

Jan Dibbets

(Weert, The Netherlands, 1941)

In 1969 Jan Dibbets created a work, *Perspective Correction*, an original contribution to the photographic production of conceptual art. The tautological and linguistic approach to artistic experiences tied with conceptual research required that photography be a tool of straightforward documentation, in the service of an analytical art that is often accompanied by texts, and it was only in relationship to the latter that photography had the possibility of being considered in terms of the work.

But *Perspective Correction* gives photography a different and decisive role. Dibbets drew a trapezoid on the wall of his studio and then shot an image of it, positioning the camera obliquely in relation to the wall. As a result, the perspectival mechanism on which photography is based appears as a perfect square, drawn in space, absolutely parallel to the diaphragm of the lens. The equivalence of meanings on which much conceptual art was based was thus destroyed in the ambiguity of a modern version of Baroque anamorphosis.

Dibbets, using photography and then the combination of photography and painting, proceeded to retrace other ambiguities hidden in some of the fundamental elements of perspective drawing, beginning with the horizon line, which is seen as straight on the plane of the sheet of paper, but conceptually as the circumference around the viewer. This seems to be the genesis of his works, where he recomposes the horizon line into curved lines, put together through a photographic sequence that conveys different parts of the same landscape. Oculi, a favorite motif in Renaissance architecture, constitute another element of the perspective tradition that the artist brings into play, opening circumferences of light and breakthroughs in the depth of the flat and opaque space of the pictorial surface. Thus, in 1989-90 he opens up windows, a principal place of the perspectival imagination, in the blue monochrome plane of the photograph sheet. But in lieu of the orthogonal frontality that the window offered the Renaissance gaze onto the world, Dibbets conveys a sense of vertigo, which he creates by destroying the opaque screens of his skies, painted in watercolor, with windows photographed from hyperbolic angles, from planes that are always strongly lowered or raised. (EV)