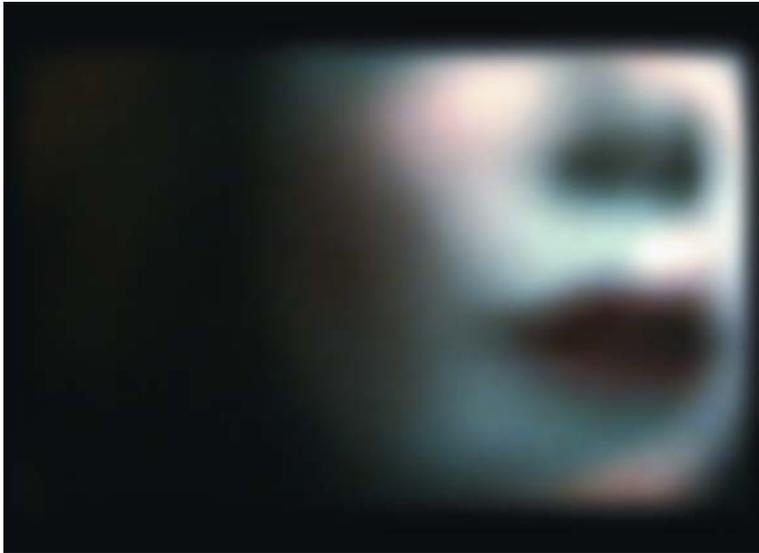




press release



phora, Ann Hamilton exhibition

curator: Waltraud Forelli-Wallach
February 18th – May 22nd 2005

public preview
Thursday February 17th 2005 6pm – 9pm

press preview
Thursday February 17th 2005 2pm – 5pm in the artist's presence

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This exhibition is supported by Étant donnés, the French-American Fund for Contemporary Art, a FACSEA programme.

I. presentation

La maison rouge is a private non-profit contemporary art foundation, opened in June 2004. Its mission is to promote contemporary creation through a programme of temporary exhibitions, staged by independent curators.

The foundation shows private collections of contemporary art, alternating with thematic and solo exhibitions.

Following two exhibitions exploring the theme of the private collection, "*L'intime, behind closed doors, the private world of the collector*" and "*Central Station, the Harald Falckenberg collection*", la maison rouge invites the American artist Ann Hamilton to engage its space.

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II. *phora*, Ann Hamilton exhibition

Ann Hamilton has achieved international recognition for her imposing site-specific installations which subtly incorporate sound, video, photography, and often vast accumulations of diverse objects and materials. The artist repeatedly refers to architecture as a skin we inhabit.

For this, her first solo exhibition in Paris, the artist has created *phora**, an utterance and a vocal expression inspired by the history and architectural context of the (red) house (*la maison rouge*), and by two symbolic places: the Bastille as the voice of public demonstration and the Bastille Opera as a demonstrative public voice.

Ann Hamilton transforms the different exhibition spaces into platforms from which the genesis of vocalisation and vocal expression are explored.

Immediately upon entering the space, visitors find themselves surrounded by multiple mouths – the vehicle for the voice – of medieval wood sculptures. These open mouths, close-up video stills, are printed on paper and cover the walls around the red house and the patio.

Moving through this gathering of silent figures, visitors step into a darkened room that is filled with the sound of a voice diffused from spinning ceiling-mounted speakers. Caught in what becomes a chorus, an assembly of voices, they intersect the powerful beam of a video, projected onto the walls.

In another room, filled with light, the imposing form of a silk lined refugees' tent, is suspended from the ceiling and tethered to the walls. The outline it makes on the floor is that of the red house. But whereas the house is firmly anchored and accommodates the foundation's offices, the inside of the tent is visible to all and loses its function as a refuge.

On the following room the airspace is filled with clothes. The artist has hung them from the ceiling among back-to-back megaphones that diffuse the sounds of articulated speech.

Stepping down into the basement, visitors arrive at a wooden platform; its dimensions are the same as the red house and the tent. This structure resembles a stage, but its height makes it impossible for a speaker to stand upright.

For Ann Hamilton, public life implies construction: the construction of space, meaning, language and deliberation in order to voice a common utterance.

**phora*: etym. Greek *to bear* > *metaphor*, also in reference to the Latin *fora* > *forum*.

III. interview with Waltraud Forelli-Wallach, curator of the exhibition (extracts)

How would you define Ann Hamilton's work?

WF: With this quote from Robert Storr¹: "It's all elegantly simple and gently disorienting: walk-in Surrealism with the formal economy and referent of a Shaker² homestead." Some of Ann Hamilton's installations do provoke a feeling of "disconcerting strangeness" and a dreamlike disorientation akin to Surrealism. Also, Ann Hamilton's native Ohio is still home to Shaker communities, and the rigour and simplicity of the means and forms she uses evoke Shaker style with its absence of ornamentation. This austerity can be seen in the light and the materials, as well as in the attitude and dress, white shirt and black trousers, of the human "attendants". Nothing is left to chance; everything down to the last detail is thought through in order to "slow" the spectators and encourage them to focus on a more interior resonance.

Could you say a few words about the origins of her work?

WF: Ann Hamilton began by studying textile design. In 1983 she felt the need to tackle sculpture. The first work she showed at the Yale School of Art's Sculpture Department was an installation which she called a "studio tableaux". Its title, "Room in Pursuit of a Position", exactly defines what would be the central theme of her research over the coming years. In this first work, Ann Hamilton strewn fragments of furniture and objects around a room, producing an acute sensation of disorientation.

After this, she took certain of these objects to use in performances, although it isn't the objects themselves that interest her: "I am not an object-maker." She stages scenes in which people interact with the objects in immobile choreographies, a sort of tableau vivant. Engrossed in a repetitive and silent activity, these people become the guardians of environments in which the visitor is guided by words, images, light, sound, touch and smell.

So these environments supplanted the "tableaux vivants"?

WF: Absolutely. Each of her projects is conceived for a specific site, and that site only. She lets its configuration and history inform her work.

In 1989 at an alternative arts venue in San Francisco, she spread a sea of 750,000 pennies, the smallest American coin, across the floor in front of a woman sitting bathing her hands in a hat full of honey which she held on her knees. The title, "Privation and Excesses", expresses the content and the method, inspired by the underprivileged environment of this space compared with the luxury of her previous exhibition at the MoCA in Los Angeles.

Sometimes her perception of a space is entirely intuitive. In her installation in a Santa Barbara home in 1998, arias from two operas played while on a table sat a stack of laundered and ironed shirts.

Without realising it, Ann Hamilton had captured the homeowners' world, that of an opera singer and his daily vocalisations and the domestic obsessions of his wife. Commenting on this installation, which she named "still life", Ann Hamilton noted how "the home is often a sanctuary, a refuge, a place where one

1. Joan Simon, *Ann Hamilton*, New York, Abrams, 2002; catalogue raisonné of Ann Hamilton's work to which Waltraud Forelli-Wallach contributed.

2. Led by their founder Ann Lee, the Shakers, a dissenting group of English Quakers, settled in the United States in the 18th century. Shaker homes, crafts and clothes are known for their simplicity and utility, seen as conducive to worship and spiritual advancement in daily life.

is tended. But tending can get claustrophobic. It can strangle and destroy the very thing it's trying to create. When the gesture is not right, when will is too present, the balance is destroyed. The treatment of the shirts followed from that thread. [...] They were so tended they were rendered dysfunctional."³

How did Ann Hamilton respond to the site of la maison rouge?

WF: The interlocking of public and private spaces at *la maison rouge* enabled her to come back to the idea of the home and explore the oppositions between interior and exterior, private and public, culture and nature.

Also, the foundation's urban and historic environment, with the nearby Opera and the ghostly presence of the Bastille prison, were an opportunity for her to continue her reflections on language and vocal expression. In her eyes, the Bastille prison represents the voice of the insurgent people and has mythical status in the collective memory, whereas the Opera represents the voice of poetic and historic fabrication. These two public platforms form the symbolic context of the foundation with, at its centre, the red house. A private space now in public use but closed to visitors, it stands as a witness to the separation of domestic life, weighed down with memories and time, and public life which invites expression and creation.

Ann Hamilton responds to a place and also to the atmosphere of an age. She began her analysis of the interactions between the voice and everything *la maison rouge* inspired by researching the origins of public speaking, from the first forums to today's political debates. In my view, her work at *la maison rouge* in particular raises questions about the silence and individualism of the western world, saturated with what has become ineffectual discourse while others struggle to have their say.

Phora is the voice that carries the metaphor's poetic transposition, diffusing it outwards from *la maison rouge* to connect the different platforms for vocal expression. As is often the case with Ann Hamilton, the titles indicate the method and, as she says herself, "how things are made becomes, in a very literal sense, their meaning."

3. From a conversation with Doris von Drathen, published in "Vortex of Silence, Proposition for an Art Criticism Beyond Aesthetic Categories", Milan, Charta, 2004.

Waltraud Forelli was born in Austria in 1964. She has worked in New York, Vienna and Düsseldorf for Heike Curtze Gallery and ran Karsten Greve Gallery from 1994 to 2001. She now works freelance, staging exhibitions with Ann Hamilton, Rebecca Horn, Jean-Marc Bustamante and Arnulf Rainer.

IV. biography

Ann Hamilton was born in 1956 in Lima, Ohio.

After training in textile design at the University of Kansas, she studied sculpture at the Yale School of Art.

From 1985 to 1991 she taught sculpture at the University of California, Santa Barbara, before returning to Columbus, Ohio where she lives and works. In 1993 she was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship.

Since 1995 she has been represented by Sean Kelly Gallery in New York.

Over the past twenty years, Ann Hamilton's work has been shown at such prestigious institutions as the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington (*View*, 1991), Dia Center for the Arts, New York (*Tropos*, 1993), the MoMA, New York (*Projects 48: Seam*, 1994), the Tate Gallery, Liverpool (*Mneme*, 1994), the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyons (*Present, Past*, 1997-98), the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal (*Mattering, the body and the object*, 1998), and the Wanas Foundation, Sweden (*Lignum*, 2002). In 2004 she created a vast installation for the MASS MoCA in North Adams, USA.

She represented the United States at the Venice Biennial in 1999.

Ann Hamilton has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions, notably at PS1 (*Caught in the Middle*, a performance with Susan Hadley, 1986; *Artists Projects*, 1997), the Whitney Museum (*Elements: Five Installations*, 1987; *BitStreams/Data Dynamics*, 2001), the MoMA (*Readymade identities*, 1993; *Thinking Print: Books to Billboards*, 1996), in Arnhem, Netherlands (*Sonsbeek 93*) the 10th Sydney Biennial in 1996, and the S. R. Guggenheim Museum (*Moving Pictures*, 2002).

She has worked with the choreographers Susan Hadley (*Caught in the Middle*, 1986), Meg Stuart (*Appetite*, 1998) and Meredith Monk (*Mercy*, 2001).

Her work features in numerous museum collections, in particular at the Carnegie Museum (Pittsburgh), the Guggenheim Museum (New York), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Whitney Museum (New York), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Miami Art Museum, and the Tate Gallery (London).

V. related events

Saturday February 19th at 5.30pm, the artist will talk about her work (in English). (reservations only: info@lamaisonrouge.org).

Sunday February 20th at 11.30am, the artist will present the exhibition to the public (reservations only: info@lamaisonrouge.org).

Saturday March 19th at 20.30pm (time to be confirmed) concert by Les Cris de Paris, choirmaster Geoffroy Jourdain.

Thursdays at 7pm (dates will be published on the foundation's website), conferences by different artists as part of the foundation's partnership with Paris X-Nanterre University

Saturdays and Sundays at 4pm (beginning February 26th) free guided tours of the exhibition.

VI. la maison rouge

La maison rouge was created on the initiative of Antoine de Galbert, an art collector and active figure on the French art scene. While Antoine de Galbert's own collection is not shown, the entire project is fashioned by his personality and outlook as a collector.

The building, facing the Port de l'Arsenal in Paris' Bastille district, extends over 2,000 square metres on the site of a former photoengraving equipment factory. This space has been divided into four exhibition areas surrounding a house, the maison rouge ("red house") from which the foundation takes its name.

This choice of name reflects Antoine de Galbert's determination to offer a pleasant and relaxed venue where visitors can take in an exhibition or a conference, enjoy a drink and browse at the bookstore.

VII. 2005-2006 programme

Berlinde de Bruyckere

June 24th – October 9th 2005

preview June 23rd 2005

Arnulf Rainer and his collection of art brut

June 24th – October 9th 2005

preview June 23rd 2005

the meta garden, an installation by Gerda Steiner & Jörg Lenzlinger

June 24th – October 9th 2005 on the patio

preview June 23rd 2005

Dieter Appelt

November 4th 2005 – January 22nd 2006

preview November 3rd 2005

Luc Delahaye

November 4th 2005 – January 22nd 2006

preview November 3rd 2005

VIII. practical info



getting there

metro stations: Quai de la Rapée (line 5) or Bastille (lines 1, 5 or 8)

RER station: Gare de Lyon

bus n° 20, 29 or 91

accessibility

the exhibition areas are accessible to disabled visitors and people with restricted mobility.

opening days and times

Wednesday to Sunday 11am to 7pm

late-night Thursday until 9pm

closed December 25th, January 1st and May 1st

admission

full price: €6.50

concessions: €4.50 (13-18 years, students, full-time artists, and over-60s).

free: under-13s, the unemployed, companions of disabled visitors, members of ICOM and *les Amis de la maison rouge*.

annual pass

full price: €22

concessions: €14

free and unlimited admission to the exhibitions.

free or reduced rate admission to related events.