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Cover: Tanya Mars. Still from *Pure Virtue*, 1984. See p. 37.

Note: Earlier versions of the article written by Joanna Roche, "Performing Memory in *Moon in a Tree*: Carolee Schneemann Recollects Joseph Cornell," published in the Winter 2001 issue of *Art Journal*, were presented at the Barnard Feminist Art and Art History Conference, "The 70s and the 90s in Feminist Performance: Bridging the Generations," October 29, 2000 and at the conference, "Unnatural Acts," which was co-sponsored by the departments of Performance Studies and Art History, University of California, Riverside, April 12, 1997.

We congratulate Joanna Roche on receiving the Art Journal *Award for a distinguished feature published in the 2001 volume year. The* Art Journal *Award was established in 2000 and is awarded annually at the discretion of the officers of the College Art Association.*

Andres Serrano. *White Christ*, 1989. Cibachrome, silicone, Perspex and wood frame. 47¾ x 68¾ x ¾ in. (114.6 x 165.1 x 1.9 cm). Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Janet A. Kaplan

Give & Take Conversations

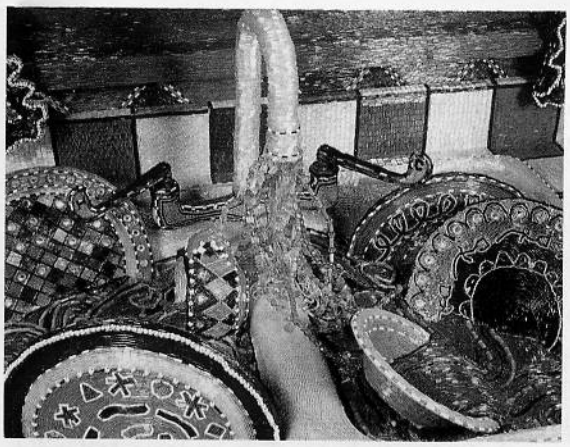
Give & Take, a collaborative exhibition in two parts organized by the Serpentine Gallery in partnership with the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), London, was displayed concurrently at both institutions from January 30 to April 1, 2001. Curator Lisa Corrin conceived the exhibition as a single project at two sites. At the Serpentine, the artist Hans Haacke installed *Mixed Messages*, his selection of more than two hundred objects from across the spectrum of the V&A's rich collection. At the V&A, fifteen international contemporary artists, invited by Corrin, contributed works—some newly commissioned for this project—that were sited in various spaces throughout the galleries.

The following text comprises edited conversations between Janet Kaplan, the curators, and some of the artists held during press previews of *Give & Take* in London in January 2001. The participants were Lisa Corrin, curator of the exhibition and former chief curator of the Serpentine Gallery; Julia Peyton-Jones, director of the Serpentine Gallery; and the artists Ken Aptekar, Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, Roxy Paine, J. Morgan Puett and Suzanne Bocanegra, and Yinka Shonibare. The conversation with Hans Haacke took place in New York in April 2001.[1]

Lisa Corrin

Janet Kaplan: What prompted you to develop *Give & Take*, this complex pair of exhibitions that required such elaborate and intricate coordination between the Victoria and Albert, a huge historical museum, and the Serpentine Gallery, a small, contemporary *kunsthalle?*

Lisa Corrin: The V&A is about connoisseurship. It has some of the best examples in the world of so many categories of objects. And then being able to study and replicate them through manufacturing. The museum was founded in the Victorian era at the height of the British Empire, after the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was a period when people were deeply invested in a belief in progress and technology. With its sixty-five thousand vitrines packed with a million items, the V&A says a great deal about the impulse to classify and to present objects from other times. It also speaks volumes about how people understood or defined knowledge. One of my hopes for this exhibition was that it would bring that history to the surface.



Liza Lou. Kitchen, 1991–95. Bead encrusted household objects (detail). 8⅜ x 11½ x 15⅞ ft. (2.43 x 3.35 x 4.57 m). The Norton Family collection, Santa Monica, California. Photo Anthony Cuñha.

As the exhibition curator, I wanted to find a way to get people to see the V&A collection as a source to constantly return to with fresh eyes. I wanted the public to share my passion for objects that are difficult to access because our cultural context has changed so much since they were made. I was deeply concerned that the public not think that this installation was disrespectful to the V&A. But, equally, I wanted people at the V&A, who may think there's nothing to contemporary art beyond a lot of hype, to take very seriously the work that these artists are making.

Placement of the invited artists' pieces in the V&A galleries often did not require altering the existing installations of the permanent collection. For example, photographs by Andres Serrano, such as *White Christ* (1989), were mounted on the walls in the medieval galleries. The vitrines of V&A objects served as

1. The artists in the show who were not part of these conversations are Xu Bing, Wim Delvoye, Jeff Koons, Liza Lou, Marc Quinn, Andres Serrano, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and Philip Taaffe.

looking glasses through which Serrano's image could be viewed. The recent art in this exhibition was foregrounded and the collection was slightly decentered. Although it is true to say that the visitor who wished to focus on the permanenent collection could do so.

I didn't want the V&A collection to receive any less attention than the contemporary work because this project was about dialogue. The fluorescent orange directional tape that was laid on the floor to mark *Give & Take* installations went through the center of the cases in many rooms. Visitors were forced to look at what was in the vitrines if they wanted to follow the route of the exhibition. For those visitors who were not very interested in contemporary art, *Give and Take* was gently inserted into their experience. The familiar collection acted as a bridge to the new art.

I asked Hans Haacke to select objects from the V&A and install them at the Serpentine because he has devoted more than thirty years of his life to looking at the way art circulates within our society and at the role of cultural institutions in shaping agendas. I also chose Haacke because he is German-born. I think an outsider can see and get away with more than an insider can.

At the Serpentine, historic objects took on a new aura; one looked at them in a different way. Why should contemporary art museums show only contemporary art? Contemporary art is amputated from the limbs of history when we architecturally sever it from the body of the history of art and of culture generally. Our goal was to challenge our visitors, to provoke them to question rather than confirm assumptions, to invite them to see the collection as something that's constantly in intellectual, not just physical, rotation. We were also trying to communicate the idea that there should be room for subtlety, double take, and humor.

Julia Peyton-Jones

Kaplan: Why did you want the Serpentine to get involved in this project?

Julia Peyton-Jones: *Give & Take* is one of the most important shows the Serpentine has ever undertaken. Context is the key issue. I'm the director of an institution with rather limited space, in a city that is home to some of the great institutions of this country. We wanted to find a way to mark the millennium, and the idea of working with colleagues, both locally and elsewhere, became the hook for exploring our context.

The V&A staff was quite concerned, in terms of critical appraisal of the two arms of the project, that Haacke's show at the Serpentine Gallery would, so to say, scoop the installations at the V&A since it was the gallery's treasured objects coming up here. And it remained to be seen how successful contemporary art would be at the museum. But to make possible the siting of work by fifteen artists throughout the museum, the V&A really had to open its doors. And it did.

Kaplan: Do you think the V&A feels honored by Haacke's work? Criticized?

Peyton-Jones: Our trustees were very well aware of Haacke's contributions as an artist. So both organizations at the highest level went into the process knowing what they were embarking upon. There was never any cynicism about this,

that the project might serve as some sort of criticism. It wasn't that the notion was considered and rejected; it was absolutely not in the cards.

Kaplan: Does the scope of this show change the profile of the Serpentine? Does it affect what you think about doing in the future?

Peyton-Jones: It's too early to say. I'm against the principle of retreading ground unless you have something new to say. We have had access to one of the great museums anywhere in the world, which is our good fortune. It marks a chapter in the Serpentine's history, which is incredibly important. This has been a way for us to stretch ourselves. It shows us that we can diversify in unexpected ways. We will need some time to take stock, but I don't see it as beginning any sort of rolling program of similar interventions.

Kaplan: What do you think is the meaning of this project for the larger world of contemporary culture?

Peyton-Jones: It is interesting to see how the British public has embraced a certain kind of contemporary art. When I took over as director of the Serpentine in 1991, you cannot imagine the resistance I encountered. In a sense, that made it very easy because the public was equally resistant to everything you did. Now, of course, with the success of the YBA [Young British Artists] and the exhibition *Sensation*, contemporary art has been more accepted as a part of contemporary culture. But there is still a lot of work to be done. To critically assess the relevance of a contemporary art gallery of our size working with an institution of the V&A's scale and importance and placing contemporary art within its collections is in no way gratuitous. It was incredibly gratifying at the opening that people were going from one exhibition to the other, which affirmed the relationship between the two.

Ken Aptekar

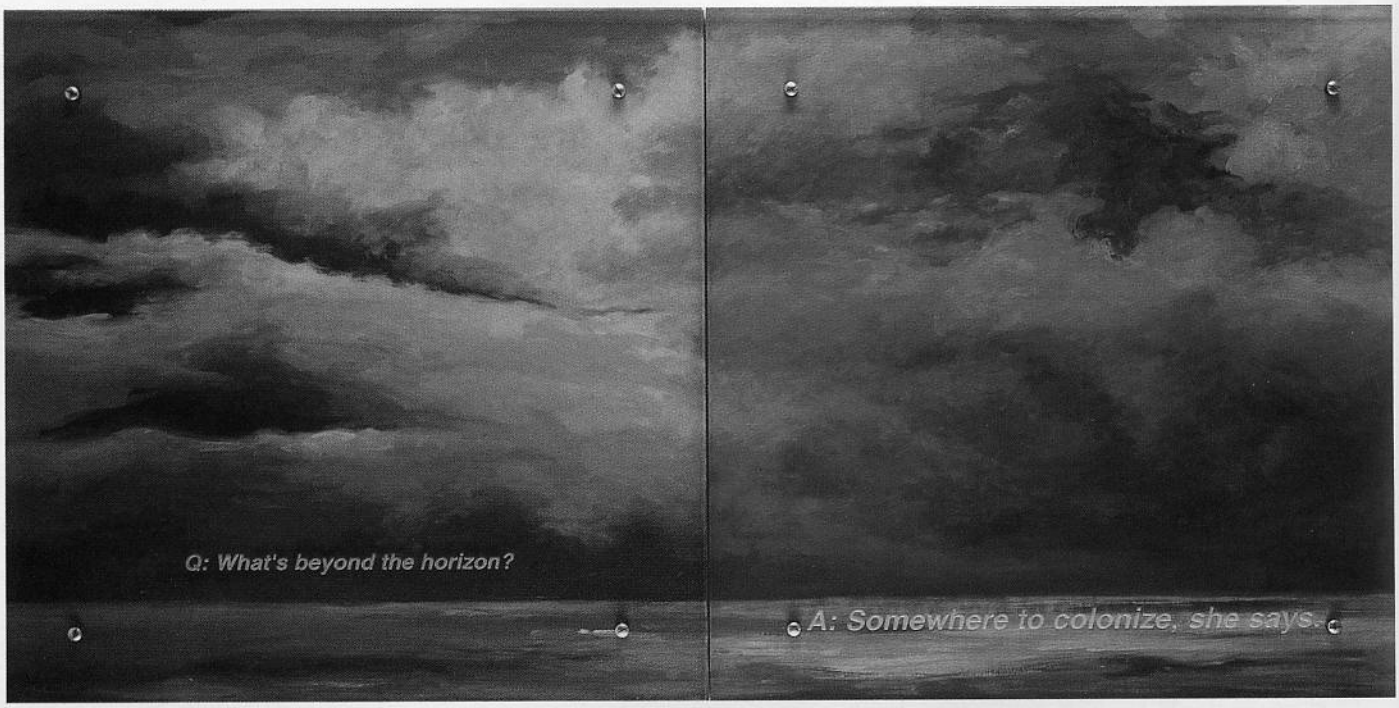
Q&A,V&A, 2000

Kaplan: How did you get involved in *Give & Take*?

Ken Aptekar: I was the first artist Lisa commissioned to make work specifically for this project. She knew that my art is particularly concerned with introducing the voices of a diverse public into museum collections. That was central to her idea for this exhibition. My project is called *Q&A,V&A*, which refers to my inviting groups to the museum and posing questions to them while they were seated in front of a group of paintings I had selected from the collection.

In preparation for these sessions, I viewed all the paintings in the V&A's holdings, including many in nonpublic spaces—back stairwells, offices, and off-site storage. I made an effort to use masterpieces as well as dust-covered junk that nobody ever looked at, including a forgery by an anonymous artist from the Fakes and Forgeries Gallery.

I chose about twenty-five works, which were set up to be viewed by various groups—learning-disabled gardeners, literacy students, Spanish immigrants, elderly Afro-Caribbean women, recent fine arts graduates, and redheads. I posed questions to them using the techniques of a focus group as though for marketing purposes. I wanted to get their reactions to the paintings. Quoting from



Ken Aptekar. *What's beyond the horizon?* Detail from *Landscapes Short on Land, Q&A, V&A*, 2000. Diptych. Oil on wood, bolts, and sandblasted glass. 31¼ x 63½ in. (76.2 x 152.4 cm).

Q: What's beynd the horizon?

A: Somewhere to colonize, she says.

those responses, I assembled texts, which I then sandblasted onto glass panels to be bolted to versions of the works that I painted myself.

Kaplan: What sorts of questions did you ask?

Aptekar: I began by explaining my project to each group and telling them that in gratitude for their helping me with this exhibition the museum had agreed to let each of them take home one of the paintings they were looking at. And all they had to do was pick out the one they wanted and tell me why they made that choice. There was giggling and then everybody entered into the fantasy and they were off and running, on a shopping trip. When you have to choose something you want guided by your own unbridled desire in the context of a fantasy, it's very liberating. People were remarkably candid and generous in lending themselves to thinking about the paintings. They entered into the project without any resistance at all, despite Britain's famous reserve. Then I asked them each to pick out one painting that he or she couldn't stand and tell me what it was about the picture that repelled or repulsed him or her. People really did hate certain paintings. I also sandblasted some of these comments onto the glass panels.

Kaplan: When you made your versions of the paintings, did you work from photographs?

Aptekar: Yes. I studied the originals in the museum, but painted from photographs in my studio. I prefer not to work from a real painting because it's intimidating and constricting. I don't mean to reproduce the painting or to achieve verisimilitude. I am interested in creating an experience with a historic painting as the source. Then I juxtapose the original with my painting in the installation. It sets up a dialogue in which you notice all kinds of things you wouldn't have otherwise.

Another goal was to imbed institutional history in my project. So I researched acquisition history of the museum. Just as the V&A is a collection of taxonomies, I organized my exhibition by themes that play on stereotypes of British culture: the British obsession with tea, love of dogs, the who's who of class hierarchy, and the fact that this island culture became famous for painting landscapes, but on so little land. So for the section "A Landscape Short on Land," I chose to work with paintings that primarily portrayed sea or sky.

Ken Aptekar. *The Artist Attempts to Understand*. Detail from *Q&A, V&A*, 2000. Diptych. Oil on wood, bolts, and sandblasted glass. 60 x 30 in. (152.4 x 76.2 cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo Jean Luc Cormier. After Arthur Devis' *The Duet*, 1749, V&A.

The artist attempts to understand the place of painting in the museum today. He questions Alice Mungrave, a Londoner from Barbados.

Q: You're ten years old and you're king. You can have anything you desire. What is it?

A: A toy, one I shouldn't be playing with. Maybe a very expensive piano. You want to play it, just mess around with it.

Q: Did you ever play the piano?

A: Once.

Q: When you were little? This would be fifty years ago or so, no?

A: Yeah (with a big smile). But I didn't get very far.

Q: How long did you play?

A: A few minutes.

Q: How come?

A: It wasn't my parents'. It was in a friend's house, just decoration. Nobody touched it. It was forbidden.

Kaplan: What kind of response did you get from the curators, particularly those in the paintings department? Did they mind you digging up minor things that they had intentionally not exhibited?

Aptekar: Paintings, Prints and Drawings, and the Contemporary Department embraced the project immediately. I felt a real willingness on their part to subject the museum to whatever kind of inquiry I was interested in making.

Kaplan: The exhibition is called *Give & Take*. You have described what you gave to the V&A and the community. What do you think you've taken?

Aptekar: I've learned so much from an art-historical and a sociological viewpoint. I've

learned a lot about British culture and about the lives of people with disabilities, and to really listen to what people from other cultures have to say about how they think and see the world. For me this has been an immensely educational and moving experience because of what people were able to communicate about their own lives through looking at a painting.

Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska

UseValue, 2001

Kaplan: Why do you think Lisa commissioned you to create a piece for *Give & Take*?

Marysia Lewandowska: Lisa knew Neil and I have a history of working with museums and collections. We try to investigate the relationship between objects and the institutions that hold them, whether a department store, a museum, or an art gallery. The V&A is such a particular museum; it mixes together objects of use and objects designated as art. We were intrigued that the biggest ceramics collection in the world is here, in a vast space on the top floor, and that it receives relatively few visitors.

Neil Cummings: It's such a stunning and unreconstructed collection, with ceramics displayed in very different informational contexts. There has not been an extensive education program; there are no interactives. Because it is so vast, there is something, both historical and contemporary, for everyone.

Kaplan: How did you come up with the idea of filling the space with sound instead of a thing?

Cummings: Given that about seventy percent of most museum collections is in permanent storage, leaving only thirty percent of the objects on display, and given that the V&A is already jammed to the roof with artifacts, it seemed perverse to us to try to insert something more. To say it directly, neither the world nor the museum is crying out for more artwork. What they are crying out for is for people to rethink and, in a sense, reanimate the art we already have. Increasingly, that is our approach as artists.

Lewandowska: The spaces in the V&A are very controlled, as are all museum environments, so it seemed quite provocative to introduce something that had no substance but would resonate with the collection and fill the space.

Cummings: When you are alone in the ceramics galleries, it's absolutely silent. You hear the wind howling through the glass roof. It dawned on us while we were looking at these displays that what was missing was the sense of what these things do and what these things could do if they weren't sealed off behind glass.

Lewandowska: We imagined where they might be used, for example, what would we do with them in our own lives. So we made audio recordings of such situations: the clatter of dishes and the chatter of diners in the museum's restaurant, school children in the cafeteria, and the sounds of dishwashing with an occasional crash as something is accidentally dropped.

Kaplan: In addition to the sounds upstairs in the ceramics galleries, the recordings can also be heard downstairs at the entrance. Why?