

## 12. FEATURES BIENNALE VAN VENETIË

'When attitudes become form: Bern 1969 / Venice 2013'

# FONDAZIONE PRADA RESTAGES HARALD SZEEMANN'S EXHIBITION

When I first heard that Fondazione Prada was 'restaging' Harald Szeemann's 1969 exhibition, I was a bit leery, since I couldn't imagine many remaining artworks. One-quarter of the artists had passed, and few artists' estates fabricate post-mortem like Sol LeWitt's. At Kunsthalle Bern, most artists had either repeated actions performed elsewhere – Lawrence Weiner's carved wall patch (1968), Alain Jacquet's embedded electrical wires, Richard Serra's lead splashes (1968) and Keith Sonnier's flocked walls (1967) – or employed handmade props to activate the space: Richard Artschwager's elliptical blips (1968), Barry Flanagan's meandering rope (1967), Reiner Ruthenbeck's free-standing cage (1968) and Gilberto Zorio's bundle of sticks (1969). In in-

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interviews with Swiss T.V., artists routinely denied that their exhibited objects were artworks. They rather considered them 'indications' of unfinished processes. Hence, all of the replacing, reenacting, and displacing happening here (only 47 are extant) prove to be integral features of this particular 'attitude'. Despite artists' earnest efforts to resist market forces, artworks were born in Bern, enabling 25 percent to enter collections. Hence, 18 chalk lines designate irreplaceable classics by the likes of Joseph Beuys, Alighiero Boetti, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, Panamarenko and Serra. Between 1967 and 1969, no fewer than ten curators organized eleven exhibitions featuring mostly 'indications' for thirteen institutions in six countries. Rather than launch a movement,

Szeemann's extravaganza captured one already in full swing. Exhibition roster overlaps are uncanny. Of the 68 artists who presented works in 'Attitudes', that era's ninth iteration, two-thirds had participated in related exhibitions. To curtail travel time (and shipping expenses) to 'Op Losse Schroeven (On Loose Screws)', which opened the week before 'Attitudes', Robert Morris instructed Stedelijk Museum staff to display combustible refuse, amassed from Amsterdam streets, on the floor, to be burned outdoors, post-show!

## RESTAGING EXHIBITIONS

Prada Foundation Artistic Director Germano Celant, who curated this exhibition (in dialogue with architect Rem Koolhaas and artist Thomas Demand), first articulated this new attitude in the November 1967 issue of *Flash Art*, though in reference to Italian sculpture, which he found noticeably grittier than Minimal Art. Five months later, *Artforum* published Morris' essay 'Anti-Form', which privileged the process of making over final products. A few months later, Szeemann accidentally entered Hans Haacke's studio, where he glimpsed this attitude in Haacke's watering grass growing on a table.

Rather than offer explanations for why artists suddenly began working this way back then, or why thousands more employ nomadic methodologies (Sarah Sze's U.S.A. Pavilion is heir to in situ practices), I prefer to analyze what restaging this exhibition accomplishes. Some critics have unnecessarily worried that re-staging curated exhibitions treats exhibitions like artworks. Such temporary re-stagings rather treat exhibitions like curated collections, whose thoughtful presentations illuminate obscure qualities that otherwise go unnoticed. Visitors can explore the merits of a once-controversial exhibition that drew 7000 visitors. However, the herculean duplication of Szeemann's exhibition in terms of checklist replication and object placement ultimately transforms that era's 'indications' into finished artworks, thus eradicating any radicality. Such curatorial fidelity, which curators typically reserve for artists, not collectors, overwhelms



Installation view of 'When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013', from left to right: Gilberto Zorio Torce, 'Torches', 1969; Mario Merz, 'Acqua scivola (Igloo di vetro)' / 'Water Slips Down (Glass Igloo)', 1969, photo Attilio Maranzano, courtesy Fondazione Prada

the capacity for these once open systems to resist ownership.

## MILIEU AND SPECTATORS

Even though the footprints of the kunsthalle's galleries map directly onto Prada's, 'Attitudes 2' should never have attempted 'readymade' status, for reasons already discussed. Nor would it be the same show, even if every last object from 1969 were in place. Checklists and object placement are only two components; the others being facility (Ca' Corner della Regina), milieu (Venice) and spectators (2013). To create this reverse Potemkin Village, the organizers hid a Baroque palace behind faux floors, white walls, radiators and modified transoms. Visitors seem surprised by how crowded 'Attitudes 2' feels, despite there being 30 percent fewer works! The promise of easy replication, which ensures objects against trampling, enabled 'Attitudes' to sprawl. Guards now steer people away from priceless floorworks by Giovanni Anselmo, Boetti, Bill Bollinger, Hesse, Merz, Ruthenbeck, Alan Saret, and Zorrio. Incidentally, Tuttle's straddle walls! It would be interesting to know why ten living artists opted not to participate and why Carl Andre,

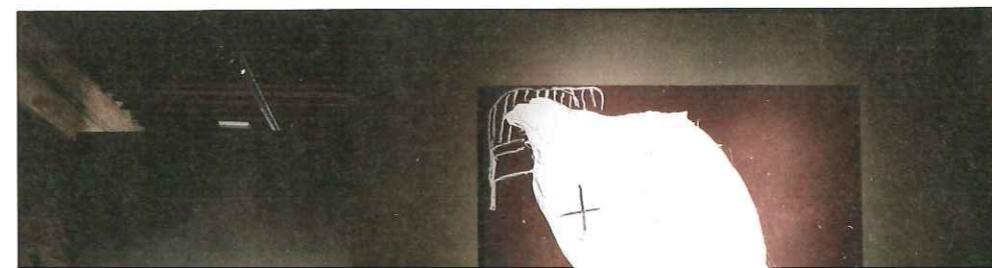
Robert Morris, as well as the Estates of Fred Sandback and Robert Smithson contributed artworks, even though they withdrew artworks from Szeemann's 'Documenta 5' (1972). Michael Heizer's absence reflects his disapproving of group shows. Most stellar is Weiner's wall, since it demonstrates the revolutionary prowess of a simple idea, whose very unrepeatability ensures that its outcome remains a total surprise. The saddest work by miles belongs to Jannis Kounellis, whose ten original burly burlap sacks are now seven rather wimpy replicas jointly owned by Tate Modern. Hesse's 'Augment' seems so sparkly new that it must actually be the 2009 exhibition copy. Most missed are people clowning around in Franz Erhard Walther's wearable sculptures. Most surprising are the inclusion of posters by an uninvited Daniel Buren and a phone by Walter de Maria, despite Yoko Ono's 1964 version. No doubt, Miuccia loves Stephen Kaltenbach's lip stamp, which prefigures her signature lip fabric introduced in 2000 and revisited in Prada's 2012 collections.

Sue SPAID

'When attitudes become form: Bern 1969 / Venice 2013' thru 3 November at Ca' Corner della Regina, Venice, IT.  
[www.fondazioneprada.org](http://www.fondazioneprada.org)

Robert Motherwell en Antoni Tàpies: side kicks op Biënnale Venetië

LEERMEESTERS  
VAN WELEER



van wie hij vond dat hun thematiek aanleunde bij zijn eigen werk. De tentoonstelling, die luistert naar de naam 'Lo Sguardo dell' Artista (De blik van de kunstenaar)' is een gezamenlijk initiatief van het Palazzo Fortuny, Galleria Toni Tàpies uit Barcelona (uitgebaat door de zoon van Tàpies) en de Axel and May Vervoordt Foundation.

Wie het palazzo al bezocht heeft weet dat de architectuur en de inrichting perfect matchen met het werk en de sfeer waar Axel Vervoordt groe...