



Sarah Oppenheimer, van Bartha, 2010; Photo: Andreas Zimmermann

„An opening is not a removal, but a reconfiguration.“

Shifting Boundaries

The enthusiasm is written on her face. Pages and paper trails with lists, plans and diagrams are lying about her.¹ Everything appears to be part of a larger order. Sarah Oppenheimer does not like to lose sight of the overall view. For years, the New York artist has been working on a kind of typology – a typology of holes.

One could have expected anything from an encounter in the studio in Rome that she occupied as a recipient of the 2010-11 Rome Prize at the American Academy – wood shavings, scraps of metal, mirror and glass fragments. After all, the artist works with these materials in order to create large-scale, spatial interventions that often transect several stories of a single building. In the high-ceilinged studio, suffused with light in the heart of Rome, Oppenheimer appears to have established an architecture department or research laboratory. There are wide wooden tables in the room and notations of light studies hanging on the walls. A row of abstract room models made of glass, thick cardboard and aluminium in various sizes are placed on the floor or line the windowsill. Even the computer is busy: it hums to the point of overheating.

Full of energy, Sarah Oppenheimer turns the computer screen in our direction and is almost euphoric as she reads off the codes, which initially sound strange: MF-142, OE-15, 554-5251, 610-3356, VP-41 and D-17. Before one can consider what it all means, the New York artist begins precise explanations. “This is the progression of a system. It’s a kind of encyclopaedia of holes...” For years, she has been working on the development of different types of holes within architectural space. The coding system explains the seemingly complex titles of her artworks. But how does an artist preoccupy herself with hollow cavities - with the construction of air, so to speak? Holes, as realized by Sarah Oppenheimer, are open spaces within architectural boundaries such as floors, walls and ceilings. Only the edges demarcate the holes. She realizes so-called negative spaces embedded within existing architecture. One can’t determine where any of her artworks start and where they end. The building, the architecture, the space are all part of her interventions.

Löcher und Tunnel

“Why holes?” is a question the artist is often asked. While she looks for a germane example in one of her exhibition catalogues, one quickly realises that Oppenheimer is not an artist who would demolish walls and floors with

a sledgehammer to orchestrate a breakthrough. She builds vast sculptures to form tunnel-like cones or regions in varying sizes, shapes, and materials. They penetrate houses, rooms and corridors. Her actions are precise and sophisticated. Precision and control over her material, its strength and effect, seem to be her supreme maxims. She leaves nothing to coincidence – and she is particular, very particular.

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Sarah Oppenheimer realizes so-called negative spaces embedded within existing architecture...«
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But is sculpture the right term for her artworks and interventions? Perhaps she would not call herself a sculptor either. After all, the visible material is only part of her work. Sarah Oppenheimer leans back in her chair to consider her answers carefully. For her, the work is really not about holes alone. It’s all about wholeness, which makes it difficult to begin with the individual elements. “I think”, she then says, “that my work today is not about holes, but about perception across some kind of boundary condition. Boundaries are re-assuring; they obscure exactly what exists over and under us at any given moment, and how visible space is intertwined with the non-visible. Knowledge of what surrounds us could cause us great discomfort.” And this is what her work is about: unhinging the apparent security of the envelope that surrounds us. Herein lies the constant challenge to the perception of viewers who are confronted with her interventions.

As a consequence, Sarah Oppenheimer’s works can at times create an acute awareness of spatial edges and chasms. That is how many of the visitors who experienced her architectural intervention, *610-3356*, at the Mattress Factory, a museum in Pittsburgh, must have felt. Upon first inspection, the work presents itself as a longitudinal, oval, wooden section in the centre of the dark parquet floor of the exhibition room on the fourth floor (Fig.4). Only when the viewer slowly approaches the piece does the audacious endeavour reveal its full extent. The artist has created a cone-like structure several metres high, bisecting two stories from the ceiling of the upper floor through to the third floor, leading diagonally through the façade window. The unexpected aperture in the ground, framed by the surrounding hardwood floor, channels the visitor’s view through the tunnel-like wooden structure, to a lawn in the courtyard of a neighbouring building (Fig.3). The sense of discomfort is perfect, as the (at first subtle) anomaly of the opening in the flooring does indeed present a real danger. While one may truly risk falling through the opening, what is

equally important is the changed atmosphere of the room, the quality of the light, temperature and sound. This is arguably the most surprising aspect of Oppenheimer's interventions: she interferes with the tension of an existing space in its entirety, altering this tension with the insertion of apertures, boundary displacements and sight lines. Holes create new spatial and visual ruptures for her, and lead to a remarkable impact on the viewer. Those who move through her space-interventions and suddenly encounter an opening within architectural boundaries must rethink the experiential logic of space from their own standpoint.

Irritation und
Innehalten

It is quite obvious when one hears Oppenheimer's explanation: disruption of the visitor's routine experience is decisive for her works; only then does a work seem truly successful to her. For only in this momentary pause does one begin to rethink one's situation. "You are being knocked off balance and get the feeling that the room is doing something to you that you don't expect it to." The New York artist's works are not intended for passive viewers. Cautious and contemplative strolling around her subtle architectural projects seems impossible. Her works demand emotional participation and constant scrutiny of how, as an individual, one moves within and is conscious of one's environment.

Oppenheimer walks across the studio with dynamic steps and stops in front of a metre-high model made of glass, plywood and metal; it is a project that she will realize at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 2012. "The exhibition spaces in the Museum are stacked," she explains. "Gallery 16 is directly above Gallery 1. They are linked through an extended spiral stair that traverses a large atrium space." While the viewer is aware of the museum's general layout, the visitor's route gives the impression that the galleries lie at a distance from each other. The opening through the floor plane between Gallery 1 and 16 will re-assert the proximity of the two spaces. By surgically incising the existing floor, she will create new views, direct and reflected, between adjoining spaces.

The model is so large that the artist almost crawls into it. One must also turn, bend and dodge in order to understand the project with all its reflections and viewing axes. This is an ambitious task for the artist, because this radical and large-scale intervention in the heart of

the multi-storeyed building will upend the normal spatial sequence of the museum, fundamentally altering its visitors' recollection of the spatial logic and sequence. One could imagine projects like this one in Baltimore would overwhelm Sarah Oppenheimer. But the 39-year old does not shy away from size and complexity; on the contrary, they seem to be her driving force. When working on major projects she routinely surrounds herself with a staff of specialists including engineers, programmers, technicians and professional manufacturers in order to solve the seemingly unsolvable.

And how should the titles of her projects be understood? What will the title of the work, as yet undecided between *W-140306* or *W-130306*, at the Baltimore Art Museum mean? This is not clear at the moment. "It's a type of hole," she says with a knowing smile, aware that for the outsider this system, based on an algorithm, is not easy to comprehend. Many variables such as size, coordinates, number of rooms, type of holes, reflection and so forth combine to form a numerical title.

All of her titles codify the continuous exploration of distinct openings, holes and transitions from one space to another. She has already defined many possibilities, others are yet to be defined. There is, for example, the type *wormhole* (Fig./diagram): a hole that creates a visual and temporal shortcut through a set of discrete locations such as the Mattress Factory project. The new project in Baltimore would also fall within the wormhole type, as the W in the title reveals. Or there is the *cinema hole* type: a hole through which an adjacent space appears as a projected image; or *horizon hole*: a hole that distorts the viewer's perception of horizontal and vertical orientation.

Vorüberlegung und
spontanes Reagieren

This encyclopaedia of holes helps her understand, plan and deliberate what she will lay out on a large scale when spatial boundaries suddenly become permeable. Through a gradual process, and with the aid of sketches, diagrams, 3-D animations and models, she makes the invisible visible. So does she use the lexicon a priori, before she intervenes in existing architectural space? The artist clarifies that her process is a convergence of pre-existing conceptual considerations with the specificities of a given place. Sarah Oppenheimer does not ignore intuition and responsiveness to the given conditions on site.

Yet all these hole types and spatial interventions would not interest her if it were not for the figure that lingers there and animates these spaces: the visitor, rendered an active participant by Oppenheimer's sculptural interventions. Such questions have become essential to the artist: how do we move about in a space? How does our perception of the space change through this movement? How does an intervention in the existing spatial order influence both our engagement with the space and the whole building and our engagement with the boundaries of public and private?

"A moving person," she says, "is a critical measure in establishing what can be perceived. A person's progression through a space informs the understanding of the given space's layout and shapes their short-term memory. This short-term memory in turn informs all perceptual experience." The interaction between visitors, the existing architecture and her manipulation of the room make for a challenging and exciting work.

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Sarah Oppenheimer speaks with such certainty about perception and the spatial memory of a moving viewer, on which basis she designs her subtle architectural sculptures, that it becomes clear her knowledge is gained not only by reading. After all, she wants to understand everything she is doing in minute detail and to use her interventions as truly effective instruments of perception.

This preoccupation with the details of perception began with one of her first large projects, completed in 2002 at the Drawing Center in New York: *Hallway*. In that work, she emphasized the question of mapped movement. For the project, the artist invited various groups of people to move through a room, the structure of which the artist altered in response to the recorded motion of selected visitors. The spatial setup, which was continually remade, diagrammed the movements of individual visitors. The individuals' paths through the room provided data that was in turn used for an ongoing alteration of the space in order to find out what influence these alterations had on orientation. According to Oppenheimer, she was not interested in reframing the experimental process as an artwork. Rather, she wanted to explore how a body moves through space and what impact architectural changes have on spatial navigation.

Sarah Oppenheimer's intensive preoccupation with the displacement of spatial boundaries and its effect on the

moving participant brought the New York artist into contact with the American cognitive and behavioural scientist, William Warren. Warren's research investigates the relationship of perception and spatial navigation. His empirical testing is conducted in virtual space. In one such study, test subjects were guided through virtual environments to determine which cues impacted the perception of spatial proximity.² Warren demonstrated that our spatial experience and our spatial memory seldom correspond to a real spatial arrangement but are dependent on certain visual and temporal cues.

In conversation with Warren and others, Oppenheimer established basic hole-types within her lexicon. But one should guard against pinning down Oppenheimer's work to these typologically predefined perforations. For ultimately the empty spaces that she designs cannot be conceived without the architectural whole and their impact upon it. It is not enough for her just to open up walls and floors with holes and wooden shafts and tunnel-like structures. Sarah Oppenheimer's sculptural interventions at once surprise and irritate and make anyone pause mid-step.

That is how it would have seemed to the numerous visitors to the Basel art fair, Art Unlimited 2009, who worked their way through the large exhibition hall and suddenly stood still, a little perplexed, in front of a wall approximately six metres wide and four metres tall. Something was being shown, which initially could not be fully understood: Sarah Oppenheimer's work *VP-41* (Fig.9). People moved around, bent down, took steps forwards and then back again, even waved to the viewers on the opposite side of the wall. The two longitudinal, superimposed openings, made of plywood and encased mirrors, produced an image that at first appeared to be a direct view through a window. But something was not quite right. While the upper opening through the wall was indeed an open vista, the lower opening functioned as a periscope. It reflected the view of those visitors gathered above the piece by means of a staircase leading over the wall construction (Fig.8). The dislocation was startling.

Logik und ihre
Destabilisierung

Not all of Sarah Oppenheimer's interventions can be comprehended straight away. It is, however, fascinating to gradually decode her logic. It is rather rare for the artist to build walls or entire room structures in which to embed her disorienting openings. More often she responds to a given location in order to destabilize its spe-

cific spatial logic. At Annely Juda Fine Art, a gallery in London, Oppenheimer used the familiar structure of an exhibition space to build the enormous wooden structure *MF-142* (Fig.1). Its expanse, bifurcated by a central crease, appeared to have wedged itself between walls, ceiling and floor. It was scarcely possible to clearly differentiate between the existing architecture and the space. For the artist had lined the surface of the ambitious work with pale floorboards so that it gave the impression that the gallery floor, made of the same material, had been doubled up in the room. The floor and the artwork became one entity. Oppenheimer embedded two openings in the surface area, creating a visual rupture in the middle of a smooth plane (Fig.2). A shaft-like opening at approximately eye level imparted a view to the outside world in two directions. Surprisingly, these new points of view accentuated the viewer's proximity to that which lay beyond the space. Now guided by newly formed edges and corners, this viewpoint changed the sense of closeness and distance. The artist states that the architecture was the most important thing in determining the final project. "The edge of the slanted plane created a new boundary condition, a space above and below. This bisecting surface made the existing architecture seem even more present."

Such projects demand a lot from everybody – from the artist, but also from those who help create the work alongside her. To give the structure its apparent lightness and its high degree of stability, knowledge of statics and material properties is required. And staying power. The precision of her work is crucial for Oppenheimer. Often, they are so elegantly and skilfully built into existing rooms that they are not immediately perceived as foreign objects; only on second glance do they reveal their subtle enigmas. They do not occupy the space, but make existing elements visible. One can understand why Oppenheimer does not want the concept of object to be applied to her sculptural interventions, since she always works with the entire structure of the architecture. Therefore, one cannot quite locate where Sarah Oppenheimer's displacements begin or end; everything can become part of the whole.

Oppenheimer's architectural and spatial manipulations bring to mind the work of American artists from the 1960s and 1970s – projects that fundamentally changed the role of the artwork and its recipients and were based on the direct experience of the active visitor, such as 'experience architecture' by Bruce Nauman. With his accessible corridors, rooms and tunnels, for example, Nauman made works that sent visitors into often profoundly unsettling spatial structures. Only after the visitor had once again stepped outside the structure were they free of the uncomfortable feeling, akin to being physically thrown around.

While Oppenheimer's work has established a distinctive signature, she is aware of the generation of the great pioneers of the 1960s. She especially remembers the way

in which they created profoundly destabilising spatial effects, sometimes with the simplest of means, and made viewers into active participants. Oppenheimer studied at the renowned Art Department of Yale University under one representative of that generation of artists - Mel Bochner. At that time, Oppenheimer was working on picturing the surrounding world in paintings: she wanted both the representation and the observer to be understood as moving in space and time. Her shift towards architectural space is thus easy to understand, as is her desire to shift boundaries.

Once again she turns to her computer and starts a programme. Shifting boundaries defined her spatial intervention *Horizontal Roll* at the Saint Louis Art Museum in 2008, says the artist. With her openings, embedded in both existing and new walls, she altered and disturbed the sight and path of the visitors to the permanent collection of the museum. Type: *cinema hole*. For example, the people who moved through the museum's rooms first encountered a painting by Piet Mondrian and then, through an opening in the painting's supporting wall, a section of a Spectrum painting by Ellsworth Kelly (Fig.7). Although the paintings were physically located in different museum galleries, they appeared to the observer to exist on a single two-dimensional plane. If the visitor looked through the same opening from the opposite side of the wall, a section of *Curtains*, a Painting by Roy Liechtenstein, was visible (Fig.6).

Betrachtung und
Bewegung

Sarah Oppenheimer would not be satisfied if one understood such interventions as tricks or optical illusions. In tandem with the visitor's altered perception of the permanent collection, Oppenheimer was interested in interactions between visitors: how they moved through the spaces; looked at one another looking; all the while trying to locate themselves and understand the sequence and of places and spaces. And that must have been difficult for many visitors as Oppenheimer's cut-throughs rarely allow quick comprehension, rather they bring about lengthy puzzling. In conversation with the artist, the words she often uses are: to cause discomfort. She wants to bring about a state of discomfort in the observer so that they begin questioning what is around them and reconsider what they see. This is what Oppenheimer's interventions confront one with – and this is the point at which they are the most fascinating. They offer the visitor the possibility of acquiring a consciousness of an

integrated, multidimensional spatial situation. Moving through this situation, the visitor experiences the extended spatial layout physically, simultaneously forming a memory of it and locating themselves within it.

So it is obvious why the artist often chooses large dimensions for her work. Ultimately, it is not only one's eyes but also one's whole body that constitutes perception. And while one picture after another appears on the computer screen, one also notices the limitations of each photograph and diagram. One has to physically experience each of Oppenheimer's projects in order to understand the complex spatial interventions.

At our final meeting in Basel, the artist is working on a new project, to be assembled in the production halls of Kunstbetrieb. These workshops at a former steel mill site offer a number of artists the space and tools needed to assemble the ambitious works. For this project, Oppenheimer is using broad aluminium strips, which, by roughly interlocking at different angles, fold into a hollow body. The more than eight-metre long metal parts now lie on several trestles like two formidable aircraft carriers. It is fascinating how the anodised aluminium shimmers in the light coming through the large industrial windows: now matt, now shining. Oppenheimer is in good spirits and anxious to see how her work will look when it is complete. It is the first time that one of her sculptures will be permanently installed outdoors.

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The starting point for this particular project was an installation exhibited at the von Bartha Gallery in Basel in 2010, *OE-15* (Fig.11). Oppenheimer set two hollow structures – made out of plywood and approximately eight metres in length - to cantilever into the gallery space from opposing walls. The zig-zag of the sharply tapered ends, optically creating a hole and a frame at the same time, offered the visitor different views depending upon their movements through the space. As the viewer moved along the sculpture and walked around the construction, sections of the space lying beyond it were visible through a continually changing frame (Fig.10). Sarah Oppenheimer developed this opening in response to existing spatial boundaries and edges. Simultaneously, the piece functioned as a kind of barrier, which was set against the visitor. “The work played with the possibilities of occluding edges” explains Oppenheimer. “Edges frame visible space. They demarcate one zone from another. An occluding edge is constantly in flux: its location

changes with the position of the viewer.” Thus it was also the viewer who had to re-chart their course through the gallery and was surprised by new viewpoints offering new experiences of space and sight. Architectural elements such as windows, which were in effect further away from the viewer, would, framed by the wooden structure and a focussed gaze, appear to be closer or to be pictorial.

Räume und
einfallendes Licht

To now reproduce this work outdoors in a wide-open landscape poses a challenge. For everything always belongs to the whole situation - in this instance, the surrounding panorama and more. The artist smiles, a little lost in thought; she likes the idea of this situation. It describes how the work's periphery is more than just the architectural space visible around it. For example, it includes a new consideration of natural light. Sarah Oppenheimer reaches for one of her models made of anodised aluminium and places it on the table. Light, daylight, which varies over the course of the day and over the yearly seasons, has become a central concern since she began using aluminium, whose visual properties change with the shifts in incidental light. These considerations are familiar to her from one of her recent solo projects, a project that coalesced into a new type of hole: diffusion hole (Fig./diagram).

Oppenheimer now plays a short video on the computer; still images cannot capture the time changes of this phenomenal work, entitled *D-17*, constructed at the Rice Gallery in Texas. The artist looks proudly at the flickering screen. A huge, wedge-shaped metal construction pierces the glass front entrance, diagonally traverses a clearance, seemingly perforates another glass wall and finally rests on the far end of the gallery floor (Fig.5). The central questions to emerge from this work were how a boundary diffuses light, and how a moving viewer experiences this diffusion and reflection. “*D-17* and diffusion holes more generally,” remarks the artist “form new openings in architectural space that divide light and sight along different vectors. This discontinuity of the axis of light and vision works in tandem to illuminate otherwise unseen views”. Depending on the time of day and the ratio between the natural light outside and artificial light inside, what one sees changes; what is reflected and mirrored also changes (Fig.12). The spatial and material boundaries appear to dissolve.

Perhaps it is one of her most surprising projects – so reduced, clear and simple yet still complex. Nothing detracts from what it is fundamentally about: a spatial-temporal experience. The apparent displacement and dissolution of the boundary between interior and exterior creates a bodily dislocation. The experience emerges through reflections, mirror images and the visitor’s physical experience as they move along the sculpture within the confines of the space, allowing themselves the surprises offered by the different viewpoints.

Sarah Oppenheimer is back at work bending and folding the large aluminium strips in the Basel Werkhalle, leaving one to regret that one does not encounter her subtle interventions in space more often. Her disruptions of space make so much tangible and visible: even if we cannot experience the contemporaneity of all that is around us all the time, this does not mean that it is not present. So it is rewarding to appreciate these interrelations, at least in part. Oppenheimer’s work makes this possible.

Translated by Katharina Hutter-Doshi and Aoife Rosenmeyer



INES GOLDBACH

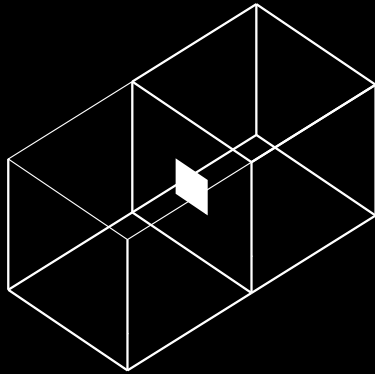
studied art history, German language and literature and history in Siena, Berlin, Freiburg and Frankfurt. She has a doctorate in art history and works as a curator at the Hallen für Neue Kunst Schaffhausen for the Raussmüller Collection. In addition to collaboration, lecturing and teaching at the art historical institutes of, amongst others, the Universities of Freiburg im Breisgau, Uppsala, Nottingham and Rome she is also active as a freelance curator and the author of numerous texts in catalogues, books and newspapers with a focus on architecture and contemporary art. Her book on the artist Jannis Kounellis appeared recently from the Gebr. Mann Press, Berlin. She lives in Zurich.

NOTES

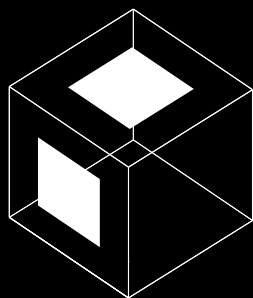
- 1 The author met Sarah Oppenheimer on various occasions from June 2010 onwards for several conversations. The first meetings at length took place in Rome on 14 March 2011 and on 14 and 15/16 July in Basel and Zurich. The citations and the interview for the present text result from these encounters.
- 2 Cp et al. William H. Warren and Suzanne Whang. Visual Guidance of Walking Through Apertures: Body-Scaled Information for Affordance, in: Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance 1987, Vol. 13, No.3, 371-383.

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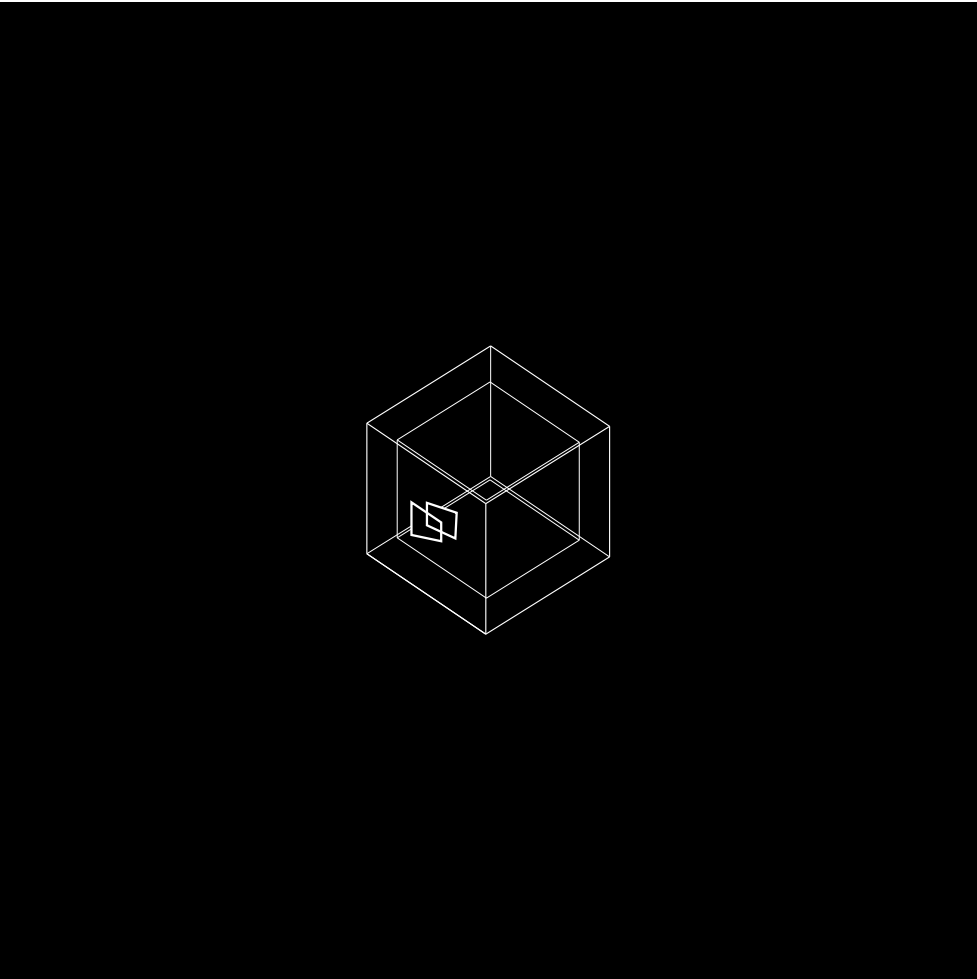
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Fig. 4, 5	Jean Paul Torno
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Fig. 7 a+b	Andreas Zimmermann



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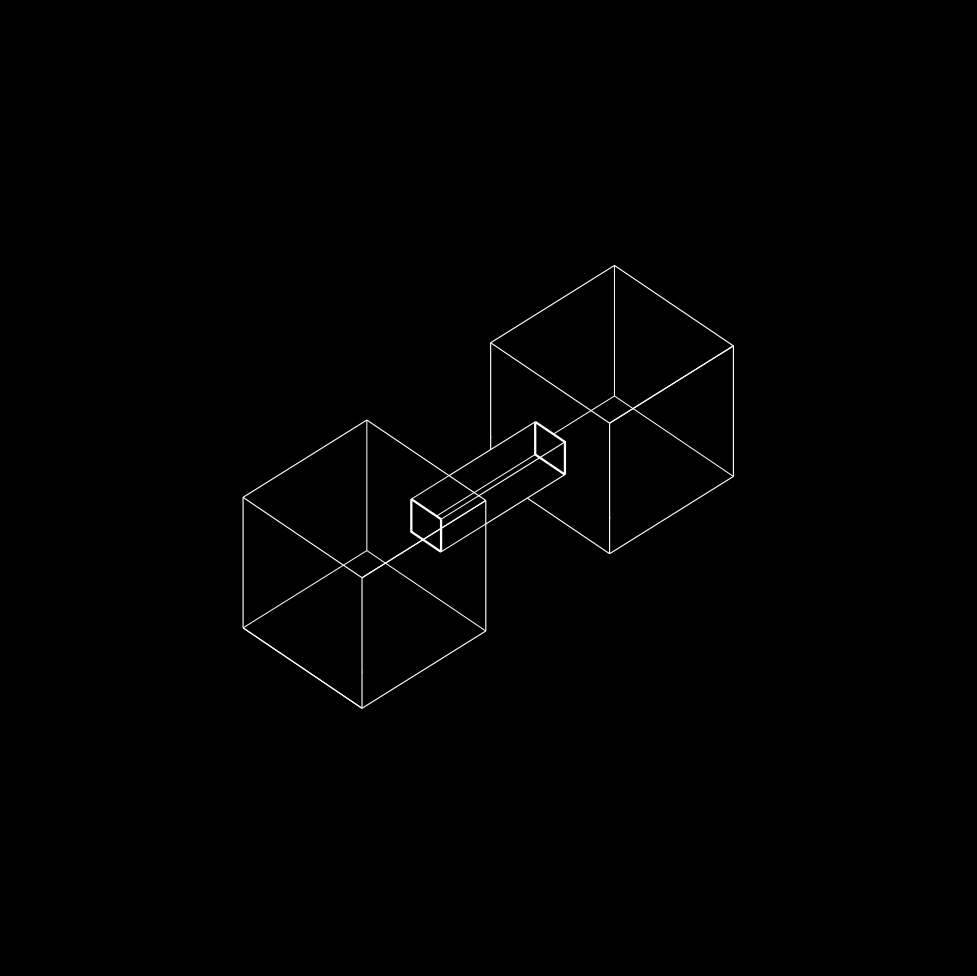
4 b



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4 a-d
DIAGRAMME

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4 d

„A piece is successful when it prompts a viewer to rethink their surroundings“

Ines Goldbach in conversation
with SARAH OPPENHEIMER

I.G.: *Let us speak again about the work you have been continuously working on in the last few years, your lexicon. How did that come about?*

S.O.: The dictionary of holes is an exploration of the mutability of discrete spaces. The dictionary catalogs how holes act as catalysts for physical and perceptual exchange between these spaces. At times, I also refer to this system as a typology... The dictionary begins with the premise that inhabited space is comprised of clustered zones. For example, one room is next to another room, or alternatively, one room is above an exterior space. I refer to the spatial configuration of these adjacent zones as a spatial array. The dictionary defines how a hole alters a given spatial array. Each hole is a catalyst for change within this array. Entries enumerate how flow between zones (light, sight, motion etc.) is shaped through an opening.

I.G.: *How do these spatial openings, boundary displacements and holes work in relation to the observer, who moves through the space? The moving observer is your main interest, right?*

S.O.: Yes. That's right. Let's say you have two adjacent spaces. Imagine now there is a hole between these zones. Light, sight and circulation can pass through this opening. The opening changes the perimeter of a previous boundary, and the possibility of diffusion across that boundary. These changes are experienced by a viewer moving through a space...

I.G.: *.....by a moving observer or a viewer in motion.*

S.O.: Yes. The path of this viewer is critical. Each viewer has a particular trajectory through a cluster of spaces. The viewer experiences distance through their path of locomotion. A hole often slices through this cluster along the shortest possible path, creating a visual short cut. This visual short cut can also act as a mnemonic short cut; it allows the viewer a collapsed view through a cluster of spaces that take time to traverse physically. In this sense,

a hole abbreviates distance, and re-sequences our short-term memory.

I.G.: *Perhaps it is important to know why you create these types of openings. Does it have to be an opening?*

S.O.: A hole is not a thing. By hole, I am referring to a catalyst – an agent of change. This catalyst changes the edges of space. Edges can be demarcated in many ways. They can be lines, surfaces or atmosphere. The space that surrounds you is a second skin. Holes make this skin porous; they extend and alter its boundary. And a hole rewrites the mental image of a place by resequencing the memory of spatial adjacency.

I.G.: *I have to refer back to the lexicon again; what course of action do you take with your work? Do you develop your ideas from the respective situation or do you refer back to the lexicon? What role does the lexicon play in the genesis of the work?*

S.O.: The dictionary enables a range of possible interventions within a given spatial array. It enumerates these interventions as comprehensively and generically as possible. This rule set, or language set, can then be applied within a specific spatial configuration.

I.G.: *And every new aspect or circumstance gives you the possibility of entering a new aspect into your lexicon?*

S.O.: Yes - exactly. The dictionary becomes increasingly detailed as each piece responds to a given space. The dictionary outlines a language that changes with use. The dictionary helps me consider the general when making the specific.

I.G.: *Are there any projects or works of art, which could not be entered into your lexicon because they perhaps showed an entirely new aspect?*

S.O.: In those instances that projects don't align with the rules of the dictionary, the dictionary changes and adapts. For each new piece, I rethink the dictionary in the context of how certain variables anticipate the perceptual impact of the work. I examine how the dictionary can change while remaining internally consistent. I then subsequently use the dictionary to make new pieces. It is a kind of loop; it grows and changes.

If you come to a situation you can look at so many things, an infinite number of things. The dictionary's parameters limit this field. The dictionary's expansion allows me to incrementally extend my focus to encompass an increasingly large number of variables. That gives me freedom.

I.G.: *I think it is important to understand that in your work there is a connection between rational strategy and intuitive decision-making. Not everything can be planned or is foreseeable.*

S.O.: Yes. The specificity of place always introduces the unexpected. This allows each project to remain an open-ended exploration. It keeps it interesting.

I.G.: *Some of your works can be very destabilizing for the viewer. Is de-stabilization of the viewer an important aspect for you?*

S.O.: I am interested in the friction between a viewer's perception of place and a viewer's expectation. A piece is successful when it prompts a viewer to rethink their surroundings. This rethinking results from an alteration of the conventions of spatial demarcation. That can often be somewhat destabilizing.

I.G.: *To open up spaces could be very radical and of course has a certain effect on the whole building. Is aggressiveness a notion you are thinking of?*

S.O.: It is a question of how aggressiveness is directed. Rather than directing aggressive action towards or at the viewer, it is directed at the environment surrounding the viewer. If you think, for example, about certain works by Bruce Nauman, for example the Green Light Corridor, you have a very specific form of aggressiveness. While this piece aggressively challenges the viewer by placing the body in a specific environment, the work remains extremely polite towards the surrounding space. Any intervention into an existing spatial array

engages with a different system of problems: the proprietary rights over the space, building management, boundaries between public and private, the political hierarchy of decision making in social space, and of course, the experience of the viewer within this system.

Aggressiveness is an interesting notion: if you come to a museum and say "I want to remove this section of your building" an invisible set of political forces becomes immediately apparent.

I.G.: *I think by opening up spaces the moving viewer has the possibility of being aware of his entire situation. So in my opinion your work is all about sensitizing one's perception and the awareness of your present situation.*

S.O.: In certain pieces, the viewer is able to rethink their immediate surroundings through recognition of a whole situation. This is much more complicated than viewing your immediate surroundings. Instead, you are suddenly able to experience a diagrammatic picture of the space - but you never see it. It crosses; it cuts against your immediate surroundings. I am interested in these disparate experiences of space being simultaneously present.

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SARAH OPPENHEIMER

BIOGRAPHY

1972 born in Austin, Texas
1990- Brown University, Semiotics. BA
1995
1997- Yale University MFA
1999
2007- Critic. Yale School of Art. Yale pres. University, New Haven, CT lives and works in New York

Selected Grants and Awards

2003 Rema Hort Mann Fellowship
2007 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship; American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Art
2009 Louis Comfort Tiffany Fellowship
2010/ N.Y.F.A. Fellowship in Architecture
2006 and Environmental Structures
2010- Rome Prize Fellowship. American
2011 Academy in Rome

AUSSTELLUNGEN

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2002 Hallway, The Drawing Center, New York
2003 Lid, Queens Museum of Art, New York
2004 Screen, Momenta, New York; Box Man, Youkobo Art Space, Tokyo, Japan
2006 554-5251, P.P.O.W., New York
2008 P41 x P21, Duve Berlin, Berlin; Sarah Oppenheimer, Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO
2009 MF-142, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, UK; VP-41, Art Unlimited at Art Basel, in collaboration with Annelly Juda Fine Art, London; Galerie von Bartha, Basel; DUVE, Berlin; P.P.O.W., New York
2010 OE-15, Galerie von Bartha, Basel; D-17, Rice University Art Gallery, Houston, TX
2011 P-13, Brown University Cognitive Science Building, Permanent commission, Providence RI
2012 Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Mills University Art Museum, Oakland, CA

Selected Group Exhibitions

2000 Transposed: Analogues of Built Space, Sculpture Center, New York
2001 Szuper. Galerie der Künstler, NVLP collaborative project, Munich; Artists in the Marketplace, Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York
2002 Artists to Artists, Ace Gallery, New York; Storage and Retrieval, Midway Contemporary Art, St. Paul, MN
2003 EAF Exhibition, Socrates Sculpture Park, New York; Reconfiguring Space, Art in General, New York
2004 Impact: New Mural Projects, P.P.O.W., New York; Trolls in a Metropolitan Green Park, Nishi – Mach Media, Tokyo, Japan
2005 Odd Lots, Cabinet Magazine, White Columns, Queens Museum of Art, New York; No Ordinary, Skulpturens Hus, Stockholm, Sweden; Art Rocks – Containers at Rockefeller Center, P.P.O.W., New York; Off the Wall, Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Gallery, Hunter College, New York
2006 Aporia / Heuristics, EFA Gallery, New York; Archicule, Makor Gallery, New York
2007 Frieze, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, UK; I Died for Beauty, Newman Popiashvili Gallery, New York; Facts on the Ground, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York; Invitational Exhibition, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York; Islip Museum,

Carriage House, Islip, New York; Aporia: Aporia, LACE, Los Angeles, CA
2008 Inner and Outer Space, The Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA; Anteroom, Queens Museum of Art, New York
2009 Automatic Cities, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, CA; Don't Perish, Leo Koenig Projekte, New York; Infinite Possibilities, Momenta Art, New York
2010 Art Forum Berlin, Duve Berlin, Berlin; Art Basel, Galerie von Bartha, Basel; First Supper, Josée Bienvenue, New York; Smoke and Mirrors, Hunter University Art Gallery, New York; Companion (with E. Stanley), EFA Project Space, New York
2011 Art Cabinet at Art Basel Miami Beach, Annelly Juda Fine Art, Miami, FL; Temporary Structures, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, MA; Art Basel, von Bartha Garage, Basel
2012 Factory Direct, The Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA

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2000 Hertz, B.-S., Transposed: Analogues of Built Space. Convergences of Architecture and Sculpture: The Consequences of Borrowing, Kat. Sculpture Center, New York
2002 The Drawing Center, "Drawing Papers #30a", New York; Meredith, M., Sarah Oppenheimer, Drawing Room, in: ARTFORUM, Sept., 206-207
2004 Johnson, K., Impact: New Mural Projects, in: The New York Times, Art in Review, 30.7.
2005 Glueck, G., Off the Wall, in: The New York Times, Art in Review, 29.9.; Kimmelman, K., Inspiration From Real Estate Rejects, in: The New York Times, 9.9.; Kastner, J., Najafi, S., Richard, F. ed., Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clarke's Fake Estates, Cabinet Books, DAP Catalog
2006 Baker, A., Socrates Sculpture Park, Yale University Press; Goings on About Town, Sarah Oppenheimer, in: The New Yorker, 2.10., 22; H.G., Sarah Oppenheimer: 554-5251, in: Flavorpill, Issue #326, 5-11.9.; Princenthal, N., Sarah Oppenheimer at PPOW, in: Art in America, Nov.; Saltz, J., All Art is Contemporary Art, in: Modern Painters., Nov.; Smith, R., Sarah Oppenheimer: 554-5251, in: New York Times, Art Listings, 29.9.
2007 Masters, H.G., One to Watch, in: Artkrush, 19.9.; Phillips, P., 552-5152, in: Art Journal, Spring
2008 Amado, M., Inner and Outer Space, in: ARTFORUM.com, Sept.; Bonetti, D., Currents 102: Sarah Oppenheimer, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 4.5.; Clark, R., Sarah Oppenheimer. Interview with Sarah Oppenheimer, in: Currents 102: Sarah Oppenheimer, Saint Louis Art Museum; Green, T., Sarah Oppenheimer at the Mattress Factory, in: Modern Art Notes, 21 und 22.5. Contemporary Art, Kat. Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Hull, M., New Installations at Annelly Juda Fine Art, in: Architects' Journal, Sept.; Latimer, Q., Art Basel Begins, in: Art in America, 11.6.; Morgenthaler, D., Breakthroughs in Exhibition Architecture, Edition von Bartha. Basel; Rabinowitz, C.S., MF-142 – catalogue essay, Annelly Juda Fine Art, Sept.; Usherwood, N., Sarah Oppenheimer, in: Galleries, 9.10.
2010 a+a, Unbalanced View: Manipulator of Architecture and Space, Vol. 30, 90-95; Adler, T., Smoke and Mirrors, Shadow and Fog, Hunter College Art Galleries, New York; Britt, D.,

Menil Showcases Room-size Art with Replica Merzbau, in: Houston Chronicle, 14.10.; Britt, D., Sarah Oppenheimer: D-17, in: Houston Chronicle, 4.11.; Byng, M., D-17 installation by Sarah Oppenheimer, Texas, in: Wallpaper* Magazine, 23.11.; Green, T., Sarah Oppenheimer at the Rice University Art Gallery, in: Modern Art Notes, 31.8.; Hoberman, M., The Illusionism in Art. The Art of Illusionism, Hunter College Art Galleries, New York; Last, N., There and Not, in: von Bartha Quarterly, Basel; Lark, L., Over and Out: Sarah Oppenheimer's impressive D-17 breaks out of Rice Gallery, Houston Press, 17.11.; LesCalleet, C., Space and Planes at Play in Unusual Art Display, West University Examiner, Sept. 8.9.; Naidoo, R., Sarah Oppenheimer: D-17, in: Designboom.com, 29.9.; Sam, S., Back to the Future, Edition von Bartha, Basel; Sculpture Magazine, Sarah Oppenheimer, Itinerary, Nov., Vol. 29, No. 9
2011 Green, T., Baltimore Commissions Sarah Oppenheimer, in: artinfo.com, 18.5.; Yearbook 2010/2011, von Bartha Garage, Mai; Salvioni, D., Interview on ARTonAIR.org, 27.6.; Smees, S., Altering our Architecture in Ways that Make Us Change. Boston Globe, 30.9.; Goldbach, I., S. Oppenheimer, in: Künstler. Kritisches Lexikon der Gegenwartskunst, Ausgabe xy, Munich

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