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**THE SEVEN DAUGHTERS OF ATLAS**  
**„BODY AT WORK“**  
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Ladies and gentlemen:

What I would like to speak about today is the development of a biophysical or cyberphysical art.

In contrast to classical art, the viewers and actors in my work change the staging with their biophysical values. For instance, the heartbeat, the breath, blood values, and REM dream phrases modulate the tone of the music. And there is another difference: mutual feedback. The staging and the theatrical procedures alter the biophysical values of the humans present. The spoken word, or the radio waves of the stars – in the form of a mechanical oscillation or electric impulse – alter the blood and hormone values among the viewers. You might could speculate that it is possible that this process results in the kind of Catharsis of which Aristotle speaks. Though the viewer – the viewers body indeed – is a co-actor who cannot be done without.

The idea of this implantation of the body into the staged events and vice-versa was not yet established at the outset of my work. It developed out of the structure and theme of my projects. Therefore I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the general structure of the work and sketch out the development towards the emergence of corporeal, biophysical aspects within it.

Since 1998, I have been working on a project series called “The Seven Daughters of Atlas.” The individual projects are manifested in public space. Their basic theme is the new, future human, new worlds, and various dreams of Utopia.

I have chosen to call this form of theatrical processes histrionic topography and later on as the body gets implanted in the theatrical processes or cyberphysical topography or cyberphysical art.

To give an initial idea about why I am calling my works cyberphysical topographies, I would like to draw a comparison with Oriental maps from the Middle Ages. In these old maps, there are not only roadways and river ways, but also (and this is an essential difference from contemporary maps) myths, hero sagas, or very personal family histories, which are also rendered through calligraphy and cartography.

In this way, the cartographic gesture in these maps can be sensed as a ritual operation and not as a purely functional one. The maps attempt not only to reproduce the world, to photocopy it, but rather to narrate it, to image it; they show extracts from dreams, from the unreal. It is this tradition of cartographizing that I take up in my work.

But I take up the process of cartographization, of producing a map, in a different gesture. I do not develop two-dimensional maps. My works unfold in public space as multi-dimensional processes. In these processes, the borderlines between the arts, the sciences, reality and imagination become permeable and are consolidated as conjunctions of this kind: „and...and...and.“ As conjunctions, they form a texture. This texture has no dividing lines between arts, sciences, and other categories. However it is not just a mixed bag, not mixed media. This texture narrates, imagines, cartographizes moments of the new human, of new worlds. It is this texture that I call a theatrical map, a histrionic topography. Later called from the 2003, it cyberphysical topography, because ultimately it is not a play or theatrical performances, it binds to the fine arts the theatrical, cybernetic and human biophysical Act and expanded the work of art, it expanded it to cyberphysical art.

I conceive of the cartographic process as an experimental approximation of reality and also of imagination. Each theatrical map/cyberphysical map is a poetic attempt [or essay, in the French sense of the word *essai*]. The poetic attempt is not an attempt to photograph the given nor to create a theatric figure of reality. To do so would rather be reminiscent of contemporary maps. So I do not wish to represent the world, to photocopy it, and none of the performers seeks to simulate a human. Rather, cartographic processes unfold into fields of actions of ritual structuration: they are a kind of representational prayer, a representational prayer about the utopian dreams of the human. The cartographized space is a possible space of prayer. In this sense, the work processes are closer to the prayer of the dervish's dance or the Japanese no-theatre, than to the western theatrical gesture.

I would like to explain my position in more detail by referring to two histrionic topographies.

In Munich in 1999, I installed „DANCERS OF ELECTRICITY“ on the Odeonplatz, a public space in the city center, for a duration of six weeks. Thematiccally this project was about two poetic and utopian thought-fabrics - the one of the Russian poet Velimir Chlebnikov and the one of the middleage theologian and poet Celaleddin Rumi. Their thoughts form the two main threads of the project. Both perspectivize in very different ways the future human. Both positions struggle with another: It is a struggle of voices about utopias: the mystic and islamic, the cubo-futuristic and socialistic.

First one sees a 10-meter tall wooden tower. This tower could be a conceived of as a wooden sculpture in public space. However it is also a sound object and a theater space as well: In the evenings 48 viewers stand inside it and attend a performance. The "stage" is in the undermost inner space of the tower. (The performers' space and audience spaces are on various levels – [EXPLAIN on PICTURE]).

This eludes maybe more what I meant before with processes without boarderlines, that are consolidated as conjunctions This form of multifaceted interplay can be considered perhaps as a

sequence of conjunctions (wooden sculpture and theater room and light sculpture and sound sculpture and...). However, this is no arbitrary sequence of functions. Rather, all the functions cooperate with each other in sketching out / cartographising the main theme – the struggle of utopian concepts.

During this project, the first thought of making the voice corporeally experienceable came to me. During the daytime the wooden tower was a sound sculpture. When one approaches it from a distance, one hears the tower whisper. In Russian, one hears Chlebnikov's extreme tone lyrics and in Persian Rumi's poetry. The closer one gets, the softer the whispering becomes. In the immediate proximity of the tower, it ceases to make sound altogether and begins to vibrate. One can now touch the voices, feel them.

Up to this point however there had been no thought of other points that in the future would be constitutive for the cyberphysical art: There was no consideration how these vibrations affected the passers – by, who were touched by it and furthermore no consideration of the viewer influencing the work of art.

Yet another example from the broader project: The Robinson Syndrome 2, which I installed in the English Garden in 2001 for three weeks. The textual bases were Robinson stories: one from the Arabic philosopher Ibn Tufail from the 12<sup>th</sup> century called "Hajj ibn Jaqzan," the well-known Robinson Crusoe story by Daniel Defoe, and a Japanese "no-piece" by the name of Shunkan. All three works are Robinson stories, in which negotiation with the world and life is construed from the position of a solitary person. All three works – as well as the English Garden of landscape architect Friedrich Skells itself – were intended as designs of societally relevant, utopian moments. Emboldened by the human hubris of shaping nature according to human whim, the garden's architect Skell implants an architectonic nature into nature. I wanted to have a thousand goldfishes flutter in the air like autumn leaves. And I installed 30 Plexiglas cubes with 1000 goldfishes in the Lake. The lake was on the evenings transformed into a playing surface and the rowboats became stages and viewing spaces. The viewers glided in boats on the night lake, past the stages installed in the water, flanked by illuminated rowers.

In "Robinson Syndrome 2" a few things took place for the first time, which developed in the period following into the cyberphysical integrations of histrionic topography.

- One could cite maybe as a kind of first step the relative exposedness of the viewer's body especially in regards to the natural elements. The erratic "stage set" of nature physically moved the body of the viewer into the content of the projekt. (Luckily we had a rainstorm on the water.)
- The second point emerging in this project was the integration of my own body into the project, an integration that would later on become constitutive of bio-pysica theatre. In the

"Robinson Syndrome," I entered the water of the lake. I became a "fish", diving around in the lake, cartographically charting my own fear of the dark water in the histrionic topography. – In this project the as – yet undeveloped idea of allowing the viewer to encroach on the scene through corporeal values emerged for the first time. Originally I wanted to develop a kind of bio-port for the viewers. They would drink sugared water, an emblem for the drink of paradise. I intended to measure the change in their blood-sugar brought about by the drinking of sugar water by using a blood analysis machine. These data would then change the sounds that were being produced in the rowboats and on the water's surface. The viewer thus would have become a constitutive part of the sound machine, a integral part of the histrionic topography.

This idea could not be realised in robinson syndrom. Precisely the technical and procedural impossibility of realizing such a bio-port in this project led me to the thought of a public artistic work, a kind of public work in progress.

(The thought of a public work itself arises from the theme of the project series – utopias – and although from their structure – beeing reaslized in in public space –. Because all the projects are realized in public spaces; passers – by literally stumble into them. And Utopias are always broader societal dialogues and processes. Thus I thought that the public ought to have an opportunity to publicly experience and discuss the development of the histrionic topographies.)

For this reason, I have been working in the Deutsches Museum (German Museum) – a technical museum – since 2002 to create poetic experiments as a kind of sketch. The museum is like a sketch pad. The experiments may be conceived of as the early stages of a histrionic topography. The location is a conscious choice: as a technical museum, the Deutsches Museum / German Museum is a specific kind of public space. Within it, dreams of new worlds and future humans are archived and exhibited. They thus establish the cognitive frame for my works. The thought-machine of the German (technical) Museum envisions the new world of the future human in the spirit of technology.

I began the first poetic experiment in the German Museum in July 2002, in which I for the first time manifested what I consider to be cyberphysical art. I tierd to generated a collective REM dream phase as a homage to the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet and calles the project: on the ship to mars. The dreams of "viewers" were to be synchronized with the assistance of his conserved voice. I understand this experiment as a kind of farewell to his futuristic thoughts. It is no longer about about living a communal dream, it is about setting individual dreams to the same beat, to synchronize them. Though four people laid themselves to sleep in the museum. The conserved voice of Nazim Hikmet vibrated on their bodies. My thought was that as in breathing – when one person inhales, the others fall into the same breathing rhythm – the vibration of the voice would lead to a collective REM-phase. The REM-phases were measured using an EEG machine. At that point, a synchronicity did not take place.

After this trial in the museum "on the ship to mars – experiments" were corroborated by various algorithms.

– A trans-Atlantic dream synchronization took place. Eight people slept in the courtyard of the German Museum in Munich while one slept in a closed space in Boston at the Cyberarts Festival. The poet's voice was used to synchronize the dreams over the ocean. The thought was thus if a synchronicity was to take place, it would be generated independent of place and time.

– Another poetic experiment took place with forty people on a bridge in Munich. Forty "viewers" slept through a whole night in white bubbles upon this bridge, while the poet's voice vibrated on their bodies. This time thirteen people came into synchronicity in.

At On the ship to mars the dreaming body of the viewer entered the theatrical space itself. The body in fact became his own theatrical space, the body of the viewer became co-terminus with the actor and viewer. Stage and viewing space melded into one another.

As a side remark: Only later did I discover through further poetic experiments that, through the vocal effect of the poet – which was transmitted in the form of a mechanical oscillation onto the body – the blood and hormone values of the dreamers probably have changed – even if they were not measured this time.

A mutual effect between theatre processes and bio-physical values took place through this histrionic topography. A synchronicity in the REM-phase was generated through the scene results. The entirety of the scenic events affected the bio-physical existence of the participants.

Precisely this bio-physical effects upon the viewer I thought to examine and manifest in the following poetic experiments when in 2003 I began to develop sketches and ideas for my next project called The Grievances of JOB. (What that project was exactly about I will elude later on). The new step was that I proceeded in the opposite direction by examining the effect upon the viewer, while I had previously been concerned with the effect of the viewer on the scenic events.

You may ask why measuring all that? Well I think – apart from being maybe able to make a theatrical instrument out of it – the conscious knowledge that the histrionic topography initiates bio-physical changes, significantly changes the posture and experience of the so-called viewer. That the blood and hormones, as well as the REM phase, can be changed in measurable and calculable ways by the theatrical intervention, poeticizes in an odd way the experiential process of the viewer and ultimately transports him or her into a metaphysical, ritual process. Knowing that a feedback would take place, that one's own corporeal orientation could influence that theatrical process, transforms the natural materiality (Naturwissenschaftliche Sachlichkeit) into an emotional, archaic premonition. The immediate vitality and generativity of the theater/fine art alters by my body, the world, the cosmos, and indeed to a measurable extent.

Though the new experimental arrangements for Grievances of Job deal with a supermental outlook. I was pursuing a certain question: Is it possible for the human voice, when metamorphosed into inaudible, low-frequency vibrations and applied to the body, to change the bio-physical values, the blood values of humans? And if so, does the content of the text play a role, the spoken form of the recitative, etc.?

The effect of magic spells, Koran texts, healing mantras, and instruction manuals were transferred onto me and other poetic test participants. (By the way, I begin each experiment with a self-test, and then invited others to join.) The investigation of blood and hormone values continued as I tested its effects in a salt water tank – in a gravity-free state. I made a simple discovery: the musical recitative changes the blood and hormone levels in what I am cautiously calling a harmonious way, while the mantra-like, staccato speech changes the values in an unharmonious way. In the salt water tank, the temporal factor increases; the values change quicker.

[As an aside note, I would like to say that it would poetically incorrect, if all of the data collected were not to remain scientifically contested.]

Quite naively, yet armed with these initial findings, I took first steps to realizing the JOB-Project, which deals with the Biblical Job-Myth, which is invoked in my staging to highlight that the most important aspect of Job is the loss of an originary paradise an originary utopia, of a unquestioned belief in a good and just god.

For Grievances of Job a theatrical sculpture was build across from the Palace of Justice in Munich. During daytime, as the public affairs of the building proceeded, the theatrical sculpture metamorphosed into a discursive sculpture. The public negotiations in the Palace of Justice were transformed into inaudible vibrations. The vibrations were transmitted in the form of wave patterns onto the water. This water was then distributed to passersby to drink – in a sense a mythical water, or a water of justice. The passersby could then take a saliva test and thereby observe the crystalline transformation of their saliva. At night, a "viewer" could enter the salt water tank and become part of the histrionic topography. His bio-physical values could be changed through three different modi.

#### Mode 01 – The Cosmic Synthesizer

The speaker thinks the biblical JOB-text in Hebrew. His brainwaves are measured through an EEG machine. The changes in his brainwaves modulate the sounds of outer space, that is collected through a radar machine in the German Museum.

Though electric sound arises as the speaker thinks the text and is transmitted in the isolation tank.

#### Mode 02 – The speech act (The first bio-physical transformation)

The speaker recites the text. His voice is transmitted in the isolation tank onto the water in the form of a speech-vibration or mechanical oscillation. This causes a first bio-physical change for the person in the tank.

Mode 03 – Silence and the cosmic order (the second bio-physical transformation)

The speaker then becomes silent. The sounds of outer space are no longer audible. The “viewer” is encased in silence, and only the signals from Jupiter and Cassiopeia can be felt in the salt water as vibrations.

I would now like to cite a text from the theater scholar Dr. Katharina Keim. Her text communicates the effect and thematic constraints of the project in a particularly illustrative way.

“The performance installation “Job’s Grievance” enacts the human being’s magical, ritual, symbolic divestment from the “Weight of the World.” The participant is elevated to the station of a passive co-actor. In the absence of gravity within the salt water tank, he reacts solely through his unconscious bodily responses to Job’s grievance, which are read in Hebrew and transformed into acoustic tones. The biblical Job’s desire to reappropriate his existence in the face of the inhumane suffering inflicted upon him by God, can be accomplished literally through one’s own body. Strengthened through the effect of Cassiopeia’s and Jupiter’s radio waves, which are transferred into the water, Logos, Psyche, Bios, and Cosmos appear to unite holistically and to reverse a piece of the history of creation. Here, in a kind of return of that gruesome machine of Kafka’s “Penal Colony,” which carries out the bodily inscriptions of an indecipherable judgment in the name of civilization and justice, the body under this societal colonization, even its subjugation to the law of nature, is wrested out of earthly gravity. Whereas the performance art of the 1970s celebrated pain and the mutilation of the body as a form of liberation, here a purgatorial process is actually achieved through physiologically measurable, cathartic effects. Body, language, law, and nature are therefore no longer seen under the sign of a logic of subjugation. Rather, the entirety of the process may be perceived as a kind of experimental arrangement that subjects these factors to an artistic re-mapping and makes completely unexpected constellations visible and open to experience. Before the stage set of the Palace of Justice, which casts its powerful shadow upon the scene in the form of an architectonic embodiment of human jurisprudence, the authority of Holy Scripture, reduced to an incomprehensible tone, can avail itself not a literal, but a sensory-affective value. Here the laws of nature are newly interpreted through the influence of astronomical radio waves upon bodily response. The somatic body becomes the singularly definitive measuring instrument of this closed loop between social, divine, and cosmological factors. Through this anthropological dimension, the project “Job’s Grievance” pursues trans-culturally communicable moments of art that lie beyond the mere mirroring of one’s own culture and enter into a dialogue with the other. In its archaic and ritual character, the action also arises from ancient attempts to fathom the relation between human and invisible cosmological orders.

Just as celestial bodies can possibly influence human existence in some way, perhaps humans may also find consolation about their own finitude and nothingness in the starry sky – like the grieving Atlas, who wept as he saw his seven deceased daughters, the Pleiades, immortalized on the firmament."

Thank you very much for listening.