Within the context of the exhibition *Chance Encounters* and as part of Karin Schneider's contribution to the show, Union Gaucha Productions invited to a screening of the 16mm film *Phantom Limb* (1997/8) on Friday evening May 29, 2009

The film is a fictional documentary about the development of modernism in three different countries: Argentina, Brazil and Poland - and introduced the idea of analogy that would form the basis for conversation on this evening.

The screening was followed by an installation walkthrough Power Point presentation of the exhibition *Tangled Alphabets: León Ferrari and Mira Schendel* (on view at The Museum of Modern Art, New York through June 15, 2009) by the curator Luis Pérez-Oramas, and a subsequent conversation between the artist Nicolás Guagnini and Pérez-Oramas on the idea of analogy. Below is an abridged excerpt from the transcript of the conversation at Ludlow 38.

Luis Pérez-Oramas:

In *Tangled Alphabets, León Ferrari and Mira Schendel*, I tried to address the fact that both artists embraced in their practice the question of language, and that they did not use language as a way to transform reality into a non-physical form, or as a tool for dematerialization, but rather informed their works with the body of language, stressing its own materiality.

The basic ideas in their general repertoire had been already set in the 1960s, which I personally relate, for Schendel at least, to the discussion about meaning and speech under the moral weight of history as tragedy: How could we say something meaningful, intelligible, how could we conceive poetry after the Holocaust? I think of Paul Celan, often, when I look at Schendel's work from the early 1960s, the same years of some of Celan's most striking poems, such as Tübingen, January: „If there came a man to the world, today/if he spoke of this time, he/ could only babble and babble..." I think Mira Schendel's work shares this spirit, she very much went through that kind of experience when she arived to Brazil as a refugee just after World War II.

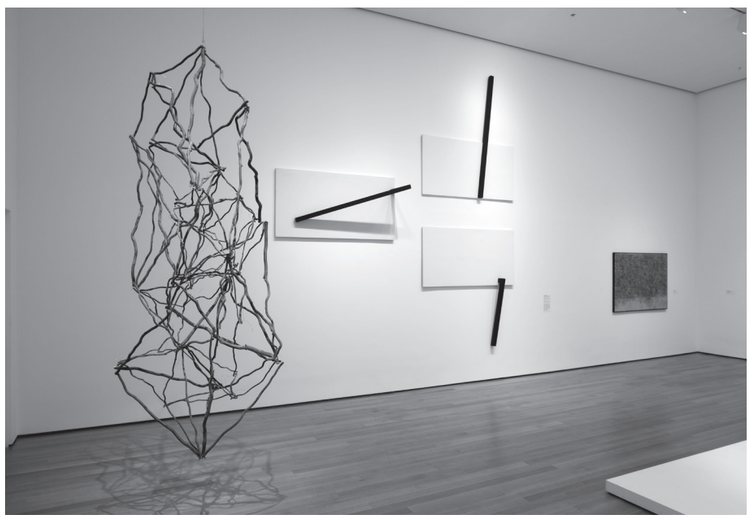
My decision of showing these two artists together, knowing that they never really met each other, and that they never had the experience of each others' work, even if Ferrari lived in the same city as Schendel, São Paulo, during the Argentine dictatorship (1976- 1983), lays on the fact that we could very much establish an argument based on visual and conceptual analogies between their works, rather than on their biographies.
The exhibition follows thus this idea of producing a montage of differences, using their objective artistic production through a process of editing gaps, where visual approximation collides with the repertoire of differences. There are tons of references in terms of coupled retrospectives, and MoMA is known for having done some of these, but framed within the conventional, organicist conception of history, and very much justified by biography, like Picasso and Braque, Cezanne and Pisarro or Matisse and Picasso.

In this case, I am trying to work out, within the space of the exhibition, the idea of transformational series, meaning that it is always possible, either formally or conceptually, to see a particular work within the light of another work, playing out their intervals as productive creases of meaning and to produce a difference within the practice of art exhibitions. Experiencing those proximities, both in terms of form and content, in their serial disposition within the exhibition space, is a way to understand their differences as a source of meaning. A work of art, as well as any symbolic object, does not exist alone, in an isolated instance. It only exists, at least in terms of its interpretation, vis-à-vis another work of art that can transform it or be transformed by it within a game of proximities and intervals, differences and gaps.
One of the strongest analogies in this exhibition revolves around the notion of knots, which is not only a visual form of link, but also a thematic form of language. I elaborate in the catalogue essay something about the archaeology of language as a knot and the idea that in some primitive appearance of language, logos is being said as something that is a knot, that is a practical device that serves as a link between things and signs. So we see the figure of a knot as a material linguistic element of language, as a knot between things, as well as a knot between linguistic elements themselves.

Installation view of the exhibition, "Tangled Alphabets: León Ferrari and Mira Schendel."
April 5, 2009 through June 15, 2009. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Therefore the show unfolds around diverse forms of entanglements in the work of these two artists. I also see an archeology of entanglements that concerns the idea of language herein played-out, if you think, for example, of Homer when Ulysses is untied; and also in the entire discussion about the origin of writing in Plato by Derrida, and the idea of writing as pharmakon. Mira Schendel's major example of entanglement could be her paper-knotted series of sculptures titled *Droguinhas*. The Droguinhas are crucial works for this discussion, or rather real theoretical objects. The word 'droguinha' means literally "little drug", which in this case embodies a formless, non-hierarchical form of sculpture made of entanglements and knots. It could be referred to the notion of writing as pharmakon, in other words writing as medicine, drug, poison, after Plato and Derrida. I see here a visualization of a problem that goes from language to the possibility of a (new) repertoire for abstraction in the 1960's.

León Ferrari left Buenos Aires in 1976 because of the dictatorship and fled to São Paulo. This is a tragic moment in his life because he lost in that dirty war his son and his daughter-in-law who was pregnant, and I think this moment led León to an entire revision of his own commitment as a militant artist. He understood an ideological link between the political tragedy and the Judeo-Christian theology of judgment. Whereas he was a conventional provocateur during the 1960's, he now became systematically someone who tried to really reveal the monstrosity of that link and the experience of human, politically and theologically grounded, violence.
At that moment, Mira Schendel is also very much involved in her own survival during the Brazilian dictatorship, and this moment ends up being a breaking point between Schendel and Catholic theology. She becomes an agnostic person, and in 1969 she produces the installation *Still Waves of Probability, (Old Testament, I Kings 19)* for the São Paulo Biennial. One can interpret this as a work about the silence of God in front of the atrocities of history, so there is an analogy owed to historical forces in the terms in which these artists react to extreme adversity.



Installation view of the exhibition, "Tangled Alphabets: León Ferrari and Mira Schendel."
April 5, 2009 through June 15, 2009. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Nicolás Guagnini:

I would like to begin with a working definition of analogy and its ideological implications. I hope that this somehow can clarify how could we then reevaluate the dubious concepts of Latin American art or Brazilian art as this exhibition that Tobi curated here, that somehow evolves around Brazil, does.

So the analogical is opposed to the identical. The identical, curatorially, would be an exhibition of things within the same class, like minimal art, or Mexican Art from the 20th century, or seascapes.
A common identity is generally defined in geographical or historical terms; or worse, in disciplinary terms like media or subject matter.
The analogical, conversely, contains two elements. One is identical and the other is different. To introduce the analogical one could use a very simple example, an atrocious simplification, like the domino game: 1-2, 2-6, 6-4, 4-5 and so on and so forth. That is a series of analogies. Analogy contains both the structure of the identical and the germ of difference, or vice-versa. It is in nature heterogeneous.
What does this have to do with the idea of Latin American art? I would say today's trends of exhibiting and collecting entwined with the American interest in Latin American art stem initially from the phenomenon of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism brought about important changes and a generally inclusive impulse, but one of its disadvantages is that it has functioned as a mapping machine that encircled each difference in order to establish identities categorically readable: Brazilian, Mexican, Latin American, etc… Encircling everything with their particular difference in a way flattens all the differences. And of course a Mexican lesbian does not equal a Brazilian black person. Differences and identities are layered and complex, which sounds obvious but it's not. Nothing is really equal, and there is no actual equality either.

So to that there was a kind of upheaval, mainly enacted through postcolonial theory, which established basically that those categories used to delineate each difference defined as an identity. And these identities were in fact determined by the culture that was doing the categorization, which again sounds obvious but was not. And now we are in a situation which supports a little bit more of complexity, like this very exhibition here at Ludlow 38 that features artists like Pablo Pijnappel who is Brazilian/ Dutch or Karin Schneider, whose work relates simultaneously to the Neoconcrete tradition and the Lower East Side, meaning she is a local artist, too.
So going back to the analogical model, it raises all the questions about power relationships. For instance Oiticica is constantly compared either to Smithson or to Yves Klein; and there is the famous written picture by Leon Ferrari, which was made about six months before the already questionable dated breakthrough of conceptual art attributed to Joseph Kosuth. It's always something established in a canon, and something that is pushing its way into it. So Ferrari becomes important because he predates Kosuth or Weiner, which in the end can only reinforce the very idea of the canon.

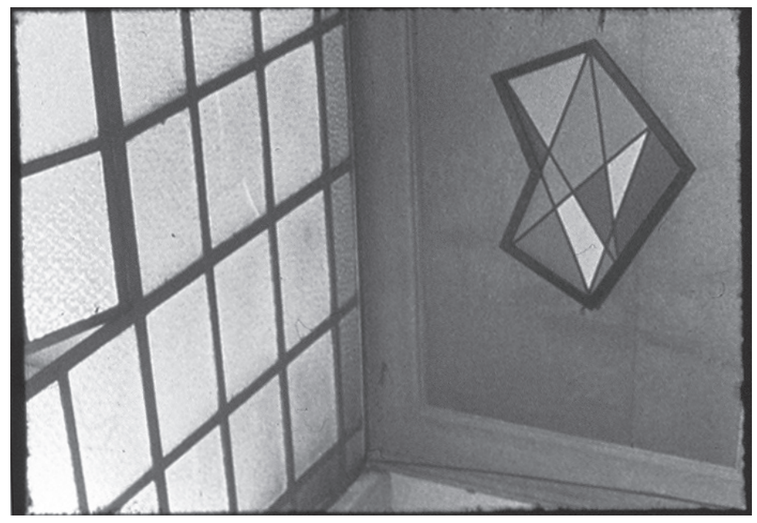
Back in 1998 when we did the film you just saw, *Phantom Limb*, this discussion was just beginning. So we did a fictional documentary about the development of modernism in three different countries: Argentina, Brazil and Poland. We decided to compare non-canonical things among themselves, instead of comparing something non-canonical and making a claim as to its importance because it predates the canon or looks like it.
These countries have in common the fact that they do have a particular cultural tradition, but they have never been centers. We can thus define them as „relative peripheries". Under these atypical cultural paradigms the system of successive breakdowns of avant-garde is replaced for an often-asynchronic continuity. This happened, of course, in different historical circumstances in each country. For instance, in Poland, the Unism developed by Streminski and Kobro since the early twenties was pushed further in the thirties until World War II, as opposed to Russian constructivism, which was crippled by Stalinism. Neoconcrete artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica departed from concrete formalism in the late fifties and ended in experimental, performatic art in the 1970's within a perfectly logical development. The film, then, rather than presenting a didactic thesis is a fictional construction of a possible art history.
So that will be a kind of genealogy of the ideological use of the analogy. My question to you as a curator is: how do you then identify the differences and mobilize them with analogies?
Is there a methodology?

LPO:

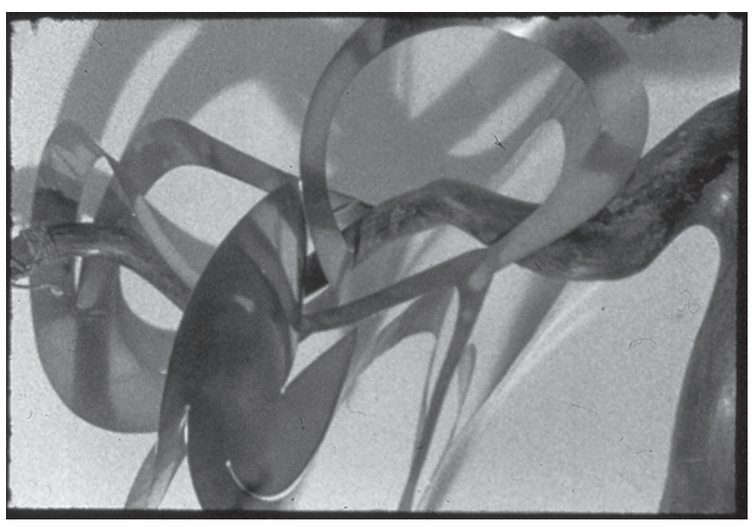
Every time I talk about analogy at the Museum, people answer "juxtaposition", which is frustrating because analogy is not about juxtaposition. Analogy, an analogical mode of thinking, is about building an experimental set of proximities, which is why you have to give yourself the freedom of producing analogies in the exhibition space, knowing that you might reject or criticize your own results.
What I would like to add to Nicolás's initial definition of the analogical is that analogy has an old "theoretical jurisprudence" in the Western history of ideas. Analogy came up as a solution within the Aristotelian tradition, to the general and fundamental problem of the separation between beings, subjects and objects. So far analogy is a great theoretical tool in order to explain the problem of ontological differences. How can you explain that something shares a form of being with something else while also being different? The answer given by those late Aristotelians in the Middle Ages was analogy as a way to predicate both the fact of something being as everything else is and the fact of that very specific something being uniquely different vis-à-vis everything else. The only way these philosophers found to approach the apparently contradictory field of being and not being, of being as everything is while being totally different than everything, was the predictability of analogies. That only means that an analogy is a way to address differences and separation, since there is something not identical in those beings, objects, and subjects. So this is actually a way to build a common ground for those differences.
In terms of art, analogy should play a major role, since art history is a discipline entirely grounded on the practice of comparisons and analogies. It is however a discipline that has grown more and more fearful of analogies and that seems only to aim at a biographical, documentary based form of analogies.

Playing out differences as a source of meaning, through a sophisticated analogical approach allows an experimental common ground that might serve to discover questions; it might generate a nice moment in front of a painting; it might transform the understanding of a work of art through another work of art, etc. I think that there lies the problem, in the sense that we as historians work necessarily on the basis of analogies, however we experience the most incredible fear that analogies could disturb our comfortable understanding of art. What we really fear is not only differences, but also the emergence of differences within differences, the realization of the universe as ultimately an infinite entanglement.
So we want to control analogies through genealogy, chronology or documentation or historiography.

Now we know that our essential art historical models are entirely grounded in an organic notion of history: a work of art as a being that is born and then grows and dies. And this is the question I am just asking: what if they are not that? What if we accept the entire repertoire of artistic practices that comes from the simple idea of an object trouve, a ready-made, meaningful chance encounters.
What about producing a curatorial model based on the theory of ready-mades – an art history of readymade encounters? I think we have an entire building of artistic practices grounded on an ideology of genealogies, and we know today that at least there is another dimension of artistic practices grounded on a different notion. So why don't we try to produce curatorial models that are more akin to understand these practices?



Phantom Limb (1997/8), 22min, b&w, silent Courtesy Union Gaucha Productions



Phantom Limb (1997/8), 22min, b&w, silent Courtesy Union Gaucha Productions

NG:

My first comment is that, having tried to use the analogical model in the gallery Orchard, one street down from here, and having treated the gallery as an art work itself I came to the realization that the basic functioning of the market is analogical. The social construct of the gallery is equally analogical. The idea of the gallery program and its stable functions analogically. That's how collections are made and that's how art is speculated with as a commodity. So in an incredible way, the market, in a most uncritical manner, contains also the form that could be subverted and made most critical.

LPO:

I would just like to make two comments to your comment:
I'd like to think about exhibitions as a sort of manifesto, a manifesto no one realizes is there, which is the only way for me to skew the "messianic" notion of the manifesto.
The other comment pertains to your statement about the gallery form, and is an anecdote that I love from the well-known matador Juan Belmonte. One day, in a "tertulia", Ramón del Valle Inclán said to him: --Juanito, the only thing that is left for you to do is to die in the bullring. And Belmonte replied: -Well, Don Ramón, I do my best, a bit.

Ludlow 38 presented in collaboration with
Union Gaucha Productions

Sunday May 17th, 7pm: ‚Body Psychotherapy in the era of isolation - an experiential lecture with Jorge Stolkiner'

In this experiential lecture we confronted the paradox of the increasing quantity of information related to the greater personal isolation; concomitant pathologies and their approach through therapy. A small experiment did show us how our own appearance reflects the sign of the times.

Jorge Stolkiner is a medical doctor, psychiatrist and orgonomist. He was born in Argentina and lives in New York.
Since 1978 Jorge Stolkiner presents orgonomy, as created by Wilhelm Reich, in a version that has developed from a dialogue with patterns of scientific thought, therapeutic developments and philosophical and religious influences occurring in over half a century of the death of Reich in 1957.
Stolkiner currently is involved in the network 'open Orgonomy', which connects the USA, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. Within this network he realizes the exchange of knowledge and therapeutical training and the research and development of a truly inclusive therapy.

published on the occasion of the exhibition

Chance Encounters: Manon de Boer, Tim Braden,
Pablo Pijnappel, Karin Schneider

May 3 – June 21, 2009

Two events were hosted, programed by Karin Schneider as part of her contribution to the exhibition:

Sunday May 17th, 7pm:
Body Psychotherapy in the era of isolation - an experiential lecture with Jorge Stolkiner

Friday May 29th, 7pm:
Screening: *Phantom Limb* (1997/8) - by Union Gaucha Productions
followed by a conversation between Nicolás Guagnini and Luis Pérez-Oramas the curator of the exhibition *Tangled Alphabets: León Ferrari and Mira Schendel* (Museum of Modern Art, New York April 5 - June 15, 2009)
an excerpt of this conversation can be found on the reverse

curated by Tobi Maier
publication designed by Yildiz Aslandogan

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Press release

On journeys I often find myself in the situation to eat in between places, so it is with joy that I remember sites where I can observe the surroundings and sometimes start a casual conversation with a shopkeeper or other guests around me. When I first entered Bar Jorge Americano, a construction by Tim Braden, I felt immediately taken out of the art context within which it was presented. I felt glued to the bar, tried to identify some of the football players on the paintings, the woman with the feathered hat. I was led to believe to be in a roadside restaurant, with a singer appearing any minute from behind the curtain. But who was Jorge Americano? My eyes were compelled to penetrate deeper into the paintings on the walls. My gaze paused at people around me. Hardly anyone sat down in the makeshift restaurant. Now I wanted to bring it alive again as space for analysis, conversation, to socialize.

For Chance Encounters I selected two films by Manon de Boer and Pablo Pijnappel. Their films to me resemble journeys through the urban and rural and show people in transit, as they go after their daily routines. Filmed from the front of the car or through the side window of a bus I feel like participating in their road trips. Not completely unlike the phantasm of Jorge Americano the films function also as introductions to a couple of idiosyncratic figures. To begin with I empathize with the figure of Suely Rolnik, with her drug experiences, the repression from police forces she experienced, her life in exile, the feeling of losing ones own language, of being a foreigner. The concrete desert cityscape that Manon portrays evokes sensations of familiarity and nostalgia in me, but it also confronts with the shelters we built to withdraw from the public of the megalopolis to the private realm.

Subsequently Pablo sketches a portrait of family history, his father's and grandfather's. I asked myself what makes it so hard for Walderedo Jr. to maintain a 'normal' life with his children and his wife who tries to understand him for the last 13 years? What comes to his mind when he thinks about Walderedo Ismael de Oliveira's practice in a rural psychoanalytical hospital in the 1940's? What is his anguish and why doesn't he speak? I can feel with Walderedo's melancholy and sadness for the world. With Pablo, I follow him to the beaches, to the steel and glass towers, to meditate in seclusion.

Somehow my situation was akin to watching a performance at the beginning and acting in it towards the end, because conversations with Karin Schneider made me reconsider this press release and rewrite it completely. In a psychoanalytical exercise I try to associate freely between the works on view and unlearn the parameters of writing about art I have exercised for many years. Thus this press release was my task and also became her work. I look forward to discovering with you more about Jorge Americano, Suely, Walderedo, and ourselves. During the events program that accompanies the show and which is organized in association with Union Gaucha Productions we'll try to also introduce you to the Poison of Tunga, Mira Schendel & Leon Ferrari and the practice of analyst Wilhelm Reich.

Karin Schneider, *Untitled* 2009

During a studio visit and an exchange between Karin Schneider and Tobi Maier about the exhibition *Chance Encounters*, Karin decided that her participation in the exhibition would be the production of a new press release by Tobi practicing the technique of free association. The new press release, written by Tobi, became Karin's piece in the show.

opposite page
Tim Braden, Jorge Americano sign (2009), enamel on aluminium, 10 sheets each 75 x 60.5cm
Installation view of Tim Braden, Restaurante Jorge Americano (2008-2009), mixed media installation

Pablo Pijnappel, Walderedo (2006), 16mm, color, sound, 31min (shown May 29 – June 21)

Tim Braden, Chicken/colour chart (2009), acrylic on board, 45 x 62.5cm & 32 x 25.5cm

this page
Installation view of Tim Braden, Restaurante Jorge Americano (2008-2009), mixed media installation

Installation views of Manon de Boer, Resonating Surfaces (2005), video, color, stereo sound, 39min
(shown May 3 – 24)

Installation view of Pablo Pijnappel, Walderedo (2006), 16mm, color, sound, 31min

clockwise