

«Fiktion / Fiction»

art in public space, Heuwaage Basel

Christine Zufferey, 2009

June 2010 - June 2015, Heuwaage Basel, Switzerland

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A horizontal clock without a face, and thus without reference, is directionless.

«Fiktion / Fiction» - time as a construct - asks questions about perception and relativity of time, about orientation. Time, an agreed upon grid in which every day life is being organized, coordinated and synchronized, is being subtly alienated.

Fragments of the vocabulary of the urban space are being ‚sampled‘ and rearranged. The public clock, deprived of it's normal function, becomes a measuring instrument, questioning the accepted notion of time and fathoming it anew .

Background thoughts

The golden sword-like hands of a (church) clock are sampled and being applied onto the unused underside of the functional concrete architecture of a street viaduct. A hybrid structure is being generated, oscillating between ornamental, historical design and functional, dry architecture of fair faced concrete (which could be read as modernist, almost brutalist architecture in this context). The mixing of these different languages also reflects a (swiss) reality; the coexistence of historical and contemporary architecture. The dominance of religious architecture and tower clocks (the clock as the hallmark of Switzerland) shaping the appearance of the city, mixes with the aesthetics of functional, dry architecture of fair faced concrete (a kind of Swiss hallmark as well). The clock shows real time. It is just through the horizontal positioning, the absence of a clock face, that a contextual shifting of the clock as an instrument takes place. Suddenly it is perceived as a kinetic object, an instrument of measurement.

„Fiktion / Fiction“ opens up a wide range of possible levels of associations (on a time axis so to speak);

Past

Historical aspects of the perception and measurement of time are evoked; astronomical observations to divide the course of the day in ancient times (the appointment of time as an interpretational act of observation of real events), or the historical dominance of church clocks (religion) as reference points in the order of time.

Present

The present time as an era of disorientation, of insecurity. Busyness without direction, constant activity/movement without destination.

Future / speculation / fiction

The understanding, the display and the measurement of time are subject to constant change, depending on the level of knowledge and of technical progress. From this perspective, the concept of the mechanical clock could be declared as ‚fictional‘, depending on the level of knowledge, technical development and point of view of the time when it was first developed. Historically it is interesting to see that the first mechanical clocks were developed in medieval age (beginning of the 14th century), thus go back to a time in which the earth was seen as the center of the universe. It is an interesting question whether the concept of the clock would have looked different if it was developed on the background of a heliocentric world view. This approach opens up a field of speculations about possible alternative concepts of the measurement of time and its effect on every day life. Einstein's theory of relativity could be spun into ideas and models of the future, into visions and speculations to the point of science fiction and futuristic ideas.

„Fiktion / Fiction“ works as a moment of alienation in the course of everyday life. Long-term, this alienation can be interpreted back through translational work; „Fiktion / Fiction“ can be read as a normal clock after some time, whereby the surrounding areas serve as potential reference points creating a sort of a clock face. The reading of the clock becomes an act of translation again; the deduction of time from the setting and circumstances. An echo of the manner in which time was originally defined, through the observation of cycles in the natural world.

The Installation „Fiktion / Fiction“ is a test arrangement, a mental experiment affecting the reading of the place and public space. The public space plays an important role; without the public space, without this specific local situation, the project „Fiktion / Fiction“ is nonexistent. The elements of „Fiktion / Fiction“ preexist in reality (this specific urban location / the clock hands as sampled elements of the urban space); the interaction of all the elements are able to transform the perception of the place. The interaction generates the actual ‚sculpture‘.

„Fiktion / Fiction“ offers a kind of parallel world, an ambivalent area between reality and fiction into which one can enter. Different variations of playful imagination are being evoked, to the point of mentally tipping the reality over until the clock reassumes it's conventional purpose and the Heuwaage viaduct becomes a kind of monumental modernist (church) architecture...

Implementation

Clockwork (controlled by a radio) without clock face, two golden sword-like clock hands. The minute hand moves in steps of one minute.

The clock measures real time.