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(I'M
YOU
RS

Pirelli HangarBicocca

Public Program | Take Me (I'm Yours)

14 January 2018

A day of conversations and performances

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Pirelli HangarBicocca

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FREE ENTRY

Take Me (I'm Yours)

1 November 2017 – 14 January 2018

**From an exhibition idea originally conceived by
Hans Ulrich Obrist and Christian Boltanski in 1995.
Curated by Christian Boltanski, Hans Ulrich Obrist,
Chiara Parisi, Roberta Tenconi.**

Pirelli HangarBicocca

The Exhibition

First presented in 1995 at Serpentine Gallery in London, and then held starting in 2015 in different versions at various institutions in Paris, Copenhagen, New York and Buenos Aires, “Take Me (I’m Yours)” is a group show that reinvents the way we experience art.

The project presents a new idea of exhibiting based on the concepts of exchange, diffusion and sharing, stepping outside of the traditional art market channels. In “Take Me (I’m Yours),” visitors are given a chance to do things that are usually forbidden in museums: touch, modify, buy, leave, swap and in many cases carry away exhibited works, challenging the “myth” of an artwork’s uniqueness and calling into question the way art is produced.

“Take Me (I’m Yours)” evolves and regenerates over time. Alongside the possibility of taking home one of thousands of copies of the artworks produced—and therefore helping empty the space—visitors can interact with ephemeral works and performances in which exchange is not necessarily connected to an object, but rather to an experience, according to an idea of immateriality that is increasingly present in both art and real life.

The original concept for the exhibition was born in the 1990s through a series of conversations between curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and artist Christian Boltanski over the need to rethink the

Christian Boltanski, *Dispersion*. Installation view, “Take Me (I’m Yours),” Serpentine Gallery, London 1995. Photo: © Armin Linke



way artworks are exhibited. Boltanski eventually produced an artwork that would prove fundamental for the project: *Quai de la Gare* (1991), made up of mounds of used clothing that visitors could pick up and carry away in bags marked with the word “Dispersion”—it was an artwork deliberately designed to disappear. In Milan, each visitor can use a “Dispersion” bag to carry away a number of the works on display.

The exhibition at Pirelli HangarBicocca brings together works by more than fifty artists from different generations and cultures, as well as several of the original projects presented during the iconic 1995 event, here presented with an exhibition display conceived by the artist and designer Martino Gamper. “Take Me (I’m Yours)” also expands beyond the exhibition space through projects presented in the atrium, in the bookshop, and actions that develop around the surrounding Bicocca neighborhood.

“Take Me (I’m Yours)” aims to create a space in which visitors can gather their own collections; a space in which a more direct, involving way to experience art is possible, and where the concept of gift becomes a different way of interpreting the contemporary society as a whole.

The Degree Zero of the Object of Value

The following text is an excerpt from the conversation occurred between Christian Boltanski, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Arnaud Esquerre and Patrice Maniglier, published with the title *The Degree Zero of the Object of Value* for the first re-stage of “Take Me (I’m Yours),” Monnaie de Paris (September 16 – November 8, 2015).

1. THE 1995 EXHIBITION AT THE SERPENTINE GALLERY, LONDON

PATRICE MANIGLIER So let us begin with the first exhibition. How did it come about?

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI About twenty years ago, Hans Ulrich and I would often meet in cafes, and for the pleasure of conversation, we sought to reinvent exhibition methods, as well as the methods not just for artistic work, but also for how it’s shown. We put forward many projects, of the most far-fetched kind, which thankfully never saw the day; and then there were a few projects that took form. There was “do it”, the idea for an exhibition for which we wrote a booklet, with all of the artists describing a work, and then this document was sent to art centers that were supposed to produce the work, but we were never supposed to see what the art centers had produced. There was the notion of a musical score, and the possibility for everyone to play their own music, good or bad. We imagine that certain art centers played our score well, and that others played it poorly, but we never checked. Later, Hans Ulrich made a book called *Home Do It*, which this time was for individuals, who could produce works at home. At the same time, we had the idea of doing *point d’ironie*

[Irony Mark], a free, 8–page journal with a large print run of up to 200,000. There were no words, so there would be no problems with translation. The journal was financed by agnès b. and we used Agnès' stores in a number of world cities, which enabled us to have someone in charge of placing them in cafes, art schools... "Take Me (I'm Yours)" was part of these attempts to change how art is shown. I think that what connects these three projects to some extent is a questioning of the idea of the Holy Relic. In "do it", the object was not made by us, but by others. While we did *point d'ironie*, it was nevertheless dispersed by people we didn't know at all. Near my home there is a small psychiatric center, and they had papered their walls with *point d'ironie*, without knowing who I was. It could also be used to wrap gifts. Our work was used by people in a way that was not necessarily in an artistic spirit, and who at any rate did not necessarily know us. "Take Me (I'm Yours)" offered to dispel the taboo that one can't touch anything in museums, because the work is sacred. We have all had this experience. I have a large work with biscuit tins in Hamburg, at the museum. I wanted to exhibit it at Oslo museum: the five hundred biscuit tins arrived wrapped in silk paper, and the museum curator required Oslo employees to wear white gloves, which soon turned red because the tins were rusty. They believed that these tin boxes were totally sacred. So of course I told them: "If this biscuit tin is damaged, we'll get another, it is of no importance." At this moment in history, all of us were concerned with reflecting on the rules, or rather on what was and was not a relic.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST I remember the first conversation Christian and I had in 1985. I was on a trip to Paris with my high school: I ignored the school program and went to see Christian

Boltanski and Annette Messager in Malakoff. The first thing that Christian and Annette told me, which affected me deeply, was that people only remember those exhibitions that invent the rules of the game. These rules of the game can be dispositors or spatial or temporal rules. We began thinking about the question: what were the exhibitions that had never been done? Rules of the game had to be reinvented. The first thing we realized with Christian was that there was perhaps a disappearance of intimacy, because the art world had grown immensely during the 1980s. Thus there was a desire to go back to the kitchen, in order to do something intimate. Then we thought about how art could travel, about how we could create other structures of dissemination. A first idea yielded "do it" with Bertrand Lavier, which is to say a user's manual, and the notion that anyone in the entire world can produce and perform this exhibition. The idea was that art could travel not as an object, but as a kind of musical score, and that it could be performed, even fifty or one hundred years later. I also remember that we had talked about the notion of artists creating user manuals, and that the works would be produced later by following these manuals. It was already an old idea. But what was new was that we had entered into a period of globalization: it was henceforth possible to do this worldwide, by going to approximately 60 countries, where the idea could be performed. The point of departure is always the concrete practice of artists. For "Take Me", it began with a work by Christian, *Quai de la Gare*. We had asked ourselves how to go from an immaterial to a material dissemination, where the work would be fragmented and could be taken, and where people could do everything they normally couldn't do in an exhibition.

CB For *Quai de la Gare*, I had a friend who had a large space in a kind of squat, in what at the time was a poor neighborhood. I installed piles of second hand clothes there, and bags with the word “Dispersion” marked on them; you could fill up the bag with clothes and buy it for the current equivalent of a euro. A lot of people came, and most of them thought it was a good deal to be able to buy so much clothes for a euro, and some people who knew me kept the bag with the clothes inside, and did an installation with them, as though it were one of my works. It was the same thing, but everyone could help themselves in different ways. I talked to Hans about it, it’s the work I did at the Serpentine Gallery, and that I’m going to do again here. For me, who is linked to Fluxus and who admires Beuys, all of this naturally takes its place in a tradition of art—perhaps more so than for Hans, who was born after 1968. To be honest, one must see that it’s a political gesture that is simultaneously not one, because each of us continued to have the normal life of an artist, exhibiting in galleries; I do so less and less, but I continue to do so, everyone having objects to sell. There was no total rupture with the artistic system. What can be said is that it was more of a game or an attempt in a tradition that began with the exquisite corpses of the surrealists. Exquisite corpses that did not prevent them from producing large canvases and displaying them in museums. With me there was always a reflection on the notion of the relic, on what it was, and even more so today when I destroy all of my works with the idea of replaying them later.

PM How was the choice of which artists to “make available” done?

CB Hans Ulrich was responsible for the choice of artists.

HUO The rule of the game is that of the dispersion or dissemination of the work. There are works like this with all kinds of artists, from all generations. The idea is thus to bring them together. There are four or five generations of artists in the exhibition. In 1995, we were looking especially toward the Western world, for that was the art world we inhabited. Yet there is a polyphony of centers, and so there are artists from all continents. Thanks to the initiative of Chiara Parisi, this exhibition is reborn. It is exactly the opposite of “do it”, which never stopped, and each time it went someplace this exhibition learned something, like a sponge, becoming more intelligent and more complex. There are all sorts of ways of re-performing an exhibition. Here we have the case of artists—and especially Christian, who was there at the beginning—revisiting the exhibition.

2. WHAT HAS CHANGED BETWEEN 1995 AND TODAY’S EXHIBITION?

PM Let us now move on to the new edition you are offering today. What I find interesting in your remarks is that this first edition in short took its place in a series of experiments aiming to rethink the ways in which art is exhibited, circulated, and even produced, experiments whose general problematic was, in the end, relatively classical for the field of contemporary art, since each time there was a shifting or a confusing of the bor-



ders of what was generally accepted as the basic conventions of art, its prohibitions, the sharing between the impossible and the evident. For example, the convention of not touching, of being content with “looking”—this obviously goes with the very notion of *exhibition*. And also the notion of a work being endowed with an irreducible spatio-temporal individuality, which was opposed by the invention of a “dispersible work” such as *Quai de la Gare*. All of this is fine and good, yet all of these gestures remain, if I may say so, *aesthetic* gestures: they involve art as it purports to be art, they shift something of the rules of the game for art, but they do not directly undertake what could be called the heteronomy of art, all of the machinery in which it is caught up, especially the economic machinery. However, I believe that the new edition you are offering now touches much more directly on the problem of *economics*, and to thus say about itself: not to reinvent art, but also to do economics differently. This is what interests us, what it reveals about value. In fact, this new edition takes place in a particular space, Monnaie de Paris, and at a particular moment, during the FIAC. Moreover, the historical context has changed: today the question of the commercial value of works of art has become much intense due to the explosion of the market, which for me dates to the early 2000s. It is fascinating to see that a same artistic act, such as “Take Me”, can change meaning and perhaps even nature due to a change of context. Precisely because your exhibition touches on the rules of circulation for art, it cannot be indifferent to its context. It is striking that in speaking about the first edition, you made no reference to the economic problem, or even to the fact that the works there were *free*. On the contrary, the new edition, taking place at the same time as the FIAC, will result in there being works by the same artists that will

on the one hand be sold for a very high price at the FIAC, and that on the other hand could also be had for the price of an entry ticket at Monnaie de Paris. One can wager that this exhibition will be seen as intervening above all regarding this problem of the value of art.

CB Indeed, two things have greatly changed in the last twenty years. On the one hand is this relation to the extreme commercialization of art, which was already present, but not to this extent. On the other hand, there is the Internet, Wikipedia, Facebook. Today there are enormous amounts of shareable things that did not exist twenty years ago. If I put a photo on Facebook, I can give it to everyone. The notion of the communal thing for me seems more present today. The notion of taking something free, through networking and digital technology, is increasingly widespread. There is a sharing.

HUO Still it must be said that this question already existed a long time ago in art. William Morris reflected on how to develop a more democratic art, one that was for everybody (*Art for all*, souvenir cited by Gilbert & George). There is also this notion of “commons,” which is very old. Joseph Conrad already said that the artist calls on that part of our being which is a giving, and not an acquisition. Starobinski also inspired us through his writing on the topic of giving in the history of art. According to him, we not only give things, but also words, signs. Giving is not always passing things from one hand to another, it is part of the fabric of life itself: “Things can be given, but so can signs, words, missions, and duties. Gifts do not always pass from one hand to another... In truth, giving and receiving (in which a substance offered becomes mine) form the very fabric of every life,

beginning with the first mouthful of food. Giving and receiving are first behaviors, which belong to a language of the body prior to speech: the maternal breast in contact with the child's lips. Simultaneously, as the human being is constructed, the acts of appropriating and giving, of monopolizing and dispensing, are made manifest through different intermediaries, through more complex paths—from the mother's lips to the child's ear—and through a changing series of more or less codified symbolic elements. The gift of speech cannot be separated from the gift of the first nourishment.¹ This is what Lewis Hyde recounts in *The Gift*²: there is a whole history of this in art. As for the notion that the economic context has so radically changed since 1995, I both agree and disagree. All artistic fields have become industries. The only one that has not is poetry. An economic crisis struck when I was at university, where I was studying with the Swiss economist Hans Christoph Binswanger, who was much in demand during the Occupy Wall Street period. My whole generation has this questioning of the object, as with Rirkrit Tiravanija and things of that nature, and that's when we reconnected with the 1970s. It is this that connects me to Christian, beyond the fact that we are close friends. It wasn't against the 1980s, but it was anti-cyclical all the same. The art industry had grown, reaching planetary levels, and we did an exhibition in Christian's kitchen. This is why we can't say it was not present. It's just a question of degree, like globalization. It was indeed there in 1987, but it's only because of technology that we can say it's a thousand times more powerful now. Incidentally, "do it" and "Take Me" also take their place in the context of globalization. These exhibitions were designed to be global. Alighiero Boetti's puzzles or Christian's things are taken by people from all over the world. "Take Me" is being done in Paris, but the exhibition

will be visited by people from around the globe, and afterwards these objects can be found everywhere. This is why Édouard Glissant was important for me. Glissant drew our attention to the dangers of homogenization that go hand in hand with this globalization. Rules of the game must therefore be invented to make this homogenization more complicated. And that's what we are doing with "do it": it's planetary, but at the same time never ceases to change. We discuss this at length in the preface to "do it": how to make an exhibition that learns, changes, and transforms itself? So all of this was present. I don't believe that there was a categorical *change of paradigm*. It just became extreme. So it's true, replaying the exhibition today implies making a more direct gesture, for here it works like a call to generosity.

1. Jean Starobinski, *Largesse*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 2.

2. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift, Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York / Toronto: Random House, 1983); *Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage, 2007).

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To take and collect the artworks in the exhibition, buy the paper bag designed by Christian Boltanski at the Info Point and the Bookshop

Public Program, performances and special events:

James Lee Byars | performance every Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 6 pm to 8 pm
Pierre Huyghe | performance every Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 6 pm to 8 pm

Adelita Husni-Bey | workshop with schools
Otobong Nkanga | performance January 14, 2018
Koo Jeong A | walks in the neighborhood

A day of conversations and performances | January 14, 2018
 Find the detailed program at hangarbicocca.org

1 Aaajiao

Email Trek, <http://t-h-e-s-p-a-c-e.com/email-treck>, 2016

2 Etel Adnan

Divine Comedy, 2017

3 Rosa Aiello

Calypsò's Way, 2017

4 Giorgio Andreotta Calò

Senza titolo (Cera persa), 2017

5 Micol Assaël

Untitled, 2017

6 Gianfranco Baruchello

Artiflex. Finanziaria Artiflex, 1968/2017

7 Christian Boltanski

Dispersion, 1991–2017

8 Mohamed Bourouissa

Prickly Pear, 2017

9 James Lee Byars

Be Quiet, 1976

10 Luis Camnitzer

Mio, 2016

11 Maurizio Cattelan

Copies of the poster received as a gift from Alighiero Boetti

12 Ian Cheng and Rachel Rose

Untitled, 2016

13 Heman Chong

Monument to the People We've Conveniently Forgotten (I Hate You), 2008

14 Jeremy Deller

More Poetry is Needed, 2015
Lost Children, 2015

15 Patrizio Di Massimo

Self-Portrait as a Model (Take Me, I am Yours), 2017

16 Hans-Peter Feldmann

The Prettiest Woman

17 Yona Friedman

Street Museum, 2017

18 Martino Gamper

Design of the exhibition display

19 Mario García Torres

Because Dreams Are Made of This, n.d. Un homage to Alighiero Boetti, 2017

20 Alberto Garutti

Opera dedicata a chi guarderà in alto, 2010/2017

21 Gilbert & George

THE BANNERS, 2015

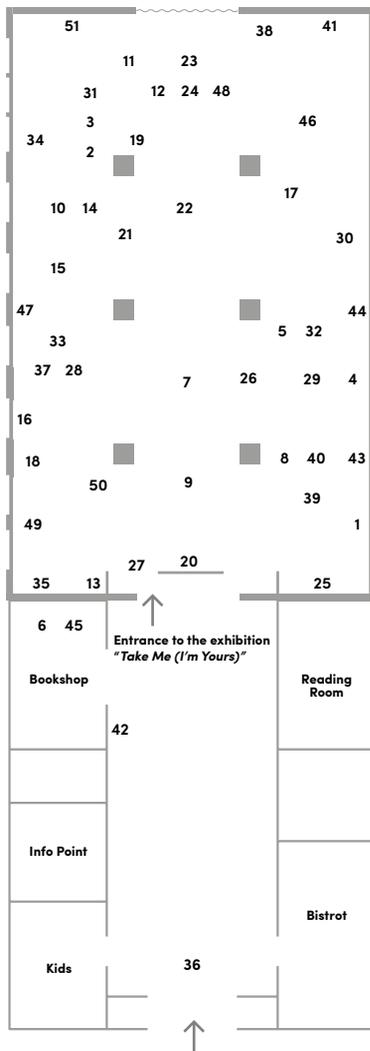
22 Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

Or Not, 2017

23 Félix González-Torres

"Untitled" (Revenge), 1991

Lucio Fontana exhibition



Pirelli HangarBicocca is a non-profit foundation, established in 2004, which has converted a former industrial plant in Milan into an institution for producing and promoting contemporary art.

This dynamic center for experimentation and discovery covers 15,000 square meters, making it one of the largest contiguous exhibition spaces in Europe. It presents major solo shows every year by Italian and international artists, with each project conceived to work in close relation to the architecture of the complex, and explored in depth through a calendar of parallel events. Admission to the space and the shows is completely free of charge, and facilitators are on hand to help the general public connect with the art. Since 2013, Vicente Todolí has been the foundation's Artistic Director.

The complex, which once housed a locomotive factory, includes an area for public services and educational activities, and three exhibition spaces whose original twentieth-century architectural features have been left clearly visible: **Shed**, **Navate**, and **Cubo**.

As well as its exhibitions program and cultural events, Pirelli HangarBicocca also permanently houses one of Anselm Kiefer's most important site specific works, *The Seven Heavenly Palaces 2004-2015*, commissioned for the opening of Pirelli HangarBicocca.



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