Trevor Shimizu on Dan Graham


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 Chivaratanond. 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.
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.

“Aeverything 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.

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.”
“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.
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.”
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.

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 Youths, 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.
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 reflection 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 profession 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’ (AM006), 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 reflective mediations: yet his subjects have not been social but recondite and romantic: an erstwhile melancholic in ‘Lena’ 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 London’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 Verwanndungsmusik 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, “book reader”, akteur (after Thomas Eakins), concertinist (after Georges Braque) et al. … Amongst others’ is where Rodney Graham has dispensed – 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 virtuosic use of high-definition lightbox photographs. 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-involving. 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 midbrow culture, as in the title work here, The Central Questions of Philosophy – adapted from a paperback cover of A. J. 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. Shaved behind him are Ayer’s works with others by J. L. Austin. Maybe among these is dispersed an allusion 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 dispense 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 Hocumming 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 loopings 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.
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.
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”.

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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: Rock’n’Roll
Lisson Gallery, London
3 October – 3 November 2018

Interview by VERONICA SIMPSON
Filmed by MARTIN KENNEDY
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 Japander 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
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
Since the late 1950s, 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 skateboarding-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 favorite music is going to catch 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 assassination at the most inappropriate moment; or his amazing, almost encyclopedic recollection of information that would give most analysts 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 assertions. He’s an Aries, indicating spontaneous. He’s also into cliches, architecture, music, art, puppets, and TV comedy. I’ve known Graham since the mid-70s, 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,格瑞納 2015-16, went on display in the sculpture garden at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. In spite of all that, Graham occasionally misses 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 to do. A sudden illness 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 Maria Miro, and doing well—busy with rebuses, experimenting with his music, 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 the puppet could be worked mechanically. Later, there was History Doop with his Peanuts Gallery. I liked how these shows illustrated the spectrum—in other words, the studio audience—and how that interaction became part of how the whole thing worked.

SMITH: We had History Doop growing up in Chicago, but not Uncle Fred.

GRAHAM: It was on a local station in Newark, I know 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 beagles 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.

SMITH: How old were you then?

GRAHAM: Around 11 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: 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 free-thinking 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’mrazy 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 on to look for the money, and I noticed one of the houses 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 Culverland?

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 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 don’t know what to take because they’re all good. The reason I like him is because he thinks everything is funny and he’s on the edge of being offensive. One of my favorite works of his is a drawing or a photograph. I gave a talk once at UCSD, and I looked around at their outdoor project collections. Wegman did a project that was like one of those overeats where you drive the car for scenic views. The boundary was made of stone, and there was a telescope aimed at a fake model 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
"WHEN I PITCH MY WORK, I SAY, "THESE ARE FUN HOUSES FOR CHILDREN AND PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTS."

PHOTO: MARK LEVITT, ART DIRECTION: RENÉ HAXEUR, PHOTO: DAX GILLIAM; COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GREGORI ABRAMS, 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 astronomy.

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 made 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 12–13-year-olds, and 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 Amazing Science Fiction. The editor was named John Campbell. A friend and I visited him in Montclair, New Jersey, near the cutting-edge technology institute Bell Labs.

SMITH: Didn’t Bell Labs do E.A.T.? [Beginning in the 50s, 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 all sorts of other things. Anyway, for us to meet an editor of a great science fiction magazine was thrilling. But he lived in a suburb and was smirking 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 parades. A piece of mine, Past Future Split* (1972), owned a lot to *Cryptos* by Brian Aldiss, about time going backward.

SMITH: There were two performers in Past Future Split* (1972): one predicting the other’s movements in a continuous feedback/feed-through loop. I always liked the pieces where you appeared as a performer. I’m thinking, in particular, of Performer/audience/Mirror* (1975 video documentation 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 [Bob Prine, 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 amusement. But neither of us are amateurs anymore. I think I was thinking about Acconci’s whole practice in relation to yours. He talked about transcribing 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: *Secluded* 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 The Bob Cummings Show, among other sitcoms] 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 Don DeLillo's *Greatist Hits* (Graham) mixtape series, which has now run six volumes, I remember now倒入 Some Music to Your Day* by the Beach Boys, which almost sounded 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 interested me, as a Jewish fellow, is the kind of white Protestant church music you have 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 really hard to understand. Also, Lester Bangs. All the Beach Boys songs are about how we can get married and be happy—a kind of 60s dream. The group was very close to, because I am a New Jersey boy, 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 66th Street? You were really young when it opened in 1964. It seemed very ambitious.

GRAHAM: That's bit of a myth. I had what they call a shucker. I had no job, and I had two friends who wanted to social climb because they were reading *Figuers* 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 booked most closely was Son LeWitt. I wanted desperately to have a gallery because he was not in the Greens Gallery, where all his friends were. The reason I liked Son LeWitt is that we had the same favorite writer, Michael Baxo. And (Donald) Judd had Alan Robb Griffin. We were all reading French novels and watching Godard films. People who came to the gallery were young artists who wanted to be it. So they would find any gallery they could that was interested to show them.

SMITH: You were showing incredibly cutting-edge artists, but you had to sound like another slasher club.

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

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

GRAHAM: I think artists were looking for gallerists. Better.

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 art. 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 no Einstein?

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 clichés in people's faces. Allan Kaprow wrote about America's attraction to melodrama.

GRAHAM: About five 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 [CONTINUE ON PAGE 122]
Glass act: Dan Graham's latest installation offers a new perspective on Marseille

Dan Graham's latest exhibition, 'Observatory/Playground', is the final instalment in a trilogy of shows curated by French designer Ora-Ito atop Le Corbusier's Cité Radieuse in Marseille.
Graham's almost phantasm pavilions survive Le Corbusier as they blend in with the mod concrete curves and pillars. Photography: Sébastien Veronese

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
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. Photography: Sébastien Veronese
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-Ito 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-Ito 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-Ito 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-Ïto 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

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.
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.
SOCIAL SPACES

Dan Graham discusses sci-fi, dance, model-making and the ‘just-past’
with Turkish artist Can Altay
CAR AT LB: My first real appreciation of your work was in Paris a
number of years ago, when I saw an early Elliptical Pavilion (1955) in the
Spiral area.

DAN GRAHAM: I first get the idea for that work when I was walking along
the Seine. The elliptical form of the pavilion would be reflected in the water.

CAR AT LB: In the collections of the new elliptical pavilions on the other
bank, but a certain light hit me, and I saw the proposal. Because you wanted
for it to be a work on the particular site, instead we made an artificial pool
but it didn’t work as well as this end, the water had to be drained because
people were playing in it.

CA: What I mean is that perhaps it was really unusual to see what I’d
been thinking about or reading about in your work.

DG: Early on, my gallery, John Daniel Gallery, New York, which Graham
opened in 1961, showed artists like John Cage and Don Judd, so I
had a certain point of view of Minimal art, of Minimalism as a point
in its own right. But I think there is more to be said about this.

CA: There is more to be said about this.

DG: You know, the Modernist idea of transparency is a kind of
corporate ideal of surveillance.

CA: Your work represents a kind of 'driving in', rather than a 'stopping at'
viewers, to give in to the projections of the alternating perceptions.

DG: It’s not always at human scale. While it’s not necessary for a human, I
think your body is important. The human body is important, so
Minimal art was about human presence. The human presence
was significant, and that was the human body. But it was more interested
in non-object, deictic elements, as people moved their bodies in time,
so that became a critique of Minimal art as time became important.

CA: That was a little dismissed by everyone, but also by La Monte
Young’s and Steve Reich’s music and the idea of processor duration.

DG: Processor duration is not a Duration. It’s duration as a
corporate ideal of surveillance.

CA: Let me make a point, and the birth and growth of corporate
culture coincided with a very particular mode of operation in the
perception of space. Since the 1960s, when I first started thinking
about space in New York, the city has transformed its skyline, especially
the large empty blocks, as a block in New York City. They’re being
occupied by a new generation of people who live there, who
occupy large office buildings, the place where the planners
are doing business across corporate high-rises. The buildings always come first in
Tomasello, infrastructure is more than just the 'inter-weavers'.

DG: My experience in seeing New York’s shopping streets was very
important to me. When I was 16, I read Jean-Paul Sartre’s Being
and Nothingness (1943) and I think my interest in the inter-subjective
perspective comes from this idea of the child’s mirror stage in terms of
identity. Knows the space of the artist’s studio when you’re looking at
a display of the product and the fragmented mirrors –

Asociated Press of yourself as displayed, superimposed on the product, so you see the

CA: Your work represents a kind of 'driving in', rather than a 'stopping at'
viewers, to give in to the projections of the alternating perceptions.
I was interested in the sun setting, the clouds changing, as people moved their bodies in time.

Dan Graham

\[\text{CA. That was a very much like the inner-subjectivity you were crouching in the early video works.}\]

\[\text{CA. Walter Benjamin's idea of the “just past” has been important to me. In other words, you don't have just the present time or even 1960s, but an \textit{entirely present time} that is a continuation of the “just past”.}\]

\[\text{CA. In 2001, I did a piece at Platform Ceramics in Istanbul that was very much related to this idea. Over the course of several exhibitions, I reconstructed and reconfigured all the exhibited works in the gallery. So the same piece was always in a different location, always in a new space. Growing and changing, I was working with new exhibits from the works in various shows in various cities. Always in the space of the piece, always in the space in which the artist then became involved. But it was obviously becoming something else, both the exhibition space being reconfigured.}\]

\[\text{CA. A piece that might not know I'd exist in an alternative space called the Franklin Furnace in SoHo. In the show, I projected slides of the entire exhibition space taken from the front window view of the gallery exhibition concurrent with my show (1979).}\]

\[\text{CA. I was very inspired by the performance of science fiction writers such as Brian Aldiss, as well as by Gregory Benford's writing, especially his “double-tidal” theory of schizophrenia. Baranski was married to Margaret Nolan, whose books on material culture in primitive cultures I read when I was only 12, which later became, if not a hobby, at least a passion.} \]

\[\text{CA. No backwards, the video-based installations that I sometimes realized now that they are a part of a group. The audience always forms a group, a contingent community.}\]

\[\text{DG. In the early 1980s, a great influence on me was Anna Halprin's dance group in San Francisco, which was something like a psychologically therapeutic body workshop. The participants included Peter, Simone Forti, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, and Yvonne Rainer. The Halprin group was interested in the physical and social aspects of body movement but also in the dancers' interactions in communal, social situations. Her workshop became a kind of early hippie communal, psychological ritual art. In influence came to New York through the transplanted San Franciscans, Robert and Richard Serra, both of whom I met who after the 1960s I met the early 1970s. When I first met Richard, he told me that Baron's work was a huge influence on his sculpture, especially her use of gravity in human movement.}\]

\[\text{DG. I'm interested in how function changed or connects with meaning. I deal with these questions in my work, increasingly in projects such as: a national project: A Possibility: 2012, a national project: a national project that is more than a project for people who think about the problem of space.}\]

\[\text{DG. My 2011 exhibition at Casa in Utrecht was an investigation into the city's public space, which resulted in a series of proposals for projects in addition to existing public projects. In these projects, I used the new sort of semi-functional, or lightly functional, programming and settings to push toward new ideas and new room for play and possibilities.}\]

\[\text{DG. When I had a gallery, my first artist was LAV and my second was Flavin. They both worked on guards in The Great Experiment: Russian Art, 1863-1952, about Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1962, and my work really comes out of the kind of quasi-functional, quasi-design of Constructivism.}\]

\[\text{DG. Other things that are not one thing or the other. Hybridity is a very important feature in my most recent works, which function as a bridge between art and architecture.}\]
You often work with models in different scales, and even show them as sculptures. I see model-making as a dual process: one side involves producing models that can be displayed or realized on a larger scale; the other is to do with building scale models. In architecture and relatively controllable forces, which requires the extreme attention found only in cutouts and models. This dual process fascinates me because both sides involve an intensity of imagination, though each faces a completely opposite direction.

The first model I did were for my show at Oxford University, Museum of Modern Art in 1978. I had an exhibition with the Castelli gallery, and thought why shouldn't artists do models by architects which could also be a 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 Attention 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 put together to convince clients. For those first models, I would go to hobby shops and so on.

Nicholas Logan, my London dealer, suggested I should make models of my pavilions which could function as installations. 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, lighting can't extend outdoor light. So it changes that impression I put a lot of effort into video filming and editing these videos, because it's the only way of filming the work in terms of its actual situation. People often think I extend my work. For example, Homes for America (1966–71) is not a sociological critique of suburban, 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 focuses on the alienation of suburbs and are illustrated by a serious 'name' photographer. Homes for America is also about the suburban city plan in a way for starting art.

With artists doing large-scale video projections, nobody is allowed to relax and spend time with the videos. But I think people should actually sit down and sit down to see; they should spend a lot of time looking at videos at a relaxed, horizontal position. The structure for New Design for Showing Video (1995), for instance, is a labyrinth using two-way mirror panels, whereby you can see people watching the video and each other. So it becomes part of the gallery and museum design—it's quasi-functional. I wanted to change the EFA Foundation idea of showing the 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

It was interesting to hear how you talk about the commissioning processes, the way you work in response to a site or client.

2. What 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.

3. There is always this sense of negotiation – you have to deal with the regulations.

4. Well, that's architecture.

5. 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 rooms for presence, or at least allow something outside the utility and profit logic 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 a 1960s hotel that was going out of business. To save the building, Zumthor put a kind of 18th-century 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 were like a large topographical map, 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.

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 18 percent of all 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' Cassettes" at The Showroom, London, UK (2010), and "COMARE: An Assembly of Spare Parts" at Casco, Utrecht, the Netherlands (2014). Forthcoming projects include Uprise Projects East, London, launching this summer.

Dave 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 first saw Sol LeWitt's first sodalite. He has exhibited and worked together on exhibitions all around the world, including at the Venice Biennale (1976, 2003, 2005 and 2009) and documenta 6, 7, 8, 10, and 13 (1972, 1977, 1982, 1992 and 1997). Major retrospectives of his work have been staged in Europe (2003–05) and in the US (2002). Recent solo exhibitions include: Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK; Prototyper, Istanbul, Turkey (both 2011); and Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, Switzerland (2013). He currently has an exhibition at Lessing Gallery, London, UK.

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