

NEW
EXHIBITIONMUSEU SERRALVES
MUSEU DE ARTE CONTEMPORÂNEA

For the first time in Serralves, an exhibition dedicated to

THE 80s

11 NOV 2006-25 MAR 2007

Curated by Ulrich Loock and Sandra Guimarães, the exhibition "The 80s: A Topology" is the most ambitious attempt ever undertaken to understand this vital decade within the recent past of the world of contemporary art. It is also one

of **the largest exhibitions ever to be held in the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art**, including approximately **250 major works**, produced by around **70 artists** from various countries and occupying a total exhibition area of **4.000 m²**.

WHY THE 80s?

Significant changes took place in the political, social and cultural fields in this decade. These changes generated wide-reaching developments, whose impacts are still felt today.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled*, 1981, Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York

**THE WORLD WAKES
UP TO AIDS**

**LIVE AID AGAINST
HUNGER**

**GOODBYE BERLIN
WALL**

**CNN AND MTV
REVOLUTIONIZE TV**

*Good for military spending.
Bad for social activism.
Good for very big paintings.
Bad for my neighborhood.*

Laurie Anderson

The 80s was the decade for the biggest cultural and political changes in the so-called Western World since the end of the Second World War. It was an incubation time for the globalization that marked the following period right up until today.

1978-79 were the years for a number of symbolic landmark events announcing the beginning of the 80s: the election of the Polish pope (1978) – an early indication of the erosion of the Soviet power and the unsettling of the hitherto more or less stable East/West balance of terror; the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979) – the rise of Islam as a new power; the first successful in-vitro fertilisation (1978) – the loss of the sense of a natural place for human life; the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's *La condition postmoderne* (1979) – an affirmation of the disintegration of the great narratives of modernity. Clearly the 80s ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – with this event the East/West confrontation as it was previously known was dissolved and there followed a period in which the dominance of Western culture and values were fundamentally questioned. An early expression of this new situation was the Paris show "Magiciens de la terre" (1989).

Presenting work from the last historical moment before globalization, "The 80s: A

Topology" is organized in geographical clusters (the geographical mapping of the art world, however, is set aside whenever an aesthetic argument proves to be stronger than the topological one). The exhibition shows – with very few exceptions – work originating from Europe and the Americas. Adopting a European perspective it includes contributions from all the art world while opening a few windows towards lesser visible places like Istanbul (Gülsün Karamustafa), Athens (George Hadjimichalis, Apostolos Georgiou), Santiago in Chile (Eugenio Dittborn), Moscow (Ilya Kabakov) or Abidjan (Frédéric Bruly Bouabré).

The show focuses on work that in particular gives form to the contemporary uncertainty about the place of art in society, and in general to the cultural and political uncertainties of the time. Therefore it does neither include work that pretends to offer new (old) certainties (e.g. the return to local traditions and mythology, to established forms of art and representation in Italian *Transavanguardia*, German *Wilde Malerei* or the work of Americans like Julian Schnabel, David Salle and Eric Fischl) nor does it include work that reacts with cynical detachment to the contemporary situation (Jeff Koons). What can be witnessed (after the period of conceptual, language-based art from the 70s), is the re-

turn of the object – an object, however, that generates a suspended place, a place without a place, the non-place of atopy. What can be witnessed as well is the return of the body – a body, however, that is fragmented, traumatized, hybridized. In this way "The 80s: A Topology" presents – in contradiction to some of the common readings of the decade – a particular and partisan perspective showing a period rich with work that is informed by critical references (and not by disgust and rejection) to advanced art from the 60s and 70s while creating new constellations on the basis of precedents from recent history.

The **hall (1)** of the museum is occupied by an untitled work of **Niek Kemps** (NL) which, first and foremost, consumes space – this was precisely the work's function when it was first made: to eliminate exhibition space in a Dutch museum which (as the curator complained) was not suited for exhibiting work. The curious position then of this work is to be manifested in a situation that doesn't allow for an artwork to be shown. This work's precarious place between presence and absence is echoed by its form: a rich and seductive velvet drape covering an unknown structure. The suspended place of the work and the virtual disjunction of surface and support are two traits that mark an important part

of the artistic production in the 80s. **Jenny Holzer's** (USA) *Inflammatory Essays* were first posted anonymously in the streets. Around 1980 they marked the re-introduction of conceptual art in vernacular situations.

In the **entrance to the galleries (2)** works by **Jan Vercruyse** (B) are shown, namely one *Atopies* and one *Tombeaux* – works that generate the still place of an absence, the place of something that has no place, a non-place: atopy in contrast to the modern concept of utopia, the place elsewhere, to be reached (or not reached) in some future.

Thomas Schütte's (D) *Models and Views* in the **central gallery (3)** of the museum refer to the drive of historical avant-gardes to break out of the symbolic space of sculpture and painting to transgress into the space of architecture, architecture being valued by its “use value” as opposed to the “exhibition value” of modernist art. At the same time Schütte's models – in this case models for buildings for a capital that are derived from the shape of a bottle – imply the failure of that utopian concept by exposing unmistakably that they will never be built full size.

David Hammons (USA) uses language and the reference to music as tools to locate his work outside the restricted cultural space dominated by white culture. *Chasing the*

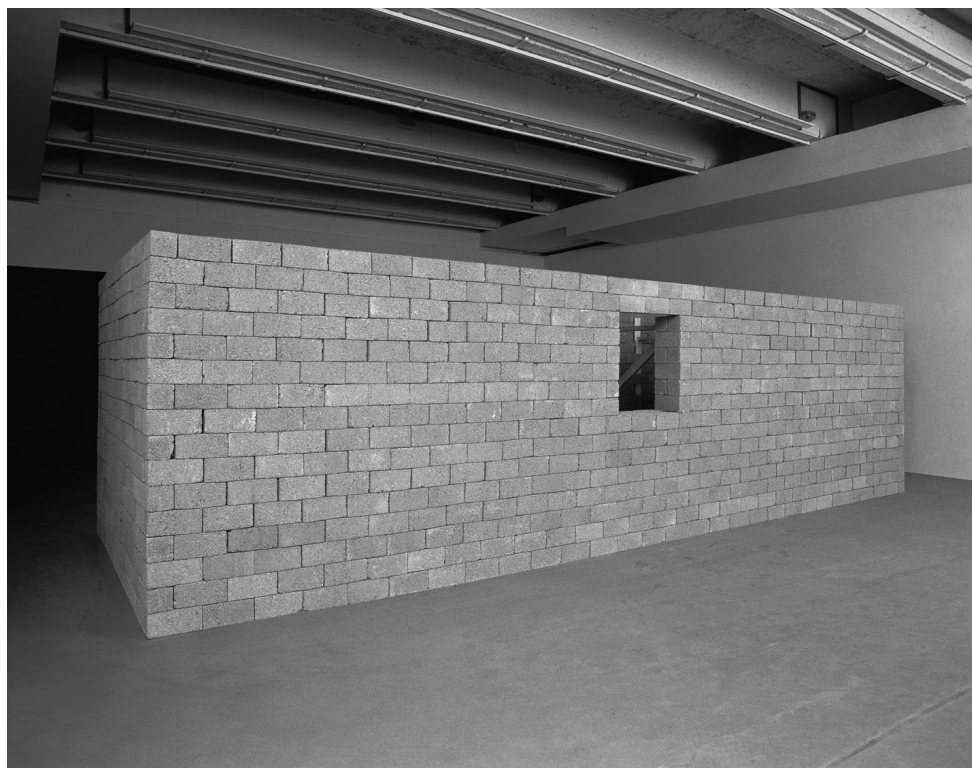
Blue Train is an homage to the Jazz saxophonist John Coltrane – his name being pictorialized by the use of a pile of coal and a toy train: coal + train = Coltrane.

The artistic community of Düsseldorf presented in the **first large gallery and in the corridor on the right side (4)** of the museum – also Schütte belongs to that environment – is very much concerned with questions of the social, institutional and physical place of the work of art – therefore the abundant use of architectural paradigms. **Reinhard Mucha** creates towards the end of the 80s complex vitrine works that present and preserve earlier pieces of his which had been disassembled at the end of the respective exhibition. They had been disassembled because they were inseparably connected to that specific venue. Thus his present exhibits exhibit earlier works of his which exhibited exhibition devices of the nature of those that are presently on exhibition as part of his works in “The 80s: A Topology”. The circular structure of Mucha's works that makes them shift incessantly in space and time is directly addressed in his constellations of chair-pedestal-chair which could be turned upside down without the slightest difference in appearance. As a painter **Helmut Dorner** is concerned with the location of the painterly mark in relation to the picture plane and the wall while as a sculptor **Harald Klingelhöller**

crosses sculpture with language and vice versa, each way compromising presence and absence of one and the other.

Candida Höfer assembles an archive of exhibition spaces – photographs representing spaces like the one where they are presently shown themselves. **Thomas Struth** shows photos of an architectural development in Paris the modernism of which had already failed while this project was just completed. Isa Genzken constructs sculptures which also can be considered models of ruined architecture made from scratch, thus questioning the validity of all the categories mentioned: sculpture, model, architecture, ruin. In contrast to those proposals **Katharina Fritsch** focuses on the highly perfected object – in the tradition of Duchamp's readymades, which doesn't play much of a role in the work of the other Düsseldorf artists, her sculptures explore issues relating the art work to the commodity fetish as well as to the mystical object.

In a way Fritsch's work creates a connection to the Cologne situation presented in the **second large gallery on the right side (5)** of the museum. If the Düsseldorf artists belong (however vaguely) to a constructivist tradition the Cologne artists tend to belong rather to a Dadaist/Surrealist tradition. **Rosemarie Trockel** intentionally uses for her painting the knitting of wool, that way reappropriating a “female”



Georg Herold, *X. Baracke*, 1986, Courtesy Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin

technique that is interdicted to women artists precisely on the basis of its “femaleness”.

Martin Kippenberger’s and **Georg Herold’s** contributions are ironical and critical – ironical not the least in relation to the Düsseldorfers’ dealing with issues of place and architecture. Kippenberger counters Schütte’s aporetic architectural models with the hilarious models of mothers’ recovery centres, and Struth’s photographic research with paintings of *Buildings with Slits*. If Struth works in a strictly methodical way, **Günther Förg’s** installation of wall painting and photos is spectacular and eclectic. Both artists, however, share roughly

the same subject matter: the corruption of modernism. Works by four Austrian artists reflect and displace more or less explicitly the conditions of art in an exhibition. **Herbert Brandl’s** paintings can be read as “blind mirrors” which neither reflect their surroundings nor open the imaginary space of representation. **Ernst Caramelle’s** wall painting affirms and subverts the existing architecture, and **Heimo Zobernig’s** objects duplicate critically and ironically exhibition devices. **Franz West’s** installation is itself – not completely dissimilar to Mucha’s work – an exhibition of his own work, namely his *Adaptives*

which are supposed to be handled by the visitor. Franz West is one of the few European artists in the exhibition whose work is made *for* the human body. This body, however, would be a traumatized body: “If neuroses were visible they’d look like my *Adaptives*”.

The works of **George Hadjimichalis** (GR), **Miroslaw Balka** (PL), **Fischli & Weiss** (CH) and **Apostolos Georgiou** (GR) are more pictorial and metaphorical than the works previously discussed. Balka creates scenarios laden with memories of adolescence and Catholicism while Fischli & Weiss seem to amuse the-

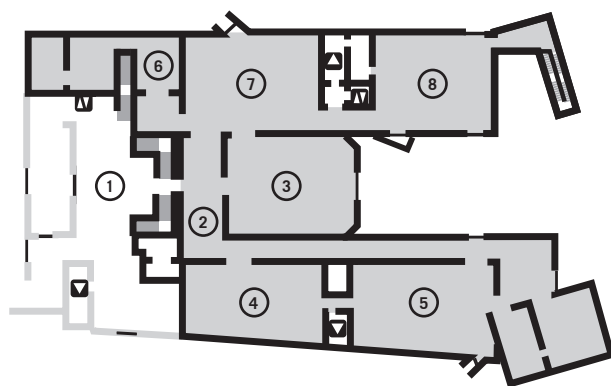
mselves creating travesties of “high art”. **Zbigniew Libera** (PL) presents a video showing an old and decrepit woman who appears reduced to “bare existence” – all she is able to do is to incessantly turn the night pot next to her.

In four **small rooms on the left side (6)** of the museum works are presented which originate from particularly troubled places in the world and/or reflect the individual’s trouble to claim a place for him or herself. **Hannah Villiger’s** (CH) photos are enlarged polaroids which she made of her own body and which she considered as “sculptures”, **Ilya Kabakov** (RU) records the disaster of the realized utopia of communal life, **Frédéric Bruly Bouabré** (Ivory Coast) counters the Colonialists’ claim that Africa was lacking scripture with the great ambition “to read the signs”, **Gülsün Karamustafa** (TU) reflects internal migrants’ attempts to create a feeling of home for themselves in the unknown megalopolis and **Mona Hatoum** (Palestine/GB) documents performances which she made in the 80s to protest the suffering caused by war and social injustice.

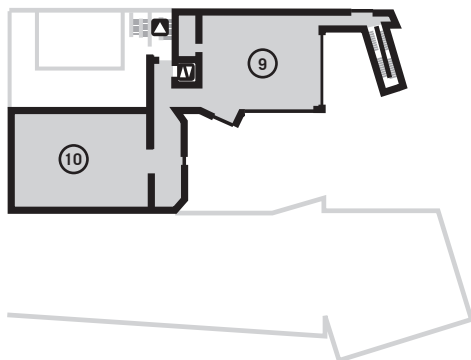
Several works in the **first large gallery on the left side (7)** of the museum can be considered as places of the lack or exclusion of the body: **Jean-Marc Bustamante’s** (F) *Inventaire* encapsulates the image in the reflection of the reflection of mirrors facing

each other; **Lili Dujourie’s** (B) sculpture consists of drapes and folds that essentially lack the support structure of any body they’d ever cover; and **Thierry De Cordier’s** (B) pole is “the last of the standing figures”, a work which was recently made but nevertheless belongs to the 80s using the terms of an oeuvre that refutes the notion of development. **Marlene Dumas’** (NL) drawings in contrast are explicit about the (female) body

which in turn, however, lacks a place. Place, the place of the art work in an exhibition, is yet again the subject of the *Observatorium* by **René Daniëls** (NL) which depicts and abstracts the exhibition space. Considered this way the poetic installation of **Ettore Spalletti** (I) might be regarded “out of place” in the context of this gallery since it creates a spatial presence completely of its own, disregarding all constraints im-



3RD FLOOR
ACCESS LEVEL



1ST FLOOR
INFERIOR LEVEL
OF THE MUSEUM

sed by the “condition of art”. What Spalletti does in relation to space the British sculptors **Tony Cragg**, **Richard Deacon** and **Richard Wentworth** do in relation to the object: they create a particular and highly idiosyncratic reality of the object by exploring improbabilities of the sculptural configuration and the use of materials. The paintings of **Luc Tuymans** are made after drawings he made for films at a time when he decided to stop painting.

Ana Jotta (P) shows paintings that promote the complete implosion of language: tautology takes the place of the creation of meaning. If Ana Jotta’s paintings are in that sense empty, **Mariella Simoni’s** (I) are full of silence. They consist in marks that find their place and miss their place: any support, large or small is nothing but a fragment of the complete surface that could be touched by the painterly gesture. Therefore her brushstrokes will always be the same size regardless of the size of the picture plane.

Works from the Iberic Peninsula in the **second large gallery on the left side (8)** of the museum have a relation to the theatrical and metaphorical which is missing in many other works in the exhibition. With his *Melancholia* **Pedro Cabrita Reis** (P) refers to Böcklin’s *Isle of Death*, **José Pedro Croft’s** (P) sculptures suggest idiograms for es-

sential shelters and **Julião Sarmento** (P) paints signs from a language completely of his own. The spaces of **Juan Muñoz** (SP) are empty and inverted, but nevertheless they are spaces for someone to be in. **Cristina Iglesias** (SP) constructs spaces between the given architecture and her own sculptures, and **Rui Sanches** (P) metaphorically projects part of the exhibition space’s wall into that space.

Works by four artists from South America complete that gallery: **Doris Salcedo’s** white shirts – Whom do they belong to? Whom did they belong to? – refer to the political trouble of her native Columbia. **Guillermo Kuitca’s** (Argentina) is a work of mapping: indicating places elsewhere, places of loss. **Tunga** (Brazil) connects his sculptural wave in the image of hair to concepts of topology, a scientific discipline that presents an alternative to the identification of places through numeric measurements. **Eugenio Dittborn’s** (Chile) is truly atopic work, work that doesn’t have a place of its own, work that is out of place wherever it is placed: in order to survive as an artist under the terrible regime of Pinochet he invented *Airmail Paintings* which can be sent through the international airmail system to any place in the world.

The galleries downstairs are devoted to artists from North America. In the **first gallery**

downstairs (9) work by **Jimmie Durham** and **Jean-Michel Basquiat** balances work by **Robert Gober**, **Cady Noland** and **Christopher Wool**. In contrast to works by Europeans which are much concerned with issues of the lack of place and body the Americans’ works are concerned with an individual’s social place. Jimmie Durham works through his experience as a native Indian and Basquiat, whose origins are Haitian/Puerto Rican, seems to be struggling to organize fragments of knowledge of a culture foreign to him. In a completely different idiom, in “cool” aesthetics Robert Gober creates devices of bodily trauma, Cady Noland creates devices of violence and oppression, and Christopher Wool makes paintings with marks (ornaments or letters), the repetitive insistence of which has an aggressiveness which is balanced but never muted by purely painterly concerns. The large installation by **Matt Mullican** includes elements from all the different modes of his work whose ambition is to create a cosmology – as if to unite contradictions and particularities exposed by the other works in that space. The empty surfaces of **Allan McCollum’s** *Plaster Surrogates* then may appear as an inversion of the fullness of Mullican’s work.

There is an affinity between Gober’s *Sinks* and **Charles Ray’s** irritating cube: both

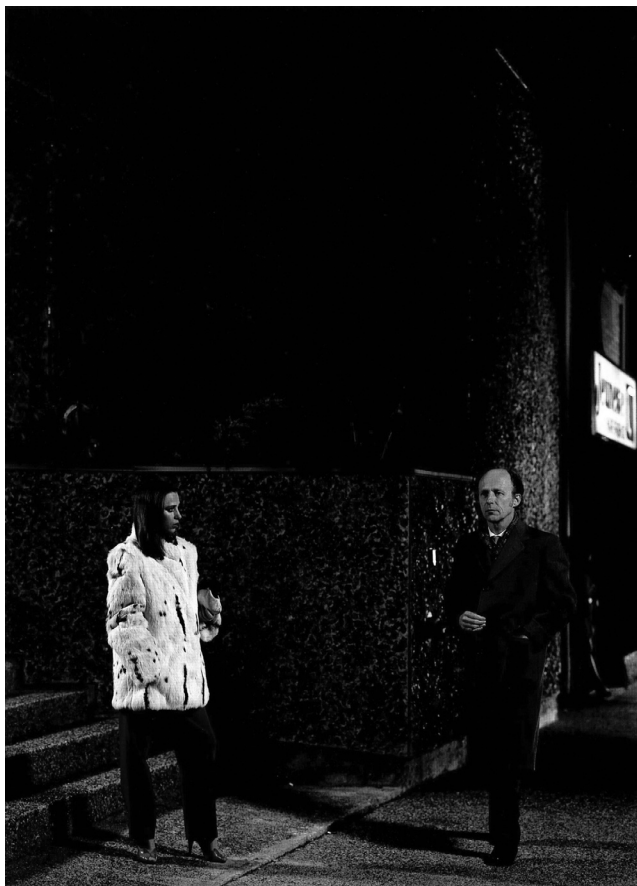
works refer to and critically displace the minimalist paradigm – quite a number of works in this show both by Americans and Europeans are informed by that legacy: the minimalist paradigm is used to introduce issues that are ideologically excluded by the self-contained nature of minimalism proper, namely the actual relation of a work to the beholder's body. That body, however, is – especially in Gober's work – an abject and traumatized body. The AIDS crisis at the end of the 80s plays an important role here.

Like Charles Ray, **Raymond Pettibon** also works in Los Angeles. His drawings cum writing – formally connected to the organization of the comic strip –, first distributed in the form of xeroxed pamphlets, attempt to digest all possible knowledge regardless of its status as “high” or “low”. **Mike Kelley's** drawings yet again stage the human body as a place of disease, death and waste.

The works in the **last gallery (10)** don't follow the topological organization of much of the exhibition. The issue here is photography. Photography plays an important role in the 80s as a medium used to counter traditional art's aura. **Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, Louise Lawler** and **Barbara Kruger** use photography programmatically without, however, creating “original” images – their sources are

images that already exist in the world of the media – their images are images of images: in the case of Cindy Sherman (possible) images which she re-enacts, in the case of Richard Prince images which he transfers from media sources to his own works. In contrast to the work by those “appropriation artists” the photos of **James Welling** are “original”: they are pictures, however, of surfaces that seem to lack – in a way similar to Lili Dujourie's work – a support structure. Thus even the “originality”

of Welling's image doesn't reveal origins which are fundamentally inaccessible according to much of the most influential philosophical theories that marked the 80s. Work by **Jeff Wall** (Canada), **Rodney Graham** (Canada), **Stan Douglas** (Canada), **Gary Hill** (USA) and **James Coleman** (IRL) finally testifies to efforts to reintroduce in the field of photography and video a cinematic and theatrical dimension without falling into the trap of the spectacle.



Jeff Wall, *No*, 1983, Courtesy of the artist

THE 80s: A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY*

1980

Iraq invades Iran, thus initiating one of the most deadly wars since the Second World War (-1988).

Solidarnosc, a federation of Polish trade unions is founded in the Lenin Construction Yards in Gdansk, led by Lech Walesa.

1981

"A New Spirit in Painting", Royal Academy of Arts, London. Exhibition curated by Christos M. Joachimides, Norman Rosenthal and Nicolas Serota, initiates a series of discussions about painting and pictorial practices.

The **"Espaço Lusitano"** is created in Porto, at the initiative of the artists, Gerardo Burmester and Albuquerque Mendes. This venue is to host numerous exhibitions and performing arts events until 1985.

IBM presents their **first personal computer** (PC), which uses the Microsoft (MS-DOS) operating system.

1982

"Transavanguardia Italia / America", Galleria Clivica, Modena. Exhibition curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, whose essay, "The Italian Trans-Avantgarde" promotes a return to figurative painting.

"Documenta 7" opens in Kassel, curated by Rudi Fuchs: all of the works on display were produced in the preceding 5 years. The participation of a young generation of artists is dominated by recent figurative painting. The high number of artists includes the Portuguese artist, Julião Sarmento.

First edition of **ARCO**, Madrid International Art Fair. ARCO is to serve as a relevant source of information for the artistic context in the Iberian Peninsular.

1983

"Depois do Modernismo – Uma Polêmica dos Anos Oitenta" (After Modernism – a Polemic of the 1980s), exhibition organised by Luis Serpa, Leonor Moura, António Cerveira Pinto, amongst others in the National Society of Fine Arts, in Lisbon. The artists taking part include: José Barrias, Pedro Calapez, José de Carvalho, Gaetan, Álvaro Lapa, Leonel Moura, Cerveira Pinto, Rocha Pinto, Palolo, Vitor Pomar, Sérgio Pombo, Lurdes Robalo, Julião Sarmento, Luis Serpa, Ângelo de Sousa and Mário Varela. Several of these artists participated in "Alternativa Zero", in 1977, and in the meantime had moved away from their former conceptual languages.

1984

"Os Novos Primitivos" (The New Primitives), Porto, Exhibition curated by Bernardo Pinto de Almeida. Participants: Gerardo Burmester, Luis Calheiro, Carlos Carreiro, Fernando Pinto Coelho, Álvaro Lapa, Albuquerque Mendes, Fernando M. Oliveira and Paula Rego.

In order to ensure continuity to the context created upon the announcement of "After Modernism" Luis Serpa founds the **Galeria Cômicos**, in Lisbon. This is to become an important instrument for the presentation

of an international context in the Lisbon art scene.

1985

Guerrilla Girls are founded. A group of artists begins to affix posters in the windows of a building housing several galleries, in Broadway, New York, stating: "These galleries do not present more than 10% of women...". The anonymous Girls appeared on various occasions, dressed with gorilla masks.

The **Galeria Nasoni** opens in Porto, and during the second half of the 1980s is to serve as the epicentre of the new art market in the North of Portugal.

"Live Aid." A giant concert brings together a large number of pop and rock stars, held in Philadelphia and London, and raises 70 million dollars in order to combat hunger in Africa.

1986

Joseph Beuys dies at the age of 64.

Portugal and Spain enter the European Union.

A serious accident takes place in the Soviet Union in the **Chernobyl** nuclear energy plant, dispersing radioactivity across large zones of Ukraine and Europe.

"Continentes – V Exposição Homeostética" (Continents – V Homeostetic Exhibition), in the SNBA, in Lisbon, is the most significant moment in the activity of the Homeostéticos – a group created in 1983, and bringing together the artists, Fernando Brito, Ivo, Manuel Vieira, Pedro Portugal, Pedro Prouença and Xana.

1987

"El Arte y su Doble", an exhibition curated by Dan Cameron, opens in the Fundación Caixa de Pensions, in Barcelona, bringing together 15 artists sharing a New York perspective. The 15 artists included Robert Gober, Matt Mullican, Louise Lawler, Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer, Peter Halley, Louise Lawler and Sherrie Levine.

The Portuguese State acquired the **Serralves Villa and Estate**, in Porto, in order to found a Museum of Modern Art in the site.

"Skulptur. Projekte in Münster" is inaugurated in the Westfälisches Landesmuseum, in Münster, and also in various parts of the same city. Under the curatorship of Klaus Bussmann and Kasper König, 64 artists are invited to create a specific work for public spaces.

1988

Celebration of the 100th anniversary of **Fernando Pessoa** in Portugal.

Pan Am Flight 103 explodes in a terrorist attack committed over Lockerbie, Scotland.

1989

The series of works by **Gerhard Richter** on the "Baader-Meinhof" group, entitled **October 18, 1977** is presented in the Museum Haus Esters, in Krefeld, Germany, provoking an enormous discussion.

"Magiciens de la Terre", exhibition curated by Jean-Hubert Martin in collaboration with Mark Francis, opens in the Centre Georges Pompidou and in La Grande Halle de la Villette, in Paris. The exhibition includes around 100 artists, many of which come from geographical and cultural contexts that until then had been considered to be of marginal importance within contemporary culture.

Creation of the **Serralves Foundation**, as a joint initiative between the Portuguese State and around 50 private Founders.

The Communist Government of East Germany collapses, and all restrictions on circulation between the two Germanies are removed. On the night between November 9 and 10, hundreds of thousands of citizens from East Germany cross into West Berlin, thus originating the **fall of the Berlin Wall**.

* Excerpts from the chronology published in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition.

Guided Tours

07 DEC 2006 (Thu), 18h30

by Ulrich Loock

14 DEC 2006 (Thu), 18h30

by João Fernandes

18 JAN 2007 (Thu), 18h30

by Ulrich Loock

15 FEB 2007 (Thu), 18h30

by Ricardo Nicolau

22 MAR 2007 (Thu), 18h30

by Sandra Guimarães

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The 80s: A Topology (exhibition catalogue), Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Fundação de Serralves, Porto, 2006; *Flashback: eine Revision der Kunst der 80er Jahre / Revisiting the art of the 80s* (exhibition catalogue), Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2005; *Anos 80 / The eighties* (exhibition catalogue), Culturgest, Lisbon, 1998; *Artforum International: 40th Anniversary Special Issue, The 80s: Part One*, Nr.7, March 2003; *Artforum International: 40th Anniversary Special Issue, The 80s: Part Two*, Nr.8, April 2003.

CURATORS

Ulrich Loock, Sandra Guimarães

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