

malte martin
october > december 2009
make me a sign!

agrafmobile
graphic studio
malte martin
my turn to speak



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“My wish is to re-create through this visual theatre a public place which presents—as something to see and to read—something other than administrative signs and commercial messages. An attempt to win back the public place like a space of imagination belonging to those living in it...”

Malte Martin

cv agrafmobile

Agrafmobile act like a travelling visual theatre.

In tandem with his activities involving graphic design for contemporary theatre, dance and music, Malte Martin, with Agrafmobile, has opened up an artistic arena for using urban space and everyday turf. At the same time it is an area for experimentation, somewhere between visual and acoustic creation, and gestures and signs.

2008

“ici je suis ailleurs” (“here, I am somewhere else”), *Nuit Blanche** event, Saint-Blaise district in Paris

During the *Nuit Blanche*, in the *Square des Cardeurs*, for the occasion the usual lighting was switched off and replaced by fifty light globes from two-eight metres in diameter. They all vibrated gently in the dark with a white, low energy light. An archipelago was projected on the surface of a building turn by turn with phrases; moving landscapes capsized the buildings. Train of letters moving on pixel panes of windows, the phrase proceeded: “Here” is written on the façade, “I am” lights up at the back, on the balconies. “Somewhere else” appears on the tower, to the right... a game of consequences, endlessly renewed”.

**Nuit Blanche* (Sleepless Night) is a celebration of contemporary art from 7 p.m. until dawn. It is the perfect opportunity to discover artistic talents from France and abroad, free of charge.

“90°”, Fontenay-sous-Bois

“90°” is the tale of two walls. One turned towards the street sees cars, trucks, and bikes passing by and the other gives onto the park, where it sees pedestrians, prams and dogs strolling past, and receives the moving shadows of the leaves of trees. These two walls will talk to one another like a game of consequences, from one to the other. Phrases which turn at the next corner to the left, change the direction, ask again.

2007

“multiplicité” (“multiplicity”), Paris

For the opening of the *Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration - CNHI* (National Center of the Immigration History), triptychs sporting writings taken from our literary heritage and from sources in the network city (encompassing civil society and researchers) informed the areas of the CNHI with a “theatre of words”, where our imaginary and collective representations of immigration raised questions. Its acoustic equivalence was an installation in the Network’s kiosk. In it were broadcast five loops—where reports and questions to do with immigration reverberated with each other and confronted the ear of each visitor. These two devices symbolized the presence of civil society at the heart of the establishment and its role in the construction of the *Cité*, by the introduction of an Agora where the Network contributes to the lasting and permanent questioning on this issue...



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2006

“le feuilleton du boulevard de Magenta” (“the soap opera of the Magenta boulevard”), Paris

Invited by the Department of Art in the City, twelve artists were asked to “celebrate” the transformation of this major thoroughfare into “civilized spaces”. Malte Martin did not want to scale his intervention down to a celebratory form. For three months there he set up the equivalent of an enormous Morris column with twelve flat sides. Each week they presented a series of poster words in Dadaist mode. Three of them were renewed, juxtaposing texts of thinkers of the city, summonses signed by Malte Martin, and texts dictated by the populace itself, in reaction to the works and to the system.

2004

“instants mobiles” (“moveable moments”), Chaumont, Reims, St-Quentin

During the year of the “new circus”, as part of a Fiacre grant programme, the idea of creating a meeting between a graphic artist and a circus performer came into being. Malte Martin set up an alphabet garden on rods. The letters were set at different heights, vibrating on their long thin wire legs, brushed by the dancer’s movements. The composer Patricia Diallo gave each of the letters a particular sound. A sensor triggered this sound whenever there was any contact. So the dancer could compose his own score, as he saw fit. The performance was an open form. It was based on figures worked in advance, plus a share of improvisation in front of the audience.

2003, 2004

“onzes délires !” (“eleven ravings!”), Paris XI^e

As part of the 2003 “*Lire en fête*” reading festival, Agrafmobile proposed a literary rediscovery of Belleville, giving back to the walls, streets and inhabitants themselves what they had inspired in writers. Quotations loomed up throughout the neighbourhood, spread out in the form of posters, wrapping paper, table sets, and dazibao, they could be read on shop blinds, and sampled in major newspapers, and they covered whole walls. The event was wound up by the slow scan and the whispers in the ear of the Prompters. The “rain of words” became heavier, rising up from nowhere, it spread in abundance, whirling in the blue of the day, snowy magic at night.

“facteur d’échelle” (“scale factor”), Maubeuge

This was a video creation for a composition by Marie-Hélène Fournier, as part of the “flying experience” which was the brainchild of *Musiques Nouvelles* (New Music) (Brussels) and Art Zoyd, performed by this ensemble. Marie-Hélène Fournier’s work did not as yet exist in the form of a sound recording. But the composer gave her “logbook” to Malte Martin. He then proceeded, based on his interpretation of each of the words, to capture therein colours, sounds, rhythms, and ranges.

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2002

“le théâtre des questions” (“the theatre of questions”), Chaumont
Writing and graphic workshops collected from inhabitants more than six hundred questions, and constructed the topological map of their societal, philosophical, existential and oddball questions... Twenty of them were presented in the public place, three months prior to the festival. In the end, as it unfolded in May 2002, various installations punctuated the whole city (in conjugated forms of images, signs, movements, dances, videos, music and light). The “theatre of questions”, in the end of the day, was an occasion to broaden the graphic performance of Agrafmobile to a visual theatre where the city was a 360° stage.

2001

“blanche neige” (“snow white”), La galerue, Fontenay-sous-Bois

The “Galerue”, a former small downtown business downtown, is now regularly used by visual artists. In it, Malte Martin produced “Snow white”, as part of a *work in progress*. The tale was written in four words – *rêve, blanche, nuit, neige* (dream, white, night, snow.) At times noun, at others verb, or adjective, they combined to form a sentence, then changed each week, writing a new story in mid air...

“takalefaire”, Chaumont

For the 100th anniversary of the law of 1901 — on non-profit associations and organizations — “Takalefaire, *association d’images, images d’associations*” (association of images, images of associations) proposed a picture of the imaginary citizen of Chaumont. Malte Martin proposed that the city’s associations should come and tell him about their aspirations, treating him like a “public scribe”. In one hour, he translated their cause into a sign, proposing a pictorialization of his perception of their commitment. Then they drew it themselves, and two hundred additional pictograms saw the light of day. Malte set them down like a forest of signs in the square outside the town hall and the gardens around the various neighbourhoods. Thus did “the galaxy of associated involvements” rise up from the city’s ground, in which could be read emerging energies, dreamed-of involvements, and the strength to get the city of tomorrow on the move.

2000

“quoi de neuf Denis” (“what’s up, Denis?”), Chaumont

For the 11th Festival of Graphic Arts devoted to political and social involvement, a presentation of the urban space by Agrafmobile helped to (re)discover the thinking of the philosopher Denis Diderot, offspring of the region. Malte Martin proposed a selection of words-actually quotations from Diderot- aimed at young people. He photographed them to retain their expressions, at the very moment when they appropriated those texts, at the precise instant when they understood and grasped the line of thought and saw in it real parallels with their lives.



Agrafmobile / M. Chassat



Agrafmobile / M. Chassat



D.R.

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Malte Martin, graphic designer/visual artist

Born in 1958 in Berlin, Malte Martin studied fine arts in Stuttgart and Paris. He has taught visual arts and the history of art in Stuttgart, the concepts of images in Paris and written the educational programme in graphic design for the first visual art school in Marrakech.

In 1986, he moves to Paris, joins the Grapus studio in 1988 and then founds his own graphic studio in 1989 and Agrafmobile in 1999.

graphic creations realized for:

the Georges Pompidou Center, the Festival of Avignon, the Athénée theatre, Cartier, the Commune theatre, the 71 Malakoff theatre, Royaumont Foundation, Ile-de France National orchestra, IFRA press international association, Hatier, Vrin and Nathan Publishing Companies, the CENTQUATRE Bookshop, the theatre of the Commune, the 71 Malakoff theatre, The Comedy of Reims, the Chalon festival in the street, the art house cinema festival of Aubervilliers, the triennial of Milan, the Fashion Museum of Paris, Amnesty International...

formation/parcours

1989/2009 atelier graphique malte martin (malte martin graphic studio), Paris
1998/2009 urban scenography with Agrafmobile

2000/2003 Artist-in-residence programs- Poster Festival-Chaumont

2001 Research grant (FIACRE)

1986/1987 fine arts School of Stuttgart research grant in Paris

1988/1989 Grapus studio, Paris

1981/1982 National Fine Arts Academy of Paris, Gili/Iscom studio

1978/1986 Fine arts School, Stuttgart

Professor's Certificate of fine arts and art history

cv malte martin graphic studio

CV Graphic Studio

Here are some visual samples of the production of Malte Martin's graphic studio. Publications, posters, visual identity, all based on the same principle: listen in order to see.

The studio works mainly in the field of contemporary art, theatre, music, dance... It also tends to combine the author's signature and design praxis with communicational design activities. It is the intelligence of the dialogue between clients and the graphic designer which largely defines the success of the signs and images created.

In his studio, Malte Martin works with a team of two graphic designers, Adeline Goyet and Vassilis Kalokyris, as well as a production manager, Cédric Andrzejczak. Current clients include the Avignon Festival, the Centre Pompidou, Cartier, the 104 bookshop, the Athénée and Malakoff theatres, whose posters have conspicuously marked the Parisian landscape over the last three years, as well as the Abbey of Royaumont (Val-d'Oise), and the National Ile-de-France orchestra.



Subway posters for the 09/10 season of the Athénée theatre and publishing supports.



Poster of the 2002 Avignon Festival and extracts of the publishing documents with the quotations set up.



Visual identity and posters of the Malakoff-71 theatre.



Visual identity of the Royaumont Foundation.

cv graphic studio



Graphic scenography and catalog of the D-Day exhibition at Georges Pompidou Center (2005)



Descriptive for the head offices of Cartier (2007)



M. Chassat



Identity and signage of the 104 bookshop (2009)



Matte Martin



09/10 and 08/09 launches of season for the Athénée theatre.



malte martin

my turn to speak

Conference of February 6th, 2007 in the Sorbonne



I walk around my city, and my life. Signs, people, sounds, smells. My city is a world. 'Mondésir' — a portmanteau coinage of monde (world) and désir (desire), incl. mon désir = my desire. I try to learn the art of getting lost in the city, the way you get lost in a forest, as Walter Benjamin invited people to do.

My city is this chaos which I'm starting to get acquainted with, learning about it so I won't be scared of it any more. My city is at once the beauty and terror of the world. Like the 8 pm news on TV, where globalization moves everything about, and relocates us. It's because we sort of doubt that we know "where we live", because every day there are millions of us asking the people on the other end of our cell phones: "Where are you?"

How then do we go about finding ourselves? How can we once again be in our own home, in this public place that's in the process of being privatized?

By speaking up. By putting words in this space, private words, and public words. My wish is to re-create through this visual theatre a public place which presents — as something to see and to read — something other than administrative signs and commercial messages. An attempt to win back the public place like a space of imagination belonging to those living in it.

a sensitive spot

Why is my city — the one where I want to do things — often one with those neighbourhoods (euphemistically) described as "sensitive"? For once, the politically correct term has given rise to a new meaning, a meaning which creates a **desire to work hard on these territories: "sensitive neighbourhoods"**. Sensitive neighbourhoods? But they should be everywhere! I want to do something here, neither out of guilt, nor to make amends, but rather to work on the outpouring of words like so much sensitive matter.

the community of people who talk

I believe in the power of public words, be they scholarly or ordinary, which assert their autonomy in relation to administrative and commercial signs in the public place.

The artist may be the vehicle of the word's upsurge in both housing estate — the city — and urban society, creating cracks in the predominant order which treats the dominated like beings incapable of thought and speech. "The problem is not that 'the dominated' are made incapable of developing their own political discourse, it is that their words are strictly inaudible, that they can only be heard as noise, because they are socially defined as incapable of talking" ¹.

"All these people are people who talk", all of them are equally as likely to be touched by political statements and literary texts, or be torn through this meeting from "their natural purpose, which is to reproduce their life by letting the job of governing fall to those with credentials for governing" ².

I actually think that the artist cannot limit himself to the observation that sharing sensibility — the heart of creation — is not possible because social and cultural inequality does not permit it and will be relentlessly reproduced.

Needless to say, this risk exists if we do not stray from the power of the declaration of

¹ Charlotte Nordmann : **Bourdieu/ Rancière, la Politique entre sociologie et philosophie**, p.132.

² Rancière : Interview given to **Mouvements** N°3, March-April 1999, p. 134. Quoted by Charlotte Nordmann, inop.cit., p.13

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equality. But "there is an aesthetic dimension to politics", according to Rancière, "insofar as the transgressive work defines a new configuration of sensibility, shows up what the distribution of functions would render invisible, and invents a community by acting as if it already existed"³.

takalefaire, the theatre of questions, eleven ravings!, borderline words, the series called Magenta boulevard, public words at Saint Blaise... all are part and parcel, for me, of this attempt. "It's the city which presents itself in its ordinary words, and it's theatre because the words are no longer in their ordinary arrangement..."⁴

low tension

The society of the spectacle gives rise to a frantic dash leading to a plethora of signs. The permanent and ubiquitous flashing of signs is the symbol of the world's commodification. **I don't have what it takes to shout louder and I don't want to add noise to noise, or colour to colour.**

Words, typographic contrast, black and white, and often the material paper is made of, all are the ingredients of my attempts to slow the world down.⁵ **What is paradoxically involved is gaining strength by whispering, from time to time sending shards of words into the city** "excessively, close to tearing point"⁶. A low tension strategy then, which does not shrink from giving voice.

of the texture of paper, skin of the world

Skin is that brilliant invention which gives beings the possibility of being. Of being themselves, delimited, with a body and a silhouette. And at the same time of being permeable, of breathing the world, of breathing with the world. On it time is inscribed, and the traces of life. On it, the cares.

"Nothing is as deep as skin." (Paul Valéry)

For me, paper is close to this quality. I have a special relationship with this matter, even if writing with light (by screen or projection) interests me as much. Paper invites the eyes and hands to touch it. Contact of skin with skin.

Paper receives the narrative of the world, of the city, and of the lives unfolding in it.

In a way, the skin of the world, which talks to us, communicates, expresses: the paper of posters on walls which sweat the city. Wrapping papers which smell of what they wrap. Bits of paper, that poetic snow that flies over the city. Those fine-leaved notebooks which show the fingers holding the page.

I like that fragile and resistant material.

Fragile and resistant.

³ Charlotte Nordmann, op.cit., p.13

⁴ François Bon, **Impatience**, Les éditions de Minuit, 1996.

⁵ A notion shared with the company of "Prompters", transmitters of words, word to mouth.

⁶ François Bon, op.ct.

Malte Martin 06/02/2007
ArtEspacePublic conference
(Pascal Lebrun-Cordier
master at Sorbonne)