

CHRISTIAN JANKOWSKI. THE WILL OF THE CURATOR

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Christian Jankowski is screening three films from the years 2008 and 2010 at the Berlinische Galerie, where he has integrated them into a work conceived especially for the museum called "The Will of the Curator". This title refers, firstly, to the three video works he presents here, where the curator is a key protagonist in each case. At the same time, it refers to the role played in the new work by Christina Landbrecht, the Video Lounge curator at the Berlinische Galerie.

Involving everyone who collaborates with the artist on an exhibition is certainly an established feature of Jankowski's output. His films are often associated with processes that reveal the work that is done to art and with art, depicting it analytically and ultimately turning it into a piece of art in its own right.

In all the films, the curator's role is decisive to the course and outcome of events. The curator can intervene in the project at any time, boycotting it, or playing an enthusiastic role with his or her own input. Any such activity is absorbed as information into Jankowski's work. The (good) will of the curator to participate in the emergence of an art work has always been a guarantee and driving force behind many of his films.

The Perfect Gallery (2010)

In "The Perfect Gallery", the artist seized his opportunity to explore what constitutes the perfect space for contemporary art. As the rooms in London's Pump House Gallery did not at all respond to the requirements that current-day art presentations expect of a venue, he had them thoroughly reorganised. It was not Christian Jankowski, however, who defined the specifications for this conversion. He gave full powers to interior designer Gordon Whistance, well known for advising a TV reality show on make-overs for houses, and allowed him to make spatial changes throughout the gallery building. It is evident throughout most of the film that curator Sandra Ross was sceptical about this rigorous interference and the choice of architect, not to mention uncertain about what Jankowski was actually intending to show in her exhibition. Nevertheless, it is her trust in the project and in the artist's ideas that guarantee smooth progress.

However, at the end of the building process, the show of the artist's work that Ross and Whistance were expecting did not materialise. Instead, there is the empty exhibition space itself, like a sculpture at the focus of attention. The grand new entrance, a multi-storey projection wall, and the optimal light and proportions, enable the viewer to experience how heavily the space influences perceptions of art. White cube ideology is a major factor here, but it has been interwoven into the film in an entertaining manner typical of television.

Tableau Vivant (2010)

"Live from the inside" is the motto for the piece "Tableau Vivant", created for the 17th Sydney Biennale. Television journalists monitor the creation of Jankowski's contribution for this big exhibition. They report in front of a backdrop of "tableaux vivants", like stage sets composed of all the real players in the show frozen into stills. In this way, milestones in the artistic project are literally placed in the frame. The artist himself also plays a central role: he lets the audience take part in the design and implementation of his idea and in the presentation of the final art work. When artistic director David Elliott agreed to back the project, Jankowski was given the chance to halt the hectic preparations for the Biennale at a decisive moment: just before the opening, tensions and pressures are at their highest, and yet the motionless presence of the participants sharpens the reflection of events by the television journalists and hence our view of what we are being shown.

Dienstbesprechung (2008)

In "Dienstbesprechung" [Briefing], Christian Jankowski creates new conditions for preparing his exhibition in Stuttgart Art Museum. With the help of a lottery, he tells all the departments to swap roles. Fate, therefore, does not place the exhibition planning in the hands of the art historians, but leaves the curatorial ideas to the people who normally mount the exhibits or guard the premises. This raises completely new questions about the exhibition, reflecting the will of the new curator: How would it be if the curator added something to this oneman show by mixing Jankowski's works with those of another artist?

"Dienstbesprechung" explores, among other things, what happens when an artistic concept is subordinated to the wishes of the curator.

