

SCHWARZE ZIMMER

Cyber / space. Localizations in art and science
Projektmodul by Lasse Scherffig
2013



Schwarze Zimmer, installation view, 2013 Marienstraße 5, Weimar, Germany, mixed media, Xerox copies, paint, wood chair, Arduino, light, electronics

You enter a dark room. Take three steps forward. Put your hands in front of you and you feel a chair. Sit in the chair. The sense of ground is represented in basic electricity terms. The chair relies on but also ignores the floor to a large extent, just as your mind does. This is not to claim that chairs are mind-like, but the reverse. What are you thinking about now? What is your fantasy? Do you need to be punished? Touch the floor. Is it wet?

– Wall text from the installation Schwarze Zimmer



Introduction

Pornography has transformed our most basic understandings of human sexuality, relationships and the roles we play as men and women. More and more our fascination with sex orbits around the axis of the observed, even within the act of sex itself. Studies have shown that nearly 50 % of women have fears about how their bodies will look during sex that dramatically affect their libidos.

How is this trend towards voyeurism changing our perceptions about sex as a society and our sex lives as individuals? When did sex become more about watching, photographing or taping the moment rather than the moment itself? Why are we so fascinated by the sex lives of others?

In the tradition of art that engages the spectacle and produces a distilled moment of aestheticized interaction, *Schwarze Zimmer* is an installation exploring the shifting paradigms of human sexuality.

In the real world our relationships are challenged, questioned and put into risk from others. The internet provides solace because in cyber space we can become anyone we want to be. Whether or not individuals are aroused while alone in the room is tangential to the larger question of our increasingly voyeuristic relationship with sex.

Development

The development of *Schwarze Zimmer* was a profoundly personal journey for the two of us. We had to trust each other and allow ourselves to enter a state of vulnerability. Our ideas began to take form in Paris, France. The two of us were there to take part in a demonstration for Muslim women rights to wear face cover (*niqab*) in France. During our time in the city we found an object which raised our interest - a German magazine from 1993 called *ff* (*Freies forum für Erziehungsfragen*). *ff* was a monthly magazine with erotic and instructive content, it came out in 1967 and cost 16,80 DM. The central image of the installation uses a photograph from the *ff* magazine.

The photographic research started in a Paris public restroom where we made photographs of ourselves reading a pornographic magazine with our faces covered in fabric. Our photographic studies continued with additional studio sessions and field studies. We wanted to explore several possibilities but eventually we narrowed it down to three related images.

This project is an examination and visualization of the fantasies we construct in our mind. Starting with the appropriated erotic image we place a sexual fantasy into the mind of the observer. The second and third photos reduce the fantasy to the lowest common denominator, first the object of the chair which itself can be seen as a sexual object, and secondly the floor itself with semen on it.

The first is an erotic photo of a bare assed woman straddling a chair looking back at us as she receives a spanking from a stick. The second image is an almost identical photograph of a chair on the floor but now without a woman. The third is the same image again but now there is no chair, we only see the wooden floor and what appears to be semen. The final images were produced as Xerox photocopies and wheat pasted to cardboard. This medium was used due to the financial and aesthetic aspect which reveals defragmentation of the image.

The centerpiece of the installation is a wooden chair that has been modified with simple electronics. This chair is placed in a dark room, when a person sits on the chair it turns on a small light hanging from the ceiling. When a person stands up the light goes off again. The act of sitting becomes an analogy for becoming grounded. At the moment of connecting with the electrical current three images are revealed to us. These images, approximately six feet wide, hang around us creating a small room. They appear to us and disappear when the visitor stands up from the chair.

This experience of *Schwarze Zimmer* is about going into a dark room and being completely blind and the process of discovery when your mind's eye is projected onto the walls and for a moment you see that which was hidden. Is it a flashback or unfulfilled fantasies? Is it a private room or a torture chamber? Does this experience shine a light on hidden desires? Is it a place to sit down and think for a while how we emphasize our fantasies onto objects?

We managed to summarize everything into 4 objects but it is the journey that allowed us to arrive at these particular objects and images. Are we projecting our fantasies onto others? Seeking to discover the perfect relationship or the perfect moment. The role of fate and destiny was part of our creative process. It's important to recognize these momentary fragments of clarity and inspiration because they often don't last. Everything can change in an instant. Things are not always what they seem to be on the surface.

Observations

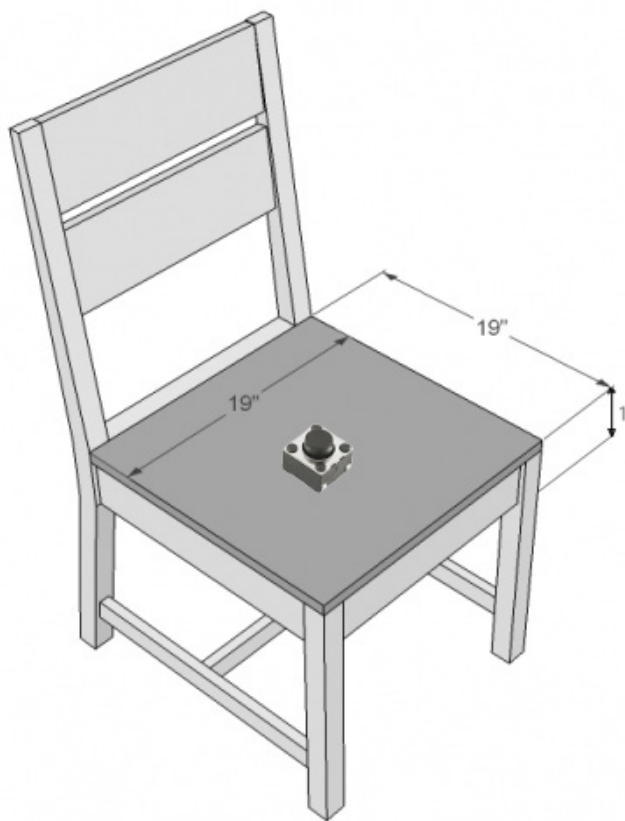
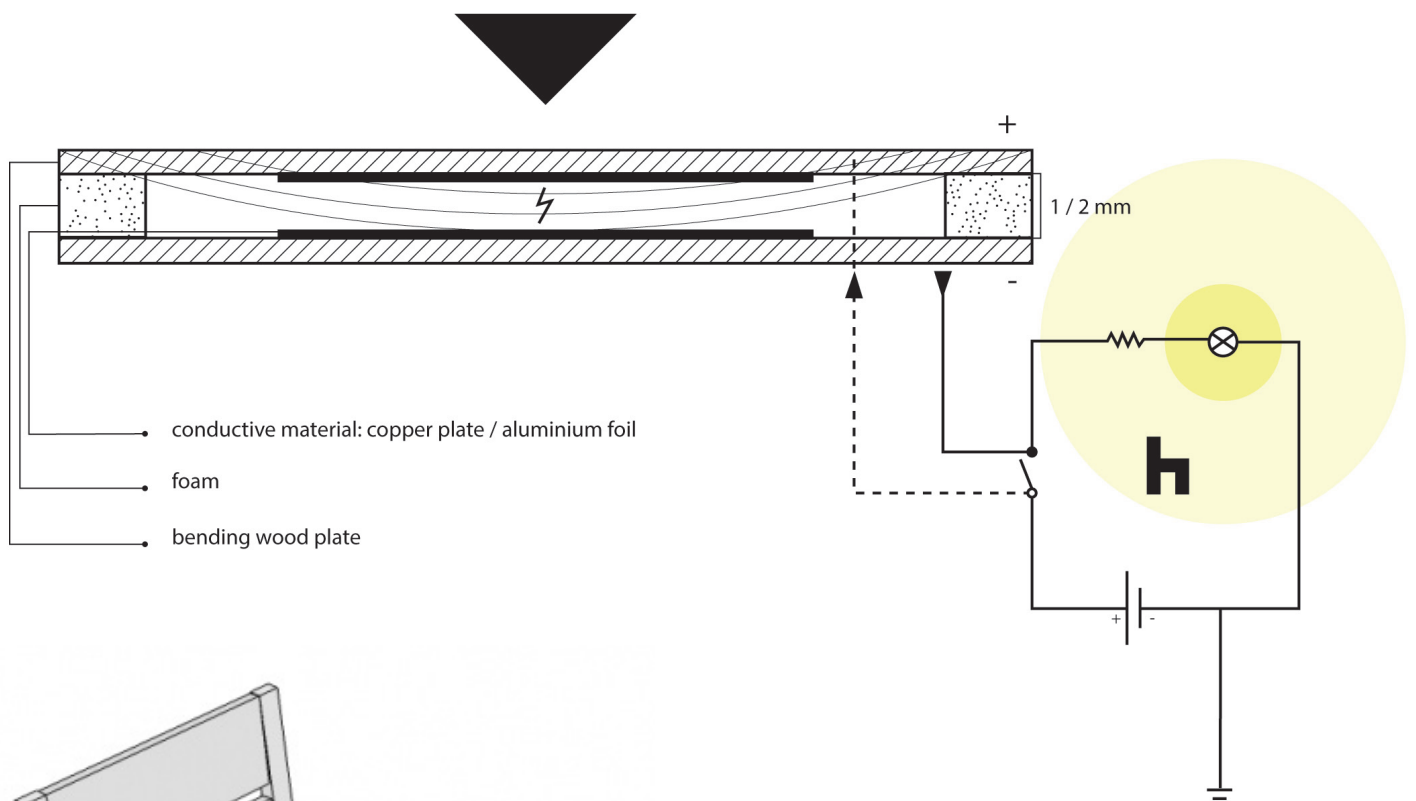
An interaction is made by a viewer who navigates a pitch black room through tactile sensing and eventually experiencing light. When the viewer sits on the chair, a light turns on and three large photographs are seen. After the person stands up, the light turns off again.

One visitor was asked if he found the chair after spending 20 minutes in the room on what he answered that he touched everything starting from prints hanging on the walls till non-existing metal constructions but never found the real chair.

Whereas other visitor felt scared to slip thinking that the room is filled with water because the instruction line said the floor might be wet.

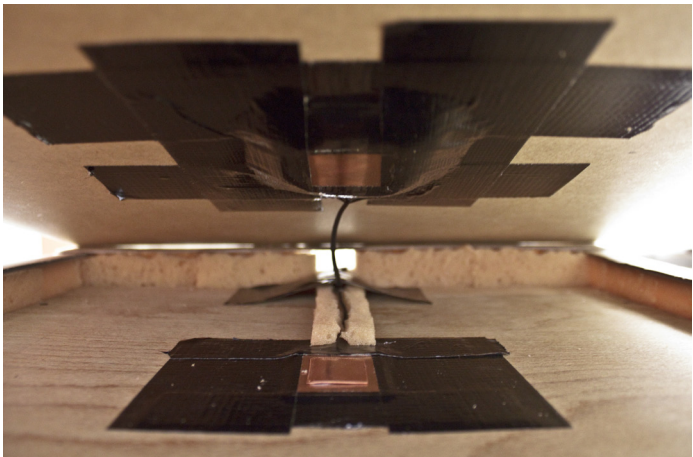
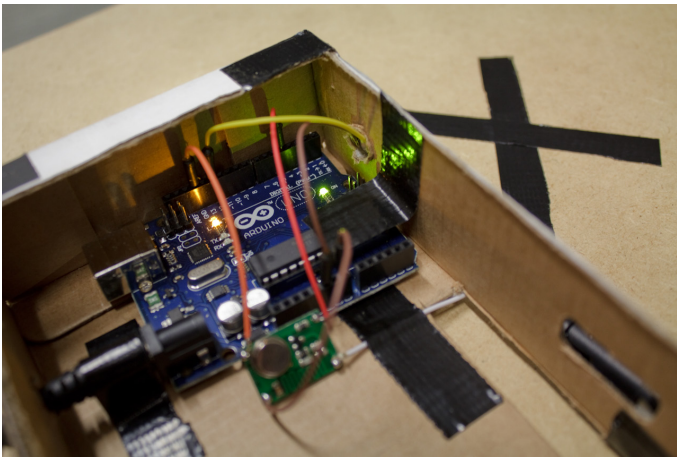
Schwarze Zimmer is a collaboration between artists Brian Bixby and Zanda Puce. The original installation was shown in the exhibition *Summaery*, July 11-14, 2013 at Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Germany.

Technical Description



Setup

Room in size of 20 m² (4,9m x 4m x 2,9m)
 Found wood chair
 Two conductive copper plates and foam in between two layered seat
 Arduino microcontroller with remote control power circuit for the switch and lamp
 Aluminium foil and Molton fabric to make pitch black room
 Three 6ft wide b/w prints made of Xerox copies, wheat paste and cardboards
 Reserved sign and instruction to allow only one person at a time



Field Studies / Photographic Research

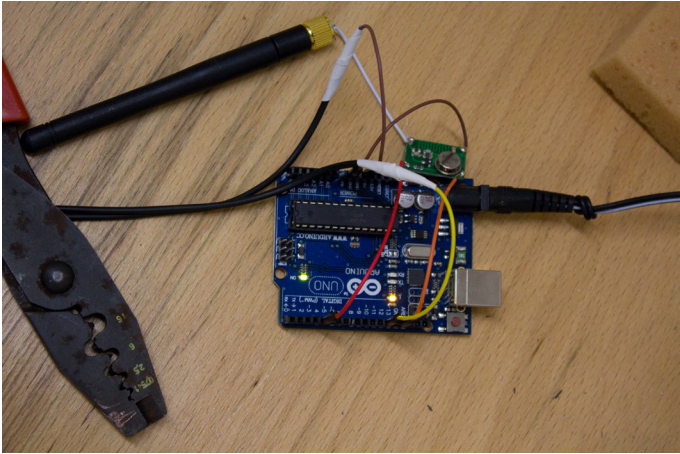






Installation





Influences / Bibliography

Raum S - Ka.: Erzieher, Mitte 40, züchtig, straft ab, dressiert, demütigt entsprechend veranlagte Sklavin. Härtegrad kann abgesprochen werden. Familienmitglieder werden nach Rücksprache mit dem Hausherrn/-frau ebenfalls akzeptiert. Diskretion 100%. Chiffre ff 284002.

Bielefeld: Dominanter, erfahrener Erzieher mit Stil und Niveau, Anfang 40, 180, einerseits sympathisch, zärtlich und verständnisvoll, andererseits streng, konsequent und durchsetzungsfähig, möchte weibliches Pendant kennenlernen. Sie sollte zwischen 25 und 40 Jahre alt sein, eigentlich eine ganz normale, selbstbewußte Frau von heute, manchmal aber wieder zur erziehungsbedürftigen Göre werden, die mal ordentlich den Hintern voll braucht. Je nach gegenseitigem Einverständnis ist sowohl Wohngemeinschaft, als auch Lebensgemeinschaft oder spätere Ehe nicht ausgeschlossen. Diskretion vorausgesetzt. Chiffre ff 284127.

NEU: **KGB-VERHÖRRaum**
IM DOMIZIL DER GRÄFIN

DIE GNADENLOSEN
LADY SHANNA
&
LADY LAVINIA

MIT IHREN GESPIELINNEN.

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Mannheim, Kaiserslautern: Erzieher, Anf. 50, nimmt sich besonders gerne jüngeren Burschen, bis etwa 40, in kurzen Jungen-Lederhosen oder knapp sitzenden Jeansshorts vor. Hiebe auf den nackten Hintern gab's auch früher für schon größere Jungen nur in besonderen Fällen. Chiffre ff 284099.



ff

27. Jahrgang 1993 • DM 16,80

DEC 284

freies forum
für erziehungsfragen



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Documentation
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