

Abstract Possible:
The Stockholm Synergies
Tensta konsthall 12.1—22.4.2012

Doug Ashford
Claire Barclay
José León Cerrillo
Yto Barrada
Matias Faldbakken
Priscila Fernandes
Zachary Formwalt
Liam Gillick/Anton Vidokle
Goldin+Senneby
Wade Guyton
Iman Issa
Gunilla Klingberg

Dorit Margreiter
Åsa Norberg/Jennie Sundén
Mai-Thu Perret
Falke Pisano
Walid Raad
Emily Roysdon
Tommy Stöckel
Mika Tajima
Haegue Yang

Wikipedia

Tensta Konsthall

Abstraction is a visual strategy used in many cultures at different times in history. In the Muslim world there is a particularly prominent tradition of abstraction. As an aesthetic category, abstraction was first used by the classic avant-garde in the West in the early twentieth century. In this capacity it is intimately connected with social and political utopias, both material and transcendental. Since then, one of the key characteristics of abstraction has been its capacity for self-reflection as an artistic and intellectual technique, with multiple expressions beyond the visual arts. **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies** suggests that we pay attention to and reconsider certain crucial aspects of the phenomena of abstraction as manifested in contemporary art. **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies** follows, examines and complicates three prominent tendencies: formal abstraction, economic abstraction and “withdrawal-strategies” (Latin *abstrahere*, to withdraw).

Each “strand” is loosely connected with one of the three locations which form part of the project in Stockholm: formal abstraction (Tensta konsthall), economic abstraction (the auction house

Future Scenarios, which will be released at the end of January. A symposium will mark the release of the report and a subsequent debate will bring up the specific conditions of funding for contemporary art in Sweden.

“Withdrawal” refers to the wave of artists’ initiatives and strategies during the last fifteen years that have deliberately not joined what we can call the “mainstream” in order to create a greater degree of self-determination for the artists. The university in general and the seminar room specifically can, as the artist and writer Catherine M. Lord argues in a text on a poster by Emily Roysdon, be seen as examples of “spaces apart” which allow for other kinds of interactions than those characterizing the rest of society. At the Center for Fashion Studies, two artworks will “cohabit” with students, staff and faculty in their day-to-day working environment for two years.

Abstract Possible is a research project that aims to explore notions of abstraction, taking contemporary art as its starting point. Since 2010 the project has developed in three locations: Malmö konsthall, Museo Tamayo in Mexico City and the White Space in Zurich. Further iterations

Bukowskis) and withdrawal strategies (in a seminar room at the Center for Fashion Studies, Stockholm University). Formal abstraction encompasses painting, sculpture, installations and video that reflect abstract languages, especially geometric abstraction, which often recalls the classic avant-garde’s development of a novel visual expression. But also performative takes on abstraction.

Economic abstraction concerns art and economy, taking up the genuine abstract value of money. Locating one part of **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies** at Bukowskis makes it possible to imply as well as concretely point out economic connections and discuss changes in the structures of art funding, specifically transformations concerning the commercial art markets such as auction houses—the secondary market—moving into the primary market—traditionally the sphere of galleries. The art works at Bukowskis will be for sale for set prices and thanks to the generosity of the participating artists Tensta konsthall will be paid a fee for the exhibition. The fee is funding the report **Contemporary Art and its Commercial Markets: A Report on Current Conditions and**

are planned at Eastside Projects in Birmingham and Künstlerhaus Stuttgart.

www.abstractpossible.org

Over the last fifteen years, a plethora of examples of formal abstraction, both geometric and expressive, have been visible in exhibitions, site-specific installations, publications, and other projects. This work often seems to buy into the idea of unproblematic aesthetic enjoyment, ultra-subjectivity and certain visual codes which are taken at face value, as style rather than structure and ideology. But in addition to the many cases in which geometric abstraction in art and design today becomes a lifestyle indicator, artists contemplate and engage with the legacy of modernist abstraction, also formally, as the result of highly specific artistic and ideological trajectories. One of the questions raised by **Abstract Possible** is exactly what it means to revisit these trajectories from today’s point of view.

And yet, as these works show, abstraction is more than a formal construction. The concept of abstraction has—within a Marxist framework—also been applied to all relations within a capitalist system. As of late, this has been extended to the logic and distortion of

scale engendered by the post-Fordist/late capitalist economy. Working conditions, and conditions of production, are other pertinent points of reference here. The abstract nature of modern finance has been addressed by theoretician Sven Lütticken, whose text **Living with Abstraction** moves between abstract art and an increasingly abstracted world. He discusses how abstraction is implemented universally through capitalism, drawing connections, for example, between the abstraction of social and economic conditions and those mechanisms that turn abstract concepts into code. All this is happening within a culture and an economy in which we literally “live under abstraction”, although the economic recession has more recently called such abstraction into relief. In which case we have to acknowledge abstraction as omnipresent, not unlike the ideal of transparency in liberal democracies. What then is the potential of abstraction in such a contested territory?

The use of strategies of withdrawal among artists and other cultural producers is an easily observable phenomenon in today’s art world. This kind of abstraction is a conscious method of obscuring

and entering the art terrain “at an angle”, often with the aim of creating more space for manoeuvring through self-organised initiatives. Artists seem to need a space apart today, through “withdrawn” initiatives in the field of cultural production. These developments have been discussed in terms of “strategic essentialism” as well as “strategic separatism”. Sometimes it seems to be a reaction to pressures of spectacularization and access, at other times it seems to draw on specific art historical developments. Perhaps we can begin to think of these abstract and opaque strategies and tactics as an indication of a different “post-postmodern” critical paradigm challenging the enlightenment trust in transparency? Or is it yet another phenomenon obscuring our view of the world?

Parts of the exhibition will also run concurrently at Bukowskis auction house (27.1—12.2):

Doug Ashford
Claire Barclay
José León Cerrillo
Matias Faldbakken
Priscila Fernandes
Zachary Formwalt
Liam Gillick
Goldin+Senneby
Wade Guyton
Iman Issa
Gunilla Klingberg
Dorit Margreiter
Åsa Norberg/Jennie Sundén
Mai-Thu Perret
Falke Pisano
Emily Roysdon
Tommy Stöckel
Mika Tajima

The Center for Fashion Studies,
Stockholm University
(12.1.2012—12.2013):

Mai-Thu Perret
Emily Roysdon

For opening hours and further
information visit
www.tenstakonsthall.se

Contemporary Art and its Commercial Markets: A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios is published by Sternberg Press and Tensta konsthall as part of **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies**. This report maps and analyses the complex and contested entanglements of contemporary art and its commercial markets.

Contemporary art as an asset category and celebrity accessory, the rise of the art fair, and the increased competition of auction houses are among the phenomena which are discussed by academics, theoreticians and artists. While some of the contributions show how the market's globalization, and commercialization both reflect and propel the way art is produced, presented, and perceived, others downplay the impact of these developments and argue that the market's structure has essentially remained the same. All the texts trigger the question: What will art look like in 2022 and how will artists operate? A symposium on the occasion of the report's release will take place on 28.1.

Edited by Olav Velthuis and Maria Lind. Contributions by Stefano Baia-Curioni, Karen van den Berg/Ursula Pasero, Isabelle Graw, Goldin+Senneby,

Noah Horowitz, Suhail Malik/Andrea Phillips, Alain Quemin and Olav Velthuis. Design by Metahaven.

What Lies in the Future for Contemporary Art? Debate on art funding in Sweden—today and ten years hence will take place at Tensta konsthall on 23.2. During recent decades, both the public and the private infrastructures of art have undergone changes that have affected how art is produced, presented and perceived. Internationally, studios connected to individual artists, which resemble companies with more than hundred employees, have become increasingly common. Artists are expected to be entrepreneurs within the “creative industries” as well as researchers within a growing “practice-based” area of research. Public art institutions are required to come up with their own revenues and high public attendance figures, and art is more and more considered to be entertainment. In many places, for example, in municipalities, we see how public financial support has decreased on the one hand, and on the other, become more controlled than only a decade ago. Art has been commercialized: at present it is an object for investment and speculation, which is underlined by the fact that sales of art at auctions have

increased eight times between 1998-2008. In this situation, what will happen with contemporary art? What kind of art and which artists will be privileged and which will be disregarded? Representatives from public and private agents in Sweden have been invited to present their prospects and the risks involved. What will the situation for art and artists be in ten years time? The debate is undertaken in cooperation with Konsthall C.

Artist presentations as part of **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies**

19.1

Doug Ashford

9.2

Wade Guyton

15.3

Mai-Thu Perret

24.3

Walid Raad

12.4

Sven Lütticken (critic and theoretician)

In collaboration with the Royal University College of Fine Arts.

Guided tours of the exhibition Saturday and Sunday at 14.

Events as part of **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies**

14.1

The Wittgenstein Suite, a musical performance by José León Cerrillo and Sara Lundén presenting twelve pop songs in honour of Wittgenstein.

28.1

Contemporary Art and its Commercial Markets: A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios, a symposium on the occasion of the report with the same title, with contributions by Stefano Baia-Curioni, Noah Horowitz, Andrea Phillips, Mika Tajima, Olav Velthuis and Thea Westreich. Moderator Tone Hansen.

29.1

A Guiding Light, a film by Liam Gillick/Anton Vidokle shown at the cinema Zita.

23.2

What Lies in the Future for Contemporary Art? A debate on the forms of financing for art in Sweden—today and 10 years hence. In

collaboration with Konsthall C.

26.2

A Guiding Light, a film by Liam Gillick/Anton Vidokle shown at the cinema Zita.

17.3

Strategies of Withdrawal, an afternoon taking Georges Perec's book and film **Un homme qui dort** as a starting point. Lectures, film screenings, presentations and readings by Ida Börjel, Cecilia Grönberg, Jonas (J) Magnusson and Jesper Olsson, organized by OEI.

14.4

The Complex Object (Affecting Abstraction 3), performance by and with Falke Pisano.

Abstract Art Now and Then, Here and There

Four lectures on the topic of abstract art.

How did abstraction within art emerge in the western world at the turn of the century?

How has abstract art functioned and been understood in other parts of the world, for example in Latin America?

What has been the role of abstraction in Muslim cultures?

How do artists today use abstraction? In collaboration with ABF (the Workers' Educational Association). In Swedish.

25.1

Abstraction and the Classical Avant Garde, Maria Lind

21.2

Signs. Abstraction in Muslim art and architecture, Jan Hjärpe

21.3

Latin American Challenges, Maria Lind

18.4

Formal and Economic Abstraction in Contemporary Art, Maria Lind

With support by the Austrian Embassy, Stockholm; Danish Arts Council; FastPartner; Mondriaan Foundation; Malmö konsthall; Office for Contemporary Art Norway.

In collaboration with the Center for Fashion Studies, Stockholm University; Ross Tensta Gymnasium; The School of Architecture; Tensta Bibliotek; Zita Folkets Bio.

Special thanks to Iaspis.

Works beyond the exhibition space

Gunilla Klingberg: **Brand New View**—Tensta, cut-out foil on the two front windows of Tensta Centrum.

Tommy Stöckel: the result of a workshop conducted with pupils from Ross Tensta Gymnasium and students from The School of Architecture's preparatory course at the gymnasium is shown in the atrium of the school.

Doug Ashford (New York)

Six Moments in 1967 # 1-6, tempera and collage on board, 2011

With layer painted upon layer using the ancient medium of tempera, these intimate paintings come about slowly in the relative isolation of the studio space. The surfaces are even and rarely do they betray strokes of the brush. The colours are subdued and, together with a method that is reminiscent of icon painting, they create a somewhat meditative air around them. By contrast, the newspaper clippings report on the civil rights movement's street protests in the US. These geometrical but not necessarily rectilinear paintings originally

unexpected combinations, play into the fabrication which takes place both in the studio and in the exhibition space before the moment of display. This gives the work a sense of being in the middle of an ongoing process that involves intention as well as improvisation. Elements of slick manufacturing are combined with the handmade and improvised, creating a hybrid that tends to be at once abstracted and concrete. Like many of Barclay's works, the two sculptures contain a wide range of materials shaped to appear like found objects but which in fact are all constructed. These sculptures hover between the familiar and the foreign, allowing a wide range of possible and imagined interpretations, interactions and scenarios.

Yto Barrada (Paris/Tangier)

Autocar—Tangier, Fig 1-4, photography, 2004

The four photographs by Yto Barrada show colourful but imperfect abstract shapes on shiny surfaces. In three of the photographs the shape is "broken" by black lines cutting through them. The breaks come from doors and shutters

evolved out of diagrams mapping people in the New York art world involved with political and social activism. Collective social imaginaries and endeavours are documented and translated by an individual whose subjectivity spans from the sharing of groups—Doug Ashford was a core member of legendary art collective Group Material (1979-1996)—to solitary reflection. Like Gilles Deleuze's "abstract machines", the resulting delicate diagrams show relations between forces, charting powers—pictorial and others.

Claire Barclay (Glasgow)

Untitled, powder coated steel, machined aluminium, leather, 2011

Untitled, powder coated steel, silk chiffon, machined aluminium, screen printed aluminium foil, 2012

The functional and dysfunctional nature of objects often acts as triggers for Claire Barclay's own objects and installations, which draw on sophisticated and primal understandings of the world we inhabit. Intense attention to specific materials, their qualities and connotations and not least their

on buses which need to communicate their routes to illiterates who migrate for work and other reasons. This new visual language consists of basic and easily recognisable forms painted large on the sides of buses, creating a kind of "everyday-abstraction" born of necessity. Working with the tension between allegory and snapshot, Barrada is engaging with geography as a zone of imagination and desire. The Strait of Gibraltar often appears in her documentary photographs and films as a zone where migrants want to move north and expatriates long for home. Once described as images which document "bare life", albeit negatively, through blurs and lacunas, her photographs evoke a situation in which even political representation is a blank spot.

José León Cerrillo (Mexico City)

Hotel Edén Revisited, silkscreen on Plexiglass, mirror, metal, paper, light, 2011

Hotel Edén Revisited re-contextualises the visual vocabulary that the artist has developed in several exhibitions involving recurring elements such as screens, paper curtains, two-way mirrors, and a reduced geometry (circles,

squares, triangles). Together they form a distilled visual grammar or hint at a possible system of meaning. Shadows and the inclusion of people are other features in the work. Like Pierre Guyotat's novel **Eden Eden Eden** (1970), which is written in "one breath" without a period, this work is based on overlaying and simultaneity, making it impossible to isolate one panel from the other. The effect is one of withdrawal from normal behaviour and surrender to an entirely different existence set apart from the world. But to observe something can change that which is being observed, just as how we linguistically describe colour can affect how we experience colour, as the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein argued. Twelve pop songs in honour of Wittgenstein make up the core of José León Cerrillo's and fellow artist Sara Lundén's collaborative musical performance **The Wittgenstein Suite**. Functioning as an extension of Cerrillo's installation, music as an abstract art form is evoked. For this occasion they have produced six new songs, thus closing the project with twelve songs, a whole album. Performance 14.1.

conditions of production, dissemination and reception.

Priscila Fernandes (Porto/Amsterdam)

Calibration Circle, HD video, 16:9, colour, silent, 2'06" on loop, 2011
Dancer: Caroline van der Ouden

Onesingerule in **Calibration Circle** dictates the choreography: the red circle, held by the white-clad ballerina, must remain at the centre of the frame regardless of where the pirouettes take her. Against a black background, the locked circle and ballerina seem to hover in space, like a red and white abstract shape, thus in multiple ways enacting dance, understood as a quintessential abstract art form. Through this peculiar performance, a system is made visible: here the repetition creates a mesmerizing space for passive observation and absorption, which then turns into endless recurrence. Interested in varying states of activity and passivity that the contemporary individual inhabits within the ideology of our casting society, Priscila Fernandes' recent works struggle with the pressure put on individuals to be in a constant state of performance, and the expectation put upon them to perform.

translate

Matias Faldbakken (Oslo)

Triple Cover Screen Print #2 - 11, silkscreen print on paper, 2011

In this series of silk screens the image is overprinted several times, making the starting point blur. Such intensive layering is a recurring method in Matias Faldbakken's work, which draws heavily on direct attitudes and various subcultures, in this case the commercially extremely successful computer and console game *Battlefield*. The "sloppy" installation, with its brown sticky tape, enacts some of this attitude. Acts of destruction are transformed into aesthetic forms in which abstraction plays an important role. His first solo museum exhibition (2009) was even entitled **Shocked into Abstraction** and there his interest in how social and political aggression can appear as powerful gestures in art was explored in installations, sculptures, wall-painting and video. Faldbakken is a prolific writer; his first novel **The Cocka Hola Company** (2001) was published under the pseudonym Abo Rasul. Here he used literature to delve into similar topics, not least negation as a method, but with entirely different

Calibration Circle will also be shown at Bukowskis.

Zachary Formwalt (Albany, Georgia/Amsterdam)

At Face Value, single-channel HD video with sound, 22 mins, 2008

Zachary Formwalt's work deals with the operations of capitalism through various instances of material culture. In the video essay **At Face Value** the strategy of overprinting stamps in times of rapid changes in economic value is the focal point. Having learned about economic value through stamp collecting as a boy—they are considered a safe investment as you can always exchange them for the value on them—the artist admits that this view does not take inflation into account. Mixing old footage like excerpts from Sergei Eisenstein's film **Strike** (1925) with his own shots from stamp collector gatherings and close-ups of stamps, Formwalt concentrates on stamp overprinting in Germany during the hyperinflation in the early 20s and in the US in 1928. On each stamp two histories converge—the history of the stamp itself and that of the postmark

stamp, visualizing the cost of making connections. Through these juxtapositions a whole system of value is exposed.

Liam Gillick (London/NewYork)/
Anton Vidokle (Moscow/New York)

A Guiding Light, video, 2010

At the Cinema Zita, 29.1 and 26.2. In the film **A Guiding Light**, by Liam Gillick and Anton Vidokle, a manifesto written by Gao Shiming, the Executive Curator of the latest Shanghai Biennial, served as the starting point. This manifesto is an attack on the art system and what Shiming thinks of as its limiting monoculture. He proposes that in order to escape the long claws of the system, it is necessary to step aside. To withdraw becomes for him an escape route from unbearable limitations. Gillick/Vidokle have responded to the manifesto by inviting a handful of emerging artists, curators and critics to interpret and extrapolate from the text in front of three cameras in a TV studio where the making of the film is revealed. Former Artforum editor and poet, Tim Griffin has lent his voice for the voiceover. The 22-minute long film hovers between cultural criticism and

using outsourcing and other post-Fordist ways of organising work, for example hiring a ghostwriter who conducts research on and writes about an off-shore company in the Bahamas called Headless Ltd, the artists enact significant aspects of today's society. Goldin+Senneby's contribution to **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies** is twofold. It includes the framework for one of the exhibition's three parts, at the auction house Bukowskis where the works will be for sale. Goldin+Senneby have invited in the poet Mara Lee, who has provided a confidential policy poem to be followed by the staff at Bukowskis. The staff is also in charge of displaying and mediating the work and to remove each art work at the moment of sale.

For the sale itself, Goldin+Senneby have produced a new work together with legendary art advisor Thea Westreich. Approaching the opaque and asymmetrical information flows of the art market, they are offering a confidential "investment portrait" of the exhibition itself. As articulated through Goldin+Senneby's work, "implication" is a significant trope in **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies** because it

soap, borrowing its title from the longest running soap opera on US television.

Goldin+Senneby (Stockholm)

Policy poem, Goldin+Senneby with Mara Lee (author and poet), 2011, a framework for **Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies** at Bukowskis, where among other things, the staff there is in charge of installing and mediating the work, when a work is sold it is taken away, etc.

Abstract Possible: An Investment Portrait, Goldin+Senneby with Thea Westreich Art Advisory Services, 2011, a detailed evaluation of the collecting opportunities presented by each of the works on offer in the exhibition at Bukowskis. Presented as a unique and strictly confidential report, its contents are only made available to the buyer.

Goldin+Senneby's practice is perhaps best understood through their multi-formal and Bataille-inspired project **Headless**, which started in 2007, in which late capitalist phenomena such as off-shore finance and its enactment of virtual space within a real economy are explored. By

concretely becomes part of that which it wants to discuss.

Wade Guyton (New York)

Untitled, plywood and paint (the floor), 2010

The very means of artistic production, particularly painting, are the focus of many of Wade Guyton's works. Standardized procedures such as printing with basic commercial printers have been appropriated in order to generate paintings where the mechanical meets the incidental with wrinkles, blurbs and other "errors", not unlike in any office environment. The resulting paintings are minimal and abstract, as in "non-representational". At the same time, they evoke the emergence of mass media, and therefore popular culture, in print workshops. The work **Untitled** is a remake of the floor in Guyton's former studio. Cheap plywood was painted glossy black, thereby creating a large sculpture, or pedestal, as the very support of all work taking place in the studio. At the same time, the floor becomes an enormous monochrome painting, partaking in a somewhat daunting tradition. The first

three times the floor was shown it was combined with the printed “paintings” that had made indexical marks on the surfaces of the floor wherever they landed immediately after their printing. In **Abstract Possible** the floor has been released from this context, taking on a different existence. The artist has asked for the floor not to be cleaned during the exhibition period.

Iman Issa (Cairo/New York)

Material for a sculpture proposed as an alternative to a monument that has become an embarrassment to its people, wooden table, lights, automatic dimmer, circuit, vinyl text on wall, 2010

How can you speak to a collective? Is there a value to the seemingly failed languages of monuments and memorials? In a series of ten “displays” Iman Issa searches for adequate ways to deal with significant figures, events and places (rather than virtues and value systems). Referring to existing monuments and memorials which she knows well from her hometown of Cairo and other places in Egypt, and which for a long time no one looked at, she has a renewed belief in

Possible: The Stockholm Synergies she has made a new version of **Brand New View**, this time relying on logos found in Tensta Centrum, for example, the grocery store Matvärlden and the kebab restaurant Tasty Fried Chicken. In Klingberg’s installation we are surrounded by seductively beautiful and commercially-driven manifestations of abstraction with the potential to quite literally make us lose orientation. Supported by FastPartner.

Dorit Margreiter (Vienna)

Zentrum (lynne), mobile, metal construction, paint, 2011

Zentrum (lynne) is part of a series of “proto-cinematic” mobiles which simultaneously function as portraits of female curators and elaborations on how architecture shapes socio-cultural contexts. Based on the typeface used for a monumental neon sign which for more than four decades sat on top of the Brühlzentrum building (1963) in Leipzig, it is now documenting something lost. This complex, containing public housing, a theatre, a restaurant and a kindergarten, has since been demolished and Margreiter has recalled its legacy in a film, posters,

their symbolic languages and abstracting tendencies. Nevertheless, she suggests alternatives to the existing monuments and memorials, which remain in the realm of the powers that be. In **Material for a sculpture proposed as an alternative to a monument that has become an embarrassment to its people**, two spherical white lamps sitting on top of a tall and slender table take turns lighting. The title is an integral part of the work, placed on the wall next to the table.

Gunilla Klingberg (Stockholm)

Brand New View—Tensta, cut-out foil on the two front windows of Tensta Centrum, 2012

Brand New View is a series of installations with cut-out foil on windows. Employing mandala-like abstract patterns based on logos from cheap brands more likely to appear on the sink at home, rather than more prestigious brands from luxury goods, Gunilla Klingberg evokes Eastern and New Age types of abstraction. However, “the spiritual in art” here has more to do with consumption than with ideas such as Vassily Kandinsky’s about transcendence through art. For **Abstract**

sculptures and the mobiles. The latter consist of letters cut from sheet aluminium referring to standardized type in old-style hot metal printing. The typeface is reminiscent of those designed by Josef Albers and Herbert Bayer in the 1920s, based on a restricted repertoire of simple geometric shapes, at a time when signage in general became more important. In **Zentrum (lynne)** the digital meets the analogue, words mix with images and information becomes abstract.

Åsa Norberg/Jennie Sundén (Gothenburg)

As We Go Along, three MDF boards with paper, cardboard and textile, 2012

As We Go Along is an on-going project inspired by the lectures held by Josef Albers at the Bauhaus in the 1920s and at Black Mountain College in the 1930-40s. Albers, one of the most influential abstract artists in the 20th century and a legendary teacher, often used inexpensive material in his workshops, encouraging the students to get the most out of the material at hand so as to learn how to see and interact with the material. The students weren’t supposed to think of what they did as art or as a

means of self-expression but as a way of “gathering experience”. Albers used the word “magic” in relation to the moment of transformation of the material, a moment that he called “Schwindel” (vertigo). He often drew parallels between form and society, talking about “democratic design”, where all elements—lines, shapes and colours—were supposed to integrate and “get along”. The materials used in **As We Go Along**, which consists of three low platforms referring to presentations at art schools with simple shapes made of cheap material on top, are “around materials”: plugs for mounting, sandpaper for polishing/shaping, corrugated cardboard for protecting an object, etc. The materials relate to carpentry, transformation and reconstruction.

Mai-Thu Perret (Geneva)

Untitled, block printed wallpaper, dimensions variable, 2008

Early 20th century avant-garde practices and their employment of abstraction offer a distinct backdrop for the work of Mai-Thu Perret. In paintings, sculptures, installations, textile banners, wallpaper, etc. she refers to works by

artists such as Alexander Rodchenko, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Francis Picabia and—more than anyone else—Varvara Stepanova. Their versions of abstraction developed as a reaction to the materialism and naturalism of previous generations and expressed a desire to create a new language suiting a new society. Stepanova, a pioneer of textile, fashion and set design, as well as polygraphy, was not only engaged with but also embedded in concrete industrial production. One of her textile designs provides the basis for Perret’s wallpaper, which can be ordered online. Conditions of production are also central to the work of Perret, who since 1999, has worked on a fictive “master narrative” entitled **The Crystal Frontier** that deals with a group of young women who withdraw from urban life to form a self-sustained commune in the American Southwest. **The Crystal Frontier** is manifested as a longer text, with excerpts printed on posters, sculptures, garments and installations. The wallpaper is on view at Tensta konsthall and at the Center for Fashion Studies, Stockholm University.

Falke Pisano (Amsterdam/Berlin)

Figures of Speech; Figure 1 (Context, Past, Present, Future), sculpture: wood, paint, fabric, metal, 2009; **Figure 2 (Collaboration & Subjectivity)**, sculpture: wood, paint, fabric, metal, 2009; **Figure 3 (Conditions of Agency)**, sculpture: wood, paint, fabric, metal, 2009; **Figure 4 (Production of Speech)**, sculpture: wood, paint, fabric, metal, 2009

Figures of Speech has developed in stages over five years, involving texts written by the artist, performances based on the texts, images and objects based on the texts, and then performances and texts referring back to the images and objects. New contexts and ideas create feedback loops where each new round does something different. Falke Pisano presents the objects on view here (with the titles **Figure 1—4**) as symbolic formal syntheses of four lines in her practice, namely “objecthood and time”, “collaboration and subjectivity”, “agency” and “speech”. They have a touch of the handmade, vaguely reminiscent of abstract works by the classical avant-garde, from Vladimir Tatlin and Kasimir Malevich to Anni and Josef Albers. “The

object as performative site” is one of Pisano’s major concerns: how can a static thing be the locus of action? How can an artwork be a speech act? Can a sculpture be turned into a conversation? “Context”, “collaboration”, “subjectivity” and “agency”, typically thought of as keywords within social practice-type work, are part of Pisano’s flux, which is embedded in abstraction. The performance **The Complex Object (Affecting Abstraction 3)** will take place in the exhibition on 14.4.

Walid Raad (Beirut/New York)

Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art: Part I_Chapter 1_Section 271: Appendix XVIII: Plates 24-151, 23 archival inkjet prints on archival paper, framed, 2008

In the by now legendary works which form part of the **Atlas Group Archive** (1989-2004) Walid Raad explored the history of the recent Lebanese civil wars. Using facts as a starting point – historical, sociological, economic, emotional and aesthetic facts – but claiming that some facts can only be experienced in fiction, he created an intriguing account of the

traumatic experience of the violence of war at once intimate and distant. In **Scratching on Things I Could Disavow** the “hysterical documents” refer to the history of art in the Arab world, specifically the fast development over the last decade of a new infrastructure for art. Writer Jalal Toufiq’s notion of “the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster” helps Raad to elaborate on how material and immaterial effects of war in the region can be seen in art, culture and tradition. In this series of abstract-looking photographs and prints, he argues that while some results of war are material, like the destruction of libraries and museums, colours, lines and shapes are also affected. But the effects can also hide, hibernate and take refuge for a period of time. In fact, his contention is that in the case of this work, tradition is hidden not in art itself but in the material surrounding art in Lebanon, in letters, price lists, diagrams, catalogues etc.

Emily Roysdon (New York/Stockholm)

Ecstatic Resistance (Schema),
silkscreen, 2009

This silkscreen by Emily Roysdon

Tommy Støckel (Copenhagen/Berlin)

In My Mind This Goes on Forever,
styrofoam, 2012

In Tommy Støckel’s sculptures handicraft and science, speculation and optical phenomena are mixed together. Most of the materials he uses in the laborious process of fabrication, which retains the handmade, may be bought in stationery stores and hobby shops: paper, cardboard, foam rubber and glue are combined in remarkable detail. Like concrete artists such as Max Bill and Richard Paul Lohse he often uses systematic approaches borrowed from mathematics—a prominent field of abstraction—such as permutations of given geometrical shapes. However, he typically allows the system to also be personal and odd. Scales shift and illusionistic techniques are at play. The sculptures refer to time travel, four-dimensionality, new forms of life and how modernism could have looked if it had been influenced by present-day mathematics and computer-generated realities. **In My Mind This Goes on Forever** was made for this exhibition and consists of approximately 6300

functions as the “title page” of **Ecstatic Resistance**, a project, practice, partial philosophy, set of strategies and group exhibitions organized by Roysdon. In 2010 two “sister” exhibitions were on view simultaneously in Kansas City and New York, involving work by artists such as Sharon Hayes, Yael Bartana, Adrian Piper and A.L. Steiner. The silkscreen is a diagram—an important vehicle for abstraction—of **Ecstatic Resistance** where “movement”, “struggle” and “improvisation” make up the core surrounded by a circle of the “impossible”. Roysdon even sees the impossible as a model for political plasticity. Beyond a green circle there is a “cloud” with space for the imaginary as well as pleasure. **Ecstatic Resistance** is a call for many things: for understanding resistance precisely as something pleasurable, for the importance of embodied, lived experience, for the necessity of reorganizing the cultural imaginary and re-imagining political protest. A co-founder of the queer collective and magazine LTTR, Roysdon employs performance, photography and printmaking to explore the relationship between choreography and political action.

pieces that together form an intriguing candy-coloured cube. **Thinking Small**, a smaller—“handy”—version of **In My Mind This Goes on Forever**, is part of the exhibition at Bukowskis. The result of a workshop conducted by Støckel with pupils from Ross Tensta Gymnasium and students from The School of Architecture’s preparatory course at the gymnasium is shown in the atrium of the school.

Mika Tajima (Austin, Texas/New York)

The Extras, wood, plywood, industrial carpet, paper, video monitor

False Expectations, I(IV), Accessory 4, White Out/Disunite, One being deaf and the other being mute, Today is Not a Dress Rehearsal, Ad Hoc #9, Ad Hoc #3, 2010

A Facility Based on Change III, Action Office I cubicle panels, canvas, wool fabric, acrylic paint, cotton rag paper, silkscreen, pins, clips, 2011

The partition, or screen, is a recurring element in the work of Mika Tajima. Being both architecture and a type of furniture, it can be at once a structural dividing

element and a surface, simultaneously breaking up a space and “hosting” other objects. **A Facility Based on Change III** consists of original Herman Miller panels from the “Action Office” system, bought from a bankrupted telemarketing company and stretched with new canvas transforming the panels into monochrome paintings. Invented by architect Robert Propst (1964) and produced by the company Herman Miller, the “action office” introduced the ubiquitous, semi-enclosed and flexible office cubicle. This tool for standardization and efficiency continues to affect the contemporary workplace, including its discontents. As Tajima herself says, with the form of the cubicle “work and social interaction were organized to control/produce life’s abstractions”. Another topic of interest to the artist is “the slacker” as a figure of resistance and self-determined refusal of work. **The Extras**, consisting of an inventory of previous bodies of work, is a storage unit “refusing” to properly display its contents—a scene of surplus, dereliction, and anticipatory potential.

Haegue Yang (Seoul/Berlin)

Dress Vehicles—Golden Clowning, aluminum venetian blinds, powder-coated aluminum frame, casters, magnets, 2011

Displaced everyday objects are often part of Haegue Yang’s sensorial installations, sculptures, objects and videos. **Dress Vehicles—Golden Clowning** is one of plural performative sculptures on casters where venetian blinds, one of her signature materials, are combined with an aluminum armature with handles. Like in Oskar Schlemmer’s **Triadisches Ballett** (1922) which Yang refers to in this series of sculptures, the elemental and abstract is at the core of the work. Following the tradition of this Bauhaus teacher, Yang also employs the human body as a medium and allows for a choreographed geometry. Formalism and sense of body meet, belonging and detachment co-exist and the obscure is given a chance. Her baseline includes geopolitical conditions filtered through subjective experience and high degrees of abstraction.

Frederick Kiesler 1890—1965 (Vienna/New York)

Correalist Instrument (two pieces), 1942

Rocker, 1942

When art collector Peggy Guggenheim’s legendary museum-cum-commercial gallery, Art of This Century, opened in New York in 1942 **Correalist Instruments** and **Rockers** furnished the space. Visionary architect and artist Frederick Kiesler not only designed the gallery but also its furniture. Art of This Century was a true sensation: its Surrealist, Abstract, Kinetic and Daylight Galleries offered an unprecedented experience of the work of the European avant-garde. As one headline put it: for the first time “modern art in a modern setting” was on offer. Even good photographs of the galleries cannot do justice to the presentation which had, for example, frameless paintings by Max Ernst and Joan Miro “floating” in front of undulating curved wooden walls in the Surrealist Gallery. Utopian architecture, stage design and retail display counted among Kiesler’s references and in the Abstract Gallery where the walls were covered with ultramarine curtains; pictures by Francis Picabia and Kasimir Malevich among others were hung on V-straps running from floor to ceiling like in a shop window. The flexible **Correalist Furniture**, with its seemingly arbitrary amorphous forms, was carefully designed by Kiesler to function as stands for both paintings and sculptures but also as seating.