

Playing the Building - a compositorial journey

"Erkennbarkeit der Realität" (Alfred Andersch)

[aus: **Die Blindheit des Kunstwerks**, 1956]

Wie funktioniert Interpretation, was ist eine Deutung?

"(Re)Cognizability of reality" (Alfred Andersch)

How does interpretation work, what is a

"correct" reading of a situation?

*Art and investigation/research, artistic fundamental research
Kunst und Er/Forschung - künstlerische Grundlagenforschung*

How does this happen – this decision, what I am going to do? That I am going to do it?

In another book called *Kirschen der Freiheit* (Cherries of freedom), Alfred Andersch describes the moment, before one takes a decision. He describes it as the only moment, when freedom actually happens. Once I have taken the decision whether to take the bus or the train, all sorts of consequences out of this decision have to be taken into account, like the schedule or the number of seats.

What can this mean in the context of production?

The purpose of the action is the core question, the core criterium.

Die Handlungsabsicht ist die zentrale Frage, das zentrale Kriterium.

I try to sketch the development of *Playing the Building* along its timeline.

A little while ago, in March 2008, I had spent a week in an improvised one-week residency at the Velvet Factory in Rimini, Italy, invited by Roberto Paci Dalò.

I was there with friends Ushi and Maex, and my dear partner, Jogi.

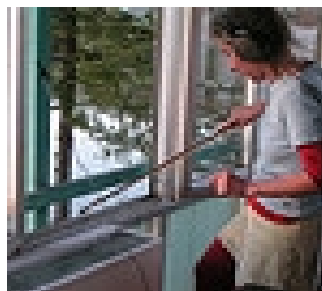
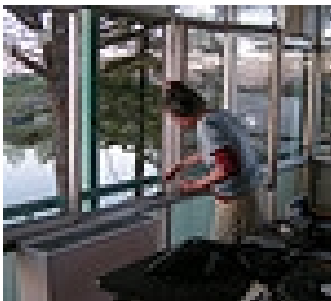
There was no expectation of producing a piece, and present it at the end of the week, so we had quite a big freedom in just being.

And anyhow, we had had the plan to have this as our holiday, and do day trips to the sea side (which we did).

So, I started experimenting among other things with piezos (contact microphones);

I use them from time to time, nothing new, technologically speaking.

One working space there had a many many windows, and their sockets were made of metal.



It seemed logical to fix the piezos on that structure and listen, bring it to vibration and expand the space by listening to its metal vibrants.

After a while I started walking around in the whole building, looking for more and integral parts of the building, on the roof, outside, behind the bar.

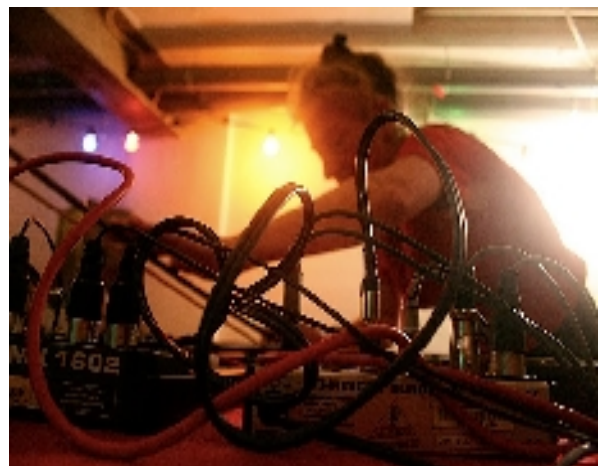
At this point, I was not sure what to make out of the whole: ok, the sound was interesting. But: structurally – at this point – I would not know, how to handle this whole situation as my instrument: the building, something completely stable, that I cannot just take with me; the instrumentalization: contact microphones and a bow, facing away from a potential audience? Not very intriguing. Not polite. And towards whom would I focus my energy?

I was definitely thinking about a performance situation.

How does the conceptualization of a performance work? Which are the essential settings?

The /etc in Amsterdam, in May 2008, gave me the surrounding to test this.

With the dancer Noha Ramadan, we agreed to explore the space of the performance itself (the Plantage-Dok), and decided during our only rehearsal, to focus on certain parts of the space available. I would concentrate on the metal structure of the stairs leading from the groundfloor to the basement, where Noha was.



I realized: if the instrument is so huge that I have to wander around, I cannot play it as a live set. Or at least I cannot play only with the building itself during the performance. So, this was what I decided to do, when the collective Ningunlugar invited me to join their 2nd Generatech gettogether in Barcelona.



The preparation was to listen to the building and record these different findings.



The second phase was to work on the recordings, decide a sequence, and then think about the combination with my other instruments: a sewing machine – the daily live object, representative of “the thing, everybody knows”; the world receiver – symbol of the invisibility of a constant stream of information that we are actually also crossing through, and at the same time the connectedness to the outer world, that anyhow exists; and: my electric bass, the “known instrument”. Sort of my backup. So, these sounds would be my orchestra.



How does perception work?
 When can I call an
 appropriation an act of
 resistance, a resistive act?
 Which form of
 misappropriation leads to
 "Erkenntnis"
 (understanding, insight,
 enlightenment)
 Wie funktioniert
 Wahrnehmung? Wann ist
 Aneignung ein
 widerständiger Akt?
 Welche Zweckentfremdung
 führt zu Erkenntnis?

The invitation to Barcelona in July 2008 gave me the possibility to experiment with my "orquestra" and expand the range of integration of the building. The open invitation expressed by the people of ningunlugar put me in a stage of freedom, and I remembered Alfred Andersch *"...before you take the decision, you are in the situation of freedom; then after taking it, you have to face the consequences..."*

So, I asked myself:

What is perception?

How does perception work, what do we perceive at all?

How do we look at and especially listen to our surroundings?

And how can we widen the known sets of this perception?

I personally think, there is no need for repetition; performances once thought and acted out are over, they are done. The question and challenge is: how can I tell a story, how has a narrative to look like/feel like, so that people can relate to it? Or: how do I have to tell the story so that people can relate to it?

I realized: I needed myself to be photographed/filmed in it, so that it would be visible = readable right away where the sounds come from, how they are generated.

I asked Claudia O. from ningunlugar to take photos of me during the preparation phase and display them during the performance the next evening.

In this summer, 2008, the artists group h.arta, based in Timisoara, invited me to join their *Femimins*, their project at the time. We have been working together in many different ways. So, when they spoke out this really open invitation to come, be part of their project *feminisme.ro* and realize a new piece in the way that I want it, I asked myself, how we could combine our ways, methods and possibilities to deal with space. Again with a very open invitation, *"to realize a project I would want to work on in the moment"*.

How could that be anything else than developing the structure, the idea, the concept of PtB further?

And again I was faced with the challenge to confront me with the freedom offered, decide and deal with the consequences of my decisions.

PALTIM - Playing the Building Timisoara "Inside Paltim" and "The Corridor" came out of that.



It is the political, cultural and artistic space that we are constantly modelling by the things we do. The space that we live in is influenced by the actions that we take or do not take. So, the research for an abandoned industrial space (like PALTIM) in a city becomes a question of access. Using such a space as a place for artistic production means to widen its functionality. And to realize this without time pressure, like for a public showing right after production, means to be able to focus on the piece, on the work, and not on its representation.

For Timisoara, I asked my friend and artist Nicole Pruckermayr to come with me to film what I am doing and then edit the materials together that would emerge.

In the two videos that came out, the sound is a mixture of my realtime composing and the sound(s) the camera picks up, daily life sounds. So there is a disolution of inside and outside, it is all merging together.



Again the question: how does perception work? When can I call an appropriation an act of resistance, a resistive act? Which form of misappropriation leads to "Erkenntnis" (understanding, insight, enlightenment)

Wieder die Frage: wie funktioniert Wahrnehmung? Wann ist Aneignung ein widerständiger Akt? Welche Zweckentfremdung führt zu Erkenntnis?



The video is not edited - and with the moving image you can see that it is "realtime" in the sense of not altered afterwards; like: it could be live broadcast this way. Although, there are of course the times in between each miniature to the next. We took as much time to set up the next station as we needed, and these parts are not filmed/documentated. This makes it different from a documentary, it is not a making-of.

Hm, and "realtime" does not seem to be the right term here either, maybe I can find something more fitting.

What I try to say is:

I think, if it were sound only, it would be very hard to tell that there is no further intervention with electronics, or several soundsources used at the same time. So, I have this idea, notion, that together with the image you can see that the sound research/miniature composition happens in this moment, it has a directness that astonishes me myself as well.

It is like: it cannot be repeated.

And at the same time I try to get as close to the physicality of these parts of the building - the space dimension, if you will; and also to the "now", the moment, the immediacy as the time dimension, which is here --- and gone already.



I started walking around in the whole building, looking for more and integral parts of this and other buildings. Since then I have been looking for interesting buildings - from their sounding and acoustic point of view. Everything can be an instrument, all sorts of composition of sound and noise are possible; it is a matter of looking at places in a different way. It is a way of listening differently.

After working at Paltim, I questioned myself, if it could be possible to realize a performance, using the possibilities of a building without adding any other sound sources, as I had done it before in Barcelona.

The research and experience in Timisoara had actually given me the experience and trust into the reliability of the concept Playing the Building. With the realization and the findings during PALTIM I found the principles of PtB strong and stable enough to abstract it into a simple set of rules that enable me (and for that: anybody else) to look at my surroundings in yet another way, spaces to be explored.

This is why I decided to participate in SocialSoundSystems, curated by Andrea Sodomka, in Winter/Spring 2009/2010.

In this series of “Music in Public Space”, I play on a waterpowerplant, at Hammerhof, in a little village called Unterzeiring. As a first step I did a performance there to explain how the system PtB works.



Following will be a sound installation around and with the waterpowerplant.



And this is also why I had the courage to go to Poitiers with only a few days time to work and realize a sound performance with sounds and materials only from Le Carre Bleu, at makeart2009, invited by Marloes de Valk.



PS: If I remember it right, the situation Alfred Andersch describes in his book, when the question of freedom comes into play, is: whether or not to steel cherries.