so in projects such as PARR: bir ihtimal / PARR: A Possibility, 2010f, which involved installing the work of artists – including Nils Norman and Ceren Oykut – alongside collectively produced elements in a park in Istanbul. Similarly, my 2011 exhibition at Casco in Utrecht was an investigation into the city's public sculptures, which resulted in a set of proposals for prosthetic additions to existing monuments and sculptures. In these projects, I usually go for semi-functional or slightly dysfunctional programming and settings, to push those overlays and to make room for glitches and discrepancies.*
- DG** When I had my gallery, my first artist was LeWitt and my hero was Flavin. They both worked as guards in 'The Great Experiment: Russian Art, 1863–1922' show [Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1962], and my work really comes out of the kind of quasi-functionality, quasi-design of Constructivism. But I also like things that are not one thing or the other. Hybridity is a very important feature in my most recent works, which function as a bridge between art and architecture.



2

1
Dan Graham, *Bicycle Riders Pavilion*, 2008, installation view as part of *Stroom Den Haag* public art project 'Fiets85tal', The Hague

2
Dan Graham, *Untitled*, 2011, two-way mirror glass, aluminium, cellulose and MDF, 107×107×71 cm

3
Can Altay, *PARK: bir ihtimal (PARK: A Possibility)*, 2010, installation view, Nişantaşı Maçka Dimitrie Cantemir Park, Istanbul

4
Can Altay, *COHAB: An Assembly of Spare Parts*, 2011, installation view, Casco - Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht

CA You often work with models in different senses, and even show them as sculptures. I see model-making as a dual process: one side involves producing models that can be applied or realized on a larger scale; the other is to do with building scale replicas in manageable and relatively controllable forms, which requires the extreme attention found only in enthusiasts and hobbyists. This dual process fascinates me because both sides involve an intensity of imagination, though each faces in a completely opposite direction.

DG The first models I did were for my show at Oxford's Museum of Modern Art in 1978. I'd seen an exhibition Leo Castelli did of architectural models displayed as gallery art, and I thought: why shouldn't artists do models by architects which could also be propaganda for projects that could actually be realized as well as be art objects? For that show I made two kinds of models: one group were fantasies for suburban situations like *Alteration to a Suburban House* [1978]; the others were proposals for 'sculpture/pavilions' to be someday realized. The first time I made very cheap models, which I'd take in a suitcase and use to convince clients. For those first models, I would go to hobby shops and so on.

CA In recent exhibitions you've shown model pavilions alongside videos of actual pavilions. Is that a new way of making work over the pavilions, in a sense that builds a narrative of the experience of the pavilion through more human-scale representation?

DG Nicholas Logsdail, my Lisson dealer, suggested I should make models of my pavilions which could function as saleable sculptures. I did this, but in fact my work is not exactly sculpture; the models don't really replicate the situation of my work. My work is very site-specific - it's about light conditions. Galleries can't emulate outdoor light. So to change that impression I put a lot of effort into videotaping and editing these videos, because it's the only way of filming the work in terms of its actual situation. People often misunderstand my work. For example, *Homes for America* (1966-7) is not a sociological critique of suburbia, but a celebration of lower-middle-class suburban culture. In a way, I was making fun of standard sociological pieces in magazines like *Esquire*, which focus on the alienation of suburbia and are illustrated by a serious 'name' photographer. *Homes for America* is also about the suburban city plan as a basis for situating art.

CA But you've also done pavilions for indoor and museum settings.

DG With artists doing large-spectacle video projections, nobody is allowed to relax and to spend time with the videos. But I think people should actually lie down rather than stand up; they should spend a lot of time looking at videos in a relaxed, horizontal position. The structure for *New Design for Showing Videos* [1995], for instance, is a labyrinth using two-way mirror panels, whereby you can see people seeing other videos and each other. So it becomes part of the gallery and museum design - it's quasi-functional. I wanted to change the Dia Foundation idea of showing the one main work of art as a quasi-religious, meditative experience.



'Architecture is completely compliant, especially in the ways in which it works with and for "Power".'

Can Altay

- CA *It was interesting to hear how you talk about the commissioning processes, the way you work in response to a site or client.*
- What I like about being almost an architect, is that whatever comes into the so-called office, you respond to – whether it's corporate or non-corporate or whatever it is.
- CA *There is always this sense of negotiation – you have to deal with the restraints.*
- Well, that's architecture.
- CA *In my opinion, architecture is completely compliant, especially in the ways in which it works with and for 'power'. But, hopefully, works of architecture also generate room for presence, or at least allow something outside the utility and profit logics that govern cities and buildings in general.*
- You have to deal with people's bodies. I've written about Peter Zumthor's thermal baths in Vals [1996]. The great thing about that project is that it's in a '60s hotel that was going out of business. To save the building, Zumthor put a kind of '80s structure with a Roman period thermal bath on top of it. There, the feeling in his design work is very important.
The other person who uses body as a context is John Chamberlain. For his Guggenheim show in New York, in a Frank Lloyd Wright building whose galleries are like a large topological Möbius strip, he put in raw foam-rubber couches in the centre of the lobby. They were for people to relax in while other visitors gazed from the gallery levels – an observation of their subjective pleasure, like a drug experience.



4

Chamberlain is one of the most brilliant artists that I know; he did so many different kinds of things and he would still go on to do something else.
At least 15 percent of my works are failures. Most artists who are successful have perfected a fairly slick signature style. I like artists who experiment and don't mind failure. ☛

Can Altay is an artist based in Istanbul, Turkey. Recent exhibitions include 'The Church Street Partners' Gazette' at The Showroom, London, UK (2010), and 'COMAR: An Assembly of Spare Parts' at Casco, Utrecht, the Netherlands (2011). Forthcoming projects include Frieze Projects East, London, launching this summer.

Dan Graham lives and works in New York, USA, and has written two articles on The Kinks. In 1964, he opened the John Daniels Gallery in New York, USA, where he put on Sol LeWitt's first solo show. He has exhibited and realized commissions all around the world, including at the Venice Biennale (1976, 2003, 2004 and 2005) and documenta V, VI, VII, IX and X (1972, 1977, 1982, 1992 and 1997). Major retrospectives of his work have been staged in Europe (2001–02) and in the USA (2009). Recent solo exhibitions include Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK; Protocinema, Istanbul, Turkey (both 2011); and Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, Switzerland (2012). He currently has an exhibition at Lisson Gallery, London, UK.

An earlier version of this conversation appeared in issue 126 of the Turkish art journal Sanat Dünyamız.