

KUEHN MALVEZZI

THE PRODUCTION SHOW

In the essay “Studio and Cube”, Brian O’Doherty analyses the relationship between the place where art is produced and the place where art is shown, indicating a moment where the two coincide. O’Doherty describes how in 1964 Lucas Samaras reconstructed part of his studio in the Green Gallery in New York, observing that in Samaras’s work the art gallery space is inundated by the mythologies of the atelier that historically precede those of the white cube. By placing his studio in the gallery, he deliberately makes the two places coincide, subverting their dialogue.

But it is not the transfer of the atelier that is decisive as much as the extension of the production process, or rather the identification of the art gallery as a non-finite space.

Dieter Roth is the artist who has done the most to eradicate any confine between production and exhibition, making works that evolve while on show and after, involving his son Björn in the never-ending transformation of the works, even after his death. In his use of biodegradable organic materials, he wanted to go against the collector’s efforts of preservation. He then fundamentally managed to challenge the assumption of the artwork defined by materials, dimensions and date of production.

His work *Tischruine* originated on his work table in Stuttgart in 1970 and was then transformed, enlarged and changed in various situations for public places until 1998; the *Gartenskulptur* has existed since 1968 and is in transformation still today. It currently belongs to the Friedrich Christian Flick Collection at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin.

Following the installation of both the Gartenskulptur in Berlin in 2004 and the Tischruine at Documenta 11 in 2002, we established the difference between the installation of the sculpture atelier in a historic museum and in an ex-warehouse. In Kassel, the relationship between process and space remained a problem, giving the sensation of a suspended moment in the vitality of the Tischruine inside the Museum Fridericianum; while in Berlin the Gartenskulptur was born inside the Rieckhallen, an industrial space we had adapted to a new use. Björn Roth lived for a month inside the museum space, working with his assistants on the installation, without defining an endpoint in terms of space and time. The white cube has remained indifferent to the artistic process that, however, distinguishes the Rieckhallen. (Image 1)

Invisible Architecture

If the origin of the exhibition space is the atelier and it is the artist who determines the place that becomes the model for galleries and museums, observing how the production of art has evolved today can help to understand the logic and forms of the museum of tomorrow. The classic atelier still exists marginally, while artistic practice occupies everyday spaces of all kinds, often the most normal ones, becoming an activity that is less artisan and more conceptual: the office thus becomes the contemporary atelier. In 1974 Warhol had already substituted The Factory with The Office and in 1978 the Kippenbergers Büro opened in Berlin. Thirty years later we can see the first museums located in administrative buildings as well as in industrial ones. The Stedelijk CS, the temporary premises of the major Amsterdam museum, is located in a high-rise block that was previously the post office headquarters, while Anselm Franke and Hila Peleg have chosen in 2008 the post offices in Trento as an exhibition location for Manifesta 7, which they curated and where KUEHN MALVEZZI redesigned the space. (Image 2)

More generally, the insecurity of the place that distinguishes artistic activity is increasingly inscribed in institutional activities, as demonstrated by the Fondazione Trussardi in Milan, which over recent years has chosen to exhibit in different locations around the city instead of in its own space. For example the exhibition by Fischli & Weiss at Palazzo Litta, where the combination of decorated rooms with deliberately low lighting and the exhibited works has generated a “clear confusion” between the object and the container, dissolving the confines.

The museum of the future will have two distinct areas which are presently united in the presentation of collections. On the one hand it will be a visitable warehouse such as the Schaulager, resembling a great walk-in wardrobe that takes account of the need for spatial installation of modern and contemporary art and that forms the conservation part of the museum. On the other hand there will be an unpredictable practice of exhibition activity that is no longer linked to pre-established spaces but uncertain and nomadic.

The key to designing an exhibition does not lie so much in the form to give to the space as much as in the form to give to the movement of the participating visitors. This was the concept behind the two winning schemes by KUEHN MALVEZZI in the competitions for the ex- brewery Binding at Documenta 11 curated by Okwui Enwezor (Image 3) and for the Stoschek Collection in a multipurpose building in Düsseldorf (Image 4). In the former a triple matrix of pathways was created and superimposed on 5,000 metres horizontally; in the latter the design consisted in reorganising the whole six-storey building based on a continuous up-ward movement that starts with the cinema in the basement and goes up to the new platform on the roof. As opposed to a theatre performance, the visitor does not look with detachment from a fixed position but determines not only the spatial approach to the exhibited works but also the temporal one: he becomes the

director of his own experience.

The task of architecture is changing. From the visible envelope of the “Bilbao effect” we are moving towards an invisible architecture that has a far more direct relationship with art. The architect is becoming a curatorial designer who uses existing situations and objects like ready-mades to generate new spaces. Design logic is addressed towards the design of perceptive space starting with the visitor, intended as a participant in an event.

IMAGE 1 :

KUEHN MALVEZZI, Flick Collection, Berlin: Diether Roth, GartenSkulptur. Photo Ulrich Schwarz

IMAGE 2:

KUEHN MALVEZZI, Manifesta 7, Trento: Althea Thauberger , La morte e la miseria. Photo Ulrich Schwarz

IMAGE 3:

KUEHN MALVEZZI, Binding Brewery, Documenta 11, Kassel. Photo Ulrich Schwarz

IMAGE 4:

KUEHN MALVEZZI, Julia Stoscheck Foundation, Düsseldorf. Photo Ulrich Schwarz

