

works of art that do not establish the slightest dialogue either with their immediate setting or the city or its inhabitants. The most immediate solution would be to simply stop installing things in our cities and try to clean them up to leave the space open for architecture, the landscape and people. The next, much more difficult step would be to remove all the sculptures and monuments that really do not establish a space of their own in the urban structure. Eliminate and remove objects and clean up cities to create a space for reflection. Starting from scratch to resituate ourselves within our surroundings and construct the urban landscape of the future.

PUBLIC SPACES

Itala Schmelz

Over the previous panel discussions, we have been able to see that it is impossible to grasp or define the notion of public space from a single point of view, as it is a site of convergence for all sorts of interests. It is a heterogeneous, syncretic space in constant progress, erratic and chaotic, probably impossible to quantify. The city is supposed to be the paradigm of rationality, but it is doubtful nowadays that we could speak of vertical planning. Rather, what we behold is a constantly dissolving context that we can only approach based on fragmentary experiences. However, what we can emphatically state is that we are truly fascinated by both the city and the mass media of our time and that we are perplexed by the rich, complex panorama of the social network that traps and distributes us.

Society nowadays is besieged by the public. Ideology as well as pornography infiltrate homes through the media, while the subliminal voracity of consumerism has overtaken the streets. "Public" cannot be defined as the opposite of "private." We live in a gregarious society, riddled with collective imaginaries. Public space is the place where intersubjectivity settles, where individuals' idiosyncrasies coexist and it is the

point of convergence of common sense. We experience public space pragmatically, but also from the point of view of emotions and memory; it is the place of exchange, dialogue, survival but also the space of economic control, of the coercion of identity, and at the same time, it is the space of thievery and resistance.

We cannot conceive of human beings without the act of communication. In order to understand today's public space it is fundamental to look at the physical and virtual channels that our civilization has built, giving us access to exorbitant quantities of information at ever increasing speed. Public art nowadays is concerned with communicating by using the languages and technological and audiovisual media that constitute the virtual and physical geography in which we live. Moreover, contemporary art—understood as a series of disciplines and interdisciplines that, in essence, is more of a concept than a craft—seeks to involve itself with the city on the level of a privileged order of reading. Artists today cannot remain passive or indifferent to the excess of meaning, to the suggestive symbolic vortex of the places that they travel to and experience.

Transgressing the museum's boundaries, art for the past several generations has struggled against the position to which it has been relegated by utilitarian rationality. I would like to contextualize this round table by emphasizing that the growing interest for public art has to do with our search for a more active role in society based on our own practices, with our desire for dialoguing on equal footing with the present in which we live, and also with our need for considered, critical actions in the complex setting of our times. We are being called to interact in public space. In this panel discussion, we shall directly deal with contemporary-art actions and practices that are currently understood as public art: readings of the context, walks, interventions, what we have come to call deconstructive practices,

minimal or maximum gestures or expenditures, subtle and, in many cases, fleeting dislocations.

SITTING ABROAD - SENTADO EN EL EXTRANJERO **Erik Gongrich**

First part: What's really necessary to add to reality? Is there any need as an artist to add something to all the found situations, objects, sculptures, etc. in public space? How much are found situations already art or architecture? How do I create as an artist a relationship between the public space in a city and myself? In this first part I would like to present some of the found situations, objects, sculptures, etc. and some of my works focusing on the artistic interventions in the urban context. That means how I changed specific situations in public institutions and how I developed guided tours through different cities. These presentations are: „Ready- Mix" was an exhibition 1997 in a pavilion and the public space in the center of east-Berlin.

I placed different foam objects and billboards in public space and made a specific guided tour through the backyards of the center of east-Berlin along these signs. The whole formerly east part of Berlin changed a lot at that time which means it got „westernised". „Interface Rue du Chevaleret" 1998 in Paris was an intervention in two different institutions. It also included a guided tour through these institutions and the district where they are located. The whole district got massively gentrified in the last years. „Quadras y manzanas" was an installation in Fundacion Proa/ Buenos Aires which questioned the image of the city of Buenos Aires and used the interview-questions of „Sitting Abroad - Sentado en el Extranjero" written on a wall to answer directly on it. The show was accompanied by a bicycle-tour which was another way of using a tour to discuss the informal part of a city.

Second Part: Sitting Abroad - Sentado en el Extranjero, 2000 Is a research of several months in Mexico-city, Bogota and Buenos Aires which has been published as a book and presented in different installations. In interviews and photographs the complexity, the function and the use of public space is examined. The interviews focus on personal views on how people live with public space and how they imagine to change it.

Are there ideas or plans that are more than reality for you? Do you have hidden places in your city with a personal meaning/history? Has your favorite architect build in your favorite city? Which Science-Fiction-Films do you like most? Which street in your city is masculine which one feminine for you?, Which houses did influence you, especially in your youth?, Do you prefer city-maps or do you ask a taxi driver?, Did you ever had the feeling of being in the city of tomorrow?, Do you think an art work could be effective as city planning?, Which place, city and space a-e you dreaming of?, Does graffiti in public space bother you?, ..." are some of the questions which I used in the interviews. They have been as well basic questions etc. start my work in Istanbul. Some of the answers of these interviews are going to be projected as text-slides together with image-slides. Excerpts of some interviews:

Can you describe the daily route you take everyday in the city?

I leave home - walk towards the office: chancellery, street 10 with road 6 (historic center)- and I walk all along road 7 up to the junction with 26. Then I walk from that corner up to the 72th (second center). From the 72th on, I have no clue what will happen to my life. Two sites (both centers). Moving from the historic to the contemporary, which is necessary, which I do everyday.

Do you like city maps or do you prefer to ask along the way?

I don't trust maps. I prefer the human filter