
PRESS RELEASE
3 April 2009

OK I HÖHENRAUSCH

Art above the rooftops of Linz – An exhibition in 7 stages

OK OFFENES KULTURHAUS OÖ with LINZ 2009 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Exhibition dates: 29 May – 31 October 2009
Opening: Thursday, 28 May 2009, 8:53 p.m. (Sunset)
Exhibition architecture: Atelier Bow-Wow, Tokyo (in collaboration with Riepl Riepl Architekten, Linz)
Sponsor: RLB Raiffeisen Landesbank OÖ
Curators: Paolo Bianchi & Martin Sturm

In the final part of the trilogy KUNST IN DIE STADT!! [Art into the city!!] the OK and Linz09 finally leave *terra firma* behind and take off skyward. After shop windows (“Schaurausch”) and tunnels (“Tiefenrausch”) it is now the turn of the rooftops of Linz’s centre to serve as venues for artistic productions and walkabouts. Art is being used as a potent magnet to defy gravity.

The Project

In a joint show of strength by the OK, Linz09, the City of Linz, the province of Upper Austria and RLB Raiffeisen as the venture’s commercial sponsor, an art project is taking shape the likes of which the city has not yet seen.

The circuitous path starts in the OK up the “Himmels Stiege” [Stairway to Heaven] and takes visitors across the City Multistorey Car Park to the roof of the Passage City Center and back to the OK, across a new bridge into the hitherto virtually unknown roof landscape of the Ursulinenhof. After a panoramic walkabout of about 1,5 km, up staircases, along an ingenious system of walkways and bridges and past spectacular viewing points, plateaus and a unique historical roof structure, visitors descend again into Landstraße.

The Highlights

Red Ferris Wheel as a Landmark

Level 14, the uppermost floor of the multistorey car park, serves as the pedestal for a Rieger Ferris wheel standing 26 meters tall. It is both a perfectly straightforward fairground attraction and a cultural emblem and landmark that is visible from afar: the Basque artist Maider López has manipulated the wheel's colour scheme in a way that transforms it into a sculpture and she is even capable of making it disappear into thin air using digital tricks.

An Austro-Japanese wooden walkway as a stage

The well-known Japanese artistic and architectural practice Atelier Bow-Wow has designed a spectacular network of walkways and stairways made of spruce wood that makes not only the rooftops accessible but is in itself a sculptural object of note and doubles as a stage. The roof of the so-called Passage City Center alone is criss-crossed by a walkway 350 metres long.

Linz Protagonistes

The roof of the Passage City Center offers a unique 360° panorama of the city both in visual and in acoustic terms. Linz itself appears as an urban landscape of peaks and troughs, and the city plays the leading part during the entire walkabout.

Artists Juggling with Reality

Artistic interventions along the trail contribute to a "Höhenrausch", a height-induced sense of elation or inebriation, by toying with reality, experimenting with physical phenomena, creating experiences rich in sensory content and setting the scene for unusual transformations (e.g. of water drops into music). This "school of perception" is meant to hone our senses.

The Partners

City Building Authority

Extensive construction work was necessary to realize this major project: static expertises, calls for tenders and approval procedures involved challenges for the OK that could be met adequately only through close collaboration with the City Building Authority.

Bridging the Gap

A bridge now connects the OK to the Ursulinenhof , making Upper Austria's new art collection directly accessible from the museum. This bridge will be left in place after the end of the Höhenrausch project, adding to its long-term benefits for the city.

Sponsor

The RLB Raiffeisen Landesbank OÖ is not only one of Linz09's main sponsors, it was also involved in securing the cooperation of Real Treuhand und Passage City Center, both of which are closely affiliated to the bank. This was a precondition for the realization of a project whose significance is neither limited to Linz nor to the city's Culture Capital Year.

Architects and Realization

The idea of the walkway connecting OK, the Passage City Center roof and the Ursulinenhof was first conceived by the OK together with Riepl Riepl Architekten. The latter are also the Upper Austrian arm of the Bow-Wow team of Japanese architects and have been put in charge of the execution design and on-site construction supervision. The wooden walkway was built by Gebrüder Resch, a Mühlviertel company.

The Walkabout

Participants in the walkabout morph into rooftop wanderers and explore unusual perspectives on the city in seven distinct sections or stages: 1) The Stairway to Heaven, 2) Luna Park, 3) Rooftop Walkway, 4) Linz09 Lounge, 5) Art Lab, 6) Herb Garden, 7) Roof Structure.

The trail takes visitors along walkways and up and down staircases across several houses and from rooftop to rooftop, changing in appearance all the time as it dips and climbs again. Rooms are crossed partly inside, partly on the outside, and visitors find themselves passing through a series of highly unfamiliar environments. In the end they touch down again in the workaday reality of Landstraße.

“Höhenrausch” will be open for visitors for 150 days. After that the sky above Linz will again cease to be accessible.

1. The Stairway to Heaven

The OK marks the beginning of the seemingly endless “Stairway to Heaven”. Visitors proceed to the pinnacles of art and to the sense of height-induced inebriation step by step. Most religions picture the way to Paradise as an ascent and many use the ladder as an emblem to visualize this ascent. The mundane ladder helps us picture the inconceivable in familiar terms, and the almost endless distance we have to travel is reduced to a short climb in this symbolic representation.

The wooden stairway takes visitors to the roof, where an ingenious system of undulating walkways connects several adjacent buildings. Once it reaches rooftop level, the Stairway to Heaven branches out like a tree’s proliferating network of roots. Several branches of the walkway corbel outwards for special effect. (*ATELIER BOW-WOW*).

2. Luna Park

The Luna Park (located on the level of the rooftop car park Dametzstraße/Marienstraße) is a powerhouse of sensory experiences.

Here you can experiment with a sculpture consisting of six gigantic, helium filled balloons (*RICARDO JACINTO*).

If you stand under a sprinkler system with an open umbrella, you will experience the umbrella as a sound box, as the fine threads of water that come pouring down regardless of the weather turn into music (*PAUL DEMARINIS*).

The Ferris wheel gives you that bird’s eye view of the city at the heart of the city which is normally only possible from distant Pöstlingberg. *MAIDER LÓPEZ*’s colour scheme transforms the Ferris wheel into a sculpture and into a veritable Culture Capital landmark.

As you leave its gondola, a cultural history of mankind’s fascination with the heavens will be clamouring for your attention. The objects, pictures and texts of the “Himmelsmuseum” [Museum of the Heavens], curated by *BRIGITTE FELDERER*, are presented in 20 or so illuminated showcases, to help you focus on higher things.

The “Weather Station” by *ANDREAS STRAUSS* provides object lessons on such themes as heat and cold, rain and wind. It gives you the precise details of the weather of the day and all kinds of data on the Linz summer.

3. Rooftop Walkway

The walkway then transports you to the roof of the Passage City Center, Linz’s largest hitherto unexplored rooftop garden. It offers you another possibility to take in the city’s urban silhouette: its houses, smoke columns, thirty church towers and perhaps the glow from the tapping of a blast furnace.

The wooden walkway, designed by *ATELIER BOW-WOW*, Tokyo, guides visitors safely across the roof with its total area of more than 2.000 square metres. You can see the city, hear it, smell it! *WERNER PFEFFER*, who was in charge of the 2008 Klangwolke, has created several unusual viewing points. The well-known Swiss artist *PIPILOTTI RIST*, who specializes in extraordinary video projections, has set up an installation on the roof of the Passage using a large light balloon, which creates the illusion as if the artist was imprisoned inside it. High above the roof floats *SHIH-YUNG KU*’s “Air Bubble Man”, which measures 4m across. It signals to people in the Landstraße whether the exhibition is open or not: as the exhibition’s gates close in the evening, it is hauled down only to reappear punctually at 11:00 a.m. on the next day and to hover above the city.

4. Linz09 Lounge

The walkway then takes visitors to the OK’s “Freideck”, where the Linz09 Lounge offers a place for relaxation and refreshments. Visitors can here post “Höhenrausch” greeting cards designed by *ERWIN WURM* with such motifs as *ROMAN SIGNER*’s rocket trajectory.

5. Art Lab

Artists explore the phenomenon of “Höhenrausch” (*INGER LISE HANSEN, LEONID TISHKOV*). Above or below; defying gravity; flying; falling and rising; studies; trials; analyses and experiments. The “Art Lab” bridges the gap that separates us from our next-door neighbour. It connects the OK to the Ursulinhof and affords visitors a sneak preview of the new art collection (*FIONA TAN*).

6. Herb Garden

Seeing, smelling, touching and tasting the herbs grown in the garden on the roof of the former St Ursula’s Convent jogs the senses and creates a natural link between heaven and earth. The plants that are grown here have been used for medicinal purposes since time immemorial. The garden is the work of the Taiwanese artist *WU MALI* in collaboration with the Mühlviertel Bergkräuter Genossenschaft Hirschbach.

7. Roof Structure

The roof structure of the Ursulinenhof, which dates from the 17th century, can be viewed in all its (renovated) splendour. It houses installations by the American artist *SERGE SPITZER*.

The descent via a long footbridge into urban everyday life marks the end of “Höhenrausch” as an exhibition. Chances are that visitors will henceforth see the city with different eyes.

The Catalogue

The exhibition catalogue edited by Paolo Bianchi & Martin Sturm on behalf of the OK Offenes Kulturhaus OÖ is a “visual reader” balancing texts and pictures. It documents the “Höhenrausch” walkway and offers background information on the artists and the “Höhenrausch” phenomenon as such. It is due to be published in early July 2009 by Folio Verlag, Vienna/Bolzano. The book design is by Stephan Fiedler, Berlin.

The Curators

“The Höhenrausch exhibition is devoted to the “Rauschen”, the swoosh that is audible above the rooftops of Linz. It continues to fill the entire panorama. Its genesis is comparable to the way rain falls to the earth or the sun’s rays singe your head.” Paolo Bianchi & Martin Sturm

Paolo Bianchi, born 1960, is a freelance exhibition designer and guest editor of the periodical “Kunstforum International”. He is based in Baden near Zurich.

Martin Sturm, born 1957, is the director of the OK Offenes Kulturhaus OÖ.

Artists

Atelier Bow-Wow (JPN)
Paul DeMarinis (USA)
Inger Lise Hansen (NOR)
Ricardo Jacinto (POR)
Maider López (ESP)
Werner Pfeffer (AUT)
Pipilotti Rist (SUI)
Roman Signer (SUI)
Serge Spitzer (USA)
Andreas Strauss (AUT)
Fiona Tan (NED)
Leonid Tishkov (RUS)
Mali Wu (Taiwan)
Erwin Wurm (AUT)

Information in brief:

Dates: 29 May – 31 October 2009

Opening hours: Daily 11:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m., closed on Tuesdays

Tickets, information, guided tours

+43.732.78 41 78-555, office@ok-centrum.at

Admission: Regular: €10.00 / Concessions €7.00

Groups (Admission and tour guide for groups of 15): €120.00

Visitors will be escorted to the rooftops by experienced guides.

In addition to guided tours arrangements are available for a **Höhenrausch cocktail** in the 09 lounge.

The Catholic Church in Upper Austria and the organisation Austria Guides will also be providing guides for “Höhenrausch”.

The Project Partners

OK Offenes Kulturhaus OÖ

Director: Martin Sturm

www.ok-centrum.at

LINZ 2009 – KULTURHAUPTSTADT EUROPAS ORGANISATIONS-GMBH

Artistic director: Martin Heller

www.linz09.at

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