

Conversations between Artists, Writers, Actors, Directors, Musicians—Since 1981

BOMB

Joanne Greenbaum
Gyula Kosice
Richard Thompson
Fiona Maazel
Matías Piñero
Abraham Cruzvillegas
Hope Gangloff
David Grubbs
Phillip Lopate

\$7.95 US / \$7.95 CANADA
FILE UNDER ART AND CULTURE
DISPLAY UNTIL SEPTEMBER 15, 2013



Number 124 / Summer 2013

extent, and that's *The Plain Where the Palace Stood*. I didn't have to wait until I was old for "late work." Late work happens 30 minutes into an album!

CSY I am fascinated with those arcs that happen over the course of years and years. That is very much what I hoped to explore on *Transitions*. It's tight songs, a lot of rules—nothing gets too weird. And it ends up being weird anyway because of those rules, but not overtly.

I'm on a couple of tracks of *The Plain Where the Palace Stood*. I was talking with Nate Wooley, who appears on *Optimist*, and I made this joke that as soon as I burst in on the scene on the first track, it feels somehow disconnected from what's going on—

DG Oh, do you mean your violin playing is disconnected on that track or from the rest of the record?

CSY I generally feel that way when I hear myself playing on someone else's record. The circumstances in which I contributed to *The Plain* were very much "in person." There's this live feel that I assume you intended to keep?

DG Absolutely.

CSY Has that always been the case with the song-based records? Maybe because of your time in rock bands, you want to do whole-band takes and whole overdubs in the studio without too much editing?

DG I do a lot of editing, but I like to play with people who are good improvisers, who can really go for it in a way that I myself don't necessarily do. In asking you to not prepare in advance, I was looking for a certain quality that I don't hear in my own playing, which is more prearranged. I was looking for an improviser, a wilder, go-for-it quality, which is also the way that Nate Wooley has played on those records. On Gastr del Sol's *Croakt, Crackt or Fly* there's one song where it really falls apart. John McEntire is one of the most amazing no-sweat-I-got-it, first-take drummers, and I think it's the one time ever that, while the tape was rolling, you can hear the gears jamming and the smoke coming out of his ears. I love it! It felt like a never-to-be-repeated moment from John, who is the most methodical of timekeepers and percussionists. That kind of unrepeatable quality is what I hope to find with other improvisatory musicians.

CSY You definitely got that in my takes on the new record.

DG There was a period when I felt, I'm the songwriter who plays with improvisers, with people who don't repeat themselves.

CSY About an hour ago, I was trying to ask you about this particular "David Grubbs sound."

DG My core musical identity—

CSY I feel like I have an insight now—

DG Colon: likes to revise. (laughter) I've always done a poor job of encapsulating what I do in a few words. When musicians describe what they do, for better or worse—although I usually think it's for the better—it's not as precise as with most visual artists, who seem to be trained in talking the talk.

CSY Do people still strictly approach you as "just a musician," despite all your other interests and efforts?

DG The reason I love doing those collaborations is because there's rarely a tidy division of labor. Playing live to a solid-light film by Anthony McCall made me learn more about McCall's visual art and about installation practices in general. Also, through the conversations and projects with Susan Howe, I learned more about poetry. I believe, like a lot of people, that there can be a degree of randomness to one's professional identity. My own professional identity is primarily as a musician, it's what I've done the longest. But I've also been teaching for seven years now, so there are plenty of people who think of me as an academic. I've just finished a book that's about to come out that will add a different wrinkle to my professional identity. It's only troublesome when you feel like you're being talked down to as a musician.

CSY I think that's what I'm trying to get at.

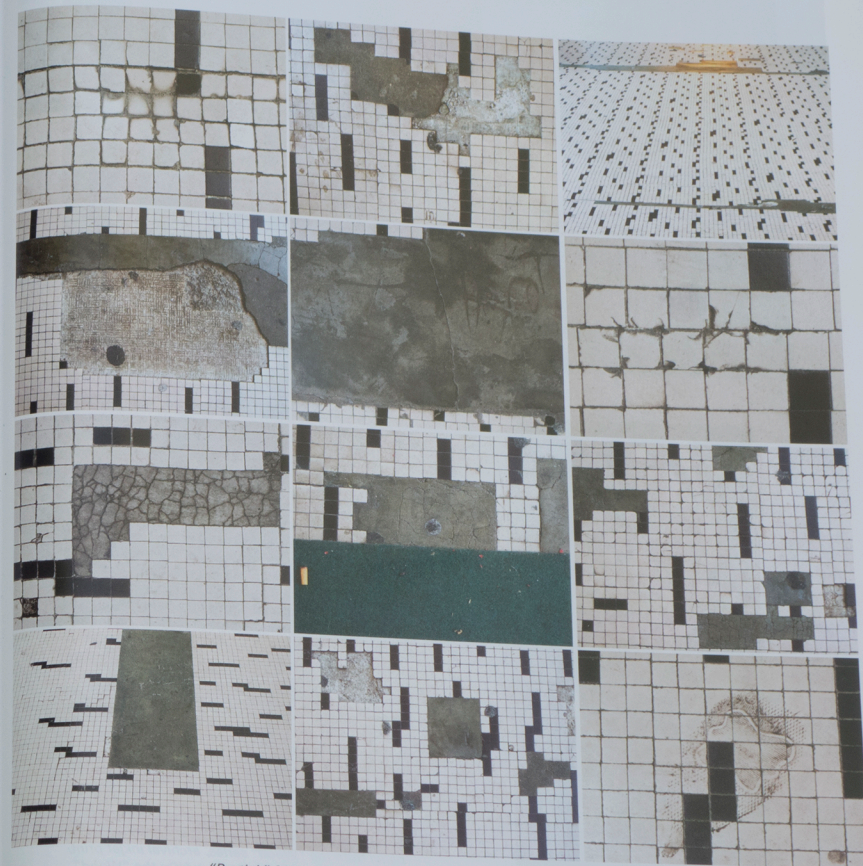
DG Like Duchamp clearly felt that people were talking down to him as a painter. He couldn't stand people thinking that he was, above all, just an intuitive maker of images. For much of my time, I am an intuitive maker of sounds and musical compositions.

The person transcribing this interview can't see this, but I'm shrugging my shoulders very slowly, very dramatically. (laughter)

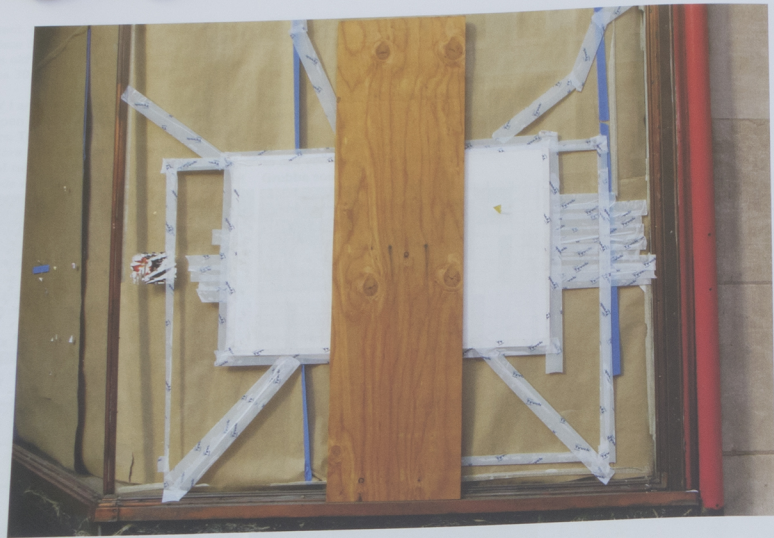
CSY You are writing and teaching, but at the end of the day, you would still be "just a musician." I often think about that tag and about all the possible transitions, like actors with rock bands and musicians who become actors. I very much agree with you that it can feel random or like stumbling around. Maybe I'm envious of people who decide "I'm going to become this," and just figure out how to do it.

DG I generally am not envious of people who found their callings as painters or as documentary filmmakers because often times it's stunting when people identify too strongly with their professions. One of the things that's in fact difficult to take seriously in academia is the extent to which many people are so strongly identified with their areas of expertise. Everything I do as a teacher is to push in the opposite direction. I'm happy not to be a professor of English specializing in early 20th-century American poetry and living in a college town somewhere. I feel really fortunate that I didn't wind up foreclosing all these other things that I have done and that I want to do.

Portfolio: Paola Ferrario



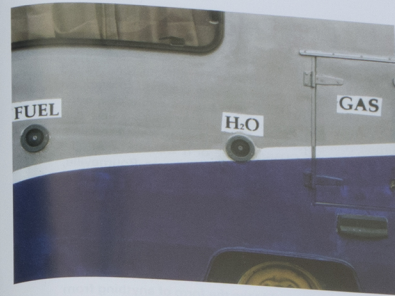
"Portici," 2012, archival inkjet print, grid 4 feet, 3 inches × 4 feet, 3 inches. Images courtesy of the artist.



For the past five years I have been engaged in a quixotic process cataloguing the artifacts of a material world in decline. My archive—personal, often diaristic—tracks the efforts people make to repair and adorn their surroundings. The photographs fall into different series—"Hands," "Wood," "Cars," "Asphalt" etc.—which are distinct in form but emanate from a consistent observational logic.

"Wood" is a series of over 40 images that pay witness to the strange permutations of this material, most of them the result of human intervention. "Portici" is a meditation on the 45-year-old mosaic paving the arcade under the apartment building where I was raised, in the small industrial town of Rho, Italy. As the tiles began to come undone in the 1980s, they were replaced with patches of gray concrete that fragmented the original modernist pattern. The 5-foot-square, 12-part grid reproduced here is complemented by two related works: "Restauro dei Portici," a performance/protest that can be viewed on YouTube; and a set of postcards, one for each of the 12 panels, plus a 13th entitled "Zia Maria," in which the pavement is brought into reality through the record of its use.

top: Detail from *Adam and Eve*, 2011, 4-piece panel from the "Wood" series, archival inkjet print, 13 x 16 1/4 inches; left: Veneer from the "Wood" series, archival inkjet print, 11 x 16 3/10 inches.



Clockwise from top left: *Untitled #4*, *Untitled #2*, *Untitled #7*, 2011–2012, from the "Cars" series, archival inkjet prints, 8 1/2 x 11 inches.