

There Is Fiction in the Space Between

Antonia Low's installations engage with spaces and how they are perceived, encouraging a conscious reflection on them by means of interventions such as the opening of new models of access, sight lines, and axes of movement, or the superimposition of images of other places. In a process of appropriation, she makes the space itself the material of her art, transforming it into an environment that sheds light on the characteristic qualities of the situation as she found it and the interests and ideas invested in it, while also sketching plots that suggest the impermanence of these features. Treating the settings she scrutinizes as one might a sculpture or an archaeological excavation site, she carefully removes stratum after stratum in an effort to produce or unearth narratives. Several of her works have examined the invisible infrastructure of the sites, highlighting how their aesthetic is informed by objective needs as well as subjective usages. For *The Electric Return* (2010), for instance, she uncovered several layers of old and new electric wirings hidden in the walls. The technicians how had installed them had routed some of the cables along the shortest and most economical paths and run others through existing ducts; to meet changing needs, they sometimes scrambled the existing structures. In an earlier work, a tangle of newly installed electrical wires acted as a work of three-dimensional graphic art, drawing attention to a particular we are wont to take for granted (*Ein Detail*, 2009). Low's art is often based on an investigation of concealed or overlooked areas in public institutions. For the installation *Der Verlorene Raum* (2014), for example, she recruited the assistance of the staff at various governmental and educational institutions in Brussels to explore workspaces that were inaccessible to ordinary visitors. She pasted the photographs documenting her research – always, break rooms, cubbyholes – on no-frills metal cabinets that she exhibited together with furniture from the buildings' storage rooms. Facing these elements were shots of the stately marble walls and hallway windows of the Brussels Plais des Beaux-Arts printed on panels of semi-transparent fabric hung in a staggered arrangement. The architecture, whose splendor looked a bit time-worn, also contrasted with the gallery's modern austerity. *Skulpturen-Depot* (2014), meanwhile, consisted of a photograph from the Kunstmuseum Bonn's storage room, a part of the building that is off-limits to the public, on a giant curtain in the museum's foyer. Having to push it aside to enter the galleries, the visitors were alerted to the facility's essential role in the institution's operation. A similar encounter between two very different spheres took place in *Status of Lost Imagery* (2016): the floor of a meticulously restored spacious room at Rome's Palazzo Altompe was taken up by a coarsely pixelated press photograph printed on linen that showed the scene at a museum in Palmyra ravaged by IS during the Syrian Civil War. Set out across the picture were lightweight metal barriers that typically serve to protect exhibits; they now framed the vandalised sculptures. In these and other works, Low spotlights the parallel between disparate scenarios and the simultaneity of different realities. Spare and delicate yet expansive installations function as stages of a sort, prompting a choreographed contemplation. Her art reveals architecture to be a framework moulded by historical processes as well as pragmatic considerations that is as temporary as it is potent – and undergoes transformation in the individual engagement with it.

Michaela Richter, *There is Fiction in the Space Between*, Walter König, 2018
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