

Cornelia Schlothauer

“Circumtapes”. Playing with the appropriation of public space

http://static.londonconsortium.com/issue01/schlothauer_circumtapes.html

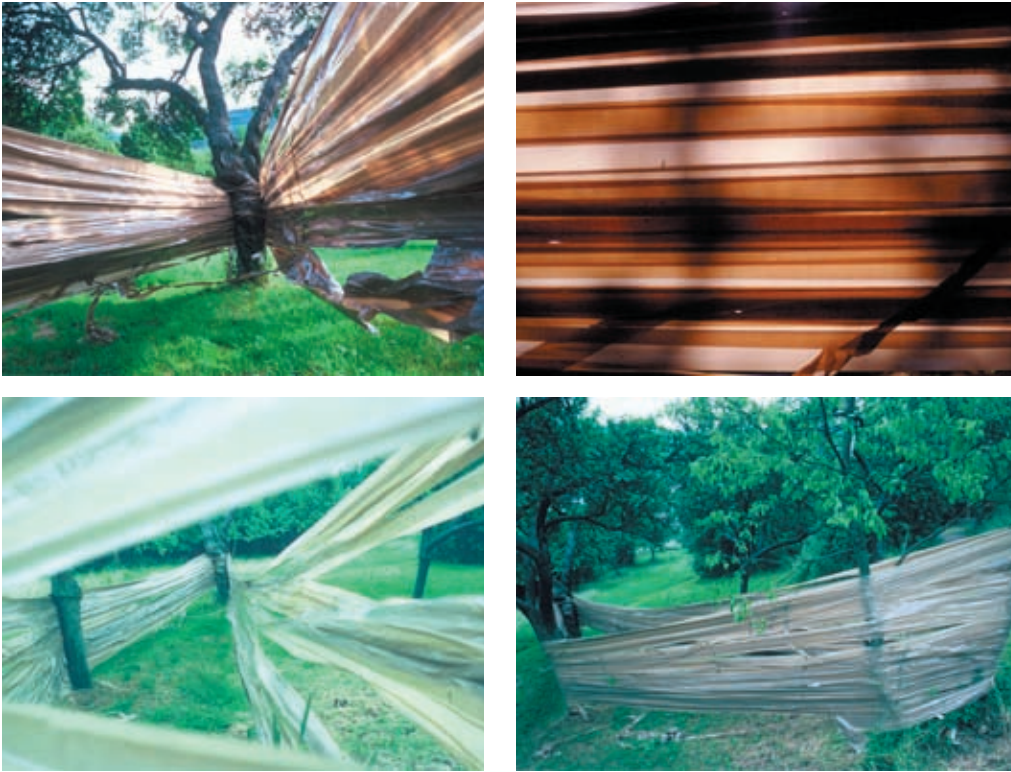
© Steven Connor / Static / London Consortium 2005

STATIC is the web resource of the London Consortium, a unique collaboration between the Architectural Association, Birkbeck College (University of London), the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and Tate.

Aiming to initiate interdisciplinary intellectual debate about paradoxes of contemporary culture, Static presents contributions from an international team of academics, artists and cultural practitioners.

The materials, assembled for each issue around a theme, include analytical essays and articles, interviews, art projects, photographic images, etc. Static will welcome feedback, argument and commentary from scholars, artists and other readers, and will be regularly updated in order to communicate the most recent and relevant ideas and interpretations on the chosen topic.

<http://static.londonconsortium.com>



Umwicklung IV, 2002

By walking in a circle around organic or architectonic structures in public space while unraveling about sixty rolls of scotch tape, temporary constructions of about 5 x 20 m and approximately 2m high take shape in the urban landscape. The uncanny shapes are formed by the thin, translucent tape that takes on the qualities of a flexible yet strong skin in which the structures get wrapped.

Public spaces are thus quickly redefined. Pathways may be blocked, common uses can be amended and architectural landmarks may become unrecognizable. For several weeks, the objects are appropriated anew by the reactions and comments of passersby. Is it a way to let their imagination run wild or a violation of their perception of space? When plants are involved in defining the shape of the tape structures, spectators worry that they might be harmed in the process, seemingly forgetting that they have been standing in small islands in the asphalt, surrounded by cars and other dangers of civilization for decades.

The installations also work as traps. Inside the improvised enclosures, small objects, dust, insects, leaves and blossoms gather on the sticky side of the tape. At the end of the exhibition, the tape is rolled up again and transformed into a new object which preserves the special traces of the time when and the place where the „circumtape“ was installed.

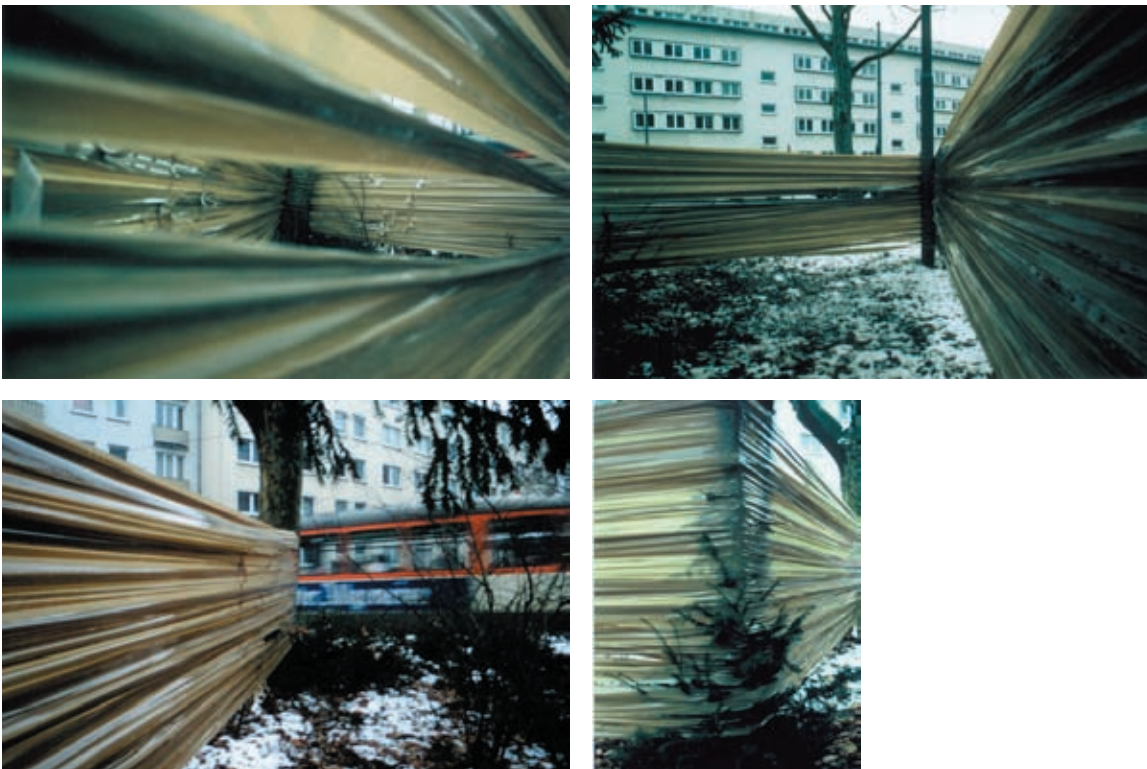
UMWICKLUNG V, 2002
IN CONTEXT OF THE SHOW HOLZMETALLPLASTIC
KÜNSTLERFORUM ZAUBERBERG KELKHEIM, GERMANY

Outside a gallery in a small countryside town lies an orchard where a temporary installation, „Circumtape“ V, shall be unrolled. Apple trees serve as posts for a construction which presents a jarring contrast to the organic forms of the meadow. The artificiality of the tape and the graphic shape it takes allows the sculpture to stand out disquietingly in this idyllic space.

Overnight, the installation was attacked, an event which left knife cuts into the structure. Was the AGGRESSIVENESS of the artistic intervention answered to with an act of similar violence? The results were interesting. The attack modified the installation by creating windows allowing passersby to look inside the structure, but not destroying it completely.

Who appropriated the work in this way? Most likely people who felt that the space they had appropriated had been invaded by the sculpture. The intervention was mildly transgressive, more playful than destructive.

Umwicklung IV, 2002



UMWICKLUNG IV, 2002
IN CONTEXT OF THE SHOW LUGGAGE ITEMS
AUSWÄRTS KUNSTRAUM, ERNST-MAY-PLATZ, FRANKFURT,
GERMANY

Ernst-May-Platz is located in the center of the Ernst May Quarter in Frankfurt. It is a monument meant to honor the architect Ernst May, head of the Frankfurt planning department office in the 1920s. The Frankfurt quarters built in these days were meant to release the crowded Old Town which provided very poor living conditions for the working class. The subsequent development of Frankfurt became known as “Das Neue Bauen” or *New Architecture*. The Neue Bauen did not follow a bourgeois idea of the city, driven more by function than by form, its main purpose being to solve problems related to population increase. Although Ernst-May-Platz is an important part of the history of the city, it has been more or less forgotten. The place is by no means easily accessible and has, at best, a rather lackluster appearance. Only the few trees that stand in the area hint at a form of activity on the part of the city’s urban planners.

The horizontal lines of the installation adapt themselves to the monotone architecture of the Maysiedlung Quarter. The sculpture breathes a new life into the area: footsteps are visible in the fresh snow outside and even inside of the „circumtape“ structure. Passersby utter their concern for the trees which have to bear the tension of the material and start discussions about the temporary installation. The space has thus received a new function of urban public place.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

I am interested in occurrences at boundaries and borders and in the processes which form perceptions of and movements in space. What happens (in the period) between tension and relaxation? It is fascinating to explore the ambivalence and aggressiveness of inclusion and exclusion and the problems of defining for example insides and outsides.

I like drawing up borders and resolving them again, moving within the ambivalence between playing a place and appropriating it. I am also interested in the interaction between the aesthetic and repulsive aspects of the material and their in-betweens.