

WHERE ARE WE? IN WHAT TIME ARE WE? THE PLACE OF THE SPECTATOR IN JAMES COLEMAN'S *BOX (AHHARETURNABOUT)* (1977)

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James Coleman's audio-visual work *Box (AHHARETURNABOUT)* (1977) has two parallel effects on the viewer: on the one hand, it destabilises him or her, since it is installed in a pitch-dark Black Box, where the visitor is overwhelmed by audio-visual stimuli.¹ On the other, his or her sensory perception and act of interpretation are constantly attacked by the nervousness of the fragmented audio-visual stimuli, and a complete immersion in the installation is hindered.

In my text, I will elaborate on how Coleman is able to create a space that oscillates between the illusionary and the real and between the here and there. As I will show, the display of the Black Box is crucial, as are the visual and acoustic stimuli used by him. The artist not only is destabilising the spectator's physical and psychological consciousness of being present, but also is able to link the body directly to the work. In my analysis, I will focus on the specific display of *Box (AHHARETURNABOUT)* and its relation to the viewer in conjunction with Boris Groys's theory of the aesthetics of video installations of 2001, as well as Michel Foucault's *Heterotopia* (1984), working out the limits of these theories. Finally, I will present the concept of anamorphosis, referring to which such works as *Box (AHHARETURNABOUT)* can – in my view – be explored more extensively.

KEYWORDS: place of the spectator, Black Box, sound, anamorphosis, Heterotopia, James Coleman, Michel Foucault, Boris Groys.

¹ Illustrations of the work can be found in Linda Schädler, *James Coleman und die Anamorphose. Der „Blick von der Seite“* [James Coleman and the Anamorphosis. The 'View from the Side'], Munich, Silke Schreiber, 2013, p. 82 and 85.

I would like to start with my first personal experience of James Coleman's *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)*. In 2009, this audio-visual work of the prestigious Irish artist was included in a major solo exhibition in Dublin that took place in several museums simultaneously. When I entered the Project Art Centre, which was one of the venues, I heard a muffled rhythmical beat in the entrance hall coming from a space next to it. I opened the heavy door that led to the source of the sound. After having entered a pitch-dark room, the door immediately snapped shut behind me.

There I was. I had the impression that I was alone. But how could I tell? If anybody else was in the room, I would not have been able to make him or her out. I even could not tell how big the room was, let alone where the walls and the corners were. Since the ground, the ceiling and the walls were painted black, all reference points were blurred. The difference between the entrance hall with its natural light and the dark, windowless room could not have been bigger. Even though there was a projection going on, I had difficulties to orientate myself, because the projection itself worked like a stroboscope. There were very short sequences of a historical black and white film that alternated with equally brief black sequences. Moreover, I heard these hollow beats that I had caught already in the entrance hall. Now, I perceived them together with a recorded voice and the rattling of the film projector. The sound was indeed deafeningly loud and, together with the flicker of the film, all was very unsettling.

After several minutes, my eyes gradually became adjusted to the darkness, and I was able to locate the film projector. Yet, I still had no chance to make out if there were more people in the room. I did not feel at ease, and at first I hardly dared to step forward, always fearing that I could collide with somebody. All my senses were alert – the sense of direction, the sense of touch, of vision and of hearing. James Coleman had been able to overwhelm and destabilize me within seconds. Not only the darkness and, hence, the spatial situation

played their part, but also the visual and acoustic stimuli did not give me a moment's rest. It was impossible to calmly contemplate the work of art. Instead, I was constantly engaged and was trying to perceive something that would hopefully finally be consistent.

The content of the film and of the recorded voice triggered this constant engagement even further. Although *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* unfolds in time and thus alludes to a narrative, there is no coherence: everything remains ambiguous. I could easily make out that I saw snippets of a historical boxing match – that it was historical not the least because of its grain patterns, – but I could not make out which fight it was and what its outcome was. Neither was I able to decide if the snippets of the fight were put together in a chronological order or if they were mixed up. Likewise, the beats and the voice did not give away a comprehensible story. The voice was holding a kind of inner monologue: I could hear strategies of the fight in abbreviated form like 'Do it – again, again', expressions of excitement or even pain like 'Ah, the liver, the liver'. And there was breathing as well.

Only when I later read the background information in conjunction with my research was I able to classify the fight: it was the boxing match between Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney that took place in Chicago in 1927. This fight went down in history as one of the most famous, and also one of the most notorious ones. Shortly before the fight, the rules of boxing had been changed insofar as the counting would not begin straight after the KO anymore, but when the opposing fighter had gone to the neutral corner. When Dempsey knocked his opponent out, he falsely remained next to Tunney. It was only when the referee interfered and directed Dempsey to a neutral corner that the counting began – by then delayed for several seconds. According to the former rules, Dempsey would have won. But as Tunney was able to recuperate thanks to the extra time (which was later known as the 'Long Count'), he went on and finally won the fight.

Thus, Coleman refers in his work to a fight with an ambivalent outcome. Besides, he refers to a fight that was covered by media as widely as never before. It was the first boxing match with a live radio broadcast. Moreover, several cameras shot the fight from different angles. These films, primarily made for newsreels, were later successfully sold for domestic use. Although these films differ in their angle of view, almost all share the slow motion picture of the 'Long Count'. I would therefore argue that they subtly take Dempsey's part: if the long count was shown in slow motion, its duration was dramaturgically prolonged and the assumed falseness of the new roles was emphasized¹.

Coleman split this fight up into stroboscope-like snippets, which have become part of his complex and precisely arranged display. The installation is, as I have described earlier, utterly immersive. But, unlike other installations in Black Boxes, where the atmospheric impact of a film or other audio-visual components is superimposed on the space of the installation (e.g. many of Bill Viola's works), *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* always has a simultaneous twofold effect on the spectator. When perceiving it, I was, on one hand, strongly involved in the fight, overwhelmed physically and even psychologically, and on the other, I was clearly conscious of being in an exhibition hall in Dublin due to the nervousness of the audio-visual stimuli, which did not allow me to fully indulge in the fight. With these two parallel effects, Coleman was able to fuse the illusionary and the real space to the utmost so that I, the viewer, felt placed at the border of factual and fictional spaces. The installation turned into a space that was oscillating between the past and the present, and between the here and there².

1 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

2 Even though the Black Box is in general a very important form of display for Coleman, he has never before and never after interlocked the Black Box with his work of art as radically as in his "Box". The title might even allude to the boxing match as well as to this specific form of display in art.

How can a work like Coleman's *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* be analysed without reducing it solely to the content of the film snippets and the sound? My introductory remarks on my personal experience with the work have made it clear that the display or, more precisely, the Black Box, and the effect of the entire work on the viewer's perception are equally important³. In order to include these aspects in my analysis, I would like to turn to two theories, which explicitly address displays and their relation to viewers. The first is Boris Groys's essay on filmic art works shown in Black Boxes in museums, and the second is Michel Foucault's theory of Heterotopia. I will show that although these theories touch upon the relation between a work, a museum and a viewer, they are not fully applicable on works such as Coleman's. As a consequence, I will suggest to introduce an approach based on anamorphosis, understood as an optical technique as well as a philosophical metaphor.

BORIS GROYS: VIDEO AND FILM WORKS IN THE MUSEUM

With video and film installations having found their way into the museum, the relation between a work, a museum and a viewer has fundamentally changed. Boris Groys analyzed this relation and especially distinguished two important shifts. One shift concerns the light, which is no longer part of the museum's equipment but emanates from the work itself. As a result, it turns into an integral part of the work:

Formerly, museum light was the symbolic property of the viewer. It was in this light that he actually saw the

3 I have not conducted an empirical study on the effect of Coleman's work on viewers. Therefore, I cannot draw conclusions that every single person would react exactly the same way that I did. However, discussions with different people made it clear that the display and the structure of *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* facilitate or even provoke reactions comparable to mine.

work. Now the light has become part of the work and is accordingly controlled and determined by the artist. The viewer's gaze is regulated by his light design. This amounts to a crucial shift in power over the light conditions that affect the contemplation of art and, correspondingly, to a shift in visibility: this represents a new form of control exerted by the artist over the viewer's gaze [...].⁴

A work in a Black Box being simultaneously the source of light in the exhibition hall blurs the border between the work and the space. A consequence of this observation is that the work can no longer be thought of as an entity *per se*, which is clearly separated from the room in which it is presented. I would therefore add that film and video works enable the artists not only to direct the gaze, but also to organise the viewer's movements within the installation.

The second shift concerns, according to Groys, the parameter of time. This shift derives from an intersection of two traditional models of perception: with a traditional work of art, the viewer is free to contemplate it repeatedly without detriment, since it is a self-identical entity and thus will not change. With movies, the spectator is watching moving images, whereas he or she is utterly immobilized and sitting in the chair until the end of the story. In video and film works shown at an exhibition, these two movements come together: the movement of the film or video as well as that of the viewer. On one hand, the works of art start dictating [...] to the viewer how much time he should spend on contemplation, robbing him of his accustomed autonomy.⁵ Every time the spectator is leaving the Black Box before the film or video has finished, he or she gets the feeling of having missed something. On the other hand, it has practically become impossible to see an exhibition in its entirety due to the duration of

each work of art, so that the viewer is [...] physically confronted with presentations which cannot really be seen.⁶ A secured point, an anchor within the field of vision is lost, and hence, visibility is at stake.

The strength of Groys' observations lies in the fact that he makes forms of displays for moving images in Black Boxes and their relation to viewers a subject of discussion⁷. One could argue that he does not take the different structures of video or film works into account and has, as a consequence, a tendency to overgeneralize. His theory works best with pieces that overtly refer to cinematic structures in which narratives unfold over time and people miss the plot if they do not stay in the installation until the end. However, it is less applicable to works that do not tell a story, as, for example, a flicker film. The structure of a work is, in my view, crucial and needs to be taken into account in order to define its impact in the Black Box.

Coleman's *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* is a striking example of the fact that Groys's theory brings certain aspects to the fore but misses others. In Coleman's work, the film is the only source of light in the room, allowing the artist to control the light and, likewise, the temporal condition of the work, which is unfolding in time. It is shown in a loop and, therefore, its duration is endless (or at least only defined by the opening hours of the museum). In addition to this, it is important to notice that the film itself is flickering, meaning that the flashing and, consequently, short alternating illuminated and black sequences clearly structure the work itself. The constant and sudden change of something visible into invisible and vice versa leads to the fact that the content of the film itself cannot be perceived fully. What Groys describes with regard to an exhibition

4 Boris Groys, *Stan Douglas. Le Détroit*, exh.-cat. Kunsthalle Basel, Ed. Peter Pakesch, Basel: Schwabe, 2001, not paginated.

5 *Ibid.*, not paginated.

6 Boris Groys, 'KARLSRUHE, Immaterial Communication (Ursula Frohne, Boris Groys, Peter Weibel)', in: *Concepts on the Move*, Ed. Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager, Amsterdam/New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2002, p. 50–67, here p. 50.

7 New technologies allow by now to project moving images on LED screens at daylight. The Black Box is therefore just one form of display of video and film works, among others.

display in a museum is here applicable to the structure of this work rather than to the display: the viewer gets the constant feeling of having missed something, of seeing just part of an unknown whole because of the stroboscope-like snippets of a formerly complete film.

As I have shown, it is exactly the specific structure of *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* that has a particularly strong impact on the light and temporal conditions. Because of the structure intrinsic to the work, Coleman is able to blur the borders between the illusionary and the real space, meaning that two concepts of space (and time) come into play. In order to elaborate on this further, I would like to refer to the concept of Heterotopia, with which Michel Foucault defined a so-called counter-space. Can his concept be productive for understanding the work or, more precisely, for understanding the overlap of two different spaces in *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)*?⁸

MICHEL FOUCAULT'S HETEROTOPIA

Heterotopia is a term that originates from medical use describing the displacement of an organ or body part to an abnormal location. The organ or body part is not sick or wounded, it is just dislocated and can thus be described as a variant form of the normal. Foucault, who was well acquainted with the history of medicine, turned the medical term into a philosophical one. In analogy to the medical term, it undermines an unambiguous typological attribution to spaces. Unlike the nineteenth century, which was, according to Foucault, a century of time and history, the century in which we now live is an epoch of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition and, hence, an epoch of space. It is a space that is not empty or homogeneous, but is defined by social, cultural and topographical relations.

Within his concept, Foucault distinguishes two types of space that have the capacity to contradict all

the other spaces. One is Utopia – a site without a real place, and the other is Heterotopia – a real space, a sort of counter-space⁹. The special quality of a Heterotopia is that it is not claiming its own terrain. It emerges every time a society attributes a specific function to a specific space. Therefore, the 'other space' is not understood as being outside of the ordinary. On the contrary, it is inside and challenges or contests the space we live in: it emerges from an existing territory changed to situational on the basis of a certain configuration.

Foucault elaborated on possible Heterotopias in his text, mentioning as different fields hotels, gardens, prisons, or libraries, among others. A further example of an 'other space' is the cinema on which I will focus here. It is defined as a space that has the power to juxtapose different, in fact incompatible spaces and locations in a single real place: the space of the cinema, and the space constructed by the movie on the screen¹⁰. Since the spectator can mentally drift into the events of the movie – a process, in which emotions are strongly involved too, – the amalgamation of the two spaces starts. One of the main features for it to happen is illusion. People are sunk in the narrative; they are absorbed by it. With regard to the field of art, I would postulate that film, video or slide pieces are also able to make people lose themselves in contemplation, but only if they fulfil certain parameters, either by establishing a coherent narrative, or by creating a specific atmosphere that allows the spectator to contemplate the work calmly and without being disturbed by other people or by the work itself.

But what if the spatial-temporal relation is not coherent anymore, what if there is a spatial and temporal dissociation, a loss of unity and stability? Can such works still be described by the concept of Heterotopia? Or are they in turn disrupting and unsettling

8 See: Linda Schädler, *op. cit.*, especially p. 88–90, 92–94.

9 Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces. Utopias and Heterotopias', in: *Rethinking Architecture. A Reader in Cultural Theory*, Ed. Neil Leach, New York: Routledge, 1997, (1984), p. 330–336, here p. 333.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 335.

it, demonstrating the limits of that concept? I would like to explore this with reference to Coleman's *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)*. The artist is making a clear and distinguishable reference to a historical event and thus overlays historical and experienced time. It is 'about reintegrating a dimension of the historical into art and its experience,' as Dorothea von Hantelmann has put it¹¹. If the focus is placed on the reintegration of the historical into the present, one could speak of a Heterotopia comparable to the cinema where fictional and factual spaces intermingle. But if one considers the entire work, the way it is structured and how this structure influences our perception, I am sceptical to call it a Heterotopia.

The main characteristic of *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* is precisely its constant disruption and disturbance of our perception through sound, film and space, so that we lose a clear sense of where and in what time we are. Our place as spectators is not easily discernible anymore. As I have mentioned earlier, the main reason for this is that we, as viewers, are exposed to two entirely different effects caused at exactly the same time: on the one hand, we are absolutely overwhelmed by the installation, and on the other, we can never be completely immersed in the work because our senses are attacked constantly by the way the space, the audial and the visual stimuli are structured, be it through the complete darkness of the room, through the language that is characterised by a certain rhythm, through the beats, through the rattling of the projector, or through the ultra-short snippets of the projected image.

The artist denies a coherent narrative and, hence, the concept of linearity is replaced by fragmentation and repetition. *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* never turns into a complete illusion. Instead, it leads to destabilisation as well as to the loss of control. The space, the visual and the sound are constantly re-organising our senses – the senses can never rest.

¹¹ Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art. The Meaning of Art's Performativity*, Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2010, p. 56.

Usually, we are able to locate ourselves in space, and we can put our body in relation to its dimension – but not anymore in complete darkness. Already in 1908, German philosopher Georg Simmel elaborated on how darkness makes real borders disappear, and how our own powers of imagination widen in it. Suddenly, one starts to feel surrounded by a fantastical-indefinite and unlimited space, which often provokes irritation¹². A comparable thing happens to the viewer in the Black Box. The dark space triggers a physic-psychological reaction, which can – as in the pitch-dark room of *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* – cause a feeling of unease, or even anxiety. Hence, the Black Box is not just the opposite of the White Cube, but rather a 'space of projection and suggestion of the psychological and affective,' as Ursula Frohne has rightly noticed¹³.

I have already mentioned the flicker of the film, the language, the heart-like beats and the rattling of the projector that can be heard in Coleman's installation. All these elements follow a certain rhythm, which is nearly, but not entirely regular throughout the unfolding of the work. Especially the hollow beats are so loud that they are physically perceived and can have an effect on the heartbeat of the viewer.

Generally speaking, all rhythms – be it music or beats – can have an impact on the heart rate¹⁴, and over the past years, several studies on the relation between music and the heart activity have been conducted.

¹² Georg Simmel, *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* [Sociology. Explorations of the Forms of Sociation], Ed. Otthein Rammstedt, Vol. 11, Frankfurt, 1992, (1908), p. 705.

¹³ Ursula Frohne, 'Ausbruch aus der weissen Zelle: Die Freisetzung des Bildes in cinematisierten Räumen' [Outbreak Out of the White Cube: The Release of the Picture in Cinematic Spaces], in: *Black Box. Der Schwarzraum in der Kunst* [Black Box. The Black Space in the Arts], exh.-cat. Kunstmuseum Bern, Ostfildern, 2001, p. 51–64, p. 57 (my translation).

¹⁴ I would like to thank cardiologist Ruth von Dahlen for the information on that topic by mail (05-05-2015).

Luciano Bernardi, a cardiologist and associate professor at the University of Pavia, for example, made a research on the impact of style and tempo of music. He played samples from pieces of Beethoven, Vivaldi, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, sitar music, a dodecaphonic orchestral work, and techno music to volunteers for two minutes. Unlike earlier studies, his research showed that the musical style and preference had no effect on the heart rate. It was only the tempo that had an impact: 'Fast music, whether classical or techno, caused increases in blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate, and reduced baroreflex sensitivity. Slow music, on the other hand, whether classical music or reggae-style sitar music, caused a significant fall in heart rate and breathing frequency compared with the baseline.'¹⁵ As a consequence, it can be assumed that beats, as they are occurring in Coleman's work, would have a comparable impact. A study performed by biomedical engineers in Sidney as early as in 1972 confirms this assumption. An audible click in a loudspeaker was played to volunteers at precise time intervals. The researchers found that the heart rate of human beings could deliberately be varied non-invasively: the auditory stimuli of a click were sufficient. If the stimulus falls within a certain restricted time range, the heart rate can be caused to increase or decrease, whereby the '[...] new rate is maintained until the stimulus is removed, when it reverts to its previous value.'¹⁶

This research is given proof that the loud beats perceived in Coleman's *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* influence the heart rate as well and, as a consequence, have a strong and direct effect on the body of the spectator. The rhythm creeps into the body, since one starts to

15 Emma Baines, 'Music and the Heart', in: *Circulation. European Perspectives in Cardiology, Journal of the American Heart Association*, 11 12 2007, p. 39–40. (A baroreflex helps to maintain blood pressure at nearly constant levels.)

16 P. T. Bason, and B. G. Celler, 'Control of the Heart Rate by External Stimuli', in: *Nature*, Vol. 238, 04 08 1972, p. 279–280 (The restricted time range depends on the particular subject. With stimuli of less than 0.1 s, no control can occur and the heart rate does not alter).

adjust to it unconsciously (or unwillingly). When I was experiencing the work in Dublin, my bodily reaction was thus directly linked to the conception of the work. As a viewer, I was not only inside the installation, but also physically overcome by it¹⁷. The strong impact of the beats on my own body, the voice, and the darkness created the impression that I was in fact in the boxing ring myself. I started to identify with the fighter – I even started to feel displaced into the body of the fighter. But the installation itself was not a simulacrum of a boxing ring. The black and white film always made it clear that it was a historical fight of a bygone time. Therefore, the film projection did not allow complete identification with the fighter.

These remarks reveal that Coleman's *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)* is a space that cannot be equated with the movie understood as a Heterotopia by Foucault. It is not entirely illusionistic, and the spectator is not entirely transported into a fictional space due to the fact that the historical film in his work is clearly fragmented and not coherent. Although the concept of Heterotopia makes one aware of the different notions of spaces that can be experienced, it falls short to describe the idiosyncratic structure of Coleman's work.

ANAMORPHOSIS

To analyse Coleman's work, I suggest referring to anamorphosis rather than to Heterotopia. Anamorphosis is an optical technique that emerged during the Renaissance, when central perspective had become the conventional manner of representation. One of the most famous examples of anamorphosis is to be found in the painting *The Ambassadors* (1533) by Hans

17 In the dance performance 'Moon Calendar' (2007, realised for Manifesta 7 in 2008), artist Hiwa K tried to overcome his heartbeat by tap-dancing to the rhythm of his own heart rate that he followed by listening through a stethoscope. It differs from Coleman's work insofar as it does not include or refer to the heart rate of the viewer, but isolates the artist from the surroundings.



1. Hans Holbein the Younger, Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve *The Ambassadors*, 1533, oil on oak
© The National Gallery, London

Hansas Holbeinas Jaunesnysis, Jeanas de Dinteville'is ir Georges'as de Selve *Ambasadoriai*, 1533, aliejus, ąžuolo lenta
© Nacionalinė galerija, Londonas



2. Hans Holbein the Younger, Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve *The Ambassadors*, 1533, oil on oak, Detail
© The National Gallery, London

Hansas Holbeinas Jaunesnysis, Jeanas de Dinteville'is ir Georges'as de Selve *Ambasadoriai*, 1533, aliejus, ąžuolo lenta, fragmentas
© Nacionalinė galerija, Londonas

Holbein the Younger [image 1]. Two ambassadors are depicted in front of a shelf filled with different instruments, mainly from the fields of astronomy, mathematics, geography and music. In the lower part of the painting, there is a depicted large indistinct mass that resists recognition when viewed from the front. It loses its distortion only when seen from the far side, meaning that the gradual transformation of an unrecognizable form into a discernible object can only be achieved by the physical movement of the viewer. It requires the viewer's active participation: only if he or she has physically shifted to the right side (an utterly untypical viewing angle for looking at a painting), does the form turn into a clearly discernible skull [image 2].

Anamorphic images can be best characterised by changing from one expected view to another and by revealing hidden secrets, once an uncommon viewing angle is discovered. They do these things in particular visual ways according to specific rules. Anamorphosis is thereby never operating independently, but is always bound to the conventional mode of viewing. It stretches the conventions of central perspective to its limits and, for that reason, can be defined as a disrupting factor in the system of central perspective, making the viewer aware of its structure and principles. Anamorphosis concerns not only the content – typical is the interplay between concealing and disclosing a motif in relation to the place of the spectator, – but also the way in which something is depicted and perceived.

By including snippets of moving images, Coleman does not create his work *ex nihilo*, but subtly refers to a historical film and, at the same time, to patterns of representation intrinsic to films of sport events (emphasizing it with the inclusion of the prominently placed projector in the Black Box). Since the found footage of the boxing match is not presented in its entirety, and the snippets presented are neither clearly discernible nor unveiling a coherent story, a fully illusionistic space is not created.

Instead, there is a continual shift between the exterior and the interior view: on the visual level, I was looking rather distanced at a boxing ring and the fight, but on the acoustic and spatial level, there was the notion of being inside the body of the fighter, not least because of the frequency of the strokes to which my heart rate adjusted unconsciously. Therefore, in *Box (AHARETURNABOUT)*, space is defined at the same time by illusion on the acoustic-spatial level, and by a rupture of illusion on the visual level. As a consequence, a secure and prescribed position of the viewer is lost not only in real space, but also metaphorically. This, in turn, fundamentally restructures the relation between the work and the spectator. Coleman has created a work that is, as I would postulate, challenging and destabilising the notion of a Heterotopia or, more generally speaking, it is in fact a counter-space, but a counter-space that itself is split up again as in anamorphosis. Similar to anamorphosis, in Coleman's work the shift from one spatial concept to the other also discloses a conventional viewing angle and at the same time denies a clear and stable definition of space. This withdrawal of a stable definition of space is mirrored on the semantic level: although the content of the work can be related to a boxing match, it is no longer possible to ascribe an unambiguous meaning¹⁸. The act of interpretation never comes to an end and, similarly, the viewer is constantly engaged in finding his or her relation to the work, whose space is neither illusionary nor real.

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18 See: Linda Schädler, *op. cit.*, especially p. 94.

KUR MES?
KOKIAME MES LAIKE?
ŽIŪROVO VIETA JAMESO
COLEMANO KŪRINYJE
BOX (AHHARETURNABOUT) (1977)

Linda Schädler

SANTRAUKA

Reikšminiai žodžiai: žiūrovo vieta, Juoda dėžė, garsas, anamorfozė, heterotopija, Jamesas Colemanas, Michelis Fouconet, Borisas Groysas.

Jameso Colemano audiovizualinis kūrinys *Box (AHHARETURNABOUT)* (1977) yra instaliuotas Juodojoje dėžėje, aklinoje tamsoje, kurioje žiūrovą atakuoja fragmentiški garsiniai ir vaizdiniai stimulai. Rodomos istorinių bokso rungtynių kadru nuotrupos, tačiau jų fragmentiškumas iki galo neleidžia suvokti, kas tai yra. Vaizdai ekrane verčia stipriai įsitraukti į rungtynes, patirti fizinį ir netgi psichologinį vaizdo poveikį, tuo tarpu fiziškai juntami garsūs ritmiški smūgiai įtakoja širdies ritmą ir galiausiai stipriai ir tiesiogiai veikia žiūrovo kūną. Tuo pat metu per nervingus garsinius ir vaizdinius stimulus žiūrovas aiškiai suvokia esantis parodų salėje, ir tai jam neleidžia iki galo įsitraukti į rungtynes. Dėl šių dviejų efektų Colemanui pavyksta maksimaliai sulieti iliuzinę ir realią erdvę, todėl žiūrovas jaučiasi atsidūręs tarp tikrovės ir fikcijos.

Kaip galima analizuoti tokį kūrinį kaip Colemano *Box (AHHARETURNABOUT)* neapsiribojant tik vaizdo fragmentų turiniu ir garsu? Tam, kad į analizę galėtume įtraukti ir pačią ekspoziciją bei viso kūrinio poveikį žiūrovo vaizduotei, siūlau remtis anamorfoze – optine technika, kuri atsirado Renesanso laikotarpiu. Tai yra toks vaizdavimo būdas, kai žiūrint iš priekio vaizdas yra neatpažįstamas, bet žvelgiant iš tolumo kampo iškreiptumas išnyksta. Transformaciją į atpažįstamą objektą galima pasiekti per fizinį žiūrovo judesį. Atradus neįprastą žiūros kampą, atsiskleidžia paslaptys.

Colemano kūrinyje nuolat pereinama nuo išorinio į vidinį vaizdą. Tai galima palyginti su anamorfoze: vizualiniame lygmenyje per atstumą žiūrime į bokso ringą ir

rungtynes, tačiau akustiniame ir erdviame lygmenyje jaučiamės taip, lyg būtumėme pačiame kovotojo kūne, didele dalimi dėl smūgių dažnumo, prie kurio nevalingai prisitaiko žiūrovo širdies ritmas. Visa tai baigiasi tuo, kad stebėtojas praranda savo saugią ir iš anksto numatytą poziciją ne tik realioje erdvėje, bet ir metaforiškai. Panašiai kaip anamorfozės atveju, Colemano kūrinyje perėjimas iš vienos erdvinės sampratos į kitą taip pat keičia įprastą žiūros kampą ir tuo pat metu neleidžia aiškiai ir stabiliai apibrėžti erdvės. Tai atsispindi semantiniame lygmenyje: nors kūrinio turinį galima sieti su bokso rungtynėmis, jo nebegalima suprasti vienareikšmiškai. Interpretacijos aktas niekada nesibaigia, ir žiūrovas nuolatos stengiasi rasti savo santykį su kūrinium, kurio erdvė nėra nei iliuzinė, nei reali.