

# Dear Visitors

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Dear Visitors,

Now the show is up. At the moment you read this, you will most likely have walked through each floor of the building.

Before going into the exhibition, did you notice the weather outside? If I said that the weather in Bregenz is part of the exhibition – an extra piece in the show – would you believe me? I guess it's not a question of whether or not I made the weather – in fact, I didn't make anything in this show. I only decided what should be part of the show and what shouldn't. In deciding where the show starts and ends, I (as always) realised that the question of whether the weather is part of the show or not is irrelevant, since I don't have a choice – the weather will always be part of the show, whether I want it to be or not – just as the show, in response, is part of the weather. This story started, of course, a long time ago, with the end of objecthood in art and its assumed existence as an autonomous thing. Challenged by the Kunsthhaus in Bregenz, I had to consider – besides the weather – Zumthor's building to be part of the show. The reason for that is simply that the Kunsthhaus is there, and unlike many other buildings, it even makes a big point of being there (or should I say here?). And why is that so? I should ask Peter Zumthor.

Dear Peter,

Assuming that you understand that your building is now part of this exhibition, I want to ask you about the people visiting this building (and reading this text). What do you think happens when people move around in the spaces? What do they see? Do they see themselves – sensing their own presence, activated through their surroundings? Or do they forget themselves (and their bodies) in a non-presence due to their non-reflexive surroundings?

A year ago, when I first started to think about making this exhibition at the Kunsthhaus, the above questions were some of the first to emerge. And it took me a while to understand that both possibilities (the visitors' sense of presence, and the less fortunate forgetting of yourself in non-presence) seemed to be in play – only under different conditions. When the building is perceived as an icon (of architecture) – a static representational image of good taste or even an objectifying sacred hall – the engagement of the people in the building is merely formal. And their sense of presence is absorbed in a suspended narration of knowledge (a displacement where the weather outside makes no difference). It is like relating to – and discussing – the building, without the most relevant component: duration or, even better, time. The visitor's time – your time. It takes a while to walk up to the third floor – and doing so takes you into every single exhibition space in the building. Experiencing the spaces, moving through them, taking advantage of (your sense of) time, I believe, gives you the benefit of presence – having a body. Moving and engaging with your surroundings is eventually what constitutes the spaces (and yourself).

So here I happily found the key for how to approach this exhibition. Movement. Motion. This is the component that enables you (and me) to see a subjective transparency in the building rather than a totalitarian monolith. From there I could start thinking about how to make this exhibition – with what media I should mediate the motion.

Mediating the motion. Exposing and integrating our movements into the exhibition in a way that enables you to sense what you know and to know what you sense. Every movement has some level of mediation, or should I call it 'cultivation'? Moving around in a city or in a landscape always carries with it a certain level of staging or mediation. Our city surroundings have been planned to mediate us. Outdoor landscape and city spaces have a long tradition of using movement as a generator of space; they take advantage of our memory to organise our expectations. The city is mediated through safety measures that eliminate surprises and create predictable surroundings (traffic control and shopping malls). The city's socialising potential, on the other hand, lies in its less predictable (multipurpose) surroundings, which let you enjoy the hospitality of presence.

For the exhibition on all four floors of the Kunsthaus, I wanted to involve somebody experienced in cultivating the processes of motion. Understanding that the process of making this show is inevitably a part of the show, as is the weather and the building, I had to look for somebody experienced with the typology of working with outdoor spaces. This led me to landscape architect Günther Vogt and his office, who, in their interdisciplinary collaborations, are experienced in using the nature (of the city) to engineer areas in which motion is essential.

I mediated the spaces as a garden-like structure, where each floor, as well as the stairs between the floors, presents a different platform on which you can move around. Wood with mushrooms, a wooden pontoon bridge across water with duckweed, a sloped plane of contaminated earth and finally a smoky room with a hanging bridge . . . *The mediated motion.*

Olafur Eliasson