

Kazunao Abe

### **East Berlin Radio Station**

In a socialist country, the radio station was, so to speak, an experimental device in the city, in which nature, the world, and our existence were kept frozen and reproduced by the media through sounds only. To everyone's surprise, in then state-of-the-art institution given all available technologies as a recording machine of the materialistic ideology as the social realism, an enormous space like an orchestra hall for recording was designed to hang in midair to avoid noise. Now the building itself is the remains of the past, and almost no one uses this empty space. How is this building viewed in a historical context of Berlin, a leading city in the EU economic block as the capital of Germany having experienced the fall of the Wall and the reunification of Germany?

In this media-architectural installation, Nina Fischer / Maroan el Sani focus on Andrej Tarkovsky's film „Solaris“ (1972, the original novel by Polish writer Stanislaw Lem) that strongly reflects the thought of the Communist block in the Cold War times, while, by contrast, trying to attain the motif of universal human existence. There, the ruins of the „Radio Station“ of East Germany and the probe spaceship of „Solaris“ are overlapped in the installation. Here arises a question about whether or not the two (one is an unknown celestial body „Solaris“ that materializes the marked traces through all human memories, and the other is today's society reproducing all existences through information and media) are actually far apart. The „Radio Station“ was designed to use the technology to reproduce the real existences through only sounds without vision, as the ultimate technology. Here, Nina Fischer / Maroan el Sani try carefully to gain insight into some hope and crisis in the contemporary times is, just as the approaches to the unachievable are applied and translated into media technologies.

#### Creative designed media installation

This media-architectural installation constitutes a space composed of ten multi-faceted projections linked sideways in a spiral form. The installation basically consists of a camera travel through the empty spaces of the radio station. It is a continuous shot, which is divided into 8 screens. On each screen another room can be discovered. The films are screened in a unit of 8 alternating twin projections. That means Fischer / el Sani filmed the traveling through the radio station twice. One time just the abandoned spaces and the second time with slight interventions inspired by Tarkovsky's film „Solaris“. The objects that appear in Tarkovsky's film „Solaris“ and the motifs from natural science and art-history, for example the Gerhard Richter painting „Frau, eine Treppe hinabsteigend“, are quoted into fascinating and elegant moving images mixed with the space from the social realism. They show practical reality, but at the same time, work as a fictitious factory producing realness obtained through memories. The documents and memory-added documents begin simultaneously, and as they get entangled, they start to regenerate subtle differences.

The music and sound design for 10 pairs of speakers have been created by Robert Lippok, Berlin. It is a traveling sound, that guides the visitor through the installation.

In addition, Nina Fischer / Maroan el Sani especially produced for the YCAM exhibition a new video double projection for their project „Radio Solaris“, in which the viewers can compare the scenes of the metropolitan highway ride in the vicinity of Akasaka in Tokyo filmed by Andrej Tarkovsky around in 1970 that appear in „Solaris“ and those in current Tokyo filmed from the same angle in the same size. The highway, futuristic architecture of the 70ies, seems old and not up to date anymore in the film-remake of today.

\*This work was first displayed in Leipzig, Germany. The contents have been substantially revised during the artist-in-residence program at YCAM, with the latest version including travel shots in Japan.

\* The title „Kelvin“ shows the absolute temperature standard, and it also comes from the name of physicist Dr. Kelvin who gets on board the satellite probe in the first Solaris investigation in the film „Solaris“ directed by Tarkovsky. “-273,15 C=0 Kelvin” means the absolute zero indicated by centigrade -273,15 C, i.e. the environment that humans are unable to experience. At the same time, the investigation of an unknown celestial body Solaris described in Tarkovsky’s film “Solaris” parallels reflectively the investigation of human existence, and so is a metaphor for a situation in which humans are confronted with the limits that are physically impossible for us to reach.

Radio Solaris / -273,15°C = 0 Kelvin, exhibition catalogue, Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media (YCAM), Yamaguchi, Japan, 2005