



ENGADIN ART TALKS 2019: GRACE & GRAVITY

BY ANDYMEETSWARHOL | JANUARY 29, 2019

The art year 2019 commenced powerfully in the Swiss Alps: **Engadin Art Talks (E.A.T.)**, this year in its eighth edition, took place on **January 26th and 27th, 2019** in Zuoz, Switzerland, offering an interdisciplinary platform for international exchange on a variety of creative fields.

Each year, a new carefully conceived theme determines the framework for the conversations led this year by **Daniel Baumann** (Director of the Kunsthalle Zurich), **Bice Curiger** (Artistic Director of the Fondation Vincent Van Gogh Arles), **Hans Ulrich Obrist** (Artistic Director of the Serpentine Galleries London), and **Philip Ursprung** (Professor for the History of Art and Architecture at ETH Zurich, and Dean of the Department of Architecture ETH Zurich).



The curators and founders of the Engadin Art Talks. Bice Curiger, Cristina Bechtler, Philip Ursprung, Daniel Baumann and Hans Ulrich Obrist.

Founded by Cristina Bechter, the annual Engadin Art Talks (E.A.T.) has featured more than 140 international artists, architects, film-makers, artists and designers, presenting their projects, ideas and visions on the selected theme.



This year's theme, "Grace & Gravity": How do gravity and grace define current-day life in the digital age? was inspired by a chapter in Simone Weil's book "La Pesanteur et la Grâce." The two-day talks featured inspiring and thought-provoking speeches by renowned creatives including

artist Thomas Hirschhorn, Tomás Saraceno, Francesco Bonami, Lena Henke and Jürgen Teller amongst others.



andymeetsw...
Zuoz, Switzerland

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Gefällt 1,145 Mal

andymeetswarhol

Ever been to Engadin? Currently at [@engadinarttalks](#) 2019: Tomás Saraceno & Hans Ulrich Obrist in discussion. This year's topic is Grace & Gravity. A fascinating lineup of speakers. BIG thanks! 💕
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Also say hi if you're also here. Would love to meet you 😊

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How do gravity and grace define current-day life in the digital age? A meeting of two conflicting forces: on one hand, the idea of mass and gravity, and all the power that draws us earthwards; on the other, the unburdened fluidity of grace and elegance, which bring the positive momentum of beauty into play.



hansulrichobrist

258.3 Tsd. Abonnenten

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ART-BECAUSE ITS ART-
IS RESISTANCE, ART
RESISTS FACTS. ART
RESISTS POLITICAL,
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THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

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Thomas Hirschhorn

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During the Talks, ANDY MEETS WARHOL (AMW) met and spoke with artist Lena Henke (LH), one of the speakers of this year's talk.



Andy Meets Warhol & Lena Henke

(AMW) Has there been a turning point in your artistic practice so far? Is there something which influenced you in doing things a different way: using a different kind of material, in producing your artworks. And in your development as an artist.

(LH) Until now not so much I think. Well, as I said in the talk, when I started to study at the art school, I started with screen prints. But I was never a painter. I started doing screenprints which is like overlapping “Schichten” layers of color: so it’s kind of building up to something, and from there on I developed my kind of like sculpture practice which is not a traditional way. I like to work in a very direct and in the easiest way possible, so I put drapes something and I throw something over and then I leave the studio and come back the next morning and see how it dropped the head dry. So it always was against this very traditional way of making a sculpture. And then I moved on and since I lived in New York: my first piece I made when I arrived there, was casting off walls from houses in Brooklyn- I didn’t have money for a studio back then.

(AMW) How was it? Also, I would like to find out more about your connection to Starbucks, what was the connection to your art.

(LH) The Starbucks inspired show was at Neuer Aachener Kunstverein with the tar pieces. That was my first institutional show in Germany, but I was already living in New York, where I just presented raw tar-covered wood panels at the Institution Aachen stacked on chairs . The idea behind that was that I wanted to just you know show the raw material from the streets. And then you have this term called the third place which is a place where you are at when you’re not at work and not home.

(AMW) Which is maybe a coffee place?

(LH) Or a hair salon or nail salon. I still didn’t have a studio by then, so I started to sit with a coffee at Starbucks and I would draw the people how they would hang down on their chairs. So again gravity was of interest to me. And later on, I transferred those drawings onto the top panels but stacked them up on the chairs borrowed from the institution itself and it closed all the windows of the space so it became kind of like black cube in the end.



HANG HARDER by Lena Henke, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, 2012

(AMW) OK, really exciting story. You mentioned your experience and your studies at Städelshule. My question here is in regard to art education and how did it influence you? Do you think it is a must for an artist to establish himself and what was the impact on your in your own experience?

(LH) That's an interesting question. I don't think that an artist needs to go to an art school. I studied at Städelshule for six years and one year in Glasgow as an exchange student which was a nice experience. It prepares you.

In fact, I gave a workshop yesterday for the kids at the Lyceum Zuoz. And we were talking about some of the issues. And for them it was I think hard to understand that the studies are so free and I described it to them that it's like nobody gives you a schedule and nobody cares if you're in the studio or not. You just get this fantastic space at Städelshule, and you can work and there are some classes, some courses philosophy and then a lot of like crafts making courses, screen printing, photography but you're so free and you basically learn how it's going to be in the end. So it really helped me as it's also of course any beginnings like very harsh environment.

(AMW) Yes, I saw you mentioned the expression “Cut-Throat” Städelshule previously.

(LH) Yes, it's quite tough. I mean some people just came and used it as a network airport which is important, too. I think you don't necessarily have to study at an art school but what you need to have is a network of friends and supporters and people you can talk to. I have a very great network in New York. This also helped in my beginnings in the city: especially in New York where nobody has money and you just need a helping hand here and there. And then you have your friends, too.

(AMW) So tell me more about your beginnings in New York: I guess you did also different jobs to survive basically.

(LH) Oh, I came with a thousand bucks on my bank account. Everybody thought I'm crazy. But I started to work for Sergej Jensen, the painter: he really helped, I mean that was great.

(AMW) So, was it like a door opener?

(LH) I mean for me it was definitely. He saved my ass because I worked three days a week. But then he was also an established artist. So he was like a mentor to me.

(AMW) Ancient Roman and Greek sculptures and sites: Have you visited any of these places?

(LH) Yeah a little bit. It's not easy to answer this question but I'm not really particularly interested in traveling to those places. What I'm very interested in right now are sculpture gardens. You know, I've been to Italy many times and but this is fantastic sculpture garden Bomarzo from the 16th century for instance.

And this is something which really inspires me: as somebody who isn't an artist, has the opportunity to build this kind of crazy garden. And you know, he makes these sculptures where all the dimensions are wrong: I love to discover those. I'm very interested in how these people get these ideas and bring these things together. You have to have such a big force and energy and belief to do that, right. So, I like space a lot. Other places I've visited: Donald Judd's Marfa (archives of Donald Judd) or the sculpture garden of Las Posas, Xilitla, Mexico which is fantastic, built in the 1980s.

(AMW) What do you think of Dali. Of Surrealism?

(LH) Oh, I love Dali. I have a couple of books. And, I also discovered that he was friends with the person who build Las Posas. So I discovered that and then all of a sudden it makes sense. You know, you're interested in somebody and then you see that there is a kind of a connection, a flow.

(AMW) What are you currently working on?

(LH) I'm working on a solo booth for Art Basel Hong Kong. So, I'm going to Hong Kong in March with my Vienna gallery Emanuel Layr. And then afterwards, I just won the Rubin's price for young artists in Germany. In fall, I'm planning an exhibition at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen.

(AMW) So last question. What is your experience in working in Zurich, in Switzerland?

(LH) Well, I moved to St.Gallen for the show in Zurich. Because Daniel Baumann organised me this fantastic six-month residency at the **Kunstgiesserei in St.Gallen**: they're not only a huge team of people who work on sculptures but they also have a fantastic material archive where you can look at 3000 different materials, and also have a fantastic library. I would say I'm shy in architecture, so it was also valuable from a research perspective. It's fantastic. You know it was unbelievable to work there. So it was definitely a change to move from Manhattan to St.Gallen: very beautiful and nourishing. I did the Kunsthalle show with Daniel Baumann and Fabrice Stroun as an external curator. So they visited me and we developed the show at **Kunsthalle** together. Yeah, I mean this was fantastic. It was also my largest show to date.

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