

## BETWEEN REALITIES

The Dutch program *Between Realities* is an ongoing research in the public space of Praha 1, the city centre of Prague. It consists of small scale interventions, cartographic explorations and public discussions with the audience and local and international guests.

Each day a team of artists/designers critically explores and intervenes in the many staged realities that are to be found around the PQ venues. They focus on the tension between the emerging Disneyfication and theatricalisation of the inner city and the continuation of daily life in Prague. They will use their scenographical tools and views to map realities of commerce, tourism, history, politics, labour and art; to expose or question their scenography, or even transform it. How do these realities work? How are they staged? And how do people cope with them? Do we flee, fight, shelter, negotiate or surrender?

What is their scenography and what does this scenography do to how people act, think, perceive and experience? And most importantly, how do all these different realities relate to each other and how do we cope with its complexity?

## MULTIPLICATION OF IMAGINED REALITIES

Staging and theatricalisation are crucial features of today's society. We long for unique experiences; personal, memorable and meaningful events. We want to discover new realities, be part of them and be immersed in them. Art, culture and commerce all respond to this desire. They create worlds and imagine realities that produce such experiences. Sometimes these are designed as 'guaranteed adventures', meeting our paradoxical need to experience adventures, as long as they meet our expectations and deliver what we imagined. At other times these worlds offer experiences that are truly unexpected: experiences that surprise, or even disturb and shift, our perspective on reality. Apparently our desire to be touched and carried away can pull us in many different directions. Reality is thus revealed as a multi-layered 'field of imagination'.

This multiplication of imagined realities can be most intensely felt in urban public spaces, where layers of tourism, entertainment, consumption, art, work, leisure, history and policies come together. Public space is an unstable articulation of heterogeneous practices that often leads to tensions and contradictions. In urban public spaces we can see how people live, both in and between different realities, and how they cope with this complexity. We distinguish between five coping strategies: to fight, flee, shelter, negotiate or surrender. Often, one or more of these strategies are used simultaneously. To fight means to transform reality through intervention or disruption, to flee means to escape reality through disengagement, through moving away from reality. To shelter means to protect oneself from reality by hiding or covering,

while negotiation aims at reconciling different realities by organizing and exchanging experiences, and to surrender means to give in to and totally immerse oneself in any reality.

We believe that scenographers and designers have the sensibility, insight and tools to critically question, map and intervene in this multi-layered field full of different coping strategies, known as public space. Both are able to expose, disrupt, dismantle, twist, tilt or reveal complex realities. But how exactly can set design shift our perspective on the realities we encounter? How can it reveal the fissures and cracks or create space for the in-between? How can it unravel or change its performance? During our ten day-long operation in the public space of Prague we will collect, test, review and debate answers to this question. We are here to dismantle reality in order to create in-betweens. The audience is invited to join the curators and participants in this operation at our mobile Command Post in the city centre or around our interactive Publishing Room at Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace.

Between Realities is curated by Sanne Danz (scenographer), Sigrid Merx (dramaturge), Iris Schutten (writer/architect) and Ester van de Wiel (designer of public space) and initiated and organised by Platform-Scenography. During the PQ, curators create a daily 'Instant Magazine' in the exposition at the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace.