

BitterWeber: LIVE LIKE THIS!

Duration: October 1 – November 18, 2005

Location: CAMERA AUSTRIA, Kunsthhaus Graz

IMAGE, SPACE AND POLITICS IN THE WORKS OF SABINE BITTER AND HELMUT WEBER

The works of Sabine Bitter and Helmut Weber created since 1993 are often described with the term urbanism and comprehended as a form of processing the urban / architectural space. However, this focus essentially falls short. Although the artists' interest has become increasingly concentrated on space, public space, urban space, but equally living space and the appropriated spaces of specific social groups, in their works these spaces do not appear as an architectural or urban phenomenon, but rather, above all, as an image, as a formation of images, as a – cultural, ideological – system of representation that describes, anchors spaces, that allows spaces to circulate beyond the bounds of their place within urban systems, to inscribe themselves as a myth, as an emblem of power or of romance into social narratives.

The context of the articulations of the works of Sabine Bitter and Helmut Weber, as formulated, for example, in "On Formation" (1994 – 95), "image.source" (2000) or "Bronzeville" (2005), is not only urban space, urban architecture, but rather essentially the multifarious visual practices that produce the concepts of these spaces. When the focus is on the processes of appropriation, transformation, re-territorialisation of public, institutional, semi-public or private spaces, then this is in the sense of a critical reworking of the associated systems and ideologies of representation. "In other words, the 'real' sociological object in this case is the image and – above all – ideology." (Henri Lefèbvre)

This urban debate as a debate about images, views and representational conditions can, in turn, only be held against the foil of current discourses concerning the economisation of the city, the metamorphosis of urban structures into location factors, the perennial myth of the European city and masking its colonial foundations and its neo-colonial transfer of ideology, modernism as a permanent undead cultural entity, the mediatisation of social exchange relationships, and the advancing technologisation of culture in general.

For this reason, Bitter / Weber work on examples of a self-enclosed history of representation, into which image, politics and architecture are woven. The intervention in and criticism of the "supremacy of the global, the logical and the strategic", as manifested in the connection between urbanism, architecture and systems of visual representation, is implemented as an intervention in the form of image formations. However, the focus of these various interventions is always directed above all at the respective underlying cultural subtexts, that are, at the same time, the "main plot" of systems of domination and discipline. For Sabine Bitter and Helmut Weber, the image becomes the scene of interventions that determine the image as a moment and field of action in the realm of global socio-political terrains.

Reinhard Braun

Excerpt from an essay to appear in September 2005 in the publication
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with texts by Catherine David, Neil Smith and Jeff Derksen, as well as an artists' talk with Bik Van der Pol, Ken Lum, Andrea Geyer, Jayce Salloum, Marina Gržinić, David Thorne and Julia Meltzer (Speculative Archive).