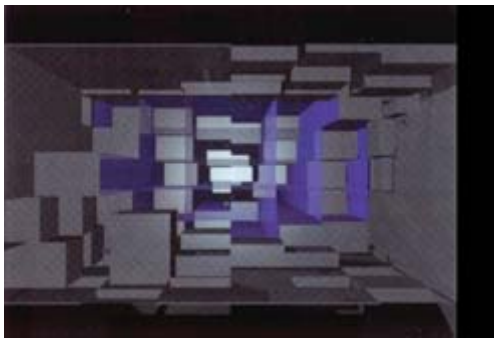


Space Balance Christian Möller



Elbow Room

The world we live in presents itself unmoved, expressionless, in the new building. Architecture usually only becomes alive with "material fatigue", as it is called in technical language. What is it about such material fatigue which causes doors to creak, roof tiles to clatter, paint to peel and foundations to subside, and conveys a more sensuous feeling of well-being than the serviceable "stiffness" of a new building? The weary material is probably appreciated more and more because it reacts to the individual occupants. Interactions with the occupant only become possible in real architecture when apparently lifeless material becomes tense, disintegrates or becomes audible. In the real world, the horizon of perceptible, tangible architecture is crammed by the organic decay on the one stone and dead stone, and on the other side. To expand this horizon together with its metaphors, or to break it open, is one possibility of "virtual architecture".

What could architecture in virtual space look like? Where no rain falls, a house obviously does not need to have a sloping roof. It would be insane to copy the functional shapes of our world and its objects in a virtual space. The architect of virtual space is more likely to devote his fantasy to complex control installations which structure phenomena and their explorability. By composing new control installations and new interdependencies, he creates a perfect artificial space: a place of new experience which, in each and every case, must be illusionistic but not hallucinatory. One interesting criterion for the consistent manner of computer-generated architecture is undoubtedly the direct interaction with the "occupant". This principle is demonstrated and consistently emphasized by the installation "Space-Balance".

"Space-Balance" conveys a swaying space sensation with the movement of the observer. Due to the fact that the relevant location of the observer in the moving interface determines the room inclination, his perceptual situation becomes exclusively artistic. He is part of an

architecture which he can redesign with his every movement: as a largely empty virtual space whose swaying picture is magnified by the reactive reeling of the observer, and vice versa. The work which is no longer representational becomes the observer's own present and consequently also takes up the illusionary spectacle of the Baroque just as it does the technical sensations of the fairs at the turn of the century. Their sensation is forced and decidedly modified: the interactive system "Space-Balance" completely transmits the functions that are usually demonstrated by the medium, to the observer: it forms, reeling, but nevertheless exclusively, the picture sequence and the picture context of a virtual space.

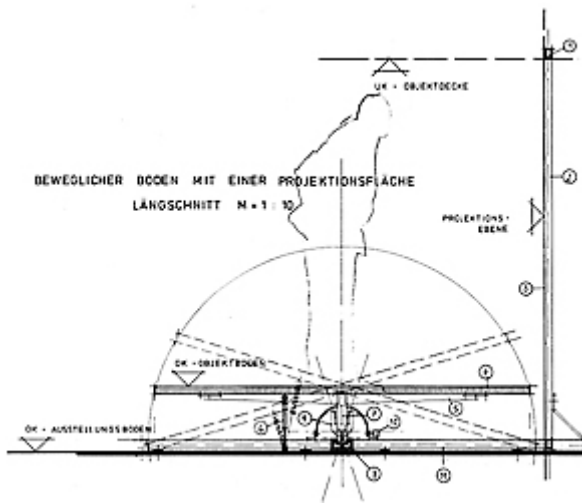
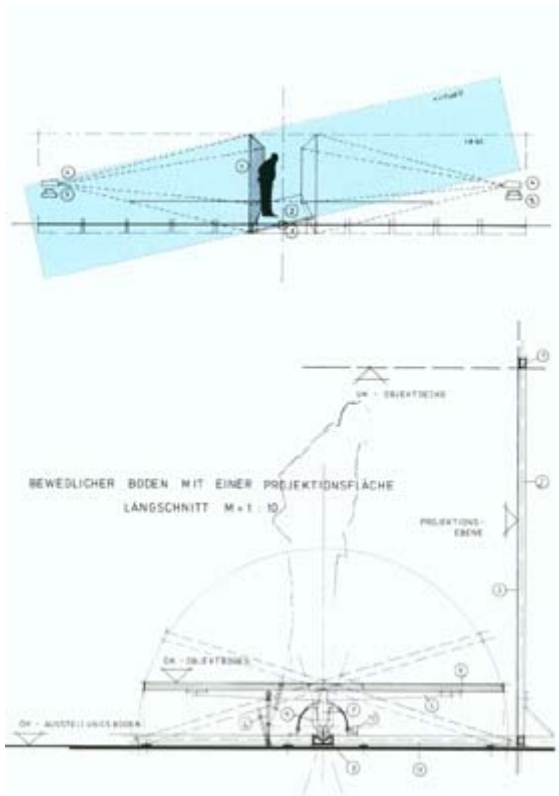
The same principle is also presented by the "Kinotoskop" installation: a two-tier wall installation from a sequence of stationary pictures in an underground shaft that the passenger travelling by at high speed perceives as a film-like performance, while he primarily creates it. In "Kinotoskop" and "Space-Balance", the observer and the works are a doubtful subject and doubtful object, the parts of an interaction which "Space-Balance" demonstrates virtually as being necessary for each other: the observer, inner observer and part of the body, determines the virtual space and conversely becomes a reeling and characteristic subject. In "Space-Balance", at the interface between the stable object body and the instable interior space which is digitally calculated and formed according to its movement, the observer no longer faces a serviceable, silent body of architecture, but moves, more or less, within its body. Apart from himself, it is almost empty. It is not furnished according to human standards with proportional stuff, but only with cube-type shapes which roll depending on the inclination of the space — from one end to the other with deafening noise, in order to force the sensation of wavering.

Due to the fact that this rolling space no longer exhibits architecture as a dead body, but audibly sets itself in motion with the observer, as a type of body, it turns the spatial conception inside out — from the outside to the inside. A real interior space cannot really be actually explored in a definitive sense; it changes as soon as we enter it to become a new exterior again. The inside can only be explored from the outside and is always only imagined from the perspective of the observer. "Space-Balance" plays havoc with the consequently insatiable (and very European) longing for the inside (concealed, scorned, original): to be felt directly, but hardly able to be fixed, is another "world from within" which has been consciously designed empty; which is illusionistic but in no way hallucinatory.

Susanne Craemer

Das Projekt wurde ermöglicht durch die freundliche Unterstützung von MBM Metallbau Möckmühl GmbH (D).

The Principle



The exterior space is formed by a long box-type object body. The interior space appears to the observer virtually in its real size on projection surfaces directly in front of and behind him, by

means of rear wall projections. In the narrow middle area between the projection surfaces, side walls, ceiling and floor correspond in geometry, brightness and material exactly to the virtual projection on both picture levels.

The observer is in a virtual space.

The floor in the walkable centre area of the space installation is moveable. The slope of the floor changes — like on a seesaw — depending on the location of the observer. The virtual space follows this movement. The orthogonality of the room to the floor is therefore constantly maintained. Similar to staying below deck during a boat trip on a rough sea, the human sense of balance is irritated. Unlike on the boat trip, the observer controls his "waves" himself in the space installation. When the illusion is complete, the observer has to struggle with his sense of balance for some time after leaving the installation, despite the fact that he has "solid ground beneath his feet."

C. M.