

# Éric Hussenot

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Lasse Schmidt Hansen

11 janvier – 22 février 2014

The new works of Lasse Schmidt Hansen are – as the artist prefers it – close to nothing. The works appear in the space as if they are meant to disappear in the space. The chipboards are leaning as a wall against the wall. The concrete blocks – the negative imprint of the terrace outside the artist's house in Denmark – are placed on the floor as yet a floor. The notes on small walls in acrylic glass boxes hung on the gallery wall look like notes for future work though now presented as finished works.

If these new works of Hansen are minimal, they are not minimalist. Whereas the minimal artist of the 60s sought something absolute, something essential, Hansen is rather interested in something we could call 'relatively minimal'. His works cannot be said, for instance, to be *small* since they suit the scale of the gallery *comme il faut*. Instead one could say that they are *smaller* since they double the space they are in but on a minor scale. Hansen's chipboards make up a wall, but smaller than the one it leans on – just like his concrete piece is also a concrete floor, but smaller than the one it sits on. The works which Hansen exhibits at Galerie Hussenot also exhibit the space of Galerie Hussenot. The works that Hansen has made disappear in the space to the extent that they make the space appear. However, if Hansen aims at not only exhibiting works, but also the space where these works are on display, it is not simply because he wants to make the space part of his exhibition. It is just as much his way of showing his work by showing what is not his work, namely the space, where his works are shown. This is evident in the lighting, which the artist has chosen for his show. He has not placed the nine spots in the ceiling in accordance with the works in his current exhibition. Instead he has simply kept the lighting from the previous show without modifying them whatsoever. The lighting only accidentally lights up parts of the work on display.

Hansen's new works are elusive. He has done his best to make them so very elusive that they are almost neither new nor even works. Nevertheless, if these new works can be said to deal with something in particular, it might be the problem of bringing new works into the world. This not only goes for the lamps in the ceiling. It also goes for all the other works in his show. Talking about the chipboard work, "Other activities", for instance, Hansen evokes that these boards were once used to construct an older piece, a small four wall room within which he displayed a third piece. Later, he recounts, the boards have served as a support for making other works to which the various marks on the materials testify. This artwork at Galerie Hussenot which refers us back to earlier work and works is thus difficult to grasp as a whole, as an autonomous work. It is difficult

to say where Hansen's work at Galerie Hussenot starts and ends. This does not mean, however, that it escapes falling into the artwork category, since escaping from this has simply become another way of making artworks within the paradigm of contemporary art, where the minimal, ephemeral and performative is considered particularly noble. However, what does make Hansen's piece, "Other activities", slippery as a contemporary artwork considered is the way in which Hansen probes what we understand by work at all, i.e. both as an activity and as a product.

As the philosopher Hannah Arendt has suggested, there is an occidental tradition for distinguishing between the noun and verb 'work', which both designates the act and the product of working, and the synonym 'labor', which only designates the act of laboring. Along these lines, an artwork is a product which results from the act of working. Whereas art can be noble as work, because it strives for a certain permanence in order to survive us, what results from laboring such as cooking has been regarded with contempt, since it leaves nothing behind and serves mere survival and necessity. But in Hansen's "Other activities" all the marks left from work does not testify to the work process which went into the making of said piece - similar to the way brushstrokes do not make up a motif, when Andy Warhol screenprints Mona Lisa on top of a painted surface. However, unlike Warhol, Hansen has not added another work on top of his own. "Other activities" is not the product of the act of working, but rather the result of a lot of laboring, which the artist has abruptly decided to present as an artwork. All the signs and marks of the act of working in "Other activities" only bear witness to the way the artist has previously worked - and how he has not worked recently. The artist has not reached the end of a working process here. What the artist overall displays in these new works is basically an artist who did not get to work this time around. If his works look somewhat shabby and fragile, it is because Hansen plays with turning something as fleeting as labor into something as permanent as work and vice versa.

Normally, when we want to get into an artwork, we try to figure out what the artist has been doing. When we try to get into "Other activities", however, one might get the feeling that the artist, too, is trying to figure out what he is doing. Hansen moves things around somewhat the same way the viewer is moving around things to get a better look at them. This activity might not be considered an activity at all, at least not a productive one. Instead we could call it contemplation or simply thinking, which is what we might at least expect Lasse Schmidt Hansen has been doing.

Thinking can be considered even less productive than laboring, since - as Arendt also points out - it does not leave behind any tangible trace whatsoever. Therefore we do not know, when thinking is taking place, because thinking has to stop in order to materialize on a support and get passed on: "Whenever the intellectual worker wishes to manifest his thoughts, he must use his hands and acquire skills just like any other worker. In other words, thinking and working are two different activities which never quite coincide; the thinker who wants the world to know the "content" of his thoughts must first of all stop thinking and remember his thoughts."

Lasse Schmidt Hansen seems to be exactly at this crossroads where he has to transition thinking to remembering. That is, of course, what his notes - as well as any other notes - are all about. However, Lasse Schmidt Hansen's notes seem to be absorbed by the act of writing as if the support materializes his thoughts instead of letting his thoughts materialize. On the pieces of paper he writes "work", "untitled work", "(working)", "material", "something etc. He keeps rewriting the same words over and over again as if he cannot remember what he is about to write, because he cannot stop to think. The conceptual artist, the thinker, who wants to be the most noble of all workers is degraded to a laborer who succumbs to the effort and toil of the task at hand. But it is no tragedy. Rather a comedy. The writing looks ridiculously lazy and without any real engagement on the part of the artist. Here there is no straight line. No direction. No end result - apart, of course, from the essential, namely the work in question. However, whether this troubled conceptual artist is Lasse Schmidt Hansen himself is of course less certain.

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