

## Spatial Poetry

Encountering Dolores Zinny & Juan Maidagan's work for the first time, you are tempted to focus on its immediate architectural form. Zinny & Maidagan's practice is post-minimalist; slight and discreet interventions into the architecture of galleries, museums and other spaces. Their art works slip almost unnoticed into the spaces that they occupy and appear to have existed as permanent features for sometime.

This initial interpretation of their work as architecture or design overlooks the subtler elements in their practice. The aspect often missed in the reading of their work is its poetic dimension which subtly prevents their practice from being seen as simply building design. The layers of lyricism that their work contains generate fictions, suggesting to the viewer alternative realities that challenge the conventional reading of spaces, institutions and value systems.

In *1/1 fiction*, 1997, the artists created the illusion that the four corners of one wall in an exhibition space had started to curl up like a piece of paper; peeling away, but from what? It posited the delightful possibility that another dimension existed behind the wall's plaster and lathe. This use of fiction questions whether there is one reality or several existing simultaneously, bending our concept of time and space as if in some kind of Borgesian labyrinth.

The titling of works plays an important role in the elaboration of other narratives. For example



*Where the lion goes through*  
2000

in the piece, *Where the lion goes through*, 2000, the artists offer us one possible interpretation of the work with the title. They ask us to suspend our disbelief and imagine that a lion leaping through space created the series of large, gold rimmed holes made in the boards suspended in the Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico.

Dolores Zinny & Juan Maidagan are concerned with the use of poetry to undermine existing systems and structures. While their practice exists primarily within the art world, it simultaneously functions on social, political and philosophical levels. Zinny & Maidagan interrogate the politics of exhibition and other spaces, choosing to site their critique within the institution. Their work offers the viewer the freedom to use their imagination as a subversive tool; encouraging them to open and step through literal and conceptual doors. This occurred in *Movement in Art*, 2000, in which concealed cupboards with sliding doors tantalisingly offered the possibility of entering a parallel, fictive world. However, the dimensions of this space were not large enough for an adult to enter, triggering the viewers' sense that they were being wilfully excluded.

In its form Zinny & Maidagan's work follows the tendency which examines architecture and space through visual art practice, as demonstrated by the work of Gordon Matta-Clark. Matta-Clark has undoubtedly influenced Zinny & Maidagan's own practice. *Variations*, 2000, presented a street sign based on Matta-Clark and Caroline Gooden's *Food Project*. This work showed the original sign, *Comidas Criollas*, as it appears in the altered Richard Landrey photograph of 1971. This image, taken just before the artists were about to enter the restaurant to start working on the space, has now taken on mythic proportions, creating its own aura



*Movement in Art*  
2000

in the piece, *Where the lion goes through*, 2000, the artists offer us one possible interpretation of the work with the title. They ask us to suspend our disbelief and imagine that a lion leaping through space created the series of large, gold rimmed holes made in the boards suspended in the Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico.

Dolores Zinny & Juan Maidagan are concerned with the use of poetry to undermine existing systems and structures. While their practice exists primarily within the art world, it simultaneously functions on social, political and philosophical levels. Zinny & Maidagan interrogate the politics of exhibition and other spaces, choosing to site their critique within the institution. Their work offers the viewer the freedom to use their imagination as a subversive tool; encouraging them to open and step through literal and conceptual doors. This occurred in *Movement in Art*, 2000, in which concealed cupboards with sliding doors tantalisingly offered the possibility of entering a parallel, fictive world. However, the dimensions of this space were not large enough for an adult to enter, triggering the viewers' sense that they were being wilfully excluded.

In its form Zinny & Maidagan's work follows the tendency which examines architecture and space through visual art practice, as demonstrated by the work of Gordon Matta-Clark. Matta-Clark has undoubtedly influenced Zinny & Maidagan's own practice. *Variations*, 2000, presented a street sign based on Matta-Clark and Caroline Gooden's *Food Project*. This work showed the original sign, *Comidas Criollas*, as it appears in the altered Richard Landrey photograph of 1971. This image, taken just before the artists were about to enter the restaurant to start working on the space, has now taken on mythic proportions, creating its own aura



*Movement in Art*  
2000

and fiction. Matta-Clark was to employ the technique that would become his signature style, 'cutting' the space, for the first time in *Food*, 1971. The restaurant/public art project also continued his interest in process and natural change, through a philosophical and poetic examination of food as a living, mutating medium. In terms of Zinny & Maidagan's own practice it is interesting that *Food* was the generator of many apocryphal stories that have contributed to its legendary status.

Zinny & Maidagan are fascinated by awkward or overlooked spaces, the corners of rooms, stairwells or the unusual layout of The Showroom itself. Their practice encourages the viewer to think spatially through interventions that change and subtly heighten our awareness of the space that they occupy. In contrast to the myriad associations that their work triggers in the mind of the viewer Zinny & Maidagan's structures are simply made, using prosaic materials. *Offside*, 1999, for the New Museum, New York was made from wood and steel mesh. It inhabited the negative volume created by a stair well, forming its own negative volume within the space. In the case of their project for the Moderna Museet, the duo used the existing security grills, normally only lowered at night, to create a permanent perspectival grid on the picturesque view of Stockholm's waterfront.

The artists first adopted Duchamp's concept of the 'delay' during their project at the Moderna Museet. They employed it particularly through their use of the window grills, which caused a distortion between the artists' work and reality, thus forcing a re-evaluation of the surroundings. Duchamp employed the term 'delay' in his notes for *The Large Glass*. His intention was to



*Movement in Art*  
2000



have the work interpreted not simply as a visual image but as one that warped time and ideas of representation. The museum in Stockholm has one version of this work in its collection, as well as an edition of the *Boîte en valise* which contains a miniature version of this and other works by Duchamp.

This term was again used in their work *A façade that considers no interior, contains an illusionary garden*, 2002, for the Forwart project in Brussels, apropos the curved wooden bench and green painted glass panels sited in the foyer of the Brussels Royal Library. This work took as its starting point the temporary windowless façade built for the library in 1961. The project established that a façade should clearly demarcate the division between interior and exterior space and give a suggestion of the building's function. The artists chose to examine the separation between inside and outside, as a certain ambiguity surrounded the current usage of the courtyard and lobby areas. As with many modernist buildings the façade of the final building is made mainly of glass. Thus, on encountering it from outside, one sees only a reflection of the courtyard. The project's poetic title while descriptive also suggests a puzzle and the existence of multiple realities. It demonstrates the fine balance that exists in Zinny & Maidagan's practice between what we understand as real and as fiction and the possible nuances that exist in between.

**Kirsty Ogg**  
Gallery Director



*A façade that considers no interior,  
contains an illusionary garden*  
2002

This publication was published on the occasion of  
Dolores Zinny & Juan Maidagan's exhibition at The Showroom, London.  
28 May - 6 July 2003.

**The Showroom**

44 Bonner Road

London

E2 9JS

t. +44 (0)20 8 983 4115

e. tellmemore@theshowroom.org

w. www.theshowroom.org

f. +44 (0)20 8 981 4112

© The Showroom, Dolores Zinny & Juan Maidagan, Kirsty Ogg.  
All rights reserved.

Published by The Showroom in an edition of 1000.

Designed by paul@ezppl.com

Printed by Specialblue, London. t. 020 7538 0330



The Showroom is financially assisted by Arts Council England



Visiting Arts

Project presented in association with Visiting Arts

Mary Jane Aladren, Adelaide Bannerman, Claire Barclay, Iwona Blazwick, Sarah Carrington, Paul Collett, Laura Emsley, ezppl, Peter Fillingham, Rose Finn-Kelcey, FlatPack001, Rebecca Fortnum, Frieze, David Gilmour, Simon Grant, Ceri Hand, Margot Heller, Margot & Fergus Henderson, Paul Hobson, Claire Hooper, Martin Hopkinson, Matthew Hunt, Sue Jones, Kate MacGarry, Lynn MacRitchie, Anna Milsom, Dave Muller, Paul Nicholson, Kristine Nielsen, Campbell & Mairi Ogg, Michael O'Pray, Maureen Paley, Alison Raftery, Signwave, Simon Starling, David Thorp, Transmission Gallery, Catherine Ugwu, Isabel Vasseur, Grant Watson and White Window are all actively supporting the work of the gallery by joining The Showroom's Friends Scheme.

**Cover image:**

*Where the lion goes through* (detail)  
2000

This publication  
is available  
in audio format.