THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

Parcours

April 21–September 9, 2012
Gallery 188

Parcours—a French word for “route” or “path”—in the United States designates an educational or exercise trail, a loop marked by sights or gymnastics, always with explanatory texts and often with diagrammatic drawings as well. It is, one could say, an outdoor exhibition circuit for the improvement of one’s mind and body. Parcours at the Art Institute, a sort of model exhibition, presents a similarly conceived itinerary indoors in the Modern Wing’s Bucksbaum Gallery.

Florence Henri. Self-Portrait, 1928. The Art Institute of Chicago, Promised gift of a private collection.

Parcours is the result of a collaboration between artists Liz Deschenes (American, b. 1966) and Florian Pumhösl (Austrian, b. 1971), in dialogue with Matthew S. Witkovsky, Richard and Ellen Sandor Chair and Curator, Department of Photography. It takes inspiration from an unrealized exhibition proposal of the 1930s by Austrian-born Bauhaus designer Herbert Bayer. Bayer wanted a series of parallel walls that would turn the gallery space into a maze, with text and the works of art themselves serving visitors as a guiding thread. Expanding on that didactic premise, Deschenes and Pumhösl have chosen just a few photographs from the permanent collection of the Art Institute—designated by short red lines in the sketch reproduced on this page—and placed them like route markers on temporary walls modified expressly for this show. The artists’ own works, a set of specially tempered glass panels by Pumhösl and lustrous photograms by Deschenes, will reflect these works and the surrounding space.

Liz Deschenes, a professor of art at Bennington College in Vermont, has exhibited widely in the United States and Europe, including at the inaugural exhibition of the Art Institute’s Modern Wing; she is featured in the current Whitney Biennial in New York. Last year, Florian Pumhösl orchestrated the reinstallation of the modern art collection at Vienna’s Museum Moderner Kunst (mumok), holding a spacious one-person show there at the same time. This is Pumhösl’s first significant exhibition in an American museum.

Sponsor: This exhibition is made possible by the generous support of Anne and William Hokin and Martin Fluhrer. Additional support is provided by the Stuart Family Endowment for Photography Exhibitions.

Featured Events
4/21 12 p.m. Artists in Conversation: Parcours