

Witty Procedures.

*Der Fahrende Raum* and

*Die vierte Wand der dritten Pädagogin*

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What you see depends on your approach: whether purposely heading towards the free-standing architecture in anticipation of an event, or happen to come across it by chance while walking through the neighborhood; whether you participate as a child, a parent, an artist, a teacher, a member of the team, or as an art student. Each year, *Der Fahrende Raum*, situated in Munich's Freimann district, does not only change its location but also its appearance, opening itself up accordingly to very different activities. It is possible to hold theoretical lectures inside the space, or to jump out of it dressed in a costume. An audience might be placed on the surrounding lawn if the weather is good; if it's poor, the movable wooden walls might be closed to provide shelter. The room can be apprehended as a storage space for material, as a dance-floor, and as a play-sculpture. But it is just as possible to ignore all intentions, as these are constantly being expanded by all participants.

*Der Fahrende Raum* was initiated by Maximiliane Baumgartner, who served as its artistic director until 2019 alongside a changing constellation of others who have cooperated on the program over the years.<sup>1</sup> A resultant multi-layered entity emerged, in some ways paralleling Baumgartner's individual artistic practice, but also detaching itself from it and developing its own dynamic. Like Baumgartner herself, most participants have a hybrid understanding of their practice as artists, authors, curators, or educators, resulting in overlapping notions of what an artistic and/or educational activity can be. At the same time, such participatory structures frequently give rise to ambivalence around authorship, representation, institutionalization, and responsibility. I would like to address this complex from several angles and will elaborate on ideas connected to *Der Fahrende Raum*, my personal involvement with the project, and the space of resonance Baumgartner's painterly practice opens up within this context.

## Mobility

*Der Fahrende Raum* describes itself as an art project and mobile space of action for art educational and artistic activity in an urban

context. It is officially funded by the Verein *Kultur & Spielraum e.V.* on behalf of the City of Munich; its striking, tent-like architecture was designed by Baumgartner and Jochen Weber in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Every spring since, and running until October, it has been erected in a public square in Munich's Freimann district, providing space for artistic and educational activities for children, young people, and adults; as noted on *Der Fahrende Raum's* website, the aim is to host and enable a diverse range of events around collaborative action and artistic research.

The mobility that lends the space its name (it could be roughly translated as *Transient Space*) has held several implications from the very beginning. It can undoubtedly be understood as a reaction to the definitional power of urban planning, and at the same time, to the generally unimaginative spaces and offerings made available to children and young people, where delimiting fences are the rule and free-flowing transitions to the urban environment are the exception.<sup>3</sup> As a counter-proposal, *Der Fahrende Raum* instigates a wide range of actions in public space and calls for a sensibility of site-specificity, in this case for the Freimann district: "Its different settings serve as a point of convergence between urban gentrification processes—refugee arrival center and accommodation in former barracks, Euro-industrial park, a railway compound, Motor-World, and residential housing—producing a tension between new and old, familiar and foreign, transit and residence, periphery and center."<sup>4</sup>

Before having its own dedicated architecture, the first interventions took place in a temporary-use space where a former supermarket in Freimann had been sitting empty, activating the space for three months in 2015, and then again in 2016.<sup>5</sup> With a focus on performative and site-specific activity, *Der Fahrende Raum* has taken up this state of the temporary and turned it into its program. For mobility also implies fluctuation: the everyday experience of change (and displacement) in urban space, as well as continual cycles of discovery, use, and evacuation of meeting places and available open space. Expanding the scope of activity from the shop out to the pedestrian zone made it possible to both think about the habitual use of such spaces by the young participants as well as consider chance encounters with passers-by. As the project continued to develop, this approach towards mobility and permeability was translated into the design of the space itself:

while the free-standing architecture does not literally drive around, it sets off on its way for places that tend to occupy the periphery of public regard, between freeway and shopping mall, yet in the neighborhoods of many young people whose dormitory homes are likewise temporary. *Der Fahrende Raum* becomes a contact point for the neighborhood and opens itself up to being shaped—or disrupted—by its participants. Participation in this sense implies that planned activities must adapt—to the preferences, age, abilities, and the extent of the young visitors’ voluntary coming, staying, and going—and not the other way around.

Also making their way to Freimann are the invited guests, who here—sometimes more, sometimes less—act outside of their standard routines, art institutions, school buildings, and social roles. Furthermore, it is surely no coincidence if one might now and again come to think of circus grounds where tricksters, vagabonds, and artists gather. Many of these motifs appear thematically within the program’s lectures, performances, and play activities. Even Maximiliane Baumgartner’s own painterly postulation on the exterior wall of the architecture summons such spaces of collective action: a two-part tableau, the upper section depicting a group of people dancing. The motif is derived from the so-called *Schäfflertänze*, dances staged for the public square that, according to record, were introduced in Munich around 1500 to reinvigorate public street life after the plague. The scene thus posits a question towards the relationship between mandates of the state versus self-organization in relation to public space.

## Action

Central to Maximiliane Baumgartner’s artistic and pedagogical practice is the term *Aktionsraum* (action space) and the concept of “situated knowledge.” With this, she refers back to projects surrounding independent art and pedagogical action in Munich in the 1960s and 70s, as well as to Donna Haraway’s 1988 essay *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*. In her parallel rereading and attempts at practical application—likewise permeating the conception of *Der Fahrende Raum*—Baumgartner opens up both approaches for current discussion. She insists on the urgency of establishing alternative

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spaces for artistic-pedagogical action, in contrast to schools and institutions in which clear-cut learning objectives and canonical knowledge determine the potentiality of exchange between children, young people, and adults.

In recent years, Haraway’s text has delivered important keywords, particularly in connection to a differentiated viewpoint towards artistic research, that are useful for critically interrogating the relationship between artists and those participating in a project, and between research material and its representation within an art context. Haraway argues *against* “unlocatable, and [thus] irresponsible, knowledge claims” and *for* “situated and embodied knowledges.”<sup>6</sup> “Situated” here implies a local, and therefore partial, perspective, which arises only via a shared—and even bodily—experience, one which understands the exchange of knowledge as a process of mutual decoding. Against this backdrop, Baumgartner’s engagement with the history of artistic-pedagogical actions and feminist strategies of education to be understood as a thoroughly radical attempt to negotiate spaces within her work—or to develop them together with others—that enable surprising, unknown connections between contexts and generations. However, *Der Fahrende Raum* does not act in isolation from organizational frameworks, financial demands, and conceptual predecessors. On the contrary, a nexus of the discursive, personal, and historical, including figures and events local to the district of Schwabing-Freimann, is reflected again as material for theatrical reenactments as well as in the texts and images of the *Flugschriften*. In one of these annual magazines published by *Der Fahrende Raum*, Baumgartner shares her research around the two Munich-based groups that “founded and later sharpened the concept of the *Aktionsraum* as an artistic-pedagogical method”: the group *KEKS* (*Kunst-Erziehung-Kybernetik-Soziologie* / Art-Education-Cybernetics-Sociology) and the group *PA* (*Pädagogische Aktion* / Pedagogical Action). Herewith, she directly relates to a practice that views “action spaces as process-oriented vehicles for the consideration of the lived environment of the city (in this case, Munich) and its implications.”<sup>7</sup> An exchange with Gerd Grüneisl included in the *Flugschriften* elaborates on such attempts to build bridges between the free experiments of the late post-war years and current project-oriented approaches to working.<sup>8</sup> Grüneisl’s reports convey the activist significance of such conquests of urban space.

“The actions owed a lot to current artistic practices (happenings, action-painting, pop art, conceptual art, performance, land art, etc.) and always attempted to link as many disciplines of art as possible in complex ways. [...] But what was new was that all of a sudden children and young people could no longer be overlooked or ignored in public spaces.”<sup>9</sup>

Translated into the practice of *Der Fahrende Raum*, this concept of the action space encompasses the larger and smaller units that have shaped its program up to now: each year’s thematic areas of focus, the play-sculpture itself as the place for daily encounters with children and young people, the collective probing of urban space, and the collaborative research, sharing, and publishing of stories. From this rhizome-like scenario, a multitude of possibilities for connectivity emerge. Together with the young participants, the invited artists translate their artistic practice into new formats for a program of action. To name a few examples of the productions to date: the *Cyborg Disco Workshop – Zines, Posters and Crip Material* with Eva Egermann; the play-sculpture *Hummel Allmende* with Jonas Beutlhauser; the *Magic Channel* with Leo Heinik; the *Café Größenwahn* with Gözde Ilkin and Panagiotis Gritzos; and Baumgartner’s *Performative Gusto Gräser Children’s Archive*, a project the artist has developed over the years.<sup>10</sup>

## Cooperation

To address this again from a different, more personal angle: in 2018, Maximiliane Baumgartner and I designed a joint *Aktionsraum* under the title *Phasenweise nicht produktiv – Performance und Vermittlung* (Periods of Non-Productivity – Performance and Education).<sup>11</sup> Here, the term “productivity” turned into some sort of indicator to address different conceptions in both work fields: when do educational processes become counter-productive and for whom, but also how can non-productive periods be consciously allowed or how can the dropping out of overly efficient routines be provoked. Departing from this conceptual premise, we initiated a cooperative project between the institutions that we were respectively involved in: *Der Fahrende Raum* and the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. In the process, our roles as artists, teachers, and friends shifted and became intertwined, as did the relationship between collective and individual decision making surrounding the project, as the number of people involved—

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in effect, co-creators—constantly multiplied. The invited artists<sup>12</sup> took part in the mediation program inside *Der Fahrende Raum* as well as in a so-called *action day* organized with students<sup>13</sup> within the spaces of the academy. In both sites, provisional, performative, and slowed-down methods of teaching and learning were tested out or called for. Lying down, listening, sleeping, eating, presentations in the dark, or dancing in the daylight—all were proposals prompting reflection on whether art was actually work, a consideration opened up for all involved, whether for the children at *Der Fahrende Raum*, or the guests and participants of the action day. Or, as Clara Laila Abid Alsstar wrote to all of us during the planning phase for the event: “Shouldn’t basic needs be treated and viewed with at least the same value as intellectual work? Instead of being pushed into the background, as so often happens with the people tasked with carrying out such activities?”<sup>14</sup> The students involved were themselves artists, performers, and educators who have continuously been taking up and critically evaluating this topic. The resulting considerations were not all merely fed back into the *Aktionsraum* or into the art academy and its public, but were rather consolidated and realized within other self-organized contexts.<sup>15</sup>

Participatory projects do not always automatically allow for situations that are, according to Haraway, “less organized by axes of domination”<sup>16</sup> (especially in academic or art-institutional frameworks). Within this project, allowing time for different forms of visibility and invisibility, as well as for their reflection, perhaps created an opportunity for interrupting prevailing dichotomies and designations. In this sense, the gathering and exchanging of experiences, the production of publications and performances, and the collective testing of artistic and pedagogical tools foundational to *Der Fahrende Raum* and its action space are intended to be processes for sharing, as transparent as possible. Participants are prompted to take the developed pool of materials with them, to find productive uses of this experience and knowledge for themselves and others: a score of sorts that everyone can adopt, document, and evaluate from their own perspective.

## Painting

Under these auspices, how could one comprehend a painterly practice and the exhibiting of work as expanded fields of practice,

where intermediation is not excluded, but on the contrary, is named as a motif? In 2019, Maximiliane Baumgartner addressed this within the spaces of Galerie Max Mayer in Düsseldorf. Already in the title, *Die vierte Wand der dritten Pädagogin* (The Fourth Wall of the Third Pedagogue). The exhibition presents an interlaced discursive concept that resists binary arrangements and the distinct allocation of roles. The term “the fourth wall” refers to the invisible boundary between the seemingly closed realm of the stage and the reality of the audience, a division that is keenly addressed, crossed, and rendered visible within participatory approaches. The expression “the third pedagogue” goes back to Loris Malaguzzi and 1960s Italy with the Reggio-pedagogy movement, which in its work with children and young people grants particular attention to the architectural conditions and the design of the space as a kind of pedagogical actor. Baumgartner draws attention to the spanning space of negotiation between the artist, work, and viewer as well as that within educational scenarios, and which must be established anew again and again.

As in the installation of the painting *Schäfflers Grid* on the exterior wall of *Der Fahrende Raum*, the Düsseldorf exhibition proposes an understanding of painting-as-object that places itself in relation to its environment. In fact, the paintings displayed here seem to wish only to use the walls as a representative stage for a short period of time: their hanging is at the same time site-specific and temporary. They jut out over the edges of the gallery walls (and thus into the space of the viewer); they become figurative elements in space, their sheet metal supports cut in occasionally rounded, occasionally angular contours. Despite this body of works’ sculptural quality and gestural style of painting, the depicted elements within the pictorial space compress into narrative scenes as forest landscapes, parks, and streetscapes, articulated with just a few brushstrokes. Within *Die vierte Wand der dritten Pädagogin*, Maximiliane Baumgartner inserts a number of cultural signifiers into the field of vision between her and the viewer. Depictions of the *Ulm Stool*,<sup>17</sup> here with a stack of books, or of the façade of the Hofatelier Elvira<sup>18</sup> in Munich-Schwabing refer to spaces whose anti-fascist and feminist significance has drifted into oblivion. On the other end, one discerns a deconstruction of motifs that have been repeatedly charged by nationalist right-wing movements (as in the romanticized idea of the “German forest”).

In the painting *Einem Esel das Lesen beibringen* (Teaching a Donkey to Read, 2019), two people stand across from one another in a clearing, one holding a book in their hand, the other wearing donkey ears—but which they seem to be holding shut. The reference to the eponymous tale by Till Eulenspiegel does not only serve here to reflect on the absurdity of pedagogical models in which learning is limited to being taught. In the context of the exhibition—and with the knowledge that the artist posed as her own model in the role of the donkey—the scene interrogates the pitfalls of activism when taking a position of refusal alone is not enough to break up hierarchies inherent to the system. Particularly with regard to strategies of the “new right,” who often adopt parodic forms in order to evade debate, Baumgartner proposes a self-reflective criticism, mindful of not being “taken for a fool,” which is at the same time a plea for more complexity.

Baumgartner’s painting and installation practice, like her pedagogical and publishing work, is another setting for sharing her research, and a space for political positioning and self-reflection. Mobility, action, and collaboration, or in other words, agility, intervention, and communality, could be described as witty maneuvers for engaging in the world in its “protean embodiments,” as the world itself is, as Haraway states, a “coding trickster with whom we must learn to converse.”<sup>19</sup>

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- 1 At the end of 2019, Baumgartner transferred the supervision and management of *Der Fahrende Raum* to Ludwig Bader, author and educator, and to the artist and educator Leo Heinik.
- 2 Jochen Weber is a Hamburg-based artist.
- 3 See Maximiliane Baumgartner, “Viele Vampire sind Vögel,” *Der Fahrende Raum Flugschrift* #4 (2019/20).
- 4 Website of *Der Fahrende Raum*: <https://www.fahrender-raum.de/en/about/>.
- 5 These first actions marked the beginning of the collaboration with the cultural educator Doris Koopmann, who was active at *Der Fahrende Raum* from 2015 to 2018.
- 6 Donna Haraway, “Situierendes Wissen. Die Wissenschaftsfrage im Feminismus und

- das Privileg einer partialen Perspektive,” in: *Vermittelte Weiblichkeit: feministische Wissenschafts- und Gesellschaftstheorie*, Elvira Scheich (ed.) (Hamburg, 1996), 287. Originally published as “Situating Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn 1988), 575–599.
- 7 See Maximiliane Baumgartner, “Was mich als Malerin am Aktionsraum vor dem Hintergrund des Fahrenden Raums interessiert,” *Der Fahrende Raum Flugschrift* #2/*Florida Magazin* #4 (2017/18).
- 8 Gerd Grüneisl was a member of the KEKS group, a freelance cultural educator, and has been a project manager at *Kultur & Spielraum München e.V.* since 1989.
- 9 Gerd Grüneisl, “Der Aktionsraum – Vermittler zwischen Kunst und Pädagogik,” *Der Fahrende Raum Flugschrift* #2/*Florida Magazin* #4 (2017/18).
- 10 All productions are documented on the website of *Der Fahrende Raum*.
- 11 Our proposal was to focus on the relationship between performance as an artistic form and mediation itself as a performative act, in view of their mutual reflection and difference. See also: Karolin Meunier, “Phasenweise nicht produktiv” in: *Der Fahrende Raum, Flugschrift* #3. *Aktionsräume. Pädagogische Partituren und künstlerische Routen*, 2019.
- 12 For the Aktionsraum “Periods of Non-Productivity,” the artists Eva Egermann (Vienna) and Romy Rügger (Berlin/Zurich) were invited.
- 13 Clara Laila Abid Alsstar, Martin Bogisch, Vera Brosch, Eva Burkhardt, Luca Daberto, Lukas Eberl, Tabea Färber, Jonathan Göhler, Anna Greckl, Sophia Köhler, Ashley Lamm, Antonia Lippert, Franziska Lütke, Corinna Rausch, Anna-Lena Steinbach, and Pauline Stroux.
- 14 Clara Laila Abid Alsstar is an artist and art educator in Munich. See her contribution in the jointly produced publication *Phasenweise nicht produktiv. Ein Reader als Performance und Vermittlung*, published together with the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, 2019.
- 15 I am referring here for instance to parallel and long-term involvement of several students with the format of a free pedagogical class, with their own performance projects, and in the implementation of anti-racist pedagogical work.

- 16 Haraway, 288.
- 17 *The Ulmer Hocker* was designed in 1954 by Max Bill in collaboration with Hans Gugelot within the environment of the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm; the context of its creation—a design school invested in anti-fascist artistic teaching—is hardly communicated anymore. See press release, Galerie Max Mayer, 2019.
- 18 The Hofatelier Elvira was a photo studio of 1900s bohemian Schwabing that the women’s rights activist Anita Augspurg ran together with her romantic partner Sophia Goudstikker. The location also played a role in *Café Größenwahn – an Artist Colony*, an action space included in the 2019 program of *Der Fahrende Raum*.
- 19 Haraway, 297.



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(1) Ausschnitt / Detail *Schäfflers Grid*,  
Der Fahrende Raum, München / Munich, 2019.  
Foto / Photo: Leo Heinik



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(2) Aktionsraum / Action space *Magic Channel*  
(von und mit / by and with Leo Heinik),  
Der Fahrende Raum, München / Munich, 2019.  
Foto / Photo: Maximiliane Baumgartner



(3) Lesung, Aktionsraum / Reading, Action Space  
*Wir führen uns mal auf. Die Kinderbuchsammlung*  
zu Gast im Fahrenden Raum, München / Munich, 2018.  
Foto / Photo: Maximiliane Baumgartner.

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schöne Lieder. Maximiliane Baumgartner

Maximiliane Baumgartner

