

DYSTOPIA EUTOPIA

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“A person’s thoughts are his kingdom.”¹

Bantu Wisdom

For many years, the Viennese artist Victoria Coeln (b. 1962)² has been using public spaces to implement her multi-faceted light interventions. Active internationally, she most recently traveled to Turkey in order to combine her chromotopian ideas and light space works with archaeological research locations and world heritage sites such as Ephesos and Göbekli Tepe. On site, diachromes are manually edited and inserted into projectors as precise light filters. In several overlapping layers, with the help of light they create new spaces for thought, experience and remembrance. Coeln’s work refers directly to the place or building, including its implied contexts, never shying away from the relevant political themes. Real space and light space enter into a synthesis. The intention is an interaction of time and color, light and material, space and time, an interaction observers can and should enter immediately. They become part of the light intervention in question, participating in a completely new meaning and interpretation of the place and embarking upon a visual and intellectual themed journey.

Victoria Coeln paints with precisely guided and designed light. “Light demolishes the boundaries of our imagination, our actions and thoughts. Light is the medium of our time to expand painting beyond all boundaries, to invert our familiar gaze upon things and to rethink vision,” thus the artist. The United Nations declared 2015 the International Year of Light. This referred mainly to its vital importance: light is the elementary prerequisite for life and a central factor in science and art. Being both particle and wave, it also stands for a universal thought: all colors together result in white light – several individual parts forming a new whole.

By shifting her artistic works from the supposedly neutral museum or gallery space into a public context, she reaches a higher number of people and a less specific audience. At the same time, the public space offers an excellent basis for addressing current social, political or ecological questions and inspires viewers to question their own positions critically. The artist accomplishes this by “plowing up” the usual appearance of a place, for habit creates a kind of “blindness” to one’s surroundings, and art’s role is to recall it to our consciousness, allowing us to experience it anew.

1 Quote in German: Eberhard Puntsch, *Das neue Zitate-Handbuch*, Munich 1995, p. 228.

2 She studied stage design from 1981 to 1985 at the Academy of Fine Arts (with Lois Egg and Erich Wonder). She also studied mathematics at the (Technical) University in Vienna. Victoria Coeln: “Mathematics is not only the world of numbers. In essence, mathematics is about seeing correlations, to expand, to bring together new insights – a philosophical expansion.” <http://www.architektur-online.com/kolumnen/architekturszene/licht-schafft-raum-victoria-coeln>, April 30, 2012 (viewed on April 4, 2016).