

**EXPO
CHGO****IN/SITU**

Michael Ned Holte, Exhibition brochure, September 2012

As noted by Daniel Buren, an artist who has worked *in situ* since the late 1960s and largely defined that term, "Every work of art inevitably possesses one or several extremely precise frames. The work is always limited in time as well as in space. By forgetting (purposefully) these essential facts one can pretend that there exists an immortal art, an eternal work." So, a site is not simply a location, a dot on the map, but also a thing conditioned by time and context—social, economic, political. In this sense, the term "in situ" takes on a very particular connotation in the context of a four-day art fair, which is, of course, an event predicated on economic and symbolic exchange.

In recent years, a tremendous shift has been occurring in an increasingly widespread art world: a shift from exhibition to event. Which isn't to say exhibitions no longer matter; they do—both big and small exhibitions continue to define the contours and concerns of contemporary art. But it is important to recognize the growth—and inevitability—of art fairs, even though I suspect many critics, curators, and historians (not to mention artists) would rather not. I've been in this camp, too, and perhaps will long to return to it again when this particular event is done. But to pretend art fairs don't exist or don't matter in our present moment is disingenuous. Art is a truly weird field, where commerce and aesthetic or theoretical concerns coexist, awkwardly but often inextricably so.

My approach to **IN/SITU** is one that acknowledges this interdependence, but also one that aims to exploit the potential of such a context, and I am particularly interested in how these artists and their works will respond to this frame and its conditions. I'm calling these interactions—between artist and site, artwork and viewer—*Temporary Landmarks & Moving Situations*. This title demarcates an exhibition, however itinerant and dispersed, that is nested within the context of **IN/SITU** and EXPO (and, more expansively, the city of Chicago). The title of the exhibition is intended to emphasize such an itinerary of momentary and sometimes surprising opportunities for engaging viewers and offering opportunities for contemplation (or perhaps relief) within the bustling frame-

Robert Barry's text-based work, *SOMETHING THAT IS TRULY MOMENTOUS BUT GOING UNNOTICED OR REMARKED UPON AND IT COULD CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING*, 2012, is situated on the windows of Navy Pier, coinciding with a view of Lake Michigan, and was realized specifically for this site. For over four decades, Barry has addressed both the epistemological and phenomenal foundations of visual art, frequently asking the viewer to question his or her fundamental assumptions about the art experience. Fabricated in reflective chrome vinyl, and turned away from the activity of the fair, the phrase affords a literal opportunity for reflection.

Tony Feher's contribution to the exhibition, *Swimming with Galileo*, 2012, provides one useful example of a "temporary landmark." Deploying concentric arcs of yellow polypropylene scaled to the vast ceiling of Navy Pier's Festival Hall, the work is a drawing writ large. "At this scale the building ceases being a support for a work of art," Feher notes. "It becomes an irrefutable component of the work of art." The work is one of the largest in EXPO, yet given in its placement overhead, and in its use of humble materials—typical of this artist—the work daringly flirts with the threshold of visibility.

Several artists emphasize the itinerant nature of *Temporary Landmarks & Moving Situations*. For example, **Steve Roden's** *gradual small fires (and a bowl of resonant milk)*, 2012, consists of four modestly-scaled Plexiglas sculptures positioned at various sites throughout EXPO. Each variation is equipped with a speaker playing a sound work that includes a field recording of a fire in Denmark, and quietly demands concentration. (The title of the work refers to Ed Ruscha's 1964 artist book, *Various Small Fires and Milk*.)

Roy McMakin's two-part work, *A Lamp Table and Picture Frame Each with Thirty Coats of Red Paint that are Not to Be in the Same Room with Each Other*, 2012, describes a reciprocal relationship between two objects that are intimately connected while separated in space—calling attention to several meanings of the phrase "moving situation." Likewise, *A Round Table with Thirty Coats of Blue Paint*, 2012, similarly

that articulates meaning (emotional, psychological) that extends well beyond presumed notions of functionality.

For **EXPO /Video**, a special section of *Temporary Landmarks & Moving Situations*, five artists have situated work in a suite of conference rooms that have been more or less converted for this exhibition. **Sarah Rara's** hour-length video, *A Ray Array*, 2011, employs its expansive temporal scale, familiar objects, and simple special effects to articulate a sequence of extraordinary moments. Comprised of 16 vignette-like images, and driven by a soundtrack composed by Rara and her **Lucky Dragons** collaborator Luke Fishbeck, *A Ray Array* achieves a dynamic tension between sound and image, with both held in remarkable balance. (On a related note, Lucky Dragons will perform in the Inkwell during Vernissage.)

Jennifer West's videos *Heavy Metal Sharks Calming Jaws Reversal Film...* and *Heavy Metal Sharks Calming Jaws 2 Trailers...* (both 2011), treat found Super 8 and 16mm footage with an unlikely list of materials (iron and zinc vitamins) and techniques (grated with stone, whipped with hair head-banging) to stunning effect. In deploying the Hollywood classic *Jaws* (and its sequel), which elicited screams of delight with calculated "movie magic" from a willingly captive audience, West slyly points to the codes and expectation of spectacle—not unlike those performed in an art fair context.

In her installation *Michael Clifton & Michael Benevento and D'Ette Nogle Present: Information from Two Sources*, 2012, **D'Ette Nogle** presents a sequence of three looped videos, each with the artist as narrator—an initial video "greeting" that leads to two simultaneous, but seemingly disjunctive recitations: one of actress Blake Lively taken from *Elle* magazine and the other of financial advisor Porter Stansberry, one on a young star's bankability, the other on fiscal disaster. While absurd, the combination of texts also speaks to the ideas of marketability and investment—and invariably, the symbolic exchanges enacted in the surrounding art fair environment.

Jan Tichy's three-channel video mural, *Things to Come 1936-2012*, 2012, makes its United States premiere at EXPO. Using

archival special effects footage created by László Moholy-Nagy for the 1936 film adaptation of H.G. Wells's *Things to Come*, which injected avant-garde cinematic techniques into a dramatic studio spectacle with a brief but extraordinary sequence. Tichy elaborates Moholy-Nagy's kaleidoscopic vision of the future, reframing a fleeting utopian moment deferred in time. A year after his contribution to *Things to Come* Moholy-Nagy moved to Chicago to run a newly reformed Bauhaus. In this context, Tichy's video is a tribute one Chicago artist to another.

Amid this group of time-based works, and situated in an otherwise unaltered conference room, **Fiona Connor's** *A Series of Compliments and Suggestions*, 2012, could startle many viewers while also providing an opportunity for resting, reflecting, retreating, or taking up a conversation. For *Temporary Landmarks & Moving Situations*, Connor has gathered a diverse collection of seating from Chicago art museums and institutions—a heterogeneous and ephemeral grouping of furniture that nevertheless calls attention to Chicago's important history of design. Additionally, she has enlisted a small group of actors "wearing business casual" to look at work throughout EXPO "in a focused way." Like Robert Barry's text in the lobby, it holds the potential to "[go] unnoticed or... change the way we think about everything."

—**Michael Ned Holte**