



Ann Hamilton

*human carriage*, 2009

Installation, "The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia: 1860-1989"

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

January 30-April 19, 2009

Photo: Thibault Jeanson

Materials: cloth, wire, bells, books, string, pipe, pulleys, pages, cable, gravity, air, sound

*human carriage* rimmed the Guggenheim's parapet walls with a slender pipe to create a pathway, from the upper end of the museum's ramp to the entrance below, for the descent of a wheeled carriage that housed two suspended Tibetan cymbal bells. Ringing intermittently the sound of the bells was both everywhere and nowhere within the spiral of the Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda. As the bell carriage reached its terminus and came to rest at the bottom of the rotunda, it triggered the drop of a bundle of reconstructed books acting as conceptual counterweights in a system exchanging weight for weightlessness, and sound for the silence of reading. Like the many individual and disparate readers of a book the descent of the bell and the fall of the books was variable and responsive to the moment of each particular pull of gravity.

Following the curatorial theme of the exhibition, Hamilton responded to the forms by which cultural knowledge is transmitted and travels as influence through another cultural context. There is no real tracing of or accounting for the routes of translation and circulation these texts take, for the ways in which they are read or misread as they pass from reader to reader. The decision to use books reconstituted from sliced cross-sections of multiple volumes made physical alignments between disparate books and meanings. These meetings or alignments of texts became a demonstration of what happens when one line of writing rubs up in arbitrary juxtaposition to another. The story of transmission is in part an accounting of these arbitrary meetings, their amplifications and influences.