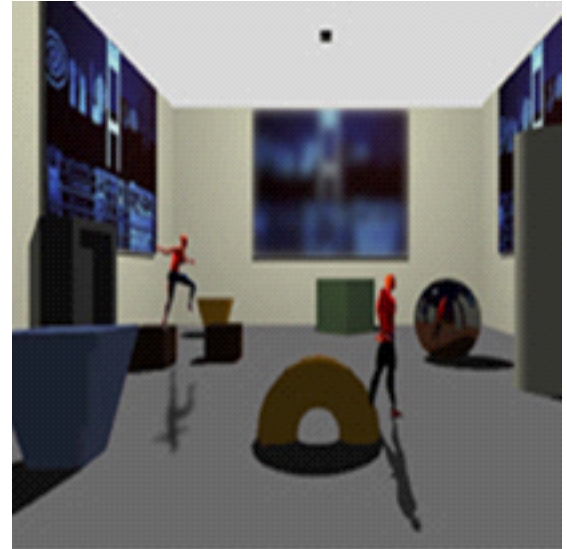


poster



mediatecture

on the synergies of electronic media and architecture

Axel Wirths, 235 media, Mediatecture

Abstract

The synergies that can be achieved between electronic media and architecture, between virtual and real spaces, are being appreciated only slowly and are to be the theme of an exhibition with the programmatic title of "Mediatecture". The goal of the project is to make it possible to identify the direct link that exists between electronic media and built architecture and the fluid interfaces between real and virtual space. It is all about presenting an overview of the status quo and at the same time taking a look at visionary future media-architecture synergies. This allows the current discrepancy between theoretical discourse and working practice to be demonstrated: Although architects such as Nouvel, Ito, Sakamura, Koolhaas and the Viennese Coop Himmelb(l)au have done some groundwork and there is much talk of the use of electronic media in architecture, there have so far been only a few half-hearted projects ? and in these the application of electronic technologies was limited to the use of a web-server.

Keywords: Medien, Architektur, Design, Virtueller Raum, Realer Raum, Elektronische Medien, Electronic Space Media Art, City and Urbanity Synergie, Kybernetic Vision

1. Introduction

Mediatecture stands for the synergy of electronic media and the built environment. The exhibition's aim is to investigate the floating borderlines between the real and the virtual space as well as their real interfaces. The exhibition provides the visitor with the opportunity to experience the results of this investigation.

An exhibition with the subject "Mediatecture" - the amalgamation of electronic media and architecture – can be realised in different forms:

1. As a documentary presentation of those projects that have already been realised or are currently being planned
2. As a physical presentation of interface solutions and built components which can be entered, touched and experienced
3. As a mixture of both aforementioned forms, supplemented by a fringe programme including films, symposia etc.

This paper on Mediatecture introduces ideas and concepts of media artists and architects. The conceptual structure is deliberately kept open and flexible in order to achieve a synergetic implementation of architecture and electronic media through a process of discourse or a form of interpolation as it were.

The exhibition intends to address a professional audience of architects, designers and those who work in the media. It should, however, also appeal to a broad public by offering extraordinary experiences through the presentation of installations, interface solutions, parts of buildings etc.

The fringe programme and the symposium should not attempt to rewrite the history of architecture, rather they should result in a small, high quality contribution to the current discussion that will attract general attention.

Bill Seaman, Exchange Fields, 2000 (see image above)

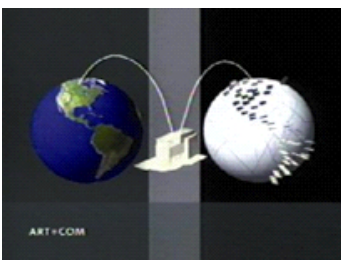
2. Mediatecture - Borderlines between the real and the virtual space

In the history of artistic expression through electronic media we can clearly observe a tendency towards spatial extension. While artists during the 70s still concentrated on the limited space of the TV box, this space was already being extended in the sculptures and closed-circuit installations by the likes of Nam June Paik and Bruce Nauman. In the early closed-circuit installations the ability of media art to interlink real spaces, temporal processes and constructed realities was already visible. The interactive installations emerging in the mid-80s with their increasingly complex interfaces radically reinforced this development. Since the beginning of the 90s, media art installations have rather turned into environments that integrate the complete space with all its details into the artwork. Since, on the other hand, the virtual space with its complex constructed realities is extending significantly in terms of size, use and qualities interactive, space-related interfaces are of increasing importance. The trend towards spatial extension continues and is not limited by walls. It seizes whole buildings as well as social and urban structures. In the latter case, media artists are still reaching their limits and a co-operation with architects and city planners becomes a precondition of constructive integration into the built environment.

The current status of an architectural work has to be determined on the basis of today's technological and perceptive possibilities. Electronically transferred information, like Walter Benjamin's "mechanical reproduction", reconstitutes not only the visible and the process, but also our understanding of time and matter.

Our real communication needs and existing technologies (telephone, fax, TV, radio etc.) find their counterparts in the virtual space of electronic networks. The real world is projected into the virtual space which simultaneously is being expanded by the medium's intrinsic qualities. At the present moment we are observing a virtual building boom. Particularly as far as hypertext, or more generally front-end interface software and their applications are concerned, we are finding ourselves in the centre of a fast growing global city. Here, too, we mainly encounter projections of the real world. But as opposed to traditional communication systems, we are able to create our own habitat within this environment. It is possible to lead a virtual life within the medium, the medium has become inhabitable.

How do these virtual forms of behaviour effect our real life, or is it at all justified to differentiate between the virtual and the real world? How will people who have a virtual past and those who have not interact with each other in future? And, most importantly, how will the interfaces between the virtual and the real be designed and how will those interface solutions be integrated into architecture? Can there be a synergy between the built and the virtual environment within a common urban structure?



Art & Com, Networked Skin, 2000

3. Aim of the exhibition

As can be seen by the very divergent evaluations of mediatecture - a small circle of insiders already considers the concept passé, while it is still unfamiliar even to the majority of architects - it is essential to begin with outlining its content in a more clear/concrete and vivid manner: Mediatecture can be described as the synergy of electronic media and architecture, of virtual and real spaces. This interface can be distinguished from TransArchitecture, that is virtual architecture, as well as from the simple use of media technology within the framework of architectural planning.

Neither the influence of media applications in the field of design nor the purely virtual character of architecture is to be placed in the foreground. Far more central in this context is the exposition of the interface between real and virtual space - presented in a way which makes its influence and quality sensuously perceptible to the visitor.

Since very few mediatectures have ever been realized and concepts of the synergies between electronic media and architecture have rarely been put into effect, the visitor will only be able to grasp this interface if it is possible to present a survey of those projects that have been conceived and/or realized, and when an interdisciplinary discourse can be initiated. The architects and artists who realize projects on media art and architecture are characterized by a clear tendency to extend space beyond its real and into its virtual capacity. In doing so they react seismographically to social tendencies like global networking and the growing importance of electronic media. However, the rapid development in the field of new media is leaving those architects who want to integrate a medial approach in their work increasingly helpless.

The area of media art with its direct access to technology, inventions and applications is steadily gaining importance in this context. Nevertheless: the interface between architecture and electronic media can only be dealt with sensibly and put to best use when developers of both areas are able to realize their ideas and visions jointly. In exploring this interface visitors of the exhibition will be able to experience the concrete synergies of electronic media and constructed architecture with their senses. Through this experience the fluid borderline of the interface between real and virtual space is directly perceived, which may help visitors to deal with the expanding role of electronic media in our social and urban surroundings more consciously.

Exhibition space will be devoted particularly to the medial and architectonic ideas and visions of the younger generation of architects and artists, the ones who have grown up with the expansion of multimedia. For they are the ones who strive for a genuine synergy of media and architecture, and this connection can be classified as mediatecture in the more narrow sense: real and virtual spatial situations and structures lose their special characteristics, spatial and temporal distances are overcome, space opens up around us - variations of spatial mutation become possible. In this context it is possible to approach the desired synergy of real and virtual space through either medially extending actual architectural constructions or by turning this process around and augmenting electronic media with real spaces. This synergy always entails the combination of real situations, chronological processes and constructed realities. Because space is virtually expanded, the space-time-interval is suspended and people can be everywhere at the same time - The actual location of architecture disappears to the extent that space and time are dissolved by the electronic media.

4. Artists and Architect

Christian Möller (D); Art+Com/ Joachim Sauter (D); Horst Prehn, D; Bill Seaman (USA); Studio Azzurro (I); ag 4 (D); NOX Architekten: Lars Spuybroek (NL); Greg Lynn (USA); Diller & Scofidio (USA); Foreign Office Architects (GB); b und k + (D); Marcos Novak (USA); Peter Anders (USA); Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Mex); Asymtote, Hani Rashid & L.A. Couture (USA); and others.

5. Historic References - Designs in architectural history

Mediatecture is not an invention of the 90s, rather it can be related to various historic ideas and attempts. These references to the history of architecture shall be introduced in a special part of the exhibition.

Some attempts to extend spatial environments through the use of media and electronics in order to address all of the visitors' senses can already be found in the 1960s. Although only few of these ideas were actually implemented, some of the projects such as the Philips Pavilion by Le Corbusier are often cited again today.

In the theatre of "The kybernetic city" from Nicolas Schoeffler the audience sits on a rotating platform and is surrounded by flying sculptures. Light, color and sound projections intersect the space. "As the visitors enter the center, they simultaneously enter an audiovisual bath of warm, fragrant atmosphere flooded in mild hue, where sound, coloured lights and scents pulsate to a very slow rhythm. [1]

The "Spatiodynamischer Turm" from Nicolas Schoeffler (1961) measures various urban processes, in order to actively respond with sound, light and colour to alter the atmosphere.

An outlook will be delivered by the exhibition.

References

References are the works by artists and architects, presented in my talk. Copyright of pictures in this paper by the author Axel Wirths.

[1] Nicolas Schoeffler



Abb1. Constant, New Babylon, 1967

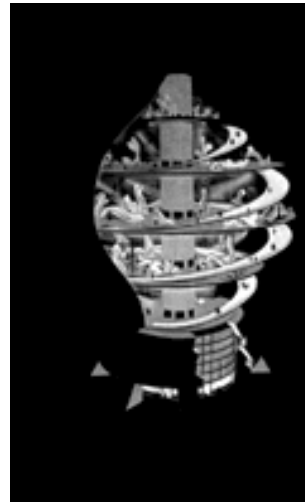
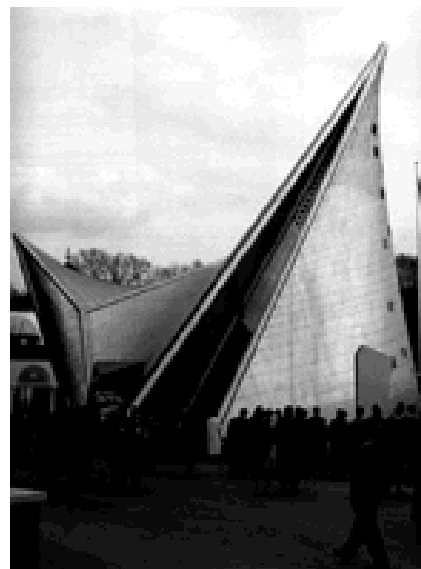


Abb2. Nicolas Schöffer, Cybernetic City, 1970.



Nicolas Schoeffler, Spatiodynamischer Turm, 1961



Le Corbusier, Varèse, Xenakis: Phillips Pavilion for the 1958 World Exhibition in Brussels