



Event Sculpture 5
Maria Nordman, 'Fluiens Circulus'
5 January 2015, 4pm

Response by Agnieszka Gratza, 7 January 2015

Source: Henry Moore Institute
www.henry-moore.org/hmi

Copyright remains with the author. Any reproduction must be authorised by the author.
Contact: research@henry-moore.org

The Henry Moore Institute is a world-recognised centre for the study of sculpture in the heart of Leeds. An award-winning exhibitions venue, research centre, library and sculpture archive, the Institute hosts a year-round programme of exhibitions, conferences and lectures, as well as developing research and publications, to expand the understanding and scholarship of historical and contemporary sculpture. The Institute is a part of The Henry Moore Foundation, which was set up by Moore in 1977 to encourage appreciation of the visual arts, especially sculpture.

To subscribe our newsletter email: newsletter@henry-moore.org
www.twitter.com/HMILeeds

Event Sculpture 5
Maria Nordman, 'Fluiens Circulus'
 5 January 2015, 4pm

Response by Agnieszka Gracza, 7 January 2015

With Maria Nordman's 'Fluiens Circulus' *The Event Sculpture* could be said to be at its zenith. The fifth of nine events making up the series, Nordman's highly idiosyncratic contribution marks the midpoint of *The Event Sculpture*. Unlike the previous four events, Nordman's is staged inside the Henry Moore Institute. Three of Nordman's 'Standing Pictures' – slender boxes fitted with sliding glass panels that visitors can pull out to examine drawings contained within – were positioned in one of the galleries where the works from previous and future events first presented outside and surrounding the Institute will be displayed from February.

For Nordman, the opposition between the inside and the outside, the interior and the exterior, is hardly a meaningful one. Walls are not permanent. Sunlight penetrates and seeps into buildings. Perhaps this is why the artist is drawn to foyers in museums, preferring to work with them rather than gallery spaces. Foyers, such as the one at the Henry Moore Institute with its tall glass door, are in-between spaces that channel daylight. Today Nordman draws our attention to the soft wintry light that suffuses the low-stepped corridor leading up to the reception area, where a group of us gathers around 3pm, and bids us to commit this experience to memory. Later, after it gets dark in the mostly unlit gallery, she will ask us to summon up the memory of the sun, which she refers to as a 'primordial presence.'

Memory forms the most basic and immediate record of Nordman's work – a precursor to Tino Sehgal's approach in this respect. The artist tells us about a five-minute sculptural event prompted by a chance encounter with a family in front of the Henry Moore Institute that morning. 'Whisper' took place then and there, recorded only by those present, the people she happened to meet making the piece with her. It will subsist in their memory and spread by word of mouth. In contrast, sound recordings and photographic stills made according to the artist's specifications will document the event proper, scheduled to begin at 4pm. A firm believer in the virtues of improvisation, Nordman is not one to be constrained by a fixed schedule: this event began an hour before the scheduled start time. The event's temporal and spatial boundaries are equally diffuse. Our exchange on the threshold of the gallery spaces is already part of the sculpture we will soon be making and even 'Whisper' arguably folds into its sphere.

More discursive and interactive than any of the previous events in the series, 'Fluiens Circulus' (1988-present) interacts with its surroundings and not just people. But people, or 'persons' as Nordman insists on calling them, are integral to the piece. 'Persons' of all ages, young and old – yet again, the distinction is rendered meaningless – are in equal measure her 'colleagues' and 'collaborators'. 'You are neither too young nor too old,' Nordman announces, and elaborates by saying that Richard Demarco, travelling for the event from Edinburgh especially, 'is in his eighties, which is very young.'

Human age pales into insignificance when measured against that of stones or fossils. One of the three 'Standing Pictures' holds what could pass for an abstract drawing: a black surface inscribed with delicate razor shell-shaped white motifs, 'fusing in manifold directions', as Nordman puts it. Prompted by Nordman, one by one we offer tentative suggestions as to what this object might be: 'print,' 'fossil,' 'charcoal,' 'time,' 'stone.' Fond of talking in riddles, the artist assures us that these answers are all correct, even if they contradict each other.

Nomenclature is what sets us apart from other beings. It introduces a hierarchical subject-object relation that is linguistic at its core. Nordman proposes to reverse this – though it is not entirely clear how. A perfect embodiment of her concept of 'geo-aesthetics,' the picture in our midst is in fact 350 to 500 million years old. Sculpted by nature and time, it has come down to us from the Cambrian Age, before animals had eyes. Nordman leaves us to ponder that.