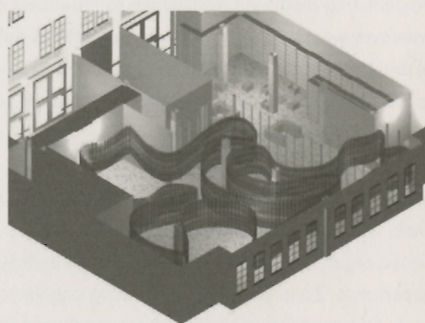
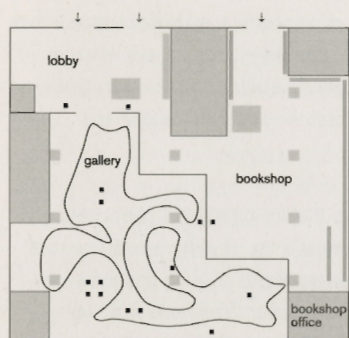


site map and checklist



Jorge Pardo, *Project*, 2000

3 parts: lobby, bookshop, gallery

overall dimensions: 108 x 108 feet

Commissioned by Dia Center for the Arts, 1998

Jorge Pardo, *Curtain*, 2001

500 yards x 8 feet

silkscreen fabric, aluminum track

Gilberto Zorio, *Microfoni*, 1968–1969

remade 2001

microphones, concrete blocks, and rope

dimensions variable

Collection Sonnabend Gallery, New York

- microphone, installed as indicated

cover photo: Michael Govan

Jorge Pardo and Gilberto Zorio

Reverb

September 19, 2001–June 16, 2002



Dia center for the arts

548 west 22nd street new york

The work need[s] the direct intervention of the spectator . . . the work [is] constituted of consecutive waves, the first visual and plastic, in silence, the second with the introduction of sounds, words, or noises, the third with their bouncing back and forth and fusion. It was important . . . to achieve an "enveloping" space ready to assimilate all things and events.

—Gilberto Zorio

"A boundary is an imagined line, which becomes concrete through violence," Gilberto Zorio argues.¹ The concept of a boundary carries multiple meanings. When it takes concrete material existence, it impacts decisively, aggressively—in short, violently—upon its surroundings: when immaterial, abstract, or invisible, it may be a dividing line between states, a restriction on the self.

In the late 1960s, this concept began to manifest itself in Zorio's practice in diverse ways. His earliest work betrayed what was to prove an abiding concern with natural materials in transformation, with physical, chemical, and, by extension, alchemical transformation. A turn to language as his preferred medium seemed at first unexpected, though ultimately words, too, became subjected to reductive purification. Probing issues relating to communication, he employed the Italian word for boundary—*confine*—in several seminal pieces. In one it was inscribed in phosphorescent ink high on the wall of the gallery. Only intermittently, in brief moments when the incandescent light was extinguished in favor of black light, did the word become legible and thus part of a cycle that, endlessly alternating presence and absence, made visible the temporal and circumstantial limits of its own existence. Applied to the wall, the text served to render self-reflexive the role of the support, its identity, as one of several boundaries within the space. Yet, given its position—its elevation and distance—in relation to the spectator, together with its episodic ephemerality, it functioned as a dematerialized abstract signifier, as well as a guide to an actual spatial location: it both referenced and registered a condition. A spectral division, it infiltrated the mind while engaging the body. Since its appearance was determined mechanically, by a timer, the viewer physically encountered it every few minutes; expectation functioned more organically, however, as the waiting period seemed sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, depending on the visitor's emotional state.

Microfoni (1968–1969), realized shortly before *Confine fluorescente* (1970), engaged this notion by recourse to other senses. In its inaugural presentation in January 1969 at the Sperone Gallery in Turin, fourteen microphones were dispersed throughout the small space. Two were directional, wired to pick up ambient sounds in the room; the remainder was sited so that visitors who wished to speak into them were required to mount concrete building blocks set on small wheels, which thus offered somewhat precarious or at least

destabilizing platforms from which to broadcast. Each microphone was manipulated so that whatever was amplified was repeated after a delay of several seconds. As any effort to elaborate on a statement or engage in a dialogue inevitably produced echoing and interrupting and deforming speech, communication rapidly devolved into an illegible, but enveloping, barrage of sound.

Sound is not necessarily confined by the same barriers that inhibit sight: it permeates walls and hence can alter a work's material and immaterial limits. Giving precedence to a sense organ other than the eye, customarily the prime instrument shaping phenomenal experience, Zorio prioritized alternative cognitive structures, alternative ways of bringing body and mind into play. With the normal confines of the Sperone Gallery made porous, visitors reshaped and redefined the space. As they acted singly, or collectively, improvising fragile fleeting situations, they transformed via the breath the physical world, remapping and reanimating it.

Some thirty years after it was last presented, Zorio was invited to recreate *Microfoni* in Jorge Pardo's indelible redesign of Dia's ground-floor exhibition gallery, bookshop, and lobby. At the same moment, Pardo, too, was invited to react to this proposal. In anticipating the other's intervention, each artist was confined by different limits and restrictions. Zorio adhered to the initial material identity of his pioneering work, but freely reconfigured it, tailoring it to the new physical conditions. (By contrast, the institutional differences were apparently of little concern: instead of a private gallery, a public museum; instead of a classic white cube, a space strongly imprinted with an aesthetic signature.) Pardo's continuous tiled floor in a vibrant palette of limes, lemons, and other citrus hues, radically reconfigured the ground floor from three physically discrete, as well as functionally distinct, containers into a single entity comprised of a trio of interconnecting parts. Congruent with his holistic, if creole, conception, two murals, like bookends, mark the outer perimeter of the site. Pardo also intermingled functional design items, either selected from the range of modernist exemplar currently commercially available—such as Marcel Breuer's celebrated nesting tables—or fabricated to his own design, whose vocabulary celebrates this renowned heritage.

By situating a pair of directional microphones in the lobby, Zorio ensured that the serendipitous sounds registered there and rebroadcast through amplifiers located elsewhere would infiltrate every corner of Pardo's *Project* (2000). Next, he positioned dual microphones to face each other across the glass partition separating bookstore from exhibition space, reinforcing his younger colleague's treatment of both areas as spaces of display, as interconnected mirror images of each other. Then he moved two armchairs from the seating area of the bookshop into the rear of the gallery, raising them on his eponymous concrete blocks and aligning them so that two participants sitting side by side would

share access to a single microphone. Finally, he carefully looped and draped the long cords carrying the electric current into an elegant tracery spanning the upper reaches of the space; a system of veins feeding the "body," it highlighted a system of transmitting energy that usually is treated as if invisible. Counterpointing this elevated arterial tracery, a second linear armature snaked across the space: made of rope, it loosely tied the blocks to each other along the floor. A natural fiber whose individual strands are weak and fragile, hemp gains great durability and strength when plaited into a dense skein. For Zorio, materials, as crucial to the content of his art as to structuring its form, offer potent metaphors.

Pardo reciprocated by contradicting the spirit, as well as the substance, of Zorio's intervention. A new fabric was specially designed in multiple shades, ranging from burnt orange to deep yellows, comprising an interlocking pattern of biomorphic shapes. Sewn into a vast curtain that sinuously wanders through the gallery, arcing and twisting back on itself, it creates a labyrinthine nexus of spaces, none of which can be securely identified as positive or negative, and none of which is strictly defined, since at any moment the curtain can be pulled, closing off or revealing pockets and interstices. Those wishing to engage with a microphone from one of Zorio's makeshift stages can choose to some degree how or whether they are exposed, how or whether they are vulnerable to the gaze of others, while they are themselves prevented from seeing. Irradiating the space with a vibrant glow, Pardo's luminous sheath encourages playful experimental responses to a sound work that at least theoretically is as likely to prompt cacophonous, even aggressive, activity as its converse. For the younger artist, fewer limits governed his riposte beyond the desire to illuminate the aesthetic and conceptual structure he had formulated in *Project* the previous year.

Conceived at the end of the sixties, at a moment of unprecedented cultural and social change, *Microfoni* is emblematic of the radical revision of contemporary art practice that merged at that time. While the new forms and modes of art-making were not causally produced by the crises in knowledge, cognitive discourse, and theoretical models addressed by such writers as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes, its experimental inventiveness was nevertheless dependent on, just as it contributed to, this intellectual ferment, which quickly produced fundamental revisions of the utopian modernist project. Conceived some thirty years later, Pardo's work coincides with a substantial renegotiation of the lingering traces and residue of that decisive moment.

In proposing to layer one preexisting work, *Microfoni*, over another, *Project*, "Reverb" required from each participant considerable confidence in the resilience of his

own work, as well as a willingness to trust the (unknown) other to engage with the geste—though not necessarily to play by the (unspoken) rules. In this, as much as in the resonant interconnections that result, "Reverb" echoes the present climate, marked as it is by an unprecedented level of exchange and engagement between artists from very different generations, circumstances, and aesthetics.

L.C.

notes

1. Gilberto Zorio, quoted in Nehama Guralnik, "Energy with a Human Dimension," in *Gilberto Zorio* (Trento: Galleria Civica di Arte Contemporanea, in association with Hopeful Monster Editore, Turin, 1996), p. 206.

Born in 1963 in Havana, Cuba, **Jorge Pardo** emigrated to the United States in July 1969. He studied at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena (1984–1988) and has exhibited widely since his first solo show in Los Angeles in 1988. Besides participating in numerous international group exhibitions, he has realized various permanent projects, including *Reading Room* at the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam in 1996, *Pier* in the 1997 Skulptur.Projekte in Münster, and, in 1998, *4166 Sea View Lane* (with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles). Pardo lives and works in Los Angeles and Long Island.

Born in 1944 in Andorno Micca, Italy, **Gilberto Zorio** studied art at Turin's Accademia di Belle Arti from 1963 to 1970. Since his first solo show at Galleria Sperone in Turin in 1967, Zorio has exhibited widely in Europe and the United States. He was included in several group shows defining Arte Povera in 1967 and 1968, in addition to exhibiting at Documenta V (1972), and the Venice Biennale in 1978, 1980, 1986, and 1997. Retrospective exhibitions of Zorio's work have been presented at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1979; the Kunstverein in Stuttgart in 1985, traveling to Paris, Geneva, and Eindhoven; Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, Valencia in 1991, traveling to Prato; and Galleria Civica di Arte Contemporanea, Trento (1996).

Support for this exhibition has been provided by Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz and the members of the Dia Art Council. Pardo's fabric was produced through a collaboration between Dia Center for the Arts and The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia.

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