

Garten der Erinnerung – Erzählung im Raum mit digitalen Medien

Garden of Memories – Storytelling with digital media in the museum

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Zusammenfassung:

Als Architekten untersuchen wir, ausgehend von der subjektiven Wahrnehmung von Raum sowie den assoziativen Qualitäten von Raum, das narrative Potential, das Räume beinhalten. Mit unserem Interesse für Film und digitale Medien, für deren spezifisch erzählerischen, räumlichen und zeitlichen Möglichkeiten, erkunden wir, wie diese mit der Architektur kombiniert werden können, um dreidimensionale, begehbare Erzählungen zu schaffen. Das illustrieren wir anhand unseres Projekts „Fürst Pücklers Welt“, Museum Schloß und Park Branitz, bei Cottbus in Brandenburg.

Abstract:

As architects and storytellers, our understanding of the individual's subjective perception of space and its associative qualities is the basis for our exploration into the narrative potential that space embodies. Furthermore, our interest in film and digital media with their narrative and spatial possibilities has lead us to enquire how they can be combined with architecture to create spatial storytelling environments. We shall illustrate this using examples from our completed work, the exhibition "Prince Pückler's World" at the house and garden of Branitz, Cottbus in the German federal state of Brandenburg.

Introduction

Our challenge at Branitz was to create an exhibition with a strong narrative content with only a few artefacts available for display. The storytelling is dependent on the spatial design and media installations. The exhibition is conceived as an introduction to the house and landscape garden of Branitz and the character of Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau.

Situated in the reconstructed cowshed, the exhibition is on two floors. The first area on the ground floor comprises mobile media cabinets with folding and sliding planes inspired by Prince Pückler's travels. They contain media installations, which inform the visitors about his life and work. The multi-channel video installation "The Garden of Memories" occupying the entire cellar is the focal point of the exhibition and brings together the metaphysical world of Prince Pückler and his landscape architecture.

The Media Cabinets

In the first media cabinet the viewer's experience is cinematic. **Bizarre but not Vulgar** is a 5 min. HD video with surround sound. The structure of the film is based on the dramatisation of a duel. The scene of the duel is montaged with images of Prince Pückler's inner life. Through the visualisation of his thoughts, reliving various moments of his life, the viewer has an insight into the prince's adventures, provocations and flirtatiousness. Prince Pückler's recollections are portrayed with drawings, separating them visually in time from the moment of the duel. The film acts as an introduction to the character and places him directly in the role of hero of a narrative structure. The viewer is drawn in to the dramaturgy of the cinematic language, which is complemented by the display of a pair of duelling pistol



Film stills from the Installation Bizar but not Vulgar,
Duncan McCauley 2006

The Souvenir Travel Journal is a projected interactive table surface, with 6-channel audio depicting excerpts from four large-format albums Prince Pückler bought in London during his second visit to England from 1826-1829. They contain views of the places Pückler visited, landscapes and places of interest as well as portraits of contemporaries, caricatures and depictions of society events with the prince's own comments.



The Interactive book, Souvenir Travel Journal,
Duncan McCauley 2006

The interactive book requires a direct interaction from the visitor. The visitor is invited to turn the virtual pages of the historical document. The intuitive interface is through a series of sensors at the bottom of the page. The visitor has to move their hand over more than one sensor in order for the page to turn completely. A sound collage accompanies the turning and the content of the pages. The books would not otherwise be able to be displayed in the exhibition due to their conservational requirements.

In **The Berlin Salon Interactive** Pückler's humour and quick-wittedness can be experienced in the life-sized graphic representation of Rahel Varnhagen's Berlin Salon. The prince's contemporaries such as Goethe and Humboldt are gathered there, and the visitors can experience their intellectual debates and flirtatious jokes.

The conversations are triggered by the position of the visitor in the room. A sensor is positioned behind the illustration of each character. A series of short conversations are pre-programmed. A conversation will start from the character the visitor is standing closest to. The interaction of the visitor with the installation is of a passive nature. Depending on where the visitor is standing in the room different conversations will start from different characters. The life-sized hand drawn set creates a pre-photographic environment and expresses the characteristics of the individuals. The visitor engages in an intimate salon atmosphere between the historic characters.



The Berlin Salon Interactive, Panorama illustration, Duncan McCauley 2006

Using three different types of media presentation – cinematic, active interaction and passive interaction – the media installations introduce the character of Prince Pückler to the visitor. Each experience is spatially choreographed and contained within a media cabinet placed like carriages within the space. The experience in the media cabinet acts as an introduction to the installation The Garden of Memories.

The garden at Branitz was first laid out in 1845, by which time Prince Pückler was already 60 years old. He moved to the small stately home after having to sell the family's castle in Bad Muskau. He had bankrupted his estate through his extravagant lifestyle and exuberant travels in Europe and Africa.

Inspired by the English romantic garden, it is a narration of his memories and beliefs ordained with follies and spatial literary quotes as choreographed positions within a structure of paths, water features and parkland. The garden is built around a geographical dialogue between east and west; the approach to the garden is in the east representing birth and the Pyramid Landscape representing death, where Prince Pückler is buried, is in the west.

The Garden of Memories

The immersive environment *The Garden of Memories* is a 17 min. 5-channel HD video with 22-channel audio. Four synchronised screens immerse the visitor in the garden within the structure of a walk from east to west. During the journey the cycle of seasons rotates. Fragmentary narrative sequences combined with animations present Prince Pückler in his era within the garden.

Film projection allows us to create a spatial experience, which portrays the element of time. The background film material is created using digital photographic sequences taken from fixed surveying points within the park over a period of one and a half years. The changing seasons create different spatial relationships in the park; as the leaves come and go so views extend and shorten. The space created by the installation is a scenic projected stage frequented by the narratives from Prince Pückler's time. Re-enactments of stories and spatial features such as the Moon Folly or the Tree Steps are intertwined with the imagery of the park today. The protagonists are in period costume but the image of the garden is of the present. Pückler meets with his messenger Menson, his female companions Henriette Sontag, Rahel Varnhagen and his wife Lucy at specific places within the garden.

The characters are filmed both in the garden and in front of a green screen, enabling the figures in the film to move seamlessly between the different mediums of the garden and animation. The cinematic language of the installation creates multiple and fragmented planes of vision, reinterpreting the garden with a series of cuts and montaged images. The digital moving images connect the spaces of the garden and the house with that of the exhibition.

In the *Garden of Memories*, multi-screen projection puts the viewer in the centre of the story as the collector of images. The story unfolds across the room. The visitor is surrounded by the real and recreated life of the garden and its creator. The images transport the viewer from a natural landscape of the garden today to the historical world of Prince Pückler's time.



The Garden of Memories, Duncan McCauley 2006,
Photo Jan Bitter

Projected Digital Architecture

The architecture of the room is defined not only by the positions of the screens but also by the content of the images projected onto them. The screens are positioned in the room as plains of vision influenced by the relationships of the vistas and views in Prince Pückler's garden.

The multiple screens floating in space create a physical filmic experience as opposed to a cinematic one. The space is defined by screens of light and motion, depicting moving images of the multifaceted visual geography of the house and the garden. The audiovisual construction of the space is encompassing and takes hold of the viewer, drawing them into the spatial immateriality of the video projection.

The images are projected onto four screens, three at a proportion of 16:9 and one double screen at 30:9. The projections encompass intimate scenes between Pückler and his female companions, contrasted with spatial constellations of the vistas in the garden. Kaleidoscopic interpretations of the colours and forms of the pleasure garden expand the perceived space. At specific moments the screens show a continuous single image, encompassing and tightening the spatial experience. The visitors move around between the screens, traversing a navigable memory of the garden, becoming moving images themselves.

Soundscape

The 22-channel synchronised audio creates a landscape of sound. The sound locates the viewer within the complex visual layering of the four screens, creating choices of which way to focus their attention. A combination of composed music, abstract atmospheric sounds and original sound from the film support the images. The changing atmospheres of the 22-channel soundscape enhance the moods of the images and allow the visitors to feel the space.

Pückler created the space of the garden not as something static but made up of a dynamic set of views that were experienced by moving around the garden. The installation is designed as a dynamic spatial experience where the viewer is encouraged to move around between the screens. The challenge for the viewer lies in capturing the story, by connecting the fragments, essentially filling the gaps between the screens.

Conclusion

The installations we have illustrated show how we have used the combination of digital media and architecture to create a storytelling environment. The projects are each part of a whole. They are instruments of communication, which also allow the visitor to make their own interpretation. The poetic quality of the work is not dissimulated by its didactic nature in the context of the historical exhibition environment. We describe the spatial storytelling environment as narrative space, stimulating the viewer to combine visual, sound and haptic experiences by collecting images in space and reflecting on them.