

ARTnews

You Can 'Do It'

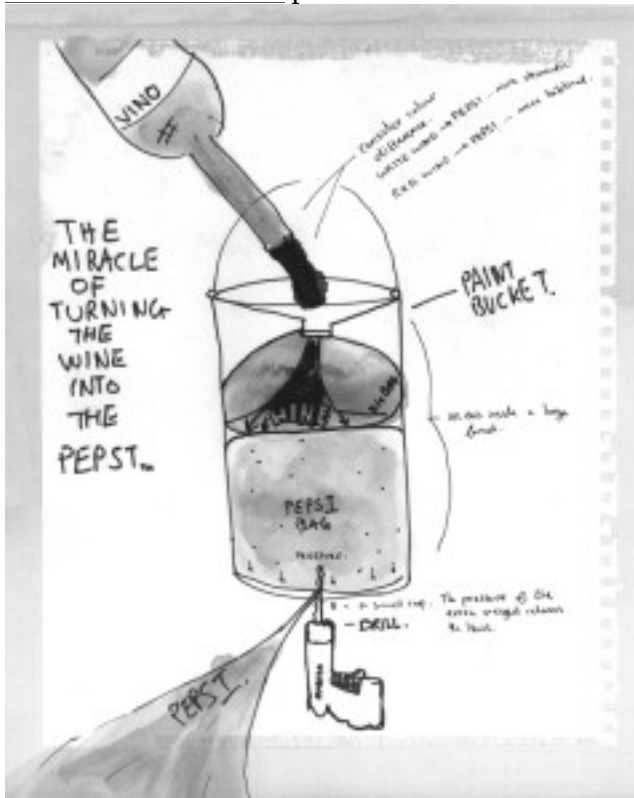
BY Emily Nathan POSTED 07/02/13

New book and projects expand Hans Ulrich Obrist's participatory-art movement

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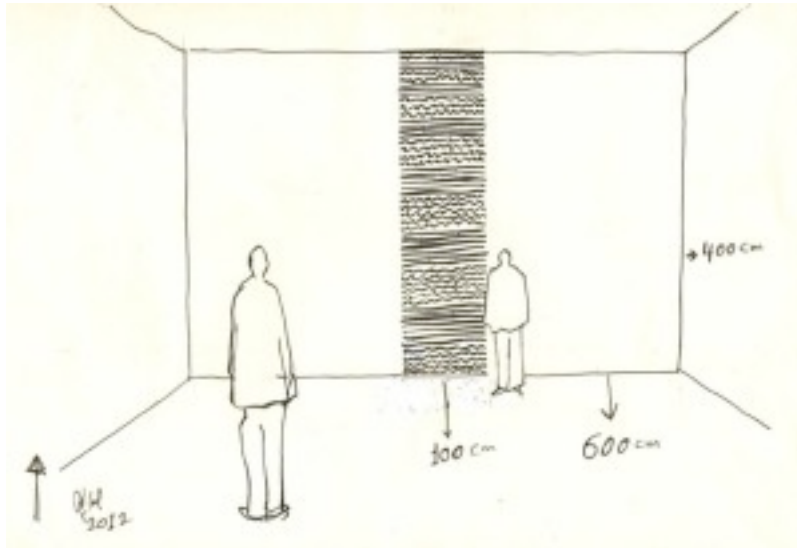
"Tear out this page while listening attentively . . . crumple the page into a small ball," read Christian Marclay's directions for a do-it-yourself artwork. "Save the ball(s)/ discard the book." Marclay's *Instruction* (1995–96) is one of 250 written "art scores" included in a new book documenting Hans Ulrich Obrist's ongoing "do it" exhibition project. Featuring contributions by the likes of Amalia Pica, Cory Arcangel, Ryan Trecartin, Yoko Ono, and Lawrence Weiner, *do it: the compendium* is intended not only as a record of this historic project—which Obrist conceived with artists Christian Boltanski and Bertrand Lavier in 1993—but as an iteration of the exhibition itself, with 80 new scores. D.A.P. and Independent Curators International published the book to coincide with the 20th anniversary of "do it."



Alexandre Singh's place for turning wine into Pepsi, 2012.
COURTESY THE ARTIST.

“The exhibitions we remember are the ones that invent new rules of the game,” Obrist told *ARTnews*, “and when we came up with ‘do it’ we had that in mind. Every ‘do it’ work is very much a collaboration—between the artist who writes the instruction and the artist who actually executes it, and then the visitor who interacts with it.” In conjunction with the book launch, “do it” will have a slew of participatory events worldwide throughout the year—including the very first outdoor “do it” at New York’s Socrates Sculpture Park (through July 7)—and a comprehensive show at the Manchester Art Gallery in England, which features the inaugural edition of DO IT TV, will go up in July.

Of course, the flexibility of the contributions varies wildly, ranging from Sol LeWitt’s meticulous graphic specifications, to Alexandre Singh’s freewheeling diagram for “turning the wine into the Pepsi,” to Ono’s poetically abstract *Wish Piece* (1996), in which she instructs us to make wishes until the branches of a “Wish Tree” are covered in them.



Hassan Sharif's design for a draw-it-yourself wall work, 2012.
COURTESY THE ARTIST.

“Do it’ obviously evokes the playful nature of something like Neo-Fluxus or Neo-Dada,” Obrist says. “But there is also a strong connection to activism. The instructions from the last couple of years have a kind of parallel energy to Occupy Wall Street.” While some works in the volume are overtly political—Ai Weiwei’s irreverent *CCTV Spray* (2012) guides readers in making a spray-can device that can block out surveillance cameras—others more subtly reference the complex nature of cultural exchange in a rapidly globalizing world. Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s *Untitled* (1994), for example, demands that we gather 180 pounds of local candy and drop them in a corner.

“In the ’90s, there was a very strong spirit of DIY,” Obrist says, “and that spirit seems to be recurrent. ‘Do it’ is not always relevant, but it pops up when it needs to. And every iteration is like a brand new ‘do it’ generation.”

