

Overture: Tino Sehgal

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Imagine coming into an art space, preferably a museum, and all of a sudden an exhibition guard jumps up, springs from one leg to the other, rotates the arms in front of the body, stops and then unexpectedly says: 'This is Good, Tino Sehgal 2001. Courtesy the artist.' What we witness should we see such a scene in a museum is a work by German artist Tino Sehgal entitled *This is Good*. The work is part of larger series of works that Sehgal has developed in the last two years, employing exhibition guards as the medium of artistic expression. The guard, repeats this sequence every time another person enters the room in which the guard is watching over the works of art. The guard does so during the entire opening hours of the museum, throughout the whole length of the specific exhibition. *This is Good* is, however, more than the simple act of turning the museum guard into a work of art, something that could be a true conceptual, yet simply formalist, gesture. By way of choreographies Sehgal offers a different look on issues around the relation of art and art object, museums and society. As the artist, who was originally trained as dancer and since studies economy, stated: 'While most art works in being objects mirror what has been the historically prevalent mode of economic production, the transformation of material, these works propose the transformation of actions as a way of obtaining a product or an art work.' Performance with its subversive quality of being utterly ephemeral proposes yet another view on common beliefs in regards to our cultural heritage and the formation of subjectivity in western societies. To employ, in addition, a museum guard, the person who is physically guarding our tradition and culture, to articulated such a predicament is plainly a stroke of genius. *This is Good* has been shown already in a special version at the Museo de Arte Carillo Gil in Mexico City and will be seen in various exhibitions this year. The title is an additional element to generate a form of tangle, what does the artist mean by *This is Good*? It could be his own work, the performance of the guards, the works of art in the space or even the whole system of museums and through that our entire society that offers Sehgal a closely framed backdrop that he can deconstruct. Sehgal has made other works that include performative elements contrasting the idea of process versus object. One example is his piece *Instead of allowing some thing to rise up to your face, dancing bruce and dan and other things* (2000) which the artist presented at the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst in Gent as a live restaging of movements of dance-influenced video-works by Dan Graham and Bruce Nauman. Sehgal insists that his works are visual artworks as only as those they have the power to question inherit beliefs of exhibition practice and the conservation of art and culture and through that question determined convictions within today's civilization.