

Atmosphäre, phantasmagoria (online, 25–27 Nov 21)

online / Barcelona, Nov 25–27, 2021

Deadline: Oct 1, 2021

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Atmosphäre, phantasmagoria: thinking designed interiors, installation art and environmental forms (c. 1700-present)

The current event will attempt a reappraisal of the artwork that rests on environmental devices to surround and lead a spectator who moves and uses a space. This field of work has often suffered from the fragmentation resulting from a sense of discontinuous genres and relatively self-standing types of object, such as the rococo, neoclassical or historicist interior, the “period room” or Stilzimmer, the art nouveau interior and subsequent modalities of the designed interior, but also the vast field of installation art and immersive forms in contemporary art. Although such variety of genres seems to suggest discrete functions and intersections with familiar art forms (architecture, painting, sculpture and designed furniture), they usually share a common type of beholder – mobile wanderers, “visitors” or “actors” facing an integrated space which marks the territory of the artwork, but does not separate out clearly a space for its intended or actual “public”. Indeed, when these various historical instances of the artwork as “environment” are examined, they enter into fruitful dialogues with critical terms of visual culture. The widespread analytical terms of the spectacle or the phantasmagoria carry immobilizing associations of beholder entrapment, illusion and even hypnosis. But these now share space with far less dismissive inroads, via notions of atmosphere, refuges, niches or empowering environments.

The triumphant return of environmental and atmospheric structures in 20th and 21st century installation art (Andreas Huyssen) gradually unveils the possibility of exploring a long tradition of interiors in terms of complex strategies of relating to the “visitor”. This happens without discarding certain phantasmagorical aspects: in many cases, theatrical and ocular strategies continue to circulate, turning spaces into imperturbable “images”. Indeed, after having held fast to the sense of an opposition between spectacular strategies and hallowed contemporary art practices of performativity, somatic apperception and thingness, these two poles are now more commonly considered as porous and interconnected. This has happened in a number of studies dealing with the installation, where such oppositions got their first footing (Claire Bishop, Juliane Rebentisch, Anne Ring Petersen). In a sense, recent approaches stressing performativity have pointed out that physical immersion of a “public” in atmospheric settings does not imply a barring of the body or of the individual visitor’s autonomy as viewing subjects. Instead, the transactions that are made possible through environmental forms offer an important ground for investigations that go beyond the aesthetic to bear on intricate aspects of our affective economy, our co-emergence with an atmospheric quasi-object and attendant organisation and disorganisation of subjectivity (Gernot Böhme, Tonino Griffiero).

The international symposium seeks to bring together new paths into environmental artworks and the study of the historical, situated spectator. Proposals for 25-minute papers (350 words max) should be accompanied by a brief bio mentioning your principal publications (300 words). The event will consist of up to two days for English-language contributions, and one day for Spanish and Catalan contributions.

Abstract submission: tomas.macsotay@upf.edu

Confirmed Keynote: Prof. Dr. Tonino Griffèro

Scientific Committee: Prehistories of the Installation: from Ecclesiastical Baroque to Modern Interiors. AEI/FEDER, UE-PGC2018-098348-A-I00

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