PROJECT 29
Tino Sehgal
2014

This is so contemporary
6 February – 23 February 2014
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

BIOGRAPHY

Tino Sehgal's radical and captivating way of making art leaves no material traces. The artist refuses all documentation, the works remaining a mystery to those who have not directly experienced them. Born in London in 1976, the Berlin-based artist, who originally studied political economics and dance, constructs 'situations' by orchestrating interpersonal encounters through dance, voice and movement. His works elicit a different kind of viewer, one who cannot be a passive spectator – they bear a responsibility to construct and contribute to the realisation of the actual piece.

FACTS

- Sehgal's works are 'constructed situations' not performances. A constructed situation is an idea created by the artist, which places the viewer into the middle of a situation, rather than a performance, where the viewer remains passive.

- Sehgal does not allow photography of his projects, does not write anything down as instructions, or as clarification of the concepts explored in his works. Neither does he allow wall texts or brochures outlining the works to be published as part of the exhibition.

- *This is so contemporary* was first presented at the 2005 Venice Biennale and made its Australian debut at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2014.

- The work was presented by a diverse group of interpreters, who were from all walks of life, and not necessarily performers or dancers. These interpreters were trained to create the experience in the gallery, bringing their own unique gestures to Sehgal's instructions.

- *[Y]ou cannot be uninvolved, somehow, when there's this other person who can look back at you. The viewer in my work is always confronted with him-- or herself, with his or her own presence in the situation, as something that matters, as something that influences and shapes this situation. This experience that his or her own presence has consequences can kind of empower the viewer.*
  – Tino Sehgal

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Spontaneous and contagiously uplifting, controversial artist Tino Sehgal's *This is so contemporary*, 2004, enlivened the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), Sydney, in summer 2014. The work featured a cast of twenty-six interpreters, who directly engaged visitors at the gallery's entrance through dance, voice and movement.

Born in Germany, Sehgal studied political economy at Berlin's Humboldt University and dance at Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen, later apprenticing with French artist/choreographer Xavier Le Roy. "What interested me in dance," Sehgal explained, "was it was a way of producing something and nothing at the same time".

Sehgal has since pioneered a radical way of orchestrating "constructed situations", featuring rigorously trained and rehearsed "interpreters", employing dance, voice and movement in museum and gallery spaces.

The youngest artist to represent Germany at the Venice Biennale, participating in 2005, when he presented *This is so contemporary*, and again in 2013, Sehgal was awarded the 55th Venice Biennale's prestigious Golden Lion in 2013. That same year, Sehgal presented *This is new*, 2003, in the 27th Kaldor project, *13 Rooms*.

Sehgal's works have become renowned for subverting the relationship between viewers and art, demanding a new way of engaging with art and ideas around art, politics, production and ownership. Distinct from both performance art and theatre, Sehgal's situations demand a different kind of beholder; one who cannot be a passive spectator, but bears a responsibility to contribute to the realisation of the actual piece.

Not permitting his work to be photographed or filmed, Sehgal leaves no material trace, creating something at once valuable yet intangible that "seems to revel in its own contradictions", as Anne Midgette observed in the *New York Times*. "It is created with extreme, even obsessive, rigour , yet it is subject to change, as the only record exists in the minds of those who see it".