

instant city

a music building game table

a Projekt by:

Sibylle Hauert & Daniel Reichmuth
in Collaboration with Volker Böhm

info@rosen-spademan.net

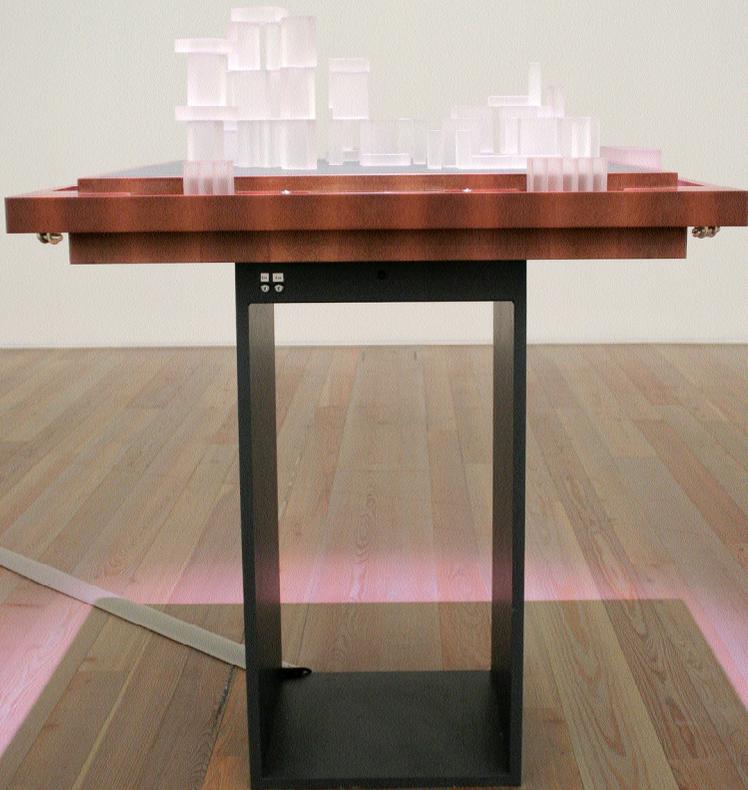
www.instantcity.ch

www.rosen-spademan.net



INSTANT CITY

EIN ELEKTRONISCHER MUSIK BAU SPIEL AUTOMAT
VON SIBYLLE HAUERT, DANIEL REICHMUTH UND VOLKER BÖHM



.....**instant city** is many things at the same time: an interactive computer game, an unpredictable music instrument, a theatrical social game, a psychological test, a light sculpture, 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 table** brings a dynamic impulse into space that is new and whose true quality has to be experienced personally.....

instant city

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instant city

<instant city> is a music building game table. One or more players at a table can create architecture using semi-transparent building blocks and in the process make different modular compositions audible. Every performance is unique because the sequence, timing and combination possibilities are completely in the hands of the players! For each game one composition is chosen.

To date, eight different musicians have each produced special compositions which serve as the basic music building kits of instant city.

In order to give players a wide choice of compositions, we asked musicians working with very different kinds of music to create the first <music building kits>.

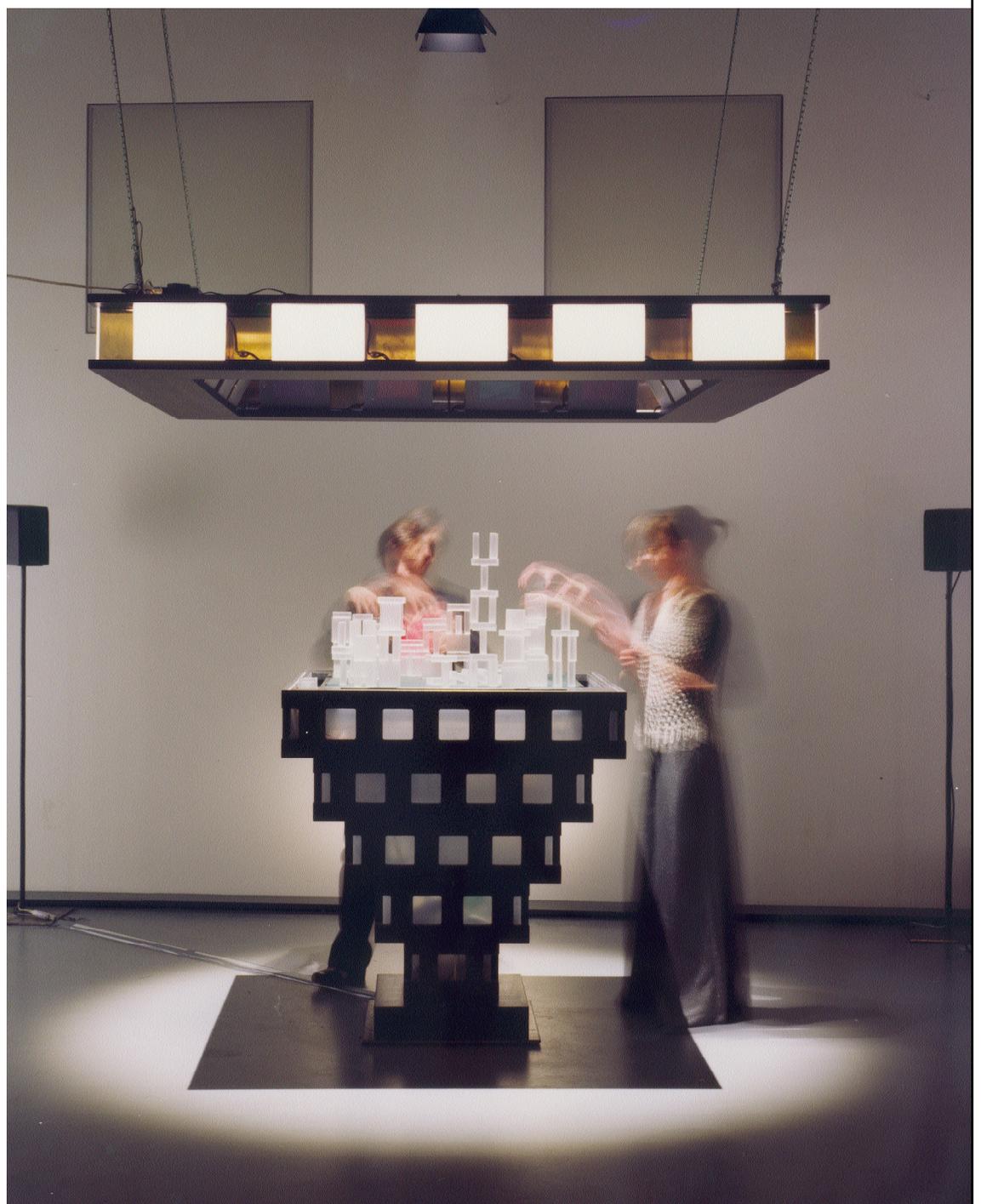
These <building kits> were created with a special sound and detection program that was especially developed to meet the requirements of <instant city>.

In the modular creation of the software, the aim was to achieve a large range of tonal flexibility.

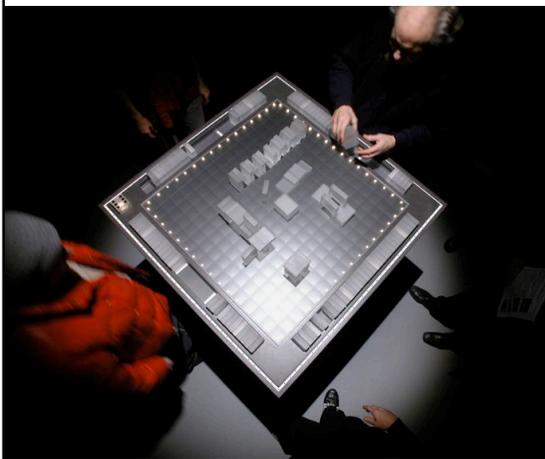
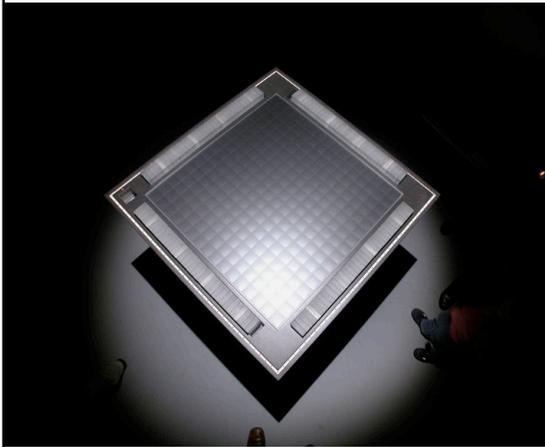
The repertoire and compositions can and will be continually renewed/replenished, i.e., it is possible for any interested musician to create a <music building kit> for <instant city>.

In 2004/05/06 <instant city> was technically and formally re-developed, so that now three different versions are available for different kind of presentations:

- instant city classic
- instant city mobile
- instant city de luxe



a music building game table



<instant city> is an interactive installation, modular music-sequencer, composition software, playing console, and game, which can be played by one or more players simultaneously.

In Summer 2001 the Basel Kunstcredits helped launch the project through a "Freie Kunstprojekte" (Open Art Projects) grant for the basic concept the in the annual competition. During the following one-and-a-half years <instant city> was then developed and realized.

Since its first presentation in January 2003 in the digital arts gallery plug-in in Basel, <instant city> has been presented in numerous national and international festivals for new media, as well as new music.

In 2003 <instant city> was presented in the international new media festival ars electronica in Linz (AT) where it was awarded an Honorable Mention. In the same year, Southwest Radio (SWR) and the Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe (DE) also distinguished <instant city> as one of fifty works nominated for the prestigious 'International/Media/Art/Prize03.' In 2004, both the Dresden (DE) CYNETArt Award, as well as the Tokyo (JP) ACA Media Art Festival juries granted <instant city> special recognition in addition to including the artwork in their respective exhibitions.

Idea and Concept: Sibylle Hauert und Daniel Reichmuth

Development and Realization: Sibylle Hauert, Daniel Reichmuth (Design, Constructions, elektronical Hard- und Software) and Volker Böhm (Software „instant.tool“)

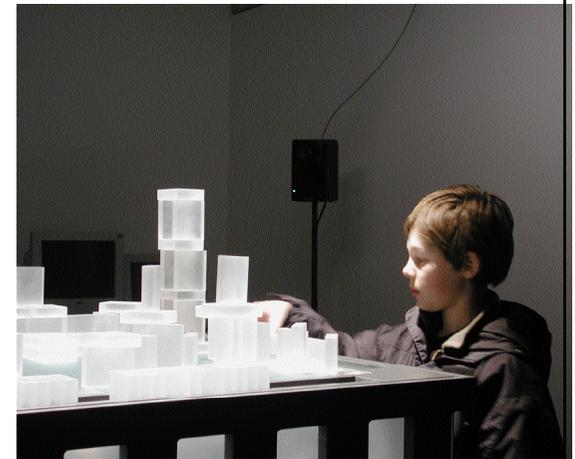
Hardware-development Mediacontroller: tegoro solutions, Valentin Spiess and Andres Erni

in Collaboration for the design of instant city de luxe table: Christian Kohne und Jean-Marc Gaillard

VFD Support: anyma, Max Egger

Composer:

Gary Berger, Michael Harenberg, Stig Botterbloem, Geri Huber, Bernadette Johnson, Birgit Kempker, Tomek Kolzycynski, Andri Freuler und Samy Kramer, Daniel Weissberg



the game



and the "staging"

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. Singleplayers 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.

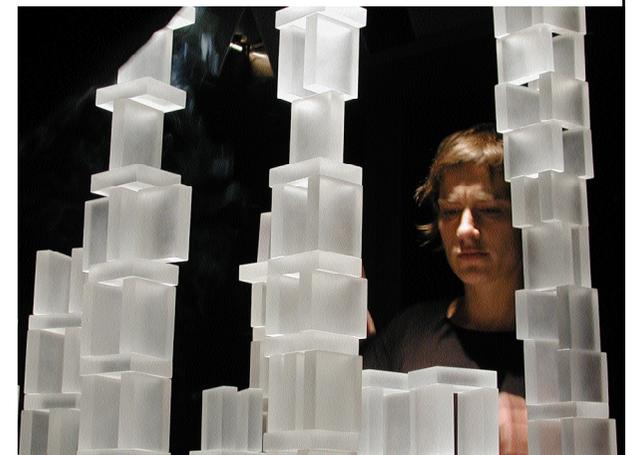
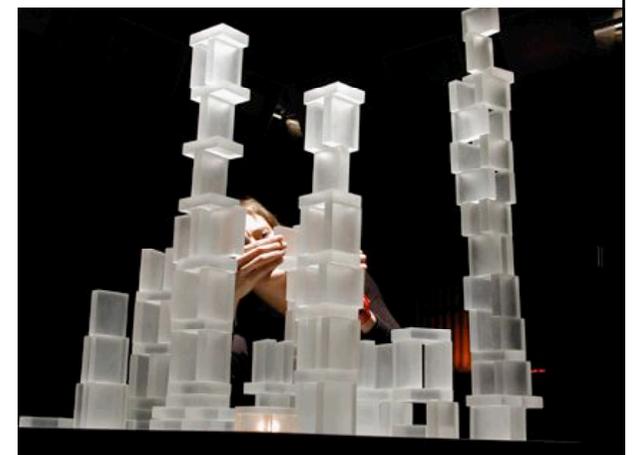
The situation is made more complicated for the players in that they can be observed in their doing. Since the game doesn't have an aim or goal which one can follow, every action becomes a demonstration of the playing personality. With every block that the player plays, he betrays something about himself,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

Samuel Herzog



the installations



instant city <classic> 2003

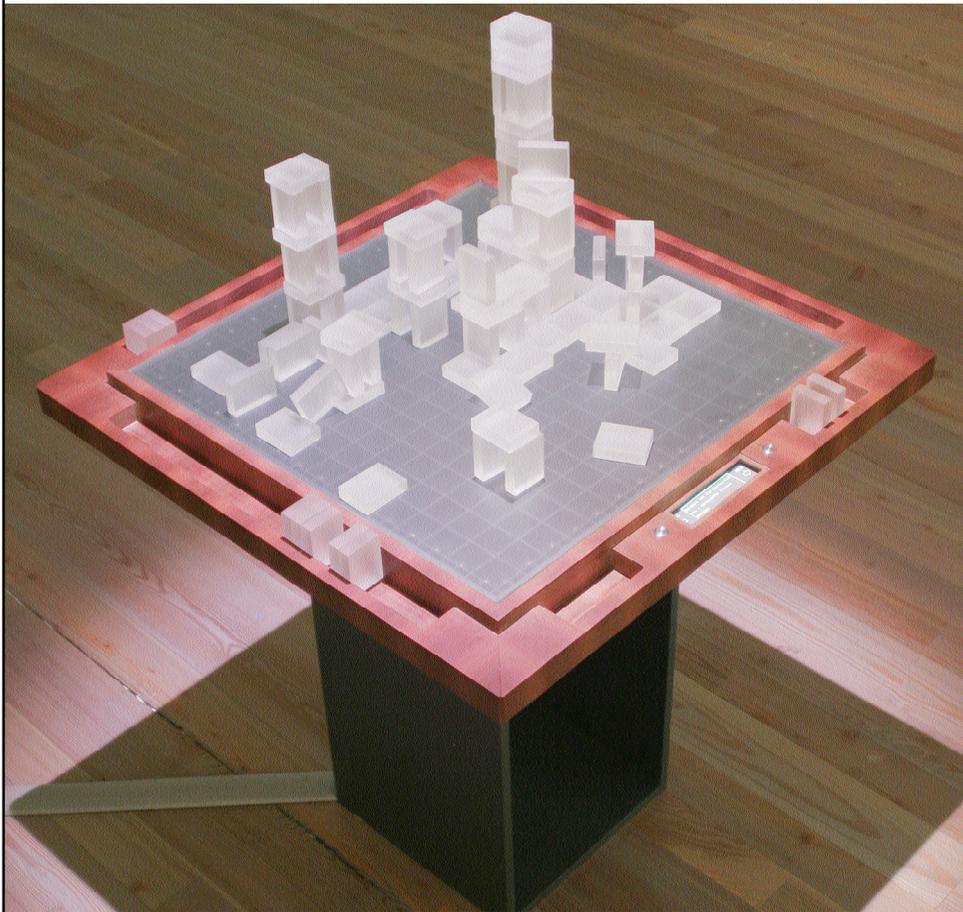
instant city <classic> is the Alpha-Version and a "fantasia" unicum art piece, made by one`s own hand, 100% handcraft custom-build. The Environment is equipped with many additional Detailles... instant city classic is and remains the Rolls-Royce of the collection.



instant city <mobile> 2004/05

instant city <mobile> is the light and smart travel version (short exhibitions, presentations, live acts, ect.) or as an instrument, can be placed to composers or music students disposal as an experimental platform for non-linear and modular compositions.

how it works



instant city <de luxe> 2005/06:

instant city <de luxe> is the final version of our instant-city <versions>. It was seriesable conceived and can be presented convenient and almost maintenance-free in long-term exhibitions.

Detection

A spotlight hangs over the table and under the glass plate game board there is a field of light sensors. Each semi-transparent building block that is brought into position anywhere on the table establishes a filter dimming down the intensity of the downward-flashing spotlight. The resulting variations create a kind of grey scale continuum that can be registered by the sensor field under the glass plate. Each of these grey scale values corresponds to a particular parameter of the selected <instant city> composition. Exactly what is heard, however, depends upon where the building blocks are placed, how high they are, how many are on the table, and the sequence in which they are used.

Detection Barrier

In placing the blocks, the active hand and arm of the player casts a shadow on the game board surface. Since such a shadow would be detected by the three-dimensional and grey-scale continuum sensitive playing field and thereby disrupt the game, a 'detection barrier' runs around the outermost ring of the game board. This device serves in delaying the detection of the building blocks until the active hand and arm are no longer within the sensing field. The detection barrier consists of a string of lights located under the glass plate. As long as a hand or arm is in the playing field, it is lit up. When the hand or arm is removed, it goes out and the new musical event becomes audible.

Choosing the Composition

instant city „de luxe“

On one side of the play table are a display (VFD) and two navigation push-buttons integrates. Over the push-buttons the desired language as well as the different compositions can be selected in a simple and understandably developed menu. Furthermore the display documents the play process.

Instant city „classic“

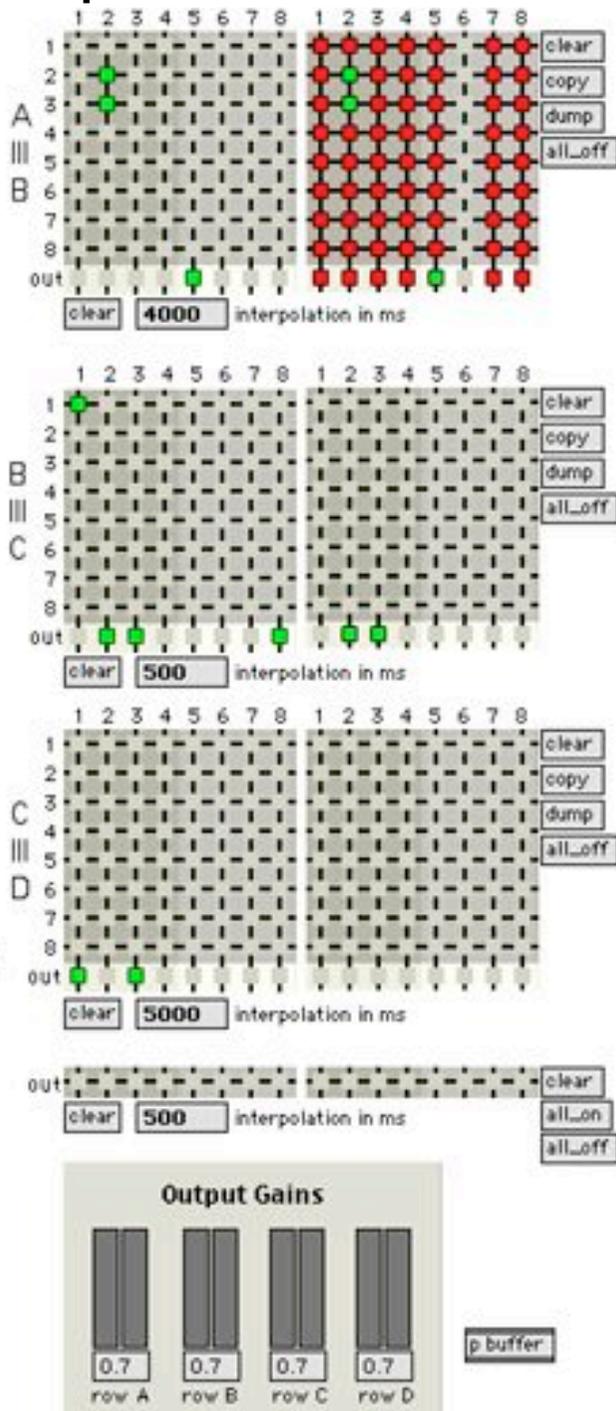
Near the installation there is a board upon which the composition keys rest: all are different. For each composition there is one glowing, pulsing plexiglass object. Every object encases a simple, electronic circuitry which not only serves in recognizing/selecting the composition, but also to start and stop the game. Each piece can be inserted into a respective slot in the table.

Additional specification of instant city de luxe:

instant city can be easily switched on and off by turning just a key-switch.

If nobody is at the play table or in the exhibition space over longer time, the spotlight as well as the space acoustic irradiation switch off automatically, (slow fade out). Re-enter a visitor into the area, he is recognized by the space sensors integrated in the table, and light and sound "are raised" automatically again (slow fade in).

compositions



Are musical events comparable to architectonic structures?

Will people become engaged in “naively” researching a system with which they are not familiar?

Which building structures are relevant and which are not?

These are only some of the questions that were posed to the 8 different composers invited to write a musical building kit for <instant city>. These compositions could be anything from noise collages with integrated text to minimal music. The tonal result is not so much a totally-polished composed “song”, but rather is something that can be called a sound environment.

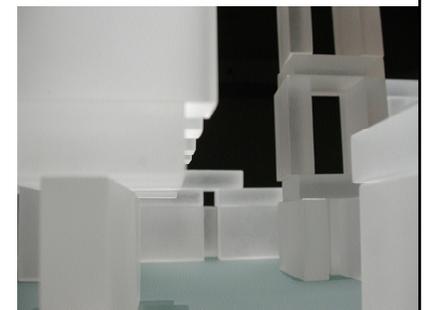
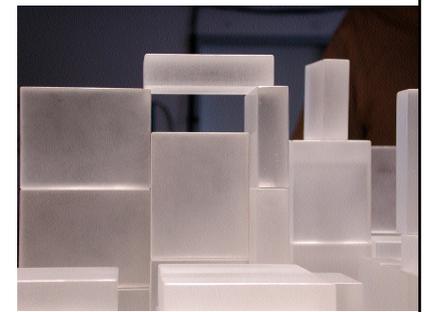
The clang/sound of such music building kits is thereby mainly dependent on the sound files/tones with which the composers “feed” the <instant city> software. These sound files can naturally be produced in the most various of ways, with which methods/programs (recording, synthesizers, sampler, software, etc.) were always and exclusively imported in “instant.tool”.

The software itself contains no prefabricated sounds whatsoever.

Inviting different musicians and composers not only served to provide for a variety of music, but also of diverse strategies in dealing with this “instrument”; while one composition appears to be repeatable, another is never the same; one aims to engage chance, while still another tries to avoid it; here diversity, there simplicity.

While most of the players let themselves be led by the strategy of the respective composer, the tonal result is not reduced to something “pleasing”, but rather it inspires courage and curiosity to do the “unheard-of”. Namely to keep on building!

The repertoire and compositions can and will be continually renewed/replenished, i.e., it is possible for any interested musician to create a <music building kit> for <instant city>.



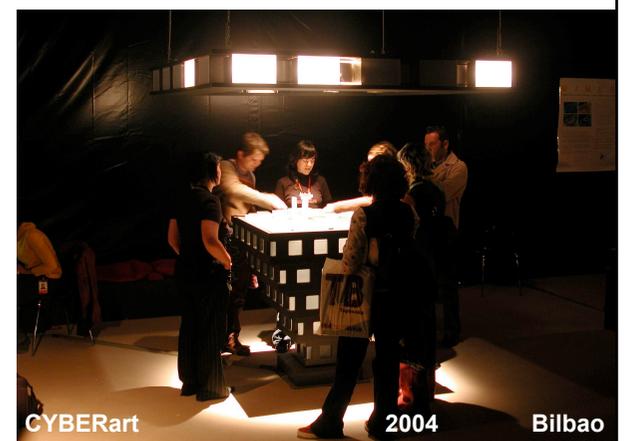
exhibitions



ars electronica 2003 Linz



Eid.Wettbewerb für Kunst 2004 Basel



CYBERart 2004 Bilbao



[plug.in] 2003 Basel

2003

ars electronica, Code 03, OK Zentrum, Linz (A)
 [plug in] Zentrum für Medienkunst, Basel (CH)
 e-culture fair, a technologie-art fair, Amsterdam (NL)
 Swamp, Interaktiv Wellness Park, Zürich (CH)

2004:

Gare du Nord / Bahnhof für neue Musik Basel (CH)
 ACA Media Arts Festival, Tokyo (J)
 Ciberart Bilbao, Festival for Computer Arts, Bilbao (E)
 Int. Festival for Computer Arts, Maribor (SLO)
 Eidgenössischer Wettbewerb für Kunst, Basel (CH)
 CYNETart, Festival für Computer Kunst, Dresden (D)
 Kornhausforum Bern (CH)
 Kunstraum Walcheturm Zürich (CH)
 plug_in Basel (CH)



Computerarts 2004 Maribor



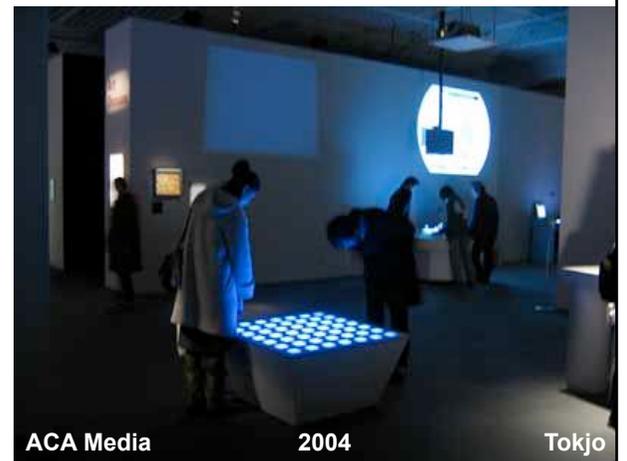
Swamp 2003 Zürich

2005:

NAI, Museum für Architektur, Rotterdam (NL)
 science et cité, Kunst und Wissenschaft (CH)
 Rümelingen, Festival für Zeitgenössische Musik (CH)
 ICMC-Barcelona, inter. Computerkonferenz (E)
 100 Jahre Musikakademie Basel, (CH)

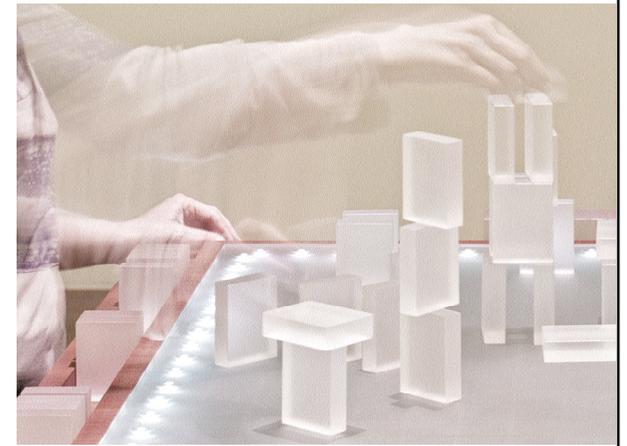
2006

Museum Tinguely, Edgar Varèse, Composer Sound
 Sculptor Visionary, Basel, (CH)
 Wonder, European Science Festival, Vilnius (LIT)



ACA Media 2004 Tokyo

awards



2003 **ars electronica**, honorary mention in "interactive art".

2003 **internationaler Medienkunstpreis**, nominiert für den internationalen Medienkunstpreis, ZKM + SWR.

2003 **CYNETart Award**, 2004, Anerkennung in computergestützter Kunst, Trans-Media-Akademie Hallerau/Dresden

2004 **ACA Media Arts Festival**. Anerkennung durch die Jury des Media Arts Festival, Tokyo

