LIAM GILLICK:
LITERALLY BASED ON H.Z.

KERLIN GALLERY, DUBLIN
11 NOVEMBER – 10 DECEMBER

Ten trestle tables, neatly arranged: seven carry signs or simple constructions, three are vacant. On the stair's landing, a multicoloured platform hangs beneath lights. Thus Liam Gillick's *Literally Based on H.Z.* waits for others to arrive.

Ideally the platform and worktable create an environment for shared action of some kind, and prompt speculation concerning what could have happened, what might yet do so and even, perhaps, 'thinking about this form of thinking'.

But as such 'scenario thinking' unfolds in the subjunctive – premised upon a 'what if...' – it implies a lack of present activity and dialogue. Others have not yet arrived. It's assumed that from the recognition that something is missing comes the longing for something to be done, something to be made into a project, to be planned for – an ongoing, multifarious design project, say, around which a provisional community is to gather (the current exhibition, for example, results from collaboration between Gillick and Austrian artist Heimo Zobernig – 'H.Z.').

For dialogue, if it develops at all, does not do so upon, under, through or about the work so much as *around* it (and some might say *despite* it). Insofar as the worktable that solicits us to make an encounter functions as the territorial base of strategic planning, and thereby frames that encounter against the *arrière-garde* background of neomodernist cocooning, so one must approach obliquely what is projected in order to see what is beside the point. For the playful elements in Gillick's work are often overlooked, yet they occasionally elevate it above familiar criticisms (the platform as conversation piece for the cultural services sector, as corporate feng shui, and so on). Many of these criticisms are to the point, yet rather stunted. They tend to diminish Gillick's parodic overdetermination of corporate and modernist strategy. But more so, they seem unwilling to read Gillick against the grain.

Literally Based on H.Z. is marked by shifts down in scale, to the level of the tabletop, the display model and the test-piece. Correspondingly, there are shifts in significance and potential. This process of miniaturisation also dismembers, removing from the work the aspiration to condition an environment, and altering the temporal quality of its objects from 'what if' or 'what might be' to 'once upon a time'. Here the model is on the way to becoming a toy, what Giorgio Agamben calls a 'cipher of history'. And as it enters into play, *Model for a pavilion on the site of an abandoned car plant* (2006), for instance, becomes less a failed prompt to make statements or create new scenarios than an exemplar of meta-communication, suspending the background against which certain communications are expected. Although Gillick's interest in this background might only be to reaffirm its status, the occasional and unexpected generosity of his materials diverts such intentions.

Gillick's most recent research concerns the progressive redundancy of production methods in a post-industrial situation and the crisis that might follow. That may be, but it is where Gillick's work shows its own redundancy that it ceases to be a simple demonstration of compromise and becomes more open than its rhetoric of openness allows. *Tim Stott*
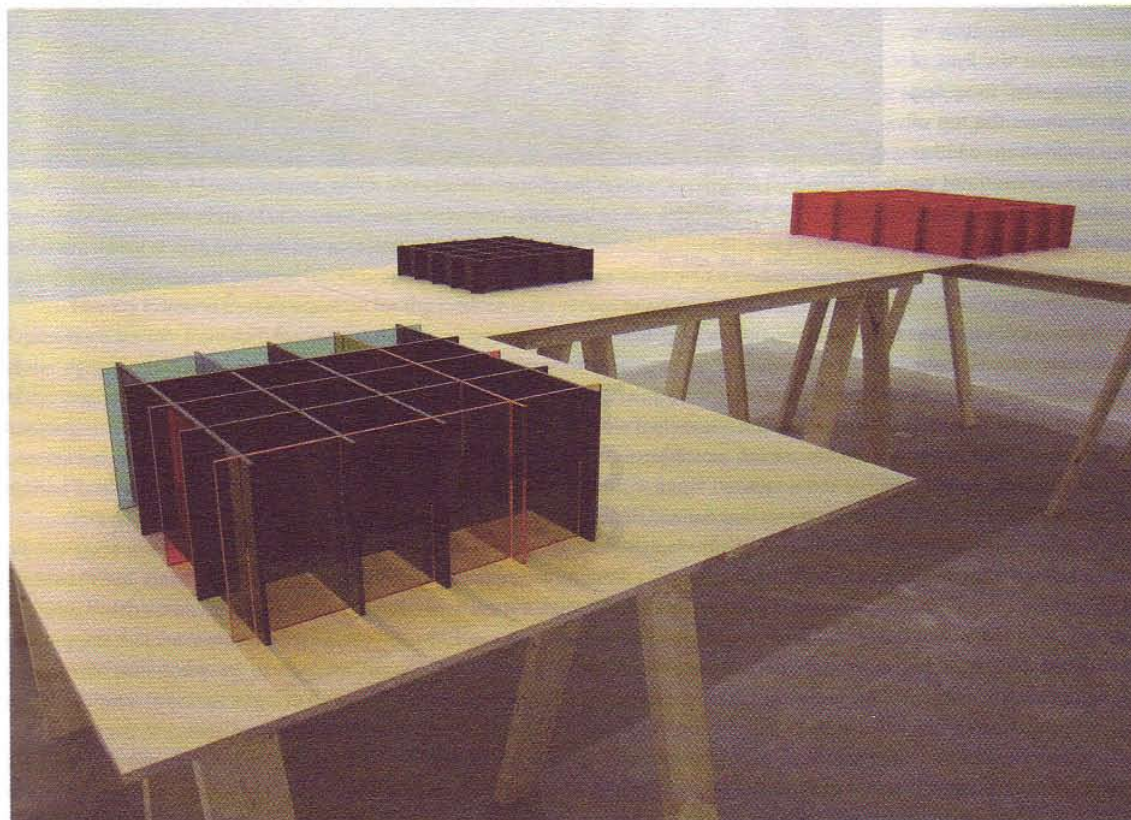
Literally Based on H.Z., 2006, ten table units and seven prototypes/structures to be arranged by the user in any permutation. Courtesy Kerlin Gallery, Dublin