

Showcases and Earpieces

Metaphor: Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organise places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories.”¹

High-flying dreams and understated stories cross through the strict modular geometry of Ursula Bachman’s spaces. Like metaphors, their labyrinthine narrations constantly go astray, elsewhere, or, unexpectedly, force changing destination: eavesdroppers on windows, doors are being pushed open, curtains lifted and eyes cast down. Minimal incidences in everyday situations raise attention for something at once all-too-familiar and uncanny: it nests in all gaps and intervals. In the computer-game “Dwelling Incidents” (2003), for example, the viewer can, acoustically and visually, attend to such domestic in- and accidents: they come to seek out the viewer like flowering ornaments on the computer-screen.

Space ought to be considered in the plural sense, as the geographer Doreen Massey puts it. This ambivalence is characteristic for the spaces of Ursula Bachman, even if, on the surface, they seem to be based on strict modular construction. That’s why the one who attempts to hold onto architecture’s laws of scale will go astray even more and, like in an optical riddle, will get entangled in a syn-aesthetic net of countless (in/on/over-) sights of the showcases and earpieces on display: the spaces are, in more than one sense, “transparent” and “animated”. The titles of two animation projects indicate it: what we are dealing with is, literally, “Soft City” (2002) or “Lifted City” (2004). Architecture grows constantly, stone by stone, while the view goes continuously up and down and all around as if in *slow motion* (in German: 'Zeitlupe': time magnified). Here, the view slips down smooth walls, there, it loses itself at the horizon, it flatters with flags, then ripples over water or draws a serpentine course. In these cities, there’s indeed no need of maps to go around: one rather drifts with the syntax of one’s stories which reed themselves of any prejudiced plan and turn patterns of speech into balloons.

“How many rooms can a human being endure before getting lost in them, and loosing his own centre? Only the one who has partaken in this radicalisation - which is due to increasing levels of plurality and subjectivity - will detach from

*the superficial objectivity of maps and will get to feel something of the enormous and confusing richness of landscapes inside his own head. This is how real space comes about: it's not the smallest common denominator, nor the average, or the sum of all possible spaces, but something different."*²

In this sense, Ursula Bachman's recent works, from isometric architectural drawings to computer-animations, represent a reflection about the production and appropriation of spaces: we encounter scaled constructions of space which, however, allow for the most various links, networks and (de)tours: passing through these spaces, in which architectural and anthropological traces cross, multiple space-time-images and narrations form. The works of Bachman can thus be described both, as representations and as narrations of space. The drawing "Zeitlupe. Time Magnifier" (2005) in the stairwell of the Eichhof-building, an old peoples residence in Luzern, reflects this in many ways: the various scenes, or in other words, the building with its four floors overlap in multiple sights: the chosen point of view with staircase, lift and the different in-sights of the floors allow a moving view through the drawing. Yet, the construction of the drawing also subverts the stand-point of the viewer: the floor-plan is projected vertically and makes the long building appear like a tower block, while all verticals are projected onto the plan in acute angles. Unexpected gaps open despite the application of scale. The transparency of the spaces allows the view to dive deep into the architecture: one encounters double floors, gets caught in ornamentations and, again and again, stumbles over traces of human presence. It's only with habitation that the spaces become alive: a place of interaction and individual anecdotes. That's why spaces have to be considered (in the) plural.

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¹ Michel de Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press 1988, p. 115

² Karl Schlögel: *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit*, München/Wien 2003, p. 244
(citation rendered in English by the translator, cw)