

WHITE CUBE

Mirosław Balka

Random Access Memory

25 January – 9 March 2019

White Cube Mason's Yard

There's place intangible a void and room.
For were it not, things could in nowise move;
Since body's property to block and check
Would work on all and at times the same.
– Lucretius 'On the Nature of Things', *The Void*,
Book 1, from 1st century BC (trans. by William
Ellery Leonard, 1916)

White Cube is pleased to present 'Random Access Memory' by Mirosław Balka at Mason's Yard, a new work that links and transforms each of the gallery spaces.

Throughout his practice, Balka has emphasised how the viewers' experience and their negotiation of space is fundamental to meaning. In this exhibition, he reflects on this through a radical artistic gesture, whereby both floors of the gallery are partially blocked by heated metal walls spanning the entire width of each space.

The title for the exhibition, 'Random Access Memory', refers to the complex form of computer data storage that we all use but do not necessarily comprehend, as well as to more generalised conceptions of 'memory', both in terms of the personal and the collective. It can also be seen as a reflection on our current political climate in which access to memory and history is often deliberately manipulated or even denied.

In his sculptures, Balka regularly incorporates various sensorial effects as a way of highlighting how all of our senses support cognition. In this way, the 'invisible' and the 'visible' can be of equal importance, as with the pauses, negative spaces and markers of absence (the materials or measurements associated with the body) which are foregrounded. Composed of corrugated metal sheets, the walls are heated to a temperature of 45 degrees Celsius, the point in the body at which blood will coagulate and enzymes denature. At their top, a one-metre gap remains, allowing limited access to the space beyond. Functioning as both barrier and container, these temporary walls make direct reference to the increase in national border control as well as to the escalating crisis of global warming.

While registering a point of danger, the heat also suggests comfort, safety, an inference of an 'other' and the locus of human energy. Balka has frequently used heat in this way in earlier works; in sculptures reminiscent of tombstones, for example, where slabs of terrazzo were heated to variable standard bodily temperatures, or in his 1997 monument to the victims of the Estonia ferry disaster, where the physicality of heated walls honour the

memory of those who perished. In these works, the measurement of degrees Celsius, like the centimetre measurements of so many of his artwork titles, become part of an objective system, demarcating the presence of the body and alluding to the line between life and death, sickness and health.

While the installation draws attention to the viewer's psychological reaction, whereby they understand the walls are 'hot' before physically experiencing that heat, Balka encourages us to touch. Evoking a plurality, the process of touching sets up a dialogue between the individual singular viewer and the collective experience, marking a place where we are no longer alone. As with his previous installation *Touch me / Find me* at Kiasma, Helsinki (2013), dirt or marks that build up as a consequence of the invitation to interact with the work become a poetic register of human presence throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Formally resonant of memory structures in the brain as well as those of digital technology through the trapezoid structure of the material, 'Random Access Memory' deals with the enduring erosion of historical memory. It suggests perhaps, that access to memory is always controlled and that the possibilities and responsibility for its safeguarding lies entirely with us.

BIOGRAPHY

Mirosław Balka was born in 1958 in Warsaw, Poland. He lives and works in Otwock, Poland. Solo exhibitions include Hangar Bicocca, Milan (2017); Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany (2017); Museum of Art MS1, Łódź, Poland (2015); Foksal Gallery, Warsaw (2014); Freud Museum, London (2014); National Centre For Contemporary Art, Moscow (2013); Akademie Der Kunst, Berlin (2011); Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2011); Museo Nacional Centre de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2010); Modern Art Oxford, UK (2009); Tate Modern, London (2009); Museum of Contemporary Art, Rijeka (2007); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2007); Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, K21, Düsseldorf, Germany (2006); Museum of Contemporary Art, Strasbourg, France (2004); Kroller-Muller Museum, Otterlo, Netherlands (2001); Dundee Contemporary Arts, Scotland (2002); and Stedelijk Museum voor Actuelle Kunst, Ghent, Belgium (2001).

Balka has participated in numerous group exhibitions including Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2018); Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna (2017); The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan (2017); Fundacion la Caixa, Barcelona, Spain (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art, Krakow (2015); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2014); 55th Venice Biennale (2013); Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Israel (2010); Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund, Germany (2010); Museum Stzuki, Łódź, Poland (2010); 6th SITE Santa Fe Biennale, New Mexico (2006); 15th Biennale of Sydney (2006); 51st Venice Biennale (2005); 45th Venice Biennale (1993); Documenta 9, Kassel, Germany (1992); and 44th Venice Biennale (1990).

White Cube Mason's Yard is open
Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm.
Admission is free.

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