

Architecture and the Virtual

by Marta Jecu

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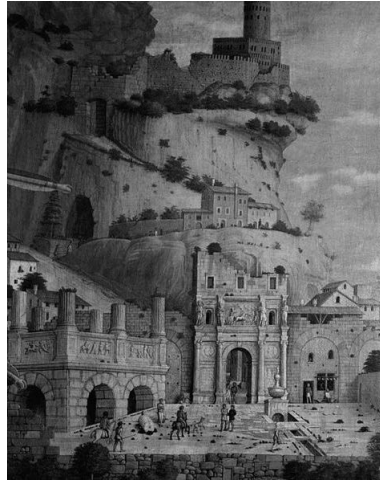


Fig. 0.1: Andrea Mantegna, St. Sebastian, 1480, Musée du Louvre, Paris, Detail ©Public Domain.

Fig. 0.2: Andrea Mantegna, St. Sebastian, 1480, Musée du Louvre, Paris, ©Public Domain.

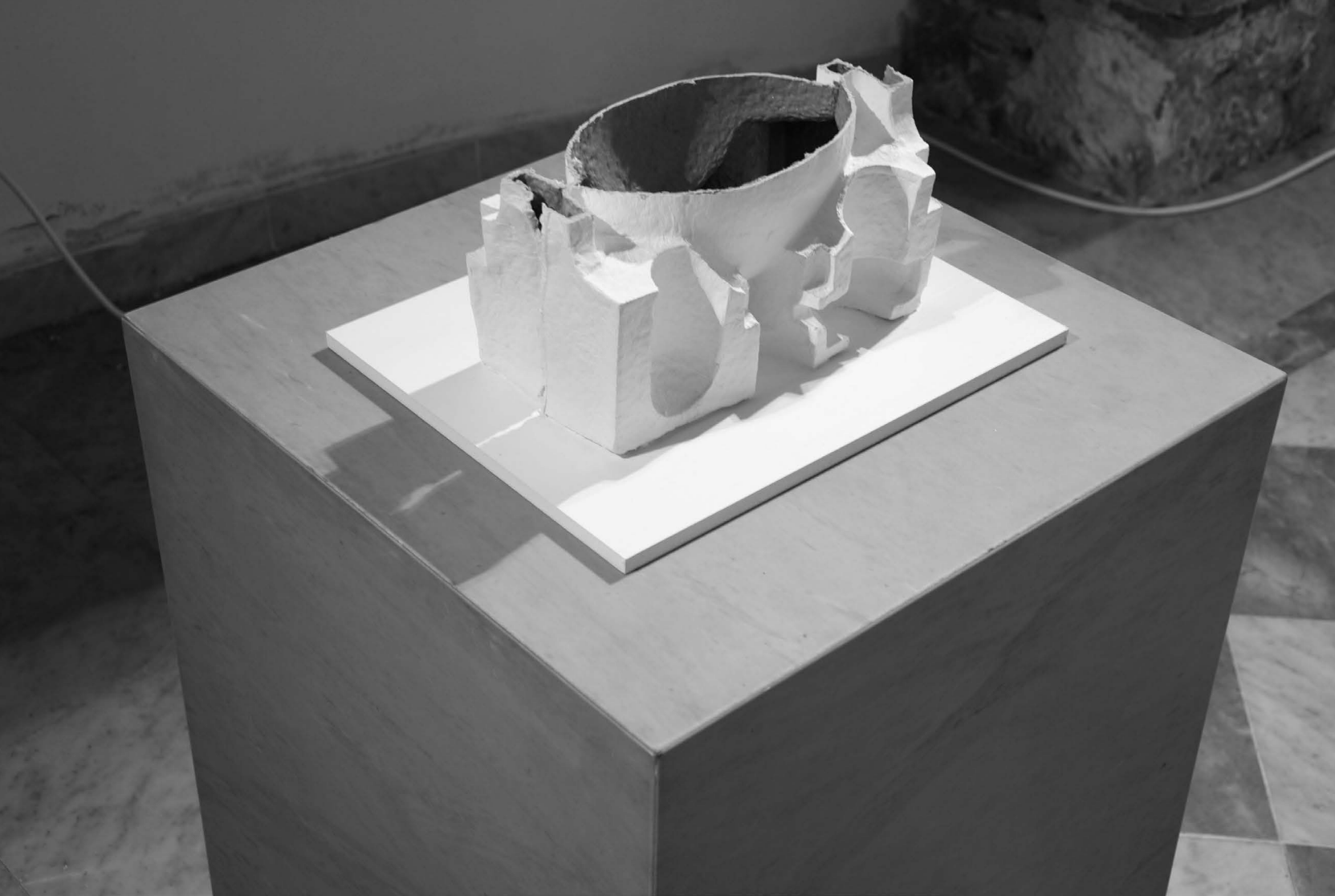


Fig. 0.3: Carlos Bunga, *Espacio Metaforico*, 2010, Cardboard, paint and wood on Carrara marble pedestal, Sculpture at Postmonument: XIV Carrara International Biennale of Sculpture, Carrara, Italia, ©Carlos Bunga.



Fig. 0.4: Carlos Bunga, Espacio Metaforico, 2010, Cardboard, paint and wood on Carrara marble pedestal, Sculpture at Postmonument: XIV Carrara International Biennale of Sculpture, Carrara, Italia, ©Carlos Bunga.

Introduction

The multiple is not only what has many parts, but also what is folded in many ways.

(Deleuze 2006b: 3)

In late medieval painting, the preoccupation with ruins manifested itself by cloaking important religious scenes under the rugged abode of time-eaten ancient colonnades, cracked fronts and almost pulverized arches. Derelict and Roman remains, markers of another era in the history of devotion, are called to spatially situate ‘The Nativity’ or ‘The Adoration of the Magi’ in an eternal present. During the Renaissance, Greek and Roman ruined pieces advanced vigorously to carry entire constructional complexes that sturdily coffer hagiographic allegories in a complex composition of scenes, extracted from the quotidian, which were traced from antique friezes and methodically constructed. The ruin here is the architecture that carries information; it is a reservoir of erudition but most of all of an ancient tradition of urbanity. The well-felt cultural distance in time and space from ancient cosmopolitanism, which endows the ruin with symbolic authority and substance, serves as a theatrical setting, marking an elated reinforcement of the antique past in a Christian, humanist new vision. This structural function of the ruin in Renaissance painting also appears in Andrea Mantegna’s ‘St. Sebastian of the Louvre’ (1480), where the saint is martyred directly against a passionately documented Roman column that is crowned by a heavy capital, his foot replicated by a marble Roman one – symbol of the triumph of Christianity over paganism. This scenographic insight into a narratively-chronicled hyperreality is juxtaposed on a background block of architecture which can be seen in Figure 0.1.

In Figure 0.1, the antique ruins seem to be an osmotic part of a tectonic sedimentation of various ages, with their architectural excrescences. This totally different treatment from the protagonist’s ruin featuring the saint in the main scene; the calibrated measures and organicity devoid of allegorical assertion approximates this architectural detail to an almost modernist reading of form.

At this point, the detail comes close to another almost modernist disclosure of form, Carlos Bunga’s ‘Espacio Metaforico’ (2010). In both cases the fragmentary volumes oscillate between the documentary and the fantastic. Their purity arises from an approach that does not engage architecture either as a setting, or as a referent for an underlying and exterior reality, but eliminates the symbolic and narrative substrata with which architecture can be approached. In the main scene in Andrea Mantegna’s painting, the Roman ruin works as a mark of separation insulating two spiritual eras. The annihilation of one historic age is invested convincingly in the fortification of the

other. Much more fragile, the architectural detail of the right corner of the painting is less dualistic, ignoring the architectural conventions of Christian iconography and its rendition of the dichotomy between transitory matter and eternal spirit. Similarly, Carlos Bunga's sculpture embodies a matter that is equally tellurian, elemental, abstract and essential. The construction reaches a point of indistinction between natural and artificial and, like in the painting, the border between formations of earth and artificially-built forms becomes indiscernible.

These two representations refer back to even older ways of depicting ruined architecture, by connecting it to its past, archetypal forms in time. This is exactly what defines ruins – they shift architecture into a past where it disintegrates into nature, and push nature into becoming a built form. In this sense, ruins not only measure time like a barometer, but also define, situate and perform an active role. Seemingly opposed to the apparent agency of the ruined column of St. Sebastian, it is actually in this detail that an active force of architecture manifests itself, while the past and future of form are shown as propagating and unfolding according to their own terms. Architecture here, and also in the work of Carlos Bunga, seems to represent an accumulation of time that carries other forms, objects and situations within itself. In this sense, both these representations bring with them an apparent sitelessness, which actually discloses the intensity of a virtual dimension with its own reality and agency that is fundamentally specific and responsive in time and space. The viewer stands not in front of an already fabricated symbolic epiphany, but integrated into the work; he is a constituent and real part of it.

The works and discussions gathered here centre around the virtual presence of architecture and the way it enacts with but also produces time. The architectural works of Carlos Bunga, Cristian Rusu, Hironari Kubota, Sancho Silva, Yukihiko Taguchi, and Sinta Werner are drawn together since they make a virtual side of architecture directly experienceable by working with tactile, minimal and conceptual means. At the core of this volume stands the hypothesis of embodying the virtual with analogue means and its possible uses and applicability in the quotidian environment in which these works intervene. The works discussed have simple and clear, almost modernist forms that bring about a return to archetypes of architecture and come very close to the idea of the model. Mostly ephemeral, they are non-symbolic, built around convertible or even empty space, and are non-narrative. At the same time, they elaborate an architecture that surpasses the limitations of the discipline itself and makes momentary interventions and alterations in the immediate urban environment in which it is placed. Social situations are converted and a historic material connected to the built form always comes to the surface.

For capturing the agency of these works, the concept of *catalytic space* is introduced, which delineates a specific approach to space practised in these and similar works. Taken from the field of chemistry, a catalyst is a substance that brings a process into being, through which a chemical reaction will be accelerated. The catalyst remains unconsumed in this process. The term is used here to designate a synthetic conception of built space and is connected to the operative presence of the constructions themselves that unfold an agency: exhibited or performed in a certain context, they determine a row of changes and catapult the configuration of space into structural mutation. Spaces with their specific cultural connotations and social experiences are altered – they are brought in transformation with the involvement of the audience – but in a fluctuating way. Perspectives are opened

upon their different temporary cycles. Therefore the works make a virtual side of architecture tangible, in the sense of temporarily bringing otherwise un-manifested spatial potentialities of the specific situation in which the work intervenes into the actuality of the viewer.

The works manifest a post-digital thinking by incorporating the indistinctiveness between digital and analogue into organic materialities and sensory experiences. The interplay between digital, biological, cultural, and technological elements, between conceptual and real space, between embodied and virtual media are manifestedly post-digital. In this sense, the approach that these works practice makes a clear statement in the debates surrounding the post-digital experience. They demonstrate that the trajectory of digital thinking is continued through crossbreeding with analogue.

In the four chapters I follow up on conditions and means by which the virtual can be directly experienced in the conceptual space. The chapters introduce a plurality of approaches to *virtuality* as it relates to architecture, space and partially design. To argue for the value of an expanded definition of *virtuality* that is not limited to a ubiquitous approach to *digital* as merely computational and parametric, this volume stresses the role of tactile, material, physical and analogue processes in the materialization of the virtual – extracted from interviews and scrutiny in historic sources.

The interviews form the core of this volume. They are framed, on one hand, by an introduction that situates concerns expressed by the interview partners in a larger frame of theoretical and historic reference. On the other hand, they are associated with a collection of images of the artists' works referred to in the interviews. The interviews confer an intensive insight into the artists' manner of thinking and working, and into their approach to architecture. •

Introduction to the content

In *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze (2006b) adopts and further develops Leibniz's term of 'the fold,' a spatial paradigm that is, for him, a philosophical principle. Here Deleuze explains that a building is not one space and one site, but many spaces folded into many sites. This folding of space into other spaces is, for him, architecture: a multiplicity, where everything is always read and re-read but can never be assimilated in its entirety and which, as with any pleat, is a consequence of a movement.

The works invoked in this book show ways in which the accumulation of information layered in an environment, building or situation can be brought to the surface and put into circulation again. This 'moving' of information has various consequences and uses in the quotidian, immediate reality in which these works intervene. It can be experienced ephemerally due to the agency that the works put into motion. The artists work with processes of destruction and reconstruction of representation, but also with transpositions of situations, objects and images from one media to another (for example from performance into video, from sculpture into performance). The works show how superimposed layers of information – the virtual presence of a built environment – can be used by the audience and urban passers-by.

On the line of thought initiated by Gilles Deleuze, the virtual is not understood as an illusion, or as an altered copy of reality, but as a fluctuating, temporary manifestation of the existing potentialities of a certain situation. As will be shown below, Deleuze has described the virtual as a *presence*, which, though situated in proximity to our material reality, has not been actualized. Following Henri Bergson, Deleuze regards the possible as the correlative of the real, since it will transform itself into reality and is no more than a past form of what later became real. In place of this relationship, Deleuze proposes the virtual and the actual; the virtual is real, but has no actuality in the present; the actual has no resemblance to the virtual – it neither limits it nor selects from it, as happens in the other equation.

In this sense the works presented in this volume temporarily actualize a world that is real, but has no actuality in the present – the world of potentialities of matter and of architecture. Making these perceivable determines a rethinking of the situation in which the works are inserted, with immediate cultural and social implications, which will be described in the interviews gathered here.

The virtual–actual relationship on which the works are based can be understood as their structuring layer. I connect the oscillation between these two states in the following chapters with different aspects, which are all drawn to explain how the experience of the virtual is possible with immediate, almost bricolage tools. Recent theories of post-conceptualism discuss the recuperation of the image, after its dissolution that the avant-garde aimed for and partially attained. As will be shown, the experience of the virtual here is connected on one hand to the consistent material presence that a post-conceptual approach brings. On the other hand, it is also connected to a new tendency, which is here interpreted as post-digital, that applies the thinking on the virtual of the digital age to minimal, almost modernist tools of representation. This material proximity that the works unfold in relation to

a viewer is performative. Without superimposing video projections, sensors etc. on architecture, but rather by taking an analogue approach rooted in conceptualism and related to the early minimalism of the avant-garde, this approach to space is the result of an assimilation of the virtual experience, launched by the digital era with its juxtaposition and indistinctiveness between real and virtual.

It is also the interactions brought by the digital era that initiate the viewer in becoming a participant in this performative, enhanced reality, while being himself transformed and becoming part of the art object. The conception of the virtual, expressed by the artists in the following interviews, recalls again the vision of Gilles Deleuze of the virtual as a *dimension of experience*. Actualization of spatial potentialities takes place by involving the correlation between the recipient and the work in a determined social context. At the same time, through their performative agency, the works gain an independence from their creator, the artist, and take on an unpredictable course of development, which reflects the non-auctorial positioning of the authors towards their own works. The agency and the transformations of these installations in the social space will be illustrated in the interviews on pages 132–148.

Another idea that this volume proposes and that I approach in the second chapter is that the specific understanding of architecture that results from these works represents a late materialization of the philosophical architecture of Jacques Derrida, for which the discipline itself did not find a functional solution in the 1980s.

Introduction to the structure

This volume is structured in four chapters with their own theoretical background, which complement each other and the ideas expressed in the interviews. Issues like performativity, deconstructivism, conceptualism and theories of the virtual, which are mentioned in the analytical introduction and which build the four chapters, reflect the multiplicity of influences and materials that the artists are working with. The fully quoted discussions with the artists and the gallerists Noam Braslavsky, Daniel Lima and Michael Krome, conducted over a three-year time period, are less oriented towards presenting their work or professional history, but instead pursue perspectives of their creative and conceptual universe, while conferring the reader access into the thinking of these personalities. Instead of constructing a direct reinforcement of the theoreticians' texts with the artists' statements and works (or vice versa), this book stresses rather multiple points of conjunction between their ideas and those of other thinkers (artists or scholars) based on historic, theoretical or philosophical criteria. The discussions with the artists are regarded themselves as theoretical sources in the consideration of the virtual, therefore they are given an equal weight to the other sources in the economy of book. The chapters are a confrontation with the questions highlighted by the personal preoccupations of the artists; therefore, the theoretical input does not exhaust a specific theory, but rather points to associated contexts in literature and debate in order to suggest some directions in which these concerns can be further pursued. Small parts of interviews are also often quoted in the body of the text. They usually originate from interviews that are not included in the rest of the book and are meant to reinforce

the argument.

The first chapter is dedicated to the comprehension of performativity as the quality of a work to manifest itself actively in a certain environment just by being there. The reading of performativity made by Dorothea von Hantelmann is invoked, which throws light on the way in which the environmental and immersible qualities of these constructions become *experienceable* for the audience and unfold their agency. I link interactivity, understood in the digital era as the capacity to access, participate and intervene in a foreign reality, to the possibility of producing the *new* in a certain concrete situation. As will be seen from the description of the works and from the interviews, the news that the works generate manifests itself in most of the situations through an event, which alters the quotidian course of action in an unexpected way.

In the second chapter I will get close to the notion of deconstructivism and sketch its essential role in contemporary thinking, starting with the postmodern current of the late 1980s. My intention is to propose the idea that recent conceptual works offer an accurate materialization of the architectural project of Derrida, formulated some decades ago. The deconstructive theory of Jacques Derrida, having been at that point transposed in a rather formal way into postmodern architecture, now finds a new form of existence in these performative and highly conceptual works of art. Although not making programmatic reference to Derrida's theory of a new architecture, these built forms meet Derrida's thinking and offer solutions to Derrida's philosophical proposals: they surpass the function of habitation, are transformative and essentially structured like an event – attributes that Derrida associated with the deconstructive 'architectural experience'.

In my attempt to identify means by which the experience of the virtual can take place, I draw in the third chapter on conceptualism and post-conceptualism. I consider the legacy of a certain direction in the neo-avant-gardes, a direction that placed high value on the material qualities of objects, especially relevant, partially by means of documentation. Based on the outcomes of the interviews, I will trace a connection between on one hand the minimal and conceptual art of the neo-avant-garde as tendencies of art's own dissolution into pure idea, which is related to the virtual (as something being there, but not in reality), and on the other hand documentation as a way to establish a relation to the context and its immediate material presence. Yves Klein, the German artists' group Zero, and the neo-avant-garde experiments of the Japanese Gutai group are all brought up as references by the artists during the discussion of their works. Similar to the works discussed here, the Gutai artists put processes of matter into motion without the narrative or symbolic content that still characterized other contemporary experiments of the neo-avant-garde.

The conceptual approach of the recent works discussed here, is often based on documentary practices, which have their roots in the neo-avant-garde's demolished representation. Documentation is a destructive intervention on the objects, their time and their image, which is inherited from even earlier, from what Walter Benjamin understands as the modern trauma of visuality.

In the fourth chapter the means by which the processes of the actualization of the virtual takes place become central. I will evoke notions like the ruin, the event and the simulacrum, that play a decisive role in

a number of interviews. Carlos Bunga, for example, considers his works simulacra of architecture. Even his actions are for him simulacra of destruction and construction processes. Simulacrum, as a copy without a model, is therefore a means by which the new can be realized in reference to the real and has a specific regenerating power in the context in which it appears. It is a virtual real since virtuality (as it is understood by Gilles Deleuze) represents an approximation of the real that is not actual, and that deviates from reality. I follow Carlos Bunga's ideas and approximate the architectural environments that appear in this volume to simulacra, since they function as documents of what spaces could have been under other conditions. I will draw again on the role of documentation, which simultaneously records and produces reality in an event-like way therefore offering concrete solutions in specific social environments.

I will trace also a brief history of the young concept of post-digital, a term which I consider essential for the approach to the virtual which results from these works. Their ideas and solutions, as well as the interviews in this book fill the little theorized notion with a new content. They project a direction in which the thinking of the virtual catalysed by the digital could further unfold.

Introduction to the works

The works discussed here do not share the same formal vocabulary since they generate in different preoccupations with space and the built form, but they are all concerned with the agency and capacities of space. These mostly analogous constructed environments disclose a side of architecture that functions as an archive of time, and a sum of various past and future spatial configurations. Without constructing narrative subjects, or augmenting the real with illusory effects, they deal with the virtual through their concern with creating and making visible a multiplicity of potentialities of architectures and spaces that surpass a given time-space framework. Still, as will be shown, this virtual is not connected to the creation of an artificial environment of infinite possibilities, but instead emerges by involving everyday material from the social and cultural environment in which these site-specific works are situated, therefore formulating a polemic or political agency in their environment. The works come also close to design, creating new functions for the existing spaces, while giving concrete solutions for the optimizing of certain environments or by offering a new interpretation to spatial hierarchy.

This analogue approach to the virtual, connected to minimalism and the abstractions of conceptualism, mostly assumes very simple, manual forms of manifestation and traverses various media identities. The works can encompass at the same time architectural models and the spoken word, installation and staged discourse and drawing, animation and sculpture. By substituting video with a camera obscura, Sancho Silva, for example, scrutinizes what an analogue image is and techniques of observance connected to architectural form. He also uses basic building techniques to construct multifunctional wooden units that blur the distinction between sculpture and architecture, private and public space, but also actual and virtual living space.

The works are not especially innovative from a formal perspective; they cite paradigmatic architectural forms

but understand architecture as transcending its physical borders. As Boris Groys demonstrates, in his book 'Art Power' (2008), there is no difference between new and old at the level of visibility, in the sense that it is not possible to create a total difference in relation to what has been before. Groys explains that contemporary artwork operates with the 'different' rather than with the 'new', and places more emphasis on the context than on an absolute formal innovation.

Carlos Bunga often mentions that he does not conceive of his own working process with space as an auctorial performance (in the sense of space being a container for his own innovative acts and for creating a new artistic product), but as a way of making visible for an audience the intrinsic potentialities that space itself carries. His idea has been an inspiration for this book. His works, whose meaning cannot be located in a final product, are built by him of fragile materials, such as cardboard and tape, in a complex, time-consuming and manual process. He sometimes destroys his space-filling installations, even before the opening of an exhibition. Construction and destruction, with which he approaches sculpture and drawing, provoke modifications of the qualities of objects, accelerate or slow down time and map an initial object *in absentia*. He projects space by negating it, while he exposes gaps in signification, architectonic remains, which belong to a time of the 'after'.

'*Um-Räumen*', re-spacing space, is what Yukihiro Taguchi is doing with space. As with the other artists, he is redefining the composition of space in various media. He brings architecture into movement by decomposing it progressively and letting its parts travel in space. Then he reconstructs them in videos that use the stop-motion technique and reveal a space of their own. Without bringing anything new into space and without taking any existing element out of space, he is focusing on the relationships that emerge between its different elements, and which determine self-generating processes that construct his work in time. Taguchi lets the space shift from one situation into another, until different possibilities of its inner relationships manifest themselves concretely. His row of works 'Moments' deconstructs existing buildings and lets their elements wander around the city, by constructing other functional installations with them at every new station. This *operative* space in his interventions is always connected with human presence, seen in a social or a very intimate hypostasis. Spaces appear through our relationship with them, through the movements of the city, and his installations begin to function in a very concrete way through these interrelated forces.

Sancho Silva is working with the dismantling of pre-connoted constructed space, involving, in particular, vision and its cultural determinants. His works are tautological up to the point that they become non-existent. His installations may consist of various entrances to the work, of hidden mechanisms, which sustain and at the same time destroy the constructed space, and of machines or cabins, which simultaneously direct vision upon the city and upon the mechanisms themselves. His analogue, minimal and architectonic spaces are performative, in the sense that they call into presence political, historical and social systems of reference in distorted reflections. His works seem to become *indispensable* for the constitution of meaning of these culturally charged reference frames. In a subtle interplay of authority between subject and subjected, his constructed space disappears in spatial and temporal conjunctions, which Silva dismantles and de-conspires.

The work of Hironari Kubota is a mixture of elements of ancestral beliefs from Japanese culture and industrial and postindustrial elements, and it brings to life rituals and acts that are re-signified by the artist according to his own contemporary spirituality. Kubota creates architectures of various gyrating objects at high velocity until he completely destroys their initial identity, delimiting a recovered space that releases a virgin symbolic capital. He spins cars, boats and idols or bringing into movement huge handmade industrial machines – mammoths from another era – while imprints of animist worship get superposed with the traces of our own consumed civilization. He literally breaks the iconographic context of the image and frees the object from its temporal determination. In the spinning performances the objects seem to lose their self, as they leave behind their shape, their contours, their materiality. Almost flying, these initially inert, dense and massive objects are completely dissipated while not only their functionality but their representation itself is momentarily abolished. During the spinning process, Kubota uses popular music from Japan, which is played back by him with a modified rhythm and pitch, in a slight counter-movement with the rotations of his spinning objects. His shows determine the return of the individual to himself and formulate a symbolic rejuvenation of the object, a post-object in an altered time-space framework, which releases a certain tension. This oscillation of the mutated objects transgresses the given reality and reaches into an impossible condition, one that affirms a new and freed object that is beyond visual conventions. While working with the forces that are latent in the elements, he uses minimal techniques and addresses the problem of the fundamental devices of ‘form giving.’ The heavy sculptures begin to move in an elementary manner, but with a temporality that seems to belong to foreign cycles. Hironari Kubota constructs his artworks during many months of continuous work. Nevertheless his performances only last about 30 minutes, during which elements of urban pop culture mix with ritualistic religious moments and a contemporary architectural and sculptural vision. His works are intensive and do not take into account conventional frameworks of significance, surpassing genres yet expressing a futuristic and at the same time archaeological vision of materiality, movement and spatial definition.

Sinta Werner explores the domain of the optical illusion in sculptural installations that reproduce reality, feigning its apparent continuity, imponderability and fluidity with concrete, persistent materiality. She works with a space that is built with the instruments of the real, but differs imperceptibly from it. In her works, illusion is a provocative medium of reality analysis that moves beyond the mirror-effect and becomes a reflexion on the collision between reality and surreality.

Cristian Rusu starts working with space through what he calls *spatial clichés*. These are not so much stereotypes as they are cultural imprints on forms of representation and perception, which transport an implicit, historically-shaped, ideological load. His search is directed towards utopia – mental constructions, which are impossible to create materially, yet which function with persuasive power and come near to the aesthetic category of the sublime. Among other media, Cristian Rusu, like Carlos Bunga, works with architectural models, which question the laws of spatial representation. He represents architecture by oscillation of the basic form, which is

connected to the multiplication and migration of architectural forms in time and with the cultural memory they convey. This subtle imbalance creates a disjunction between space and time and the specific rhythms thereof. It raises the question of instability of value, and makes a subtle subversive manoeuvre that abstracts the processes through which cultural identity is stated in architecture.

The way these spaces lead the narrative content of a given situation and of concrete experiences into abstraction brings a register of intensity and is a meditation on destruction and decay over time. The works keep the clarity of elementary forms, but like ruins, they carry a thick history of material presence and a history of cultural form. They embody paradigmatic architectural elements, which resonate with the fluctuating limits of the discipline itself, which revisit the same shapes every time with new content: essential architectural moulds, which now cannot be considered beyond the heavy sedimentation of connotations acquired thus far. •

CHAPTER 1

Intensity: Performativity and the virtual

I am for my work, what is called in traditional Japanese theatre, a kuroko: a character, all dressed in black (his face is covered too), who assists the theater from the backstage, who prepares the stage, who gives directions to the actors and sometimes appears on the stage, but always remains unnoticed. Without his presence in the background the theatre could not move forward. Still he has to always stay hidden, even though he appears in the foreground. This is the best position that I could take for my work. If I mingle too much with my work, then I will make a work about myself, but I would like to keep the work, as work, always in the foreground. My work exists only with the presence of the audience, without them my work would not be possible. I wish for the audience to act inside my work, without me taking an authoritarian role in this process. The audience and myself, we can be both actors in this play. To do this, one of my strategies is to upload my films and the documentation of my work onto YouTube. Everyone can re-use my works, appropriate them, as with any other material.

(Taguchi 2008)

Besides being site-specific and reacting to a specific cultural or political context, the works reproduced in this volume subsume simultaneously a multiplicity of possibilities that an initial situation can carry and surpass the limits of the present by addressing various temporal layers. Performativity is a key concept that is mentioned frequently during the discussions quoted here. It is a means of explaining how a mostly analogue, minimally built environment can transmit a virtual dimension, capable of being experienced, that expands the space beyond its sphere of visibility in the present. Performativity establishes a connection between the work and its environment, and embodies the effects upon its surroundings that it influences and shapes. These performative architectures are therefore temporary, fluctuating and subject to change. In considering these works, and in the talks with the artists about their approach to architecture and site-specificity, the *reality that a work generates* stays at the core of these discussions. It will be shown in the following pages in which way performativity is seen as the agency by which the virtual can temporarily actualize and how this is thought of, in conjunction with an already assimilated digital experience.

In 'Moment' (2008), Yukihiro Taguchi's first piece from 'Moments', a series of works that he calls 'performative', he lifted up the wooden floor panels of the gallery and constructed with them every day another installation inside the gallery. One hundred additional drawings showed possibilities of arrangements for the wooden bars. The gallery changed into a landscape of slopes, which seemed a cityscape, an archaeological site or a street in construction, while the panel installations could be used for table tennis, a cinema, a party setting or a large dinner table, on which Taguchi himself served sushi. In 'Moment. Performatives Spazieren' (2008) he decided to take the wood panels outside of the gallery into public space, and mingled them with various objects or constructions found on the streets of Berlin Kreuzberg. Every day he constructed new functional installations with them, which were usable and became urban furniture that generated their own social practices.

Brief historic overview of the term

The term 'performativity' comes from John Austin in his 1955 lecture 'How to do Things with Words' (Austin 1962) where he defines a 'performative utterance' as one that should not be considered true or false from the point of view of its content, but from the point of view of the factual realization of the action, which it describes verbally. In this case speaking is doing. The performative utterance brings an action into being, solely through its expression. Although Austin is excluding art in his consideration, his theory had a decisive role in art theory and slightly preceded the movement of the avant-gardes. Austin excludes all the arts, and, with reference to the theatrical field, suggests: 'a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy'. (Austin 1962: 22). Theatrical/artistic utterances are not included by him in the performative utterances he envisions, since they do not represent 'normal' speech. Therefore theatrical utterances cannot realize that which they express: 'Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use' (Austin 1962: 22). Nevertheless, Austin's theory has determined the emergence of the 'performative turn' in various cultural arenas. Transferred into the domain of the visual arts it brought the understanding that alone through the existence of a work, through its self-assertion, its expressive potential manifests and can influence its environment.

Recent approaches that regard theoretical argumentation from the point of view of its dramatic and aesthetic value also have as a starting point the performativity of any type of utterance. Austin's book is considered as having made a step in this direction, by not only exposing a theory, but by also performing it: the rhetoric of his argumentation has been seen as



Fig. 1.1-3: Yukihiro Taguchi, Moment, 2008, Galerie Air Garten, Berlin, ©Yukihiro Taguchi.