

Liam Gillick, Pt II

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Exhibition view, "A short text on the possibility of creating an economy of equivalence," Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2005. Photo © Daniel Moulinet, courtesy Air de Paris, Paris.

ART iT: Earlier this year you presented the [Bampton Lectures 2013](#) at Columbia University in New York, which were collectively titled "Creative Disruption in the Age of Soft Revolutions." The lectures focused on four combinations of dates and themes: 1820 Erasmus and Upheaval; 1948 Skinner and Counter Revolution; 1963 Herman Kahn and Projection; and 1974 Volvo and the Mise-en-scène. Were the lectures a summation of a certain trajectory in your thinking?

LG: Yes. The lecture series is very materialist. It is about the history of materials and production and objects, and on that level it does have a lot to do with everything I've done in the past 20 years. The lectures will be made into a book published by the University, and the book is now twice the length of the lectures. I've almost expanded it too much, so now it covers too much. So I have to edit it, but I can't even look at it, I hate it so much. I have to sit down and rewrite it. It's sitting in the hotel room right now. But I'm just walking around, taking photographs of the floor. I thought I would do the edit here, but of course I haven't done anything of the sort. Right now the problem is voice, like what voice should I use, who speaks? That's something I have to work on.

ART iT: Previously have you considered time to be an actual material you're working with or, as in the lectures and *Erasmus is Late*, are you more interested in a speculative playing with historical time?

LG: A few years ago I would probably have given you a simple answer. What's happened recently is there's more of a gap between the abstract work and the text – a bigger space that is not accounted for – which might be connected to the deliberate decision to make art in a state of distraction. In any case, I decided to keep working this way and let the gap get bigger. In 2005 I abandoned the book I was writing, *Construcción de Uno* (Construction of One) – which was literally about the construction of an individual, and also about questions of production. This changed the way I worked – it allowed the gap between abstraction and the text to widen – so exhibitions would jump, between having a subject and not having a subject, without any consistent method while moving through time. That's basically what's been happening, although it doesn't really answer your question.

I think what I'm doing is checking some of my assumptions about the relationship between objects and time and the perspective from which you look at them, and of course part of this has to do with trying to respond to the emergence of people agonizing about object-oriented philosophy and speculative realism and new ideas about animism. I'm an artist who works in a context: there's one group of people now who are talking about animism, and another thinking about objects and how they affect everything and how to look at something from the perspective of an object and so on, and I'm working out my position in relation to all this. I know we think about contemporary art as this big matrix of different stories and directions, but the decision to be an artist is also a kind of philosophical position. You sometimes have to decide where you stand in relation to this or that. Some of my friends are taking clear positions. Pierre Huyghe has decided he's interested in a certain position, Philippe Parreno has decided he's interested in another position. And I have an enduring fascination with the problem of abstraction, the problem of the art object as a thing, and I don't know if I'm ready to escape to the cinema or the landscape. I still believe in the possibility of doing something in an art gallery, even though they seem so stupid to me as well. There's a certain feeling that galleries have that strikes me as ridiculous. But I still want to deal with the legacy of abstraction in relation to time and to other ideas, and the artist as a phenomenon and the genealogy of an artist, and also the question of "point of view" as an artist. In a way the title of the exhibition at Taro Nasu, "Vertical Disintegration," is about all of this. Vertical disintegration is a management concept where if you're producing, say, an airplane, you devolve autonomous companies to produce all the different parts, which are then assembled as a single airplane. The exhibition is not a collection of fragments, but it is made of irresolvable elements from different moments that come into one space. It's very much an exhibition about exhibitions, which maybe is a terrible thing to do, but sometimes necessary.



Top: *Extended Regression* (2013), powder-coated aluminum, 30 elements, 250 x 480 x 10 cm. Courtesy Liam Gillick and Taro Nasu, Tokyo. **Bottom:** Liam Gillick & Louise Lawler – Exhibition view, "November 1–December 21" at Casey Kaplan, New York, with Gillick's *Övningskörning (Driving Practice Parts 1 – 30)* (2004) in foreground. Photo Jean Vong, courtesy Liam Gillick and Casey Kaplan, New York.

ART IT: The practice of vertical disintegration, or, specifically, subcontracting, was a major

part of the Japanese postwar economy. Were you thinking about that in relation to the exhibition?

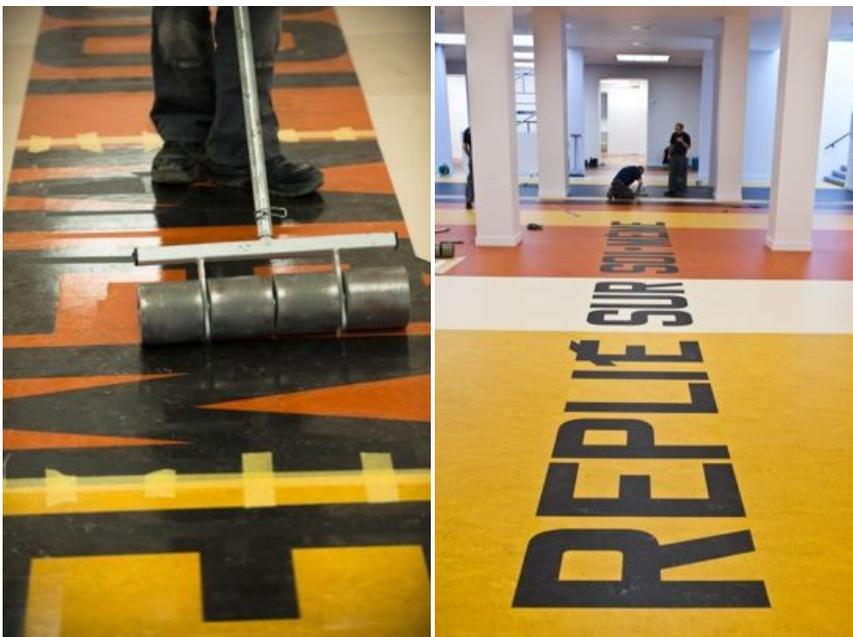
LG: I didn't really think about that. Japanese production is such an enigma for some people and always connected to simple misunderstandings about "other cultures." I have always been interested in what you could call the Scandinavian Model, on one hand, and not so much how the Japanese industry functions, but I do think a lot about Japanese structural components, and the innovations produced.

ART iT: What's interesting about the Japanese context is that you would have a mom-and-pop factory making widgets for a major industrial conglomerate in some warehouse in a residential backstreet. The scale of production was really skewed.

LG: That's something I find really fascinating, because the work I make comes from that kind of environment. It's like having a mom-and-pop organization, as it were. I work with the materials that are left over after you build the city, or after all the construction is finished. I make almost everything in Germany, which has a similar, although different, quality of structural production as exists in Japan. There are mid-level businesses there, which are higher up in the chain of production and bigger than a small business, but which still allow you to do a small number of things quite easily and at good quality. It was actually in 2001 after I came back from the residency at CCA Kitakyushu on my last trip to Japan that I started working this way. To that point I would always work in the gallery space, ordering all the materials and cutting and assembling them on site; the gallery was the site of production for me. After Kitakyushu I went straight to Zurich to make an exhibition there, and worked in my normal way, but when the exhibition was finished I thought, I will never work this way again, I need to change the way I work. I don't know why I had to change it, but I found someone in Germany to work with and have continued to do this ever since. Something happened while I was in Japan that made building work in a gallery seem stupid and meaningless. Maybe it was from seeing what you describe, seeing different scales of production in one place, which is much more evident in Kyushu than in Tokyo, because you have different industries each nested inside each other like a doll within a doll within a doll. In any case after Japan in 2001 I decided I wanted to make use of the potential of production in Berlin at the time, which was connected to the rebuilding of the whole city. I could get anything I wanted done by pulling out little strands and pieces from this enormous reconstruction process.

ART iT: Are the materials literally taken from construction sites?

LG: No, they're taken from the various distribution sites around Germany. Everything is kind of new, but extra. The material for the black piece downstairs on the wall [*Extended Regression* (2013)] - those specific aluminum extrusions - were made for the façade of a big building in Berlin but weren't used, so I bought all of it and then started to make work with it. There's something about the different size of businesses in Germany, with these different levels, that means you can find resources in different places. Materials don't disappear. They get moved from a big situation to a slightly smaller one, and then I take it out and bring it to an even smaller situation.





All: Liam Gillick & Lawrence Weiner – "A Syntax of Dependency" at M HKA, Antwerp, 2011. Photo Bram Goots.

ART iT: I saw the video documenting the installation of your collaborative exhibition with Lawrence Weiner at M HKA in Antwerp, "A Syntax of Dependency" (2011), which includes interviews with the staff of the flooring company that produced and installed the linoleum mats used in the work. This also evokes the German situation. It brings up the question, what is the economic scale of possible positions?

LG: I don't know. This is what I've been thinking about, and it's very confusing at the moment. On my way here this afternoon I was thinking, maybe I need to address the question of scale. Maybe that's part of the problem. There is a problem about scale that gets lost in the way people talk about art now.

Today I was in the area of the Mori Tower and there were these little paths and parks caught between these huge towers, creating sudden shifts of scale. I don't know what I was thinking, but I realized something. So I'm thinking much more about physical things at the moment rather than time. Scale and expansion and contraction and numbers of aspects of how things are produced in opposition to time.

I just made a film in Texas for an exhibition with the Contemporary Austin. In this park in the middle of nowhere, I made a standing form about 90 feet by 25 feet [*Raised Laguna Discussion Platform (Job #1073)* (2013)], and then I shot the film in the park. The film, [*Margin Time 2: The Heavenly Lagoon* (2013)], speaks about questions of time and production in a basic way. I mainly filmed trees and flowers, and then divided the footage into four sections, each with a different soundtrack. The first soundtrack is the sound of microprocessors being produced – which actually sounds quite soft and natural, with a lot of soft clicks and whirs. The second part is from an interview with Lawrence Weiner, when he was 29, that took place while he was working on the exhibition "When Attitudes Become Form," with the interviewer asking questions like, what does it mean to produce something, and how does it exist in your head, or anywhere, or does it change if you move it from one place to another. The third part is the sound of pilots going through the pre-flight systems check. You hear a little speaking, but mostly you hear all the emergency sounds and phrases like "wind sheer" and "50 feet," and then the engines start up. And then the last section is Gilles Deleuze talking about territory and deterritorialization, but with a big reverb on his voice, so that it's like a voice of authority, without any subtitles. Basically, for an average American audience, they hear a French guy speaking with a big echo, and he can't breathe properly, because he smokes too much, but I wanted them to hear the voice as a thing in itself, which sounds so beautiful with the reverb.

So when you talk about these other projects, they are important in a way, but they definitely have the sense of being a project. What I've been doing is connected to unpacking or taking things apart and on some level being much clearer, and on another level changing my approach, whether by working with other people, using another artist as a subject, or doing collaborations with older artists, as with Lawrence Weiner at MuKHA and now with Louise Lawler at Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York. I like this idea of working with people who are a little older – partly because I can now – and they are prepared to do it – but also I am aware that we will only do it once. It's the same with the Richard Hamilton film I am going to make. It's just my way of finding a way to recharge some ideas without pretending to be 25.