

Abstract

"Performing Spaces. Spatialities in Visual Culture"

Since the debate on postmodernism reached its peak in the 1980s, most theoreticians agree that the modernist predominance of temporality gave place to a postmodernist predominance of space. In the current discourse, spatial juxtaposition has become more important than temporal order; ‚periodization‘, the very „lifeblood of modernism“ (Gary Shapiro) has been replaced by ‚mapping‘; the modernist emphasis on ‚depth‘ has been replaced by a postmodernist logic of the ‚surface‘. Whereas notions such as ‚crystallization‘, ‚mosaic‘, ‚texture‘, ‚fold‘, ‚expansion‘, ‚site‘, ‚immersion‘ and ‚atmosphere‘ are en vogue, notions such as ‚distance‘, ‚causality‘, ‚linearity‘, and ‚expression‘ are outmoded. Today, one sits in lounges - not at the bar.

This ‚spatial turn‘ can be localized most clearly in the realm of art and architecture – a realm which attracts an ever growing public. Diller + Scofidio’s *Blur*, a water cloud hovering over a lake, was the main attraction of the Swiss National Exhibition expo.02 in 2002. Jürgen Mayer H’s award winning *stadt.haus*, a town hall near Stuttgart, which was completed in 2002, deals with the issue of the diagram turning into spatial reality. Michael Elmgreen & Ingar Dragset performed the white cube of the Kunsthalle Zurich during the opening exhibition in January 2002.

In this book we want to focus on the idea that there is not such thing as an ‚outside‘ but only ‚involvement‘. We are interested in the specific spaces, which are produced by collaborative practices. We are interested what happens when the distinctions between the inside and the outside, the material and the immaterial, the self and the other get blurred and when the discourse on aesthetics starts to merge with political, social, and economic issues. We are interested in the various practices of the production of space in art, architecture, literature more than in any abstract discourse *about* space – an idea which, again, would imply the existence of critical distance. We are interested in the pragmatic aspects of the production of space, in what happens in the studios, offices and meetings. And finally, we are interested in the engaged, collaborative practice of writing, discussing, and lecturing.

Historians of art, architecture, and literature as well as artists and architects were invited to participate in this project which started in a workshop in Zurich and Berlin, in spring 2003. To get things started, we deliberately chose two notions, which are currently en

vogue – ‚performance‘ and ‚space‘. By bringing these notions together, we intend to focus particularly on the issue of meeting, confrontation, collaboration. We understand ‚performing spaces‘ as sites where things actually happen and are visible – be it a performance by artists, a theatre performance, an event in history or an architectural layout which frames social action. Process, change, duration, are issues which we consider important.

The authors are asked to focus on one specific space which which they are particularly involved.

We also ask the authors to focus with their essays on one of the broad thematical sections we suggested at the conference and/ or consider some of the key questions we would like to put forward. Focussing on a few of the leading questions (one of the few we also tried to discuss at our conference), might be helpful linking our diverse contributions and subjects:

1) How and why are boudaries between art and architecture in artistic practises and theory blurred?

Where can historical transformations such as the shift between a modernist and a postmodernist conception of space be located? We are interested in case studies on literature, theory, monuments, performances, artistic and architectural projects from the 20th and 21st century. How can we map historical transformations in the relationship between arts and architecture, visuality and spacialities in this context? When do inbetween-spaces and zones of the liminal occur or disappear? How and why are architectural dimensions prominently reflected in painting, photography, video and installation?

2) How do spatiality and critical discourse intertwine?

What is the relationship between space, visuality and critical discourse? In which ways are spatial categories restated? What are specific historical and political dimensions of power and place? How does the relationship of the visible and of the invisible change? What are fruitful intersections between theories of the visual and theories of space?

3) In which way are sites provoking? When and how do altered spatial practices occur?

What is the specific role of the audience? How does their perception, interaction and bodies contribute to the production of sites? How are spaces performed? Does the this alter the dimension of spatiality? Are there fluid boundaries between spaces and bodies?