

## Hans Schabus

Institut d'art contemporain, [Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, France](#)

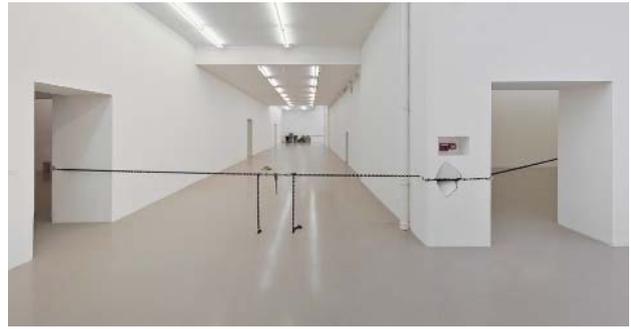
If chains are usually associated with restriction and confinement, in architecture they represent one of the conditions for a structure's vertical and technical expansion. Austrian artist Hans Schabus's installation *Meterriss* (Level Line, 2011) works in an opposite fashion. A 75-metre-long chain encircling the heart of the exhibition space was gradually tightened until it tore into the sheetrock walls and bent the metal rods supporting them. Exercizing this pressure has revealed the innards of the décor, the structure of the construction housing the show, the way an archaeological site is sometimes uncovered when a motorway is being built. Suspended at a height of one metre above the ground, the stretched chain limits viewers' movements, creating their route while keeping them on the threshold of the venue's interior. The authoritarian dimension of this powerful sculptural gesture exposes the white cube – usually regarded as the natural habitat of the work of art – as a cultural construct.



This piece might have been sufficient as an exhibition in itself, in a kind of sculptural and Brutalist appropriation of the teachings of Daniel Buren and Michael Asher, but it also offers an opportunity to develop and link the complex, overlapping aspects that inform all of Schabus's work in this solo exhibition, 'Nichts geht mehr'. In addition to critiquing the ideological and structural framework of the space, Schabus introduces a private, biographical dimension focused on the theme of the studio as a metaphor for the mental space where creative processes are tried and tested. This space is the pre-condition for the art institution, where thought is frozen and observed for a while. Whether one thinks of Marcel Broodthaers accommodating his fictitious museum in his apartment, or Urs Fischer re-creating his studio in the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the to-and-fro introduced by Schabus between his workplace and the Institut d'art contemporain is developed in a more fragmentary way. With *République* (Republic, 2010), he presents his studio staircase by placing it parallel to the floor, once again hampering the viewer's body by hijacking the staircase's functions of elevation and passage. Like a spatial and sculptural marker, the metal structure rests on plaster discs drilled out of a nearby wall, whose hollowed out imprints called the outside world to mind. The less spectacular *Der Letzter Dreck* (The Last Dirt, 2007), a small mound of dust, bits of wood and cigarette butts brought together when the artist cleaned his old studio prior to handing it over, functioned like the traces of the work done on the spot, with one space giving way to another. Placed in the gallery cordoned off by the chain of *Meterriss*, this work also invites the spectator to cross that physical barrier in order to get a proper look at it.



By applying a principle of de-territorialization, which encourages a shift of context, Schabus extends the Duchampian appropriation of the standardized object to a place containing a personal or collective history, and raises the issue of individual action in a world marked by the ebb-and-flow of globalization. His work *Welt* (World, 2008) is devised on the basis of the artist's own stamp collection as a teenager, which he reorganized not by country or year, in accordance with traditional philatelic classification, but by colour. The chromatic range overlays the illustrations of political figures, animals and places, thereby questioning conventional hierarchies. Schabus plays on the title's ambiguity, referring as much to a personal and private world as to an abstract global entity, with its established rules for determining ways in which goods and leisure pursuits appear and disappear.



It would be a mistake to imagine Schabus as a stay-at-home hermit, despondent in his studio. From his journey through the sewers of Vienna in a collapsible sailboat called *Forlorn* – a nod to Bas Jan Ader – to the project of discovering the western United States in a mobile home, following a plan defined by the shape of an unfolded pack of beer, Schabus's desire to undergo the physical experience of the world is expressed through derisory and poetic procedures, where conceptual projections and romantic aspirations intersect.



Translated by Simon Pleasance

Quelle: Raphaël Brunel, in: <http://www.frieze.com/shows/review/hans-schabus/>, 24/03/2011.