

Editorial

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Starting and Restarting: In the first place, this issue's theme reflects the editors' personal wish to do without any predefined objectives, any set laws on structuring or content. In other words, to undo the increasingly confining corset we ourselves have hooked tight, in order to slip instead into a plain, lightweight T-shirt, preferably a few sizes too big – in any case, certainly not too small – and thus ensure full freedom of movement.

The thought of making a new start first brings relief, maybe inspiration; often, it ushers in hope and curiosity. Before long, however, it propels us back to the essential, to clear forms or – even – non-forms. The originally vague idea of something new then takes shape in our mind's eye, becomes clearer. But at the first step in its direction, we realize how difficult it is to transpose our vision onto paper or into space, to translate it into reality. Our work comes to a standstill. This is a problem occurring in many realms of endeavor, including art. The advantage of artistic creation, however, is that it can also start off at a non-conceptual level, through trial-and-error improvisation using the materials, tools and techniques at hand. This artistic approach, invariably involving a great deal of curiosity as to the final outcome, was highlighted, for example, in the recent "Bricolages" exhibition¹ exploring the ideas behind Claude Lévi-Strauss's "La pensée sauvage".

On the other hand, artistic projects are very often inspired by a straightforward stand on a problem: "At the start, there was a simple question, and right away it multiplied".² When asked whether he would like, as third in the row, to redesign the Kunsthalle Basel's outside wall, Anselm Stalder first turned up his nose. But he ended up accepting the task "since the project's very presence – persistent and forceful – turned it into an offshoot of his own work" and deprived it of its "chore-like" nature. Hence, from the start, Stalder was called upon to work on an already structured site, representing the sort of problem that is frequently involved in architecture-related and public space projects. As a rule, artists get to deal with sites only once they are already fully occupied and lavishly fitted. Untouched spaces are becoming harder and harder to find; even those few

blank spots that do remain on the map are already booked. So it comes as no surprise that artists do not necessarily consider the production of new art objects as their main task, but rather are increasingly inclined to comment upon those that already exist, to leave their own provocative traces, to reorganize, deconstruct or reoccupy an already occupied site.

Although artistic endeavors can be bunched together, each tends to retain a great deal of individuality. Yet they are all rooted in a specific mentality of the sort that, for instance, will prompt someone sooner or later to enroll in an art school, or to develop certain artistic skills without the corresponding specialized training. Christian Selig, a former teacher (and onetime student) at the "Farbe und Form" ("F+F", color and form) School, describes this outlook: "Already at a very young age I looked for a different route, and I came to realize that other forms of awareness and levels of approach existed besides those recommended by society."³ At F+F, like at the other professional schools of today, artists are given the opportunity to take the first steps of their art career. But before achieving a valid artist status, they will have to spend long years experimenting and working hard at their goals. There will perhaps be interruptions to their artistic élan, unexpected intrusions, family-motivated breaks, all of which will exercise their share of influence on the course of the artist's career. Meanwhile, what happens when artists are dragged onto the art scene earlier and earlier, to satisfy "a novelty-addicted public in constant search of new names"?⁴ And what happens when budding artists are already drawn into the sphere of influence of exhibition directors, critics and art consultants? When their biographies pinpoint the start of their career at an ever earlier age? The trend abides, as do the questions attached to it.

Roberta Weiss-Mariani

¹ "Bricolages," Kunstmuseum des Kantons Thurgau, Kortaue Ittingen, 2001

² "Jahresausstellung der Basler Künstlerinnen und Künstler," Kunsthalle Basel, 1998

³ Interview 2001

⁴ "Künstlerkarrieren," DU, 1990