



Carsten Höller, *Amusement Park*, detail, 2006, Re-engineered amusement park rides: Gravitron, Courtesy MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts, Photograph © NGC.

Carsten Höller's Three-Way Installation

National Gallery of Canada
380 Sussex Drive
Ottawa
613-990-1985
Carsten Höller, *One, Some, Many*, 3 Shows
June 2-September 30, 2007

Two giant aviaries, one in-gallery amusement park, and a "laboratory of doubt" — the latter containing a Mercedes-Benz station wagon equipped with megaphones, a blindness-inducing maze and a wall of lights geared to flash in sync with the frequency of the human brain. This astonishing trilogy, which by its nature compels the participation of viewers, is what's in store this summer at Shawinigan Space (Shawinigan, Quebec) when the National Gallery of Canada presents *One, Some, Many*: 3 Shows by Carsten Höller from 2 June to 30 September 2007, the first solo exhibition in Canada by this internationally acclaimed artist.

Only the Belgian-born Carsten Höller, widely known for his large-scale, multimedia and sculptural projects that unflinchingly transform the way people interact with art and their surroundings, could (or would) conceive of such a dramatic trio of exhibitions. *One, Some, Many*, his no-holds-barred intervention in Shawinigan, promises an unforgettable contemporary art experience.

"Over the past several years, the National Gallery of Canada has become a hub for innovation by some of the most avant-garde contemporary artists in the world," says Pierre Théberge, director of the Gallery. "We are honoured to provide a venue for Carsten Höller's considerable creative talents, stature and vision at Shawinigan Space, a wonderful resource that allows us to offer the remarkable results of this experiment to the public."

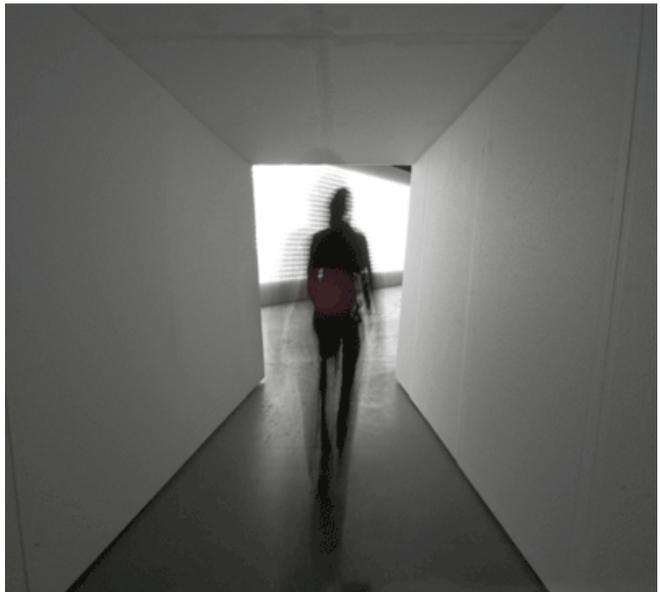
A doctorate in agricultural sciences with a specialty in plant and insect communication, Höller the scientist became Höller the artist in the early 1990s. He has since successfully experimented with a wide variety of media and forms of art, reconsidering everything from buildings, cars, and psychological tests, to the more playful aspects of human activity.

In *One, Some, Many*, Höller — a songbird enthusiast whose home in Stockholm, Sweden, contains several built-in aviaries — brings the outside world in, and enacts a series of situations that turn our sense of space and of ourselves inside-out.

The first of the three shows, *The Belgian Problem*, is an entirely new installation involving two gigantic symmetrical aviaries. The industrial architecture of Shawinigan Space and its natural surroundings provided the context for a major project, which is also inspired by the story of the arrival of the European Starling to North America in 1890. Eugene Schieffelin, a wealthy drug manufacturer, released eighty or so of these birds in New York's Central Park in a bid to bring all the birds mentioned in Shakespeare to this continent. Schieffelin's romantic gesture created the beginnings of a huge and unexpected bird migration, to the extent that starlings are now regarded as pests more than songbirds with a highly structured vocabulary. *The Belgian Problem* combines audioacoustic and nature elements creating an unprecedented display that is sure to make visitors see Shawinigan Space's airy first gallery, and themselves, in an entirely new light.

Next is *The Histories of the Laboratory of Doubt*, a series of "double" installations inspired by the near symmetrical architecture of Shawinigan Space's first two exhibition halls. Since 1999, Carsten Höller's practice has been primarily concerned with radically questioning the rational bases for our perception, knowledge and sense of identity and self. On view in the second show is the work that started this line of inquiry: *The Laboratory of Doubt* (1999), a readymade sculpture of a white Mercedes-Benz station wagon equipped with a pair of megaphones on the roof intended to disseminate doubt "without transposing it into imagery." Also on view are a number of Höller's "confusion machines": large-scale installations intended to produce heightened states of awareness by synchronizing with visitors in an often powerful and exhilarating way. Included is the sensation-overwhelming Light Wall in which thousands of 25-watt light bulbs flash at a frequency attuned to brain activity, and *Shawinigan Corridors*: two corridors that turn pitch-black forcing viewers to rely on senses other than sight. This circuit participatory installations takes over the brain's centres of perception and temporarily hampers the ability to distinguish between body and mind, providing the visitor with a profound physiological experience.

Finally, *Amusement Park* features a series of readymade but altered fairground attractions. Five classic rides — the Twister, bumper cars, flying billiard balls, Baja and Gravitron — have been reengineered to mislead our expectations of the speed, thrills, sounds and light we would find in carnivals and fairgrounds. "The barely perceptible movement of the fairground rides in Amusement Park forces viewers to come to terms with a perceived gap between cognition, perception and experience," says Jonathan Shaughnessy.



Carsten Höller, *Shawinigan Corridor*, 2007, Gyproc panels, two handrails, Produced by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Photograph © NGC.

Taken together, the trio of shows provide three sharp angles on the sensation of doubt, and affecting, triangular journey that calls the viewer's entire sense of self into question.

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Canada, presented by Cité de l'énergie and accompanied by a bilingual catalogue and a bilingual Bell audioguide.

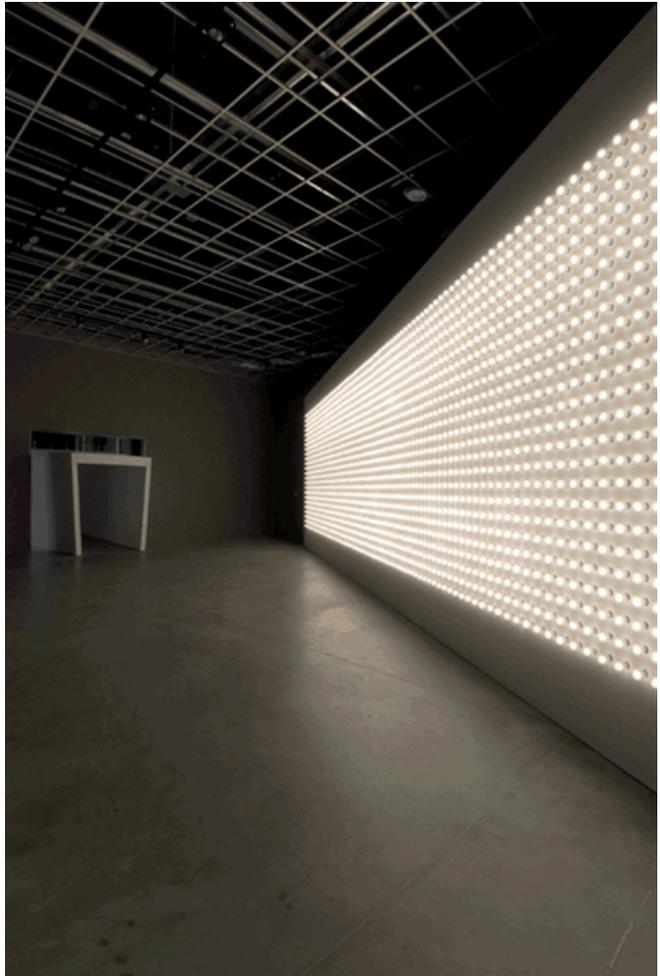
Amusement Park was originally exhibited at Mass MoCA (the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) in 2006. The *Laboratory of Doubt* (1999) first appeared in Anvers, Belgium.

Shawinigan Space is part of the Cité de l'énergie complex and is an exhibition venue of the National Gallery of Canada.

Carsten Höller (born 1961, Brussels, Belgium, lives and works in Fasta, Sweden) holds a doctorate in biology, and he uses his training as a scientist in his work as an artist, concentrating particularly on the nature of human relationships. Viewer participation is the key to all of Höller's sculptures, but it is less an end in itself than a vehicle to informally test the artist's theories concerning human perception and physiological reactions. Equal parts scientific experiment and sensual encounter, Höller's works are most frequently devoted to his singular obsession—chemically analyzing the nature of human emotions. *Solandra Greenhouse*, a work created for this exhibition, is a garden filled with the *Solandra maxima* vine, a plant that exudes pheromones capable of inducing amorous feelings. Coupled with strobe lighting intended to create a slight disorientation in the visitor, the experience of the *Solandra Greenhouse* is meant to recapitulate the physical effects of falling in love.



Carsten Höller, *The Belgian Problem*, 2007, Two aviaries, netting aluminum, wooden perches, feeding devices, nesting boxes, wood chippings, starlings, Produced by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Photograph © NGC.



Carsten Höller, *Light Wall*, 2007, MDF panels, incandescent bulbs, frequency generator, pulse generator, loudspeakers, Courtesy Esther Schipper, Berlin, Photograph © NGC.



Carsten Höller, *Shawinigan Zöllner Stripes*, 2001-2007, Black vinyl, Courtesy Esther Schipper, Berlin, Produced by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Photograph © NGC.