



From the exhibition of architecture to spatial practices. The shows at ar/ge kunst, Bolzano (1992-2019)

Roberto Gigliotti

Keywords:

Architecture, Exhibition, Display, ar/ge kunst

ABSTRACT:

This text is the result of an archival research conducted consulting the records of ar/ge kunst, the Kunstverein of Bolzano, where, among others, several architecture exhibitions have been presented over the last 35 years. From the very beginning, the founders chose to work on the different languages of contemporaneity, integrating in the visual arts program of the small space further disciplines like architecture, among others. Regarding the presentation of architecture, the focus of the different artistic directors of the space moved throughout the years from traditional architectural exhibitions to the display of works that understand the relation with space in a more extended way. Some of ar/ge kunst's exhibitions are introduced here as examples in order to address issues, such as architecture, its exhibition and the spaces of its narration. The aim is to highlight the relationship between the display of architecture and the form taken by the design of the show. How does the contents of the exhibition influence its setting? In these lines there is no ambition to exhaustively list and describe the possibilities of narrating architecture through exhibitions nor the role played by their design. Instead, the purpose of this analysis is to identify some possible forms of architecture exposition, and to intersect a genealogy of recent architecture exhibitions. ar/ge kunst seems to be a useful case study in this context because it allows to explore a phenomenon, which is broad and elusive at the same time, studying some examples that are concrete and comparable since they have been hosted by the same institution.

Questo testo è il risultato di una ricerca archivistica condotta consultando i documenti di ar/ge kunst, il Kunstverein di Bolzano, dove sono state presentate diverse mostre di architettura negli ultimi 35 anni. Fin dall'inizio, i fondatori hanno scelto di lavorare sui diversi linguaggi della contemporaneità, integrando nel programma artistico del piccolo spazio ulteriori discipline come l'architettura, tra le altre. Riguardo alla presentazione dell'architettura, l'attenzione dei diversi direttori artistici dello spazio si è spostata nel corso degli anni dalle tradizionali mostre di architettura all'esposizione di opere che riflettono sulla relazione con lo spazio in un senso più ampio. Alcune mostre di ar/ge kunst sono qui illustrate come esempi al fine di affrontare tematiche come l'architettura, la sua esposizione e gli spazi della sua narrazione. L'obiettivo è evidenziare il rapporto tra il display dell'architettura e la forma assunta dal design dell'esposizione. Come i contenuti della mostra influenzano la sua ambientazione? In queste righe non c'è l'ambizione di elencare esaustivamente e descrivere le possibilità di narrare l'architettura attraverso mostre né il ruolo svolto dalla loro progettazione. Lo scopo di questa analisi è invece quello di identificare alcune possibili forme di esposizione dell'architettura e tracciare una genealogia delle recenti mostre di architettura. ar/ge kunst sembra essere un caso studio utile in questo contesto perché consente di esplorare un fenomeno ampio e sfuggente al tempo stesso, studiando alcuni esempi che sono concreti e comparabili poiché sono stati ospitati dalla stessa istituzione.

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Opening Picture:

Fig. 09: Matilde Cassani, *It's just not cricket*, 2018, installation view (courtesy ar/ge kunst)

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ar/ge kunst and its spaces

ar/ge kunst was founded in 1985 as exhibition space for the production of culture in Bolzano, a bilingual city close to the border between Italy and Austria. The official description states that «the name is an abbreviation of the German word *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (working group) [...] chosen to promote the idea of collective work on the language of contemporary art and on its relationship with disciplines such as architecture, design, performance and cinema»¹. The translation from German of the two words *ar/ge* and *Kunst* is uncomfortable art.

Many shows have been organized in this space's more of 30 years of activity and in the past; next to the artists, the rooms of ar/ge kunst also hosted the exhibitions of today's well-known architects, such as Peter Zumthor, David Chipperfield or Steven Holl, just to mention a few of them. After a break at the beginning of the 2000s, under the artistic direction of Emanuele Guidi (2013-2022) and in a subtly reinterpreted sense in its enlarged role as so-called spatial practice, architecture takes prominence once again. The photographic series *La mia scuola di architettura* by Gianni Pettena was presented in the gallery² and gave its name to a series of lectures within the gallery's public program, while long term research projects were curated in which space, architecture, culture and society meet in the production of exhibitions that let the borders between art and architecture blur. As we will see, Gareth Kennedy, Can Altay, Matilde Cassani and Lorenzo Pezzani from Forensic Oceanography are the contributors that so far have been invited to

produce their work for this format, three of whom are architects. Kennedy, Altay and Cassani's contributions will be examined in this text.

In 1985, a former sewing machines shop was transformed into exhibition space by one of the founder of the *Kunstverein*, architect Christoph Mair Fingerle, who directed the gallery in its first years. ar/ge kunst basically consists of two adjacent rooms on the ground floor of a historical building in the very center of the city of Bolzano. The two spaces have approximatively the same surface and both have an elongated form and an irregular geometry due to the age of the building [fig. 01]. The first room is characterised by a large shop window that puts the spaces of the gallery in non-mediated visual contact with passers-by on one of the main commercial roads of the city. The most significant elements of the second space are a door opening to a backyard, an ancient vaulted ceiling and a staircase leading to the office and storage spaces underground. A small cabin hosting the toilet is positioned to the side of the door that connects the two spaces. Both the service elements (the staircase and the cabin) considerably reduce the surface available in the second room for exhibition purposes. Eventually the ones who exhibit in the spaces of ar/ge kunst have a total length of about 26mt, an average width of 5.50mt and a height between 3.30mt and 3.70mt.

Exhibiting architecture

In the exhibition space the idea of architecture as bricks and mortars is

hard to maintain and the notion and border of architectural work comes under discussion

Arrhenius, 2014

Architecture is, by its nature, public, and one could argue that for this reason it would not need to be presented in an exhibition space. Nonetheless, the moment architecture enters the context of a show, different kinds of necessary translations are possible. Important exhibitions have marked the history of architecture and the architecture exhibition has become an established and consolidated format in the dissemination of architectural knowledge: an integral part of the discipline, so to say. Furthermore, nowadays we are even witnessing a growing diffusion of architecture generated by its public presence, by its exposition: a sort of overexposure that responds to the desire of being visible, which increases almost exponentially. The outcome of the architecture exhibition has become more public than architecture itself. Together with books and journals, the exhibition has reached the role of barometer, not only for the presentation of architecture, but also for actively feeding the debate on architecture.

At the end of the 1970s, the landscape of cultural bodies has been marked by the foundation of institutions dedicated to the conservation, storage and presentation of architecture. This was followed by an equally intense diffusion of curatorial studies in general, some of which specialized on the particular case of the display of architecture. After the first Architecture Biennale in 1980 in Venice, venues for periodical events dedicated to architec-

ture have proliferated worldwide. The explosion of architecture biennials and triennials proves this, and literature about architecture exhibitions has meanwhile become vast and exhaustive. The chronological sequence that begins with the first architecture museums and continues with the consolidation of the architecture exhibition format and the consecutive proliferation of periodical shows frames the research question in the background of the argumentations at stake here: what do architecture exhibitions produce today?

We can distinguish different kinds of architecture exhibitions: on one hand, we find expositions that aim to document the built substance of an edifice (even when this cannot be displayed in the space of the exhibition because it is physically elsewhere) through a variety of elements ranging from drawings and three dimensional models, and extending to photography and video. On the other hand, we observe the diffusion of exhibition forms in which the object is not so much architecture (or building) *per se*, but issues relevant to it, such as the social, economic, cultural and artistic backgrounds that have led to the formation of a project and the possible realization of architecture. Among others, we could address a further kind of exhibition: the ones which purposely set a distance between the presented content and architecture in terms of building (realized or to be realized), and open up to a broader way of looking at the architectural phenomena. These exhibitions move towards issues connected to the production of space and can almost be considered as pure spatial/architectural experi-

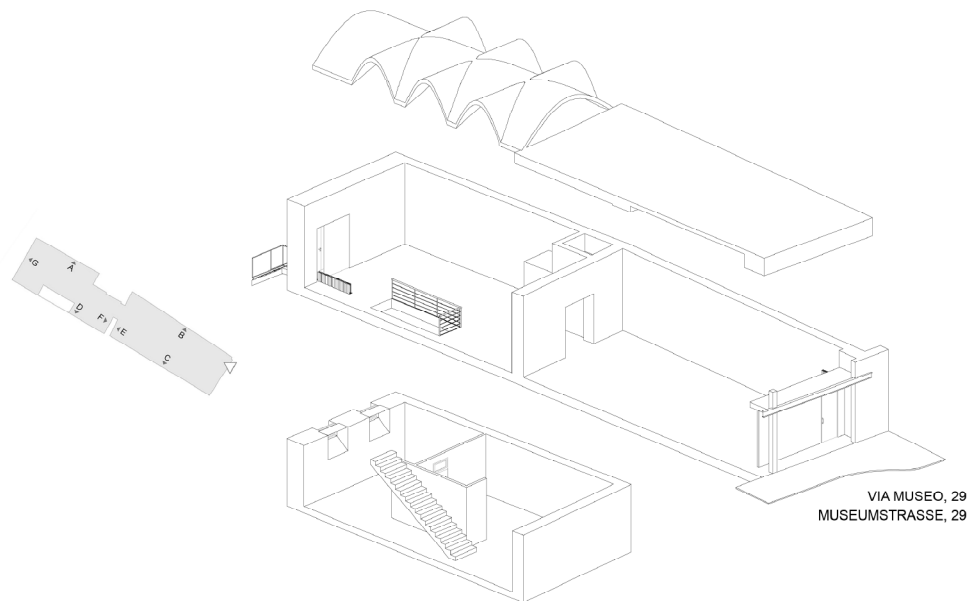
ments, since it is acknowledged that *«the most extreme and influential proposals in the history of modern architecture were made in the context of temporary exhibitions»*.³ This latter approach establishes a radical distance from the seminal belief about the architecture exhibition, according to which there is only room for surrogates in the exhibition space, since architecture is elsewhere outside. On the very contrary, the architecture belonging to the content of this kind of shows finds its reason for existence in the show itself.

As it already happened long ago in the art world, the space of the architecture exhibition can today be easily described as a field of action,

tool capable of fostering debate on architecture. It is not so much an instrument of representation but an opportunity to investigate and reflect. The architecture exhibition is therefore neither ‘on’ nor ‘about’ architecture: it is ‘for’ architecture.⁴

Exhibitions are transformed into exploration of themes and attempts to suggest a different role for architecture and planning today:

This change in the role of the curator reinforces this stand that considers an exhibition not merely as an objective per se but rather as a strategical tool, among other possible ones, for fostering ideas, challenging positions, introducing new



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a space of intense debate on the meaning of narrating and making architecture public, a space of reflection on the multiple roles that an exhibition can acquire in the construction of a shared knowledge around architecture. In this respect, Giovanna Borasi insists on the significance of the architectural exhibition and its nature as a strategic

themes, questioning current topics and, ultimately, for advancing new theories and changing current practices, that the objective of an exhibition is not to document the absent work, but to propose the idea for potential architecture, their relationship to the surrounding world, and the shaping of thought through exhibiting.⁵

Fig. 01
ar/ge kunst,
isometric view
(courtesy ar/ge
kunst)

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Significance of the setting in the architecture exhibitions

An architecture exhibition can be described as a space that shows space and for this reason the formal language of the design assumes here a fundamental role, probably even more than in other kinds of exhibitions. Here design becomes a curatorial device.⁶ As Borasi says:

«If in a traditional exhibition the display considers the relation between the materials in the show, in the case of an exhibition for architecture the setting is what takes on a significant role. The design becomes an integral part of the curatorial strategy, it participates in the interpretation of the objects in the gallery and in the narrative, and along the process it contributes to a better definition of the scope of the show and to the construction of a precise point of view. Finally, design determines the overall character and the atmosphere of the exhibition, establishing which way it will be read and the impression that the visitor will have.»⁷

From this point of view, the perspective of introducing surrogates into the exhibition, since architecture won't fit into the exhibition space, is also turned upside down. Just to quote a possible example: what is the deep meaning of an intervention in scale 1:1 in the architecture exhibition? Is it a fragment of an architecture that did not find enough space in the show or is it architecture *per se*? Does it present, re-present or does it carry an intrinsic meaning? Through the architec-

ture of the architecture exhibition, the gallery space is transformed into an architectural gesture. What is shown in the exhibition space, the way it is shown and the work it refers to become the same thing. The question is shifted from the issue of representation to the very experience of the exhibition 'here and now'.

Architecture exhibitions at ar/ge kunst

At the very beginning of its activity, several architecture exhibitions have been organised by or imported to ar/ge kunst since some of the founders were young practicing architects interested in activating a debate around the production of space not only through the construction of buildings, but also through the organization of cultural initiatives that addressed architectural issues. Exhibitions were among these. Bolzano never had an architecture faculty and the young architects of the ar/ge kunst's board took the occasion to keep in contact with significant personalities they encountered during the time of their studies elsewhere, as proved by the fax exchanges still preserved in the archive of the institution. From 1986 to 2000 ar/ge kunst presented the work of Peter Cook (1986), Raymund Abraham (1986), Carlo Mollino (1989), Peter Zumthor (1990), Behnisch and Partner (1991), David Chipperfield (1992), Steven Holl (1993), Juan Navarro Baldeweg (1994), Hans Kollhoff and Helga Timmermann (1994), Gonçalo Sousa Byrne, Joao Luis Carilho Da Graca, Eduardo Souto De Moura (1995), Antonio Cruz and Antonio Ortiz (1996), Luigi Ghirri

on Aldo Rossi (1997), Jean Nouvel (1999), Florian Beigel and Tony Fretton (2000). Some of the exhibitions were directly imported, some co-curated and organized in collaboration with prestigious venues, such as Arc en Rêve Bordeaux (Holl), deSingel Antwerp (Chipperfield, Kollhoff, Timmermann and Baldeweg), Canadian Centre of Architecture and Architekturzentrum Luzern (Zumthor and Nouvel). In most cases, they



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contained original drawings and models, but some of them became an opportunity to experiment with the construction of the exhibition space through the articulation of the design. If, as already mentioned, exhibiting architecture means to show space in/through space, these displays position themselves somewhere between the content presented through the exhibition (which speaks of the construction of space) and the production of space itself. Without being buildings, they gave the possibility to observe on a 1:1 scale some of the architecture principles mentioned in the exhibition.

Adding architecture to architecture through the exhibition. David Chipperfield: *Architettura 1985-1990 Architektur* (1992)

From 17 January to 15 February 1992 ar/ge kunst presented the work of David Chipperfield in its spaces through an exhibition imported from deSingel in Antwerp where it had been displayed in 1991 [fig. 02]. The exhibition was curated by the architects Giordano and Izzo (the latter was a collaborator of Chipperfield's studio) and Chipperfield's studio designed the display. Furthermore, an indication in the 1991 program of deSingel refers to the fact that the installation of the exhibition was planned by Chipperfield himself.⁸ ar/ge kunst's archive holds: descriptions of the presented buildings, extensive fax exchanges in relation to the organization of the exhibition, documents for the insurance of the exhibits, an isometric view of the exhibition spaces, installation views and pictures taken during the opening.

Chipperfield's projects realized between 1985 and 1990 in the UK, in Japan and in the United States were exhibited through 22 models, a series of 15 square panels all with the same dimensions and further miscellaneous material (mainly pictures of the realized projects). The fact that the 15 panels have all the same width and height of 990mm is a sure indication that they have been produced for exhibition purposes. The design of the exhibition space allows Chipperfield to put in place an architectural exercise. In front of the gallery window stood a building crane which base was covered by a coating of rough timber. The title of the exhibition was positioned in the street, printed on the plinth of the crane. There is a cross-connection between the space of the street and the inside of the gallery. In fact, the material of the coating of the

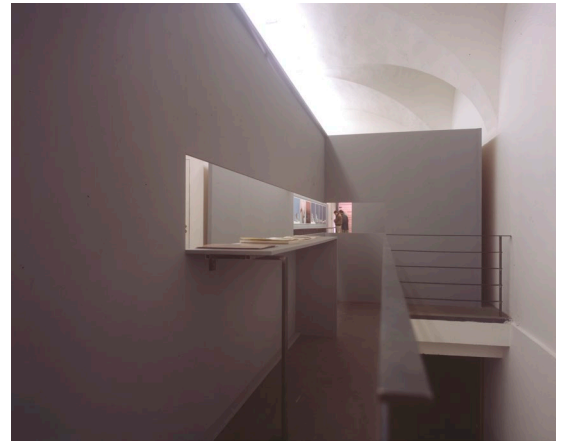
Fig. 02
David Chipperfield, *Architettura 1985-1990 Architektur*, 1992, installation view (courtesy ar/ge kunst)

crane base is used to make a pier that enters the gallery space and crosses it lengthwise becoming the main axis of the exhibition. In the first room, on the left side of the pier, the 20 models are positioned on high plinths, while the right side is dedicated to the 15 panels hanging on the wall in front of a grey background, and to the remaining miscellaneous material, preserved on tables under transparent horizontal showcases. Dark grey is the dominant colour. The display becomes a proper spatial intervention in the passage between the first and the second room where toilets and staircase are hidden behind mock-walls that give a new shape to the spaces [fig. 03].

It can be argued that the display is a further architecture element added to the ones exhibited. Although it doesn't open a clear dialogue with the presented contents, it assumes the role of a 1:1 project still keeping the materiality of a model. Despite this is one of the few of the first ar/ge kunst exhibitions that extends beyond the mere presentation of documentation of an architect's building activity (as it is confirmed by the decision to ask Chipperfield to develop a proper setting for the exhibits presented expressly for Bolzano), the press release does not refer at all to the exhibition itself; it has words for an enthusiastic description of the author's architectural production, but never mention the fact that it is presented in an exhibition.

The result is an exhibition intended strictly for the presentation of the author's work. At the centre is the content and the display, although

it has the autonomy of an architecture, only supports the documentation of the buildings. The intrinsic, potential power of the exhibition is reduced to the vision of represented architecture: technical drawings as original artefacts, while the 1:1 scale architecture of the display is mere support.



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Fig. 03
David Chipperfield, *Architettura 1985-1990* Architektur, 1992, installation view (courtesy ar/ge kunst)

Fig. 04
PAUHOF, 1996, installation view

Fig. 05
PAUHOF, 1996, installation view



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An exhibition space in four phases. PAUHOF (1996)

From 13 April to 18 May 1996, the spaces of the gallery were literally manipulated by the two Austrian architects Michael Hofstätter and Wolfgang Pauzenberger (PAUHOF) who received *carte blanche* for their exhibition at ar/ge kunst, curated by architect Susanne Waiz. There are no drawings or other forms of documentation or representation of buildings in the exhibition. As it can be read in the webpage of the photographer Walter Niedermayr, who was directly involved in the project, the exhibition was followed by a publication containing the pictures taken by Niedermayr himself, while PAUHOF were modulating the space of the gallery according to their intentions. The photographer underlines that «*architecture was shown not as something final and static, but as a dynamic result that was subject to temporal changes*»⁹.

The modulation of the space was presented in different phases that corresponded to different forms of the space displayed to the public. Basically, the PAUHOF exhibition can be read as the interpretation of the relationship between space (architecture) and its representation (through text and/or photography, for example).

Schwarzer Winkel (black angle), *Faltung* (fold), *Freier Blick* (open view) and *Graue Zone* (grey zone) are the title given to the different episodes. During the first one, rubber panels were spread out on the floor and the spaces were not accessible to the public but could be seen only from the street through the shop window. Blank spaces in the panels were references to the future architecture models to be exhibited in the gallery. The second phase is a sculptural gesture. The rubber surface is lifted along a line defining a fold in the space and the name of the studio appears on the glazed surface of the window [fig. 04].

Fig. 06
Gareth Kennedy, *The uncomfortable science*, 2014, installation view (courtesy ar/ge kunst)

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Afterwards, seven different scale models of unrealized projects by PAUHOF were exposed (Synthese Museum – Vienna, Trigon Museum – Graz, EXPO Pavilion – Sevilla, Stadtplanung Wien Nord, Neuer Urbaner Komplex – Linz, Regierungsviertel im Spreebogen – Berlin, Austrian Cultural Institute – New York). Thanks to the height of the models the visitor was offered a glimpse into an imaginary PAUHOF city. Eventually, the black horizontal surface was turned and hung over the black surface of the wall, while the previously hung models sunk into the plinth, which was transformed into a temporary office where Michael Hofstätter and Wolfgang Pauzenberger personally encountered the visitors of the exhibition [fig. 05].

The only two-dimensional features that enter into dialogue with the space of the exhibition created by PAUHOF is the photography series *Berge und Haus P* (Mountains and House P) hanged on the walls of the gallery from the beginning of the exhibition.

With regard to the architecture exhibition, Moritz Küng, who contributed to its catalogue, argues:

«Unfortunately the curators of architecture exhibitions all too often use conventional forms of presentation – plans, models, photographs, photography arbitrarily displayed behind glass and under plexiglas domes as artefacts to be celebrated. Hence there is the danger of thinking that architecture as attractive and miniaturised exhibition material, instead of seeing it as the basis and starting point of a future oriented realisation. In short: architecture isn't made to

*be shown but to be built. The contemplative element inherent in the exposition of architecture often ends up being neglected in the exhibition. Through their, in part, very elaborate exhibition contributions, however, PAUHOF seek to translate their vocabulary into a real if only temporary architecture. This inherently contradictory procedure has made possible and opened up new paths of thinking in the architecture debate, for they have given substance to the mental process».*¹⁰

Differently from any other architecture exhibition at ar/ge kunst, PAUHOF is the first one in which a certain awareness of architecture on display emerges. The exhibition distances itself from a mere presentation of buildings and opens up to a territory for debate on the very issues of architecture. «Architecture is put up for discussion».¹¹ Architecture, its representation through three-dimensional models and photography, and also the time of its production (the studio) are first brought into a dialogue and presented to the visitor to question them and then documented by photography again.

Spatial practices

The issues addressed here somehow resonate with a more general question. So-called spatial practices have been extensively examined by scholars like Jane Rendell¹² who, in turn, bases her arguments on the legacy of the seminal text by Rosalynn Krauss *Sculpture in the expanded field*,¹³ among others. Krauss assumes that, in a well-defined histo-

rical moment, a very special kind of spatial interventions were being developed, which could neither be described entirely as art nor as architecture. These could be seen as practices that followed the artists' need to leave the art space of the gallery and position themselves outside, where other issues, as for example, the social or relational relevance of their work, could become integrating part of the work itself. But what we are witnessing today – in a moment of huge explosion of architecture exhibitions and institutions devoted to them – is that some architects deliberately abandon the space of the very building and almost 'seek refuge' in the spaces of the galleries. We could provocatively speak of a 'compressed' field instead of an 'expanded' one. The building site produces something worth examining and showing. The presentation within an exhibition, however, allows to produce something that is architecture in itself, but derives its own reason for

existing from the very exhibition space. This distinction between building and architecture in the context of the architecture exhibition has been precisely described by Maristella Casciato, who writes that «*This is already a major challenge: architecture exhibits/performs outside the museum. The building is just not present when the exhibition is running. The very expensive and complex way of creating architecture inside a museum space remains a challenge and removes architecture from its everyday life and context*». ¹⁴ It is indeed this removal from the everyday life and context that summarizes the multiple alternatives we have when we exhibit architecture and the possible, open interpretations of the idea of displaying architecture (or maybe, more broadly, displaying space) that can be traced as we continue our journey along the sequence of the architecture exhibitions at ar/ge kunst. When we refer to the more recent exhibitions at the Bolzano gallery, we can speak of an



Fig. 07
Can Altay, VFI – Virgolo Future Institute (such claims on territory transform spatial imagination into obscure anticipations of repartition), 2016, billboard space (courtesy Lungomare)

architecture that has been expressly produced for exhibition, an architecture that exists when it is shown in an exhibition context.

An exhibition as architecture surrounding a content. Gareth Kennedy: *The Uncomfortable Science* (2014)

The uncomfortable science is the result of the research conducted by Irish artist Gareth Kennedy as part of the first *One Year Long Research Project* and has been presented in the spaces of ar/ge kunst from 20 September to 15 November 2014. Invited because of his previous works on folk and popular culture, Kennedy starts an exploration of the burdened history of folklore and visual anthropology in South Tyrol [fig. 06]. Due to perverse agreements between Hitler and Mussolini, during WWII, the South Tyrol inhabitants were forced to decide whether they wanted to remain in the territories recently annexed to Italy (giving up their culture and tradition) and become Italians, or move to the territories of the growing Third Reich with the promise of getting back all the possessions they had left behind and become Germans. The need to document these circumstances from an anthropological point of view saw the dictatorial regimes employ a group of 'uncomfortable scientists' whose task was to document and give a scientific foundation to this violent intervention. Gareth Kennedy translates the results of his research into an exhibition consisting of five wooden masks carved by local artisans representing the personalities involved in this forced

displacement process, a video documenting the production of the masks and the display of extensive photographic and filmic original documentation from the archives explored during the research that preceded the exhibition.

The exhibition layout was designed in collaboration with designer Harry Thaler. The walls of the main exhibition space are painted black, a gesture that negates/erases the spatial borders of the gallery. Masks hang on the black walls, illuminated by a directed, concentrated light and seem to float in an empty space. The wooden coating of a historical Stube (the dining room of the traditional rural house in South Tyrol) is suspended in the centre of the space enveloping the empty space in the middle of the room. This empty space is intended to host the projection of a movie shot during the carving of the masks and a public program to which archive experts, scholars, anthropologists and dramaturgs are invited to participate.

Once an exhibition, Kennedy's year-long research becomes an emptied space full of symbolic meanings. The idea of inhabiting the spaces of the exhibition takes shape around a convivial gesture: a shared meal in the reconstructed Stube, as per local tradition. The Stube is indeed an intimate place inside a home that, according to the tradition, has also a semi-public function. During the wintertime, it is the place where traditionally small handicraft works are carried out. It is a place where, according to the research conducted, small theatre plays were staged. The display of *The Uncomfortable Science* becomes a meeting space. Through his work, Gareth Kennedy

generates a comfort/neutral zone in a space devoted to the presentation of art where people, who would otherwise not have an exchange, can meet and share thoughts.

An exhibition as a supporting structure. Can Altay: VFI – Virgolo Future Institute (such claims on territory transform spatial imagination into obscure anticipations of repartition) (2016)

The exhibition¹⁵ starts from the request to address issues collected under the evocative title of *Radical Hospitality* (i.e. what happens when the ritual/gesture of hospitality is brought to its extreme? Who hosts and who is hosted and what happens between the two parties?). After his first visit, Altay orients the focus of his research on mount Virgolo, which stands in the municipal territory of the city of Bolzano and attracts the attention of the artist because of a specific episode: after WWII, some citizens of Bolzano whose houses had been bombed and destroyed started living in the unfinished road tunnel that was being built under the mountain due to the scarcity of housing. This episode, witnessed by an old newspaper article¹⁶, represented the initial input for preserving and collecting unknown stories about the mountain. The reason that moves the artist to focus the attention on the mountain comes also from the global references that such a specific place can engender. The exhibition in the spaces of ar/ge kunst is the last episode of a series scattered along a timespan of one year. The project starts with a short-lived exhibition that represents the first moment of

a lasting experiment in creating and showing work. The unconventional exhibition is then followed by a poster campaign in the public space of the city of Bolzano. The billboard spaces of the city are occupied by a series of posters that focus on neglected desires and unfulfilled promises: like advertisements for an imaginary tourism, they function as a campaign on episodes from the history of the mountain mixed up with issues to be discussed in a public conversation [fig. 07].

Limited Experience is a performative walk, a choreographed movement of a dozen of participants along the fence of the former social club on Virgolo. It reflects on the meaning and function of borders. It is a score that gives all the necessary indications to make a performative encounter happen. *Split Horizon* is an observation apparatus positioned in different parts of the city. It is oriented towards the mountain, but allows for different views.¹⁷

The Virgolo mountain is always the centre of the attention. If the first extemporary exhibition is a spontaneous reaction to the first encounter with the hosting institutions, the posters in the city are a gaze directed not at the mountain but that let its collected history resonate. While the walk is on the mountain, the split horizon is a device oriented toward it that shows something else instead. In the end, all the impressions are collected in the spaces of the gallery and tell a story that starts from Virgolo and Bolzano, but has a meaning that includes other episodes, other people and other times. Inspired by the dual idea of tunnel and shelter, Can Altay literally translates the concept of the exhibition into an



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inhabitable structure and occupies the first space of the gallery with a large timber construction that modifies the space, dialogues with it, orientates the vision and choreographs the movement of the visitors [fig. 08].

The timber structure supports a phantasmagoria of materials coming from the research and at the same time documenting the interventions. All this generates a combination of information that enlarges the different topics emerged from Virgolo and places them within a wider framework of cultural references and international cases. In the second space, Altay positions an appositely developed table that houses *Ahali*, a collective journal intended as a growing collection of works, statements and voices from artistic and spatial practices that translates and extends the contents of the first part of the exhibition into an editorial project.

The exhibition at ar/ge kunst focuses

on supporting structures¹⁸, whether physical or metaphorical, such as the publication *Ahali*. It is the production of contents and their translation into an aesthetic artefact, which is the very structure supporting the material selected to narrate the story of a place which is not Virgolo itself, but all the spatial considerations that its stories contain (in a social, historical, anthropological sense) and should have a meaning that affects other places too.

An installation that translates behaviours (of the communities living at the border between Italy and Austria). Matilde Cassani: *It's just not cricket* (2018)

In her exhibition that ran from 23 February to 05 May 2018, after a year of research at the Brennero border between Italy and Austria, Matilde Cassani put in the spaces of ar/ge kunst objects that refer

Fig. 08
Can Altay, VFI – Virgolo Future Institute (such claims on territory transform spatial imagination into obscure anticipations of repartition), 2016, installation view (courtesy ar/ge kunst)

to the cricket game [fig. 09], but do not represent themselves. The cricket game is used as a double metaphor here: what happens to the traditions of a community when it is displaced? *It's just not cricket* is an English idiom meaning that not everything is going well, that it is not completely right. Thus, the first room of the ar/ge kunst gallery is occupied by an imaginary cricket pitch that does not fit within the walls of the exhibition space. In the same way the cricket player belonging to the Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka communities living on the Brennero border and other northern and South Tyrol territories adapt the rules of the game to the few places where they are allowed to play, Matilde Cassani's cricket pitch is compressed in the spaces of the first room and becomes deformed. The surface is reduced, the goals are oversized, the two bats are tied to a rope that recalls the constriction to which the player are forced and limits the posture of the visitor that wants to try them. The game staged in the exhibition is described as interrupted, a suspended match waiting for the players to come back. The *mise-en-scène* of an imaginary cricket match in the gallery space represents the opportunity to introduce a reflection on contemporary geographies, the use of the territory and other categories of time, entertainment, and spectatorship. In fact, the cricket game arrived in Asia during the English colonization and comes back today with the displaced communities that embodied that tradition. Today, in South Tyrol, cricket is often a forbidden sport. In the second room, Matilde Cassani installs functional devices for a series workshops addressing

issues related to the transformation of identities and of the forms of use of the territory.¹⁹ The installation is completed by a green curtain that divides the two rooms, an extra designed table, a shelf for bats and cups and a hanging metal rod for the T-shirts of the teams involved in the research that lead to the exhibition.

Matilde Cassani – whose aim is to assemble structures capable of hosting an upcoming exhibition²⁰ – fills the space of the gallery and activates it through her interventions that possess both a sculptural and an architectural strength. “I design small celebrations and people are part of the piece, without audience the project is incomplete. The design ends when people arrive. I explore a very specific context, record collective habits and individual behaviors and then propose something that is not always meant to be used, sometimes only to be observed.”²¹

Conclusions

If, as mentioned, the basic question underlying all the issues presented here can be summarized with: what do architecture exhibitions produce today? The story of ar/ge kunst enables us to add further episodes to an ongoing narration and to argue that an increasing number of architecture exhibitions today concentrate on spatial practices and the autonomy of the architecture on display. The exhibitions analysed can be ordered along a line that describes a phenomenon and traces back to the evolution of the architecture exhibitions in general. We

are witnessing the growing proliferation of ‘exhibitionist’ architects and architectures, and the architecture exhibition has become to all intents and purposes an accepted and shared tool in the international debate. On a closer scrutiny, it could be argued that it is possible to trace a path from more retrospective exhibitions to the display of artefacts that are recognized as architecture *per se* and deliberately take a distance from the contingency of the building. They become spatialization of an architectural thought instead. This does not come to terms with the needs of the construction and takes advantage of the licenses allowed by the exhibition context, which is an artificial place with a wide range of experimentation possibilities even in constructive terms. The exhibitions by Kennedy, Altay and Cassani are not documentation of architectures or buildings. Rather, they are spatial translations of stories, episodes and narrations. Maybe this is not the right context to linger on the question of whether all this can be considered architecture. They are certainly useful examples to amplify the meaning of the term architecture and at the same time they seem to be antennas capable of providing a very clear picture of what is happening when the exhibition is no longer to be considered only a hosting context, but the very site of the production of a spatial intervention.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.argekunst.it/info/>.
- 2 The work was part of the exhibition, titled “Prologue – Part two: La mia scuola di architettura”, that run from 15 November 2013 to 11 January 2014 (<https://argekunst.it/it/programma/prologue-part-two-la-mia-scuola-di-architettura-2>).
- 3 Colomina 2008.
- 4 Borasi 2015.
- 5 Borasi 2015.
- 6 Borasi 2015.
- 7 Borasi 2015.
- 8 «David Chipperfield ontwierp voor deSingel de installatie waarin de gehele tetoonstelling wordt gepresenteerd» (<https://s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/desingel-media/a1i0N00000P06HdQAJ.pdf>).
- 9 “Während mehrerer Wochen modellierten Pauhof an ihrer Vorstellung von Raum, die sie in verschiedenen Phasen präsentierten. Architektur wurde nicht als finales und statisches, sondern als dynamisches Resultat gezeigt, das zeitlichen Veränderungen unterworfen war.” (<http://walterniedermayr.com/en/remixed-niedermayr-pauhof-hauser/>).
- 10 Küng 1998.
- 11 Küng 1998.
- 12 Rendell 2006.
- 13 Krauss 1979.
- 14 Casciato 2017.
- 15 The project by Can Altay is the result of a collaborative research project between ar/ge kunst and the cultural association Lungomare, also based in Bolzano.
- 16 Ettore Frangipane, “Uomini come le talpe. Campionario della miseria sotto la galleria del Virgolo. Dormono in piccole nicchie scavate entro il tunnel. Il gelido soffio del vento del nord canta loro la ninnananna.”, in *Alto Adige* 07.12.1948.
- 17 For a detailed description of the episodes preceding the exhibition in the spaces of ar/ge kunst see <https://www.lungomare.org/archive/project/lungomare-residency-radical-hospitality-can-altay/>.
- 18 Also in his display intervention “The way beyond art” (2017-2021) at the Van Abbemuseum in Maastricht, Can and Asli Altay produce an artistic work which is support for works of the collection presented in the semi-permanent exhibition.
- 19 <https://argekunst.it/en/programme/its-just-not-cricket-matilde-cassani>.
- 20 <http://atpdiary.com/extreme-land-matilde-cassani/>.
- 21 <http://atpdiary.com/extreme-land-matilde-cassani/>.

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