

Curator's Acknowledgements

THIS PROJECT BEGAN with a casual Saturday conversation at a Paris café in September 2011 with Richard Conte and Sandra Laugier, respectively professors of art and philosophy at the Université Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne. When I mentioned to them that 2012 would be the twentieth anniversary of the simultaneous publication (in English and French) of my book *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, they proposed that their respective faculties of art and philosophy would be happy to collaborate in organizing a conference to mark that event, especially because pragmatist aesthetics is an excellent theme for connecting philosophy and art. I am particularly grateful to Richard Conte, who generously took the leading role of launching this project from his research unit and skillfully assured its continued support; and I was delighted when Barbara Formis (also of the Sorbonne's arts faculty) enthusiastically accepted the crucial job of writing the grant proposal and coordinating the entire project. Not only an insightful interpreter of pragmatist aesthetics, she is also a leading researcher in somaesthetics, editing the first anthology in that field (*Penser en corps: Soma-esthétique, art et philosophie*, 2009) and brilliantly translating my lead essay for it ("Penser en corps"). She agreed with Richard Conte that, to highlight the transdisciplinary aims and impact of pragmatist aesthetics, an art exhibition at the Sorbonne's Michel Journiac Gallery should be included in the project and that I should be offered the job of curating it. In patiently and passionately coordinating this complex double project in all its diverse aspects while also enriching it with creative intelligence, Barbara deserves my most profound thanks.

Mathias Girel of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, who was also thinking of an anniversary conference for *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (and had organized a conference on somaesthetics in 2011),

kindly joined the Sorbonne team, as did the Italian philosopher Roberto Frega (who is independently arranging a special issue of the *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* to discuss the impact of this book). In thanking them for their collaboration, I also give my special thanks to Peng Feng (the Chinese translator of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*) who has been enormously helpful in coordinating the Chinese elements of this conference and exhibition. It is truly a blessing to have such wonderfully gifted philosophical friends.

Although the prospect of curating daunted me (since I had no prior experience and was busy working a continent away) I overcame my initial reluctance and accepted the job with real pleasure and an enthusiastic curiosity that only grew as I plunged deeper into the project and its meanings for pragmatist philosophy and art. Work on this curatorial project has also been rich in personal meanings, allowing me to deepen my connections with the seven artists who have generously made their works available for this exhibition, in amiable recognition of our earlier collaborations (which I describe in the essay that follows). I hereby acknowledge my gratitude to these magnificent seven: Luca Del Baldo, Pan Gongkai, Carsten Höller, ORLAN, Thecla Schiphorst, Yann Toma, and Tatiana Trouvé.

Without a trusted and talented volunteer in Paris to help with organizing so many technical details of the show, I would have been lost. The art theorist and critic, David Zerbib provided this and much more — a treasure of helpful feedback and creative ideas on the selection and display of the different works, along with a deeply supportive understanding of the philosophical thinking that structures this show. I am extremely grateful for his taste, his insight, and his friendship.

Years bathe us in the waters of Lethe, and key figures in past enterprises are often forgotten as we focus on the present and future. In celebrating the twentieth anniversary of this book in Paris, I gratefully recall the superb skill and generosity of its French translator, Christine Noille, then a doctoral student in French literature at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. It was her

first effort of English translation, and she performed it brilliantly without any promise of payment or even assurance of publication, but simply out of impassioned interest. Her literary talents were good enough to satisfy the highest standards of Jérôme Lindon, the legendary publisher of Editions de Minuit, who shrewdly decided to remove three of the book's original English chapters to ensure a wider reception for the French version. His strategy proved successful, and the intense media attention the book received helped generate a continuing string of translations (now numbering fourteen). The international career of the book is somewhat reflected in the international range of artists and scholars contributing to this exhibition and conference. I am likewise extremely grateful to Pierre Bourdieu who first brought me to Paris and then welcomed my book in his series with Minuit, despite its pointed criticism of his views on popular art and aesthetics.

Many other individuals and institutions have helped to make this double event possible, too many to acknowledge individually here. I should at least thank Air de Paris and the Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin for lending me works of Carsten Höller and Tatiana Trouvé, as I note with deep gratitude the official sponsoring organizations of this project: Université Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne (especially its UMR ACTE: Arts – Créations – Théories – Esthétiques, but also its Equipe de recherche Philosophies Contemporaines); Ecole Normale Supérieure d'Ulm; Centre International de Recherches en Philosophie, Lettres, Savoirs; Peking University, Centre for Aesthetics and Aesthetic Education; China's Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing; and Florida Atlantic University, College of Arts and Letters and its Center for Body, Mind, and Culture.

Florida Atlantic University (FAU) is my academic home, and I wish to express my profound indebtedness for the support and understanding it gives me. Like the best of homes, it encourages educational voyages of discovery that involve extended absences and laboring in foreign places, which in turn enrich my work at FAU. This intercontinental project focused on my work and hosted

by France's most prestigious university is eloquent testimony to the value of such international, trans-institutional strategy. I am especially grateful to the Schmidt Family Foundation for providing the munificent endowment that funds my position as the Dorthy F. Schmidt Eminent Scholar in the Humanities at FAU and supports the Center for Body, Mind, and Culture that I direct there. That same endowment has enabled the publishing of this catalog.

Several artist friends insisted that the show deserved the documentation of a catalog; and having authored and edited several books of philosophy, I thought I knew my way about publishing. But creating an art catalog for an exhibition only months away proved a radically new publishing experience, a thoroughly challenging scene of instruction.

Fortunately, I had good company in this process. If my research assistants Megan Fryer and Joel Wilson shared my inexperience with art shows and catalogs, they also shared my passion to do the best job possible within the severe constraints of time and budget. Extremely grateful for their support in this project, I also thank Shane Fryer for designing the catalog. Without this team, you would not be holding this catalog in your hands, and I hope you find its texts and images — and the exhibition it documents — as rewarding as we found producing it.

Richard Shusterman