

TAKEN APART AND PUT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN

31.01 – 21.04.2024

FRANCIS ALÝS, KATINKA BOCK, PAULINE BOUDRY & RENATE LORENZ,
GIORGIO ANDREOTTA CALÒ, ANGELA DETANICO & RAFAEL LAIN,
JULIEN DISCRIT, MOUNIR FATMI, AURÉLIEN FROMENT, MARIO GARCÍA
TORRES, DOUGLAS GORDON, SHILPA GUPTA, CLAIRE HARVEY, DAVID
HORVITZ, KOSMAS NIKOLAOU, WILFREDO PRIETO, JIMMY ROBERT, OSCAR
SANTILLÁN, VITTORIO SANTORO, PAUL MPAGI SEPUYA, LAWRENCE WEINER

A collaboration with Tlön Projects
Curated by NATHALIE ZONNENBERG

The exhibition *TAKEN APART & PUT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN* marks the fourth edition of an annual collaboration between A Tale of A Tub and Tlön Projects, and presents a selection of artworks drawn from Tlön Projects' *imaginary collection*. This collection was created by combining works of art from various international private art collections, and is the starting point for a program that is being developed in collaboration with multiple partner institutions. In this way, Tlön Projects makes works of art accessible to the public that otherwise remain largely hidden from public view.

The title of the exhibition is derived from a statement by the American artist **Lawrence Weiner** (US, 1942–2021). As the motto of the exhibition, it refers to the particular existence of conceptual artworks in collections, which often disintegrate after their initial presentation and need rebuilding to be seen again. Referring to this idea of renewing or resumption, the exhibition brings together sets of works of art that (originally) formed a whole, like twins separated at birth being brought together again. These twin works – or 'doubles' – are parts of the same or closely related works by the same artist, or they are works by different artists with a conceptual or content-related connection. The works come from different collections; corresponding choices in their composition are revealed and the circle of production, distribution, and collection is reversed through various re-enactments.

TAKEN APART & PUT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN is structured as a journey of discovery in which visitors can draw links between the twin works, similarly to the game *Memory*. Here, though, it is not about bringing the *right* works together, but about seeing associations or relationships between the various works that generate 'universal' meaning. The exhibition thus highlights various principles of the historical, comprehensive 'encyclopaedic collection.' It can be understood as a microcosm of the macrocosm, which represents themes from the world we live in, and actions within it, but also from far beyond, by reading the position of the sun, moon, and stars. The exhibition is an invitation to explore routes of kinship between concealment and publicity, reality and myth, day and night, Orient and Occident, and Global North and Global South.

On the back wall of the ground floor of A Tale of A Tub, Weiner's *TAKEN APART & PUT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN* (1997/2024) is mounted in vinyl letters. The statement can be taken both literally and figuratively; it represents the taking apart and making whole again of a concept, object, or other material construction, but also figuratively refers to someone who is torn apart and pulling themselves together again. In the exhibition, both meanings are echoed in various works. The reflective surface of the letters physically mirrors other works in the immediate environment, while mirrors or ideas of mirroring feature in several other works throughout the space. **Kosmas Nikolaou's** *Pendulum #4* (2024) – a new version of an existing work made especially for the exhibition – consists of two mirrors that are tailored to the dimensions of two corners in the space, and are lying parallel to each other on the ground of the first floor and mezzanine. The effect of the light makes it appear as though the mirror is hanging from a point on the wall like a pendulum. **Douglas Gordon** also makes frequent use of mirrors and the principle of mirroring in his work. In *Still Lost, Found Soon* (2008), two A4-sized mirrors – each engraved with one of the titular phrases – are placed opposite each other at a right angle, creating an infinite reflection. This reflection ensures a constant visual interaction between the words '*still lost*' and '*found soon*.'



Further along on the ground floor stands *Table of Recall* (2008) by **Aurélien Froment**. The square glass table is topped with a grid on which visitors can play a card game designed by the artist. The cards display images from Froment's archive, including many of his own works. A variation on the traditional game *Memory*, where two identical images must be matched, Froment's game allows different images to be linked together in alternative ways that rely on agreements or understandings between the players. From this work, the association game expands further; diagonally opposite the table, in the right-hand corner of the room, is *Passe-partout/ L'esprit des lumières* (2012), another work by Froment. Here, photographs are framed on both sides and thus are forcibly entered into a relationship – an indication of the adapted rules that can also be followed in the exhibition.

One side of Froment's work is mirrored in **Jimmy Robert's** video *Paramètres* (2011), which is shown at the opposite side, on a free-standing screen. The video relays a performance in which the artist sits at a table before a stack of A4 sheets of paper displaying geometric drawings and cut-out patterns. One by one, Robert takes them from the pile and holds them to the left and right of his face while repeating statements (in French) such as 'Set up the parameters, adjust the structure.' The didactic nature of the presentation refers to all the imperative codes, rules, and systems that determine our lives, and invites us to review them. Revision is also anticipated in the photo collage *Untitled* (2008) by **Paul Mpagi Sepuya**, which hangs on the wall next to Robert's video. In this work, and also in the photographs *Darkroom Mirror (_2160168)* and *Darkroom Mirror (0X5A9530)* (both 2018), which can be seen in two opposing niches in the basement, the visitor is confronted with their own 'gaze.' Framed by a tattered mirror in a studio setting and accompanied by various models, Sepuya photographed himself mostly naked, holding the camera in front of his face. Mirroring the viewer's gaze, the artist makes them aware of their own positions in relation to the other.

Performativity and the vulnerability of the black male body are considered in the work of both Robert and Sepuya, in sharp contrast with the stereotype of the 'strong and perfect' male body so widely represented in the marble sculptures of classical antiquity. *Two Classics* (2011) by **Wilfredo Prieto** can be seen as a reflection on this history. The tiny sculpture consists of a piece of marble the same size as the sugar cube to which it is joined, seemingly equating the two raw materials. The connotations of this physically small gesture are great, and contribute to a conceptual visual tradition that merges art and daily life.

In the middle of the space on the ground floor, *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History* (2019) by **Oscar Santillán** hangs in the void of the mezzanine. The hand-knotted net is made from unraveled threads of ancient and antique fabrics from every century of the past millennium – the oldest fabric component comes from the Chimú culture of what is now Peru. The work embodies the convergence of historical material cultures that are not necessarily related to each other, symbolizing alternative lines of kinship between northern and southern histories that transcend territorial zones. Issues of the boundaries of the nation state also become visible in *100 Hand Drawn Maps of My Country, (Tel Aviv/Jerusalem)* (2014) by **Shilpa Gupta**. The drawing is part of a project that Gupta started in 2008, in collaboration with residents of various countries whose existing borders are a cause of conflict, such as Israel and Palestine, India, North and South Korea. For each drawing, Gupta asked one hundred people to draw a map of their home country, which she then superimposed and captured in a single print.

Atlas (N) (2021) by **Angela Detanico** and **Rafael Lain**, drawn on the back wall of the mezzanine, is a schematic representation of the galaxy as seen from the Northern Hemisphere. The various constellations are not depicted explicitly, but appear in an endless cluster, creating a network of star signs. Detanico and Lain studied semiotics and graphic design, and their combined interests translate into a complex oeuvre relating to transcoding, in which relationships are made between the meta structure of different alphabets and cosmic bodies. In the work *Lexique/Idea* (2009), this is illustrated by connecting several letters in a constellation of the Greek alphabet, forming the word 'idea' in Greek. In a corner between the wall and the ceiling, *Palavras compostas (rise/fall)* (2022) is attached to the mezzanine. Once again, this work plays with semiotic principles, where the arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified is visualized by positioning the words 'rise' and 'fall' against each other in upward and downward directions respectively.



Semiotics plays an important role in **Mounir Fatmi's** work *Les chutes* (2010). The French title has a dual meaning; it refers to both declines and cutting waste. The laser-cut steel Arabic characters come from religious texts and poems that have been used by Fatmi in other works. The remains of these works are stored in a cardboard box which spills out onto the floor. This strips the religious texts of their content and authority, allowing the language to gain new meaning as an object in itself. The signs can be used anew, illustrating the freedom of the word.

Another sign that is repeated throughout the spaces of the exhibition is a clay sculpture by **Katinka Bock**, which is part of the hanging sculpture *Population I* (2015) on the ground floor, and which resonates with three black and white photographs entitled *Zarba Lonsa* (2015) on the mezzanine. The photos emerge from a project that the artist developed while in-residence at Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers in Paris. Bock made a series of clay objects to be exchanged for the products of local businesses in the Quatre Chemins district, where the art space is located. Her clay sculptures were subsequently exhibited in the local shops and business premises after the exchange. The project has been exhibited via various forms, e.g. sculptures, installations, films, photographs, and other documentation, in London and Toronto, as well as in a publication.

Two postcards by **Claire Harvey**, *E24216* and *By the Way DL02833* (both 2015), hang on the other side of the mezzanine. These snapshots are taken from the window of an aeroplane and display a view of its wings high in the clouds – a familiar composition for many air travelers. Upon closer examination, two tiny figures can be recognized in the images, which were drawn by Harvey with a pen on transparent foil and pasted onto the photographs, after which a new print was made. In one photo the figure is positioned on the wing, while in the other it floats through the air in free fall. The fall is reminiscent of Yves Klein's *Le saut dans le vide* (1960), an iconic photograph of the artist jumping in what appears to be an upward motion from the second-floor window of a house in Paris, into 'the void.'

Man's desire to fly is central to the myth of Icarus, who is given wings by his father Daedalus, an architect and sculptor, in order to escape captivity on the island of Crete. The myth was the starting point for two works in the exhibition by **Giorgio Andreotta Calò**. *Icarus (ramo)* (2023) comprises a bronze twig to which three moth cocoons are attached: one made of bronze, one made of silver, and one a natural cocoon. The work is 'activated' by the living cocoon; the silkworm that has encapsulated itself inside is developing and could emerge any moment as a moth. The species, *Argema mimosae*, is used for the production of silk, but when developed for this purpose it never reaches maturity, because the silkworms must be boiled alive in order to remove the silk threads intact. In the gallery, the animal is given the unusual chance to complete its metamorphosis. The work is derived from the video *Icarus* (2022), on show in the middle room of the basement, which was made in the butterfly garden of the Emmen Zoo before it disappeared as the zoo moved to another location. The video focuses on two entomologists who, based on the myth of Icarus, talk about the cycle of growth, flowering, and decline. Documentation and fiction intertwine, and contradictions such as light and dark, flying and falling, and appearance and disappearance reflect both on the metamorphosis of the butterfly and on more fundamental life issues.

The contradiction of light and dark also appears in *Eridanus (Paris)* (2017), by **David Horvitz**. In a major metropolis like Paris, city lights often disturb the levels of darkness necessary for viewing stars. In this work, the artist temporarily reverses the city's light pollution by switching off several street lamps to reveal the starry sky. The title refers to the constellation named after the river in ancient Athens, meandering through the sky as seen from the Southern Hemisphere. The same shaped route was taken by Horvitz through Paris, who walked along various streets turning the lamps off with special keys. At each street light, marked on a map of Paris, the artist took two photographs: one with the light on and one with the light off.

Questions of visibility are further perpetuated in *What Is Not Visible Is Not Invisible* (2008) by **Julien Discrit**. Like other works in the exhibition, Discrit's work draws on the legacy of conceptual art and that of Weiner in particular, who was fluent at formulating statements that raise both questions and reflections. The textual work is applied with invisible ink across the



entire length of the wall opposite the entrance to the cellar. When visitors enter the room, a sensor activates UV lighting, which renders the text visible.

The slide work *I Always Thought Anselmo's Invisible (1971) Should Be Installed Against a Window* (2011), by **Mario García Torres**, which is projected alongside Discrit's work in the corner of the corridor, forms a conceptual addition. The work refers to the work *Invisibile* (1971) by the Italian Arte Povera artist Giovanni Anselmo. The word '*visibile*' is projected against the light with a slide projector, so that it can only be seen when someone walks by and acts as a projection screen. In his work, García Torres explores the 'open-ended status' of conceptual art – the possibility of continually re-executing existing concepts – and often gives his own contemporary interpretation.

Wig Piece (2019) by **Pauline Boudry** and **Renate Lorenz** is also a work that offers a new interpretation, in this case to the tradition of painting. The 'tapestry,' which is made of synthetic hair, proposes a feminine response to the large, monochrome, 'masculine' paintings that made artists such as Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko world famous. The use of a soft material such as hair belongs to a tradition of feminist art that began in the 1970s, while the abstract visual language used by Boudry and Lorenz is more like color field painting. Different versions of these wig pieces are often shown in combination with video works. Here, the work relates to the video *Silent* (2016), in which a female character, musician Aérea Negrot, stands silently in front of a group of microphones on Oranienplatz in Berlin. Although sometimes it seems like she is about to speak, she remains silent for four minutes and thirty seconds, before walking away from the microphones and singing a catchy song that references various current events. The performance, based on John Cage's score *4'33''* (1952), can be seen as an act of resistance, in which silence and speaking up are linked.

The political connotations of film, which are addressed by Boudry and Lorenz, are also the starting point for the work *Camgun #83* (2008) by **Francis Alÿs**. The sculpture, which is composed of two rolls of film and found pieces of wood and metal, is duplicated in the drawing hanging next to it, and is part of a larger installation with various *camguns* that Alÿs previously showed at retrospective exhibitions in Jerusalem and New York. Many of his works involve intensive observations and recordings of the social, cultural, and economic conditions of specific places, encountered by the artist during walks through different areas. Alÿs works in a wide range of media, such as documentary film, video, performance, photography, and painting, and connects poetic reflections with political positions.

Vittorio Santoro's work *Seven Erased Contributions (Lawrence W)* (2011) completes the chain of doubles by referring back to Weiner. Santoro transcribed a weeklong interview he conducted with Weiner in 2007, in which he asked the artist one personal question every day. Writing the answers in pencil on an A4 sheet of paper, he then erased the often intimate revelations and wrote over these with the answer to the next question, repeating the process daily. The action recalls the practice of the American artist Robert Rauschenberg, who erased a drawing by fellow artist Willem de Kooning and framed and exhibited the empty sheet. In art history, this work is seen as a reaction to abstract expressionism and the exaggerated appreciation for the 'hand' of the artist. Santoro's work is rather an (invisible) portrait of the artist, with whom the intimate exchange only exists in (Santoro's) memory, and honors his conceptual legacy.

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