

Peter Weibel: STREAMERS – a COVID Sculpture

The public space is dominated by dirt and trash. Acoustic trash and visual trash, acoustic and visual noise. Public space is full of advertising and noise. The noise of cars, of streetcars, of machines, construction sites, road works, etc. The public space is full of advertisements, publicity, propaganda. The public space is a euphemism, a hypocrisy. In fact, public space no longer exists, it is completely privatized by advertising and publicity. It is colonized by private companies and by the state, whose public space is sold to private companies. It has long been a desideratum that public space be decolonized. On the one hand, through a law that demands advertising-free zones. On the other hand, through cultural initiatives or acoustic subversions. In a word: through visual and acoustic art. Unfortunately, there is still no general awareness - not even in the art scene - that one of the greatest achievements of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde in the 20th century was the creation of sound art. Sound as a medium of visual art. Soundart does not take place in concert halls. Those are more or less reserved for historical music. The halls and stadiums are reserved for pop music. As a result, sound art usually finds its exile in museums - just like artistic film, avant-garde film, which is not shown in cinemas or on television. Soundart, however, must not only take place in the closed spaces of museums, but should also take place in the open urban spaces, in the so-called public space. The urban sound of urban traffic must be contrasted with an acoustic urban art as an aesthetic of resistance. Such an initiative, however, requires heroic pioneers who defy all restrictions of politics, all regulatory offices and administrative barriers. In Vienna, such a heroic pioneer lives and works, namely Georg Weckwerth, who with his art association TONSPUR has for decades ensured that sound art takes place in public space as an art of repair and care, e.g. Museumsquartier. Together with the organization Kultur im öffentlichen Raum and with insightful local politicians, an excellent example of an interactive sound sculpture and a soundscape is opened today, a soundscape that transcends the normal acoustic environment. The Covid virus pandemic is a global phenomenon caused by global mass mobility, which is a purely physical one, namely corporeal messengers travel around the world to deliver disembodied messages. In the infosphere of telecommunications such as telephone, fax, television, radio, and the Internet, we can now deliver messages without bodies moving. Message and messenger are separate. The sender of the message can be anywhere in the world and so can the receiver of the message. And they can communicate without bodies moving. That's the secret of streaming services. You still have to physically go to the cinema to see the images and hear the sounds. When streaming, you can stay at home to see the images and hear the sounds. Streamers, the Covid sculpture by Benoît Maubrey reflects both - the infosphere and the Covid pandemic, which, by the way, is being fought very successfully with a drug that has the word "messenger" in its title, mRNA. The inclusion of speakers who can send a message within a permanent livestream also turns the Plague Column into a Speaker's Corner. However, this new Speaker's Corner is not limited to local audiences in one location, but reaches non-local audiences in many locations. The interactive speech sculpture thus transcends conventional cultural thinking that still has a body bound to place and matter. This interactive speech sculpture has a visible form and is made of electronic material, but it is a distribution medium, borderless, placeless for immaterial messages. It is therefore a hybrid sculpture. I can only congratulate the City of Vienna and its representatives and thank Benoît Maubrey and Georg Weckwerth and the organization KÖR for bringing this grandiose work of art to the way and to the square, to Anitta-Müller-Cohen-Platz.