

ALBERT ÁDÁM

DESCRIPTIO

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Descriptio is a total installation occupying the two basement rooms of FUGA, Budapest Center of Architecture. It is a complex and intricately interwoven assemblage of disparate elements or perhaps units. These occupy discrete parts of the gallery space, keeping a bit of a distance, yet lend to resonance with each other. The arrangement of the separate object groups invites the visitor into an active interpretative role, in which the parts become co-referential. In this process, an extensive time-span opens up in order to compel the viewer into a critical reconsideration of the historical basis of taxonomical thinking; thereby its debt to early forms of logistics becomes visible.

Albert takes up the imaginary journey he started with his previous work *Never take a trip alone*, in which he “inserted” the study rooms of two influential intellectual figures of German history, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt, into a perspective box (peep show) modelled on its 17th century predecessor. Like this previous work, *Descriptio* reflects on a wide scale of cultural-intellectual transmission (that is, the means and modes of knowledge production) through time, placing them into an imaginary aesthetic sphere.

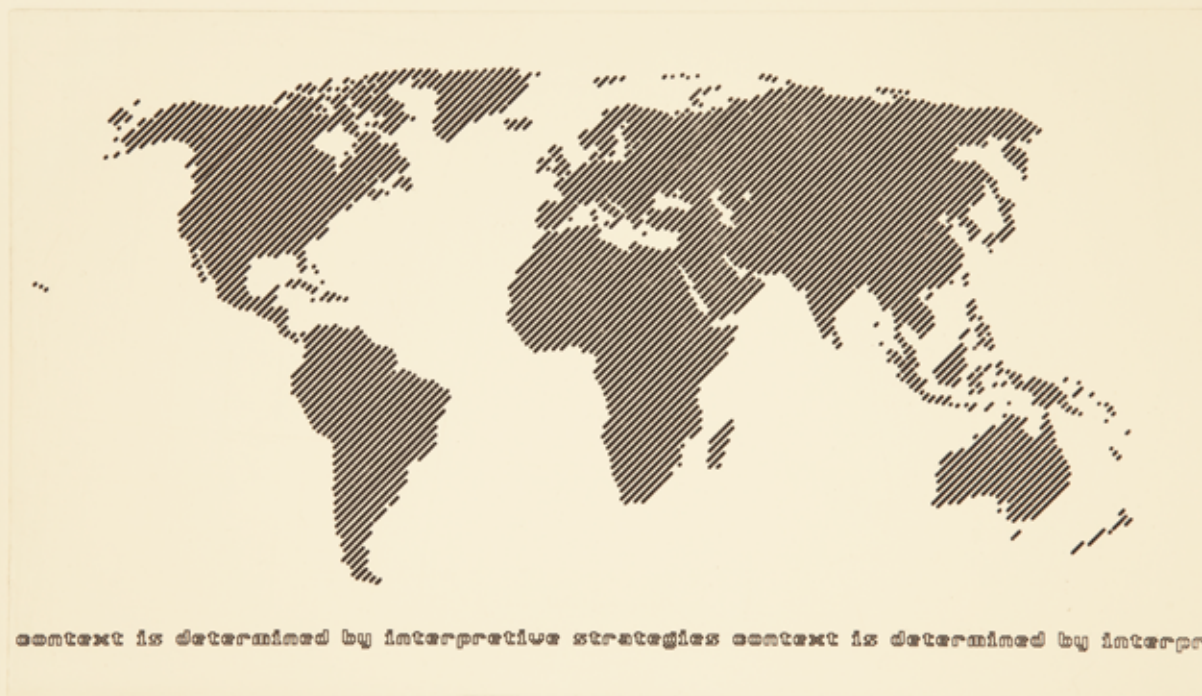
On entering the gallery space, the first impression is the dominance of grey, white, and black. The gallery’s pure white enhances this effect of under-tint colours. The first set of objects one is confronted with are three monochrome globe forms, carefully placed on a table, painted black, white and grey. It is a symbolic erasure of continents and oceans, the traces of how the map would represent the earth, where one can spot a home land. There is only one word on the fourth globe: *Heimat*, in gothic German characters. There is no stopping from here, the installation starts to work on the viewer, and the different aspects of colonizing discoveries and their means and effects reveal themselves, posing the question: what counts as home today, and how was this home constructed? On the left wall there is a convex Dutch mirror placed opposite a file cabinet condensing the whole interior in its reflection. In the far right corner a group of twenty bell-glasses, all empty, reinforcing the emptiness of the file cabinet. The critique of systematic knowledge production comes to its peak with the blank grid projected from a still-projector (a reference to the imaginary projections of *laterna magica*s) to the wall near the entrance. On the two walls opposite each other two huge ink drawings add up to the concept of the criticism of the birth of global logistics and the systematic colonization and classification of the world: a crane from a cargo harbour (an inspiration from Frankfurt), and a cargo opposite it; the theme of these drawings are further enhanced by the four small engravings on the right wall depicting slightly altered maps and ships.

The smaller room gives place to two sets of plants under eight laboratory-like magnifying glasses, the scene fits into the context of taxonomical enquiry, but the aesthetic dimension of the objects and their arrangement is also of importance: the plants (*sedums*) are elementary sculptural structures. On the neighbouring two walls, two images of trees are projected, contrasting the blankness of the other room’s still projector. In Albert’s installation the display also becomes part of the subject matter.

The installation shows that—as a mode of traversing through time—the juxtaposition of the technical and scientific devices of distant epochs, those once of major importance (like the filing system, cartography, botany etc.) can be presented by contemporary modes and approaches of visualisation. The work however points beyond the invocation of the past. It directs attention to how the framework of contextualization can switch perspective. Albert’s aspiration is to understand and critique the mechanisms of taxonomic systems, classification, archiving, in other words, the construction of systematic knowledge through the realm of the aesthetic.







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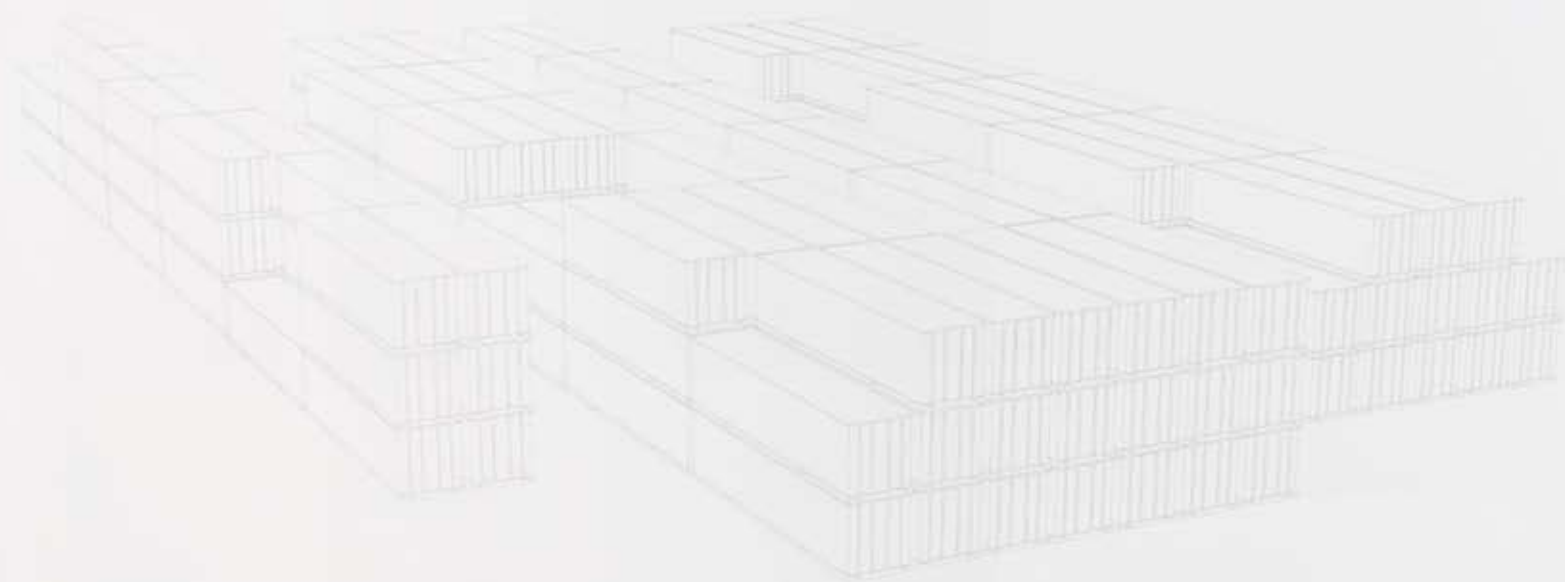




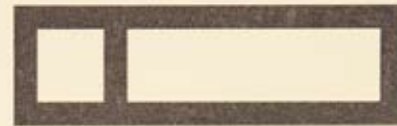
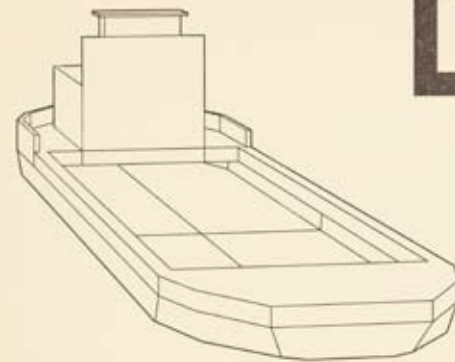












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