

# Martin Grabner





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Martin Grabner, born 1979 in Graz, Austria, works in-between art and research in the fields of architecture and city on the contentual and photography and filmmaking on the media side. He graduated in Architecture at Graz University of Technology and in Fine Art Photography and MultimediaArt at the Ortweinschule Kolleg, also in Graz.

He was teaching architectural design and doing research in urban studies with a focus on public space at Graz School of Architecture at Graz University of Technology. He is writing about architecture, city and culture in various magazines. Since 2007 his photographic work has been featured and awarded in several solo- and group exhibitions.

The focus of Martin Grabners photographic work is on the exploration, discussion and interpretation of the manifold relations between human and space. The most central topic is the expression of social meaning and transformation in the production, usage and reception of everyday life architectures in the widest sense taking in account to the (re)appropriation of public space and everyday life urban practice. A further interest is on the spatial manifestation and challenging of societal structures of power, questioning especially how visible and invisible borders in cities work, how selective and permeable they are and, above all, who is defining them. Moreover the increasing transformation of urban space to a pictorial space is explored in the work: Researching urban signs and the iconicity of architecture, he examines the increasing commercialization and privatization of urban space and the seemingly inevitable urban flood of images that establishes its own non-spatial context in todays neoliberal cities.

Recently Martin Grabner started to work also with the media film considering the dialectic relationship of photo and film in the representation of architecture and space and challenging the convergence of the two media. With Hans-Dieter Edler, 2016 he released the conceptual urban documentary *Transformig Urban: Tel Aviv* on the exceptional transformation of urban space in Tel Aviv for one day at Yom Kippur and 2019 the film and photo project *Rawabi - A Dream made of Concrete*, together with Daniel Hermes will be released.

Martin Grabner understands his work as visual urban research, based on architectural and social theories, among others considering Henri Lefèbvre, Denise Scott-Brown and Robert Venturi or Rem Koolhaas, that complements and completes his work at university.

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# Rawabi

## A Dream made of Concrete

Film and photography by Martin Grabner and Daniel Hermes



The conceptual urban documentary and photographic project explores and investigates a city that seems more like the rendering of a real-estate developer than a real city. According to the developer, the Westbank city Rawabi is to be the role model for a future Palestinian state, however, it bears numerous contradictions. The work, positioned between critical urban studies and a conceptual film- and photo project, deals with conditions and effects, aspirations and realities of Rawabi, which claims a new, open identity but is trapped within neoliberalism and political deadlocks. The city of Rawabi constitutes the sterile frame for an imagined society which will possibly never exist. As a city in the making, it finds itself between the aspiration of a cultural Palestinian renaissance, neoliberal consumerism and the sacrifice of freedom in an illusory world.

Funded by 

2018/2019



# Places of Retreat



The dichotomy of private and public is one of the very fundamentals of human society. For the individual life in a community it is crucial to have the power to decide to take part or not. If there is no place of retreat we miss the counterbalance to the crowded city, if we can't take part in public life the private refuge can become a prison. The photo series „Places of Retreat“ investigates the spatial constellations of private refuges situated in the heart of the city but still withdrawn.



# Dead Sea Lido Hotel



The Lido hotel at the Northern coast of the Dead Sea in Palestine/ Israel dates back to the 1920s when it had been built by a Jordanian businessman who established a meeting point for Arabs, Jews and British. After the Israeli occupation it was abandoned and long time property of the Israel Defense Force. In 2014, when I first photographed the buildings, the Lido hotel was about 1 km away from the current shoreline of the shrinking Dead Sea. Standing there, lost in the sands and showing the signs of decay, the ruins testified both the political and ecological dilemma of the region. One year later it has been torn down; only a load of rubble was remaining of its almost 100-year-history.

2014/2017



# Transforming Urban: Tel Aviv

Film and photography by Hans-Dieter Edler and Martin Grabner



The Film **Transforming Urban: Tel Aviv** portrays in quiet, but pointed pictures the transformation of public urban space in the Israeli coastal metropolis Tel Aviv during Yom Kippur. On the highest holiday of Judaism the loud and hectic city is turned into the exact opposite by collective power: There are no cars on the roads, no shops are open. With Henri Lefèbvres words: it is transformed from a capitalistic space that's spatial practice is circularly reproducing its own conventions into a lived and reflexive space of appropriation. People take back the city and street space in an impressive way and produce an alternative space. They turn the non-places of the late modern city back into places – even if it is only for 24 hours.

The conceptual urban documentary works without traditional protagonists or a narrator leading through the dramaturgy. The photographic shots demand the audience to follow the activities and with that empower it to explore the image space itself. A simulacrum of direct experience is created.

Funded by **BUNDESKANZLERAMT**  **ÖSTERREICH** und  **Das Land Steiermark**, ca. 46 min.

2015/16



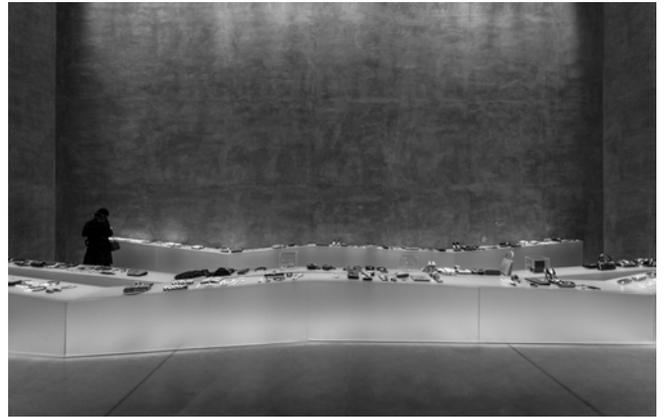
# Timepiece



The long-termed, ongoing work Timepiece is in search of the Lacanian imaginary in architecture and space. The photographs show places and constructions that contain – or are loaded with – more meaning than visible on first sight. Their seemingly silent protagonists are telling of past rifts and present conflicts, are characterized by traces of history as well as by everyday use and appropriation. Contentual and formal relations between the photographs support the viewers process of decoding the images, which are in various relation to each other.

The work is exploring places in Palestine/Israel that unveil the immanent contradictions of the country and its political situation: superficial peace and seemingly freedom for a few at Tel Aviv beach and in Sacher Park near Knesset on the one side and the Separation Wall on the other side. The photographs confront the white void of empty billboards with graffiti-covered brick walls in the midst of East London subculture as well as Oskar Niemeyers contribution to postwar West-Berlin with fragments of Mussolinis EUR in Rome and now useless military installations on Greek islands close to the Turkish coast.

The photographs common ground are the traces that have been or will be left by time and people, transforming or overwriting meanings, adding new meanings or letting them (almost) disappear. A central position takes the constituting element of the wall. It defines borders but can also be overcome, it is suppressing or channelling movement and can serve as an object of projection or provide new, focussed perspectives through its apertures.



# Living with a Wall



15 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall the Israeli government started to build a wall around the occupied West Bank: the Separation Barrier. It is in large parts constructed as a massive concrete wall and establishes a both highly symbolic and very real barrier that separates Israelis and Palestinians, but also cuts the land of the Palestinian Territories in pieces. The wall is a built weapon in a conflict about land, water and power and at the same time the physical and symbolic manifestation. It is visual evidence of the human inability to learn from history and actually determines every single day in the lives of the Palestinian people. Walled in their own land.



# From the Postmodern City of Signs to the White Noise of the Urban Flood of Images



„If you take the signs away, there is no place“, signs are the communication-system of the city, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown wrote 1978. The impact of urban „signation“ continuously multiplied since postmodernism and finally it marginalizes architecture: Megaposters cover façades and let buildings disappear, billboards climb the roofs to demonstrate their dominance over space, bright screens act as the gone-wild grandchilds of classic neon letters. Signs degrade the city’s buildings to oversized banal billboard carriers, on which ever more, bigger and jarring messages, drowning out one another, are sent to the city. Too much information quickly turns into non-information, the cacophony of messages results in White Noise.



# Europaplads 2, 8000 Aarhus C



Europa Huset, Aarhus first high-rise built in the era of postwar optimism of everlasting growth, is legacy of functionalist modernisms misleading ideology. Dropped in a prominent and aspiring location at Aarhus seaside it stands isolated and uninviting, bearing witness to decline. Maybe it is waiting for someone to give it the kiss of life and rendering it an open space for the city's community. In the short film Europa Huset plays the role of an actor symbolizing the European Union in its current situation, characterized by crisis and uncertainty, by mistrust in the institutions and community and the resurgence of nationalistic egoism. With its façades starting to age and crumble the building appears to be cold, outdated and abandoned. However, it accommodates creative life that is prepared and willing to launch change.

Shortfilm, ca. 5 min

2016

# Spatial Justice



TLV



2014/15

# TLV

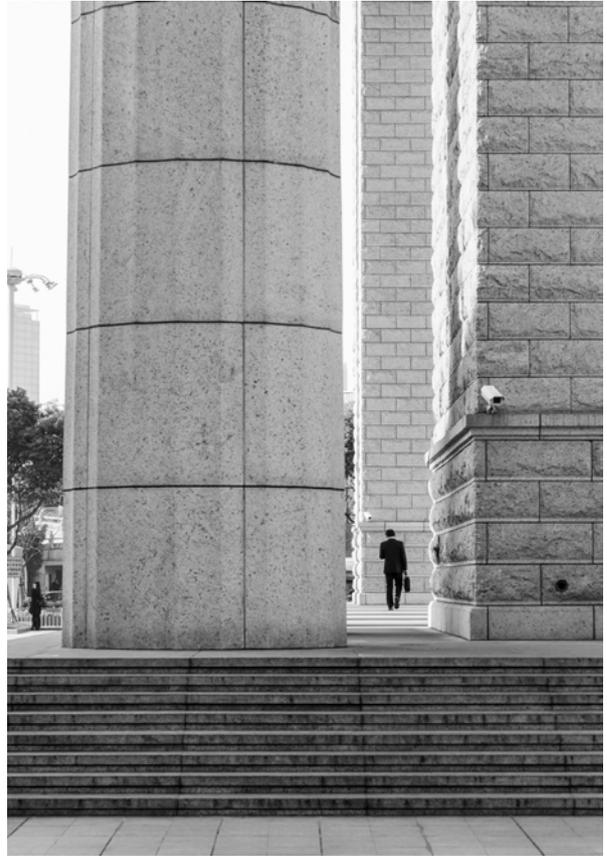


# Shanghai

## Surveilled Anonymity



Anonymity is both a benefit and a burden of life in the city. It gives freedom but also bears the risk of loneliness and alienation. (Not only) in Asian megacities like Shanghai, where traditional Chinese neighbourhoods and colonial building blocks meet the exchangeable neoliberal city, alienated individuals of all social backgrounds live deprived of direct social relations but permanently monitored by a superior but intangible state. Under the eyes of big brother they keep on searching for their niche in an increasingly dehumanised generic city.

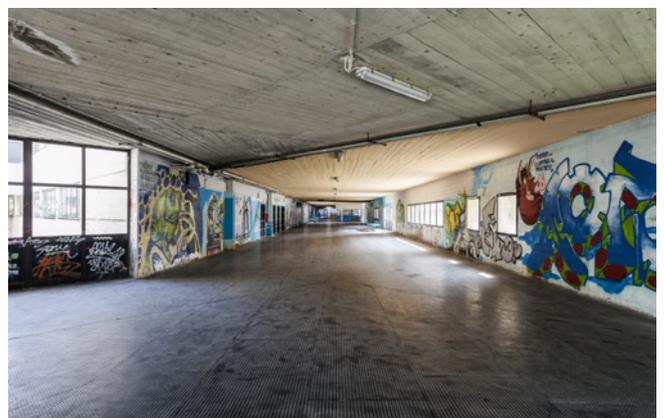
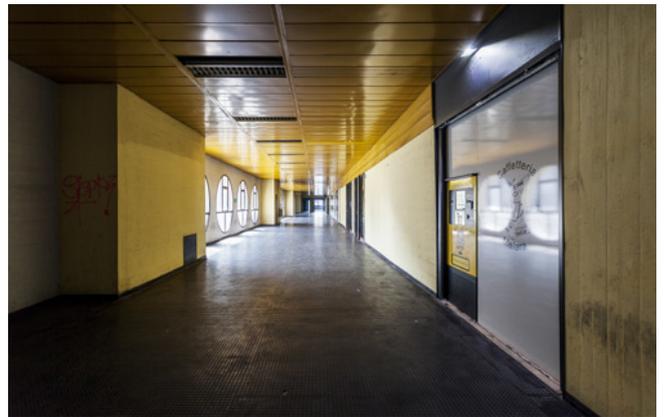
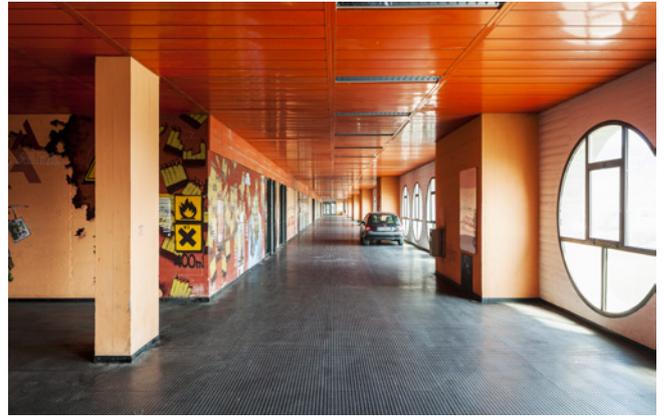


# Quadrilatero



Quadrilatero, Trieste

2016

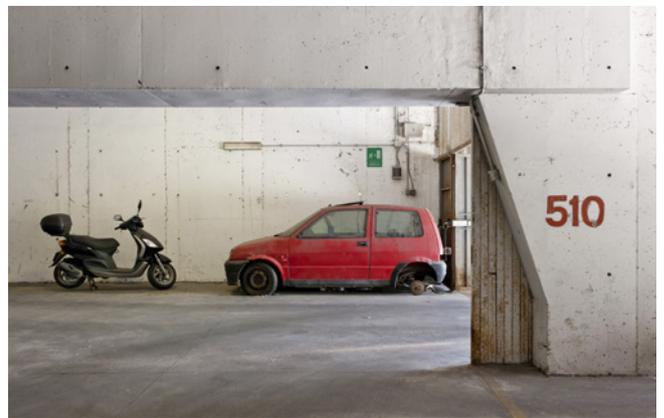


# Il Corviale



Nouvo Corviale, Roma

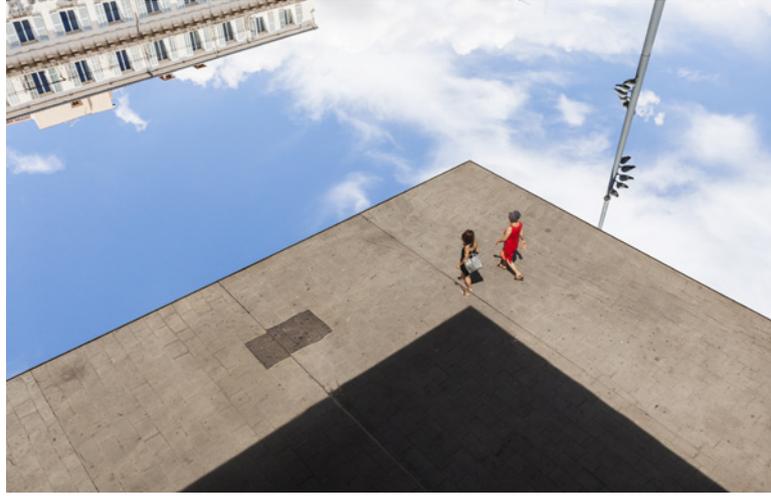
2014



# Grenze



# Miroir (Marseille)



# Curriculum vitae



Martin Grabner

born 1979 in Graz

Languages: German, English (fluent C2), French (medium B1/B2), Modern Greek (basic A1)

## Education

- 2016 Summerschool Film x Architecture: From Beyond Image. Aarhus School of Architecture, DK
- 2002-2012 Architecture in Graz and Vienna  
Master Thesis *Pirgos Peiraia* at TU Graz with distinction (Supervisor: Prof. Joost Meuwissen), awarded at GAD-Award 2013
- since 2008 History and History of Arts in Graz
- 2004-2008 Kolleg for Fine Art Photography and Multimedia Art at Ortweinschule Graz  
Diploma with distinction: *Kraftwerk Voitsberg*
- 1998-2005 Technical Mathematics / Informationprocessing in Graz

## Work

- 2014-2018 Lecturer and Research Associate at the Institute of Urbanism, TU Graz
- 2013-2018 Conception and Organisation of Architekturtage 2014, 2016 and 2018 in Styria for HDA Haus der Architektur Graz / Architekturstiftung Österreich
- 2013-2014 University Assistant at Institute for Building Typology and Design, TU Graz
- 2013 Lecturer at Institute of Urbanism, TU Graz
- since 2009 Author und architecture journalist
- 2007-2012 Undergrade Assistant at Institute of Urbanism, TU Graz
- since 2005 Design of several publications and books
- 2002-2007 Founder, Editor and Art Director at [derszeneduide.at](http://derszeneduide.at)

## Art

- 2018-2019 Film- and photoproject *Rawabi - A Dream made of Concrete*, with Daniel Hermes (Scholarship for Film, City of Graz)
- 2015-2016 Film- and photoproject *Transforming Urban: Tel Aviv*, with Hans-Dieter Edler
- 2015 Exhibitionproject *PopUpGallery Annenstraße* (as curator)
- 2014 Award for Young Photography, City of Graz
- 2013 Galerie Centrum Award
- 2010 Exhibitioncatalogue *Charmante Unwirtlichkeiten*, Ed. Jasmin Haselsteiner
- 2008-2009 Scholarship of Kultur Service Gesellschaft Steiermark for Artist-Atelier in Rondo with the collective maiö

# Exhibitions (selection)

## Solo exhibitions

- 2019 Behind the White City, with Daniel Hermes, Schauspielhaus Graz
- 2018 Dead Sea Lido Hotel, Schauspielhaus Graz
- 2016 Transforming Urban: Tel Aviv, with Hans-Dieter Edler. Orpheum Graz
- 2015 Part of the Game: Martin Grabner. kunsthalle graz, Graz
- 2014 Walled Architecture - Living with a Wall. living rooms, Graz
- 2014 Palestinian Rurbanity. LAI, Wien
- 2013 Und dann bleibt es so, mit Daniel Hermes. Galerie Eugen Lendl, Graz
- 2010 JET OIL, smallest gallery, Graz
- 2010 Charmante Unwirtlichkeiten, mit M. Schnabl und T. Raggam. Galerie Eugen Lendl, Graz

## Group exhibitions (selection)

- 2018 photo\_graz 018, Kulturzentrum bei den Minoriten, Graz
- 2017 Expressions. Ein Querschnitt zeitgenössischer österreichischer Fotografie, Wien
- 2016 Road\*Registers. Aufzeichnungen mobiler Lebenswelten. Akademie der bildenden Künste, Wien
- 2016 photo::vienna. MAK Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Wien
- 2016 Expressions, Horizonte Zingst. Zingst, D
- 2015 MOSTLY LOUD, BUT ALSO QUIET NOISE, TOO tortuga #2: LÄRM. ESC, Graz
- 2013 Galeriepreis der Galerie centrum.Galerie centrum, Graz
- 2012 photo\_graz 012, selection, ESC im Labor, Graz
- 2012 (No) Standing Anytime, curated by zweintopf. Graz
- 2012 Entdeckungsreisen - Sammlungs Zugänge 2006-2011. Stadtmuseum Graz
- 2011 Zeitzeugen - Fotografie in Österreich seit 1945. Künstlerhaus, Wien
- 2011 Small Pieces. Galerie Eugen Lendl, Graz
- 2011 Old Friends - New Friends. Galerie Eugen Lendl, Graz
- 2010 WANTED Found 2010, maiö. Galerie Kon-temporär, Graz
- 2009 maiö: Vollbepackt mit guten Sachen, maiö. Atelier Rondo, Graz
- 2009 Positionen einer Ausbildung. Rathausgalerie, Graz
- 2009 Raumheit, maiö. Abbey - Die mobile Galerie, Graz
- 2009 StreetGallery / Lendwirbel, maiö. Graz
- 2008 Fotowettbewerb Licht und Architektur, Junge Fotografen der phg. Wien (3rd price)
- 2008 Von Innen sieht man es besser. WUK, Wien
- 2005 Flowers in the Garden, with Anna Koegeler. Galerie Karenina, Wien

## Film Screenings

- 2018 Transforming Urban: Tel Aviv, Vetrinjski dvor, Maribor, SLO
- 2016 Transforming Urban: Tel Aviv, Forum Stadtpark, Graz
- 2016 Film x Architecture: From Beyond Image. Aarhus School of Architecture, Aarhus, DK
- 2016 Transforming Urban: Tel Aviv, Kunsthaus Graz
- 2016 Transforming Urban: Tel Aviv, Orpheum Graz

