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## **Ringlokschuppenost, or the phenomena of undefined places**

Heiner Lippe

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### **First curtain: an urban fragment**

They told me to pass under the old railway passage after the antroposophic church and then to look immediately for a parking. I did as recommended, turned directly behind this old iron bridge to the left, trespassed the sidewalk and shut off the engine just behind on a kind of earthen emplacement. The front of my car touched the herbs and flowers that grew in the small joints of a high old masonry wall that spread from the mentioned above bridge to disappear after a length of perhaps 4 further cars (parked in the same way as I did) behind a long faceless office building of supposing the early nineteen seventies. This functional four-stories high architecture filled the first of three parts, cut into this urbanity by the street forming a kind of "Y". The second part was filled by an ageless cubic flat roofed building with a fence-protected parking and storage area.

### **Second curtain: the arena**

Turning my eyes further on I discovered a rounded building recalling me a Spanish or Roman arena: a 3 story high, bended wall in a nice red brickwork, style of the last decades of the nineteenth century. The 6 meter high grey base of rectangular natural sandstone blocs supported the masonry of the first level after about 12 meters from the ground. Tall arched windows structured the façade in a very elegant but old fashioned way. Above a last small row with even smaller windows finished the top of the building before the slightly inclined roof started... Trying to imagine the interior, I started to approach automatically a large but hidden stairway that led me at the end to the supposed entrance.

### **Third curtain: approaching the next level**

After 26 steps I arrived at an upper floor. The small place was formed by different simple buildings and small annexes of the rounded building. All openings were shut by brown painted metal sheets, graffiti and colored tags covered all the walls. The place seemed forgotten. Everywhere plants and even smaller trees tried to reconquer this space. – I looked around. Everything seemed compressed, the place and its buildings, the time, the whole situation. – (Suddenly) some employees of the railway company appeared, discussed, and then passed near me to disappear some seconds later behind one of the buildings. Curiously I followed in a certain distance to discover finally a real bundle of rails leading from the main station about half a kilometer from this place and flowing gently like a big stream, a river, around this small island.

The border of this iron river were formed by the town itself. I went on, guided by the outer shape of the building. So I could understand it better and better and I imagined that, seen from the sky, this ensemble must look a bit like two very big French croissants that touched or even overlapped by their endings. More graffiti, wild bushes and even small trees grew all around. I discovered the two big turning disks situated each at the inner side of each of the two masonned croissants! In former times these platforms were used to receive the locomotives, then to turn and direct those to enter the building by one of the 14 entrances. These doors had also been closed by large metal panels. – A train passed at a really short distance, I felt the air waving, some workers, dressed in orange colors shouted something, perhaps they did not agree my presence. – I turned back to check finally how to get inside the rounded building.

#### **Fourth curtain: entering the desired object**

Two keys to turn and then the metal protected door opened to the inside with a grinding that I was already awaiting. I stepped over the door sill and left paralyzed for some moments by the brightness of the evening sun passing like lightning arrows through the thousands of small holes leaving in the metal protection before the windows at the opposite side of the hall. Yes, a hall! A really wide hall! And I found the rounded walls again: the larger one behind me, of masonry, and the smaller one, in front of me, in a distance of around 30 meters. It was composed of these very high doors. There were these entrances I discovered from outside.

This hall was filled of 6 rows of concrete columns and 7 regular long slots in the ground, 1m of width, 1 meter of depth, 25 meters long. They all were arranged in a concentric way, starting from one imaginary center, which was to be supposed at the invisible outside of the building, surely the center of these turning disks.

This was the first hall. Later it would be called “the cathedral”!

Turning to the right, I passed a door cut in the metal wall and entered a second space, a bit smaller than the first one. A bit darker, at its end I discovered a small stairway mounting to a kind of very small gangway, leading to really tiny rooms behind. Because of its appearance, we would name this hall “the gallery” later on.

Quickly I turned around; I accelerated and almost run through the two halls to reach a small "in between" space, a kind of "lock", with other small and forgotten rooms and a some old oil barrels, waste, a heavy railway wagon. The dark air was filled with the smell of moisture, old oil, and dust.

I reached the third and last part of the building: it was marvelous! I entered close to the exterior, rounded wall. So my view was really guided along this wall. The reinforcing columns provided a rhythm. Curiously each of them had been painted in a different color. As in the other two halls the dust covered floor was carved in a nearly regular, symmetric way by these deep slots, accompanied by rows of columns. Two small iron platforms for former supervising or controlling purposes were installed in about 3 meters height. – The light threw interesting shadows all over every object. Pigeons' feathers lay around, some old cloth, metal detritus. Suddenly the room began to vibrate, the noise of a train passing outside approached quickly to disappear some seconds after. – I felt standing at the middle of these railway main directions from east to west. Such an important place, but no one else there. For the people outside this place did not exist, even though it was situated nearly in the center of the town. Amazing ...

### **Fifth curtain: imagination and rehearsals**

The other day we formed a group of 5 people, feeling this place again to imagine how to tell about it, how to open it for a public, to inscribe it in the actual conscience of all. It should facilitate the approach to of this and other "no-places", which transport virtually the histories of men, of work, of time, of culture, of urbanity and architecture, of day and night. We improved. A hard and very busy time began, full of peace and struggles. Rich in all senses.

The gallery: Giant photos, details, curtains to form an art exposition inside the hall, dedicated to itself. A jungle of close ups, their origins could be found all around.

The bar: A bar integrated in the floor, inviting guests to really get in this building, but to be protected while getting more and more invaded by the impressions of the colors, the shadows, the echoes, the material and the proportions.

The cathedral: a special choreography was developed. Unskilled actresses and actors described the building and its situation in space and time in a very decent way. The rehearsals became part of a whole performance. Light, sound, artificial mist underlined and interpreted what was not visible at the first view.

### **Sixth curtain: three days of fiesta and events**

We were nervous, upset. All had been prepared to open a lost space in town for the public for three nights. A lot of work had been done. What would happen?

An incredible firework for the organizers, participants, visitors unfolded. An architectural approach of an area so urban, so central yet so lost and so confused. Subjective interpretation, cheerful, fun.

For three days in a row, the place was filled with more and more visitors. While some discovered the gallery, others remained in the bar near the entrance. Suddenly the sound of a bass was reverberating off the walls and objects. The musician was somewhere on an elevated platform, but we could not see him. Later analogic electro music started: a band of musicians interpreted the whole situation sending acute and strong sounds up within the grand space. In the meanwhile in the "cathedral", characters dressed in black crossing ditches with measured steps, plunged into the fog, to reappear thereafter. An irregular but steady movement stood. Two other people described the vertical, climbing and going down slowly on an iron ladder at the back of the hall, toward the ceiling. Change of scene: a dozen young people came spontaneously led by this fairy-like virtual or magic communication that spread all along these days. They rolled their bikes, jumping, appropriating the space in their own way. Pigeons' feathers fluttered in the air. One moment to another they disappeared, leaving the place to other interpretations... The three parts of the building were linked by people strolling around, by their thoughts, their emotion. Unusual encounter. And outside, above all, trains continued their road...

### **Seventh curtain: Leaving the scene**

We had everything to store: cables, lamps, furniture, metal fence, the sound equipment, carpets and more. We sweated. We were somehow desperate. The show was history. Repeatedly we stored, hours, days away. Sometimes in many people, sometimes alone. We tried to clear these empty spaces. It seemed to never end. After these intense moments of inspiration, performance and presentation we were pushed by the waves of everyday life to a rocky beach!

It was a hard impact and at the same time tempered by the radiant remembrance of what we experienced in this special time of our lives. Everyone has returned repeatedly to this place, sometimes alone: it was difficult to renounce to this place again.

### **Thanks**

Still actually I am full of thanks towards everyone of our team: Andrea Gerke and Irmard Schwarz, architects BDB, Dr. Peter Struck, artist and cultural scientist, Michael Jülke, architect BDIA. This getting and struggling and shouting and laughing together remained the key that opened this lost urban space. We crossed many borders. Urbanity became "lived". A shake hands among people from all horizons! I am really grateful to all these who contributed in their way to this event: our families, friends, actors, musicians, guests, sponsors!