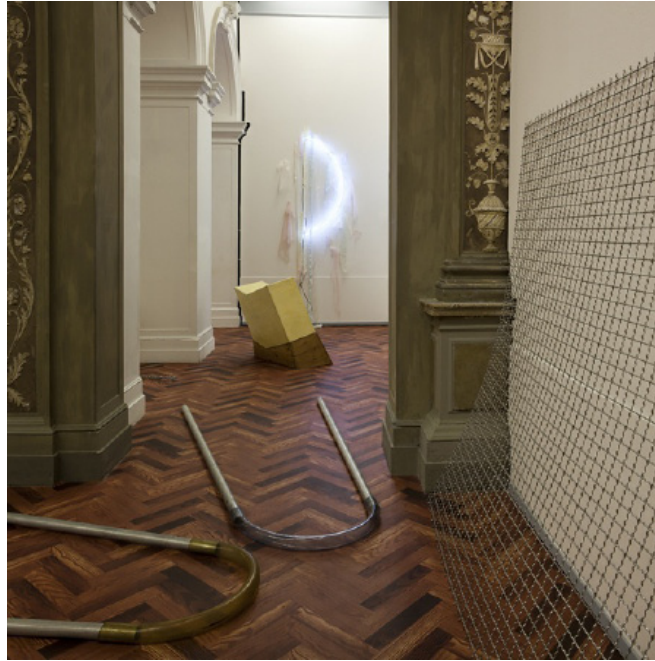




"When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/ Venice 2013" at Fondazione Prada, Venice
June 8~2013



Installation View, Bill Bollinger at Fondazione Prada, Courtesy of the Bollinger Estate and Albus Greenspon, New York

The Fondazione Prada presents between 1 June and 3 November 2013 at Ca' Corner della Regina in Venice an exhibition entitled "When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013" curated by Germano Celant in dialogue with Thomas Demand and Rem Koolhaas. In a surprising and novel remaking, the project reconstructs "Live in Your Head. When Attitudes Become Form," a show curated by Harald Szeemann at the Bern Kunsthalle in 1969, which went down in history for the curator's radical approach to exhibition practice, conceived as a linguistic medium.

To present, today, an exhibition from 1969 just as it was, maintaining its original visual and formal relations and links between the works, has posed a series of questions on the complexity and very meaning of the project, which has developed through a profound debate from various perspectives: the artistic, the architectural and the curatorial. This was the challenge: how could we find and communicate a limit to a non-limit, creating a place that would reflect exactly the architectural structures of the Kunsthalle, but also an asymmetrical space with respect to our time and imbued with an energy and tension equivalent to that felt at Bern? Underlining and highlighting the transition from the past to the present, the complex identity of which it is important to conserve, it has been decided to graft the exhibition in its totality—walls, floors, installations and art objects, including their relative positions—onto the historical architectural and environmental structure of Ca' Corner della Regina, thereby inserting—on a full-size scale—the modern rooms of the Kunsthalle, delimited by white wall surfaces, into the ancient frescoed and decorated halls of the Venetian palazzo.

It is, in fact, an exercise in double occupancy: in the same way that the spaces of the Kunsthalle were occupied by a generation of young revolutionary artists in 1969, taking the same approach, the richly decorated spaces of Ca' Corner della Regina are in turn being invaded by the Kunsthalle's twentieth-century rooms. The result is a literal and radical superposition of spaces that produces new and unexpected relationships: between the artworks themselves and between the artworks and the space they occupy.

The act of transferring the exhibition in its entirety, made up of the interlacement of rooms and plastic and visual ensembles, creates an estrangement. It is a way of transforming "When Attitudes Become Form" into a readymade, or an archeological object that is restored by putting together its different fragments. The new vision results from the dislocation and display in Venice, which provide further interpretation and additional meanings related not only to the history, but to our present time as well.

The intention is to breathe new life into the exhibition process with which "When Attitudes Become Form" was staged, so as to go beyond the necessity for photographs and films of the past event, and to be able to experience and analyze it literally, just as it was, even though it has been transported from the past to the present. The project has entailed the understanding that the language with which an exhibition is mounted and the relations between the works set out by its curator have become a founding element of the history of modern and contemporary art. The project is based on critical research conducted on different

levels, including analysis of the primary sources in the Harald Szeemann Archive, now at the Getty Research Institute (GRI) in Los Angeles; firsthand accounts by the artists or documents conserved in their foundations; and photographic and written documentation present in the Kunsthalle Bern library. An important contribution was made by the Getty Research Institute directed by Thomas W. Gaehtgens. Thanks to careful study of documents, letters and photographs related to Szeemann and the 1969 show—carried out by the Fondazione Prada in collaboration with GRI curator Glenn Phillips and his team—and to detailed analysis of a collection of more than 1,000 black and white and color photographs, it was possible to identify both the works in the exhibition and the ones that were not put on display—for technical reasons—at the Kunsthalle or in the secondary exhibition space at the Schulwarte. The result was a complete and precise mapping of what happened in Bern.

“When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013” brings together the original works presented at the Kunsthalle and Schulwarte, loaned for the event by important private collections and international museums (for example the works of Carl Andre, Claes Oldenburg, Bruce Nauman, Eva Hesse, Giovanni Anselmo, Hanne Darboven, Reiner Ruthenbeck, Marinus Boezem and Richard Tuttle); site-specific interventions “reenacted” directly or in association with the artists and their Estates (for instance the works of Joseph Beuys, Daniel Buren, Walter De Maria, Jan Dibbets, Alain Jacquet, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Keith Sonnier, Ger van Elk, Lawrence Weiner and Gilberto Zorio); plus a selection of photographs, videos, books, letters, ephemeral objects and other original materials relating to the 1969 show and its context. The exhibition also includes unpublished materials from the Szeemann archive.

The purpose is to revisit, with the same intensity and energy, the Post-pop and Post-minimalist art research of the time, ranging from Process art to Conceptual art, Arte Povera and Land art, that was developed internationally during the mid-1960s, but also to highlight the contribution made by Harald Szeemann, a curator capable of thinking beyond the limitations set by critics’ labels and the theoretic associations of his time. In particular, the focus has been on the fluid and mutable development of art, with the purpose of exploring the physical and conceptual horizons of material and immaterial visual languages, set in a multiform and continuously changing territory that transcends the immutable nature of the art object. Characterized by a new approach where everything was left to the liberating process of doing, where the viewer was not impeded by boundaries, protection systems, pedestals or perimeters, the exhibition became a dialectical field of encounter between the individual artists and the curator, between the event and the architecture: a place where the works formed links with each other, in a kind of continuously-evolving organic weave.

A scientific volume of more than 600 pages is published to coincide with “When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013.” It includes the complete collection of photographs, many previously unpublished, taken by photographers during the exhibition in Bern (Claudio Abate, Leonardo Bezzola, Balthasar Burkhard, Siegfried Kuhn, Dölf Preisig, Harry Shunk and Albert Winkler); a preface by Miuccia Prada; an interview-essay by Germano Celant; two dialogues with Thomas Demand and Rem Koolhaas; as well as contributions by internationally recognized historians, theoreticians, curators and critics (Gwen L. Allen, Pierre Bal-Blanc, Claire Bishop, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Charles Esche, Boris Groys, Jens Hoffmann, Chus Martínez, Glenn Phillips, Christian Rattemeyer, Dieter Roelstraete, Anne Rorimer, Terry Smith, Mary Anne Staniszewski, Francesco Stocchi, Jan Verwoert). The aim is to offer a complete and multiform publication that addresses the historical context of “When Attitudes Become Form”; themes like the reconstruction and the “reenactment” of objects, settings and exhibitions; and the curator’s creative practice, thinking and decisions.

(enrico bocciolletti)