

The art of visual environmental assembly - Overcoming a fundamental paradox of figurative images

The specific approach to visual art undertaken by the Institute is based on what it determines itself as the fundamental paradox of figurative images: every figurative image is made for the future, but will - unavoidably - always refer to the past, which means that figurative images, whether in art, documentary, journalism or advertisement, can only 'look back'.

The Institute has a specific reason to use visual art to suggest the 'first' ideological lifeworld. The argument is that a social world, ideologically marked by a tension between intellectual consolation and intellectual alienation, cannot be suggested or 'sketched' by way of 'rational tools', being verbal or literary rational argumentation or diagrams and schemes*. In other words, it should be suggested by *atmospheres*, and not by *arguments*.

So, taking into account the *paradox of figurative visual art* and *the motivation for figurative visual art* formulated above, the research question of the idle-city-else 1 Lab is then: how can one use figurative images to *envision a future* that, on the one hand, is marked by a different spirit for human interactions but, on the other hand, will happen in a still recognisable physical world?

In response to that question, the approach undertaken by the idle-city-else 1 Lab of the Institute is based on the reasoning that the envisioning of that future will need to be generated by a meta-level that is *not* a discursive level, but a perceptive 'atmosphere' in itself. That level can therefore be seen as an 'assembly' or 'installation' level. The research consists of creating an assembly of research artefacts (visual art images and 'objects' that can be self-created or appropriated) that 'relies' on the interrelation between the distinct research artefacts and on their relation with the meta-level of the installation. But why would that installation, as a figurative visual entity, not refer to the past just the way figurative images do? The fundamental motivation for the creation of this meta-level of assembly is that the visitor is able to 'enter' the (atmosphere of the) installation**. An atmospheric interaction is always 'future-oriented' as it is always 'anticipating', *even when the physical visibility of the installation would explicitly refer to the past through the use of historically recognisable images or objects*.

It is understandable that the inquiry into the idea of architecture (of the physical environment) as a way to mediate the spirit of human interactions is an important topic in the research of the idle-city-else 1 Lab. As the researchers of the idle-city-else 2 Lab recognise that their ideological political interaction modes of education, scientific research and political deliberation would need to be able to take place in existing recognisable physical environments, the cooperation of the two Labs on this aspect is crucial.

* This argument about that first lifeworld is a normative 'political' argument, and therefore not a contradiction in itself

** In reference to the notions of installation art, the specificity of *form* in this case is that the installation is constructed by way of (and 'around') art objects that are still 'identifiable' as art objects, however without being presented as 'autonomous' art objects. This is at the same time the reason why the Institute does not believe in the possibility of the 'autonomous art object', but neither thinks that possibility would be relevant and needed.