There is a photograph by Annick of Anton and Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo walking in the sunshine in the fields around the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas. Much of Panza’s Collection was installed in the stables and out buildings in his country estate, Varese in the Tuscan Hills, an agricultural space equivalent to the Herbert’s textile buildings in Ghent.

LxCatalogue Time Extended / 1964 - 1978
Herbert Foundation
Text Lynda Morris
Corr. LAU + ATH / 9-5-2016

Idea + Idea

Konrad Fischer introduced me to Anton Herbert at his Platanenstrasse space in December 1974. (Photo 1: Galery K. Fischer) Herbert had driven from Ghent to collect his first purchase from Konrad, Carl Andre’s 64 Lead Square (1969). It was a Saturday afternoon in December, dark at four thirty. Konrad introduced us, slightly tongue in cheek, as “an important Belgian Collector” and ‘an important London critic’. Konrad started to load the Lead Square pieces into the boot of Herbert’s car, making vroom vroom noises, joking about the BMW. (Photo 2: 64 Lead Square / C. Andre A+AH in Gallery Fischer)

(Ph 3: Studio International M. Broodthaers / recto and verso ??) Studio International published a Belgium issue in October 1974. Marcel Broodthaers was living in London at that time and made the front and back cover of the issue with old fashioned children’s alphabet discs.-The editor of Studio International Peter Townsend and the US critic Barbara Reise arranged for me to make a three-month exchange with the Belgian magazine Clés Pour Les Arts. From Brussels I could be in Düsseldorf, Köln, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp or Paris in a couple of hours. This gave me the idea of the triangle in Northern Europe, where international Conceptual Art first developed 1967-1973. London was isolated, four-hours on the Ostend-Dover ferry, with trains at either end.

(Ph. 4: Matthys en Goeminne)
I had already planned to visit Ghent the following Sunday to see the collections of Dr Matthys and André Goeminne. Dr Matthys’ house was circular, with the garden in the centre, very surreal. His collection was mainly US Pop Art and photo pieces by Gilbert & George. The Goeminne’s collection was spread throughout their house, including their bedroom. M. Goeminne disappeared into a cupboard in the front room behind an accumulation of frames and packaging and brought out Bruce Nauman’s 3D Hologram Portraits, small glass squares at eye level on metal posts. He plugged them in and the ghostly 3D face of the handsome artist gradually appeared. He had bought them from Ursula Wevers, Gerry Schum’s widow in Köln.
Herbert collected me from the Goeminne’s house in Nazareth. Anton and Annick lived in a modest, bare white flat, the work was installed as perfectly as it is today. Carl Andre’s *64 Lead Square* was on the bare wooden floor, with Sol LeWitt, Hanne Darboven, Jan Dibbets and Marcel Broodthaers on the walls. It was everything a perfect private collection should be. The memory remains astonishingly contemporary.

(Ph. 5 : A+AH documenta 5)

There is a wonderful photograph of the young Anton and Annick in front of the six poster strewn columns of the Fridericianum at *documenta 5* in 1972. Anton is bare chested, Annick is in jeans, a sleeveless t-shirt and sun glasses. They are posed under Ben Vautier’s banner *Kunst ist Überflüssig* (Art is Superfluous), obscuring the private parts of the six rooftop Roman Emperors. The building behind them, simplified by the devastation of war time bombing, contained the great rooms of *Documenta 5, Section 17 Idee + Idee* curated by Klaus Honnef and Konrad Fischer. It is the reason Harald Szeemann’s *Documenta* is so revered.i This is where Anton and Annick first glimpsed the vision they have remained faithful to ever since. It was such a powerful experience, that it has remained at the very heart of the Herbert Foundation: Art & Language, John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Bernd und Hilla Becher, Stanley Brouwn, Daniel Buren, Hanne Darboven, Jan Dibbets, Dan Graham, Douglas Huebler, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long, Mario Merz, Blinky Palermo, Robert Ryman, Robert Smithson and Lawrence Weiner. The other selections of *Documenta 5* included a few artists that are an essential part of the vision the Herber: Giovanni Anselmo, Marcel Broodthaers, Bruce Nauman, A.R. Penck, Sigmar Polke, Gilbert & George, Gerhard Richter and Ed Ruscha.

(Ph. 6: Catalogie documenta + Merz page)

I also saw *Documenta 5* in the final few days. A few late extra pages of the enormous ring-binder catalogue were on window sills to be added to the catalogue. One was of Mario Merz installing in a staircase well his work *Accelerazione*, a motor bike with the exhaust giving off the blue neon Fibonacci numbers sequence, now in the Herbert Collection. Another sheet showed Klaus Honnef and Konrad Fischer with his plimsolls off, sitting resting in contented exhaustion, at a job well done. *Idee + Idee* was the great inspiration for an entire generation, I was on the same flight to Germany as Nicholas Serota.

(Ph. 7: Fischer + On Kawara / Ph. 8: Spillemaeckers with S. Brouwn)

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Konrad Fischer and the Belgian dealer Fernand Spillemaeckers of MTL held complimentary but separate visions of Conceptual Art. Fischer was on a mission to establish a new post war internationalism for contemporary art in the industrial cities in Northern Europe. Initially he brought together Minimal Sculpture, Arte Povera and Conceptual Art. Fischer’s intelligence was based on his own experience and observations. He was a man of few words, he read but he never talked about it. He had no time for philosophy, he preferred to watch
and to find ways, often through a simple gesture, to show what he was thinking. His authority came from spending his life with his artists. The Herbergs are fond of saying: knowing the artist is as important as owning the art.

Spillemaeckers had read widely, Marxism, Phenomenology, Existentialism and the Situationists. Belgium has a linguistic and historic complexity that enabled the Flemish Universities to teach both German Philosophy and French theory: Saussure, Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Habermas alongside Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault and Althusser. Chaim Perelman, Leo Apostel and Ernst Mandel taught at the Vrije Universiteit Brussels and Ghent University. Spillemaeckers studied Roman Philology at Ghent, his MA Thesis was *De la nature de l’âme et de l’existence de dieu. L.F. Ladovocat* (1971). The study of Philology gave him an interest in the aesthetics of scripts that convey words. Spillemaeckers involvement with Art & Language and Seth Seigelaub’s Xerox Book artists can be linked with his studies.

Of the Ghent Private Collections only the Herbert Foundation has survived. I think of it as a quiet echo of the patronage in 1430s Flanders, that culminated in the Van Eyck Mystic Lamb. The medieval wool trade and art are at the heart of Flemish culture. Anton’s father, Tony Herbert was a textile manufacturer who collected Flemish Expressionists, including Permeke and Brusselmans.


The Herbergs went to the opening of the exhibition *Deurle* on July 11th 1973 at Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens. It marked the publication of the catalogue *Deurle* by MTL with texts by Andre, Baldessari, Barry, Broodthaers, Burgin, Ramsden & Burn, Cadere, Graham, Huebler, Kosuth, LeWitt, Ryman, Romeu, Weiner and Wilson. The Herbergs did not know that the exhibition had been cancelled. The only people there were Spillemaeckers and his wife Lili Dujourie, Jacques Charlier, Philippe Van Snick and Mme Rona (editor of +–0). A problem had developed over Spillemaeckers’ decision to include Cadere, a Romanian artist living in Paris, who carried a coloured ‘round bar of wood’, as his artwork. The exhibition was simply one table with ring binders of documents by artists. Perhaps an echo of Mel Bochner’s 1966 School of Visual Arts exhibition of photocopies: Working Drawings And Other Visible Things On Paper Not
Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art. The difficulties over the inclusion of Cadere continued for months on the letters pages of Flash Art.\textsuperscript{iv}

(Ph. 9: Andre Cadere photo’s)
Anton and Annick collected Andre Cadère’s work. There are photographs of Herbert at Cadère’s lectures in Belgium at Leuven University, Elsa von Honolulu-Loringhoven in Ghent and the isolated Café de L’Oasis in Tournai. Regrettably none of us made it to Paris to the Bus Shelter on Boulevard Saint-Germain September 1976, where he gave his \textit{Space and Politics} lecture, about the ownership spaces coming between artists and their audiences. There is a photograph of Herbert in Konrad Fischer’s office, with Cadère’s round bar of wood by the door during Cadère’s Maier-Hahn exhibition where he took his round bar of wood to eighteen Dusseldorf galleries during the 1976 \textit{Kunstmarkt}. Herbert could not resist witnessing Cadere achieve his ambition of “an exhibition” with Fischer.

In January 1975 Fernand Spillemaeckers offered to drive me to Amsterdam for the opening of the Hanne Darboven exhibition at the Stedelijk Amsterdam. During the journey he asked me if I was upset about the British Army in Northern Ireland? I remembered I had cried when I saw the newspaper headlines of 13 people shot dead by the British Army in Derry, 30th January 1972. Fernand said that ending conscription meant Britain now had a mercenary army, that fought for money rather than the ‘will of the people’. The US was also ending \textit{The Draft}. Fernand said this was the great lesson of European history.. I had other anti-war conversations, one with Lawrence Weiner 1971 at Jack Wendler’s home. A second in the same room November 1975 with the \textit{poetic and political} Marcel Broodthaers.\textsuperscript{vii}

(Ph. 10 & 11 : Charlier ‘Vernissages’)
In January 1974 Yves Gaevaert organised an exhibition of Minimal and Conceptual Art at the Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, titled by the artists names: \textit{Carl Andre, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Victor Burgin, Gilbert & George, On Kawara, Richard Long and Gerhard Richter}. A year later Gevaert On Kawara’s \textit{Produktion eines Jahres/One Year's Production} from the Kunsthalle Bern to the Palais des Beaux Arts, alongside Jacques Charlier’s photographs of exhibitions and art fairs in 1974. I did not realize that during the \textit{Vernissage} we were being photographed for Charlier’s catalogue. The photographs show Spillemaeckers and Lilly, Konrad Fischer, with his collectors Anton and Annick Herbert and André and Maryse Goeminne, Andre Cadere, Peter Downsborough, Benjamin Buchloh and Isa Genzken, one shows Anton and I talking, both dressed in black.

(Ph. 12: On Kawara postcards)
Herbert has a set of On Kawara \textit{I got up} post cards of Berlin sent by the artist between September 10 and October 22 1976, including \textit{? check caption} the no man’s land fortifications of the Berlin Wall, sent 4 October 1976. Annick has another set of On Kawara post cards of New
York between October 4 and December 4 1977, including the Twin Towers. I never met On Kawara, but he telephoned me in 2002 asking to buy a copy of Conception. I was overwhelmed.

(Ph. 13: On Kawara: Box of the date paintings side by side with the date painting)
It was at the Herbert Foundation in 2012, that I first saw inside one of On Kawara’s simple grey cardboard boxes that protect the Date Paintings. I read the newspaper lining and realised the care he had taken to represent the important news story of where he was on the day of the date of the painting. The boxes were a major feature of the 2014 Guggenheim exhibition. I was overwhelmed at the Guggenheim by On Kawara’s three very large, blood red paintings with the words:
‘ONE THING’ ‘1965’ ‘VIET-NAM’.
Fernand Spillemaeckers was born 1938, Konrad Fischer was born in 1939, Anton Herbert in 1938 and Annick Herbert in 1940. They were all children brought up in the aftermath of war, the bombing of German cities, the street fighting and the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On Kawara was 12 years old in August 1945.

After the Vernissage we all went to dinner and I mischievously asked Konrad why he had not shown Stanley Brouwn recently. He understood the implication behind the question, that Minimal Painting was more saleable than Conceptual Art. Prospect Painting 1973 was a surprise after the Conceptual themes of Prospect 68 and 69, and Prospect Projection in 1971. Konrad’s emphasis on bringing the artists to Düsseldorf meant he worked with artists who could travel with drawings and plans to make their work. There were exceptions, Konrad was a painter, part of Capitalist Realism with Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, he also showed Palermo.

(Ph. 14: Fischer, Richter Polke)

By 1973 Konrad Fischer was no longer a small North European artist-dealer but an important international figure. Prospect Painting responded to the importance of Minimal Painting in North America, and for major collectors. I remember him saying around this time: I am no longer free. I have to earn a living for so many artists.’

There were a number of painters that were important to the Herberts and had been part of their sensibility and their Collection from the beginning, Daniel Buren, Niele Toroni, Robert Ryman and Gerhard Richter. There is a photograph by Annick of Anton and Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo walking in the Italian sunshine in the fields around Varese, Panza’s country estate.
(Ph. 15: Photo with Panza) Much of Panza’s Collection was installed in the stables and out buildings in Varese, an agricultural space equivalent to the Herbert’s textile buildings in Ghent.

The Herberts were at the Venice Biennale in 1976 and Arte Povera is an important part of the collection from the beginning: Mario Merz Igloo (1978), Jannis Kounellis Fuochi (1971),

In 2012-13, the Herberts’ commissioned Philippe Ungar to interview them and their friends. In 1981 Rudi Fuchs organised the first exhibition of the Herbert Collection in Eindhoven: *L’Architecte est absent: repertoire*, a title from Marcel Broodthaers, *le Corbeau et le Renard*. They told Ungar:

> The exhibition revealed us as collectors to the outside world and to ourselves as well. Before that, we weren’t really aware of the fact that we were acquiring art, and nobody knew our collection.

A second exhibition took place at Casino Luxembourg in 2000 with Enrico Lunghi, the title was Lawrence Weiner’s *MANY COLOURED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLOURED OBJECTS*. There is a photograph of the “large family reunion” at the opening. At the time the Herberts said: *To choose this art is to choose your friends* …we liked the fact that the Casino was a place for research, a kind of laboratory away from large prestigious exhibition venues…

In 2006 the collection was shown at MACBA in Barcelona curated by Manuel Borja-Villel titled *Public Space/Two Audiences: inventaire*, from the 1976 Venice Biennale work by Dan Graham. The subtitle was *works and documents from the Herbert Collection*. A small version travelled to the Kunsthaus Graz, curated by Peter Pakesch in collaboration with Heimo Zobernig: *Inventur, Werke aus der Sammlung Herbert*. Speaking about these two exhibitions the Herberts said:

> …MACBA certainly gave us cause to think about the role of private foundations in relation to public institutions…It functioned on a wholly different scale from the small family get-together in Luxembourg… we were no longer in control of what was happening…We wanted to guard ourselves against the financial and political issues that rule the art world. We became aware of the need to protect ourselves and decided to rethink our approach to being collectors…We were afraid that we had ventured too far into a traditional museum system, one that would absorb us…Graz was more creative, more in the Luxembourg spirit.

After the *Overture* opening of Coupre Links in 2013, there was one more international exhibition of the Herbert Collection in early 2014 with the title *Musée à Vendre pour Cause de Faillite* from Broodthaers at Mumok Vienna.

Each of the exhibitions gave an increasingly prominent role to the archive and documents. That led them to invite me to organise the exhibition *Genuine Conceptualism* of my “Professor’s Collection” in 2014. In 2015 they organised with Maria Gilissen their collection of work by Marcel Broodthaers, alongside their collection of his documents, books, posters and ephemera.
In 2011 (is that the correct date?) Philippe Ungar asked Nicholas Serota about the Herbert Collection and the way conceptual art should be exhibited:

…the best circumstances in which to understand conceptual art are in a study room, or print room, or a library… Annick and Anton have the ambition, to replicate this intimacy which you do not find in big public museums…for both Annick and Anton, the engagement with the work of art is about a very, very directed form of concentration. Silence is essential…I think that they have the capacity to make something which is unlike any other collection in Europe.

... The art that was made at that time undoubtedly reflected a seismic change in the way individuals saw themselves in society …Anton and Annick remain children of that generation. They remain unimpressed by wealth, unimpressed by the vanities of certain parts of the art world…When they go to an opening it’s because they want to have a conversation with an artist, and this continues to inform a slightly puritanical, if you like, way of thinking about the world…I think, they feel embodied in the art and also embodied in the morals of artists who made that work…It’s about personal liberation rather than a liberation of a whole group within society.

Sophie Richard came to work with me in Autumn 2001 after seeing Catherine Moseley’s exhibition and catalogue *Conception. Conceptual Documents 1968 to 1972*. Moseley was my assistant at the Norwich Gallery and one of my MPhil research students. Her work was based on my archives and my old address books. I wrote my own text for the book. Moseley’s thesis awakened many memories and I was still trying to put into perspective the death of Konrad Fischer in 1996.

Sophie Richard interviewed the Herberts in 2004 for her PhD *The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967-77, Dealers, Exhibitions and Public Collections*. The Herbert Foundation now has Sophie Archive with her recorded ‘Conversations’ with Jean-Christophe Ammann, Jacques Charlier, Anny De Decker, Jan Dibbets, Rudi Fuchs, Charles Harrison, Klaus Honnef, Nicholas Logsdail, Paul Maenz, Rolf Preisig, Nicholas Serota, Seth Siegelaub, Harald Szeeman, David Tremlett, Henriëtte and Herman van Eelen as well as Annick and Anton Herbert. She asks the Herberts’ about Konrad Fischer and Fernand Spillemaeckers:

…They were the two characters who influenced us a lot. Both took us out of our local perspective…With them we entered into an international context: Carl Andre, Art & Language, Daniel Buren…Gilbert & George…The location of Fischer in Düsseldorf and Spillemaeckers in Brussels was of no importance whatsoever. On a whim we’d jump in the car to go to see either one of them. We didn’t differentiate. For example, we bought an Andre with Spillemaeckers from Fischer. Their choice of artists – you can see that in the collection – matched up…They knew each other very well. There is the famous piece from 1973 by Robert Barry called ‘Invitation Piece’, which explains very clearly that the
artists were nomadic, and the galleries in a sense joined in with that nomadic spirit. There was Art & Project, Jack Wendler, Yvon Lambert, Sperone, Paul Maenz, Nigel Greenwood, Konrad Fischer, MTL, Wide White Space, Leo Castelli and Toselli.

Over the last twenty years the Herbert Foundation has concentrated in gathering an important library and archive of documents. This paralleled an enormous growth of interest in both language-based works of art and in the archival documents of Conceptual Art, that are fascinating for younger artists and art historians. The Herbert Foundation now combines important work from the 1960s and 1970s together with correspondence, photographs, invitation card, books, magazines and posters documenting those two decades, enabling scholarship to continue the process of the unconcealment of the period.

Ungar’s interview records Serota saying:
For Anton, I think, the intellectual engagement with the mind of an artist was as important as any of the work… I think that we disagreed a little about their absolute inherence and engagement in certain forms of conceptual art… we did a major Art & Language show at Oxford in 1975, so I was not immune. But probably because I was in Oxford and because I was surrounded by philosophy professors, and professors of logic, who were rather skeptical about Art & Language, and skeptical about Robert Barry, and skeptical about conceptual art generally.

Young artists travelled between continents with their ideas. The radicalism inherent in the artists’ use of documents and language at that time was about making people think for themselves. The Seth Siegelaub exhibition at the Stedelijk Amsterdam raised issues about our current understanding of the period 1966 to 1968. Terry Atkinson went to New York for two months in summer 1967, spending time with Robert Smithson and meeting Judd, Dan Graham and Mel Bochner, Sol LeWitt and Carl Andre. Art & Language and Joseph Kosuth are rightly an important part of this exhibition. Spillemaeckers gave the Herberts an understanding of Art & Language and in 1978 they started to buy the work from the artists and from the Lisson Gallery. Much more research needs to be done on artists use of language this early period.

Working at the Herbert Foundation to help select the documents for this exhibition, I spent time looking through the Herbert’s almost complete set of Konrad Fischer’s invitations, his ‘postcards’. I realised that the first three cards were not postcards at all. The first Carl Andre postcard Ontologische Plastic opened out into a plan of the long thin Neubrückstrasse space with the 5 x 20 rows of steel squares with text on the back. The second exhibition, Hanne Darboven’s “KONSTRUKTIONEN” is a trimmed A4 square, with a drawing on graph paper on one side and information on the reverse. Both would have had to be mailed in envelopes. It was Richard
Long’s 1318 Wood Sticks from River Avon Gorge, September October 1968 that leaped out as the first real postcard. The front with the image of the Clifton Suspension Bridge with a resting youthful cyclist, but I had never seen the back before. It had print like a normal commercial postcard on the back, with ‘Richard J. Long’, details of the exhibition and space for an address. Richard J. Long was also printed on the front. A second Richard Long postcard from the following year had turquoise print on the back “J. Arthur Dixon postcard” of St Kilda, then in black the title “Mud” and the exhibition details. Richard Long was over printed on the image of a young male hiker overlooking the island. I sent Richard a postcard asking if they had copied a postcard or had he really bought a load of real post cards to send to Konrad Fischer to be overprinted?

He replied a day later:

They were both real commercial postcards which I ordered in bulk then posted on to Konrad for them to be over-printed. (?photo of the pc?)

This seemed such a perfect small piece of research enabled by just two of the thousands of documents in the Herbert Archive. It took me straight to the heart of the humble simplicity of our generation.

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1 The Idee + Idee section Documenta 5 also included Mel Bochner, Victor Burgin, Michael Harvey, Knoebel, David Lamelas, Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Peter Roehr, Allen Ruppersberg, David Tremlett, Richard Tuttle, William Wegman.

2 Husserl’s archives were smuggled out of Germany to Leuven in 1939.

3 Information from Koen Brams


Catherine Moseley gave the tapes with the unedited interviews to the archive at the Henry Moore Study Centre Leeds.


Atkinson taught a one week course at Canterbury College of Art in Autumn 1967 that I attended, and a further week course in 1968.