

Inside outside

The Artist as Architect – between built and not built

Michael Kröger

“...even if space is in the artwork, the artwork is not present in space.”¹

I.

No matter how individual pieces of art are realized, they all contain created interior spaces and as such provide an occasion for observations of observations. It is equally true that today we can read spaces as images; they generate new, mutual resonances between inside and outside. What happens when a “medium” or representation, for example an artist, acts as if he works like an architect? He builds spaces, which from the outside do not aim or claim to represent architecture but rather function as a special kind of interior space. Put differently: artists always replicate their own individually and idiosyncratically created *interior architectures*. They observe old border lines and set new ones, pay attention to proportions, mark new distinctions while altering the old ones in the process, and in everything that is produced they make use of the array of opportunities the respectively newest method of representation provides. For example, a relatively young contemporary mindset and creative approach to and with multi-dimensional spaces. In other words, artists create interior spaces, which for their part possess a specific,

¹ Georg Simmel, “*Schopenhauers Ästhetik und die moderne Kunstauffassung*” (1906), quoted from: Georg Simmel, *Jenseits der Schönheit. Schriften zur Ästhetik und Kunstphilosophie*, ed. Ingo Meyer, (Frankfurt/Main, 2008), p. 183.

vibrant *inner life*;² they conceive spaces, which extend far and deep into our inner time and our inner spaces, and in so doing alter our notions of inside and outside.

Space does not suffice here for more than a cursory attempt to try and understand the reciprocal relationship between artists and architects. The problem is that in their long history artists and architects have developed into two distinct institutional entities that can primarily be connected with each other through the ruse of interior spaces. An artist does not operate like an architect, but rather as an artist who works with and lives in spaces

Interior spaces – the idea behind this historical term functions in a dual manner, visibly and invisibly: Interior spaces refer to spaces that can be observed they evolve before our inner eye and simultaneously fade away the moment when they are no longer duly observed. Interior spaces can also develop outdoors. They include their audience in two ways: Since it is no longer possible to distinguish precisely between inside and outside you are forced to define your location.

If the author of this text were a philosopher then you might feasibly read the following sentence: *I see therefore I am*. This sentence suggests that a world, and above all another world, only arises through perception by the outer world. The “inner worlds” created in this manner through architecture differ from the “outer worlds” by playing with a new distinction: the difference between *built/not built*.

II.

² See cat. Innenleben, Die Kunst des Interieurs von Vermeer bis Kabakov, edited by Sabine Schulze, (Ostfildern 1998).

“The observer must move around in a space in order to grasp its true nature,” wrote Siegfried Gideon in 1965.³ You can observe built objects either from inside or outside. Today one can also imagine an inner place that simultaneously at least allows you to imagine the inner within the outer – and for a while lets you forget the division between art and architecture.

At the latest since so-called post-modernism, the topographical distinction between *inside/outside* has been replaced by the new historical, performative distinction of *built/not built* and its resultant consequences.

The artist builds in the manner that an architect does not – by performing as an artist. Not only does this sentence sound paradox, it also toys with a paradoxical formulation. And incidentally, once you realize that very many architects have designed buildings that for whatever reason were not built then, this suddenly casts a completely new light on the entire topic of reciprocal relationships. Whether we are dealing with artists, architects or other protagonists who actively build, the history of architecture always also includes all the projects that remain(ed) unbuilt. And the history of the buildings not built⁴ always also speaks of the visions of their possible opposite.

As such, an artist expands an architect’s options by asking about the aesthetic feasibility of something in space – and not simply whether it is feasible from a technical point of view or in terms of the budget. The *artist as architect*, who is not an architect, builds spaces and places that do not have a clear use, but are in all regards *nonsites*,⁵ non-spaces and non-places: performative (exhibition)

³ Siegfried Gideon, *Raum, Zeit, Architektur*, (Ravensburg, 1965), p. 280, quoted from: Dirk Baecker, “Die Dekonstruktion der Schachtel. Innen und Außen in der Architektur,” in: Niklas Luhmann, Frederick D. Bunsen, & Dirk Baecker, *Unbeobachtbare Welt. Über Kunst und Architektur*, (Bielefeld, 1990), p. 81.

⁴ See Robert Harbison, *The built, the unbuilt and the unbuildable, in pursuit of architectural meaning*, (Cambridge/Mass., 1991).

⁵ See on the history of the critical term *non-site*: John Haber, *No end in Site*: <http://www.haberarts.com/nonsite.htm> and the article by Philipp Ursprung in this catalog, p. ____.

events, which at the time of their creation embody and stage the presentation mode and its extension.

The distinction proposed here and built into this text of *building/not building* not only refers to the place, which evolves as object in the (exhibition) space and simultaneously is *not* created qua not being usable, but above all also the place as a temporal object in the historical time of the observer. What is created here in front of our eyes is a paradox built in space, which deals with the paradox of built and unbuilt.

If you have never built, thought, read, then it is not the case that you cannot build, think or read because it is not technically feasible but because you wish to do it differently. By employing a distinction (*built/not built*), you also claim to have expanded means of observation. In other words you operate with your own potential creative options.

The one side is what someone does build. What they do *not*, is something this person only knows once he has literally anticipated it in his innermost thoughts. He builds in and with time – you might say in a future conditional. Sometime in the future a place, a house, an idea will have become the present. Many designers still work with this obsession with time characteristic for the ongoing (post-)modern period, including those who like *artists as architects* work at the interfaces of the production of interior spaces.