

Nina Kurtela / TRANSFORMANCE

Performance of duration, transformation and change

Branka Benčić

Transformance by Nina Kurtela is a documentation of a five months-long durational performance, structured as time-lapses out of hundreds of still photographs. The artist positions herself/her body in the center of the image that depicts an empty warehouse in the process of undergoing reconstruction, establishing the daily routine of witnessing transformations of the architectural space in Berlin. Everything is *under construction*. There are construction works in progress. The space is undergoing a transformation, a change. It is undergoing change of purpose, from being BVG Berlin's public transport garage and workshop to a space for contemporary dance. In this way a change is both about a new architectural form and its new function, purpose, meaning and social context.

Having established the daily routine of *being-in-the-space*, Nina Kurtela witnesses the months-long process of the transformation and change of this architectural space.

Transformance poses questions on the possibilities of space and the production of meaning. In the transformation of the social and economic landscape, a new spatial context is establishing the role of art in detecting the time and space we live in.

Those months-long visits undertaken by Nina Kurtela and her presence in the time-lapse video *Transformance* can trigger different relations to articulate social and spatial phenomena, which are revealed as the meeting point of the subject and the transformations of the social and physical environment.

Models of representation of a space are constructed based on different fragments – layers of immediate environment, daily routines, everyday experiences, traces from the past, bits of culture and society, which establish perspectives on processes of thinking and perception. "Contemporary performance in the

domain of culture”, points out Miško Šuvaković, “is a performative work of an artist that intervenes in the field of culture.” A performance as an art-related event presupposes performing in real time, in front of an audience, and is subsequently available by the way of documentation, while a video-performance is meant for the camera. *Transformance* is performed without an audience and it is mediated by a dense sequence consisting of hundreds of photographs structured into a time-lapse video. In this way documentation, structure and organization of an artistic action of limited duration such as a performance is shaped as a form of its representation that reflects and makes visible the process of development of an artwork. *Transformance* by Nina Kurtela in this way is not understood only as a documentation of a performative action, but also as a video-performance, a performance staged for and in front of the camera. It has been said that the relationships between art, technology and identity have not been explored in any other artistic medium with such consistency and continuity as in the medium of video. Placing her own body, own figure and exploring technical and semantic possibilities of montage and manipulation, by interventions into the flow of time and the time-space complex, she leads us to witness an interest in social aspects and transformative processes in the immediate every day surroundings that are taking place on the edges of real and hybrid space and time, transcending and manipulating real, fixed and imaginary boundaries. Time that takes shape in such a time-space pastiche construction is a time of simulation, a hybrid time. As a result of a crisis of representation, reorganization and rearrangement of the feelings of time and space, possibilities of technical and digital manipulation can underscore the uncertain position of the subject, the isolation and unstable character of identity, drawing attention to concepts of transformation and change.

Although the protagonist is present, the main event is performed by the medium itself, underscoring the constructed character of media performance, making visible transformations in and changes to the surrounding environment, interior and mise-en-scene. In this way the basic artistic process has been made bare, and at the same time and at the same level the phases of construction of the artwork and the de/construction of interior architecture are revealed.

The construction of the scene is becoming the main narrative that emphasizes the montage – collage construction of the artwork, reveals the manipulation by the media and mediated, manipulated and constructed reality of the event, that the artist herself is continuously witnessing. The possibilities of digital technology and postproduction process are underscoring the constructed character of the event, condensing a five months long process of the artist inhabiting the space into a several minutes long performance video that even by jumps, cuts and glitches of the image stresses the continuity of the performance while we witness the construction and transformation of the event site, an interior environment under construction. The historical trajectory of techniques and manipulation in montage procedures from avant-garde cinema to contemporary computer animation has the goal of constituting a new temporal dimension and new spatial relations, making them bare and making process of transformation becoming visible and taking shape in front of our eyes.