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PhD Thesis

Site-specific theatrical space and visual readings

SUMMARY

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Introduction

The defining discourse of the present research reflects on the theatrical phenomenon, which means the release of the performance from the box stage into the real, 'free', that is the environmental (physical or 'found') (life)-space.

This 'shift' - which means the shift of representation from traditional (perspective stage) space to a concrete, artistically neutral context - has clear consequences regarding both space use and spectacle, and last but not least, reception.

Thus we are looking at a phenomena which shows specific problems of local or environmental specific performances, such as the principle of transparency, the framework, the gesture of persuasion, the intrusion of *the real*, the problem with the spectator, etc. I shall examine the range of these phenomena through three local space-specific lectures.

Such a theoretical writing is always more difficult to characterize in summary. However in order to arrange these contemporary and undoubtedly complex phenomena somehow, and to narrow the focus of our investigation, one tries to build the analyzes around some kind of frame, corpus. Accordingly, the writings are organized into two major parts, which also outline a logical path and set out certain frameworks within which one can examine the phenomena.

The first part reflects up to a chapter on issues such as the spatial experience of contemporary site- or environment-specific lectures. The spatial-forming principle and practice of representation, the (contemporary) spatial form, such as the peculiarity and mode of operation of the environmental space. The topic covered in the first part also leads to problems that are strongly emphasized in relation to the limit of representation. The discussion of the framework is summed up in the assumption that it is the (additional) element of representation that determines the further direction of the investigation. The dissertation confirms however that it is the framework that results in shifts that change the essence of the performance/work.

In fact when the framework is missing, then both the artificial unity and the structure become uncertain.

The framework also offers a number of other contexts. The *real* phenomenon, beyond the framework, is closely related to the current problem focus of current location- or environment-specific representations. In fact, the immanent logic of these contemporary performances includes the tendency outside the aesthetic reality in the work, and this fertile

tension, the system of permanence relations defines one of the main lines of contemporary practice.

Spatial management of location- or environment-specific performances allows rewriting of the former system of relationships between spectator and player, offering furthermore conditions of such as spectator's self-examination of self-perception. In the case of these representations the new *modus operandi* - as an adequate receiving scheme - means rather physical experience than aesthetic understanding. Thus the body perception becomes an important factor in the act of acceptance.

At the forefront of the second part of the dissertation and the assessment of descriptive analysis, the phenomena are related to the visibility of site-specific representations. Visual reading of environmental performances, such as street theatre or various performance-type performances, needs to be interpreted, since the specificity of that 'visual sphere' or 'material' requires the recipient, in contrast to the traditional way of communicating, to make a paradoxical reading that assumes the spectator orders the view to the performance without being marked or marked in an 'aesthetic framework'. This concluding part of the research is therefore entirely subordinated to the imaging analysis of environmental performances and to the understanding of the logic and dramaturgy of image or visual creation.

Research method

The methodological basis of the dissertation follows three aspects. One - and perhaps the most important - is Jan Mukařovský's basic methodological requirement, according to which any problem that seems to affect only one artwork will be explored in other artworks as well. (Mukařovský 2007:40) This includes the interdisciplinary nature of the research, according to which it brings visual (and not only) interferences and analogous phenomena into the literary work of art, which can be also found in the visual arts. It is not uncommon therefore for me to introduce my theatrical theoretical conclusions through specific examples taken from fine arts.

Another aspect that follows is that the selection of sample materials for lectures is the result of a conscious choice. I considered it important to illustrate the researched or explored results through Transylvanian environment-specific lectures. This is how *Terminus* (full name: *Terminus - theatre of (giving) birth*) has emerged into this discourse as a 'minimal' production. *Curva periculosa* and *Mady-baby* directed by B. Fülöp Erzsébet reflect however examples of theoretical explanations put into practice in almost every sense of the research.

The third aspect that defines the modus operandi of the present research is the synchronous negotiation mode, consisting in discussing the two different theatrical practices (see box stage principle and location specificity) in parallel, but being aware of it all along, that all this comparative negotiation does not result in value judgment or assertion into some hierarchical relationship. These comparative interpretations are mainly emphasized in terms of space, sight, and reception.

1. Space, frame

1.1. The place of performance in contemporary theatrical practice

In 1917, an artist named R. Mutt drew attention to himself by exhibiting a toilet bowl as a work of art. The gesture sparked fierce outrage at the Society of Independent Artists in New York. The exhibition hall is a place where spectators-visitors are accustomed to it, - culturally, socially and sociologically are shaped, 'coded', - to see (most of the time) artistic creations. Should one subvert the traditionally, institutionally fixed function of this place by inserting an '(artificial) object' that may be averted in this environment (in this above example an urinal), all one does is nothing but motivate the audience to look through the changes that have taken place.

Although with some phase delays, similar phenomena have developed in the history of representation as well. The avant-garde theatrical endeavors have subjected the performances to such 'novel' experiments, which have largely overturned the previously canonized or 'institutionalized' theatrical forms and patterns.

From the point of view of the present study, we are primarily interested in the consequences, as like Duchamp's audacious move, of a theatrical performance not being performed in a traditional theatre (on 'the' stage), but in such different space potentials where there are no publicly accessible 'information systems' typical of the traditional. (Michael Kirby)

Through the 'minimal' performance *Terminus* (full name: *Terminus*- theatre of (giving) birth) one reflects on the practical changes and transitions that can be mapped in the case when the representation is in the found space. What it leaves behind and what new features change it, make the stage different, and how the viewer changes its role and how the correlation with the work changes. Theatre production in the pub is kind of a contrasting aesthetic configuration, which creates in itself a gesture of persuasion. That discrepancy becomes not only strange but also revelative, due to the fact that a place that is the field of everyday life, a

very human, directly saturated, profane space, acts as a medium for the transmission of an art form (in this case theater event). Thus, the present writing revolves around this gesture of 'persuasion', forming a common situation or event with the audience, doing it from the perspective of space, as one of the most important theatrical components.

An essential precondition for our study is the examination of the specifics of contemporary (theater) spaces. In the history of theater, as we move towards contemporary phenomena, the field of performance / event is gaining more and more attention and role. From the XX. century therefore we can speak also about a paradigm shift, as the space itself has been a less-tested component of representation.

Examining the spatial aesthetics of contemporary theatre is extremely problematic, because it cannot be confined to definitions, nor can it be grasped with a generally valid conceptual framework, nor can the most canonized theatrical definitions of theatrical practice be used (see Eric Bentley's stripped-down interpretation or Peter Brook's definition of theatre).

The performance area defined both style of play and inclusion at all ages. In this context the chapter entitled *Audience area (1.1.3.)* examines the theatrical spatial structure and form of different ages, the position, (what and how the audience saw) status, role, opportunity offered to the spectators.

Among other things, we also reflect on how spatial arrangement regulated the audience's participation, that is how the space correlated the audience and the performance, and the relationship between the spectators.

For a better understanding of contemporary audience area we review the most important types of playgrounds in the history of theatre, the space concepts of different ages. To examine historical theatres, we use Manfred Pfister's typology of theatres (theatre of ancient Greece, Medieval theatre, Shakespeare's theatre, court theatre, theatre of modernity).

1.2. Opening up the frames. Representation of space as an open constellation

The starting point of this chapter makes one of the most important points of Adolf von Hildebrand's treatise (*The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*), namely, the distinction between the *actual form* and the *perceptual form*. In Hildebrand's interpretation we must distinguish between the two cases, when looking closely, we know the perceptual form directly, and when, by looking at it from afar, we obtain only an optical image, and accordingly not the perceptual form, but the actual form. The use of Hildebrand's concepts

seems productive, because the essence and mechanism of total human perception are limited to two highly concentrated theoretical terminals.

Since this human perception has a very large, let us say, constitutive role in theatrical practice, operating with these two concepts makes the theatrical discourse much more differentiated, offering a new perspective on thinking about theatrical phenomena.

The two concepts also illustrate well how space creates a direct dialogue between spectator and performance. By examining the theatrical context, the actual form by implication, it creates only a one-way communication, whereas the experience via the perceptual form creates the possibilities of a reciprocal, reciprocity-driven communication. If we think in contemporary theatrical discourse (see environmental theatre, street theatre, performance theatre, experimental theatre, etc.) it may not be too much to say that it is the perceptual form, the traditional (institutionalized) theatrical practice, that is most likely to be determined by the actual form.

The dissertation also raises the question of how the perceptual form is integrated and is present in contemporary performances, and how it determines its novel aesthetics. (1.2.2. *Relationship between performance and perceptual form*)

In connection with the terms of Hildebrand, I will highlight the useful and enlightening concepts of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht – which are aspect of the present dissertation: the *presence effects* and the *meaning effects*. (1.2.4. *Typology of the artistic experience*). The two concepts - in a very identical way as Hildebrandt's (see actual form and perceptual form) – ultimately they show the individual's attitude to things in the world and the changing forms of human self-reference in relation to art/work. The disjunction between the two concepts is, in particular, the fact that the presence attendance is strongly related to the lived experience, materialism and the non-hermeneutic dimension, showing a close connection with such physical factors as the enriching experience of touch and the enrichment experience. In contrast, the meaning can be related to all the conceptual circles that show an analogous correspondence with hermeneutics, sign, symbolism, 'surface'. The presence effects mean revealing the meaning effects, that is it reduces the act of inclusion itself to a mere 'theoretic'. I will point out - which can also be deduced as the conclusion of this chapter - that contemporary works do not restrict or impoverish the experience of reception. Its effect requires our body, the reception, thus linking it to the more physical and pragmatic dimension

of aesthetic experience. The example material of the chapter *The perceived area (1.2.5.)* makes the bus theatre performance *Mady-baby*¹.

In order to explore the peculiarities of this street theatre production, we reflect on the phenomena taken from the fine arts, which are closely related to the issues raised by the performance. Robert Smithson's Land Art Masterwork *Spiral Jetty*² points to a great deal of affinity with contemporary representation, and here I am thinking specifically of the problem of space. In fact, Smithson asks, if traditional art is about spectacle, why should it not be possible to create an art that rejects spectacle? In the traditional paradigm, by sight, we are all in possession of the work, but in this case the whole spectacle is revealed to us only from a helicopter. The space of contemporary representations often uses Smithson's denial of visuals, and hereby I am referring to performances that are opaque due to their volume of space.

I believe that *Mady-baby* is a good example of Smithson's spatial expression, as it uses the space in such a way that it is essentially never seen all of it by the audience. The path of the performance and the resulting spectacle are always revealed to us in detail, so that we can never see at the same time the space that is not yet and that is no longer visible to us.

For the rest of our performance we will analyse Duchamp's gesture in the street theatre performance *Curva periculosa*³, directed by B. Fülöp Erzsébet, in connection that anything can become art through a 'signature' without doing anything special in terms of spatial creation. (1.2.6. *Spatial creation with Duchampian gesture*).

The claim in the dissertation is that this idea of fine art is expressed in relation to the space of *Curva periculosa*. Although not "signed", but like the statement concerning readymades ('this is art'), was appointed the pop-up space of Poștei Street from Târgu Mureș as well for art space. Thus, instead of the shaped space, the found space is decisive.

Again through an example of fine art, Duchamp's piece *The Large Glass*, I wish to reflect on an essential feature of contemporary performances, the principle of transparency. According to Allan Kaprow the best part of the Duchampian work is the windowpane,

¹ Individual performance based on the drama of Gianina Cărbunariu *Mady-Baby.edu*, presented in 2009 in Târgu Mureș, directed by B. Fülöp Erzsébet, then in 2010 included in the repertoire of the Hungarian Theatre in Timișoara. In the performance-type theatre-play *Mady-baby* (2009), travel becomes the guiding principle. The journey described by Cărbunariu must be made not only mentally, but it is also must for anyone who exchanged ticket and boarded the 18-seat minibus.

² Smithson implements at Great Salt Lake in the U.S. state of Utah that monumental spiral line whose material he carried into the water from the nearby hill on the shores of the lake. The whole view unfolds to the spectator only from a helicopter.

³ *Curva periculosa* (2004), directed by B. Fülöp Erzsébet, is performed by Tankó Erika in form of a monodrama. The performance space consists of the entrance square in front of the (former) Ariel Theatre in Târgu Mureș as well as the sidewalk opposite. The spectators stay around the performance in the outdoor square.

through which the background and environment behind the work become visible. What's more, the glass allows you to see the current configuration, such as the way the chocolate grinder is interlacing with a picture of a little boy poking his nose. (Kaprow 1993: 128) I think there is a lot to say about this random phenomenon of contemporary aesthetics and art practice. This present-day feature is evident in the fact that almost anything can be incorporated in the work and almost any part of the work. However, this aesthetic attribute not only means that there is a clear dividing line between the work and everyday life, but it also allows the stacking of several realities at the same time, see performance and civic space, spectator and non-spectator, arranged and real, and so on. *The Large Glass* also shows the unfinished or partially completed nature of contemporary works, which is then carried on and completed individually by each recipient. The coincidence is that once we see the little boy poking his nose, and another time we see something completely different or someone through the glass, showing that one cannot talk here about the closed, artifact nature of the work. And how does the spectator become viewed? *The Large Glass* is an eclectic example of this too, since the little boy poking his nose is also included in the work as a spectator.

Just because one is a spectator does not mean one is going to retain that status all the time. While the *Curva periculosa* places the burden of playing and acting on the shoulders of the spectator, by including him in the performance, in case of *The Large Glass* the role of creation is given to the spectator in a similar way, for it is composed into the work by its vision, its action, its whole being, and thereby recreating it, enriching it with new meanings. This kind of reciprocity, which determines the audience in contemporary practice, creates sometimes an identity change or an identity disorder, as we do not know which status of the performance or work best enforces it. Am I a spectator or do I become viewed despite my spectator status? One just doesn't know when the spectator is titled out of his position or—using Lehmann's terminology—when his '*splendid isolation*' will be broken. (Lehmann 2009: 163)

1.3. The power aspect of space and the apprenticeship of observation

The starting point of this chapter is to discuss disciplinary mechanisms of Foucault, (schedule of imprisonment, quadratic mechanism, functional placement, interchangeability of ranking and of the elements), as aspects of power. The dissertation states that the manner these mechanisms are practiced can also be found in theatrical practice. Based on our statement, the only question is how the two paradigms (see traditional and contemporary)

operate – supervision and observation - aspects of these disciplinary systems. Along this problem, we reflect on the different ages of theatre history. This part of the dissertation can be summarized in the finding that the traditional context, as a kind of defensive endeavor, exercised supervision, ‘imprisonment’. The focus has been placed on the problematization of ‘border’, ensuring thus a secure separation of the two worlds from each other, so as not to make any cross-border or to create problematic borderlines. The aesthetic aspect of the performance, as a delimitation of a self-worthy sphere, was thus meant by the specific designation of the representation border and its supervision. Contemporary practice, on the other hand applies observation and supervision, face to face with the spectator in order to establish a direct, immediate relationship. The performance places itself in a ‘context system’ with the spectator. Through the lively act of observation, he becomes aware of it, comes into contact with it, and involves him in the area of the performance. In short, it turns it into an agent in the art field.

The essential requirement of supervision and observation must therefore be interpreted from a completely different way. While in traditional practice it strengthens the passive side and is emphatically related to the experience of the border, in modern practice it manifests itself much more on the active side and creates a new kind of relation with the spectator. We might as well say that in traditional practice it is aesthetically kind of a theoretical ‘aesthetic action’, whereas in contemporary practice, observation is realized as a practical character.

In the space of *Curva periculosa* a specific perception technique can be used by the actor and the audience. This rather simple, centralized space system is the location of the actress in the compositional center, which has a completely different aspect than in traditional practice (see perspective stage), where the eye-to-eye position is dominant in relation to the spectators and the field of play. This compositional nature allows for a more dynamic and closer relationship with the audience. What is more, due to the circular shape of the space, the possibility of a spectator-viewer relationship is also given, that is to say a much more heterogeneous mode of relations is emerging. The history of this rather simple, circular space form can be found at Foucault. This is because this spatial form is about much more and means much more than a simple compositional feature. In the light of this idea, we include J. Bentham’s Panopticon, that is the panoptic schema, in our performance analysis. It is not just about a closed facility or structure, shape, or disciplinary plan that makes the exercise of supervision as easy as possible and most effective. The excellence of the scheme lies primarily in its ability to integrate in any function (education, therapy, punishment, production), while retaining all its features. However, this particular shape can be studied as a

valid aesthetic ‘form’ or as a spatial formation or composition. In its centralized spatial composition of *Curva periculosa*, this panoptic scheme lives on as a spatial notion. We can talk about a changed perceptual situation, where (mutual) control is operated not only by the spectator, but also by the actress.

A new order of relations develops in this space, which obeys completely different principles: it does not build on the previous asymmetry of the relationship, placing the parties in a hierarchical relationship, but strengthens reciprocity, and somewhat increases mutual observation. Briefly: the practice of watching is changing.

In traditional practice (see box stage) we come across a so-called chemically pure formula, according to which the spectator is the only observer, since in order to maintain the illusion, the actor must not take notice of the spectator. All of these chemically pure solutions are less typical of contemporary site-specific areas. However in the space of the *Curva periculosa* the observed and the observer do not separate, as the actress takes on the role of the observer in addition to her observed status, that is playing the role of a supervisor. The actress, standing in the middle of the space, sees each spectator individually, and what is even more important, from a psychological point of view, the spectator is permanently observed and ‘supervised’. This simple form of space allows thus to completely change the basic mode of perception operated in conventional practice.

Finally, the valid conclusion that can be drawn is that contemporary site-specific spaces, although not fully following the panoptic scheme (see circle shape), inherit its mechanism of action. They offer an operational paradigm that significantly rewrites the spectator’s existence and the spectator-actor relationship.

1.4. The effect of the “phenomenological area” surrounding the spectator on the reception of the performance. Psychology of objects and spaces

In this part of the dissertation we try to think further about the effect of the environment on human behavior, attitudes, and how it defines internal states. We are primarily interested in recognizing the regularities through which it can be shown that the aspect of environmental externalisation is an aspect of environment, a material reality, and last but not least, the behavioral stereotypes and attitudes are activated by different spatial situations. Furthermore, how they are able to influence our habits, moods, and how they encourage our actions, and what emotional reactions they produce. I argue that these

experiences, the facts of this phenomenon, are not only reflected in our daily lives, but can all be extended to artistic practice itself, and in relation to my dissertation, what is even more important, the purpose of the proposed approach can be extended to theatrical practice, which I will accompany You towards the end of this essay. I would like to support the above reflections with arguments about the street theatre production *Curva periculosa*. In order to examine the psychological impact of the performance area and of its objects on the audience, we include the very thought-provoking writings of Jean Baudrillard and Gaston Bachelard on objects and spaces into the present discourse, and along these lines we try to understand the impact of the environment on the spectator.

We also point out that the seating chart has a very remarkable - even though it is rather less examined - psychology, because the place and the way from and how the spectators take their place play a significant role in mood training and in the attitude of the spectators. This part of the discourse draws on the discourse of Paul Goodman, who analyzes this very basic problem, namely the seating arrangement, demonstrating its importance on various occasions, such as eating, acting, teaching, legislation or even psychotherapeutic treatment. The seating arrangement, however, - though required by a complex social structure -, also defines the habitual behavior. (Goodman 1983: 57) Goodman's relevant observations illustrate well the psychological significance of seating arrangements, that their different schemes allow for the development of interstructural relationships, and how they are able to influence and determine our spiritual (intellectual) and psychological sensitivity, willing to receive phenomena. I examine this experience by comparing the (formal) seating arrangement (usage system) of traditional theatrical practice with the place for the spectators of less institutionalized venues (site-specific or environmental performances).

1.5. Aesthetic indifference

In the present paradigm, or in the postmodern reception, the contemporary interpretation of the works shows a marked divergence from the classical, a different kind of discourse.

It has become an important conceptual factor that works remain in the field of value neutrality, and it is impossible for any aesthetic assessment, as (is often) the possibility of taking a position in aesthetic terms. This exit attempt, that is, escapism from aesthetics, becomes the defining discourse of almost every contemporary art form.

The discourse begins with Daniel Spoerri's 'snare-picture'⁴. I would like to point out through this the aesthetic indifference, that is the stylistic language of New Realism. The exemplary material of a fine art nature, Spoerri's work is related to my conviction that the principle is applied by New Realism in the spatial management of contemporary, place- or environment-specific performances, its transposition.

In historical times the traditional indications of the performance had to be respected as a dictate. However the current practice breaks with any binding and established concept of representation. In the spirit of *anything goes*, any space can be involved and operated as performance area without matching any aesthetic form structure, 'trend', immanent property or reference standard, as analogy to some leftover food, that, when applied to the board, is already a sufficient condition for the work.

The lesson I want to draw can be summed up in the first place by the fact that detachment from aesthetics, as a permanent aspect, characterizes the artistic manifestations of our time and the way of thinking behind them. Furthermore, the writing also carries with it the insight that the traditional distinction has become obsolete, according to which aesthetically only that can be valid, which is closely related to the experience of creation, origination, or some construction principle, e.g. the usual conditions of the traditional artistic creative process. In contrast to the things in their reality, quasi directly and unprocessed rise into the world of art (see the remains of a meal). New Realism thus calls this hierarchical distinction into question.

One of the conclusions of the analysis is that the purpose of this fine arts approach can be extended to contemporary theatrical practice as well, where in connection with the environment specific, "found spaces" we see the same critical program working.

1.6. Somatic form of spectator's existence

In the field of contemporary art, the art trends from the second half of the 20th century, in case of the flux, happenings, performance arts, body arts, environments, in situ installations, - various created situations, event arts (event), etc. - it became central that the

⁴Daniel Spoerri, who had a dining table with all the things on it, cigarette butts, leftovers, other food scraps — fixed those to the table in their own instantaneous and eventual arrangement — something like an object ensemble or three-dimensional still life, displayed it vertically on the wall of the exhibition hall. Spoerri's name is associated with the "snare-pictures" (tableau-piégé namely table-picture) as a strange picture type. The peculiarity of this assemblage, three-dimensional panel image, is actually in their imaging technique, namely in their view, in the way a dining table suspended in a perpendicular state to the wall of the exhibition hall, - quasi leaving behind the scheme of the classical presentation-, presents to the audience with its relentless directness. The spectator "falls into an ambush" and hence the name too

event was seen as an experience, which is why the bodily presence of the spectator had a constitutive nature. The representatives of minimal art, and later analytical conceptualism, also urged the spectator to change his status and tried to make them more active at the moment of receiving the work of art and to consciously incorporate that into the act of participation. With regard to the “role” of the spectator in the performance/event, the change occurs as the theater begins to shift more and more emphatically towards performance art. If so far the viewer has been expected to express his/her critique of the performance, - as a ‘fixed image’ - as a kind of outside witness, passively, into themselves, the artistic practice of the sixties and seventies rewrites the traditional model, e.g. questions the validity of the traditional model of object and subject.

Furthermore, I would like to introduce the central idea of this chapter, the emphasis of the soma as a contemporary sensitivity and its (‘problematic’) topicality. I would like to point out an essential shift in how non-traditional, environment-specific spaces can change the spectator’s somatic experience and perception, and how these spaces manifest their specific impact on the spectator and reception.

In the theatre art, before the historical avant-garde, this spectator attitude towards physical, e.g. somatic participation was a less-discussed experience. On the other hand, beginning from the avant-garde endeavours the new theatrical practices, including place - or environment-specific theatrical spaces, build better and more consciously on the bodily senses of the recipient, thereby greatly changing the nature of the experience. These spaces not only shed new light on the ‘classic’ texts, but they also prescribe a new kind of reception from the spectators. However, there is an additional connection as well, because from the moment the spectator manifests himself/herself in a common space together with the actor, the somatic manifestations (movement, gesture, behaviour) coming from the spectators are all written into the common space, and the essential consequence of all this is that these spectator manifestations are interpreted as belonging to the performance, become aesthetically appreciable, though they remain in the background, and explicitly we do not become aware of them.

The question is: how to interpret, aesthetically approach the somatic forms of this spectator existence, which is characterized by a much more complex sensory experience compared to traditional practice. The task is also problematic because each performance is unique and has only its own, characteristic space, and from an aesthetic point of view it has a definite individuality, so consequently each one starts from a new basic position, barely having common features.

The contention of the present writing is that these spectator somatic manifestations cannot be left without interpretation. In this sense, we reflect on the bodily dimensions of reception and aesthetic experience through Richard Shusterman's soma aesthetics, e.g. we reflect through a more pragmatic aesthetic that pushes the traditional boundaries of aesthetics.

1.7. What comes under frames, or the framed 'soever'

Nowadays, dissertation on the framework means, among other things, that we have to grasp and discuss a paradoxical phenomenon that is present in the contemporary art practice in its absence, respectively draws attention to itself with it.

If we examine the framework according to the requirements of the classics, we mostly come across with those normative functions that usually form the description of a material structure that surrounds, validates, protects, cuts out, etc. an object (of art). Furthermore, the definitions are directed to an object that forms the spatial environment of a device or image. However is it the classical discourse, - or even the conceptual apparatus used so far, the kind of normativeness that can be linked to the idea of classics, - sufficient to grasp the aspects of the framework that is being manifested in the nowadays practiced contemporary art? Can we talk in our days about any kind of aesthetic requirement regarding the frame at all? Perhaps we need to redefine the former requirements and get rid of old doxas, norms, canons, old practices, and invent a new reading key to interpret the role of the framework in contemporary practice?

The concept of the framework seems broader than we might think. I try to clarify in how many approaches, according to what system of criteria it can be interpreted nowadays, or how the framework can be validly dissertated in these days. Perhaps all of this will help us to remain somewhat within the framework in the anarchy created by the lack of frameworks in contemporary art practice.

The contemporary art practice shows that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the spectator to decipher what, as a matter of fact - in Derrida's terms -, is ergon, e.g. the work of art, and compared to this, where it lies, and what constitutes the ancillary part of the work, e.g. the parergon, namely the frame. And ultimately, this is what makes the recipient uncertain in the act of understanding as opposed to contemporary creations/works. Most of the confusion stems from looking for the usual patterns and frames in everything, but we do not get them one by one.

Genres such as performance, conceptual art, street theatre, etc., which generally avoid the objectification, reification, for these genres is difficult, in some cases almost impossible, to catch and identify the act and aspect of framing.

The writing also asks about the relationship between the framework and the recipient, asking the essential question, how do we relate to the framework today? It is a reality that the contemporary artists, but also the recipients, do not like to frame themselves. A constant negation can be observed in this regard in the art of our period. However, there is an explanation for both agents. The creators/artists vote in favour of crossing borders and frames rather than framing and burnout. Recipients view things presented within the framework as outdated and less relevant in contemporary discourse. Neither agent likes to have the courtyard of interpretation of the work of art delimited in one way or another. Today, we are reluctant to predetermine the framework within which a work can be interpreted, since everyone wants to create a free, and above all a personal reading, one prefers to live with a free interpretive autonomy, and less desires a preliminary brochure about the work. And, paradoxically, as we move out of the so-called secure, protective frameworks, we increasingly find ourselves looking for frameworks everywhere to make up for our hiatus by these frameworks that occur at every step in interpretation.

2. Spectacle, image

2.1. Theatre without pictures

Although there is a sea of literature about the phenomenon of pictorial turn in the contemporary art practice, there is perhaps still relatively little dissertation about the fact that the images new and almost paradigmatically changed mode of being what kind of reading and visual experience assumes. The second part of the dissertation starts on the path of this idea, asking the following starting question, can we see the spectacle of such a space as an 'imagery' that belongs to the performance, which is composed within a non – (aesthetic) framework, and which belongs to the real, namely comes under the non-artistic 'territory'. The question is thus problematic in connection with representations that develop according to non-conventional spatial organization and imaging methods.

It seems useful for the dissertation, an overview of the ages of theatre history, and here within terms of sight/seeing and vision. The historical review thus intends to examine how the different ages and stage types have implemented pictorial manifestation and the way images

are viewed. Since a generally accepted 'value system' has not yet been developed around contemporary works, therefore it is almost impossible to speak about these representations in general. I consequently suggest that for a better understanding, the study of this dissertation shall be carried out through a specific performance. The example material of the dissertation is directed by Erzsébet B. Fülöp by a performance-type play entitled *Mady-baby*, which creates a form of language different from the conventional one, mainly in terms of space and vision. Our question is therefore whether we can read a sight belonging to a reality outside of aesthetics (a real sight through the window of a minibus, so to speak a sight of social life) through aesthetic contemplation, as the performance's own imagery, or in fact do we speak about the 'aesthetics of withdrawal', if you please, do we talk about a theatre without pictures? This question therefore plays a central role throughout this dissertation.

To understand why visual perception, which takes shape on non-conventional imaging methods (see street theatre, location- or environment-specific theatre, etc.), becomes so problematic, respectively why we cannot view the spectacle of our performance as an 'image', for this we need to examine the two types, e.g. the traditional (box stage) theatrical form and the visual dramaturgy of our performance, its spectacle and image handling.

Under the head word *The frame as aesthetic evidence* (2.1.1.) I would like to support the writingdissertation's there on argument that in the absence of a frame or some other deictic, 'pointing' notation or structure, the traditional perceptual order becomes inoperable and the condition for the development of the image effect seems impossible. Considering that to view something as an image, primarily it assumes that we view the conceptual material as a closed, a kind of image form 'for itself in its reality'.

In the case of conventional (perspective stage) practice, the imagery is given by the frame, which almost delimits the boundaries of the image as an inclusion. It is a question, however, that where the sight forms a continuum, more precisely coincides with the reality, and from where any form (means) of isolation is missing, what kind of rule, norm, or 'lawfulness' reveals what constitutes the essential, e.g. the 'object' there, and in comparison to this, what constitutes the unnecessary pictorial information, the visual 'noise'?

Here in after, we rely on Jan Mukařovský's theory that if we want to understand the development of an art, its problems must be seen in the context of other arts. (Mukařovský 2007: 23-24) In this sense, we will examine the 'semiotic equivalences' in a comparative way, in the field of fine arts, respectively we will refer to these parallels in fine arts as an analogous transposition to theatrical practice. Thus, according to the comparative study, it seems productive to match the conventional framed stage image as a kind of analog representative

with such a classical pictorial art form, image phenomenon, plane image like painting or photograph, i.e. with a form that is present as a plane image and has a closed, image space independent of everything. And the site-specific theatrical space is reconciled with the existence of a plastic art form such as a sculpture. In connection with this study/research, we point out that the reading of the plastic image phenomenon (see sculpture) is much more problematic, as it does not have a demarcation line that would definitely show from when to when lasts the formal extent of the work. This is because these works do not have a coessential, closed space with them, as the panel-picture format image phenomenon has, for this reason, if only in the background, but the spectator always includes in the reading of the work the elements of the surrounding reality. In other words, the image is defined by a connectionism, according to which the background contributes to the organization of the image.

In the following, an important concept needs to be interpreted in connection with the question of our thesis: the *real* (see, if can happen the 'aesthetic possession' of the *real*?) one of Erving Goffman's interpretation of framework, through the examination of one of his central categories, the notion of 'key', I shed light on why we cannot view the image of performance through the aesthetic contemplation, swiped from the *real*.

If Goffman's framing is applied to the visual appearance of the performance, then we can conclude that there is a complete lack of those signal stimuli that would indicate, in terms of space and the associated image, from how long takes the spatial and visual extent of the representation. Namely, the denegation, the suspended disbelief, must be operated not only by the spectator against the acting, but also against the performance as a whole, and the spectacle also has an essential part in this. Thus, in the absence of spatial signal stimuli, those aesthetic necessities that would clarify how long the spectacle of the performance lasts, so not only the establishment of an aesthetic relationship with what is seen, but also the aesthetic judgment for this purpose is not realized. The urban spectacle is thus revealed to us merely in the quality in which it appears in the context of the contingency of everyday life: in its everyday way of life, as a primary, untransformed so-called non-artistic image. As far as the appearance of our performance is concerned, this means that we cannot interpret it in a way that is different from the real, e.g., semiotically.

Under the head word *The ready-made as the semiotization of the real (2.1.4.1)* we revolve around the phenomenon that the ready-made -, as a ready-made object - is the very clear example of how the real can still endow itself with artistic status, i.e. how the semiotization of a thing, phenomenon, object belonging to the real takes place, and its

interpretation as a sign as well. This phenomenon is therefore, so to speak, precedent, in the sense that such a transformation can actually take place. That is why I consider important to reflect on this.

We also examine that in relation to the appearance of our performance, it is nothing less than a change in theatrical semiosis, and within that, the representational logic of the performance. In the traditional sense of theatrical practice, the semiotization of things, phenomena and stage events is provided by a series of semiotic apparatus (Umberto Eco) (see code systems such as stage, costume, lights, etc.), all of which occasionally encourage the spectator that what is staged can be automatically framed, placed between 'brackets' i.e. can be interpreted transformed into a sign and endowed with a semiotic function. The fact that the performance does not have a limited, distinguished from the real (own) scenic area, puts the viewer's interpretive strategies as well in a different light. As a result of the change in the use of theatrical signs, the role of the spectator increases considerably, as he/she must thus mobilize the semiosis.

The chapter about *The problematic nature of semiotic interpretability (2.1.6)* begins with Michael Kirby's definition, who sees the foundation of semiotics in a model that interprets art as communication. In this sense, there is a sender, a message (encoded by its sender), and a recipient. If the semiotics - says Kirby - is conceived as messaging through a code system that can be interpreted by both the sender and the recipient, it is enough to step back from the intent to send the message and the code remains without content. Consequently, if the message is missing, we can no longer talk about a semiotic process. (Carlson 2014: 105) This brief Kirby reflection helps to highlight on why the view of the street scene cannot be interpreted in semiotic quality, i.e. as a sign. In order to be readable as a sign, it is necessary for the presentation to highlight, to point it out, so that the spectacle is included in the coding process. So, to be in the realm of semiotics, it is essential to place the spectacle in a mimetic context, to represent the reality iconically, as an 'artificial world'. The spectator must perceive the intention of the sender, the intention of transmitting the message.

In the present case too, we come to the conclusion, which has already been drawn several times, that semiotic interpretability is opposed by the fact that without the gesture of highlighting or any pointing, the sign cannot be identified in the perception of the outside world.

In the discourse *Contemporary modes of perception. Perceptual Pluralism in contemporary experience of art (2.1.7)*, we examine the fundamental question of why it is so problematic to clearly classify the status of the spectacle into the realm of the sign or the real.

Richard Wollheim introduces two concepts to artistic discourse in relation to perceptuality: *seeing-as* and *seeing-in*. So, trying to decisively separate two types of spectator attitudes, perceptual procedure. According to the theory, representation (by this we mean things that fall into the category of works of art) must be understood through a certain kind of vision, the 'representation vision'. Representational vision can be understood, and we can best highlight it - notes Wollheim - like something that does not involve *seeing-as*, but another phenomenon that is closely related to it, e.g. the *seeing-in*. In relation to Wollheim's concepts, we highlight that while in the traditional context the perception's how and how to was controlled by the institutional framework of art, until then in the contemporary art practice the spectator has to choose the mode of attitude.

The present dissertation claims that the visual reading of *Mady-Baby* requires a change in visual habits. The spectacle of the performance can be classified into the category where both types of perception have to be operated almost necessarily, simultaneously by the spectator.

I would hereby draw the conclusion that follows directly from our observations so far and that the second chapter of the present dissertation sought to demonstrate. The *Mady-baby*, as in the case of a street theatre production, such a sight is interpreted, which does not distance itself from the traditional way of visual communication. Since it is missing the restrictive, selective, and 'dramatizing' nature of 'framing', the performance unfolds and assumes the spectacle without distinction or selection.

As a valid conclusion it can be drawn that *Mady-baby* compared to a performance in the traditional sense, i.e. to the classical representation (box stage) performance, is a 'lack of image' representation, but is not sight incomplete. In this sense, it can be fully corresponded to the visual world of happenings, as it has the same structural features. So I am very inclined to formulate it as my own hobby-horse - as the conclusion of the writing - that in connection with the sight of *Mady-baby* by no means can we speak of the imagery in the traditional sense.

Furthermore, we also pointed out that we are dealing with two very different perceptual materials. Perhaps we could also say that in traditional practice, the sight as a structure, while in the case of the performance we are examining, the sight as an event can be defined.

2.2. The problematic nature of perception and sensation in contemporary art practice

Something seemed to change in the contemporary way of speaking, in the artistic communication, which made the reception and interpretation of contemporary works, and in general the orientation in the artistic practice of our time, so problematic, what's more, at times it seems almost impossible. In my view, the study of this contemporary phenomenon shifts the discourse toward an area that is outside the realm of aesthetics. That belief guided me in the study that the transposition of information theory as a communication theory into art practice helps to understand the fundamentally problematic mechanism of contemporary perception.

In his book about the *Information Theory and Aesthetic Experience*, Abraham Moles distinguishes between two types of information. He separates the semantic, e.g. universal information, from the aesthetic, e.g. perceptual information. In my opinion, and at the same time the thesis to be defended, that in the contemporary discourse one of the main sources of the problem of reception depends on the specific presence of these two categories of information theory: aesthetic and semantic. The latter is based on the suspicion that its absence makes the reception problematic and sometimes leads the act of reception into frustration. This is because contemporary works do not contain enough semantic information to be able to communicate the status of the work to the recipient clearly and intelligibly.

In the traditional context the framed stage image has the power of semantic information, as it makes it clear to everyone, in accordance with consensus that a fictitious world can be localized within the framework. Everything that happens within must be received and interpreted with a corresponding 'aesthetic' attitude. The framework thus acts with the power of the convention and, consequently, is highly saturated with semantic information.

In case of *Mady-baby*, the lack of the frame - as examined in the previous chapters - greatly weakens the semantic side of the spectacle. Though the current part of the street is revealed to the viewer during the journey, the viewer remains in the uncertainty and indecisiveness of whether he/she can assign the spectacle of the real to the performance, and if so, specifically which part of it and which segment. Which is the territory within the boundaries of which the urban spectacle can be assigned to the performance, in other words, where is the selectable boundary of the spectacle?

What has been outlined so far, emphasizes the insight that in the case of our presentation we can actually speak of the so-called 'loadability' of borders. This is because

the more semantic information the performance contains, the more we remain within the theater rather than the genre. On the other hand, operating with insufficient semantic information increasingly pushes the artistic act in question to a frontier where theater as such becomes questionable. The visual world of *Mady-baby* should therefore no longer be categorized as a theater, but rather, it falls into the category of the sight of happenings.

Summary

In the first part of the dissertation, we shed light on a rather difficult-to-understand field of contemporary theatrical practice, the space use of site-specific staging. We pointed out to those phenomena that are interpreted quite differently from the perspective stage practice in the case of site-specific staging (e.g. the location of the performance/work, the issue of semiotization, the changed aspect of reception, etc.). Among other things, the writings emphasize the insight that no conventions have yet been developed in connection with this (site-specific) use of space that would provide general comprehension for spectators. As René Berger formulated as well, no form in art is 'objective'. The form is formed only by consensus, but it takes quite a long time for a spatial approach to gain credit and to become a shared experience. (Berger 1984: 215)

Thus, during site-specific space use, we pointed out the features that (compared to box stage practice) convey a different experience. One such specificity also is the multistable aspect of the site-specific spaces I have studied, which mainly consists in the fact that the performance/ work is embedded in the real, e.g. everyday space, which in many cases makes it difficult to determine the difference between performance/work (space) and living space.

The fact that the theatre works with space in a concrete way, 'simply' (Hans-Thies Lehmann) - when it is not dominated by formality and form, or a fixed construction - gives the spectator a completely different, an experiential spatial experience. In these spaces, in which the way of spatial organization is very different from the theatrical (constructed), scenographic space of Italian stage practice, which acts as a 'space intersection', it opens the possibility of "insight" into real. As we do not speak about a 'connectionless' static image space, but about an ever-changing spatial experience, the two dimensions become the permanent experience of the spectator - a fusion of reality of the performance / work and of the everyday reality. (These phenomena among others, have been studied in connection with the performances of *Mady-baby* and *Curva pericolosa*.)

In the second half of the research, I reflected on the need to approach the spectacle of site-specific staging differently from the box stage practice. Contrary to the custom: we have to approach from the point of view of reception, rather than creation (production). The site-specific staging that I have analysed illustrates well that the evolution of the spectacle presupposes and is somewhat vulnerable to the spectator's intention. It is left to the spectator - to his/her personal and exploratory (creative) visual experience - how he/she can 'look' that random coexistence into a unique constellation, which is provided by the surrounding reality of the performance.

There is also something special about this perception of sight, which is mainly manifested in the way of observation. The condition of the 'familiar' image comprehension (see photo, painting) that the viewer is aware regarding what he/she sees within the frame, that has a continuation and continues in a continuous way in all directions. The image space does not close and does not bend back into itself on the edges. This part outside the framework plays a constitutive role in the image comprehension because the pictorial space outside the 'cut-out' that surrounds the closed formal world as a separate unit of content is a condition of what can be perceived on the image. (Zrinyifalvi 2000: 110). Although we know that the bounded context range "does not end" at the edges of the image, but the out-of-bounds part is no longer manifested in its visual aspect, but the spectator-receiver completes all these 'gaps' of perception in his/her psyche (consciousness). Nevertheless, in case of such site-specific performances like *Mady-baby* as well, the spectator is being deprived of the 'riddle', which consists in supplementing the "missing manifest" through his/her own spiritual activity. Due to the lack of demarcation, the spectator cannot perceive either the specific spectacle presented or the "missing" element, and consequently he/she does not feel the urge to reflect on or to think more about the "unappearable". The visual perception (environmental perception) is therefore somewhat characterized by disinterest and aesthetic indifference. When we approached the sight of *Mady-baby* with aesthetic indifference, we did so not only because the visual construction of the performance is not done by considering the aesthetic categories, but also due to the relationship to the sight changes. In the absence of frame or delimitation, not only the sight of the performance becomes almost 'invisible', but also the missing part, which the spectator always receives as an exciting 'invitation' and feels a strong urge to imagine what is behind the scenes (frame). As in many cases, we play with the idea, especially in the case of historical portraits, what and who could see the person anvil the model, or how the interior continues, the painting revealing only a small detail of this. In

this sense we claim that the relationship between the spectator and the ‘missing manifestor’ changes.

Thus parting from the framed image forced us to examine this altered way of manifesting the spectacle, as there are few self-evident things about the visual evolution and reading of these (also analysed by us) site-specific staging.

From further contexts of our study, it becomes clear, among other things, that we can talk about a multi-factor system in terms of spectator-receiver. By ‘ambiguous existence’ can be characterized the experience, with which the analysed site-specific performances confront the spectator. These performances tip over the spectator of the usual perception by offering spectator and participant-positions at the same time. While in the traditional practice the distanced relationship meant a general relationship between the spectator and performance, this site-specific use of space - in which the spectators can declare its ‘presence’ - results in a much more current relationship. At the same time, the emphasis on the soma (the direct contact with the spectators) and the spatial experience also reinforce the issue of spectator’s responsibility.

I could summarize the conclusion of my dissertation, based on our previous discussion, as follows. Each of the analysed performances pointed to the experience that we always get to the issue of space. The question of space has always been at the heart of the discourses. “Problems” have always been focused on space as a permanent field of reference. Even if the spectacle formed the thematic centre of gravity, the reflections related to this, the intention referring to visual reading also led to space, as the practice of vision is tied to space. That is why it formed the ‘legitimate’ problem of our present field of research.

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