The Author as Backdrop by Julia Brennacher

Christoph Hinterhuber uses computer-generated 3-D visualisations, pictorial structures resembling pictograms and symbols, objects, text and sound works to develop complex, sometimes synaesthetic sound installations, which are very much concerned with present-day ideological and cultural codes. Different levels of reality and perception interlock in his extremely technoid and apparently superficial, atmospheric-minimalist spatial concepts, referring to our over-stylised environment and its image cult.

For the inner courtyard of the Galerie im Taxispalais, the artist has realised neon letters spelling out PARTY, which flash on at intervals of only one second. This functions as a point of identification with a club and PARTY culture, and the associated feeling of unity in this scene. The work is based on a text fragment from the novel *Glamorama* by the American author Bret Easton Ellis: "The word PARTY kept flashing above us in bright, multi-colored lettering."[1] In his book Ellis tells of the excessive, decadent lifestyle of the main protagonist Victor Ward and upper-class society in New York during the 1990s. He constructs a grotesque pseudo-reality, in which the guy involved in the PARTY scene, Ward, acts like a protagonist in a daily soap and so depicts the true lack of orientation behind the glittering façade of a fun society.

Hinterhuber fills the site-specific concept of the neon letters, usually a medium used to transmit the inflationary advertising messages of the world of consumer goods, with a specific content. It thus functions as an optical stimulus to generate a fictive, parallel universe concerned with the emblematic nature of our visual culture and its everyday phenomena. In the context of the exhibition, PARTY becomes the *brand* of the 1990s – an ideogram of the social coherence of a specific group or society whose differentiation from outside is based on encoding and abstraction. The subcultural, electronic trends in music of the techno and cyberpunk movements, which began to take shape at the end of the 1980s, represent another referential point of the work. Hinterhuber refers to the "club as a laboratory", as a sphere of resonance permeated by processes of artistic, social and political departure. In his earlier works, *Disco* (2003) and *Dancefloor* (2009), he had already concerned himself with the sphere of pop and with subcultural music milieus. In this context, it is possible to see Hinterhuber's DJ performance during the exhibition opening as an indexical pointer to PARTY; here, he played techno and house labels, whereby the authorship of the musicians is deliberately not published in some cases, so that the music becomes common property via performative acquisition. Despite their high degree of abstraction and their anti-narrative structure, the differentiated, hypnotic patterns of the electronic sound flow function as identity-creating bearers of meaning and permit conclusions about specific groups in their turn.

Besides the use of such vintage sounds, the artist's conceptual working practice is also mirrored in the choice of neon lettering, which – as an "old school" medium – refers on the one hand to the maxim of an already historical conceptual art, and on the other hand – as a technically fabricated medium – represents a closed system per se. The novel *Glamorama* forms a sub-text to the work, like the *Playlist* (2010) illustrated in the catalogue, the DJ performance. It functions as an independent referential system, which the artist logs into and assimilates for his own use by investigating its aesthetic and social potentials. In this way, Hinterhuber undermines the categories of copyright and authorship in favour of an open source movement, in which everything is suspended in the "binary data flow"[2]. Rather like Roland Barthes, who said goodbye to the author as a privileged figure, Christoph Hinterhuber steps back, behind the synthetic surfaces of his iconic pictorial and spatial systems, only to reappear as an artist-DJ – as a high priest and the guardian of knowledge about sampling and arranging sound – as "mediator" of a "narrative code"[3]. PARTY!

[1] Bret Easton Ellis, *Glamorama*, Picador 2006, p. 299.
[2] *Christoph Hinterhuber im Gespräch mit Silvia Höller*, in: cat. *sechs positionen*, RLB Kunstbrücke, Innsbruck 2003, p. 14.
[3] Roland Barthes, *Der Tod des Autors*, in: *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft*, Fotis Jannidis, Gerhard Lauer, Matias Martinez and Simone Winko (eds.), Stuttgart 2000, p. 186.