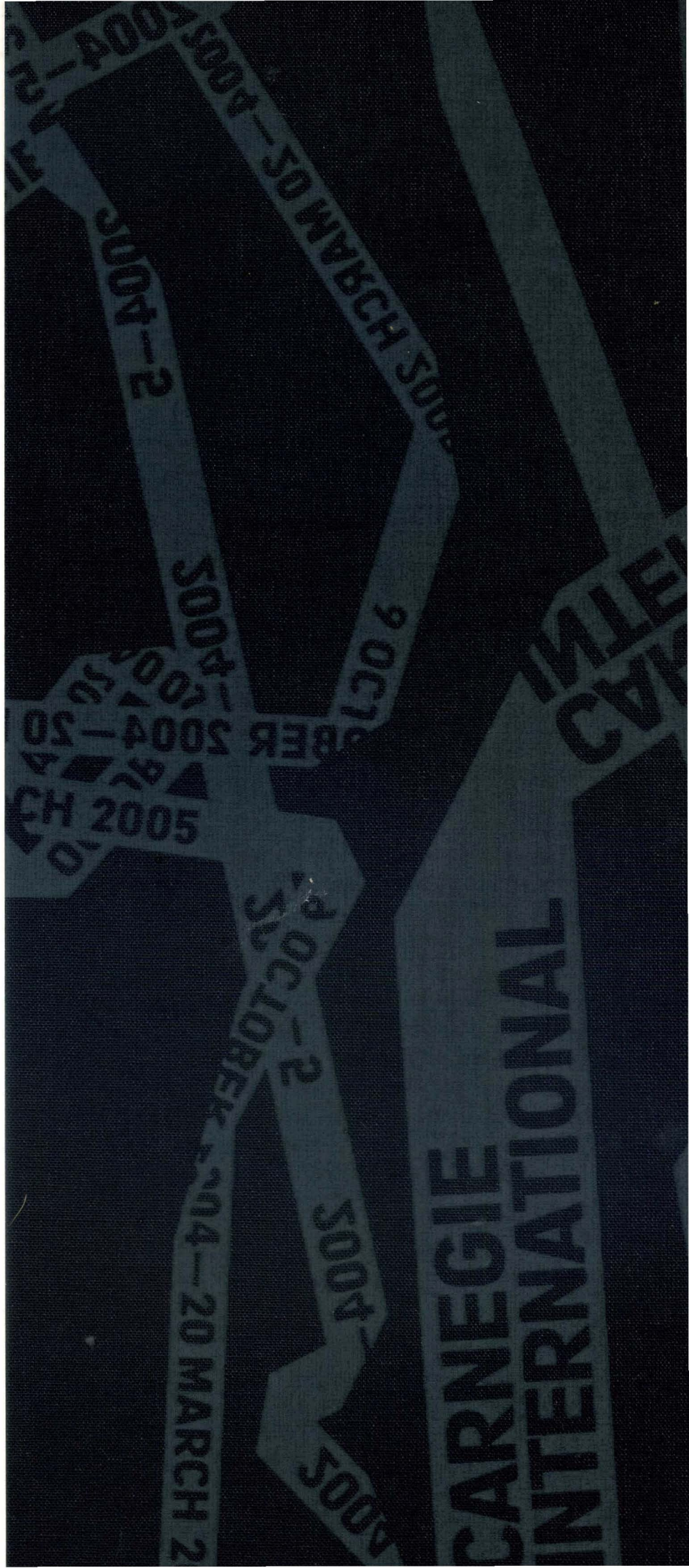


54th Carnegie International
Carnegie Museum of Art

Exhibiting Artists

Tomma Abts
Pawel Althamer
Francis Alÿs
Mamma Andersson
Chiho Aoshima
Kaoru Arima
Kutlug Ataman
John Bock
Lee Bontecou
Robert Breer
Fernando Bryce
Kathy Butterly
Maurizio Cattelan
Paul Chan
Anne Chu
Robert Crumb
Jeremy Deller
Philip-Lorca diCorcia
Peter Doig
Trisha Donnelly
Harun Farocki
Saul Fletcher
Isa Genzken
Mark Grotjahn
Rachel Harrison
Carsten Höller
Katarzyna Kozyra
Jim Lambie
Mangelos
Julie Mehretu
Senga Nengudi
Oliver Payne and Nick Relph
Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook
Neo Rauch
Ugo Rondinone
Eva Rothschild
Yang Fudong



But it goes even beyond that; it is also the shape of our trajectories as we move from one place to another, as illustrated by the roaming of Rondinone's boy and girl and by Mehretu's whooshing lines.

For almost thirty years, **Isa Genzken** has created challenging objects, photographs, and installations, many of which take as their subject modernist architecture and its symbolism of progress, power, and aesthetics as well as its relationship to urban space and to life on a human scale. Her most recent series *Empire/Vampire*—small-scale sculptures perched on pedestals—was begun in late 2001, after the artist had witnessed the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York. No direct relationship exists between that disaster and the majority of these small tableaux, in which toys and tennis shoes, shards of mirror, and sheets of plastic are set in violent interaction; but one underlying theme of their wildly imaginative and disturbing scenarios is that of geometric form run amok, as towering slabs of mirrored glass threaten defenseless dolls lying prone amidst devastated landscapes in miniature.

Barnett Newman once wrote that “true abstraction” can only be discussed in metaphysical terms,²⁴ and in fact the notion of an autonomous art through which to explore the unknowable depths of human existence is closer to a religious strategy than to a pragmatic or empirical one.²⁵ The transition from experience to belief through the vehicle of the art object is an abiding interest in **Rachel Harrison**'s work, one that links her photographs to her sculptures. *Untitled (Perth Amboy)* (2001) is a series of photos depicting a single window of a house in suburban New Jersey upon which an apparition of the Virgin Mary had been reported. Harrison was drawn to Perth Amboy because she wanted to record the phenomenon, to find visible proof of a mystical occurrence. What she ended up with is a chronicle of devotion, a nuanced study of how people go about believing. Each photo in the series details a particular trace: a shadow of a hand laid upon the spot where the holy image is supposed to have appeared; an outline of a family photograph pressed up against the sacred glass; the mist on that glass; the residue of hundreds of tears, handprints, and the hot breath of emotion. Although begun perhaps with the intention of making material what might otherwise have been purely metaphysical speculation, *Perth Amboy* is peculiar in that it serves neither to disprove nor to substantiate the miracle of the Virgin in the window. Movingly, it documents, in a drab suburb in Anywhere, USA, the existence of faith.

Harrison's work, to a certain degree, indicates not only that it is by looking that one can redeem oneself, but also that looking at art can lead to enlightenment. **Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's** practice of reading to the dead takes this notion to an extraordinary conclusion. Motivated by the conviction that it is possible to communicate with the essence or soul of a dead person through stories, poetry, and song—in other words, through art—the artist has taken it upon herself in recent years to search out people who have died anonymously and to soothe them by reading or singing folktales and love stories to them. What may sound ghoulish when merely described becomes touching when witnessed, so evident is the artist's human compassion and Buddhist faith. Just as Harrison's *Perth Amboy* is a record of the artist's pilgrimage—her search and the evidence of what she

found—Rasdjarmrearnsook's videotapes, shot using a video camera on a tripod in most instances, are not the artwork, but rather a convenient device with which to document it. The pieces themselves exist both in the act of undertaking this practice and, perhaps more interesting, in the connection made between the artist and the soul of the dead person receiving the comfort of the songs and stories, both beautiful and familiar. No evidence is given for the success of this connection; its existence is a matter of faith on the part of the viewer. It is possible then, to experience this simple work on two levels: first, to watch the artist practice her belief; and second, to believe with her ourselves. Laura Hoptman

Senga Nengudi, in her recent work, embraces head-on a kind of animism and shares with Rasdjarmrearnsook the notion of art as an instrument of healing, spiritual and otherwise. In the 1970s, Nengudi became known for sculptures made out of humble objects such as nylon stockings, which she expertly transformed into elegant abstract compositions that were at once biomorphic and precisely, movingly human—in a manner that transcended the simply narrative. In recent years, she has become more interested in the creation of environments that are spiritualized and made magic by the ritual arrangement of materials. Her sand paintings, which range from small scale to room size, partake in a tradition that is shared by groups as diverse as Native American tribes of the southwestern United States and Buddhists in Southeast and East Asia. Like Rasdjarmrearnsook's singing, the ritualistic spreading and raking that go into the making of these complex and ephemeral objects are what power the spell. The motifs of Nengudi's paintings are decidedly abstract, but their forms remain strangely familiar. We stare at them as we would at an ancient handprint in a cave; we know intimately from whence it comes, but that does not mitigate the mystery and awe it inspires.

Both Rasdjarmrearnsook's and Nengudi's manner of devotion is unconventional, in fact transgressive, in its bold mixing of Eastern and Western religious traditions. **Francis Alÿs'** series of small paintings entitled *The Prophet* (begun in 1992) partakes in the venerable, and specific, tradition of Catholic devotional painting. Intimate in scale, like Mexican *retablos* (Alÿs has lived in Mexico for almost twenty years), a number of these works feature subjects that are overtly religious, such as one figure blessing a second, which kneels before it. In other works the motifs are more ambiguous. From the figure who folds his hands behind his back in a pose of contemplation or submission to an odd vignette of a woman walking with one of her legs in a clay urn, the iconography of these paintings identifies them as parables, but of no known religious doctrine. They share with their more readably devotional counterparts an intense, quiet, almost sacred air, but in Alÿs' works, this is created by their allusive yet nonspecific content as well as by the dense opacity of their coolly colored surfaces. Alÿs has said that these works are "little windows" onto a more spiritual plane, one that the artist may or may not believe exists. For him, it is the very possibility of its existence that is important.

Maurizio Cattelan has often tangled with religion and other modes of organization and control in his angry, funny actions (taping