Projects 76: Francis Alÿs: the Museum of Modern Art, New York in collaboration with the Public Art Fund, June 29-September 16, 2002
[text, Harper Montgomery and Francesco Pellizzi]
The Museum of Modern Art
in collaboration with the Public Art Fund
June 29–September 16, 2002
Francis Alÿs's Modern Procession

Imagine a sunny Sunday morning in late June, 2002. A teenage girl from Elmhurst is dragging her mother to Manhattan to shop for bathing suits at Bloomingdale’s. They exit the subway station at Lexington and 38th Street, and suddenly find themselves surrounded by a throng of people of all backgrounds, all staring intently to the north, where the mighty One World Trade Center rises above the city like a beehive.

To celebrate the moving of The Museum of Modern Art from its midtown Manhattan location to MoMA QNS, to welcome MoMA's most sacred objects to its new home, and to ponder the significance of modern art in our spiritual lives, and its ability to reaffirm and reinvigorate spiritual faith and social values through humor, emphasizing laughter as an essential force in the restorative power of popular ritual. Alÿs's appreciation of the camaleonic qualities of processions also links him to the art of flâneurs, where he was born. The Leonardo da Vinci’s long fascination with popular spectacles of worship and celebration can be traced back through Bosch and Brueghel in The Hague, through to The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, pulling a magnificent toy dog on a string behind him, repeating the walk until his world fizzes. His projects series is sponsored by Peter Norton.

The projects series is sponsored by Peter Norton. The exhibition is organized with the support of the Public Art Fund, Inc. Acknowledgments are due to the artist and to Raphael Ortega, who organized the Projects series and whose support made this project possible; to Tom Eccles, Richard Ortega, Nina Garcia, and Andrew Wolk, of the Public Art Fund; to Francesco Pedocilli and Qiu Zhijie and to Claire Corey, Sam Hoffman, Caterina Pizzillo, David Poland, Kate Johnson, Amy Besançon Price, and Cara Larriva for their work on the exhibition and brochure.

The Modern Procession was filmed in collaboration with Raphael Ortega. Photo: Francis Alÿs, unless otherwise noted.

The Modern Procession was filmed in collaboration with Raphael Ortega. Photo: Francis Alÿs, unless otherwise noted. 11 West 53rd Street through the streets of Mexico City, December 12, 2001. There is always an ambivalent play between poetic failure and the promise of heroism in his work. For instance, for Purification of Praxis (1987), he builds a box of ice on the streets of Mexico City until it melts away into a small puddle, simply because, in his words, “Sometimes making something leads to its own destruction.” For the en-scarcements (2000), Alÿs's project was the following. "Walk for as long as you can holding a fifteen-cent peso note in your right hand." For the Collector (1994) Alÿs walked through the Centro Historico neighborhood of Mexico City sewing a mermaid's tail on a string, heading the walk until his world fizzes. His projects series is sponsored by Peter Norton. The exhibition is organized with the support of the Public Art Fund, Inc. Acknowledgments are due to the artist and to Raphael Ortega, who organized the Projects series and whose support made this project possible; to Tom Eccles, Richard Ortega, Nina Garcia, and Andrew Wolk, of the Public Art Fund; to Francesco Pedocilli and Qiu Zhijie and to Claire Corey, Sam Hoffman, Caterina Pizzillo, David Poland, Kate Johnson, Amy Besançon Price, and Cara Larriva for their work on the exhibition and brochure.

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