

space=space

[1998 - 2003]

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Silva Kalčić . 2007

In his project *space=space* Darko Fritz uses exclusively the transfer of a video image in the filmed space itself and in relation to the given architectural situation, by means of closed-circuit TV technology. The works from this project were realised, each as a separate project, on city walls of the Dubrovnik Old Town, in Le Corbusier's pavilion in Bologna, Santini's baroque chapel in the Plasy^[1] monastery in the Czech Republic, and on the Town Square of Zadar in Croatia.

Maybe because of his original connection with architecture^[2], in his works Darko Fritz expresses special sensibility for problems emerging from the relations and intertwining of spaces – real and virtual, outer and inner, physical and mental, and private and public. He often explores creative potentials of the relation of architectural space and new media like video, computer technology, and communication software, showing in his recent works a latent trend of turning public into virtual space of computer communication.

Even a photography of architecture is an interpretation of architecture. Here, in his artistic procedure, Fritz uses the mechanism of closed-circuit video technology and realises a video representation of architectural space. In the project Zadar City Square, the video image of the present situation is obtained from a camera positioned on a lamp above the centre of the City Square, and the real space and events on it are directly juxtaposed to their representations projected along the border, definitional architectural surfaces. Such definitional surfaces that served as a projection screen are the inner wall of the Renaissance City Hall, visible from the outside through the glazed front, and the frosted glass at the empty place of the old town clock mechanism^[3], which had ten years earlier been dismantled from the tower and taken away for restoration. In the Zadar project, the element of surveillance is inherent to the entire process, although in this case only latently and without any final purpose except a slight hint, symbolic marking of the possibility of manipulation, more in the sense of the attempt to focus our attention on the huge discrepancy of the contemporary world that on the one hand increasingly uncovers itself as undetermined, accidental process, which can be expressed only in terms of higher or lower probability, while on the other hand globally dominant political lines of force tend to control it with increasing strictness and limitation within acceptable boundaries that are still determined, which is becoming increasingly visible, by limited cohesive social abilities of the capital.

The time phenomenon is constructed by the media representation^[4] of space into which it is placed. Linear and virtual multiplication of real space and events, and turning the space itself into event result in evoking the feeling of intensifying the action, of enhanced spatial dynamism and raising the perception of passers-by about the presence of certain architectural contents – the re-initiation of connections and relations between the space and the ones inhabiting it. We must still remark that all this can have a plausible weight only under the assumption that the psychic, human aspect of space is relevant for spatial value. Although architectural space is basically understood as aesthetic interrelationship of basic elements like form, colour, texture, structure, and composition, in its final dimension it is resolved only in the sphere of humanity and basically human meanings. Architectural space determines the events in it. The user gives the final definition to architecture by moving through it and by using it – otherwise we would speak of architectural sculpture. Therefore Sorkin concludes that the body is also today the true measure of architecture, so that architecture is understood as built social landscape which emerges [and dissolves] in the function of enabling the realisation of man's essence that it envelops and whose topos is historical. If we should, in the sense of relevance of the psychic dimension of architecture, dare to speak about architectural space as a volume interwoven by a net of contents and relationships, in which Fritz's video-installation functions as temporary virtual extension of architectural public spatial form, then its final impact could be assessed in the profiling of the threads of fine psychological web that constitutes the aura of the square's urban entity.

All previously realised installations of the *space=space* project are intended for walking people. The Old Town in Dubrovnik, as well as Narodni trg [People's Square] in Zadar are pedestrian zones while the other two installations are inside houses. As in the architecture of the 20th century, in concordance with increasing speed, the dominant perspective of the viewer becomes the one from a moving vehicle; the necessary consequence is minimization or disappearance of those decorative elements of the facade that can be perceived only if we access the structure on foot. That is why it is said that the acceleration of the viewer causes death of twentieth century architecture. Structural rigidity and bearing capacity retreat into the inner space of a structure – its core, while the



space=space: Dubrovnik . 1998 . site-specific video installation . Dubrovnik .
curated by Slaven Tolj for Otok Gallery / ARL, Dubrovnik

For whole day and night a closed circuit video signal filmed outside the city's
fortification was projected live at the monitor within the fortification, i.e the town.





space=space: Baroque [Santini] . 1999 . site-specific video installation . Darko Fritz in collaboration with Ademir Arapović . Plasy monastery . Limbo festival curated by Miloš Vojtechovsky, Centrum pro Metamedia
Baroque chapel designed by Santini [1720] is located within the Plasy monastery in Czech Republic. Video image of a window is projected in real-time at the niche in the same room, in 1:1 scale.

facade remains often only in the form of a skin stretched over the construction, thus losing the function of a visual cover of the interior and, just the opposite, through its transparency becomes a communication medium that connects the interior with the exterior. Such facades are becoming the ideal medium for video-projections in public or public-private spaces. A further step is the exploitation of the outer skin as a medium with electronic media facades, where the electronic image enters public space, assuming the role of the contemporary surrogate for architectural and public spatial form. In this way architecture, a discipline whose essence is in rigidity and durability, by following new contemporary trends, from the outside envelops and covers itself with a media skin, transforming in relation to its essence into some sort of a crypto-discipline, although some movements – like kinetic architecture – assert that changes could, in structural sense, run even deeper than the facade. Such a symbiosis of video and architecture points to the possible increased potential of architecture in the sense of social interventions and directing and modelling of social processes – so-called triggers of social micro-changes. Everything that has been said does not mean that video will permanently and entirely substitute public spatial forms, but it simply concerns enhancement and new content of the notion of public spatial forms as such, while the existing and new forms will probably co-exist in creative competition.

As well as architecture, video art is structured around time and its passage. Moreover, through the directness of its creation, video is in the true sense of this word becoming a medium of our time. Unlike video, 'architecture is slow'. But in architecture as well, space and time are becoming variables dependent on the movement of the viewer-subject. As on the Robie house by F. L. Wright [1900-1910], with characteristic proportional progression of details [in the sense of perception

of the architectural object], in the case of video we can speak of the possibility of zooming in and out the video image, in concordance with McLuhan's postulate that the medium of television has promoted curiosity as the main quality of observation.

Boris Groys speaks about open and closed cultural spaces: the *insider* is curious, the *outsider* suspicious. Although, according to conventional philosophic observations the society of spectacle of the 70s and 80s and the society of 'participants' in the 90s has been replaced by the 'society of inter-actors', in the work *space=space* there is no communication between the camera and the *flâneur* figure, a pedestrian moving through his living space, who according to S. M. Low is not subjected to public space, but he forms it and introduces it by his walk. A participant is at the same time a viewer and an unavoidable witness of existence of a video-installation in the space. Isolating a picture by a frame [in the Renaissance] generates the impression of looking through a window; in the 20th century the frame was replaced by film frame, by the format of video image within which the artist contemplates, searches, surveys and measures the space he moves in, as well as his social frame. Today we speak of contemporary architecture and contemporary art – contemporariness is in both cases simultaneity of the present and the past; so applicable to *space=space*.

In his L'Esprit Nouveau pavilion, Le Corbusier achieves the raising to consciousness in terms of media of a construction with two cuttings featuring winter gardens set symmetrically, with half-round 'indentations'. It seems as if it were formed as a cinema screen, while the movement of visitors is directed along the ramps ^[5] as a project of distance [distancing] and optimization of viewing the gardens. Fritz intervenes in that



space=space: zadar city square . 2001 . site-specific video installation . Narodni trg, Zadar . Closed Circuit City - Zadar Live 1 curated by Iva Radmila Janković
Wireless video transmission broadcasted real-time image of the city square at two vis-à-vis locations at the square. Wide angle image was captured with camera positioned at the top of lamp at the middle of square. Sites with projections was *Gradska loža* [renaissance city court, today art gallery] and *Gradska straža* [baroque city watch, today Ethnographic museum]. The city watch was not working for ten years because of reconstruction, so it was possible to install back projection at the clock's transparent background.





space by a symmetrical turnover; he projects the left garden onto the right one and vice versa, on the 1:1 scale. By doing so he refers to intertwining of outer and inner space, a game of reflection which on a modernist structure replaces the *chiaroscuro* effect that we find on a traditionally moulded front. On the L'Esprit Nouveau pavilion inner and outer space are masterfully connected, also through the construction of a semi-open 'atrium' from which a tree shoots upwards through a circular opening in the roof, outgrowing the structure.

The medium of the *space=space* project lies in the 'tradition of the new'. It represents intercession, mediation^[6] between techniques, images, and cultural panoramas. Unlike contemporary architecture aimed at lasting not longer than its purpose, traditional architecture wants to last forever. Its essence is cancelling, annulation of time. Taking both into account, Darko Fritz stresses the duration of time in space, but simultaneously also the fact that it is short-lived. This short life accumulates [archived] as some kind of trans-historic dialogue.



[1] Works in Plasy and Bologna were realised in collaboration with Ademir Arapović

[2] Fritz began his university education as a student of the Zagreb Faculty of Architecture

[3] Through a direct video-transmission of space it is transformed, as we shall show later, into a temporal phenomenon, i.e. the place of the old clock is very meaningful in that sense

[4] A direct video-transmission that assigns an explicit portion of passing time to everything that it extends to has a transformative role here – in this way space acquires properties of time, it becomes a temporal phenomenon.

[5] 'Architectural promenades', which is an expression used by the mentioned Bernard Tschumi

[6] Interesting is the remark by Kas Osterhuis, who from now on sees the architect's activity as emotional styling [a term taken over from the field of fashion and design], as shaping of information, i.e. data flow. This means that architecture would be understood as a medium, or even as a mass medium.







space=space: L' Esprit Nouveau [Le Corbusier] . 1999 . site-specific video installation . Bologna . Darko Fritz in collaboration with Ademir Arapović
 video-link 1 . image capture: facade > projection: interior terrace wall . 1:10 scale
 video-link 2 . image capture: tree from semi-opened terrace > projection: interior floor . 1:1 scale
 video-link 3 . image capture: 'diarama' winter garden > mirror projection: opposite side 'diarama' . 1:1 scale

