



**Jürgen Buchinger**

**Zur Wohnungsfrage: Eine Odyssee**

**2020**

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## Zur Wohnungsfrage: Eine Odyssee

2020, installation with 360°-projection and 3-channel HD video

*The Housing Question: An Odyssey* is a documentary video installation about contemporary urban living, the right to housing and the urban housing market. The work deals with the privatization of our cities and the resulting gentrification processes, that more and more divide cities along monetary fault lines and class differences.

Viewers go on a journey with the artist, starting from a house in Basel, the tenants of which had to move out to make room for redevelopment, to discover the financial entanglements of the owners of the house which lead to a refugee camp in Burkina Faso where Doctors without Borders is helping internally displaced persons.

The work encourages viewers to think about their own living situation and introduces tools for research and resistance to affected persons. It does not only point to the concrete hardships of our current housing market, gentrification and the microphysics of power that prevail between landlords, tenants and real estate investors. It also reflects on the philosophical question of what dwelling is for us today and how we can think anew our relationship to the spaces we inhabit.

### Synopsis

The inhabitants of the house at Webergasse 28, at a central location in Basel's vibrating Kleinbasel district, have to move out. All tenants have seen their contracts cancelled so that the house can be redeveloped, the flats reduced in size but multiplied and the rent tripled. On a first screen, two tenants tell that story in interviews: Melanie, who lived there for nine years in a shared flat, and Gaby, who spent 35 years in the house, first with her partner and then with a growing family. After Basel's electorate voted for stronger tenant protection in June 2019, the house is one of many that are subject to mass terminations of rental contracts before the referendums are put into law.

Parallel to that, on a second screen, I investigate who is behind this transformation, locating the different legal entities that own the house, manage it, or own the owning legal entity. It is a complex system of subentities and deputies that makes it difficult to pin down any one party responsible. During my investigation

I finally arrive at a pension fund called „Profond“ in Zurich. In their annual report I come across something unusual, an unexpected image amidst the bright and smiling corporate dreariness. Two photos of a refugee camp in Barsalogho in Burkina Faso where Doctors without Borders organises medical treatment and potable water. It appears that all the employees of Doctors without Borders are insured at the very pension funds that in Basel contributes to gentrification and the destruction of a healthy and diverse urban demography.

A third screen shows the deliberations of Basel's city parliament for introducing legislation for stronger tenant protection. Approximately one year after Basel's citizens introduced a right to housing into Basel's constitution by referendum, this is the long awaited legislation following the popular vote. By watching the members of the parliament go through the law paragraph by paragraph to vote on wordings, small changes and adaptations, this screen becomes a stark contrast to the individual stories in the first screen. In the legislation, that in the end shall offer protection to each and every single tenant, there is no room for individual histories as everything has to be generalized. Slowly, one manages to discern divisions in the parliament between those who try to make a stronger regulation and those who try, in ever so tiny steps, to dilute it.

The screens are surrounded by an octagonal space that works as the screen for a continuous 360°-projection that shows a slow travelling through the Felix Platter-Spital in Basel. The empty hospital is being transformed into new living space at the same time that the tenants in Webergasse have to move out. But rather than maximising profit the cooperative responsible for the conversion aims to create sustainable and affordable living space for people of all sections of the population and all age groups while not driving out other people in the process. The projection thus serves as an encompassing visual and spatial limitation that contains the installation to its own space but also offers a positive and already existing alternative to the current prevailing strategies of urban development.

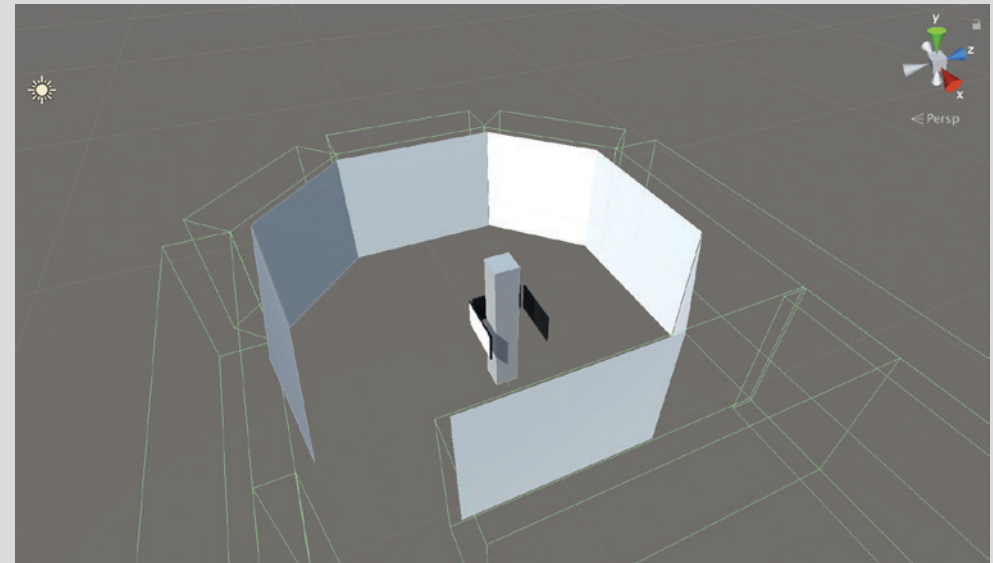


### Artist's statement

Thinking about housing and everything around it means not only to unravel the intricate weaving of company structures or the acknowledgement of statistical evidence. To actively imagine a different way of living in the cities we must also think about what dwelling means to us, what a house is and what living in one entails. It means to look at the interconnections between different people that form the social tissue that keeps a city alive.

That the 360°-projection that envelops the installation shows an alternative to for-profit housing developments becomes slowly clear in the course of watching the other videos. But first and foremost it shows space. And creates space. A space that spectators stand in, when they view the work. This space should be one for thought; thought, that goes in all directions rather than always in the same one. I aim for an immersive experience but not immersive in a story, a narration. Immersion into a topic that affects all people—albeit differently—but is seldom subject to speculative debate, to questions of how we want it to be instead of taking it for granted or lay out the specific tangible problems that emerge.

I see my work as a form of critique of ideology, that is, it aims to contest notions of naturality or inevitability of social or economic conditions that are in fact made to be the way they are. The world we live in is thus presented as one that is subject to change that can be initiated by people and everyone is encouraged to rethink the conditions of our reality that heretofore seemed irrefutable.



Installation, schematic drawing



Installation, visualization

# Credits

## A work by

Jürgen Buchinger

## Starring

Gaby Messmer

Melanie Müller

Jürgen Buchinger

## Cinematography

Simon de Diesbach

Jürgen Buchinger

## additional footage

Melanie Müller

## Sound

Simon de Diesbach

Jürgen Buchinger

## Music

Excerpts from "Odysseus" op. 41 by Max Bruch

NDR Radio Choir

Budapest Radio Choir

Radio-Philharmonie Hannover, Leon Botstein

Jeffrey Kneebone

Nancy Maulsby

Stephanie Lange

## Soundmix

Thomas Gassmann

## Editing

Jürgen Buchinger

## Mentoring

Robert Müller

Marine Hugonier

## English Language Supervision

Carly Gertler

Nicholas Kazmierski

## With quotes taken from

Theodor Adorno, Asyl für Obdachlose, 1944

Wilhelm Graff, Odysseus: Scenes from the Odyssey, 1872

Martin Heidegger, Bauen Wohnen Denken, 1952

Ernst Hubeli, Die neue Krise der Städte, 2020

Tammy Kim, Moms 4 Housing: Redefining the Right to a Home in Oakland, 2020

## Promotion

Chantal Molleur

## Monetary Support

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Amt für Ausbildungsbeiträge, Elvis Musal

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## wohnen&mehr

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Simon de Diesbach, Jochen Ehmann, Antoine Friang, Iris

Ganz, Pablo Garrido Arnaiz, Thomas Gassmann, Carly

Gertler, Marine Hugonier, Nicholas Kazmiersky, Gaby

Messmer, Chantal Molleur, Melanie Müller, Robert

Müller, Urs & Christel Raussmüller, Ruth Stofer, Fred

Truniger, Daniel Tschuppert

Lucerne University of  
Applied Sciences and Arts

**HOCHSCHULE  
LUZERN**

**Master  
Film**

Design & Kunst

FH Zentralschweiz

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				Ei Lö	weitere Adressen
				Ei Lö	Bemerkungen
				Ref	Statutendatum



### Technical requirements

3 27"-HD-monitors

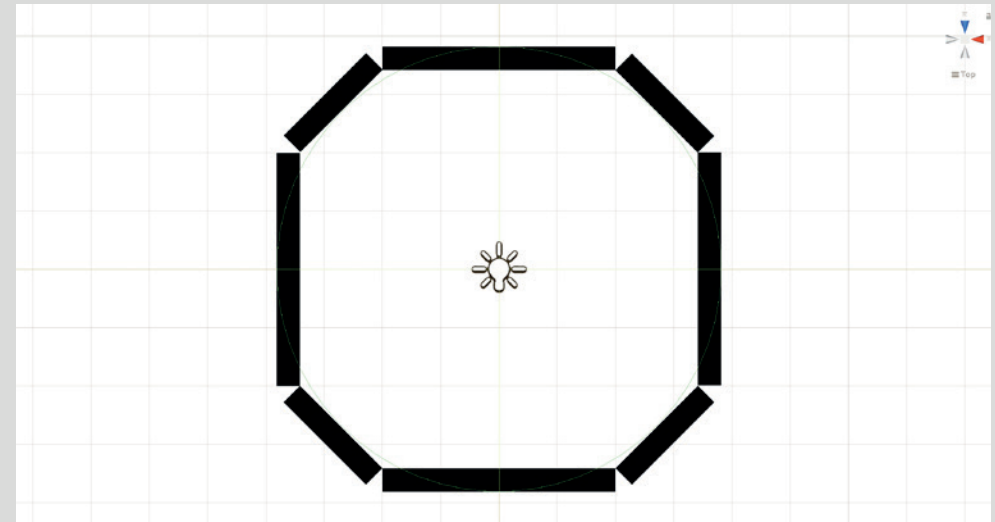
including headphones, cables and mediaplayers

7 short distance projectors, HD, throw ratio  $\leq 0.5$

including cables and synchronizable mediaplayers

A room according to the sketch on the right, measuring approx. 765 cm diameter and a height of approx. 250 cm, one of the three back walls can be left out to create an entry.

There is the possibility to adapt the installation to the circumstances on location in coordination with the artist.



### Supplied video files

1-interview.mp4, 14:25 min., h.264, AAC, 1920 x 1080 px, 16:9, stereo, color

2-recherche.mp4, 18:01 min., h.264, AAC, 1920 x 1080 px, 16:9, stereo, color

3-politik.mp4, 7:42:47 min., h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color

For 360°-projection:

front.mp4, h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color

front-right.mp4, h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color

right.mp4, h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color

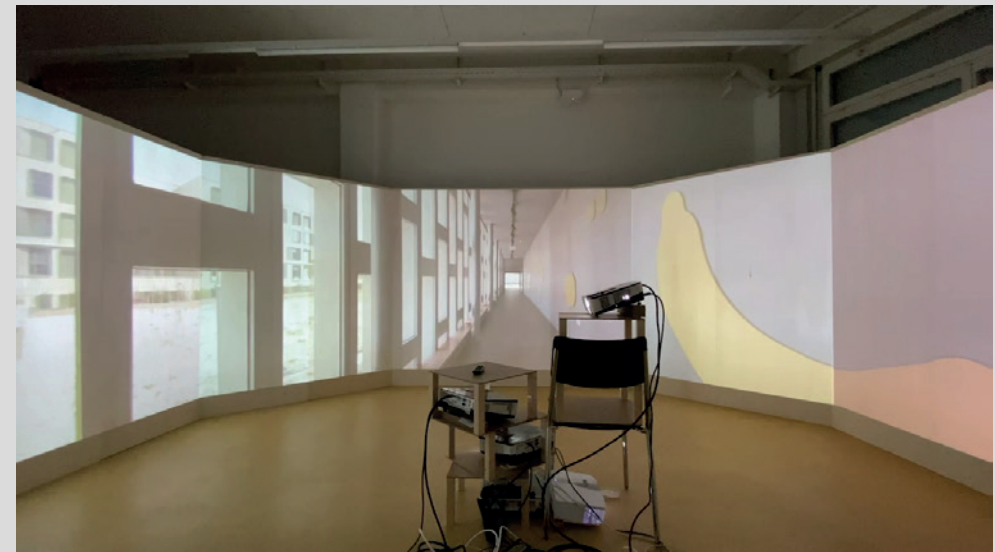
back-right.mp4, h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color

back.mp4, h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color

back-left.mp4, h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color

left.mp4, h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color

front-left.mp4, h.264, AAC, 1280 x 720 px, 16:9, stereo, color



360°-projection, proof of concept



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