

Elke Maier
SPACE^d

17 June to 29 August 2021

The artist Elke Maier, born in Bavaria in 1965 and living in Gmünd, Carinthia, since 1996, studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich from 1986 to 1993. She is predominantly known for her interventions, most of the time in sacred architectural spaces, which she has already realized in Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral, the Collegiate Church Salzburg, the Dome of Innsbruck, or Markuskirche in Hannover, among others, and which are characterized by an intensive interaction with interior, space and the light acting upon the room.

Her evolution as an artist is founded in the use of natural materials and working outdoors. For her, from her very beginnings, her interventions have been about site-specific reference and the capturing of different lighting atmospheres, about a spatial experience without boundaries and the work's appropriation by moving in and around the piece of art in the sense of land art projects. The use of thinnest white silk or cotton threads, employed by her to create transcendental, room-filling spaces of light in hundreds of working hours, is a distinctive technique that Elke Maier originally developed outdoors, transferring this precise and laborious technique to interior spaces from the turn of the millennium.

With the spatial installation developed especially for the Castle Chapel, 'SPACE^d', the artist again deliberately intervenes into the profaned sacred space, generating, as in past interventions with reference to the respective place, 'a unique auratic interplay between light, space and matter.'¹ Sacred spaces suit her working method, as her installations, though designed as site-specific, reach far beyond spatial limitations by implying a metaphysical questioning of the very concept of space. In doing so, she benefits from the natural light situation that is different each time, once making the threads beam, then again making them disappear completely. 'In the oscillation between visibility and invisibility, open, transparent spaces are generated that have no limit themselves and thus create a moment of infinity within the architectural boundaries.'²

The work which often takes several weeks is an essential part of the pieces of art themselves and inextricably linked to them. For the artist, the diligent and tight tensioning of thousands of threads may be physically demanding, but the work process, through its constant form finding and continuity, evolves into an almost meditative activity. 'I don't think form as a boundary', the artist explains her aesthetic principles, 'but as a process, as the reflection of a movement's traces in space. Shape and space do not form an opposite polarity but a continuum of movements equally pervading both, taking place at the transition of one to the other and required to take place in the form of a transformation.'

In addition, the Castle Chapel, a relatively small space for the artist, demands for a methodical, structured and process-oriented approach using scaffold and ladder in order to fulfill the logistic demands.

The installation in the Castle Chapel is created in co-operation with Kärntner Elektrizitäts-Aktiengesellschaft Klagenfurt.

Nora Leitgeb

¹ Margit Zuckriegel, in: *REQUIEM_ELKE MAIER and PERE SALINAS*, invitation to the exhibition at Galerie Weihergut/managing director: Michael Karrer, 2007.

² Elke Maier, in an interview with Dr. Anne Kehrbaum, in: *Elke Maier. Lichtungen*, Evangelisch-lutherische Apostel- und Markus-Kirchengemeinde (ed.), Hanover 2017,

Elke Maier. SPACE^d. Castle Chapel, Museum of Modern Art, Carinthia, Austria, 2021



Foto © Ferdinand Neumüller

Elke Maier. SPACE^d. Castle Chapel, Museum of Modern Art, Carinthia, Austria, 2021

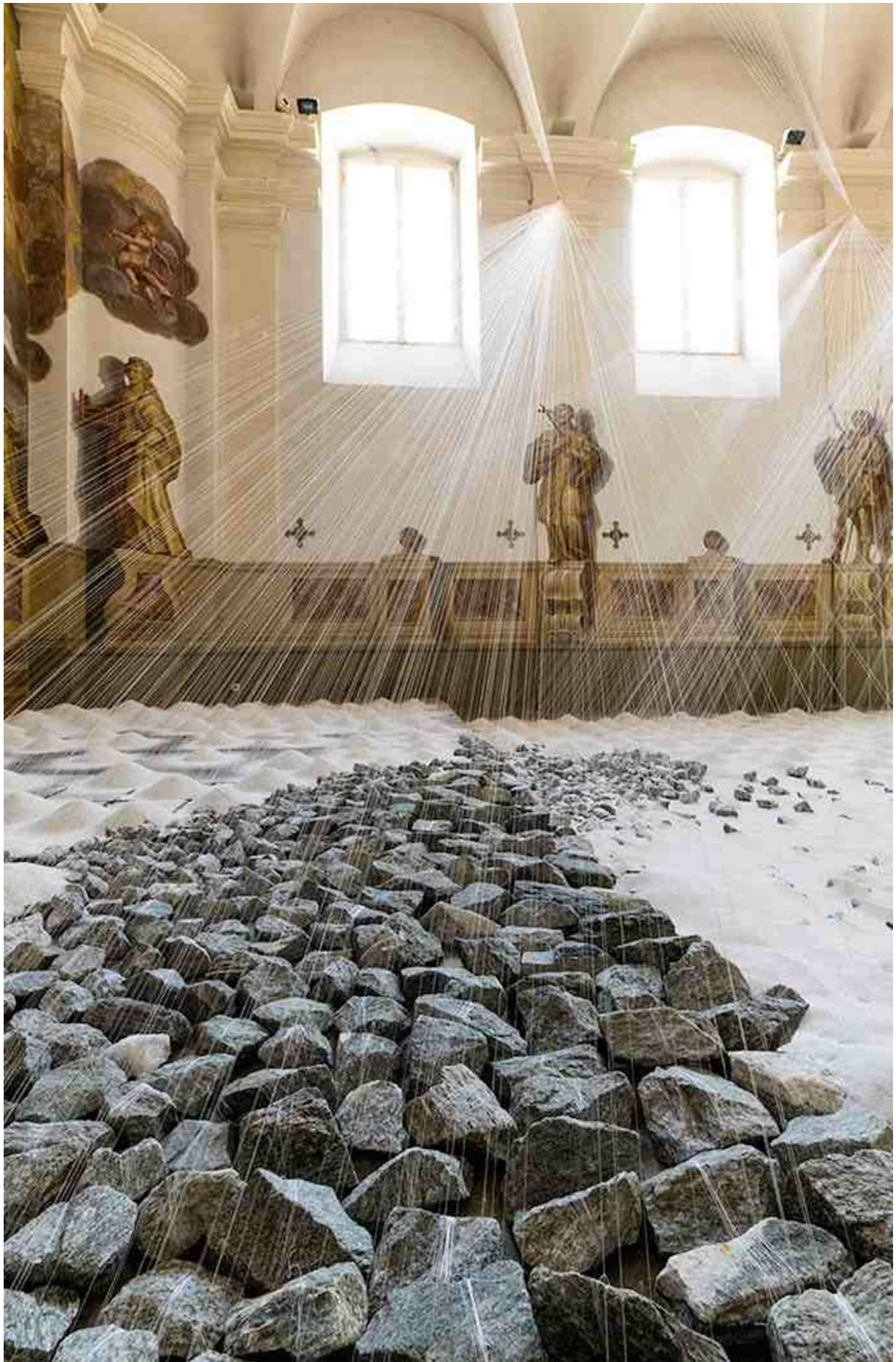


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Elke Maier: SPACE^d. Castle Chapel, Museum of Modern Art, Carinthia, Austria, 2021
Foto © Ferdinand Neumüller

Specifically for the Castle Chapel, Elke Maier is designing a spatial installation, the concept, form, and realization process of which are inseparably linked to the authenticity of the site in all its versatility and complexity, and through which she quite consciously intervenes into the profaned sacred space.

Using a simple material, finest white cotton yarn, a unique auratic interplay between light, space and matter is being created. Over the course of almost 300 hours of work, the artist is letting down hundreds of threads off the cornice, tensioning them inside the room. With utmost precision, each of the tensioned threads is individually aligned and positioned inside the room until, following the ongoing realization process, the work will eventually be finished. With a minimum of material and weight, the artist succeeds in creating voluminous spatial landscapes which can be experienced as places of contemplative being. Her works are not ad hoc interventions but are developed from the beginning in a continuous dialogue with space and light. Through the great number of threads, an abundance of light reflexions is generated. This makes threads and space perceived as not being next to each other, but within each other.

Elke Maier: "I think of form not as being a boundary but a process, as the expression of traces of a movement (of light) in space."

The material is also the medium in which light manifests itself. Oscillating between visibility and invisibility, the works by Elke Maier only appear once they reflect the light: as open and transparent spaces that have no border themselves, thus creating a moment of infinity within architectural limits.

HIGH TENSION. KELAG Forstsee show power plant, Austria, 2008

Temporary Art Intervention by Elke Maier

Back in 2008, Elke Maier already realized the spatial installation ‚HIGH TENSION‘ at the KELAG Forstsee show power plant. In a work process that took several weeks, the artist swathed the power plant's turbines and generators, thereby setting her contemplative and calm acting against the speed and noise of the machines.



Elke Maier
PLUNGED INTO THE LIGHT
Collegiate (University) Church Salzburg, Austria

Temporary Art Intervention by Elke Maier
Exhibition dates: November 28th, 2010 to January 7th, 2011

Material: white thread (40.000 m), sand (4 m³)
Extension: height 50 m
(length of the thread from the openings at the top of the dome up to the Sand-field)

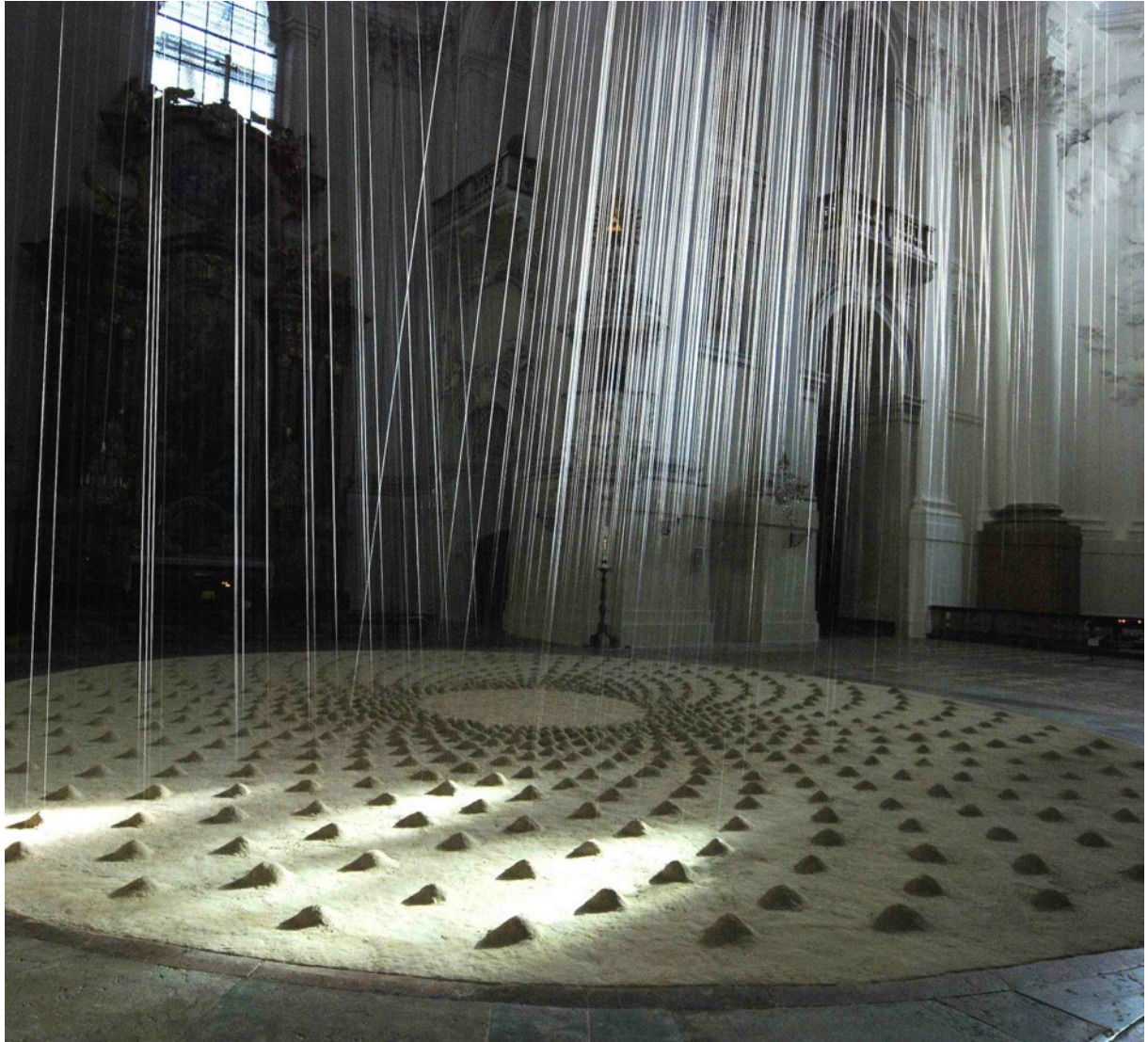
Sand-field area (relief of sand): orbital radius 6.25 m

The artist Elke Maier has been engaging with art interventions in sacred spaces for many years. her projects have been seen by thousands of visitors in numerous churches across the German-speaking world. This is the first time one of her art interventions is taking place in a Salzburg church. During these projects the artist will spend around 250 hours stretching very fine threads from precisely specified points.

For this church hundreds of silk yarn beams will spring from the opening of the dome and then stretch down to the floor around the main altar. Transcendent bodies will form, their characteristics changing depending on the amount of daylight, position of the sun and the direction the light falls. The art intervention is wholly a response to the baroque spatial design and creates a new shared place of contemplation. The interplay between artwork, space and light in all its complexity can only be truly experienced in this wonderful church.



Elke Maier, 2011. PLUNGED INTO THE LIGHT, Collegiate Church (University Church), Salzburg (A)
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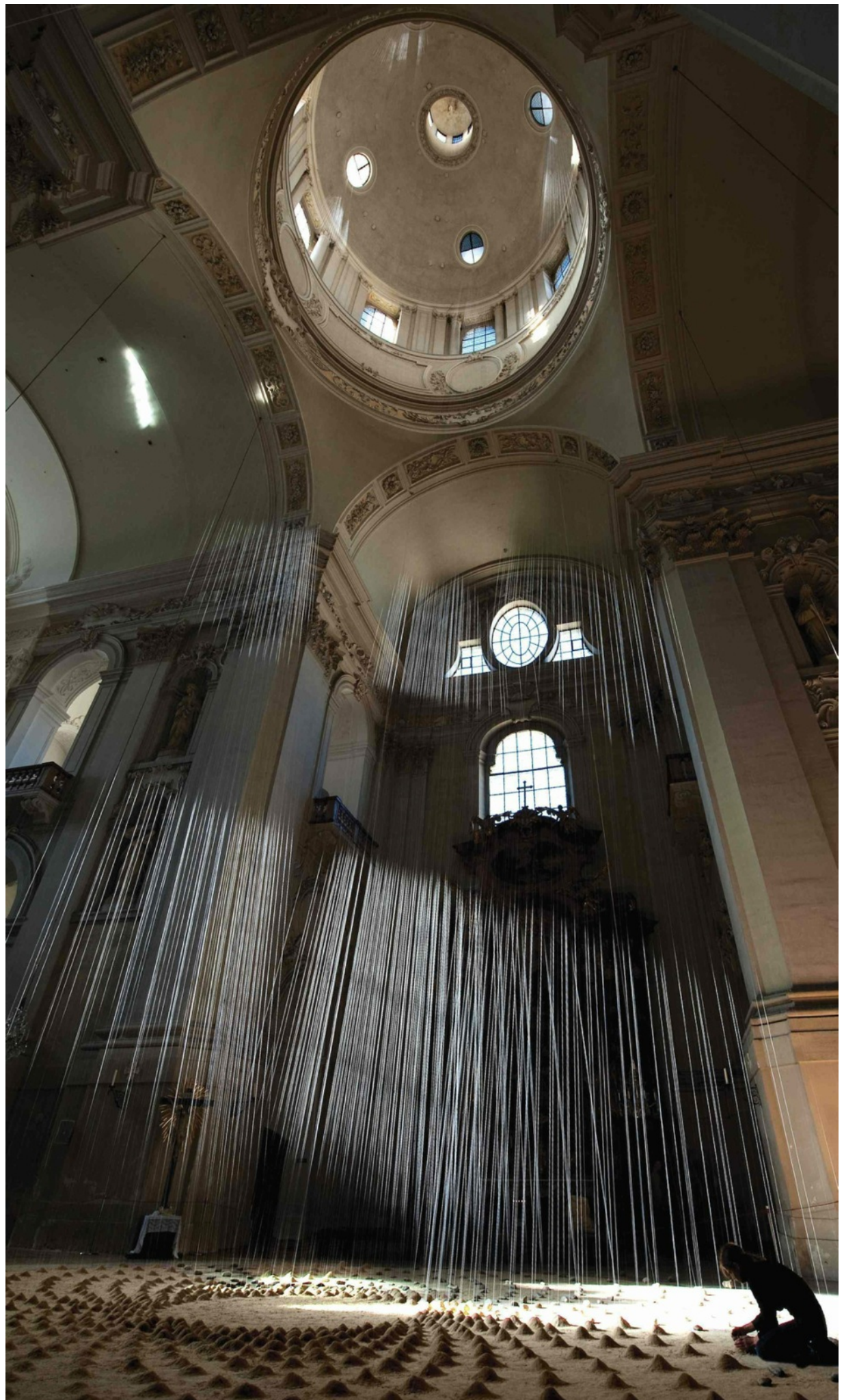


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Elke Maier, 2011 I. PLUNGED INTO THE LIGHT, Collegiate Church (University Church), Salzburg (A)



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Elke Maier

THE TRANSLUCENT LENTEN VEIL

Saint Stephen`s Cathedral Vienna, Austria 2014

Following the old Christian tradition of the Lenten veil, the main altarpiece and the crucifix are covered during Lent from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. As this notion is quite difficult to understand for many people, an unconventional and contemporary artistic installation should breathe new life into this tradition.

This year the Austrian artist Elke Maier has spanned the complete height of the cathedral with thousands of pieces of silken threads. Only the sunlight makes the thin silken thread visible which, in ever-changing transparency, catches the eye towards the chancel. Entering by the giant door, the visitor perceives the installation as a veil covering the main altar. The further he walks through the nave towards the altar, the more visible the complexity of the different newly built spheres becomes. Like very thin fans the thousands of threads spanning from the hatches of the vault 28 m high up to shortly above the heads of the visitors form crystalline like areas, hiding and opening up again and again.

Toni Faber, Parish Priest of Saint Stephen`s Cathedral Vienna

Elke Maier. TRANSLUCENT LENTEN VEIL Saint Stephen`s Cathedral Vienna Austria, 2014

The Parish Priest of Saint Stephen`s Cathedral Vienna, Toni Faber has commissioned the artist Elke Maier with the creation of a Lenten veil from Ash Wednesday until Easter Sunday 2014. Elke Maier has been focussing on artistic projects in sacral spaces for decades. Her work has already been appreciated by thousands of visitors and is especially well-known in the German-speaking world.

In Saint Stephen`s Cathedral in Vienna, Elke Maier has created an expansive installation using a multitude of finest white silken threads, an installation whose idea, creative process and form are inseparably combined with the authenticity of this specific church, so being unique and not transferable to any other place.

From the very beginning, the artist has developed her work in Saint Stephen`s in a process of continual dialogue with the interior and the sunlight moving in it, where the form of her work of art still indicates the progressive process of its development. Visitors who were able to experience in close proximity the development of her work from the very beginning on 27 January 2014, could see how her work progressed, hour for hour and day after day. The artist spanned thread of the finest white silk (about 50.000 meters) from the hatches in the cross-ribbed vault to the bottom, where she tied each one with maximum precision onto wire ropes covering the complete width of the main nave and attached to the Gothic stone pillars on each side. As she had to climb up to the vault (134 steps) and down again for every few single pieces of thread, it took her about 300 hours to complete the work.

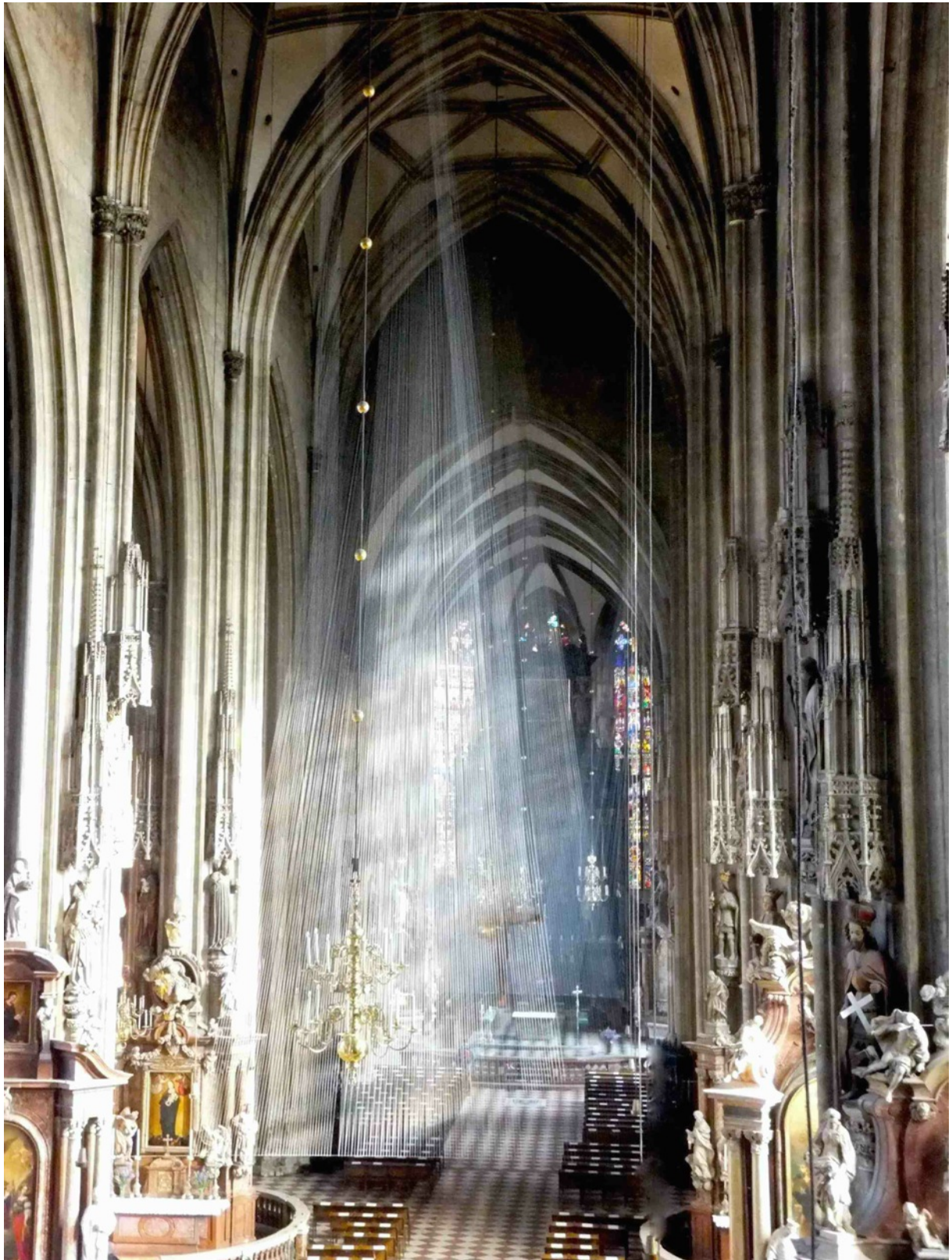
Looking from the entrance of the cathedral to the altar, the visitor will discover innumerable very fine white threads condensing into a translucent crystalline tissue which depending upon how the light oscillates between the visible and the invisible, actually only becoming really perceptible when the sunlight is being reflected. It appears, often only for moments, process-oriented, an ever-changing transition from the visible presence to invisible presence.

The "Translucent Lenten Veil" by Elke Maier keeps changing in intensive dialogue with the sunlight moving through the room. When at noon the sun shines through the first thread, it then fully manifests itself. It does so quite suddenly, like a glittering crystal quasi out of the void, unfolding to continuous new dimensions, creating new galaxies and stellar orbits, from the interior of the Saint Stephen`s Cathedral.

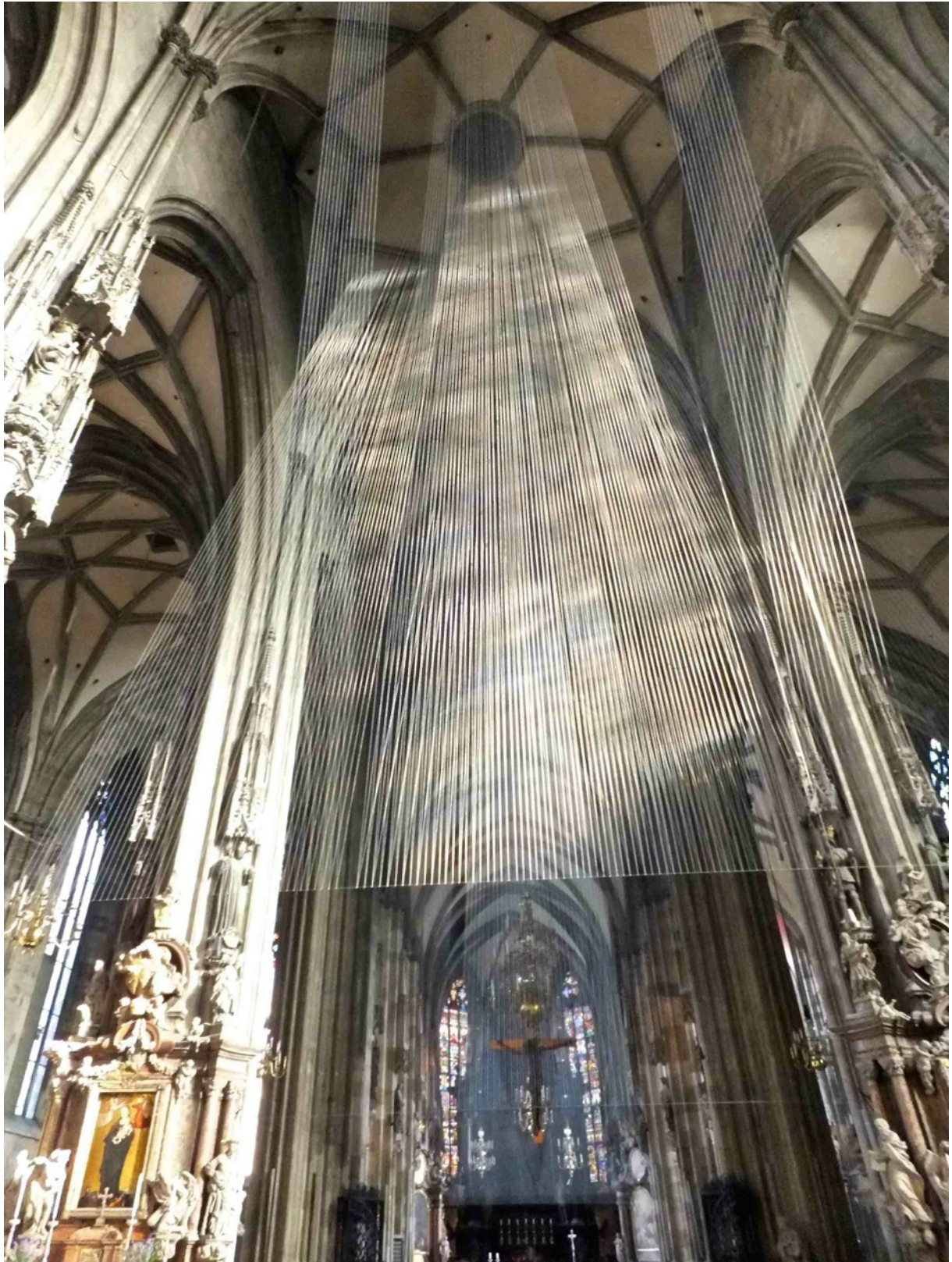
Elke Maier: TRANSLUCENT LENTEN VEIL Saint Stephen`s Cathedral Vienna, Austria 2014



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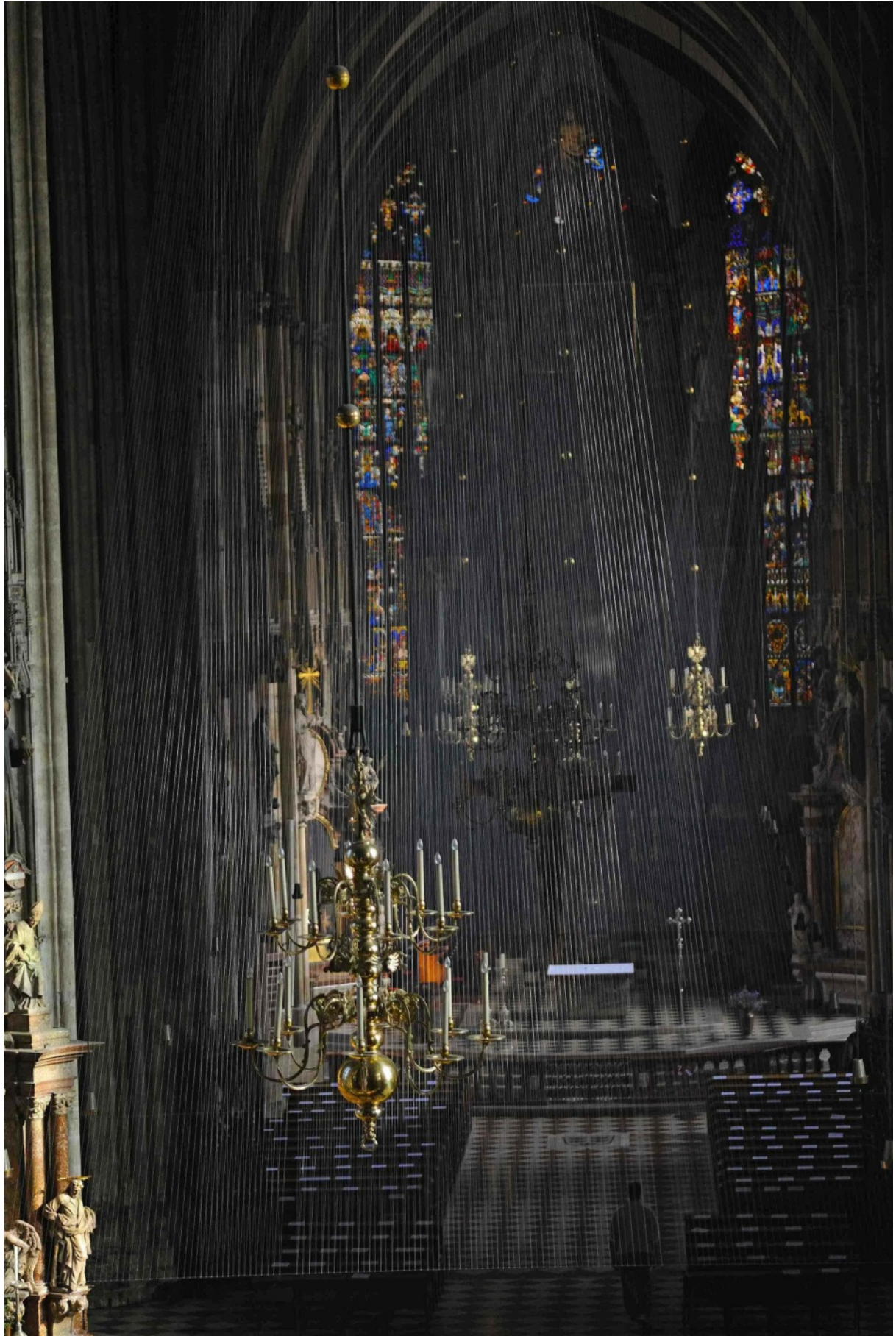


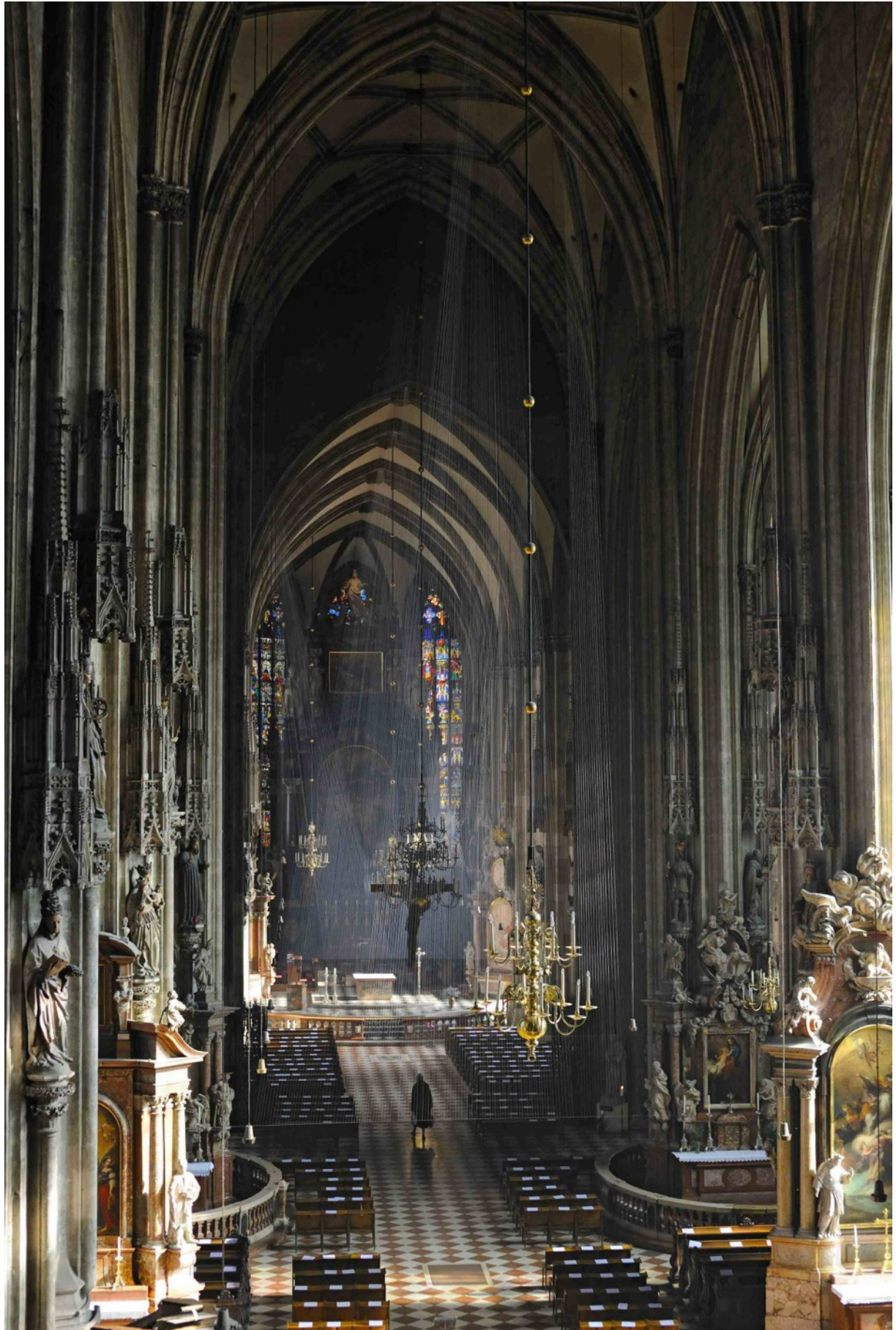
Elke Maier. TRANSLUCENT LENTEN VEIL Saint Stephen`s Cathedral Vienna, Austria 2014





Elke Maier. TRANSLUCENT LENTEN VEIL Saint Stephen`s Cathedral Vienna, Austria 2014





ONE DAY IN A THOUSAND YEARS - ART & ARCHAEOLOGY

Wilten Church Innsbruck, Austria

Temporary Art Installation by Elke Maier and Georg Planer

Exhibition dates: 6th and 7th January 2006

realization phase: from christmas 2005 to saturday, 7th January 2006

Materials: thinnest white threads, soil, debris, bone fragments, water

Extension: 20 m (= length of the threads, from the highest ledges and balustrades down to the soil of bottom)

Extension of the earth-field: 100 m

"Fast forward to December 2005, when the artists Elke Maier and Georg Planer were intruding into the archaeologists' excavation work in the sacred halls of the Wilten Church., a favorite visiting place for citizens and tourists alike.

Some meters beyond the church entrance, a huge hole is gaping, because archaeologists used the opportunity of a two-year church renovation to dig for graves and traces of ancient buildings in the deepest layers of the church, to peak down into the very intestines of history.

In the centre of church, the cave reveals its secret: far down into the abyss, human-like figurines are lying, one next to the other, just like mummies. Their bodies form a circle around the excavation hill. The sculptor Georg Planer created them from the excavations of the archaeologists with soil, debris, and bone fragments. They are one part of this artistic intervention.

Now, as the sun enters the stage, it makes yet the other component of the spectacle visible: thousands of thin white threads, all the way down to the mysterious abyss, running from the highest ledges and balustrades of the church down to the sunken mummies at the bottom. An ordered web, filling the whole space of the church like a three-dimensional veil waiting to breathe some new life into this gigantic space.

This process is ushered in by the sun. The first rays dance through the upper windows, meeting the threads and enlightening parts of them. Every minute, the picture changes. The higher the sun climbs, the deeper the light flows into the church. The space of the church, usually just a void between the floor and the ceiling, is full of cascading waterfalls. This spectacle is an airy installation, created by the artist Elke Maier, which spreads a quiet variation of magic.

The light flows even deeper into the cave; it finds new threads, leaves drops, and old constellations are dropped to form new ones. Together with, Georg Planer, Elke Maier created a prism that is breaking the secrets of life and Earth, the sunlight enabling a multilayered conversation about human existence."

Floo Weissmann, airline magazine "welcome air"

Elke Maier, Georg Planer . ONE DAY IN A THOUSAND YEARS / ART & ARCHAEOLOGY Wilten Church Innsbruck, A, 2006





Elke Maier; Georg Planer . ONE DAY IN A THOUSAND YEARS / ART & ARCHAEOLOGY Wilten Church Innsbruck, A, 2006



Elke Maier; Georg Planer . ONE DAY IN A THOUSAND YEARS / ART & ARCHAEOLOGY Wilten Church Innsbruck, A, 2006



Elke Maier; Georg Planer . ONE DAY IN A THOUSAND YEARS / ART & ARCHAEOLOGY Wilten Church Innsbruck, A, 2006

Elke Maier

To create my art installations I use a multitude of finest white silken threads as fine as a hair, which depending upon how the light oscillates between the visible and the invisible, always alternating between presence and absence and only becoming really perceptible when the sun is being reflected. This will often occur for only short moments, in a transition from an invisible to a visible presence.

Each one of the innumerable very fine white threads appears process-oriented, in a continual dialogue with the sunlight. An ever-changing process, which cannot be controlled. When each one of the many threads is lighting up, the innermost space becomes illuminated.

"I see form not as an ultimate boundary but as a process, as the visible manifestation of traces of movement, transgressing space and material. The form still indicates the progressive process of its development. Thread and space are not in opposition, but they interpenetrate and integrate one another: Thread intervention and space are not two contradictory poles / do not form a contradictory polarity / but rather a continuum of two equally interwoven movements of light, which occur in a transition from the one to the other and which have to perform a continuous metamorphosis" The uncountable threads do not form an available object with a fixed identity, with defined limits, but first at all an open translucent transparent space, which can be best experienced as a place of contemplation / open translucent transparent spaces that have no limit themselves and thus create a moment of infinity within the boundaries of space.

The substance of my artwork is merely a touch, almost unnoticeable and virtually absent for the perception. One can almost neglect the physical mass. It changes into space, or rather it defines the space. So we could say, that my installations are primarily composed of intermediate spaces. I develop every art intervention specially from the very beginning in a process of continual dialogue with the interior and the incidence of the sunlight, moving in it. The idea, form and creative process are inseparably combined with the authenticity of the specific space. So, each one of them is unique and cannot be transferred to any other place."