

Villa Salve Hospes

TIM ETCHELLS

Together Apart

March 4–May 14, 2017

“Go with your heart! . . . Don’t go with your head!”

Created by Tim Etchells for Kunstverein Braunschweig, the work *Together Apart* encompasses the entire interior of the Villa Salve Hospes. Multiple speakers confront visitors with repeating but differently intoned instructions. These consist of various English sayings that metaphorically involve parts of the body, whereby the literal and figural meanings of the statements diverge. While visitors attempt to decode the imperatives delivered through the overlapping voices—either mentally or by physically carrying out the instructions—the words take on a degree of urgency through their heightened presence in the space. When listening, one has an immediate sense of being addressed, and one becomes part of a dialogue in which the counterpart is physically absent. The words themselves, however, take on a presence that is all the more intense, given that the phrases are spoken at different paces and in alternating intonations of individual syllables, causing the voice coming from the speaker to seem present and personified in space.

The text stems from a ninety-minute improvisation that was developed into a spatial installation for Kunstverein Braunschweig. Both narrative and poetic in equal measure, the work joins the spaces of the Villa Salve Hospes. *Together Apart* sparks social, architectural, physical, and mental associations that accompany or even guide visitors as they move through the exhibition space. The sound collage repeatedly generates moments of confusion, in which elements of text oscillate between literal and metaphorical levels of meaning and in which phrases disintegrate into rhythmic syllables of sound through overlap and repetition. Repetition is a recurrent stylistic device used in the work of Etchells. Repetition means exhausting or—in a productive sense—making full use of all possible variations. In this way the attention of the audience is challenged and their focus is shifted.

“Believe your eyes! . . . Follow your nose! Follow your nose!” For Etchells, words are a material, which, as a basis of language, are not merely a means of communication. The varying emphases, tempos, or rhythms of spoken phrases lead to new dimensions of meaning and effect in Etchells’ installation. In the process, both the voice and language become subjects of an experiment. Language becomes sound and rhythm, departing from meaning and verging on nonsense.

Language also takes on a performative element in Etchells’ text-based poster and neon works. Through a rearrangement and variation of letters, color, and space (interior/exterior) the artist explores the relationship between form and content.

**KUNSTVEREIN
Braunschweig**

Haus Salve Hospes / Lessingplatz 12 / 38100 Braunschweig
Telefon 0531 - 49556 / Telefax 0531 - 124737 / www.kunstverein-bs.de / info@kunstverein-bs.de



Often absurd and comical or even provocative statements result, which refer to social or political contexts.

At Kunstverein Braunschweig Etchells concentrates on a central element of the performative act: the spoken word. The installation is a continuation of his interest in challenging the longstanding relationship between the body, movement, language, and the audience in traditional theater practices and contradicting conventional expectations. How can observers, who move freely through a space, be activated in such a way that the actors recede into the background, or even disappear entirely? "Pull yourself together! . . . Tear yourself apart!"

Tim Etchells (*1962, Stevenage, UK) lives and works in Sheffield and London. He is an important figure in postdramatic theater as the founder of the renowned performance group Forced Entertainment, which since its beginnings in 1984 has gained worldwide attention for its unique style and divergence from traditional spoken dramas. Together with Forced Entertainment he received the International Ibsen Award in 2016. In addition to numerous international engagements, such as the 2013 Ruhrtriennale, he has presented individual projects as part of the *Midnight Moments* series on New York's Times Square and at the Tate Modern, London, in 2015, the Hayward Gallery, London, in 2013, and Künstlerhaus Bremen in 2013.

Curated by: Jule Hillgärtner, Christina Lehnert / Curatorial Assistant: Miriam Bettin

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