

Johnen Galerie

KATALOG DES KUNSTPREISES DER BÖTTCHERSTRAÙE
Ulrich Obrist interviews Tino Sehgal

Hans

2003

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Interview mit Tino Sehgal in: Katalog des Kunstpreises der Böttcherstraße Bremen 2003

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HUO The first question should come from Jens Hoffmann who we are now going to call in Frankfurt. His cell phone is now ringing. Hi Jens, I'm just starting the recording with Tino Sehgal and it's your turn to ask him the first question. So you tell me and I'll ask him. The question Jens is asking as a first question is usually my last question, which is whether you could tell us about your unrealised projects?

TS I have one unrealised project which I think will definitely remain unrealised. It is part of a series of works that I am working on at the moment that run for the duration of the whole opening hours of a temporary exhibition, and it's called 'This is Hans Ulrich Obrist'.

HUO [laughs] Can you tell me more!

TS One comes into an empty space in a museum and there's you, interviewing people of your choice, say two hour sessions. So you can choose the people and there's no recording but you have to interview for the whole day. And when visitors comes into the space you have to go up to them and say 'This is a piece by Tino Sehgal, it is called 'This is Hans Ulrich Obrist', two thousand and ever, courtesy of the artist' - since I don't have a gallery. But seriously, most of my pieces are unrealised also because it is not possible to build them in a studio or make a model of them, I also don't have a notebook so I don't write them down.

HUO Do you draw?

TS No.

HUO You never draw?

TS I was really bad at art in school. Once I was in danger of repeating a year because of that. This is creating some great narratives. I cannot draw perspective, which was very frustrating.

HUO So to begin with the beginning. How did it all start for you? We have something in common which is that we both studied economics, so I was obviously interested to ask you about that.

TS My biography is very linear actually. I was very interested in politics when I was a youngster. It was like my teenage trip, like I imagine a lot of teenagers have. You probably also had them.

[pause for noise of coffee machine]

TS The break is the best! ... So I was interested in politics and I thought, if you're serious about this then you should study political economy, because at the end of the day that is the place where things are discussed. I don't know if that is true now, but I certainly believed it for ten years. I'm still involved in political economy. So on one side I was interested in a theoretical practice, like economics: I think that the basis of economics and civilisation is founded on two things - on the one hand we have something like lack, in German we have the nice word mangel.

HUO Lack or scarcity.

TS Yes, though I don't like the English word so much. Civilisations were always dealing with the fact that there is not enough to survive and with the threats of 'nature'. Growing up I felt that this was somehow lost, there was no lack and there was no threat from nature. But on the other hand all present economic and social conventions have resulted from

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millions of years of trying to deal with these two problems. So, to say it in another way, what happens in the middle of the 20th century in the western societies is a major rupture in the civilisational axiomatic: In the moment that western economies not only had excess supplies for the first time but that this production was now not only not any longer threatened by 'nature' but actually could itself also endanger the specific disposition of the planet in which human existence seems possible. At this moment these two seemingly eternal civilisational problems have been solved so thoroughly that their solutions are potentially again threatening quality of life. So in my view this really changes the premises for economics and it struck me as a very interesting thing to rethink how economics could work and I thought that the mode of production that is inherent to dance is an interesting model for this. While visual art proposes that we can extract material from natural resources and then transform it and then we have a product and that's it, it's there to stay, and thus follows the historically prevalent mode of production; dance transforms actions to obtain a product or art work and it produces and reproduces this product at the same time.

HUO It doesn't create objects.

TS Yes. It creates meanings and 'things' somehow.

HUO Relations?

TS Yes, always because it's between humans. Anyway that was the beginning, with dance. But then I realised later that it could go with anything, it could be spoken word, interviews with Hans Ulrich Obrist without a camera, it could go with singing...

HUO And what was your first performance? I know you are not very keen on the notion of performance.

TS No, no. I did performances but I called them theatre pieces or dance pieces.

HUO Could you tell me about these first pieces?

TS Well the first piece that I would really want to talk about is the Twentieth Century dance piece. It's not the first that I made, but it's the first one I'm interested in talking about now. I was only interested in visual art in the sense that it deals with the relationship between humans and objects. But how could I do that in theatre? My idea was to make a piece that exhibited the medium dance, in order to point to the idea of production that is inherent to this medium. I wanted to make a piece which had no specific meaning in the sense of form and content, only exposing the medium. At first I thought this would be impossible, an unrealisable project. I cannot stand still, that would be already a very specific aesthetic and form and content and I cannot disappear then it would be an installation and again very specific. So my idea was instead to do all the forms and contents available in the genre art/stage dance, hoping that they would cancel each other out in regard of their specific positions. Art dance started at the beginning of the twentieth century with Isadora Duncan - she was the first to think of herself as an artist. So I was working just with my body, and then I called it like this big 'Twentieth Century' exhibition in Berlin. It has different titles. In German it's called '... das XX. Jahrhundert', like dot dot dot d a s zwei grosse X punkt Jahrhundert, and in French it's called 'Musée d'Art Moderne, Section XXIème Siècle, Département'. It's always announced untitled but then I change the title orally in the show. In Sweden it was called 'Permanent Collection'

HUO And is there an Andre Malraux notion of the musee imaginaire - the

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imaginary museum?

TS I'm not 100% sure if I understood his idea, so correct me if I'm wrong, now is it that there can be one kind of museum that could show all possible artworks?

HUO And it's also to do with the fact that you have the museum in your head - it's a mental museum.

TS I would say that my museum is a temporarily material museum, but of course it is a museum which is related to a specific department - the twentieth century dance department. I think Malraux was going for more somehow.

HUO Can you tell us about a few of your favourite pieces in this large museum of the twentieth century? What are some of the highlights?

TS One thing I have to say is that I never reconstruct. It's not a museum in the correct sense that I show original works or whatever. I just show ideas. I make work in the style of. I never saw a dance by Isadora Duncan. That's also a notion of history that I think is more interesting in the sense not of original works, traces, texts and so forth but of how these ideas come into society and perform themselves through this society. They are there even though they are not there any more. And I think that dance is a good model for seeing that. But if you want some names - I never mention names in the piece - it's fun because people can see something else because a lot of things are linked. Nothing is totally original. So people say, for example, I really liked it when you did Paul Taylor. I don't even really know Paul Taylor, but I know that they mean what for me is the Cunningham Part, it is similar with the Pina Bausch part, everybody would recognise Pina Bausch as Pina Bausch but actually I pasted one movement of Sacre du Printemps of Pina Bausch and then I had four other epigones of Pina Bausch from Germany. So only every fifth movement is a Pina Bausch movement but everybody will of course see it as Pina Bausch even though I don't say it is. It's just the specific ideology of doing.

HUO So you started with the museum, and then what came next?

TS I made my museum, though I would say I started with theatre, (although I'm not interested in the connotations of the word theatre), in a dispositif sense; this is the dispositif that I worked on for the Twentieth Century piece. People sit, they shut up and I do something. So I brought the museum into this dispositif and then after I brought dance into the museum. That was also a matter of practical possibilities. Before I didn't have the possibility of having access to the museum and now I do. I think that both ways work but for me to be in the museum is more interesting since it brings out more of my points, and people are not thinking about certain specificities as e.g. dance history when they see my pieces in the museum but a lot of people do when they see the Twentieth Century piece. When people come into the museum, like here at Manifesta, a lot of them are really shocked or astonished.

HUO Really?

TS Yes, not that I am interested in shocking people, but what is interesting for me is that they are astonished not about what this person is doing but that there is a person doing something. Do you understand what I mean? They are questioning the medium more than the specific activity. So I felt that this was actually a better place for my work than the theatre.

HUO Inside and outside the museum, inside and outside the theatre.

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It's kind of an isolation although at the moment the museum is your preferred territory. It's a very rare position to be in, to be able to choose.

TS Yes.

HUO Perhaps you could tell me more about your piece here at Manifesta to get a more concrete understanding of the ways in which your work has changed. It is very different to the Twentieth century piece, maybe it's more sculptural now.

TS You think the Twentieth century piece is much more more performative than it is sculptural?

HUO Or is it a post-medium condition?

TS No, specific-medium condition I think! I'm not sure I fully understood your question.

HUO I was interested in knowing what the museum offers you. You're basically coming from the live arts into what Picabia called the zone of death. For me that is a very interesting transfer.

TS That is also the case in the piece 'This is Hans Ulrich Obrist' - there is life, Hans Ulrich Obrist in the museum. Yes, of course it has something to do with this: I would say the museum is about death, because it is about overcoming death, that it is about prolonging life, so it's double sided. Personally I am interested in proposing different notions of history, presence, eternity. The piece in Manifesta, ('Instead of allowing some thing to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things') for example, is on the hand life - there are live people and it is a live piece, but on the other hand it is also performing the historical function of the museum, since it consists of a person slowly moving through bodily positions from different by Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham, but not as them. I've never seen Bruce Nauman's 'Wall Floor positions' and I don't think it's important that that I see the work.

HUO Have you read the instructions?

TS Well I saw some photos, I read something about it and somebody told me about it.

HUO It's hearsay, a rumour.

TS Yes, but this is another way in which history works, and it's more relevant than the one of original texts and relics: I show these bodily positions in a different way. Maybe Bruce Nauman wouldn't even realise. Maybe he would see that my interpretes do a certain bodily position of his but in a transformative slow movement. I'm giving the museum this aesthetic of the movement which is somehow mine but is also Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham playing on Bruce Nauman. So I'm also taking up the function of the museum in doing something new.

HUO Can you tell me more about the issue of these instructions that we also published in the context of Do-It? (www.e-flux.com) For the time being it is on the web site and there is to be a publication about instructions. So I'm very interested in instructions for the performances. There has been a long history of instructions in art through the '50s and '60s through Fluxus, John Cage, through music and events, performative works. This idea of 'doing-it' and 'redoing it', of reinterpreting the same instructions. Can you tell me more about this in your work?

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TS I thought about instructions when you invited me to take part in 'Do-it'. For visual art people this seems to be something special. In practices where humans are instructing other humans, such as in theatre of whatever kind, there are always instructions, not in written form, but in the form of the director saying 'You should go from the left to the right' and so on. With the instructions always comes interpretation, which I think was probably your interest in doing the 'Do-it' exhibition. But if you look around at Manifesta, some people will look at my piece for hours, I've realised, and they're comparing the people. Every two and a half hours the shift changes, and they say 'but this person was doing it like this', and yes of course, there is always going to be interpretation, there cannot be an original. And even when the same dancer does the same movement or the same singer sings the same song, it will always be different, so instruction and interpretation are always there and are inseparable from the medium or from the actors. For 'Do-it' what I was interested in, but what didn't work out, though I would be interested in pursuing it, was that I would have liked to have had a person who was going to Mexico, so not to write an instruction. But I didn't find anyone. I wasn't so happy with writing an instruction; it is a fine idea but the notion of my work is not written. I wanted to meet someone who was going to Mexico and tell them that I wanted my piece to be like 'this' and they would have 'carried' it in their body, and then gone into the museum, spoken to the curator and told them how it should be.

HUO Not over the phone!

TS No, not over the phone! This body to body transmission was an idea I found interesting. Maybe we can do it next time.

HUO Can you tell me about the instructions for your work?

TS I think it's a really good piece. It's called 'This is Hans Ulrich Obrist'. I'm going to say that all the time. So seriously, the piece is called 'This is good' and it should be that you come into a normal museum space, with some sculptures or paintings, and there is a museum guard there. After 10 or 15 seconds, it depends on the guard, he makes a big movement to draw people's attention. The movement doesn't have a beginning or an ending. I always explain to the interpretes that it's like Da Vinci's proportion figure in movement, all the movement at the same time. So they make the movement and after about four seconds they stop. The movement makes a sound and the spectators or museum visitors look. Then the guard stops and says 'Tino Sehgal, This is good, 2001, courtesy the artist'. So the difference from the piece you saw in Manifesta, for example, is that in the latter, there is still a label, there is still an object, the label, that is producing meaning. The next step, in 'This is good', is to put movement into the guard who is anyways already there and to substitute the label with the spoken word.

HUO And have they filmed it?

TS This is of course a problem.

HUO That's the question, can there be a right or a wrong interpretation?

TS I think that there can be different interpretations which have nothing to do with what I intended to do, but that doesn't mean that they're not valid or that they're not interesting. These interpretations are always there. When people look at a piece which has been made by an artist and it is exactly as the artist wanted to make it, and it is totally stable over time, then there are already different interpretations within

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the spectator. I mean, it's just a question of at which stage of the reception process you put this interpretation.

HUO Exactly, that's very important. So it's to do with at which moment in the reception process it is put, at the beginning or the end and so on. But to come back to the idea of instructions, I was interested in several aspects. I was interested in economy, in collaboration, in the label. I know that you sold a performance to Jérôme Bel, so perhaps we could start this line of conversation with this concrete example.

TS I have nothing against the term 'performance' itself, but we have to differentiate. I didn't sell a performance to Jérôme Bel; I did sell a piece to him, but it is somehow a visual art work or installation. When I sell the Twentieth Century piece, it is a performance, a dance piece, and I sell it - to make my living, and this is not interesting at the moment, but there is a certain economy for this, though I would say that the dance presenters who invite and buy it don't own the piece.

HUO So at the moment you make a living from the performance art world, to whom you sell performances?

TS Well, it's not the performance art world, I don't think there's a lot of money there, it's really the dance business.

HUO And there is a lot of money there?

TS No, I don't think there's a lot of money there, but there is some money. In the dance business it's not really a market, it's a market that is somehow sustained by the state. A dance piece can be sold, a solo piece, from about 1500 to 3000. So there is not a big difference between a very famous artist and a not so well-known artist. There is not a lot of money, but a little. I'm not very interested in these matters to be honest.

HUO It's interesting for me because it is an economy I don't know about and it is very different to the visual arts economy.

TS Yes, I see. And so what I sold to Jérôme Bel is more of a visual art piece, and that's the piece in Manifesta. So he can show it when he shows his collection. There are lots of differences to Performance Art however. Performance artists didn't want to sell or reproduce their works, whereas I'm interested in creating products but by rethinking the notion of a product as a transformation of actions not as a transformation of material. The piece that I sold to Jérôme Bel is a product. It is very specific, it is reproducible in different parts of the world at the same time, but it's totally immaterial. It doesn't involve this whole civilisational mode of production we spoke about before.

HUO It's an intangible product.

TS What do you mean by intangible?

HUO Not material.

TS Well it's temporarily materialised in a body.

HUO So it's virtual and then conceptualised.

TS I'm not so interested in the virtual, but maybe I don't know enough about it.

HUO I don't mean in the sense of virtual reality.

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TS It has very strange connotations.

HUO But in the Deleuzian sense, the word means 'potential', but maybe that's not so interesting for your work.

TS Somehow it exists in my mind, in my body and the bodies of the people who know how to do it, and it also exists in their memories and of those of the people who saw it. Maybe it does only become actual when it's staged in a museum. For me, this thing about the selling of the piece was very interesting in that we could stay very conventional with everything but that this whole civilisational mode of transformation of natural resources was not touched at all, in respect of the fact that this whole system of the product on the market historically is all based on this transformation of material. Everything we did was exactly the same except that this didn't happen.

HUO Could you tell me more about this process of transfer. To repeat what I've understood so far, is that there are different things. On the one hand you do performances in the dance context and then you do pieces which happen in the art context. There is a different economy for this; in the dance context it is a conventional economy, which you use as it already exists, but then in the art context you have kind of changed the rules of the game, or at least you do something which is not normally done. Perhaps that's why it's interesting to think about.

TS Yes, I try to do everything as normal as possible in the art context but in order to achieve that I realise that on first glance it may be seen as a little unusual and this can produce some interesting meaning. There has been a whole history of structures such as the art market which still exists, which is problematic for specific reasons and by reasons I don't mean that I have a problem with the market - not at all - I think the market is great, but I do have a problem with the transformation of material for the reasons I gave at the beginning: mankind's endangering of the specific disposition that it is able to live in and that there is no real need for new products. We already have a lot. Personally I'm not so interested in this conception of material goods. I have enough of them. I'm more interested in differentiating my subjectivity. So when I sold the piece, everything was conventional about it, but the essential core of the structures is left out. You're supposed to sell an object so that a collector has it in his house, and you hand it over, but when I sold the piece to Jérôme, somehow nothing was given over that he can take back into his house or even put into his depot.

HUO So not even a certificate.

TS No, of course. So this is where I'm trying to be cleaner than performance art. Although I'm actually not so interested in performance art, it's not even really a reference for me. I'm especially trying to be cleaner than conceptual art in the sense that if we want to dematerialise the object, let's really dematerialise it. I'm still producing objects not in the material sense of the word but in the product sense of the word.

HUO So what does Jérôme get?

TS Well he gets a lot of attention! Through your camera and the interview! [laughs] No, he is specifying his collection.

HUO Is he mentioned as a courtesy?

TS Yes.

HUO It's on the label?

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TS Yes.

HUO So Jérôme Bel is a lender to Manifesta?

TS Yes. They had to e-mail him. I wouldn't have sold him the piece if he wouldn't always allow it to be exhibited. He has Huyghe, Hirschhorn, Orozco and he always lends them. Anyway, it's certainly not going to be a disadvantage for him to exhibit it, it's unbreakable.

HUO With all conceptual art there has been, in one form or another, a certificate which confirms the property of the copyright and so on. So I was somehow curious about a lawyer because I know you had to meet with a notary?

TS Yes. What conceptual art was doing was dematerialising the art object into language, which they thought meant writing something on paper. They are from the tradition of painting and sculpture somehow, so what do they do, they write on paper.

HUO And they create a new fetish.

TS I'm not interested in the notion of fetish.

HUO Why?

TS This has not been one of my problems. I would like people to fetishise my work, why not.

HUO So you're not anti-fetishism?

TS No, I'm not, but I'm just saying that if they really want to dematerialise the object they haven't so far - there's still paper with colour on it - an object. Even though this maybe isn't seen as a painting, but I would see it as painting. I'm trying to really dematerialise the object, so that there's no text, no object to certify that this 'object' is an object or whatever. So we went to the notary. I'll tell the whole story.

HUO I want to know everything!

TS So Jérôme wanted to buy it and I said 'okay, but I want to do it with an oral contract', and so I went to see a lawyer, and he said 'Well you should keep it (the oral contract) very simple and there should be a notary as a testimony, so if there is some fight, the notary will have more authority because this would normally be his job'. He said that there should also be a museum director to give it authority as art and so on. Later he said, the best person as a testimony would be a notary, the second best would be a lawyer and the third best would be the director of an art museum, to reinforce this feeble thing. An oral contract is of course considered more feeble than a written contract. It took weeks to find a notary who was prepared to do this - everyone in Paris said 'No, no, that's illegal' or 'it will take too much time to find out', but then I called one and he said 'No problem'. I have a friend who had studied law and we met in a cafe and prepared the contract. Preparing the contract we didn't write a thing down, we really tried to play the game. She would tell me the sentences in French and I would repeat them to her, then I rehearsed it with her before we met the notary. The best anecdote is that there was a Ben Vautier painting on the wall in his office saying 'On doit tout ecrire'. That's the best! [laughs] The notary sat down and he was not allowed to write a bill as that could also be used as some kind of proof or certificate.

HUO So you paid the notary but there was no receipt.

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HUO The first question should come from Jens Hoffmann who we are now going to call in Frankfurt. His cell phone is now ringing. Hi Jens, I'm just starting the recording with Tino Sehgal and it's your turn to ask him the first question. So you tell me and I'll ask him. The question Jens is asking as a first question is usually my last question, which is whether you could tell us about your unrealised projects?

TS I have one unrealised project which I think will definitely remain unrealised. It is part of a series of works that I am working on at the moment that run for the duration of the whole opening hours of a temporary exhibition, and it's called 'This is Hans Ulrich Obrist'.

HUO [laughs] Can you tell me more!

TS One comes into an empty space in a museum and there's you, interviewing people of your choice, say two hour sessions. So you can choose the people and there's no recording but you have to interview for the whole day. And when visitors comes into the space you have to go up to them and say 'This is a piece by Tino Sehgal, it is called 'This is Hans Ulrich Obrist', two thousand and ever, courtesy of the artist' - since I don't have a gallery. But seriously, most of my pieces are unrealised also because it is not possible to build them in a studio or make a model of them, I also don't have a notebook so I don't write them down.

HUO Do you draw?

TS No.

HUO You never draw?

TS I was really bad at art in school. Once I was in danger of repeating a year because of that. This is creating some great narratives. I cannot draw perspective, which was very frustrating.

HUO So to begin with the beginning. How did it all start for you? We have something in common which is that we both studied economics, so I was obviously interested to ask you about that.

TS My biography is very linear actually. I was very interested in politics when I was a youngster. It was like my teenage trip, like I imagine a lot of teenagers have. You probably also had them.

[pause for noise of coffee machine]

TS The break is the best! ... So I was interested in politics and I thought, if you're serious about this then you should study political economy, because at the end of the day that is the place where things are discussed. I don't know if that is true now, but I certainly believed it for ten years. I'm still involved in political economy. So on one side I was interested in a theoretical practice, like economics: I think that the basis of economics and civilisation is founded on two things - on the one hand we have something like lack, in German we have the nice word mangel.

HUO Lack or scarcity.

TS Yes, though I don't like the English word so much. Civilisations were always dealing with the fact that there is not enough to survive and with the threats of 'nature'. Growing up I felt that this was somehow lost, there was no lack and there was no threat from nature. But on the other hand all present economic and social conventions have resulted from

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collaborating with other practitioners. We have been in what Douglas Gordon called 'a promiscuity of collaboration'.

TS I am very afraid of the notion of collaboration somehow. If you say that there is a place of collaboration, that means that there is also a place which is not for collaboration. So it is a very difficult notion and I prefer not to use it.

HUO Do you think it's a normal thing to do?

TS It's always there - you cannot not collaborate. My favourite sentence from Rancière is where he says 'The end of politics and the return of politics are two ways of cancelling out politics'. To say that politics has ended or returned means to cancel out politics everywhere since it is always in existence, and it is the same with collaboration. I don't really see the point in the word collaboration. I think it is a word that has been too important for too long and I prefer not to use it. I know that in practical terms it means working with another artist, and personally I'm not interested in that either. Art is always collaborating - it collaborates with art history all the time. You cannot not collaborate with art history.

HUO You have mentioned your imaginary museum of dance, so could you tell me a little about your imaginary museum of visual art?

TS I sometimes see my work in relation to Yves Klein, as a dialectical reworking of Le Vide...

HUO You've never mentioned that before, that's very interesting. A reworking of Klein's Le Vide.

TS ...yes, a reworking. So if you imagine a solo exhibition of my work it would be an empty museum except that in each room there would be a person/guard doing something. Of course, Yves Klein's space was never empty, there were always people inside, and if it was empty it was irrelevant because nobody saw or experienced it. I would like to do a solo exhibition in a totally empty museum which at the same time would be full, empty and full since there would be no objects whatsoever, but there would be loads of pieces going on and in each room, so in some sense it would be very conventional.

HUO And are there other visual artists who have influenced you?

TS There are basically only visual artists, and that is again why this thing of working in different fields is not so relevant to me. I was never really interested in dance in the sense of what can a body do or how should a body move. It's just that although I was and am interested in the relation of humans to objects, I had no possibility of or interest in producing an object. But with this kind of an attitude at that point I could not enter the visual art context, I mean you simply can't dance your way in to the kunstakademie. Then again, I also had no reason for going to the kunstakademie because you can read art history anywhere. There are many artists I respect. I must be influenced by all of them. I must be influenced by Picasso also although I've never really looked at his work.

HUO You said you were interested in Michael Asher?

TS Yes, I don't know many of his works but I think that there is an aspect that is related to my work, that is when he changes the position of things. In Chicago, what Buchloh writes about - I only know him through Buchloh's writing basically - when he takes out the facade of the museum and puts it inside. Basically he's not producing anything but he's still

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producing 'things'. In that way his work is similar to mine, even though he's still related to objects, since these are objects when he takes a wall out or something. He's deproducing things or changing the position of things.

HUO Such as with the radiators.

TS Tell me about that piece.

HUO He transferred radiators around the space, so that the invisible becomes visible. It's either taking away or moving around, not about adding objects. So it starts with the idea that there are enough objects in the world.

TS In a very simple and vulgar sense, in a very practical sense of understanding each other, yes it has something to with this. But it is such a vulgar notion I am not comfortable to speak about it in that way. Maybe a more interesting notion to deal with would be the production of subjectivity through the production and possession of objects. In this respect, for example Carsten Hoeller's or Xavier Le Roys approach to games could also be interesting. I personally haven't worked on games at all, but I think they are great in the sense that they are trying to differentiate our subjectivity but not through the perception of an object. So actually it is not at all that there are too many objects in the world, but maybe a sort of boredom with them.

HUO Boredom with objects! Could that be a title?

TS A title for what?

HUO We need a title for this interview.

TS I think it should be 'This is Hans Ulrich Obrist!' [laughs] I have a whole series of works called 'This is...'

HUO What about 'This is an interview!'?

TS No, that wouldn't work! [laughs] 'This is Hans Ulrich Obrist' could be a work of mine. It will never be realised, unless you want to realise it.

[break in cassettes]

HUO ...the games of Carsten Hoeller published by Oktagon.

TS I read it.

HUO So I'm very interested in game theory and the art science link which leads us to Xavier Le Roy so can you maybe talk a little about this? Its another form of instructions.

TS Although the notion of games does not enter my own work at all, I really like these positions, since they are also dealing with a differentiation of subjectivity from human to human. I'm also interested in yours and Jens practice, when you say 'ever'. It's transformative, or working on ways of daily interaction. And I think that even the notion of progress can be introduced with this kind of practices. We're not interested in staying at the same point all the time, but where can we locate this progression? That's why I am very sceptical of new media art, since it locates progression where it has always been located: as technological progress, so it seems new media art implies that the way to be contemporary is to use contemporary technology. I'm interested in using

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technology which is potentially as old as human life, but in being contemporary with it, like when you say ever.

HUO But it is connected with change.

TS Yes, connected with change and aesthetics also. There is an aesthetic in ever. If you want to talk about ever and Valerio as objects...

HUO Can you tell me more about the urban rumor Valerio...

TS From Valerio, very and ever, I like ever the most. Its the coolest and it seems the most generous. The Valerio has a little bit of an old hippy appeal somehow; ever has a hippy-esque inside but it's cool on the outside.

HUO Ever is ever!

TS [laughs]

HUO Wallerstein in his seminal book Utopistics says its going to be a fifty year transition of trying to get rid of the market economy, and finding an alternative.

Wallerstein coined the term Utopistics in terms of historical choices of the Twenty-first century. Utopia.. is a workd invented by Thomas More, and it means "nowhere".

Wallerstein shows us that the real problem with all utopias is ..that they seem to be dreams of heaven that could never exist on earth: Utopias tend to be breeders of illusions and therefore inevitably, of disillusion. Utopistics is the serious assessment of HISTORICAL ALTERNATIVES.... Wallerstein shows that it is not about face of the perfect (and inevitable) future , but the face of an alternative, credibly better, and historically possible (but far from certain) future..:"We are living in the transition from our existing world system , the capitalist world economy, to another world-system or systems..

We shall not know until we get there, which may not be for another fifty years now..." (Wallerstein)

So I was wondering if there is a place out of the market that you can foresee, and whether we are in a process of transformation from this current crisis that will lead to another system?

TS Firstly, I don't see a crisis.

HUO No crisis?

TS Its always a question of a crisis in relation to what? But to answer your question in a way that you were perhaps not pointing to, the air is a commodity outside of the market. We don't have to pay to breathe. If it was scarce then we would probably have to pay for it, but since it is available for everybody in sufficient quantities, it does not need to be regulated by the market. I've never been able to understand what the specific ideology of the market is. Of course the market has a certain politicity, it has democratic or even anarchic aspects, but then it is a conveyor of lots of different and possibly opposing cultural ideologies; the market is a regulatory force, if something is not directly accesible there have to be ways of regulating it, and one of these ways is the market, central planning is another. I prefer the market.

HUO But in this market there is increasing inequality.

TS What does this imply? Equal in which sense - equal in happiness, in material things?

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HUO In the sense that the rich are becoming more and more rich and the poor are becoming increasingly poor. Stieglitz describes this as a crisis, Wallerstein describes it as a crisis...

TS But which premises does this reaffirm? It reaffirms that somehow quality of life is in some way linked to these kinds of things, which I think is probably right.

[strange noise]

[another strange noise]

HUO What happened?

[another strange noise]

HUO Thats very strange.

TS Ive never experienced something like that.

HUO Very strange. And its on film.

[strange noise]

TS Whats the problem?

[strange noise]

[sneeze]

HUO Bless you.

TS When did you study sociology?

HUO In the late 80s.

TS But you were already curating by then.

[strange noise]

HUO What happened?

TS She fell over.

Anyway, I'm interested in questioning this notion. I'm not saying that if the rich become richer and the poor become poorer that this is not a problem or that this is not related to quality of life, but I am interested in thinking about whether this assumption is so. Is the only way of accessing quality of life by what income you have? I don't have a high income, but I dont have a low one either. You probably have a higher one than me. We might both have health insurance. Maybe I'm happier than you? I dont know. You mentioned these games of Carsten Hoeller and Xavier le Roy, yes, lets play games. If you shout Valerio, its happiness, it didn't cost anything and it is outside of the market. So I don't think the market economy is bad and I dont think it will go away. Its not a system in the sense that Communism was a system, it wasn't an ideology that people thought up. What we call market economy is something that has grown historically. There are layers and centuries of history implied in this organisation, and I have a lot of trust in it. I think it would be arrogant to question this so quickly. It would also be very naïve not to question it at all. But I think that most of these questions, as in this very well marketed Empire book... are dealt with in a very narrow way and this is dangerous because it doesn't allow for a proper critique. This brings us

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back to the selling of the piece: no, I don't think the problem is with the market in terms of future life and its possibilities. I would say that transformation of material is a much greater problem. That has nothing to do with the market. And then on the other hand there are loads of things that are outside the market.

There is a myth of the market as something autonomous. The market only exists in state regulation and only when the state can provide a certainty of specific rules so that people can be in the market. The notion of hyper-capitalism, of something totally liberal, is not correct, it is totally regulated. But in this regulation there is some space, but of course there can and should be a discussion how this regulation is exactly specified.

HUO What about utopia? That's my last question.

TS We've had the first and last question of This is Hans Ulrich Obrist! I was thinking about this, because I knew you were going to ask this. I know that you're very interested in this idea So I asked myself about the term utopia. Am I interested in it? I'm not sure. On the one hand I think that utopia is interesting as a tool of reality, as something very practical, but on the other hand I haven't been eroticised by the term utopia in the way that you have. I don't think it's that sexy, but maybe you can explain to me why it might be. My first thoughts are that utopia is something dangerous. Somebody once said that Communism was looking for a direct way to heaven and they found the direct way to hell. Communism was like a utopia and I consider it a euphemism to say that there was a real existing socialism but actually there still is a true socialism or a proper socialism. There was a certain idea that was implanted into society - and why not, lets try it - but for reasons which were not considered or were too complex to consider, it turned out to be different than it was thought, so I think utopias can be something dangerous. They may also be something quite helpful but I'm probably something of a dilettante on this topic. I'm looking forward to your publications on utopia and I will read them.

HUO Your tool of reality notion is interesting. You think of it as some form of motor?

TS A dangerous motor. I don't know. I'm interested in reality, but I will follow your work! [laughs]