

Martin Holman

Complete bibliography since 2009

* denotes essays of more than 2,000 words

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2018

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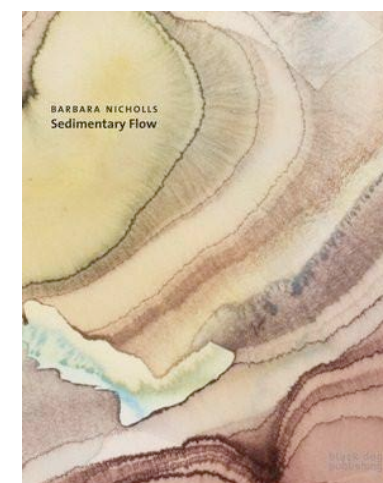
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Camden Arts Centre: January–April 2018
File Note #117 **Giorgio Griffa** *A Continuous Becoming*



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Up, up Ai Weiwei

EXHIBITION REVIEW / Martin Holman

Ai Weiwei is now described as the world's most famous living artist. Millions round the globe have followed him on Twitter and Instagram; his impassive, bearded portrait symbolises his defiant campaign for democracy. While his biography includes house arrest and prison beatings, and the illegal demolition of his studio by the Chinese government, his artwork is much less well known, despite helping to design the 'Bird's nest' stadium for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. By spanning the career of this contemporary phenomenon, the exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi attempts to put the artist before the activist.

Ai Weiwei is a thoughtful, articulate and determined man. He is thoughtful in the sense that he is deeply interested in the implications of his work. He is articulate in the sense that he is able to communicate his ideas clearly and effectively. He is determined in the sense that he is willing to stand up to authority and risk his freedom for his beliefs. His work is a reflection of his personality and his commitment to social and political change. He is a man who has made a significant impact on the world of art and on the lives of many people. His work is a testament to his courage and his vision. He is a man who has inspired many people and who will continue to do so for many years to come. His work is a gift to the world and a source of inspiration for all who seek to make a difference.

His art cannot be separated from his global reach. He has a unique ability to connect with people from all over the world. His work is a reflection of his global perspective and his commitment to social and political change. He is a man who has made a significant impact on the world of art and on the lives of many people. His work is a testament to his courage and his vision. He is a man who has inspired many people and who will continue to do so for many years to come. His work is a gift to the world and a source of inspiration for all who seek to make a difference.

Liberalism introduced by Deng Xiaoping after Mao's death resulted in the rise of capitalism. For much of that time, however, Ai lived in New York among Chinese expatriate students. These years of his life were spent in a city where he was surrounded by people who had fled China for political and economic reasons. He was a part of a generation that was growing up in a different world, one that was more open and more accepting of diversity. He was a man who had seen the world and who had experienced the benefits of a more liberal society. He was a man who had a deep understanding of the world and of the challenges it faced. He was a man who was committed to social and political change and who was willing to risk his freedom for his beliefs. His work is a reflection of his experiences and his commitment to a better world.

As an artist, he has received international recognition. He has been awarded numerous awards and has exhibited his work in galleries and museums around the world. He is a man who has made a significant impact on the world of art and on the lives of many people. His work is a testament to his courage and his vision. He is a man who has inspired many people and who will continue to do so for many years to come. His work is a gift to the world and a source of inspiration for all who seek to make a difference.

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Gilberto Zorio
 Blain/Southern, London 9 August – 28 September

‘My works are meant to be energy itself’ said Gilberto Zorio in 1972, ‘because they are always living works, or they are works in progress, or works for the future’. Since he emerged as a young artist from the Turin avant-garde during the late 1960s, Zorio has pursued the fusion of idea and form with remarkable consistency, using unconventional formats and often unobedient materials as means to explore what the critic Germano Celant described as ‘the precociousness of events, the “relativity of things” and the potential energy of the world to be transformed.’

Although Zorio has been internationally recognised for several decades for work that has become part of the definition of Arte Povera, it is surprising that this one-man exhibition is his first in London and that his British solo debut occurred only five years ago, in Milton Keynes.

Comprising 12 works that span 42 years, the show effectively introduces the main threads of Zorio’s forward-thinking practice. Emblematic of the precocious position in subsequent conceptual developments that his experimental process has won him is *Microphone* (1968, 2014), which is made up of several microphones suspended from the ceiling by cables: visitors can broadcast themselves while standing on concrete blocks placed unobtainably on ball bearings.

The significance of this work has not faded. Its primary material is sound, with the voice as catalyst, and neither is under the artist’s control.

Thus the artwork only becomes active and meaningful once a spectator’s words reverberate in the surrounding space through an amplifier set to echo and filter wherever it receives. Because the effect is contingent on location and use, the outcome is always different. For that moment, and in the memory in which it lives, the environment is transformed, with the spectator becoming the performer within it.

This is one example of how Zorio takes hold of the connections and boundaries of the spaces in which he shows to generate sensations of fluidity and creative instability. On this occasion sound travelling down a cable from a microphone in the front area emerges from the loudspeaker in the rear gallery, a room dominated by a tall blackblock structure. Movement around its perimeter seems obligatory and reveals the construction’s footprint to be a five-pointed star, the more recurrent of several emblems with dynamic cultural, historical and political associations applied by the artist throughout his career. The star’s interior is inaccessible except that through small gaps between bricks a glass alchemist is visible, its liquid content glowing yellow with diluted phosphorus and fluorescent.

The mechanical, mythical and chemical spheres repeatedly interrelate to unleash experiences involving light, heat and noise that engage multiple senses and not just the eye. When not actually kinetic, as in the sculptural



Microphone, 1968, microphone, amplifier, tape echo, concrete blocks with ball bearings, white, dimension variable.
 © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Blain/Southern, London

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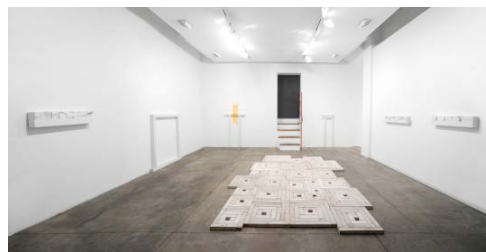
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