4.3   THE ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL STAKES FOR THE WORKS SELECTED FOR THE *ROBERT SCHUMAN ART AWARD*: EXHIBITION AND PUBLICATION SPACES – PLACES OF TRANSFORMATION AS WELL AS ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL INTERSTICE?

Paul di Felice

"In an art exhibition complex relations come into play between what is shown and what is said; between the visitors and what they are able to read or understand. What also comes into play here are what the social notions of an exhibition (of contemporary art), a mediating text or a visit should be"[12] (Glicenstein 2013: 166).

Created in 1991 as an art biennale for promoting cultural and artistic exchange and reinforcing common 'identities' between the four cities of Luxembourg, Metz, Saarbrücken and Trier, the award[13] is named after Robert Schuman, one of the founding fathers of the European Community. This event, which takes place every two years in one of the four cities, has been organized since 1995 in such a way that the city hosting the award determines the curators (one for each city) who in turn select the artists, each represented with five works. These works are presented in an exhibition, accompanied by a bilingual (German-French) catalogue and assessed by eight jurors.

The complicated but well-structured organization remains very organic and dynamic through the constantly changing artistic and cultural players (artists and curators, jury and representatives of the cultural establishment).

The artistic and cultural stakes for the organizing city are considerable, because it is the one that determines the exhibition locations and coordinates the choice of curators. It has to consider issues of the works' mediation and reception, place the works in the context of its own local cultural policy and at the same time help them to find recognition in the world of contemporary art beyond its borders. But how does the exhibition's disposition and the concept of the catalogue relate to the dynamics resulting from the opposition between local or regional artistic and cultural discourses on the one hand and international contemporary art on the other?

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12 | Personal translation of: "Dans des expositions se jouent des relations complexes entre ce qui est montré et ce qui est dit ; entre les différents auteurs de ce qui est dit et le contexte où ils le disent ; entre les visiteurs et ce qu'il leur est possible de lire ou de comprendre. Ici se jouent aussi des représentations sociales de ce que doit être une exposition (d'art contemporain), un texte de médiation, une visite."

13 | The *Robert Schuman Art Award* includes a prize money of 10,000 € for one or more of the selected artists. Besides this sum of money, being awarded also lends greater public visibility and recognition to the artist and his or her work.

If one considers the catalogue, as the only official and permanent reference to the exhibition, to be an additional space for presenting the exhibition, one may ask how this space can encourage the transition of the nascent work from the studio to the exhibition. Do the exhibition and the catalogue allow the works to be related to each other in a space of opposition and exchange?

This chapter will also deal with the question of artistic recognition connected to topics that are inherent to the event of the *Robert Schuman Art Award*, i.e. the opposition between regionalism and internationalism, as well as the contrast between local and international contemporary art.

Furthermore, I will look into the question of artistic and cultural representation by referring to specific works presented at the exhibition and their accompanying texts. I will examine the mediation and the reception of the works by verifying in how far the catalogue has the potential to be an additional exhibition space, even becoming an interstitial space where the transfiguration of 'local/regional' artistic work can take place, aiming at international recognition via cultural and artistic identity constructions and deconstructions.

In terms of methodology, I will proceed by analysing, using examples from the catalogue of the organizing city, four topics that show the prize as a "place of interaction" and as a "place of production and reflection of the social discourse"[14] (Davallon 1992: 103). More precisely, I will show how the prize expresses an interstitiality and a productive tension between two types of discourse and practice, between international orientation of contemporary art on the one hand and regional embeddedness on the other. The selected works frequently play with or dissociate themselves from this local rootedness by making use of the cross-border character of the respective region, precisely in order to endeavour to establish an international artistic and cultural discourse. This oscillation between the local and the global takes place in various ways. I have distinguished four different themes that emerge in the following editions of the prize:

- Luxembourg 1995: Can one speak of a European orientation and of an inscription of cross-border regional art into international contemporary art?
- Metz 2001: Art as a dissolution of borders?
- Saarbrücken 2005: Political discourses, socially engaged, aesthetical works?
- Trier 2007: The catalogue as a space of aesthetic exchange and a facilitator for the appropriation of new artistic tendencies?

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14 | Personal translation of: "Lieu d'interaction", "Lieu de production et de réflexion du discours social."

The 1995 edition which took place in the framework of the event *Luxembourg – European Capital of Culture* relaunched the prize – after the fiasco of 1993 – giving it a European orientation and inscribing regional cross-border art into international contemporary art. Metz 2001, where the concept of art as a dissolution of borders was a key theme, constituted a further important step.

Saarbrücken 2005 attempted to go beyond the regional framework by turning to political, ethical and aesthetical discourses without any apparent link to the location of the exhibition. This was however not a linear development: the 2007 Trier edition which took place, again, in the framework of *Luxembourg and Greater Region – European Capital of Culture* returned to art as a link between the region and the world of contemporary art. What was more apparent here than in other editions, however, was that the radical treatment in the regional and global artistic productions chosen by the artists in 2007 was not always fully appreciated by the not very experienced regional audience. The communication projected by the exhibition and the catalogue nevertheless reveals the concern of the prize's major players to encourage the public's acceptance of contemporary art. We shall see in how far the catalogue has contributed to a better understanding of new international artistic trends in a regional context.

4.3.1 Luxembourg 1995: Can one speak of a European orientation and of an inscription of cross-border regional art into international contemporary art?

After an initial attempt in 1991 (a sort of test run) and after the fiasco of 1993 the *Robert Schuman Art Award* was relaunched in 1995 in Luxembourg.

In the framework of the cultural year *Luxembourg – European Capital of Culture,* the award gave itself a new structure compared to 1991 in order to ensure a higher degree of artistic quality: four renowned curators were invited to propose four artists from one city.

Luxembourg's decision to entrust the project coordination to the Swiss Urs Raussmüller, 1982/83 founding member of the *Hallen für Neue Kunst* in Schaffhausen[15], was a decisive step. Responsible for redesigning the *Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain* to an exhibition space during the cultural year, Rausmüller was also assigned by the city of Luxembourg to select the Luxembourg candidates for the *Robert Schuman Art Award*. He had made himself a name with his activities as director of the *Hallen für Neue Kunst* in the field of museography of contemporary art. With the so-called *White Cubes,* the *Casino Luxembourg* established an exhibition concept which respected the classical architecture of the building, creating a neutral atmosphere particularly effective

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15 | With an exhibition area of over 5,000 m^2 this museum, housing a large collection of concept art, *arte povera*, *minimal art* and *land art*, served for a longtime as a model for other museums of contemporary art.

for exhibiting contemporary art. As the curator for the *Robert Schuman Art Award,* he was also responsible for the museography of the exhibition space, the Halle Victor Hugo. As the mayor Lydie Würth-Polfer emphasized in her preface to the catalogue: "With the Halle Victor Hugo, Urs Rausmüller succeeded in creating an exhibition architecture that is very sobre and very appropriate"[16] (catalogue 1995: 4).

For Rausmüller, the *Robert Schuman Art Award,* one of many art events in the programme of the cultural year, became a challenge to create an artistic approach that was original and convincing. It aimed for a process that embraced the logics of contemporary art rather than for one qualitatively superior single oeuvre.

His particular concern was therefore contrasting the works and the artists in a space and he favoured the reception through documentation and diffusion:

"There is only a point in bestowing an art award if the purpose is not to honour an individual but rather to engage with many. The award provides the pretext to launch a work and orientation process which involves much more than the participating artists, and that is where its primary importance lies"[17] (ibid.: 7).

As the politically responsible office-holder, Lydie Würth-Polfer also mentions the importance of the event with regard to the cross-border mingling of ideas and concerns. In her view, the art award shows the quality of contemporary art production that reaches beyond the Greater Region:

"For a long time already the cultural commonalities of the inhabitants of the border region around the cities of Luxembourg, Metz, Saarbrücken and Trier have been inspiring those responsible for cultural politics to constantly new projects. The European spirit is expressed – more than in any other event – in the *Robert Schuman Art Award*, which after being redesigned gives an overview of the best contemporary works of art in our cross-border and cross-regional space"[18] (ibid.: 5).

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16 | Personal translation of: "[...] réunit seize créateurs retenus dans une présentation architecturale très sobre et très adaptée."

17 | Personal translation of: "Die Verleihung eines Kunstpreises hat nur dann einen Sinn, wenn das Ziel nicht in der Auszeichnung eines einzelnen, sondern in der Beschäftigung mit vielen gesehen wird. Der Preis liefert den Vorwand, einen Arbeits- und Orientierungsprozess auszulösen, in den weit mehr als die betroffenen Künstler einbezogen sind, und darin liegt seine primäre Bedeutung."

18 | Personal translation of: "Im Robert-Schuman-Preis, der nach seiner Neugestaltung einen Überblick über die besten zeitgenössischen Kunstwerke in unserem grenz-und regionenübergreifenden Raum gibt, findet – mehr als in jeder anderen Veranstaltung – der europäische Geist seinen Ausdruck."

This European and international dimension was also underscored by the choice of the nominated artists. It was above all the curator for Saarbrücken, Jo Enzweiler, who, while deploring the poor level of the 1993 submissions, raised the political and artistic stakes of the prize by justifying his choice of artists as follows:

"In order to reach this desired level from the very beginning, I have pledged to consider in my selection artists who already possess an expressive, rich and visually convincing œuvre"[19] (ibid.: 18).

It was he who nominated the artist Wolfgang Nestler who would go on to become the prize-winner of Luxembourg 1995. All four coordinators favoured putting the emphasis on the strong personality and expressive freedom of the nominated artists. Rausmüller reminds us in the catalogue:

"The learnable mastery in handling materials and forms on the surface or in space or the visually successful realization of a specific topic are therefore in themselves insufficient criteria for assessing artistic quality. The only thing that counts in art is boundless individuality – the artist's subjective stance which, in its condensation in the work of art (regardless of the form it takes), attains universality in the course of time"[20] (ibid.: 6).

The French version of the catalogue renders the German "uneingeschränkte Individualität" as "personnalité unique et libre de s'exprimer", reflecting a shift

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19 | Personal translation of: "Damit von Anfang an dieses angestrebte Niveau auch erreicht werden kann, habe ich mich darauf festgelegt, bei meinem Vorschlag Künstler zu berücksichtigen, die über ein anschauliches, umfangreiches und öffentlich wirksames Œuvre verfügen."
French version of the catalogue text: "Afin de parvenir à ce niveau, je me suis engagé à choisir, en soumettant ma proposition, des artistes dont l'œuvre est expressive, riche et visuellement convaincante."

20 | Personal translation of: "Das erlernbare Geschick im Umgang mit Materialien und Formen auf der Fläche oder im Raum oder die visuell geglückte Umsetzung einer bestimmten Thematik sind darum als solche keine ausreichende Vorgabe für eine Bewertung künstlerischer Qualität. Was in der Kunst zählt ist einzig uneingeschränkte Individualität – die subjektive Haltung des Künstlers, die in der Verdichtung im Kunstwerk (welche Erscheinungsform es auch immer annimmt) im Verlauf der Zeit Allgemeingültigkeit erlangt."
French version of the catalogue text: "La maîtrise acquise des matériaux et des formes, à plat ou dans l'espace, ou la transposition réussie d'un sujet donné ne suffisent pas, en soi, à évaluer la qualité artistique. Ce qui importe dans l'art, c'est la personnalité unique et libre de s'exprimer, le comportement subjectif de l'artiste qui, en se concentrant sur son œuvre (quelle que soit son apparence) parvient, avec le temps, à la reconnaissance universelle."

in content and emphasizing the significance of the artist's "singular personality" and his or her "freedom of expression."

Sculptor Wolfgang Nestler, who before had participated (in 1977 and 1987) in the major art exhibition *Documenta* in Kassel that takes place every 5 years, presented an oeuvre that confirmed this longtime involvement with a new visual concept inspired by minimal art. His international recognition – art critics compare him to the great American artist Richard Serra, known in Luxembourg for his sculpture *Exchange*, which was erected on the Kirchberg in 1996 – makes him the ideal representative of this European and international development of an art that has emancipated itself from regionalism: "Wolfgang Nestler was, parallel to the American Richard Serra, the decisive protagonist of the new paradigm – for here there is a paradigm, not a rapidly exhausted stylistic variation"[21] (Schneckenburger 2013).

Luxembourg 1995 thus aimed more at an oeuvre that would endure over time, at the visual and formal qualities of the artistic approach and its international recognition, in other words at the total output of an artistic personality, rather than at the aesthetic qualities of an individual work.

The event taking place in the framework of this cultural year therefore highlighted the visual qualitites of the region's artists by giving the award to an artist whose work had already attained the status of European and international art. Instead of serving as a stepping stone to an international career for a young artist, the award here used an artist's reputation in order to reinforce its own recognition and standing, by nominating a personality that had already attained international artistic recognition.

4.3.2 Metz 2001: Art as a dissolution of borders?

The particular feature of the 2001 edition in Metz was the challenge of organizing an event that comprised three exhibitions at three renowned venues in the city.[22] "The work of art invites us", wrote Jean-Marie Rausch, mayor of Metz, in his preface, "to once more discover new paths and traverse the rifts of history. In this European space, everyone can grow and bring a part of himself or herself to the table"[23] (catalogue 2001: 7).

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21 | Personal translation of: "Wolfgang Nestler war, parallel zu dem Amerikaner Richard Serra, der maßgebliche europäische Protagonist des neuen Paradigmas – denn es handelte sich um ein Paradigma, nicht um eine rasch erschöpfte Stilvariante."

22 | The exhibition venues in Metz were the Musée de la Cour d'Or, the Arsenal and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

23 | Personal translation of: "Das Kunstwerk lädt uns ein, noch einmal neue Wege zu entdecken und über die Gräben der Geschichte zu gehen. In diesem europäischen Raum kann jeder wachsen und ein Teil von sich selbst aufbringen."

The coordinators also emphasized the event's originality and participatory format. The variety of exhibition venues and the fragmentation of the art works – presented in such diverse forms as video, installation, photography, text and painting – lent a pronounced dynamism to Metz 2001.

With its novel orientation, the *Robert Schuman Art Award* now had the aim to remodel the disposition of the exhibition as well as the communication with the public by creating spaces that were more suited for the presentation of processes than of finished works. The elimination of all sorts of borders was also supposed to show in the style of presentation. The exhibition was to be regarded as a dynamic and permeable dispositif, as Reesa Greenberg described it:

"A model which posits the exhibition less as entity and more as event, less as finite and fixed and more as temporally fluid phenomenon, less as an insular construct and more as a relational structure in its internalized and externalized connections, less as address and more as conversation" (Greenberg 1995, 118-115).

In this Metz edition, the emphasis was on the fluidity and flexibility of the artists who via their creative work evoked openings, transitions and spaces of exchange that supersede ideological and geographical boundaries. Laure Faber and Bettina Heldenstein, the coordinators for the city of Luxembourg, emphasized:

"Artistic work does not stop at borders. Artists do not even need to ignore or delete borders, since these technically do not exist for them. They are only fictional lines that delineate a sphere of activity within which a number of people exercise power. The artists' sphere of activities however is the whole world as they experience and perceive it. It is at the same time matter and subject"[24] (catalogue 2001: 13).

Her choice of artists, particularly with Su Mei Tse (laureate), a young artist who comes from a multicultural background (born in Luxembourg, English mother, Chinese father) and Yvan Klein, who presented his series in Japan, contributes to this idea of opening which contemporary art can convey by breaking through the imposed boundaries. In the text of their presentation, the two Luxembourg coordinators formulated this very clearly:

"Neither their background, nor their training nor their interests are limited to Europe. In our view, the choice of these artists, whose works testify to an open-mindedness and a real

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24 | Personal translation of: "Künstlerische Arbeit macht nicht an Grenzen halt. Künstler brauchen Grenzen noch nicht einmal zu ignorieren oder zu tilgen, da diese für sie, genau genommen, nicht existieren. Es sind nur fiktive Linien, die ein Wirkungsfeld begrenzen, innerhalb dessen einige Menschen Macht ausüben. Das Wirkungsfeld der Künstler ist jedoch die ganze Welt so wie sie sie erleben und wahrnehmen. Sie ist gleichzeitig Materie und Subjekt."

involvement in the present, seems justified for an award on a regional level which at the same time claims international recognition"[25] (ibid.: 13).

This edition seems to be expressly directed at a distant world, an artistic journey that aims to take the spectator far beyond the regional borders and the topics connected to the city network of the *Quattropole*. As if the coordinators had invited the artists to "wander about in the Afterworld, far removed from geographical borders and ideological limitations they would have been subjected to in order to reduce them to a cultural product that would be treated as a commodity"[26], as Bernard Copeaux, coordinator of Metz, put it in the catalogue. (ibid.: 23).

The dyptichs of the series *Nippon Inside/out* of Luxembourg artist Yvan Klein illustrate this transition into another culture where static interiors contrast with dynamic exteriors in an opposition of tradition and modernity. The association of aleatoric images, frequently determined by the formal components of photography, provoke in the beholder a cultural shift of involvement.

Figure 1: Cover of the catalogue
Robert Schuman Art Award 2005

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25 | Personal translation of: "Weder ihre Herkunft, noch ihre Ausbildung oder ihre Interessen beschränken sich auf Europa. Die Auswahl dieser Künstler, deren Arbeiten Zeugnisse einer offenen Sichtweise sowie eines wirklichen Engagements in der Gegenwart sind, erscheint uns gerechtfertigt für einen Preis auf regionaler Ebene, der gleichzeitig international Geltung beansprucht."

26 | Personal translation of: "[...] im Jenseits zu irren, weit entfernt von geografischen Grenzen und ideologischen Einschränkungen, die ihnen aufgezwungen wären, um sie zu einem kulturellen Produkt, das wie Ware behandelt würde, zu reduzieren."

In the installation *Si lo desea, cante!* by Dieter Kunz, an artist nominated by Saarbrücken, there is also no evidence of a regional topic. Far away from home, at the bus station and the metro station *Bellas Artes* in the centre of Caracas, Venezuela, he set up a two-part installation (video and audio) which retraces the surroundings in shifted reality and time, while the cityscapes of the Trier artist Rut Blees, steeped in mysterious and magical light, seem to transport us into the photographic non-places between reality and fiction.

In focusing on the dissolution of borders, the award of Metz 2001 not only presents works of art that pinpoint the cultural transfer from one region to another, but it also created a platform of reflection and of political, social and artistic discourse. In their contrast, the works of art, frequently inspired by personal, local, regional and national themes, took on a global dimension.

4.3.3 Saarbrücken 2005: Political discourses, involved, aesthetic works?

"Visual art is suited like no other to be an ambassador of lively exchange", wrote Charlotte Britz, mayor of Saarbrücken, in the preface of the catalogue of the *Robert Schuman Art Award*[27] (catalogue 2005: 6). Further on in the catalogue, in his presentation of the Luxembourg nominees, the art historian and critic and coordinator for the city of Luxembourg, René Kockelkorn, regrets that "precisely the political, the ideological plays no role whatsoever in the annals of the so-called *Schuman Art Award*, barring the usual babble at the opening of the respective exhibitions"[28], and he explains his choice of artists, "in order to change this", by proposing works "which fathom human existence on various levels of society"[29] (ibid.: 10).

The Luxembourg contribution is, appropriately, an installation by Jerry Frantz titled *Schandmaul* ('malicious tongue'), consisting of a video production and a 17th century iron mask, a loan from the Medieval Crime Museum in Rothenburg ob der Tauber.

In the Saarbrücken projection we see a film which records without sound the facial expressions of people reacting to questions posed by a female journalist. The people interviewed in Luxembourg were asked provocative questions such as: "Would you murder your wife if you were certain you could get away with it?" or "Do you think Hitler did good things?" The installation shows the people filmed with a video camera and their different facial expressions in slow motion.

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27 | Personal translation of: "Die Bildende Kunst ist wie keine andere dazu geeignet, Botschaften eines lebendigen Austausches zu sein."

28 | Personal translation of: "[...] dass gerade das Politische, das Ideologische, in den Annalen des so genannten Schuman-Kunstpreises, außer in den üblichen Sonntagsreden zur Eröffnung der jeweiligen Ausstellungen, keine Rolle spielt."

29 | Personal translation of: [...] "dies zu ändern", [indem er Werke vorschlägt,] "[die] auf verschiedenen Ebenen die Gesellschaft und die menschliche Existenz aus[loten]."

In this installation which relates the iron scold's bridle – in the shape of a pig's head – to the mute facial expressions shown in close-up, the artist invites us to reflect on the freedom of opinion and self-censorship in a liberal democracy. The relevance of the work with its references to history and politics, the geographical transfer from one city to another, the aesthetic and artistic prejudice are treated here, as always with Frantz, with a certain irony, while the viewer is still accorded a good measure of interpretational freedom.

The award winner Margit Schäfer, nominated by the city of Saarbrücken, takes her inspiration more from her family than from society at large, but with her series *Zehn Leben* ('Ten Lives') and *Vermächtnis* ('Legacy') she questions, through photo album pictures, the representation of the woman as seen by the petty-bourgois male. In these series, the artist plays with the synchronization of self-identification and identification by others by staging herself as her own mother on an old family photograph taken by her father.

These works by Frantz and Schäfer *in situ* testify to a political involvement that was announced by certain exhibition curators, even though in this edition not only social issues but also purely visual and aesthetic aspects played a role.

Figure 2: Video-stills excerpts from the catalogue Robert Schuman Art Award 2005 (Jerry Frantz)

4.3.4 Trier 2007: The catalogue as a space of aesthetic exchange and a facilitator for the appropriation of new artistic tendencies?

Looking at the catalogue of 2007, one immediately sees that the graphic design has not changed between 2005 and 2007. There is a shift from orange to the complimentary colour blue, but format and typography have remained unaltered. As already in 2005, the catalogue came with a DVD to reproduce the works presented as videographic works to their best advantage.

Even though in terms of form changes are not significant, they are all the more so in terms of content. The catalogue's introductory text is indeed something special since it is an excerpt from a text by the art theorist Bazon Brock on aesthetics: *Der Barbar als Kulturheld* (2007) ('The Barbarian as a Cultural Hero'). Why is the text which figures as an introduction to the catalogue so important? The fame of the author most certainly plays a part here. But what makes it significant is above all the topic of his contribution, with its thesis that "the demand for beauty is revolutionary, because it forces one to equally appreciate the ugly"[30] (catalogue 2007: 8).

In the text, Bazon Brock develops his theory of the conception and reception of the contemporary artwork by emphasizing – drawing on Duchamp's art of the *ready-made*, which he relates to the self-declared forgery in art – the difficulties, even the uselessness of judging:

"The transition from normative to non-normative aesthetics, from that of the beautiful 'to that of the no longer beautiful arts', therefore implies judging forgery no longer as a criminal act but rather as a creative performance. It is only as a declared forgery that the work can become a work of art"[31] (ibid.: 13).

Did the organizers have the need to justify the new artistic tendencies by relying on a theorist of renown? In substantiating their choice, the Luxembourg coordinators Kevin Muhlen and Anne Kayser point to the diversity of contemporary art production in Luxembourg under which they subsume different techniques such as installation, video art, photography and painting. The disposition of the installation and the diversity of tools of expression is emphasized, as well as the *mise en abyme* of contemporary art production. A number of art works from Trier 2007 illustrate this choice of topic very well. Selected by the Metz coordinator Jean-

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30 | Personal translation of: "Die Forderung nach Schönheit ist revolutionär, weil sie das Hässliche gleichermaßen zu würdigen zwingt."

31 | Personal translation of: "Der Übergang von der normativen zur nicht-normativen Ästhetik, von der der schönen 'zu der der nicht mehr schönen Künste', bedeutet dem zufolge, Fälschung nicht mehr als kriminellen Akt sondern als schöpferische Leistung zu bewerten. Das Werk kann nur noch als deklarierte Fälschung zum Kunstwerk werden."

Jacques Dumont under the title *Travelling*, Samuel François highlights the concept of the artist as a nomad who acts superregionally via exhibitions, exchanges and residencies.

The artist's geographical location reveals much about his inspirations. Living in Lorraine, in the small community of Hettange-Grande (some 30 kilometers from Metz, but also from the borders to Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany), he realized his first artistic projects in the open countryside and in the urban environment. These were temporary actions that take on various forms in the catalogue. The dispositif of the presentation is constitutive for this ephemeral and de-sacralized art, giving it, via the international exhibition and the catalogue, the legitimacy to exist in the world of art. This reveals the full meaning of Bazon Brock's introduction which ties in with the ideas of the American philosopher Arthur Danto and his concept of the transfiguration of the banal object into art. In the face of an object that transforms into art we are confronted with the intentionality of the artist and the "incarnation of his significance"[32] (Thériault 2010: 60).

In a certain sense the exhibition as well as the catalogue become this interstice where the object transforms into art, the idea into matter, and where reflection finds its space of aesthetic exchange.

Figure 3: Cover of the catalogue
Robert Schuman Art Award 2007

Trier 2007, organized in the framework of the year called *Luxembourg and Greater Region – European Capital of Culture 2007*, also presented itself as an event that contributed to the superregional and national dialogue and aimed at changing the

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32 | Personal translation of: "L'incarnation de sa signification."

attitudes of the public and the image of the region (see Sonntag 2013). As Monika Sonntag noted in her study on cross-border cooperation, the aim of the cultural year was to cross borders and boundaries and attempt the unexpected.

"The aim to promote cross-border mobility of the public and its openess towards new forms of art shows itself to be basically a social problem. In the face of this problem, the cultural-political challenge seems to be primarily to overcome social borders of cultural education"[33] (Sonntag 2012: 95f.).

The *Robert Schuman Art Award* of 2007 was able to contribute via the exhibition and the catalogue to overcoming cultural borders by making contemporary art accessible to a larger public.

4.3.5 Conclusion

The works assembled in the various exhibitions and catalogues of the *Robert Schuman Art Award*, presented via different schemes and accompanied by texts and discourses, testify in equal measure to a specific culture through the participation of regional art schools as well as to a common culture that is reflected in a particular timeliness of the works. However, this sometimes only becomes clear to the untrained public with a certain time delay. If the (Greater) region hardly ever appeared as a topic in the art works, it was because one wanted to prevent artistic regionalism by favouring more general topics, and because the award feels committed to a high-level European culture. In terms of presentation everything is done to blur the actually existing differences and discrepancies between the four cities that have no common production budget.

The emphasis is, particularly in the catalogues, on contemporary art, which asks more questions than it gives answers. In this way it is possible to bring works into contact with the international art world, while at the same time creating a new platform for the exchange between artists and regional public.

Can one therefore say that the award in its function as an interstice really contributed to the development of contemporary art in the region? Does it, after eleven editions, enjoy the international recognition in the world of art that it has striven to achieve?

In the years 2007 and 2008 the award winners exhibition *The Best of* took place in the framework of *Luxembourg and the Greater Region – European Capital of Culture 2007* at the same time as the regular award event, first in Trier and subsequently in

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33 | Personal translation of: "Das Ziel, die grenzüberschreitende Mobilität des Publikums und dessen Offenheit gegenüber neuen Kunstformen zu fördern, stellt sich im Kern als soziale Problematik heraus. Die kulturpolitische Herausforderung scheint angesichts dieser Problematik in erster Linie darin zu bestehen, soziale Grenzen der kulturellen Bildung zu überwinden."

Luxembourg, at various major exhibition venues. As a sign of an opening to the east, Dumitru Gorzo, an artist from Sibiu in Romania, was also part of the selection of the *Robert Schuman Art Award* 2007, as a guest *hors concours*.

If one looks at the list of young artists that participated in the award, one can note that the event has contributed to the artistic development of some participants. Personalities such as Su-Mei Tse who in Venice in 2003 was awarded the Golden Lion for the Luxembourg pavilion (two years after her participation in the *Robert Schuman Art Award*), or Martine Feipel, who together with Jean Bechameil represented Luxembourg at the 54th Biennale in Venice, received their first visibility and recognition via the award's exhibition and catalogue.

But there were also critical remarks by artists and curators who participated in the award. For the Luxembourg artist Marco Godinho, who was invited as curator (2009 for Metz) and as artist (2011 for Luxembourg), the award – which he described as an interesting and important initiative – permits "to deconstruct local representations, to highlight the notions of territory, interstice and multiculturality, but should be developed more consistently regarding its artistic concept and its mediation"[34], so that the participating artists and above all the young laureate can profit from the award for his or her professional development.[35] Nevertheless the award creates a scheme which allows to contrast the works and reflect them in their reference to multiculturality and contemporary art.

Finally, this ephemeral space which establishes a transition between local production and international art production and a connection between artist and spectator, can only be realized if it is appropriated and recognized by the public.

These four examples of the 1995, 2001, 2005 and 2007 editions of the *Robert Schuman Art Award* have shown how both the exhibition venue as well as the space of the catalogue have contributed in shaping the way of dealing with local, regional and national culture with regard to the globalization of art. By creating a 'space of passage', the award partly succeeds in turning the different artistic stances into complex and hybrid options, which, taking into account the different identities and spaces, can complement instead of confront each other. Even if this space only appears occasionally, it will legitimize the interplay of the cultures of production and reception in art and contribute to building new transcultural bridges.

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34 | Personal translation of: "[...] die lokalen Vorstellungen zu dekonstruieren, die Vorstellungen von Territorium, von Zwischenraum und Multikulturalität zu thematisieren, doch sollte er hinsichtlich des künstlerischen Konzepts und der Vermittlung konsequenter weiterentwickelt werden."

35 | Marco Godinho, Interview at the book fair of Walferdange, November 2013.

Sources

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4.4 The Threshold of Exhibition Venues: Access to the World of Culture

Céline Schall

A museum exhibition is not a medium like others: By nature it is spatial and involves the visitor as an active participator (see Davallon 1999). For a visit to a museum it is therefore necessary to leave one's home, go to the museum and enter it. In addition, a visit to a museum requires an intellectual effort – which aims at comprehending the meaning of the exhibition – and a symbolic effort: it presumes the entrance into a heavily valorized place of culture, a place of experience and knowledge, which is not yet accessible to all members of society (see Donnat 2008). Visiting a museum exhibition thus implies a physical, intellectual and symbolic passage from the space of everyday life to that of the museum, to the world of art, science, history, in brief, to 'culture'. It is worth noting that one third of Luxembourg's residents have declared that they have never set foot in a museum (see University of Luxembourg, IDENT2 2012/2013 – quantitative survey).

It is this threshold of museums and exhibition venues that constitute the subject of this case study, understood as the more or less expanded space which both separates and connects the everyday space and the exhibition space of cultural objects and knowledge. Using a variety of examples, my concern will be to understand the symbolic function of the threshold and to examine under which circumstances it facilitates the passage between the two spaces and creates a positive 'visitor attitude' in those who cross it.

After establishing how the notion of the threshold is employed in different contexts, I will present a communication-oriented method for analysing museum thresholds, followed by a typology of the latter. The study will conclude with a discussion of the results and perspectives of this analysis.

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SPACES AND
IDENTITIES IN
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