

**ALTRUISM. RECENT ART FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC:**

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Part of the collaborative project LAST CHANCE TO SEE, realized by the Kunstvereine Bonn, Cologne and Dusseldorf and European partner institutions

**June 26 – August 29, 2010, Opening: Friday, June 25, 2010, 7.45pm**

Welcoming address by Jürgen Nimptsch, Mayor of the city of Bonn and Prof. Anne-Marie Bonnet, 2<sup>nd</sup> chairwoman,  
Introduction: Stephan Strsembski, director p.p.

**BONNER  
KUNSTVEREIN**

**Press conference:** Friday, June 25, 2010, 11am

LAST CHANCE TO SEE is a joint project of The Kunstverein Bonn and the Prague exhibit house tranzitdisplay. The autonomous institutes for contemporary art in Eastern Europe (Prague, Budapest, Bratislava) combined under the umbrella project transit.org, which was initiated in 2002 by public Austrian retail bank Erste Bank, consider themselves part of a broad cultural support program for Eastern Central Europe. Founded originally purely as a project office, transit.cz has since expanded to include the exhibit house tranzitdisplay. These days its duties are comparable to those of Kunstvereine in German-speaking countries – only without the essential member structure.

In collaboration with tranzitdisplay and its curator Vít Havránek, the Kunstverein Bonn (curator: Stephan Strsembski) has put together a group exhibit of Czech art on the topic of altruism. Altruism is a moral term, putting individuals in relation to others. It refers to the willingness to put one's own interests behind those of others and therefore society as a whole. This allows for two possible readings: Firstly, the individual's interest in themselves might indeed be lesser than their interest in others. Or secondly, acting altruistically and putting the needs of others before one's own might itself be the individual's main objective.

Starting point for the ALTRUISM project is the assumption that a functioning society is dependent on altruism. In general understanding, the altruistic principle and the economic contract are polar opposites. More recent studies in social science however suggest a "civic economy" which would put an end to that kind of dialectic thinking (Luigino Bruni). The ALTRUISM project is concerned with applying this actuality to the domain of fine arts.

A collaborative project was realized which not only shed light on altruistic processes and acts, but was altruistic itself. Instead of selecting a group of artists or an individual artist and commissioning visual representations of the topic in question, tranzitdisplay and the Kunstverein Bonn developed a mode of altruistic curatorial form and assigned essential parts of the exhibition's planning to a group of well-suited and interested individuals. This approach is used to transparently apply the now-common concept of the guest curator, to test its capability and to reflect on it in both publication and conversation. This curatorial process, initiated from an altruistic perspective and realized with people of Czech and German origin, will culminate in several exhibitions, lectures and performance projects of different proportions, which will be developed to suit the size and potential of the two institutions.

According to the above stated assumption, two types of conclusion are key to the project: First, how can an exhibition project on the subject of altruism be designed to be altruistic itself? This question is subsequently the basis for the second consideration: organizations like Kunstverein Bonn and tranzitdisplay which are, despite several similarities in social function, potential and limits, entirely different from each other. **Curators:** Stephan Strsembski (Kunstverein Bonn) and Vít Havránek (tranzitdisplay).

Involved organizations:

o.s. Gallery Ostrava, Krajska galerie vytvarneho umeni ve Zlině, Entrance Gallery Prague, Gallery – Dum umeni, Ceske Budejovice, Futura Gallery Prague, MeetFactory Prague, A.M. 180 Gallery Prague, etc. Gallery Prague, Gallery G99 Brno, Skolska 28 Gallery Prague, E. Filla Gallery Usti nad Labem, tranzitdisplay Prague

## **LAST CHANCE TO SEE – KUNSTVEREIN. THE DINOSAUR OF THE ART WORLD** **A collaboration of the Kunstvereine Dusseldorf – Cologne - Bonn**

**Parallel opening: Friday, June 25, 2010, opening party from 10pm at the Kölnische Kunstverein, Hahnenstraße 6, 50667 Cologne; there will be a free bus shuttle going from Bonn at 9.30 pm.**

The exhibition ALTRUISM. RECENT ART FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC will take place within the framework of the collaborative project LAST CHANCE TO SEE. The Kunstvereine Bonn, Dusseldorf and Cologne have, for the first time, initiated a collaborative project, consisting of exhibitions, events and a publication, meant to shed light on the institutional challenges facing Kunstvereine in the 21st century. At the core, Kunstvereine are civil institutions, which sprung up during the Vormärz (the eve of the German revolution of 1848) as a response to aristocratic salons. But what happens when we come to realize that in our post-civic society, civic involvement and federal logic have all undergone a loss of importance? And how does this conclusion impact Kunstvereine? In LAST CHANCE TO SEE, a reference to Douglas Adams' travelogue, we are treating Kunstvereine as a species that is possibly endangered but also exceptional and most definitely worth preserving, a species that will be closely examined in a series of events in Bonn, Cologne and Dusseldorf.

These considerations are enhanced by an international perspective. The three Kunstvereine organized the LAST CHANCE TO SEE exhibitions together with other European partners: Dusseldorf with Overgaden/DK, Cologne with the Chisenhale Gallery/UK and Bonn with transitdisplay/CZ. These venues for fine arts are organized very differently and all very relevant for their respective art scene. Unlike the German Kunstvereine, which are looking back on 200 years of history, their partner organizations were all founded much more recently. Cooperating with international partner organizations that have similar objectives despite their different social structures allows for a free exchange of artistic endeavors and theories, nationally and internationally. After uncovering the potentials and the direct comparison of similar objectives within different social and organizational structures within Europe, the next step can be an evaluation of the possibilities and perspective for an organization like the Kunstverein or its European alternatives.

The Rhineland network is debating questions concerning the role of contemporary art and its communication. The independent exhibition projects in Dusseldorf, Cologne and Bonn are linked together by debates, guided tours and an accompanying publication (to be released September 2010). The unusual concentration of cultural institutions in the Rhineland and its potential as an engine for social change will be illustrated and celebrated in a party at the Kunstverein Cologne on Friday, June 25, 10pm.

**[www.die-letzten-ihrer-art.org](http://www.die-letzten-ihrer-art.org)**

### **EXHIBITIONS**

#### **June 26 – August 29, 2010**

Exhibition at the Kunstverein Bonn: ALTRUISM. RECENT ART FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC, in collaboration with transitdisplay, Prague

#### **June 6 – September 5, 2010**

Exhibition at the Kunstverein Cologne: MELANIE GILLIGAN in collaboration with Chisenhale Gallery, London

#### **June 26 – August 22, 2010**

Exhibition at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Dusseldorf: HENRIK PLENGE JAKOBSEN: MAINFRAME in collaboration with Overgaden, Copenhagen

## SUPPORTING PROGRAM

### Friday, June 25, 2010

Exhibition opening in Bonn, Cologne and Dusseldorf, opening party at the Kunstverein Cologne

### Sunday, June 27, 12am, Location: Kunstverein Cologne

Subject and Society - A conversation with artist MELANIE GILLIGAN

Polly Staple, director of the Chisenhale Gallery, London will discuss the new film "Popular Unrest" with MELANIE GILLIGAN and ask about her approach to filmmaking and working with her twelve main cast members. Points of interest will be MELANIE GILLIGAN'S thoughts on how the individual relates to society; on economizing social relations and on how she was inspired by television.

### Wednesday, June 30, 7pm. Location: Kunstverein Bonn

Altruism as a working principle for independent art institutions in the Czech Republic

Exhibition tour and conversation with Stephan Strsembski und Noemi Smolik

Stephan Strsembski, the exhibition's curator and Noemi Smolik, art critic and expert on the Czech art scene, will guide you through the ALTRUISM exhibition, discuss the state of independent art institutions in the Czech Republic and their histories and draw comparisons to Kunstvereine in German-speaking countries.

### Thursday, July 1, 7pm. Location: Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Dusseldorf

Different countries, different institutions. Conversation with Henriette Bretton-Meyer.

Kunstvereine only exist in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. What do comparable institutions in the rest of Europe look like? And what defines a Kunstverein for those who only know the concept from a distance. Henriette Bretton-Meyer, director of Overgaden in Copenhagen, will be talking to Vanessa Joan Müller, director of the Kunstverein Dusseldorf.

### Wednesday, July 7, 7pm. Location: Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Dusseldorf

Kunstverein: yesterday, today and tomorrow. A conversation with Wulf Herzogenrath and Florian Waldvogel.

Prof. Wulf Herzogenrath, director of the Kunsthalle Bremen, and Florian Waldvogel, director of the Kunstverein Hamburg, will discuss modern perspectives for the institution Kunstverein, productive crises of the past and new paradigms for tomorrow.

### Wednesday, August 25, 7pm. Location: Kunstverein Cologne, Theatersaal

Civic involvement as a way out of the crisis. A conversation with Loring Sittler, Foundation of Generali Germany

The Foundation of Generali Germany is dedicated to advancing civic involvement and, with demographic changes in mind, especially the involvement of elderly people. In this conversation, Loring Sittler will discuss how this adjustment can be an answer to the changing responsibilities in politics, economics and civic society. Additionally she will introduce the Ideenatlas 09 (involvement atlas 09).

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ALTRUISMUS is supported by

**Der Ministerpräsident  
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen**



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