

Johnen Galerie

FRIEZE

Looking Back Looking Forward

01.01.2011



Sarah Robayo Sheridan's project 'Reunion 2010' (2010), performance documentation, Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, Toronto

Ryan Gander

An artist based in London, UK. His work is currently on show at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; Manifesta 8, Murcia, Spain; 'Exhibition, Exhibition', Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art, Turin Italy; and 'Publics and Counterpublics', Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville, Spain.

It's nice to be in the right place at the right time. There's a value in discovering something – or feeling like you have worked to unearth it – rather than having it handed to you pre-packaged. Now I stop to think about it, amongst all the biennials, surveys shows, prizes and art fair projects of the last year, the things I enjoyed the most are the ones that

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hardly anyone else I know saw.

Artists are constantly preoccupied with discovering the perfect art school or new educational model. This place exists! It's on a tree-lined hill above Nice; it overlooks the Côte d'Azur and is called Villa Arson. It's a museum, residency programme, art school and library where magic continually happens and is rarely noted outside of France. Roman Ondák's show at the Villa, 'Shaking Horizon', ran from July to October and was like perfect happenstance. It's not often I see artists I really like showing at spaces I really like. The Villa's labyrinthine rooms and halls were the perfect setting for Ondák to produce an exhaustive show that presented his practice rather than merely a collection of works. It was an astounding collision.

I'm of the opinion that jealousy is a good measure of an artist's worth; when I see an art work that I wish I had made, I know that something important is happening to me. The work of the 24-year-old Warrington-born, neo-'leany-bits'-conceptualist Matthew Richardson (who is greatly championed by my wife, Rebecca May Marston, who runs London's Limoncello gallery) makes my stomach hurt. I've seen three shows by him in the last 12 months: 'The Bosch Young Talent Show' at akv St. Joost, in 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands; Outpost Members Show, Outpost Gallery, Norwich, UK; and Limoncello. His work in all of these exhibitions made me do a double-take. There's a kind of independence or idiosyncrasy in what he's doing that makes me think he's not looking at what anyone else is making. It also greatly intrigues me that he's still so young; the work seems to have the kind of privilege of hindsight you usually only get from years of labour. Richardson has just graduated from London's Slade School of Fine Art; he has moved to Glasgow to start his mfa.

Sarah Robayo Sheridan is curator at Mercer Union, Toronto. Her project 'Reunion 2010' was not only one of the events I most appreciated in the last year, but in my lifetime. It comprised night-long performances and re-enactments of works by Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, Alison Knowles, Takako Saito and other Fluxus members at Toronto's Ryerson Theatre in October. The evening consisted of various chess-related activities, including Wine Chess (1978–ongoing) by the 81-year-old Saito, who flew in from Düsseldorf. Two world champion chess players, Jennifer Shahade (a.k.a. 'Chess Bitch') and Pascal Charbonneau, battled it out with chess pieces replaced with various glasses of red and white wine; distinguishing between them was dependent on the players senses of taste and smell. During those 12 dark hours I sat backstage experiencing not only a durational exhibition in the making, but also the unravelling, remembering and forgetting of a part of art history that I would have liked to have lived through first hand.

As for 2011, I am looking forward to Gabriel Kuri's solo show at South London Gallery; he has a sleight of hand and a lightness of touch that I really appreciate. Although I have been remotely following what he has been doing for the last few years, I haven't seen anything by him in the 'real' for quite a while. This show will be his first institutional solo exhibition in the UK. Should be good 'un.