

## Fabien Lerat: Théâtre

Yoann Le Claire

The object is in the shape of a half-sphere, obliging the spectators to sit in the round. When everyone is seated, all lines of vision converge, meet, hold still. The stage is very small, reduced to one meter in diameter. This contraction induces changes in theatrical practice: The hierarchical distances between actor and spectator and among spectators are abolished. With no stage sets, curtain, or sense of the stage as a closer-like space, the action cannot take place – it is impossible here to stage Racine, Shakespeare, Ionesco's *The Chairs*...

It is a place or structure that cannot contain the actions for which it was or seems to have been conceived. That does not correspond to what is usually meant by this place: A theater is surely not a theater if plays cannot be staged in it. Fabien Lerat's *Théâtre* is therefore only a theater because it has been designated as such. The artist has given it a function it cannot contain. He has conferred a status on it. To call "theater" an object that is structurally similar to a theater is to provide a user's manual for that object while locating it within a history. The object now has a purpose in addition to that of being contemplated: This is not a sculpture but a theater. The word "theater" informs in the sense that it commands a particular representation of the object and gives it a use.

The object opens.

And given our expectation that a spectacle will take place in it, we may imagine that the spectacle is adapted to its structure. This eventuality does not seem to be a projection, yet this eventuality does not seem to have been planned for. The artist accentuates the paradox. He not so much designates or constructs it as attributes a history and function to it, the purpose or end of which is uselessly undermined, thwarted.

### The Expectation

By telling us, "This object is a theater," the artist invites us to take a place. The empty object awaits the spectator. If we enter, we are no longer regarding an object but are located in a space.

A theater is a space arranged or an edifice constructed for the presentation or execution of a spectacle. So we are here, sitting in the round, awaiting a probable spectacle. *Everything around me is spectacle.* Awaiting a spectacle that cannot happen even if it arrives. There remains, however, something to see, to perceive, something to be given the title "theater". From outside we see people in a structure; from inside, we see, touch, sense one another, close together. Parallel to the closeness it creates, the theater rests on its convex base, which logically reduces the stability of the whole and subjects it to a kind of rocking. Inside, each movement made by each person is felt by all – as imbalance. If a person moves, his or her act engages the perception of all; they are brought into the presence of all.

The multitude of small movements imprint on one another. This mobility is perceptible, it transgresses the sphere of personal intimacy within which it is usually contained. Movement under these conditions has qualities that are rarely encountered: indeterminate, insignificant, often unconscious. Here, each movement touches the other, without intention or excuse.

Physically, the weight of each person is decentered and gathered into the same mobile point. Perception of gravity, normally proprioceptive, is displaced outside the self, joins with others. The others are inscribed within a quasi-organic, empathic structure in which their presence is not so much represented as felt. "I" and "we" experiment with having the same body.

Excerpt from Yoann Le Claire, "Théâtre," in: *Flam de art - Fabien Lerat, Le Quartier, Quimper and Galerie Duchamp, Yvertois, 1999.*



Fabien Lerat, *Théâtre*, 1999, steel, painted wood, Ø 300 cm, height 150 cm, Collection Musée d'Art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg, with funds from the Banque de Neufchâteau, NBN AMPO, 2004, photo: Marc Donnage ■ "A half-spherical form rests on its convex base. Thirty-one segments curve into quarter-circles to form the limits of the structure and fold toward the center. Four indented, circular plates meet the spallier horizontally, creating the structure's rigidity. From outside, the structure can be seen through at many points; inside, benches can hold up to 20 people. A metal cup, 21 centimeters high and 150 centimeters in diameter, creates the step into the structure and is its connector with the ground." Fabien Lerat