Within a Labyrinth of Gazes:

Exhibiting Christoph Schlingensief

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Matters of performativity

Some voices questioned if it would be possible to exhibit Christoph Schlingensief's work without him, following his death in 2010, due to its performativity and the artist's role. Indeed, the German Pavilion at the 2011 Venice Biennale became more of a memorial to the artist. Its design was finished without Schlingensief, and instead of setting up an African wellness center, the abandoned set of *The Church of Fear of the Stranger in Me* (*Die Kirche der Angst vor dem Fremden in mir*, 2008) was installed, accompanied by films and other documents on Schlingensief's *Opera Village Africa* in Burkina Faso.[1] Accordingly, the Schlingensief retrospective at Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin in 2013–2014 was perceived as a "ghost train" and confusing "obstacle course" by some critics.[2]

On the one hand, this ghostly manner and criticism is related to aspects of performativity and presence in Schlingensief's work. Similar difficulties have been addressed in the theoretical discussion of performance art as ephemeral and immediate in general, and Amelia Jones has even argued comprehensively that the documentation of performance art and its display actually functions supplementary to performances, as they are dependent on documentation to attain a symbolic status.[3] On the other hand, there are difficulties linked to the specific status of the artist himself, who functioned as an element of his work. Before his death, Schlingensief was not only particularly present in his performances but also in the media. The discourse surrounding him—including clichés of being an *enfant terrible* and common references to his biography—

functioned as some kind of pendant to his theater productions, operas, actionistic projects, and performances, just as had been the case for artists like Joseph Beuys, Andy Warhol, and others.[4] Hence, differences in experiencing Schlingensief, his plays or installations and exhibited artworks or documentation, are common.

Of course, gallery and museum spaces can appear to be labyrinths in general; finding a way through exhibitions can seem to be a riddle for some (e.g., if wall texts are too long, labels are too small, and overall narrations are hard to decipher). The KW Institute, a former factory building, has a rather clearly arranged structure with several white rooms on three floors and approximately 2,000 square meters; it is not a labyrinth per se. In 2013–2014 visitors to the Schlingensief retrospective had to make their way through and past numerous installations, projections, screens, and monitors. Works were placed on the floor or on plinths, arranged in circles, rows, or facing each other, all showing different scenes, partly creating layers of images by projecting performances, plays, films, and television formats, one upon the other. The retrospective not only created a feeling of being drawn into a vast maze by enfolding a complex web of connotations, it also generated a rather nonmaterial labyrinth through the use of invisible walls that caused constant disorientation. The exhibition was thus an obstacle course indeed. The curator's advice was to "bring time, approximately five to six hours."[5]

It was not the bodily movement that was hindered by physical obstacles; rather, the spatial and temporal irritation resulted from the fact that visitors' gazes were constantly disturbed and distracted by images and flickering projections that functioned as gazes starring back at the spectators in a figurative sense. The labyrinthine feeling in the Berlin exhibition seemed to be rather conceptual. Moreover, the exhibition—as obstacle course—mirrored and imitated Schlingensief's artistic strategies, as I will argue in this essay. Schlingensief worked with a labyrinthine overload, a multimedia overstimulation that stimulated the feeling of being lost. Therefore, the concept of the labyrinth is central in the following, not only in regard to the exhibition but also Schlingensief's works in general, and shall be explored as artistic approach.

This essay aims not only to understand and analyze the Berlin exhibition as a (visual) maze due to its curatorial concept but also to further examine how Schlingensief constantly provoked visual labyrinths, visual *labyrinthine* structures, or labyrinths for the gaze. He produced chaotic scenarios and irritating images, in particular as he worked with multimodal collages, blurring boundaries between media such as theater and performance, spoken texts, projections, and involved bodies, thereby playing with modes of representation and presence, as well as self-exposure. In his late autobiographical (or rather auto-fictional) projects like *The Church of Fear of the Stranger in Me* and *Mea culpa – Eine ReadyMadeOper* (*Mea culpa – A*

ReadyMadeOpera, 2009), which thematized his cancer diagnosis, Schlingensief, for instance, used intermediality to stage, question, and blur frames of reality, factuality, and fiction. The overall overload in the Berlin exhibition, but also within Schlingensief's works themselves, reflected on norms and common forms of the gaze which were challenged, including the function of the formerly "passive" viewer of the artwork, and further thematized by art, literary, and aesthetic theory in the context of the reception aesthetic within a shift towards participatory art and the viewer's experience, especially in the twentieth century.[6]

Reality staring at art staring at reality: Aspects of uncertainty and framing in Schlingensief's work

Schlingensief's contribution to the art world is not the work of an *enfant terrible* or provocateur, but lies in his play with the boundaries between reality, authenticity, and staging as different modes of representation. Even though he used elements that were already established in the avant-garde tradition, his approach and the disturbances of plays were often perceived as shocking "intrusions of reality" by the audience, as an embodied experience.[7] Schlingensief, for example, interrupted the usual course of his theater play *100 Jahre CDU – Spiel ohne Grenzen* (*100 years of CDU – Game without Limits*) at the Volksbühne Berlin in 1993 during the sixth performance by appearing on stage. The play aimed to recreate the chaotic state Germany was in after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and featured media celebrities, politicians, and quotations from news programs, talk shows, and other television formats. The critique of the collage-like compilation was as scathing as it was loud and overloaded.[8] Schlingensief added another disruptive moment when he appeared on stage. He used a syringe and bit on what was in fact edible glass. His arm and mouth started to bleed. Covered in what was apparently fake blood, Schlingensief started screaming at the audience. With tears in his eyes he talked about his grandmother and even undressed.[9] While some of these elements were clearly used for their theatrical effect, Schlingensief's appearance still seemed to be a counterpart to the staging, as it naturally was an indexical self-staging. The artist himself described this moment as the very moment that he was able to reach a certain seriousness within his plays:

> From that evening on, it was clear that I also would go on stage, because it would give the whole thing a special seriousness and truthfulness. Finally, the stupid giggling had stopped. It became an addiction to disturb the other actors in their play. It had become clear to me that the unpredictable… interested me in theater.[10]

Indeed, Schlingensief's intervention was perceived as an "intrusion of reality," as stated above, although he used images and theatrical elements that had already been common components in performance art, such as the blood to verify the director's identity with the staged figure. This figure actually remained a staged body, a reference to

authenticity in performative art, because Schlingensief used fake blood. However, his appearance was perceived as an exposure of the artist, partly because he referred to his biography and partly because he was de facto "real" as he addressed the audience, and thereby exploited different modes of reference. When Schlingensief came on stage, the audience did not know whether his appearance was planned or spontaneous and real in this respect. By intervening in the course of the play, spontaneity and authenticity—in terms of common elements of performance art—were suggested but at the same time challenged and undermined by the theatrical character of the appearance. Such artistic interventions can be described as elements of an "aesthetic of undecidability" or as "non-dramaturgy" in the tradition of the avant-garde.[11] Schlingensief further followed this tradition of breaking down the fourth wall in theater by placing actors in the audience and parts of the audience on stage between actors, ideally leading towards a so-called feedback loop—the audience's experience of a specific presence, a *hic et nunc*—as well as a form of embodiment instead of staging.[12] Thus, Schlingensief questioned the differences between staged and scripted reality, spectacle and reality, by blurring boundaries. More importantly for my argumentation, he thereby also exposed the audience to the gaze of the others, which will be elaborated on later. The outlined methodological interaction in space can be described as the creation of mazes with invisible walls. These walls relate to the status (e.g., the boundaries/similarities of art and play) of reality and fiction, as well as presence and representation.

In regard to the questioning of definite systems and categories that did not function as opposites anymore, Schlingensief marked reality as a concept based on framing.[13] Within the project *Passion Impossible – 7 Tage Notruf für Deutschland* (*Passion Impossible – 7 Day Emergency Call for Germany*, 1997), he referred to everyday life as theater, as Erving Goffman described it in his famous *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), and to paradigms of identity/authenticity. For this project the attendants were led away from the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg to the center of the city. In a former police station Schlingensief had installed an artistic railway mission, a meeting point for homeless people who were included in the performance as a socially marginalized group. The participants were asked to help people carry their shopping bags, to invade the local Scientology center, etc. Dressed up as a police officer and using a megaphone, Schlingensief announced: "This is the Hamburg police, we are overwhelmed, we are exhausted, we are giving up. […] We cannot guarantee your safety any longer."[14]

The police came to investigate his status, since *Passion Impossible* was not clearly framed as an art project for all of the spectators occupying the public space, and some might have taken his warning and performance seriously as everyday reality. Schlingensief explained to the alarmed police that he wanted to investigate the staging of the city center, namely the mediality of reality as a practice of

representation itself, in this case by challenging its legal boundaries.[15] In the end the decision on the legitimacy and status of this performance was dependent on its official framing. Just as in the case of Schlingensief's behavior at documenta X in 1997, where he called out "Kill Helmut Kohl!" in public, in reference to his performance *Zweites Surrealistisches Manifest von Andre Breton* (*Andre Breton's Second Surrealist Manifesto*, 1996) in which a (poorly) masked double of the former German chancellor got stabbed, he was exempted from any legal consequences because his actions "were art."[16]

In the course of Schlingensief's career, such disturbances became integral parts of his work and dramaturgic elements. Eventually, he used the concept of undecidability concerning his whole biography; it became a disturbing running gag, a reference to artists' legends, myths, and the artist's status. Whether such moments and the often chaotic nature of his plays were actually scripted or spontaneously improvised is not significant in the end; it was the moment of doubt that was foundational for Schlingensief's works.

Such an artistic strategy naturally risks becoming less and less effective as the "non-dramaturgy" becomes a dramaturgic element at some point, but Schlingensief explored new ways of operating, for instance, by allegedly focusing on his person(a) after his lung cancer diagnosis in 2008, even though this was perceived as some kind of "true exposure" of the artist. Schlingensief usually played an important role in his plays and performances, as indicated above. He appeared as actor, as nameless figure; he let others play his part (e.g., when he used a double in his project *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* (*Please Love Austria – First European Coalition Week*, 2000) and interrupted plays and performances as frame-breaking artist. In one of his last productions, *Mea culpa*, the protagonist "Christoph" (played by Joachim Meyerhoff) told the story about his illness and his visions for an opera village in Burkina Faso, for which Schlingensief planned to build a school, an infirmary, living spaces, and an opera house. Rehearsals of a staging of Wagner's *Parsifal*, directed by Schlingensief in Bayreuth in 2004, merged into the protagonist's daily life as a patient in an ayurvedic clinic through the use of a revolving stage and intermedial projections. *Mea culpa* followed an autobiographical narrative on a thematic level; in addition, seemingly revealing projections on stage showed Christoph Schlingensief crying at the time of his diagnosis. However, these nonfictional projections immediately created an alienating feeling, because their sound—and in particular Schlingensief's voice—was distorted. Later, the director himself appeared on stage to engage the audience and comment on the film projections as a nameless but surely known figure, breaking the frames of the narration. The artist's subject is thus fragmented in its various medialities and the multiplied juxtaposition: the video and sound recordings, the protagonist "Christoph," and the nameless body of Schlingensief himself.

Altogether, *Mea culpa* was less autobiographical, since every reference, every moment of representation or illusion, was interrupted and the whole play itself seemed to point to its mediality in its intermediality.[17] Furthermore, it is a readymade. What was perceived as personal is made from texts by Goethe, Nietzsche, Wagner, and Sheryl Crow, and even makes use of the medical history and biography of others, such as the artist Jörg Immendorf.[18] Hence, Boris Groys argues that the textual "narration" of the play has no meaning besides its linguistic characteristic and significance.[19]

Schlingensief's late plays revolve around forms of presence and representation, but still they do not lack an autobiographical effect on an audience that might want to cast a glimpse of the subject Schlingensief. More importantly, plays like *Mea culpa* created a maze of references and played with modes of self-exposure and the spectators' gaze on the artistic subject in an artistic exposition that became an object in the end. Schlingensief not only worked with the (supposed) exposure of himself as subject/object but also the exposure of others. It was the gaze that dragged one into his performances—because what is one to do or say when Schlingensief calls for the killing of Helmut Kohl, or even proclaims "Foreigners out!" in the public space of Vienna? The public was confronted with this very question on the occasion of the Vienna Festival Weeks in 2000.

Under the gaze

Back then, as part of his project *Bitte liebt Österreich*, Schlingensief installed a container in central Vienna nearby the opera, topped with a large banner stating "Foreigners out!" and accompanied by flags of the right-wing populist party FPÖ. Twelve people, introduced as asylum seekers from Iran, Zimbabwe, China, and other countries, were brought to live in the container for a week, where it was possible to observe them online 24/7 in a *Big Brother*-like setup.[20] As it was advertised, the inhabitants of the container could be voted out and deported from Austria.[21] The last inhabitant was supposed to win permanent Austrian citizenship if someone would offer to marry him.[22] It was not clarified how Schlingensief could ever be able to influence someone's resident status, and overall the project led to an intense uncertainty regarding its seriousness.[23] Besides, the container's inhabitants usually appeared anonymous, wearing sunglasses, while their pictures online were disguised with black bars and their names and biographies were actually changed and fictional, which undermined the authenticity of the project. Beforehand, Schlingensief insisted on working with real asylum seekers, while the director of the Festival Weeks referred to them as actors.[24] Overall, there was much uncertainty among passersby about the question of whether the project was real, if it would have real consequences, and if it was art if it was legitimate as such. When the organizers of the festival put up a sign pointing out that the container was part of an art festival,

Schlingensief announced: "Scandal. The coalition claims it's supposed to be art."[25]

Unlike the original reality TV format, which can be described as "fiction of authenticity produced by strategies for staging," the authentic performance in Vienna was partly perceived as staged.[26] As Schlingensief puts it, the truth itself does not appear to be authentic; something authentic that is explicitly mediated does not function as such. Again, he used the element of "total irritation" to stimulate an awareness and sensitization for categories of performance and representation.[27] As a matter of fact, Schlingensief's installation was an adaption, an imitation or playthrough of the right-wing FPÖ's program. The FPÖ had become part of the Austrian government shortly before the festival, which led to European sanctions against Austria.

There is disagreement on whether *Bitte liebt Österreich* was "successful" or not. Richard Langston argues that it "was nothing more than a twenty-first century manifestation of *l'art pour l'art* that made no claim to altering social reality whatsoever."[28] Schlingensief's contribution to the festival was obviously not some kind of positive art activism. It did not offer or perform an alternative to xenophobia, but actually imitated it.[29] And again, it does not matter if the installation and its operation were real in the end. In fact, the container was installed in the city and it was announced that asylum seekers would be exposed and expelled from the country. The reality of the performance could not have been denied—regardless of its status. The public space as medium engaged the bodies of passersby, for whom the setup eventually became reality. During the campaign, Schlingensief repeatedly asked passersby to take pictures and distribute them, thereby manifesting the installation and its proclamation as fact.[30] It was hard to ignore the project, as it claimed reality (or "hyperreality," as Schlingensief puts it) by engaging the spectators.[31] As involved bodies they had to move through, or rather past, the labyrinth of statuses that Schlingensief created, and that even as artistic staging seemed atrocious: it was a racist act in public space. Ignoring this act meant to accept it as such, even if it was art.

The problematic situation the audience found itself in referred to the general aesthetics of performance art, epitomized in Marina Abramović's performance *Lips of Thomas* (1975). This was ended by gallery visitors who helped the naked artist off the ice cross she was lying on, after carving a bloody star into her skin. Within this performance, the specific character of performative art became visible. Perceiving and understanding Abramović's performance and its aesthetic dimension as "art" impedes any reaction to it as reality, since it legitimates not doing anything to oppose the artist torturing and hurting herself. When perceiving the performance as "real," on the other hand, one's own morality seems to legitimize the interruption of the performance and therefore also the art.[32] Only within

this tension can performance art exist; the same applies to *Bitte liebt Österreich*.

It does indeed seem to be problematic that Schlingensief only reenacted and mirrored a certain attitude towards immigrants, but did not mediate or comment on it, and that the installation did not embody its meaning. It did not take a clear stand against xenophobia, but doubled xenophobic behavior. However, it was this experienced ambiguity that made the project significant, as it let one see reality through art staring back at reality.[33] It was not the status of the project as reality that was crucial, but the aspect of the gaze as the act of seeing and being seen at the same time that required each and every tourist and citizen to take a stand and position themselves—even by not reacting at all.

The objectification of the viewer within the project can be compared to the binary nature of the gaze as it was examined in regard to *Las Meninas.* Diego Velázquez's meta-painting prominently thematizes questions of representation and reality. It depicts several figures from the Spanish court as well as the artist himself, who is painting and looking at the viewer. Thus the painting illustrates the process of painting and points to its medium rather than create any illusion. As the viewer is gazed at by the depicted persons, especially by the painter, she/he becomes the subject of the artwork within this objectification.[34] However, Schlingensief's installation in Vienna did not (only) include viewers through the use of actual gazes, but—in the sense of Jacques Lacan's mirror effect—by the presence of an object as the addressing counterpart, particularly the sign on top of the container stating "Foreigners out!"[35] Thus, what was occasionally criticized in literary art was the crucial aspect in many of Schlingensief's projects. The viewers inevitably became participants of the performances by entering the scene.[36] *Bitte liebt Österreich* gained its meaning through the gaze from the outside that became the gaze from the inside in a labyrinthine situation.

By negating the distance between performance and reality, and once applicable or common frames between staging and authenticity/sincerity, Schlingensief dismisses (moral) passiveness. He calls to action, or at least to positioning, similar to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* in the 1960s. Debord elaborates on the passivity of being a spectator in the media age and in the context of mass media/mass production in which the individual becomes a passive consumer. The reality of life vanishes behind a veil of clichés that become a surrogate for reality; as he argues, a hyperreality—just like the subversive ones that Schlingensief created.[37] Schlingensief himself certainly functioned as a driving force within many of his projects due to his presence, which was outdatedly even described as "aura."[38] On the contrary, it was the engaging of the audience by incessantly addressing it that is crucial for Schlingensief's artistic approach. During his lifetime, only a few exhibitions tried to meet the challenges to recreate or preserve the situations he created within a gallery or

museum context, apart from the outer public space. As stated above, many exhibitions were criticized after his death, just like the retrospective in Berlin. Yet this exhibition, which was described as ghost train and confusing obstacle course, actually mirrored Schlingensief's artistic methods.

Schlingensief at the KW Institute

The aforementioned impressions of the Berlin exhibition are of course partly linked to the fact that it naturally was a compilation and collage of displayed works, numerous films, operas recordings, and staging examples, as well as installations, objects, and other media. Furthermore, this impression was evoked by the way the exhibits themselves make use of gazes that engage the audience as presented above—besides their specific setup in 2013–2014. Gazes as disturbances blur the borderlines between staged/recorded performance and exhibition space as reality. The displayed *Animatograph* (2005), which is described as labyrinth in research, can be understood as a symbol of the whole exhibition.[39]

It was not just the number of the approximately sixty exhibits, of which many were films and other recordings, that created the impression of a "flood of images" and the constant pressure to decipher their meanings. The differences in the work's mediality, framing, visual language, and the way they challenged viewing habits created the feeling of being lost in an overstimulation and overload of visual and acoustic inputs. Most of the time the tour was accompanied by sound coming from other rooms, constantly attracting the visitors' attention anew, drawing them further into the exhibition. Stage directions by Schlingensief were even played in the hallway. "Why is nobody up here?" echoed from the upper level through the building.

Visitors were confronted with an overflowing abundance, while the nonexistent narrative in the exhibition as installation itself allowed many possible paths through the retrospective. One was obliged to make one's way past dark replicas of performative sets, for instance. In the first hall, this included passing seven people that silently and mostly motionlessly sat on poles, some of them reading, some remaining in ascetic poses, all equipped with buckets, water bottles, and food in the otherwise empty space, which was illuminated by old-fashioned lamps. This scene was a reminiscence of weeklong pole sitting contests that Schlingensief held in the context of his project *Church of Fear* in Venice, Frankfurt, Nepal, and other places. In the courtyard of the KW Institute, the wooden *Church of Fear* from the 2003 Venice Biennale was likewise an obstacle one could enter or pass by. With the founding of the church, Schlingensief proclaimed a community of nonbelievers that demanded a confession of fear. This was a reference to politics, governments, and religious institutions that use fear (e.g., working with modes of observation and the element of suspicion, thus criticizing the Bush administration and its

Fig. 1. Installation view of *Christoph Schlingensief* at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, December 1, 2013–January 19, 2014. DEUTSCHLANDTRIOLOGIE [GERMANY TRIOLOGY], 1988-1992: DIE 120 TAGE VON BOTTROP – DER LETZTE NEUE DEUTSCHE FILM [THE 120 DAYS OF BOTTROP – THE LAST NEW GERMAN FILM], 1997 Germany. Blu-ray, b/w, sound, German with English subtitles; 55'. Film distributor: Filmgalerie 451; TERROR 2000 – INTENSIVSTATION DEUTSCHLAND [TERROR 2000 – INTENSIVE CARE UNIT GERMANY], 1992 Germany. Blu-ray, b/w, sound, German with English subtitles;79'. Film distributor: Filmgalerie 451; DAS DEUTSCHE KETTENSÄGENMASSAKER [THE GERMAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE], 1990 Germany. Blu-ray, b/w, sound, German with English subtitles; 60'. Film distributor: Filmgalerie 451; 100 JAHRE ADOLF HITLER – DIE LETZTE STUNDE IM FÜHRERBUNKER [100 YEARS OF ADOLF HITLER – THE LAST HOUR IN THE FÜHRER'S BUNKER], 1990 Germany. Blu-ray, b/w, sound, German with English subtitles;55'. Film distributor: Filmgalerie 451. Photo: Uwe Walter. Courtesy of KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin.

anti-terrorism policy).[40] In Berlin the pole sitters seemed more aestheticized as poses, putting the focus on the form instead of the participatory context of the original project.

The setup in the gallery's first hall introduced the labyrinthine feeling of disorientation in space. The "stylites" flanked another space inside the hall in which Schlingensief's *Animatograph*, a small maze per se, was installed. It consists of and generates different wooden segments and spaces with screens and projectors, each part being a potential projection surface, just like the entering audience. And like the projectors, the *Animatograph* itself constantly moves like a slow carousel.

Images as medium and the mediality of images

The title of this installation refers to early types of animatographs, or rather theatrographs, from the nineteenth century, when photographs and paintings were innovatively projected into the audience and on actors in the theater, so that the projected images, the staged play as scenery, and the audience as real space behind the fourth wall merged and altogether became the object of the gaze on the "art work."[41] Schlingensief's *Animatograph* is likewise an intermedial web and maze of images, visual impressions, references, and connotations. Visitors can enter the revolving stage, which is equipped with obstacles, move through its segments, and become part of the installation. The *Animatograph* also refers to Schlingensief's multimodal *Parsifal* staging in Bayreuth (2004–2007), for which he first used a revolving stage. Regardless of its functionality, Schlingensief did not use this element to create perfect illusions in regard to scenic changes, etc., but to point to the mediality of the performances and to constantly break frames of illusion. Together with the cross-fading and projections on stage, inner and exterior space and space and time are fluid in the *Animatograph*, and again the self gets lost.[42] Images and sounds were constantly documented, projected, and woven into the steadily growing installation as a living organism.[43]

Schlingensief first installed the *Animatograph* in a basement in Reykjavik, Iceland, on the occasion of an art festival. The initial camera shoots were projected onto the revolving stage. Later on, filming and projections in different countries and cities followed. The *Animatograph* was installed in a woodland in the east of Germany, at a township nearby Lüderitz in Namibia, at the Burgtheater in Vienna, and at the Volksbühne in Berlin, always in the context of other projects.[44] In these places the *Animatograph* was supposed to be "used" by the people; they were invited to enter, to explore the space and its props, which were supposedly random everyday objects. Drawing and painting on the installation was permitted. Afterwards, the *Animatograph* editions were brought back from these "everyday stages" into traditional art spaces, galleries, museums, theaters, and opera houses, where they were again entered by another

audience.[45] But, actually, only the setup in the Namibian township was truly an installation in public space, apart from an institutional environment and context.

When encountering the moving installation in Berlin, the Icelandic edition *Parsipark* (*Ragnarök*), one saw the wooden construction from an admittedly short distance as scenery that constantly changed within its movement. At the same time, other scenes were projected on the apparatus, moving in a different way and with a different pace. The projections in the *Animatograph* come from various directions. The interplay of all the scenes and images creates a new overall picture that is irritating and difficult to decipher, partly barely visible or difficult to grasp. Sounds and acoustic elements form further stimulatory input. The projections relate to historical events, stories, myths, and fictions, and produce cross connections between its references and meanings. One is put in the small German town of Bottrop and on a battleground in Afghanistan at the same time. The installation is a rhizome, as Roman Berka explained, a model of (dis)order.[46]

Through the constant movement and shift in perspective, theme, and image, the *Animatograph* adapts aesthetics of film on a visual/aesthetic but also technical level, being an accessible apparatus itself. As Schlingensief puts it, the installation functions as "actionistic photo plate" when one enters.[47] Because it is a surface for projection (a medium for seeing something) and a space for action (a medium for being in the picture), it emphasizes a specific three-dimensionality.[48] Being inside the *Animatograph* is like being on the inside of a brain that is staring at images and processing what is seen.

Unlike other projects that have been mentioned, the collage of images and projections forms a labyrinth of gazes and seems to come from inside the viewer (to whom they eventually belonged, in case of real-life projections). The installation mirrors the process of visuality. Schlingensief reads it in another way though: "'Anima' is the soul. The *Animatograph* captures what happens in the soul…"[49] Actually, the whole picture dissolves, as if there were no images, no decipherable meaning, nothing to see at all in the end, just a slight feeling of dizziness. As Annemarie Matzke argues, the *Animatograph*, in its flood of images and impressions, ironizes the desire for explanations by excessively making use of connotations and evoked meaning, leaving the spectator with the feeling of being overwhelmed.[50] The confusion of images is challenging indeed, but it also awakens the desire to explore the space—the real and the illusory space—to look from a distance, but also to look out of the picture from the inside. As Schlingensief puts it, "Anyone who gazes on the *Animatograph* exposes it. And anyone who trespasses it, is exposed."[51]

Observing and/or being observed

In Berlin the *Animatograph* seemed to function as a *mise en abyme*, blurring the inside/outside of projections, images, and spaces—a miniature of the whole retrospective. Moreover, like in Vienna in 2000, the installation exposed the viewer to the gazes of others as she/he became a medium for the projections and part of the imagery; the gaze was directed from the medium onto the spectator and vice versa.

A reference to the Vienna project, *Bitte liebt Österreich*, might have actually been the first thing visitors encountered in Berlin. Still, outside the KW, documentary material and footage from the project examined above was shown in a container placed in the narrow streets of central Berlin. It was referred to as a reconstruction of an installation in the exhibition brochure, but it was also easy to overlook or even ignore due to its placement, as it did not allow for distant viewing and could not be approached. One nevertheless got caught in a labyrinth of gazes even before entering the exhibition space, as described in the documentation of the project (and also the sign stating "Foreigners out!" on top of the container). Since the container was located outside of the gallery in the reality of the city, it was actually not musealized; without comment, it reproduced the xenophobic slogan into the public space. To some extent the setup therefore recreated the situation in which passersby were objectified and exposed to the gaze of others.

The aspect of gazes forming a labyrinth by constantly causing distraction and thereby disorientation was particularly present on the first and second floor, where a large number of screens confronted the visitors. On the ground floor, nine video works were exhibited in three rooms, including *The African Twintowers* (2009), which itself consists of eighteen flat screens on a wall. Following on that, half a dozen video works were displayed on the first floor, among them the eight-episode talk show format *U3000* (2000). For this work, eight CRT televisions were placed on tables in two rows. They created a flickering, diffuse atmosphere, accompanied by other CRT televisions screening Schlingensief's version of a casting show, *Freakstars 3000* (2002), which were placed on the floor in the same dimly lit room.

For *U3000*, originally screened by the music channel MTV, personalities and wannabes from show business were invited into Berlin subway cars, which functioned as talk show sets. The show's host, Schlingensief, in addition to talking too loud and too fast, generally imitating the language of infomercials, TV evangelists, and sports commentators, constantly interrupted his guests, even when going live to someone's alleged deathbed, and thereby undermined his own format. Again, he played with and ironized the element of exposure, took off his clothes, masked himself in camouflage (so no one would be able to afterwards say that what one saw was real), and praised

guests for memorizing their statements while assuring what they said was not staged.

Just like *U3000*, Schlingensief infiltrated the standards of his own format in the TV show *Talk 2000* (1997), which was screened on the second floor of the KW in the original set, together with other filmic and photographic documentation of productions such as the play *100 Jahre CDU*. For the eight episodes of *Talk 2000*, Schlingensief invited apparently unprepared guests in order to distress and expose them on a platform with sofa and chairs—constantly rotating like the plate in a microwave—by being an ungracious and insistent host. With both *U3000* and *Talk 2000*, Schlingensief simulates poor entertainment concepts in willfully subpar ways. As much as both shows are strategically captivating because they use common methods to attract "the masses," the urge for silence and rest arises in the exhibition. The slightly uncomfortable voyeuristic sensation of watching trash talk shows that Schlingensief refers to might be bearable in one's private living room, but not when exposed to the gazes of others. The permanent addressing of the spectator as such in the retrospective, the constant interruptions and permanent shifts of focus, created an excessive demand and thus also a labyrinth, not only due to the sheer amount of media products, works, and even media apparatus.

The talk show formats were loud, fast, and chaotic, and the parallel screening of the different episodes intensified a negative sensation, as any focus was distracted or rather constantly newly attracted by the incessant movement and flickering. This feeling was intensified on the third floor. Four mostly earlier trash films were shown on big projection screens in a semicircle on the wall, namely *100 Jahre Adolf Hitler – Die letzten Stunden im Führerbunker* (*100 Years of Adolf Hitler – The Last Hours in the Bunker*, 1988/89), *Das Deutsche Kettensägenmassaker* (*The German Chainsaw Massacre*, 1990), *Terror 2000 – Intensivstation Deutschland* (*Terror 2000 – Intensive Care Unit Germany*, 1992), and *Die 120 Tage von Bottrop – Der letzte neue deutsche Film* (*The 120 Days of Bottrop – The Last New German Film*, 1997). The setup of the big projections partly created a cinema-like atmosphere, although visitors could only sit down on the floor or stand during the longer films. Since they were screened without any effective partition, focusing on their content while simultaneously seeing and hearing the other films was undermined. One got lost in the movement of all images, almost like being placed in the center of a panopticon.[52]

In curatorial regards, the juxtaposition of screens and the overall endless possibilities to move around and engage with the objects as a visitor felt like a reminiscence of Jean-François Lyotard's postmodern exhibition *Les Immatériaux* from 1985. With this exhibition, Lyotard referred to the structural and spatial complexity as well as to the semantic openness of exhibits. The audience similarly made their way through dark spaces with audio and image pieces, trying to

determine meanings and references, but focusing on the curatorial composition and the media at the same time.[53] In both cases the focus on certain images was challenged within the overflow of images, while the exhibition in Berlin even provided the experience of passing through some projections—and thus becoming a medium for the images oneself. Besides entering the *Animatograph*, visitors had to physically enter *The African Twintowers – Stairlift to Heaven* on the first floor to fully explore it. Apart from watching its projection on the wall, visitors could sit down on a stair lift that took them about two meters up. From there they could open a small curtain in front of a box that contained a screen showing another piece put together from elements of African and Nordic tales, texts by Elfriede Jelinek, and music by Patti Smith. Along the way, the visitor functioned as projection screen and explicit medium of the installation, again blurring the boundaries between the inside/outside of exhibition media.

Epilogue

While some critics argued that the Berlin retrospective put visitors in a position of distant viewing, this essay argues that Schlingensief's artistic approach to make the viewer object and subject at the same time was dramatized and therefore kept alive in the abundance of addressing and of gazes in the labyrinthine, overloaded setup.[54] In the exhibition, visitors found themselves in situations similar to the ones that Schlingensief created in his performative projects. With the constant stimulation to move forward, one lost control over one's own movement, figuratively speaking, bumping into invisible obstacles. The overload and excessive demand for attention was also linked to the sociopolitical aspects of some of the displayed works. A visit to the retrospective was demanding and exhausting, and aroused the need for (visual) quietness. The outlined exposure, the addressing of the objects, and the gazes of others stimulated the opposite feeling—contrary to this longing for rest—namely, the urge to be active as a medial part of the exhibition. Unlike the pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011, the retrospective did not reveal a view on Schlingensief's *persona*, his biography or "aura," despite his initially mentioned significance, but on the viewer subject.

The existing struggle in exhibiting Schlingensief per se relates to aspects of performativity, the dissolution of artistic limits, and the dematerialization of art. The Berlin retrospective is another proof of how the documentation of art can be supplementary to the artistic performance, as it is able to capture and recreate an alienating feeling, a feeling of uncomfortableness. In the case of the exhibition, this is applicable because any real interaction and reaction is impossible, or rather seems inappropriate in the museum space, challenging both one's role as museum visitor and the museum as potential public space, a sociopolitical engagement that is yet to be discussed as such.

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4. See Janneke Schoene, *Beuys' Hut. Performance und Autofiktion* (Heidelberg: Art books, 2018).
5. Kathrin Schirmer, "Christoph Schlingensief in den KW – Retrospektive der Provokationen," accessed March 12, 2018, http://www.artberlin.de/ausstellung/christoph-schlingensief-berlin.
6. See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012).
7. Antje Hoffman, "Scheitern als Chance. Zur Dramaturgie von Christoph Schlingensief," in *Studien zur Dramaturgie: Kontexte, Implikationen, Berufspraxis*, ed. Peter Reichel (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2000), 217–311, here 247.
8. Sandra Umathum, "Theatre of Self-Questioning: *Rocky Dutschke, '68*, or the Children of the Revolution," in *Christoph Schlingensief: Art without Borders*, eds. Tara Forrest and Anna Teresa Scheer (Bristol: Intellekt, 2010), 57–70, here 60.
9. Catherina Gilles, *Kunst und Nichtkunst: Das Theater von Christoph Schlingensief* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009), 26–27; see also *100 Jahre CDU – Spiel ohne Grenzen*, accessed on March 2, 2018, http://www.schlingensief.com/projekt.php?id=t001.
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11. Hans-Thies Lehmann, Postdramatisches Theater (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1999), 170f; see also Antje Hoffmann, "Scheitern als Chance. Zur Dramaturgie von Christoph Schlingensief," in *Studien zur Dramaturgie. Kontexte – Implikationen – Berufspraxis*, ed. Peter Richel (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2000), 217–311, here 274.
12. See Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004).
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15. Ibid.; see also Erving Goffman*, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondswoth: Penguin, 1990).
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19. Boris Groys, "Sprachversagen. Zur Arbeit des Künstlers und Theatermachers Christoph Schlingensief," *Lettre International* 90 (2010): 114–116.

20. See *Der Container kommt*, accessed March 3, 2018, http://www.schlingensief.com/backup/wienaktion.

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22. Matthias Lilienthal and Claus Philipp*, Schlingensiefs Ausländer raus. Bitte liebt Österreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 216.

23. Eva Kukuruz-Mittermann, *Christoph Schlingensief und der Nationalsozialismus."Mein Nazi-Ding ist keines, das mit wehenden Flaggendurch die Straßen rennt"* (master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2010), 39.

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25. Wolfgang Walicek, "Österreich, wie es stinkt und lacht," *Theater heute*, 8/9 (2000): 5–11, here 6.

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40. See Church of Fear – Die Kirche der Angst, accessed March 1, 2018, http://www.schlingensief.com/projekt.php?id=t040.

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43. Berka, "Schlingensief's Animatograph" (2010), 171.

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