

Architettura della Separazione **Interactive Sound/Video Installation & Theater Performance "Scanning Bacchae"**

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"Now, as for these actual heterotopias: how can they be described, what sense do they make? One might posit a science — but no, let us eschew this heavily depreciated term, and let us say: a descriptive system whose task, in a certain society, would be the study, the analysis, the description, the "reading" [as one is inclined to say nowadays] of these various spaces, these other places; to a certain extent, a simultaneously mythic and real disputation of the space in which we live. This description could be called heterotopiology."

Michel Foucault

The Installation

Architettura della Separazione is an interactive sound and light installation in the Linz shipyard. Computer- and sensor-controlled audio and video equipment has been installed in this space; performances of the theatrical work Scanning Bacchae, based upon Euripides' play The Bacchae, will also take place in this same venue. In addition, a web site will be set up on the Ars Electronica Server and radio broadcasts are being planned to run parallel to these events. Architettura della Separazione was designed especially for the Ars Electronica Festival.

The project has been specifically designed as a contribution to the theme of this year's festival, since it deals with the creation of ambiances in the physical world and in electronic space, to which the "Human Interface" can also be linked up. All of these environments serve as a laboratory and, following the festival, the web site will remain on-line as an ongoing project.

The following list of key words establishes the realm under investigation within the framework of this project: heterotopy, city, body, scanning, sampling, broadcasting, border. Architettura della Separazione is an environment oriented toward the practice of hearing. The focal point of the project is the city itself, which is analyzed in an interplay of acoustic, spatial, historical, geographic, political and urban architectural studies. The grounds of the VOEST-Alpine Works have been chosen as the symbolic space in which to conduct this exploration. As a city within a city, as a unique example of an autonomous conurbation within a place historically defined as "Linz": the VOEST-Alpine Works constitute an extreme variant. The theory of the project is also directly related to the work of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben who — particularly in Homo sacer — investigated the concepts of sovereignty and deviation. A consummate heterotopia and one which is, moreover, still in operation, and thus unique in Europe; a part of the dream of industrial culture, at present, dynamically interrelated with the digital Linz.

Architettura della Separazione is thus the result of a series of scanning and sampling activities which have been carried out in Linz. It ought to be regarded as a next-generation developmental phase advancing upon earlier large-scale interactive installations such as Locus [1994] and Teatro dell'ascolto [Theater of Hearing, 1995]. In these projects, dramaturgical and narrative performances have taken applied technologies on a journey into the depths of remembrance of lived spaces, into the interplay between remembering and forgetting, and into the consciousness of those empty and uncertain spaces which exist between the actual, the presumptive and the possible.

Here, the city is that complex machine that accommodates as well as modifies the flow of information, a machine which houses a corpus whose subcomponents are put under surveillance and pressure. Here, the cityscape is simultaneously a homeland and a foreign place, a border town which reveals itself incessantly, whereby it most often has at its disposal geographical and political codices which are both provisional and biased. If one regards the city as a symbol of the process of becoming, then residing would be the original form of staying at a place. On the other hand, that would imply that the subdivision of a place is to be interpreted as a minimal transference of a body to another body.

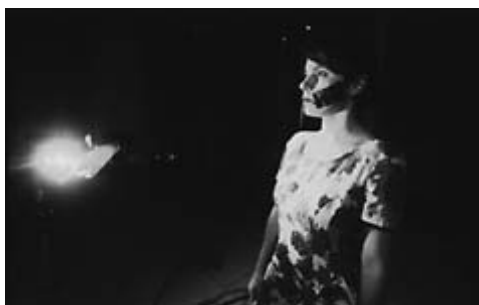
Architettura della Separazione penetrates everything that bodies penetrate, and shares with them their transitoriness and, at the same time, their diversity of perspectives and visions. It demands, produces and glorifies a body which becomes a space, so that the space becomes flesh. The body as an entity is a standard of measurement and a magnitude, a track and a border. These are tracks and borders upon which identity in transition is based.

Therefore, this is a matter of "inhabiting" the geography, the politics, the history and — not least of all — the emotionality of this neighborhood. This takes place both through the staging of a performance which is based, in particular, on the theory and practice of scanning — thus, on the original text, on a space created primarily by means of digital technologies, on sound, and on relationship between places and bodies.

Performance

Scanning Bacchae is being staged in the ambiance of "Linz," and the city itself provides the infrastructure for the dramaturgy. At times, the installation thus becomes the digital set of the performance. Both of these circumstances can be experienced by the audience in completely different ways. Sometimes, the point of temporal and spatial departure is one which the visitor can precisely ascertain; at other times, events proceed from a given space at a given time. From the standpoint of perception, this is a matter of two different modalities from which a third is derived — one which brings about the emergence of a force field from the hybridization of the first two.

The text which serves as the source of inspiration and point of orientation for Scanning Bacchae is Euripides' The Bacchae — a natural focus for the effort to reconcile pleasure and discipline. The original, contemporary text follows the traces of a tragedy which is based upon the pressing need for identity — whether it be individual, national or territorial — and is, in this sense, thoroughly modern. Euripides' Bacchae thus seem to be the origin of a non-moral point of view. This work provides a glimpse of a ritual which is neither purely private nor totally collective, but rather micro-communal — the ritual of a geometry of feelings, of liberation, of ecstasy and hysteria, of forgetting. Force field, battle field, playing field, ritual of the body and glorification of one's own psychic and physical mechanism, the competitive drive as mental conditioning analogous to physical training.



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Agamben, Giorgio *Homo sacer*, Torino 1995

Agamben, Giorgio *Mezzi senza fine*, Torino 1996

Euripides, *The Bacchae and other Plays*, Harmondsworth 1973

Foucault, Michel, *Eterotopia. Luoghi e non luoghi metropolitani*, Milano 1994 [dt.: *Andere Räume*. in: Barck, Karlheinz/Gente, Peter/Paris

Heidi/ Richter Stefan [Hrsg.], *Aisthesis, Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik*, Leipzig 1990]

"Bodies are becoming like cities, their temporal coordinates transformed into spatial ones. In a poetic condensation, history has been replaced by geographies, stories by maps, memories by scenarios. We no longer perceive ourselves as continuity but as location."
D. Gregory

"The heterotopia is capable of merging together at a single location multiple spaces and multiple placements which are inherently incompatible. In this way, the theater makes it possible for a whole series of mutually irreconcilable places to succeed one another onto the rectangle of the stage. Similarly, the cinema is a remarkable rectangular room, in whose background one sees a three-dimensional space projected onto a two-dimensional screen. But perhaps the garden is the oldest of these heterotopias containing highly contradictory positionings."
Michel Foucault