



SAC GARDEN STATE

CINEMATIC SPACE AND
CHOREOGRAPHIC TIME

STÄDELSCHULE ARCHITECTURE CLASS

DANIEL BIRNBAUM
HORST BREDEKAMP
WILLIAM FORSYTHE
DOUGLAS GORDON
SANFORD KWINTER
LOUISE NERI
PHILIPPE PIROTTE
TOBIAS REHBERGER
MARK WIGLEY
... AND MORE

SAC JOURNAL



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STATE**

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EDITORIAL

GARDEN STATE CINEMATOGRAPHIC SPACE AND CHOREOGRAPHIC TIME

Gardens are at once architectural and not. Poised somewhere between the natural and the artificial, the domesticated and the wild, gardens serve as a powerful metaphor for utopian ideas, paradise, as well as loss. They harbour veiled crimes, surreptitious affairs, playful games and the adjournment of our daily toil. In their various typological forms, as urban oases, modest extensions to domestic space or palatial symbols of power, gardens are the site of sedate life, quixotic dreams and calm reflection.

In the face of environmental crisis where our fears and hopes are cast against enormous human-made and natural forces, the ambiguity of the garden is all the more alluring for artistic and architectural speculations. During the academic year 2013-14, SAC's second-year group, *Architecture and Aesthetic Practice* (AAP), explored this ambiguity. The group, led by Städelschule professors Daniel Birnbaum and Johan Bettum, teamed up with the choreographer ensemble Mamaza to realise their project, *Garden State*, which premiered early 2014 in a Frankfurt art centre.¹ MAMAZA ushered in the idea and practice of choreography at the heart of AAP's experimental inquiry into the space and time of gardens. Birnbaum, in a series of seminars that explored paradoxes of time and space in art and philosophy, supplemented the experimental journey with the notions of *cinematographic space* and *choreographic time*. Against the backdrop of the garden, select ideas in art and philosophy became the vehicle for addressing evasive and non-linear constructs of social and political life or, quite simply, our existence.

This issue of the SAC Journal presents the project, *Garden State*, together with the ideas and work of invited contributors whose deliberations are less a reflection on garden typologies than experiments suspended between the past and the future, between social and cultural utopias, and artistic and architectural visions.

Daniel Birnbaum, who is the director of the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, sets the huge thematic ambitions of the issue adrift when he addresses *Labyrinths in Time, Garden States* through a selection of art works that are at once multifaceted and provocative in how they set out time and space in a labyrinthine and sometimes horticultural fashion. Birnbaum also introduces the artist Sebastian Stöhrer's fascinating sculptures, featured in a portfolio herein.

To further explore the disciplinary relation between choreography and architecture, SAC hosted a conversation with the world-renowned choreographer, dancer and artist William Forsythe in conjunction with the opening of the 14th Architecture Biennial in Venice. The event was a collaboration with the Goethe-Institute and convened Forsythe in conversation with the theorists Sanford Kwinter and Mark Wigley on the fringe of the Biennial's busy opening. Daniel Birnbaum and Johan Bettum attended the stimulating and humorous talk which is featured herein.

Forsythe was in Venice for the performance of his project, *Birds, Bonn 1964*, set in the German Pavilion in the Giardini.²

The project was remarkable for how it activated the much addressed architecture of the pavilion in the context of the Venetian garden by exploiting Alex Lehnerer and Savva Ciriacidis' part reconstruction of the German Chancellor's *Bungalow* in Bonn – a building completed in 1964 by architect Sep Ruf and which served as the German chancellor's residence until 1999.³ *Birds, Bonn 1964* is never to be performed again. However, Louise Neri, the director of the Gagosian Gallery in New York, which counts Forsythe amongst its artists, reviews the unique project.

The art historian Horst Bredekamp accounts for another extraordinary yet much older garden history, which took place at Herrenhausen in Hanover, where the philosopher Gottfried Leibniz served his nobility while developing exceptional ideas relating to our experience and creative thought. For Leibniz, the garden was a medium for thinking, and Bredekamp unfolds a remarkable history and in the process demonstrates that the landscape and Baroque gardens were less oppositional to one another than variants on 'principles associated with incipient modernism.' The essay has been penned, based on Bredekamp's astounding German book, *Leibniz und die Revolution der Gartenkunst*.⁴

Philippe Pirotte, an art historian and the dean of the Städelschule, addresses the dominating imagery regimes in Western art history when he discusses the work of the American artist, Kerry-James Marshall. Various painting series in Marshall's oeuvre use the garden in public housing projects to portray African-American life and history. Pirotte's reading of the 'idealised notion of the (rural) idyll' and the utopian garden scenes in Marshall's work is a powerful critique of the role of inherited images in Western culture.

In *Towards a Non-Intentional Space*, fiction writer, art critic and curator, Hu Fang, gives a most personal account of *Mirrored Gardens*, a project that connects the spatial archetypes of the Chinese garden and a (re-)emerging form of the European "farm-garden" which integrates its ecological manifold in a single, dynamical whole. Fang teamed up with the architect Sou Fujimoto to bring about *Mirrored Gardens*, a countryside arts venue at a former farm on the outskirts of Guangzhou in China. Fang renders the context and motivation behind the project and describes his ambitions 'to construct a "field" where contemporary art, daily life and farming-oriented life practices can merge and flow together.'

As one of the leading contemporary German artists, Städelschule professor Tobias Rehberger has produced numerous gardens as well as objects and installations that are set in gardens. His intelligent and often humorous art defies strict categorisation, yet his "garden projects" resonate with Rehberger's deep fascination with horticultural life and its power to intervene on patterns of social and cultural convention. Julia Voss, journalist, scientific historian, writer and art critic at the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, interviews Rehberger for this issue. The

informal conversation reveals some of Rehberger's history with as well as his thoughts and ambitions for the garden projects.

Another Städelschule professor, Douglas Gordon, was interviewed by Daniel Birnbaum and Johan Bettum. The conversation focused on Gordon's work and, specifically, his relation to cinematographic time and space. Gordon has been pivotal in defining contemporary video art, and his highly diverse body of work masterfully stages collective memory through the use of, for instance, multiple monitors, manipulation of time sequences and various forms of repetition. In the conversation, Gordon tells the story of some of his main projects and accounts for the background and his personal approach to his work.

In his contribution to this issue, SAC faculty member Damjan Jovanovic discusses the medium specificity of software. Jovanovic argues that architecture is essentially a compositional practice and that contemporary computational paradigms in architectural design fall short of delivering architecture to the powers that the software medium potentially presents. He reinvokes the garden as reference and original typology for the creative space that software holds in store. In the process, he places a new realist project bluntly in the midst of garden utopias.

Lastly, Johan Bettum presents his ideas for how a choreographic space might be understood architecturally. Bettum goes via art and reviews projects by Ryoji Ikeda, William Forsythe and MAMAZA, before turning to early projects and writings by Toyo Ito. He argues that a choreographic and therefore more flexible and agile approach to space might be better than conventional and stifled spatial paradigms in dealing with the already fully saturated space in which architectural design operates.

The issue closes with a presentation of the three finalist projects for SAC's AIV Master Thesis Prize 2014. The three projects comprise of Damjan Jovanovic's prize winning *Running on Random: Speculative Garden* and the two projects by, respectively, Sophia Passberger and Vasily Sitnikov, which received an honourable mention.

NOTES

1) *Garden State* was in the Künstlerhaus Mousonturm from January 9 to 12, 2014. At the time, MAMAZA was the resident artist group at the art centre.

2) These gardens in the east of Venice have been the traditional venue for the international exhibitions since 1895. They were laid out during the Napoleonic era and today comprise of the Biennial grounds which host the national pavilions.

3) Lehnerer and Ciriacidis' project was named *Bungalow Germania* and sought to capture the spirit of a building that became well known in the West German media in the postwar era. This is juxtaposed against the architecture of the German pavilion, which was extensively remodelled in 1938 in the spirit of the German Reich.

4) Horst Bredekamp, *Leibniz und die Revolution der Gartenkunst: Herrenhausen, Versailles und die Philosophie der Blätter*, (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2012).





JOHAN BETTUM
INTRODUCTION

LIVES IN UTOPIA BETWEEN NO PLACE AND A GOOD PLACE

Since time immemorial, gardens have offered us the space to dream and imagine things outside the regulated realm and ordeals of daily life. Regardless of form and organisation, gardens house gods and fairies, gnomes and an infinite range of other garden creatures. Gardens are where philosophers meander and lovers commit illicit acts, where children come to play and elderly unhurriedly return to the pleasures of work. Gardens are places of longing and desire. The Bohemian-Austrian poet, Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), wrote: 'You, Beloved, who are all / the gardens I have ever gazed at / longing.'¹ Gardens are enchanting. Their enchantment reflects the idea of being both a *good place* and a *no place* - a utopia that is strung out between domestic "safety" and "civilised" urbanity on one side and, on the other, a wild and unruly nature.²

Notwithstanding that they are human-made, gardens defy the permanence of architecture and, in a classical sense, the eternal aspirations of "great art." As a vibrant yet fragile interface between art and architecture's pristine solidity and nature's beautiful and alluring mercilessness, gardens are like tamed beasts. They succumb to the weather and natural resources and elements. Unless tended to, they rapidly crumble as the seasons pass. They warp time and space yet open

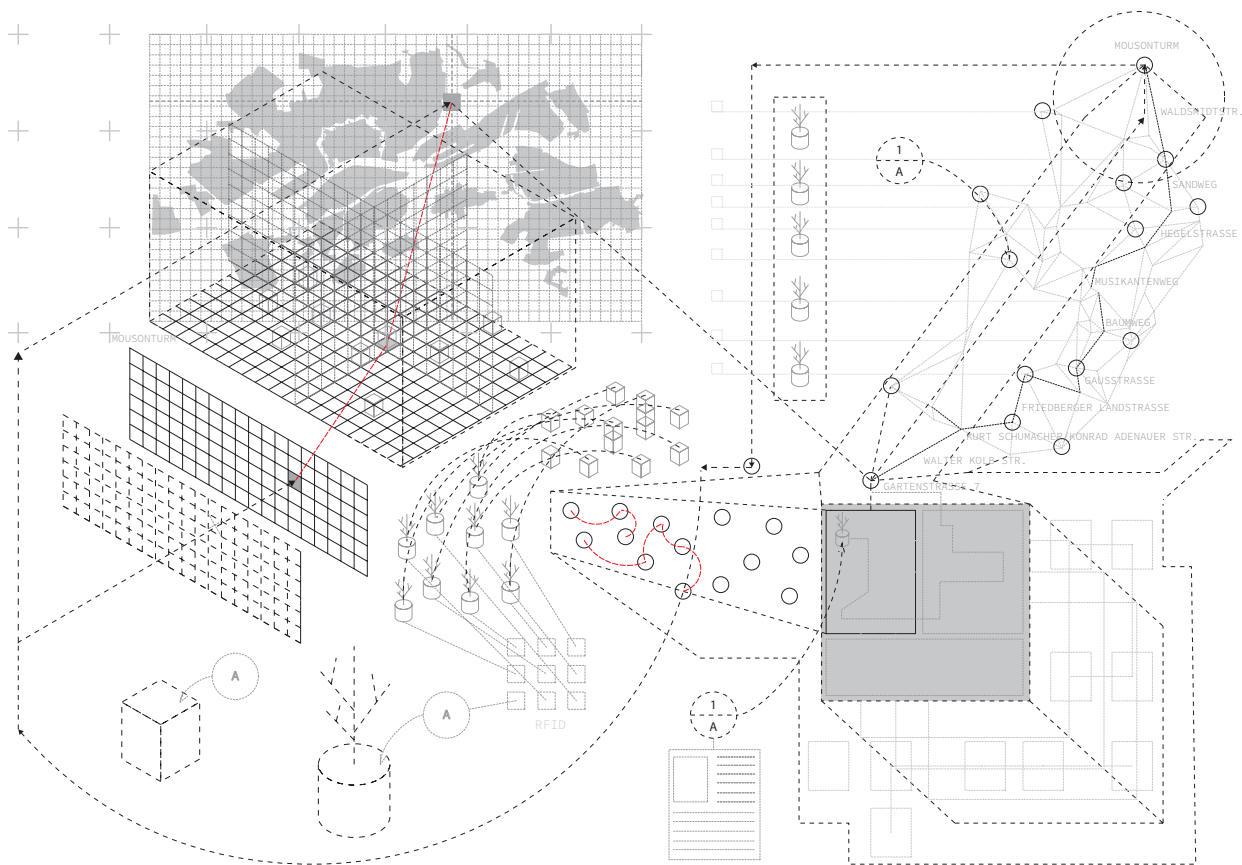
up to other times and spaces or extend these dimensions. To make a garden is an act of design, yet it also accommodates the complete "other" into the midst of human creation, the forces and flows that will undo the human-made. Hence, to prevail, gardens must continuously be tended to and pruned. So much so, in fact, that the greatest gardens in recent history, such as the one at Versailles, cost a fortune to maintain and its fountains were only turned on shortly before the king approached on his promenade by someone hiding nearby. Hence, gardens are also where labour concatenates with pleasure in an intimate yet unseemly manner.

The time and space of gardens is strange and indecipherable, and gardens are at once form-full and formless. Whether Japanese, Persian, English, French or of any other origin, gardens present a symphony of geometric forms, ordered and not, symbolic and whimsically meaningless, straight and curved, botanical and humane made.

There are gardens of love, hate, sin, goodness, bewilderedness, inclusion and excommunication. Gardens are heterotopias in Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) sense of 'juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that



Garden State, Teatro Fundamenta Nuove, Venice (2014)



Garden State, drawings, Damjan Jovanovic (2013)

are in themselves incompatible.³ This heterotopia is never private since it always extends our desires beyond our reach, beyond ourselves; it is where we place ourselves in the midst of an unknown social collective and a fantasy.

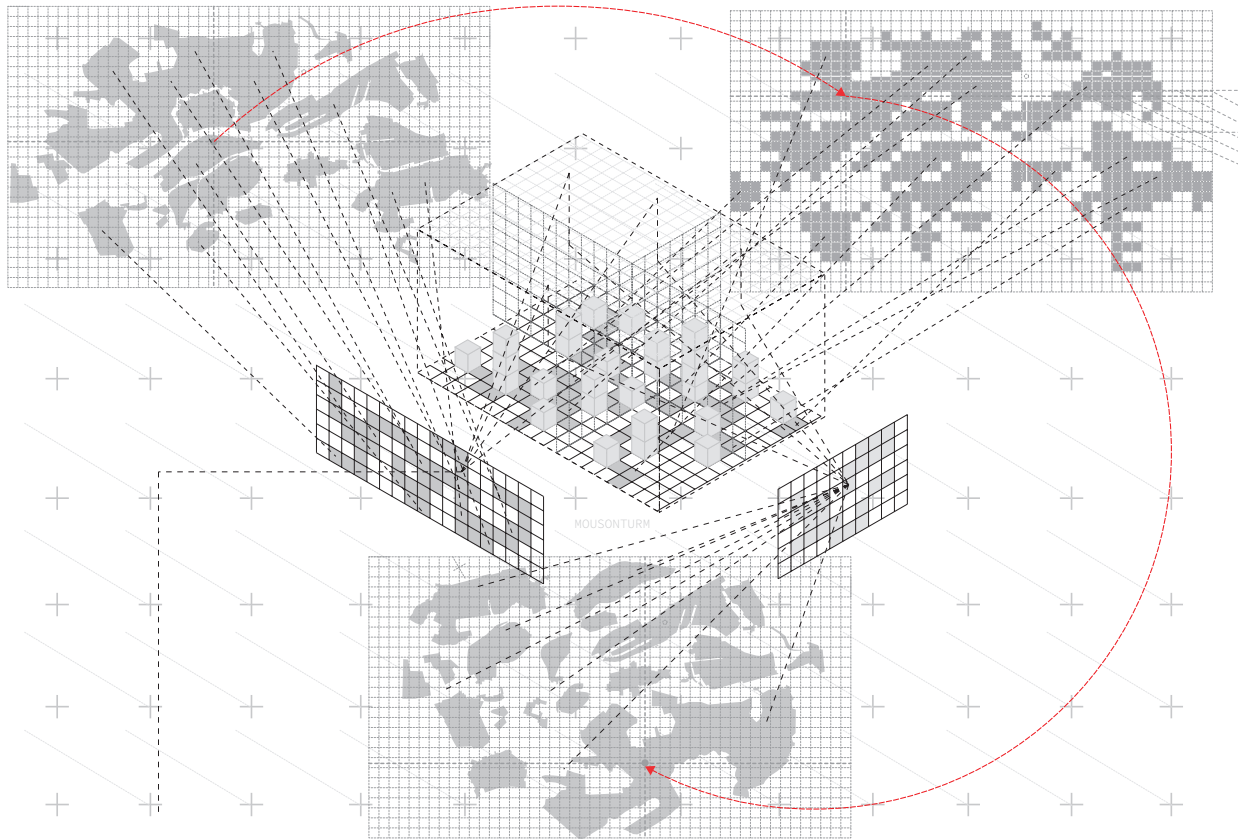
GARDEN STATE

For a long weekend in early January 2014, the choreographed community environment *Garden State* inhabited the main theatre in the Frankfurt art centre, Künstlerhaus Mousonturm. *Garden State* was far from New Jersey and inspired by the story of *Libertalia*, a fictional anarchist colony founded by pirates in the late 17th century in Madagascar, freeing slave ships and living communally with the slaves in an exotic, peaceful environment. The project was conceived by the choreographer ensemble MAMAZA as an 'enacted thought,' a 'biotope,' a 'social oasis' or 'utopian island.' It was developed and executed in collaboration with SAC's second-year specialisation, *Architecture and Aesthetic Practice*, as well as with numerous other contributors.

Garden State formed an enclave inside Künstlerhaus Mousonturm. It was open from early in the morning till late at night and offered its visitors a temporary retreat from the city. It turned out to be a curious gathering place, welcom-

ing people for early morning yoga sessions, individuals and groups who came to read their books or simply doze off on an island of pillows in one of *Garden State's* semi-private niches. Then there were those who brought their sandwiches for lunch, lounging on carpets and pillows with friends or alone; the numerous parents who populated the theatre in the afternoon with their small children who crawled amongst and through *Garden State's* many boxes and plants; the pensioners who enjoyed a reasonably quiet hour while the soundscape in the 'social oasis' brought them exotic birdsong and even a short thunderstorm. All the while, the light subtly changed, mimicking a full day's natural light. The light- and soundscapes operated synchronously on a fourteen-hour-long, gradually evolving cycle with intricate compositions reproducing the sound and light of exotic fauna and habitats. Hence, when the thunderstorm set in, the occasional seminars or talks on various art-related topics, musical performances or readings that were part of *Garden State*, were literally interrupted by the effects produced by Mousonturm's technical installations that hung under the ceiling.

Before the distinct, young art crowd came in the early evening, there were organised city walks departing from and ending in *Garden State*. The art crowd, however, were



the ones who hung out till late. Small groups of them took the places of the “luncheoners,” the parents with children, the pensioners and other interested visitors. A few drifted alone or with a friend through the garden; there was always a nook or a cranny that had yet to be discovered. Then everyone gathered for a planned or improvised party, and dance music replaced the sounds of nature that till then had drifted through the garden.

The nooks and crannies in *Garden State* were in the recesses in and between the many islands made of wooden box and frame modules and potted plants. The plants were obtained through a door-to-door action in Frankfurt in which citizens were asked to lend a private plant to *Garden State*. Upon arriving in the art centre, each plant was tagged with the name and address of the lender and placed in the theatre. The plants’ placement followed a cartographic strategy by which the re-mapping of their respective geographic origin in the city was scaled to the space of *Garden State*. When *Garden State* ended, the plants were returned to their lenders.

The plants were placed in, on and around various aggregations of the dark green, cubic and wooden modules measuring 50x50x50 centimetres. In turn, these were organised on

a 50x50 centimetre grid that was mapped onto a scaled representation of the city.⁴ The modules came in the form of closed boxes and inverted, U-shaped frames. The latter offered directed views onto neighbouring zones within the garden, creating various levels, depths and fascinating perspectives. The zoning and stacking of units made up a changing archipelago of islands that accommodated the numerous potted plants.

A number of modules were fitted with wheels so that they, with or without other modules above but but always with a plant(s), could be moved around by visitors. The islands mixed the green, rectangular geometry of the hard, wooden modules with the green, botanical, irregular and soft geometry of the plants. From the floor of the theatre to the apex of every island, the regularity of forms gradually dissolved. The height of an island varied from 50 centimetres (one module only) to five metres (three modules and a three-and-a-half metre high plant on top). When moving around or sitting next to an islands, vistas from the specific location within *Garden State* multiplied with respect to the number and orientations of the U-shaped modules, the placement, size and geometries of the plants as well as the neighbouring islands.

In a given location, an island created small-scale ambiences and environments that could be inhabited. Between and around the islands, carpets and pillows were scattered and moved around by the visitors according to their needs. Whereas visitors could be mostly private in an appropriated, green chamber or recess, they always found themselves also sharing their presence with others who peered through the vistas offered them or dropped a glance as they quietly strolled by.

Being in Mousonturm for four days, *Garden State* was not only ephemeral like theatrical performances tend to be, its existence was predicated on borrowed time: The time of its visitors-cum-actors and the time of the plants lent to the installation. Given the light in the theatre, they would slowly have died had they stayed there much longer. However, people were more than willing to lend; plants and visitors came in abundance. *Garden State* hosted 630 people during its four day duration and 500 plants were lent to the installation. After Frankfurt, *Garden State* went to Buenos Aires where it was part of the festival *Changing Places* in March, 2014.⁵ Then it appeared in Venice in the Teatro Fundamenta Nuove in October 2014 as part of the Goethe Institute's programme, *Performing Architecture*.⁶ *Garden State* was perfect in Venice, a stage in a stage, but more importantly: Gardens in Venice are private and filled with plants and flowers imported from near and afar. For *Garden State* at Fundamenta Nuove, borrowed plants were doubly imported via boat from elsewhere in Venice, but the garden was public and open to everyone.⁷

THE ARCHITECTURE OF A CHOREOGRAPHY IN DURATION

As a choreographic act, *Garden State* presented a remarkable confluence of things in an original fashion: Things dead and alive, artificial and natural. There were visitors and actors, performances and theatre, public and private, planned events and improvised presences, architecture and dance. It was an exotic heterotopia, all framed within the Mousonturm's main theatre.

MAMAZA consciously planned *Garden State* as being suspended between the idea of an idealist community and a turn-of-the 19th century, elitist, intellectual salon. Moreover, the group aimed at addressing the theatre's "fourth wall," the typical, reified separation between performers and audience that manifests itself materially and spatially as well as in experience and presence. The artists saw *Garden State* a 'choreography in duration,' a choreographic act in which the strange confluence of things in the garden staged and activated the visitors in different ways amidst the saturated, green and spatial decor. The visitor became perhaps what Glenn Gould once called 'the reflexive visitor,' by which he challenged the 18th century, stratified separation of composer, performer and audience and rather saw listener and maker intermingled?





Pursuing this vision, MAMAZA transformed the theatre of Mousonturm into a gardenesque stage on which everyone performed. Domestic, private and intimate settings were literally transposed to the theatre, and the theatre was more a communal lounge than a space for directed performance and passive watching and listening. Being at once a collection of living rooms, a public garden and a choreographed performance in a theatrical institution, *Garden State* brought different platforms together to produce a melange of performative environments, each with their own spatial and temporal qualities that coexisted without collapsing into one another. Perhaps the best way to tap into this manifold of different performative platforms with their respective spaces and temporalities is to embrace MAMAZA's notion of a 'choreography in duration' - a set of intentions that remain insistent over a period of time for how we inhabit a seamless, heterotopic space?

If this proposition is plausible, then the architecture of *Garden State* was not merely the organisation of pre-designed, green wooden units and potted plants within the main hall of Mousonturm. The architecture comprised of bringing together the different performative platforms and organising their coexistence within one space without losing their particularities. For instance, *Garden State* synthesised architecture's hard "groundness" with the softness of a garden's sedimented and mutable terrain - not literally but in a fully tangible, artificial composition of elements. Likewise, the domesticity of the private and intimate realm of the living room was dramaturgically brought to life with rugs, pillows and plants that literally were on loan from these private, domestic spaces. And the privacy and organisation of these domestic platforms were transposed to Mousonturm's hall where the grounds of auditorium and stage for four days were collapsed into a new choreographed realm.

Garden State was the amalgam of these environments. It involved and surreptitiously activated everyone who entered and therefore left the realm of the city behind for a moment or more. It was a garden of strange and fascinating times and spaces.

NOTES

- 1) From Rainer Marie Rilke's poem, *You Who Never Arrived*.
- 2) 'Utopia' derives from Greek: οὐ ("not") and τόπος ("place") and means "no-place", whereas 'Eutopia' has its roots in the Greek εὖ ("good" or "well") and τόπος ("place"), and thus means a "good place."
- 3) Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", in *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, October, 1984. The original was published as *Des Espace Autres*, March 1967. Translated from the French by Jay Miskowicz.
- 4) Outside the theatre, in the lobby, maps with pins indicating the plants' home location were presented.
- 5) *Garden State* at *Changing Places* was made possible by the Siemens Foundation.
- 6) *Performing Architecture* was run in parallel with the 14th Architecture Biennial in Venice. A new version of the programme is at the time of writing in Venice for the 15th Architecture Biennial.
- 7) At the time of writing, plans are for *Garden State* to appear in Lausanne, Switzerland, at the *Festival de la Cité* in July 2016; *Steirischer Herbst* in Graz, Austria, in October 2016; and at PACT Zollverein, Germany, in November 2016.





DANIEL BIRNBAUM, philosopher, critic and curator, is the director of the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm and professor at the Städelschule. He was the dean of the Städelschule and director of Portikus from 2001 to 2010 and the director of the 53rd Venice Biennial (2009).

DANIEL BIRNBAUM

LABYRINTHS IN TIME, GARDEN STATES

In a small essay titled *Chronology*, I once tried to analyse a few works of art that, if theorist Sarat Maharaj is right, I should perhaps have called spasms rather than art pieces. In a way, they are spasms in time or, more precisely, spasms of time. In a series of seminars for the Städelschule Architecture Class leading up to the project *Garden State*, we looked closer at a few specific cases. Like this one: *The International Date Line* (IDL) is the imaginary line drawn around the globe, marking the boundary between today and tomorrow. Although commonly identified as being 180° longitude from the meridian located in Greenwich, England, the IDL has no fixed location and no international law that proclaims its existence. In 1995, the small archipelago of Kiribati located in the south pacific, moved the IDL east to 150°, so that the entire country would then be situated on the Western, “tomorrow” side of the IDL. Julieta Aranda, who sent me this information, materialises this anomaly of time in a work consisting of a wall that replicates the path of the IDL. Viewers can traverse this physical version of the elusive entity that divides past from future, and contemplate its history in the presentation of charts, scientific diagrams and related ephemera that accompany this representation. This work certainly represents a temporal spasm.

Another puzzling garden, this one constructed by Stan Douglas: The video installation *Der Sandmann* (1995), an

elaborate meditation on the mechanisms of recollection and temporal awareness, and, I think, the most sophisticated work of contemporary art I have come across in decades. A poetic, visually perplexing attempt to come to grips with the German situation a few years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the piece can be viewed and enjoyed simply as a dreamlike scenario about the childhood memories of three people from the small, formerly East German city of Potsdam. But to really appreciate the installation requires a familiarity with numerous sources: The German Romantic writer E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *Der Sandmann*; Freud's essay *The Uncanny* and its theory of repetition; certain aspects of German city planning, particularly the Schrebergärten, small plots of land that the poor could lease from the city to grow their own vegetables. These gardens were named after the nineteenth-century educator Moritz Schreber, whose son Daniel Paul Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* would play a crucial role in the development of Freud's theory of paranoia. All this is relevant to Douglas's installation, even if it is not ultimately what the work is “about.”

Der Sandmann is a double video projection, each screen showing a 360-degree sweep of a Schrebergarten. Staged in the old Ufa studios just outside Potsdam and shot on 16 mm film, the sets are re-creations of the gardens, one as