



Penwald 2: 8 circles / Photo: Michael Hart - hartharthart.com

When people ask him what he does for a living, Tony Orrico (Illinois, US, 1979) does not immediately call himself a dancer. However, dance, or perhaps rather movement, is the most important medium by which this many-sided artist covers various artistic areas, either solo or in collaboration with others. But he would be equally justified in calling himself a performer, director, actor, choreographer, or painter and draughtsman. And whatever he is doing, it is almost invariably about breaking down the barriers between choreography and visual art. Among the things Tony Orrico learned when he was working for the Trisha Brown Dance Company and for Shen Wei Dance Arts was using movement as an instrument to create two-dimensional work and dance to create an installation. Earlier this year, he was one of the artists who, in the context of the major retrospective exhibition *Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present*, re-enacted early work by this performance artist at the MoMA, New York. During these 'durational pieces', the performers had to stay in a certain position for a very long period of time. The physical stamina needed for this can also be found in his growing number of original works.

The organizing principle underlying Tony Orrico's work is not so much the discipline involved, with all the accompanying traditions, as the improvisation. His work is usually created live on location. He brings about a certain artificial structure, in which he then embarks on a process, with the end product as the ultimate circumstance of this process. The improvisation is not entirely free. In his

work, Orrico examines partly physical, partly man-bound circumstances and conditions for different states of being and change. Movement, measurement, gravity, energy, chaos, efficiency, duration, limitation, repetition and isolation are recurring themes in his work. Sometimes the spectator is merely an observer of the artist's slightly introverted exploit, at other times he becomes involved in the performance. In *Sunken Ship* (2009), Orrico danced and acted to the sound of the mobile-phone ring tones of his audience. In other performances the audience hands the artist the modest utensils he makes use of, or it becomes so carried away by the process that it eventually encourages him.

Fundamental material for Orrico's performances are more and more often his body, virginal sheets of paper and chalk or charcoal. In his performance at *Dixon Place* (New York, 2009) he smeared various parts of his body with colour and, always from the same angle, kept letting himself fall over to the right, against a sheet of white paper attached to the wall. During his performance at the *Red Horse Cafe* (New York, 2009), he pivoted round on his knees in a virtually perfect circle on a white sheet of paper, with his arms repetitively moving backwards and forwards against his body. The sticks of graphite that skimmed the paper in this way showed the creation of a circle consisting of hundreds of interlaced lines. Not only the penetrating graphic quality of this work, but also the conceptual challenge emanating from it, is the direct result of a body that 'expounds' itself in situ with notions of size, form, idea. The execution in-

variably shows great mathematical precision, but the challenge of this one-man-spirograph always has an ultimately human aspect. Orrico's control of his limbs and his physical stamina are the most important assets in his ever longer performances. Some of these last for several hours. And in these cases, the spectator gradually begins to share more and more in Orrico's increasingly heavy breathing and the exceptional effort required from his arms and legs. The works of art that subsequently form the reflection of his performances not only lastingly document the physical and abstract process, but are first and foremost the magnificent result of a powerful and personal signature in a still relatively young oeuvre.

During Flux/S, it will be possible to see Tony Orrico at work daily. Three performances from his project Penwald can be experienced live. Orrico has characterized these works as drafts. They are the execution and documentation of just one single performance at a particular moment in an ongoing process. It is never finished, always changeable, always dependent on the situation in question. New performances are always possible. Because for Orrico, too, performance art in fact only needs four basic elements: time, space, the performer's body, and a relationship between artist and audience. Wherever these are available, a new work of art can be born.

PENWALD 2: 8 CIRCLES

This work originated in the National Academy of Sciences in Washington D.C. Tony Orrico, inspired by the spatial areas of the different departments, translated elementary

criteria and areas of research into simple but powerful movements. The patterns generated in this way, carried out by the artist lying flat on his stomach, consist of eight separate circles made up of repetitive cycles, which refer to, among other things, geometry, astronomy and biomechanics. Together they form a larger circle. In a live performance, Orrico in fact adds his own research questions to science: What does art consist of, and where can it come into existence?

PENWALD 3: CIRCLE ON KNEES

Rhythmical performance in which the artist slowly pivots round on his knees, as in a ritual dance - just as during his performance at the Red Horse Cafe. Orrico's arms are moving in perfect symmetry along the sides of his body, so that he creates a circle of point-by-point lines on the sheet of paper on the floor beneath him.

PENWALD 4: UNISON SYMMETRY STANDING

A three-hour performance in which Orrico draws on a white wall with perfectly orchestrated bilateral movements. Slowly but surely a densely woven symmetrical image emerges, which bears a strong resemblance to the two halves of our brain.