

Interview

Andrea Rosen and Tino Seghal

Andrea Rosen: The first time we met in person, we were at the Guggenheim, and you were in the middle of rehearsal for your exhibition. We immediately got into a conversation about the limitations and benefits of the physical form of Felix's work. You seemed to be reacting to the way in which the physicality of Felix's work addresses both the general and the specific.

Tino Seghal: My main interest in Felix's work is that I think he very elegantly constructs situations out of the means of visual art. I think that Felix was conscious of that, in that he takes on these minimalist forms and engages with the language of his predecessors. Then what's important to me is that he constructs a particular situation. For me, his work resides primarily in these situations it generates: it draws the viewer or the public into asking questions like, "What does it mean if I take this? Am I going to breach some rule that some authority has put up? Do I care?" There are also other questions, which are not necessarily at the forefront of our consciousness. For instance to think, "OK, what if everybody does this? What consequences does that have?" Or in a more general sense, there may be an insecurity about what to do, but still a desire to do something. That's why it's important that it's candies, and also why the stack posters are seductive. It's also good visual art in the narrowest sense of the word. I mean, it's a good picture, it's a nice photograph. And then in the larger sense of the word, his work actually does something to the tradition of exhibitions, in terms of actually producing a quite specific situation which has a kind of content, and an ethical, moral dimension, which in a way, the Minimalists claimed to have. They had ideas of standing before an artwork and how that's supposed to redeem you from contemporary life. When you're in front of a minimal artwork, you sense your body in some ways, but it's a very, very abstract situation, whereas the situation Felix constructed was more concrete. When you construct a situation, an object can be a good lure.

AR: The existence of physical objects is what creates a record of change. In the Foundation, we consider it one of our primary jobs to record what we call case studies. The case studies are not a recording of what the rules are, even though institutions would like us to do this. It's instead a recording of all the types and variations of decisions that have happened with each installation or manifestation of a particular work. Since there is a physical object, or a record of a physical object, there is a remembrance and change becomes more overt. The idea of change becomes a subject. You have to actually be responsible and register that change.

What I find so fascinating about life is that there is change all the time, either physical change or conceptual change. But because there is rarely recording of it, we tend not to recognize that readily. In some ways we take change for granted, but in some ways we take physical objects for granted. We assume physical objects to be a representation of no change. One of the things that is compelling about Felix's work when it is manifested as a physical object is that we get to understand and reflect on them anew each time. Our consciousness and reflection around their change from one manifestation to another can create a greater sense of recognition around the concept of change.

You deal with this differently in your work. Perhaps forgetting is more important in your work. Does forgetting become a lack of memory? And how important is a lack of memory? Is there an advantage in your work that information gets lost, or information transforms into knowledge? Felix's work, as it points to an original form, directs us in acknowledging change and loss. In your work, it seems significant that there is something always being lost since the work is not recorded, and the work is always only what it is at that moment. How does one acknowledge change? There's potentially no remembrance between each occurrence of your work.

Is acknowledging that you've forgotten something a better indicator of an acknowledgment of change?

TS: I think I understand what you say about the Foundation, and the rules. Rules are always a bit mechanistic. In psychology they make these studies about how we don't really think in categories. And philosophers, from Wittgenstein to Whitehead, in all different ways talk about this idea of a gradual affiliation, you know, which is an idea similar to the idea of family resemblance. What you're doing in these case studies seems to be something of that order. It actually seems to me more accurate. And it's not more imprecise; it's just more loose. It reminds me of where the history of science is nowadays, it's not that they've kind of loosened up the idea of objectivity to undo science, but they're loosening it up to actually be more precise.

For most visual artists, artworks are static. I think that Felix had a sensibility for these life processes. It's also maybe not a coincidence that often he thought about death, or about a person's body changing. Things are never stable, and so in that sense his work is never stable. To be precise with his work is also to acknowledge non-stability. For him to do that with objects, which are the Western trophies of stability, signals or signum of stability, is quite important, I think. Maybe more important than he himself realized.

AR: I'm always amazed about what I think Felix might have realized or preconceived. What I also remember from when you and I first met was that you thought I was going to lay down all these Foundation rules, but my role in the Foundation is one around discourse, which supports the opening up of the work. What did you think as you realized that there are certain boundaries, but these boundaries are not limitations, as such? What did you think when you realized that your role was a lot more interpretative and open, that there were a lot more choices to be made than you may have first anticipated?

TS: You know, I'm somehow more of a *metteur en scène*, let's say, instead of using the old word "artist." And then of course, if you give me something, then I'm going to try and make a *mise-en-scène*, which I think brings out a certain kind of essence, but also adds to it, in a way.

I grew up with the German *Regietheater*—which was a tradition you don't have at all in the U.S.—where basically the director deconstructs the play and becomes a much more important figure than the scriptwriter. So for instance, growing up, I didn't fully know the story of *Hamlet*, because when I saw *Hamlet* in the German theater, it would always be some weird deconstruction. That tradition isn't that important to me, and I've rarely mentioned it, but growing up with that as a kid, you get to feel that you can do something to something, and that's also a way of using it. And using it means giving life to it. And of course when you do it well, you actually bring out a kind of core of it, you know?

AR: I'm always wondering about and interested in thinking about why people don't act on that right more. It's always interesting to me why people feel more comfortable with boundaries as rules rather than lines to rub up against. Felix was very purposeful and concise about all the words he chose—like "ideal" and "original"—and these words clearly have intention and power. And while nowhere are there instructions to fuck with the rules, there's certainly nothing that keeps anyone from doing so. I wonder why people do or don't do that. Words like "ideal height" are implicitly powerful, as they imply that there can be an other. The words he chose always presented the right or responsibility to consider an alternate. So, I think you've done the most ideal show of Felix, in a way, in terms of really taking on those responsibilities.

TS: Just for the record, I'm not necessarily a fan of *Regietheater*, even though I did grow up with it. But I think of the tradition of the museum as coming out of Hegel, and this historic, rational, enlightened, non-Dionysiac, non-embodied, non-imminent, but distant, tradition—a very Western tradition. It's what makes the West the West. Museum culture and art history are totally steeped in this, and thus not so interested in creative continuation. They expect that you are able to take a critical distance, and maintain the idea of objectivity, scientific precision—that there is one truth to be achieved about something. They're not interested in messing with things; they're interested in keeping things static entities over time. Museums

consider themselves the guardians of this modality. There's very little tradition of doing something else. But when you do it, of course subjectivities mix. You've been very complimentary, since I did that show. You felt that Felix's subjectivity was not dead, and you saw my subjectivity and his as a pas de deux, a kind of ballet. But it's possible that two people can have an awful dance, too. Maybe then you would have been less excited!

AR: Here's one interesting relationship between Felix's work and your work: the responsibility of a curator working with you, and any rules that exist around the work, are specifically about the interpretation and negotiation of the work. The whole responsibility of being a curator of a Felix Gonzalez-Torres show is to grapple with those questions, and to make decisions. Even owners sometimes, who know the range of what they can do, end up moving toward "keeping it the same," keeping it stagnant, keeping it "original." Is this inclination about somehow honoring the artist? Is it a fear of change, or a fear of being unsuccessful?

TS: I think probably what Felix wanted is the empowerment of his buyers or his recipients. His public. That's why he destabilizes this Western, priestly position of the artist. Instead of just him holding mass, he wants to have a more common ritual, where everybody gets to do something. People are used to being the audience and not participants, and it's a bit unusual for them to really accept this empowerment. Maybe that's something that could be your role: encouraging people to make these decisions, so they don't find themselves thinking, "I have to make this decision, and how am I going to do it? I'll resort to what's right..." Maybe the idea of "right" is where your irritation comes from, Andrea. Because if Felix wanted people do what's "right," then he would have said so. But he set up the system for others to make decisions, it's because he really wanted others to make a decision. He wants to mix his subjectivity, his personality, with others'. That's also how I see it with the portraits, in which owners and exhibitors can directly and visibly add some things. I don't think Felix just wants to have his personality, subjectivity, whatever you want to call it, out there, pure form, and that's something I relate to deeply in my own works. My work is always a mix of my sensibility and the sensibility of the person doing it. The work changes radically.

AR: Yet Felix wasn't interested in allowing the work to be completely or entirely porous. Regardless of how much someone changes it, the core of the work always remains. The work has an absolute and ongoing essence.

TS: It's paradoxical. Let me vulgarize a little bit what you said. It's like, OK, these artists have set up a system of coordinates so strong, that no matter how you bend this thing, they'll always win. That's a bit superficial, a vulgar reading of the situation. On a deeper level, you could say it's part of the core of this work that other people's personalities, sensibilities, subjectivities, are enmeshed into it. So its core is already impure.

AR: If I'm ever reactionary to people's complacency, I've had to take cues from Felix regarding when not to be irritated, when not to give instructions. It's almost my job to not give instructions; instead I try to communicate that it is necessary to think about the possibilities. For instance, the punctuation in Felix's titles was a very specific decision by Felix embedded with intrinsic content. And yet if a museum put up a wall label that didn't have it, I would ask, "Why did you say yes when it's essential to your work?" And he'd say, "Oh, you have to leave room for these things." What was essential to Felix was that he knew, and made us know, that one decision was just that—one decision. Any one decision is not a final decision, and one decision was not intended to be able to close down the possibility for future decisions. With Felix, there is the idea of the original, and a description on paper. There is a certificate that someone can always refer back to. Whereas in your work, as changes occur, and because those changes are not recorded, that change keeps going, it continues. With Felix, there's a building and an evolving as well, but he wasn't interested in everything being entirely linear. There is also the opportunity to go back and consider the record of change. Every time a choice is made, it may alter the fiber of how someone makes that choice in the future, or it may not.

TS: So what is the original, in Felix's case?

AR: The original, and the present, are related yet distinct. Each body of work is so different. For example, with a stack piece, the description may say, "Original paper size, 23 x 29 inches, with an ideal height of 27 inches." So there's two pieces of information there, the dimensions of a paper sheet and the ideal height. There's also a recording of what the original looked like. We should remember that Felix often changed the work himself—change does not occur only by others.

TS: So the starting point of your thinking involves a static original object, which is obviously a kind of default position if you're in the visual arts tradition. But you could also say Felix's work is an algorithm. An algorithm is always in play. You put some candies on the floor ... you put them in an exhibition, and because they're candies, people walk through and take them, and over time the shape of the thing changes. So it's very difficult to break that algorithm, that process. Now, if you started gluing them to the floor, I think then it would actually not be a Gonzalez-Torres work any more, because you've changed the algorithm. Maybe he is the first algorithmic artist, by creating work that changes form by itself. I'm more interested in the fact that it changes during the exhibition, the candies, especially—also the stacks, but their change is a little bit more ... mechanical, it just goes down—with the candies there are ... little holes ... and the shape of the pile can actually change. Felix managed to instill that possibility of algorithmic change on all levels of his work. He allows this change to evolve in all aspects, on all levels of the art game. He also does this in relation to the buyer. I think that's great too, but that's less interesting to me. I'm more interested in the actual moment of, let's say, the ritual, when the public encounters the work. It's interesting when you take this process and you transition it in to the portrait works, where the buyers decide how they are going to put the work up. The owner can decide which words it will contain. But even with those changes, once it's installed it's going to stay fixed on the wall until it changes again, you know?

AR: There's a duality in how you just described Felix's portrait pieces. On one hand, you mentioned that once the collector chooses the words they're permanently (or at least for a while) on the wall. On the other hand, you describe how as the works continue over time, that words can be added, changed, and removed. And it brings up a really important subject for me which is about how conscious Felix was about the role of change and how it purposefully differs, from one body of work to another. So, while you described the change in a candy piece as being quite fluid, and that there may be no physical form until a candy piece is manifested and how very purposeful Felix was about this idea of making some works that potentially lose their physicality and totality, it's interesting how his ideas shift in, let's say, the portrait pieces. While the portrait pieces are simply "paint on wall" and can change over time, there was something very purposeful for Felix that they weren't vinyl that could be easily pulled off. There's an idea of the permanency that is associated with paint on the wall, and a general resistance to want to change that.

And then it goes a step further, for instance with the light string pieces. While each of the light string pieces can be configured differently each time the work is installed, a light string piece can only exist in one place at a time. This is unlike a candy piece or a stack piece that can exist in more than one place at a time, because the uniqueness of the work is not defined by the object, but by ownership.

There's a lot to say about this idea of where and when, and the role of permanency versus that of impermanency in Felix's work. The Foundation is always trying to find the most accurate and appropriate words to describe these concepts. What's really interesting is our ability to understand the work is always changing, and our ability to describe those works in language is always changing.

Felix practiced and anticipated this—when works changed ownership, new Certificates of Authenticity and Ownership were issued that superseded (and were attached to) the previous. The change in language is about extension, of what came before it, not a series of culminations or perfections. Each new certificate was, and is, an opportunity to try and make that language more concise. There is so much that might appear to be contradictory information.

Felix was so concise about all the decisions he made, and it was particularly purposeful for him that there were these contradictions in his work. I would say, I believe, this is so we never lose the rigor

and the questioning around these kinds of decisions, never to take them for granted, or never assume the work is only one way. Hence, also the reason for the contradictions, or the changes in pace, from one body of work to another. But what this leads me to is something that might be, perhaps, the essential difference between your work and Felix's work. That is, in Felix's work, like your work, obviously, there was an original, but unlike your work Felix recorded the original. This is often a photographic recording, and a written description as found in a certificate that describes the original, which purposefully uses the word "original," yet, I still think it was as much about honoring what that original was, as it was a linguistic tool to set apart and create a possibility for later.

In your work there is no recording, and therefore as the changes occur, each change in your work is based upon a previous change. Therefore, eventually, it might become unclear how close a relationship there is with the current form of your work and the original. And one thing I have definitely witnessed in Felix's work—partially as a result of my being so close to it—is that I might even perceive something to be the same as it was sixteen years ago, but through the record I can not only see, but be shocked by, how much change has occurred—both in my understanding, and in the physicality, or in the most basic levels, things like the availability of materials. I think that Felix was really interested in us having a consciousness around change, around our fear of change, as well as the joy of knowing that things will change.

TS: Felix's portraits created a portrait of a person at a particular moment, like a conventional, traditional portrait, yet he also wanted it to be a continuous likeness. In that sense, you can see it as a kind of ritual with yourself. I'll assume you have one, a portrait by him. Our society is very liberal, and individualistic, and less focused on or aware of these really apparent rituals. What do you do when you feel like your self has evolved so much... or when you feel like something outside of you has marked your evolving self? It becomes what you associate with you, and in turn you want to paint it onto the wall. Have you done that?

AR: My portrait is up in my office. If you choose the things you think are so important in your life, you imagine that, to some degree, they're going to remain important. But it's only because my portrait is literally in my office that I realize how much I've changed, or how little I have changed. Sometimes I look at it, and I think, I don't even remember what that thing is, I forget the particular significance that an event may have had in the moment.

TS: Well, they say that all of the cells in our body change every seven years. Have you added something since...

AR: Yes, definitely. On one hand, my inclination is—either out of laziness or attachment—to keep it as it is. But, either out of my responsibility to Felix, or the gift of the process, I've changed my portrait a number of times over the years. But I really have to sit down and force myself to do it. It's both hard and liberating to rethink myself.

TS: What's an example of something you added?

AR: I added Obama 2005, [laughs] The birth of my child. Polar Ice Caps 2002 . . . I've probably added ten different things, and taken some things out. I actually added Felix 2010 for this show! I think most people would think, "Oh, my God. It's so emotional, how could I change my portrait?" Or, "How could I change someone else's?" For instance, there are museums that own other peoples' portraits and it is still their right—their responsibility—to keep adding. It's a ritual to realize how much I've changed, or not changed.

Otherwise I'm a person who lives without much of a relationship to time. It's an opportunity to say, "Oh, life is a continuum." Or, "Life is not what you expect it to be." "Who am I right now?" It's always shocking to realize how inexact our memories are. It's only because of Felix's work that I am even conscious about a timeframe of when really big changes happened, like when we became digital. When Felix made work, there was no Internet like we know it today. Felix had this uncanny ability to leave room for all these huge changes in his work, and at the same time the work is a forum for the ideas around change.

I want to talk about the physical choices you made for your exhibition, for instance, the candy pieces, you made all these choices to change the shape. Do you think that if you were to do the show again—which I hope will happen one day—you would think further about limits? You said earlier that the sustaining characteristic of Felix’s work is something similar to an algorithm. If so, could you push the limits of that algorithm further? How could an algorithm accept and assume difference? For yourself, could you imagine changing the color of a piece? Would changing the color of a piece change the algorithm? Do you think you could go further if you had to reinstall those pieces again?

TS: I don’t think the question of further is so interesting. It’s a very twentieth-century idea, further for further’s sake.

AR: Well, exactly. [laughs] Instead of saying further, what about the idea of making your choices different.

TS: It depends on the piece. There are some where the color seems essential. Isn’t there one that has U.S. colors? If you change the color on that one, then that seems wrong. It would change the nature of that particular piece. Hmm, with the white one, the black one, I still wouldn’t change the color, no.

AR: It’s the line between acting like a curator or acting like director in the theatre, be it a good director or a bad director, maybe someone who changes *Hamlet* does so for the worse. But in some way, your interest was not to impose a direction. Your decisions were about making more meaning in the work of Felix, right?

TS: In the exhibition I was against the idea of further and more interested in the idea of continuing. I think Felix was very interested in doing things continuously. Taking up this basic principle of his exhibition *Every Week There Is Something Different* he did with you at your gallery in 1991. But those were discrete changes. But I really related to the continuousness, which is why I relate to the candy pieces because the candy pieces most clearly show continuous change. So I applied that continuous change to a lot of the works in the show, even the more traditional types of visual art, for example the photostats. I applied this principle to the entire exhibition.

AR: We’ve talked a lot about the malleable works, but clearly there was intention to the breadth of his practice. The photographic works, the photostats, the mirrored pieces, the drawings, are equally as important in Felix’s body of work. It seemed quite specific in your exhibition how you used all the bodies of work. They are purposefully stagnant works. It was important for him to have the contrast and the consciousness of the differentiation between malleable works and non-malleable works. Sometimes you pushed the boundaries of each body of work, but also it seems you used more static works as a way to emphasize the discourse surrounding permanency versus malleability, and how both reflect change.

You chose to take works, like the photostat date pieces, and alter their means of installation. Those works are most typically hung at normal viewing height, head height, with the reflection of the viewer’s face on the black surface being a part of an intention of the work. However, there were instances when you placed those works on the floor which allowed for a different perspective for the reflection. It made me think, you know, why don’t people take paintings and put them on the floor? In your curatorial practice that you’ve moved into, would you ever do that? Did it open up possibilities to you in thinking about our treatment of objects?

The blue curtains being in one place played a specific role in your exhibition, the embedded mirrors—“*Untitled*” (*Orpheus, Twice*)—the static works never moved, but so much moved around it throughout the exhibition daily. Felix talked about this continuous shift, about how when one type of space becomes no longer marginalized so then you need to switch it up . . .

TS: I think his bodies of work are quite different, but they work well together because they maintain this idea of counterpoint. I think it’s quite good in his work. It produces a good rhythm. I think that’s also why the show was quite enjoyable and people came back. He doesn’t have just one idea, you know? For example,

there is Carl Andre's work, which Felix must have looked at heavily, and whose work I am also interested in and influenced by. Yet, Carl Andre seems to have less game somehow. He can do more or less just one thing, and he also does his poetry, but you somehow sense the same principle at work in all the work. With Felix, you feel a little bit more of a dance going on. He can do different moves, not just one move. My ambition was to show as much as possible in many ways and in different constellations. The liberal idea of the exhibition in a white cube is that things can exist in an open cosmology. Whereas a church has a fixed cosmology—there's Jesus, there's the Holy Spirit, there's God, the architecture, the mass—all of it is fixed and set up for the one idea. But everything in the white cube is liberal, secular, with nothing fixed on the walls, you can move things around. And I was interested in doing that in the moment, actually moving things around over the course of the exhibition. It relates to other things I've done since then. It was an important moment for me. It really helped me come into my own, as a kind of *mettre en scène* of exhibitions of other people's work.

AR: One of the things that made your show so incredible was your ability to understand the breadth of Felix's intention combined with a kind of fearlessness around change, or the potential of what that could mean in terms of the content of the work. Carol Bove, in her version of this exhibition, also was interested in change but in a completely different way. For half of her exhibition, in addition to her restaging *Every Week There Is Something Different*, she left the upper floor of Elena's exhibition for the most part exactly as it was. But she was engaged in a kind of almost psychic altering of the work, for example, she was engaged in the maintenance of the works, touching and altering them with her hands, and in this way, she engaged in the psyche around the work. This was also interesting because she acknowledged that even the most nuanced act can alter the perception of the work, or of an exhibition. When someone touches the work, they are changing the work in relation to themselves. Alteration doesn't just come in extremes. The work changes because of you—the audience, or the maker.

Your particular genius was taking on the nature of change. You didn't just change the work from one configuration to another - you created six distinct installations. And while each fixed beginning or end point was extremely different from the other, and the movement from one installation to the next allowed for an extensive amount of variability, I found it compelling that it wasn't only about constant change. The radicality of your show was also that because you knew there would be six distinct installations in which to describe the nature of Felix's work, it allowed you to make extreme decisions for each of these fixed points. For instance—and this is one of the most beautiful moments I've ever seen in all of Felix's work—when you lined up all of the stacks in a row, one right after another. You placed paper stacks in doorways, you made the public decide if they were going to step on or over the work to pass through to the next gallery. I can't imagine that someone else would line up the six stack pieces in the way you did, yet it was obvious in our conversation that their arrangement had a clear reference to seriality, to Judd, no one would imagine lining them up in the way that you did.

Because there wasn't just one singular installation, you didn't feel like you had to be singular, standard, in describing a retrospective of Felix Gonzalez-Torres. The overlap between the installations each day created such a profound range of perspectives on Felix's practice. For instance, if someone was to take this checklist of artworks and were to create a single exhibition, they would feel the need to be respectful in the way in which they arranged those works out so as to illustrate—or reinforce—what they were trying to discuss or represent. What's interesting is that for you, because there were six installations, each with their own territory or purpose, together they of those could have a greater radicality, a greater scope. Each installation was an admission that any one view could not let you see the whole thing, and yet the culmination of those installations, admissions, is the only way to see the whole thing. You really challenged commonly accepted ideas of completion and totality by determining your exhibition structure based upon the experience of a viewer in an exhibition, moving from one gallery to another, refining and complicating their perspective through their experience. You were able to experience the object simultaneous to the understanding that what you were experiencing was only one of many possible options. That was the experience. You facilitated openness and acceptance within the viewer.

Ultimately, while those two ideas that you played out—the changing of the exhibition, and the radicality of each installation - are significant and mind-blowing enough, there is a third idea in your exhibition that makes significant the conceptual emphasis on “original” found in Felix’s work. It makes me realize that the format of your exhibition allowed for others to delve in to the idea of originality in Felix’s work.

TS: Well, I think it’s just the craft of composition. In the end, I wanted to do a continuously changing show. I wanted to produce a rhythm. One early idea was to be quite mathematical, for instance: just add one, subtract one, add another, and in doing so it would be a constant shift, which may have been how the show I did do appeared to the viewer. Instead, what I did I took from the choreographer George Balanchine which is to decide on climatic moments, or the accents. Then you choreograph and compose the in-between. So in a way, I needed starting points. If I simply say, “I want a continuously changing show,” and I stuck with that idea in a very purist way, then I was just going step by step. But these six different states allowed me to have places to start. It allowed me to do a show that portrayed Felix as a person dealing with his time, his explicit political engagement. And I also wanted to show him as somebody who is deeply influenced and engaged with Minimalism. Also, I want to have a moment, simply because I liked it, of only light strings. And that allowed me to compose. Felix’s work can be read through so many filters, and I wanted to show that. The exhibition was not only about change.

It’s nice when it’s changing to somewhere; it allows you to go towards something. And for the people who were moving the works around, it was their point of orientation, it allowed them to move towards something. Also, I didn’t necessarily want the art handlers to be so present. I wanted the show to change, but not necessarily that you see these people. I wasn’t against you seeing them, but it wasn’t supposed to be about that.

AR: It’s interesting to be able to verbalize this. You created multiple agendas, presenting different aspects, as opposed to just creating rooms with themes, for example, “In this room I’m going to talk about the political aspect of Felix’s work.” Had you done that, each room would have been reduced to being didactic, or purely descriptive.

Your purview was the entire exhibition, Felix’s entire practice, and your six curatorial positions were much more nuanced. You were able to address change, and also larger aspects of his work. It’s very much like Felix’s work, I realized, and that’s why you’re such a good match. Felix wasn’t just interested in, oh, my piece, you can take it, it changes shape. He was interested in all kinds of different issues. And your show was layered, superimposed, one exhibition concept on another, made it so much richer. It was so Felix.

TS: It also had something to do with a personal kind of style—my taste, a certain sensibility. Personally I enjoy and am interested in this explicit temporalization of the exhibition.

Which allows, for instance, a moment to really experience those light strings as an exhibition. Let’s give them a moment in time, and not just a place in space. The works were able to breathe, and produce an experience, not just to be a representation of an experience. For those artists who are interested in crafting experience, obviously every work and every moment is an experience, but it is also about spatial-temporal experience. Not just the semiotic experience of looking at and reading something. Sometimes there is danger in representing an experience. There were also more conventional exhibition moments that were brought in. It wasn’t exclusively either/or.

AR: One of your talents is that you are actually interested in genuine experience, and none of it operated as pretense, or was pretentious, and that’s what made it so amazing. Your personal ego as a person, or your personal work as an artist, influenced the exhibition but never became an overt part of it. The exhibition was never a performance; it was an experience in and of itself and also an experience of Felix’s work. It was just happening, ongoing, and as the public you could observe it, experience it. It’s related to your choosing not to have wall labels. I suspect that you chose that position not to be unconventional, but it’s

that wall labels would limit the possibility of having the actual experience of the work in its purest form. It was about having a Felix experience, and your construction of the system for and around that.

TS: Yes, but it was also my take on the exhibition format, and my take of him. And so if Felix says “Untitled,” with parenthesis following, I obviously think that is something he can do and that’s fine, but if I’m doing the show I feel the “Untitled” gave me this kind of . . . passage, or let’s say allowance, to say, “Well, if it’s untitled, let’s take that seriously, and then we don’t need the parenthetical titles.”

AR: That’s completely awesome because perhaps too often people ignore the “Untitled” to favor an attachment to the parenthetical.

TS: Because when it says, (Portrait of Dad) or (Loverboy), it brings this whole semiotic thing back in. But maybe that’s his strength—the oscillation between bringing it to the point of an individual perspective of him as the artist and as a person, and then also this total openness. But I was a little bit bored by his personal life, you know . . . So if he uses “Untitled,” well, let’s take him seriously, because for me, in a positive sense, he’s in this very advanced oscillation between “Untitled” and a meaning. But then, in the other sense, you can say it’s also a contradiction or a paradox. I was not so keen on going towards this oscillation, like in my work, I’m more interested in the situations the work produces.

AR: This is such an interesting conversation. Because on one hand, Felix worked very, very hard to prioritize the “Untitled.” The “Untitled” is in quotation marks. The parenthetical titles are outside the quotation marks, and in parentheses. So it’s a double removal.

TS: But still there.

AR: But still there. As I now remember, back at our initial meeting at the Guggenheim, this was your most pressing question, and perhaps what you considered a weakness in Felix’s work—the need to have parenthetical titles. It’s interesting to think that Felix was adamant about always situating the discourse around his work, and not around himself. He didn’t allow for there to be photographs of himself, he almost never gave interviews, he always said that for the work to be able to continue to evolve over time, it had to be removed from him as the artist. He didn’t want to prioritize himself as a person. Yet, those parenthetical titles are clearly essential as Felix always was extremely thorough about his decision-making. So I wonder, are they there because Felix couldn’t let go of the personal? Or, are they there to indicate that we may misread the personal—that we assume that these titles are something personal but that in having it there we realize that those words can never mean the same to us as they did to him. For instance, “*Untitled*” (*March 5th*) is a title that reappears, and while I can guess, truthfully I cannot say with authority what the meaning of that date was.

I know Felix was interested in the loss and transference of meaning. I know he wanted me to think about the idea that it is an illusion to imagine that meaning can remain the same. Or, maybe there can be an awareness with the parenthetical titles being about an oscillation between consciousness for our desire for permanency and the personal. I know that he wanted me to question the sustainability of anything that is personal, the readability of anything as constant throughout time. This is such an important issue, and I think that it’s incredible that you’re bringing this up, Tino. You deeply understand and take on Felix’s work.

TS: It’s that he goes for this openness, and brings that as a real thing in to the situation, but he brings it back to himself so much more than most artists do. It seems he doesn’t want to take himself as a person out of it, but regardless of his intentions, it seems that sometimes the parenthetical titles outweigh the rest. “Untitled” becomes something like an element in a math equation that one can just cancel, equal out. It’s like balancing an equation, and all that remains—the remainder—is (Portrait of Dad), and that’s what we remember. It’s almost like the “Untitled” doesn’t even register, it becomes assumed, and over time, it becomes for me less important and, in the experience of the work, it may even become removable. Because

the parenthetical titles are there, they stay in your mind while you are experiencing the work. Maybe the parenthetical titles also had an internal, practical function. When all of your works are untitled, how can you talk about them?

AR: I think it also had to do with that it didn't exist. What this makes me think about is the idea of existence, of how Felix spoke of existence in his work. He would always say, "If someone chooses to never install a work again, or manifest a manifestable work again, it may not physically exist, but it does exist, because it did exist." I know Felix said that, but it was a statement with a question mark, it was a challenge to us.

TS: Well, it definitely makes things more complex, and it seems to be pretty interesting for us as you and I are spending our Monday talking about this, trying to figure this out.

AR: We don't know.

TS: And in that sense, it is successful.

AR: I'm wondering if in the case of your exhibition, many of your decisions were primarily based around practicality.

TS: Well, for example, with the paper stacks in the exhibition we began with them at their ideal heights, but then if someone said, "This is too heavy, we can't push it," then we just took half off. There are so many opportunities for decision-making. What I cared about was if there was going to be enough, materially, by the end of the show, yet in some way, conceptually, I found it interesting in terms of seeing things from Felix's perspective that the works might vanish. From my own perspective I wasn't against the possibility of the work disappearing out of the show, I thought that, that was also somehow interesting. Felix and I see things differently, because in my way of seeing things, if it disappears it doesn't really exist again. If it's there it's there, and if it's not there it's not there. If somebody comes in on a particular day when a work is not there because we've allowed for it to vanish, then the work cannot be experienced by that person. To that person, it never existed.

AR: Earlier, you brought up this idea of a buyer, and ownership, and said that you were less interested in the fact that an owner could change a work. In your own work, is ownership a kind of necessary by-product? I always imagined that you and Felix share this idea that ownership is a vehicle that allows the work to have a continuum.

TS: Well, first, you have to understand that art and exhibitions, this whole system of art that you've been playing along with since 1990, and I've been playing along with since around 2000, is a historical thing. It emerged at some point and isn't going to stay around forever. Ownership, and art itself, has a lot to do with the process of individualization, like how people see themselves more and more as individuals and less as part of a collective. We see ourselves as individuals, roaming around, forming our own wants and desires and trying to coordinate them with others. This produces a lot of friction in all of our lives, and art has a lot to do with that. To be a subject, you need an object. So in that sense, I think ownership is something, but it also seems to be increasingly generational. For my parents, ownership was a very important thing, for instance it was important to own a car. Today, at least in Berlin, to own a car doesn't mean anything. Using a car and sharing it is the thing we do. So, these things radically shift.

But definitely something that's important to me, which I think will take longer to get out of—but I don't even think we need to get out of it—is the market. If you devote your life to a creative practice, and develop a specialization, and that would be true for both Felix Gonzalez-Torres and myself, you need to be in some kind of market. Today, markets are still related to ownership.

Or take these people like Kosuth who wanted to have . . . I don't know what Joseph's thing was, some kind of fee, or something. They wanted to get out of this ownership thing, which was related to getting

out of the interior decoration, private house thing. I think that is why Felix, but also Bill Forsythe, were really important to me. The question became for me, like, how do you do something different that's not a ruptural kind of grand gesture, which would only then fall back in to the dominant tradition. This being the case for many of the avant-gardes; you do this big, radical gesture but at the end it ends up as a photo. I think that both Bill and Felix showed me the best of post-Modernism and how you can go into a tradition deeply. Felix went deep into Minimal art, and Western Conceptual art, and then really did something else with it. Bill went into ballet and then really did something else with it, to it, but not by saying "I am not doing this." That's how I end up doing a piece like the one I'm showing right now in *14 Rooms*, and it speaks to my galleries and how my work should be for sale because that's just where we are at this moment in time with the concepts of ownership and selling, but I don't think it's always going to remain that way.

AR: I think that you and Felix share this idea, an idea of liberation, and the liberty of the misinterpretation of your work.

Didn't you and Felix both make a conscious choice to make art? There is something significant about your work being art, not just performance. It needs to be art in order to have this sense of continuation. If it was just performance, or only seen through performance, you wouldn't be able to talk about all of these ideas of the nuance of change, and our consciousness—or unconscious awareness—of change. And the thing that allows us to have that marker, the possibility of its continuation into the future, is ownership. I just always assumed that you and Felix shared that.

TS: Well, I think I'm definitely not interested in "theater" as we know it as a model or a mode of working, and I think that performance art is such a historical footnote that you and I should not waste time on it. What does exist is the theater. Here I mean the theater as a format of the ancient Greeks; a format of assembly. It's a ritual for quasi-enlightened cities, for smaller societies. And the exhibition is a ritual for nations, for mass societies of individuals. So, I never had an interest in the theatre, my impulse is that I'm more a kind of politician, so I wanted to go to the dominant Western ritual. I know this is a longer conversation, but that dominant ritual for us is definitely the exhibition. To make a political impact is to go into the ritual of your time. The theater is place for a few hundred people, and my ambitions are somehow bigger than that. But that means I must deal with concepts such as ownership, which exist today, they're part of the dominant conglomerate, although maybe they will change soon.

AR: Does that mean you're not interested in history? I always think that the collector and ownership are in some way linked to the possibility of immortality. Perhaps Felix was more interested in the discourse around immortality than you are.

TS: No, I think that societies have institutions, and one idea of the West is a linear timeframe, and one of the institutions that practices that idea is the museum. If you look at the history of mankind, there are not many institutions that refer to the past, or make a bridge between different eras. The museum is one among very few. And so, by situating myself in this museum ritual, when I create work, it's extremely present to me, it has to have a kind of timelessness. Whereas Felix does these kinds of history paintings of his moment, you know, I don't really go there. Can you repeat your question again ...

AR: It was about ownership, and does it allow your work to continue to exist over time.

TS: That's definitely an important point for me. A very important point, and so to do that with the live, the live is associated with the moment, but I think both are important. The highest form of Western culture is to have the present moment and the past dancing together. But I don't think my emphasis is with the bourgeois collector. And "bourgeois" is not a bad word for me. It's a very revolutionary word, in a way. You know, historically. But the bourgeois collector, the private home, are not such interesting sites, for me.

AR: As a gallerist—in my relationship to performing the role of a gallerist—my primary interest is the

exhibition, meaning, the opportunity for people to perceive something in the moment. I'm so interested in the public, and the thousands of people who come, every week, to the gallery.

TS: You have thousands of people?

AR: Thousands of people a week.

TS: That's a lot for a private gallery.

AR: It's interesting to have this conversation because it clarifies my own interest, and validates my interest. But, I'm also involved in creating history. Like, keeping archives, and documentation, because there are people who are interested in that. I'm also interested in people's obsession with ownership and immortality, whereas personally, I barely even live with art, because for me it's not about the possession of the object, it's about the experience of the object. But the role of others collecting and collections is totally fascinating to me, and I also feel is part of the responsibility to history.

I remembered Elena wondering if you were at all conflicted about participating in curating this show, and now I'm curious if you can recall your early opinions about the exhibition, namely, the presentation of work that recalls points in history other than our present day. Does working with history conflict with your need to be in the present moment, your desire for timelessness? There are some people who have conflict with revisiting or shaping history, some people who only want to look to the future . . .

TS: Actually, I wasn't conflicted. While I questioned being a curator for the work, I knew it was a good opportunity for me to connect myself to an artist that I actually consider to be part of my lineage. Maybe I can see now that Gonzalez-Torres is more a part of my lineage rather than an influence on my work. Doing this was a way to make a public kind of "affiliation"? And of course, there's always this moment when you ask yourself, Am I going to stand by this publicly? And it was clear to me, yes, I am going to stand by this publicly. There's not a lot of artists who I would do that with.

AR: Has the show altered your work in any way? Was there anything that was unexpected, in terms of your understanding of yourself or your own work?

TS: When Susanne Gaensheimer saw it she said to me, "Oh my God, you are a real interior designer." [laughter] I think very few artists of the twentieth century understand that, because the modern idea of art is so anxious about visual art being decoration. But even the modern idea of "art" since the nineteenth century has always been used as decoration to a large degree. In the twentieth century, not many artists got that. There was Buren, and Broodthaers also played with the idea, a little bit, but he didn't really do it. Gonzalez-Torres really got it. The curtains, you know, and the lights. He was really doing interior design.

AR: Felix was really interested in the center, and lulling people into experience. And maybe it's hard to lull people. I think that there aren't so many people who have both an authentic desire to want to create real experience, not a reference, and have the ability to put themselves in someone else's mind's eye. When you did this exhibition, you showed you have an incredible gift for knowing how someone else is going to perceive it, and wanting them to have a genuine experience.

TS: I don't want to get too far into my own personal psychology [laughs] but I do think it's worth saying that I came to understand something about myself.

Since then I have also started to curate more. My experience was definitely the beginning of something. I won't say it changed my work, but it opened a new line in my practice. I don't see the artist in this typical way, this comfortable position of just making *mise en scène*. At the time I thought of it as some side-stint, like, I'm kind of making this affiliation with Gonzalez-Torres. Now I see it less as a peripheral thing. It's actually something I do. I now am convinced, on a deep psychological level—and this is

something I share with Felix—knowing that my own subjectivity is just not enough. I need to mix with other people. And I think, in some way, that maybe Felix had that, too. It's not enough to just put yourself out there. Part of being a person is to be in association with others. And if the work can, like, put out this net, or a networked sense of a self, then that's the stronger, more precise rendition of yourself.