

EN

DON'T LOOK NOW

**THE COLLECTION OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
PART 1**

11.06.2010 – 20.03.2011

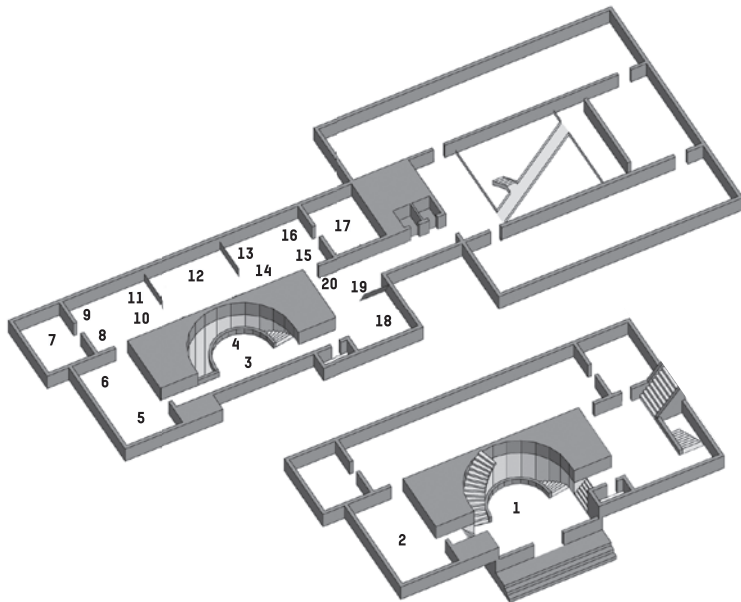
In memory of Toni Gerber (1932–2010)

**KUNST
MUSEUM
BERN**

EXHIBITION GUIDE

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Introduction

Don't Look Now: The Collection of Contemporary Art, Part 1 is the first in an annual series of themed presentations of the collection organized by the Contemporary Art Department in the Kunstmuseum Bern. With the playful invitation not to look now, we are presenting works from the large international collection comprising the holdings and long-term loans of the Stiftung Kunsthalle Bern, the Stiftung Kunst Heute, the Stiftung GegenwartART, the Bernische Stiftung für Fotografie, Film und Video, the Hermann und Margrit Rupf Foundation, the donations of Toni Gerber as well as the Kunstmuseum itself. Because the Kunstmuseum Bern lacks space for a permanent presentation, this comprehensive collection is unfortunately not always on view. All too often for visitors interested in art this means: Do not look now because there is nothing contemporary to be seen anyway.

The exhibition title, however, also references the film ***Don't Look Now*** (1973), which deals with destiny, hallucinations, and perception in general. The British director Nicolas Roeg based this thriller on a short story by Daphne du Maurier. It revolves around the problem of the most crucial factors often remaining invisible or being easily overlooked. In an irresolvable contradiction, the title demands that we abstain from looking even if we feel compelled to do so. Despite blatant warnings, the protagonist of the film is unable to see the approaching disaster that he will fall victim to. Although equally puzzling the artworks chosen for our exhibition may appear a little less dramatic. They address the subject of visualizing the invisible or non-depictable, namely the subject of perception itself. They involve

their viewers in a similarly paradoxical situation by inviting their gaze while offering 'nothing' to see. In any case, the nagging feeling of not having seen the essential or at least being unable to describe it in words is a common one when looking at contemporary art, and the exhibition's contradictory motto symbolizes the challenge of engaging with it.

The starting point and a crucial work for the exhibition is James Lee Byars's *The Looking Glass* (1978) [1], a larger-than-man-size sheet of glass with a hole at eye level trimmed with gold. Byars' artwork, at first, offers simultaneously nothing and everything to see. Above all, the gold-framed hole marks out the place at and through which viewing should take place. However, it fails to deliver any proof of whether we really will see more from this point. Instead it sharpens the viewer's awareness for the act of viewing as indicated in the work's title 'looking glass', that is, 'mirror'. It is probably no coincidence that the artist has chosen a work title referring to the verb 'to look' rather than 'to see', which can be associated with 'insight' and 'understanding'. It seems as if James Lee Byars wanted to draw our attention to the complexity of engaging with contemporary art and of sensory perception in general, to point out that just because we look at something does not mean we see it.

Contemporary artists do not only strive for a visual means of understanding. In an art museum the visual sense is the most important – after all, touching the artworks is prohibited. However, since the 1960s audio-visual artworks have increasingly emerged and mu-

seum space is gradually being conquered by the acoustic, haptic, olfactory, and even the culinary. Media, genres and concepts that no longer limit themselves to the merely visual gradually have taken their place in art following the rapid spread of (video) installations, the emphasis on interactivity, and performance art, in which the artists' entire bodies play a role and which stage a communal happening with their audience. For example, Christian Marclay's *White Noise* [3] is located at the interface between the visual and the acoustic and devoted to making an acoustic phenomenon visually manifest. And Silvia Bächli's tables with drawings [13] extend the graphic medium with the assistance of compositional principles and perspectives that originate from physical sensations. The case is similar in Tracey Rose's boxing performance [11], which is filmed in a way that the act of viewing mutates into a total bodily experience.

1

James Lee Byars, *The Looking Glass* (1978)

James Lee Byars (b. 1932 in Detroit, d. 1997 in Cairo) studied art, psychology, and philosophy before emerging as an artist. All of his works have been given enigmatic titles. This is also the case with the object *The Looking Glass* (1978), which previously had the title *I Change My Mind Through The Golden Hole* as well as *Imagine I Say I Change My Mind Through The Gold Hole in the Middle*. The description 'I Change My Mind Through The Golden Hole' is reminiscent of many of Byars's actions that consisted of momentary events. His work challenges spectators to act in place of the performance artist. At eye level they are invited to look through the hole and see things differently and – as the earlier title announced – imagine that the artist has changed his view of things: on peering through the hole we inevitably ask ourselves if we now think differently or if nothing at all has taken place. *The Looking Glass*, with its gold-rimmed hole in the pane of glass, directs the gaze to the act of looking itself, to the connection between ideas and perception. Thereby our attention is directed towards the invisible, the spiritual – to that which dwells beyond the material world of things. With his precise viewing instructions, Byars entices us to go beyond seeing to awareness: be it simply that he makes the moment present in which a change of opinion occurs, or be it that he lets the awareness materialise that art can only exist when perceived consciously.

2

Yves Netzhammer, *Die Subjektivierung der Wiederholung, Projekt B* (2007)

Yves Netzhammer's (b. 1970 in Schaffhausen) space-filling installation *Die Subjektivierung der Wiederholung, Projekt B* [The Subjectification of Repetition, Project B] consists of stage enclosure with ceiling painting and reflective sidewalls. A wooden silhouette of a tree is housed in the corner. Fallen leaves lie singly on the floor. Three video projections of digital animations, each of approx. 37 min. duration, are let into the mirrored walls and accompanied by a soundtrack composed by Bernd Schurer. The film projections as well as the surroundings and the viewer are multiplied via the mirrored sidewalls. The impression of a multi-dimensional universe is generated, in whose centre a tree stands with a planetary system of images orbiting in its branches. The same motifs appear in all three films, comprising images of violence and affinity between people, animals and plants: for example, a cigarette is put out on a person's arm; an elephant lying on the floor bleeds to death; a person's tongue is being stretched by a wire clamp; a chameleon hovers in the air; leaves fall and collect on a magnificent garment, and so on. Transformation is a recurring motif, be it the chameleon adapting to its surroundings or one creature transforming into another. The evocation of the ability to transform can either be understood as questioning the concept of consistent identities or as a reference to the fundamental similarity of all creatures because they all clearly carry the germ of others within them.

Christian Marclay, *White Noise* (1993)

Christian Marclay's (b. 1955 in San Rafael, USA) art revolves around musical phenomena. In his installations, collages and objects he focuses mainly on transposing the audible into the visible. The wall installation *White Noise* (1993) portrays the acoustic phenomenon that is named in the title and perceived like a voiceless 'ssshhhh'. The photographs Marclay has fixed back to front on a wall make it appear like a gigantic white wall that – like noise – is composed of an infinite quantity of single tones put together within a defined spectrum. Occasional notes written on the backs of the photographs break through the homogeneity and create random accents. At the same time they evoke images of the people who were photographed and who remain, however, invisible. The reproductions comprise thousands of anonymous portraits that Marclay found at flea markets and represent various biographies and memories. Marclay's wall installation encourages viewers to conceive for themselves both the images and sounds. At the same time the artist minimizes the visual completely by hanging the photographs back to front, that is, he makes the spectator oscillate between seeing and listening or to let one sense do the work of the other. The artist thereby simultaneously makes viewers sensitive to the limits of perception and opens up poetic space for border crossings.

Adrian Schiess, *Flache Arbeiten* (1988)

Adrian Schiess's (b. 1959 in Zürich) *Flache Arbeiten* [Flat Works] (1988) comprise five rectangular particleboards in two different formats, which are lacquered in various tones of color. Supported by simple strips of wood, the colored panels are arranged across the floor at regular distances from each other. Adrian Schiess's painterly innovation lies in liberating the painting from its conventional position on the wall and laying it on the floor. The flat, anonymous coating functions as a priming open for all kinds of things, such as the fall of light, which varies according to the panels' positioning within a space. In this way Adrian Schiess questions the nature of a painting. The pictorial field in these works is not a window that proffers an image of reality, an illusion, a symbol, or a mark. Color tends to play an insignificant role because it is difficult to determine, despite the specific hues of the panels. Their surfaces are instead, by reflections, infused by the surrounding space. By such a dependency on its environs, the picture is liberated from its traditionally stationary state: it becomes a continually changing chameleon-like creation. Schiess therefore does not comprehend a painting as the result of the painting process, but as event that is taking place anew every single moment. His *Flache Arbeiten* are reflectional fields of continually changing manifestations and surroundings.

Boris Nieslony, *Das Paradies* (1988)

According to the Bible, Paradise is a place where the first human couple lived in innocence until it was persuaded by a serpent to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. After this Adam and Eve became aware of their own nakedness, began to be ashamed in the presence of each other, and finally were banished from Paradise. In 1980, Boris Nieslony (b. 1945 in Grimma, Germany) began to work on his installation as a long-term project by documenting the work table in his Cologne studio with a camera. The photographs quickly became too limiting and *Das Paradies* [Paradise] expanded into an elaborate system of interrelated tables. By means of hundreds of objects, Nieslony created an 'ethnography of the everyday', in which the eye could indulge in a 'paradise of innocent curiosity'. *Das Paradies* also makes cognitive processes visible in his work by referring, for example, to the various states of the objects: the things simultaneously appear as themselves, as reflections in sheets of glass, magnifying glasses, and in mirrored surfaces as well as in photographic reproductions. Which of these is closer to reality and what is the relationship between the individual elements? Besides a multitude of possible combinations, the work explores optical illusions and complexity. Who would really want to differentiate between the real object as opposed to a reflection? And to what extent does knowledge influence seeing? Can we believe what we see or what we know?

Christoph Rütimann, *Mit gelbem Rechteck* (1990/1994) / *Grosses Violett mit zwei Quadraten* (1994)

Christoph Rütimann's (b. 1955 in Zürich) pictorial compositions, *Mit gelbem Rechteck* [With Yellow Rectangle] and *Grosses Violett mit zwei Quadraten* [Large Violet with Two Squares], consist of sheets of glass painted with monochrome colors and lent against the wall at acute angles. An interest in questions of perception led the artist to take up the technique of reverse glass painting. Furthermore, Rütimann was searching for alternatives to the figurative, often illustrative, and narrative kind of painting that dominated the art world in the early 1980s. In contrast to practices prevalent in conventional painting, the first layer of paint is the binding one in reverse glass painting because it's the only one which remains visible. Further layers create a patina, which is only visible from the sides. The glass is analogous to the canvas of the traditional picture support. Otherwise it also acts as a transparent protective membrane that, while it isolates the paint from the viewers, reflects their images, confronting them with themselves and with their surroundings, visually increasing the impression of space. The smooth glass surfaces present the paint in a virtually dematerialized form and are simultaneously projection surfaces in which space is perceived in all its depth, appearing to unfold as if seen through a window. This ambiguity – painting that is fascinating in its flatness and color as well as a surface that mirrors other objects – brings movement into the viewers' gaze, sharpening their perception.

Markus Raetz, *Ohne Titel* (1980–1983)

In 1983, Markus Raetz (b. 1941 in Büren on the Aare) made an installation comprising 24 individual artworks created over a period of three years for the small space in the Kunstmuseum Bern's so-called Stettlerbau. This untitled installation is highly representative of the artist's oeuvre in its complexity and scope of materials and media. Raetz's art makes viewers experience perception as an interaction between audience and work. His artworks demand that viewers actively partake intellectually, because intense viewing and consideration are necessary in order to achieve even a modest and vague idea of Raetz's pictorial cosmos. The installation space is ultimately to be understood as a single complex work. Due to the installation's expansiveness it can only be comprehended by careful exploration, during which it continually presents itself anew in relation to the viewer's standpoint. There appears to be no ideal position from which to view the installation. Having to processually perceive the single works necessitates that viewers find interconnections, which they, however, can only discover from a certain distance. The interrelationship of all the objects can only be discerned by moving through the installation space and thereby by triggering the viewer's perceptual process. The beholder can only comprehend the sense of the whole as a result of the perceptive process, although the installation is never visible in its entirety. Rather, an imaginary gathering of various partial or momentary views occurs through remembering what we just saw but is now no longer being viewed.

Stefan Brüggemann, *K.B. OBLITERATION NEON* (2008)

Stefan Brüggemann's (b. 1975 in Mexico City) *K.B. OBLITERATION NEON* refuses to make a straightforward statement. The artist presents the viewer with a bundle of lines constructed of neon tubes. They give the impression that the artist has often deleted something that was written and thereby 'obliterated' it, as the title suggests. The neon light construction crisscrosses and overlaps the mysterious glow of white light. *K.B. OBLITERATION NEON* displays several contradictions simultaneously: The subjective impression of something that has been emphatically negated is presented in an impersonal and public medium that belongs to the domain of advertising. Additionally, the illegible sign is underscored by the harsh light in which it appears to hover. At the same time, the work 'speaks' of something that we can not see because it never actually existed: that which has been crossed out and erased. Crossing out nothing seems pointless, but the neon image nevertheless fascinates and irritates us with its blinding halo of light. In this way Stefan Brüggemann provokes our orientation toward performance and efficiency. Furthermore, he plays with the symbolical value of light, which is connected to terms such as 'insight' and 'enlightenment' in our language. The artist, however, prevents any form of deeper insight being attained by equating crossing something out with crossing out itself, whereby both lose their fundamental meaning.

Herbert Brandl, *Ohne Titel* (1993) (3 Werke)

In Herbert Brandl's (b. 1959 in Graz) three large and untitled paintings, the initial layers of paint have been generously applied with expressive gestures in different directions. He has then applied a silver film-like coat of lacquer over them. It appears almost as if the painter wanted to erase his paintings and as if he has achieved this goal to varying degrees on the different canvasses. Depending on the refraction of light, colors appear differently and can consequently only be defined in comparison to another. The vexing dullness of the lacquer, whilst intensely reflective of light, fails to mirror any image, ultimately causing the eye not only to bounce off the surfaces of the paintings but also to linger upon them. The silver layer is thus reminiscent of a membrane that separates imaginary (pictorial) space from real space and simultaneously makes the interface mediating between the two spheres visible. The shimmering of the silver surface imbues it with an immaterial and elusive quality. But, when viewed from the side, the distinct relief-like textures of the underlying paint become visible and vary according to the fall of light. The considerable size of the canvasses allows the viewer to experience them as pictorial spaces in which revealing and veiling, transparency and opacity, openness and deception are all realized equally and by the same means.

Hans Danuser, *Chemie II* (1988/1989)

'Is it still possible to document the world photographically in the era of electronic media?' Hans Danuser (b. 1953 in Chur) asked himself this question in advance of his work on the seven pictorial essays *In Vivo* on sensitive areas in our civilization. They are sensitive because they are sectors in which value is created, knowledge increased, or power strengthened, and of which no pictures previously existed as they were principally concealed from the public eye. Hans Danuser's procedure is initially that of a photojournalist. The artist photographs his motifs in black-and-white. Then he selects details to enlarge and processes them further, utilizing all the technical possibilities a darkroom has at its disposal. With this working method, Hans Danuser creates highly focused pictorial essays, which do not show everything, but instead evoke all the more, as is the case in *Chemie II* [Chemistry II] comprising twelve photographs from the sectors of genetic research and biotechnology in the field of pharmaceutical and agricultural science. Practically all the motifs are details displaying no depth. The gaze is unable to penetrate beyond the superficial and lingers instead on the picture surface over which painterly all-over structures extend. In this area the invention of imagery – compressing sensory impressions together into an image to be viewed in a photographic laboratory so as to visualize the invisible – is more important than documenting real events that occur at a microscopic level and, in any case, are only apprehensible via conceptual models.

11

Tracey Rose, *T.K.O. (Technical Knock-Out)* (2000)

Tracey Rose (b. 1974 in Durban, SA) belongs to the generation of contemporary South African artists who grew up during Apartheid and were witnesses of as well as protagonists in the painful transition to post-Apartheid in the mid-1990s. As a non-white with German roots and well as a Catholic upbringing, she creates work dealing mainly with her identity as a 'colored person' and a woman within the complex structures of South African society. In her video *T.K.O. (Technical Knock-Out)* Tracey Rose hits a punch bag with increasing frequency and mounting aggression. At the same time the spectator hears the accompanying sounds. The images of her body from the four differing camera perspectives are as detached and ambiguous as the sounds emanating from her body. It remains unclear where the artist's body begins and ends. Instead of providing a stable point of view, the work emphasizes the multi-sensory perception of the artist's physical experience, whilst she, as an individual, appears to be virtually dissolving in the sweat of physical exertion. Additionally, the compositional structure leaves open who exactly is hitting whom or whether Tracey Rose may, in an act of symbolic self-punishment, even be hitting herself. There is no clear-cut line between puncher and punched, and instead the audience finds itself in an arena in which the artist is simultaneously both, and it can alternatively or simultaneously identify with both positions.

12

Bill Viola, *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House* (1983)

This 19 min. long video performance is a fascinating experiment carried out by the video artist Bill Viola (b. 1951 in New York). He filmed himself while he spent three days and nights alone, without any distractions, in a room while he attempted to remain awake for the entire duration. The passing of time is made apparent only by the changes in daylight and the various noises from outside. The position of the camera remains unchanged in a corner of the room from where the space is filmed. Although the view of events is somewhat like that of a security camera the door stands ajar for the entire duration. The experiment does not present a prisoner but rather a volunteer immersed in spiritual meditation for the purposes of self-revelation. The spectator remains fascinated by the concentrated attitude that the performer attempts to maintain until the end, when his movements grow increasingly agitated. The space appears 'noticeably more subjective, as much for the protagonist as the viewer, while events slip in and out of consciousness and the persistence of the situation becomes ever more brutal'. Bill Viola is interested in the perceptual border zone between real and experiential space as well as spiritual experience. The latter can result from a heightened perception of the present and has its roots in his long-term interest in Eastern philosophy

Silvia Bächli, *Table with 8 Drawings (Bodies)/Tisch mit 8 Zeichnungen (Körper)* (1993–1998), *Table with 11 Drawings (Scratching / Dissolving)/Tisch mit 11 Zeichnungen (Ritzungen / Zerfliessen)* (1992–1997) (Will be exhibited alternately.)

Although Silvia Bächli's (b. 1956 in Wettingen) drawings in table-top displays may be considered figurative, they are neither bound to realism nor reducible to the symbolic nor the easily decipherable. In *Tisch mit 8 Zeichnungen (Körper)* [Table with 8 Drawings (Bodies)] and *Tisch mit 11 Zeichnungen (Ritzungen / Zerfliessen)* [Table with 11 Drawings (Scratching / Dissolving)], fragments of bodies and landscapes appear somehow familiarly strange. They are not primarily based upon exact visual studies of objects but rather upon multi-layered perception of our own physical nature or own environment. Bächli has developed her grouping displays further in the non-chronological and non-linear arrangements on tables. In a viewing and selection process involving myriad sheets, the artist chooses a few drawings. Affinities only become apparent during this process, and a common 'theme' then emerges and develops. A probably never clearly definable meaning arises from the interrelationships and rivalries between the individual sheets as well as from the references to the surrounding space, which are always relevant in such presentations. Silvia Bächli's arrangements convey the impression of providing an overview and some form of order. However, this remains tenuous due to the complexity and fundamental openness of the individual drawings and persistently eludes rational interpretation. The depiction's sensory orientation and its fragmentary nature invite the viewer to imagine how groups as well as individual motifs might infinitely continue on a sheet.

Pia Fries,
Ahli (1991/1992), *Fich* (1991/1992)

Both paintings fascinate on account of the generously applied paint, which in some areas accumulates in ridges and paths several centimeters thick. Pia Fries (b. 1955 in Beromünster) deploys paint not only for its visual effect and as an expressive medium, but also from the very start as a sculptural material. In this way she confirms its power and durability and engages with the ever new possibilities for pictorial invention with an unencumbered curiosity. Even though there is no particular underlying theoretical concept to Pia Fries's painting, she does set out clear guidelines for her practice, allowing the effervescent vitality of her compositions to develop in a systematic way. She invents imaginary onomatopoeic titles for her works. By means of this device she endows her pictures with an autonomous identity without confining them thematically. The onomatopoeia of the title refers instead to an additional quality fundamental to her painting, that is, to synesthesia (involving several senses). Her ribbed, streaked and abrasive masses of paint clearly not only encourage a haptic perception and tempt tactile contact or her saturated hues – reminiscent of ripe fruit – activate the sense of smell and taste, but similarly also her one- or two-syllable titles evoke musical and linguistic associations.

Joel Fisher, *Apographs* (around 1978)

Apograph is the name Joel Fisher (b. 1947 in Salem, USA) gave to his handmade sheets of paper on which symbols have been drawn in black felt-tip pen. 'Apograph' means transcript or copy: The letters or numbers drawn on the paper are in fact enlarged duplications of visible structures in the handmade paper. The artist takes these as a basis from which to derive his own linear figures. Often he finally transposes them into three dimensions, so that the drawings in effect become the rudimentary plans for sculptures. The fact that Fisher focuses on structures resembling letters or numbers is no coincidence: The artist is just as interested in letters as fundamental data as he is in the search for 'universal forms' in his sculptures. The attraction of the *Apographs* lies in viewers eventually realizing that the figures derive from basically insignificant patterns, leading to a temporary suspension of recognizing them as numbers or letters, only to then again marvel at logical sequences of numbers or letters nevertheless emerging from the drawings. Ultimately, however, the impression of a visual sign has been generated that has clearly emancipated itself from its explicit literacy and opened itself up to a multitude of associations. Due to the puzzling continuity and a basic similarity between all of the different figures, the issues of cause and effect, original and copy are also ultimately visually formulated.

Olivier Mosset, *Red Painting* (1981)

Olivier Mosset's (b. 1944 in Bern) engagement with monochrome painting and oversized formats revolves around questions of the essence of painting, with the intention of creating paintings that are 'nothing but painting'. Already at the beginning of his artistic career, Mosset was interested in an impartial, impersonal art that was not to be misappropriated for political purposes. The title *Red Painting* from 1981 precisely and succinctly describes what the work is, a red painting. The intense color evokes many associations. Red is the color of blood and of life, it betokens not only warmth but also fire and danger or signals alarm, it may allude to sin and embarrassment; ultimately it is likewise simply the color which antagonizes the human eye most. It is precisely the lack of a motif that causes the eye to stray, to wander across or within the shimmering matte color, which does not appear to be a substance applied to the canvas but rather seems virtually dislocated, a hovering intensive field of color. However, it was not Mosset's intention to evoke a transcendental color sensibility with his monochrome painting: The red is too significantly matte to be appropriate for such metaphysical allusions. Instead, Mosset's absolutely flatly painted or seemingly not-painted-at-all works generate an enormous visual tension, proving what the artist himself already suspected: 'A work is never only itself and never truly neutral. These seem to be the contradictions that we are dealing with.'

Ceal Floyer, *Light* (1994)

A light bulb and four projectors have been set up in a darkened space. The light is not connected to the electricity and is lit instead by the beams of the slide projectors, whereby it throws strange cones of light back onto the walls. Metal templates are fixed to the front of the projectors and cut out in the shape of light bulbs. They concentrate the projected beams of light and generate the impression of a glowing lamp. This effect tends to astound the viewer, although a lit-up lamp is usually a matter of course. Lighting, which is normally considered as merely incidental within an exhibition space, has become the subject in question in this poetic staging, namely the work itself. The point behind Ceal Floyer's (b. 1968 in Karachi, PK) work lies in the reversal of cause and effect, of depiction and the depicted. Even though the title *Light* refers to light's fundamental significance for both art and visual perception, it would be misleading to read this work merely as a paradigm for optical predominance in cultural and art discourses. On entering the exhibition space and then realizing how *Light* functions, particularly the minimalist appearance of the work makes the viewer aware of the perceptual act as a process dependent on time and space. The optical (and acoustic) irritations, which only gradually become apparent, provoke a thought process that does not, however, break off after we have discovered how this artwork functions.

Nam June Paik, *Egg Grows Positive and Negative* (1993)

Two floodlights illuminate the film location: a simple console on which a chicken's egg lies. The video camera records the scene and displays the image in a row of seven monitors altogether. It is always the same egg, even though the format and the position of the screens change. They sequentially grow and each tilts on its corner more to the right. As the screen adopts a vertical position stage by stage, the chicken's egg also turns, suggesting a steadfast link between the image source and the medium of display. As a still life or *Nature morte*, *Egg grows Positive and Negative* does not convey an image of frozen life but is a rather lively creation, as the image of the egg is continually formed anew within fragments of a second by way the monitors function. Even the occasional shift from positive to negative simply underscores the performative dimension of the installation. The viewer is not a witness to the transient being preserved for posterity and to the creation of an image of ephemeral presence, but rather the present exists forever via the scanning compilation of the video image: The image is created anew from moment to moment. This concept of infinite presence accompanies Nam June Paik's (b. 1932 in Seoul, d. 2006 in Miami) obsessive involvement with the tension between permanence and the ephemeral moment. Such opposition simultaneously dissipates because, according to the concepts of Zen Buddhism, being and time are identical.

Rémy Zaugg, *VOIR MORT* (1991)

Rémy Zaugg's (b. 1943 in Courgenay, d. 2005 in Basel) neon text consists of two words in capitals in extra bold Univers typeface: '**VOIR**' (see) and '**MORT**' (death). In relation to each other they do not make much sense but evoke mysterious dark associations: see death. Actually see death? See even when dead? The fragment of text illuminated in green is strangely insistent, particularly in the context of an urban environment, in locations normally reserved for product advertising. Inevitably neon signs are tied to advertising. This makes Rémy Zaugg's contrary advertising message all the more provoking. While advertising usually entices to consumption, this conceptual artist advertises death, the complete antithesis of pleasurable sensations. What the work leaves grammatically unclear, however, is who is looking at whom; are we looking at death or is it looking at us? Therefore *VOIR MORT* functions dialectically on all levels: Even though there is something to see, its deeper meaning remains hidden; it is an image but also text, it is a work by Rémy Zaugg and likewise resembles an anonymous billboard; and it simultaneously stands for both active and passive states. The two poles – active seeing and passive dying – describe the most innate factors motivating human deeds and thought; they are, as it were, the origins of human culture. The fundamental statement of *VOIR MORT* in illuminated text simultaneously makes perception and its limits visible.

Meret Oppenheim, *Röntgenaufnahme des Schädels M.O.* (1964)

The willingness to take self-exploration – intrinsic to the genre of the self-portrait – to its limits and subject herself to a radiographic examination down to the very bones, speaks volumes about the radicalism of Meret Oppenheim (b. 1913 in Berlin, d. 1985 in Basle). Primarily known as a Surrealist, the often-photographed artist only rarely portrayed herself. The x-ray of *Röntgenaufnahme des Schädels M.O.* [X-Ray of the Skull of M.O.] artlessly embodies the artist's strategy of increasingly creating works which 'are not merely the image of an idea but rather the thing itself.' The radiographic exploration of the self via x-rays occurred in a special period of Oppenheim's life. After settling in Bern, Oppenheim managed to surmount a creative crisis there. Additionally, from 1970 onwards she actively participated in feminist discussions. But Meret Oppenheim was not simply a feminist but had a highly nuanced concept of femininity. Her black-and-white photograph also illustrates this. The reduction of her upper body and face to bones and skull hinders the perception of any gender-specific features, with the exception of the extraneous removable attributes of jewelry. Only viewers who know the identity of the 'sitter' recognize the vaguely discernible profile. Instead, in the way the artist presents herself, the skull and consequently a genderless entity very much take the centre stage.

Agenda

We would like to thank the following foundations residing in the Kunstmuseum Bern for their support:

Bernische Stiftung für Fotografie, Film und Video: Was founded in 1981 by the Bernische Kunstgesellschaft BKG (Bern Society of the Arts) and focuses on new media. Its holdings comprise an eminent collection of videos, the archive of Paul Senn, photographs, and also a small archive of artists' films.

Stiftung Gegenwart: Dr. h.c. Hansjörg Wyss set up this foundation in 2005 in order to, among further goals, sponsor contemporary art through exhibitions, publications, artists-in-residence programs, lectures, symposia, and purchasing works.

Stiftung Kunsthalle Bern: Founded in 1987 by collectors of contemporary art, the Stiftung Kunsthalle Bern, using donations, targets the purchase of works from international exhibitions in the Kunsthalle Bern.

Stiftung Kunst Heute: The Stiftung Kunst Heute was founded in 1982 to promote art that has not yet found its way into the halls of fame. It aims to make an independent contribution to public institution acquisition policy. Its purchases since 2003 are part of its donation to the Kunstmuseum Bern.

Hermann und Margrit Rupf Foundation: Comprising around 300 leading works of modern art, the Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation was formed in 1954 by this couple with the greater part of their collection. The foundation's goal is to preserve and augment the collection.

Toni Gerber Donations: The art collector and gallery owner in Bern donated his extensive collection of contemporary art to the Kunstmuseum Bern in 1983 and 1993.

Öffentliche Führungen

Sonntag, 11h

13. Juni, 11. Juli, 15. August,

12. September, 10. Oktober 2010

Reihe Zeitfenster: Einen Augenblick Zeit, um genauer hinzuschauen?

jeweils letzter Dienstag im

Monat, 18h bis 19h

Einmal im Monat nehmen wir

ausgewählte Werke der

Gegenwartskunst unter die

Lupe und unterhalten uns über

Sichtbares, Verstecktes,

Überraschendes, Erfahrenes,

Aufregendes, Ästhetisches,

Irritierendes und Unsichtbares.

Veranstaltungen im Rahmen von 'Zeitfenster':

29. Juni: Director's Choice:

Matthias Frehner und Kathleen

Bühler im Gespräch

27. Juli: Kathleen Bühler im

Gespräch mit Pia Fries

28. September: Isabel Fluri im

Gespräch mit Christoph

Rütimann

26. Oktober: Isabel Fluri im

Gespräch mit Silvia Bächli

30. November: Kathleen Bühler

im Gespräch mit Hans Danuser

Filmvorführungen im Kino Kunstmuseum

'Don't Look Now' (Nicolas Roeg, I/GB 1973, 110 Min., E/d/f, 35mm, Farbe)

Samstag, 12. Juni 2010, 20h30

Montag, 14. Juni 2010, 20h30

Montag, 21. Juni 2010, 20h30

Reservation: T 031 328 09 99

KATALOG

Don't Look Now – Die Sammlung Gegenwartskunst, Teil 1

hrsg. vom Kunstmuseum Bern, mit einem Vorwort von Matthias Frehner und Texten von Kathleen Bühler und Isabel Fluri, Kerber Verlag Bielefeld 2010, ca. 184 Seiten, in deutscher und englischer Sprache, Verkaufspreis CHF 42.–

Exhibition

Duration	June 11, 2010 – March 20, 2011
Opening	Thursday, June 10, 2010, 6.30 p.m.
Curator	Kathleen Bühler
Assistant curator	Isabel Fluri
Admission	CHF 8.– / red. CHF 5.–
Opening hours	Tuesday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m. Wednesday, Friday–Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Mondays, closed 1st of August, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. December 24, December 31, January 1, January 2, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. December 25, closed
Guided tours	T +41 31 328 09 11, F +41 31 328 09 10 vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch

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