

georg klein / steffi weismann pickup



An Interaction by Steffi Weismann and Georg Klein

in and around a kiosk in Freiestr./Muesmattstr. in Bern (CH)

Performative Interaction: 31rd March 2005 | Installative Interaction: 31rd March - 4th April 2005

marks blond project - raum für zeitgenÖssische kunst bern

For an empty kiosk in Bern (Switzerland), Steffi Weismann and Georg Klein developed an interactive sound project in two parts. This kiosk is not only an exhibition space, but an object in itself. It has both a familiar and unfamiliar existence within the public environment and promises a contrasting experience to the repetitive sounds of the blue container for glass recycling across the street. Like a packet of cigarettes, the "Blond Cube's" contents are uncertain, provoking a curiosity for people to approach, take a closer look and stay a while.

Performative Interaction

For the opening's performance, the artists mingled incognito among the unfamiliar visitors, flirting and initiating intimate small talk. To hide their identities, the two performers put up a poster of two fictive "pick-up artists" in the show window of the kiosk. To get in contact with people they used pick-up lines fished from the Internet. The charming cockiness of these pickup lines overcame the initial embarrassment of the situation. These encounters took place around a small bar set up next to the recycling container across the street from the kiosk.

Inside the kiosk, four people at a time could sit on a park bench watching the outside scenery through the big window. The small talk taking place across the street was transmitted live, via wireless microphones, into the kiosk. The listeners in the kiosk, acoustically isolated from the outside and surrounded by lounge music and orange light, saw the scene outside through the window, which gave the scene a film-like quality.

The street became a stage. The scenery of the small bar, stairs and platform in the background offered a perfect setting. While the visitors inside the kiosk witnessed the success or failure of the pick-up-lines, the ones outside didn't suspect anything. Later on this voyeuristic and communicative situation became slowly more transparent in exchanging the positions of the viewers. As it became darker, the four visitors sitting on the bench became more visible because of the orange light around them. They also became more and more the focus of the pick-up small talk as the artists related their experiences and flirted with the guests. During the evening the perspectives were swapped as inside and outside were exchanged.



Installative Interaction

The installation's relationship of inside and outside had been inverted: the empty kiosk spoke to the passers-by, attracted them and told them about its difficult life as an automatic art machine. This time the listeners were outside and engaged in a conversation with the kiosk initiated by an interactive sensor (ultra sonic distance sensor). The „kiosk voice“ was created by the pitched down voice of Steffi Weismann in very slow Swiss german, sometimes interrupted by the pitched up voice of George Little.

The closer the people came, the more talkative the kiosk became. Its vocabulary consisted of 53 words, expressions and sentences. Controlled by a program (Max/ MSP), with a number of random functions the passers-by activated the kiosk speech in a variable way. Depending on the measured distance between the listener and the kiosk window these words and sentences were played in different sequences with a basic separation into three areas: 1- long distance (at the street and on the sidewalk), 2 - closer (in front of the kiosk), 3 - very close (directly in front of the kiosk window). Quite close the voice of the kiosk gets also more intimate: "Do you also feel such an emptiness inside?"

video documentation: 10min.