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REVIEWS:

Europe I

The low suspended ceiling of the exhibition space is clad with 192 oblong wooden panels that are arranged in a pattern of squares – eight wide and 12 long. Four smoke detectors punctuate the ceiling's vast regularity. A narrow shadowed gap on its sides allows a limited glimpse of the vast, inaccessible space above. Near the entrance and exit doors, a label, two printed schedules and two Perspex holders for exhibition flyers are affixed to the white walls. Two white chairs, two fire extinguishers and a pictogram on a metal stand calling for silence are the only furniture on the grey concrete floor. The light in the space is dim and dull, and comes mostly from the frosted glass door of the emergency exit on one of the long sides of the space; a very subdued light comes through the entrance from the bookshop and the exit to the café; and a fine band of yellow-orange light leaks all along the gap in the ceiling above.

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla's installation provides a very limited visual experience. There is nothing to see, and thus the paraphernalia of public display takes on a strong presence that is slightly disturbing in its concentration on the insignificant. *Compass* (all works 2009) turns the white cube of the Temporäre Kunsthalle from a temporary architecture into an integral part of an art installation. Every detail is on display – this includes the attempt to contextualise the show for a tourist audience, a challenge that lies at the heart of this troubled institution's programmatic and ideological problems.

Yet *Compass* is much more than what can be seen. There is noise and invisible movement. The wood above creaks, and the entire space resonates with the sound of a person moving about. Rhythmic steps and shuffling can be heard emanating from the other side of the false ceiling. A dancer – according to the schedule, during my visit her name is Julia Wachtel – moves on what must be a wooden dance floor above the thin panels. The rhythm of the steps, the stomping staccato, the dragging of a foot, suggest a flamenco-like dance. One can almost hear some castanets or see the ruffles of a dress, though this remains, of course, pure imagining. The movements of the dancer above and of the visitors below correspond and connect. The listeners turn to the source of the sound, following it with their eyes. A most spectacular piece.

Spectacular enough, in fact, to cover for *How to Appear Invisible*, a video, displayed in a side room, of a German shepherd wearing a conical protective collar branded with the KFC logo as it roams the demolition site of the Palast der Republik, a plot of land next door to the Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin. The involvement with location and site, so fitting in *Compass*, becomes in this video a formulaic first-response to a place and its history, almost touristic – which, ironically, might be appropriate, considering that the area has become the main tourist destination in Berlin. *Axel Lapp*

Allora & Calzadilla

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Compass, 2009 (Installation view),
wooden drop ceiling, dancer, dimensions
variable. Photo: Jens Sieha, Berlin.
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