

and disfigured bodies. Display cases were arranged along the path leading to this space; they contained plates from a book by the artist, presented as if they were medieval folios. Titled *The Three Cattelan* and *Die / Die More / Die Better / Die Again*, they were both published this year by Three Star Books. They show images of nearly all the works Cattelan has created, but the plates and the texts (by Bice Curiger and Francesco Bonami, curator of this show) were painted and handwritten by Chinese calligraphers, thus mediating Cattelan's own story through the intervention of others.

Cattelan has reversed the meaning of monumental public sculpture, which now celebrates nothing but the failure of the observer, and he addresses the theme of domestic space as a theater of the most savage crimes and their unavoidable catharsis through media spectacle. The exhibition, however, also confirmed the artist's long-standing attitude toward working with invisibility. Months before the opening, the show had already aroused debates about the scandal that would, it was presumed, be created by the image of the pope felled by a meteorite and lying at the feet of a child. This commotion created a massive presence for the artist in the local press, whose desperate attempt to explain to readers what was being censured seemed perfectly orchestrated by an artist satisfied to watch as this tool of public information was subverted for his own private ends.

—Paola Nicolini

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

STOCKHOLM

Lundahl & Seidl

NATIONALMUSEUM

Most accounts of Christer Lundahl and Martina Seidl's *Symphony of a Missing Room*, 2009, cast it as magic realism: a mélange of fairy-tale hallucination and reality beyond doubt. At appointed hours an audience, limited to six, assembled and, once outfitted with special surround-sound headphones, heard a disembodied female voice directing them toward the museum's Renaissance rooms, where they donned opaque goggles, which translated everything that they might have seen into nondescript shapes in light and dark. A furtive detour within the museum commenced; routine sight and hearing now supplanted, you followed the woman's whispered instructions as someone's hand softly holding yours offered gentle guidance. "Crouch and step from the room you are in," the woman said, "into a tunnel toward the secret room"; your bowed head happened to graze the edge of the tunnel's entrance just as the sonic effect of your footsteps changed, from making

the floorboards creak, to echoing down a dank, gritty tunnel. Inside the missing room the light touch of the shepherding hand would suddenly seem to dissolve, leaving you feeling quite vulnerable, until another took its place, helping you maneuver and respond to assorted commands: "Take three steps forward, turn around."

Over and over again, the touch of your escort's hand gently departed as if you were in a serene dance, until another materialized, sometimes from behind or even above. Two sensations prevailed during this enigmatic experience; separated from the small group, you felt utterly alone, and constantly on a threshold physically, psychologically, emotionally, and temporally. There was no "before" or "soon," only now. The woman's voice offered hints about the room—"uninhabited for hundreds of years"—then invited you to touch its walls, triggering your own intimate imaginary world to emerge. Afterward you were led outside, where the light increased, birds sang, and your feet sounded in a "supernatural forest." More stories—"an old man dwells here . . ."—then, without warning, the goggles were lifted. There lay the old man's apparently lifeless body—not in a forest, but in the museum—with nineteenth-century plaster sculptures about. But the astonishment you inevitably felt was not primarily because of the body, or the missing forest, but because of the other members of your group standing alongside; one second ago, you were unconditionally alone in a ceaseless netherworld.

Magic realism is not a scalpel sharp enough for this experience; *Symphony* evoked elaborate feelings about madness and what might follow immediately after death. A few lines from William Wordsworth's 1807 poem "She Was a Phantom of Delight" came to me: "And now I see with eye serene / The very pulse of the machine; / A Being breathing thoughtful breath, / A traveller betwixt life and death." Poised between insanity and the afterlife, *Symphony* is ever more intriguing when one considers the neuropsychiatric disorder known as Cotard's syndrome, of which the symptoms are general feelings of unreality, bodilessness, nonexistence: a fit description of the work. Cotard's syndrome patients may even declare they are dead, yet they can still think—a case of *cogito* without *ergo sum*? Not really. As evidence that they are dead, Cotard's patients aver that they no longer feel anything. Interweaving Wordsworth's sensations of the phantom with the madness of Cotard's syndrome, one begins to grasp the experience of *Symphony of a Missing Room*.

—Ronald Jones

COPENHAGEN

"Make Yourself at Home"

KUNSTHAL CHARLOTTENBORG

"Make Yourself at Home" set out to explore notions of hospitality in a world marked by globalization, mass displacement, and growing xenophobia. Curators Charlotte Bagger Brandt and Koyo Kouoh invoked everything from the writings of Jacques Derrida to the Danish term *hygge*, a word akin to "coziness," in the text accompanying their exhibition of ten artists' work, which included painting, video, photography, installation, and performance. Unexpectedly, the most incisive works on view often included aspects of either monumentality or social experiment. One of the more imposing pieces, Pascale Marthine Tayou's *Home Sweet Home*, 2010, projects both overt jubilation and subtle heartache with its massive jumble of concatenated birdcages held aloft by stakes on top of a straw pallet. Spindly African wood carvings of figures in Western attire dangle upside down like bats from the structure's underbelly. Occupying a room nearby was Kader Attia's installation *Conversations Relocated as Reappropriation of the Public Space*,



Lundahl & Seidl,
*Symphony of a
Missing Room*, 2009.
Performance view,
September 8, 2010.