

THE STATUS OF THE POLITICAL IN CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

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Statement

The question of regionalism has always been political.

We want to show that this geography functions on another plane in our works. They rather refer to a sort of hyper-geography, where territories move and enter into resonance, beyond cartographies.

Today, regions are taken into fantastic adventures, into connections no one wants and over which we all stumble. Then they decompose into grounds, more or less identified, into buildings, even into architecture. Architecture is in the middle of this behaviour. We suggest experimenting with the relations between news and architecture and with their interferences with memories of places.

It is question of situating oneself on the plane of urban expressivity and not on that of urban expressionism. Architecture is expressive: it changes aspect through events. After I have a decisive meeting on the corner of a street, I no longer see that corner in the same way. Somehow, the event summons up the architecture. It moves in the event. Then this architecture enters into conjunction with the event.

Not all architecture enters into the game. In order for it to be expressive, it should have nothing to say. It is not a neutral architecture, but on the contrary a sensitive architecture, available for the event. One finds here the paradigm of family resemblance. I abruptly see somebody and realize that he looks like my neighbour. A sudden mobilization of memory is made without calculation. When one evokes the reconstruction of a wall fragment as a monument, we suddenly notice that the fences of the nearby construction site are made with the same prefabricated elements as the former Berlin Wall. One needs then the news of the construction of the monument.

Not all urban architecture will be available; this is susceptible to compromise with the current events. Some are too much loaded, not available, and remain closed to any summons. Others are wrapped with emotions, with memories, and will enter into complex montages and therefore change.

A collision between news and architecture will almost involuntarily precipitate an act of memory. A repressive event in China will surreptitiously actualise the symmetry of Karl Marx Allee. The event suddenly actualizes the memories associated with architecture. Susan Sontag says that our memory is made of still images. If it is not fed by images, by photographs, it is much easier to have an amnesia. Architecture and photography procure these still images. Impersonal emotions appear virtually everywhere in the city and address everyone. New connections between material and emotions are to be investigated. They go together with the dissolution of the current status of elements at stake. Architectural expressivity supplants formal determinations. For photography, the stakes of utterance scenes supplant images as such. On the other hand, the flow of news is profoundly dissociated from the sources. These connections are conflictual in particular in terms of their visibilities. It is certain that these connections meet in the relation between art and politics.

Berlin, January 3, 2005.