

*Luca Frei*

by Vincenzo De Bellis, *Flash Art. Overture / 277 August - September 2009*

If one could encapsulate Luca Frei's artistic practice in a definition by borrowing terms from other cultural spheres, one could speak of "syncopated narrative." Just as syncopation is a pause, a gap, between two musical notes, the young Swiss artist's way of working seems to involve each work being a different moment in a narrative made up of images, words, spaces and architectures that are independent of each other but at the same time represent fragments of a larger discourse. Each of these fragments—a sculpture, an installation, a neon sign, an environment—is to be always read in relation to the other; in the transition between them "occur" empty moments, pauses, syncopes precisely, that somehow ask to be filled by the viewer who moves between them. Whether in fact texts, architectural structures or display and exhibition settings, Luca Frei's works have in common a necessary and unavoidable relationship with the viewer who activates or completes them.

This is never a forced interaction but rather an offer, a request for dialogue that is open to multiple possibilities of reading, without the claim that the work represents for those who observe, hear, touch or "inhabit" it a meaning established a priori. On some occasions this process of interaction is more explicit, such that the work exists in the service of those who use it, as is the case in *Bookshelves FormContent* (2009). Within the project "It's not for reading. It's for making," organized by the FormContent project space in London and in which thirty artists, curators, critics, and writers were invited to make available their own small selection of books and publications, Frei created a shelving system that not only modulates the architectural space but also houses and makes possible the consultation of this open archive. In other circumstances, the audience's action becomes almost a process of "co-authorship" of the work: in *Space Jockeys* (2002), a slide projector is resting on a table on which are placed several transparent and colored sheets and other objects that invite the viewer to create through their own reconstruction, a personal point of view.

Sometimes the call for participation is less immediate and more subtle, as in the neon signs, or more properly physical, so much so as to claim a strong engagement, as in the case of the sculptural works. *Untitled (Gaps)* (2008) is a sculpture composed of 27 white cubes. In its arrangement it invites the viewer to walk around it and follow the interplay of openings and closings suggested by the juxtaposition of the cubes that sometimes allow one to see through to the other side, at other times obstruct the view. In *Untitled (Floor Piece)* (2008) strips of silk paper are laid on the floor. They allude, albeit in their flat two-dimensionality, to walls that construct a hypothetical and aleatory subdivision of the surrounding space and that, thanks to the very nature of the object, shift as the viewer passes. As in *Brilliant Corners* (2008), which in the artist's words is "a work conceived as a wall that bends, curves, explains and rebels, a wall that stops being a wall to open new spaces, both physical and mental," it is the wall that physically and metaphorically represents the creation of spaces that close and that open, that divide and unite, and that route the viewer toward a process of awareness of space and of one's self in relation to it.