

A HOUSE OF LEAVES

AN EXHIBITION IN THREE MOVEMENTS AND AN EPILOGUE

FIRST MOVEMENT | 21.09.2012 - 10.11.2012

An exhibition with works by Horst Ademeit, Ida Applebroog, Phyllida Barlow, Nina Beier, Louise Bourgeois, Bettina Buck, Miriam Cahn, Keith Coventry, Tony Cragg, Enrico David, Matthew Day Jackson, Shannon Ebner, Thomas Houseago, Bethan Huws, Chosil Kil, Martin Kippenberger, John Latham, Alvin Lucier, Marie Lund, Benoît Maire, Victor Man, Kris Martin, Eddie Peake, Man Ray, Steve Reich, Pietro Roccasalva, Wilhelm Sasnal, Rebecca Warren, Lawrence Weiner.

SECOND MOVEMENT | 16.11.2012 - 12.01.2013

An exhibition with works by Sarah Barker, Phyllida Barlow, Karla Black, Nina Beier, Louise Bourgeois, Carol Bove, Ben Cain, Luis Camnitzer, Marieta Chirulescu, Keith Coventry, Tony Cragg, Alex Dordoy, Nikolas Gambaroff, Theaster Gates, Ian Law, George Henry Longly, Marie Lund, Benoît Maire, Kris Martin, Anselm Reyle, Gerhard Richter, Pietro Roccasalva, David Schutter, Adam Thompson, Alison Wilding, and Lawrence Weiner.

THIRD MOVEMENT | 18.01.2013 - 16.02.2013

An exhibition with works by Danai Anesiadou, Katinka Bock, Etienne Chambaud, Martin Creed, Aaron Curry, Jason Dodge, Ryan Gander and Mario Garcia Torres, Laura Gannon, Dora Garcia, Pierre Huyghe, Chosil Kil, Marie Lund, Bruce McLean, Benoît Maire, Kris Martin, Jonathan Monk, Roman Ondak, Marlo Pascual, Francesco Pedraglio, Falke Pisano, Yvonne Rainer, Pietro Roccasalva, Lorna Simpson, Simon Starling, Adam Thompson, and Lawrence Weiner.

EPILOGUE | 23.02.2013

An exhibition with works by Jason Dodge, Dora Garcia, Chosil Kil, Marie Lund, Benoît Maire, Kris Martin, Manuela Ribadeneira, Pietro Roccasalva, Adam Thompson.

This exhibition, *A House of Leaves*, is conceived by Vincent Honoré, director and curator of DRAF. It is curated and produced by Vincent Honoré and Benedict Goodwin, Nicoletta Lambertucci and Sandra Pusterhofer, assisted by Marina La Verghetta and Anna Peres, with additional help by Alonso Diaz-Rickards, Rosemarie Merchant and Sairandhri Raut.

The founder, the board of trustees and the director of the Foundation would like to thank the artists for their trust and commitment, and everyone who participated in the opening of our new space.



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Tue-Wed by appointment
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MOUSSE

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²THE TITLE OF THE EXHIBITION

inaugurating our new premises, *A Houses of Leaves*, references a work by American novelist Mark Z. Danielewski in which different storylines, told in different styles, intertwine. The story centres around a house that keeps changing, a house that resists measurement because its interior gradually becomes larger than its exterior.

THIS EXHIBITION has been conceived as a process lasting six months, a symphony structured in three movements and an epilogue, each deriving from the study of a single key work that defines the whole movement: *Echo VIII*, a sculpture by Louise Bourgeois (First Movement); *Fuji*, an abstract painting by Gerhard Richter (Second Movement); and *Silent Score*, a performance by Pierre Huyghe (Third Movement). The Epilogue moves towards the void, emptying the exhibition space to explore the architecture and volume of the space and reveal the long-term works – special commissions and interventions inscribed in the building itself. Each division will also highlight a different aspect of our project for a museum: the museum as structure in the first movement, as school in the second, as stage in the third, and as site in the final movement.

RATHER THAN BEING STRUCTURED around an external theme selected by the curator and “illustrated” with artworks, the exhibition self-organizes internally, the process coming mostly from the artworks and the building themselves. The substitution of works over the course of the exhibition will gradually alter the overall context and evolve naturally from one movement into the next like a dissolve in a movie. Since it will be in a constant state of flux, the exhibition is never the same and never entire, but is always virtually composed and completed by visitors: the museum as a deferred action and a mental space. Our museum, like the house in the novel, is a productive medium in its own right. It creates its own function. But who are its authors?

THIS IMMEASURABLE MUSEUM we are creating abandons the authoritarian voice. Many individuals directly or indirectly participate in its creation. By reading this text, you have entered this museum of leaves we have yet to define, and are now contributing to *A House of Leaves*, a co-author of this narrative, a player of this game, a character of this fiction, a performer in this symphony.

Vincent Honoré

A MUSEUM¹ OF LEAVES²

¹OUR NEW BUILDING – a former furniture factory built between 1870 and 1890 – reminds us that a museum is a production site, a site that not only presents and describes an existing context, but generates new contexts, a site where artists, curators, critics and other stakeholders can produce, share, discuss, act and interact, where visitors are co-producers, and where the machinery of exhibitions produces prototypes, experiences, catalysts for thought. Here thoughts are formed and visions transformed, culture is disassembled, and the contemporary redesigned. The dimensions of such a museum, in a state of permanent reconfiguration and hybridization, are impossible to measure, far greater than its actual floor plan or elevation, being at any one time a gallery, a laboratory, a studio, a workshop, an academy, a theater, a fiction.

SINCE 2008, at our temporary headquarters in Fitzrovia, DRAF has produced group and solo exhibitions, established a Curator Series, and hosted a programme of discussions and performances. Knowing that we would eventually be moving into a bigger space in Mornington Crescent, we viewed this incubation period as an opportunity to interrogate our model of what a contemporary art museum should be. From the start we conceived DRAF as a forum for discussion and a structure acting beyond the confines of an exhibition space. Our initial goal was to generate a unique context by establishing and supporting an informal cultural community, and this polyphony is something we intend to extend to the new building.

“MUSEUMS ARE HOUSES FULL OF THOUGHTS,” according to Marcel Proust. DRAF can be such a house, rich in sensibilities, styles, and voices. Already this museum speaks many languages and tells multiple narratives in numerous ways. The library-cum-meeting room will serve as a cultural platform for a parallel programme of talks and screenings. Caroline Achaintre created a tapestry and Ruth Beale designed the furniture for this room. The *Labs* are invitations to researchers, critics or curators. We offer a space/office in which to work in our building, with the possibility of testing new ideas. Each participant is independent from DRAF. These and other aspects of our proposal for a museum will continue to adapt to the heterogeneous and constantly changing needs and visions of contemporary art. Our programmes include *Study*, focused case-studies of works from the collection, in which a single artwork is shown on its own and studied in depth, everything from its technique to its position in contemporary art debates.

STUDY

STUDY is the generic name for a series of focused case-studies of works from the collection. Each involves a single work, displayed on its own in a gallery. The work is studied in depth: from its techniques, origin and history to its position in the artist’s practice and contemporary debates. Each *Study* is made available in a booklet.

AN ARTWORK is a system that cannot be reduced only to an object or an index (certificate, instructions, etc.). It also includes the histories (material and conceptual), the trajectories (physical or virtual) and the narratives (past or to come) generated by the artwork: this is what this programme will research.

TO STUDY is to devote time and attention to a particular subject, to acquire knowledge. It can also refer to a piece of work done for practice or as an experiment. It is this latter sense that we would like to pursue – of study not as the transmission of knowledge or an act of contemplation, but rather as an invitation to act.

STUDY IS NOT an attempt to capture or seize but a methodology of encounter and the insistence on the provisional as both form and content within the process of research. It is an exercise in responding to the infinite demands of the work, not meant to bring forth any historical truth but rather to enter into dialogue with the work.

IN THIS SENSE *Study* is not finite, but demands the reader to take up multiple positions and viewpoints. More than anything, it asks the viewer to engage with the artwork by, at the very least, spending some time with it.

ECHO

I MODERATO; II VERY SLOW; III AXIAL ASYMMETRY; IV FAST

“To illustrate the multiple resonances found in an echo, the Greeks conjured up the story of a beautiful mountain nymph. Her name was Echo and she made the mistake of helping Zeus succeed in one of his sexual conquests. Hera found out and punished Echo, making it impossible for her to say anything except the last words spoken to her. Soon after, Echo fell in love with Narcissus, whose obsession with himself caused her to pine away until only her voice remained.”

(Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 2000, Doubleday, London, p.41)

I MODERATO

ECHO VIII (2007) BY LOUISE BOURGEOIS is the starting point for the First Movement of *A House of Leaves*. This work is therefore the deforming lens through which the whole movement can be viewed: the formless expressivity and the tense dialogue between abstraction and representation are possible filters through which to interpret this first chapter of the exhibition. *Quartet* will be the very last piece to be performed in *A House of Leaves*. Composed in 1935 by American artist John Cage (1912-1992) while he was still studying under Arnold Schönberg, this quartet for four percussionists was initially composed for unspecified instruments. Cage defined it as a piece for percussions, but with no more specific instructions about the instruments needed. *Quartet* is divided in four movements: I Moderato, II Very Slow, III Axial Asymmetry – Slow, IV Fast. If Louise Bourgeois' work dictates the general tone of the First Movement, the four movements of Cage's score are mirrored by the structure of the whole exhibition *A House of Leaves*.

II VERY SLOW

“Ironically, hollowness only increases the eerie quality of otherness inherent in any echo. Delay and fragmented repetition create a sense of another inhabiting a necessarily deserted place. Strange then how something so uncanny and outside of the self, even ghostly as some have suggested, can at the same time also contain a resilient comfort: the assurance that even if it is imaginary and at best the product of a wall, there is still something else out there, something to stake out in the face of nothingness.”

(Mark Z. Danielewski, *Ibidem*, p. 46)

COLLECTION

ONE OF THE COMMON DEFINITIONS¹ of a museum is that it *owns a collection*. However, although the artworks in a collection may be possessed, this possession can only be imperfect. In fact, from a legal perspective, the artist is always the holder of the copyright over his/her work. This imperfection of the museum's ownership needs to be fully acknowledged in order to determine an appropriate and ethical position towards a collection.

DRAF IS RESPONSIBLE for the David Roberts Collection. As a team, we decided to approach the collection by considering each work as a system constituted by its specific histories, its trajectories, and by the discourses and narratives that it provokes/generates. A work in the collection is then constituted by an archive, a physical object and/or its index (certificate or instructions) and by the possible virtual texts or discussions it generates. We are then responsible for a number of these systems. Our duty is to make sure they are physically and intellectually safe. This responsibility lasts for a certain duration. We may, eventually, pass on this responsibility for one or many of these systems or for the entire collection.

EVERY TIME AN ARTWORK is acquired the whole collection's dynamic changes. In fact, the whole reacts to the parts, as each time a new acquisition is made, the entire collection expands with new possibilities of existence. This is an intrinsic quality of a collection: in order for it to be alive, it needs to always be activated and reconsidered; it is always in the stage of 'becoming'.²

LIKE TWO SEPARATE BODIES that nourish each other, the museum and the collection are in a state of constant exchange. Together they form a complex system able to create an experience of fragmented histories, and to generate a multi-layered perception of what can be encountered in an art context.

III AXIAL ASYMMETRY

BOTH LOUISE BOURGEOIS AND JOHN CAGE are key artists of the 20th century. Two works by them act as preface and afterword, as an opening and a closing of the exhibition. While the former's work is a bronze sculpture and late expression of a life long research, the latter's is an indefinite and rhythmic performance for which the artist did not even define the instruments and one of the very first efforts in the American composer's career. Despite the differences the two works form an axis for *A House of Leaves*: they reflect the rhythmic repetition of the exhibition, its overlapped layers and its slight and constantly changing structure. Conceptualism and performance, minimalism and expressionism, realism and abstraction, are key points in the dialogue that will take shape between the works in *A House of Leaves*.

IV FAST

THE ORGANIC, HIGHLY EXPRESSIVE FORMS in Bourgeois' work are far from the fixed rhythmic patterns in Cage's piece. The two pieces represent two opposite poles, but still, the rhythmic repetition of shifted layers – like the progression of waves in an echoing sound – is the very inner structure that is supporting both works. Time and space are the consistent coordinates along which the exhibition's inquiry progresses.

AS A PRIVATE COLLECTION, the David Roberts Collection does not have to aim at a specific unity (geographical, thematic, medium, stylistic) other than its own. Coming from a single collector, it does not have to respond to any conceptual or social obligation: it is free to explore, to dare, to make mistakes. It is conceived as an evolving body and as a research collection: an open and flexible archive of forms and concepts.

IN ITALO CALVINO'S NOVEL *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, reading and researching are never-ending processes. They are dramatic games denouncing any univocal understanding of reality. Calvino analyses the structure of research and its failure to reach a perfect and fulfilled conclusion. The viewer in our space will be like the reader in and of Calvino's book. The notion of the unfinished, the structure of a process that repeats itself endlessly, are echoed in both the museum we want to develop, and in our understanding of a collection.

¹The definition of a museum has changed in line with society. According to the ICOM Statutes, adopted during the 21st General Conference in Vienna in 2007, the most recent definition of a museum is: 'a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment'.

²Like in Blanchot's *récit*, which is 'not the narration of an event, but that event itself, the approach to that event, the place where that event is made to happen', a collection can be expressed as a body in progress, a system that is alive only when it is questioned.