

# Art Los Angeles Contemporary (<http://artlosangelesfair.com/>)

January 24–27, 2013 | The Barker Hangar

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## Press Center > News > Press Item #105 The World is My Idea

January 25, 2013

Scott Benzel performs W.W.A.R. / Die Dritte Generation



In Scott Benzel's *W.W.A.R. / Die Dritte Generation* — a performative work named after Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* and Fassbinder's *Die Dritte Generation* — Benzel and a group of six act upon machine and materials in strange, specific ways, pouring physicality into belt sanders, reels of analog tape and sheets of glass and reclaiming them as extensions of the mind.

Central to the Schopenhauer text that frames the performance is the notion that the mind of man is what makes the reality of the physical objects that surround him, even his own body. To activate these objects for ourselves, he writes, "we must regard all presented objects, even our own bodies, merely as ideas." How they appear, or are represented, to others and to ourselves, can only result from the active application of will — that desire or striving that pushes us to know, even if it culminates in our suffering.

Benzel demonstrates the power of will by physically communing with the objects on his stage. As two violinists coax out a shrill dissonance, he flings belt sanders down stage-spanning wood chutes, their movements for a moment paralleling his outstretched arms. He connects car bass speakers to a reel-to-reel tape player and lays sheets of glass on top so they can bump to the bass. Like an act of terrorism, Benzel is using what Karlheinz Stockhausen calls “the cosmic spirit of rebellion, of anarchy” to destroy the fixed use of these banal commercial objects. While his hands are on these objects, they are his, and they are him. “Violence against objects is violence against humans,” intones a narrator quoting Fassbinder.

That this performance uses the formal elements of Benzel’s past works — the string players from *Sines* for Michael Asher, belt sanders from *Recombinant Folk History*, and dancers striking poses with a reel-to-reel tape player from *Threnody* — makes the power of the will more pronounced. Even Benzel’s own performances no longer belong to him, or are him, once they have been represented to audiences in the theater of their own minds. So Benzel doesn’t perform his pieces, including *W.W.A.R.*, more than once. He reuses and reclaims them.

There was a moment pregnant with expectation. As the narrator intoned that “something is about to happen,” empty champagne and Coke bottles teetered to the edge of the rattling glass sheets. The audience braced for impact by covering their eyes and shielding their bodies but the objects plummeted to the ground, in thin, quick thuds. “I recently had a dream,” the narrator continued. So, evidently, had the audience.

## **The Journal**

### **Night becomes Day becomes Night**

Parsing the architecture of the new Night Gallery

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### **Friends of Poetry**

Adam Overton and Dominique Gilliot paired by Machine Project and Mains d’Œuvres for Paris at Your Home

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### **The World is My Idea**

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### **Shoeless at Marc J. Lee's**

A morning tour at the collector's home

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