

Pushing Against the Walls - On the Temporary Interventions of Marco Fedele Di Catrano

by Eva Scharrer

Marco Fedele di Catrano's work is informed and determined by the space for which it is made. His spatial interventions negotiate with an existing architectural layout, and, by displacing or surpassing it, they simultaneously emphasize and push the physical and psychological borders and trajectories of a building within a given time-space-frame. The temporary displacement of what is usually regarded as 'immobile' proposes architecture – and borders in all their definitions – as something negotiable and flexible.

In a series of works, he superimposes the floor plan of one space – that of his own Roman apartment – onto other, similarly sized spaces, so as to apply the photographic term of double exposure onto architecture, shifting it from the second into the third dimension and rendering built architecture permeable. Aligning the North, South, East, and West coordinates of different spaces, the artist builds brick walls that intersect the original architecture, opening up new spaces, niches and corners, but at the same time blocking off other spaces and pathways, creating a dense, highly illogical maze. The first architectonic intervention, simply titled *North South Ovest East* (2007), took place in a private apartment in Berlin, where the built-in walls significantly altered the daily routine of the inhabitants – who lived and worked in the artwork for several days, until it was dismantled and its material deposited – and their perception of their own living environment.

The second conflation of spaces was installed in a gallery in Rome, and the third in an artist-run project space located in a former printing shop in Lausanne (*So Far So West*, 2009). Here, the collapse of different architectural realms – business and domestic – offered a striking spatial experience and interrogation. Wandering through the labyrinth of walls one could only speculate as to which part of the original – now imaginary and defunct – buildings one could be standing in, and where the respective rooms – the hallway, office, kitchen, or bedroom – once were.

Within the architectural installations, other installed works further explore the confinements of space within the private, social and political realm. In Lausanne these were for instance twelve photographs, entitled *Exchange* (2008), that welcomed viewers to the exhibition. Together they presented the constellation of stars that form the European Union logo. Marco Fedele di Catrano had initially hammered the circle of twelve stars out of the plastered facade of the American Academy in Rome as an architectural intervention with a certain political impact.

The artist had then photographed and framed each one individually so that the exposure of the underlying brick structure now appears as a *trompe l'œil*. Likewise, the original symbol changes its meaning significantly when the single elements that are supposed to form one circle are framed individually.

Around the corner, a video of a basketball silently moving between two staggered wall segments depicts an innocent object virtually confined by space, bouncing back and forth infinitely in steady movement, followed by its own shadow. The ball, deprived from its original context and function, its movement cut and sequenced and looped in slow motion, becomes a neutralized abstraction, a sole measurement visualizing the virtual space between two borders, just as the pendulum of a metronome makes time audible.

In a similar way, the installation *Senza Titolo* (2010), first staged for the group show *C'era una volta un futuro* (2010) in an empty building in Rome, removed the doors from all the rooms of the exhibition space and displaced them diagonally in an alternating rhythm inside a corridor-cavity in the building's basement. Relieved from their original function as both opening and closing devices and now obstructing a passage, they become somewhat absurd, obstinate negotiators of space: fifteen diagonals temporally stuck in a corridor, tightly stacked between and revolting against the walls that hold them, before being put back into everyday use at the end of the exhibition. The only remaining traces of the work are photographs of a physical space rendered abstract – a three-dimensional drawing, a composition of lines.

For the work *C.A. Tense* (2010) Marco Fedele di Catrano asked the well-known Italian artist Carla Accardi to draw an abstract form directly on his arm, which was then tattooed onto his skin – a conflation of the physical and the abstract in the most immediate way. The tension of a minimal drawing inscribed over muscular flesh embodies precisely “the space between abstraction and persistent human presence with all its limitations, attempts and failures” in which the artist positions his work. While the ball and the doors explore the tension between architectural borders, rendering the space in-between both visually and physically, here the intervention, the ‘touch’ so to say, is neither projected nor temporal. The inscription of one artist's drawing onto another artist's skin is both abstract and physical at once, and beyond that also signals a trust in each other's work – a linkage not only between two artists of different generations but between the work and the body