

CHRISTOPH MEIER

Christoph Meier C&O PREFACE

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Just what is it that makes today's art institution so different, so appealing?

Richard Hamilton's famous artwork might be a good entry point to the work of Christoph Meier. In "Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?" Hamilton defined consumer society in 1956¹; his collage was an allegory rather than a representation. The piece is all about new media and communication, about everyday materials and design, a structural analysis of a new world order that was coming into being.

Analogous to Hamilton, Meier fills his spaces with domestic objects and materials taken from industrial society, and connected to technology and craftsmanship. Meier defines the space by installing a grid that, in a deviant way, doesn't accept the limitations or the obvious constraints of this very area it's occupying. In subverting the grid, referred to as the emblem of Modernism by Rosalind Krauss, can we conclude that Modernism no longer accepts the modernist exhibition space, the White Cube, anymore? Or that the values of Modernism clash with reality? Christoph Meier is imposing on us a game of fruitful contradictions in order to make us understand the concepts, frictions and rules of today's art institutions and art productions.

Like Gordon Matta-Clark, Meier is exposing a limited, existing room. At the same time, he is pursuing some current problems in sculpture when he defeats the way of ornamenting a space with specific works. A minimalist, he follows the rule that the spectator should be aware of the real-time encounter with the art work as well as of the institutional space in which the very sculpture is installed. In his large-scale installations, structure and architecture reveal themselves as such while at the same time questioning their own existence. Meier recalibrates the architecture of the room.

Through thoughts and actions that are grounded in reality and experience, the Vienna-based artist chooses to approach aesthetic problems from multiple perspectives. Looking at the Austrian art scene after 1945, it is quite evident that Meier is in a line of artistic expression that endows the visual meaning of art with a larger significance. For example, the artists of the Wiener Gruppe wanted to turn away from prewar practices in order to alienate the familiar forms and thus gain insights in the changed habits of seeing and listening while using language as a critical tool for social criticism. Later, Franz West and VALIE EXPORT – in different ways – examined the interaction of the human body with the sculptural object in order to analyze its linguistic potential.

Traversing the exhibition space in a Meier installation starts with the grid as a signifier, and follows up with sculptures that occupy the walls and the floors while seemingly digging deep into the existing structure, as if the artworks themselves want to merge with the room. In the end, Meier enforces *the production of the process of production*, which constantly changes its own rules as it develops in practice. Language and materiality are determined by cutting and connecting, production and passage. A singular interpretation is rendered obsolete the moment it is conceived, because its object transforms, raising new questions and opening itself up to new interpretations. Meier deconstructs established parameters in order to give space to complexity.

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The artist combines the abstract and architectural concepts of the gallery space with a social structure revolving around the narrative and performative potentials of the media involved. Meier's space is thus also a site of social interaction. His audience becomes part of a real, space-filling, architectural structure that challenges the viewer to contemplate the respective art institution as a place of assertion and speculation. And when he serves liquor along with it, it aims deliberately at the viewer's perception.

This publication is a result of the collaboration between three different institutions who all have presented solo exhibitions by Christoph Meier. This exhibition catalogue aims to illuminate the many different aspects, detours and vantage points in Meier's practice, examined in three in-depth articles by Vanessa Joan Müller, Anna Nowak, and Thomas D. Trummer. The site-specificity in the operational character of Meier's installations provides the basis for the exhibitions at Kunstverein in Hamburg, the Casino Luxembourg, and KIOSK in Gent, which enable the artist to expand his discursive space. With each subsequent location, additional aspects of his central questions will be taken into account.

We would like to express our gratitude to the teams involved at the partner institutions, the authors who have contributed to this publication, to Christoph Meier himself, and to Nosbaum Reding Gallery, and Galleria Collicaligreggi for their dedicated efforts and support.

¹ See Richard Hamilton, *Just what is it that makes today's art institution so different, so appealing?*, 1956, Collage, Kunsthalle Tübingen.