

Invitation card, exhibition *General Idea's Yen Boutique*, Esther Schipper, Cologne (March 3 – April 1, 1989)

Esther Schipper

about the founding of her gallery, *THE KÖLN SHOW*, the beginnings of the digital revolution and the concept of art and exhibition in the nineties in conversation with
Brigitte Jacobs van Renswou

Esther Schipper gained her first professional experience in the art market in 1983/84 as an assistant at the Monika Sprüth Gallery in Cologne. There she met Rosemarie Trockel, with whom she published the artist's wool edition *Balaklava* in 1986.

In 1989 Esther Schipper founded her own gallery at Neusser Straße 28 in Cologne and opened with the exhibition *General Idea's Yen Boutique*. The artists' collective General Idea (Felix Partz, Jorge Zontal and AA Bronson) worked on joint projects from 1968 to 1994 and is considered a pioneer of early conceptual and media-specific art, which set the tone for the gallery's program. Esther Schipper has become known for her exhibitions of ephemeral, performative and conceptual works and projects and her longstanding ongoing collaboration with her international artists, whose working methods cover a broad spectrum of methods and practices.

Since its foundation, the gallery has worked with artists such as Angela Bulloch, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno, whose positions are characterized by a radical questioning of traditional exhibition practice. Julia Scher who worked on the subject of surveillance across several media, also joined the gallery in the early years in Cologne. Beginning in 1990 Esther Schipper and Daniel Buchholz operated the Buchholz & Schipper room for multiples, editions and books at Albertusstraße 26 in Cologne for two years.

Also in cooperation with Michael Krome - the gallery operated under the name Schipper & Krome between 1994 and 2004 - various media projects such as *November TV* were realized. In 1995, Schipper & Krome opened a project room at Auguststraße 91 in Berlin. Since moving from Cologne to Berlin in 1997, the gallery program has expanded continuously.

Esther Schipper understands her gallery as a discursive space, a "laboratory" in which changes in the concept of art and exhibition can be thematized and developed. To this day, the internationally active gallery has held on to its open concept of experimental, performative and cooperative formats and has helped its artists achieve worldwide success.

BJvR Our project "*THE KÖLN SHOW* - Networks of Avant-Garde Galleries in the Nineties" refers to the group exhibition *THE KÖLN SHOW* (24. 4. - 26. 5. 1990) – 1990 was also the founding year of *Texte zur Kunst* – and aims to shed light on the impulses that emanated from Cologne internationally. How did you come to Cologne, and how did the Cologne art scene appear to you at the time?

ES Cologne was a place where you could encounter and experience recent art history as it was emerging. I had just finished school in Paris and moved to Cologne after I had seen how exciting the city was during a visit, including a Christmas party at the studio of the Mülheimer Freiheit. After some time I met Monika

Sprüth, who had just opened her gallery. I was her first assistant, that was in 1983/84, and later I started publishing multiples: The first one, the Balaklava Wool Edition, I produced with Rosemarie Trockel in 1986.

In 1987/88 I left Cologne for a year to complete a curatorial curriculum at MAGASIN in Grenoble. It was the first year of the program and comparable to the Whitney's Independent Study Program in New York. In Grenoble I met Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Philippe Parreno, who were studying at the Academy of Arts. But Gonzalez-Foerster also took part in the MAGASIN program. A selected group of well-known people from the art world, such as Kasper König and Nicolas Serota, were actively involved. This is how it came about that I did an internship with Serota at the Whitechapel Gallery in London during my studies. In London I met Angela Bulloch and Liam Gillick. These artists – Angela, Dominique, Philippe and Liam – formed the core of my work as a gallery owner and still play a key role as artists in my gallery today.

BJvR In 1989 you founded your own gallery ...

ES I founded the gallery in 1989 and opened, as mentioned, with the *General Idea's Yen Boutique*. I have been working with many of the artists, including Angela Bulloch, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno, who radically rethought the format of the exhibition and used it as a critical medium, since the 1990s. To this day, the gallery represents AA Bronson and the Estate of General Idea.

In 1990, together with Daniel Buchholz, I then opened a room with multiples, editions and books in Albertusstrasse. What was interesting at that time was the way the galleries cooperated: We worked together and with the artists to make experiments possible. One project, for example, was at the 1990 ART COLOGNE: Daniel Buchholz and I installed identical booths. Julia Scher, who exhibited in the gallery for the first time the following year, connected the two booths with a live CCTV circuit – at that time, this was still technically quite complicated.

BJvR Was the idea of a joint exhibition also a new approach, in the sense of a different collaboration among galleries, like the formation of networks or corporations?

ES The time was marked by experiments. The difference between galleries that operated more along the lines of the traditional art dealer model and the new spaces that I and artists of my generation wanted to work in was enormous. I wanted to create exhibition spaces, but also a discursive space in which the changes in the concept of art and exhibition could be addressed. The approaches of my first exhibition projects – such as *General Idea's Yen Boutique* or, in November of the same year, *Readymades Belong to Everyone*®, an agency founded by Philippe Thomas to address the characteristics of the art market – were decisive for me: the concept of art was to be expanded, the traditional boundaries of medium-specificity were to be dissolved. Ultimately, everything could be art: every medium, the relationships that developed in exhibitions, the role of the viewer, or even the preoccupations and ideas of the artists themselves. Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster thematized her

experiences and memories when she began the *Chambres* series, Angela Bulloch chose rules from institutions, organizations, or even from a New York strip club like the Baby Doll Lounge and made them into her *Rules* (whose form as a work of art is completely variable: The owner gets an A4 sheet of paper, but can also fill a wall with it), and Liam Gillick, with *McNamara*, exhibited elements of a non-existent film that put the American Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, John F. Kennedy and a series of partly fictional characters in dialogue. For me these approaches were very important – and are still relevant.

I also associate with this time the idea of using the gallery as a laboratory. One such laboratory project, for example, was *240 Minutes* by Lothar Hempel and Georg Graw. The title-giving 240-minute video compilation (with contributions by Angela Bulloch, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Wendy Jacob, Liam Gillick, Pierre Joseph, Lothar Hempel, Philippe Parreno, and Julia Scher, among others) was produced entirely in the gallery: The production dates were announced in advance and visitors were able to watch the filming, as well as the editorial documents and meetings of the team. The transparency of the production process was incredibly important for this project.

Equally crucial was the open, if you will, non-hierarchical approach to the various media. In the early 1990s, a market for video or film work was still largely unimaginable, not to mention performance. But the groundwork was laid during this time, so that today it no longer seems unusual for an institution like the MoMA to have a film by Philippe Parreno, a sculpture with live bees by Pierre Huyghe, or a situation by Tino Sehgal in its collection – and private collectors are no longer afraid to buy conceptual, ephemeral or performative works. This was quite different in the 1990s: as a gallerist, you had to do a lot of persuading, have many conversations, without playing down the complexity of the works and their radicality.

BJvR How did *THE KÖLN SHOW* come about?

ES *THE KÖLN SHOW* came about in a time of upheaval. The booming 1980s were coming to an end, the Iron Curtain had fallen. It was a time of economic, but also cultural change, and with this joint exhibition we wanted to draw attention to Cologne and its incredibly active art scene.

It was predominantly about bringing each other into contact with something new and also about confronting each other with something different: Younger galleries could suggest their own artists, but the more established ones were encouraged to recommend new artists they didn't already have in their program. None of the artists were shown in their own gallery's space. Since it was all about contrasts, a lot of painting was shown in my gallery – while artists like Angela Bulloch, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, and Philippe Parreno exhibited completely different kinds of projects in other galleries.

BJvR What role did transatlantic exchange play?

ES At the time, there was indeed a lively exchange, especially between galleries in New York and Cologne. In addition, many American artists came to

Cologne to see what was happening here, lived in the city. Even the New York Times devoted a cover of its magazine to this movement of the art world from New York to Cologne.

BJvR In your view, what was new about art at the beginning of the nineties? Did the new media, the Internet, the possibilities of cooperation and networking have an impact on your gallery practice or on art production?

ES In the nineties, the beginnings of the digital revolution and globalization had an impact on society, on culture, on notions of identity and on the relationship of the individual to others and to the world. In the course of increasing globalization, a visual language emerged that is understood on all continents. The changes and tensions – social, cultural, artistic – that began to manifest themselves in the 1990s are still a major theme. In a sense, the general effects are much more visible now – many artists in my gallery were already sensitized to these issues in the nineties.

Following on from the conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s, my generation began to put viewers in a different relationship to the artwork. Works emerged that could be everyday objects, were performative or were only activated by the viewer. Artists are no longer primarily painters, photographers or sculptors, but use different media to give form to an idea. During this period, the exhibition also became an artistic medium.

BJvR So you worked early on media projects, such as *November TV*. Can you say something about that?

ES The project, which was developed together with Michael Krome, with whom I was running the gallery at the time, involved the production & broadcasting of a week-long local channel, which offered art television around the clock, via antenna, on a channel that was made available to us especially for this purpose, parallel to the last *ART/Unfair*. However, *November TV* was not a gallery project, but a collaborative project, which was realized with a whole group of artists, critics, exhibition makers and of course from the beginning with a professional technical director.

BJvR In 1995 you opened a project space in Berlin (Likörfabrik, Auguststraße), and in 1997 you moved from Cologne to Berlin. Why did you move to Berlin?

ES We had opened our first room in Berlin in 1995 and then moved there entirely in 1997. In the early 1990s, Berlin was about to become one of the most interesting cities in Europe. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the city's cultural scene exploded. Another important factor for me was that so many artists moved to Berlin. My work has always meant a close relationship and exchange with the artists.

With the move came new artists: The program was expanded to include artists such as Thomas Demand, Pierre Huyghe, and Ugo Rondinone; as well as artists who came from Berlin or had established a foothold here, such as Matti Braun, Christoph Keller, and Roth Stauffenberg, who organized lectures, discussions, performances, and concerts beyond the exhibitions and who shared with me the

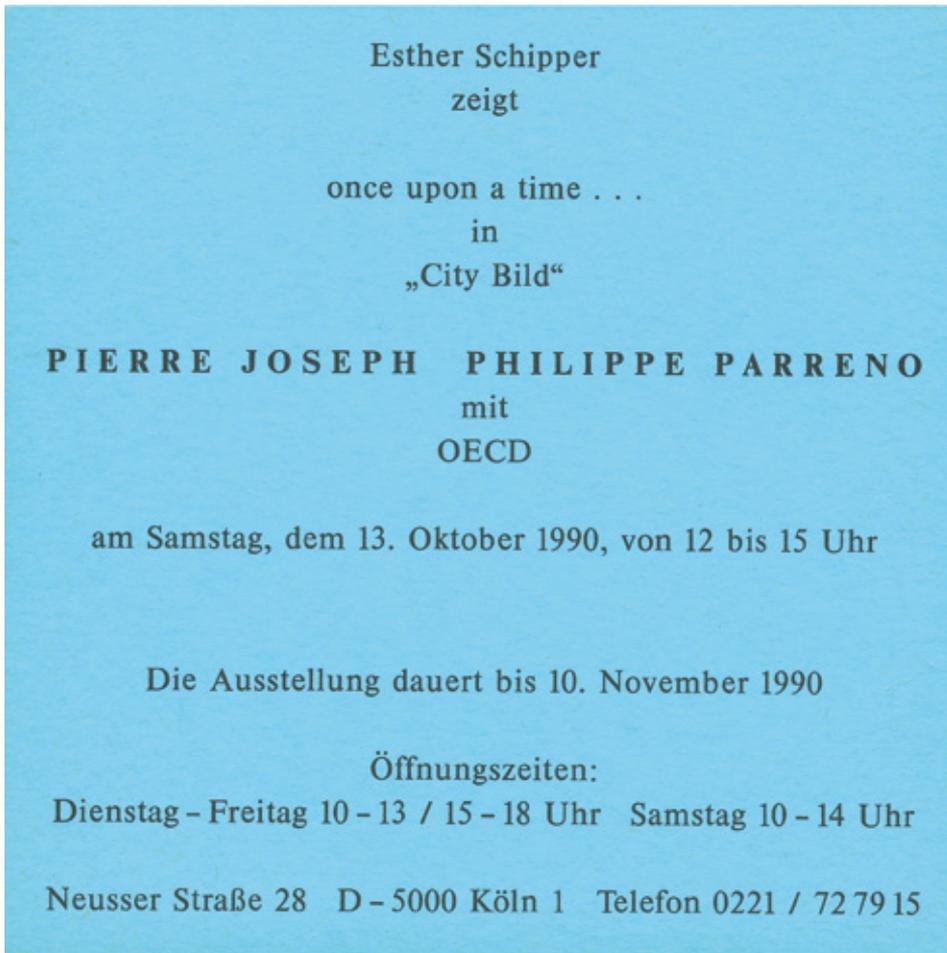
gallery's view of being a committed, discursive environment.

After the open formats of the Cologne years, a period of chronological exhibition projects with solo exhibitions of the artists began in Berlin – Demand exhibited in 1998, Rondinone in 1999, while at the same time there were still larger projects such as *No Ghost Just a Shell* by Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, the beginnings of which were presented in a two-part exhibition at the gallery in 2000. In 1999, Huyghe and Parreno acquired the copyright for a Japanese manga figure and its image from the Japanese agency KWorks. They named her Ann Lee. Originally conceived for smaller roles in comics, advertisements or video games, Ann Lee was freed from all industrial copyrights, and several artists – including Liam Gillick and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster – were asked to use the character for their own stories, resulting in a series of videos, objects, texts and prints. The works were then shown together in the exhibition *No Ghost Just a Shell* (2001 - 2003) at the Kunsthalle Zürich and the Van Abbemuseum, among others.

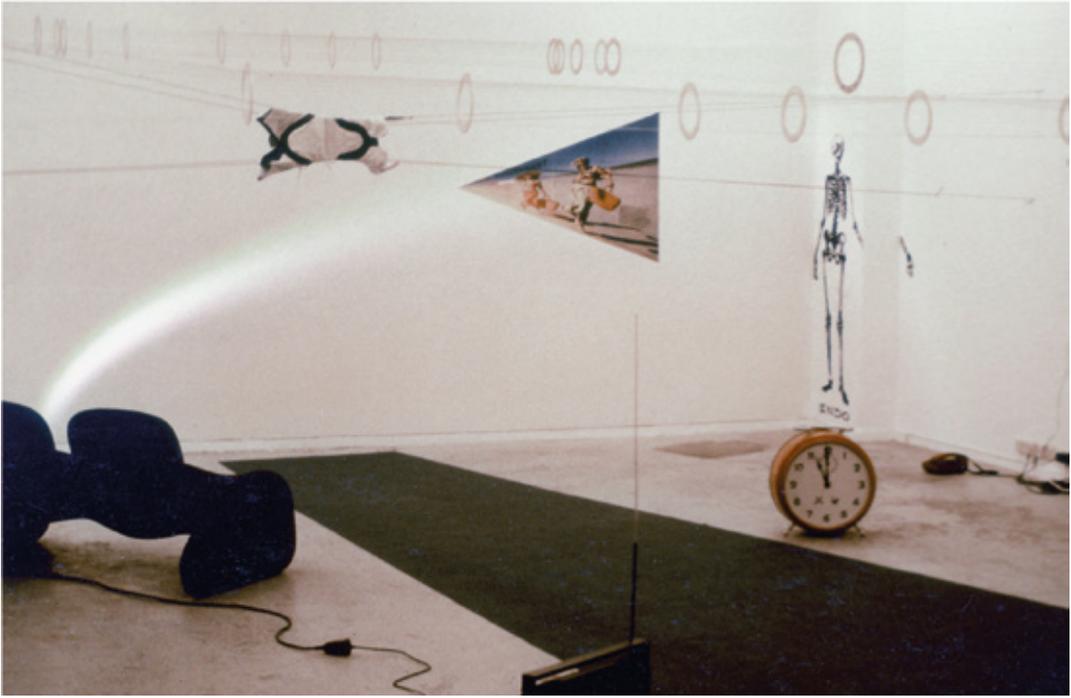


Exhibition views: *Readymades gehören allen*, Esther Schipper, Cologne (November 17 – December 8, 1989). Photography © Lothar Schnepf. Courtesy of the artists and Esther Schipper, Berlin



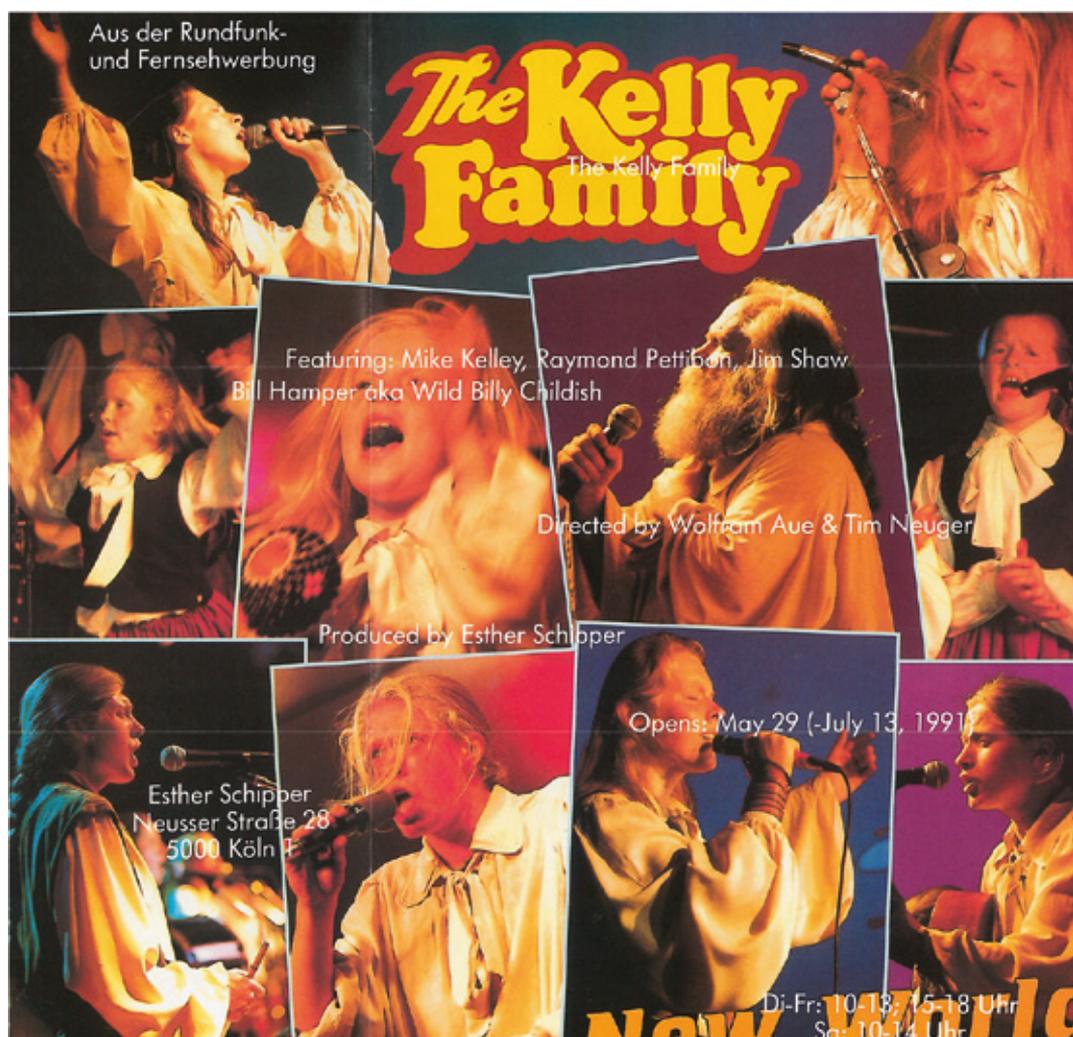


Invitation card, exhibition Pierre Joseph, Philippe Parreno *once upon a time ... in "City Bild"*
Esther Schipper, Cologne (October 13 – November 10, 1990). Courtesy of Esther Schipper, Berlin





On this and previous page, exhibitions views: Pierre Joseph, Philippe Parreno *once upon a time ... in "City Bild,"* Intervention to Peter Fends' exhibition *City Bild, Urbanism Division of the Ocean Earth Construction and Development Corporation, OECD*, Esther Schipper, Cologne (October 13 – November 10, 1990).
Photography © Lothar Schnepf. Courtesy of the artists and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Invitation card, exhibition *The Kelly Family*, featuring: Mike Kelley, Raymond Pettibon, Jim Shaw, Bill Hamper aka Wild Billy Childish, curated by Wolfram Aue and Tim Neuger. Esther Schipper, Cologne (May 29 – July 13, 1991)
 Courtesy of Esther Schipper, Berlin



Exhibition views: Lothar Hempel and Georg Graw *240 Minuten!* Esther Schipper, Cologne (October 16 – November 11, 1992)
Photography © the artists. Courtesy of Esther Schipper, Berlin

G3N3RAL ID3A
Laura Emrick
PRUITT • EARLY
 DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER

Raymond Pettibon
SEAN LANDERS

Julia Scher
 PHILIPPE PARRENO
TITUS

Gavin Brown
 PAUL MC CARTHY

Wendy Jacob

Ausstellung:
 von

JEAN - LUC VILMOUTH 15. 7. 1993
ANGELA BULLOCH.. bis 7. 8. 1993
Jeanne Dunning
Karen Kilimnik

ESTHER SCHIPPER

Öffnungszeiten:
 Dienstag - Freitag 10 - 13 / 15 - 18 Uhr
 Samstag 10 - 14 Uhr

HERR FEND
PIERRE JOSEPH
PAUL GRAHAM
Jim Shaw
CITY BILD
 - lothar hempel.
 henry bond
Liam Gillick

Neusser Straße 28
 4-5009 Köln
 Telefon 0221 / 72 79 15
 Fax 72 28 16

neue Postleitzahl:
 50670

Exhibition leaflet, group exhibition: General Idea, Laura Emrick, Pruitt Early, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Raymond Pettibon, Sean Landers, Julia Scher, Philippe Parreno, Titus, Gavin Brown, Paul McCarthy, Wendy Jacob, Jean-Luc Vilmouth, Angela Bulloch, Jeanne Dunning, Karen Kilimnik, Peter Fend, Pierre Joseph, Paul Graham, Jim Shaw, Henry Bond, Liam Gillick
 Esther Schipper, Cologne (July 15 – August 7, 1993). Courtesy Esther Schipper, Berlin

Angela Bulloch Rules Series

bei: Esther Schipper Neusserstrasse 28 50670 Köln
Eröffnung am 18.9.1993 von 13 bis 15 Uhr
öffnungszeiten: Dienstags bis Freitags von 12 bis 18 Uhr 30
Samstags 11 bis 14 Uhr

am: Friesenwall 116a
Eröffnung am 18.9.93 von 15 bis 17 Uhr
Tag und Nacht sichtbar

...und an anderen Stellen:
weitere informationen telefonisch unter 0221/727915

Invitation card, exhibition Angela Bulloch *Rules Series*, Esther Schipper, Neusser Str. 28 and project space Friesenwall 116a and in the streets of Cologne (September 18, 1993). Courtesy of Esther Schipper, Berlin



Angela Bulloch, *Baby-Doll Saloon*, 1993
Exhibition view: *Rules Series*, Esther Schipper, Friesenwall 116a, Cologne (1993)



Exhibition views: Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster *RWF* installation at Hohenzollernring 74, 3rd floor, Cologne (November 11 – 17, 1993).
Photography © Lothar Schnepf. Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin

Vanessa Beecroft
„Ein Blonder T.“
11.11. – 17.12.1994

Eröffnung und
Performance
Freitag, den 11.11.1994
20.00 – 22.00 Uhr

SCHIPPER & KROME
Neusser Strasse 28
D-50670 Köln
Tel.: 0221 / 72 79 15

Öffnungszeiten:
Dienstag bis Freitag
11.00 – 18.30 Uhr
Samstag
11.00 – 14.00 Uhr

ART Cologne 1994
Halle 5, Stand 080
Tel.: 0221/81 97 58

Shuji Ariyoshi
Angela Bulloch
Henry Bond
Liam Gillick
Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster
Carsten Höller
Karen Kilimnik
Sean Landers
Philippe Parreno
Julia Scher
Stahl Stenslie
Diana Thater

Vanessa Beecroft „Mädchen in Uniform“ 1994 © A. Lark

Exhibition leaflet announcing the performance by Vanessa Beecroft *Ein blonder Traum*, Schipper & Krome, Cologne (November 11 – December 17, 1994). Courtesy of Esther Schipper, Berlin



Exhibition views: Vanessa Beecroft *Ein blonder Traum*, Schipper & Krome, Cologne (November 11 – December 17, 1994). Photography © Renard Kiel. Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin





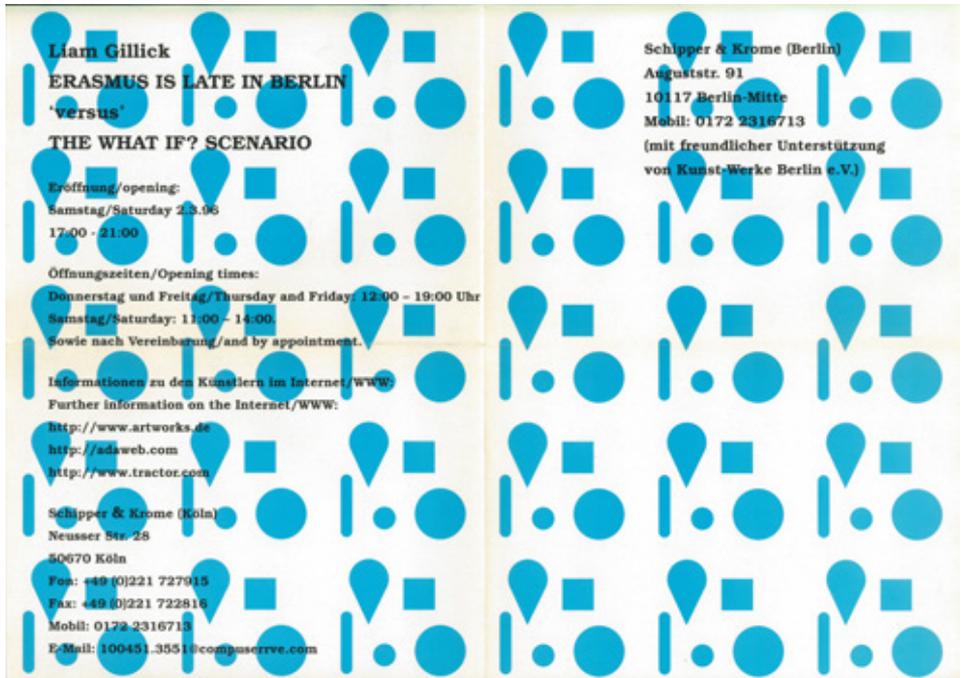
Exhibition poster: Philippe Parreno
Werktsche, Schipper & Krome, Cologne
 (May 5 – June 16, 1995).
 Courtesy of Esther Schipper, Berlin



Exhibition view: Philippe Parreno
Werktsche, Schipper & Krome, Cologne
 (May 5 – June 16, 1995).
 Photography © Lothar Schnepf.
 Courtesy of the artist and Esther
 Schipper, Berlin



Film stills: Philippe Parreno *Werktische: Made on the 1st of May*, Schipper & Krome, Cologne, (May 1, 1995).
Film stills © Philippe Parreno. Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Exhibition poster: Liam Gillick *Erasmus is late in Berlin "versus" The What If? Scenario*, Schipper & Krome, Berlin (March 2 – 30, 1996). Courtesy of Esther Schipper, Berlin



Exhibition view: Liam Gillick *Erasmus is late in Berlin "versus" The What If? Scenario*, Schipper & Krome, Berlin (March 2 – 30, 1996). Photography © the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin