

qualitalk

Information from Technology and Society

December 2012
Internet-Version
ISSN 1615-9667
13th Year
46th issue

Printed-Version
ISSN 1435-1641
17th Year
62th issue

In Germany, it has become fashionable to call (real or promised) housing developments near a waterfront »Harbor City«. For example, at kilometer 500 (from its source) of the Rhine, a new city quarter named »Customs Port Mayence« comprising a total area of 355,000 m² for office buildings, residences and leisure areas is being developed. A »Kulturspange« (cultural bridge) integrating art and culture is planned to make this area even more attractive to potential well-to-do inhabitants, visitors and thriving enterprises.

Oliver Schuster

»Die Kulturspange« Cultural Bridge

Attractive and expensive:
Harbor City paired with
Culture

Page 2
Urbanisation à la Mayence

Page 3
Cultural Bridge – A Start

Page 4
Roman Signer, an Action-
and Concept Artist

Page 5
Attila Csörgő and Platonic Love

Page 6
Impressum



Das Weinlager, the former storage facility to store wine barrels of the customs and inland port of Mainz is to provide some historical flair by restoring a crane and also an art museum at the location of the Central Machinery Complex of the old port. Still, the deserted port area is waiting to be awakened from its sleep.

Die Kulturspange – Cultural Bridge

Attractive and expensive – Harbor City paired with Art

If one absolutely has to live at the water, one has to pay the price for it: for example, to have a landing stage directly to one's balcony, and that only living a few minutes from downtown. One is reminded of Kurt Tucholsky's satirized poem about the Baltic Sea accessible from Friedrichstraße, a main thoroughfare in Berlin.

Some cities have already succeeded to accomplish that, converting former industrial areas at the waterfront into high-value living quarters.

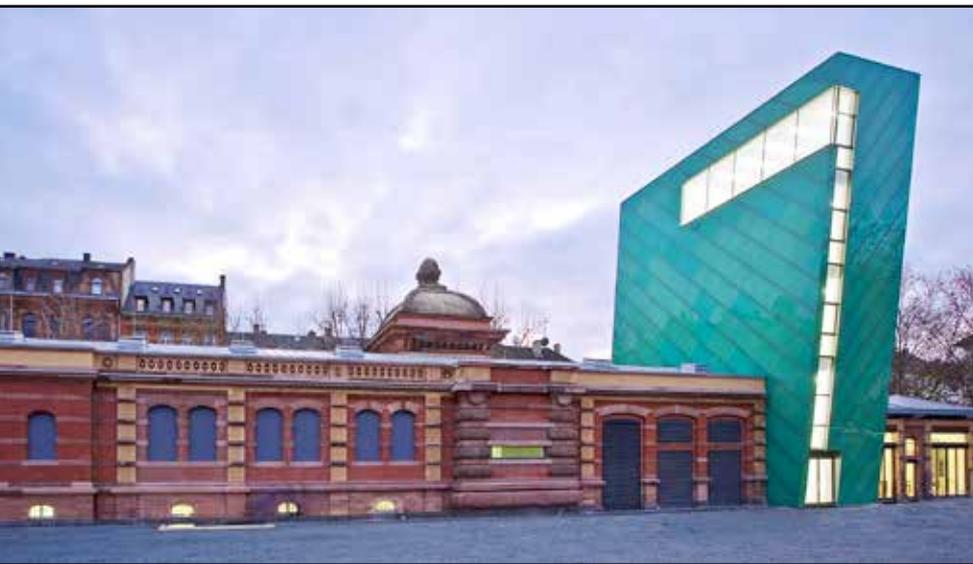
Urbanisation à la Mayence

With the advent of container shipping and the resulting demise of old

docks at street level of residences facing the promenade. It is also easy to forget that the noise and exhaust smell of boat traffic on the Rhine, day and night, will not disappear. Add to this small motor boat traffic to and from the marinas which no doubt will be established for the benefit of residents who can afford it.

A stroll to and look at the promised »Customs Port Mayence, Culture at the Rhine« (the latter a word play with »Reinkultur« as *pure* culture) on the day after Christmas 2012 showed that the project is still far away from the conditions idealized (and satirized) in Kurt Tucholsky's poem. True, the new art museum (»Culture Hall«; see picture on pg. 2) was open that day between 14 and 16 hours but had only few visitors, probably no more than a dozen. The nice coffee shop established in the former railroad shop unfortunately was closed; could be that this was the reason for the dearth of visitors at the museum?

Still, that a highly indebted city like Mayence provided to its citizens access to an art museum on a holiday like the 26th of December is admirable; entrance fee, at a discount, was 2 Euro (about US\$ 2.60). Come to think of it, the existence of this art museum is a miracle in itself. It is destined to accommodate traveling exhibitions of contemporary art as it does not have a permanent exhibition, or collection on its own. The slightly inclined (by 7 degrees) modern tower of the building is a striking landmark of the »Kulturspange«. On four floors of the tower, there is additional room for the exhibitions. From the top floor of it one has a fascinating view of the harbor of Mayence and the other side of the Rhine river, with



Exterior of Culture Hall
housing a Modern Art Gallery.

The Tower is inclined by 7° and stands 21 meter high. It fits in a tiny gap between two historical buildings, Energy Center, now Culture Hall, and railroad shop (r.), now Café-Restaurant.

Photo: Norbert Miguletz

waterfront warehouses, these old buildings invite to be configured for other uses: attract people to work, live and spend their leisure time there. But only from a very small percentage of buildings will one have direct access to the water itself. More likely, a promenade between buildings and shore will be installed. The disadvantage is that then passers-by will have a direct look through the win-

the Taunus mountains in the background (see picture on the front page).

Listening to the optimistic opinion of the developer of the quarter, the Viennese CA Immobilien Anlagen AG, there should already be about 1400 apartments, for 2500 people, completed – but the area is still deserted. A working/office area for a total of 4000 people is also planned, which makes the inhabitants around the area shudder when they think about the parking problems this may create.

Not that the whole idea is completely new: already in 1993, the city government of Mayence started considering a conversion of the old port



timized handling of shipping traffic and transfer to road and rail. Indeed, that port is now the fifth busiest of all inland ports in Germany.

Roman Signer:

* 1983 Appenzell, Schweiz

The circular self-shooting device and the blue tent with the artist snoring inside – transmitted by loudspeakers.

Signers pacifying sleeping noise is in sharp contrast to the big bang which is not produced by the pistol of the self-shooting device.



area into a new development. Because of the rise of container traffic, the specialty of the *Customs Port*, handling small cargo and bulk cargo, became less and less important, the city planned and constructed a new container terminal (completed in 2011) about a third of a mile downstream from the old *Customs Port*, in an area called »Engelheimer Aue«. This op-

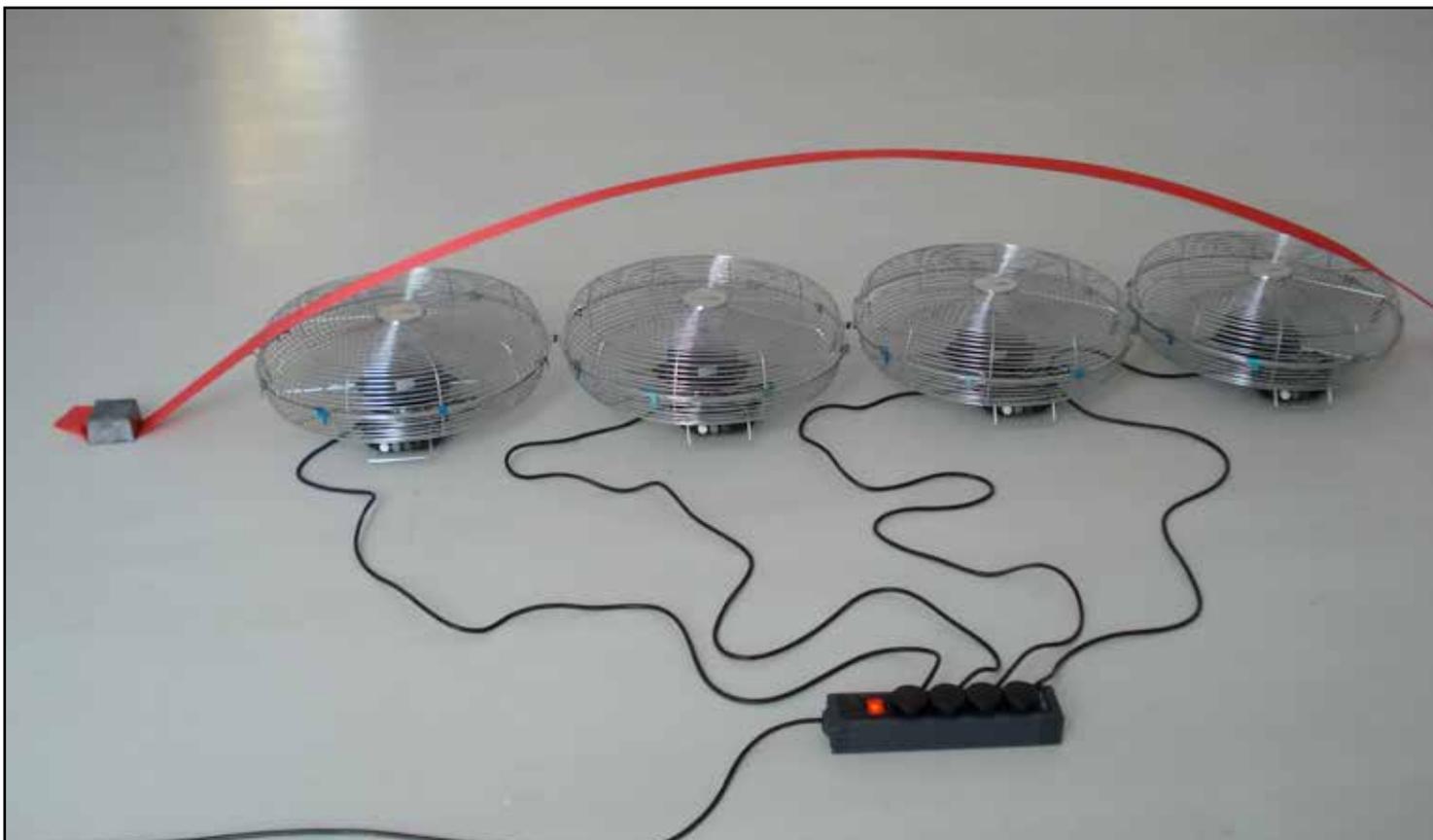
»Kulturspange« – a Start

Still, a visitor to the area at the turn of the year to 2013 notices that there is much work to do to get rid of remnants of the old port: some fragments of old buildings to be torn down completely, old signs – such as »Do not walk under moving cargo« at one of the cranes to remain as a his-

torical monument – to be taken down.

The new director of the art museum of the City of Mainz, Thomas D. Trummer, created two exhibitions of »Concept Art«: One dedicated to the Swiss artist, Roman Signer, the other one to the Hungarian At-

pendent from the renovated crane at the South Jetty. The prow of the boat points down, two pairs of paddles stick out from the front part. That installation is part of the exhibition, the rest being inside the building where there is another red kayak swimming



Roman Signer:

*Quatre Ventilateurs, 2009
The red tape stands next to
motionless in the agitated air
above the fans.*

tila Csörgő. Both are established artists whose works were also displayed during 2012's »documenta« in Kassel.

**Roman Signer,
Action-/ Concept Artist**

Signer's surprise: not fate, but the force of air flow. Four fans enabled a red tape to stand motionless in the air; whether the fans were programmed to follow a secret choreography one couldn't tell. At the moment, a red kayak, a work by the artist, is sus-

in a small canal. Almost if planned as part of the »action«, a small, maybe nine-year old boy climbed into the red kayak in the canal and pushed himself forward. He managed himself well, without creating waves swamping over onto the floor. He moved the kayak forth and then back; his parents just looked on. After a while the guard came and asked the boy to get out of the boat; his parents still didn't react. A true performance of action art in real time – we enjoyed it.



Roman Signer:

*Volets, 2012
The wooden wall is opened
and shut by the »air force«.*

*When the wooden wall is
abruptly closed the noi-
se sounds like a shot. It is
especially frightening when
one stands close to the self-
shooting device.*



On the other hand, one wouldn't want to experiment in »real time« with another piece of exhibit, a handgun with a circular barrel ending close to the back of the handgun. The artist did not provide any explanation. As a »self-shooting device«, from the time of the GDR, the communist German Democratic Republic, it could be understood a playful variant. Also, the suicide in Stuttgart-Stammheim prison of Andreas Baader and Jan-Carl Raspe (in the 1970s; both were members of the notorious extreme left-wing RAF, Red Army Faction), shooting themselves in the neck, comes to mind.

While looking at the »self-shooting device«, a sudden loud bang mo-

mentarily scared me. But it was only a window shut by wind blowing from a fan. As a soothing sound, a loudspeaker transmitted the artist's snoring in the blue tent. It was therefore not fate, but the force of air flow: four fans enabled a red tape to stand motionless in the air; whether the fans were programmed to follow a secret choreography one couldn't tell.

**Attila Csörgő
and Platonic Love**

The title, in Hungarian (Plátói szerelem), means »platonic love« and refers to the artist's love for Plato's basic geometric objects. He depicts creation, perfection, destruc-



Attila Csörgő :

The Artist titles his magic construction and destruction »Platonic Love«.

tion of such objects. It is fascinating to observe the delicate construction of objects made of very thin wooden rods which are moved through fine threads and rolls and weights by an electrical motor, following a secret score. The erection from the floor of a cube, the adding of a tetrahedron, and then an octahedron to form a dodecahedron almost reminds one of

the grace of a classical ballet. With all components in its perfection forming an ideal mathematical body, we look now at a harmonious structure with 20 corners and 30 edges. The twelve surfaces, as the name implies, only exists in our imagination. At the next movement of the motor, all surfaces, without any shattering fragments, dissolve into nothing. □

Impressum



Chris Schuth

Photo: www.martina-pipprich.de

qualitalk is edited by Chris Schuth,
Max-Planck-Straße 45 · 55124 Mainz
Germany · Phone (+49) 6131-476466

Internet: www.chris-schuth.de
mail (*at*) chris-schuth.de

December 2012
published four times a year

ISSN 1615-9667 [Internet]
ISSN 1435-1641 [printed edition]

Pictures by the author, if not otherwise stated.

German-English Translation by
Dr. Dieter von Jettmar, Vienna (Austria).

qualitalk will be forwarded to registered readers by e-mail and can be downloaded from the internet via www.chris-schuth.de/qtalk_62_en.pdf

Readers not connected to the internet receive the publication by snail mail.

© *Chris Schuth*