## RAY RAPP
NEW YORK

Like Eadweard Muybridge, Ray Rapp is interested in perception and movement. His recent exhibition featured a number of installations and video-sculptures that demonstrate his command of space, images, and technology [Black and White Gallery; November 21—December 20, 2008]. *I Spy*, 2008, begins with video recordings of the everyday actions of people performing such twenty-first century mundane tasks as shopping, exercising, dancing, and playing. He then assembles these scenarios into sculptural installations, presenting them on small, casing-free LCD screens. Colorful extension cords link the disassembled hardware. Splayed all over the gallery walls, floor, and ceiling, they transform the video-installation into a technological wall drawing.

*I Spy*'s point of departure is the 1950s English children's game wherein players get points for identifying people and places in everyday life. While Rapp begins with the premise, "I spy a woman jogging...," he transforms the game into a creative display of accumulation. His imagery is often location-specific. Thus, for this presentation, he shot footage in and around his Brooklyn neighborhood. Using a technique derived from Rotoscoping, Rapp removes the background around the figures and replaces it with fields of bright color. He then reanimates the sequence of images, creating a flickering effect. The figures now move in front of a background of pulsating color. They are often silhouetted, and presented as flat bright colors with differing transparencies. As one movement sequences into the next action, Rapp allows colors to intersect, creating overlaps of color and shape.

In *daisyChain*, 2008, a lime green extension cord connects eight DVD players to steel electrical boxes, creating an oval that spans the gallery wall from floor to ceiling. Smaller LCD monitors are also plugged into the outlets and positioned in the space created by the extension cord, forming a second oval. The images float across each monitor, creating the illusion that they are moving from one to another while simultaneously moving clockwise and counterclockwise along the oval. The mesmerizing work cycles indefinitely. Like *daisyChain*, *spinners*, 2008, and *Greenfield*, 2008, move

from the wall into the gallery's physical space, which they deftly command. Not only is the black coiled extension cord connecting the DVD players in *spinners* an integral part of the work, but the conduit extends from the ceiling to the wall, making a track through which the wires travel. That track becomes a metal maze that invokes minimal sculpture. Each character in the animation—a generic worker—spins like a bicycle wheel, stops, and then spins again. The work's structure and location, which directs our movement, parallels this dizzying effect.

Rapp's work is also loaded with art historical references, and he uses technology to abstract the known and transform it into something new. *billDescends-Staircase*, 2008, is a case in point. While the references to Duchamp are obvious, Rapp also cites Muybridge's *Nude Descending the Staircase*, 1887, as his inspiration. In *billDescendsStaircase*, eight LCD monitors are configured as stairs moving out into the space from the gallery wall. Against a green background, *bill* moves from the top monitor to the bottom, as if walking down a set of stairs. The video was shot both from the front and the top, allowing two simultaneous views of the action. The figure is in suspended animation, forever moving down the stairs. Not only is *billDescendsStaircase* a visually compelling work, it is a technological feat needing a DVD controller to synchronize the image sequence.

In an installation such as *I Spy*, individual pieces play off each other and work together to enrich the experience. Rapp provides a key to the imagery in the print *peopleInMotion*, 2008. Here, individual frames from the forty-nine animations become a character index, tracing the disparate activities that are contained within his game. Spying a young girl acting, or a man in a suit, or even a crossing guard is less the point than understanding how Rapp has recontextualized their activities and turned mundane actions into stimulating visual experiences, creating an environment of technology and play.
—Jody Zellen

## TANJA SOFTIĆ + HOLLY MORRISON
RICHMOND, VA

The poet Gregory Orr, writing in *Poetry as Survival* about the ambiguity of the self, speaks of "the joys and terrors, the boring days and the Kodak moments—all up in smoke and the smoke itself drifted away into the blue of oblivion that is the Vanished Past" and the way "we all of us live our lives with our faces pressed up against the unknown and unknowable next moment...which I...call the Unknowable Next." Caught in the flicker between these expansive but elusive horizons, the self is but "lightly here," an apt title for the exhibition of work by two Richmond printmakers, Holly Morrison and Tanja Softić [Page Bond Gallery; November 7, 2008—January 3, 2009]. In *Lightly Here: Tanja Softić and Holly Morrison*, each artist conveys, by different means and points of reference, the metaphysics of presence and memory. The desolate immediacy of Morrison's digital prints telegraphs a consciousness that is hyperaware and barren. Softić's mixed media works transmit another kind of awareness, fleeting and eccentrically disconnected, through their capricious overlays of colorful, softly muted pictures.

Everything seems heightened in Morrison's work. Her works and their titles both suggest location in time and space. So do the numbers and arrows drawn on objects within the photographic images. It is as if, in a moment of illumination—one that has "gone up" in an almost nuclear flash of light—everything were correlated in perfect clarity, yet the exposed thing is empty. Her work invokes the sentient instant that initiates an act of contemplation: a frightening, vast, specific, and fleeting evacuation that invites perception while also suggesting nothingness, and a place the mind tries desperately to avoid.

*Coordinates*, 2008, a quad-toned archival digital print with dry point on enhanced Somerset Velvet paper, features nine folios loosely suspended in staggered diagonals, the paper curling and bowed, casting shadows along the wall. Scattered images bleed off the edges of the pages—a repeated head and shoulders, the wing of a plane above clouds and earth, a ring of rocks in front of distant cumulonimbus clouds and a mountain, the backs of two feet with big toes touching, the edge of a

## THE ART OF PARTICIPATION: 1950 TO NOW
SAN FRANCISCO

globe, a rainy window filled with kitsch figurines. Like intermittent lacerations or bloody rain, thick diagonals of red ink slash across the pages and images.

Morrison's other works are single large-scale quad-toned digital prints. These minutely focused images of arid landscapes and a concrete interior space are inscribed with cryptic numbers, letters, dashed lines, and arrows, suggesting a present location, a *here and now*, further conveyed by their titles—*Sixty-Three*, *Thirty-Two*, and *Bunker*. Yet this present is a fiction captured by Morrison through an impeccable eye for composition, texture, nuance, and light, which makes the inexorability of these sharply untenanted spaces weirdly disconcerting.

If Morrison's prints convey a relentlessly present consciousness, Softić's *Migrant Universe*, 2007—2008, a series of large mixed-media works, suggests the disheveled loops of memory by way of tangles of natural and unnatural forms, and jumbles of isolated images in subdued browns, oranges, blues, and yellows. Born in Sarajevo, Softić aptly quotes Edward Said's statement in *On Exile* that "Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions…" The strings, beads, bird silhouettes, wires, towers, hairy webs, branches, nests, leaves, molecular patterns, globe, magnetic fields, satellites, blood cells, dragonflies, coils, organs, lungs, vessels, eyes, orbs, nests, and implications of latitude and longitude—the random and the mapped, the graphed and the uncharted—that swarm through her works suggest both the attempt to find order and the ensuing—or inevitable—confusion. If the viewer occasionally wishes for imagery more distinctly personal to the artist, she is also conscious of the loss of identity—the beautiful dislocation—that arises from the mixing of these generic elements.

—Dinah Ryan

On a low platform resides a collection of everyday objects—brooms, oranges, a small refrigerator—alongside neat pencil drawings that provide instructions for the viewer. This stage, Erwin Wurm's *One Minute Sculptures*, 2007-2008, is not merely a prompt for engagement, but the crystallization of a web of interactions that take place within the museum setting during *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* [San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA); November 8, 2008 —February 8, 2009]. Wurm's work transforms the viewer into collaborator, instructing her to physically engage with the objects to complete the sculpture. The sheer absurdity of these gestures in turn attracts the attention of other visitors, and, conforming to its titular one minute, the sculpture takes on a performative quality. Wurm's open-ended sculptures further break down the normal relationships at play within the museum space as the guards—whose role is normally to enforce, among other rules, a strict "do not touch" policy— become participants in the scene.

While each work included or documented in *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* provides an interactive experience, curator Rudolph Frieling's definition of participatory art is expansive, including nearly every conceivable connotation of the word "participation." Throughout the exhibition, the role of the viewer/participant shifts from passive onlooker to active subject, from bystander to collaborator, from unwitting extra to willing contributor. Some encounters are personalized, others anonymous, some physical and others virtual.

*The Art of Participation* takes John Cage's *4'33"*, 1952, as its chronological and conceptual starting point and follows a trajectory through the present that becomes notably more democratic in artists' approaches to audience participation. While Cage's silent work requires participation, it is primarily concerned with the act of perception—shifting the normal relationships between performer and audience, changing the rules of performance just enough so that the act of listening becomes focused on the not-quite-

noiseless silence. Other early works in the exhibition create similar scenarios for interactivity; although there is potential for two-way exchange, it is generally under controlled conditions. Vito Acconci selects involuntary participants in his *Proximity Piece*, 1970, following museum visitors at an uncomfortably close distance. In other cases, the audience is a kind of foil for formal explorations between artwork, artist, and audience, such as in Dan Graham's *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, 1975. Abramović/Ulay's *Inponderabilia*, 1975, VALIE EXPORT's *Zeites TAPP- und TASTKINO (Second TAP and TOUCH CINEMA)*, 1968-1998, and Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, 1965, all cast the audience/participant in a questionable role, forcing us to assume an aggressive, dominant or uncomfortable position vis-à-vis the artist/performer.

Beginning in the 1980s, technology plays an important role in the shift towards a more democratic approach to interactivity. An important inclusion in the exhibition is *Hole-in-Space*, 1980, a lesser-known piece by Los Angeles artists Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, in which they used satellite technology to create otherwise impossible ad hoc communities on street locations in Los Angeles and New York. *Hole-in-Space* connected two groups of onlookers by providing a live-feed broadcast to the opposite coast, without contextual information. The resulting six hours of footage, filmed over the course of three days, reveal long-distance and virtual, but no less genuine, camaraderie, anticipating the types of temporary communities enabled by the spread of the internet.

Many works from the past two decades confront issues of authorship, at times ceding control of content to the participant. Torolab's *Work Room 4*, 2008, provides a blog for museum guards, who post on everything from observations about museum visitors to diaristic musings. Antoni Muntadas' *The File Room* is a proto-wiki that began in 1994 and continues today, offering a living archive of instances of censorship. Harrell Fletcher and John Rubin's *Pictures Collected*