

"Wettergebäude" (Weatherbuilding) Stadtwerkstatt

From the frying pan into the fire



**Stadtwerkstatt — "Wettergebäude"
Architecture made of wind and weather — an action concerning "Alt-Urfahr Ost"**

Responsible for the project:

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**The restless transition from one state into another
The project "Wettergebäude"**

**Gap between houses along Friedhofstraße and Schulstraße
Alt-Urfahr Ost
daily from 4- 10 p.m.**

"Wettergebäude" — From the frying pan into the fire — The restless transition from one state into another. The "Wettergebäude" is a building that doesn't shelter from wind and weather, but that consists of wind and weather, air, water, heat, turbulences, and in which you can hear the thunder rolling.

The "Wettergebäude" is an installation, a "weatherworks" powered by machines and devices like snow-producing machines, electric fans, glowing coal-filled metal cages, a heat reservoir made of bricks, waterpipes and heaters. The mist sprays, water fountains, heat waves, air jets, rising vapours, produced in such a way form the architecture made of weather. The weatherplant can be walked on by the public. The spectator should be able to feel the different climates in a very realistic way. Weather is pure energy, weather is power. The locality for this happening is the open square (Piazza) in front of the "Stadtwerkstatt" building, Friedhofstr. 6, in the old part of Urfahr. Every day at night the "Wettergebäude" does its foul work (during the period in which the Ars Electronica takes place). The plant is looked after by the weather station mechanic on duty, whose task is to adjust the weather machinery according to the general weather situation, i.e. to set the snow-producing machines in

accordance with the winds, to watch over the furnace of the glowing cages and to charge the steamplant with water at the proper time.

Even if it does not occur very often that people read such catalogues, we don't want to miss the opportunity to demonstrate to the reader how this "Wettergebäude" is conceived. Thus he might be stimulated (within these 4 days) to fire 10 tons of coke, spray and make vaporize 100 m³ water and make the electric motors and petrol engines run, so they can set in motion air and water.

The energy is released into nothingness, into pure being. A self-acting installation on a place covered with gravel in the old part of the town. Engines are rushing and droning and a spitting, sprinkling and rippling equipment is working. The weather for the sake of weather — the weather for the sake of architecture to create a building that has no concrete form, but is a man-made concoction of changing shape, vigorously driven and controlled by machines. Precision disappears in the free interplay of forces. The unbroken omnipotence of gravitation. The gushes of water are eroding the place with gravel, the water is gathering in huge puddles, the street next to it is covered by a landslip.

A general comment on the weather

Weather is the almost endless but after all limited atmosphere of the modest planet Earth. Weather is an elemental force, weather is amorphous energy. Masses of cold and heat interfere in a mixture of air and water, which is turned into speed and embodied in gravitation. Was it the weather that the gods conjured up? The weather in the mind of a people, the weather in one's own mind. The weather removes from the human judgement. And how foolish is the attempt and how energetic are the efforts of mankind to get the things of nature under control. Thus the "Stadtwerkstatt" tries to organize "self-created" weather. Freedom has nothing to do with the divine, freedom is the bigger vision, vision stands above power. The "Wettergebäude" is the vision, symbolizing an attitude that is open for all possibilities, it is the attempt to direct the vital nerve at the restrictions produced by self-imposed dogmas. Economy won't listen to reason. It doesn't say anything but goes its own way. The artist is no decorator of economy, if economy as omnipotent force uses — because of an utilitarian point of view — the advantage for the sake of advantage; seeking an assimilation of the divine principle, seeking to control the means. The artist doesn't look for omnipotence, he is looking for vision. The unrestrained "Wettergebäude" is a model for the fizzling out of energy, helping to set up a thought for a further perspective to live in this old part of Urfahr. It is an attempt against the omnipotent gentlemen managing the economy, who use the old part of Urfahr for their capital(istic) weather. Although art has only a limited freedom, it must nevertheless engage itself fundamentally in the social reality. Alt-Urfahr Ost is a lost area for the unbridled vital nerve. This model of the weatherhouse oversteps the limitations of an architecture built for economic purposes and undermines the collapsed buildings of ideas, which have become rigid in their material manifestation. An example, a more than symbolic act in view of the announced building up of this area in the old part of the town, a transitory monument against narrow intentions planning to erect a posh quarter there.

Footnote:

Alt-Urfahr Ost has been fallow land in the old part of the town for decades — Speculations with building sites and a competition for architects initiated by the City of Linz, planning a mixture between old and new, define its situation in the future — A hard struggle for the existing social and cultural structure and a fight for the "Stadtwerkstatt" house have started it off.

If architecture is exclusively understood as cover that protects man and his belongings from the influence of weather, then it will become necessary to erect a building that consists of weather. Otherwise architects and artists couldn't do any meaningful job in this field.

Culture is like the weather

This means, culture needn't be made. It won't help to think that somebody removes from culture when he doesn't participate because it might be bad. Neither the weather nor culture is good or bad, not at least as they are permanently changing. Even if no one is aware of it, it happens. The standard is crucial, it determines culture. Basically it's striking how little modern society knows how to manage the means it has at its disposal. Good equipment on its own doesn't help at all, if there is no adequate sound cultural standard behind it. The way culture expresses itself is not primarily by works of art but by the way people live; similarly the weather doesn't consist of sporadic skylines, its main feature is a permanent influence. Contrary to this correct evaluation of this problem there is the established but wrong definition of culture. If society were in a position to make use of its freedom, there would be no dominating culture. Many people go similar ways in vain. In the field of art: it means to make use of freedom and work at the quality. And the term cultural and educational policy: manifestation for the inability to determine culture through politics. The man of today doesn't do what he needs for life. Therefore everything becomes a problem! Now we want to turn to the present situation of Linz, from the general to the specific weather. Linz is not happy with Linz. As the city is situated in Austria, people from Linz do not differ very much from other Austrians -concerning their mentality. They do not like to intrude into the big clockwork, don't bother about changes. Maybe a breeze of the composed nature of the river Danube has entered our blood. And when we are jostled and hustled by the tiresome rhythm of our century, we don't think it is right. What the city wants in this century is generosity. Maybe the reason for this is that Linz was always forced to act and was hardly in a position to choose if it wished to. The biggest humiliation is the fact of "having to live". Not only single fates are ruined by this claim but also the entire idea of progress wanting to create a considerably useful quality of life. Though not long ago Linz had a stroke caused by the century, the city nevertheless has now the opportunity to use its own resources. On the one hand there is a high dose of irresistible embarrassment, on the other hand there is the latent cultural proactive capacity, both giving it a chance to become a big city, at least as big as it is able — considering its own mental background — to be its own boss. One must be careful not to make the mistake of directing the cultural impetus towards a tourist or festival centre. This would be an unsuccessful step and furthermore erode the active native cultural potential. The storms of enthusiasm don't get us anywhere as long as they arise only for entertainment. What should be considered is a forced and permanent reevaluation of contemporary culture together with the splendid routine of everyday life. Avantgarde in Linz means: to be constantly annoyed. Up to now. In order to give room to a new tradition Linz must create a climate in which you can breath; with structures, activities, discussions, openness. This means: permanent places of work in order to try out new ideas and media, extending and furnishing of already available structures, organization of current national and international events concerning Modern Art, increased access for artists to the mass media, use of radio and television by people who do independent cultural work, rejection of perfectionism and specialism, legitimate co-determination of artists concerning social decisions, participation regarding questions of town planning and urban renewal, increased presence of Modern Art in public places, organization of a comprehensive communication structure for an open public discussion, an up-to-date analysis of regional customs, creation of self-governed studios, rehearsal facilities and workshops, where there is room for unbiased and undefined work, necessary to allow constructive changes. The solutions to carry out these measures are simple, less costly and much higher paying than all expenditures necessary solely to keep people in a good mood. Art is of greatest importance for this renewal of social self-confidence. Society must put emphasis on the fact that art needs room in order to make new prospects and ways possible. It's not desirable if artists — in view of the social muddle — come to the conclusion to not waste their energy in public any longer but to work in isolation, as the alchemists did who at least knew what it was all about -namely to bring forth the power of one's own consciousness. It would also be comprehensible, if the active forces decided to leave their

country. The native country would mainly have to suffer by such a procedure and this must be avoided in the interest of a fresh artistic impetus. For several years the "Stadtwerkstatt" has been taking care — with pain but not in vain — to "cultivate" the city. The financial means have been modest, but the artistic and cultural ones have been demanding. The basis and the fruit of this labour show an impact: there is the youth culture, acting off commerce, unique in Austria for its vitality and versatility, having led to a remarkable independence in the field of art. But Linz also disposes of an up-to-date address for international avantgarde and contemporary culture: the "Stadtwerkstatt"! The activities of the "Stadtwerkstatt" have influenced the urban area in several ways. It produced a decisive rethinking concerning the quarter "Alt-Urfahr Ost" -town planning is now defined as preservation and animation of the town centre. "Stadtwerkstatt" projects have added something to voice the artistic outline of Linz in a vital way. And like everywhere the institutions also profitted from this uncensored kind of art, even if they couldn't come to like the essential idea, i.e. liberality and the gift to induce changes.

Considering the present question (autumn 1988) about the "Stadtwerkstatt's" right to exist in its domicile (Friedhofstrasse, "Alt-Urfahr Ost") it becomes evident that representatives of the public have still not recognized how important it is to leave sufficient room for the achievements of Modern Art. Free space is the biggest challenge. And it is provided. The most important task of the "Stadtwerkstatt" is its presence, and therefore a high value must be set on the fact that it remains where it is now and where it can fulfill these tasks. Linz needs a mental concentration in the city. The only still available and prepared ground for this is "Alt-Urfahr Ost" in the town centre. The radical changes that are taking place in this quarter at present must become fundamental changes. The people responsible are called upon to accept the challenge by turning that intra-urban quarter into the cultural heart of Linz that works independently. It will be unavoidable to put this project into reality in co-operation with all parties concerned, if Linz wants to make a name for itself in the foreseeable future. The concepts are submitted, a very promising starting position has been called into being. Nothing would be more painful at the moment than to destroy this chance in the offing by any incapability. The point is that decisions should be made for the next hundred years which could guarantee the existence of a vital and stimulating environment for the future. The quarter "Alt-Urfahr Ost" is the basis for a cultural axis to come, the new backbone for an upright discussion with one's own culture.