



Like Hildegard, Dragan is not a witch per se, but she embraces otherworldly approaches in her work process. A mobile made from aluminum appeared as a strange celestial formation, bulbous yet hollow. Alluring plays of light tumbled off the piece as it gently turned in the air. In molybdomancy, shadows cast by the metal formations are used to divine the future. Dragan used red, blue, and green lights to create white light, which, when broken by her aluminum forms, cast a rainbow of cyan, yellow, and magenta. Through her use of an almost lost form of soothsaying, Dragan allowed viewers to dance with light, shadow, and objects that speak the future.

The other platform of the exhibition—gay counterculture—acted as an overarching statement of inclusion, acknowledging the often dismissed forms of knowledge attained by those deemed “other” by the structures of religion, capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and colonialism. Seeking grassroots inclusiveness, Chaykowski used Facebook as a forum for discussing the ideas behind the exhibition.

Above: Maggie Groat, *Moonlight Reflectors or a Proposal for Returning Moonlight Back to the Moon*, 2011–ongoing. Mirrors, tinfoil, wood, metal, and salvaged objects. From “To talk to the worms.” Right: Lucio Fontana in collaboration with Nanda Vigo, *Ambiente spaziale: “Utopie”*, nella XIII Triennale di Milano, 1964/2017. Mixed media, installation view.

This was a purposeful decision “to demystify some of the labor associated with curating.” By posting her evolving conversations with the participating artists, she became a conduit of knowledge-sharing, not an authority figure. The result was an alternative trinity, conjoining the inspirational example of Hildegard von Bingen, the ethos of gay counterculture, and the liberation of cyberspace to posit new and open-ended formulations of understanding.

—Maeve Hanna

MILAN

Lucio Fontana
Pirelli HangarBicocca

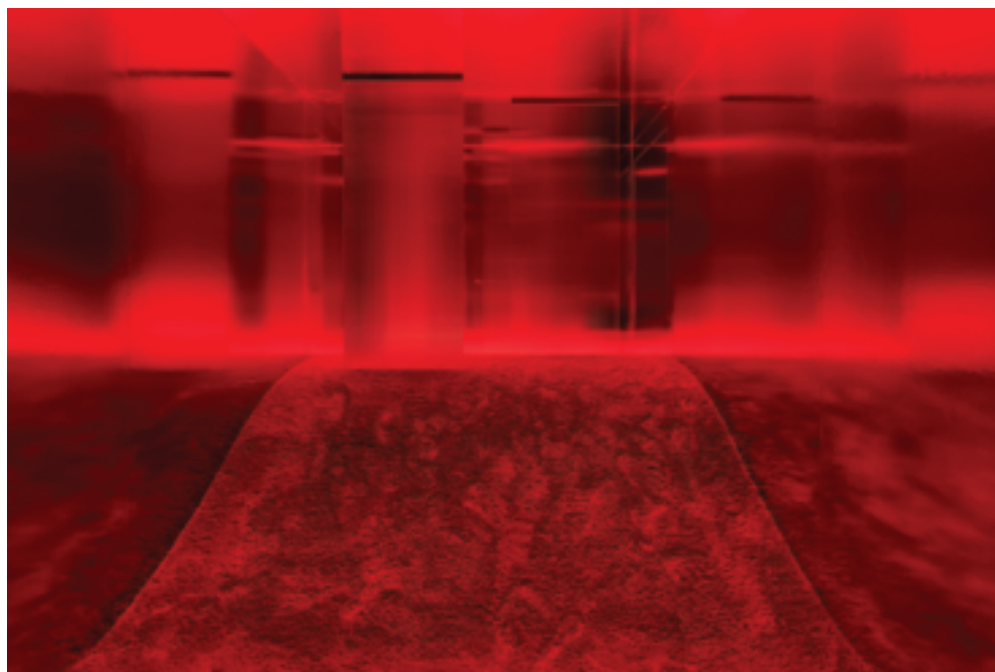
“Ambienti/Environments,” curator Vicente Todolí’s ambitious reappraisal

of Lucio Fontana’s spatial installations and light interventions, focused attention on a little-known aspect of Italy’s leading Modernist, successfully re-constructing nine of these works as life-size cabinets of curiosity. Though less familiar than the “Holes,” “Cuts,” or “Spatial Concepts,” Fontana’s installations marked a comparable break with traditional forms of sculpture and painting, foreshadowing later explorations by Gruppo Zero and Yves Klein. Fontana’s environments surround us with art, inviting us to become integral to it. As co-curator Barbara Ferriani explains, the “Ambienti” are “immersive works that demand viewer participation, and a complete reconstruction is the only way to fully experience them.”

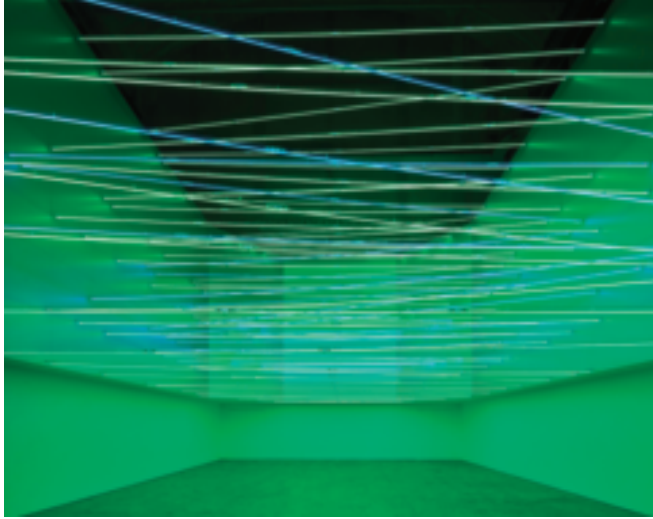
As Fontana has said, “We are living in a mechanical age. Painted canvas and standing plaster figures no longer have any reason to exist. What is needed is a change in both essence and form. What is needed is the supercession of painting, sculpture, poetry, and music. It is necessary to have an art that is in greater harmony with the needs of the new spirit.” That spirit developed into

Spazialismo or Spatialism, which led, in 1948–49, to his first environment—*Ambiente spaziale a luce nera* (*Spatial Environment in Black Light*). Shown at the Galleria del Naviglio in Milan, the intervention consisted of nothing more than a series of fluorescent elements suspended from a make-shift ceiling, illuminating an otherwise entirely blacked-out room. Though the work was considered “too innovative” at first, Fontana reconstructed it several times over the course of a decade, believing that people would eventually acclimatize to his ambition. It is telling that he wasn’t about to apologize for his work or abandon it, seeking instead to persuade the public of the validity of an art that required an audience at its center.

Fontana saw space as substance, something as meaningful as matter, as tangible and tactile as any solid object. In fact, space formed the underlying agenda for everything he would go on to do. He employed then-modern technology to create “artificial forms, rainbows of wonder, words written in light.” Like Bruce Nauman or Anne Hardy after him, Fontana was intent on positioning



TOP: NICOLE KELLY WESTMAN / BOTTOM: AGOSTINO OSIO, © FONDAZIONE LUCIO FONTANA, COURTESY PIRELLI HANGARBICOCCA, MILAN



WASSENAAR, THE NETHERLANDS
Michael Johansson
Museum Voorlinden

A first look at Michael Johansson's work suggests that he might be quoting other contemporary artists a bit too literally. His well-ordered stacks of household objects variously recall Jackie Winsor's Post-Minimal cubes, Jannis Kounellis's niche-filling accumulations, and Tom Wesselmann's Pop Art *Interior* (1964), a wall piece that fuses working domestic items and painting to create a hybrid and not-so-quiet vision of quietude. Johansson even includes an igloo: Is there any more obvious reference to Mario Merz?

Despite the comparisons, Johansson's unique engagement with paradox and wordplay sets him apart. *Last Summer*, his richly chromatic igloo, is built out of picnic coolers. Installed outside on the grass, it not only conjures nostalgic visions of summer outings, but also shines light on changing times. The word "igloo" was once associated first and foremost with the structure that insulated Arctic nomads from harsh winds and cold; but it also identifies the world's largest manufacturer of coolers, and today it is synonymous with a commercial product that guards food and drink against the effects of heat.

Many of Johansson's works are hexahedrons, so Tony Cragg's *Stack* (1975) forms another seemingly obvious reference point. Cragg's cube of randomly layered detritus transmits the look of geological strata; it conveys density and weight, an earthbound feature produced over an immensely protracted period of time. Johansson, on the other hand, uses collapsible cardboard boxes, file drawer units, suitcases, and vented plastic storage crates to create airy structures implying transience. The addition of an occasional speaker cabinet or television set accentuates the objects' sonic potential and underscores a literal or symbolic hollowness. Judicious sorting and assembly enable him to devise geometrical patterns and deploy color in a painterly manner. Cubes of transparent glass objects, like *Miniature Glacier* (2017) and *Spegling (Reflection)* (2017), evoke natural phenomena and allow their centers to be scrutinized. The material content, worn appearance, and predominance of earth tones in two older works, made by packing leather-bound volumes, a turntable, briefcases, and camera bags onto and under reading chairs, not only casts furniture as infrastructure, but also calls up the archive. Situating them in the environs of the museum's new library rather than the tempo-

art as an entire situation rather than a series of disconnected circumstances, and he required that the viewer see and sense everything as he intended. In the case of the environments, made over the course of 30 years, that intention includes a preliminary darkness immediately replaced by intensely illuminated rooms of light in which modern materials are juxtaposed in such a way as to create solid sensations.

For decades these conceptual environments have been more speculative than specific for audiences. The opportunity to experience them for the first time could not help but expand one's idea of Fontana. More than a painter or sculptor, he is an architect: "I do not want to make a painting; I want to open up space." And so he does, by introducing ceramics, colored walls, and curving and contorted neon light to shape his intensely luminous environments while creating subtle and very substantial physical experiences designed down to the last detail.

Struttura al neon per la IX Triennale di Milano (Neon Structure for the 9th Milan Triennale) (1951), which opened the HangarBicocca show, recalls Cerith Wyn Evans's more recent foray into neon — whirling dervish-like structures suspended from Tate Britain's main hall. Fontana's work is pushed high up into the ceiling as a spike to the imagination, in what might appear to be an entirely empty space.

Only after entering the first enclosed installation was it possible

to understand the extent to which some of Fontana's works require an audience to come alive. *Ambiente spaziale: "Utopie", nella XIII Triennale di Milano* (1964) for instance, with its pinhole lights and entirely blackened room, resembles an upturned runway in which all sense and perspective have been intentionally directed to the specially constructed walls. Walking over the carpeted mound completely shifts one's perception, as Fontana concentrates on fundamentals of light, space, texture, and material to redesign space as a vehicle for modern art. In *Ambiente spaziale con neon* (1967), an even more intensely colored room, the walls are painted a luminous pink; a stretch of curved neon suspended from the ceiling opens into an alternative stratosphere within the darkness.

Fontana's environments altered the ambition of art and paved the way for a new lexicon underscoring greater openness and invention — "concepts," "happenings," "environments," "art as an exercise through space." Following his example, artists would come to embrace space, creating living, participatory artworks with more than a passing resemblance to the spaces of life.

—Rajesh Punj

Above: Lucio Fontana, *Fonti di energia, soffitto al neon per "Italia 61", a Torino*, 1961/2017. Mixed media, installation view. **Right:** Michael Johansson, *Sista Sommaren (Last Summer)*, 2014. Coolers and cool packs, 4.4 x 5 x 2.4 meters.

