

Catch Me!

Grasping Speed

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This text is published on the occasion of the exhibition

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Grasping Speed

Kunsthau Graz

Universalmuseum Joanneum

February 6 until

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Already one hundred years ago the Futurists proclaimed that passivity was over, “aggressive action” was to come and “that the world’s magnificence had been enriched by the new beauty of speed.” Today the desire to grasp speed as a metaphor for life itself can be understood as the wish to scrutinizingly and critically take it apart; by anachronistically slowing it down, by splitting it up or by extracting forcefully an essence.

Peter Fischli and David Weiss

Peter Fischli, born 1952 in Zurich (CH) and David Weiss, born 1946 in Zurich (CH), live and work in Zurich (CH), collaborators since 1979

Objects oscillate, explode, push, fall burn or spill over. Tyres roll, seats overturn, fluids bubble up. Following a strict composition, each action leads to a certain reaction. The filmed domino effect comes alive from the passing of time, constantly heightening expectations of the success of the absurd event. Nothing is accidental in this drama. Distances and forces are calculated exactly so as to lead to specific physical and chemical processes. There is a playful lightness about *Der Lauf der Dinge*, but it also carries an unmistakable message about interconnections of life and the finiteness of any action. It summons up associations of personal, physical, global, subjective or collective aspects. With marked gallows humour, *Der Lauf der Dinge* depicts a life cycle as an organised entity in which everything has its place and a function attributed to it. At the same time, the film also becomes a metaphor

for the whole exhibition, and symbol for movement in space itself. The film was first shown at dokumenta 8 in 1987, where it attracted much public interest.

***Der Lauf der Dinge*, 1986/87**

Film; 30 min, Camera: Pio Corradi;
production: T&C Film
Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich;
Sprüth Magers Berlin London;
Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

Roman Signer

Born 1938 in Appenzell (CH),
lives and works in St. Gallen (CH)

No doubt some people would like to travel through the exhibition on a motorbike. You're through it quickly, and don't even have to get off your bike. What's more, there's the thrill of feeling the throaty roar of power of your own machine in the room. Roman Signer dedicated this work to his friend, artist and easy rider Stephen Parrino, who lost his life in a tragic accident with his Harley Davidson in 2005 – the same vehicle that played a symbolic role in his art as well.

***Führung durch die Ausstellung in der Lokremise für den Harley Davidson Club Grace MC*, 2003**

Video; 6 min, Production: videocompany.ch
Courtesy Hauser & Wirth

A model helicopter takes off in a box. The space is much too small, and it's no easy job to hold the helicopter in position. During the six minutes or so of film, the flying device comes more and more to resemble an insect in our eyes, a defenceless and helpless captive kept in this box that it can't escape. The end is foreseeable, and its struggle for existence hopeless. The helicopter insect destroys itself through its own power and gives up. Silence follows the storm.

***Schweben in einer Kiste*, 1999**

Video; 6 min 17 sec; Pilot: A. Caspari,
camera: Aufdi Aufdermauer,
editing: Aleksandra Signer
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth

Roman Signer lights a rocket and begins to run. Like the tortoise and the hare, he is caught up in an absurd competition. And runs and runs and runs. As an inveterate tinkerer perpetually

experimenting, he's chasing empirical discoveries. The launch of the technical toy can no doubt be controlled, but, despite technical developments, its speed is ultimately beyond human comprehension.

***Wettlauf mit Rakete*, 1981**

Fluss Sitter, St. Gallen
Super 8 film; 22 sec
Courtesy the artist

Gwenaël Bélanger

Born 1975 in Rimouski (CDN),
lives and works in Montreal (CDN)

A camera revolves in a circle at vertiginous speed. A room, the artist's studio, becomes a merry-go-round. Suddenly mirror panels fall simultaneously to the ground and shatter with the force of the impact. The "wrong movement" condenses into the frozen moment of a panorama unfurled in two-dimensions. The impetus of the rotating motion remains detectable, but the room in the background is now only visible in fragments. In large format, the shards recorded as they fell produce a host of glimpses of a

highly charged, almost extra-sensory moment only visible to us through the camera.

Le Faux Mouvement, 2008

Giclée print; three parts, each 100 x 269 cm
Courtesy the artist and NETTIE HORN

Ernst Mach

Born 1838 Chirlitz (Chrlice, CZ),
died 1916 in Vaterstetten (DE)

No human can see a flying projectile with the naked eye. Capturing speed visually needed the technical assistance of photography, which around 150 years ago led to the inspired studies of motion by English photographer Edward Muybridge. In 1886, Viennese physician and philosopher Ernst Mach undertook the first experiments to make compressed air visible. A flash triggered off by the flying projectile successfully provided lighting like a rapid electrical spark, at 1/800,000 sec. Mach graphically described the pictures thus generated: "If I didn't tell you what the picture showed, you might well think it was a picture of a boat moving fast across the water, taken from a bird's eye view."

Mach numbers named after him indicate relative speeds. Still generally used today, they appear on the mach meter in aviation to show real airspeed. The new pictures of movement and speed proved highly fascinating at the time, changing the way we see things. They led to numerous discoveries that can be traced in art as well.

Geschoßfotografien mit Projekttilen unterschiedlicher Form und Geschwindigkeit, 1892

Collotype (from a photograph); 11.8 x 17.7 cm (on card; 27.1 x 33 cm)
ALBERTINA, Vienna – on permanent loan from the Höhere Graphische Bundes-Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt, Vienna

Momentfotografie eines fliegenden Geschoßes, 1893

Collotype (from a photograph); 11.7 x 17.7 cm (on card; 27 x 33 cm)
ALBERTINA, Vienna – on permanent loan from the Höhere Graphische Bundes-Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt, Vienna

Carsten Höller

Born 1961 in Brussels (BE),
lives and works in Stockholm (SE)

"Slides manipulate people," says Carsten Höller, who in his best-known project in 2007 installed huge slides in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in London. Low friction and gravity make it possible to move downwards at speed on the smooth surface with the minimum expenditure of energy. The kick people got from sliding down the tubes was planned, and delighted millions of (shrieking) visitors. It is understandable therefore that Höller exploits this effect for a speedy means of transport. He introduces it into his sophisticated designs of the *Slide House Projects* so as to expose how anti-pleasure the design of public buildings – theatres and hotels – can be.

Slide House Project (*Riviera Beach Hotel Accra Nr. 1/1* *17. Februar 2000*), 2000

Pencil, silver felt-tipped pen and
laser print copy; 27 x 18 cm
Victor Gisler Collection, Zurich

Slide House Project (*National Theatre Accra Nr. 2/2* *2. Juni 2000*), 2000

Pencil, silver felt-tipped pen and
laser print copy; 27 x 18 cm
Victor Gisler Collection, Zurich

Kinetism

Wilhelm Rösler (1894–?)

Autogeräusch, c. 1920

Charcoal and coloured crayon on paper;
34.8 x 50 cm
Wien Museum, Vienna

Stella Weissenberg-Junker (1901–1986)

Straßengeräusch, c. 1918

Watercolour on paper; 31.5 x 45 cm
Wien Museum, Vienna

Erika Giovanna Klien (1900 – 1957)

Studie zum Stiegenhaus *Stokowski*, 1932

Pencil and watercolour on paper;
30.5 x 22 cm
Museum Moderner Kunst,
Stiftung Ludwig Wien

Wilhelm Rösler and Stella Weissenberg-Junker were Kinetists, members of the Austrian movement that came out of

Futurism, founded in the 1920s by Franz Cizek (1865–1946) at the Arts and Crafts School in Vienna [Gk. *kinesis* = movement]. The aim of the Kineticists was to capture integral sequences of movement visually. Studying a body in space and its characteristics in motion and capturing the sensations of speed, they wanted to break it down into rhythmic components. But whereas with its manifesto in 1909, the Futurist model had established itself as avantgarde, progressive thinking and pro-war, Kineticism long remained in thrall to the ornamental aspect of arts and crafts and strongly female-dominated, which meant it was peripheral to the art mainstream. Wilhelm Rösler, Stella Weissenberg-Junker, Ludwig Reutterer and Erika Giovanna Klien all went to Cizek's class on ornamental forms, where they studied a wide range of movement sequences, and at the same time were given "rhythmic training in feeling". Kineticists adopted a wide range of subject matter, showing aspects of modern cities and the increasing pace of everyday life. While Erika Giovanna Klien, the star of the class, devoted herself to the motif of

staircases beloved of the Futurists, Wilhelm Rösler and Stella Weissenberg-Junker focused on visuals of the acoustics of locomotion.

Daniel Hafner

Born 1979 in Deutschlandsberg (AT), lives and works in Vienna (AT)

Rotating on an axis fascinates even very young children. This roundabout in the Kunsthaus challenges our senses doubly. If you get on the rotating platform (not more than four people at once) and use it in the normal way, there is the risk not only of getting dizzy but also of losing your sense of orientation. The loudspeakers arranged in a circle produce a backdrop of sound that, with an unchanged position in space, revolve around you. If you move synchronously with the sound, the movement of your own body in space creates a new experience. The spatial reference points no longer apply, and a feeling of immobility sets in. Movement can be sensed in immobility, and immobility in movement.

Road in the Needle evokes a similar space + sound experience. Without your seeing vehicles, the captured sound still generates the feeling of standing beside a country road.

Carousel, 2010

Installation: roundabout, sensor, curtains, loudspeakers, computer; 2.4 x 7 x 7m
Courtesy the artist

Road, 2006

Installation: loudspeakers, computer; dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

Markus Wilfling

Born 1966 in Innsbruck (AT), lives and works in Graz (AT) and Vienna (AT)

The *Standortvehikel* is a contradiction in itself. It describes a standing wheel in motion. By simply leaving out a spoke, you get an impression of accelerating rotation. Like the coaches of Xavier Veilhan, it recalls the Futurists' deconstruction of dynamics in the early 20th century.

Standortvehikel, 2009

Stainless steel; diameter 140 cm
Eisenköck private collection

Wo da ist, muss auch dort sein is a video installation that documents Markus Wilfling's journey from Mexico to Austria on opening day. The artist flies to Graz specially for the opening. Twelve hours later, he gets on another plane and flies back. This makes Markus Wilfling himself the performative object of his own installation. To be present and available at all times everywhere is a requirement of our society that particularly affects artists. If you want to succeed in the art market, the desire to be in several places at once at the same time almost becomes a duty, given the increasing opportunities to do so. A presence in virtual realities, networks and communities is indispensable – after all, publicity is possible anywhere, at any time.

Wo da ist, muss auch dort sein, 2010

Video installation, in two parts; infinite loop
Courtesy the artist

Xavier Veilhan

Born 1963 in Lyons (FR),
lives and works in Paris (FR)

Xavier Veilhan is well-known in France as the artist of numerous public works. Most recently (in 2009), he had a much-noticed multi-part exhibition in the châteaux and park at Versailles. Among the “exhibits” was an outsize purple carriage that seemed to rattle over the cobblestones of the courtyard. Like the model here, it was distorted by speed and Futurist dynamics. His *Mobile* in Space01 hangs in equilibrium completely free in space and is constantly in motion, stirred by the air and three motors. The fragile arrangement is reminiscent of the boundlessness of a rotating galaxy functioning according to a system of its own. The concept of mobiles was invented by Alexander Calder in the 1930s, who made movement the principle of his work, thereby establishing a basic existential condition when he said that “various movements different in kind, speed and extent come together to make a whole.”

***Large Carriage*, 2008**

Painted stereolithograph;
horses and carriage: 12.5 x 11 x 69 cm
Courtesy Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris

***Mobile*, 2009**

Composite material, stainless steel, paint;
10 x 10 x 10 m
Courtesy Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm;
Gering & Lopez Gallery, New York;
Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris;
Galeria Javier Lopez, Madrid

***Amish*, 2008**

Painted stereolithograph;
horse and carriage: 12 x 10.5 x 34 cm
Courtesy Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin; Paris

***Amish Boccioni*, 2008**

Painted stereolithograph;
horse and carriage: 12 x 12 x 36 cm
Private collection, USA

***Amish Vibration*, 2008**

Painted stereolithograph;
horse and carriage: 12.5 x 10 x 30 cm
Jeanroch Dard Collection, Paris

Roman Signer

Born 1938 in Appenzell (CH),
lives and works in St. Gallen (CH)

The Christmas tree in the white room provides a special kind of Christmas sculpture not just by rotating but also thanks to suitably atmospheric lighting. The

continuous 360° visibility of the tree is completely automated. The only bad dreams this Christmas tree might cause are due to the wrong speed of rotation. A violent centrifugal force is not conducive to quiet pre-Christmas contemplation, and ends up in an unholy mess rather than holy thoughts!

***Zimmer mit Weihnachtsbaum*, 2010**

Installation: timber structure, rotating
Christmas tree, decorations;
motor; 2.8 x 4 x 4 m
Courtesy of Galerie Martin Janda

Lisi Raskin

Born 1974 in Miami (US),
lives and works in Brooklyn (US)

Lisi Raskin has come up with a (partly walk-on) terrain for the Kunsthaus Graz featuring rocket launchpads. On opening day, revolutionary theatre (played by children) is on the agenda, influenced by the idiom of the avant-garde. Made of the simplest of materials, and informed by an almost child-like passion, rockets and other theatrical devices appropriate to her performative revolution play emerge. Having grown up in the vicinity of a NASA base, Lisi Raskin has been

fascinated by the subject of space travel and the appropriation of outer space since childhood. Evoking the standard images of those days, she hammered and stuck together buildings and rockets, which she anchors directly in the utopia of modernism. These are disguised and deconstructed with a humorous and playful lightness of touch in the staging. As recent developments around Obama's latest NASA programme demonstrate, the human conquest of space plays an extraordinarily important part in the national identity of her country, and is a direct function of military resources and supremacy concerns. Through its very topicality, *For Any Revolutionary Play* invites visitors in the installation to ponder on inner images and the symbolic force of rockets, and to reconsider them against the background of a political drama.

***For Any Revolutionary Play*, 2010**

Plywood, chipboard, balsa wood, acrylic
paint; dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist and Milliken Gallery

Aleksandra Mir

Born 1967 in Lubin (PL),
Swedish/US citizen,
lives and works in Palermo (IT)

Who does the sky belong to? This is a question whose importance Aleksandra Mir is in no doubt about, suggesting that secularisation, enlightenment and religiousness can produce a thoroughly bizarre force field. Veneration of saints and a belief in progress are not incompatible. Aleksandra Mir takes devotional images of saints familiar from private 19th century piety, mass-produced products that also popularised famous works of art (the projection screen includes for example a print of Raphael's Madonna). Not only faith – technology is also a route to a successful ascent. Pictures of space travel are also dressed up in the dog-eared style of devotional icons. She illustrates the power of globally disseminated images by citing pictures of the moon landing. Elsewhere, she has shown how these images can be manipulated by depicting herself as the first woman on the moon.

***Aim for the Stars*, 2008/09**

23 collages in white gold frames;
200 x 390 cm
Courtesy Galeria Joan Prats, Barcelona

Ludwig Reutterer

(1893 Vienna – 1985 Vienna)

***Tänzerin (Entwurf für ein Plakat)*, 1920**

Gouache, watercolour, charcoal and opaque white on paper; 44.8 x 31.8 cm
Wien Museum, Vienna

See Kinetism

Christian Eisenberger

Born 1978 in Graz (AT),
lives and works in Wien (AT)

Christian Eisenberger must presumably be among the niftiest workers on the contemporary Austrian art scene. The video shows Eisenberger about his gravity games, in which he shows the earth apparently stuck on a skewer. In fact, he rolls downhill camera in hand, gravity and the slope causing the dizzying rotation. The painted pictures and manipulated “measuring equipment” that Eisenberger adds as an echo likewise owe much to

improvisation. They are composed into a three-dimensional installation that reveals a delight in high-speed experimentation and the inspiration of the moment.

***Echo*, 2010**

Installation: video and painting
Courtesy the artist

Lu Qing

Born 1965 in Shenyang,
Liaoning Province (CN),
lives and works in Beijing (CN)

Day after day for 365 days, Lu Qing painted squares on the delicate silk carpet. The passing of a year can be seen in the plain array of squares. Ink is slow to permeate silk. Irregular blurred patches show where the colour has run into adjacent fields. Amid the breakneck hustle and bustle, her work is a still point of calm meditation, a symbol of the fact that time is only really experienced in the moment of conscious perception.

***Untitled*, 2000/01**

Acrylic on silk; 4670 x 82 cm
Sigg Collection

Library

The mezzanine floor contains a small library and mediatheque on the subject of speed, where you can browse at leisure. Without attempting to be comprehensive, it contains a wide range of books and films of recent years. Selected mainly by association, they provide not only information about individual artists but are particularly indicative of the current explosive topicality of the subject. Do drop in – and leave yourself lots of time!

Anri Sala

Born 1974 in Tirana (AL),
lives and works in Berlin (DE)

A solitary, emaciated horse stands in the dark, scarcely discernible and motionless on a motorway in Tirana. Suddenly a car appears, its headlights picking out its head. The horse does not react. A lorry roars past. The horse lifts a foot and begins to tremble, looking exposed and lost. Vulnerable and no longer needed, the beast symbolizes ageing in a society that pays

dearly for oases of calm and stillness in the stupefying pace of everyday life. Using an unchanging camera perspective, Albanian artist Anri Sala reveals to us such hidden moments of life.

Time After Time, 2003

Video; 5 min 22 sec
Moderna Museet, Stockholm

Ed Ruscha

Born 1937 in Omaha, Nebraska (US), lives and works in Los Angeles (US)

High-Speed Gardening is a contradiction in itself, but could nonetheless be an advertising slogan for contemporary gardening. Mowing, sowing and weeding faster means getting more out of the garden. Not the way there – working in nature – is the point, but the garden itself. Since the 60s, Ed Ruscha has been homing in on phrases that stick in the mind, and making the words themselves – written large – the subject of his pictures. The words-become-picture draw attention to an ordinary expression that thereby assumes emblematic character.

His word paintings, which are now found even in the White House, are for Ed Ruscha closely bound up with American attitudes to life. They particularly reflect the visual idiom you see along the highways. He gets ideas while driving – the surroundings he drives through inspire him. It has been said that no-one knows the streets of Los Angeles as well as Ed Ruscha.

High-Speed Gardening, 1989

Graphite and acrylic on paper; 102 x 150 cm
Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Picardie

Events and Education

Diagonale 2010. Festival of Austrian Film

Billy Roisz, brRRMMMWHEee – extended version

The trailer for this year's Diagonale Festival is thematically connected with the Catch Me! exhibition – *brRRMMMWHEee ...* was created by Vienna-based experimental film and music performance artist Billy Roisz. It translates a frenzy of electrical signals into images and sounds. The extended version will be shown three-dimensionally in Space03 at the Kunsthau Graz while the Festival is on, from 18th–21st March. Audio/video performance by Billy Roisz and dieb13, 7pm, Space03, 17th March 2010

The Dimension of Temporality in Markus Wilfling's Work

Talk with Markus Wilfling, Werner Fenz, and Katrin Bucher Trantow
April 16, 2010, 4pm, Space01
In co-operation with *contemporary art in graz* – gallery days

Annie Vigier & Franck Apertet – les gens d'Uterpan

The finissage will once again be a high point of the exhibition, this time with a performance by the Paris-based experimental dancers les gens d'Uterpan. The dancers will plumb and measure the exhibition rooms at the Kunsthau Graz, at the same time plumbing the expressive capabilities of their own bodies.
7pm, 24th April 2010
Admission free

Kunsthau Jour Fixe 26

Discussion
April 20, 2010, 7pm, Needle

Guided tours in English Saturdays 2pm

And by arrangement in English, Slovenian, Croatian, or French
Request: +43-316/8017-9200

Curator
Katrin Bucher Trantow

Text
Monika Holzer-Kernbichler

Translation
Paul Aston

Graphic concept
and design
Lichtwitz – Büro für
visuelle Kommunikation

Layout
Andrea Weishaupt,
Chiara Pucher