

## PAST IMPERFECT

PAST IMPERFECT explores the relations between the radical output of the conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s and everyday life, gradually moving on to include how radical ideas from the past are linked to those of today. In all corners of life—politics, literature, intelligence, science—radical actions, even if they seem to have disappeared into oblivion, influence and shape the public arena.

This publication is the result of a research, intensely guided by curiosity, amazement and suspicion, accepting the risk of being totally incomplete or overly thorough. PAST IMPERFECT searches for hidden pasts by lifting stones and poking underneath; collecting cases around notions on disappearance (persons, information), perfection, excessive control, compulsion and withdrawal—as varied as causal developments (Ford boxes), state fiction and ambiguity (Absolut), coincidental histories (from zucergines to Hotel Angst), preservation and destruction (from Amanda Lear to Howard Hughes), dark politics (Elvis meeting Nixon), the haunting of artifacts and economical speculation (Corbis), erasure (from Alfred Loos' archives to Willem de Kooning's drawings), protection (Walden's utopia), the impossible made possible (Houdini), ... and much more.

*Essette Smits & Bik Van der Pol, ed.*

## PAST IMPERFECT...

# THE SPACE BETWEEN LEE LOZANO AND EYAL WEIZMAN IS AN INTERESTING PLACE TO BE

*Stuart Comer*

CAMOUFLAGE  
TRINITY

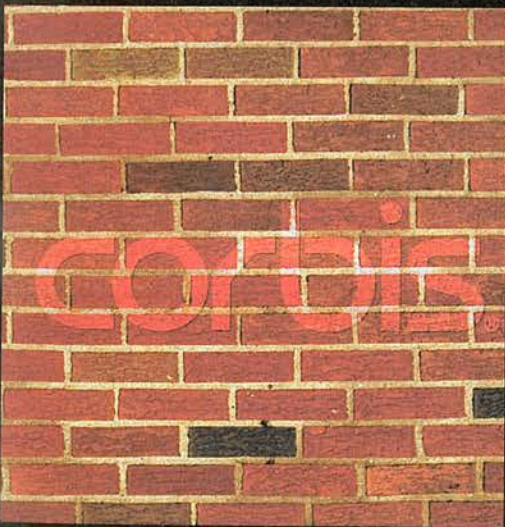
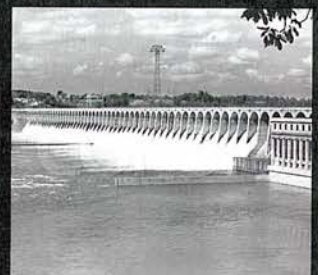
# ERASE PIRAHA

INTEREST PIECE

BOIJMANS BRICK

HISTORY ACCORDING TO THE MOVIES  
FILMOGRAPHY

CASCO ISSUES N99



## THE SPACE BETWEEN LEE LOZANO & EYAL WEIZMAN IS AN INTERESTING PLACE TO BE



Alvin Lucier  
photo by Nancy Walz

<sup>1</sup> Alvin Lucier, programme notes for OPEN SOUND SYSTEMS (Seth Kim-Cohen, curator), Tate Modern, September 2005

Recently, the pioneering American composer Alvin Lucier presented a performance of his composition *WAVE SONGS* during a concert at Tate Modern in London. The piece was originally commissioned in 1998 for the opening of an exhibition of Lee Lozano's *Wave Paintings* curated by James Rondeau at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. Lucier makes the connection to Lozano explicit in his brief for *Wave Songs*: 'Eleven solos for female voice with two pure wave oscillators. An oscillator is a simple electronic device that can be tuned accurately and emit a steady sound for an indefinite period of time. In each solo the oscillators are tuned relative to the size of the waves in one of Lee Lozano's *Wave Paintings*. Throughout the work the singer sings against the oscillator tones creating audible beats/bumps of sound as the sound waves coincide. I imagine the work as a mini opera, with the singer taking the part of the artist, singing her paintings into existence or perhaps simply humming to herself as she worked on them.'<sup>1</sup>

Lucier's remarks encapsulate both the influence and rigour of Lozano's work and the fascination with her biography that continues to inform the reception and investigation of her practice. Like many artists in New York at the time, he knew her only through fleeting encounters in studios and bars and eventually lost all contact with her after her radical action *GENERAL STRIKE PIECE* (1969) prompted her gradual withdrawal and subsequent disappearance from Manhattan's art world. The accumulated impact of Lozano's work did not directly manifest itself within Lucier's practice for over twenty years.

*WAVE SONGS* intercepts the mathematical systems that determined Lozano's paintings 'wavelengths that go from visible to invisible and then beyond,' and magnifies the legacy of an artist whose own abstract systems collided with the systems of patriarchy and capitalism, eventually taking leave of the studio and culminating in a public art of refusal and rejection.<sup>2</sup>

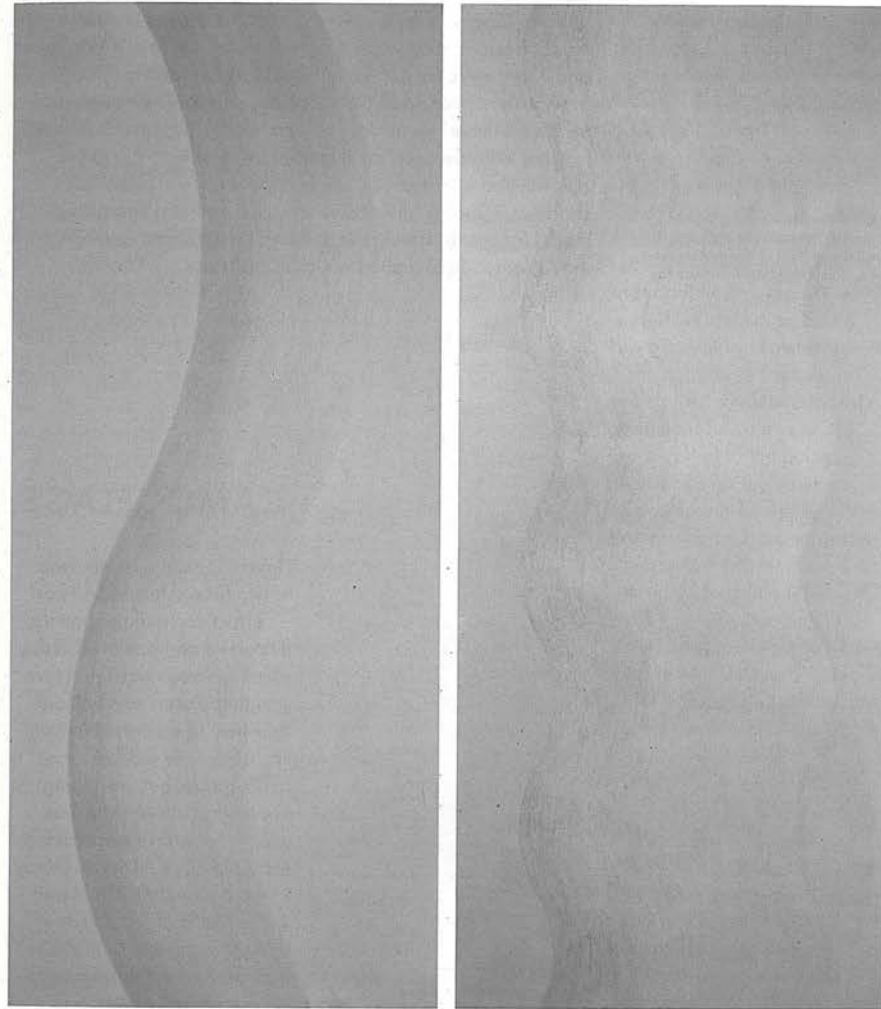
<sup>2</sup> Donald Goddard, review of LEE LOZANO: DRAWN FROM LIFE, 1961-1971, [www.newyorkartworld.com/reviews/lozano](http://www.newyorkartworld.com/reviews/lozano)

Lozano began producing the *WAVE PAINTINGS* in 1967, the same year that witnessed the Six-Day War and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and other Arab territories. The end of the war marked a new phase in imaging the consequences of

Israel's victory. The Israeli army began to use stereoscopic aerial photography to document, classify, and re-map its new terrain. The stunning images that resulted depict undulating topographical lines that were carefully charted and mathematized. Over time, somewhat like the Wave Paintings, these patterns have expanded exponentially as Israel's 'civilian occupation' has inscribed itself on the land through burgeoning settlements in the mountains that overlook low-lying Palestinian towns and villages. The strategic development of this spatial and architectural 'weapon' has been the subject of a sophisticated, intensive and damning analysis by architects Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal, culminating in *A CIVILIAN OCCUPATION*. This book examines the 'politics of verticality' and its impact on the Palestinians' loss of visibility and autonomy. It was intended to accompany an exhibition scheduled to be the official Israeli contribution to the UIA World Congress of Architecture in July 2002 in Berlin. The Israeli Association of Architects, who claimed that the project was 'one-sided propaganda', abruptly cancelled the exhibition and banned the book, which was subsequently published by Verso in 2003.

Weizman and Segal's radical re-assessment of Israeli community engineering in the West Bank has an odd but compelling resonance with the 'phantom limb' that remains in the wake of Lee Lozano's disappearance. The powerful refusal inherent in Lozano's 'boycotts' threatened the accepted structures of the art community in New York at the time. She even defied her colleagues in the Art Workers Coalition who were trying to reorganise those structures. Lozano's withdrawal from the art world culminated famously in her decision to boycott women and in her move to Dallas, far from the primary trade routes of the art market. Helen Molesworth has eloquently analysed these actions as a direct challenge to traditional notions of community defined by capitalism and patriarchy, in which the language of inclusivity tends to 'calcify' into a politics of exclusion.<sup>3</sup> Lozano's disappearance, simultaneously an artwork and a rejection of culture, also rejected her place in history and further revealed the construction of history within a commodity-oriented art world as the production (and maintenance) of private property. Ironically, whatever freedom she gained by her absence now helps fuel the mythology that has returned her work recently to the attention of scholars, historians, and—more disturbingly—to the gilded frontlines of the marketplace. The notion of disappearance in Weizman and Segal's project functions in an inverted fashion to Lozano's work, but, like the *WAVE PAINTINGS*, it similarly maps out the rules of a system

<sup>3</sup> Helen Molesworth, *TUNE IN, TURN ON, DROP OUT: THE REJECTION OF LEE LOZANO*, *ART JOURNAL*, Winter 2002.



Lee Lozano, *2 WAVE, 8 WAVE, 1968*

courtesy: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. / Contemporary Art Purchase Fund

4 Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, eds, *A CIVILIAN OCCUPATION: THE POLITICS OF ISRAELI ARCHITECTURE*, Verso, London and New York 2003, p. 92.

5 Rudolf Borchardt cited in Walter Benjamin, *THE ARCADES PROJECT*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London 1999, p. 857.

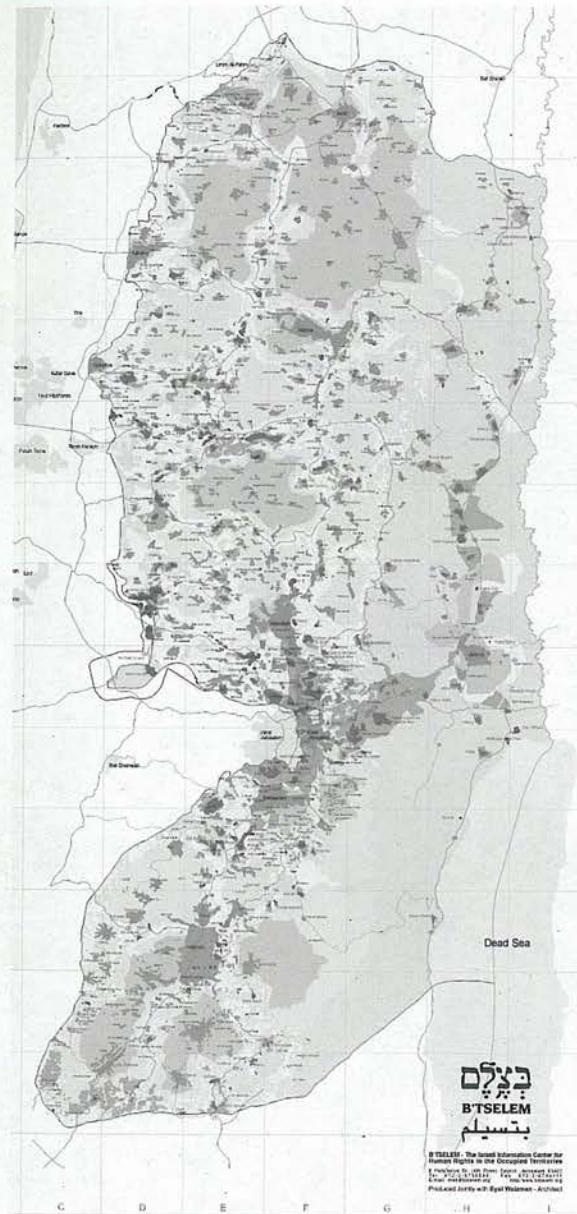
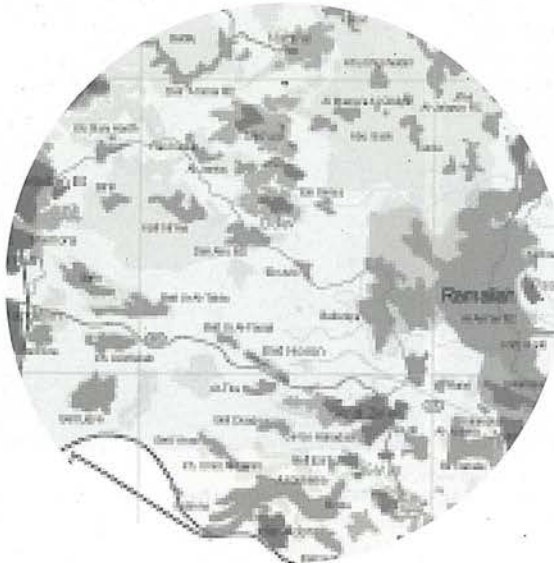
that eventually leads to an absence, in this case the involuntary disappearance of the Palestinians. As Weizman and Segal note: 'The Palestinians are there to produce the scenery and disappear... What for the state is a supervision mechanism that seeks to observe the Palestinians is for the settlers a window onto a pastoral landscape that seeks to erase them.'<sup>4</sup> Weizman and Segal visualise the Palestinians' loss of visibility through previously unseen spatial and social patterns. Their analysis of 'the politics of verticality' reflects Walter Benjamin's interest in using 'stereoscopic' or 'dimensional' seeing to grasp the construction of history, to 'see into the depths of historical shadows.'<sup>5</sup> Such a 'dialectical optic' suggests an interesting model for reconsidering the politics of visibility or, perhaps, the reclamation of a once vanished artist like Lee Lozano.

*Stuart Comer*

## CAMOUFLAGE

Have a look at a recent map of Israeli-held territory: it has a perfect camouflage pattern, dispersed and scattered. If this situation were not so perverse, it might be seen as a brilliant new way of warfare. No front-line troops, no old-fashioned avant-garde, but everything happening at the same time everywhere, on several different scales. *THE LAY OF THE LAND* by Stephen Zacks and *A CIVILIAN OCCUPATION* by Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman both reveal these camouflage tactics, the architecture of disappearance. Here, the loss of the object means: the loss of an overview, the loss of visibility.

see: review Publishers Weekly, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). *LAY OF THE LAND*, by Stephen Zacks, Metropolis, February 2003 ([www.metropolismag.com](http://www.metropolismag.com))



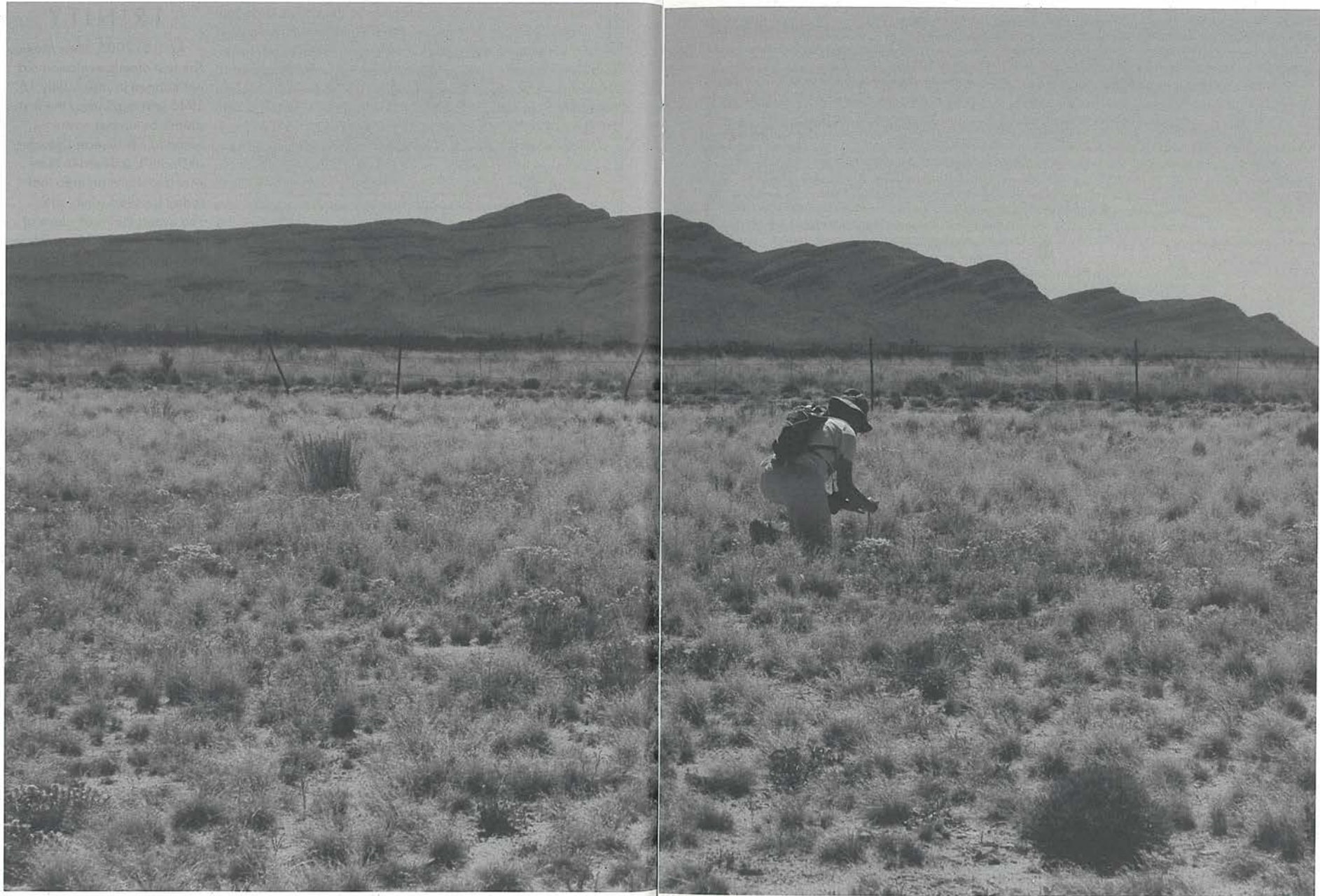
Jewish Settlements in the West Bank, May 2002

## TRINITY

April 2, 2005, New Mexico  
The first atomic explosion did not happen in Japan: July 16, 1945 was marked by the first atomic bomb test, in the Jornada del Muerte ('Journey of Death'), a desert in New Mexico, US, in an area that today is called Trinity site. The events that took place at this site changed the world; but went long unnoticed by a wider public or were not seen in their full radical meaning. This piece of land transformed in the public eye from secret nuclear test site into a tourist attraction. Twice a year, the area is open to the public; a pilgrimage for the veterans, an event for the curious, school children and others, for just a few hours. For a moment, this empty landscape is filled with talking and exchanging information, knowledge and experiences—voices it usually lacks. There is nothing to see really, apart from the immense emptiness of the landscape. At the moment of detonation, the heat was so extreme, that it fused the sand together into a sort of green glass, called 'trinitite'. Trinitite is still radioactive. It is scattered around on the Trinity Site and for sale outside along the road. Clandestine. Some of the trinitite is, surrounded by a golden border, made into a pendant.

בית צל  
BTSELEM  
بتسيلم

BTSELEM: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories  
P.O. Box 119, Tel Aviv 61001, Israel  
Tel: 03-6443333 Fax: 03-6443334  
E-mail: [info@btselem.org](mailto:info@btselem.org) [www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org)  
Published jointly with Eyal Weizman - Architect



still from: TRINITY, 2005 (video, 34 min.), by Bik Van der Pol



aerial view of the Trinity test site

## ERASE

**Tanya:** I remember when Bob erased the drawing of de Kooning... like somebody writes and he erases it, makes a sort of collage out of it.

**Bob:** It was nothing destructive. I unwrote that drawing because I was trying to write one with the other end of the pencil that had an eraser.

**Tanya:** (dreamily) You went over it...

**Bob:** I had plenty of erasers but I didn't have any art and I'd only figured out fifty per cent of this problem but if I did the drawing and then

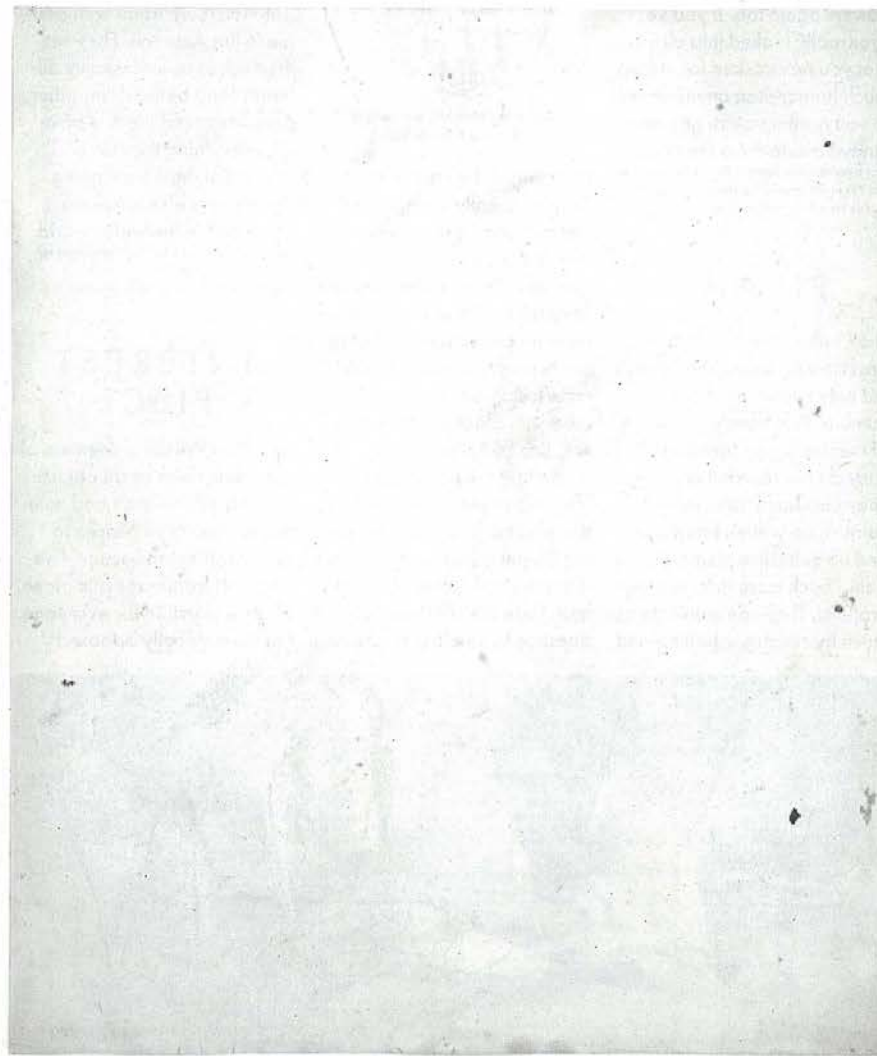
erased it, it would go back to nothing so I had to take something that was accepted as art to use the eraser as a drawing tool. I don't think Bill de Kooning would let anybody else do it now.

**Tanya:** At the time he was fascinated.

**Bob:** Terrified! A new generation of erasers! I was trying both to purge myself of my teaching and at the same time exercise the possibilities, so I was doing monochrome, no-image. It was only natural that I would use the other end of the pencil and that's not like having an idea if it's in

the middle of your life and the way you're working. I mean, to have an idea I've gotten many invitations: 'Please, send me your work, that I can burn, because I understood what you meant by the erased de Kooning!'

The erased de Kooning, it's like a picked flower, and not even stolen, I asked permission, and so it wilts and the other end of my pencil was the wilter. It wasn't a gesture, it had nothing to do with destruction. I would never part with it. How much could you charge for a de Kooning drawing that took three weeks to erase by an



Robert Rauschenberg, ERASED DE KOONING DRAWING, 1953

artist who also has a reputation? In what way do you add that? That goes back to the flowers again too. If you've ever really looked into a rose that you have asked for, it lasts much longer than anything sent to you or that you're growing. I may have to raise the price!

from a conversation between Robert Rauschenberg and Tanya Grosman in her studio on Long Island outside New York. Published in: INTERVIEW, Vol VI, No 5, 1976.

## PIRAHA

The Piraha tribe lives in the Brazilian Amazon. They are the only known group of humans, that have no concept of numbering or counting. They do not abstract anything. They also have no words for colours, no written language and no collective memory going back more than two generations. They communicate as much by singing, whistling and



One of the Piraha efforts at drawing and writing: drawing of a cat

humming as by normal speech. They frequently change their names because they believe that spirits might take them over and change who they are. They tell no fictional stories, have no creation of myths, no concept of future events, and no art. Linguists approach this case with great curiosity and scepticism. Some of them argue that the learning of a language determines the way that you think. Others, including Chomsky, believe that there is a universal notion of grammar. Here the challenging question is, whether not having

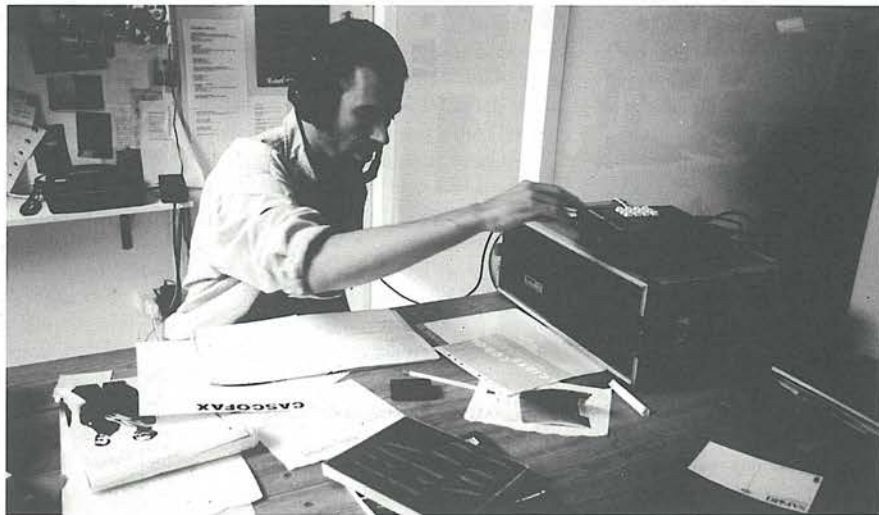
words for something prevents you from thinking about it.

The Pirahas do not live in isolation: they trade with people in the Amazon. They see themselves as intrinsically different (and better than) other people around them. Above all, everything they do is to prevent them from being like anyone else, or being absorbed in the wider world.

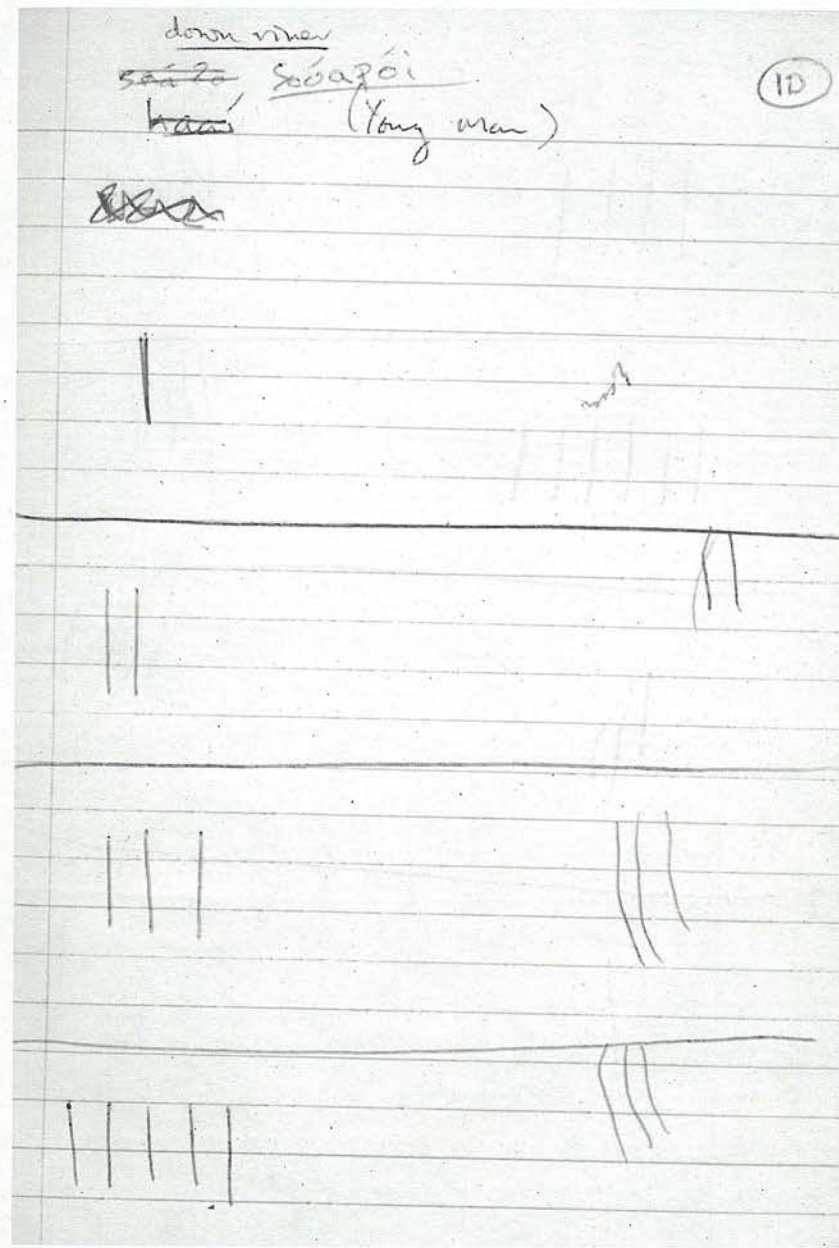
<http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/001387.html>  
<http://www.jcrow.com/withoutnumbers.html>

## INTEREST PIECE

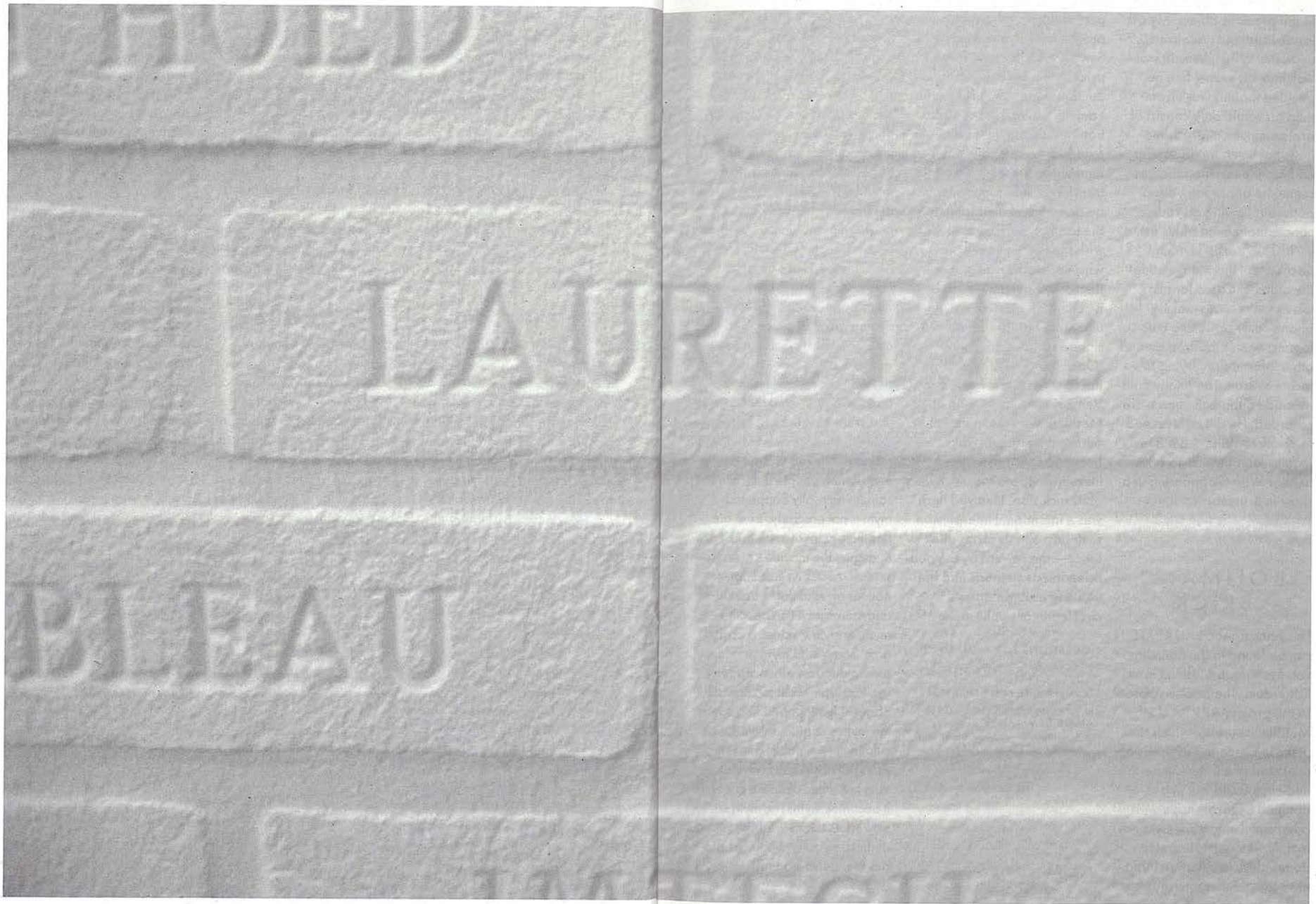
Artist Ian Wilson presents oral communication as an object: all art is information and communication. 'I've chosen to speak rather than sculpt. I've freed art from a specific place. It's now possible for everyone. I'm diametrically opposed



INTEREST (PIECE), Hinrich Sachs, 1997, courtesy Casco



counting test made by a Piraha indian, courtesy of Peter Gordon



to the precious object. My art is not visual but visualized...'<sup>1</sup>

In the 1970s, Wilson was well known, even when he decided that his work from then on would only consist of oral communication. Somehow, however, he disappeared from the international art scene; he apparently disappeared following his radical conceptualization of his art.

In 1997, artist Hinrich Sachs spent three days using the office of Casco for his INTEREST PIECE, making phone calls, consulting catalogues, names, addresses, and other information, trying to locate Wilson. The phone calls he made during his search are recorded. He did not succeed to speak to Wilson, but a few months later he was surprised to hear Wilson appearing in a show in Brussels.

1. CONCEPTUAL ART AND CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS, The New York Cultural Center, 1970, p. 33.

## BOIJMANS BRICK

This brick signed LAURETTE can be found in the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam. The brick is related to the project APPLAUS by Matthieu Laurette, which took place in Casco in 1998. It consisted of a lottery where the audience could win prizes donated by local shops and other small enterprises. As no money was spent, Laurette donated his production budget to the Boijmans museum as

part of their fundraising program for a new wing. '(...) Since we hadn't paid for the prizes we gave away, the production budget was for profit. I decided to make a contribution to the building of the extension to the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum. This transfer of public money will be given visual embodiment in the form of a brick engraved with the name of each person who donated a sum of more than 1000 guilders. Each brick is set into the wall of the museum. Mine has now become a signed sculpture. (...)'<sup>1</sup> 'Once fitted into the walls of the new wing of the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, the Matthieu Laurette brick will be part of the museum walls because it will have quite literally adopted the mechanics of its inclusion. Involved here was a intentional interplay on sculpture and its forms of existence — the reward by the publicization of methods and the visibility brought on by a circulation of public money.'<sup>2</sup>

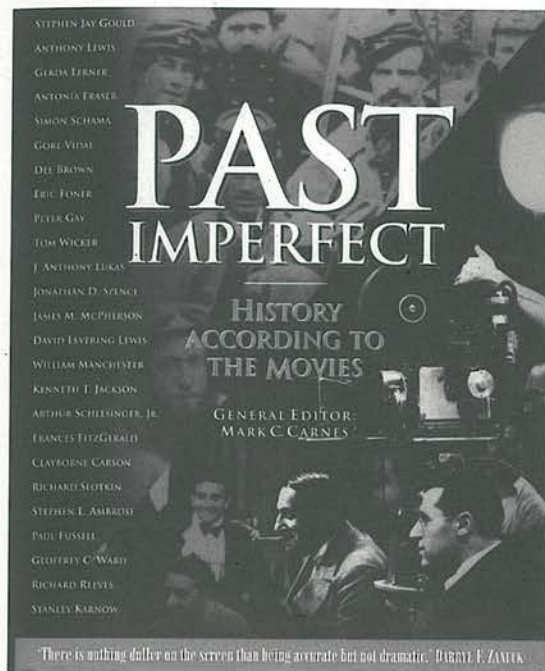
1. QUESTIONS FOR A CHAMPION, interview by Alexis Vaillant, in: CASCO ISSUES #5, 1999

2. HAVEN'T WE MET SOMEWHERE BEFORE?, by Alexis Vaillant, in: FREE SAMPLE DEMIX, 1998  
see also: <http://www.cascoprojects.org/projects.php3?lang=en>

## HISTORY ACCORDING TO THE MOVIES

Movies influence the way we perceive history, and a growing amount of what we learn about history comes from the movies. The history shown in the movie replaces the history as we remembered it; Martin Sheen becomes Kennedy, Ben Kingsley becomes Ghandi. This is quite radical: what actually happened disappears, drama takes its place, and the cinematic narrative becomes our future heritage. History-as-we-knew-it, is changed through fiction, and through fiction we get a sense of history.

Something (even when it is fictional) can reach the level of a myth, when people believe that something really happened. A myth is not precisely 'true' but has the potential to be true. For example, the movie THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT has vague notions of 'realness' about it, and therefore it can become myth, and new stories can grow on it. Sometimes myth accelerates: a discovery then leads to hype, people want to know all about it. Rumour and hearsay is the myth's engine. A rumour circulating in the public domain does not necessarily have to be true, but, when plausible enough, it becomes myth. The myth is powerful: it both establishes and authorizes cultural habits, histories and belief-systems.



## FILMOGRAPHY

- ABOVE AND BEYOND, USA 1952, Dir. Melvin Frank  
 AMERICA'S ATOMIC BOMB TEST OPERATION TUMBLER SNAPPER, USA 1997, 110 min., documentary footage released by the American Government  
 ATOMIC JOURNEYS WELCOME TO GROUND ZERO, USA 1999, 52 min., Dir. Peter Kuran  
 BERKELY IN THE SIXTIES, 1990, 133 min., documentary, Dir. Mark Kitchell  
 BIOSPHERE 2, 1998, 88 min., Dir. Dirk Wayne Summers  
 BY DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT, USA 1990, 100 min., mystery, Dir. Jack Sholder  
 CONTROL ROOM, 2005, documentary, Dir. by Jehane Noujiam  
 CRY BABY, 1990, 85 min., Dir. John Waters  
 ECOLOGICAL DESIGN—INVENTING THE FUTURE, 1994, 65 min., Dir. Brian Danitz  
 HOLLYWOOD'S TOP SECRET FILM STUDIO, USA 2003, 52 min., documentary, Dir. Peter Kuran  
 LES VAMPIRES, 1915, 420 min., Dir. Louis Feuillade  
 MIRACLE MILE, USA 1988, 127 min., Dir. Steve De Jarnatt

- NEVERLAND: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SYMBIONESE LIBERATION ARMY (GUERRILLA: THE TAKING OF PATTY HEARST), 2004, 89 min., Dir. Robert Stone  
 NUKES IN SPAGE, 1999, 53 min., documentary, Dir. Peter Kuran  
 OUR BIOSPHERE: THE EARTH IN OUR HANDS, 1991, documentary, Dir. Robert Redford  
 PANIC IN THE CITY, USA 1968, 133 min., political thriller, Dir. Eddy Davies  
 PATTY HEARST, 1988, 108 min., Dir. Paul Schrader, writing credits by Patricia Hearst and Alvin Moscow  
 PECKER, 1998, 87 min., Dir. John Waters  
 PHASE IV, 1974, 93 min., Dir. Saul Bass  
 PLANET OF THE APES, 1968, 93 min. Dir. J. Lee Thompson  
 RADIO BIKINI, USA 1987, documentary, Dir. Robert Stone  
 REBELS WITH A CAUSE, 2000, 109 min., Dir. Helen Garvy  
 SILENT RUNNING, 1972, 89 min., Dir. Douglas Trumbull  
 SOYLENT GREEN, 1973, 97 min., Dir. Richard Fleischer  
 STEALTH, 2005, 121 min. Dir. Rob Cohen  
 THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN, 1971, 131 min., Dir. Robert Wise  
 THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN, USA 1957, 80 min., Directed by Bert I. Gordon  
 THE ATOMIC CAFÉ, 1982, 88 min., documentary, Dir. Kevin Rafferty, Jayne Loader & Pierce Rafferty

- THE ATOMIC KID, USA 1954,  
86 min., Dir. Leslie H.  
Martinsen
- THE BEGINNING OR THE END,  
1947, 112 min.,  
Dir. Norman Taurog
- THE CORPORATION, 2004,  
documentary Dir. Mark Achbar,  
Jennifer Abbot & Joel Bakan
- THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW,  
2004, 124 min., Dir. Roland  
Emmerich
- THE DAY AFTER TRINITY,  
1981, 89 min., documentary,  
Dir. Jon Else
- THE FOURTH PROTOCOL, UK  
1987, 119 min., Dir. John  
Mackenzie
- THE MAN WHO FELL TO  
EARTH, 1976, 138 min.,  
Dir. Nicholas Roeg
- THE MANCHURIAN  
CANDIDATE, 1962, 126 min.,  
Dir. John Frankenheimer
- THE OMEGA MAN, 1971,  
98 min., Dir. Boris Sagal
- THE ORDEAL OF PATTY  
HEARST, 1979, 139 min.,  
Dir. Paul Wendkos
- THE PHILADELPHIA  
EXPERIMENT, 1984, 102 min.,  
Dir. Stewart Raffill
- THE SECRET AND THE  
SACRED, 2001, 58 min.,  
(Los Alamos - und die Erben  
der Bombe), Dir. Claus Biegert
- THE WEATHER UNDER-  
GROUND, 2002, 92 min.,  
documentary, Dir. Sam Green  
& Bill Siegel.
- THX 1138, 1971, 88 min.,  
Dir. George Lucas
- TRINITY AND BEYOND. THE  
ATOMIC BOMB MOVIE, 1995,  
133 min., documentary,  
Dir. Peter Kuran
- USA THE MOVIE, 2005,  
121 min., Dir. Tony Zierra
- ZARDOZ, 1974, 105 min.,  
Dir. John Boorman

Casco Issues #9:

PAST IMPERFECT  
Compiled & edited  
by Bik Van der Pol  
and Lisette Smits, 2005

Concept: Bik Van der Pol

Research: Liesbeth Bik,  
Jos van der Pol, Lisette Smits  
and Will Holder

Design: Will Holder

Texts: Guus Beumer,  
Bik Van der Pol, Will Bradley,  
Jason Coburn, Stuart Comer,  
Steve Rushton, Jan Verwoert, a.o.

Editor-in-chief: Lisette Smits

Final editing: Emily Pethick

Print: Raddraai, Amsterdam  
Printed in the EU  
Edition: 1000

Casco, office for Art,  
Design and Theory  
Oudegracht 366  
3511 PP Utrecht  
The Netherlands  
Ph +31 30 2319995  
Fax +31 30 2319995  
www.cascoprojects.org



REVOLVER  
Archiv für aktuelle Kunst  
Fahrgasse 23  
D- 60311 Frankfurt/Main  
Germany  
Ph + 49 69 446362  
Fax + 49 69 94412451  
www.revolver-books.de

Disclaimer:

In making PAST IMPERFECT  
we have quoted images and  
texts taken from various re-  
sources. Information concerning  
the original authors and source  
have been credited as detailed  
as possible. Despite these efforts,  
some sources nevertheless could  
not be identified. Please contact  
the editor in case of questions  
or objections.

The ideas and opinions revealed  
in the quoted material, do not  
express ideas and opinions  
of the editors, unless stated  
otherwise.

Casco / Lisette Smits  
and Bik Van der Pol, ed.  
ISSN 1385-9064  
ISBN 3-86588-218-8

All rights reserved.

PAST IMPERFECT has been  
generously supported by:  
Mondriaan Foundation,  
Amsterdam; City Council  
of Utrecht; Fonds voor  
Beeldende Kunst, Vormgeving  
en Bouwkunst, Amsterdam;  
Prins Bernhard Fonds;  
Cultuurfonds Andersson Elffers  
Felix, Utrecht and CBK, Centre  
for Visual Arts, Rotterdam

The project PAST IMPERFECT  
by Bik Van der Pol was con-  
ceived at Casco, office  
for Art, Design and Theory  
in November 2003.

Parts of the research have been published  
earlier in: LIFE, ONCE MORE. FORMS  
OF REENACTMENT IN CONTEMPO-  
RARY ART, Sven Lütticken ed., Witte de  
With, Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam  
2005. PAST IMPERFECT,  
Bik Van der Pol, Secession, Vienna, 2005

Photography colour pages (top to bottom):  
Paul Edmondson  
Unknown  
Tim Davis  
Lili K.  
Unknown  
Underwood & Underwood  
Alan Schein  
Unknown  
All images taken from www.corbis.com