

her sculptures in wood. “Nature’s forces teach us that if we want to live on this earth we must learn to respect all the environmental elements of our protecting home.”

That’s how the bi-national project “El Bosque/The Forest” was born. Desiring to contribute in the conservation effort to preserve the world’s woodlands, Siegmann challenged a group of Mexican and American artists to create a forest out of any material, except wood and its derivatives, which would travel in both countries. On the Mexican side, Helen Escobedo, Pedro Friedeberg, Yolanda Gutiérrez, Marina Lascaris, Kiyoto Ota, Marta Palau, Ricardo Regazzoni, Jorge Yazpik, and Siegmann were invited. The Americans were Caroline Kaplowitz, Robert Lobe, Bryan Nash Gill, Beverly Pepper, Steve Tobin, and Catherine Widgery. Aside from the high quality of their work and their wide professional experience, the artists were chosen for their interest in ecology and their preoccupation with forests. According to Siegmann, the artists participated because of the ecological message offered by the show.

Many of these manmade trees, which need no water or care, were created from the very materials that are destroying our forests. Caroline Kaplowitz, for example, used the steel saws that fell trees. The circular cut of Bryan Nash Gill’s tree, made with an electric chain saw, refers to possible extinction in a simple, but beautiful representation of rings. Helen Escobedo invented a palm tree with rubber tires, a material straight out of the Amazon. The artificial outline trees proposed by Siegmann and Marina Lascaris remind us that such representations could be our only visible reminders if we don’t create a culture conscious of a balance between man and nature.

“El Bosque/The Forest” began its itinerary on the first of July 2005, at the Federico Silva Museum of

Contemporary Sculpture in San Luis Potosí. From there, it went to the Manuel Felguérez Museum of Abstract Art in Zacatecas, the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Oaxaca, its last stop in Mexico. In the U.S., the portable forest will visit San Antonio, Santa Fe, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. To fulfill its objectives, the work is planted in public plazas or explanades in the open air outside the museums and cultural centers.

—Merry MacMasters

## PARIS

### Christian Boltanski Marian Goodman Gallery

Christian Boltanski is a philosopher. His work is about the death of childhood, memory, and the universal spirit within each soul. His famous use of blurred mug shots of the dead to evoke Holocaust victims is not that different from his photos of the young graduates of a Jewish school in Vienna in 1931—one of two times he used identifiably Jewish subjects. In his installations, the living and the dead find each other in the vortex of each viewer’s memory bank. Boltanski, born in 1944 to a Christian mother and a Jewish father, has said that he does not practice any religion, but he does regard the Holocaust as a seminal event in his consciousness and in his art.

His recent exhibition turned the front room of an elegant old building in Paris into a mausoleum of lost souls without faces. A crowd of dummies in long dark wool coats stood on stilt-like two-by-four legs. At first, their lack of faces—the heads consisting of nothing more than light bulbs on bent goosenecks—and their silence made a statement about sameness and lack of identity. But as the viewer passed through the space, the installation changed. The coats that seemed so identical are in fact slightly dif-

ferent, illustrating the unexpected alignment of conformity and difference. And the viewer’s movement activates a Babel of voices: “I am a liar. I’m fat. I am jealous. I’m unworthy. I am tired. I’m naughty. I’m brave.” While the bodies are not gendered, each of the neurosis-uttering voices is distinctly male or female. The exhibition title, “Prendre la parole” (“Take the word”), is ironic: viewers are asked to “take up” or at least to recognize that these banal utterances are not unlike our own inner voices.

At the bottom of a plain staircase, a second gallery featured *Le Coeur (The Heart)*. A single pulsing bulb was timed to simulate the artist’s heartbeat. In the pitch darkness, one could not see well enough to know

deeply in an instant. The pulsing light also served as a metaphor for memory—its flash representing the way we can recall a past event, such as this installation, viscerally rather than intellectually, its alternating and opposing states capturing how my perception has changed both in experiencing and in recalling this work. This minimal installation paradoxically triggered very complex emotions.

The final work in the exhibition was *Être à nouveau (Making it new)*. Using faces from his Swiss archive of the dead, Boltanski divided the faces into top, middle, and bottom sections in an electronic children’s game. Pushing a red button stopped the flow of facial parts and created a new three-part face. However, it



Christian Boltanski, *Prendre la parole*, 2005. Mixed media, installation view.

if anything, or nothing, was there. Beyond the half-opened front and back curtains, the room itself became the body. Being inside the dark interior was like entering Plato’s cave. I felt suspended in both time and space. It was scary: hard to see, hard to move forward. At the same time, I was also “blinded by the light.” *The Heart* presented a potent paradox, one I could experience

is impossible to stop the shuffling to create a normal face: the button-pusher becomes, in an innocent way, an experimenter, a manipulator of dead faces for amusement, a mutilator of the dead. While this role is far from that of executioner, it is easy to assume, and the viewer doesn’t even necessarily realize she is playing with the dead. Moreover, some of the facial parts seem recognizable: Aren’t



those Elizabeth Taylor’s lips? Bill Clinton’s eyes? Lyndon Johnson’s nose? Probably not, but the partial faces trigger memories.

In a 2002 interview, Boltanski explained his obsession with memory and its absence: “Sometimes we need to forget. For this reason, I do nothing, and I only wait to die. We must be friendly with dying.”

—Jan Garden Castro

## BERLIN

### Anton Henning Arndt & Partner and Wohnmaschine

German artist Anton Henning had dual shows in Berlin last fall. “27 mainly quite appealing sculptures” at Arndt and Partner maintained the usual rigorous level of intensity in Henning’s recent installations. Using the sensuality of oil paint, light, wood, and art historical imagery, the show was a meditation on joy and seduction. Each of the gallery’s two spaces offered a cacophony of images, objects, sculptures, painted wall installations, and Le Corbusier-inspired chairs titled *Arbiter*, symbolizing and scrutinizing the act of the viewer.

Henning invited the specter of Gustave Courbet to set the tone for

the discussions and issues that ricocheted energetically across objects and paintings. Engaging Courbet as if he were a contemporary, Henning established the foundation of the installation with a sculpture based on Courbet’s 1866 painting *The Origin of the World*. He placed Courbet’s in-your-face image of a vulva, concentrated and miniaturized, into the drain of a porcelain washbasin, titling the piece *L’origine de la sculpture* (1996). Forcing the viewer to look down at the appropriated image, Henning directed the gaze away from the traditional interaction with a painting on a wall and suggested an idea of life that inverts backwards into its originary state.

The crowded gallery seemed overcharged at first by layers of works in vitrines, objects on pedestals, large Modernist chairs, light boxes, and vivid abstract and realist paintings on the walls. On the one hand, Henning’s overcrowding of space with

**Above: Anton Henning, view of “27 mainly quite appealing sculptures,” 2005, at Arndt & Partner, Berlin. Right: Soo-Jung Hyun, *Narrative of Desire*, 2004. Fiber optics and mixed media, installation view.**

art objects and concepts was, at times, relieved by the clarity of his thought process. On the other hand, connections between objects and paintings sometimes dropped into obscurity, and it was difficult to tell if this was an intentional conceptual tool or Henning’s being overwhelmed by the number of ideas he uses at one time. The work is not stingy: it is refreshing to see art overflowing with well-conceived content—even if that content does sometimes threaten to overwhelm the work itself.

Wohnmaschine presented a less crowded installation, at a more viewer-friendly volume and without the full-on Henning assault of intensity. “La Retour de la Conférence” included one large rotating painting pedestal and several paintings. Although largely a two-dimensional show, Henning’s quirky lighting system handled light as a sculptural material rather than enhancement or specific directional tool. With light boxes built into the picture frames and the rotating painting pedestals, it became a performative, even celebratory tool for Henning. Light gave the work a self-consciousness about its own presentation, its manipulatory effects on the viewer revealing the presence of camp. In all of Henning’s recent work, camp is a conceptual and visual aid that he uses to move fluidly between the many languages of visual Modernism.

—Lara Taubman

## GWANGJU, KOREA

### Soo-Jung Hyun Lotte Gallery

Contemporary women artists cause a lot of confusion in Korea. This is largely due to the fact that one cannot easily separate content in art from other political, economic, and cultural issues. Throughout the 20th century, Koreans suffered chaos, instability, and repression, as their country transformed from a relatively isolated nation to one ready to engage in cultural exchange and international trade. Not until the mid-’80s did Korean women become visible in contemporary art.

Innovators in abstract sculpture like Chong-yung Kim (who studied sculpture in America in the ’50s) were relatively isolated during the rise of high Modernism. One could argue that the concept of Modernism escaped Korea entirely and that it was not until Postmodernism reared its head more than three decades later that Korean women, artists like Kim Sooja and Lee Bul, came to achieve recognition.

Gwangju—with the fifth largest population in Korea—is a geographically isolated city that advocates a conservative Neo-Confucian lifestyle and, paradoxically, sponsors the Gwangju Biennial. However, the cultural climate is changing quickly, largely due to the young artists who have moved to the region. One of these is Soo-Jung Hyun whose personalized installations take on a gamut of women’s issues through a



LEFT: COURTESY ARNDT & PARTNER, BERLIN  
RIGHT: COURTESY LOTTE GALLERY, GWANGJU, KOREA