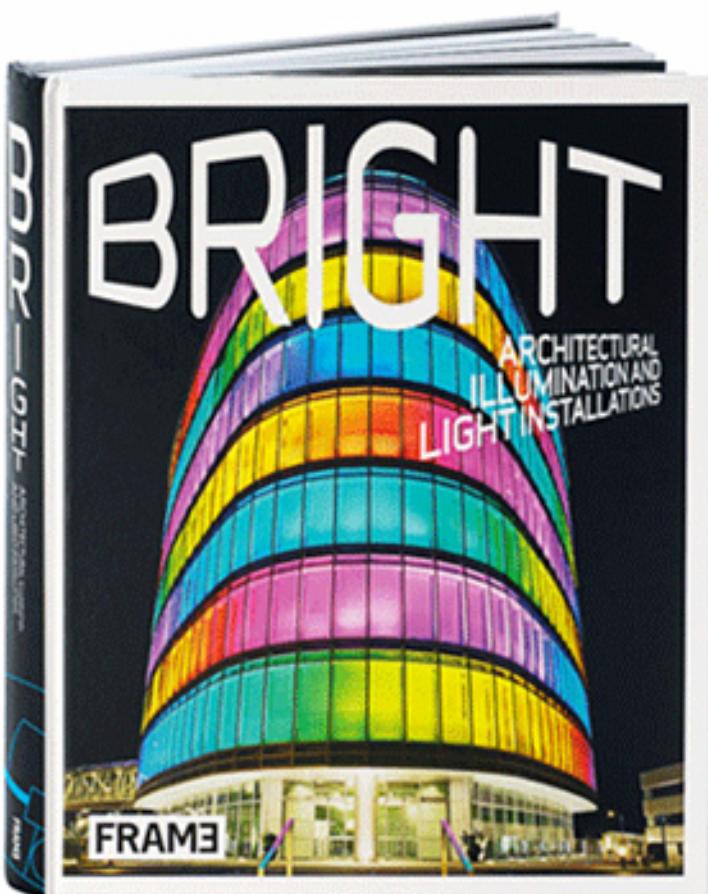


# FRAME

## interview

Interview realised in the context of:  
Bright, architectural illumination and light installations publication

between:  
Sarah Schulz, frame publishers and LAb[au], Manuel Abendroth  
non published in the book



## Interview 2008

Interview realised in the context of:  
Bright, architectural illumination and light installations publication

about:  
Touch - interactive urban installation

between:  
Sarah Schulz, frame publishers and LAb[au], Manuel Abendroth  
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### interview \_ questions

- question1: What was the brief from your client?
  - question2: Did the client have much involvement or where you given the freedom to do as you choose?
  - question3: Did you employ any methods to reduce the energy consumption of the project?
  - question4: How would you describe the effect of the 'Touch' on the existing landscape?
  - question5: Did you encounter any technical problems before or after the installation? If yes please explain.
  - question6: Which elements were particularly successful/unsuccessful?
  - question7: Do you have any plans for anymore lighting projects of this nature?
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#### What was the brief from your client?

Originally the client asked for an 8 min. video loop to be displayed as an artwork on the Dexia Tower, being one besides many other possible usages of the enlightening system. We decided to confront the client with a general design philosophy rather than a unique artistic approach. The undertaken risk paid-off and resulted in a productive partnership involving LAb[au] to develop an architectural and artistic language for the tower enlightening. In this sense we could establish a common understanding for the tower enlightening being an architectural light design rather than being a screen or media façade to display promotional content.

#### Did the client have much involvement or where you given the freedom to do as you choose?

The 'Touch' project, as the entire discussion process we are involved in from then onwards, is for us a unique example of a productive partnership between a client and a design lab. The value of such a partnership is not to fight for the artistic freedom but to develop a common understanding and aim, in order to ensure quality, which in the case of establishing an urban light sign has to base more than on the design team or client values but also on the public reception.

#### Did you employ any methods to reduce the energy consumption of the project?

For the 'Touch' project we worked with the existing infrastructure of the tower and as such we haven't had the opportunity to involve low energy consumption concerns. Besides the Dexia Tower reasonable energy consumption, the main reflection according to its enlightening should be the question of its public relevancy. For us the tower enlightening is part of the public sphere and urban / collective representation; and as long as the tower enlightening stays in the scope of a public architectural and artistic concern the enlightening is relevant; in case the system would become an advertising or corporate display the question of light pollution and energy waste should be re-considered. Of course the artistic and architectural research using light and technology doesn't exclude at all low energy consuming solutions, but rather encourage research and creativity. In this sense we developed a project proposal for a skyscraper enlightening based on an entire self sufficient system, using thousands of small fans being at the same time the fixture of the leds as its power generators. This proposal eliminates any cabling or control system while using wind to generate the visual flows of light. Unfortunately the proposal hasn't been retained, but according to the raising interest in public lightning systems in general we are optimistic to find another opportunity to realize the project.

#### How would you describe the effect of the 'Touch' on the existing landscape?

The Dexia tower is Brussels second highest building and the enlightening of its 4200 windows not only has a huge impact on its near surroundings but also on Brussels entire skyline. Therefore, the project concern was oriented to its artistic and public relevancy resulting in an elementary architectural, abstract and interactive language based on a 'communication chain' involving each citizen within the creation of a new urban landmark. All the public reactions we received showed how far the public was getting involved and aware of the project premises, as they showed how pleased the public has been by its aesthetics and effects. Therefore LAb[au]'s future projects are to continue the undertaken voice towards a cybernetic tower and thus towards a common, contemporary urban sign of light.

**Did you encounter any technical problems before or after the installation? If yes please explain.**

No, we developed all the technology, software and hardware, our self in order to optimize user interactivity and its sustainability according to public space usage and outside whether exposure.

**Which elements where particularly successful/unsuccessful?**

The 'Touch, interactive urban installation' was conceived for the launch of the enlightening system of the Dexia tower taking place from 26th December 2006 until 15th January 2007. Therefore the project focus' was to work out a global artistic concept, a design philosophy, involving issues according to public space and the urban image. In this sense the proposed 'communication chain' of the 'touch' project was a clear statement using real-time interaction not only offering citizens the possibility to experience new form of interaction with buildings and public space, but also to be part of the creation of the city image, which each user could retrieve in form of an electronic greeting card showing its own interaction. In the entire process we reduced the language of the project to an abstract and architectural one of points, lines and surfaces. For us the most successful part of the project was that such an elementary language and technological approach could resist in a public sphere without reducing its artistic and architectural concerns.

**Do you have any plans for anymore lighting projects of this nature?**

The 'Touch' project offered us to experience and to point out how ITC technologies can actively participate in urban and architectural planning, a development we pursuit since long time, but which until there we haven't had the opportunity to experiment in such a scale. The success of the 'Touch' project encourages us to develop further proposals involving real-time interaction in the public sphere as a new vector of architecture and urbanism.

For example right now we are working on a complete enlightening cycle for the Dexia Tower, which will be launched in July 2007, researching its continuous night by night enlightening. The project will propose each two month a new variation of a time-based generative artwork applying the logics of the RGB-code and the concept of circadian distortion. In this manner the new cycle under the title of 'who's afraid of Red, Green and Blue' researches a language proper to the tower, based on time and colour, while celebrating the arrival of a new day in form of light. Similar to the 'Touch' project we looked for a possibility to involve the public within this process. For the cycle we propose a specific developed desktop widget; a graphical RGB-clock and weather forecast, similar to the running artwork on the tower, each person can install on its computer. At the end of the series the public can vote for one of the different proposals which will than run for one year. Further the development of interactive and generative installations for the tower we will start in autumn 2007 with a first live event proposing electronic music concerts to be visualised in real-time in form of light on the tower. Please refer to <http://www.dexia-tower.com> for all ongoing and future projects.

The 'Touch' project is one of many examples on how ITC technologies have become an important and un-discussible part of architecture and urban planning. An issue which not only becomes more and more relevant but which also led to many new project realizations and requests all over the world. LAb[au] has gained a lot of credibility due to the 'Touch' project and as such we have developed since than a series of new light projects all over the world which we hope to see realized in a near future. <http://www.lab-au.com>