

Esther Schipper

LIAM GILLICK

WERE PEOPLE THIS DUMB BEFORE TV? GRAFISCHE ARBEIT 1990–2016

JULY 2–AUGUST 5, 2017

The question will remain, what
kind of space are we in?

There will be large 3D printers.

Some people will dream of the
creation of an honest nostalgia.

There will be places to jump
around and wrestle.

Fed Ex boxes will arrive every
day full of unexpected things.

Liam Gillick, *Banner Design for Artists Space, New York, 2007*

Esther Schipper is pleased to announce Liam Gillick's ninth solo exhibition with the gallery. Titled **Were People This Dumb Before TV? Grafische Arbeit 1990-2016**, the exhibition gives a comprehensive overview of an important part of Gillick's work. Since 1990 the artist has produced a wide range of graphic material, including prints, posters, books, magazine covers and inserts, invitation cards (both for his own exhibitions and those of others), maps, logos and identities, both for public institutions and commercial art galleries. Conceived as a living archive, in addition to new and existing editions, the exhibition will create a set of reference prints of lost or difficult to source works.

Including more or less oblique references to the major research projects that have fueled Gillick's work, among them **McNamara**, **Erasmus is Late**, **Literally No Place**, **Construcción de Uno**, **A Volvo Bar** and **Why Work?**, these projects have constituted an integral element of the artist's critical position. Starting in the early 1990s he has focused upon the aesthetics of ideological control systems rooted in the development of a client citizenry. He plays with the codes that have placed us into a set of relationships with the managed state and precipitated multiple layers of disenfranchisement. Radically contingent and contextual, the references can be textual or graphic—picking up for example on the use of pattern or diagrams in corporate settings and thereby addressing the dysfunctional aspects of the modernist legacy as it has been deployed over the last thirty years.

The exhibition structure is derived from the artist's recollection of the Vienna apartment in the lane Stoß im Himmel that he often borrowed in the 1990s and early 2000s. This memory space serves as a central structuring element within the exhibition space and an appropriate presentation device echoing the informal locations where much of this material was conceived and produced.

Liam Gillick's work ranges from small books to large-scale architectural collaborations; it includes public commissions, abstract structures, films, audio, graphics and writing. His practice exists in a constant tension between his formally minimalistic works that reflect upon the implications of advanced social and political aesthetics and his critical approach through writing and the use of text. This approach is brought together in a continual testing of the conventions of the exhibition as form. Since the late 2000s, Gillick has produced a number of short films that address the construction of the creative persona in light of the enduring mutability of the contemporary artist as a cultural figure—a central theme in his 2016 book **Industry and Intelligence** (Columbia University Press).

Gillick uses a wide-ranging vocabulary to knowingly question the role art may play in society and how aesthetics are a political issue in the neo-liberal economy. His artworks place the viewer in an implicated role and designate spaces where it might be possible to rethink the way the built world intersects with modes of critique.

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