

# Clemens von Wedemeyer

*Von Gegenüber (From the Opposite Side)*, Metropolis Cinema, Berliner Platz 39

## In the cinema...

The Metropolis cinema lies near the main railway station. Here a film is being screened that was shot in front of its very doors: passers-by walk through the station, police officers do their rounds, everyday things occur... The moving pictures on the screen indicate a subjective view, one hears breathing and steps: someone looks into the camera as if he knew us. Perhaps we can find out by the direction the onlookers then take and their glances through whose eye we are looking – perhaps. For this is not a documentary. Cinema determines, quasi as an autonomous body, the sight and hearing of the viewer. But this interior space remains connected to public space: once outside again, we compare the view of the film location at the station with the perspective presented on the screen: verified, distorted, or disappointed.

Cinemas are semi-public places. Here we are faced with and forced to deal with images: with images from afar and others originating from sources much closer to us. One projection space long before the inception of cinema was the simple camera obscura: a small hole was made in the wall of a darkened chamber facing a street or a square and closed with a lens. Through this lens images of the outside world located directly behind the wall were projected onto a surface in the chamber. People standing outside in front of the wall could be seen. With the advent of cinema distant places or creations of the imagination could now be projected and watched. In the Metropolis the screen needs to be understood as a kind of partition, separating the audience from the surroundings. The façade of the Metropolis reminds me of Dan Graham's architectural model *Cinema* [1981]. Today Münster has only four cinemas: Cineplex, Stadt New York, Schlosstheater, and Cinema (with the Kurbelkiste). There used to be more. No longer a cinema venue, the Metropolis, to be put up for compulsory auction (or demolished), will now be populated by passers-by from the train station. Perhaps popcorn will be on sale and coffee brewed. The seats are sold, the old screen has yellowed. But the film projector is dusted off, for the last time in the Metropolis. Outside the screening times of the film, discussions, readings, flea markets, and other events will be held in the Metropolis. This is part of the project.

## ... at the station ...

The area is actually 'semi-public,' although this space owned by the German Railways is regarded as being public by passers-by and travelers. For the individual the station still offers a kind of refuge amidst a haphazard crowd in an otherwise tidied-up city. But only for a short time, then it is in the interest of the German Railways to keep stays at the station in check, only permitted for the purposes of traveling or shopping. Encounters and conflicts still seem possible though. Passengers change trains, come into contact with others, including some they want nothing to do with – public space as a volatile space of potential conflict. Here 'station' does not designate a building but rather a function. Its history is not directly readable from the façade or architecture, but rather from the discussions people have about it or its influence on their behavior. Demonstrations and rallies begin or end here. The relative unpredictability quite possibly frightens the operators of the station. That's why the station is monitored and policed. The station building in Münster is to be torn down and replaced in the coming years. Münster's residents want to get things right, at least that's what one reads in the papers, and so everyone is looking forward to getting rid of the unpopular station. Will things improve? The changes will mean a redistribution of space; and passers-by and residents will have to find new routes.

## ... in front of and behind the screen.

K. is the camera's eye, an amalgam of technical gaze and human movements – an autonomous gaze. Vertov's *Man with the Movie Camera* [1929] and Beckett's *Film* [1965] influenced this approach and its stance, but 3D computer games also have a similar look. It's not just about the actions of the performers, made up of scores of gestures, but also the gesture of the camera as a subject. It tries to hide, for its gazing eye changes the atmosphere and creates a unique situation in public space. The observed gaze into the camera with varying looks: who is a passer-by and who is part of the staged scene? Performers play the role of passers-by, and passers-by become performers... Ads were used to find the amateur and professional actors from Münster who play the various roles in the film.