

PRESS RELEASE



EXHIBITION

HOMELAND IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. Contemporary Austrian Photography

23rd September 2005 – 8th January 2006 **EXHIBITION HALL ON FIRST FLOOR**



Dieter HUBER
Airborn-Vienna, 2003

WHEN

23rd September 2005 – 8th January 2006

WHERE

Exhibition hall on the first floor

OPENING TIMES

From Tuesday to Saturday (including holidays),
from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

PRODUCED BY

Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

SUPPORTED BY

Austrian Cultural Forum, Madrid

CURATOR

Andrea Domesle

Chief curator

Iñaki Martínez Antelo
Coordinator
Marta García Viña

ARTISTS ON EXHIBITION: 14

- **Norbert Becwar** (born 1970 in Vienna, Austria; lives in Vienna)
- **Peter Dressler** (born 1942 in Kronstadt, Rumania; lives in Vienna)
- **Dieter Huber** (born 1962 in Schladming, Austria; lives in Salzburg)
- **Helmut Kandl** (born 1953 in Laa an der Thaya, Austria; lives in Vienna and Berlin)
- **Leo Kandl** (born 1944 in Mistelbach, Zaya, Austria; lives in Vienna)
- **Martin Krenn** (born 1970 in Vienna, Austria; lives in Vienna)
- **Elke Krystufek** (born 1970 in Vienna, Austria; lives in Vienna)
- **Friedl Kubelka** (born 1946 in Vienna, Austria; lives in Vienna)
- **Paul Albert Leitner** (born 1957 in Jenbach, Austria; lives in Vienna)
- **Markus Muntean/Adi Rosenblum** (born 1962 in Graz, Austria / born 1962 in Haifa, Israel; live in Vienna and London)
- **Lois Renner** (born 1961 in Salzburg, Austria; lives in Vienna)
- **Eva Schlegel** (born 1960 in Hall, Austria; lives in Vienna and Los Angeles)
- **Margherita Spiluttini** (born 1947 in Schwarzach, Salzburg, Austria; lives in Vienna)

- **Erwin Wurm** (born 1954 in Bruck, Mur, Austria; lives in Vienna)

WORKS ON EXHIBITION

The exhibition is composed of more than 80 artworks, following approaches as different as the materials used: black and white photographs and colour pictures in different formats, along with videos, paintings and postcards.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Andrea Domesle lives in Vienna and studied Art History and Germanic Literature in the University of Munich, the Sorbonne IV in Paris and the University of Freiburg. From 1996 to 2001 she worked in the Kunsthalle in Mannheim, the Kunstmuseum in Basel and the Staatliche Museen in Berlin. From 2001 to 2003, she was artistic director at the Kunstverein Brotfabrik Galerie in Berlin and chief editor for the international photography magazine *Eikon*, Vienna. She did a postgraduate course from 2002 to 2004 on "Exhibition management and cultural communication" at the University of Applied Arts of Vienna. Andrea Domesle is now working as independent curator and art critic, and is author of many monographs and publications on art from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century.

CATALOGUE

This exhibition is marked by a bilingual catalogue (Spanish-German) which includes texts written by the curator, photographs of the exhibited artworks, and the biographies of the artists.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Guided tours

Guided tours everyday at 6 p.m.

Guided tours "à la carte" for groups, only by appointment calling 986 113900/11 (extensio 307 or 314)

Guided tours for associations, on Thursday and Friday at 5 p.m., only by appointment calling 986 113900/11 (extension 307 or 314)

Guided tour by the curator, only for "Friends of MARCO", on Saturday 24th September at 12 p.m.

Bibliographical exhibition "Contemporary Austrian photography"

Thanks to the co-operation between MARCO Library and the Austrian Cultural Forum, those who want to look in greater depth at this subject matter will have the chance to consult a selection of bibliographical collections available at MARCO Library during this exhibition.

Where: library-multimedia section (first floor)

Opening times: from Tuesday to Saturday, from 11 p.m. to 2 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Free entrance through the museum's back entrance (Progreso St.)

SUMMARY OF THE EXHIBITION PROJECT

This is not the first time that MARCO has dedicated an exhibition to photography. On this occasion, it is defined by a geographical context that acts at the same time as subject matter. The focus on the topic of "the mother country" follows an Austrian approach and aesthetics. Is it still possible, in the age of globalization, to identify an artistic landscape by means of the features of a country and the mentality of its people? This exhibition shows the photographic work of fourteen artists, which attempts to analyse the most varied views of the same country and fosters the discussion about the relationship between *reality* and its *image*, and the issue of the feasibility of representation of the world.

Different generations of artists are represented on this exhibition. Some of these artists –Erwin Wurm, Muntean/Rosenblum, Lois Renner, Elke Krystufek– belong to young and intermediate generations wide known internationally; others belong to the generations that have influenced most decisively in the national art scene: Leo Kandl, Eva Schlegel, Friedl Kubelka, Margherita Spiluttini, or Dieter Huber. Besides, young artists that are barely known such as Norbert Becwar or Martin Krenn will also take part on this exhibition.

Their approach is as different as the materials used: not only black and white photographs and colour pictures in different formats, but also videos, paintings and postcards. As for the selection of the artworks, one of the main features of this exhibition is the variety of genres and motifs, and the representation of the most significant art trends in Austria.

The subject matter ranges from natural and urban landscape to group photography, portraits and self-portraits. One of the topics is the analysis of recent and past political events, but also the predominance of Catholicism in Austria, sexual obsessions, cliché images of Austria, the relationship between nature and culture, tourism, life in the country and the city, the alpine region, old and new generations, inner worlds, and the predisposition towards cultural goods.

As for natural and urban landscape, the most remarkable images are those depicting a high mountain by Margherita **Spiluttini**, or the bird's eye views by Dieter **Huber**, a pioneer in computer photography. Paul Albert **Leitner** has chosen travelling as an artistic principle and thus his artworks dwell between landscape and social portrait, and young Martin **Krenn** follows a socio-critical analysis of the immigrants' life, which results in a message as emphatic as Helmut **Kandl's** postcards with a political approach.

A recurrent motif in Austrian art is the choice of the domestic environment as a starting point. Two of the exhibited artists turn their studio into subject matter: Lois **Renner** has constructed a wooden model after his first studio, which he uses as a basis for his photo arrangements. His young colleague Norbert **Becwar** uses documental photography of past and present wars and other international catastrophes in order to recreate these scenes with friends in his studio.

The artist duo **Muntean/Rosenblum** confirm the worship of youth as something globally predetermined by advertising, fashion and brands. Other artists use portraits as a means to analyse individuals, as is the case of Friedl **Kubelka's** psychological studies. Eva **Schlegel** doubts about the feasibility of representation of individuality, and Elke **Krystufek** presents a critical analysis of today's Austrian art scene.

Erwin **Wurm** investigates the unorthodox use of objects in his series representing monks of the Admont Monastery, and he discusses the relationship between men and objects, following the footsteps of Austrian performance art from the sixties. For his photo series, Peter **Dressler** performs as an art collector with the collection of paintings of the Academy of Fine Arts.

The selected artworks show different uses of the art of photography. There are artists that interpret photographs as paintings –Renner, Schlegel, Huber–; others take them as "realist" images, such as Leo Kandl or Spiluttini; and others initiate performances, for the sake of photographing them, staging them with elements of social critic; others use photography as one of the many possible artistic means, as in the case of Muntean/Rosenblum, and Martin Krenn uses the most recent trend of pushing authorship into the background.

TEXT BY THE CURATOR

"As if he could guess my thoughts, he suddenly looks at me and smiles in a really sardonic and scornful way. He sometimes has a horrific appearance, as if he had mysterious, supernatural powers. I start thinking if he would hide that kind of powers to me and the answer is evidently YES. I say to myself 'Walter, you are a bastard', and smile back at him scornfully.

The beer tastes delicious because it isn't too cold, and from the bottle emerges that slight and comforting smell-of-homeland-is-just-around-the-corner".

Denis Mikan, "Das Licht bleibt draußen", in *Zum Glück gibt's Österreich* [Young Austrian literature] Berlin, Ed. Gustav Ernst & Karin Fleischhanderl, 2003

It is not easy to define the factors determining the feeling of attachment to the mother country referred in Denis Mikan's story *Das Licht bleibt draußen* [The light remains outside]. As a direct reason, Mikan mentions the bottles of beer produced in a local brewery. But this beer could be bought elsewhere. Is it then that place we call our hometown, or maybe our everyday pub? The scene takes place on a warm summer Sunday in Vienna, in the inside of Café Europa in Zollergasse Street, close to West Train Station and the busy commercial district of Mariahilfer Straße. Or maybe are the people involved those who create the feeling of being at home? Is it the first-person narrator or his friend Walter? Is it a social, friendly relationship? A relationship of smiles, suspicion, distrust, or insults that, particularly in Vienna, are said at other people's back? Familiarity? Shared experiences? There is only one thing to be sure of: the feeling that "the mother country is around the corner" has been triggered both by the locally brewed beer and the sight of Walter.

In order to get one or more answers, we must analyse contemporary art using photography as a medium. Photography, the focus of this exhibition, is generally considered as the closest medium to reality, but the approaches are as different as the materials used (...). As far as possible, fourteen artists have presented different views on the country through their artworks, not only on Vienna, but also on the different federate states, people, landscapes, buildings and objects.

As for the Austrian subject matter, it must be emphasised that the only famous picture of the country present at this exhibition, the Hohen fortress in Salzburg, would not have been possible if it had not been for Lois Renner's methodical refraction and, therefore, is reproduced in an indirect way. Nowadays, artists seem to avoid "postcard-like" pictures. The way in which Renner uses an image of this kind –that is, a castle that was already a popular motif among romantic landscape painters– makes clear his position as an artist and helps him immerse himself in the world of painting by means of photography. As for "Austria" as subject matter, the other artists focus on everyday life and Austrian people, unfamous places or the artistic milieu. This is, therefore, the environment that surrounds them every

day. When the main characters are politicians or people from the high society, they are interpreted making use of the mass-media, as in Elke Krystufek's work. This is how recent art takes place outside the borders of fame. This distance allows Helmut Kandl to comment on current politics, or Norbert Bencwar, among others, to talk about Austria's past.

The motifs depicted by two of the fourteen exhibited artists –Muntean/Rosenblum and Eva Schlegel– are not directly attachable to Austria, so as to approach the feasibility of exchanging people and places, synonym of the idea of social globalization. On the contrary, and despite their international approach, there is a reflection of the mother country in the images used by the rest of the artists, even if it is only upon second glance that we realize, as in Erwin Wurm's series *Brothers & Sisters*.

If we grant the idea of the existence of real Austrian art and art history, we may classify this tradition into two trends that even today are influential: on the one hand, the dialogue with Actionism, reflected in the consideration of images as performative actions, and in connection with them, the focus on the body, including the naked body, as in Elke Krystufek's famous work. On the other hand, Friedl Kubelka's and Norbert Bencwar's interest in psychology, following Sigmund Freud's ideas.

[Back to the introductory text] I did not mention that neither Walter nor Denis were born in Austria. One of Walter's parents is Russian and Denis comes from former Yugoslavia. Immigration from these countries is very common in Vienna –Peter Dressler was born in Romania. However, one wonders if the feeling of Austria as a mother country can be authentic in somebody who was born abroad. At least, this could partly explain the expression "a *smell of homeland is just around the corner*".

But we must still answer to one question: what does homeland and its culture mean? Ancient art classifies art history according to artistic landscapes usually referring to regions. The attachment to one of them is justified not only by the motifs and the forms of representation, but also by the composition, colour and stylistic links to the local art history. This classification is based upon contents, as well as aesthetic and scientific criteria. However, this is also why twelve out of fourteen of the exhibited artists may be attached to Austria. Contrary to the idea emerged as a result of globalization that considers the world as a "global village" and the Earth as a melting pot of different cultures, what this exhibition demonstrates is that the land itself has a decisive influence. Nowadays, it is possible to use appropriately the old concept of cultural landscape: culture develops and evolves through the inspiration we draw from our travels or the incentives of immigration. All in all, we may conclude that today's Austrian cultural mix represents a cultural landscape with a personality of its own.

REQUEST FOR GRAPHIC MATERIAL

EXHIBITION

"HOMELAND IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. Contemporary Austrian Photography"

GRAPHIC MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS:

CD including texts and photographs of the exhibition in different formats.

IF YOU WISH YO RECEIVE DOCUMENTATION, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND IT BY E-MAIL, FAX OR MAIL POST TO:

MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo

Rúa Príncipe 54

36202 Vigo (Pontevedra). Spain

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A project jointly financed by the EU (ERDF), programme Interreg II Spain-Portugal

Owner: Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Vigo

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