

Carsten Höller
(Brussels, 1961)

Carsten Höller's works interact with the space and involve the direct participation of the viewer; it is only through the public's mental and physical involvement that the Belgian artist's installations and sculptures find their ultimate meaning and completeness.

Höller's work pushes along the path of experimentation and the creation of experiential avenues until it opens "artificial limbos" (Bishop, C., ed., *Installation Art*, London: Tate Publishing, 2005) within reality, which destabilize it, provoking sensory uncertainties in the everyday perception of space. His works act on all the senses and attempt to demonstrate their mutability, confirming the possibility of different perspectives and calling into question the structures and coordinates of reality.

His art brings together aesthetic beauty and mathematical logic, a scientific approach and creativity, where his works are devices, machines, equipment meant to investigate the public's behavior and psychology. The often-playful aspect of his sculptures and installations exercises a seductive hold over viewers, who abandon themselves to them. The playful element is well represented by *Test System*, slides that Höller created in 2007 inside the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in London and which visitors could use to go from one floor of the museum to another. *Upside Down Mushroom Room*, 2000, a room installed with enormous mushrooms that rotate hanging from the ceiling, produces the sensation that one has entered an upside down environment, in another dimension, as in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Mushrooms have always been associated with legends and myths that attribute hallucinogenic and poisonous properties to them; in popular etymology, *fungus* signifies "bearer of death." *Doppelpilzvitrine (24 Doppelpilze)*, acquired by the CRT Foundation, emphasizes the artist's background in biology. He meticulously reproduces 24 mushrooms, bringing out the characteristics of the different species and experimenting with unions that simulate strategies of genetic reproduction. The hyperrealist imitation generates an alienating sense; the artist draws on forms and structures from natural reality and reproduces them with completely artificial materials, such as polyurethane, creating a virtual dimension. The mushrooms are arranged in a glass display case, as if to exhibit them, but also keeping their dangerous properties at a distance. (EV)