

## TINO SEHGAL

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

IS THERE NO ART? The infamous Guggenheim spiral is stripped bare. Without objects to view, the architecture shines. This coup, to keep the museum devoid of art objects, is a work by Tino Sehgal. Sehgal has created an intervention in the traditional museum-going experience, asking people to talk and listen and not necessarily to look. Looking and seeing however can not be avoided because as soon as one enters the rotunda one becomes a voyeur. Standing, and later lying in the center of the space is a couple kissing. The "Kiss" is a performance piece created by Sehgal in which a couple embraces, acting out famous kisses throughout the history of art, becoming living sculptures.

A youth about 8 years of age greets you at the base of the spiral and introduces him or herself, stating that this is a work by Tino Sehgal then, humbly asks, "What is Progress?" You can answer any way you choose. If you pose the question back, the answer becomes a discussion of why s/he wants to hear what you have to say about it. You can be coy, honest or perplexed. Because your guide is only a child the extent of the discussion can be limited. After walking together for a short time up the ramp you are handed off to a teenager with a summation of what the youth interpreted your ideas of progress to be. The discussion continues with this slightly older guide and becomes more rigorous. The topic — progress — is really a jumping off point. During the walk up the ramp the conversation gets more profound as the amount of time spent with each interlocutor increases as does their age. These conversations were not scripted as the interlocutors could engage with anyone about whatever subject was on their mind. In each conversation I was always met with the utmost consideration, never challenged, or made to feel inadequate, and surprisingly always gave more of myself to these strangers than I thought possible. Perhaps this is progress.

Once at the top of the ramp, the conversation, but not the piece, is over. You still have to walk down. How you progress down the ramp, what you see, think about and overhear are all aspects of the work. You are somehow transformed. If you hold onto the experience as you descend the ramp, see the "Kiss" again and walk out the door then you have been touched by Sehgal. As someone who is not usually open to strangers or willing to engage in conversations in a museum with those I do not know, I was surprised by not only

my openness but in how the work resonated. I was able to retain something of the experience long after I left the museum. I returned a second and third time as I was skeptical. How could I enjoy that? The power of art is amazing if you are open to the experience. That "This Progress" touched those who were willing to engage with it attests not only to Sehgal's genius but in his belief that what he does matters, it is that belief — that stripping away imagery — and filling a museum with ideas is what art is all about.

— Jody Zellen