

When something comes up

Thoughts on the art of Christian Hasucha

Karin Wendt



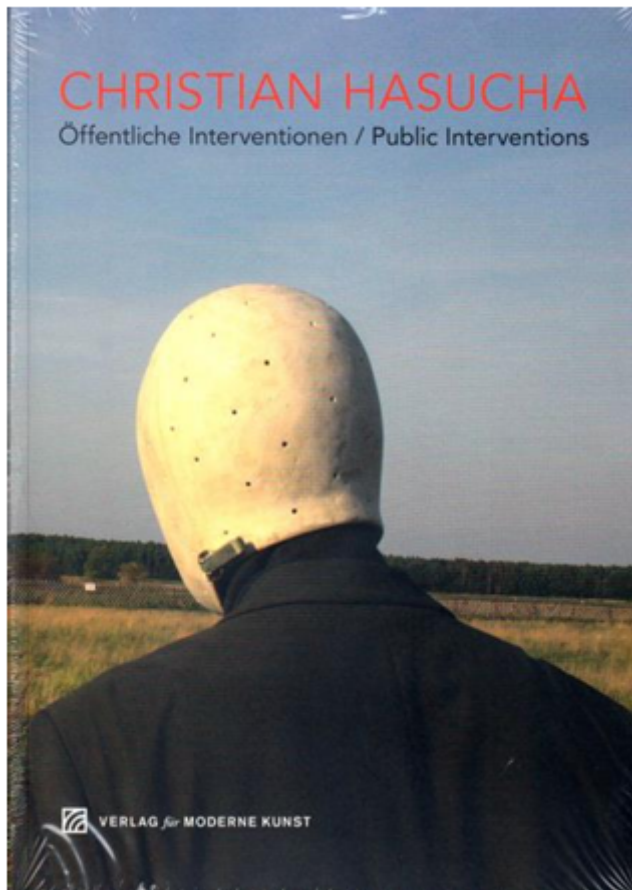
Copyright by Christian Hasucha, JETZT und der Fluss (NOW and the River), realized: Berlin 2011

Intervenire – to intervene

We only realize that we live in a spatial and temporal continuum when something changes (or has changed) in a way that is visible or noticeable to us, for example when entering or leaving rooms, or when we switch from activity to rest, when we perhaps form a new thought, consciously remember something, or when we encounter something that comes in between. “[...] the real, one thinks, is everything possible, the possible not everything real, so that according to this, the potential (the possible) would be the former. But if this were true, nothing that exists would be real,”¹ explains Aristotle, thus pointing out the potentiality of all that exists.

Art makes these questions its subject matter: it intervenes and seeks the Archimedean point at which possibility appears in abundance, still undefined by intention, goal, and purpose. Aesthetic intervention is a modern gesture with which art relates to life in order to enable the experience of other perspectives in difference. Wikipedia writes the following about intervention:

"An intervention in the visual arts is [...] an intervention in existing contexts in public outdoor and indoor spaces. [...] It addresses social, cultural, functional, spatial, and material aspects of change. Alluding to intervention in politics, artistic intervention [...] deals with the antagonism between power and powerlessness."



These considerations are prompted by the work of artist Christian Hasucha, born in Berlin Neukölln in 1955, who has been centrally involved in the theory and practice of aesthetic intervention for over four decades.

Hasucha studied fine arts at the Berlin University of the Arts and the Chelsea School of Art in London, followed by several months of traveling through Europe in a workshop van. After spending several years in Cologne, he has been living and working in Berlin again since 1996. In addition to regular teaching assignments—at the HdK Berlin, the Chelsea School of Art, the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, the University of Greifswald, the University of Art and Design Linz, and the University of Cologne—he held visiting professorships in “Aesthetics in Theory and Practice” at the University of Kassel and the Bauhaus University in Weimar from 2001 to 2003.

When Hasucha was invited to Budapest for a scholarship in 1981, it turned out that the artist had neither a studio nor any working materials at his disposal. He therefore decided to mount two rocket wings, which he had smuggled onto the plane with him, onto inconspicuous locations such as posts, pipes, bollards, or street poles, in order to photograph the staged “rockets” and then smuggle them out of the country again. The black-and-white photographs “document” in a subtle or, rather, subterranean way the political climate of repression, the Cold War, and (subcultural) opposition. “The Rockets of Budapest” is the first of what he calls public interventions and marks the beginning of a series that now comprises 79 projects realized in Germany and abroad.



From the outset, the work has involved careful documentation. This has resulted in a digital archive that provides information about the chronology of events, the projects, and their genesis. In 2013, Verlag für Moderne Kunst published a catalog of works, and this year, *der blaue Reiter* | Verlag für Philosophie published the second volume.² The publications document all of the works as well as some projects that are still in the design stage.

Hasucha's field of work is public space: its visible form and its invisible order. By implementing industrial materials such as steel and concrete, his own objects, or found objects on site, he accentuates or alienates what is already present in situ.

*Christian Hasucha—one might say—regenerates places, but he does not merely create them; he also establishes correspondences between them, exchanges places, or implants elements and thus unusual possibilities into the space. In his art, space becomes an object of transfer and transformation. [...] Such an interventionist approach can be understood as a critical counter-design to the existing, or as a form of playing with the potentials of the public sphere. An essential aspect lies in the communication that is enabled and triggered by his works."*³

In addition to their temporary and procedural nature, the works also have a performative element. Hasucha is not only concerned with inter-venire, but also with inter-agire: the interplay of people, spaces, objects, or nature. He often provides opportunities for active participation. In this way, the artistic work is enriched by interaction with or use of the experiences of others and is itself transformed.

Hasucha's art moves and is moved; it invites conversation, with each work offering something new.



Interagire – Encounters

My first encounter with the artist Christian Hasucha and his art was many years ago. At the invitation of the Förderverein Aktuelle Kunst (Contemporary Art Association), he created a work in 1998 with the residents of a single-family housing estate on Duesbergweg in Münster, which we presented in the association's exhibition space, a former high-rise bunker. I described the exhibition “Leben in Münster” (Life in Münster) at the time in the first issue of this magazine:

The photo canvases are arranged on the floor to form a model settlement, punctuated by small cacti like a stage set, and have a recessed hollow in the middle. Hasucha invited the residents of these houses to fill an octavo booklet over a period of three weeks, i.e., for the duration of the exhibition: with notes, sketches, texts, or even blank pages.

The booklets, bound in stainless steel, were attached to each of the photos like blind panels at the opening and were then handed over to the participants. At the end of the actual exhibition, they will be returned and similarly attached to one of the photos. The booklets, bound in stainless steel, were attached to each of the photos like blind panels at the opening and were then handed over to the participants. At the end of the actual exhibition, they will return and be placed in the recessed center, similar to

a relic or a found object. In terms of process, Hasucha's work can be described as a 'multiple sculpture that generates itself in its dispersion'. The result is a double extract of the project with a documentary character – 'outer facades with inner lives' (Christian Hasucha) – which the artist then circulates in the usual way in the art scene and on the art market. For ten years, until they return to the possession of the residents."And I attempted an initial classification:

"By revealing the stages of planning, implementation, and communication, Hasucha first formally takes into account the differentiation of aesthetic discourse. With the goal of maximum autonomy, he makes conception, realization, and documentation constitutive components of his work. In the case of 'Life in Münster,' this includes the slide presentation in which he presented the concept to the residents of the housing estate in advance, as well as the twelve exhibits with which he will continue to work at the end of the exhibition.

Such attempts to independently organize one's own work beyond the exhibition are particularly evident in the context of conceptual art. At the same time, the phases of design, realization, and interpretation remain systematically separate, so that new interpretations of artistic work can emerge at the edges of these overlapping circles.

What processes do these projects trigger? Christian Hasucha establishes conceptual frameworks that activate the individual experiential potential of a social space. Using the method of intervention, he intervenes in sequences of actions or life courses so that they appear newly exposed and from a different perspective in the resulting, usually minimal distance. With the principle of democratic participation, Hasucha turns the classic observer into an actor. The participants in "Life in Münster" are enabled to perceive a specific phase of their lives in a targeted manner. However, they are not released into an extra-aesthetic no man's land, but are encouraged to process their own experiences in a way that does not functionalize or exploit them: they are asked to look, take notes, write, or sketch, in other words, to set subjective accents, to search for their own criteria of an 'order of things' and their own standards of self-expression. They are thus called upon to activate aesthetic experience on their own responsibility.

Public interventions undermine the familiar dialectic between private and public. They do not suggest a utopian counter-space that lifts one out of everyday structures. Nor do they seek to reveal the functional loops of meaning in everyday life with an aesthetic gesture. Rather, through structural interruptions, they make traces of the self legible.



Since then, I have continued to follow Hasucha's work, accompanied by the mailing of postcards or leporelli, which regularly informed me about current projects. My initial fascination and interest in his art have remained. And so I would like to revisit it here: some of the stages, the twists and turns, the surprises, and the tremendous reflexivity of these subtle and radically subjective interventions in our publicly shared (everyday) world. I will not follow a chronological order, but will instead attempt a thematic journey.

Cultural patterns

“... the world lies at our feet, because we stand on it, we walk on it” (Die Fantastischen Vier, 1999)

From December 2020 to July 2021, elements that are usually found in paved areas, courtyards, or interiors could be seen lying around as if by chance on various slopes in the middle of Berlin's wasteland: pieces of tiled flooring—seemingly forgotten, left behind, remnants of a formerly built-up or yet-to-be-built-up area.



- 39 TRASBA
- 38 Die Tasche
- 37 Transfer
- 36 Mehr Licht
- 35 Günters Fenster
- 34 Pulheimer Rochade
- 33 Die Ausrufer
- 32 Das Intervall
- 31 Die Nische
- 30 Hier und dort II
- 29 Leben in Münster
- 28 Zwischenzeit
- 27 S.K. besucht Kirchheim
- 26 Hier und dort
- 25 Die Sitzung
- 24 Begegnungen
- 23 JETZT II
- 22 Adsorptions-Vlies
- 21 Brücken
- 20 Wege
- 19 Der 9. April am Fuß
- 18 Ebene Tisch
- 17 Public Diary
- 16 P
- 15 Expedition LT 28E
- 14 Über die Stadt
- 13 Fenster

For the project “Floor Coverings” (Intervention No. 77), Christian Hasucha covered ten small areas in various Berlin districts with non-slip tiles. The public intervention began with the necessary construction work: securing the site, leveling and applying the lean concrete screed, and finally laying the tiles. It ended after a few months with the dismantling and restoration of the approximate original condition. The laying patterns of the tiles on the square floor slab varied. Sometimes they showed a diagonally applied grid structure, sometimes stepped or angular tracks, or an axial pattern of tiles of different widths; the color palette of the respective light-dark pattern ranged from brown to gray tones.

By exposing the tile laying in the outdoor area of an urban wasteland, the artist removes the product from the context in which it is expected to be integrated and sets it free, drawing our attention to the manufacturing process, the special pattern, and the relationship between a designed, precisely measured field and an undesigned,

unbounded environment. The ‘uninhabited’ floor covering becomes a sign or even a trace of a world inhabited by humans. Where does it lead?

Tiles and history

If you follow the traces of ceramic floors, you look into a “mirror of human history”⁴ that reveals a global cultural history. As early as 5000 years ago, the floors and walls of mud-brick houses in the Middle East and North Africa were covered with brick tiles. The craft of tiling served to protect buildings from moisture and erosion, but from the very beginning it also had a decorative function, as evidenced by the oldest finds of glazed ceramic tiles from the ancient Egyptian city of Armana.

The Roman Empire saw the development of tile production in terms of technology and variety. The areas of application ranged from simple floor coverings in

subordinate rooms to heated coverings and colored, partly painted mosaic tiles in palaces, temples, villas, and thermal baths. Byzantine culture then specialized primarily in wall and ceiling mosaics with Christian imagery; at around the same time, large-scale ornamental mosaics were cultivated in buildings and interiors in the Arab world, which was influenced by Islam.

With the end of the Roman Empire in Europe, traditions and technical know-how initially fell into oblivion and were only rediscovered when the Moors arrived on the Iberian Peninsula, in what is now Spain, in the 8th century. With the Crusades and via trade routes, the tradition of tile craftsmanship spread from there to more distant parts of Europe, where in the following centuries, country-specific techniques and style centers developed, influencing each other.

In Western and Central Europe, ceramic flooring first became widespread in monasteries and churches as a result of the architectural style of the 12th-century religious orders, namely the Benedictines and Cistercians. Only a few of these medieval floors have been preserved in situ, for example in the Cistercian Abbey of Eberbach, St. Gereon's Church in Cologne, and the Marburg Castle Chapel of the Landgraves of Hesse. ...

... *and art*

In modern times, tiled floors have once again become increasingly popular in private homes. They enhance living comfort and serve as a symbol of status and social distinction. We also know about the varied appearance of these floors, which reflect the influence of Oriental and ancient traditions, from terracotta floors to mosaic floors to tiled floors, through Renaissance works of art.



With the discovery of the world and its representability in perspective, concrete space also became an artistic theme in the 15th century. Initially, in order to depict biblical narratives as present events, contemporary interiors were shown in which the scene now takes place. The patterned surfaces give perspective to the pictorial space and ennoble the protagonists. In secular portraits, the precious floor then represents the status and education of its owners and their guests, who want to appear style-conscious and well-traveled, and thus “well-versed” in the world. It creates, as it were, the social framework or space in which one wants to move and be seen.

Even in works of classical modern art, patterned floors are still used, but now as a set piece, quoting, as it were, the spatial and representational theories of the Renaissance, as in the adjacent painting “Roman or: Five Figures in Space” by Oskar

Schlemmer from 1925. The view into the world opened up by perspective has become ambivalent. It locates the human being, but also shows their isolation in the world. Space is no longer a place of relationship, but has itself become a field of reference.

Cultural foundations

Let us now return to the floor intervention. Unlike Schlemmer, Hasucha perceives the patterned surface as such, detached from any contextual, thematic, or situational references; it lies there seemingly 'groundless,' somewhere in the middle of nowhere. The floor panel interrupts my path, causing me to stop and look around. Where am I? What do I see? A small 'disturbance' that 'activates' the surroundings, as it were, and 'sends out' the impulse to search the surroundings for visible and invisible references, to scan them with my eyes, to divide them into fields, to identify or draw patterns. Looking at the different locations where the floor coverings are placed, it seems as if the buildings in the distance are abstractly reflected in each section: Berlin apartment buildings, prefabricated buildings, an industrial estate reflected in a river, or the pattern of intersecting gravel paths that run out into the wasteland. Depending on the location and lighting conditions, passersby may have perceived other visual correspondences and included other elements. It is as if one can view culture from a distance from the small standing area, the scattered floor fragment.

In the liberated floor, we ultimately also reflect on the form of a tile itself: on the one hand, it is a concrete rectangular surface, and on the other, it forms a module for an iterative, endlessly expandable pattern. Through the individual and collective characteristics linked within it, it becomes an image of cultural foundations or their grounding. We decide—as the autonomous floor sections also remind us—whether this lays the foundation for open spaces or the ground of a domain of domination in which the inhuman is carried out.

With floor coverings in a wasteland close to the city, the artist also reminds us, in my opinion, of the modern design ideas of the Bauhaus tradition—possibly also a reference to the foyer of the Weimar art school. For me, the work thus represents an attempt or proposal to renew the social mandate to design public space in the sense of an artistic veto, in the spirit of a free, egalitarian society that seeks to reconcile the right to individual self-realization with the right to equality.



After the slabs have been dismantled, their imprint remains visible for a while until this trace also disappears at some point. Cultural forms and patterns are fundamentally connected to the world because we have formed an image of it from the very beginning. With them, we lay the groundwork and make the earth habitable. But they are implemented, wandering forms, intermediate levels that we have creatively superimposed. Most of the time, we don't even notice them because they seem so familiar. Ultimately, however, they remain foreign bodies and remind us that we ourselves are strangers, for *"man has no place to lay his head."* Mt 8:20

Levels of perception

The following work, with the initially puzzling title "Marzahn rises" (Intervention No. 75), also deals with a second level.



In 2018, an unreal phenomenon could be observed in the Berlin district of Marzahn. On a plane tree avenue intended for walkers, one of the trees and with it the planting level had apparently risen and seemed to float a few centimeters above the ground. Hasucha's work, submitted for the district office's art competition "Movement in Space" and then realized, envisaged an intervention in the Marzahn Promenade, a

shopping street opposite the row of trees. Around each of the plane trees, which were still quite young at the time of the intervention, an unsealed area, known as a tree grate, was left open to allow the tree to access water. This area is enclosed by a square zinc border approximately eight centimeters high. The artist recreated this exact level in his workshop and mounted it around a plane tree at Marzahner Promenade 26 using a mushroom-shaped support structure, about 40 centimeters above the ground. The support structure was almost invisible, giving the impression that the tree and the tree pit were floating.

Hasucha's intervention duplicates the planting situation and makes it visible by shifting it. But he also creates a new situation, that of suspension. A floating tree, how can that be? What does it mean when a tree lifts off the ground? What thoughts come to mind when you see a tree and its base suspended in the air, disconnected from the ground? And what do the Marzahn Promenade and the title "Marzahn rises" have to do with all this?

Se promener – going for a walk

In the 1960s, the idea of a "science of walking" emerged in the field of urban and landscape planning, which sought to sensitize public perception of urban land use structures through "practical field exploration," aesthetic interventions, and "reflective walks" (Lucius Burckhardt) and to incorporate the results of field research into planning processes. Hasucha's intervention inherits and reactivates this type of reflective and creative engagement with the local environment. The name of the location, "Marzahner Promenade," may therefore provide a first clue to the context in which the tree intervention was created.



Promenades are usually elevated areas for strolling, often lined with rows of trees or lanterns, which offer sweeping views. The first promenades were built in the 19th century in port cities, on lake or river banks, or on former fortification walls. Hasucha's intervention thus refers to the idea of the promenade as a publicly designated place for movement and leisure, for encounters and exchange, where seeing and being seen are naturally also important. Now, the "Marzahner Promenade" is not as illustrious a place as the "Promenade des Anglais" on the

southern French coast in Nice, portrayed by Max Beckmann in 1947 while in exile in Amsterdam. Nevertheless, the modern shopping promenade with cafés and leisure facilities was an urban place at the height of its time in terms of design in the late post-war period. It was designed in 1970 by architect Wolf Rüdiger Eisentraut, who two years later was also involved in the design of the Palace of the Republic, to enliven a street that was part of the “Großwohnsiedlung Marzahn,” a sprawling green prefabricated housing estate built around the old village structure in the 1970s. In 2011, the storefronts were renovated and In 2011, the shops were renovated and additional green spaces were created, including the row of trees, and for several years now, the city has been regularly holding competitions for art and design in public spaces.

Looking at tree planting against the backdrop of these developments, the picture is ambivalent: on the one hand, we see carefully laid out avenues that improve quality of life and in which individual trees are culturally enclosed, protected, and kept alive by open spaces that are not covered in concrete. But one can also see trees that have been “brought into line,” each of which has only a very limited area available to it, cleared of undergrowth. These trees can never “grow into the sky” or form a forest. How do we want to build, how do we want to live (together), how do we want to live? These questions are condensed in Hasucha's tree intervention by repeating a design idea on a different level and bringing it to the forefront of our consciousness.

Land

Now that the tree has risen; now that it calls us to action, what could it tell us? As “urban greenery,” a promenade tree represents the cultivation of nature and the design of urban spaces. We have developed, surveyed, and mapped the earth. What do we use the land for? How much space do we leave for vegetative growth? Who owns the land and how is it distributed? The amount of land ownership also determines the degree of social participation in a society. But how do we measure what belongs to whom? What do we mean when we talk about the rising or falling levels of prosperity, performance, or education in a neighborhood or among its residents, about simple and upscale circumstances? Hasucha's work raises all these questions in the broadest sense and, through the raised tree, engages us in a conversation about how they might be related to the (un)availability of the earth. Knowing about rising sea levels, it could also remind us that even a slight elevation can have enormous consequences on a global scale. Knowing that sea levels are rising, it could also remind us that even a slight elevation can have enormous consequences on a global scale.

The surreal tree



But the floating tree solitaire is also a poetic image. Similar to the 1927 painting “La culture des idées” by Belgian surrealist René Magritte—where it looks as if the trunks of two trees forming a shared crown are legs on which a tree stands on a pedestal looking out at the landscape in front of it—Hasucha's tree floating above the ground also appears animated; it is a living actor on a stage. On a surreal level, the raised tree becomes a symbol of individuation, articulation, and rebellion.

In fact, as the title suggests, the work “Marzahn rises” is likely to refer to a real situation of oppression and internment. In 1936, a labor camp for “gypsies” was established in Marzahn, Hitler's first camp for “foreign races.” Following a nationwide arrest campaign, 600 people were interned in the camp north of the municipal cemetery. In the following years, it developed into the largest “gypsy camp” in Germany. From 1939 onwards, the prisoners were used for forced labor in the satellite camps of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp or for road work in Berlin. Most of the up to 2,000 prisoners were deported to the Auschwitz or Bergen-Belsen concentration camps in 1943. What if Marzahn had really risen up back then?

Taking measurements on humans



- 69 Die Zuschreibung
- 68 Eyetracking
- 67 Reakklimatisierungsraum
- 66 RumbulTurGeo
- 65 Bildrettungsplaketten
- 64 Buch M
- 63 später sein wird
- 62 Eferdinger Windrückstellung
- 61 Das Münsinger Loch
- 60 Zwischenfälle
- 59 Eichendorff-Gedenkpfad
- 58 JETZT und der Fluss
- 57 Die Vertikalen
- 56 16 Poller
- 55 + 28,33 m3
- 54 maintenant
- 53 Die Reise
- 52 Kurz vor Heinde
- 51 Abgasbilder, bewertet
- 50 Eschbachzeit
- 49 Die Insel
- 48 Münster-Coerde Drehung
- 47 Probewohnen in Stufurt
- 46 Ein Auto fährt vorbei
- 45 Ansichtslider Gegenwart
- 44 Los Manos
- 43 FREMD in Neuhausen
- 42 An der Strasse
- 41 Simultanprotokoll
- 40 Gesprächsverstärker
- 39 TRASBA
- 38 Die Tasche
- 37 Transfer
- 36 Mehr Licht
- 35 Günters Fenster
- 34 Pulheimer Rochade
- 33 Die Ausrufer

Project “P” (intervention no. 16) between 1993 and 1994 also involved a survey. Hasucha had designed 50 small steel platforms, which he attached to street poles in Cologne, Heilbronn, and Graz about 20 cm above the ground and left to volunteer participants for several weeks for any use they wished. The participants, who remained anonymous, were recruited for the project via initial letters and reply cards. The images of people exposed on platforms, seemingly locked to posts, looking out at their surroundings, are extremely impressive—beautiful and at the same time almost painful. They are images of people and of humanity. As individuals, we are “placed” somewhere in the world; and as persons, we are equal to one another, meaning we are “on the same level.” As subjects, however, we choose our “point of view” and adopt it voluntarily. It determines our view and puts “our” world into perspective. We “elevate” ourselves and look at the world according to our “own standards.” The measuring human being and the measurable human being are distinct yet inseparably connected perspectives of human existence and coexistence.

There is a famous art-historical model for the aesthetic visualization of a differentiated spatial perspective: the fresco known as “Trinity” by the Florentine painter Masaccio. It was created between 1425 and 1428 and is located on the northwestern wall of the nave of the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, which was richly painted until the 16th century. The Trinity fresco depicts the Last Judgment, with Christ on the right, the Virgin Mary on the left, and the Holy Spirit above them. The Trinity fresco is a masterpiece of Italian Renaissance art and is considered one of the most important paintings in the history of art. It was created between 1425 and 1428 and is located on the northwestern wall of the nave of the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, which was richly painted until the 16th century. To depict the opening into a fictional space, Masaccio was one of the first artists of the 15th century to work with central perspective. Masaccio's pictorial solution for the depiction of God the Father and God the Son is such that although

both can be seen in a homogeneous pictorial space, we have to change levels in our perception, to distinguish between them, so to speak, in order to locate the respective Trinitarian person in a plausible perspective.



Masaccio's depiction also contained a momentous step: when God and man are placed in the same space, man is no longer assigned a place, but can and must make himself a place from then on. This is where power and powerlessness lie at the same time. This conditionality of freedom and vulnerability also makes the voluntary exposure of the participants in the art action "P" aesthetically tangible. As humans, we have a free view, and as humans who have become visible, we are dependent on the human gaze of others.

One more thought is permitted at this point. If one reads the works "P" and "Marzahn rises," the elevation of man and the (vicarious) elevation of the tree, together, a connection emerges between the dignity of man and the unavailability of the earth. The two are also connected from a religious perspective, as the psalmist Samuel reminds us in the song of Hannah: "God robs and enriches, humbles and exalts, lifts the lowly from the dust, raises the poor from the rubbish to seat them beside the noble. God gives them a place of honor. Yes, God's are the pillars of the earth, founded on them is the globe." 1 Sam 2:7-8.

The Island

The project "The Island" (Intervention No. 49) was extremely popular. First realized in Berlin-Neukölln in 2006, it was set up in Lier (Belgium in 2007), Fribourg (Switzerland in 2008), and Vienna (in 2017) in the following years.



A grassy hill, airily elevated and open for use upon registration.

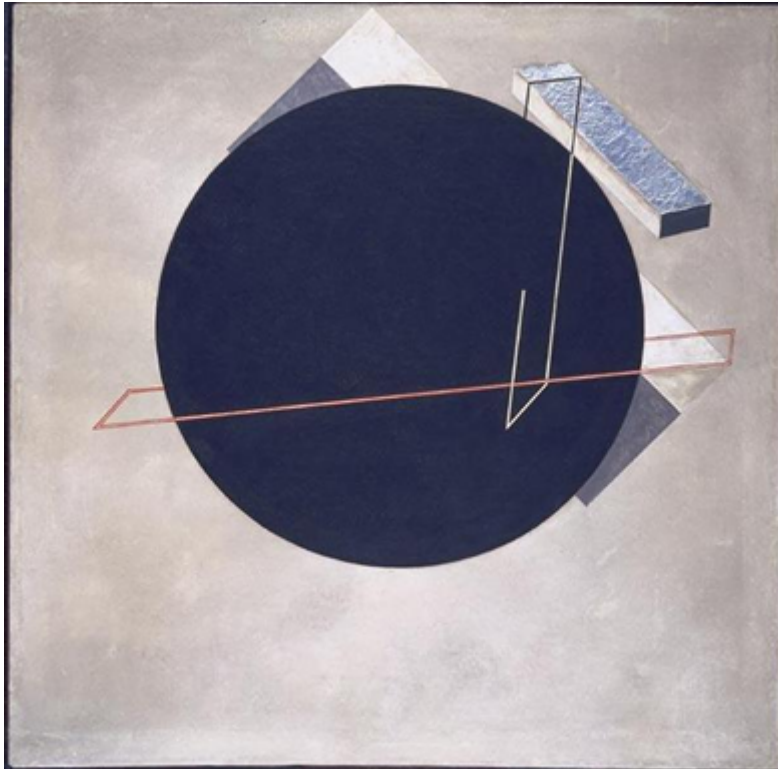
The artist recalls how quickly the place became popular: "When I started using THE ISLAND [...] as my private breakfast spot, I had no idea how much interest it would generate. Not only did the addition of another level to the urban landscape cause irritation and discussion. The possibility of having a private space in the midst of street traffic was obviously attractive. Many passersby wanted to make reservations. We gave out appointments." (C. Hasucha) The circular, grass-covered hilltop with a narrow railing and a graceful strutwork can evoke different associations: one thinks of traffic islands, viewing platforms, or urban green spaces for gatherings, play, and relaxation.

Another thought that this work might evoke is related to the ground: the geology of the city. Berlin is located in the North German Plain on a glacial layer of sand and boulder clay and was covered by a river and floodplain landscape at the time of its creation. *"Berlin is built on water. This is already evident in the name, which probably goes back to the Slavic syllable "berl," meaning "swamp."* The city's origins lie in the settlements on the narrow section of the Spree Valley where the slopes quickly transition to the Barnim Plateau in the north and the Teltow Plateau in the south. Here, our ancestors were able to cross the river with relative ease. The remaining areas in the valley were likely to have been mosquito-infested, musty-smelling quarters, especially in summer. "5 Street names ending in "Damm" (dam) or districts such as Prenzlauer Berg are reminders of these early landscape conditions— and now also the "topographical superimposition" (C. Hasucha) by a temporary island.

But there is also a political connection, of course, when one thinks of West Berlin's long-standing island status during the division of Germany.

Island reflections

In Hasucha's image of the island, I also recognize an art-historical reminiscence of the spatial experiments in early 20th-century Russian Constructivism, such as El Lissitzky's 1923 work "Proun 8." Due to the shadows cast on the ground by the precise circle and the graceful strut construction under a cloudless sky, the entire structure appears to float detached in orbit when viewed from above. We stand on the earth and circle with it in space. Or, in the much more beautiful words of Christian Hasucha, which he noted in his sketchbook: *"We sat in the meadow. The globe hung above us."*



Not least thanks to the Venice Biennale, the island has become an iconic location for contemporary art. The concept and image of the island are among the oldest topoi in the history of Western culture. Islands symbolize the discovery of new horizons, journeys to distant lands and foreign cultures. Humans can land on them or be stranded there. Depending on the narrative and perspective, they are places of new beginnings, refuge, or isolation. Hasucha's idea of an artistic island also evokes an intellectual-historical horizon. As a symbol of the longing for freedom and the search for truth, the island is a mythical place that we will never reach. In a sense, our mind itself is this island, and the world around us remains foreign territory. Kant describes it this way

We have now not only traveled through the land of pure reason and carefully examined every part of it, but we have also measured it and determined the place of every thing in it. This land, however, is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unchanging boundaries. It is the land of truth (a charming name), surrounded by a vast and stormy ocean, the very seat of illusion, where many a bank of fog and much ice that soon melts away lie new lands, and by incessantly deceiving the sailor who is eager for discovery with empty hopes, entangling him in adventures that he can

never abandon and yet can never bring to an end. But before we venture out onto this sea to search it in all its breadth and to ascertain whether there is anything to hope for in them, it will be useful to first take a look at the map of the land we are about to leave and ask ourselves, first of all, whether we could not be satisfied with what it contains, or even have to be satisfied out of necessity, if there is no other land on which we could cultivate ourselves; secondly, under what title we ourselves possess this land and can keep ourselves secure against all hostile claims." 6

I see an (perhaps even closer) spiritual affinity to Hasucha's thinking in the reflections of the religious philosopher Ernst Bloch. While Kant's image of the island illustrates the limitations of human knowledge, Bloch uses the island as a synonym for social utopias. In a conversation with Theodor W. Adorno, he describes the essence of a utopia:

"[Admittedly,] this island does not exist. But it is not nonsense or mere enthusiasm; rather, it is not yet possible in the sense that it could exist if we did something to achieve it. Not only when we go there, but by going there, the island of Utopia rises from the sea of possibilities – utopia, but with new content. I believe that in this sense, utopia is not so settled in our consciousness, despite the appalling trivialization it has suffered and despite the mandate—here I would agree with my friend Adorno—that a supposedly totally saturated society, now claimed to be classless and no longer antagonistic, has given it." 7

In Hasucha's art, both approaches to knowledge seem to be reflected as open questions. She challenges our ability to think utopically. At the same time, she interrupts rational discourse by arguing from the realm of aesthetics.

Art and life

The possibilities and limitations of art are different from those of life. But because this is the case, the two are interrelated. The aesthetic insights that can be gained from this also offer opportunities for a more just society. Hasucha's artistic interventions are non-objective and, as such, "the seed of all possibilities" (Kasimir Malevich). As consistent work in and on the public sphere, they formulate a strong yet quiet veto for aesthetic education in the sense of social participation. This is less about rules and regulations or social agreements and more about cultivating open, undefined spaces, about the possibility of distancing oneself, the randomness of a public gathering, and the desire to discuss interpretations in an increasingly restrictive public space. And last but not least, it is about forgotten places, lost spaces that tell of marginalization and devaluation. Hasucha seeks out these wastelands and reveals their beauty. Everything is different when we see it from a fundamentally different perspective.

Notes

1) Aristotle. *Metaphysics (First Philosophy)*, Book 12. Greek/German according to the translation by Hermann Bonitz, Berlin 1890. (Hans Zimmermann Görlitz 2001. Chapters 6 and 7: the unmoved mover as the first cause. – 107 b to 1073 a.

- 2) Christian Hasucha / Andrea Knobloch: Christian Hasucha. Öffentliche Interventionen / Public Interventions, Verlag für Moderne Kunst: Nuremberg 2013 and Christian Hasucha: Öffentliche Interventionen / Public Interventions, Vol. II, Vol. II, Hanover: blaue reiter | Verlag für Philosophie 2024.
- 3) Peter Funken: Christian Hasucha. Interventionen, Stadt-Implantate und Begegnungen im Öffentlichen Raum, in: Kunstforum International, Vol. 192, 2008, Schönheit II, pp. 208-222.
- 4) Wilhelm Joliet: Die Geschichte der Fliese, Muller 1996 (online). .
- 5) Ralf Nestler: Der Berliner Boden: Geschichten aus dem Untergrund, Tagesspiegel 30.6.2012.
- 6) Immanuel Kant: Kritik der reinen Vernunft. Der transzendentalen Doktrin der Urteilskraft (Analytik der Grundsätze) Drittes Hauptstück. Von dem Grunde der Unterscheidung aller Gegenstände überhaupt in Phaenomena und Noumena, 2. Aufl. Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 1998. Mit einer ausführlichen Bibliographie von Heiner Klemme; online im Projekt Gutenberg.
- 7) Etwas fehlt ... Über die Widersprüche der utopischen Sehnsucht. Ein Gespräch mit Theodor W. Adorno. Gesprächsleiter: Horst Krüger, in: Gespräche mit Ernst Bloch, hrsg. v. Rainer Taub und Harald Wieser, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1964, S. 58-77, hier: S. 60.