

Jule Reuter / Social spaces in the focus of sculptural field research / 2006

In: Stella Geppert // ach so // Objekte / Installationen / Interventionen, Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, 2006

An ongoing theme in Stella Geppert's sculptural work is the relationship of people to their spatial environment. This relationship is difficult to comprehend, being dynamic and changeable, and defined by various factors and processes, some of which are not visible. The artist attempts to approach this complexity by raising questions that constantly recur and enlarge upon themselves. The question of corporeality, says Geppert, is the foundation and stimulation for all formal development in her work. Like a field researcher she investigates concrete starting situations – the sculptural results are products of the respective site-specific analysis. In this she adheres to the concept-art-based practice of working "in situ", which declares the context to be part of the work.

The spaces that Stella Geppert investigates are the spaces of urban life. In 1998 her initial preoccupation was with the empty building and the superimposition of architectural form and social application. Upon this basis she questioned the qualities and composition of domestic interiors in spaces maintaining a tense balance between industrial design and private use. Her next step led her to publicly used interiors, which through special powers of definition can influence people's perceptions and behaviour. A pars pro toto metaphor for this is the gallery space, in which artistic composition attempts to decipher the spatial context. While she initially concentrated on interiors, this was followed by a preoccupation with exterior space since 2001. She selects urban spaces distinguished by the superimposition of various, often heterogeneous functions, definitions and uses. She particularly studies people's concrete behaviours and actions, and the types of social interaction between occupant and space.

Preceding every sculptural composition is a phase of meticulous observation and material collection. Primarily using a camera, she first records places and processes that accentuate moments of the provisional, the in-between and the temporary as the prime triggers of spatial changes. Her artistic work moves between these two poles – emphasising site-specificity, or process orientation. In sculptural terms the question is: how can a three-dimensional static form react to permanent movement and change?

Accordingly, the artistic process is defined by at least two different impulses. On the one hand Stella Geppert works with analogy. Through external, functional or structural correspondence the work apparently adapts itself to the space, sometimes so far as to almost negate its character as art. On the other hand, her process is subversive in the sense that it simultaneously and intentionally disturbs or infiltrates the apparently smooth alliance of art and life. This disturbance is created by changing parameters, which vary according to the respective location and the artist's intentions. With this hacker-like strategy she manages to reveal weaknesses in civilization's present condition, and to expand our experience of social space by demonstrating possible intellectual and physical courses of action.

Global player

With the work "Trafocontainer / Transformer container" (2000) Stella Geppert examines the relationship between function, aesthetics and economics in functional architecture and utilitarian fixtures in public space.

Transformer housings are inconspicuous grey boxes around the city. They escape the notice of passers-by because they are neither subject to public use, nor do they assert a presence with their outer appearance. The boxes, which conceal switchboards for the electrical supply of buildings, are storage spaces by nature and immobile. The distribution of the "grey boxes" throughout the urban environment seems random, following no discernable logic. Portable structures, however, settle in construction sites