

# CAC INTERVIU

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## ANSWER IS NEVER THE SAME

RAIMUNDAS MALAŠAUSKAS

People sometimes get irritated if you ask them the same question again, especially if it happens in the same conversation. Yet sometimes they provide different answers immediately or let's say two minutes after the first try (think of the Oracle in *The Matrix* or Bill Clinton in his trial). However when there are 40 years in between two identical questions there's a big chance of getting the same answer. This does not apriori mean that nothing has changed or things have remained the same. The same answer could hold a totally different trajectory for arrival than the previous one, and to illuminate this trajectory is an intellectual ride through a number of possibilities that otherwise might remain mutually exclusive. Which is why an answer can be considered as a media-type of event, while the route towards it is a terrain where things are happening always, but occasionally (and live). The fact that one day you may arrive at Hegel of course is not as interesting as the path that brought you there: maybe it happens via Heidegger or perhaps via Spinoza (like you may land on '70s Disco via house music or... maybe to Spinoza via Disco), but let's face the fact that the ultimate choices and slips happened before the arrival. Therefore each new point-of-entry and route generate a new destination and a new point-of-arrival. So the answer is never the same even if it is the same sentence.

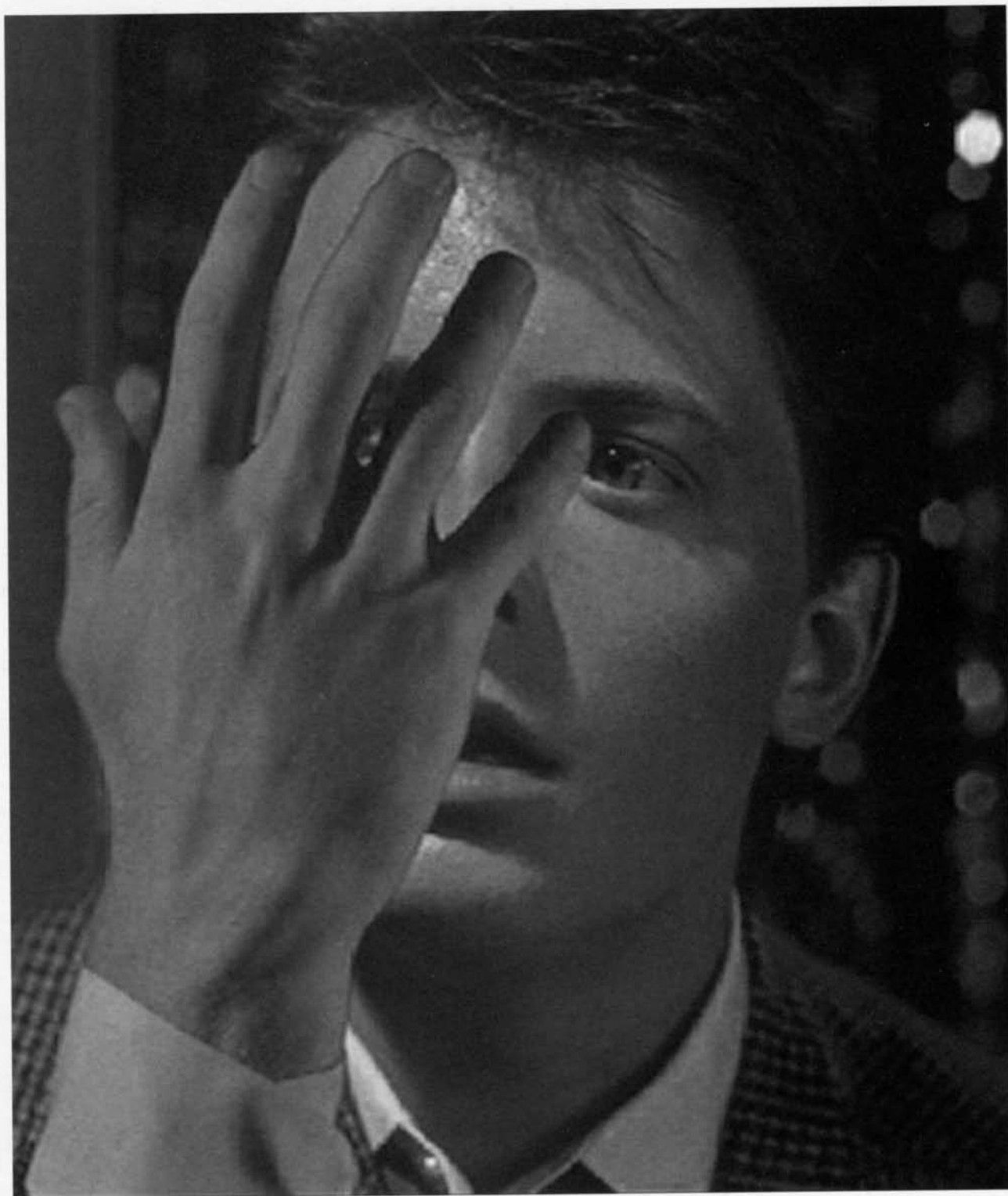
*Answer is Never the Same* is about constructing different points-of-entry to sources of inspiration, as well as playing with the genre of interview, especially when an identical principle of asking already used questions had been exploited in more colorful publications like *THE FACE* or *Another Magazine* where Kylie Minogue and Gwyneth Paltrow did a similar thing to what Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner did in 1989, answering the same 20-year-old questions by critic Arthur R. Rose<sup>1</sup>. This does not mean that Conceptual art pre-empted Kylie and Gwyneth. Yet the issue of originating is of course constantly recurring, especially in the discourse of Conceptual art which "has been marked by a fierce, absolutely fierce series of attempts by many different artists to claim primacy and position."<sup>2</sup> This phenomena is pretty well pointed out in *Untitled* by Argentinian Conceptualist Eduardo Costa, a "piece that is essentially the same as a piece made by any of the first conceptual artists, dated two years earlier than the original and signed by somebody else. 1970." In this respect new points of entry are intended to create warps in time instead of supporting linear dialectics of history.

For this issue of *CAC Interviu*, Malašauskas questions Ryan Gander (artist, London).

## Notes:

1. Robert C. Morgan, *Art Into Ideas*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
2. Charles Green interview with Geert Lovink at [www.nettime.net](http://www.nettime.net)

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# ANSWER IS NEVER THE SAME

Raimundas Malašauskas questions Ryan Gander

Below are the sources of questions as well as some random notes to them.

*Question 1* Source: Patricia Norvell to Sol LeWitt in *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews With Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelau, Smithson, Weiner*. UCP, 2001.

Sounds like a long-lasting book. The title is a bit outdated, nevertheless the backlash of object-based practices makes it relevant today. The idea about 'systems-oriented world' confirms that we are probably on the same course of Modernity as we were 40 years ago, only the point-of- entry has changed. Don't forget: how many systems? The book was written when there were at least two of them: Communism and Capitalism. There could be even more today: McDonalds, Burger King, Pizza Hut, etc.

*Question 2* Source: Bob Nickas, "Interview with Robert Barry", *Journal of Contemporary Art*, Vol. 5, No 1, Spring 1992, p. 14.

*Question 3* Source: "Interview With Ian Wilson by Oscar van den Boogaard", *Newspaper of Galerie Jan Mot*, issue 32, May-June 2002.

I think it's more relevant to talk about truth than to produce it, because it's a dramatic business.

*Question 1* Have you read Jack Burnham's *Beyond Modern Sculpture*? He makes the argument that we are changing from an object-oriented world to a systems-oriented world, and that art is involved in doing it right now.

RYAN GANDER

But when was this question first posed, when was "right now"? It's a bit of a sweeping argument isn't it, a bit of a generalization? But I guess that is because it's plucked from the context of the other questions that originally surrounded it. I'm quite fond of the idea that there could be a specific ilk or group of artists with the common ground of a 'system lend' practice, and if there was such a gathering, I have to admit I would be interested in participating. There are increasingly less groupings and schools recently in comparison to in the past. No more 'New Abstract Realism', etc. I have been toying with the idea of an artists union recently... Why the art world doesn't have one when other professions do... and if there was one what its role could be? And then in turn would there be a 'Neo-Conceptual Union' as well as a 'Political Photographers Union'. How would we go on strike? Would not getting into the Tate Triennial be like 'unfair dismissal'?

*Question 2* I wonder if we can place any significance on the idea of real time, not only in terms of a temporary work, but as a subject. We now have different notions of time than we used to... it's not limitless anymore.

What are other notions of time that are particularly important to you?

RG Most importantly 'Future History'. In the work: the subject of time displacement, and surrounding the work: Future Art History—in relation to looking at one's practice as a whole form outside one's practice.\*

*\*A general note: There's a mass of bad artists around at the moment, especially in London. You can see that a lot of the work that is being made is by people who are more interested in being artists than making art. People with present time orientation only ever stopping to think about their 'careers'. They teach professional development in art schools, artists are taught to have websites and business cards... it's really grueling. Lots of five second buzz, quick fix, populist regurgitations. I'm not interested. But what is interesting is that this means on a flip side that those with similar interests that aren't on trajectory with that path can identify each other really easily. I am interested in a small self-motivated audience who are properly interested in investing time and energy into spectatorship. If there were to be a 'New Neo-Conceptualist Union of Artists', its motivations would hopefully be to push things forward—to push history forward, to put yourself in difficult or even uncomfortable situations to enable important work to be made. Never sitting still, reinventing everything around you, until you're in a place that's not familiar anymore.*

*Question 3* Is the notion of truth important in any respect in your work?

RG I guess so, but only as important as non-truth. Most important is the 'not knowing'; The potential, that the uncertain could be real. The trust



and belief of the spectator, that the world is a place where incredible things happen, and a place where anything could be truth.

*Question 4* Source: Patricia Norvell to Sol LeWitt in *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews With Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelau, Smithson, Weiner*. UCP, 2001.

The second part of the question functions as a reference to Nelson Goodman who, in his seminal book *Languages of Art*, re-formulates the essentialist question 'What is art?' into relativist 'When is art?' A similar attitude is expressed by Sol LeWitt who talks about art "as verb."

*Question 5* Source: Raimundas Malašauskas interview about weblogging with Catherine Fake, Jouke Klerebeezem and Paul Perry in the second edition, 2003, of the online version of *NU* magazine: [www.nu-e.nu](http://www.nu-e.nu).

Perhaps this question has to do with info-ecology related issues: self-consuming or self-sustaining instead of self-replicating?

*Question 6* Source unidentified.

*The Man Who Taught Blake Painting in his Dream* is a drawing by William Blake. When I saw it for the first time last year I couldn't understand whether this was a portrait of a man who was using his dreams to teach William Blake the way of painting, or whether it was Blake who was taught how to paint in his dreams. 'Can you teach me something in your dreams?' I would like to ask someone one day.

*Question 7* Source: Patricia Norvell to Sol LeWitt in *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews With Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelau, Smithson, Weiner*. UCP, 2001.

This is sort of a take on Question 7 only it addresses the issue of repeatability instead of recombination, multiple identity and trans-personal commons. Actually the question comes from a statement by Robert Barry about his work in 1969.

*Question 8* Source: Hans Ulrich Obrist to Sol LeWitt and Jonathan Monk in *Jonathan Monk*, Lisson Gallery & Galerie Yvon Lambert, 2003. "I am not into it at all" (Sol LeWitt to Hans Ulrich Obrist)

*Question 9* Source: Carsten Holler in a discussion with Daniel Birnbaum in *Production*, Kiasma, Helsinki, 2000.

The second part of the question is something more general. The notion of a product is something that often puts people off, but since we are in a multi-system reality (see notes for Question 1), it is inevitable to use it.

*Question 4* How are you deciding what is art? Or when is art?

RG When—Other art is *it* whenever someone else tells me it is *it*. My art is *it* when my stomach doesn't hurt any more.

What—I decide what it is by seeing what is next on the list, or by pulling something out of the box in the corner of my studio. The list is quite strategically ordered so that one entry contrasts the next, so that no two works are made in succession that share similar values, ethics, media, vehicles or processes. Otherwise I tire easily.

*Question 5* Do you have an idea where deleted or erased information disappears to in general?

RG It disappears. It doesn't go anywhere. Maybe you can remember some of it, but that's all, no? Is this a trick question? Like: A man dressed all in black is walking down a country lane. Suddenly a large black car without any lights on comes round the corner and screeches to a halt. How did the driver know there was a man on the road?

*Question 6* Have you ever done work under a different name? Can you imagine doing a work of another artist? Do you sometimes imagine work of another artist that hasn't ever been made?

RG Spencer Anthony, Mary Aurory, Abbe Faria, Murry Jay Siskin, Irwin Green, Anthony Green, Alan Cho, Dave Lange, Nathaniel Evans, William Fox, Elizabeth Dunn, Frances Dillon Bell, Marie Aurora, Etienne Nys, Akiro Sontoshisan-kuso, Studio Largo, Adele Whitaker, Joseph Thackerey, Rose Duvall, François de Domégnon-Mauve, Terrance Edward White, Terrance E. White, Joshua Roberts, Boris van den Geel, Henry Sewell, Vivi...

*Question 7* Can your pieces be redone in another situation, somewhere else, by someone else, actually?

RG Yes, of course, they all come with detailed installation instructions.

*Question 8* I was wondering if you use the Internet? Do you imagine a dissemination of your work via the Internet? Is it appropriate to your work?

RG "I am not into it at all." (Ryan Gander replying as Sol LeWitt)

*Question 9* Isn't non-productivity one of the most radical and violent means to counteract dominant structures? Do you use the notion of a product in your artistic practice?

RG Not if you have no money and have to work cleaning old peoples' bottoms. I don't think about products, there is something vulgarly strategic about the word. Things just happen and then by-products and off-cuts appear that people want to swap for money. Then I swap that money for food, and things to realize new things.

*Question 10* Is oral communication just language?

RG Not sure. Well there's singing as well. Humming, that's oral communication, isn't it? And kissing... is that language? This is a weird technical question. Portraying art as a science or something? It's a bit too logic based to answer. Isn't language just two people agreeing on something and therefore the space for miscommunication, people agreeing on slightly different things, isn't that where art starts? Don't know.

*Question 11* Is the 'unknown' an important element in your other work also?

RG ...never sitting still, reinventing everything around you, until you're in a place that's not familiar anymore.

And...

*Question 11.5*

DAN FOX

Why do you think artists are endlessly fascinated by other cultural forms—television, film, music, dance, architecture? Do artists suffer a particularly acute 'grass-is-always-greener' malady?

RYAN GANDER

Cultural forms other than what? Art? The grass is definitely greener outside the art world, but isn't it meant to be? Don't trust artists that enjoy the reality of the art world: it's a bloody horrible place. And it's certainly not somewhere surprises happen: they only happen when a fence between forms becomes a perch; when you are teetering on the cusp of everything.

*Question 12* Can you have a discussion with an invisible man?

RG Invisible men don't exist, but I am sure you can have a chat with yourself. Not really a discussion, a good discussion is something that ends up in a place you're not expecting. But if you are talking to yourself you're already going to know everything you tell yourself. You're not going to learn anything that way.

I am a believer in the quality of 'getting it out' though. That's what's weird about ideas when they are in your head they don't seem to exist, they seem like ideas, but as soon as you get-em-out in language, they seem to become realized automatically, just through going about your life.

*Question 10* Source: Robert Barry to Ian Wilson in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* From 1966 to 1972. UCP, 1973.

*Question 11* Source: Interview with Robert Barry in *Prospect* '69, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, September 30—October 12, 1969.

*Question 11.5* Source: added by Ryan Gander

*Question 12* Source: unidentified.