Stillness in the System

Looking back at *INTRA SPACE*, one could see an environment of flat, thin, stretched tissues of different porosity through which light beams pass across, or are redirected and elevated in, the space at different angles and sizes. Of mirroring micro-thin aluminium foils, light-diffusive dark grey plastic, heavy black anti-skid plastic. Of computer monitors and liquid crystal displays, backlit. Of gently curved surfaces of tiny lenses, some with zooming capacities, distributed on the perimeter of this environment. A few of these lenses hover close to the floor, most of them around an estimated horizon or median height; several are perched higher up, taking a bird's eye view. This environment is furnished with twelve such tiny lenses, all directed towards an imaginary centre point. As if this multi-eyed being were squinting onto itself. These are inward-facing eyes,¹ each individually regulating brightness, aperture and real-time transmission, or latency. The focus is set mechanically by manually turning a delicate wheel around each lens. These adjustments are

made with the help of a back-focus chart, or Siemens star, as the proportions of the human index finger and thumb are in conflict with the revolving fineness of the optics. These lens-eyes perceive colour, contrasts of dark and light, sharpness in the centre, and distortion towards the edges, except for two of them, which are less wide-angled than the rest. The camera itself is originally manufactured to be a built-in component inside industrial machines; here it is isolated and naked, placed in an ensemble with eleven others of the same kind, and connected only via an Ethernet cable providing each of them with power. The cameras are mounted on magic arms with two ball joints, granting them every degree of freedom. Each of these twelve images is channelled and superimposed to create one three-dimensional representation of the space—as if seen through a simplified, yet spatially distributed compound eye. These twelve eyes share one visual cortex where all of this distributed information is gathered into one coherent model. The continuous

Fig. 1 *Otherness. Attentional Forms* (view of installation—projector, screens, mirrors, virtual figures, tracking—during a movement research workshop led by Esther Balfe and Christina Jauernik, together with Christian Freude at *ImPulsTanz Festival Vienna*, Probebühne Staatsoper, August 2019). Still from recorded footage by Christina Jauernik.

stream of images has no memory or archival function, and solely delivers colour image data to the central processing engine. Here is where the visual information is read against its past. The processing engine holds a short-term and rather fragile memory of a previously captured representation of the gazed-at environment. The stream of images from the twelve eyes is then interpreted against its own visual-spatial history. The relationship between the memorised constructed three-dimensional image and the continuously incoming stream of real-time images is based on their incoherence. This mismatch is also a site of intra, of the diaphanous, that is constantly re-configured by and in relation to the environment, the twelve-eyed arena. The incoherence opens a space of chatter, of disturbances, and of efforts to translate these, finding a way back to a commonly memorised state. The system therefore favours stillness in all its environmental components in order to see precisely. All tissues, foils, plastics, displays should be motionless; even the lighting is ideally as diffuse and constant as possible to cause the least amount of interference, to protect the system from its own fragility.

Others are also looking. There is Christian who watches the stream of images from the twelve cameras on one of the computer monitors' liquid crystal displays. He is in view of most of the twelve cameras. He is a disturbance factor in the stillness of the system, his movements with the mouse, the changing light reflections on his shoulder when he turns his head away from the monitor. He sometimes adjusts camera parameters manually, maybe compensating for an unexpected change in the environment. Then there is Christina or Esther, sometimes both together, in the centre

of the space. They enter once the space has been memorised; they wait to be registered by the system. Their registered state is held as malleable against the previous, the memorised three-dimensional representation of the environment. The threshold between their absence and their presence is the floor to be constantly re-negotiated. They look at each other, at Christian, while the twelve cameras look at them. Christian looks at Christina and Esther, looks at the twelve cameras, and at the composite image of the twelve images, which refers to Esther's and Christina's absence. The composite image is based on the absence of bodies, constructing a third and fourth body to be embodied. The twelve cameras, with rather poor resolution and distorted views towards their edges, do not actually see the bodies moving in the environment. They deliver image streams to the processing engine, where they transcend blindness to a new kind of sight. A sight that is not a view of something, a human gaze that opens to the world.² It is an introvert gaze occupied with the absence of bodies and the presence of the same. A time gaze, itself diaphanous to the previous and the now.

- 1 They are "inward" in the sense of facing towards a shared centre in order to follow and register activities, like the gaze into a sports arena, comparable to synchronised cameras at the perimeter of a football game following the players on the field. See the work of artists Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, *Zidane, a 21st century portrait* (2006), but also the relationship of sports broadcasting systems and 'all-seeing' devices in warfare technology as described by philosopher Grégoire Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone* (2015).
- 2 This thought was inspired by reading 'Blick', in: Jean-Luc Nancy, *Porträt und Blick*, Stuttgart: Verlag Jutta Legueil, 2007, p. 51