



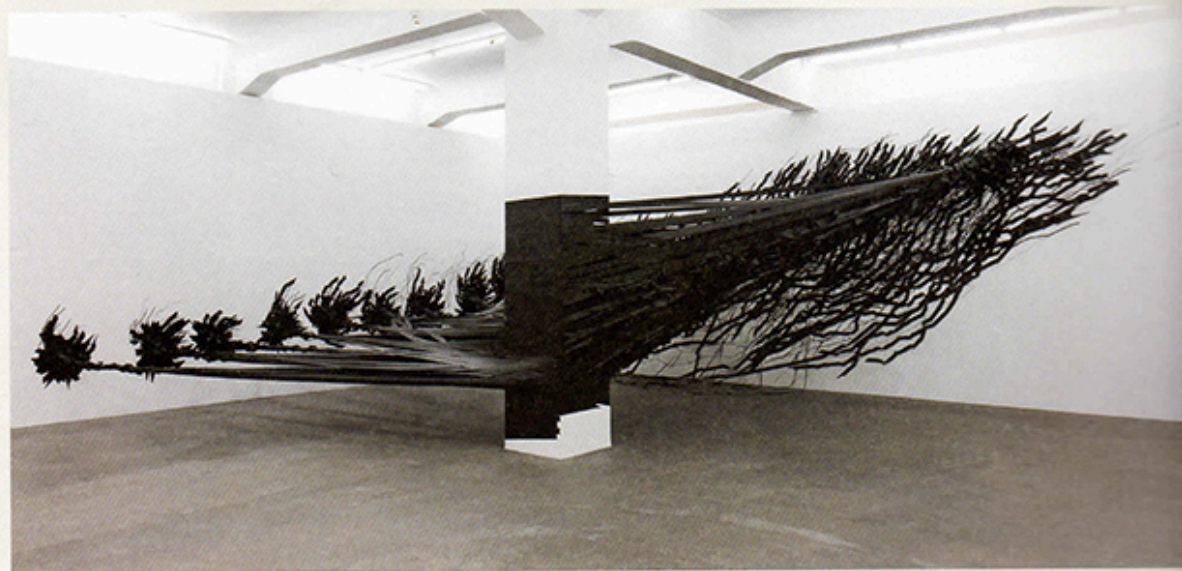
Using adhesive tape, installation artist Monika Grzymala responds to an exhibition space with her hands, her body and her mental perception.

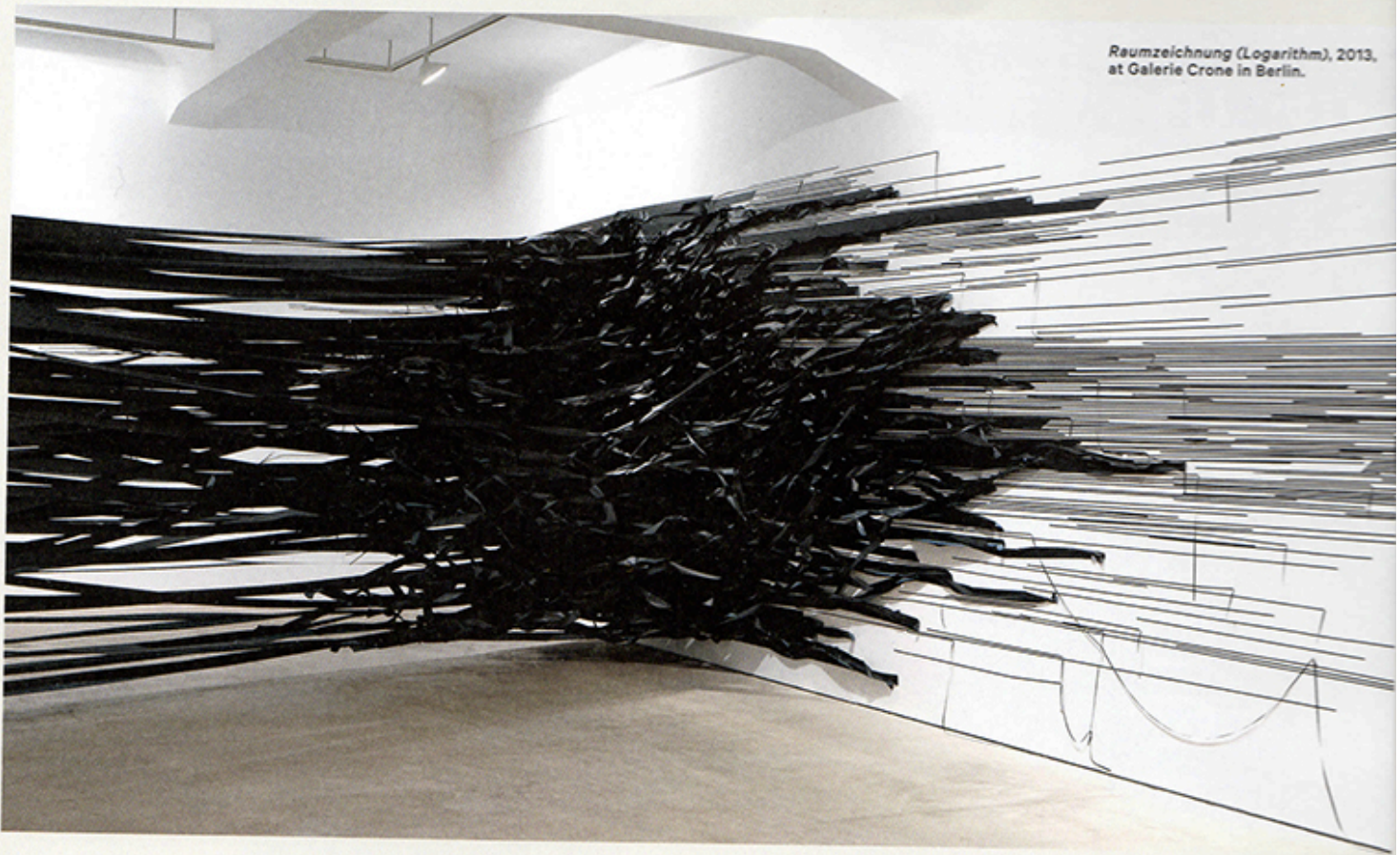
Line Dancer

In Monika Grzymala's crisply choreographed installations, adhesive tape becomes an explosively expressive medium.

Words Jane Szita
Photos courtesy of Monika Grzymala

Raumzeichnung (Bass), 2012,
required 5 km of masking tape.





If drawing, as Paul Klee famously said, is 'taking a line for a walk', Monika Grzymala's installations are more like taking a line on a high-energy gymnastic marathon. For over a decade, Grzymala has travelled the world armed only with the numerous rolls of adhesive tape she uses to create works whose expressive power and energy belie their banal origins.

Born in Poland, Grzymala has lived most of her life in Germany and is currently based in Berlin. She initially trained as a stonemason before studying fine art at the universities of Karlsruhe, Kassel and Hamburg. While concentrating on drawing, she quickly found that her line works escaped the page, migrating first onto gallery walls and then into space with the help of sticky tape. She had discovered her true interest: 'The moment when a drawing becomes a sculpture.' With her tape pieces, she says, 'I am not filling space; I am more transforming it according to a personal point of view of how human interaction with the space might be visualized.'

How did you start making your tape works?

Monika Grzymala: It all started with drawings on paper, which later became wall drawings. I wanted to take the lines of my two-dimensional drawings and allow them to enter the third dimension and become an object or a sculpture. So using tape was more or less a logical consequence of my work.

What's the best thing about tape as a material?

It is essentially a line on a roll, which is easy to handle and to transport. With adhesive tape, I can make a line three-dimensional. I can draw in space, draw like a sculptor.

How many tape works have you made so far?

I've never counted, but there are around 45 on my website, all of which I've created over the past 13 years.

How do you go about making them?

Every new project starts with a drawing on paper, preferably done with ink or watercolour as a kind of calligraphy that explores the flow of ideas for a new work. To describe the method and the outcome of my works, I use a German term I coined myself, *Raumzeichnung*. It means 'spatial or three-dimensional drawing', and it's a logical continuation of my drawing practice as a sculptor. I never correct my work, so the outcome is a linear 1:1 translation of the process.

What tools do you use?

My hands and my body are the most important ones – in connection with my mind, of course, and how it perceives a place. Making art is a local event in general. On the practical level, I use ladders and lift platforms if necessary.

Do you work with an assistant?

Generally not, as every work is about the authentic dynamic in the process and how I deal with it in a site-specific piece.

How long does it take to make a work?

Usually about seven to ten days.

How long do the works last? They are all temporary, organic interventions in space and thus ephemeral. I keep most of the de-installed works in my studio for a while, to remind me of the process or to be reactivated in another show. Sometimes, though, I decide to create a completely new piece.

What kind of tape do you use? All sorts – I pick them up all over the world. When starting a new project, I begin by choosing the optimal texture, materiality and colour, like a painter who decides to use oil on canvas or another medium.

How much tape does it take to make a work?

Usually between 3 and 10 kilometres.

What inspires your designs? Movement, the proportions of the human body, and my perception of and reaction to the surrounding space. There is also a strong connection to music or sound, as well as to performance or dance.

Do you find it ironic that many people know your 3D interpretations of 2D lines only through 2D images? It's interesting that people who look at photographs made to document my tape works react mainly to the graphic aspects on a visual level. Photos represent the return to a two-dimensional manifestation of a three-dimensional object.

When visiting the exhibition and experiencing the tape work not only with the eyes but also with the body, people can perceive the piece on a physical level, translated through the proportions of my body and through ideas pertaining to the surrounding space.

What is the biggest challenge of working with this material? Only one – the physical aspects of installing the piece. As an installation artist, I find it natural to express ideas by making every gesture visible, and adhesive tape offers the best option for that expression.