

Instant city, ein elektronischer musik bau spiel automat, 2003

The Game

With instant city an "instrument" has been created that can enliven a space and the events in it on a variety of levels. Initially the eye perceives instant city as a sculpture that is stretched like a column between floor and ceiling – a column, however, whose middle section consists only of light. As well, the two parts which, like quadratic funnels (or a reversed stalactite and stalagmite), seem to grow out of the floor and ceiling, are full of light – and a few centimeters over our heads – seduce us to come closer with a blinking which is like that of an inviting market stand.

This music building game automat, as the artists call their work, is also a light show and a seduction machine. We are unable to resist its allure to get engaged in the play.

The game itself has a beginning, but in contrast to most other games, no end - we determine ourselves when we want to walk away from instant city. As well, there are no winners or losers. And every game that is started here follows its own unique, unrepeatable course. There are so many factors which determine the musical "reaction" that the system can never be cracked. Single players could therefore appear as if they are in dialogue with an intelligent being – perhaps from a foreign, but very musical planet. Others might enjoy feeling completely overwhelmed by the mysteriousness of the system. Still others might simply enjoy that their own actions are answered musically.

The playing and what the game triggers are completely different from person to person. Some would like to walk away after only a short time, overwhelmed by the limitless possibilities. Others would like to lose themselves in the game. Perhaps mathematically oriented players will try to proceed strategically through decoding reaction patterns. Esthetes might aim to create especially elegant constructions – and allowing the musical effect to retreat into the background. Musically inclined players might try to coax as much music as possible out of these "automatons". The approaches to the game and the possible outcomes are limitless.

The situation is made more complicated for the players in that they can be observed in their doing. Since the game doesn't have an aim or goal which one can follow, every action becomes a demonstration of the playing personality. With every block that the player plays, he betrays something about himself, he gives something value.

This music building game automat gains a further dimension as more players gather around the table. Inevitably a dialogue situation develops, the action on the table transforms itself into a reaction to what the others do. Although there isn't actually a possibility to play against one another, still aesthetic differences can become visible on the game board in the same way as the different personality structures do. Suddenly there could be leaders who want to build up high – or saboteur whose structural intention is to disrupt or destroy. The music suddenly plays the role of a commentator or also a referee, who through sounds remarks upon the single acts.

instant city is many things at the same time: a music box, a social game, an interactive computer game, a psychological test, an unpredictable music instrument, a light show, a conversation space, an aesthetic testing field, ...

Yet even when the various aspects of instant city can be named, through its own art and means, this music building game automat brings a dynamic impulse into space that is new and whose true quality has to be personally experienced.

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