FRAGMENTS
Meeting Architecture III
A programme of lectures and exhibitions

Monday 26 September 2016: Part VI
Miroslaw Balka
Emplacement

18.30—20.30: Exhibition opening

The British School at Rome
via Gramsci 61, Roma

Miroslaw Balka’s exhibition Emplacement is the sixth event in Meeting Architecture: FRAGMENTS curated by Marina Engel.

‘...It used to be a whole, but it fell apart, fell to pieces. It seems that you can embrace it, but memory is unreliable and what you can retrieve is merely a fragment...’ Miroslaw Balka

The fragment is used to question both personal and collective memories; that of Balka’s Catholic upbringing and his family and the collective experience of Poland’s turbulent history, focusing particularly on the Nazi occupation of Poland. Balka grew up and spent his childhood in Otwock, a town on the outskirts of Warsaw; it was a well-known health resort before World War II and was inhabited by a large Jewish population. By the end of the Nazi occupation, not a single Jewish family remained. Twelve to fifteen thousand Jews were dispatched to the Treblinka death camp.

In this exhibition at the BSR, Balka concentrates on the role and responsibility of modernism in World War II. Employing a characteristically meticulous minimal placement of drawings, video projections and a sculpture in the three gallery spaces the artist also alludes to the notion of emplacement which, according to Foucault, means that relations between locations in space are the constitutive principles of space perception.
Through installation, sculpture, video and drawings, Miroslaw Balka’s work often concentrates on the preservation of traces, on what is absent, on memory and loss. Frequently using his studio and his own body as a point of reference and scale, Balka’s materials are simple everyday objects; things powerfully resonant of ritual and hidden memories.

**Emplacement**

The ATRIO space contains a sculpture, a wall drawing and some drawings:

1) **50 x 50 x 91 (Pain Relief)** 2012

A concrete sculpture with three Bayer aspirin pills embedded into it.

2) **Modulor\(\text{AF}\)1944 2015

Pencil wall drawing that connects the figures of Le Corbusier and Anne Frank in a drawing chart. Le Corbusier devised a scale of proportions, Le Modulor, based upon the height of an average man (male, white, European) with his arms raised to roughly 2.20 m. Le Corbusier’s involvement with the fascist Vichy regime has been well documented. Le Modulor was formulated in 1944 (the peak time of the Final Solution). At the same time the last measurement was taken of Anne Frank’s height on the doorpost of her hideout attic before being arrested by the Nazis.

3) **Drawings and prints relating to architecture and its responsibility.**

They include the drawing **Concentration Camp** (second half of the 1970s), and the lithographs **A Crossroads in A** (2006) based on four photographs taken in Auschwitz. All the fragments of architecture have been erased with a corrector and only the natural landscape remains.

The **SALA MOSTRE** is divided into two parts:

**PART I** contains three video projections that are shot with a hand held camera.

**B** (2006)

Recorded at the entrance to the Auschwitz concentration camp, the work focuses on the letter B from the gate ARBEIT MACHT FREI. German youths visiting Auschwitz as tourists can be heard in the background. Some historians consider the sign to be designed in Bauhaus lettering.
**Bottom** (1999/2003)
Recorded at the baths of the Majdanek concentration camp. A hand held camera is used by the artist to follow the shower system on the ceiling. The video is projected onto the salt container on the floor. Salt is a material often used by the artist.
Salt that makes tears, salt in the bottom of the shower floor or ceiling. From one side salt is very pure and clean, and from another side it can be very painful once you add it to the wound. On the one side beauty; on the other, the possibility of pain.*

**GPS free** (2012)
Revolving white wall projected onto the wall of the gallery

**PART II** contains three videos.

**Mondschlag Kopf, Otw, Smoke**
These videos are part of the **Nachtgesichten** series. Night time excursions and explorations shot with a hand held camera focus on more intimate spaces, close to the artist: his studio at Otwood, the smoke from his chimney and the moon above his house.

* Fragment : WRO Art Center, Wroclaw (2013)
* Interview in ExBerliner (2011)


**On 17 October 2016, Miroslaw Balka will be in conversation with the British architectural historian Joseph Rykwert on Memory and Responsibility.**

**MEETING ARCHITECTURE – FRAGMENTS**

‘**FRAGMENTS**’ considers how ideologies are shaped, memories evoked and emotions stirred by buildings, their contents and their ruins. To this end the programme focuses on the concept of the fragment, defined as an urban ruin, it may be a house and its remaining contents or it may just be an assembly of personal relics, images, photographs, and other documents. When the meanings and memories we attach to our experiences are so closely tied to materiality, how can individuals,
ethnic groups and even nations rebuild their identities and histories in the face of destruction? In an age of increasing displacement, architects and visual artists are invited, along with historians and archaeologists to examine and to reassemble such fragments to offer a contribution to the reconstruction of personal or collective identities in zones of present or of past conflict. The programme will also discuss the destruction of monuments and heritage sites brought about by war and in particular the attempt to erase or fragment the memories of differing cultural identities and ideologies.’ Marina Engel

The first year of FRAGMENTS focussed on the Middle East, this second year will concentrate mainly on case studies in Poland and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The BSR is grateful to Dvir Gallery, Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Gladstone Gallery and White Cube.

Architecture programme curated by Marina Engel.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
The British School at Rome
via Gramsci 61, Rome
telephone +39 06 3264939
www.bsr.ac.uk

PRESS OFFICE MEETING ARCHITECTURE
Ludovica Solari | press@ludovicasolari.com | +39 335 577 17 37
Lucia Bosso | lucia.bosso@basedarchitecture.com | +39 338 322 63 79

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Tuesday 27 September to Monday 17 October 2016
Tuesday –Saturday: 16.30-19.30 pm

In collaboration with
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