

Portrait of Austrian Airlines
The Poster Projekt of Felix Gonzalez-Torres in Vienna
by Hans-Ulrich Obrist

In silver letters on a green background in a 15 metre - long sequence of posters there is an alphabetical list of all the destinations served by Austrian Airlines.

Other parameters break open the alphabetical order. Mainly the years designated to each destination indicating the year of the first Austrian Airlines flight there.

At first glance the destinations and years make the poster appear purely informative (although clearly not a flight schedule).

However, a closer reading reveals social, economic and political UNDERPINNINGS. Since civilaviation is highly dependentt on external factors, the date when a new route was openend up is of a pointer to political changes in the countries involved.

The reading of the names of the cities and the years is very personal, without the artist needing to usurp individual expression to make it so. Felix Gonzalez-Torres shows that a list of destinations which is in itself neutral contains a lot of atmosphere and the beholder finds what he or she wants without having to follow a particular line. This creates travel junctions which join together to form routes through all three tempora.

As with the poster of his unmade double-bed (New York City 1991), Felix Gonzalez-Torres interlaces the Austrian Airlines poster project with the question of art in public space.

The personal and the political are a part of the same story. The private journey is confronted with its social and political implications while personal memories of journeys and new desires for travel arise.

Lacan describes a high wall which surrounds the whole world as far as the question, "Where is the inside, where is the outside ?"

With the poster project Felix Gonzalez-Torres follows a double strategy for the mutual dynamisation of places:

in the case of the Portrait of Austrian Airlines he decided to show a complete poster in the series "Migrateurs" at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Simultaneously the poster reaches a public outside the gallery in 3.000 places in Vienna.

Generally it appears that the question of activating spaces is no longer connected to the question of whether this should take place inside or outside of institutions. The decisive question is far more whether and how various spaces can be dynamised.

(AS WELL AS INSTEAD OF OR INSTEAD OF NEITHER NOR)

The Vienna stroller in December finds himself in a transitional space without beginning or end point. The modular principle creates perception in squences.

The ever increasing speed of movemnts in urban space causes human movements to be ever more sluggish until they finally come to a standstill.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres confronts the rapid disssolution of pictures with the mobile inertia of one picture, which leads under the frame. Whether he marks out spaces with garlands of light or sets out his unstable "Stacks" to vanish or decorates spaces with posters. Felix Gonzalez-Torres'works always provide the beholder with opportunities for real action.