



Hans Dieter Schaal: In-Between. Exhibition Architecture/Ausstellungsarchitektur

With contributions by Gottfried Korff, Hans Dieter Schaal and Frank R. Werner. 160 pp. with ca. 230 ill., 242 x 298 mm, hard-cover, English/ German
3-930698-71-4
Euro 78.00, sfr 138.00, £ 52.00, US \$ 89.00, \$A 148.00

Hans Dieter Schaal is already something of a cultural institution in Germany. Trained as an architect, he always operates outside the »main stream«, designing and realizing stage sets, sculptures, cemeteries, parks, squares, spatial installations or book projects, which are often trendsetting in their own field.

In the last ten years Schaal has established a focal point that seems to be the sum of all his themes: exhibition architecture. He has provided expansive installations for the broadest possible range of exhibition subjects in such high-volume buildings as the Martin-Gropius-Bau or the Zeughaus in Berlin, the Haus der Geschichte in Bonn, the Kunstvereinsgebäude in Stuttgart, the Deutsches Postmuseum or the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. His work was never mere »exhibition design« in these cases. Instead of this he was always concerned to tell spatial stories about the exhibits or their historical background. Of course he was able to draw on his experience in stage-set design here. Admittedly Schaal would not be Schaal, if he were not to use the whole stock of ideas from his decades of »lateral thinking« or his insatiable search for archetypes and images.

On occasions this has meant that Schaal's exhibitions were admired simply of their spatial sensations. It was only the very few people who were prepared to analyse the extraordinarily extensive and complex work more profoundly who found a carefully established subliminal relationship network of selected motifs running through all his exhibition installations like a central theme. Sometimes they come from his own early work, sometimes from literary or cinematic finds, then again from psychological-philosophical footnotes or even private obsessions. Such image particles constitute a thought-edifice – perhaps comparable only with Aby Warburg's legendary picture archive – which breaks right through the bounds of traditional exhibition architecture.

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