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An Interview with 3 artists on exchange in Basle

Die drei ausländischen Gastkünstler Michel de Broin (Canada), Rick Vermey (Australien) und David Wilson (USA), die bis Ende des Jahres 2000 in den iaab-Ateliers im Basler St. Alban-Tal wohnen und arbeiten, im Gespräch mit Lilian Pfaff (Künstlerische Koordination iaab)

What do you expect while you're on exchange in Basel?

Rick Vermey: The primary benefit of this exchange is that it provides uninterrupted time in the studio, allowing me to concentrate on my art work, without the normal distractions one has at home. The fact that this residency is in Basle, in an unfamiliar culture, means that I can achieve a necessary distance from my own experiences, to reflect on my art practice and move forward. Coming from far away Australia, one major benefit of a period living in Europe is the exposure to current international developments in contemporary art-making. I have the opportunity during my stay, to see for myself some fantastic exhibitions at important

museums and galleries. For an Australian artist this is a rare privilege!

Do you think the experience and the contact with other artists and a different culture will influence your work, or has already influenced it?

David Wilson: People are different and so are artists. I don't expect my ideas or approach to making art to change very much, I believe that for me this is almost biological. What is happening is that I'm looking and thinking through a new filter. I'm testing and weighing my presentation and commitment to a different standard. The opportunity to see and experience art is much greater in Switzerland. But I am probably more affected by the social life of the people.

Rick Vermey: I have no doubt that my work is and will be influenced by the artists I find around me, and by the art that I see while living in Basle. My general approach to making art is to observe and document the ways in which a culture represents itself visually. I then try to integrate what I see around me into my own artworks. So inevitably, images from my life in Basle will appear in my art, as the work evolves. Already I have found myself sometimes collaborating with Michel de Broin, another artist here on exchange, to make some little video-clips. So, I approach

S. 66
iaab-Ausstellung im
Kaskadenkondensator
in Basel
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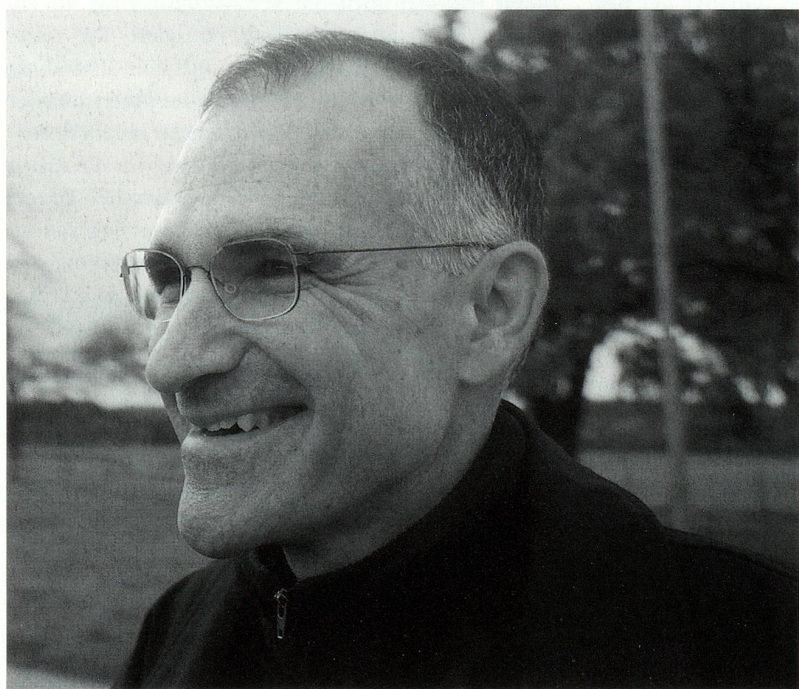
S. 67 oben
Michel de Broin (Montréal)
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S. 67 unten
David Wilson (Clarksville)
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this exchange residency with an open mind, expecting and hoping my art will change.

Michel de Broin: Etre influencé est extrêmement mauvais, mais puisque j'aspire à être encore plus mauvais, le contexte de cet échange s'y prête bien.



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L'impegno di istituzioni e di individui per incoraggiare gli artisti conferma anche indirettamente la loro necessaria posizione di outsider. Soltanto questa ricognizione libera gli artisti dall'etichetta di «pazzi moderni» – dei pazzi che sono da una parte temuti, e persino invidiati per la loro cosiddetta «vita libera» ma spesso non vengono veramente presi sul serio.

Ina contribuziun a la biografia d'artist

Exil signifitgescha per mai en emprima lingia in «auter» lieu, in auter spazi, magari er in spazi liber, in spazi dualistic da libertad interna ed externa. In spazi che permetta dad esser e da lavurar. Quest lieu po esser mintgant qua, u er insanua auter, en in lieu ester. Là nua ch'ins po bandunar las formalitads e la rutina dal mintgadi e sa concentrar sin sasez. L'ex-il nun è il stadi normal. Igl è in stadi spezial che po crear pussaivladads per sviluppar l'atgna biografia.

A Contribution to an Artist's Biography

First of all, to me exile means a "different" place or space – space that can also be vacant, in the dualistic sense of inner and outer freedom. Space countenancing existence and work. Sometimes, such a place can be right here, or else it can also be in another, foreign place. Somewhere where appearances and daily routine

get left behind, and you can refocus on yourself. Exile is not a normal condition. It is a special condition that can afford possibilities to contribute to your own biography. Since the middle of the twentieth century, art has been developing in so called vacant spaces, where the creative act can take place altogether independently of necessity and demand. Before then, artists were tied to a greater or lesser extent to the political or ecclesiastical powers representing their sole source of commissions. By contrast, today's artists operate mostly on the fringes of such social systems, since their creative activity allows them to escape the usual product production and acquisition cycle. In other words, the vacant space achieved and required by art is also a reaction to today's overall social structure.

The fact that institutions and individuals have set out to promote the artists of today indirectly also encourages recognition of their necessary outsider status. Indeed, it is only once such recognition is granted, that artists are freed of their all-too-frequently conferred image as modern fools – fools who may be feared, who may be envied for their so-called "freedom of life," but who nonetheless are seldom taken seriously.