



# JUNK JET

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## virtual interiors - Interview with Annett Zinsmeister, Berlin

**[DAM] Digital Art Museum, Berlin:** You have made a name for yourself as architect, artist and academic. What meaning does art have for you?

**Annett Zinsmeister:** Art came at the beginning of my professional qualification and has been my constant companion. That means I first studied art, then architecture, and was active as a designer. Because all of my works have always overtly revolved around architecture, I chose a profession that – as a so-called mother of arts – allowed me a greater leeway in my artistic practice. Art was always meaningful for me and has occupied increasingly more space in the past years. It offers me on the one hand a freedom which I do not have in any applied artistic discipline, and on the other hand it provides me with a cognitive model for actual questions having to do with, for example, representation, the creation of form and space, and the limits of perception, etc.

**[DAM]:** How would you describe your basic artistic approach?

**Annett Zinsmeister:** My work is very much conceptually shaped: both the raising of central questions and the process itself are fundamental artistic aspects for me. As opposed to purely conceptual art, my works also function – or perhaps it is more accurate to say - are effective (wirken) – on an aesthetic level. The art historian Beat Wyss called my installations “sublime” in Burke’s sense, since to an extreme degree they exercise a strong effective power (Wirkungsmacht) on the observer. In the first moment of observation, the intellectual and conceptual background of the work does not play a large role. The work takes effect – it stands for itself. A closer look, however, reveals an internal density which determines the work of art, and in which the observer can enter and sink into – yet does not have to.

**[DAM]:** Some of your best known works are occupied with Plattenbau. How did your intensive engagement with architecture come about and how important is this theme in your work?

**Annett Zinsmeister:** I started to work with Plattenbau in 1993. It was the peak of its unpopularity. I’ve been fascinated by the oscillation between the ugly and the beautiful and I’ve been interested in the superimposition of social, utopian ideas and the political repression inscribed into this architecture. In my opinion Plattenbau couldn’t be reduced to ugly mass architecture: it is a multilayered cultural phenomenon which has to earn serious criticism and respect and which needs to be analyzed precisely. Therefore I started to work with Plattenbau for several years as artist, as architect and designer and the theme became a recurrent element in my art work. My current spatial compositions and installations are all constituted by elements of serial architecture. I use extracts from my photographs (documents of a disappearing architecture) and arrange them as serial installations or as virtual environments. The multiplication and re-arrangement of the serial architectural elements lead to a play with unexpected and controversial spatial effects and irritating perspectives.

**[DAM]:** In exhibitions, you do a lot of work with installations. You realized an installation series called “virtual interiors”, from which I saw this impressive projection in Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart. What is the idea behind this artwork?

**Annett Zinsmeister:** For a long time I have been fascinated by the history of panorama as a machine of perception. The idea to realize an installation in turning the outside (facade) into a room or inner space came up in the late nineties. I began to design a wallpaper series with Plattenbau facades. I wanted to develop an experimental and sensual space caused by a high compression of the visual material and create an extreme and pure space where this architecture’s serial aspects could simultaneously be experienced. The oscillation between restricted monotony and the fascinating beauty of a structural and serial pattern made the work into a tightrope walk for the visitor who often found himself or herself between two extreme effects: the cruelty of endless repetition and the aesthetics of the minimal.





outside\_in / virtual interior, Grossbild in Leuchtkasten 61x100 cm © Annett Zinsmeister  
 outside\_in II, Installation Akademie Schloß Solitude, 2005 © Annett Zinsmeister

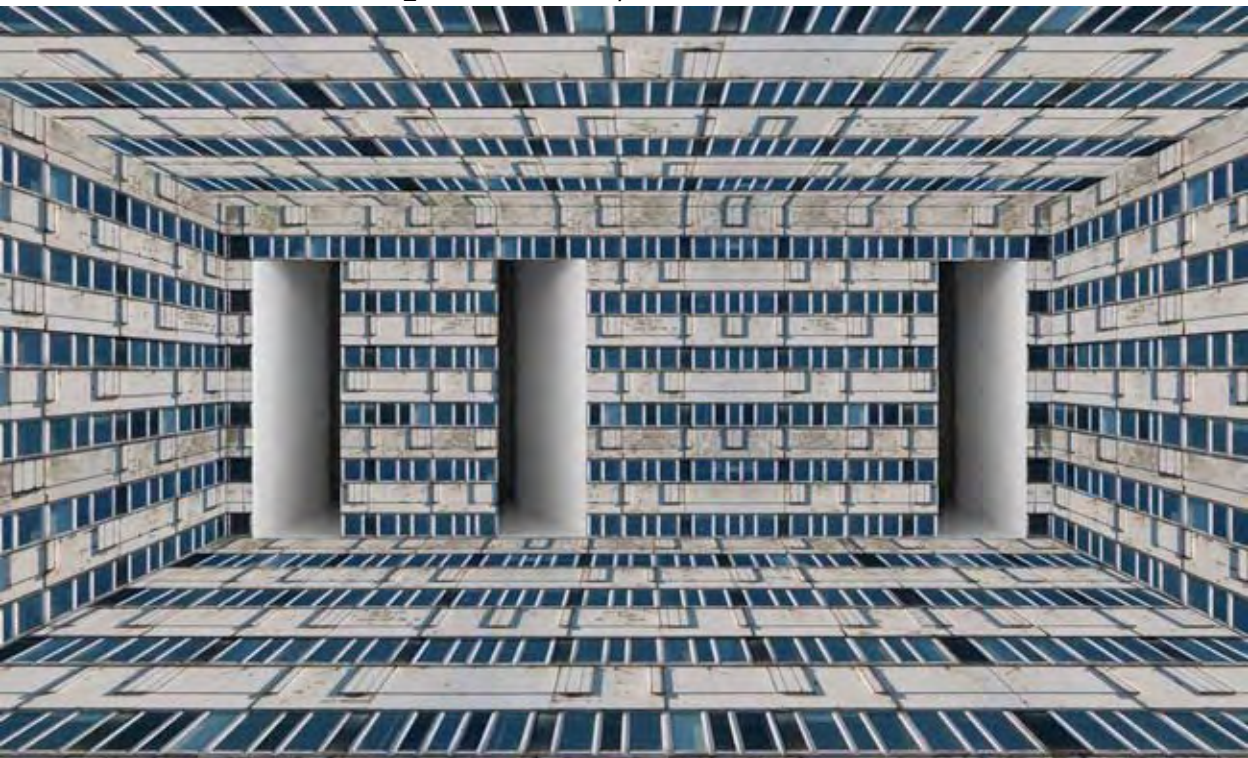






outside\_in II, Installation Akademie Schloß Solitude, 2005 © Annett Zinsmeister

Annett Zinsmeister: outside\_in / virtual interior, Grossbilddia in Leuchtkasten 61x100 cm



Different spaces for my installations were offered. One, for example, was the basement of the Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart – an extreme space, about 50 meters long, slightly curved, without windows. Another show was in a gallery where the exhibition could best be experienced through the window from outside. I created a virtual architecture of the exhibition space and the exhibition was shown as a simulation. I projected this simulation from inside through the storefront window to the outside. The opening consequently took place outside the gallery where the illusion was perfect!

**[DAM]:** What meaning does the computer have in your work? Has it decisively shaped your artistic work?

**Annett Zinsmeister:** The computer has gained increasing importance for my artistic approach with photography. This can best be illustrated through current works. The installations are based on a photographic documentation of Plattenbau types. I began this documentation as I mentioned in 1993, when the demolition and restoration of Plattenbau became an important subject in architectural practice. I worked further with these photographs in condensing and transforming them with the computer e.g. in using different techniques of changing and multiplying pictorial elements. On first sight these virtual constructed facades seem to be authentic photographs on the second look you realize that something is definitely strange. Through this process the images oscillate between document and artifact.

The images and spatial installations called “virtual interiors” are not conceivable without the computer. It has to do with the (re-) shaping of real and fictive spaces. Collage techniques that fascinate me since the beginning of my artistic practice can accomplish some things, but in this regard the usage of the computer opens new dimensions not only in the image processing, but also in the simulation of space. For me this is an extremely fascinating topic: the opening of new spaces of representation in the intertwining of art and technology.”

