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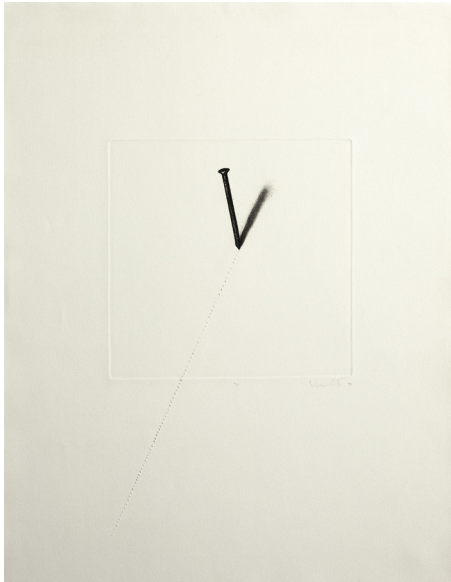
DAROS

Nail, 1972
Silkscreen and string
76 x 57 cm



10/80

Vito Acconci, 1972



Scratch, 1974
Etching and aquatint
76 x 56.5 cm

KATRIN STEFFEN: Throughout the sixties and seventies you devoted yourself to print making. When you arrived in New York in 1964 you experimented with this technique at the Pratt Graphic Art Center and the following year you co-founded the New York Graphic Workshop with Luis Camnitzer and José Guillermo Castillo. What choices or special possibilities did print making offer you? What ideas did you develop and what were the main objectives of the NYGW?

LILIANA PORTER: When I arrived in New York in 1964, the three of us—Camnitzer, Castillo, and myself—were already print makers. What New York offered us was the possibility of working for the first time with material that wasn't available in our own countries (inks, plates, types of paper, etc.); in other words, we had the best technical opportunities to develop our ideas. After this first moment, when we opened the print workshop (NYGW) we began to analyze our own works and ideas in depth, and we realized that none of the isms in the history of art ever emerged from print making but from painting or sculpture. Following much self-criticism and reflection, we agreed that the problem was that as

print makers we put a lot of emphasis on technique instead of on ideas. So each of us began to develop our work, according to our own circumstances, placing an emphasis on ideas. What interested us in the field of prints was the possibility of producing editions. At a time when we were interested in an art that was democratic, challenging, and not elitist, print making, taken to an extreme, gave us great possibilities of action. So we ended up producing installations, mail art, and multiples using non-traditional material.

KS: Many of your early works are related to the notion of *arte boludo* or "dumbass art" you yourselves explored. How did you come to this? What does it consist of?

LP: The idea of *arte boludo* has a philosophical background. Hoping to move away from the technical traps of print making and from the expressionistic works we were making in those days, we decided to work in a different way. In my case, I tried to work with elements I found simpler, more banal or less charged with meaning to ensure the work was closer to a question than an assertion, that it welcomed

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more considerations and more possible meanings. That it was not a closed work. This gave rise to works where I used a nail, a thread, or a shadow; works in which empty space emerged, i.e. the concept of non-place. Since then I've been interested in the subject of time and the relationship between representation and reality. A wonderful example of *arte boludo* is the extraordinary oeuvre of Giorgio Morandi. An oeuvre that, from the simple and banal, reaches an almost mystical clarity and conveys an aesthetic experience that Borges would define as "the imminence of a revelation."

KS: From a visual point of view, your experimental prints are very minimal. The "players" include nails, ropes, and shadows, yet the main role is played by empty space. Is this where the banal and the meaningful intersect?

LP: Empty space is what situates objects in a non-place, a space we could call timeless. In my latest work, for instance, the dialogues between objects don't take place on a table, in New York, or on a specific date; their context, or rather non-context, helps focus on the subject, on the main idea of the work.

KS: One obvious element is the visual trick, the *trompe l'œil* effect. At first, a printed nail can easily be mistaken for a real nail or the image of a shadow for a real shadow. Then the question of the connection between artistic representation, reality, and illusion emerges. What aspects of this subject matter are central to you?

LP: What interests me about this visual confusion is the questioning of the substance of reality and time. The distance between words and things, so to speak.

Interview conducted by e-mail, July 2014.

Translated by Josephine Watson

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