

**UNCONCEALED: THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF CONCEPTUAL  
ARTISTS 1967-77. DEALERS, EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

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**Ridinghouse is an imprint shared by the London gallerists Thomas Dane and Karsten Schubert, which publishes specialist texts about contemporary art with the support of sponsorship. The title word ‘unconcealed’ was derived from the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger and refers to a form of disclosure. This thick softback is edited and introduced by Lynda Morris (curator of The Norwich Gallery) who supervised the seven years of PhD research undertaken by the late scholar Sophie Richard (died 2007) into the social, economic and institutional contexts of conceptual art. Actually, its scope is wider than conceptual art because it also includes artists I would have described as performance, ecological, minimal, land or video. Indeed, some of the ‘conceptual art’ dealers featured, such as Nigel Greenwood (for whom Morris once worked), also mounted shows by abstract oil painters such as John Walker. The text focuses on the decade 1967 to 1977 and contains a plethora of information about the international network of artists, galleries, dealers, critics, art magazine editors, collectors, curators and public museums in Europe that emerged to support conceptualism. (Lack of funding**

prevented Richard from extending her research to the United States but she does discuss American artists such as Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt and Joseph Kosuth who exhibited in Europe.) It lists and describes the key exhibitions in chronological order, has data on the purchases of conceptual art by private collectors and by public museums, and provides a series of interviews with artists such as Jan Dibbets and David Tremlett, critics such as Charles Harrison and dealers such as Nicholas Logsdail and Paul Maenz. In addition, there are a number of rather grey photographs by Jacques Charlier depicting people at exhibition openings during 1974-75; plus a lengthy bibliography and an index. Richard's book, with its emphasis on documentation and databases, itself reflects the character of conceptual art practices.

Richard's main finding, reiterated by Morris, is that certain young dealer-curators were crucial to the success of conceptual art: they exhibited it, bought and sold it, helped to fabricate it and were guarantors of its aesthetic and financial value. In some instances there was a cosy arrangement: they curated shows in public museums and then sold work to those same museums. The West German Konrad Fischer, for example, curated many shows and was responsible for 31 percent of the conceptual art sold to public galleries in Northern Europe at one point. Conceptual art, Richard argues, was the first movement since 1945 in which American and European artists received equal treatment. Figures like Fischer in Düsseldorf and Jack Wendler in London connected Europe and the United States. Rather than pay

the high cost of transportation of physical artworks across the Atlantic, dealers would send the artists airplane tickets. The artists would then make or realise work when they arrived. This practice naturally encouraged site specific installations.

Much of the information provided by Richard is dry and factual but there are some vivid memories in the interviews and fascinating letters are reproduced that were exchanged between artists and dealers, and between dealers and museum staff. By examining the archives of public museums such as the Tate Gallery Richard was able to illuminate the acquisitions process by which they built up their collections of conceptualism. From the same sources she was also able to learn about the activities of private collectors, that is, those who donated their collections to public museums. Finally, finally, light is being shed on the financial workings of the contemporary art market.

Apart from critics and collectors, what is largely missing from this study of an art world system and market is the public. Minimal and conceptual art were not exactly popular with the general public. I recall seeing a number of the shows cited in this book and being the only visitor. (Performers such as Joseph Beuys and Gilbert & George were more popular and, as Richard notes, more people were attracted to the *kunstmarkts* or art fairs that were held in the late 1960s and early 1970s.) When minimal art did reach the consciousness of the British public - as in 1976 when Andre's 'bricks' ('Equivalent VIII' 1966) were displayed at the Tate - it was reviled

**and prompted a scandal about the waste of public money. This is not to deny that conceptualism was to prove a highly influential movement among artists of later generations.**

**This volume is a rich source of historical information but is not without errors: whoever compiled the index did not realise that the British painter John Walker (b. 1939) is not the same person as the British artist and writer John A. Walker (b. 1938).**

**John A. Walker is a painter and art historian.**