

Parallax as a practice between re-construction and re-invention

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Introduction

My artistic architectural research uses shifting notions of parallax within a practice oscillating between architectural historiography, design speculation, digital capture/fabrication and written reflection. Parallax is fundamental to the geometric reconstruction of three-dimensional spatial positions from two-dimensional information and lies at the basis of technologies like photogrammetry. Starting from this metrological parallax, I extend the methodology to encompass notions such as historical, speculative and trans-optic parallax.

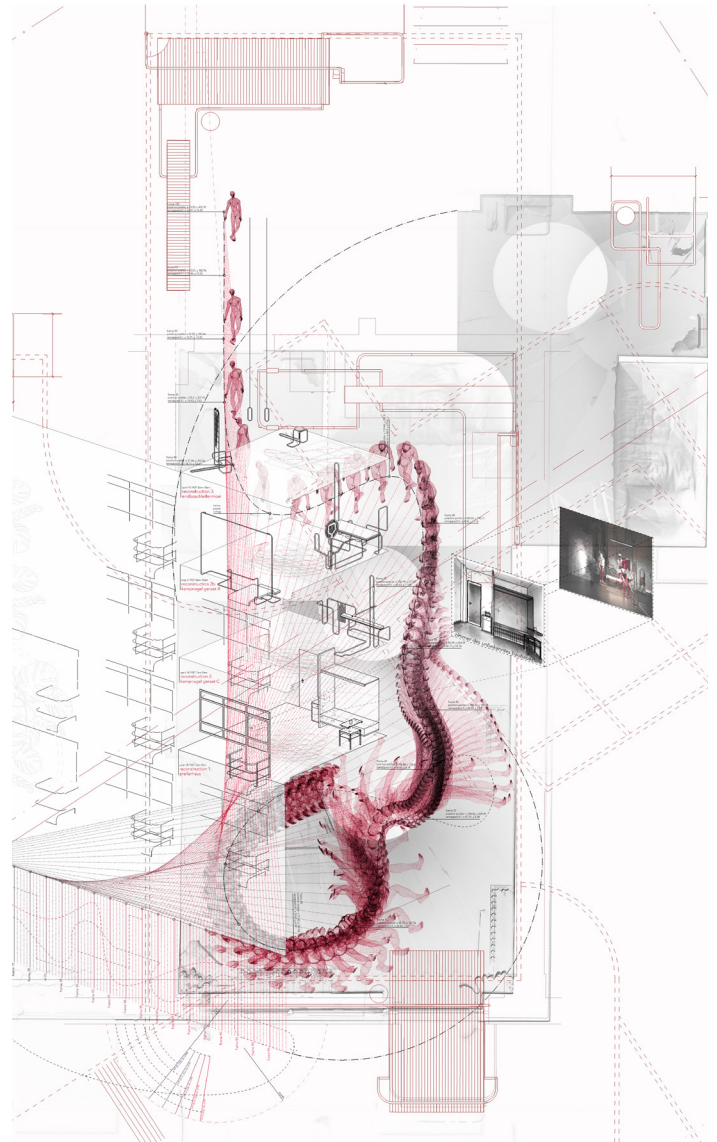
The method takes shape through a series of design-research investigations, which re-visit historical scenes – an unphotographable menswear shop by Adolf Loos (1898), an invisible wooden duck by naturalist painter Abbott Thayer (1909), a perverse rainwater pipe by Walter Gropius (1926), an elusive dance performance by Bauhaus choreographer Jakob Klenke (1927) –, re-seeing them not only from the vantage point of their own contemporary context but also, parallaxically, from (historically, technologically, geographically) shifted positions.

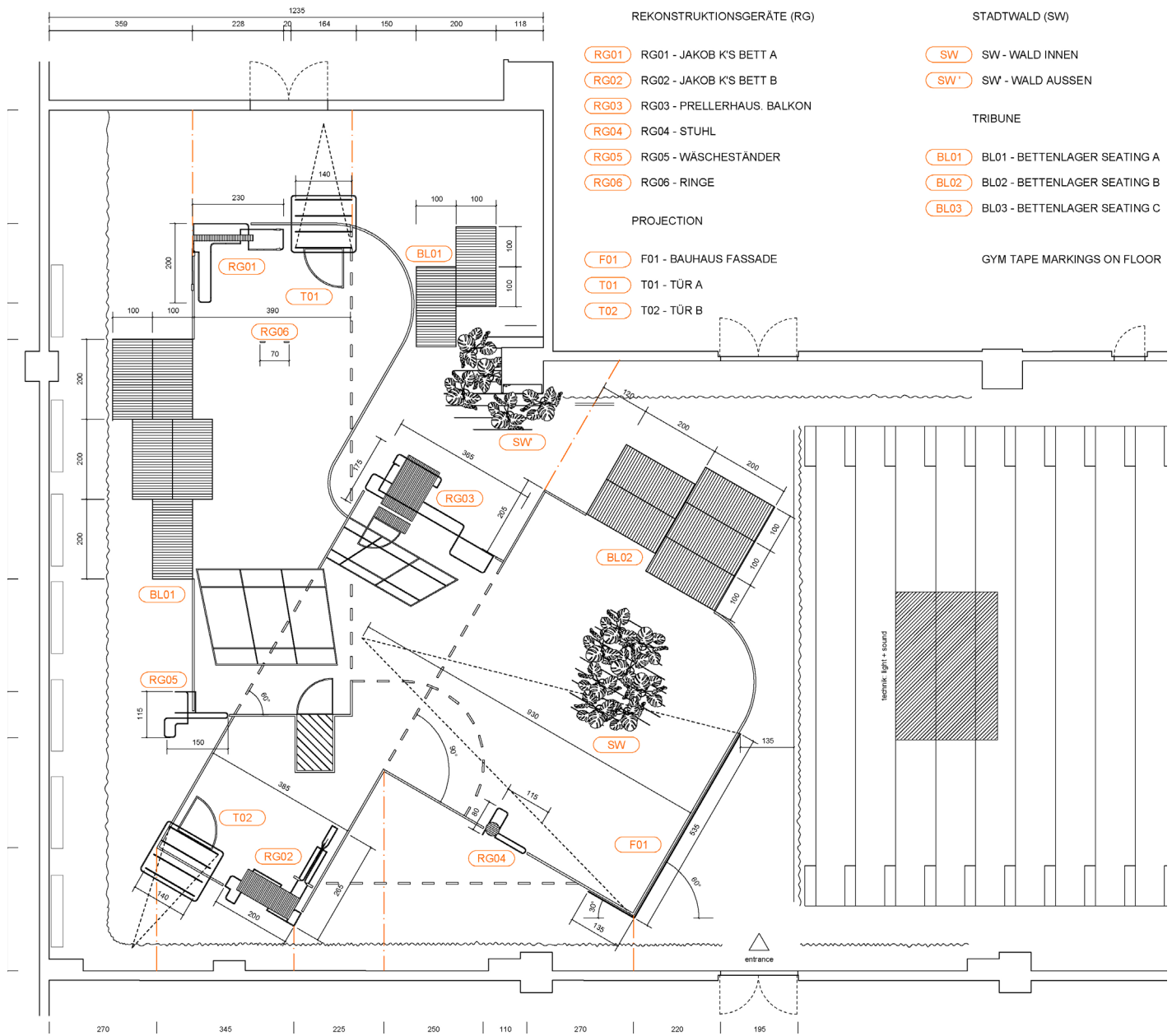
Such parallaxic shifts act as a critical device to re-examine the a-priori framing of the original vantage point, as well allowing for the recovery of 'lost' spatial dimensions. At the same time, they create their own spatial and narrative undercuts and unknowns, shadow spaces in which parallax in turn can operate in a speculative and generative manner. It is at the edge of precision's own shadow, at the intersection between reconstruction and re-invention, that the project unfolds.

Jakob K: a reconstruction without an original

The current text discusses a recent project revolving around the reconstruction of the works of forgotten Bauhaus choreographer Jakob Klenke (1874-1961). Born from a collaboration between performance scholars, performers and architects¹, the reconstruction was developed as an ongoing layering of spatial and choreographical evidence collected throughout the collaborative research project. During this process, we worked and slept in Klenke's studio at the Bauhaus in Dessau, first digitally simulating, then physically re-enacting and digitally capturing his movement practice. This data,

together with other material such as 3D lidar scans of the studio, environmental simulations and 3D models based on historical photographs or archival drawings formed an ever-growing layered drawn space. It is a virtual space, co-inhabited by overlapping and often conflicting versions of events. Its agency, as a drawn space, goes beyond description, prediction or instruction – it becomes an instrument of speculative forensics, generating from its very contradictions different versions of the object of reconstruction.





The architecture of a 2018 performance in Hamburg called Jakob K. Der Neue Mensch was conceived as a series of actualised fragments (physical artefacts, floor graphics, projected animations, live and recorded performative re-enactments) drawn from this virtual space of conflicting evidence. The performance space was at once exhibition, stage set and gymnastics studio. Saturated with the ghost of Klenke's movement practice, it was activated by the performers but also navigated and gradually discovered by the audience. The formal, frontal theatre arrangement of the stage was consciously left unused. The audience experienced the sense of co-inhabiting the non-determinate virtual space of reconstruction and was invited to participate in the (re) invention of the fictional choreographer Jakob Klenke.

Within the gradual shift in my research from re-construction to re-invention, the fabrication of a historical character and practice – a reconstruction without the

need for an original – is perhaps a *reductio ad absurdum* of the generative capacity of the very techniques of reconstruction. The following description of the performance space functions as a form of hypertext, in which the space's elements are cross-referenced in order to layer the understanding of the digital-analogue assemblage it reconstructs

A border

Every element of the set (with the exception of SW', the Stadtwald inversion) is situated on an outer line loosely containing the area of performance, evoking perhaps a sequence of fitness instruments on a fitness trail. The elements straddle the edge condition between the inside and outside of the space of performance, between observing and partaking in the act of re-construction. The edge, like Klenke's vision of the dancing body, is porous and fragile.

RG01

Rekonstruktionsgerät (RG) 01 is one of two re-inventions of Klenke's Prellerhaus room. The RG's, hybrids between Breuer furniture and open-ended fitness apparatus, re-draw key parts of this room. In this instance, Klenke's bed keeps its original length but is made 150mm wide. Lying and sitting on it is awkward – a fragile balance integral to Klenke's notion of the dancing body. The RG's incite the embodied re-enactment of a movement practice. More than just reconstructions, they are instruments of reconstruction.

The RG's are designed incrementally. Their components bear the traces of earlier reconstructions, rehearsals and improvisations. Yet, they aren't meant to replicate these, rather to instigate an ongoing open-ended practice of re-interpretation and misinterpretation. Soft silicon components bearing reconstructed body imprints ([see RG02](#)) suggest points of contact and possible uses.

T01 + T02

Next to Klenke's bed, the door to his studio is re-invented as a thick threshold, a suspended layering of scrim screens on which life-sized digital avatars are projected. The avatars are animations, based on a catalogue

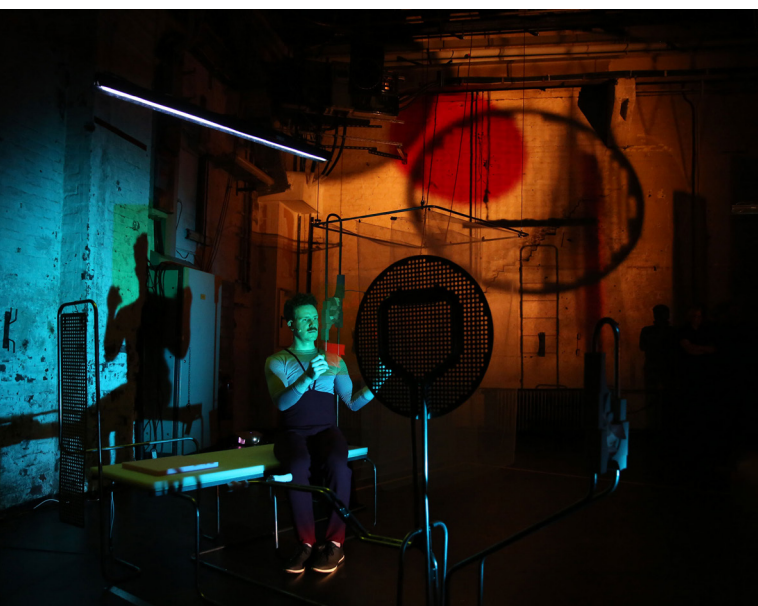


of movements from Klenke's movement practice. This catalogue has been physically re-enacted, movement per movement, limb per limb, by the performers and then digitally rigged to be re-combined algorithmically. Projected on stage, this generates a nearly endless repertoire of reconfigured movements – and of possible re-enactments and hence possible versions of historical 'truth'. These ghosts-like appearances interact with the performers throughout the duration of the piece.

RG02

RG02 is the second of two re-inventions of Klenke's studio. Because this version is rotated by thirty degrees within the space and its corresponding facade and balcony ([see RG03](#)) are projected across the performance space, the room intersects with its first, orthogonal version ([see RG01](#)). This means performers and audience can inhabit, simultaneously, different overlapping and contradicting reconstructions of one space.

Similarly, within the totem-like reconstructions of Klenke's face, of which RG02 bears two, different fragmented identities co-exist. The foam, silicone and PLA parts are pieced together from digital captures of the different performers. Klenke is a transhuman hybrid, an androgynous ghost, a fractured composite of those active in his re-invention. Performers and audience use the reconstruction as a mask, measuring the difference



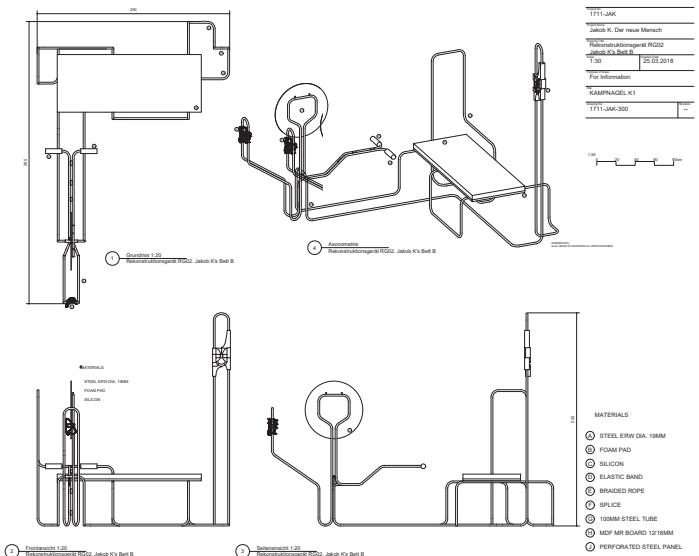


between their own features and the negative of Klenke's identity. The masks are actuated, sliding up and down or counterbalancing the movements of an opponent sitting on Klenke's bed. An alternative version of this facial reconstruction can be found projected onto the Bauhaus Fassaden Screen (see F01).

RG04

RG04 is a stool and a didactical device. Because it is small and doesn't refer directly to Klenke's room, its tubes (and by extension that of all RG's) become legible as an infinite, self-intersecting line – the infinite loop being an *idée fixe* in Klenke's choreographic drawings. As a seat, it also makes clear reference to Marcel Breuer's steel tube furniture (the diameter of the tubes is identical), with which the Bauhaus was furnished.

All RG's' seating surfaces are covered in foam of various densities, textures and colours. These refer back to the materials of the facial reconstructions in **RG02**. They are





movements of interpolated avatars (see [T01](#) and [T02](#)). When dormant, it receives still projections of lidar scans of the glazed wall wrapping Gropius' Bauhaus workshop, to which the screen refers through its size, form and proportion.

RG03

[RG03](#) (Balkon) is one of two re-inventions of Klenke's iconic Prellerhaus façade and balcony. Whereas the second version appears only as a floor graphic, this one describes a thin spatial outline, an abstraction of the original façade's proportions. The fragment projects forward from its corresponding bed (see [RG02](#)), leaving a void for the performance space but also granting a closer view from the balcony onto the Stadtwald, [SW'](#). The balcony, upholstered with thick foam and constructed as a seesaw around the object's infinite line, creates a precarious balance for the audience, who are invited to access it.

also identical to those of the audience seating elements (see [BL01-03](#)), further blurring the line between observing and partaking in the act of reconstruction.

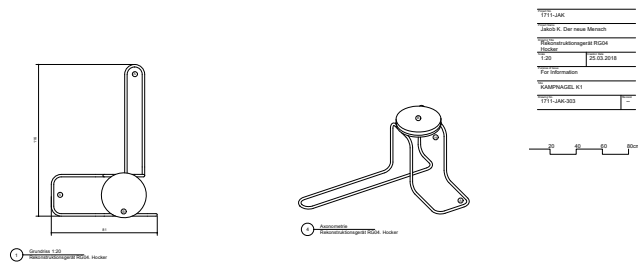
[RG05](#) (Wäscheständer) is an invention bridging the gap between the scale of the stool and the more extensive RG's.

F01 (Fassade) Projection wall

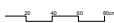
Upon entering the performance space, the audience is directed through a narrow space behind a large, diagonal L-shaped projection gauze (Bauhaus Fassade), aligned with the 30-degree rotation of the second room (see [RG02](#) and [RG03](#)). They are greeted by a colossal projection of Klenke's facial reconstruction. Unlike the fractured reconstruction in [RG02](#), this version of the face is intact. Yet it is eerily androgynous, subtly and constantly developing new features as it algorithmically interpolates Klenke's identity between the digitized faces of the performers.

Throughout the performance, the screen is used to show footage and animations of previous reconstructions and re-enactments as well as the generative



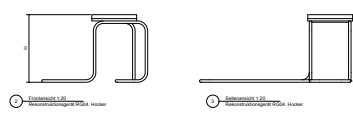


TTT1-Jak	
JAKOB K. DER NEUE MENSCH	
Raumtheaterensemble RG03	
Präferenzsystem	
T.30	
25.02.2016	
Für Information	
KAMPNAGEL K1	
TTT1-JAK-302	



Guertel 1.20

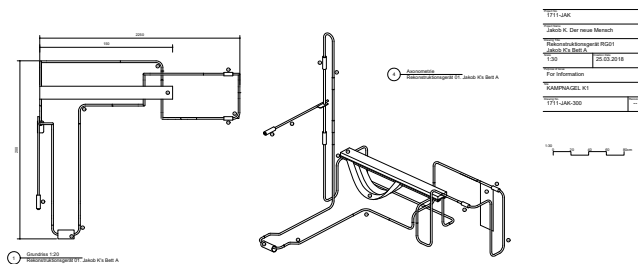
Guertel 1.20



- MATERIALS
- ① STEEL ERW DIA. 19MM
 - ② FOAM PAD
 - ③ SILICON
 - ④ ELASTIC BAND
 - ⑤ BRAIDED ROPE
 - ⑥ SPLICE
 - ⑦ 10MM STEEL TUBE
 - ⑧ MDF MR BOARD 12/18MM
 - ⑨ PERFORATED STEEL PANEL

Schemen 1.20

Schemen 1.20

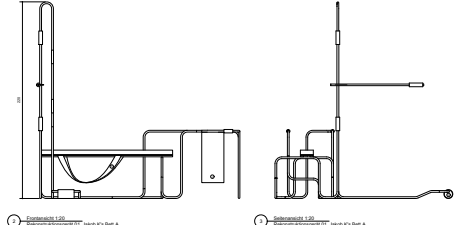


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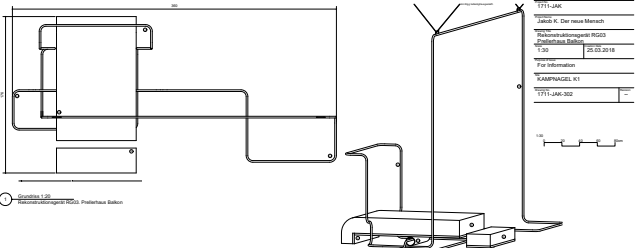
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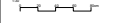
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Schemen 1.20

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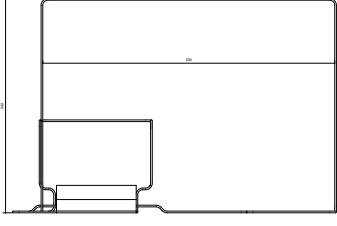


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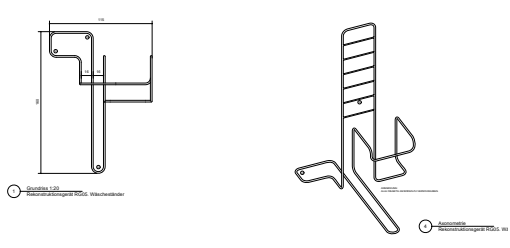
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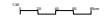
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Schemen 1.20

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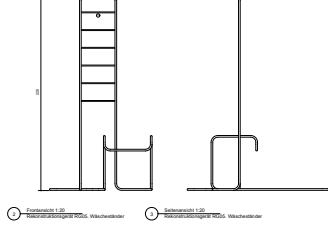


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Raumtheaterensemble RG03	
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25.02.2016	
Für Information	
KAMPNAGEL K1	
TTT1-JAK-304	



Guertel 1.20

Guertel 1.20



- MATERIALS
- ① STEEL ERW DIA. 19MM
 - ② FOAM PAD
 - ③ SILICON
 - ④ ELASTIC BAND
 - ⑤ BRAIDED ROPE
 - ⑥ SPLICE
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Schemen 1.20

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RG03 also serves as a rack for several body extensions worn by the performers throughout the piece and for a series of light filters and diffusers used during a scene called the Raumlichtmodulator, an embodied take on Moholy Nagy's machinic Light Space Modulator.

Both versions of the façade cast their own, digital shadows into the space. First used during the re-enactments in Klenke's actual room in Dessau, they re-appear in the performance space as floor graphics, structuring some of the performer's movements.

SW and SW'

SW and SW' (Stadtwald) are the only two elements clearly outside and inside of the performance area rather than being located on its edge. They are two (in versions of the same forest. In Dessau's city park (SW), overseen from Klenke's 3d floor balcony in the Prellerhaus (RG03) and cut of by the stage wall, Klenke took his students for long, self-intersecting infinitely looping

walks. The compact version of this forest (SW'), inverted around the outer edge of the performance space, is contained within the performance space. It is an inside microcosm of SW, kept alive by pending UV lamps. It is a direct reference to Walter Gropius' transparent rainwater pipe (see parallax 3 in the exhibition), which acts as a fifth façade to a condensed, internal inversion of the landscape surrounding the Bauhaus.

¹ Set design, video work and artistic collaboration with Mara Kanthak and performers Heike Bröckerhoff, Moritz Frischkorn, Jonas Woltemate. Performed at Kampnagel, Hamburg, May 2017. Supported by the Bartlett Architectural Research Fund. A film documenting the performance can be found under thomaspearce.xyz/jakob-k-der-neue-mensch.