MEDIATED ARCHITECTURE

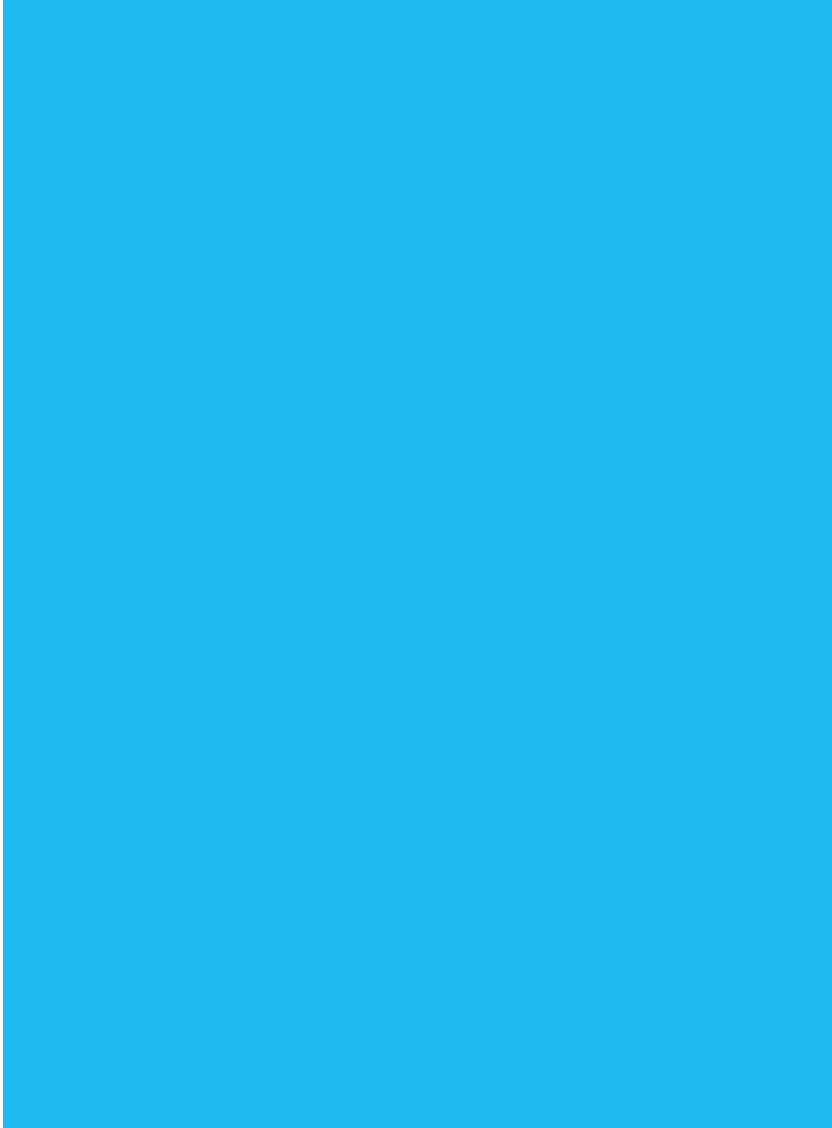## VIVID, EFFERVESCENT AND NERVOUS

THE THEATRE OF IMMANENCE
DIGITAL BODIES
ORKHĒSTRA

SANFORD KWINTER
DANIEL BIRNBAUM
MARAIKE BÜCKLING
SEBASTIAN OSCHATZ
MATHIAS WOLLIN
PETER TRUMMER
MIRCO BECKER
JOHAN BETTUM

2

MEDIATED
ARCHITECTURE

VIVID,
INTERVERSONS
AND VISIONS

SAC JOUR

BODIES

64

ESSA

MARIA IMMACULATA BY

MATTHIAS

MARAIKE BÜCKLING

JOHAN BETTUM

EDITORIAL
MEDIATED ARCHITECTURE

With the present, second issue of the SAC Journal - entitled *Mediated Architecture: Vivid, Effervescent and Nervous,* the Städelschule Architecture Class (SAC) presents three projects that have been undertaken in collaboration with partners over the last few years. The projects comprise two installations and one research project. Different in scale, duration and nature, they share one distinct feature: They all embrace the use of electronic technology in the form of computer-enabled design processes and - bar one - integrated media. Whereas this presently makes no architectural project spectacular, SAC is proud to present three projects that each respectively reach beyond the run-of-the-mill digitally enabled projects.

Specifically, the three projects are about architecture and not the technology that they engage. *Ben van Berkel and The Theatre of Immanence*, which opened as an exhibition in Städelschule's Portikus gallery late 2007, invited its visitors to an intricate and expansive architectural and urban space that the Canadian theorist and then Städelschule guest professor, Sanford Kwinter, referred to as an 'urban cerebellum.' *The Theatre of Immanence* enabled and regulated events and presences beyond what architecture generally does and beyond its own

every evening. Conceived as a so-called architecture" project, it embodied a de that is a fresh take on the integration different kinds of modules at varying s spatialised surface envelope. The envelo developed with advanced mesh modelli manufacture entailed the detailing and thousands of parts.

Finally, *Digital Bodies* was an exper project undertaken in 2014-15 by SAC's thesis specialisation, *Architecture and F Design*, led by Stiftungs- and guest pro Becker. The project ended with a stunr display of the results at the Städelschu the school's annual, open-house exhibit *Bodies* comprised a processual engager modelling based on *Maria Immaculata*, sculpture held by the museum Liebiegh The form of the sculpture was scanned with respect to curvature and the resul each student in the group to produce versions of the same form. Facilitated mediation of electronic technology, the research bridged historical and represer

presence in Portikus through a deep integration of an advanced and interactive light installation, the hosting of a collection of architecture and art projects as well as an intelligent Internet application. In retrospect, it appears as current and interesting today as it did eight years ago.

Orkhestra was sculptural installation on a public square in Frankfurt and part of the 7th *Luminale*, the Biennale of Lighting Culture, in spring 2014. It had an impressive, week-long presence in the city - attracting a large crowd every day and especially

contemporary... these three projects are... intelligent and nervous,' they present architecture that is evocative and dram... animated. The projects join other archi... to bring the discipline of architectural... point where decades of profound, spec... and practice will result in an architectu... technology and philosophical insights i... fashion to engender a new built enviro... richness will be technologically enabled

however, its qualities will be per se architectural. Meanwhile, until that day is here, architecture remains highly strung in its anticipation of a future.

The presentation of the three projects includes a series of exploratory essays by different authors as well as extensive visual portfolios.

Reflecting on *The Theatre of Immanence*, which was produced during his tenure as the dean of Städelschule, Daniel Birnbaum discusses Jean-François Lyotard's show, *Les Immatériaux* at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1985, to shed light on the 'limitations of the virtual' and the extensive physical interface that the exhibition in Portikus formed. Birnbaum's rumination is accompanied by an interview that Johan Bettum did with Sanford Kwinter in 2007. Kwinter had a key role in informing the project and exhibition and gave a lecture at its opening whose manuscript is also published herein. Lastly, SAC faculty members, Mirco Becker and Johan Bettum, recently interviewed Sebastian Oschatz and Mathias Wollin of the Frankfurt-based firm, MESO, about their role in the project and their work in general. MESO

His piece is complemented by M account of the history and splenc sculpture. Bückling is a curator ir Ragunath Vasudevan provides the documentation of *Digital Bodies*.

Lastly, *Orkhēstra* is presented texts by Mirco Becker and Peter again addresses the technical pro disciplinary context of the specific technique employed, here a 3D t Peter Trummer's text assesses *Or* four key disciplinary problems in figure/ground relation, the mass/v relationship between parts and w surface/volume relation. *Orkhēstr* has various contributors, amongst Leeb and Satish Kumar.

provides services in media design and continuous to deliver state-of-the-art projects in the field. *The Theatre of Immanence* is presented with a photo documentation by Wolfgang Günzel.

Introducing *Digital Bodies*, Mirco Becker dwells on the digital methods that were employed to explore the form of the original *Maria Immaculata* in Liebieghaus and variably transform the sculpture in a series of subsequent modelling procedures. Becker critically contextualises these techniques within the contemporary discourse and practice of architectural design.
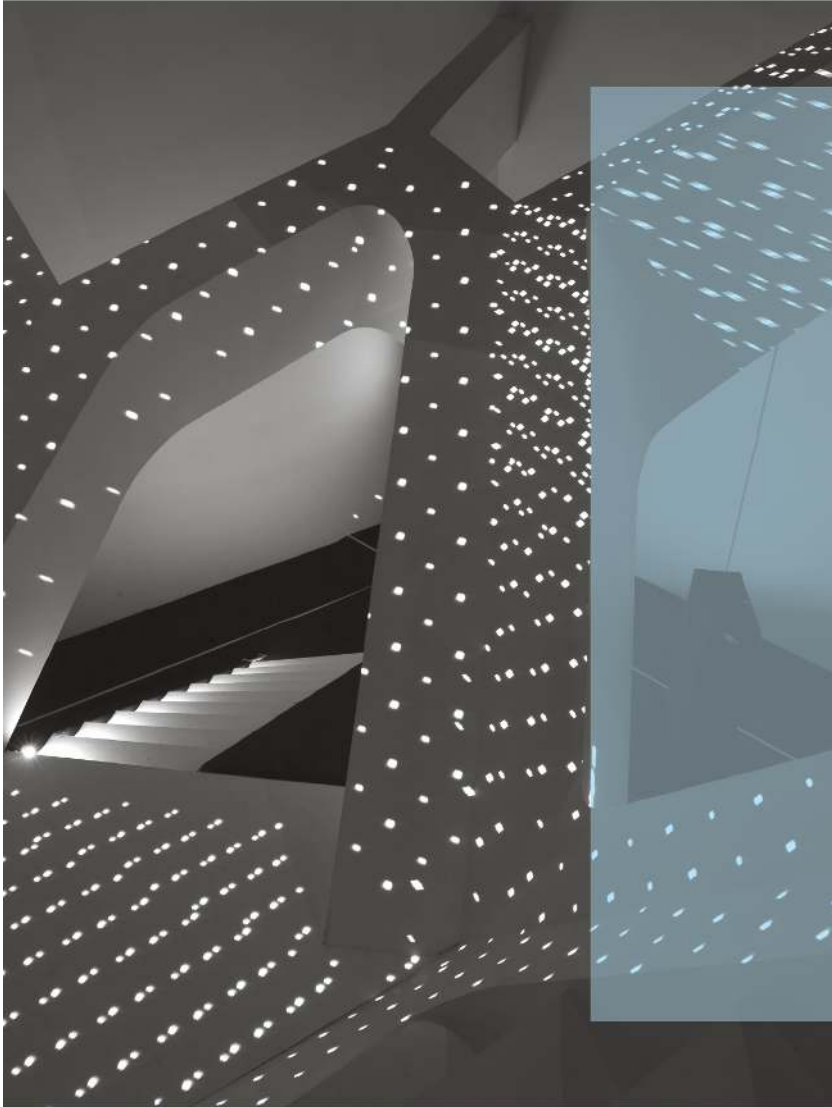
THE THEATRE OF IMMANENCE

INTRODUCTION – JOHAN BETTUM

Ben van Berkel and The Theatre of Immanence was an exhibition by the Städelschule Architecture Class (SAC), a small group of invited artist and architects and MESO - a Frankfurt-based media design firm, at Städelschule's Portikus gallery in Frankfurt from November 25th, 2007 to January 13th, 2008. The exhibition was the conclusion of the one-year long, exploratory research project, *The Space of Communication*, which had been undertaken in collaboration with Deutsche Telekom. *The Theatre of Immanence* comprised of an architectural installation that filled the inside of Portikus and provided a small theatre for various events, a dynamic and interactive shape projection design that

embellished the upper side of the architectural installation, a web application that facilitated real-time interactivity between the virtual and physical. It extended the exhibition space of Portikus to the Internet, and, finally, a series of projects and installations by the invited artists and architects. Throughout the duration of the exhibition various events took place in the theatre: Lectures, symposia and hosted talks, art performances, parties and film screenings.

Panorama view from opening in
Portikus

THE SPACE OF
COMMUNICATION

The Theatre of Immanence was
The Space of Communication,[1] a one year long
exploratory project in the arts and architecture that
investigated select aspects of communication in the
context of communication technology's saturation of
society. The project's interest was not technology per se
but the conditions for and nature of human
communication in its broadest sense. It was conceived
in response to how the ubiquity of new electronic
media has come to influence the spaces that we inhabit
and the ways that we communicate with one another.
Already eight years ago, when *The Theatre of
Immanence* took place, electronic devices and digital
technologies had a strong impact on all forms of
communication, for the sharing and exchange of
information, goods and artefacts – in short, how we
experience and engage with the world.

The Space of Communication commenced in
autumn 2005 with a group of invited young artists
and architects from various countries and ended with
a curated selection of existing and new works by
members of this group being included in the
exhibition, *The Theatre of Immanence*. The exhibiting
participants were the architects Asterios Agkathidis,
Brennan Buck and Igor Kebel, Jonas Runberger and
Gabi Schillig and the artists, Florencia Colombo and
Daniel Gal.[2]

The core activity in *The Space of Communication*
consisted
of the participating artists and architects meeting in a
series
of seminars hosted by SAC. Practical work comprised
contri-

an understanding of art and architecture a
production and mediation of social and cu
through different forms of communication
instance, Kwinter also provided vital theor
ideas for the conceptualisation, planning a
Theatre of Immanence.

As *The Space of Communication* w
phase with preparations for the exhibit
Kwinter together with the artist and th
Peter Hagdahl of The Royal Institute o
Stockholm, Mathias Wollin of MESO ar
members formed the curatorial group 1
contribution to *The Theatre of Immane*
time, the respective contributions by p
were highly diverse. While some of the
explicitly engaged with new electronic
others took it for granted or merely re
in indirect or also metaphorical terms.
however, addressed social and interrela
of communication or spaces of commu
manner, the work by project members
and architecture's contributions to the
'spaces of communication' as well as t
relations through and with which we e
another and are embedded in a meshw
channels, information, agenda and output

THE SPACE OF COMMUNICATION
JOURNALS

The agenda and output
of Communication*, the project present
Internet-based journals to the public. *J*
published at the end of the third proje
Journal 2 was launched at the end of

butions to two issues of the project's three Internet journals,

as well as the project participants' respective preparations for

the final exhibition. The seminars entertained a keen interest

in significant historical projects and achievements within the

arts and architecture that related to communication and tech-[8]

nology, and it was Sanford Kwinter, the renowned Canadian

architectural theorist, who brought these kind of references

and topics to the discussions. At the time, Kwinter was a guest

professor in the Städelschule[3] and a key consultant to the

project. Kwinter guided the discussions in *The Space of Com-*

munication and helped to conceptualise the project around

Journal 3 was made public to coincide
exhibition opening in Portikus.[4]

Journal 1: The Atlas presented vari
including an interview with Sanford Kw
entries by the project participants for a
spaces of communication. *Journal 2: Ti*
was developed by MESO Web Scapes
of an edited and limited database to In
that directly or indirectly addressed the
interests of *The Space of Communicati*
Journal 3: On Things
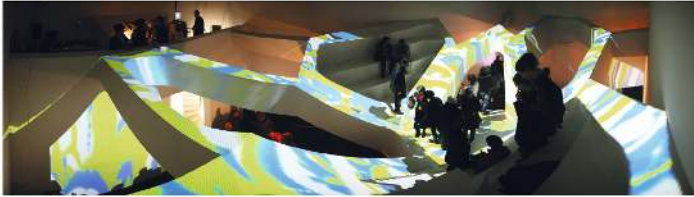
Off Things On was adopted as an integral part of *The Theatre of Immanence.* It was also designed by MESO Web Scapes and comprised one half of MESO's total contribution to the exhibition.[6] *Journal 3* was designed as a web-application that documented and extended the contents of the show in real-time to the Internet. Thus, it added a virtual dimension to the physical space of the Portikus exhibition and offered at the same time a unique and direct medium for interactivity and manipulation of the lighting and sound systems in the physical exhibition space. MESO Web Scapes' design of *Journal 3* was conceived with respect to an idea of information flow and communication that extended the space of *The Theatre of Immanence* to the virtual realm by offering an Internet location for the exhibition while not presenting a literal documentation or archive of it. Being an integral part of the exhibition project, it formed the virtual node in a continuum with the physical and actual nodes of Portikus and *The Theatre of Immanence*. Computerised technology and electronic media intimately connected these spaces and allowed for interaction between the virtual and physical realms. The integrated, virtual and interactive extension of *The Theatre of Immanence* offered Internet connected visitors to enjoy live visual and auditory feeds from the gallery. By interacting with the visual representation of Portikus' gallery space on the their screen, they could influence the dynamics of the shape projections and leave text messages that were relayed audibly albeit distorted in the gallery. Likewise, through the web-feed - a chat-line so to

this way, the architecture, the th
become a piece of infrastructure
with artistic and technical plug-in

In Kwinter's words, *The Thea*
would transform the Portikus into
cerebellum' or 'plane of immanen
the theatre were to stimulate, giv
host and thus coordinate the ma
exchanges that would take place
period. The exhibition were to be
installation offering itself as an in
for various types of mediated and
vision for Portikus also made refe
important, previous events staged
such as the highly successful *Gas*
symposium in 2002. In line with
Theatre of Immanence continued
idea that art and architecture me
social performances and, by exter
become a productive and social c
same time, *The Theatre of Imma*
an interface between the virtual a
the inside of Portikus as well as
Städelschule as the small institution
Immanence comprised of five an
architecture and the public.

The physical, architectural inst
designed
by Ben van Berkel, Johan Bet
Etchegorry;

speak - they could hear the sounds from the gallery, including the live, auditory rendering of their text messages. Hence, the physical, virtual and ambient parts of the exhibition arose from a concerted effort to synthesise different forms of design and artistic expressions.

THE THEATRE OF IMMANENCE

Design in the widest sense framed the ambitions and scope for *The Theatre of Immanence*. It was conceived as an event-scape, a theatre and a gallery space all at once and aimed to transform Portikus into an interface, a stage or a hub that in turn would offer an infrastructure for public and artistic uses. In
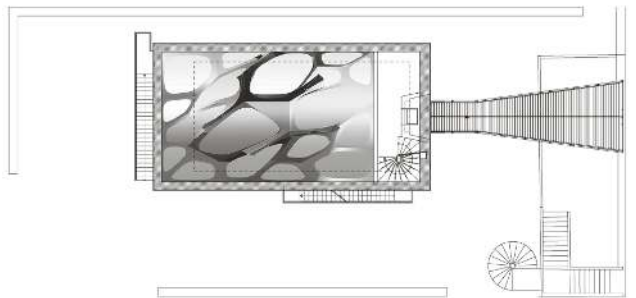
The dynamic and interactive s
design,
named *On Things Off Things*
Interiors;

Journal 3 of *The Space of Comm*
also part
of *On Things Off Things On*. The
Internet appli-
cation which enabled a two-way
connection
via the shape projection design
in the
gallery and the world wide web.
MESO
Web Spaces;

1
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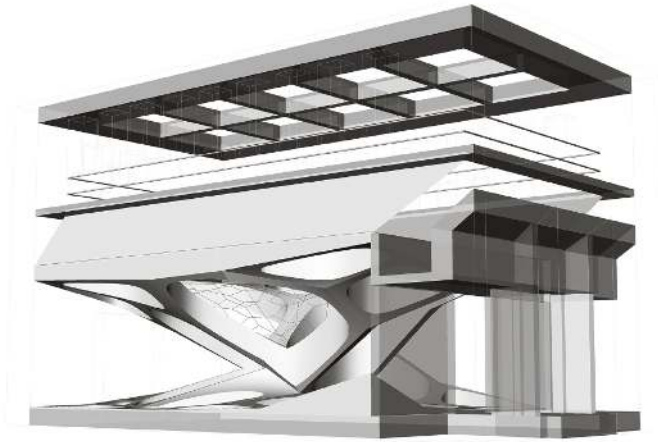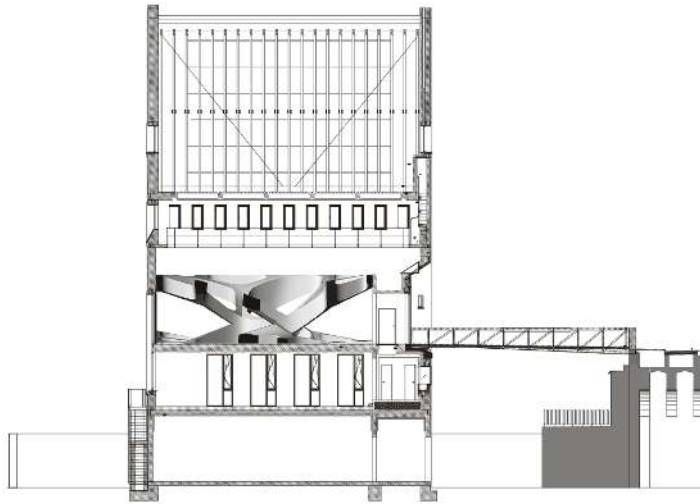
Section (above) and
Plan

The series of projects by the artists and architects who had participated in *The Space of Communication*;

And, finally, a series of events that took place in the theatre throughout the exhibition period.

The success of a project as complex as *The Theatre of Immanence* depends a lot on the degree to which its different elements are integrated with one another. The integration of elements rendered *The Theatre of Immanence* a mesh of interrelated and mutually dependent parts, and yet, as a mothership and central hub, the architectural installation was the part around and in which everything revolved. In this sense, whether 'urban cerebellum' or 'plane of immanence' referred as much to the architectural installation as to the exhibition in general. The architecture facilitated and coordinated the other activities and presented the surfaces around, in and on which the theatre became 'immanent.' In turn, events as well as other elements of the exhibition brought the architecture to life, exemplified by the interactive illumination scheme on the architectural installation's surface - an example of so-called augmented architecture.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE THEATRE

From its base, the architecture branched out in all directions, touched the walls of Portikus and horizontally split the gallery in a lower and an upper level. This produced at once the paradoxical effect of dividing Portikus' gallery space in two distinct zones, the lower for the gallery exhibition and the upper as a theatre, yet maintaining a visual, auditory and physical continuity between these. This was accomplished by perforating the volumetric surface whose central, lower part curved down to release its load onto the floor in Portikus. The perforations, twelve in total and produced in a digital model with
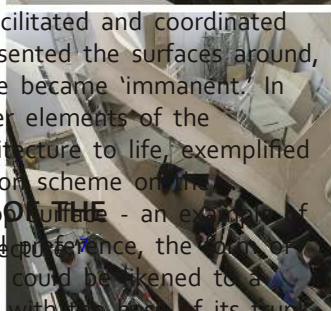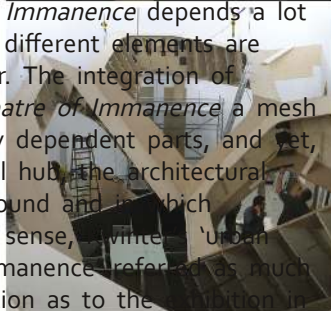
a 3D Voronoi mesh, rendered the volumetric surface
a connective tissue between the two functional zones
and provided the stage, the entrance to the theatre
from below as well as two openings that were filled
with staggered boxes to furnish the theater with
exhibition as evident as with a view from the
auditorium seating.
gallery's balcony above the entrance from the bridge
running across the river Main outside. Here, with the
architectural installation's volumetric

Nowhere in Portikus was the architecture of the
exhibition as evident as with a view from the
auditorium seating.

1
2

surface meeting the edge of balc
visitor's gaze fell on the upper fa
of Immanence which beckoned w
One were provided with a grands
projection views as well as glimps
gallery space below. Within Portik
appeared to be floating.

LIVE
SURFACES

with the developmen
Communication's Journal 3, MESC
designed a light projection system
the architectural installation by d
embellishing it with moving and
image patterns. The combined re
Journal 3 was named On Things
as already mentioned, was a case
augmented architecture that atte
reactive, multiple-mode experient
extraordinary spatial complexity
Whereas On Things Off Things
Theatre of Immanence's white, w
produced top surface with multip
sets, the initial idea was to anim
openings with the shape projecti
to render the architectural surfac
metaphorical, inner life and echo
architectural interest in the depth
the minutely scaled, three-dimens
material systems. The goal was t
of Immanence appear a more org
than a piece of traditional archite
scheme would have required a m
unrealistic number of projectors t
above the architectural installatio
impossible.
Yet, On Things Off Things O
static made up a synthesis o
and dynamic projection of light a
complex outline of a static but c
architectural form. The geometric
between these two was nearly p
admittedly, certain leakages of p
the surface's edges occurred. Hov
an impressive relationship betwee
the dynamic image sets, betweer
and its decorative or ornamental
architecture moulded the silhouet
sets, and the dynamic image set
of the architectural surface by tr
impression of it from being an il
with fixed boundaries to a flowin

Views from construction in Portikus. Photos:
Luis Etchegorry

area of pulsing light. In doing so

life, not only metaphorically but

temporal, visual rhythm, as if inv

and inner energy erupted and ca

The activation of the architec

architecture, making its existence

uppermost sur-

convulsive muscular spasms

face being a live, visual datum w

on the

Internet, spatialised anew not onl

Immanence

but Portikus gallery as well. The

interchange be