

ABSTRACTS

Prof. Dr. Alexander García Düttmann

is professor for philosophy at Goldsmith College in London. He is working on a research project dealing with concepts of participation in the arts.

Participating in art: Semblance and Consciousness

Participation in art is determined by two different aspects; what seems peculiar about this determination is that, once a distinction between these two aspects has been made, it is difficult to reconcile them. On the one hand participation in art requires immediacy. Such immediacy lies in a certain belief – one believes whatever it is that the artwork represents by way of its semblance, or one believes in the artwork itself, in the artistic representation. When one watches a film, for example, one may have the feeling that there is something important there, something relevant that is worth, and that needs, one's attention. This double belief – believing whatever it is that the artwork represents and believing in the artistic representation – may be inseparable from a belief in the body and in the world which, according to Deleuze, can be regained through modern cinema.

Yet, on the other hand, participation in art also requires a certain mediation. Such mediation is related to the distinction between art and non-art or, in the language of traditional aesthetics, between art and nature. When I turn to an artwork, when I participate in art, I must be aware of the fact that I am turning to an artwork, that I am participating in art – in art and not in nature, as it were. I must ask how an artwork is made, why it has been made in this way and not in that other way, how it relates to other artworks, what it is that is new about it, why it is relevant or not.

It is art that engenders the unity of these two aspects, it is the artwork that asks for an immediate and a mediate relationship to it. However, if it proves difficult to reconcile the two aspects of participation once they have been distinguished, then this is due to the difficulty of determining how, exactly, the awareness of the artwork's artificiality acts on or feeds back into the double belief that also belongs to participation.

Is there not a point at which for participation in art to be immediate, or for there to be a double belief in art, the border between art and nature must be permeable? If I believe that there is something (something important, something relevant) about this or that artwork, or if I believe in what a specific artwork represents, if, for instance, I sense fear when something menacing is represented in a work of art, then it would seem that I cannot *at the same time* let myself be guided by a knowledge that it is all simply a product, something made that could be otherwise, at least in principle, and that therefore is not quite real. The reality of art is not the reality of nature and yet both realities resemble each other in that the immediacy of participation in art signals an artistic demand or requirement without which there would be no aesthetic seriousness and thus ultimately no art.

Prof. Dr. Ronald Jones

is both an artist and a critic for art and design. He is professor for interdisciplinary studies at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Sweden. Jones frequently writes for Frieze, Artforum, Parkett and ID magazine

Ganging Intellectuals or Designing Toasters?

The creative disciplines are undergoing the most significant paradigm shift in living memory as professions migrate from conventional design tasks towards conceiving the intangible commodities which feed the creative economy. Increasingly design projects have a greater sphere of influence, which is to say they are progressively more interdisciplinary or even transdisciplinary.

Dr. Jennifer Allen

is an art-critic based in Berlin. Her texts are published in numerous magazines, including Parkett, Domus, Artforum, Afterall, and Les temps modernes. She recently obtained the ADKV-ART COLOGNE Prize for art criticism.

Sitz- und andere Möglichkeiten

(Sitting- and other possibilities)

My talk starts with the German expression *Sitzmöglichkeiten* – literally 'sitting possibilities' – which I first heard from a lady from whom I was renting a furnished apartment in former East Berlin. Instead of asking me if there were enough 'chairs,' she wanted to know if I had enough 'sitting possibilities.' Since German is a modular language, it's possible to create other such options, like *Auseinandersetzungsmöglichkeiten* (debating possibilities), which I hope will emerge from this talk.

The tendency to name things by a function instead of a form – to privilege the verbal over the nominal; the action over the entity – could be found in several GDR expressions, from *Broiler* (broiler instead of roasted chicken) to *Erdmöbel* (earth furnishing instead of casket), from *Winkelement* (waving element instead of flag) to *Wurfspiel* (throw game instead of darts). Far from a bureaucratic quirk, this linguistic tendency reflects the restriction on private property and the promotion of collective values proper to a socialist regime. Only one person can sit in a chair; everyone has the possibility to sit down. Unlike forms, functions eliminate the question of ownership by remaining common and accessible to all. A first *Auseinandersetzungsmöglichkeit*: Does language influence designers and consumers to treat objects in a different manner, either practically or politically? Compare the verbal 'fan,' 'mixer' and 'telephone' with the nominal 'sofa,' 'lamp' and 'car.' Maybe if cars were called 'driving possibilities,' each car might transport more people than just one driver. And does the collective nature of functions resist the singularity of fetishizations?

This division between form and function – while reflecting the distinct relationships towards property and community in capitalist West Germany and in socialist East Germany – goes back further in German history, namely to Kant's 1790 *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of Judgement), which addresses aesthetic judgements. In a certain way, Kant is the father of modern art and modern design, since he introduced a historical split in the object by privileging its form (as ornament) over its function (as useful purpose). To resume Kant: Only what has been liberated from a particular purpose – a personal interest or a practical use – is worthy of judgements of taste. Whole classes of objects – tapestries, furniture, clothing – were demoted from art to mere craft and design, which could not be judged 'beautiful' but only 'agreeable.' The goal of much modern design has been to overcome this Kantian split in the object between its beautiful decorations and its agreeable uses. Art suffered, too, since artworks could no longer be used without endangering their status as art. A

second *Auseinandersetzungsmöglichkeit*: Is Kant responsible for the current tendency in design to favour appearance over use and viewers over users? Do we still consider seeing an object superior to using one? What would it mean to use an object aesthetically?

Since 1790, both artists and designers have continually challenged the Kantian division between form and function by producing, respectively, useful artworks for exhibitions and artful uses for everyday objects. But the nineties saw the rise of a generation of artists who fused form and function with bravado. 'Relational aesthetics' turned passive viewers into active users – eating soup, talking on couches, getting free massages or taking artworks home – while 'cross-overs' featured the artist as Do-It-Yourself clothing designer, graphic designer or architect. In short, the old Kantian division was over – at least for artists moving into design. A collective like the Rotterdam-based Atelier van Lieshout built spaces – from lobbies to toilets – for museums and corporations; the Stockholm-based Carsten Höller masterminded *The Double Club*, a London bar with dancing, dining and live music; the Berlin-based Bojan Sarcevic put ornament on the pages of old copies of the architectural digest *Baumeister* from 1954. A third *Auseinandersetzungsmöglichkeit*: There was an anti-retinal drive in many relational works, which were critical of the society of the spectacle and the museum's old prohibition: Do Not Touch. If artists considered hands-on use as a more critical collective action than seeing, how did seeing come to dominate use in the realm of design? Does privileging the visual bring design closer to art?

Finally, do these hierarchical divisions – between seeing and use; form and function; beautiful and agreeable; viewers and users – make any sense in our digital era? To answer this question, I will discuss, first, the photograph *Untitled*, 2009, by the Leipzig-based artist Andrzej Steinbach, who snapped a young person wearing an old cassette tape around the neck as jewelry, bref: turning a useful object as a decorative one. Second, I will consider a recent experiment by the BBC Magazine, which invited an English teenager to trade his iPod for a week against a Classic Sony Walkman to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Walkman. The teenager's criticisms about the Walkman – too heavy, too bulky, too many buttons, too few songs, too short battery life – suggest that the object itself is disappearing, taking the distinction between form and function with it. Indeed, the teenager took three days to figure out that the tape cassette could be turned over and did not realize that the "metal" button referred to a type of cassette, not to the genre of metal rock music. The Walkman's failings against the iPod show both an object and a user as informational interfaces, with little bodily contact, less materiality and no mechanics.

A last *Auseinandersetzungsmöglichkeit*: Perhaps it's not use that disappearing from design but mechanics? To what extent is visibility an attempt to transform the object into information?

Dr. Lars Frers

works in the research project "Routes, Roads and Landscapes: Aesthetic Practices en route 1750-2015" at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design.

Design and social control. Furniture in socio-spatial constellations.

Things do not live in a world of their own, separate from us. To the contrary, we share the same space, are affected by the same flow of time that affects things. Accordingly, our social lives are also not separate from the lives of the things around us. In this presentation, I will try to demonstrate how social life interacts with the life of things, how things enter everyday routines and practices, how they guide and regulate our behavior. The key to this process lies in the concrete, sensual perception of the things as they present themselves in locally specific socio-spatial constellations. Usually, perception is seen as something that happens before action. People perceive first, then they make a decision based on what they perceived, and finally they act, based on their decision. However, analyzing video recordings of how people actually move through space and time, it becomes apparent that action and perception go hand in hand, that every act generates perceptions, and that every perception is an act too. The perceptions and actions of people are in constant connection to their surroundings, to a handrail that they touch, to a long bench on which one other person is sitting etc. These socio-spatial constellations shape the perception-actions of people. Certain aspects of their surroundings are attractive, others are repulsive, some offer specific uses, while others restrict what people can see and do – the constant interplay of all these factors creates constellations in which social control is established by making certain activities normal and by displaying others as deviant. Usually, one is not aware of these processes. Social control is established by furnishing and designing settings in a certain way, but it is not noticed as such. The goal of this presentation is to make these processes available for explicit reflection – and to show the ambivalences of establishing control by design.

Burkhard Meltzer, Tido von Oppeln (Institute for Critical Theory at the ZHdK, Zurich)

In collaboration with Klaus Spechtenhauser (ETH Zürich, Wohnforum) and Dr. Monika Kritzmöller (University of St. Gallen, Institute for Sociology)

The work of design and the lifeworld of art

For the further understanding of the term “work”, as relating to art or design, we have set the following premises for our research: The term “work of...” is used to describe a system, referencing topics like the lifeworld, object relations, and art and design history. These links form a set of cultural conventions framing the conditions of being able to perceive something as a “work”. Within the contexts of art and design, we want to pose the following questions: Has the idea of a “work of design” already been established over the past 20 years, even though it may not explicitly be called that? And in what ways have these developments in design culture been transforming the notion of a work of art?

To follow those transformations, we chose to explore the way furniture is used or produced in installations of art and design. Of course, this category of object does not introduce a new genre, but simply signifies a commodity group. The relevance of this narrow focus of examination is based mainly on the narrative, performative and even abstract qualities of furniture and how it refers to personal and social relations of material and visual culture. The methods of the project “prototype” involved image-based research, as well as interviews with various artists and designers.

The work of design

Throughout the 20th century, the disciplines of art and design have been expanding their methods of work and presentation, as well as appropriating each others contextual topics. By examining works such as Charles and Ray Eames's “La Chaise” (1948), Jasper Morrison's “Some New Items for the Home” (1987) and the contemporary designs of Front und Martino Gamper, we will look at how an emerging notion of a work of design established itself to the present day. For example, Morrison's “Some New Items From the Home” shows the broadening reference structure of design since the late 1980s. Morrison's installation shifts the significance of the utility object towards a notion of a “work”, but within the economic and cultural context of industrial design. The pictorial quality of objects within the space of an installation can be seen as a self-referential “work of design”. Institutions like design galleries and museums have also established a framework for this development since the late 1980s.

The work of art under designs influence

The notion of an artwork in the 20th century has many influences, from the material culture of everyday life, to social developments and the media. But it seems necessary to add another important factor that, over the past 20 years, has affected the way an artwork is related to its audience: the recent emergence of design. Obviously, many artists using industrially designed objects and materials for their work are already implying an appropriated work of design, simply by using these references. Looking at installations of Martin Boyce, Mamiko Otsubo,

Xabier Salaberria and Florian Slotawa, we have examined this development in contemporary art. During our research for the project "prototype", we found that if art references design then there are two topics of main interest: firstly, design history, often related to social and economic utopia; and, secondly, fragments of a living environment connected to the target groups of commodities. Both aspects could also be seen as parts of the reference system of works in the field of design. It also implies that distinct commodity attributes and references to the lifeworld of a target group have, in many cases, now become an integral part of the conditions to perceive an object as an artwork. This development is also connected to fundamental questions about recent notions of an artwork, such as those that have been raised with Minimal and Concept Art, and their relations to publicity and economy since the 1960s.

Judith Welter

is an art historian and oversees the collection of the migros museum for contemporary art.

From illusionary to real rooms

Works from the Sammlung migros museum für gegenwartskunst Zürich

Judith Welter

This presentation is bringing together a selection of works from the collection of the migros museum für gegenwartskunst, which appropriate, reflect, or use furniture and design in various ways. Different notions of the relationship between the fields of furniture design and art and the change from the functional use of furniture to a practice on “art on design” as proposed by the research project the symposium is based on, can be observed by having a close look at the various positions.

In the work of British artist Marc Camille Chaimowicz, furniture and more generally interior design and arts & crafts play a central role. Chaimowicz' used furniture and other objects take over a referential function and are used as fetishes referring to a nostalgic past and evoke different states of emotionality. This strategy is obvious in the work *Partial Eclipse* (1980–2003), a slide installation showing the interior of the artist's apartment paired with still lifes. The gesture of arranging objects and furniture serve as a practice of “Homage”. The recently strengthened attention to the work of Chaimowicz and the critical reevaluation furthermore reveal the rising interest in the relationship and mutual influences between the fields of art and design. Chaimowicz' work *Celebration? Realife Revisited* (1972 – 2002) leads over to the strategy of using and appropriating furniture and design in the art of the 1990ies.

The participative works, as for example *Office/Reception Unit* (1996) by the collective Atelier van Lieshout, the *Infomobile* (1999) by L/B (Lang/Baumann), *Reading Room* (1996) by Douglas Gordon or *Contemplation Room* (1998) by Alicia Framis illustrate the aesthetics of the 1990ies and the questioning of boundaries and limitations of the institution itself, a common strategy of the artistic practice at the time. Common and known room models and architectural settings with specific functions are transferred into the institutional space and invite the viewer to participate in creating the artwork and defining a new, expanded role of the museum.

A last example shows another notion of functionality in the use of furniture by artists. Urs Fischer is rebuilding and alienating every day and common objects. The stool for example is one of the motives he repeatedly uses in his installations and sculptures. The furniture loses its functionality but takes over a narrative function. Fischer's work *Frozen* (1998) serves as an example to illustrate how furniture and a referential design are being used to create specific spatial atmospheres and to evoke uncanny rooms.

Artisttalk:**Heike Munder**

is a curator and director of the migros museum of contemporary art since 2001 .

Tatiana Trouvé

is an artist who often uses furniture and architectural elements in her work. Trouvé's solo show will open at November 20th, 2009 at the migros museum for contemporary art. She received the Prix Marcel Duchamp in 2007. The Centre Pompidou honoured her work with exhibition in 2008.

Panel:**Martin Boyce**

is an artist whose works often refer to modern design and architecture. A recent presentation of his work is on show at the Scottish Pavillon of the Venice Biennial until November 2009. He lives and works in Glasgow.

Prof. Frédéric Dedelley

is a designer based in Zurich, where he has run a design studio since 1995. He was professor of furniture design at the university of art and design in Basel from 2001 to 2008.

Max Borka

has worked as a journalist for politics and culture for more than two decades. His positions include director of the Interieur Foundation in Kortrijk, organiser of the Interieur Biennale and artistic director of designbrussels. Today he has established himself as a writer and curator in the fields of art, architecture and design.

Keynote speech:

Let me start this short introduction to the debate with a confession. From 1985 till 1999, I've been working as a journalist, writing on almost every subject imaginable. There was one particular subject matter though I had been specialising in: contemporary art. But when I dropped journalism, end of the nineties, I also decided to quit the art world, that seemed to have become too much of a bubble. I embraced design, and became director of the Interieur Foundation, organiser of the Interieur Biennale, in order to get in touch with reality again. I've been stuck into design ever since. But it doesn't prevent me from feeling slightly embarrassed when I'm asked after my doings and recent activities, especially by people that haven't seen me since the times when I still was an art critic. As if I had dropped this noble profession to become a pimp. It's an uneasiness that stems from the fact that I soon discovered that design is a bastard, in every sense of the word. It was born as a bastard child, when the name was coined into a synonym for all tools for living, in the first half of the 19th century. Everyone knew the

mother: the Industrial Revolution. Her lovers were many, going from Philosophy and Psychology, to Engineering and Technology. None of them claimed the fatherhood. But each of them kept supporting the child that turned into a ruthless World Emperor, controlling our daily life in almost every detail. True to his bastard nature, the motto on his coat of arms, that once read 'Form follows Function', slowly turned into: 'Sell Whatever to Whoever in Whatever Way. All this may sound somewhat far-fetched, I admit, and cliché. But there's a core of truth in it, as we can daily experience from the surrounding landscape, subject to global warming, and enclosed by mountains of waste. Some designers have turned to the fine arts, in their search of alternatives, a newfound freedom to create, and route of escape, trading function for a series of other F-words, as the primal motive in their work, such as Fiction and Friction, Fantasy and Fragility, Famine and Fury, or Fun, Fuck and Funk. One of them is Frédéric Dedelley, who is also one of my two sparring partners in this debate. Born in Fribourg, in 1964, and living and working in Zürich, Frédéric also calls himself as a Design Detective. He describes his design approach as intuitive rather than being motivated by the familiar design strategies. It is also largely based on his photographic work, in which he tries to capture unexpected situations, curious objects, and what he describes as 'surprisingly atmospheric moments of everyday life'. My other guest is Martin Boyce. He was born in Hamilton, Scotland, in 1967, and represented Scotland with a solo-exhibition at the latest Venice Biennale. There were times when he thought: I should be a designer. But then: why would anybody need another chair. There's already plenty of wonderful chairs out there. He's still using industrial materials, anonymous elements such as ventilation grills, rubbish bins and black-link fencing, next to icons of classic modernist design, such as Ray & Ray Eames leg splints and Jacobsen chairs, incorporating them in masks and mobiles, or using them as triggers and props to spark and construct spaces and landscapes that hover in between the real and the imaginary, the public and the personal, the dark and the romantic, the enclosed and the open ended. In doing so, he also questions objects and the ethics and politics they entered the world with, and the narrative surrounding them.

Long gone are the pre-industrial times when, as could already be judged by names such as applied arts or decorative arts, art and craft could still live in perfect symbiosis. With the coming of the industrial revolution, each went its own way. One became a bastard, and the other a rebel, turning autonomy, refusal and the sublime into its highest aims. Art became primarily about freedom, design about constraints. These constraints, and especially the functional and utilitarian, economic and ergonomic ones, have become so obsolete and suffocating, that –not only despite but also because of its other-worldliness - art seems to have become one of the few, if not the only antidote, to bring design to its senses again.