



Left: *Every Building Is An Estimate* 2005 Installation view, Galerie Juliëtte Jongma, Amsterdam Right: *Wish* 2003 Firework  
Courtesy: Galerie Juliëtte Jongma, Amsterdam

# Germaine Kruip

by Tom Morton

## Shooting stars, passers-by and the view from a window

There is nothing new under the sun. The same atoms are endlessly configured and reconfigured; the same energy is transferred and transferred again. To perceive novelty in the shiftings and shufflings of the physical world (in the creation of clouds, shadows, works of art) is a failure of vision, if by vision we mean a faculty that provides a proper assessment of things as they are and always will be. Despite this, though, there's something in us that wants moments of transformation to be transformative, to be more than reiterations of the universe's bland state of flux. It's this desire, or perhaps folly, that the work of Dutch artist Germaine Kruip draws on. Although her barely-there installations and actions tweak social systems including crowds, exhibitions and exhibition spaces, it's not so much the act of tweaking that's important here as the thoughts and feelings it generates in the viewer.

For the 2003 exhibition 'Dreamscapes' at Beelden Op de Berg, Wageningen, Kruip made *Wish*, a work that was as ephemeral as a prayer, or its answer. Every night during the show's run the artist fired an explosive into the sky that mimicked a falling star. Ads were placed in the local press publicizing this action, reading (in the opaque language of a campaign for an aspirational financial product): 'Wish 00:00 Every Night'. While *Wish* was a work that was framed in time and space by the exhibition to which it belonged, it was also deliberately leaky. Readers of the ad might have followed its instructions without ever seeing Wageningen's

new heavenly body (and, not being aware of its limited lifespan, may be following them to this day). Similarly, it is likely that many townsfolk viewing Kruip's piece were unaware it was a work of art, knowledge that would have perhaps conditioned their response to the explosions, including whether they became cosmic vehicles for their hopes. Ultimately *Wish* existed most fully not in its physical form (a series of split-second matter transformations and energy transferrals) but in the aggregate of wishes wound around it – some granted, some not, some magnanimous, some hot-cheeked and shaming.

When we speak of a 'way of seeing', we're speaking about our behaviour as viewers, something that's as habitual as saying a prayer at bedtime or smoking a post-prandial cigarette. In her action *Point of View* (2002) Kruip attempted to add another visual habit to the repertoire of the people of Tucumán, Argentina, by introducing actors into the town's streets, where they played the part of passers-by. Although this intervention in public space was publicized in advance, the identity of the actors was not, inveigling the work's viewers in a gummy web of suspicion and doubt. ('Is that guy over there buying an ice cream or pretending to buy an ice cream? Does he think I'm pretending to eat this doughnut? Can you pretend to eat a doughnut?') Such doubts, of course, are hard to shake off – there's a part of everybody who experienced *Point of View* that'll look out for actors in every sports ground or shopping centre they ever visit,

and (perhaps) sometimes catch themselves playing the part of a football fan or fired-up consumer.

Such identity crises were also in play in *2 Seconds* (2000), shown at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, where Kruip installed a small staircase leading up to a platform set against one of the gallery's windows. Standing empty, the platform resembled a piece of exhibition furniture or, at a pinch, an uninspired Minimalist sculpture, but inhabited by museum visitors it became a stage on which boredom with the Stedelijk and its contents, and an embrace of the world beyond its walls, might be acted out. Importantly, anybody turning their back to the gallery and gazing out of the window was transformed into a living sculpture, visible to those on the other side of the glass. As an airlock between art and non-art, *2 Seconds* was woefully ineffective, but perhaps that was Kruip's point. Art isn't something that can be boxed up in white cubes. Rather, it's something we carry around with us, like mud on our shoes or thoughts in our heads.

Kruip's recent show 'Every Building is an Estimate' (2005) at Galerie Juliëtte Jongma, Amsterdam, saw her transform the gallery into the mirror image of the view through the window of an empty apartment across the street. Because of the sight lines into the flat, and because of Kruip's refusal to step inside it, her recreation fell short of a perfect simulacrum. Like all her work, it was a site of subjectivity and fantasy – the things that make the tired world fresh again.