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RYAN GANDER JONATHAN MONK

I speak to people on the telephone

OPENING 7 SEP. 10 pm

7 SEP. 28 OUT.

The artists Ryan Gander and Jonathan Monk enjoy talking to people on the telephone. It is one of the ways in which both of them are interested—or stuck, if you prefer—in ideas, modes, methods, and moments from the past.

The immediacy, annoyance, and/or ephemerality of a phone call leaves space for all sorts of things to happen—things that cannot happen when everything is written down, etched in the marble stone of limitless-capacity email accounts. The phone creates an intimacy, and also a gap in permanence.

Of course a preference for the phone recalls the children's game "telephone," based on the mixing and missing of messages. Focusing on concepts and appropriating whatever medium, technique, or scale fits their purpose, both Gander and Monk often work through the sending of instructions—a mode that likewise creates space for enticing slippages, perversions, misinterpretations, reversals. The game of telephone might itself be a genre of conceptual art, involving as it does meanings forgotten or misconstrued, instructions neglected or lost in translation.

The phone analogy also invites another allusion, to the phrase "phoning it in." Understood to characterize an action that is done unenthusiastically, with minimal effort, half-assed, the phrase "to phone it in" sometimes describes artistic production. The colloquialism could be descriptive, ironic, or critical with respect to these artists' practices.

The phone concept also has an interesting tie-in with art history, from the lost MCA Chicago exhibition *Art by Telephone* (1969), to pieces like Walter De Maria's artwork of the same name from a few years earlier, the phone and the transmission of ideas is a hallmark of conceptual art.

The request to write this short press release arrived via email—luckily. I do not like talking on the telephone; maybe Gander and Monk know this about me. In fact, I avoid talking on the tortuous telephone at all costs; having someone's voice close to my ear is incredibly uncomfortable for me. It's gotten better over the years, but I still make up excuses from time to time as to why I am not available to talk on the phone.

Ryan Gander, who lives and works in London, creates language, games, correspondences, performance, sculpture, film, and other media in order to compose propositions that settle in the space between questions, solutions, and lies. Berlin-based Jonathan Monk uses family affairs and conceptual iconography in neon, metal, paint, film, slide projections, and photography to continuously ask, answer, and reimagine “what’s next?” Both artists can be reached by telephone, but please don’t call me.

Jens Hoffmann

RYAN GANDER (Chester, 1976)

Lives and works in London.

Ryan Gander’s complex and unfettered conceptual practice is stimulated by queries, investigations or what-ifs, rather than strict rules or limits. Language and storytelling play an overarching role in his work. Occasionally his ludic concepts drift into more bodily, relational challenges. Invitation and collaboration are also at the heart of Gander’s fugitive art – whether he’s exchanging fictionalised newspaper obituaries with an artist-friend or taking pictures of people looking at pictures at an art fair – although arguably every solipsistic action he takes merely holds up yet another mirror to his ceaselessly voracious mind.

Ryan Gander, born in Chester in 1976, lives and works in London. Recent solo exhibitions include Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, USA (2015); Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada (2015); Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2015); Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore (2015); Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City, Mexico (2015); OK Centre for Contemporary Art, Linz, Austria (2015) touring to Centre for Contemporary Art, Derry, Ireland (2014) and FRAC Île-de-France / Le Plateau, France (2013); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2012); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico (2012); Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland (2010); Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (2010); Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2008); the Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2007 & 2003); MUMOK, Vienna, Austria (2007) and the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, USA (2007). He has also shown in group exhibitions such as the Shanghai Biennale, China (2012); documenta 13, Kassel, Germany (2012); ILLUMInations, 54th Venice Biennale, Italy (2011); 55th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, USA (2008) and the Sydney Biennial, Australia (2008). Ryan Gander has been awarded numerous prestigious prizes, among others the Zürich Art Prize (2009), the ABN Amro Art Prize (2006), the Baloise Art Statements of the Art Basel (2006) and the Dutch Prix de Rome for sculpture (2003).

JONATHAN MONK (Leicester, 1969)

Lives and works in Berlin.

British artist Jonathan Monk replays, recasts and re-examines seminal works of Conceptual and Minimal art by variously witty, ingenious and irreverent means. Speaking in 2009, he said, ‘Appropriation is something I have used or worked with in my art since starting art school in 1987. At this time (and still now) I realised that being original was almost impossible, so I tried using what was already available as source material for my own work.’ Through wall paintings, monochromes, ephemeral sculpture and photography he reflects on the tendency of contemporary art to devour references, simultaneously paying homage to figures such as Sol LeWitt, Ed Ruscha, Bruce Nauman and Lawrence Weiner, while demystifying the creative process. Monk is constantly asking ‘what next?’ His stainless steel series entitled Deflated Sculpture (2009) refigures Jeff Koon’s iconic balloon rabbit in various stages of collapse; letting the air out isn’t an act of iconoclasm so much as giving the original idea new life. So too Monk documented the period he lived in Los Angeles with a series of photographs titled None of the Buildings on Sunset Strip (1997–99), showing only the roads between buildings – a follow-up to Ed Ruscha’s artist book from 30 years before, All of the Buildings on Sunset Strip. But his conceptual configurations are also grounded in the personal: ‘what next?’

Jonathan Monk was born in Leicester in 1969 and lives and works in Berlin. He has a BFA from Leicester Polytechnic (1988) and an MFA from Glasgow School of Art (1991). Solo exhibitions include Kunsthau Baselland, Muttentz, Switzerland (2016), Museo d’Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Rome, Italy (2015), Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin, Ireland (2014), Centro De Arte Contemporáneo (CAC) Málaga, Spain (2013), Kunstraum Dornbirn, Austria (2013), Palais de Tokyo and Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris, France (2008), Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover, Germany (2006), Institute of Contemporary Art, London, UK (2005) and Museum Kunst Palest, Dusseldorf, Germany (2003). His work has been included in many group exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial (2006), the 50th and 53rd Venice Biennales (2003, 2009), Berlin Biennale (2001) and Taipei Biennial (2000). He was awarded the Prix du Quartier Des Bains, Geneva in 2012.