

UBS Openings: Saturday Live Actions and Interruptions

Saturday 10 March

Actions and Interruptions is a day-long 'exhibition' at Tate Modern that proposes 'performance' to be a facet of everyday behaviour. Rather than presenting discrete, theatrical events with a clear division between performer and audience, this programme of works investigates the site of Tate Modern as a unique combination of public space and fine art museum: a site that blurs the boundaries between people looking at artwork, looking at the architecture and looking at each other.

Works by **Nina Jan Beier & Marie Jan Lund, Dora García, Jirí Kovanda, Roman Ondák** and **Mario García Torres**, in various ways, investigate the museum as a 'situation' that involves particular ways of behaving that are agreed to be appropriate, a set of inclusions and exclusions that form a kind of cultural code: from the prohibition on running or touching the art objects – in order to ensure their preservation – to the way that people speak to each other or stroll around. This coding of behaviour within the museum incorporates the kinds of discourses that frames for the work on view as well; discourses are rooted in a certain modernist 'logic'. The street-like nature of the Turbine Hall and the huge visitor flow in the concourse spaces works against the museum code creating intriguing tension. The five artists in this programme treat the idea of 'performance' as a latent potential for disruption of the prevailing expectations taken into the museum, or for the insertion of fictional episodes that erupt within ordinary reality. In different ways these works expose the institution's structure as a set of person-to-person relationships rather than just a physical one.

Nina Jan Beier and Marie Jan Lund create a kind of human architecture by inviting people throughout the organisation to take part in the simple action of clapping at a specific time; also, by implication, inviting anybody else that is present to become a part of it in this simple, physical way. Jirí Kovanda's work plays upon the design of Tate Modern and its shiny surfaces and rationalised straight lines and pathways by making detours that sensualise those surfaces and interrupt, by inviting engagement, the passage of passersby through the building. Roman Ondák's *Good Feelings in Good Times (2003)* is a form of invisible theatre and performance-as-sculpture: a choreographed queue played by actors that plays upon the context of orderly behaviour within the museum and disrupts it so as to become an absurd intervention and a potential talking point. Dora García's *The Prophets* or *The Crowd* introduce pseudo-mystical ideas

that would ordinarily have no place in the 'logic' of the contemporary art museum's discourse about art. Mario García Torres' re-working of Vito Acconci's famous *Following Piece* (1969) creates a paranoid disturbance in relations as the person being followed becomes aware of what is happening without necessarily knowing that it is a performance, and a re-making of a famous artwork.

Programme

Roman Ondák, Good Feelings in Good Times (2003)

11.00–21.45, Throughout the gallery

Dora García, The Prophets

11.00–12.00; 13.00–14.30 and 15.30–17.00, Throughout the gallery

Dora García, The Crowd

Performance starts at 12.00; 14.30 and 17.00, Poetry and Dream display, Level 3

Mario García Torres, Following Piece (with Evo's sweater)

11.00–18.00, Throughout the gallery

Jirí Kovanda, Kissing Through Glass

11.00–18.00, Throughout the gallery

Nina Jan Beier & Marie Jan Lund, Clap in Time

(All people at Tate Modern)

16.30 (Duration: 5 minutes), Throughout the gallery

Catherine Wood, curator of contemporary art/performance, in conversation with the artists

18.00–19.30, Starr Auditorium

UBS Openings: Saturday Live Actions and Interruptions

Curated by Catherine Wood, curator of contemporary art and performance, with Vanessa Desclaux, assistant producer and curator.

Thanks to the artists: Roman Ondák, Dora García, Jirí Kovanda, Mario García Torres, Nina Jan Beier and Marie Jan Lund; and to: Susana Negre, Christian Sievers, all the performers, Jan Mot, Solène Guillier (gb agency, Paris), Gallery Krobath Wimmer, Vienna, galerie Michel Rein, Paris.

All artist texts by Vanessa Desclaux.

Opening up art. Tate Modern Collection with UBS



Dora García

The Prophets

11.00–12.00; 13.00–14.30
and 15.30–17.00
Throughout the gallery



The Prophets, SMAK, Gent, 2006. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris, Ellen de Bruyne Projects, Amsterdam and Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid

For *Actions and Interruptions*, Dora García will present new interpretations of two existing works, *The Prophets* and *The Crowd*.

The Prophets consists of two good-looking young men walking around the museum and informing the visitors about what will happen on the day in the gallery and beyond, i.e. London, Europe or the world at large. They will distribute prophecies written on a sheet of paper, announcing future events that may affect the people's visit to Tate Modern.

This work engages with the issues of information and communication inside the museum, and in the larger context of our contemporary societies. It also triggers people awareness of their position within a more global situation. *The Prophets* therefore looks at how people confront themselves to this unusual form of interaction as it involves investigating their relationship to the future.

'A crowd. Some among them start to perform certain actions, apparently at random. The meaning of these random actions is unclear to the rest of the crowd, but one thing they do know: if they belong together, they do not belong with us.' (Dora García) *The Crowd* is a group of actors who blend in the normal flow of museum visitors to perform an action. This action differs slightly

'Like a chronicler appropriating knowledge, Dora García is always on the look out for whatever pushes the limits of space and time.'

Peter Doroshenko

The Crowd

12.00; 14.30 and 17.00
Poetry and Dream display,
Level 3



The Crowd, House of Games, Utrecht, Festival a/d Werf, 2001, in collaboration with David Hernandez. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris, Ellen de Bruyne Projects, Amsterdam and Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid

from normal activity but not quite enough to be directly understood by the public as performance.

In her work, Dora García often creates carefully staged situations that weave in a given context and social system to observe it, not passively but actively, disturbing its normal activity. In these non-theatrical performances, the roles of the performer and the spectator are blurred as the concepts of fiction and reality become more fragile. Dora García invents structures that she explores again and again in different contexts in order to reveal certain patterns of behaviour or affects, and engage with social and political issues.

Dora García (born Valladolid, 1965) studied Fine Arts at the University of Salamanca, Spain, and the Rijkakademie in Amsterdam, Holland. She lives and works in Brussels. Since 1999 she has created several works on the web (doragarcia.net). Solo exhibitions include: *Code Inconnu*, SMAK, Gent, Belgium, 2006; *Rooms, Conversations / Cellule Cité Lénine*, Les Laboratoires, Aubervilliers, France, 2006; *Vibraciones*, MUSAC, Leon, Spain, 2005; *All the stories*, Performance and video festival, Espacio Uno, Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain, 2005; *Des messages, des instructions, des questions*, FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon, France, 2005; *forever, permanent* commissioned work for the Frac Lorraine, France, 2004; *1101001000infinito*, Fundació La Caixa, Barcelona, Spain, 2001. Forthcoming exhibitions include *Skulpture Projekte*, Münster, Germany, 2007.

Jirí Kovanda

Various works

11.00–18.00

Throughout the gallery

'Art is not much more than what we can see in a common, everyday life. It's just somehow chewed or processed and the path is slightly swept before them.'

Jirí Kovanda



Contact, September 3, 1977, Spalena ulice, Vodickova ulice, Prague © the artist. Courtesy gb agency, Paris and Kroboth Wimmer, Vienna

At Tate Modern, Jirí Kovanda will perform a new work, *Kissing Through Glass*, created for this particular site. Kovanda will kiss people through the reflective glass walls of Herzog and De Meuron's design of Tate Modern, sensually exploring this separation of spaces and individuals, which isolate them physically while keeping intact one's perception of vastness of the architecture. The artist will also re-enact some of his historical performances from the 1970s.

Jirí Kovanda's oeuvre includes performances, acted out by the artist himself, paintings and installations, which were often ephemeral and bound to a particular exhibition context. His performances were originally made in the late 1970s in public or private places in the city of Prague. They consisted of minimal gestures performed by the artist himself, often involving one-to-one encounters with other persons, whether they were random passersby or informed spectators. The intimacy and apolitical character of these actions contrasts with other performances made at the time in both Eastern and Western contexts.

Kovanda points out that his performances have nothing to do with the political context of the former Czechoslovakia. However, his actions could be looked at through the lens of the political in relation to the idea of individual empowerment, to the desire of altering people's perception of their environment and communicating his own perception of things as an artist. Kovanda's ephemeral and sculptural gestures are described by Jirí Sevcik and Georg Schöllhammer as 'romantic' in the sense that they suggest 'a quest, a dream of contact, and a desire for contact'.

Jirí Kovanda (born 1953, Prague) currently lives and works in Prague, Czech Republic. His recent exhibitions include *Jirí Kovanda VS The rest of the world (attempted acquaintances)*, gb agency, Paris, 2006 and de Appel, Amsterdam, 2007; *Jirí Kovanda, a retrospective*, Gallery Zdenek Sklenar, Prague, 2006; *Julius Koller, Jirí Kovanda*, Index – Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm. Recent group exhibitions include *More stories on absence*, Extra City, Center for Contemporary Art, Antwerp, 2006; *I invited some friends to come and watch*, Galerija Nova, Zagreb, 2006; *I (ICH)/ PERFORMATIVE ONTOLOGY*, Secession, Vienna, 2006; *2nd Prague Biennale*, 2005; *De ma fenêtre, des artistes et leurs territoires*, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 2004.

Roman Ondák Good Feelings in Good Times (2003)

11.00–21.45

Throughout the gallery



Roman Ondák *Good Feelings in Good Times* (2003)

For *Actions and Interruptions*, Ondák's *Good Feelings in Good Times* (2003), an artificially choreographed queue, will be performed throughout the space of Tate Modern. Mimicking the existing queues in this very popular museum, this intervention also engages with the sculptural aspect of this abstract flux of people moving about, and its historical representations. Passerby might join in, taking physically part in this situation emptied of its everyday function, endlessly repeated throughout the day.

Roman Ondák makes works that take various physical forms. Past projects have included simple actions such as a mother teaching her child to walk, a group of local people going to an opening with their shoelace undone or environments such as a small scale model of Tate Modern Turbine Hall. In common the different works have a performative relationship to the space and to the viewer. The work exists as much in the emotional reaction of the spectator whose memory, feelings, sense of reality and time are played with as they do in the physical object or performed action. The situations created by Ondák often relate to the artist's own history and cultural background, in contrast with the immediate context.

'Almost inevitably, Ondák's concepts enter into a productive conflict with the context, with all the positive, functional meanings that a space, an action or an object can have. In the face of these positive, functional meanings, the concepts produce poetic non-events.'

Georg Schöllhammer



Roman Ondák *Good Feelings in Good Times* (2003), preliminary drawing made by artist's friend. Courtesy Martin Janda, Vienna and gb agency, Paris

Igor Zabel said about Ondák that 'To be able to read such works as art is both a gain and a loss. The loss lies in the fact that you are in advance aware of them, that you don't meet the situations unprepared and thus lose all the subtle and immediate gradation of experiences. What you gain, however, is a context that enables you to read them in a more intense and attentive way, to connect them with more meanings, and to understand more easily their metaphorical and poetic potentials'.

Roman Ondák was born in Zilina, Slovakia and currently lives and works in Bratislava. He studied at the Academy of Bratislava between 1988 and 1994. He has participated in numerous international group exhibitions since 1992, including *Utopia Station* at the Venice Biennale in 2003, and has had solo exhibitions in museums and galleries in Europe, including Tate Modern, 2006; CAC Brétigny, 2006; the Kölnischer Kunstverein, 2004; the Kunsthof, Zurich, 2000.

Good Feelings in Good Times (2003) was first conceived for and performed at the Kölnischer Kunstverein in 2003. It was performed at Frieze Art fair in 2004 where it was acquired by Tate with the Frieze Art Fair Fund.

Mario Garcia Torres Following Piece (with Evo's sweater)

11.00–18.00

Throughout the gallery



Mario Garcia Torres *Saying Goodbye to a Ship (With Evo's Sweater)* 2006. Courtesy Jan Mot, Brussels

For *Actions and Interruptions*, Mario Garcia Torres will perform *Following Piece (with Evo's sweater)*, after the famous work from 1969 by Vito Acconci. As in the original piece, Garcia Torres will randomly choose people to follow. Visitors might accidentally encounter this situation as spectators or as unexpected participants of the performance. Garcia Torres re-enacts Acconci's performance wearing a red and blue striped sweater, known to be the trademark uniform of the Bolivian president Evo Morales. This new element creates difference through repetition, opening up a space for interpretation and rethinking of history.

Mario Garcia Torres' practice inhabits the history of conceptual art from the 1960s to more recent works from the 1990s. His work recalls artists' mythologies, like in *What Happens in Halifax Stays in Halifax* where he revisits the secret piece that Robert Barry submitted to Nova Scotia College of Art and Design's Project Class in 1969. Garcia Torres also re-appropriates seminal works by conceptual artists, as in *Saying Goodbye to a Ship (with Evo's Sweater)* where he reinterprets the work of John Baldessari; but more generally he continues to explore the idea of 'dematerialization of the art object', testing its different meanings today.



Mario Garcia Torres *A Brief History of Jimmie Johnson's Legacy* 2006, video still. Courtesy Jan Mot, Brussels

In a conversation with Mario Garcia Torres, Raimundas Malasauskas raised the questions of re-enactment and repetition in relation to Garcia Torres' work and suggested that 'perhaps the most important moment is the fact that repetition basically functions as a producer of change and thus difference as what is re-created never coincides with what it intends to represent. And when it coincides with something else than intended, it makes one think of Slavoj Žižek's proposition that the identity of something is always outside of itself. So at the end the re-enactment or repetition is simply a sort of creative way of co-producing reality'.

Mario Garcia Torres (born 1975, Mexico) currently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. He studied at Universidad de Monterrey and California Institute of the Arts.

His solo exhibitions include *Paradoxically It Doesn't Seem That Far From Here*, Meyer-Riegger, Karlsruhe, 2006; *What Happens in Halifax Stays in Halifax (In 36 Slides)*, Meyer-Riegger, Karlsruhe, 2006; *Te Invito a Mi Mundo*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 2006; *Some Hold, Some Push and Some Don't Even Know How to Take a Picture*, 2005. Jan Mot, Brussels; *Shoot of Grace with Alighiero Boetti Hairstyle and Other Works*, 2004, Jan Mot, Brussels; *Contradictory Illicit Registry (Project Room)* Muestra Art Fair, 2003, Mexico City; *I also asked myself...* Galería de Arte Mexicano, 2003, México City.

Forthcoming projects include *Mario Garcia Torres*, Dock Station, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 2007; *Learn to Read*, Tate Modern, London, 2007; *The Last Piece by John Fare*, gb agency, Paris, 2007.

Nina Jan Beier & Marie Jan Lund

Clap in Time

(All people at Tate Modern)

16.30 (Duration: 5 minutes)
Throughout the gallery



Nina Jan Beier and Marie Jan Lund *Cover each other's back* from the *Play me* series 2005
 © the artists

At Tate Modern, in the context of *Actions and Interruptions*, Beier and Lund will encourage various groups, including Tate staff, friends and visitors, to clap in time for a short duration. The idea is that this action might spontaneously engage the visitors of Tate Modern in a large and unusual collective action. Taking over the building, this sculptural soundscape will create a parallel or alternative structure within the museum's monumental architecture.

The situations created by Nina Jan Beier and Marie Jan Lund look at the dynamic and nature of the group as a single entity operating within a larger flow of people, or society itself, but also as a complex ensemble of singular human beings. Through various actions such as breathing in time, yawning together or placing a hand on each other's back, their work examines the people's behaviour within a particular frame. These actions are carefully choreographed and captured in photography and film to be shown to a wider audience in an exhibition context as groups or 'accumulations' of actions that create social choreographies.



Nina Jan Beier and Marie Jan Lund *Jump in time* 2007, video still © the artists

These situations tend to disrupt the course of everyday life. Working with groups made of friends, gallery visitors or members of a choir, the artists give out simple rules for the participants to follow. By carrying out these actions together the group is distanced from the others around it, stressing its singularity as a group entity and defining its borders. However, in certain contexts, the group becomes an open matrix in which others are invited to blend and distance themselves from normal activity, as an act of resistance.

Nina Jan Beier and Marie Jan Lund live in Copenhagen and London. They started their collaboration while studying at the Royal College of Art in London, and have worked as a duo since then, alongside maintaining their individual practices.

They have had regular solo and duo shows at M+R Gallery in London, and in V1 Gallery in Copenhagen. During the summer 2006 they were invited to exhibit new work at Spacex Gallery in Exeter, resulting in the show *You us or you me*. Recent shows include *Indica* at Riflemaker Gallery, London (November 2006 – February 2007) and *Abstract Things*, curated by Harrell Fletcher at Laura Bartlett Gallery, London (February – March 2007).

UBS Openings: Saturday Live is a new strand of programming at Tate Modern which began in May 2006, presenting live art events, performance and film every two months. Events take place in the Turbine Hall or the Starr Auditorium or throughout the main galleries on level 3 and 5. The highlight of the programme is *UBS Openings: The Long Weekend*, an annual four-day festival taking place over the final bank holiday weekend in May.