

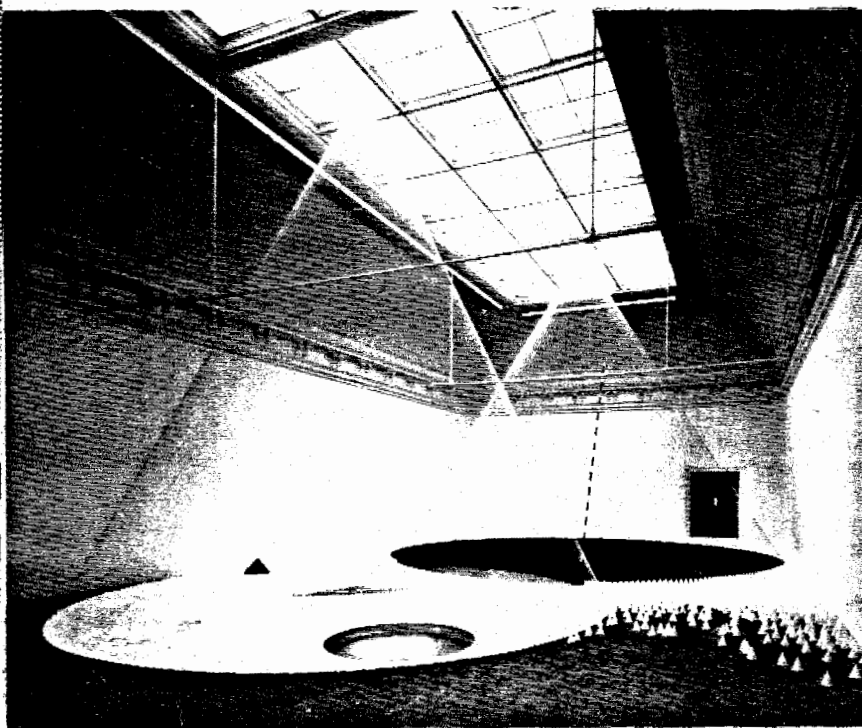


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ΤΕΧΝΗ/ART

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ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ & ΖΩΗΣ  
28 Νοεμβρίου 1989

ΚΑΘΩΤΗΣ & ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΗΣ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΗΣ Α. ΚΟΡΟΜΙΛΑΣ  
ΟΙΚΤΗΣΙΑ COROMILAS' GROUP OF CREATIVE ORGANIZATIONS  
ΤΙΜΗ ΤΕΥΧΟΥΣ ΔΙΑΚΟΣΙΒΕ ΠΕΝΗΝΤΑ ΔΡΑΧΜΕΣ



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Dmitri L. Coromilas

## KRISTTN JONES & ANDREW GINZEL 'ANTITHESIS'

KUNSTHALLE BASEL, SWITZERLAND  
20 August 29 October 1989

The care and the quality which are characteristic of major artistic events which take place in Switzerland, and particularly when they have to do with state or simply municipal initiative and support is well-known. If we said that it is the exact opposite of what happens in Greece, we should not be far wide of the mark. In spite of this, it could also be said that it is not a feature of the important Swiss foundations such as the Kunsthalle to feel the need to be strictly pioneering within the field of Contemporary Art. It is more often the case that they present us, in admirable fashion, with artists and works which have received some more general recognition elsewhere. And this, of course, may be an expression of the excessive caution which governs the thought and practice of the Swiss in all areas of public life. For this reason, then, we regard the exhibition, which closed a short while ago, in the Basel Kunsthalle of the work of two young American artists who have not yet been included in the higher levels of contemporary expression in Art, not so much because of any immaturity on their part, as much as by reason of the difficulties experienced by 'white whales' when faced by any new proposition, as having an additional importance.

Thus this exhibition, mounted in an exemplary way by Thomas Kellein, has this special extra significance, that is, it is in effect the recognition of the work of these two artists in their first major 'personal' appearance in Europe.

The work of Jones and Ginzle is marked, to begin with, by a striking beauty: a beauty, that is, which surprises and which sometimes could be taken as a deliberate attempt at outstanding beauty alone. But if we add to this the fact that these works are also characterised by movement, that certain parts of them are in constant or periodical motion, it would be easy to dismiss them as 'gimmickry'. This charge is easily disposed of, however, as soon as we allow these works to enchant us and when we remember that magic, or rather, enchantment, is contained within the dimension of Art. Another factor which many would use in order to undervalue the essence of the work of Jones and Ginzle is the technological part of that work (which is almost

always cunningly concealed to prevent it from showing), subsuming it under the easy epithet 'American', which happens often enough in European criticism, which with great facility identifies many works of Contemporary Art of American origin with that technology which is particularly advanced in the USA and which, in turn, is often identified with 'American imperialism', which is naturally 'soulless'. Others, again, would see these works as stimuli suitable for a fun-fair, that is for 'cheaper' pictorial and sensual pleasures. These three negative points are capable of doing damage to the essence of the work of the two young American artists and depriving us all of their live presence at least until the time comes for them to receive recognition if not causing them to disappear for ever into the dark continent of North America.

In contradistinction to all this, the Kunsthalle Museum of Contemporary Art in Basel has risen above these paranoid issues and decided to make available to the museum-going public this major work, which its creators have entitled with the Greek word 'Antithesis'. It is worth mentioning that the very attractive catalogue to the exhibition, with fine photographs by Charles Erickson, sold out its first edition nine days after the opening on 29 August.

Up to now we have been on the defensive. Perhaps this is because we are worried by whatever reaction you may have to what is new so new, in fact, that it has convinced us that we should put it in our first issue, since, as we have made clear, we have a deep interest in whatever is not yet fully tried and tested, that is, New Age Art, a new age which is beginning now and which will introduce us to the year 2000 and stayed with us until it has run its course.

"This creative couple," says Thomas Kellein in his introduction, "are notable for feelings of confidence, faith and inner strength and this gives their works an incontrovertible breath of life. They for their part offer them as gifts to everyone. The artistic activity of Jones and Ginzle is characterised perhaps only by the desire of two people to create light after years of failure, of prosaic repetitiveness and of so many limitations."

Patricia C. Phillips has something very interesting to say in her essay which deals with a part of the methodology followed by the couple. These two artists work very much with the English dictionary. They read the Oxford English Dictionary with scrupulous attention, because, according to them, within they meaning and also the sound of the entries is contained the essence and also the eroticism which leads them to create. This explains the use of obscure words, often of Ancient Greek, Latin, Sanskrit or even Druidical origin, not only to

supply the titles of the work but to make the beholder 'enter through that door' into their type of art. But in the short space available to us let us allow these two artists to speak to us in their own words: "Our work extends from a basis which is really one of respect. We aim to enlarge the physical hypostatis of existence, through the contemporary environment of the city, where the power of nature seems to be annihilated, forces such as gravity, equilibrium, time and movement are combined and co-exist in our explorations of the true identities and reactions of matter and energy. First and foremost, we are interested in the phenomenon of life, since our planet, and the Universe, are in a state of endless flux, which is necessarily in antithesis with the motionless of death, since it is seen in the light of the knowledge of the fact that we are alive at the present moment.

"Our work is highly complex: a quantity of symbols and metaphorical, transitional elements which are woven together. We are fascinated by that which is beyond, by that which is beneath, with that which is contained by the unseen powers which co-exist with all this and with the winds which create that tension which is equilibrium. And it is exactly this matter of balancing as a phenomenon which presupposes that the opposites are restrained by a dynamic compression.

"It is natural for us to use inventions and media of our age, as well as raw materials and those valuable for their purity. The technology which 'brings to life' a large part of our work is simply the means to achieving the end. The generative electrical power is often concealed, just as the secret of our personal metabolism is hidden under our skin.

"Our structures are theatrical reliquaries for the pieces of time which is passing. We are led on by an acute awareness of our mortality. The perception of time in the evolution of human life: this is what we take as the basic unit. We are delighted by the speed of light, by 'geological' time and by ephemeral creatures: the butterfly which lives only for a day, the ephemeral nature of our work is itself a metaphor for our own mortality."

The work 'Antithesis', presented in the Basel Kunsthalle on the second floor was designed for exactly that large space, which has the following dimensions: height 8.9 metres, breadth 11.32 m. and length 29.3 m. For the visitor there is a narrow gangway which is the length of the breath of the room and breadth of less than two metres. A surface of the lightest gauze separates the work from the visitor. This gauze is to some extent an essential part of the work a space in which the machines and the hollows which are a part of the composition are present. The dimensions of the work are the initial ones, while it occupies 2,954 cubic metres. The materials employed are lime, ashes, steam, coal dust, talcum powder, water, paints, steel, gold, aluminium, fibreglass, latex, a compressor, machines, paper, gas flame, warm lighting and the light of day. These are all arranged in the following manner:

Two vast, almost diaphanous cones from the floor to the glass ceiling describe with their bases two circular planes and separate the interior from the exterior. The walls of the cones are of fine thread which reaches to their pointed apexes. The cone nearest to us contains a small round 'pool' of pure gold within an area of powdered lime serving as sand. In the centre of the cone a compass/comb sweeps the white ground in a circular movement. On the other side of this cone is a smaller red cone. The other large cone has a floor of jet black, of coal dust, a black pool dug into the floor, from which steam emerges. In the centre of this cone is a black and white antenna, the base of which is linked to a kind of metronome, which produces a vertical oscillation in antithesis to the other movement of the compass/comb, which is horizontal. These two large cones have a small part of the surface of their base in common, with the shared surface a bright ultramarine.

Outside the two large cones the rest of the surface of the floor is covered with ashes, on which hundreds of small white plaster cones have been placed, at some points covering the whole of the 'ground'. Diametrically opposite the onlooker, at the back of the area, is an opening for a door. In the utter blackness behind this opening lives a restless flame of fairly large dimensions, which literally hangs in mid-air. Every three minutes or so, the over-charged atmosphere of this structure is shattered by a distant but terrific suggestive boom, which seems not so much to reverberate on our unprepared eardrums, but to leave us with the impression of a dull fist-blow in the

centre of the spine. Thus, while our gaze receives and in the end accepts this great visual composition, the mind uneasily awaits the boom. A little later, when we now know when this will occur, we realise that all our senses are in an intense state of readiness, because they have become aware that this large landscape is alive.

It seems somewhat strange to describe a work of the visual arts in so many words, as if there were a plot which is developed, as if we were describing a play or a film. But the audio-kinetic part of the composition includes the dimension of timing passing. It is therefore simpler to narrate. The photographs which we print are purely for purposes of information. It is often the case with works of art that photographs are inadequate to totally inadequate and perhaps we ought to be startled by the idea of there being such a thing as adequate photographs. In the case of the work of Jones and Ginzel no photographic medium, not even video or cinema film, could convey to you the emotional content which without any doubt arouses the visitor, beyond the limits of the familiar and the permissible.

**Dmitri L. Coromilas**  
for I.A.M.