

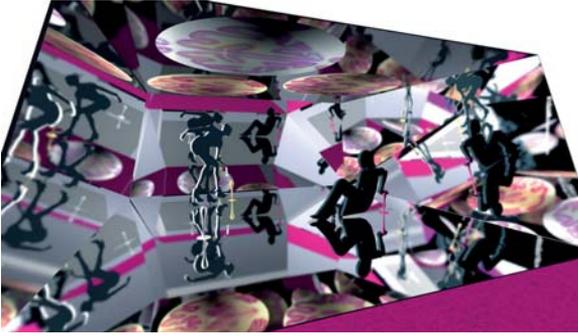
Acting in Utopia

CHILDREN! is the motto of three parallel exhibitions in the Landesgalerie Linz in autumn 2007. The projects here take quite different approaches to children. Whereas the collection presentation "Children's Room" presents works from different categories related to children and childhood, the "War of the Buttons" exhibition is about possible contacts between the world of the child and the world of war. Two films form the context for this exhibition, which has been conceived with the Ursula-Blickle Foundation: on the one hand the 1961 film "War of the Buttons", by Yves Robert, on the other hand the documentary "Lost Children" by Ali Samadi Ahadi and Oliver Stoltz, which deals with the fate of child soldiers in Sierra Leone. Between these two films, the exhibition pursues research on the subjects of childhood, identity and memory under the sign of current problems of international violence, political conflict and the fact that children worldwide are being used as soldiers.

As the subjects of childhood and war have recently been presented internationally through a range of exhibitions with regard to their significance for artistic works, the "War of the Buttons" exhibition proves to be an attempt to further develop appropriate approaches to reception and thereby above all to pay attention to the relationship between biographical and documentary levels in the individual works. Together, the projects presented show a political picture to which the individual works take quite different positions and display varying relationships with regard to content. The view of one's own childhood can be found just as much as the drawing on historical material. The staging of situations with literary and filmic references meets the observation of social phenomena and the documentation of real military conflicts in which children are involved as soldiers.

In "Acting in Utopia", the third exhibition project curated by Dieter Buchhart and Anna Karina Hofbauer, seven international artists, artist duos and art collectives create utopian play spaces in which the visitors, young and old, can participate playfully and seriously with their five senses and intensively analyze them. They become parts of the artistic works and they complete them.

The spectrum of artistic analyses ranges from works heavily conceived around the sense of touch, to works oriented on competitive sport, through utopian action spaces in the broadest sense and through decision spaces and rooms for social activity. Here it is in no way a question of easily identifiable realities, as the actions take place in artistic, utopian action spaces. The exhibition, which is subject to a child's scale and measurements, which thereby changes and critically calls into question the usual exhibition conditions, opens a hedonistic challenge for children, young people and adults and offers an extension of the everyday horizon of experience. The interactions facilitate a playful approach, but can likewise make one pensive. Alongside the involvement of adults, the potential for participation facilitates access for children and young people, who by means of tactile interaction possibilities get to feel the immediate experienceability of art works. "Acting in Utopia" is based on the opening of the concept of art to an open field of action, within which the discourse group of the art public is opened to the youngest people in our society without, however, conceiving a playground. Rather, artists' works that decidedly analyze forms of play and the participation of the visitors are brought together. As many of these works require a correspondingly large space, we have deliberately worked together with only a few artists, as a result of which a whole room is available to each of those involved.



Spiegelzellen/Mirrorcells, participative audio-visual Installation, Eckermann/Szely/Goldfarb 2007 (Simulation)



Bubbles, by Wolfgang Münch and Kiyoshi Furukawa

For this year's Ars Electronica, in its exhibition project "Acting in Utopia" the Landesgalerie Linz is making two specific contributions. On the one hand the project developed by Sylvia Eckermann and Peter Szely through direct cooperation between the two institutions, on the other hand the interactive environment *Bubbles*, by Wolfgang Münch and Kiyoshi Furukawa, which has been made available to the Landesgalerie for "Acting in Utopia" by the ZKM media museum in Karlsruhe.

In her multi-user application, Sylvia Eckermann is always working at the intersection between the virtual and the haptically perceivable space. Depending on the project, she puts together a team of artists and programmers that corresponds to the task. Thus for the space station *Skylab 5*, she created an internal skin of large-format projections and sound-architecture structures that describe not a rigid surface but a breathing, living biomass, a flexible, moveable membrane. In *Mirrorcells* developed specially for "Acting in Utopia", she goes into the phenomenon of the mirror neurons discovered in 1991, which when we observe somebody else's actions trigger the same potentials in the brain as if we were carrying out the same action ourselves. In the process, she creates the game with reflected infinity within an architectural acousmatic space. The aim is to create a sound environment that is set in motion, manipulated and controlled by the visitors. Here it concerns an organic structure that is created in such a way that the communication of the players with one another in the GameMod represents the decisive and most important variable of the sound environment in relation to form, sound and dynamics of the sound structure.

In their collaboration, the German multimedia artist Wolfgang Münch and the Japanese avant-garde composer Kiyoshi Furukawa continually combine interactive technology and computer-generated images and animations with musical applications. In the interactive environment *Bubbles*, the visitors can interact with a real-time simulation of floating bubbles. On entering the projector beam, the user throws a shadow onto the projection area. The projected area is recorded on a video-input system and transmitted back to the computer program: the soap bubbles recognize both the contact by a shadow as well as the direction it is coming from. In the process, the behavior of the soap bubbles, defined as autonomous objects, and their reaction to the user follows physical laws. They form a small, complex system in which both the total state as well as the individual interaction with the shadow create non-linear musical structures that are outputted in real time through a midi interface and a midi synthesizer.

As a whole, all three exhibitions of the Landesgalerie Linz pursue one goal: the projects should function in a special way for and by children.

Translated from German by Dave Westcott