and something ordinarily repressed is revealed: the process, our quotidian actions are frozen. In reality, as the audience to the actors...tion. Perhaps it is the “public” that functions transformed into actors. On the other side of up. In the square facing the portico—Graz's Zinny set into motion a game. The stage is set (by lowering a curtain onto the portico of...field of vision. Alenka Zupančič. “A Perfect Place to Die.”

By lowering a curtain onto the portico of Graz's city hall, Juan Maidagan and Dolores Zinny set into motion a game. The stage is set up. In the square facing the portico—Graz's “public space”—spectators are metaphorically transformed into actors. On the other side of the curtain, administrators within city hall become the attendant audience. However, in the public sphere, stage is simultaneously cut across by the curtain's ambivalent position. Perhaps it is the “public” that functions as the audience to the actors within city hall? In reality Curtain Call's demarcation simultaneously cut across the field of our gaze. In the process, our quotidian actions are frozen and something ordinarily repressed is revealed: the paradoxical nature of public space...

Maidagan and Zinny's gesture at once continues and negates another historic “curtain” that (unwittingly) set a similar game into motion. In that other instance, however, the game ends in the project's demise. Richard Serra's Titled Arc, mounted in New York City's Federal Plaza, was destroyed in 1989 after the infamous trail that pitted the so-called “art world” public and the non-art public against each other. What Serra, in his utopian vision of site-specificity failed to understand was the manner in which the administrators within the US Federal Building would transform themselves from a passive audience of Serra's work to actors on the public stage determined to tear down what they called the “Berlin Wall of Foley Square.” When Titled Arc was destroyed—an act that took place at midnight under cover of darkness—Serra saw it as a public execution. Actor/Audience. Audience/Actor. The relationship endlessly shifts the way the pronouns You/I shift endlessly in conversation. Just who is addressing whom? It depends, of course, on the situation. Back to Curtain Call. In conceiving the work, Maidagan and Zinny were influenced by Borges' short story, The Secret Miracle. In it, the protagonist, Jacomir Hladik, is a playwright living in Nazi-occupied Prague arrested for being Jewish and opposing the Anschluss. Sentenced to die by firing squad, his only concern in his unfinished tragedy, The Enemies. The night before his death, Hladik prays to God that he be granted a year to finish his play. A voice speaks to him, promising: “The time for your labor has been granted.” The next day, at the moment of his execution, a “hang-fire” occurs—a delay between the executioners' triggering of their firearms and the ignition of the powder that would expel the bullets that would eventually kill Hladik. In that frozen second spread out in his mind over the span of a year, Hladik reflects upon and completes his play. Once it is done, Hladik is struck down by the once-delayed volley. The reader is left asking: What is an audience? What is a production? In Borges' tale, the playwright is both audience and producer, meaning the play has no incidence in the real (political) world. If Curtain Call becomes a moment in which audience and actor are similarly confounded, it does so with the intention of making something in the world happen—something entirely eclipsed in Hladik's fictional case or repressed by Serra's Titled Arc. What is this thing? It is the dual commitment to avant-garde aesthetics and contemporary discourses of public space— wherein the artist’s intentionality is but one factor in a game of infinitely exchangeable, contingent subject positions.

Curtain Call's color and dimensionality mimic the city hall’s architecture. Neither frame nor negation, the work is a monument to the tactics of avant-garde site-specificity—“the scale, size and location of the work being determined by the typography of the site.” At the same time, Curtain Call solicits opposing meanings that arise (from its ambiguous position in the square) as an “instance” of public space. This is what Serra failed to see—that the babel of voices that define the public sphere was just as much Titled Arc's site as was its physical space. The more Serra defied these voices, the more threatening Titled Arc became. Some detractors even feared it would become a “blast wall for ter-
orists.” Ironically, when avant-garde tactics of abstraction maintain utopian ideals of a singular public sphere, they become political enunci.ence. Like Borges' Hladik, the homogeneous site of Titled Arc's specificity had no incidence in the real world.

Curtain Call conjures up an infinite number of disparate, real “curtains” that came before it. The memory of these curtains “appear” in Graz’s public square as we recall them in our minds eye. As in a “curtain call”—“the appearance of one or more performers on stage after a performance”—the likes of Daniel Buren, Dan Graham, Michael Asher, Francis Alÿs or Renzo Piano come to life on this global stage of critical aesthetics. For it is here that we negotiate the relationship between abstraction and politics, history and memory, vis-à-vis a curtain that is at once metaphysically lowered and drawn. An effect is produced like the final second of Hladik's life—“a second composed of a thousand seconds, frozen into action”—wherein infinite combinations of avant-garde strategies take place. This time a public audience, who are also actors, plays the game, producing a type of public Happening. And if this game follows Kapoor's mandate that “Happenings can only happen once,” it does so by encouraging the simultaneous—and infinitely contradictory—experience of the game that we hold in our minds while walking in real time. This is Curtain Call's performative “picture” of public space.