

OPEN SPACE

LISA PACINI

CHRISTINE ISTAD

HENNIE ANN ISDAHL

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The title "Open Space" conveys the desire to define different visual, physical experiences, as well as the spiritual aspect of site-specific works of art.

The gaze of the individual observer is guided through a spatial experience influenced by a variety of approaches and choice of materials such as glass, plexiglas, wood and metal, which the artists have used to create installations, three-dimensional objects, photographs, videos and paintings.

As a group of artists, we represent different and individual, yet at the same time related, artistic idioms.

Through the exhibition project "Open Space", we aim to create a dialogue and interplay between the exhibition space and its exterior surroundings, and link these to other related spatial experiences generated by the works of art.

The group creates site-specific works which in earlier projects have addressed the theme of public and private spaces.

THE SPACE BETWEEN US

In making for ourselves a place to live, we first spread a parasol to throw a shadow on the earth, and in the pale light of the shadow we put together a house.

Junichiro Tanizaki, fra In praise of shadows.

1.

It has recently struck me with increasing intensity how vague the distinction between abstract and figurative art is. The desire to draw a dividing line between art and everyday life and separate it from individual, or collective, life appears today a utopian project that came to an end with the writings of Clement Greenberg, the philosopher of High Modernism. Even though the study of, for example, monochrome surfaces is still a legitimate exercise, even that is linked in many ways to the life we lead, the buildings we exist in and the people we share our lives with.

A representation of the world around us is the basis of all types of art, and even though the representation is not immediately recognisable, the work of art has not lost its mimetic roots. Quite the contrary, I should say, since the most relevant art often balances on a fine line between the familiar - perhaps even the ordinary and trivial - and the unknown and unrecognisable. Operative art is art that does not take a stance on one side or the other, but retains its freedom and reaches its full potential by wavering between these apparently contrasting poles.

With their various choices of motifs and methods, Lisa Pacini, Christine Istad, Hennie Ann Isdahl and Mona K.

Lalim energetically enter this transitional space between abstract and figurative art.

Mona K. Lalim's works stem directly from concrete, architectonic structures, including historical buildings in Venice. In this respect, they can well be regarded as historical copies in the form of montages. The break between the various layers, for example between the fragments of a door and a detail of a mural on the one hand, and more abstract forms on the other, tell us something about how the shapes around us live a life of their own and both diverge and converge with the passing of time – one example of this is the painting Particolore del colore di Veronese. Lalim develops what may be termed a "technology of memory" by exposing the details brought together in the medium of the painting: the original, human context which the door (now transformed into part of a painting) led to, who used it, or where it was located is no longer apparent, but the fragment of it will live on as a testimony to what has happened – a testimony about a habit, a life, a time and a system of things that once had a different meaning. Lalim's technique is also a methodical expression of the function of art: art, she says, is the saviour of the detail - the trivial details of everyday life, which are usually lost through history's wide-meshed net.

Christine Istad's photographs of interior details are visual haikus – studies of the poetic qualities of the surfaces of everyday life. As with Lalim, Istad's raw materials – doors, windows and walls – are prosaic objects of daily life. But her investigation into the tactility of everyday surfaces, the

reproduction of light or reflections of nearby objects, as in Hiroshima #1 and Tokyo #14, reveals the mystery of abstraction as a different, but no less real world, lurking just under the surfaces of the things around us. This is also apparent in Istad's video works, for instance Ryoan-Ji and Sho-Ren-Ji, which focus on the gently moving texture of water and the way the surface of the water reflects the surrounding landscape. Koyoto to Tokyo depicts a train window as a frame around the landscape moving past outside, not unlike Gerhard Richter's paintings, whose visual point of departure is the passing crossings of journeys. Istad's close-up method not only stimulates us to reflect on the visual qualities of our immediate surroundings, but also on what Walter Benjamin called the optical unconsciousness of things: "This is where the camera comes into play, with all its resources for swooping and rising, disrupting and isolating, stretching or compressing a sequence, enlarging or reducing an object." Our close surroundings are usually wrapped in a net of usefulness and functionality, but Istad's works create a positive area, beyond the requirements of mere utility. They are also sensitive to the visual rhythm and musicality of everyday surfaces; an almost painterly sensibility for things observed at close range.

Whereas Lalim focuses on time, both from a historic and cultural point of view, and Istad on close-up perspectives, Hennie Ann Isdahl concentrates on spatial language. She uses the grammar of the monochrome, extending it into accumulative sculptures. In solidarisk (united) 1 and samlet (collected), a group of monochromes of different sizes

are stacked against the wall, and in Summa summarum sammensurium (all in all a hotchpotch), they are laid in piles over the floor of the gallery. Isdahl's treatment of the monochrome is the expression of an agenda that goes beyond that of the modernist, self-referential painting. She makes an obvious reference to Donald Judd's idea of specific objects as an approach to the painting as a thing, rather than an aesthetic idea, but with a clearer rapprochement to daily life and the architectural surfaces we inhabit. The serialisation of Isdahl's accumulated monochromes is not so much a minimalist statement as a demonstration of the surfaces of inhabited spaces and the presence of spatial abstraction.

Lisa Pacini's works focus more directly on reflections. Not as unmediated forms of mimesis, but as pictures of crazed reproductions. In labyrinths, the surface of the picture is saturated with the labyrinthian challenge that our perception encounters when we are confronted with an object of art – not because the object is incomprehensible, but because it has been removed from the standardised, functional world where things are usually found. In Medusa, the objects depicted have been multiplied, as if to make a point of the many perspectives of the world that the object of art embraces. But Pacini does not only create a diversity of perspectives, but also - by breaking up the conventional utilitarian surface of everyday life - a picture of the curiosity with which we, as children, discovered the world. Gaston Bachelard writes in Poetics of space that a house cannot be described as an item or object for study. Rather, a house is a place where intimate

places are woven into our view of the world: nooks and crannies are not meaningless places, but stages where our spiritual dramas are played out. By raising a magic mirror to the world, Pacini unveils our perception as open and limitless and reestablishes by means of this uncertainty, a space for intimacy and discovery.

2.

A surface is not simply a geometric composition of lines. It is a certain distribution of the sensible.

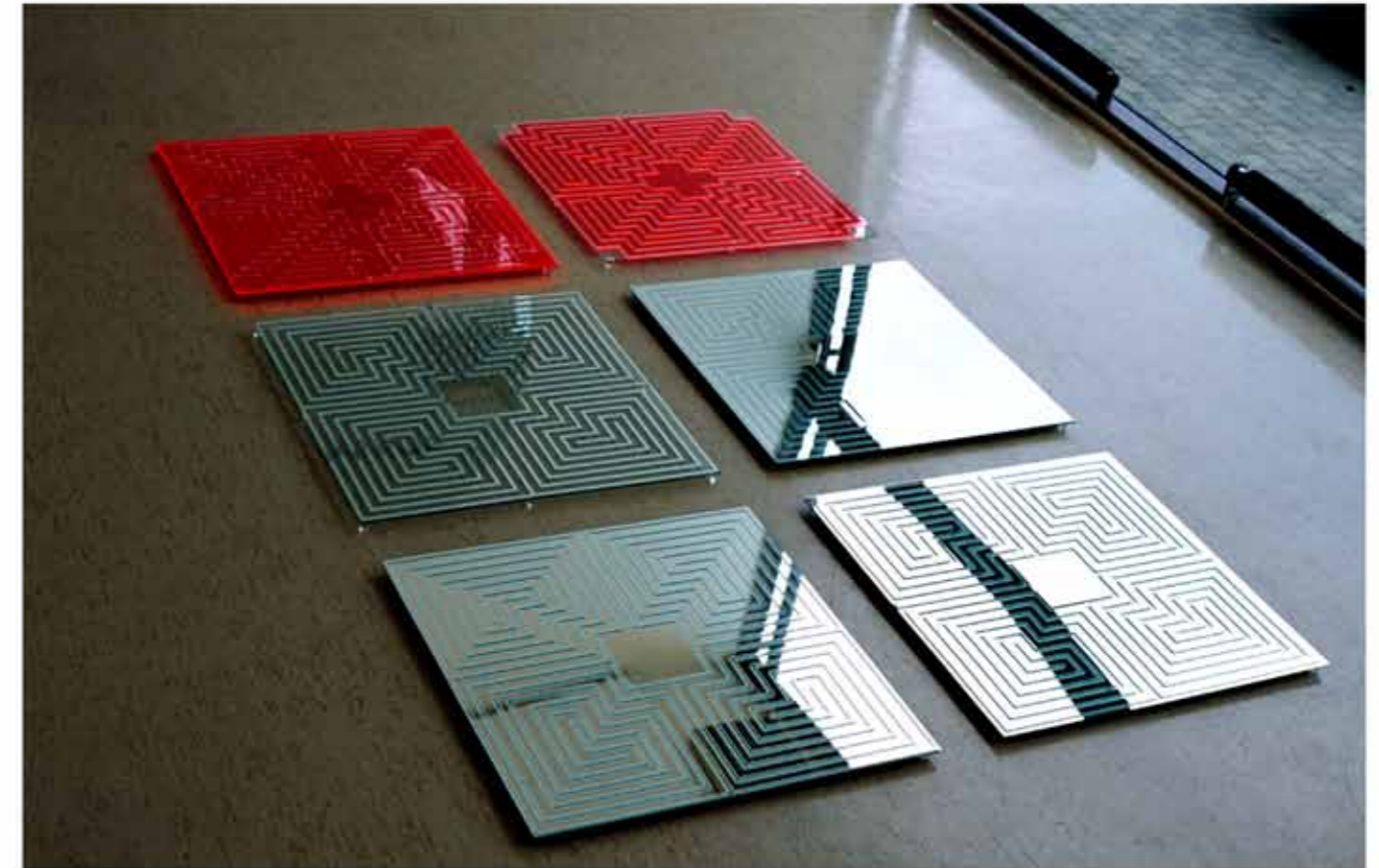
Jaques Ranciere, fra The politics of aesthetics.

Jacques Rancière writes that every object is a communal object – to be collectively understood and used. A glass is for drinking from, a car is for driving in, a pipe is for smoking tobacco with. But beyond this, the things around us are expressions of politics and hallmarks of how the world is organised. These things are symptoms of regimes of systematisation or views of the world – and expressions of how perceptibility is distributed. Visual art can of course also be interpreted according to this model; more so than ordinary objects in fact, since the function of the object of art is to ask questions about the status quo and the conventional forms in the world. The task of visual art is to give certainty and uncertainty a systema-

tically free rein. Or, as Rancière's colleague Alain Badiou writes: "to keep diversity together in a concrete form".

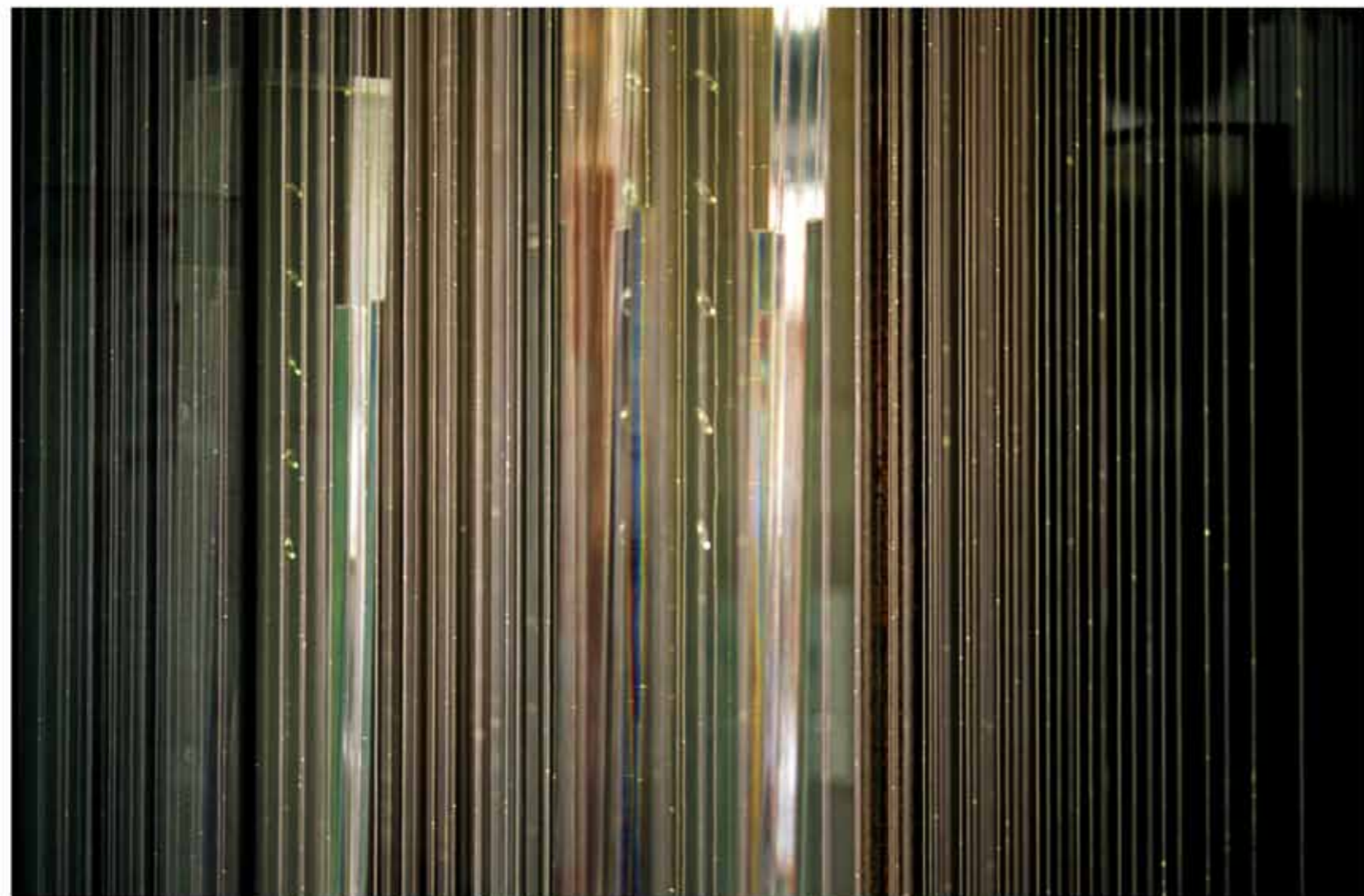
As collective objects of uncertain function, objects in visual art are nevertheless instruments for distributing what may be perceived. But it must be emphasised that the object of art, as an instrument, must be continually re-discovered and given new functions and interpretations. Seen in this light, the object of art is a negotiable field, where the things of the world and the world itself can become subjects of debate.

The art of Lisa Pacini, Christine Istad, Hennie Ann Isdahl and Mona K. Lalim presents sections of the world in an ambiguous area that for the time being lies somewhere between figuration and abstraction: their projects represent intervals in an investigation that has an almost meditative quality and is concerned with a study of the abstractions of everyday life, or the daily life of abstraction. I say "intervals" because between these artists' objects there exist parallel networks of visual forms that generate an ongoing, tense and dramatic course of events. Each of these artists creates what could be called a "theatre of forms" which, when played off against each other and interpreted in the light of each other, produce a landscape motivated by curiosity, or an array of parallel figures of thought with analytical potential.



Lisa Pacini, Medusa is 240-cm in diameter mirror on wood

Lisa Pacini, Labyrinth, each labyrinth is 120 x 120 cm mirror and glass and plexi glass on glass



Christine Istad, Photography Tokyo #01, 110x160 cm facemount



Lisa Pacini, Alice, 5 and 6 meters high mirror on wood



Mona Lalim, Connections, Painting: 60 x 150 cm



Hennie Ann Isdahl, Summa summarum/
Sammensurium, acrylic paint on mdf



Hennie Ann Isdahl, *Ensom*,
acrylic on wood 80 h x 40 x 40 cm

Mona Lalim, *Connections*, painting: 200 x 210 cm





Christine Istad, Photography Hiroshima #01, 110x160 cm facemount



Christine Istad, Photography Shibuya, Japan #01, 110x160 cm facemount



Hennie Ann Isdahl, Samsvar, car paint on mdf 40 cm in diameter



Lisa Pacini, Several Circles
Regeringsbygningen has mirrors from 30 cm. in diameter to 420 cm x 240 cm. mirrors on wood



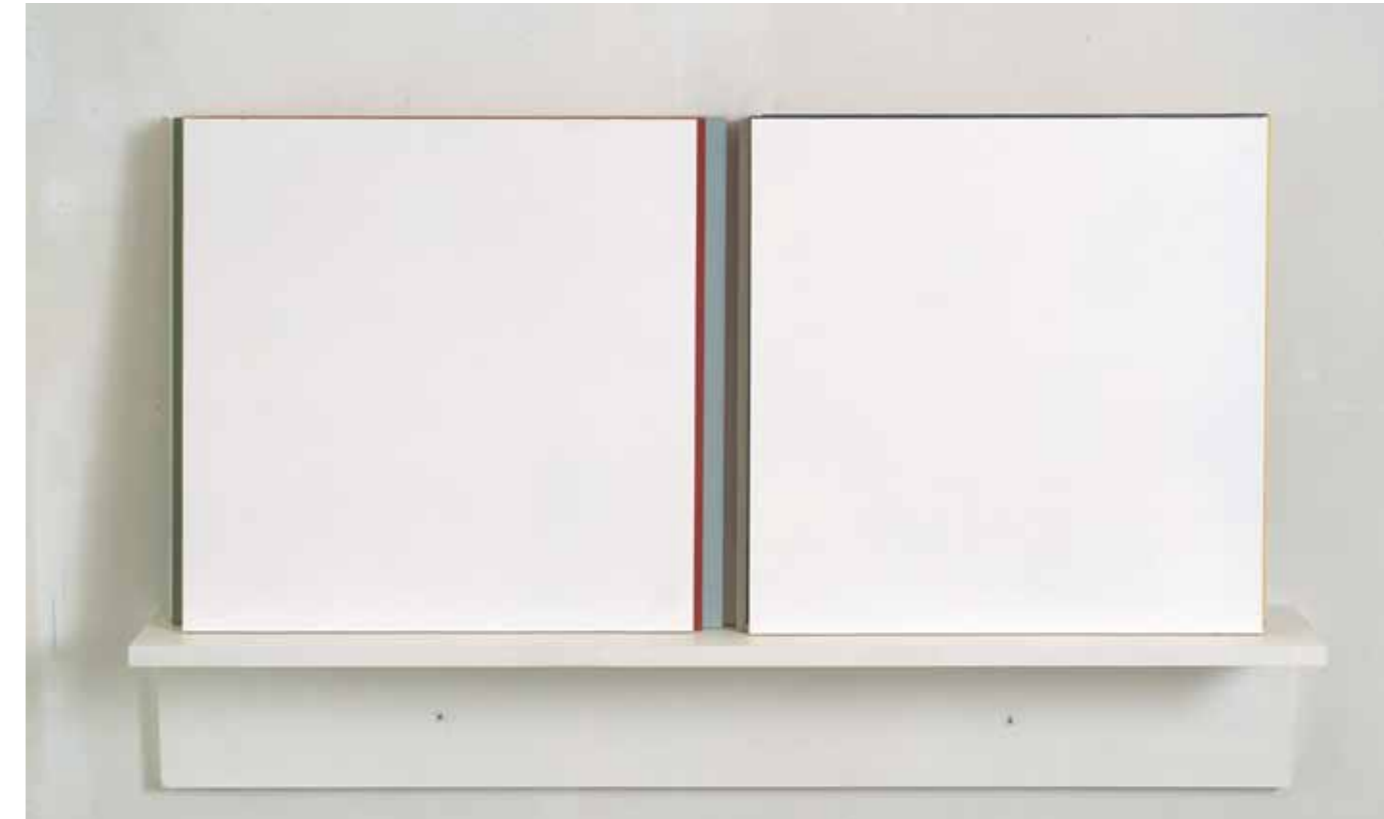
Mona Lalim, Connections, Painting: (2 parts) 60 x 140 cm



Christine Istad, Photography Elevator #15, 110x160 cm facemount



Mona Lalim, Connections, Painting: 50 x 200 cm



Hennie Ann Isdahl, Sammen , acrylic paint on wood 50 x 20 cm



Mona Lalim, Connections, Painting: 70 x 200 cm

Hennie Ann Isdahl, Sammensatt, acrylic paint
on different type of wood 120 x 180 cm



VIDEO

TITLE: **Koyoto - Tokyo**

PRIMARY CREATOR: Christine Istad

LENGTH: 2:50 min loop. Monitor.

YEAR COMPLETED: 2007

SYNOPSIS: The pattern outside, seen from the train window.

SOUND: No sound.





VIDEO

TITLE: **Ryoan-ji**

PRIMARY CREATOR: Christine Istad

LENGTH: 2:25 min. loop. Videoprojection on the wall.

YEAR COMPLETED: 2007

SYNOPSIS: The film is from a pond at the Ryoan-ji Temple in Koyoto. It like a video-painting. The audience must take off their shoes before entering the tatami mat. The intention is to bring the viewer to a state of calm and relaxed inward-looking state.

Christine Istad, Photography Elevator # 14, 110x160 cm facemount

