



Francis Alys
*Paradox of the Praxis 1 (Sometimes Doing
 Something Leads to Nothing)*, video still, 1997
 Courtesy: the artist and
 David Zwirner, New York
 Photo: Enrique Huerta

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JEAN-MARIE GALLAIS

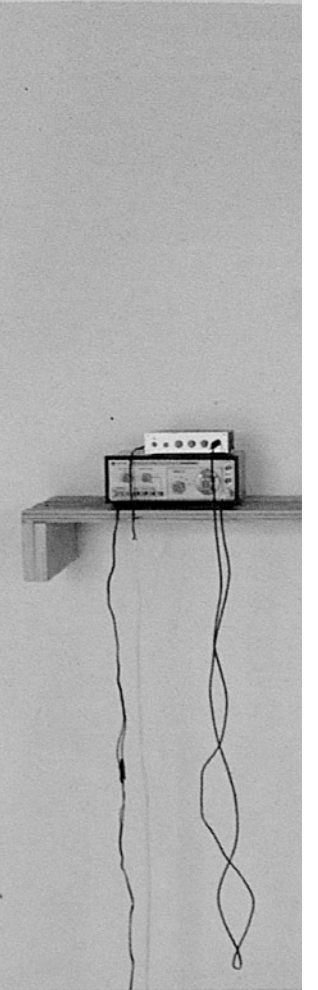
www.francisalys.com
www.wiels.org

ART / EXHIBITION
NINA CANELL

The space of waiting is a privileged space. It implies that the time “wasted”
 while in wait is of measured value. Waiting, therefore, is a performative act
 displaying both assumed value and restricted access. In one of her twelve
 newly commissioned works currently on view at MUMOK Factory in Vienna,
Unanswered Elemental Thoughts (2010), Nina Canell uses chewing gum as a
 medium to act out the anticipatory realm of suspension. The piece is a material
 departure from her use of outdated technologies and electronic tinkering; it
 engages the body on a corporeal level while still implying mechanical acts such
 as the ticking of a clock or banal mastication. The informal action is thinking
 incarnate—an act that requires patience. As the artist states, the works “apply
 their own logic of radiation in which forms and antiforms have given way to a
 more invisible spectrum of activity, thus complicating our sensory conception
 of distance and proximity.” Canell’s precision is not to be taken for granted: the
 implications of the gum are exposed in the valleys and ridges sculpted by the
 artist’s teeth. While the exhibition’s title may be distracting—“To Let Stay Pro-
 jecting As A Bit Of Branch On A Log By Not Chopping It Off”—its topographic
 wonders entice viewers back into Canell’s world of cool, minimalist assemblage.

LEAH WHITMAN-SALKIN

www.canellwatkins.org
www.mumok.at



Nina
To Be Hidden and So I
 © Nina Canell



ART / EXHIBITION
FRANCIS ALYS

Through the end of January, WIELS presents the
 work of Belgium-born, Mexico City-based artist
 Francis Alys. As the exhibition title describes, the
 works included—animations, sculptures, paint-
 ings, and video documentation—tell “A Story
 of Deception”: illusions of ideas, of symbols, of
 acts. His works are frequently humorous, often
 transient, and can seem absurdist, but they are al-
 ways poignant, precise, and revealing. His simple
 gestures are never elementary. In one, he slowly
 pours paint from a bucket as he walks, creating a
 gestural trail (*The Green Line*, 2004); in another,
 he pushes a block of melting ice through Mexico
 City (*Paradox of Praxis 1*, 1997). Always ending
 with tragicomic defeat, the works echo the failure
 of utopian ideals. In Peru, Alys asked five hundred
 students to move a sand dune a few inches from
 where it originally sat. This action, *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002), is the perfect illustration
 Alys’ ploys—a maximum of effort for a minimum of results. *A Story of Deception* (2006) is
 also the title of a work in which Alys filmed a mirage in Patagonia. It functions as a reflection of
 his entire practice: objectives are hoped for but never attained. The derisory or poetic actions in
 the exhibition always hide their game—a game whose rules might appear simplistic, but whose
 logic organically twists and turns without warning.

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