

A close-up photograph of a man's face, split vertically down the middle. The left side is a grayscale image, while the right side is in color. The man has dark hair and is looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a blue denim shirt. A hand is visible at the bottom left, holding a white rectangular card that covers the left side of his face.

William Anastasi

COPENHAGEN

COLOGNE

HAMBURG

William Anastasi

WILLIAM ANASTASI

Copenhagen - Cologne - Hamburg

All works by William Anastasi

Publisher | Stalke Galleri

Text | Jacob Lillemose

Design | Kristian Jakobsen, MOWgrafisk

Print | Trekrøner Grafisk A/S

Cover photo | William Anastasi

Photographers | Sam Jedig, bla-bla, bla-bla.

Thank you | Sam Jedig, bla-bla, bla-bla. bla-bla, bla-bla.
bla-bla, bla-bla. bla-bla, bla-bla. bla-bla, bla-bla. bla-bla,
bla-bla. bla-bla, bla-bla..

ISBN 87-90538-24-2

All rights © Stalke Galleri and William Anastasi



STALKE GALLERI
"New paperworks" April 15th - May 19th 2005

Stalke Galleri
Vesterbrogade 184
1800 Copenhagen F
Denmark
Phone: +45 3321 1533 or +45 4649 2670
E-mail: stalke@stalke.dk
Website: www.stalke.dk

THOMAS REHBEIN GALLERY
"Without titel", April 30th - June 21st, 2005.

Thomas Rehbein Gallery
Maria-Hilf-Str. 17
50677 Köln
Germany
Phone: +49 (0) 221 310 10 00
Fax: +49 (0) 221 310 10 03
E-mail: art@rehbein-galerie.de
Website: www.rehbein-galerie.de

ART AGENTS GALLERY
"Blind", 4th June 2005 - 31th July 2005

Art Agents Gallery
Wilstofer Str. 71, Fabrikhalle Phoenix, Tor 2
21073 Hamburg-Harburg
Germany
Phone: +49 40-8997551 or +49 40-8997552
Website: www.artagents.de
E-mail: info@artagents.de

William Anastasi
interviewed by Jacob Lillemose

For the show at art agents in Hamburg you'll have painters camouflage their entire gallery, the walls, pipes, fixtures, everything. A sketch of this idea was shown at the Thomas Rehbein Gallery in Cologne. Now there's the obvious reference to the current situation in Iraq, the ubiquitous terrorist threat, the growing feeling that wherever we turn there's war. But my understanding is that the project dates back to the 60's and the political atmosphere of that time.

In late 1966 when the US was raining bombs on Vietnam I offered the camouflage project, in part, as a response. I proposed a number of other projects for the Dwan Gallery in New York as well. Each of these projects involved the idea of the self-referential – the gallery space would be the common component of the exhibit. Because the slot allotted for the exhibition was in the middle of the exhibition schedule and considerable time would be needed to return the gallery to its original state, the camouflage project was not realized. But the work was finally realized thirty-six years later. As chance would have it, the exhibition opened, after a week of preparation, almost to the day of the US invasion of Iraq.

Months earlier the writer Thomas McEvelley, sensing the drums of war, reminded Juan Puentes, director of the White Box Gallery in New York, about my having proposed camouflaging the Dwan Gallery in the 60's. Puentes called me and asked whether I would exhibit the piece with them. We met and it was arranged.

My interest in finally realizing this work stemmed as much from the purely conceptual side of the idea as from the timely political side of it. To camouflage the inside of something is a blatant inversion. Camouflage by any definition is for the outside of things. In the usual way of looking at it camouflaging the inside of something is an absurdity.

Were the other projects also dealing with political issues?

In the art sense of political, absolutely – but not in the sense of war and peace. I focused on these self-referential projects most of all as simply works of art – like all works of art they would be open to a wide range of responses.

Could you describe some of the other projects?

One proposal was to erect vertical and horizontal chain link fencing twelve inches from every surface – walls, floor, ceiling, making in effect an enormous cage within the gallery.

In an obvious way, war is like a cage, isn't it?

Another proposal was to make large photo-silkscreen paintings of the walls on which the paintings were to be hung. This work would be



CAMOUFLAGE | 1966/2003

titled Six Sites and it was the exhibition that was actually mounted. At the time I actually referred to this exhibit as "bomb art". The reference was to the situation in the 60's. The US and Russia both had nuclear weapons, and enough of them to virtually wipe out human life. This steeped the Western world, in fact the whole world, in an understandable paranoia. I thought that maybe it's too late for artists to continue skipping through reality choosing this corner or that to idealize. The threat of mutual annihilation seemed to make that quaint, if not archaic. In that sense you could call this anti-art.

Camouflage – this abstracted and formalized image of nature – is intended to fool the eye. Is that what you mean in the title of the work, Blind?

That, and of course, hunters hiding themselves call that location a blind. And back to war, we continue blindly going at it despite our solid knowledge concerning its dependable horror. Bertolt Brecht has it that war, like love, always finds a way.

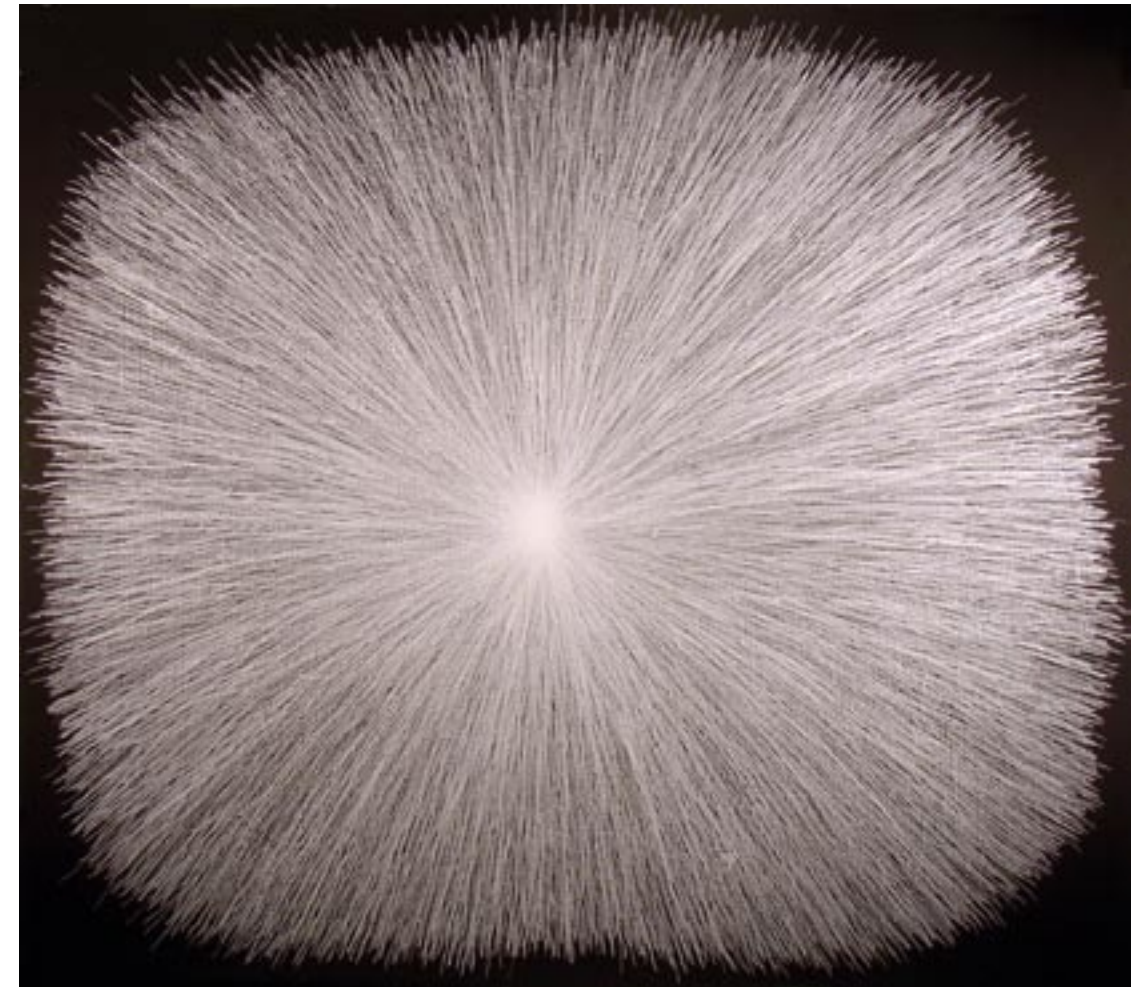
Camouflage placed out of context presented where it's never been makes it unnatural in a different way.

Camouflaging in its usual use makes something less visible. Doing the same to the inside of a room would tend to make everything more visible. Kafka's aphorism comes to mind: "You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at

your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait. Be quite and still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet."

Blindness, although in quite a different sense, is a significant aspect of your 'blind' drawings. These point to a continuous theme in your work – the transmission of energy through the hands' and arms' interaction with the physical world. How did you begin drawing without using your sight?

The first of these were dot drawings, Constellations I called them. Then I did pocket drawings. I'm currently exhibiting three at Stalke Galleri in Copenhagen in a show devoted to drawings and two from 1969 are concurrently included in an exhibition at MoMA in New York called, "Drawings from the Collection, 1945-1975". But their origin began with my love for silent movies, which I prefer as a genre. I felt a bit wayward watching so many of them, feeling it was interfering with my work. This led to my folding and refolding a piece of paper, sticking it in my side pants pocket and drawing with a stub of pencil while watching a silent film at MoMA or elsewhere. I came to enjoy the idea that my mind was occupied one place and my hand was behaving independently. It was a way of drawing without consulting my aesthetic sense, oblivious, in fact, to art making, to art in general, to art history, to myself hopefully. Then I found that



BLIND DRAWING | 2003

my interest in the activity did not depart after the lights went on – I would find myself continuing on the subway ride home. But a hand moving inside my pocket might be a misdemeanor in a subway car with other passengers. Necessity being the mother of invention, I could soon be found, eyes closed, sitting with a drawing pad on my lap holding a pencil like a dart in one or each hand, the point resting on the pad's surface. With practice my mind would eventually be as far from drawing there as it had been at the movies. I would in time describe this side of my work as being closer to calisthenics than to aesthetics.

And we know you love calisthenics...

Maybe that's why I do so many, a little like an obsession. I wear sound attenuating head phones. It makes the raucous subway racket almost ethereal -- and the drawing even more phenomenological. I am consciously distancing myself from drawing as I draw.

In this sense the blind drawings are clearly emblematic of your performative and instrumental use of the body.

Both my mind and body are getting exercise. I have always tried to escape my aesthetic prejudice of the moment. For me the only interesting thing about taste is that it's always changing.

Your camouflage project, proposed in 1966 and first realized at the White Box in 2003, connects to your other work in the 60's involving what you refer to as "recipes". There is a significant



NINE POLAROID PHOTOGRAPHS OF A MIRROR COLLECTION: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART | 1967

tradition of "art by instruction" within the various kinds of conceptual art practiced by Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, Robert Barry, among others.

It's conceivable that this very project was suggested to me by an interview of Duchamp by Dore Ashton published in *Studio International* in June 1966. I don't recall reading that article when it came out but coming across it years later wondered whether I might have. Duchamp says: "Once, many years ago, I was dining with some artists at the old *Hôtel des Artistes* here in New York and there was a huge old-fashioned painting behind us – a battle scene, I think. So I jumped up and signed it. You see, that was a ready-made, which had everything except taste." Interestingly, the painting Duchamp thought might have been a battle scene was actually large nudes but the idea of battle was in the title.

Wasn't the camouflage proposal around the same time as *Trespass and Issue*?

Yes. Both of these pieces have what I call recipes. For instance, the recipe for *Trespass*, also from 1966, runs "Cut perpendicularly, with a mat knife, to a depth of one-quarter inch the four sides of a rectangle marked on a plaster wall. With a rounded, textured stone, comfortable to the grip, rub firmly and evenly across the delineated area." It's of interest that the camouflage idea calls for completely covering the wall while *Trespass* and *Issue* call for physically removing a wall's surface.

And on the subject of recipes the instructions for *Sink* of 1963 reads, "Set a rectangular piece of hot-rolled carbon steel level on a floor. Pour on it a measure of tap water so that the resulting pond holds its position short of overflow. Each time the water evaporates, repeat." The surface of the steel will slowly be invaded by rust whereas the wall's surface is quickly invaded in the two other cases.

How did this concept of recipes come to you?

The stimulus for *Sink* and the quite separate lead-up to the *Constellation Drawings* each figure in this. In the case of *Sink* I had asked a scientist what in the world rust was about. He said that the iron ore taken from the mountain was virtually useless, except maybe as a doorstop – it's not at all malleable. When some early genius succeeded in refining it by heating and skimming off its impurities we ended up with steel. Things were now in place for the industrial revolution. But the steel forever after would be taking from the moisture in the atmosphere the very elements that had been removed when it was refined – it's as though it has a memory. I remember thinking that this was the most poetic thing I had ever heard. Within days I drove to Brooklyn and brought back a slab of steel, 20 by 20 by one half inch. The recipe practically wrote itself. In the case of the *Constellations* there was no written recipe. I simply decided to make a dotted blind drawing, one for each of the ninety-six preludes and fugues in *Bach's Well Tempered Clavier*. As with the first



ISSUE | 1966

pocket drawings something akin to guilt played a part. I had just acquired the first ever recording of the complete work on six long-playing records that the Polish harpsichordist Wanda Landowska had recently recorded. I found myself listening more than I thought was good for me. Since I often listen to music with eyes closed the idea of doing a drawing in this state was natural enough. I found it an intriguing challenge to have the tapping of the pen point on the pad at odds with the rhythmic progress of the music. Actually easier said than done especially with the percussive sound of a harpsichord. This eventually became almost a meditation device, a way of separating the mental process. The ears and the mind were following the music while the hand was trying to go its own way.

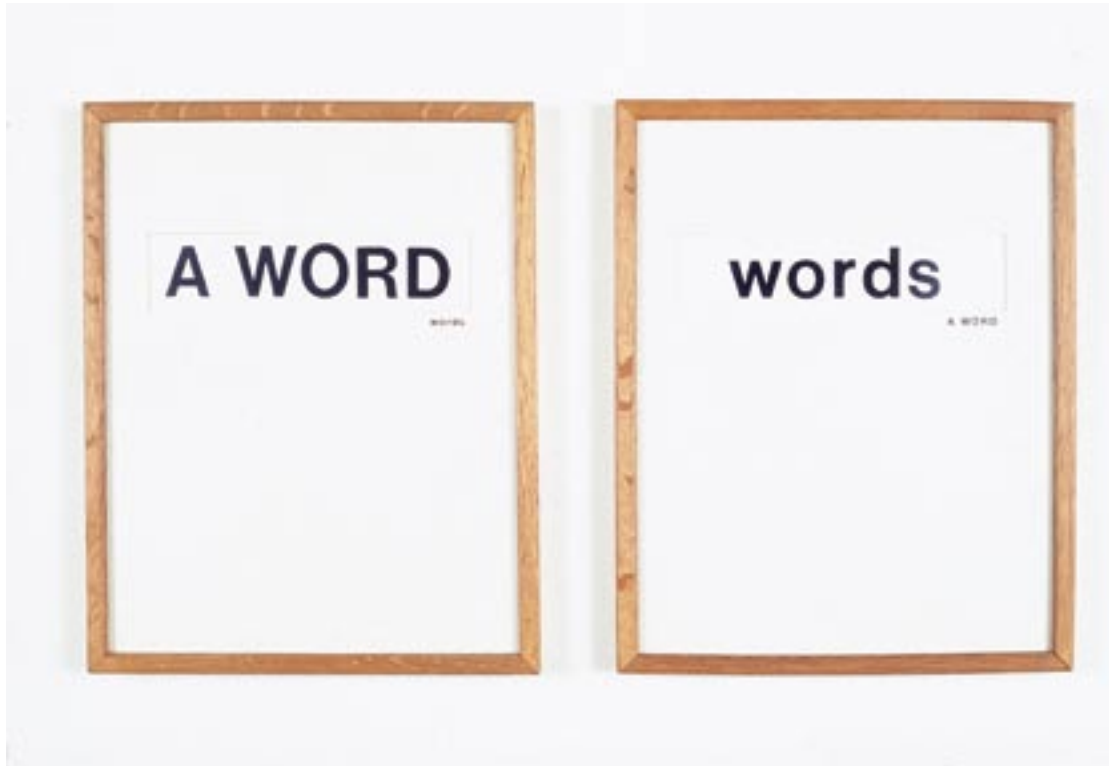
Sink brings to mind tautology, which is one of the continuous threads in your work whether text pieces, objects or photographs. What is your fascination with the self-referential and the circular in general?

Label of 1967, I guess, is as self-referential as it gets -- or as site specific if you like that word. I printed a label that reads, "William Anastasi, b. 1933, Label, 1967, type on paper". Then I printed another one exactly the same and exhibited them next to each other. The one on the right was a work of art, the one on the left was its label. That's probably as dumb an idea as I've ever had. I used to say that if something was dumb enough in the

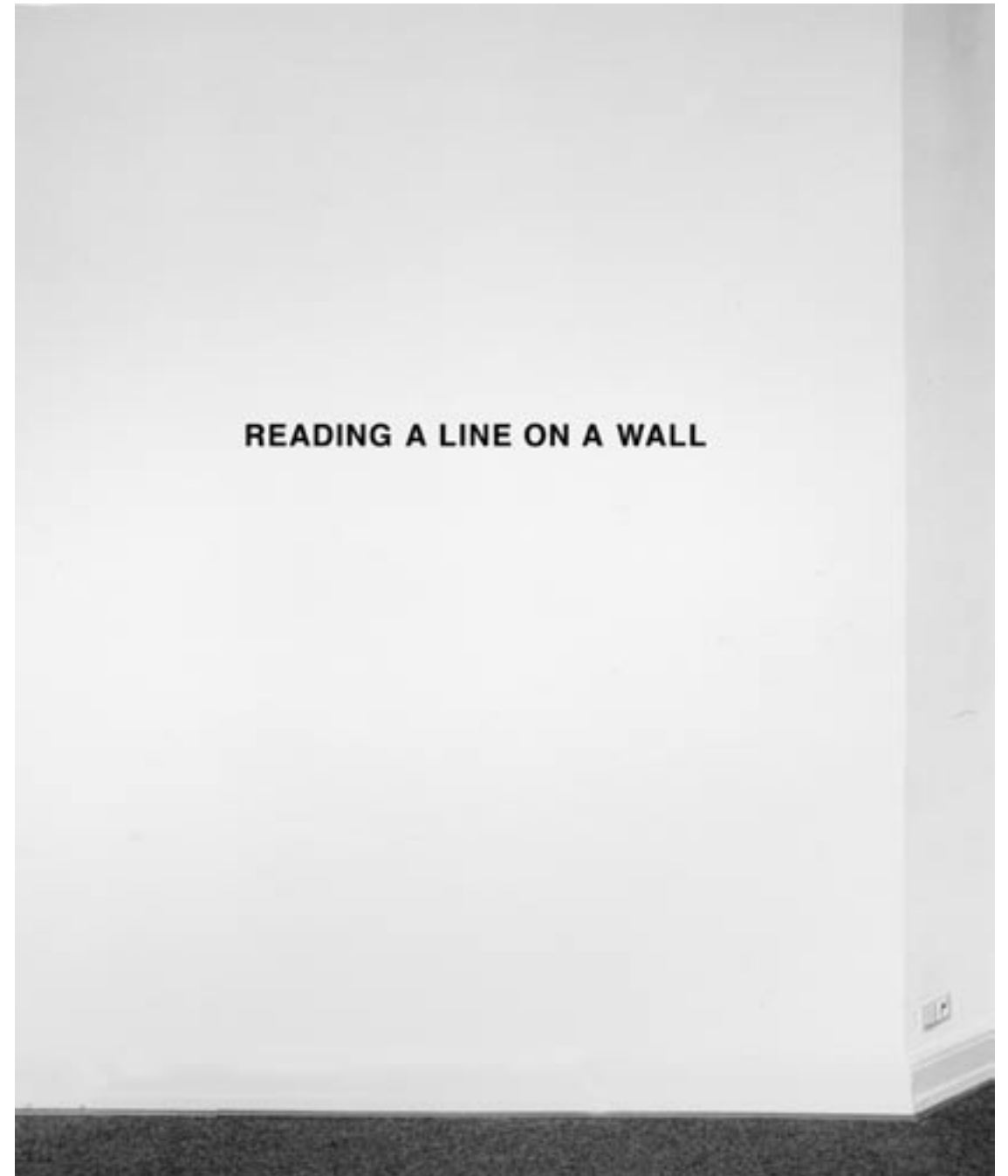
right way, it might be brilliant. This is one of my early pieces that pops back into my mind from time to time. I'm of the opinion that every living organism is only cable of acting in self-interest if it's looked at from a sufficient height. A statement of Darwin's that I discovered recently is relevant: "Free will is a delusion caused by our inability to analyze our own motives." I have often viewed "free will" as an amusing oxymoron. All of this seems to be part of a belief system that somehow connects with those works of mine that have been called tautological. I came across Darwin's remark at least thirty years after I had titled the closed-circuit video transmission of a corner of a room **Free Will**. I felt that I had a prestigious ally. The video piece **Free Will** had been inspired partially by the same Vietnam debacle that contributed to the camouflage proposal. The blind individuals who endorse an aggressive warfare are the very ones most likely to cling to a moralistic belief in free will. Probably all of my "self-referential" gestures in art are to some extent involved with my outlook on these questions.



FREE WILL | 1968



A WORD – WORDS | 1979



READING A LINE ON A WALL | 1967



XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX | 19XX



XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX | 19XX



WORLD MAP | 2003



HAND, POCKET DRAWING | 2005



DIPTYCH, SELF PORTRAIT | 1967/2000
Collection of Merce Cunningham

SOLO EXHIBITIONS - selected

William Anastasi
born Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1933

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| 2005 | "Blind" art agents gallery, Hamburg, Germany
"Ohne Titel" Thomas Rehbein Galerie, Köln, Germany
"William Anastasi" Stalke Kunsthandel, Copenhagen, Denmark | 1989 | "A Selection of works from 1960 to 1989",
The Scott Hanson Gallery, New York |
| 2003 | "Blind" The Annex, NY | 1988 | Stalke Galleri, Kopenhagen |
| 2001 | "William Anastasi: A Retrospective"
Nikolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art
Center, Copenhagen, Denmark | 1987 | Bess Cutler Gallery, New York |
| 2000 | art agents Gallery, Hamburg | 1982 | "Diary Paintings", Ericson Gallery |
| 1999 | "...vor mehr als einem halben Jahrhundert,"
Landes Museum, Linz, Germany
Gary Tatintian Gallery, NY | 1981 | "Coincidents", The Whitney Museum of
American Art, New York |
| 1998 | "I Am A Jew," The Philadelphia Museum of Judaica,
Philadelphia, PA | 1979 | "Re-revisions: Perspectives and Proposals in Film and
Video", The Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York
"Coincidents", Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf
Max Hetzler, Stuttgart |
| 1997 | "The Painting of the Word Jew,"
Sandra Gering Gallery, NY
Hubert Winter Gallery, Vienna, Austria | 1978 | "Terminus", The Hudson River Museum, New York |
| 1996 | Stalke Kunsthandel, Copenhagen, Denmark | 1977 | PS.1 Museum, The Institute of Art and
Urban Resources, New York |
| 1995 | "William Anastasi: A Retrospective (1960-95)",
Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, PA
"Abandoned Paintings",
Sandra Gering Gallery, New York | 1973 | O. K. Harris Gallery, New York |
| 1993 | "Du Jarry", Sandra Gering Gallery, New York
"Drawing Sounds: An Installation in Honor of John
Cage", The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia | 1970 | "Continuum", Dwan Gallery, New York |
| 1992 | "Works 1963-1992", Anders Tornberg Gallery, Lund | 1967 | "Six Sites", Dwan Gallery, New York |
| 1991 | "Sink, Trespass, Issue, Incision",
Sandra Gering Gallery, New York | 1966 | "Sound Objects", Dwan Gallery, New York |
| | | 1965 | Witherspoon Gallery,
University of North Carolina |
| | | 1964 | Washington Square Gallery, New York |

GROUP EXHIBITIONS - selected

- 2003 The Invisible Thread: Buddhist Spirit in Contemporary Art, Snug Harbor, New York
Davidson Art Gallery, Wesleyan University, Middletown, USA
- 2001 Visions From American Art: Photographs from the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1940-2000, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 2000 Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964-1977, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; curated by Chrissie Iles
"The American Century, 1950-2000," The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY
- 1999 Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years, La Fundacio Antoni Tapiès, Barcelona, Spain
Afterimage, curated by Connie Butler, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
- 1998 Drawing is another kind of language: Recent American drawings from a New York private collection, Kunstmuseum Ahlen, Ahlen, Germany
Re:Duchamp/Contemporary Artists Respond to Marcel Duchamp's Influence, Abraham Lubelsky Gallery, NY
- 1997 Drawing is another kind of language: Recent American drawings from a New York private collection, Harvard University, Sackler Gallery, Cambridge, MA
- 1995 "Sound Sculpture: Music for the Eyes", Ludwig Museum, Koblenz
"Joyce and the Visual Arts", The Rosenbach Museum & Library, Philadelphia
"Dark Room", Stark Gallery, New York
- 1994 "Drawings" (with Dove Bradshaw), Werner H. Kramarsky, New York
"Autobodyography" (with Dove Bradshaw), Sandra Gering Gallery, New York
- 1993 "Rolyholyoover: A Circus" (curated by John Cage and Julie Lazar), MOCA, Los Angeles, Le Centre Pompidou, Paris, The Guggenheim Museum, New York, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Mito Art Tower, Mito, Japan
- 1991 "imitating nature in her manner of operation..." (with Dove Bradshaw, John Cage, Tom Marioni, Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Tobey), Sandra Gering Gallery, New York
- 1989 The Leo Castelli Gallery, Performing Arts Benefit
- 1988 "Benefit for Contemporary Performance Arts Inc.", Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
Stalke Galleri, Kopenhagen
- 1987 "Reading Art", The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York
- 1982 "Annual Awards", The American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York
"Exhibition in Honor of John Cage", The American Center, Paris
- 1981 "Biennial '81", The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 1980 "Film as Installation", The Clocktower, New York
"Für Augen und Ohren", Akademie der Künste, Berlin
"Ecoute par les Yeux", Musee D'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
- 1979 "Sound", P.S.1 Museum, Long Island City
"Terminus", The Hudson River Museum, New York
"Benefit for Contemporary Performance Arts", Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
- 1978 Paula Cooper Gallery, New York
Anna Canepa, Video Distribution, New York
"Couples", P.S. 1 Museum, Long Island City
The Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, Georgia



UNTITLED | 1966
One gallon of industrial high-gloss enamel, throw Diminision vary



William Anastasi
ISBN 87-90538-24-2