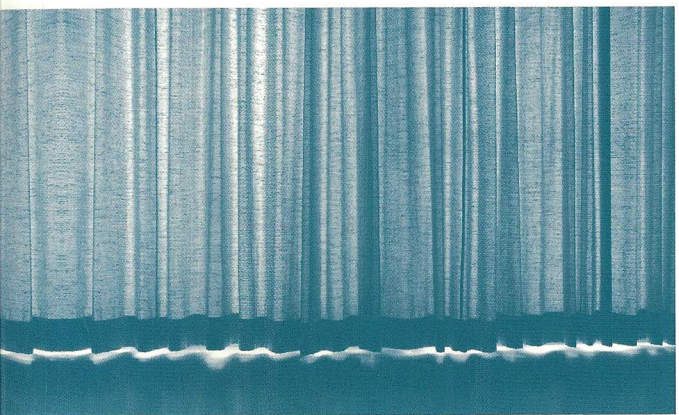


Strøm Thom Vink Jen Jaag



Part of an interview with John Gayer that appeared in the May/June 2010 issue of *Art Papers*

JG: You express contrasts in many ways. Some of the work presented in your retrospective at Stroom in The Hague earlier this year evoked the grid, but gaps in the rational structure and shifts in scale consistently complicated its reading. I found the wall installation to be particularly interesting, since no modern building's skin could ever be this thick. This outrageously exaggerated cross section presents a view of a wall's interior structure. What inspired you in the creation of this piece? Included in the exhibition is a small architectural model. What purpose does it serve?

TV: Actually the whole exhibition at Stroom refers to the interior layers of a house. It includes the wall and wallpaper, a curtain, dust and slide projections showing pipes and wires. The model house represents its external shell. **Moth House**, the title of the exhibition, makes reference to a Japanese architectural project focusing on the preservation of an old house in the middle of a dense forest. To preserve it, a white translucent structure was constructed around it. Lit from inside, its glowing walls attracted all sorts of insects. The name of the project also refers to the house itself. Isolated by the new structure, it resides within a protective cocoon.

The wall installation forms the central piece of the show. Made of various insulation materials, I see it as questioning the idea of boundary as it relates to the mythical undisturbed privacy of the home. In reality the wall is a thin, almost illusionary, barrier between us and the outside world. The immense thickness of my wall not only symbolizes the boundary, but also represents it scientifically. It exists as a geographical display that reveals all of the accumulated sediments and layers.

Infiltrating the 'grid' of the exhibition space is one of the biggest challenges I face. I see this grid as a net that I can respect or corrupt, in which I can establish a sense of balance or imbalance. A vital part of this process involves using negative space to create tension between certain objects and materials. In Asian culture empty space holds more importance than filled space. I find this interesting. In their view objects are defined by the space surrounding them.

JG: You have, in essence, inverted and deconstructed the house, re-contextualized it and changed the character of the exhibition space in the process. Many elements have been transposed into planar constituents – a series of screens – that urge the viewer to re-consider the house in physical and conceptual terms. Psychological implications are also evident.

TV: All the dichotomies defining my work are also indications of an individual's psyche. The work visualizes the contradictions that we

are built of, the complex nature of the mind and the way extremes can simultaneously be present.

JG: What other influences did your time in Japan have on your work and artistic outlook?

TV: I have been obsessed with maps since I was a child. I especially loved the city and subway maps of Tokyo. When I finally visited the city, I was completely taken by this mega-labyrinth and saw its maps as portraits of the city and icons of urban navigation. This inspired me to begin a series of pattern drawings which can also be interpreted as maps.

While in Japan I also learned much about the ancient Japanese traditions of *suiseki* and *bonseki* – types of miniature landscape art where imaginary environments are created with sand, stones and moss. How the Japanese replicate the complexity of nature at such small scales really struck me. This inspired me to make a video installation that was first shown at Youkobo Art Space in Tokyo. The installation shows a 24-hour stop-frame video of a curtained Tokyo apartment window. As evening falls, the curtain gradually darkens. At the same time the folds and patterns in the green fabric suggest an imaginary forest. A water basin on the floor reflects the projected image. Every 30 seconds a water droplet falls from the ceiling to break the stillness of the surface.

JG: Your artistic strategy confirms nothing is fixed, that there are numerous interdependencies and many ways to see things. Your focus is not strictly about subverting our assumptions but also proposes we re-calibrate our cognitive abilities to witness the complexity around us.

TV: Yes, we move from threshold to threshold. The world keeps changing. Every one we cross brings us to its edge again.

De **Stroom Premium** is een sterk geprofileerde subsidie voor individuele kunstenaars op basis van hun actuele werk en de betekenis van de kunstenaar voor het Haags kunstklimaat. De subsidie stelt kunstenaars in staat om tot verdere verdieping en ontwikkeling van hun werk te komen. Om deze buitengewone toekenning en het werk van de gehonoreerde kunstenaars speciale aandacht te geven, publiceert Stroom van de 'Premium-kunstenaars' boekjes.

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