

opening speech for exhibition at MAK Vienna

Station Rose LogInCabin by Vitus Weh

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are standing here on the so called MAK terrace plateau . A building first sketched by Peter Noever in 1991, it has created remarkable spaces. From the barrier there is an intimate garden on one side & this plateau on the other side, where we now stand above the city of Vienna. I do not know how many of you have ever stood here in the upstairs. Normally entering the staircase is unfortunately forbidden. But for the sculpture, which is to be opened here this evening, there is no better location imaginable than exactly this one, this quasi-extraterrestrial place.

I say this also because the extraterrestrial resonates also with "Station Rose" - a name, which sounds like space station, computer station and also like an intensive care unit. And, all these associations are correct. "Station Rose" exists as an artist duo for 20 years now. That is a long time - a time, in which the fine arts very much changed themselves.

Originally the station was created by Gary Danner and Elisa Rose as a real space in Vienna at the corner Margaretenstrasse/ Schikanedergasse in 1988. Exhibitions from the whole range of media art were shown. There were also very often audiovisual live acts . Since the beginning, Gary Danner has been purely responsible for the sound-track, and Elisa Rose for the visual part. Gary Danner came from punk-music and was Frontman of bands like "The Vogue "and "the Nervous Birds ". Elisa Rose had studied fashion with Karl Lagerfeld amongst other things. Thus, they operated as a kind of public research station. Such a specialized off-space broke new ground for Vienna.

NEW GROUND says it so well, because Gary Danner and Elisa Rose have been, and are today, pioneers settling new territories: New areas like the audio-visual field, the club culture, television and net art. Also the sculpture, which was opened today , in its logcabin-house aesthetics, picks up this aspect of settler. But more of that later.

First, I would like to beam you back to the former shop for media art in Vienna. There, what today is the famous Schleifmuehl-quarter. The gallery station and a club called "Trabant", also initiated by Station Rose were the beginning of this so-lively arts biotope of today .

Some architectural detailing and spatial memories of this germ cell you will discover later in the interior of the LogInCabin : the ornament of the balustrade, the bunk hidden in the upper hidden-room called "secret room", and at the bottom of the art space the office as a laboratory.

This mixture is very typical Station Rose: Today, as then, the station is housing, presentation and working space in one. There are no separate spheres. In the StationZs concentration, art and life are actually really one. This concept of a socially expanded advanced art course also draws on the relationship between the sexes.

It sounds more banal than it is to be exposed to this pioneering station where working men and women have equal rights together. This conjoins Station Rose with artists-pairs such as Lois and Franziska Weinberger, Bjork and Matthew Barney or Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Working together for the success of the project seems to be profitable for the relationships, too.

On this occasion I would also like to unveil a mystery, which is to what inspiration the name "station" actually goes back: It was Sergio Leone with his Italo-Western "Once upon a Time in The West" from the year 1968.

Somewhat against closing the heroine of this movie, charming and very self-consciously played by Claudia Cardinale, has then "station" brushed on a wooden house. Just the word "station" with no other name. Amid the solitude a future railway station is marked as a node, as a hub, as the nucleus of a city. The music of Ennio Morricone did the rest, to let the term "station" sparkle like magic.

The Station in the Margareten Street was not yet open a year, when they went on trips, namely to Cairo. The coming year in Egypt was a very formative time. The alienation as well as their new oriental point of view were the appropriate environment - like the Stargate - for their dedicated step into cyberspace and electronic music.

Shortly afterwards came the move from Vienna to Frankfurt, Europe's biggest hub. The City of data and traffic flows: Bank headquarters, the hub airlines, nodes of the trains and highways and not least the data lines.

The early 90s there was also the mecca of the electronic club scene. Station Rose got a fixed commitment in the most important club from 1992-94 and held their Gunafa-clubbing. Simultaneously they began their year-long expeditions into the virtual worlds of cyberspace. They even wrote a research study about it for the Austrian Ministry of Science. Finally, they became natives of this new world.

However, the global data network initially was focused quite much on pure text. It was the time & the world of draftsman of concepts, pamphlets and polemics. Indeed, as "visual artists & musicians" Station Rose were the exceptions. They had to develop their own formats for their audiovisual access. The appropriate media had to be captured initially.

Soon, webcasting was an appropriate format on the web and an appropriate medium later for television. For four years from 2002 to 2006, Hessian Television, part of the German public television ARD, showed Station Rose's program one hour each week.

Data streaming and radio became the preferred material over the years. Much of that which now flows into a large database project, can be seen and tried out online and also here in the station, in this sculpture.

And so we are already back from the virtual worlds of cyberspace and television, back on the Terrace Plateau of the MAK.

The MAK is well known internationally, especially for its rooms designed by artists of their famous collection. During the reorganization in 1993 it was an incredible act to break with the old depot system. But more importantly, it was immediately convincing. It was immediately clear that independent, idiosyncratic rooms are necessary as living spaces for art.

In my work as artistic director in quartier21 in the Museum Quarter, I have made a very similar experience: even the cultural production in areas such as fashion, sound art or street art needs specific, autonomous areas in order to be properly perceived. Their rooms must be real and durable. Only in the actual positioning of a discourse can individual works unfold their force.

This need obviously also weighs in the field of digital art: In order to be socially perceived, the activities in virtual worlds need a return commitment to our conventional world. It is time for such a real return bond for the digital arts. Especially now that netart has lost its utopian head start, and the initial euphoria lost ground to a necessary sobriety. This is the time now for more discourse - of the artistic, visual quality.

In any case, this house-sculpture of Station Rose is located clearly in the context of fine art.

Like a lighthouse, it has been positioned on the terrace plateau . Solid and heavy, it can even defy the winter storms.

The outer shape of the wooden house lets you think of film scenes or even of the performance settings from Paul McCarthy. In any case, it is an arrangement that should be used.

In the U.S. such simple settler block houses are called "Log Cabins". From that, Station Rose created the title "LogInCabin." In the world of computers "login" means signing in for a particular use. Out here in the real urban wilderness it means the real entering of the house.

And so I hereby cordially want to invite you.

Thank you very much.

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