

AGENCY

PROPERTIES OF PSEUDO-PUBLIC SPACES AS A PRELUDE

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KURZDARSTELLUNG: Sanna Helena Berger's 'Agency' question the rooms in which we view art and their claim as a supposedly public space. Contrasted with true public space Berger reveal characteristics of the gallery as pseudo-public domain. Highlighting the dichotomies between the public room and the gallery Berger constructs an installation as an action and/or event serving as an introduction to something more important. A conversation begins; A heightening of the antagonisms challenging the visitor of a space where the additional elitism supercharged in the content of these rooms continues to focus on the crevasse between the public and the pseudo-public. "Privatising the smaller spaces we limit the communal appreciation of art to that of the readily available situations in which one can find art that poses no threat of damaging our intellectual ego".

Berger manifests these observations by the removal of identity from Sorbus Gallery's (*Abb. 4*) otherwise recognisable window front and replaces it with a closed vertical blind. She frosts the remaining glass, obstructing the previous aperture of transparency and affixes a doorbell. As part of an assemblage of elements of unavailability the doorbell (*Abb. 1*) is a signature of the most private of domains. Signifying the power and right to exercise a standard set by which and with whom we share this space. Continuing to accentuate the contrast between the public and pseudo-public Berger structures a performance as monologue. The language refers in part to the academic language we use both to justify and intellectualise works with entitlement, to a degree where this addition of value seems outside of the realm of critique or interpretation; Unashamedly self-referential of conservative contemporary cultural hierarchy.

1. EINFÜHRUNG

Any artist working in a public space at present has to confront a complex set of problems and tasks. With the additional actuality of the pseudo-public space these sets of problems and tasks also adds other dilemmas. Since the supposedly public space is only posing as a dichotomy within an independent zone, free from the pressures of accountability, institutional bureaucracy and the rigours of specialization, when in fact these are the very norms and standards that they adhere to. The fallacy that art is an inherently erudite discussion can be scrapped without ever moving into the experience of producing it.



Abb. 3: A work of art is not only it's content but also the limitations of its milieu.

Like-wise the need for truth is not a constant; no more than the need for repose. An idea which is a distortion may have a greater intellectual thrust than the truth even though less lucidly realistic.

The market which in this instant becomes the surrounding attitude and counts the value of exclusion as its most profitable becomes the producer and as extension the artist thinks of the fruit of his or her own labour as a consumer would: as objects to be bought and sold. The viewer is converted not into a viewer, valuable as a visitor and as a seeker of the experience but reduced to to the sum of one's pre-existing influence and thus calculated importance.

But let us assume then that a work of art is not only its content but also the limitations of its milieu (*Abb. 3*). Is it possible to retrieve that innocence before all theory when the viewer knew no need to justify themselves? Was there then a work to be experienced not only legible because of the the summary of one's experiences. Whatever it may have been in the past, the idea of content in which you are asked to position yourself is today mainly a hindrance, a rationalised hill, a subtle or not so subtle philistinism hidden behind the pretense of connoisseurs.

The emphasis is on the social value of this interaction (*Abb. 2*), not the physical or formal integrity of a given work or the artist's experience in producing it. Rather the thought had crossed my mind that I might remove crucial elements at any time, or even annihilate any art, recognisable as such, altogether.

I want to suggest that this is because the idea of art is now perpetuated in the guise of certain environments (*Abb. 7*). and systems (*Abb. 6*) and we must consider the obstacles we must overcome before encountering firstly these spaces and secondly these works. It is through this theory that the appreciation of art as such, above and beyond specific works of art, becomes problematic – in need of defense.

2. THE CURATED SYNTAX

Let's remember that it is not the action of the skilled alone that is to be seen in the center but let's look at every degree of proficiency in all that is going on. This point is crucial to understanding how vision can work as a stimulus, engendering action in the company gathering here.



Abb. 1: „Klingeltaster mit Beleuchtung“ - A signature of the most private of domains

This is merely an overture, an introduction to something more substantial. The superior attitude is restricted to its method of display. Narrative should hasten, neither clumsily nor lazily, to criticism restricted to the person, group or area concerned.



Abb. 2: The performance in waiting

2.1 A SERVICE AS DIALOGUE

A service should be relatively autonomous but the curated syntax which is my arrangement is the world which the piece connects to. Your somatic presence as participants help fortify the authorship of my work as artistic gesture. There is a process of normalisation that advances the dialogue (*Abb. 4*). and then a conversation begins (*Abb. 5*). Grand monumentalism is just one more aspect of the spectacle as reification of every-day life. We have to take back this material and put it to use.



Abb. 4: The process of normalisation that advances the dialogue.

Let's stop this kind of plundering the archives for contemporary purposes and at least for a brief moment promote the full scale recuperation of these once revolutionary endeavors. The sovereignty of this contemporary purge stops all possibility to let dissidents and anti-institutional cultures whose concepts, symbols, metaphors and ideologies remain autonomous as anti-economic and anti-capitalist systems. Prevail without being re-appropriated by the culture of individualist entrepreneurialism.

3. A STATUS QUO OF CONVENTIONAL SELF-CENSORING

Today's distance is present in a strange absence of struggle for social co-presence of spectators before the artwork, actual or symbolic, as a basis of any work. Situations that are constructed for private use is labelled public even when these situations deliberately exclude others. Trying to shake off the constraints of the ideology of mass communications, this general mechanisation of social functions gradually reduces our relational space. Spaces claiming to be open to all (*Abb. 8*) are purposefully counter-active, restricting opportunities for inter-human relations.



Abb. 5: A conversation begins.

I suggest then a site-repair; A narrowing down of character-flaws of this space. The hierarchy of the closed space posing as open must be evaluated. Not only in this present but in view of human consciousness. In a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect it is the assumption that a gesture of anarchistic reclamation of free circulation is a bitter aftertaste of symbolic non-conformism which inevitably will leave you behind; less likely to achieve 'success' and more likely to grow desperate and self-humiliating.

Paradoxically this has tended to promote a status quo of conventional self-censoring pre-agreed pragmatism, endless re-evaluation, curation, and homogeneous neutrality as conservative cultural hierarchy. The equation between the resulting consequential aesthetics and the market propels us into a regression where we encounter nothing but the deeply entrenched authority of the white male elite. Anyone claiming that these arguments have grown tired and orthodox is anyone who brews in the stagnate lukewarm bathwater where the idea that by social exclusion and unavailability we reach higher by reaching fewer.

The same bathers who force us to account for the value of art with marketing statistics and audience figures become essential to securing justification and funding for the arts. Then any experimentation and right to work without goals or result loose the capability of becoming a gesture or thought in the process. The bather's statement is then that any socially inclusive art as a reception is only a camouflage fostering aspirations to eventually become socially exclusive art and in its transformation add both intellectual and monetary value both to the work



Abb. 6: The Gallery (Pre-installation of Agency)



Abb. 7: The guise of certain environments



Abb. 8: „Spaces claiming to be open to all”



Abb. 9: Acts of spontaneous communication



Abb. 10: Shared private experiences



Abb. 11: Acts of spontaneous communication

the artist and the gallery by extension. Lost is the discarding and disregarding of institutional spaces and the ambition to maintain a practice that could collapse both socially and politically constructed boundaries in acts of a spontaneous communication (*Abb. 9/11*) which could both promote and further a movement into truly public spaces instead of being herded along the long corridors of bureaucracy and monotony into the most private domains where rooms within rooms open up for the inestimable possibility of shared private experiences (*abb. 10*).

4. SCHLUSS

Rather than considering the work of art to be autonomous, I draw your attention to the autonomy of our experience in relation to art.

5. DANKSAGUNG

Benjamin Flesser