

## CHRISTINE HIEBERT

### RoundTrip – A Wall Drawing for the Pinakothek der Moderne, 2005

Christine Hiebert is one of the most interesting artists working in the field of drawing today. Born in 1960 in Basel, Switzerland to American parents, she has lived since 1964 in the United States, currently in Brooklyn, New York. She studied graphic design at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, and later, painting at Brooklyn College. From childhood on, her urban east coast life was interspersed with long trips through the American Midwest and to various national parks – and later by travel and long stays in remote areas in France and Italy. There, in the early eighties, she began her path as an artist. Over time, she developed drawings in which the blank white field of the paper is marked with pencil or charcoal in a search for pathway and structure – abstract-lyric analogies of the investigation of unexplored landscapes or cities. In addition to these works on paper (many of which are large-format), since 2000 she has also made monumental wall drawings in public spaces. In these latest pieces, her drawing tool is a bright blue masking tape used by housepainters in the U.S.

With this as her luggage, and without sketches or predetermined artistic plans, she has made yet another trip, this time to Munich in April 2005. Her destination: the third floor of the Rotunda in the Pinakothek der Moderne, a circular space some 80' (25m) in diameter, which is covered by a transparent glass cover, and bounded on all sides by white walls over 16' (5m) high. Flooded with natural light, this space lies at the center of the museum; yet it is far in spirit from the strict choreography of the collections galleries that flank this space. It is closer to the sky the time of day, the free flight of birds, than to any sense of cultural classification. Until now this space has resisted a dialog with art, as neither its overwhelming dimensions, nor its dazzling brightness, nor its curved walls, have been suitable for more traditional forms of painting or sculpture. Our wish was for Christine Hiebert to bring life to this emptiness with a site-specific work.

Seemingly perfected for no particular use, this pristine space was to her, initially, as barren as a desert. In day-long expeditions, she explored the area with careful attention. She observed the spill of light, the movement of flecks of sun and shadow on the walls; she analyzed the space from different levels of the museum – its shifting angles and perspectives. From her lookout on the third floor, she watched the movements of the visitors below. And then she set her first mark on the white wall in the form of a blue line.

This line was the point of departure for a constructed world; from the logic of this first decision arose all further lines and forms. And in the same way that she herself traversed the space – running, waiting, hesitating, with simultaneous respectfulness and deep sensitivity – the blue lines travel along the walls, recording her experience. What has emerged is a space that leads us far beyond the architecture, and carries us into a freed, vibrant, pulsing world, which until now lay dormant in the emptiness of the Rotunda. When lost, hunters release their dogs in the forest, in order to follow their way out. For Christine Hiebert, the words of the German poet Hilde Domin resonate: “Ich setzte den Fuß in die Luft und sie trug.” (“I set my foot into the air and it carried me.”)

Shown simultaneously with Christine Hiebert's wall drawing is the thread installation *Untitled (Rotunda)*, *A Sculptural Project for the Pinakothek der Moderne*, which was created for the Rotunda by the American artist Fred Sandback (1943– 2003) just before his death. It is comprised of yellow, blue and black wool threads, which are strung taut along the edges of the columns and intervening stretches of ceiling to create portal shapes. The threads act in both reserved and vigorous symbiosis with the space which the artist has brought to light with seismographic accuracy – an acute sensibility that Christine Hiebert's work also demonstrates. Both artists are preoccupied as well with the everyday, nearly worthless material used in the manner of “three-penny toy” (Henri Matisse's term for the common paper with which he made his cut-outs), and make from it artworks which give no hint of the original purpose of the material. The two are also connected in the ephemeral nature of their work: at the close of the exhibition both pieces will be removed. The only vestiges of Fred Sandback's installation will be tiny holes in the floor; as with the migrations of nomadic people, in the end, only the hole in the soil remains, the sign of a temporary stop on an ongoing journey. The slack threads are put away until the next installation. Christine Hiebert's tapelines will also be taken from the wall after this exhibition at the Pinakothek der Moderne. For a future installation, however, she must find new lines out of fresh experience.

*Corinna Thierolf, Chief Curator*