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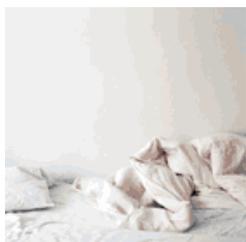
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[13. juni 2009]

## Interview



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Simon Lamunière in front of Pascale Marthine Tayous piece *Le Verso du Vice Recto* at Art Unlimited, Basel 2009

## Interview: Simon Lamunière - Art Unlimited 2009

Launched in 2000, *Art Unlimited* is Art Basel's pioneering exhibition platform for projects that transcend the classical art-show stand - including video projections, large-scale installations, massive sculptures and live performances. Selected by the Art Committee, it has been curated since its inception by curator **Simon Lamunière**. Kopenhagen met a visibly exhausted, yet kind and focused, Lamunière for espresso and cigarettes outside the exhibition a few days after the official opening.

Interview: **Louise Steiwer**  
Foto: **Torben Zenth**

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Art Unlimited  
09. juni - 14. juni 2009  
Messezentrum Basel  
web site: [www.artbasel.com](http://www.artbasel.com)

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**How is the process of curating Art Unlimited different from curating any other show, and how do you work together with the Committee?**

I start preparing for *Unlimited* in January, when the galleries submit their projects. The projects are submitted by the galleries because they are the clients of the fair, not the artists. From these applications I select projects, which I discuss with the committee. This makes two lists: A list of projects that we definitely want in and a waiting list of works that could fit in. We do so in order to see what's best for the exhibition and what's feasible - sometimes there'll be technical questions to be solved. It's not that I work with a given list at all, it's something that builds progressively just like a normal show. According to these projects that I'm studying and working with, I try to figure out the best architectural way to solve it. All these works are very demanding in terms of space, light, sound. Their great artists and they know what they're doing, but we also have an in between situation with the galleries. What we have to do is to reduce the number of people we're talking to and getting closer to what the artist's project is really demanding.



**Bharti Kher:** *The Wag Tree*, 2009. 450 x 300 x 550 cm. Fibreglass, iron, copper



**Bharti Kher:** *The Wag Tree*, 2009. 450 x 300 x 550 cm. Fibreglass, iron, copper



**Bharti Kher:** *The Wag Tree*, 2009. 450 x 300 x 550 cm. Fibreglass, iron, copper

**When selecting the pieces for the exhibition, what do you and the Committee look for? Are there any given criterias?**

No, there's no criterias.

**And yet you have to select one piece, and not another one...?**

I mean, there's so many criterias: The work can be interesting in itself or it might be a historical work. It might be very interesting for me to have this work next to another work, because we have to do a show, we're not just doing a fair. I think we succeed in this manner of displaying artworks because we think of it as a whole. If you go in *Unlimited* this year, you'll see a lot of artworks dealing with products and media - a form of mediareality, in the sense that you're not sure what's real. For example this political photo, which Xu Zhen has reused and restaged in order to talk about how controversial images are built. Of course you have a kind

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of natural friendship between some works, and this is how I build my exhibitions. There are always developments, what you might find in a work, might be pursued in another. The idea is not to build a discourse on the works, but rather to reinforce each individual work.



Art Unlimited 2009; works by **Sterling Ruby** and **Lawrence Weiner**

There seems to be different areas in the exhibition that have different characteristics: Some of them are very intimate, some on the other hand is open and allows panoramic views. Can you tell me about the different scales and spaces on *Unlimited*?

The exhibition start with some quite big works by i.e. Hans Op De Beeck and Yoshitomo Nara, who has made a house, that seems big in the exhibition, but which is actually a very small house. The way the work is displayed is part of the work itself, and that's why I thought it was important to lead the people to where your own scale as a viewer is in consideration. That's how you end up with *China - made in Italy*, which is almost like a studio display. Walking through the exhibition you go from huge scales that seems museum-like to a studio display. I thought it would be important since they are not big works, to give them an intimate character. In the end Unlimited is not about big works, but about how you display works, that are demanding. Hans Peter Feldmans work, which is 100 photos, or Nan Goldins series, they're not big works but they are demanding in terms of space. To exhibit them correctly is really what they need.



>|>Art Unlimited, 2009. Works by **Steven Shearer** and **Joseph Bartscherer**

**Some people say that the works on *Unlimited* this year is different than they used to be. They are smaller and less spectacular, in comparison to i.e. Takashi Murikamis sculpture last year. Do you agree with that?**

I don't think the projects are smaller, in fact this year there's less projects taking up more space. The hall is usually about 12.000 m<sup>2</sup> and I think this year we're about 14.000 m<sup>2</sup>, so probably there's bigger works. But maybe they are not as spectacular as they have been some of the other years. In 2006 I showed a lot works that were turning, most of them on a bigger scale, because I was working on a thematic "Are we going to a Disney-world?"- kind of situation. That year I really pushed it, because I wanted to make a physical feeling. I'm working a lot with architecture and the physical fell of things. It's was interesting there to make people almost dizzy, you're changed and you're disoriented in the way you perceive space.

I'm happy in a way that there are less spectacular works this year. It may also have something to do with the marked and the crisis: The galleries are more careful this year. But the works are great, and that something that has nothing to do with size. My work is not to do a show, that will fascinate everyone by the glittering. It's to show art at it's best.



**Daido Moriyama:** *Hokkaido*, 1978/2009. 100 x 150 cm. each Black-and-white photographs; set of 30 prints

**You said that you had worked with certain themes in 2006. Can you point out some of the themes in this years exhibition?**

I'm dealing a lot with the way media and globalization of the world has changed our perception. We more or less expect that the work of a Chinese artist looks Chinese and hands over some cultural aspect of China, but through globalization and media reality we're not even sure how his own story is perverted by the same globalization. There are a lot of misunderstandings about this going around and building up, which I find interesting. You have all these overlapping layers, which allows Xu Zhen to use a photo in Africa with a totally Western way of looking at objects.

I try to focus on these cultural misunderstandings in the way the exhibition is build, both in the works of the artists and in curating the space. *China - made in Italy* is also a very good example. It's an interesting story: There were families living in Naples from doing copies of landscape paintings to just sell cheap on the market for around 10 euros each. Then a couple of years ago there was a Chinese family arriving in Naples, that started to produces paintings for 3 euros. All these traditional families, who had been doing this for years and years, got broke. The artist who did this project asked these Italian families to paint in black and white very famous Chinese paintings, blockbusters from auction houses, so you have all these elements talking about globalzation and media reality. The works are known much more through the media that through exhibitions.



**Sigmar Polke:** *Cloud Paintings*, 1992. 300 x 500 cm. each Mixed media on fabric



**Sigmar Polke:** *Cloud Paintings*, 1992. 300 x 500 cm. each Mixed media on fabric



**Sigmar Polke:** *Cloud Paintings*, 1992. 300 x 500 cm. each Mixed media on fabric

**This years it is the 10th time Unlimited has been going on. So here comes anniversary request: Can you elaborate a bit on the development of the exhibition in the last ten years?**

When we started we were testing something out. When the fair asked me to do this I had done a lot of exhibitions of the 90's with video and computing, and they thought I could upgrade an existing part of Unlimite

that had to do with video art, and have somebody else to do another section of sculptures. Instead of making two different sections we both wanted to make a different concept, where video could be next to photography could be next to just a wooden installation. So we kind of started thinking about how we could handle these different elements together. Progressively we started to talk more and more, looking for projects, talking to the artists to bring things over, in order not just to juxtapose elements, but to really make an exhibition. Finally in 2004 I started doing it alone, and at that point it became much easier to focus on the exhibition and how it should work out. That's a face I love: I do my little sketches on paper, I know the projects and the variables, and to start building up relationships between works, as I said to reinforce each work and to create pleasure when you walk into the space. Each time we're trying to create a new relationship to space and to the works – depending on the works themselves – also on the general concept.

Today everybody is more knowledgeable of what you can do and what you can expect. In the beginning the others didn't really understand me when I said I wanted to do things differently on *Unlimited*, than in the gallery booths. It's not that I have anything against the galleries, because they are doing a great job, and they put a lot of energy in it. Before they would always come with the floorplan of the gallery or where the piece had last been exhibited, telling me what they wanted it to look like, but I think it's getting more and more clear now, and they trust me that I'm not doing this for economical reasons or because I want to disturb them or I don't like the piece, but because I think we can find a better solution.

**Thank you.**



**Nan Goldin:** *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, 1973-1986. Portfolio of 126 Cibachrome photographs



**Nan Goldin:** *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, 1973-1986. Portfolio of 126 Cibachrome photographs



**Nan Goldin:** *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, 1973-1986. Portfolio of 126 Cibachrome photographs

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