

ROOMS FOR PROJECTIONS : LES TRANSPORTS DE L'IMAGE DU VISITEUR *

The project for this opening exhibition of Le Fresnoy, Studio National des Arts contemporains, is related to some main conditions of the given space, the architectural concept by Bernard Tschumi and the most economic way of building temporary structures in existing main halls.

First of all, the building is a reconversion of former entertainment halls dated from 1925, where the social context of the Sunday-leisure with dancing halls and "pattinoires" was very important. It is located in Tourcoing, a town in the Lille-regio in France. This regio suffers a lot of unemployment, so the French Government decided to give some new inputs. One of them was the whole Lille-Center townplanning with the TGV-railroad station, a concept by Rem Koolhaas, the "Carrefour" by Jean Nouvel, some towers by Christian de Portzamparc and others.

In 1990 an architectural competition for the renovation of the still existing spaces of Le Fresnoy, one of the last "Grand Travaux" by president Mitterrand, was won by the American/French architect Bernard Tschumi. His concept consists in the idea of all-over "*in-between*"-spaces inside and outside the building. The main space is the whole "*entre-deux*" between the old hall roofs and the new roof built all over the existing volumes where new functions could be integrated such as terraces, small "*follies*" and others.

Two of the three main halls remain as exhibition spaces, the last one is the new movie theater. All these spaces are necessary for the main events of Le Fresnoy, partly a museum, partly a school and specified in moving images. This center is directed by the French artist Alain Fleischer. The concept of the new extension was to enlarge the building with new functional requested volumes and also adding some possibilities for other main leisure-events on new concepts.

Starting from the difficulty to project video- and movie-installations in spaces which are in-between and where there is no control of light, the main classical idea of a structure with separated "*rooms*" is requested. So a link with the very traditional system of the museum-concept as elaborated in the 19th century is introduced again through the modernistic fluid way of nowadays plans.

Secondly, there are the costs of these ever changing temporary installations. One can imagine there are no unlimited concepts for exhibitions. On the first hand an exhibition can be taken over out of another museum, in the second idea a total intervention in the space can be done by the artist, a third one can be that the whole space is basis for a new intervention and the fourth is the building of enclosed rooms to install the pieces of art. For this last one the idea of closed spaces to build up nearly every year for another show do generate a concept of prefabricated modules in which all techniques could be placed. This results in volumes of 3.00 m height, 1.50 m in length and 0.75 m in depth. This thickness of the walls is all thus very important. Not only all the techniques can be placed into these walls, also some installations such as tv-monitors and videoscreens can be worked out in the volume while one passes all through without disturbing the inner room-spaces. This thickness gives at the same time an image of strongness, of classic tradition on to the global "*irritating*" concept of "*in-between*".

Thirdly, and more specific for the opening exhibition of Le Fresnoy "*Projections, les Transports de l'image*", there are the requested floor surfaces and heights of the installations. A sequence of rooms is worked out so each visitor sees a "*travelling*" while looking at the exhibition, starting from one of the main installations: Michael Snow's "*Two Sides to Every Story*" (1974) and ending with Atom Egoyan's "*Early Development*" (1997) in which movie and video are coming together, even disturbing the visitor's way of seeing.

For not losing any orientation through the exhibition, a corridor collects some of the openings towards the installation rooms. So the visitor holds to the same known image from the entry to the exit. Twice he's disturbed by his "*flânerie*" in darkness but returns always to the main space, an idea of vertebral column, of a so called "*galleria*". Along this space some texts are placed on the floor surface. A wall in translucent polycarbonate which reflects some external

light and an horizontal TL-strip guide everyone in this corridor of the new structure. The placing of the columns makes the grid of the existing structure of 1925 more visible as a basic matrix, so a connection with the history of the building is done.

The "*placing*" of the works is indicated by the height of three installations which need a height of 4.50 m. An A-B-A-B-A matrix is introduced so the new volume in his whole works towards a "interval" sequence-structure in the main hall. The height of 4.50 m. not only refers to the economics of the panels for the prefabricated walls, but also to the height of the uppergalleries of this big hall.

All of the installations are elaborated following a well defined order. In the first (small) hall *-la petite nef-* one of the first historical "machine de lumière" "*La lanterne magique*" is placed in confrontation with a text by Diderot. In the second (big) hall *-la grande nef-* the new space provides the following sequence : Michael Snow - Henri Foucault - Jozef Robakowski - Patrick Bokanowski et Christoph Cardoen dit Pitch - Jean-Pierre Bertrand - Alain Fleischer - Atom Egoyan. In some aside space underneath the cinema the work of Bill Seaman is placed. This interactive installation with the Zentrum für Kunst und Medien in Karlsruhe is requesting an other environment, while the work of Anne-Marie Jugnet et Alain Clairet "*22 v'la le siècle*" is placed on the terraces in the "*entre deux*"-space. It consists in some flags announcing the new century but also the new streetnumber of Le Fresnoy (22), a french wordplay which is used also for some whatever emergency calls.

The given volumes, modules and techniques are now used for other events in the main hall and with the same event purposes. In 1999 the "*La Voix*" (*Voices*) exhibition is held based on the same idea of integrated "*rooms*" although these are more separated from each other and stand individual as a system. Where in the "*Projections*"-show all the outer walls were painted in a light greyish color, nearly the same as the concrete floor and the interiors of the rooms are painted black, excepted the Pitch-room which is painted in dark green, brown and blue, in the "*La Voix*"-show the outer wall is painted in dark greenish grey to contrast with the more brilliant inner walls in broken white and to unify the whole concept. The new exhibition "*Fables du lieu*" (2001) with works by James Turrell, Giuseppe Penone and others starts again from the main idea of one connected volume in which an "*enfilade*" of installations, distortions and irritations are elaborated to make the visitor more sensible for every piece.

All of the room-installations for the mentioned exhibitions are related on the same attitude of an a-priori non-architecture. Starting from a series of conditions and limits, some concepts are worked out to give strength on the given art-concept by the curator. Like in many of the new architectures, spaces for art do not show themselves, they give a "*plateau*" for the art pieces and are putting themselves on a certain distance. Nevertheless they are absent in a way one can deny their presence and vice-versa. Absent in presence. Present in absence. It is a notion of knowing what is important, in knowing the order of things. It is totally opposite to the fin-de-siècle attitude where architecture is becoming a fashion victim taken by the media. This is the true way and reason of architecture: first we need to build. It is the mind of "*buildingness*"***: referring to the american artist Robert Ryman saying "*In my work it's all about painting*" one can think furtheron that for architects "*In our work it's all about building*".

Christian Kieckens, october 2000

* translated : *Räume für Projektionen : Transporte von das Bild der Zuschauer*

** notion worked out with the american artist Dan Walsh