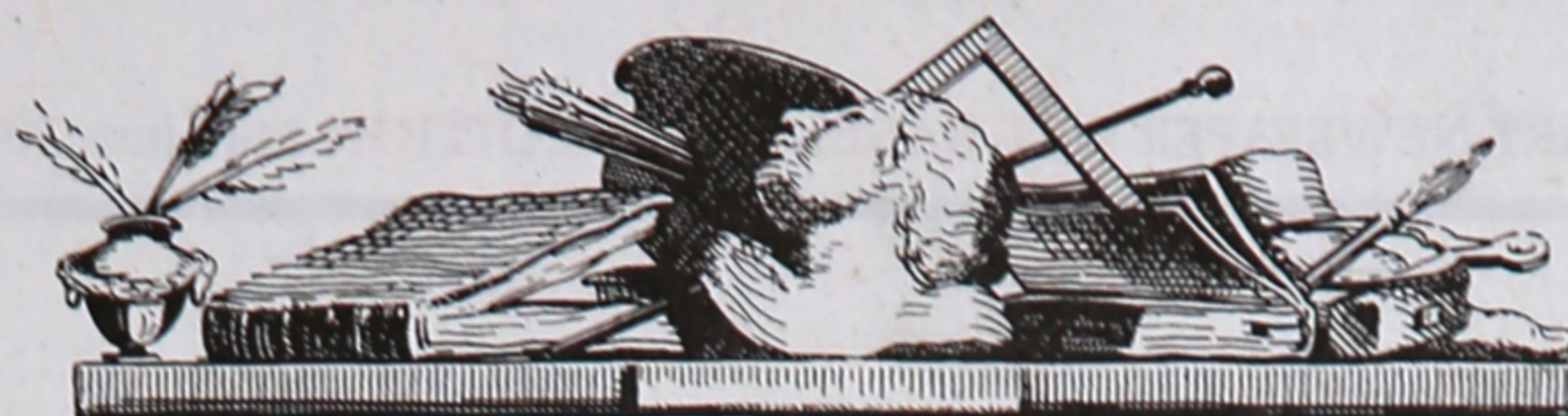


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Behold a terrible beauty

Artists are responding to a decade of global conflict, but will their work find favour with collectors?

TRENDS

Basel. With civil war raging in Syria and anti-government protests taking place across Turkey, the art world goes about its business on the Messeplatz this week – but a number of powerful works relating to war, conflict and terrorism are making an impact in Art Basel this year. Works inspired by sensitive political subjects, usually the domain of non-selling biennials and the Kassel-based Documenta exhibition in particular, have not previously been considered market-friendly.

Visitors are queuing in the fair's Unlimited section to see the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar's work about the late photojournalist Kevin Carter, whose image of a starving child in the Sudanese desert won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1994 (*The Sound of Silence*, 2006, \$500,000; Goodman Gallery, Galerie Le-long, Galerie Kamel Mennour, Galerie Thomas Schulte, U42). Huang Yong Ping's terracotta model of Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan (*Abbottabad*, 2012, €375,000; Gladstone Gallery, U19), where the Al-Qaeda chief was killed by US forces in 2011, is also sparking debate. Meanwhile, *The Shadow World*, 2013, a film by Johan Grimont (€35,000, edition of 15; Sean Kelly Gallery, Galerie Kamel Mennour, U45) features a South African arms dealer and a war correspondent.

"The reality around us is unavoidable.

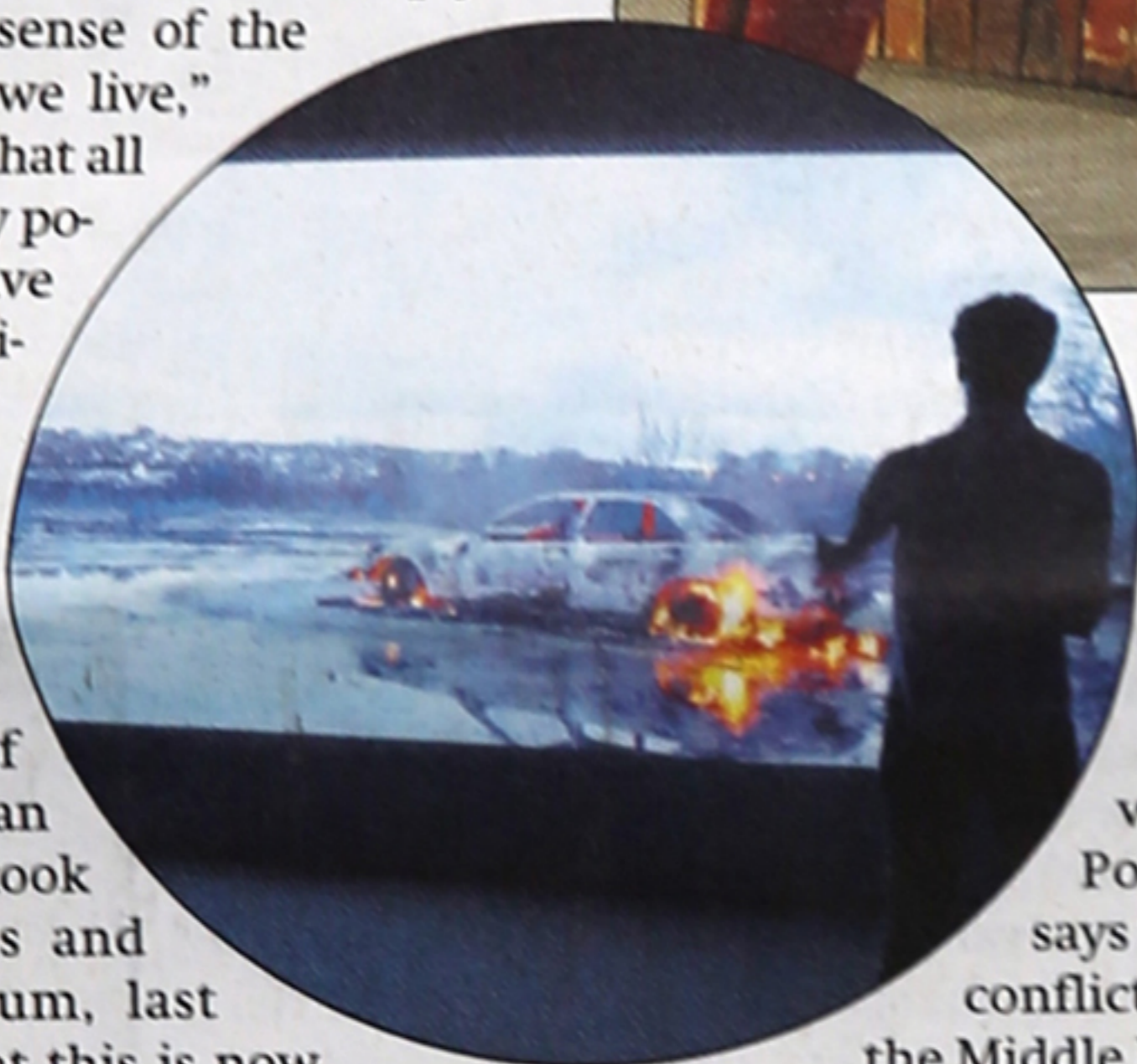
This dilemma is visible in the work of the new generation; they are simply trying to make sense of the world in which we live," says Jaar, adding that all art is "intrinsically political". Artists have always been politically engaged – particularly from the Enlightenment, says Kate-rina Gregos, the curator of "New-topia: the State of Human Rights", an exhibition that took place in Brussels and Mechelen, Belgium, last year. She says that this is now more true than ever, as "we live in volatile and uncertain times".

Conflict zones

Liza Essers, the director of the Cape Town- and Johannesburg-based Goodman Gallery (2.1/N12), which represents Jaar, says: "The social pendulum has swung back towards the ethos of the 1960s. We are seeing a reaction against the big, shiny, flashy tendencies of the past decade; people are making more meaningful work." In the past 15 years, works by artists such as Takashi Murakami, Damien Hirst and Andy Warhol have dominated the stands at Art Basel, but now, politically engaged art has become more visible. The museum is in negotiations to buy Kader Attia's *The Repair*, 2012, a diptych featuring 80 slides that juxtaposes the disfigured faces of First World War soldiers with damaged African artefacts (Galleria Continua, U73). Attia stresses that upheavals in the Arab world and beyond mean that the "bling-bling era couldn't last any longer. Art practice is linked to war. The relationship between war and avant-garde art is extremely tight."



Theatre of war: Huang Yong Ping's *Abbottabad*, 2012 (above), recreates Osama bin Laden's final compound, while Willie Doherty's *Remains*, 2013, depicts the Troubles in Northern Ireland



Whether private collectors want to be confronted daily by such issue-based art is, however, debatable, says Gregos, who adds that "most collectors are still attracted to object-based art". A Middle Eastern collector attending

Art Basel, who preferred to remain anonymous, says that politically engaged art speaks to him "because I'm a child of war", though he believes that other collectors may find this subject matter more difficult.

Museums may be the natural home for these bold pieces. The anonymous Middle Eastern collector says that certain works available in Unlimited "can

"The social pendulum has swung back to the ethos of the 1960s"

be so jarring" that he would only donate them to a museum. A number of public institutions have expressed interest in Willie Doherty's video installation *Remains*, 2013, a harrowing account of the Troubles in Northern Ireland (€75,000; Alexander and Bonin Gallery, Kerlin Gallery, Peter Kilchmann, U50).

"Perhaps some of the hardest-hitting works, which deal with radical social issues, are destined for institutions or museum collections, but on a smaller

scale, we are seeing a rise in private collectors buying works with a social conscience," Essers says. Her gallery deals with international artists who tackle contentious topical issues linked to Africa. Jaar's 1995 video *Embrace*, which depicts the genocide in Rwanda, sold to a French private collection for \$36,000. Thomas Dane Gallery (2.1/M15), which is showing several politically charged works, sold Steve McQueen's lightbox *Lynching Tree*, 2013 – depicting a tree in New Orleans used as a gallows for slaves – for €65,000 to a Beirut-based collector (another edition is on show in McQueen's retrospective at the Schaulager in Basel).

Some commentators are surprised that the art of conflict is not more abundant at art fairs in these tense times. But the presence of political work at Art Basel at least demonstrates an appetite for grittier, hard-edged art outside the biennial circuit. Ultimately, "artists are the conscience of society", Gregos says. "They shift your perception and challenge your ideas about the world." **Gareth Harris and Julia Michalska**

Monaco's Picasso show under fire

Monaco. A show of works by Picasso, drawn from the collection of the art-dealing Nahmad dynasty, is scheduled to open at Monaco's Grimaldi Forum next month. More than 100 paintings have been loaned by the Impressionist and Modern art dealers David and Ezra Nahmad, who are brothers, for "Monaco Celebrates Picasso" (12 July-15 September). But according to the *Daily Telegraph*, a UK newspaper, concerns have been

raised in Monaco, as David Nahmad's son, the New York-based dealer Hillel Nahmad (known as Helly), faces charges of racketeering and money laundering.

In April, agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) raided the Helly Nahmad Gallery in New York and named Hillel Nahmad as one of 34 defendants in a case against alleged members and associates of two related Russian-American organised-crime businesses.

Helly Nahmad denies the charges (David and Ezra Nahmad are not connected to the case). Marie-Claude Beaud, the director of the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, reportedly said: "The question is... whether to go ahead with the exhibition or not." There are concerns that it may prove an embarrassment to Prince Albert II of Monaco. The show will open as planned, a spokeswoman for the Grimaldi Forum says. **G.H.**

In brief

Royal Academy in talks with potential Moscow partner

The Royal Academy of Arts in London is negotiating with a potential partner in Moscow, the artist-run institution's chief executive, Charles Saumarez Smith, has confirmed. The Russian project—details of which are still to be announced—follows the news last month that the academy is bidding to co-organise, with a local partner, the arts programme of the Central Police Station in Hong Kong, a planned cultural centre that is being designed by the architects Herzog & de Meuron and is due to open in 2015. The academy has been increasingly active in the Gulf and Singapore. "The Gulf states and Asia are [interested] in [our] model of representing living artists," Saumarez Smith says, noting that, unlike many museums, the academy is independent of the government. **J.P.**

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ARTISTS

The lost decades: why the past is back to stay

Collectors in search of the new are buying up work that hasn't been seen for years

A group of sculptures by the Japanese artist Nobuo Sekine has been taken out of storage after more than 30 years and is on show this week in Unlimited. The works, made out of fibre-reinforced plastic and collectively titled *Phase of Nothingness – Black*, toured Europe in 1978 and 1979 but have not been seen since then. Their display here, organised by the Los Angeles gallery Blum & Poe (U35 and 21J18), takes place amid a revival of interest in the art of decades past. Works from the 1960s and 1970s that have been forgotten for decades are now going on show, and pieces that have been lost or destroyed are being recreated.

There are two main reasons for this, says Franco Fanelli, the contemporary art critic of our sister paper *Il Giornale dell'Arte*. First, the market has lost some confidence in untested, emerging artists; second, collectors in search of the new are increasingly coming to realise that they can buy work made in the 1960s and 1970s that is "much more radical" than anything currently being made –

and often much cheaper as well.

"The [1960s] have never had a bigger presence; you can feel it in the air in a very strong way. With time and perspective, the decade is seen as even more radical and more formative in terms of changing the terms in which art is considered," says Michael Govan, the director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the co-curator of "Prima Materia", an exhibition at the Punta della Dogana in Venice drawn from the collection of the French

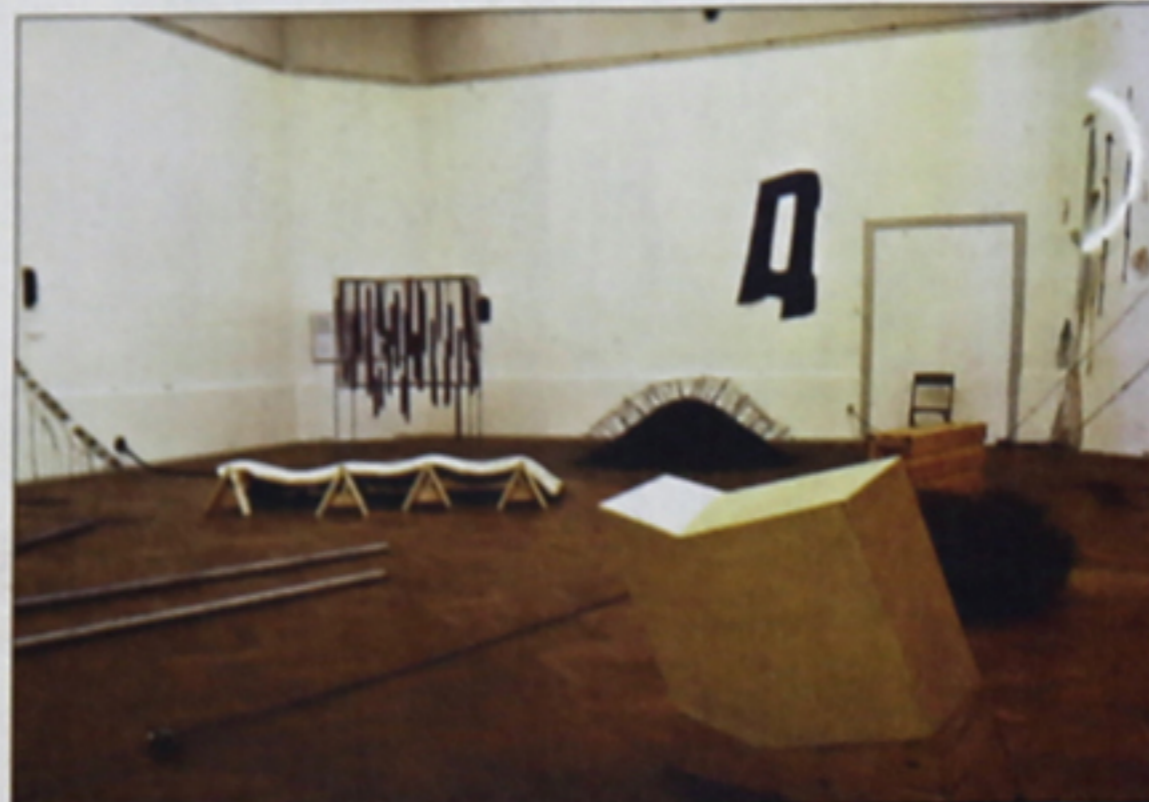
includes Sekine's *Phase of Nothingness – Witer*, 1969, two lacquered steel tubs in different shapes that contain the same amount of water. Kishio Suga's *Gap of the Entrance to the Space*, an installation of zinc plates and rocks from 1979, and Susumu Koshimizu's *Paper*, 1969, which consists of an open paper cube containing a rock – works that were all lost after being shown decades ago. They were recreated for exhibitions held last year at Blum & Poe.

Works made in the 1960s and 1970s are "much more radical" – and often much cheaper as well

billionaire François Pinault. The show (until 31 December 2014) juxtaposes work by artists of the Mono-ha (School of Things) movement, including Nobuo Sekine, with pieces by their Arte Povera contemporaries. Although both groups of artists used similar materials drawn from nature at almost exactly the same time, the movements evolved independently on opposite sides of the world.

The Punta della Dogana show

where they were seen and bought by Pinault. A Mono-ha group show entitled "Requiem for the Sun", which opened at the Los Angeles gallery in February 2012, is described by the gallery's co-owner Tim Blum as "one of the most successful... in our history". As well as Pinault, buyers included the collectors Howard Rachofsky in Dallas (who is currently exhibiting these works in his newly opened gallery, the Warehouse),



The original "When Attitudes Become Form" exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969 (top) and its 2013 reincarnation at the Fondazione Prada

Bernardo Paz in Brazil and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

The re-emergence of Mono-ha in the West shows the influence that a well-timed gallery exhibition programme can have. However, much of the current resurgence of 1960s art has been led by curators and institutions, not least because the art being revived is often ephemeral and difficult to sell or collect. Historic performance pieces, which are relatively easy and cheap to restage, are everywhere today. A Marina Abramovic retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 2010 included pieces spanning four decades and was the first time the artist's works had been re-performed live by anyone else in a museum setting. Other seminal works have been restaged at art fairs (see sidebar), perhaps an incongruous setting for performances that were entirely detached from the market system when they were first made.

Tribute to the ephemeral

One of the most ambitious acts of reconstruction ever attempted is the exhibition currently on display at the Fondazione Prada in Venice. "When Attitudes Become Form" is a nearly exact replica of a landmark show of conceptual and Arte Povera art first staged at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969 by the curator Harald Szeemann and endlessly eluded since then.

The show brought together around 140 works in paper, plaster, felt, rope, wax and bricks by Joseph Beuys, Carl Andre, Jannis Kounellis, Alighiero Boetti, Eva Hesse, Richard Artschwager and many others, to



Nobuo Sekine's *Phase of Nothingness – Water*, 1969 (black works, in foreground), is on display at the Punta della Dogana in Venice

we had available. The works themselves had absolutely no economic value... they were bits of material left over from various places. Nobody thought of selling them and most of the artists didn't want their work back after the show was finished.

"Only museums have collected this work over the years because they had the resources to store it... the art market was mostly focused on paintings and sculptures. This continues today because the type of work on display here still does not have much of a market, while more durable work by the same artists does very well at auction."

Despite this, the subsequent commodification of some of the work included in the 1969 show hindered Celant's attempts at a comprehensive reconstruction of the exhibition. "There is a piece by Neil Jenney, who now shows with Gagosian Gallery [2.0/B15], that we haven't been able to include. When he first made it, he was 21 years old and he walked into a shop on the Bowery and saw a pile of discarded and broken fluorescent tubes. He asked if he could take them and the shopkeeper said yes. This is the work that was shown in Bern. Reconstructing it today would have cost millions. We couldn't afford it. It went against the spirit of the [1960s], which was about using every possible material freely and with impunity." Cristina Ruiz

chart the rise of a new kind of art that rejected traditional hierarchies. Nearly all the works from the original show have been obtained or reconstructed for the new incarnation of the exhibition (until 3 November), which has been organised by Germano Celant. Using thousands of archive photographs, the architect Rem Koolhaas has recreated the walls, floors and even radiators and electrical fittings of the Kunsthalle Bern and squeezed them into the frescoed 18th-century rooms of a palazzo on the Grand Canal.

The show encapsulates the spirit of an era in which artists believed that anything was possible and

worked together to achieve the same aims, Celant says. There were no inflated egos, and "nobody wanted their own room, as often happens today. Everyone collaborated. Beuys would ask Sarkis to help him install his work; all the Italian artists helped each other out. That communal approach has disappeared."

Looking back on the art 40 years later, "we understand that the true contribution to [history] was made by [shows like this] and not by the market", says Celant, who helped Szeemann install the Bern show in 1969 and gave a talk at the opening. "Our only challenge then was to display objects effectively in the space

The art of the remake

• In 2006, the Wrong Gallery, an initiative by the curators Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick and the artist Maurizio Cattelan, re-enacted a historic performance by Gino De Dominicis at Frieze in London. Titled *Second solution of immortality: the universe is immobile*, the work consists of a man with Down's Syndrome sitting in a booth gazing at a stone, a sphere and an imaginary cube. When it was first shown at the Venice Biennale in 1972, it was shut down within a few hours.

De Dominicis's original provocation

• Other notable re-enactments of performance works at fairs include Sean Kelly's restaging of Marina Abramovic's 1977 *Imponderabilia* at Art Basel last year. This consists of two naked people facing each other in a doorway; to enter Kelly's booth, visitors had to squeeze between the two performers. *Imponderabilia* had already been restaged, along with several other historic performances, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York as part of its Abramovic retrospective in 2010.

• In 2009, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Kunsthalle in Bern co-organised "Voids", an exhibition that examined the art of emptiness. It recreated historic installations in which artists left the display space blank, such as Yves Klein's 1958 show at the Galerie Iris Clert in Paris, where the public was presented with nothing more than freshly painted white walls, or the 1967 "Air Conditioning Show" assembled by the British artists' collective Art & Language, which displayed air-conditioned air in an empty gallery. Last year, the Hayward Gallery, London, hosted a show entitled "Invisible: Art about the Unseen", which included several historic works from the 1950s onwards. C.R.

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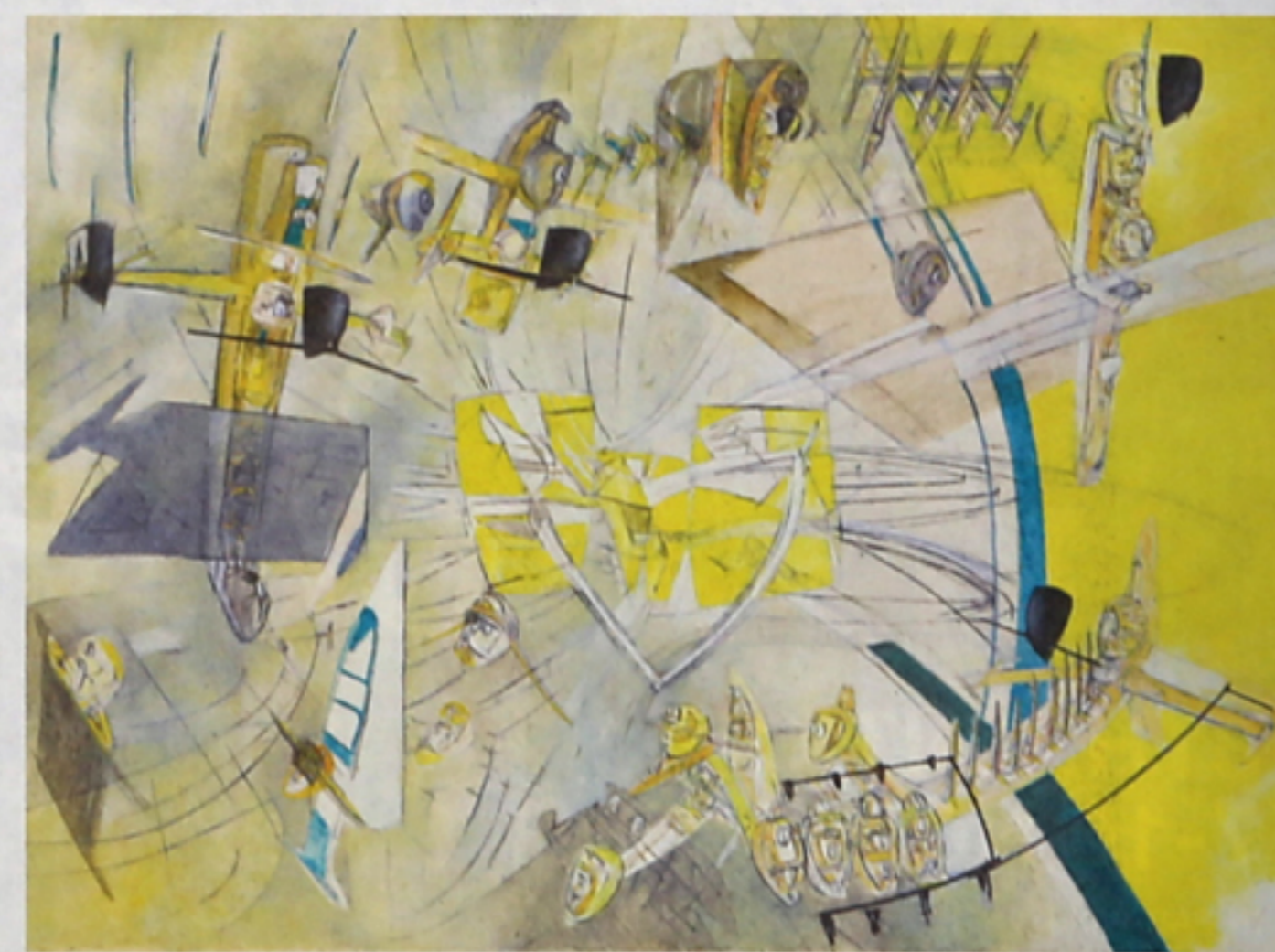
Martial Raysse, *About Now (Obelisk II)*, 1964

Neon, metal, and Plexiglas, 96 x 30 x 18 in. (244 x 76.2 x 45.7 cm)

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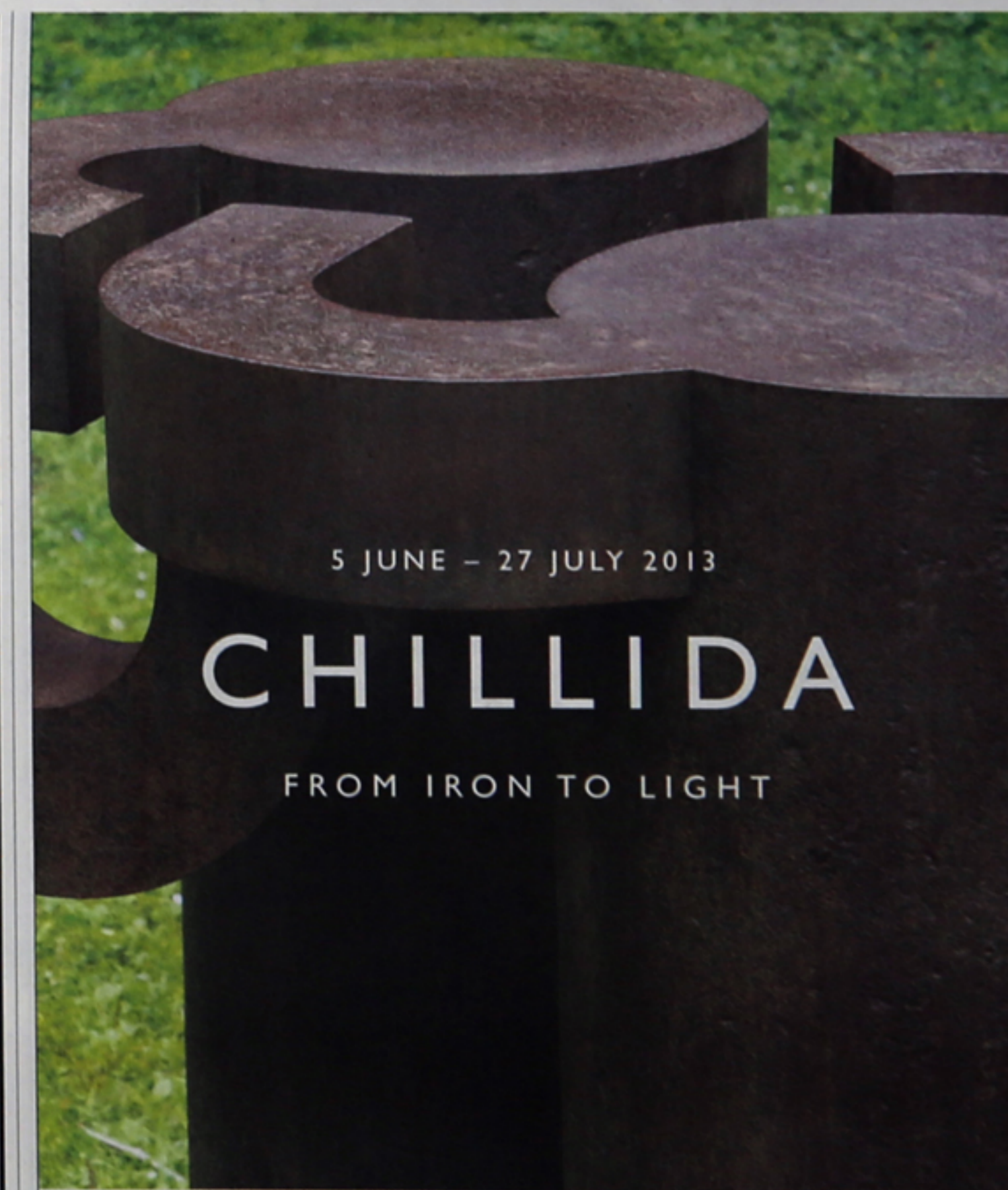
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Matta, *Untitled*, 1947, oil on canvas, 7' 11" x 9' 8" (218 x 296 cm)

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Eduardo Chillida, *Bosco IV (detail)*, 1990, photographed by Alberto Cobo Gil © Zabalaga-Leku, DACS, London, 2013