

Breg  
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*How  
to Do  
Things  
with Space*

# **How to Do Things with Space**

*Shifting roles in production  
and presentation of  
installation art*

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## PREFACE

**If we are to establish a genuinely new self-understanding of the artist at institutions devoted to education in art and culture, this will require both new curricula and teaching methods. [...] Sources of new topographies for artistic practice, and thus also for research in the field of art, are to be found precisely in this contact and interaction among different fields of culture and society and in the free exploration of their interplay.’#1**

note E#1

This thesis serves as a final assignment within the postgraduate program in Curating (CAS) at ZHdK in Zürich, department of Art and Education. During the last nine months the program functioned as a mirror on my ongoing practice as an architect/artist/curator/manager centred around the theme of collective learning and transformation of knowledge. The opposition between the ones who know and the ones who don't know is an important issue I'm addressing in my practice and in my position in the CAS program. Too often we see spectators separated from artists, artists from institutions and teachers from students. Questioning and breaking this opposition by acknowledging the equality between intelligent beings is an important issue I want to address in my development as an architect/curator.

In the past few years I experimented with this collective learning process in an attempt to build bridges by an extensive dialogue through spatial design. Primarily these social experiments have pushed me to reflect on the shifting role of *the maker* in a process of production and presentation. Secondary it is space itself that shifts its role as a social mediator and producer of meaning. The quote by Uta Meta Bauer as mentioned above embodies this shift, connecting the need for self-understanding - from the position of the architect/artist/curator/student/spectator - to new topographies of artistic practice that can enrich and support a collective process of learning.

*How to do things with space* focuses on how space - and the people engaged in producing, presenting and experiencing it - can expand its role as mediator between people. As a genre installation art positions itself between architecture, visual art, exhibition design, scenography, theatre. It asks for an open approach and multiple perspectives both inside and outside the white cube or the black box. I'm thankful for the opportunity to do this research within the CAS program and especially for the constructive dialogues with my CAS colleagues. In the coming years I want to further develop my role as an architect/curator with a clear focus on how we can learn together and transfer knowledge by using space. In this sense the thesis you are about to read is not a final conclusion but just a modest starting point for further research on *how to do things with space*.

**#1 INTRODUCTION**

## Intersubjectivity as a critical practice

**‘They [curators] seem to seek not the masterful production of expertise and the authoritative pronouncement of truth rather the coproduction of question, ambiguity and enquiry, often determined by the simple contingencies of where people happen to begin a conversation.’#2**

note E#2

image D#1

Let’s start with the image on page 30. The two *performers* on stage are Christo and his wife and partner Jeanne-Claude, who unfortunately passed away in 2009. The image shows them presenting their *Over the River project* in Colorado, USA to a group of local politicians, neighbours and partners in 1997. Christo showed the picture during a lecture at the symposium *INTEGRATED 2013* in Antwerp. It was lively imaginable that the energy and enthusiasm on stage during the lecture was equally present at the local meetings to engage and involve the communities. Although the long and rich process is currently on hold as a protest to the current presidency, Christo’s determination, vigour and openness will surely surpass the coming four years. His artistic goals are clear and the common ground to realise the project with and within the local society is broadly supported and truly inspirational, no matter whether you consider yourself an artist, architect or curator.

note E#3

note E#4

As an architect (Graduated LUCA Ghent, Belgium, 2008) I’ve been working on performative installations, varying between exhibition and set design to autonomous pieces from 2011 until present. These works were presented in a variety of different contexts, from theatre halls, white cubes, public buildings and -spaces. In 2012 I’ve founded TAAT (Theatre as Architecture Architecture as Theatre) together with theatre maker Gert-Jan Stam, questioning the interwoven relationship between architecture and theatre/performance. Since 2013 I’ve explored setting up open-ended processes with often multi-authored expressions. In these settings I have been going back and forth between initiating ideas, setting frameworks for co-creation, pushing institutional boundaries, educating and mediating, which shifted my position from a *promethean architect*<sup>#3</sup> to what Ratti would call a *choral architect* or *architect/curator*<sup>#4</sup>. Making transdisciplinary installation work within very different settings made me critically aware of the differences within the institutional contexts and their respective conventions. This made me also aware of the shifting role of (installation) art and architecture and its impact on education and society at large. Ratti’s choral architect - or architect/curator - is a key figure in his idea’s on open source architecture, where his role is less based on the architect as a genius, but more on the architect as connector and mediator. The above mentioned definition for ‘curator’ by Wilson and O’Neil resembles how the contemporary role of the architect and curator is shifting.

case C#3

case C#10

The notion *coproduction of question* as proposed by Wilson & O’Neil implicitly means the creation of a common ground to work from, which is a crucial and important starting point for any project or research. On a microlevel this notion breaks the idea of a division between the one who knows something and the one who doesn’t, the one who makes something and the one who experiences it. In the most minimal sense this notion creates an open dialogue based on the acknowledgment of the intersubjectivity and equality of two people starting a conversation or a creative process. My personal interest in this notion of intersubjectivity during the production and presentation processes grew especially while working on the projects HALL33 (ongoing) and KHOR II

image	D#11	(2014–current). In this thesis our goal is to reflect on these projects in relation to other transdisciplinary practices, that emphasise the physicality of built space itself, where the role of designer/artist/user/visitor/audience member is shifting it's conventional position. This physicality and an emphasis on a reality producing character will be the red line throughout this thesis.
image	D#12	
note	E#5	Before getting into the physical matter, we will start with a brief reflection on the critical position of writing this thesis. As Lefebvre highlights the hypercomplexity of social space <i>'embracing [...] individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements, and flows and waves – some interpenetrating, others in conflict'</i> <sup>#5</sup> , he is allowing the discourse on space in general to position itself in a broader artistic and scientific discourse. This position translates an intersubjective approach on the practical level of producing a piece of installation art, but at the same time on the level of critical writing. Let us shortly elaborate on this critical position in regards to a more conventional visual arts discourse. As the title suggests we will take Dorothea von Hantelmann's <i>How to do Things with Art</i> <sup>#6</sup> as a guideline for this thesis, with a specific interest in the broadly discussed notion of <i>performativity</i> in chapter #6, <i>Performative Space</i> . Following Lefebvre's quote to broaden the critical discourse on installation art, it is important to open things up instead of narrowing it down. Therefor we have to allow ourselves a critical perspective on the position that von Hantelmann takes towards (installation) art and it's societal impact.
note	E#6	
note	E#7	In <i>How to do Things with Art</i> the conventions of the art institution in and their influence in the production and presentation process are not fundamentally challenged. She argues: <i>'Yet it is only from within these conditions that we can start a discussion on art's significance, and the consequences of this assertion is what this book will explore: the artwork does not gain a societal impact by rupturing these conventions; it is via these conventions that there is already a societal impact'</i> . <sup>#7</sup> Staging some exemplary works of Buren and Seghal, that deliberately challenge the museum walls and conventions, von Hantelmann safeguards the conventions as such, as the only way to generate a legitimate production of art's meaning and significance.
note	E#8	If we want to really take a critical stance here, and research on the societal impact of installation art, don't we have to shift our own critical position outside the inclusive art world into the real world? If we think of intersubjectivity as a way of organizing a practice, can it then also be a way to position ourselves critically in writing? Lefebvre writes <i>'Criticism of literature, art or drama is concerned with people and institutions: with painters, dealers, galleries, shows, museums, or else with publishers, authors and the culture market. Architectural and urbanistic space seems, by contrast, out of range.'</i> <sup>#8</sup> Lefebvre points out a blind spot on the <i>critique of space</i> , saying that <i>'to suggest out of the blue that there is a need for a 'critique of space' is liable to seem paradoxical or even intellectually outrageous. [...] one normally criticizes a person or a thing – and space is neither. In philosophical terms, space is neither subject nor object. How can it be effectively grasped? [...] There would certainly seem to be a need for such criticism: its 'object' is at least as important and interesting as the aesthetic objects of everyday consumption. We are talking, after all, of the setting in which we live.'</i> <sup>#9</sup> Lefebvre makes us aware of the paradox of being critical towards something where we are part of – meaning we can never escape from it – and at the same time bridges the opposition that lies within. At the end of <i>How to do Things with Art</i> a final spark to break down this opposition between art and the holy museum conventions is highlighted. Von Hantelmann uses the efficacy of art's performativity is a key component: <i>'A space beyond critique need not necessarily mean a step behind it, but can also overtake critique in the direction of construction. Today an art that is ambitious with regards to it's societal impact mostly operates under the paradigm of critique. An art that is conscious of the efficacy of it's own performativity could possibly replace it with a more constructive and effective attitude.'</i> <sup>#10</sup>
note	E#9	
note	E#10	It is not the ambition of this thesis to deliver a critical reflection from an authoritative pronouncement of truth. The goal is merely to use this research to open up new questions and discussions between artists, producers, students, experts and members of the public on installation art's societal impact. This position is intrinsically connected to the presentation and production processes of the works that will be discussed, therefor adressing their urgency.

## #2 FRAMING THE RESEARCH

### Social, metapolitical & performative

The main topic of this thesis focusses on *reality producing installation works*. A specific interested will go to installation pieces that blur boundaries between object and subject, artist and spectator, institution and public space. We're looking for both a theoretical and pragmatic understanding of installation art's societal impact. This incorporates the understanding of the shifting roles between the ones in charge of the production of the work and the ones in charge of the experience of the work. This understanding will be built up within a set of questions and respective chapters. These questions will also be used to *dissect* the cases studies that are presented as examples throughout the whole text and especially in part C from page 20:

**#3 - Beyond the experiential** - Installation art and it's the urgency

**#4 - Social Space** - How is authorship pronounced in the work?

**#5 - Metapolitical Space** - How is the work situating it's visitors?

**#6 - Performative space** - How do visitors engage or commit to the work?

The theoretical framework for this thesis consists out of a relatively young selection of works dealing with the role of the maker, the role of the audience and the role of the artwork as such. I deliberately chose works that incorporate a contemporary approach on the post-digital societies of today, where I believe the urgency of installation art is situated. In chapter #3 the question of urgency will be raised in relation to the platonian concept of *chora* as a *becoming space*. Dorothea von Hantelmann's essay *Experiential Turn*<sup>#11</sup> will serve as a guide in the search trying to go beyond *the experiential* connecting it to a brief historical overview of installation art and the sociological prospect proposed by Schulze.<sup>#12</sup>

note E#11

note E#12

note E#13

note E#14

In chapter #4 Henri Lefebvre's notion of *Social Space*<sup>#13</sup> will be discussed in relation to Carlo Ratti's manifesto *Open Source Architecture* and the pronouncement of his idea on the role of the architect/curator.<sup>#14</sup> The emphasis in this chapter is aimed towards a better understanding of the intersubjective process of making, and the division between object and subject within this process. The shifting roles between architect, artist, curator and audience will be discussed on the physical and mental level of building a *common space*.

note E#15

Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* is relevant in the totality of this thesis, as the role of art in general within education, participation and politics is articulated very clearly.<sup>#15</sup> In chapter #5 We will focus on what Ranciere calls, *metapolitical strategies* from a spatial perspective. I will also refer to his previous work *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* to emphasise the power of space as a *material thing* from which we can collectively learn.

note E#16

In *How to Do Things with Art*<sup>#16</sup> Dorothea von Hantelmann investigates a *pragmatic understanding of art's societal impact today*. The title of this thesis is of course a reference to this book, which respectively refers to J.L. Austin's *How to do things with words*.<sup>#16</sup> It is there, going back to Austin's lecture at Harvard University in 1955, that the concept of *performativity* saw daylight. In *How to do Things with Art* von Hantelmann discusses the notion of the performative both generally and in detail, without putting forward - what I believe to be - the crucial activating relevance of installation art's societal impact. In chapter #6 our objective is to reformulate performativity - and it's effectiveness through space - defining a different notion of *Performative Space*, where the role of the viewer shifts into that of a committed actor.

The added cases studies emerged both from personal experience and previous studied references. There's been decided to focus on works that have been created between 2004 and now - referring to the second phase of the experience society, according to Schulze - and specifically on works that highlight analogue tools and working methods. This selection is based on a subjective preconception about a rather distancing effect of digital media in relation to the physical here-and-now experiences that embody the *becoming space* we are looking for. Critique on and additions to the selection of works are very welcome.



**#3 BEYOND THE EXPERIENTIAL**

## Installation art and it's urgency

**'When these spectacles work, they serve to bring us together to experience something as a community. We are no longer cocooned observers of isolated works of art, nor are we mindless users of dull buildings. The art takes us out of ourselves, brings us together, reenacts and reinvigorates our public lives, and, what is not unimportant, lets us have fun together. In an urban theatre where Big Brother is always watching and we fear each other, any art that accomplishes that [...] is worth every penny. It shows that there is still some life in architecture, even if we have to turn to artists to find the essence of social constructions.'**<sup>#17</sup>

note E#17

case C#5  
image D#9  
image D#15

This quote is written by Aaron Betsky, dean of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture and director of the 11th Venice International Biennale of Architecture. It's a comment on Heatherwick's *The Vessel*, an iconic piece of installation art in public space. Undoubtedly the societal impact of the structure - planned for the Hudson Yards development in New York City - will be discussed more then once in the near future, as it might translate in the first place it's neoliberal narrative as a landmark, before being exemplary for it's societal impact. Although Aaron Betsky doubts the relevance of it's wow-factor, he complements installation artists in general for their competence to bring life back into architecture. It is indeed a problem that architecture, as the so called mother of all arts, got disconnected in a lot of cases from some of her descendants - including a lot of it's *audience* - in an urge to answer the market in the Post-Debordian society of spectacle. The following example tries to define an experience that as Betsky says 'takes us out of ourselves' and goes beyond the spectacle, to investigate how we architecture could actually learn from installation art.

case C#6  
image D#14

In *The matter of time* by Richard Serra, at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, the visitor comes across 4m high selfsupported steel shells. Their rusty and ruff appaerence, encloses an enigmatic inside space, that can only be discovered by entering narrow 'gorges' that appear in between two standing steel walls. An individual desire to enter the installation, brings every visitor in a trajectory through space in relation to other individuals, going with or against flows of moving bodies. A spontaneous choreography is operative. A desire for the unknown - and the active commitment in looking for it - moves the visitors. It tries to bring them in a mode of physical and emotional engagement. It is here that time can be suspended and meaning can be created. If these experiences work they can connect us to how we operate as existential beings in search for what we fundamentally desire. Alberto Pérez-Gómez describes the idea of architecture translating or shaping our human existence as *space of desire*.<sup>#18</sup>

note E#18

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- note E#19 He researches the evolution of rituals into art by describing the concept of the *daidala*, which 'are constructions made of well-adjusted pieces, capable of inducing wonder and providing existential safety for a community'<sup>#19</sup>. These *daidala*, and the idea that architecture translates meaning that goes beyond the functional, is closely related to the Platonic concept of *chora* - of which the term *choral architect* is deducted - signifying a *becoming space*: 'A space which is eternal and destructible, which provides a position for everything that comes to be. [...] *Chora* is the place (which is not a place) where the idea is transformed into the material, or the intelligible into the sensible'<sup>#20</sup>. If *chora* is a place but at the same time *not a place*, how can we understand the role of a physically built and sensory experienced space as a *becoming space*? Who or what is transforming into who and what? To answer this question it is important to look at space in relation to time. Lefebvre argues that 'With the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space. [...] Lived time loses its form and its social interest - with the exception, that is, time spent working.'<sup>#21</sup> If we want to understand the *becoming space*, it is necessary to restore the relation - or supremacy - of time over space. As the subtitle of this thesis implies we are looking to reconnect production and presentation, reflecting a 'holistic' process driven approach, whereby the production of meaning happens in the interplay of the different phases in the life of an installation or building.
- note E#20
- note E#21

Let us try to formulate the different levels where being and becoming in relation to lived space are active. Generally there is a distinction between the production process (conception, design and execution) and the presentation process (opening for audience). During the production process the 'becoming space' is the physical space itself, going from a blueprint to a physical thing. The social process of production as in *putting one brick on another* goes hand in hand with a mental process of sharing knowledge with others. Being and becoming can be experienced here in the physical and social process of developing something from scratch towards a finished space. On the other hand, when a building is finished - so space takes over from time in a modern sense - the space starts *speaking* to its users, translating its meaning in both a visual sense and through an embodied experience. Both in production and presentation we can notice a transformation process between doing (building the space or experiencing it) and reflecting on this experience. So the active potential lies not exclusively in the physical appearance of the structure but originates from the starting point of its conceptual development. It is active in every moment where something or someone is transforming from one state of being into another. It is in the rich and complex process between the ones who make something - with certain intentions - and the ones who experience it - within certain conventions - where the active potential of an installation work can be exploited and where meaning is created.

- note E#22 From the late fifties the role division between subject and object in the production and presentation of installation art has been actively discussed and deconstructed. In *The Experiential Turn*, von Hantelmann talks about the evolution of Minimal art - the mother of all installation art - and its effect on the relation between subject and object: 'Certain positions within Minimal Art during the 1960s fundamentally changed the relationship between the object and its viewer, between art and its venue, by completely shifting the meaning of the object to the experience had with and through it.'<sup>#22</sup> This shift towards the experiential became the core of the artwork. Yves Klein's *Le vide* at Iris Clert Gallery (Paris, France, 1958) framed elements of the gallery space itself (entrance, corner), by adding curtains and a glass display box in a corner, while Graciela Carnevale locked the visitors up in the gallery in her *Acción del Encierro* (Rosario, Argentina, 1958), forcing them to break the window to free themselves. From the sixties on, artists like Alan Kaprow and Richard Serra have explored new ways of producing works of art, environments and happenings, in search of a fluidity between art and life. Robert Morris wrote in his *Notes on Sculptures* that the object doesn't become less important but 'has merely become less self-important'.<sup>#23</sup>
- image D#2
- note E#23

This development ties in with the theories of German sociologist Gerhard Schulze on the *Experiential society*, where the turn toward experiential art is presented as a parallel development to a societal shift, in which - in a situation of affluence of products - the subject is challenged to choose what he likes instead of *just getting what is there*. This means that the importance

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of experience in consumer culture – and eventually also in the art world – is increasing. Schulze describes two phases of the *experiential society*:

*'In early experience society, instrumental thinking conquered the new pattern. Rationality of experience was born: a collection of common strategies to maximize and perfect experiences. A rapidly expanded market of experience trained and stabilized this rationality of experience. [...] In late experience society, however, these techniques have largely lost their potency, like addictive drugs. People are still dedicated to the pursuit of happiness. They still define the sense of life in psychophysical terms. The good life is still conceived as one of intense, fascinating experiences. But there are increasing tones of criticism, boredom, disgust, and hostility.'*<sup>#24</sup>

note E#24

If installation art has to measure itself to society saturated with experiential situations, how can we prevent it from losing its subject? How can a museum – or other venue – that presents installation art avoid the risk of becoming a merely hedonistic place, instead of a conscious chora? Von Hantelmann is hopeful and summarizes it like this:

*'An important premise of the experiential turn, which does not imply a turn away from meaning, discourse, and content but rather points to a connection of meaning production to experience—to the viewer's situated and embodied experience. It leads to a concept of situated knowledge, an understanding of meaning as something that is always and inseparably linked to a situated and embodied subject. Correspondingly, the turn toward the subject and his or her experiences does not imply a narcissistic turn to the self. The work with and on the self presupposes an engagement with outer projects or content in the same way that such an engagement with projects or content also implies or leads to work on oneself.'*<sup>#25</sup>

note E#25

Also Schulze points to a kind of dead end of the subject's turning to the self in the attempt to invert the self-centred perspective and open it to a new direction. The shift toward inner goals that he defines as the main characteristic of contemporary Western societies is now recognized as a path that does not turn away from the outside but, conversely, presupposes an engagement with it.

Going back to the concept of chora as a *becoming space*, it is important to investigate the physical translation of this and the affect it can have on its users, as the main research question that we are trying to answer here. The following three chapters are a concise overview of three *concepts of space* that were drawn from the work of Lefebvre, Rancière and von Hantelmann. It is an attempt to broaden the discourse of space and its activating potential on people engaging with it, creating meaning and sharing knowledge. The setup of the chapters serve the case studies as theoretical input, where the case studies may feed further research in spatial formats referring to the theoretical framework.

# B

## #4 SOCIAL SPACE

How to pronounce authorship

**'The architect will not be anonymous, but plural and compositional. Authorship will not be erased, but contextualized as it is woven into a relational fabric. The new architect is situated in between top-down and bottom-up, challenging the raw energy of the latter through the targeted framework of the former. The responsibility of the Choral Architect is less oriented toward object-building than orchestrating process. [...] The Choral Architect weaves together the creative and harmonic ensemble.'**<sup>#26</sup>

note E#26

case C#7  
image D#4

Inhotim (Brumadinho, Brazil) is an open-air contemporary art museum, showing works of several international installation artists like Dan Graham, Doug Aitkin and Olafur Eliasson. Next to autonomous installations they show work from (inter)national artists. Falha (2003), by Brazilian artist Renata Lucas, consist of plywood panels with handles and hinges, covering the floor of one of the white cube venues in the museum. Coming in to the space, visitors walk over the flat panels, meandering in between the ones mounted up. The interactive system invites the visitor to change the room's layout, blocking entrances or enclosing spaces. The installation is therefor never fixed or finished and always in motion.

note E#27

If we want to understand the impact and effectiveness of an experience in, with or through space we have to start where it all begins: how a space is produced, who produces it and with what intention this happens. To do so I would like to introduce Henri Lefebvre's broadly discussed notion of *social space*<sup>#27</sup>, that emphasises the production and (re)presentation of space in relation to it's socio-political, historical and philosophical background. Turning to the physical production of space, Lefebvre questions the rationality immanent to production is to be defined. He says:

note E#28

*'By the fact, first of all, that it organizes a sequence of actions with a certain 'objective' (i.e. the object to be produced) in view. It imposes a temporal and spatial order upon related operations whose results are coextensive. From the start of an activity so oriented towards an objective, spatial elements - the body, limbs, eyes - are mobilized, including both materials (stone, wood, bone, leather, etc.) and materiel (tools, arms, language, instructions and agendas).'*<sup>#28</sup>

note E#29  
case C#8  
image D#3

Lefebvre shows quite literally the physical process of building something incorporating body, mind and building materials, where the line between object and subject is suspended in the collective action, where the results - but also the actions that lead to the results - are coexisting in space. He continues: *'Relations based on an order to be followed - that is to say, on simultaneity and synchronicity - are thus set up, by means of intellectual activity, between the component elements of the action undertaken on the physical plane. All productive activity is defined less by invariable or constant factors than by the incessant to-and-from between temporality and spatiality.'*<sup>#29</sup>

In the ongoing project *Cityscapes* by French artist Olivier Grossetête,

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image D#13

huge cardboard sculptures are made within the scope of a day. A group of committed local volunteers construct predesigned tower or dome structures, lead by the artist and his team, creating a temporary landmark for any public space. At the end of the day the tower deliberately collapses. Comparable in the project *BOKRIJK SENGU* by TAAT the method of building together on a physical space is embedded into the microclimate of an open air museum dealing with craftsmanship in its historical context. Under the curatorial lead of TAAT five young designers were asked to design a building kit in what is called an *offline open source process*, starting with five huge pine trees. The eventual result is presented to the visitors of the museum, who are invited – continuously – to transform the flexible structure in a day. The project is a practical toolkit that embodies and represents a production process, and at the same time offers outsiders a tool to share knowledge about woodcraft and its cultural and historical situation.

note E#30

When these kinds of actions in time and space – and the working process towards a common goal – are shared, meaning is created through the functionality of these actions and through the satisfaction of a ‘need’. In this process of creating meaning *The formal relationships which allow separate actions to form a coherent whole cannot be detached from the material preconditions of individual and collective activity; and this holds true whether the aim is to move a rock, to hunt game, or to make a simple or complex object. The rationality of space, according to this analysis, is not the outcome of a quality or property of human action in general, or human labour as such, of ‘man’, or of social organization. On the contrary, it is itself the origin and source – not distantly but immediately, or rather inherently – of the rationality of activity; an origin which is concealed by, yet at the same time implicit in, the inevitable empiricism of those who use their hands and tools, who adjust and combine their gestures and direct their energies as a function of specific tasks.*<sup>#30</sup>

Lefebvre here emphasizes the physicality of *making something with your bare hands*, being connected or engaged to result and in this *immediate* sense connect one person to another in a dialectical relationship to *get something done*. He formulates cautiously the following definition on social space:

note E#31

*‘Social space is not a thing among other things [...] It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be – reduced to the rank of a simple object. At the same time there is nothing imagined, unreal or ‘ideal’ about it [...] Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. Among these actions, some serve production, others consumption (i.e. the enjoyment of the fruits of production). Social space implies a great diversity of knowledge.’*<sup>#31</sup>

With the processes and examples mentioned above diverse intersubjective practices in designing and building installations were shown. On the level of the organizational structure these processes redefine the role of designer/artist in relation to other co-designers/artists and to audience members taking part or making the work. The structure of *who does what* in these examples is an integral part of the work that is deliberately and intentionally pronounced by the initiator of every project, whether it’s a visual artist (Renata Lucas, Olivier Grossetête), or architecture/theatre collective (TAAT). Next to showing the relevance to the concept of social space as defined by Lefebvre, the examples question the role of the initiator of a project. Following Carlo Ratti’s manifesto *Open Source Architecture* this role can be defined as the one of an architect/curator or Choral Architect, that in opposition to the *promethean architect* seeks for a shared process instead of a top-down one. I quoted Ratti to start this chapter.

Although this quote refers specifically to architects, it can open critical reflection for every designer, artist or curator to position him or herself in any open process where hierarchies – between presentation and production or between subject and object – are questioned and ask for experimental models of authorship.



## #5 METAPOLITICAL SPACE

### How to situate the viewers

In *The Emancipated Spectator* Jacques Rancière follows up in his book from 1991 *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* in which he connects his ideas about *universal teaching* – a shared production and exchange of knowledge – to the ways of how artworks operate. The term universal teaching implies a way of teaching in which there is no hierarchy of knowledge (the ones who have knowledge versus the ones who don't). In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* Rancière defends the notion of a *material thing* as mediator in knowledge production unifying people as equals:

note E#32 *There is intelligence where each person acts, tells what he is doing, and gives the means of verifying the reality of his action. The thing in common, placed between two minds, is the gauge of that equality, and this in two ways. A material thing is first of all the only bridge of communication between two minds.*<sup>#32</sup>

This material thing – in our case a physical space and people experiencing it – defines an immediately shared experience, based on the common ground of being in space together.

The project LUNÄ by dutch visual artist Marjolijn Dijkman is inspired by the Lunar Society of Birmingham, which was formed from a group of amateur experimenters, tradesmen and artisans who met and made friends in the Midlands from 1765 till 1813. LUNÄ is a table, a produced facsimile of the original table where Lunar Men met that provides a context to speculate and expand on the possible topics. Since January 2011 the table is used in different locations always around full moon for an ongoing series of critical discussions. The table is at the same time a *material thing* that provides a discussion, a *performing object*, but also a way of arranging people in space, where the one who leads the discussion sits at the head of the table, or not.

In a conventional setup of a museum or theatre hall, there is a physical – opposed to a visual – separation between the viewer and the work of art. Although the artwork always needs the viewer and visa versa, Rancière argues that *It's a bad thing to be a spectator, and for two reasons. First of all because looking is the opposite of knowing. The spectator is opposed to the imaginary world without knowing anything about the production of this imaginary world that lies in front of him.*<sup>#33</sup> This passive way of being directly links to Guy Debord's *Society of Spectacle*<sup>#34</sup> where the *true is just a moment of the false*. In this movie – a cinematic interpretation of the book with the same name – the externality of the spectacle is performed as the evil. Rancière argues: *What man sees in a spectacle is that activity that is taken away from him; it is his essence that has become alien to him and turns against him.*<sup>#35</sup> The core of what Rancière questions is the way in which (moving) bodies and objects are positioned in space. He argues that for artworks with a representational methodology shown in an institution:

note E#33  
note E#34  
note E#35  
note E#36 *The problem is not the moral or political value of the message conveyed by the representative or operative system, but the system itself. The crack in the system shows that the artistic effectiveness does not show itself in propagating messages, in offering behavioural models or in learning to decode representations. Primarily it lies in the disposition of bodies, in a format of separate spaces and times that define multiple ways of being together or separately, opposite or central, outside or inside, near or far.*<sup>#36</sup>

case C#9  
image D#5 The spatial dimension that seems crucial in artistic experience that are founded on the deconstruction of this classical opposition is what interests me in this quote. Dutch theatre maker Dries Verhoeven often uses space to make social oppositions tangible. In his project *U bevindt zich hier* (You are here) audience members enter a black box theatre, finding a simple wooden maze like 'hotel'. Every visitor is lead to his or her room, and goes in. The ceiling is a mirrored surface, offering every visitor some time for self-reflection. Suddenly the mirror starts moving up, exposing the visitors in the adjacent rooms, and at last everybody in the whole structure. *U bevindt zich hier* shows every anonymous 'guest' as an individual in relation to the collection of anonymous beings present.

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- This direct connection between how people are organized in space and the artistic effectiveness of the experience - the situation they're brought into - is Rancière's theory put into practice. This kind of works implies a way of producing and presenting spaces that have the potential or capacity to show and transfer meaning through what Rancière calls *metapolitical strategies*.<sup>#37</sup> These strategies embody a direct physical identification between art and politics. He calls them *artistic formats of dissent*, in which the invisible elements in the Debordian spectacular image flow are brought back to the world of flesh and blood. In this here-and-now situations sensory elements are organized without hidden realities behind appearances, and an imposed regime of interpretation. Rancière describes these as:
- 'Forms that reinvestigate the collective power to give, talk and act and translate them in new formats, forms that question the boundaries between visual representation regimes, forms that reinterpret politics in art and translate it in a different sort of fiction.'*<sup>#38</sup>
- note E#37
- case C#10
- image D#11
- image D#12
- In the project KHOR II by TAAT (2014), a metaphorical black box appears on a square containing a building kit for a wooden theatre pavilion. After the build up day (BUILD KHOR II) by local members of the community, a Do-It-Together theatre play is staged (PLAY KHOR II). The pavilion is also used as an open podium for the local community (SHARE KHOR II). During BUILD KHOR II the idea of the social space is clearly represented in the act of the collective building process. The process is lead by the TAAT team and is operated through an A4 building manual and three teams executing the design. PLAY KHOR II also works with a script, in which a set of instructions (44 scenes) leads the participants through a group process, going from small to bigger groups and ending with one big group. In every scene a different phase in the choreographical setup is executed, finding a variety of metapolitical setups that express different phases in the formation of a *community*.
- Until now the notion of intersubjectivity was only used to understand better the process of production - from the perspective of a practice as an architect/curator but also from the perspective of the team that makes the installation (social space). The latter could also be a team of volunteers - viewers - as shown in the work of Olivier Grossetête or the project *KHOR II*. Within the idea of metapolitical space, the notion of intersubjectivity is not explicitly or intentionally happening on the level of production of the physical space - being the hardware. Intersubjectivity in metapolitical space, is activated where the viewers are put into positions - or choose positions - that embody a relation towards the other(s), with means of for example height difference (hierarchy), visual difference or acoustic difference. These differences enable or disable certain emotions, movements or actions, that are affected on the viewers (by space, script, actions,...) who perform different group dynamics and make interrelational tensions or oppositions visible in space. The role of space (from the *LUNÄ* table to a theatre set by Verhoeven to the *KHOR II* pavilion in public space ) positions subjects in relation to space and each other, defining both a physical experience and reflection of the metapolitical setup.

## #6 PERFORMATIVE SPACE

### How to let the viewers commit

In the third chapter of this thesis Lefebvre's concept of *Social Space* was used to question the role of the initiator/architect/artist/curator in a creative process, building further on the idea of an intersubjective practice. In previous chapter the notion of *Metapolitical Space* was introduced as the physical arrangement and the disposition of its viewers/participants purging the production of knowledge and meaning. In current chapter *The Performative Space* we will focus at last on the shifting role and the commitment of the viewer. I will start with a short introduction on the notion of performativity, and von Hantelmann's alternative concept of the *Experiential Turn* to conclude with an altered notion of *Performative Space*.

The notion of the performative originated from linguistics and was first introduced by the British philosopher John Langshaw Austin in his lecture series *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin introduced the idea of the *performative* as a tool within language to produce reality within certain conditions. A classic example of a *performative* is the ritual of marriage in "I now pronounce you man and wife". This sentence, spoken by a person entitled to do so - the priest - to two people who explicitly made the choice to commit themselves to each other transforms the situation - the reality of that specific here-and-now - in the minds of the people who are gathered in space together. In the first place the newly wedded partners, in the second place their family around them. The space they use - a church in a lot of cases - is designed for the signs and rituals that are performed by the members of a certain community. At the core of the performative - thus reality producing - character of this event is a reciprocal commitment between the people involved. The declaration the priest - given to him as a script - expresses something to the world, constitutes it. This performative as a declaration works only if all gathering participants take part in - or perform - the ritual and that they are committed to do so. The ritual can't take place without the creation or conditioning of time and a space for it.

We're using the term *performative* in two ways: as a noun 'a *performative as a tool, a script, a declaration*' and performative as an adverb 'a *performative situation in time and space*'. Both meanings require people that perform the *script* and share time and space to do so. A performative situation of people in space can only be effective if the willingness and commitment of the people involved is present.

case C#2

Koen De Preter is a Belgian choreographer who works both in black box environments as in community settings. In 2016 he presented a couple of experiments titled *Dancing Dust* at Dommelhof Neerpelt (BE). In one setting, the viewer is asked to individually enter a dark space and take out his or her shoes. The main room, a classical black cube, was lit up by five different lamps (bulb, spot, disco ball, etc) going on and off on the rhythm of a random classical piece of music. No one else is there, except you and this choreography of lights. What follows is the decision to commit to the freedom to perform within the space, putting yourself in the footlight or at the periphery of shadows, moving with or against the speed of lit positions. The personal decision to commit to whatever the situation gives you and find the freedom to perform this in your own way is essential to grasp the notion of performativity. It is here that a space speaks to the viewer directly, and invites him or her to perform.

In visual art discourse the term *performative* - as an adverb - is used in ambiguous ways. In the essay *The Experiential Turn*, von Hantelmann points out that performative is often wrongly used to depict works of art that have *performance-like elements*. Every piece of art has - to a certain extent - a here-and-now aspect and so a reality-producing potential. Von Hantelmann argues that labelling pieces of contemporary art as *performative works* makes little sense. She argues:

*'To ask about the performative in relation to art is not about defining a new class of artworks. Rather it involves outlining a specific level of meaning production that basically exists in every artwork - although it is not always consciously shaped or dealt with - namely it's reality-producing dimension. In this sense, a specific methodological orientation goes along with the performative, creating a different perspective on*



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- note E#39 *what produces meaning in an artwork. it means to recognize and bring into discourse the productive, reality-producing dimension of, in principle, any work of art’.*<sup>#39</sup>
- To even make it a more tangible, the following quote in von Hantelmann’s essay *The Experiential Turn* makes things more clear:
- ‘What the notion of the performative in relation to art actually points to is a shift from what an artwork depicts and represents to the effects and experiences that it produces, [...] from what it “says” to what it “does.”’<sup>#40</sup>
- note E#40 Von Hantelman proposes to use the term *experiential turn* to avoid ambiguity with *performance-like* art works and to formalize a broader spectrum of works incorporating performative methodologies. By doing that, performative methodologies are generalised and possibly categorized with artworks that generate experiences *just for the experiences*, The risk here is to unintentionally categorize all experiential installation works on a *hedonistic level*, exactly what we are trying to avoid here. In previous chapters we have tried to bring up examples that - through their process of production or their metapolitical setup - invite the viewer to actively engage. In this chapter we are looking for methodologies that go again one step further in this level of engagement. They redirect us to von Hantelmann’s quote as mentioned in chapter #2 on the urgency of this topic:
- ‘The work with and on the self presupposes an engagement with outer projects or content in the same way that such an engagement with projects or content also implies or leads to work on oneself.’<sup>#41</sup>
- note E#41 This quote implies an effect that explicitly goes beyond the merely *esthetical experiential*, and purges a real impact on an individual or a group of people. This *real* impact is of course difficult - probably impossible - to measure. But if we’re looking for performative methodologies in the production and presentation of space - would it not be useful to at least try to formalize and define them?
- The somewhat hidden subtitle of *How to Do Things with Art* - it only appears on page 3 - is *What performativity means in art*. Although performativity indeed points towards fundamental levels of meaning production, it does not appear explicitly on the foreground of the book. Would it be wrong to look for installation works that explicitly use a performative methodology to find an effectiveness and thus a *real* impact? We can agree that there is no sense on dividing art in either performative and not performative. But we should consider recognising a space as *performative* if ‘what it does’ can be clearly experienced in relation to the intention of the maker. If we’re looking for the shifting role of the viewer towards a committed actor in space, it is important to recognise projects and practices that are indeed conscious of the efficacy of their performative methodology that could replace the oppositional methodology with a ‘*more constructive and effective attitude*.’<sup>#42</sup>
- note E#42 ‘*Working on oneself*’ as proposed in chapter #2 implies a shift of the viewer from the *receiver of an experience* towards an *emancipated spectator* or committed viewer. Every space has performative aspects to it, but by explicitly defining a space as a *Performative Space*, we are emphasizing the potential of space to act as a *performative* - as a noun - that shows it’s activating potential operating from a constructive and effective attitude.
- Thinking back of *Dancing Dust* and it’s highly individual impact, it is important to mention the empowering effect of these kind of experiences, where the intention of the artist, frames the crucial input of the viewer in a way that needs his or her conscious commitment. If this commitment does not happen, the work loses every significance or possible effect. The power for the piece to work is equally in the hands of the maker and the viewer. Let’s look at a more notorious work in this category. The *Artist is Present* by Marina Abramovic, consists out of a very simple and clear spatial setup: a table and two chairs. Different from *LUNÄ* by Dijkman, this table doesn’t ask for a topic based dialogue, but solely an invitation for anybody to sit down and silently encounter with Marina Abramovic in person. Means of communication are stripped down to the basic premise of looking each other in the eye, incorporating the tension, the doubt, the openness and maybe an occasional and spontaneous smile. A mutual commitment that exposes itself through the *micro-mechanics* of the encounter as such.
- case C#1  
image D#8 If we go back to the *legal* origins of the *performatives* as proposed by

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Austin. Could we interpret the space as an active medium for commitment? Or in other words: can space take over the role of the priest in the marriage ceremony in constituting a *bond* between people? Although in *The Artist is Present*, it is only a table, two chairs and the presence of Marina Abramovic that define the medium for the experience to take place, there is a clear spatial component - the white cube - that works along with the situation of chairs + table + the artist. It is not only the encounter in itself that generates an experience, but also the relation of this micro-event in the larger realm of the museum space, where other visitors are walking in and out, becoming spectators on this participative one-to-one performance.

It must be said that in the examples given the hierarchy between the ones who make the work and the ones who experience it is fading. The power of these *formats of dissent* generate space for experiment and reflection on what von Hantelmann is describing as 'to work on oneself'. It is here the performative potential of installation art is situated and the activating power of individuals and communities can be explored. As a last example I would like to share some thoughts on the project *HALL33* by TAAT, that I co-initiated and produced. This project is a very important part of my practice as a choral architect (or architect curator) as it puts a lot of the notions as discussed in this thesis into practice, and at the same time opens the discussion about them.

*HALL33* is a longterm research project that appears in different subprojects. The installations *HALL01* to *HALL05* were presented in different settings and locations between 2013 and 2017. Every subproject, that consists out of a wooden modular system, builds upon the results of the previous subproject. Every *HALL* consists out of two parallel corridors, separated into smaller rooms. For every subproject a collaboration is initiated between different institutions, students and experts. On the presentation level every *HALL* project works more or less as follows: after a short introduction you are invited to enter individually. Before entering an usher gives you the following instructions:

case C#3  
image D#6  
image D#7

**'You are about to enter HALL. Inside there will be another person. This person is a stranger and a participant just like you. You are making this experience together, so find a common pace. Always go forward and close the doors behind you. Take your time and enjoy.'**

Similar to the examples as mentioned before, there is a couple of thresholds in the experience that ask for a conscious commitment. First of all, there is the choice of going into an unknown situation. After entering the open setting where *you and the other participant are making the experience together* - made explicit in the introduction - asks again for a second commitment. How much time do I give the other to be here? How do I want to make contact? These questions are brought up spontaneously and answered immediately by the participant in the position he or she takes and the actions that are performed. Every space asks for this action-reaction dynamics between every individual with the space and the other person. The project in this sense creates an *architectural dramaturgy*, operated by the two participants in space.

By redefining performative space in reaction to von Hantelmann's term *experiential turn*, I hope to broaden the discourse on performativity and open discussions on the societal impact that installation art can have in the experiential societies of today. Let us hope that by adding this altered notion of *Performative Space* we can add a vital position to the discourses of performativity in installation art and in architecture at large.

## 'It's not about winning. It's the enjoyment of doing it. It gets your brain going.'<sup>(Christo)</sup>

As proposed in the introduction this thesis did not seek *a masterful production of expertise and the authoritative pronouncement of truth*, but rather creates a starting point for dialogue and further research. Hopefully formulating this critical position came across as open and genuine as I intended it to be. If not please send your thoughts and contributions to the email address as mentioned in the colophon.

The question of urgency in chapter #2 tried to connect my personal development and vision as an architect/curator to a broader theoretical framework and to a series of case studies (including projects I initiated, produced and presented). Within this intersubjective position between production, presentation and critique we tried to formulate a multiplicity of methodological approaches. Therefore you may not find distinctive and pronounced answers in this thesis but hopefully come up with more - and better - questions generating new experimental approaches to produce and present installation art.

The three *concepts of space* as presented, deal with the production of meaning through embodied experience. We deliberately focused not only on experiences on the level of the viewer, but on all people involved in the production and presentation of installation art. This intersubjective - cfr. universal or *holistic* - approach has been an important starting point in thinking about *How to do Things with Space*. The premise of intersubjectivity as a practice not only redefines the role of the initiator, curator or architect, but at the same time shifts the role of the viewer and the role of the installation as such. These shifting roles can be seen as a crucial precondition to think of a shift on the level of the embodied experience. If we really want to *work on the self* it is - at last - the shift in responsibility from object to subject where the difference can be made. I believe it is here that societal impact can be formulated and the active potential can be found.

In *Social Space* the experience is defined by opening up the physical building process of making the actual installation. We borrowed Lefebvre's concept to formulate the here-and-now value of working towards a common goal, a common space. The relevance of the way we produce space collectively can be questioned in a broader cultural and historical sphere. In *Metapolitical Space* Jacques Rancière made us compare different approaches on situating people in space and the respective experiences that followed. This opens up typological questions of how we generally relate to each other visitors or participants. Last but not least the notion of *Performative Space* was reformulated in contrast to Dorothea von Hantelmann's writings on performativity. This might come across as far-fetched and pretentious, or it can - in the best case - help building constructive and effective new attitudes in creating commitment of the viewer.

These three concepts of space, together or separate, highlight a couple - but cover not all - active elements and questions in the production of experiences and meaning in space. I hope what you just read could serve as an inspiration and a continuation to experiment with space and to find the energy and vigour - like Christo on the age of 82 - to actually make a difference. The real question now is not anymore *How to do Things with Space*, but just to *do it*.



**#1 CASE STUDY****The Artist is Present, Maria Abramovic, 2010**

image D#8

**How is the context situating the work?**

*'In a city that always seems to be on the edge of a nervous breakdown, Abramovic had created a situation that in some respects replicates what happens during the process of psychoanalysis.'*#1

*'Inside museums, we enter what might be called the group-mind, getting quiet to look at art. For the past two months, Marina Abramovic's large-scale 40-year retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, "The Artist Is Present"—featuring Abramovic herself, seated in queenly fashion in the museum's atrium, nude performers re-creating her past work, and lots of audience participation—has turned the usually introspective institutional sphere into an existential circus of bizarre self-help.'*#2

**How is authorship pronounced in the work?**

*'The queuing was a very important part of what happened because by the time you came into her presence, you were already playing by rules she had established.'*#1

*'During every moment of her performance, she was in complete control from the moment a member of the audience joined the queue until the moment they left.'*#1

**How is the work situating the visitors?**

*'Members of the public were invited to come forward one by one and sit in a straight-backed chair opposite her with a table between them. They could stay for as long as they wished. Though they could speak to her, she did not reply and nor did her facial expression change.'*#1

*'Maybe museums have merged with the age of reality TV, where everyone's life is art. Perhaps participatory sculpture extends celebrity to everyone. Maybe it's just institutions fighting for market share.'*#2

*'People have engaged with this work in ways that are as intense and profound as their interactions with paintings and sculpture. It is especially thrilling that no Mayor Giuliani equivalent showed up to close the institution because it offended us or him. That Abramovic's show is a hit proves that art is bigger than moralism, and that the audience is more open and more mature than ever.'*#2

**How do visitors engage or commit to the work?**

*'She took the role of the psychoanalyst – a silent impassive stranger onto whom you could project your everyday hopes and fears, but also someone who by a process of transference could be idealised, despised, loved or hated in lieu of a parent.'*#1

*'A few wear wacky costumes; some cry; others stay all day, causing no end of complaining in line.'*#2

**Sources**

#1 - Richard Dorment, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/10895104/Marina-Abramovic-review-I-hated-every-second-but-I-cant-deny-its-power.html>

#2 - Jerry Saltz, <http://nymag.com/arts/art/reviews/66161/>

## #2 CASE STUDY

### Dancing Dust, Koen De Preter, 2015

#### **How is the context situating the work?**

*'Dancing Dust has only been performed once, as an introspective mirror on his previously produced YoYoGi, a participatory choreographic performance in public space including people with Down syndrome. It is created for a black box context, being a black cube - without a tribune - of minimally 8x7m. Two volunteers are present to guide the visitor in via a small waiting room, where the visitor is asked to take down his or her shoes.'* #1

#### **How is authorship pronounced in the work?**

*'The setup is an empty room only lit with five types of light. The space has clear boundaries, where there is only one way in and out. The emptiness, and the knowledge of being alone are crucial factors if we want to understand the pronunciation of authorship. There is no script of what to do and how an when to do it, just the music and the changing light modes. Every choice to move - or to stand still - is free for every visitor to decide on. There are no representational elements present that transfer an 'exterior meaning', next to the embodied experience and the here-and-now meaning that it generates. This means that the visitor is also free to reflect on whatever he does or doesn't. The visitor produces both the work as a physical experience, as much as the reflection on this experience in dialogue with the setting in time and space. Authorship is shared between the visitor and the artist.'* #1

#### **How is the work situating the visitors?**

*'Space and time are limited, which is different from a conventional white cube settings. The framework is clear. Within this framework authorship is shared as mentioned above. The situation and how authorship is pronounced coincide. Of there would be a clear script of every move that the visitor has to make, he or she would just be 'participating' in the authoritative will of the artist. The volunteers who lead you inside and make you sit down to remove your shoes, don't impose 'a right way to do this', letting the visitors decide how to situate themselves in time and space.'* #1

#### **How do visitors engage or commit to the work?**

*'The commitment is two faced. On one side the visitor is asked to walk inside the unknown, without much preparation (no script). When surpassing this threshold, the space itself makes the visitor find a confidence, knowing - or hoping to know - that he or she is alone in the space. The question of commitment here is a commitment to the self. Do you commit to surrender to whatever this situating brings you? Do you commit to the power of reacting instinctively to your emotions? Do you allow yourself to be crazy and open? The answer lies with every individual.'* #1

#### **Sources**

#1 - BH

## #3 CASE STUDY

### HALL05, TAAT, 2016

image D#6  
image D#7

#### **How is the context situating the work?**

*'Every HALL subproject is situated in a different context. TAAT preferably looks for places that are neutral on the institutional level. HALL05 was not presented at the respective local partners (Design Museum Ghent or Campo Arts Centre) but in the empty Saint Nicolas church in the centre of Ghent. This choice not only defined the collaboration as truly interdisciplinary, but also questioned the position of art in society, leaving the conventions of white cube or black box for what they are. Being situated in a church - explicitly a public space - HALL05 was able to attract a broad audience scope.'* #1

#### **How is authorship pronounced in the work?**

*'The resulting installation and performance was made together with design students from the Royal Academy of The Hague, the Netherlands, and theatre students from the KASK School of Arts in Gent. Over a fourteen day period they collectively developed and built Hall05. Five pairs were made, each consisting of a theatre maker and an architect. Each pair designed and constructed a sequence of spaces or scenes, creating a storyboard. For each 'show', to people who were complete strangers to each other entered the installation to live a unique encounter experience.'* #2

*'The quote above answers this question on the level of production of the physical component of the installation. On the level of presentation, similar to Dancing Dust by Koen De Preter', the visitor chooses how to perform this 'play' together with the other participant. Authorship is situated in between the artist - in this sense a collective body of artists and students - and both viewers.'* #1

#### **How is the work situating the visitors?**

*'There is a series of empty spaces, two parallel corridors, in which both visitors walk and position themselves. They walk through according to the instructions, given by the ushers. They follow each other's pace and give space for reflection on each other's acts. In every space the interaction is fully up to the visitors.'* #1

#### **How do visitors engage or commit to the work?**

*'Three levels of commitment can be understood. First there is the decision to go inside, and to be open for the unknown. Secondly, once inside, there is the question of how to commit to the freedom of this experience and how to be in charge of the experience. Thirdly there is the other person - that has the same question - and the common goal to commit to this experience together.'* #1

#### **Sources**

#1 - BH

#2 - [http://www.domusweb.it/en/news/2016/12/17/taat\\_hall\\_05.html#fb](http://www.domusweb.it/en/news/2016/12/17/taat_hall_05.html#fb)



## #4 CASE STUDY

### Test Site, Carsten Höller, 2007

image D#10

#### How is the context situating the work?

*'Turbine hall of Tate Modern is unique as a public space within the museum walls. The hall unites the life of the city with it's business people and tourists passing by and the production and presentation of contemporary art installations. Mostly the space is open during the build up, opening up the production process to the visitors eye. Höllers slides were preproduced in his atelier in (...) and mounted in a period of three weeks time.'* #1

*'In order to approach an understanding of Carsten Höller's Test Site, the work must not be understood as an object but as a platform of interaction. Installed in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern in 2006, Test Site comprised five spiralling tubular slides that ran from the upper floors of the gallery to ground level.'* #4

#### How is authorship pronounced in the work?

*'artists such as Höller propose a notion of reflection that is inseparably bound to a lived, felt, and situated dimension of experience.'* #2

#### How is the work situating the visitors?

*'When Höller installs giant slides in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, the object—although clearly one with a sculptural quality—functions like a tool for producing an experience of oneself (or of a different side of oneself). The actual aesthetic effect of the work lies in its capacity to trigger this experimental self-relation. Viewing the slides, we communicate not with the sensitivity or the specific subjectivity of the artist—as we might do when contemplating other artworks, for example, drawings—but with ourselves and others who enter into the same experience.'* #2

*'They are, he says, a way of propelling visitors into a state of "simultaneous delight, madness and voluptuous panic". This last bit is a quote from the French writer Roger Caillois, who in the 1950s described sliding as "surrendering to a kind of spasm, seizure, or shock which destroys reality with sovereign brusqueness".'* #3

*'Sliding down, especially from the higher levels, was an experience that was both physically and psychically intense. Using people's experience as what he calls his 'raw material', Höller has been making art since the late 1980s centred around, and dependent upon, visitor participation.'* #4

#### How do visitors engage or commit to the work?

*'The subject, however, is no longer the "recipient" of the museum in its canonical nineteenth-century formation. Contrary to the way in which nineteenth-century viewers received a canon through quietly reflecting on the works—thereby submitting to the authority of history, the state, knowledge, and so on—artists such as Höller propose a notion of reflection that is inseparably bound to a lived, felt, and situated dimension of experience. They address a subject for whom looking is as much the body as the eyes, a subject whose body engages in an active encounter with the physical world.'* #2

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**#5 CASE STUDY****The Vessel, Thomas Heatherwick, 2017**

image D#9  
image D#15

**How is the context situating the work?**

*'The Vessel is being built in public space, away from art conventions or institutions. The project is part of a prestigious city development (Hudson Yards) in New York city.'* #1

*'My commission sits right in the middle of commercial functions, but it has no commercial job to do. It's a public room for the city.'* #2

*'The new landmark is intended to be a stunning spectacle of public art while also being entirely accessible to the public, including an elevator to the top, which is expected to be 15 storeys high.'* #3

**How is authorship pronounced in the work?**

*The office of Heatherwick designed a proposal that went back and forth to the client (a building company) for approval. Engineers and construction workers are now building the installation. The experience of walking up the stairs of the Vessel will be open to everybody who is around Hudson Yards.* #1

**How is the work situating the visitors?**

*'As the project is still under construction, this is difficult to say. What is noticeable from the renders is the idea of a multiplicity of staircases that lead up to a circular viewing ring. Every platform always offers the possibility to go left or right, creating a constant and spontaneous process of negotiation of when to go where.'* #1

*'The project, in a way, is a big invitation. It's just there to - hopefully - mean different things to different people. It's like a platform for life.'* #2

*'That sense of play is also the strength of much of this work. The Vessel transforms a device, usually hidden in the guts of a building, that works either to get us up or down, or to help us escape a disaster as a fire stair, and turns it into a giant, collective toy.'* #4

*'It also takes the ways stairs are perfect stage sets on which to see and be seen, to make an entrance and to watch an entrance being made, into something reserved not just for opera patrons, brides, or politicians, but office workers out on their lunch break. It glorifies fun and useless glamour.'* #4

**How do visitors engage or commit to the work?**

*On an individual level the commitment is in the act of climbing the installation and reaching the top. On a collective level every visitor is negotiating his or her way up in relation to the other visitors.* #1

*'It's not based on electronics. It's not based on advertising. It's extremely interactive, but it's properly using your physicality.'* #2

*'The work that I like best takes play further, but in a way that is more involving. It turns us into actors who are essential to the work's success.'* #4

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## #6 CASE STUDY

### The matter of time, Richard Serra, 2005

image D#14

#### How is the context situating the work?

*'Opposed to many of Serra's works that are positioned in public space, 'The matter of time' is presented permanently in one of the main halls of Guggenheim Bilbao. Although not the typical white cube in terms of architectural envelope, the conventions of the white cube are at work.'* #1

*'The Matter of Time allows the viewer to perceive the evolution of the artist's sculptural forms, from the relative simplicity of a double ellipse to the complexity of a spiral. The last two pieces of this sculpture are created from sections of toruses and spheres that produce different effects on the movement and perception of the viewer. These are unexpectedly transformed as the visitor walks through and around them, creating an unforgettable, dizzying feeling of space in motion.'* #2

#### How is authorship pronounced in the work?

*'The physical work - meaning the object - is made by Serra and his collaborators. The placement in the museum was done by a local construction team. Serra works merely alone, but is supported by a team of engineers and a construction company to physically produce it. The authorship is undoubtedly with Serra.'* #1

#### How is the work situating the visitors?

*'The massive steel walls hide an 'inside', that can be discovered by entering on the vertical open endings. Visitors walk through the gorge like hallways individually, but conscious of people in front or behind. Passing each other in opposite directions creates short intimate crossings. The ellipses shaped space in the middle is wider and makes visitors stop for a few seconds or longer, while people go in and out. The way out again unfolds in a gauge, proposing a simple 3-step in-middle-out dramaturgy. This personal path unfolds in time and space. The work literally offers space for the visitors to construct their experience by moving through the structure, following the gorge like effect of constantly changing wall angles and bends.'* #1

*'The entire room is part of the sculptural field. As he has done in other sculptures composed of many pieces, the artist has arranged the works deliberately in order to move the viewer through them and through the space surrounding them. The layout of the works along the gallery creates corridors with different, always unexpected proportions (wide, narrow, long, compressed, high, low). The installation also includes a progression in time. On the one hand, there is the chronological time that it takes to walk through and observe it from beginning to end. On the other, there is the time during which the viewer experiences the fragments of visual and physical memory, which are combined and re-experienced.'* #2

#### How do visitors engage or commit to the work?

*'The enigmatic 'inside' can only be seen by entering the gauge. For a visitor to enter, he or she needs to commit to an unknown situation, in which he or she is not alone - as other people also go in and out. This expectation and tension to 'see what is there' moves the visitor, physically and maybe mentally.'* #1

#### Sources

#1 - BH

#2 - <https://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus/en/works/the-matter-of-time/>

## #7 CASE STUDY

### Falha, Renata Lucas, 2003

image D#4

#### **How is the context situating the work?**

*'Renata Lucas manipulates urban spaces and architecture to intensify the tension between inside and outside, public and private, past and present. Lucas' practice is a critical interpretation of how our built environment determines actions, behaviour and social relationships, and by extension, societies dependency on the preservation of prescribed definitions of space, property and order.'* #1

*'The white cube space in Inhotim where Falha is situated is part of a cluster of pavilions with a extensive garden connection through large windows. The space where Falha is situated has a separate entrance and exit, forming a route 'through' the work.'* #1

#### **How is authorship pronounced in the work?**

*'The work is never finished as visitors can keep interacting with it.'* #2

#### **How is the work situating the visitors?**

*'The artists work imagines a space where these barriers break down, where the possibility of deconstructing boundaries might result in a different social dynamic. By offering an alternative spatial imagination, one that brings into consideration malleability, manipulation and play Lucas provokes the possibility of new subjective and collective engagement within our built environment.'* #1

#### **How do visitors engage or commit to the work?**

*'Falha triggers a playful interaction of lifting and lowering hinged plywood panels. The visitors may put up series of panels, enclosing fellow visitors or blocking the exit or entrance. The possibility for the space to transforms questions the entire setup of the space, that can be read as a playground for (meta-)political action.'* #2

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#2 - BH

**#8 CASE STUDY****The Ephemeral City, Olivier Grossetête, 2011**

image D#3

**How is the context situating the work?**

*'In Mexico City, Sydney, Helsinki... and now in Paris, plastic artist Olivier Grossetête imagines in the course of his travels gigantic cardboard sculptures, some of which can reach 80 feet in height and weigh over a ton. These site-specific structures are an opportunity for the public to take part in an unprecedented human and artistic experience: coming together to build, without a crane or any type of machine, a utopian and ephemeral construction. Residents, tourists, passers-by, young and old – everyone is invited to participate in the performance which relies exclusively on the energy and hands of the participants. From the construction of the first boxes to the final demolition, it is collective strength which enables the materialisation of what was at first a "childhood dream".' #2*

**How is authorship pronounced in the work?**

*"We work with whoever is here, so if there is a smaller team we do the preparation for the next construction, and once a bigger group of people are here we can do the big ensemble barn raising and lift the buildings and grow the city," Grossetête said.' #1*

**How is the work situating the visitors?**

*'To fully appreciate the temporary cityscape, spectators-turned-builders can fly between the structures on a special 165-metre zip-line inside the Cutaway cultural space, to admire their hard work from above. "People are loving the flying fox, travelling over and through the growing city," said Grossetete. "Those constructing the city are like town planners making decisions on where the buildings go, to make the flying fox even more exciting."' #1*

*'After it's finished, the temporary city will topple on Australia Day when the public are invited to knock down the buildings, box by box, to complete the exhibition.' #1*

**How do visitors engage or commit to the work?**

*'With around 60 helpers bringing Grossetete's design templates to life each session, The Ephemeral City is one of the largest community participation projects at this year's Sydney Festival.' #1*

**Sources**

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**#9 CASE STUDY****U Bevindt zich hier, Dries Verhoeven, 2013**

image D#5

**How is the context situating the work?**

*'The installation is setup in a black box, addressing the theatre conventions, but changing them in it's setup.'* #3

**How is authorship pronounced in the work?**

*'U bevindt zich hier' essentially deals with the personal stories of the audience. [...] Here the spectators become performers but not by acting something out but by sharing personal information. [...] The real stories of the audience itself are requested.'* #1

**How is the work situating the visitors?**

*'Alone in a hotel bedroom, the spectator stretches out on the bed. On the ceiling, a mirror. Time goes by and solitude creeps in. Then the mirror begins to reflect the neighbouring rooms occupied by other prostrate spectators. Gradually, they communicate by sliding messages under the doors to be collected by a performer. Through this collective theatrical experience, Dries Verhoeven explores the feeling of solitude, the meaning of being together and our perception and desire of the Other: a separate other or our other selves?'* #2

**How do visitors engage or commit to the work?**

*'The viewers are asked to share information about themselves in questionnaires. The spatial setting serves merely as a decor, framing the viewers attention to himself and the other participants as 'staged' in the installation.'* #3

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**#10 CASE STUDY****KHOR II, TAAT, 2014**

image D#11  
image D#12

**How is the context situating the work?**

*'KHOR II is built by about twenty local volunteers from the town where KHOR II is situated. The building is temporary, and situated on a public square or in a park. The building process is done in one day, inviting the volunteers to be part of the realisation of a ambitious common goal. During the build-up surrounding spectators watch the volunteers build, occasionally ask them questions and might be persuaded to join in. During PLAY KHOR II - the Do-It-Together theatre play, maximum 36 participants get a script that leads them through a series of scenes. The pavilion is open, so people occasionally passing by, might enter and take part in the choreography for a few moments.'* #1

**How is authorship pronounced in the work?**

*'The design of the physical space was done by TAAT. During BUILD KHOR II process every wooden beam is put down where it belongs according to the design. Authorship of the space as such is not shared. During PLAY KHOR II, the participants are not only asked to perform the play themselves, but also to make conscious choices in where to be, what to do and why to do it. Authorship on the experience is situated in dialogue between the script and the group of participants. In SHARE KHOR II, the question 'How do we build a community' is answered in a workshop - operated by a script - that is executed by the temporary here-and-now community, being the people present.'* #1

**How is the work situating the visitors?**

*During BUILD KHOR II, the participants are situated as 'builders', and invited to share their physical and mental ability to collaborate and share the common goal. The installation offers different spatial qualities, in which the participants of PLAY and SHARE KHOR II are asked to position themselves.'* #1

**How do visitors engage or commit to the work?**

*'Within every phase - BUILD, PLAY, SHARE - different layers of commitment are at work. Engaging people to build happens by an open call and a lot of social investment. For PLAY the commitment starts when people buy a ticket. Generally the piece is announced as a Do-It-Together theatre play, where the engagement is made explicit. During the play people are actively asked to take positions and express their opinions. In SHARE the commitment is thematised even more, where the activating potential will be hopefully put into practice.'* #1

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D

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D

#2

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Rosario, Argentina,  
1958*



D

#3

*Olivier Grossetête, The Ephemeral City, Bordeaux, 2013*



D

#4

*Renata Lucas, Falha, Inhotim, Brumadunho, Brazil, 2005*



D

#5

*Dries Verhoeven, U bevindt zich hier, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2005*





D

#6

TAAT, HALL05,  
Ghent, Belgium  
2016  
Photo by Jim Stephenson



D

#7

TAAT, HALL05,  
Ghent, Belgium  
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Photo by Jim Stephenson



D

#8

*Marina Abramovic,  
The Artist is Present,  
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D

#9

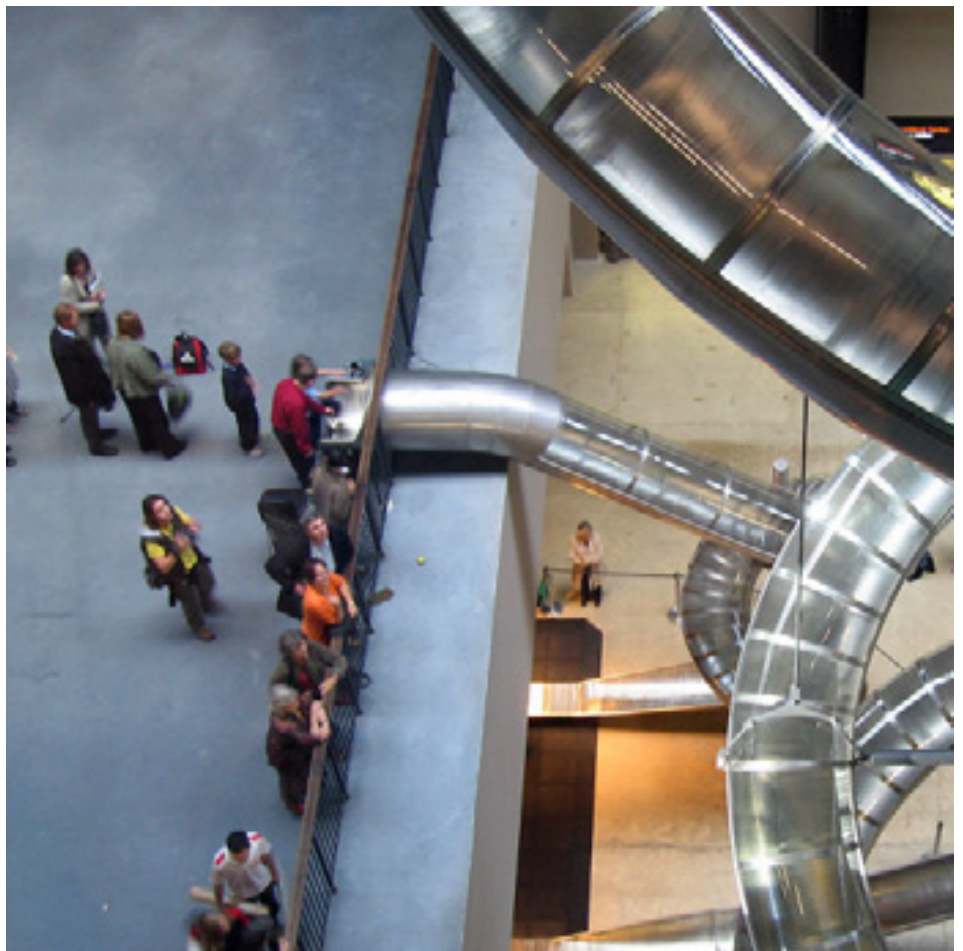
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D

#10

*Carsten Höller, Test Site,  
London, United Kingdom  
2007*





D

#11

TAAT, KHOR II, Den Bosch, The Netherlands 2015  
Photo by Saris&Den Engelsman



D

#12

TAAT, KHOR II, Den Bosch, The Netherlands 2015  
Photo by Saris&Den Engelsman





**D**

**#13**

*TAAT, BOKRIJK SENGU,  
Genk, Belgium  
2016  
Photo by Jim Stephenson*



**D**

**#14**

*Richard Serra,  
The Matter of Time,  
Bilbao, Spain,  
2003  
Photographed by a visitor*



**D**

**#15**

*Thomas Heatherwick,  
The Vessel,  
New York, USA  
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**Project details and credits**

- HALL05 was realised with the support of SoAP foundation Maastricht (NL), Dommelhof Neerpelt (BE) and funded by Kunsten en Erfgoed and the Dutch Performing Arts Fund.  
- BOKRIJK SENGU was commissioned by Open-Air Museum Bokrijk. The design process and respective end result was a collaboration with Jolien Naeyaert, Frederic Schobben, Sylvie Hagens, Ward Delbeke en Bas Vreken.  
- KHOR II was realised with the support of Cultura Nova Festival (NL), Fund Creative Industry (NL), Bankgiroloterijfonds (NL), Via Zuid (NL) and the SoAP foundation (NL).

**Design**

Breg Horemans

**Typeface**

Apercu

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who supported the production of this thesis and the research over the past years, in special to Benoît Vanraes for his unconditional support, Jasper Delbecke for feedback and proof reading, Dorothee Richter for theoretical advice, Gert-Jan Stam as the co-founder of TAAT and my artistic partner in crime and all the artists mentioned.

**This thesis was produced within the CAS program in Curating at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) located at:**

Toni-Areal  
Center Further Education  
Pfingstweidstrasse 96  
CH-8005 Zurich

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Things  
with Space***  
Breg Horemans  
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