

finger  
quarterly newsletter for contemporary cultural  
phenomena

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curated by Joseph Kosuth

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"Readers Profile"

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newsletter für aktuelle kulturphänomene  
newsletter for contemporary cultural phenomena

Martin Brandt & Andreas Wolf (Stuttgart), Florian Haas & Martin Schmidt (Frankfurt)

APEX ART C.P.

An interview between Joseph Kosuth and the finger-staff referring to topics from finger 1-3:

THE FINGER IN THE TEXT: PROJECTS AND TEXTS IN FINGER  
20 Questions about meaning

#### THE CENTER FOR LANDUSE INTERPRETATION

Does finger see this as the real political underbelly of a cultural practice (Interpretation) whose "meta"-self-conception is based in a socially pragmatic role? Yes.

Does finger think that the idea here is to constitute a study of the negative traces of human activity now non-functional?

The CLUI is not only about the negative effects of the occupation of land but first of all about the use of it in general.

Is an esthetic dimension implied by this?

It is included at the moment when the CLUI makes a choice out of the variety of uses of the land and visualizes it (publications, a homepage and the foundation of exhibition spaces).



CLUI: The Mark 17 hydrogen bomb, on display at the National Atomic Museum

If we have a kind of macro-readymade, what is its larger context and what meaning is produced by it as a relationship that signifies?

The CLUI mainly works in the USA, the basic idea, however, is a global one. In contrast to the materialistic subject of the CLUI, Matthew Coolidge compares the CLUI, in his interview, with a spring that is used by various people who communicate with each other. The employees of the CLUI also come from very different fields. And as Matthew Coolidge says: Both the authorities and activists against nuclear energy use the CLUI as a source. The higher context in which the CLUI is interested is to control the communication about its subject.

#### KEEP THE FORM

What would finger say the semiotic difference is between a monument and another object which would call itself a 'statue' or a 'sculpture'?

Probably one cannot speak of the semiotic difference. This difference, or better the perception of this difference itself, rather underlies constant change. This could be noticed very well in Piotrkow Trybunalski. A memorial that has shown political, culturally valuable, esthetic, etc. implications against a formerly communist background,

becomes after the dissolving of this background completely unambiguous at once and only political and actually political in the "wrong" way. The context in which the memorial was located does not exist any more, but the memorial is still there. To find a solution for this situation, the town decided to remove all characteristics that could be traced back to the political past of the monument. The reliefs of the soldiers and the inscriptions were removed and the monument was repainted with the paint that was left over from the renovation of the cinema next door. Besides that, vines were planted that are slowly growing over the former memorial. This nothing indicates the former memorial for Polish-Soviet comrades in arms and the monument looks like a piece of public art.

Do you think that the history of monuments affect our view of all outside work?

In the long run, yes.

After a profound government change, such as in eastern Europe, what should be done with such monuments? a) remove them, b) leave them as they are, c) somehow transform them and make them acceptable to the present political reality. Could you discuss all three in relation to your project in Piotrkow Trybunalski?

A definite yes and no in all three cases. Partly the monuments should be removed, partly



The monument in Piotrkow Trybunalski as it was in 1997

they should be saved and partly existing monuments should be developed further, depending on the special situation. Already in communist times the memorial was thought of as provisional. As well as the removal of the inscriptions, the new paint and the vines should actually bridge a transitional period, while a competition for redesigning the whole place was organized. During this transitional period it was possible to temporarily install the wooden cross that exceeds the monument by several meters. For us, we are observing the situation more or less as tourists, to look at the constellation not only in its chronological development but in its totality. From here on it was important to simply stress what was happening. The posters announcing an open-air movie showing of the film *Cowboy* on the place in front of the monument attracted quite a lot of inhabitants. On a gallery made out of wooden pallets the guests could take a seat so that they had a good view of the projection. The surface on which it was projected was the spot where the inscriptions and the relief used to be. But as there was no film to see, except the light from the projector, the people passed their time with the drinks offered, such as catholic mass wine and NIE-vodka—produced by the publisher of the communist daily paper NIE (=never). The event lasted for one night and was not repeated.

This is a very interesting project, from my point of view, because the issues which surround the production of meaning become quite visible. Do you think your activity occupies a kind of meta-relation (or eclipse) to the present meaning vacuum of the monument now? What would suffice as an ontological description of your work as separate from the meaning of the monument that exists now?

More than in the actual alteration of the object, we are interested in the altered interpretation of it. That is why it was important for us that the performance had been temporary and that the effect did not appear at the monument but in the heads of the guests or in their stomachs.

#### DIE WEIBEN VÄTER

How would finger compare the wrapping of the Max Bill sculpture with the utilization of existing public work in Keep the Form?

Keep the Form is about re-using a memorial by the community, by artists and the church. Concerning Max Bill's sculpture, it was only for a very short period of time that the work of art was used for a political performance. In both cases it is interesting for us how a memorial or a public sculpture is used apart from the artist's ideas.

#### CERN, THE EUROPEAN LABORATORY FOR PARTICLE PHYSICS

How about: what is the difference/similarity between a photograph and a map and what are the conditions which would make your answer(s) differ?

First of all there were some general questions: how and by which means one is trying to create a picture of the world and its meaning, in respect to the meaning of the picture itself and the influence of the means used for each descriptive attempt. The common thread is three guided tours in and around CERN (Conseil Européen de la Recherche Nucléaire), the European Laboratory for Particle Physics, one of the world's largest scientific laboratories. It stretches out on both sides of the French-Swiss border, just west of the city of Geneva. There the scientists deal with frontline research, pure science—particle physics—probing the innermost constituents of matter to find out how our world and the whole of the universe works. To achieve this, they use the world's largest scientific machine—the LEP electron-positron collider. To protect the highly sensitive experiments against influence by cosmic rays, almost the whole technical site (collider-rings, detectors, laboratories) is installed underground, varying in depth from 50 to 150 meters. There, beams of electrons and their counterpart, positrons, are whirled around in a 27-kilometer underground ring to

#### INGO RUSCHE FROM TORNITZ

Is this more than life in the face of shifted fictions? Yes on the one hand there is the *fourx* naturalism of market forces, with the suggestion of a promise which should really be seen more as a form of non-prohibition (you can go to Spain if you want, but...), and on the other is life inside a political playhouse, where the actors are invited on stage, ushered off of it, but never own it except as participants in the fiction. The stage and audience are one, and the producers run a party, etc. What patina of meaning would finger give this to prevent it from being one of a thousand badly written and unpublished Kafka stories, experienced by outsiders mostly as guilt when the perception of banality is attained? We do need to make meaning of these stories, but where does finger start?

Ingo Rusche is about 30 years old and describes how he grew up in the GDR and what his experiences are with the difference between the systems. The interview is one of several that we made in two villages in Sachsen-Anhalt. In a book that was published in 1998, we let parts of these conversations run together into imaginary village gossip. By adding these shifted fictions a representation of time arises

#### BRIDGE PHENOMENON

What exactly is being honored? The two policemen that died as fathers, buddies, sons, husbands, brothers or boyfriends of someone living, policemen in general, the idea of a monument/museum for policemen, the 'real' as constructed by American media? The most unusual aspect is the representation by a drawing rather than a photograph. What does this question?

This is difficult to say. The multitude of questions that arises in view of this memorial simultaneously shows the quality of this place. Standing in front of the memorial, one does not know exactly what it is all about. As no definite content becomes apparent, except for something about the police, the form of the arrangement itself is paid closer attention... Authenticity is suggested—the actual place where the policemen were murdered/handwritten comments on a drawing, the photograph of a uniform cap that has been pasted onto the drawing, a prayer that comes from the bottom of somebody's heart, all this seems to be completely authentic at first sight. Only when the arrangement is observed in greater detail, does it become bizarre and artificial. One cannot recognize any action that would set any context for the death and thus the place. Why is there an American prayer translated into German? Why is it mentioned



"Die Weiblen Väter" demonstrating in front of the Deutsche Bank



CERN proposal showing the location of the collider ring

Konrad Witz, 'Der wunderbare Fisching', Geneva 1444



First automatic photos by Nadat, 1957

LEP tunnel at CERN



Inside the pub 'Zur Post' in Tornitz



Bridge Phenomenon, Paper for a Policeman

Have these actions had any effect on the policies of Deutsche Bank, and if not, has there been any discussion of the 'cultural face' of such strategies, given that choices here seem to manifest something like a style? In other words, these are choices and another group with the same objectives could easily choose another approach. Is there a meaningful construction (as a cultural form) which links these actions? Can we speak of an aesthetics of political form which is not highly problematic and pejorative?

As far as we know, these performances have not had any effect on the policies of the Deutsche Bank. What is interesting for us in the campaigns of "Ordensleute für den Frieden" (monks and nuns for peace) is that forms of art performances meet extremely moralized demands in a situation that is a lost cause from today's aesthetically and politically effective points of view.

within a hair's breadth of the speed of light and smashed together. Four mighty detectors, each as big as a four-story building, are spaced around the ring to intercept, record and analyze the emerging fragments of matter. So far the given frame (the conditions).

Against this background photography and cartography (together with painting, aerodynamics and physics) are compared historically-culturally. As media they become orientation (compass), considered within a very concrete practical relation, but also regarding their function of representing a conception of the world. Consequently an equation is established with regard to their influence on views of the world and possibilities of orientation as well as their usage, in which one simultaneously finds specification or, say, difference.

regarding today's emotions in this area.

The interview in finger is basic material for us—Ingo Rusche was the only artist among the group of interviewed people...how does an artist dramatize his banal fate? Similar to the interview with Father Böckermann, the conversation with Ingo Rusche is also an aspect of a major context. In one case, it is the impression of the area of Frankfurt/Main, in the other case it is one of two small villages in the east of Germany. These interviews appear in finger in a different extent and within a different context. They can be interpreted both as accompanying texts to the project and as news.

that the prayer originally comes from the Police Museum in Miami? What is the picture of the Police Museum doing here? Why is the uniform cap not drawn also, but cut out of a photograph and pasted onto the picture? The attempt to add more importance to this distant place than it really has, apparently does not work without using traditional vehicles, for example 'God', 'uniform', 'America' and 'museum'. Thus this place is not so much an actual place of remembrance of the deceased as it is an interesting example of how normative cultural codes are recombined in a private arrangement.

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