



PRESS RELEASE ON OPENING CEREMONY lichtsicht 5 – Projection Biennale

Bad Rothenfelde, 23 September 2015

The opening ceremony of lichtsicht 5 – Projection Biennale took place in Bad Rothenfelde on Friday, 18 September 2015. Several thousand people journeyed to the tranquil spa town to experience this spectacular major projection art event. World-famous artists such as Robert Wilson and William Kentridge attract tremendous attention in the art world and the media.

As the day came to a close, a remarkable discourse on the lichtsicht – Projection Biennale evolved between Robert Wilson and Peter Weibel ...

Opening ceremony at the Kurhaus

The grand opening ceremony at the Kurhaus got off to a fantastic start at 6.30 p.m. with a sparkling wine reception. After **Marion Carey-Yard**, Managing Director of lichtsicht ggmbh, gave a warm welcome to the guests, an official speech was delivered by **Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter**, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (German Federal Environmental Foundation), domiciled in Osnabrück. She emphasised the “eco-friendly and sustainable” supply of lichtsicht projectors, powered by wind and solar energy. The Mayor **Klaus Rehkämper** praised the extensive media coverage in the press, radio and on TV. Finally, **Peter Weibel**, Curator of lichtsicht 5, used vivid, enlightening words to illustrate the dimension and significance of this biennale. He explained media reflection via intermedial strategies using imagery of a fish in an aquarium that only notices which medium it’s in when it accidentally leaps out of the tank. His remarks met with rapturous applause from the audience.

After the speeches, the visitors gained their first impression of the artistic work created by the biennale’s two star artists. The video portrait “Lady Gaga, Flying” by the world-famous American artist **Robert Wilson** was projected onto a tripartite, stage-filling projection screen. Pop icon Lady Gaga, sporting traditional Japanese bondage, was suspended from the ceiling, declaiming a constantly repeated chant taken from Marquis de Sade’s Justine: “The next day another turn came, and so it continued, always the same. Coitus, cries, curses, ejaculation, always the same.”

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This audacious performance was followed by an excerpt from the multimedia video by South African artist **William Kentridge**, "More Sweetly Play the Dance", which broaches the issue of Apartheid, and hence a political issue, at the biennale. In between projections, four musicians and a singer from Osnabrück Theatre got the whole audience swinging, lightening the mood at the event yet further.

Start button

At around 8.30 p.m., both members of the audience and stakeholders Klaus Rehkämper, Mayor of Bad Rothenfelde, Marion Carey-Yard, Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter and Peter Weibel went on stage in front of the therapy centre to press the start button together at 9.00 p.m. on the dot. After a few moments waiting for the data flow to reach the projectors, the works of art were projected onto the graduation towers.

Works of art

Those setting out to explore the Old Graduation Tower were instantly confronted with strange shadow images, illuminated by two different coloured light sources. Using 3D glasses, **TIM OTTO ROTH** reveals the three-dimensional play of shadows that Bad Rothenfelde would experience if the Earth were illuminated by not one, but two suns – one red, one blue – i.e. "sterea skia". Many solar systems in the universe have more than just one sun.

On the side of the Old Graduation Tower facing the town, **HOLGER FÖRTERER**'s "Feuerwall" criticises digital data surveillance, and offers a solution whereby photos can be deleted from the smartphone for good. Using an app, photos uploaded by visitors are not only burnt on the tower, but also deleted from the smartphone. As a reward, viewers are left with a personal memory of unforgettable images.

Proceeding to the New Graduation Tower facing the park, visitors are invited to use their smartphones to interactively shape **LASACT**'s sound and laser installation. Visitors help create this "piece of crowd art" via a web application. The more participants become involved, the more harmonious the resulting image is.

An extraordinary, new visual experience is offered by New Zealand artist **DANIEL CROOKS** in his work "A Garden of Parallel Paths". In this piece, reference is made to a short story by Jorge Luis Borges about a time labyrinth. And, indeed, the amazed viewer finds himself in temporal and spatial parallel worlds of different views of Melbourne city.

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What comes next is a procession by **WILLIAM KENTRIDGE** "More Sweetly Play the Dance", involving a multimedia collage suggestive of both political statement and poetic drawing, dance performance and digital *danse macabre*. The exhilarating music played by a South African brass band enables visitors to immerse themselves in this touching procession of shadows.

At the end of the tower, we experience "Marathon der Tiere" by **ROSALIE**, a German star of stage and light art. She used animated radiographs, i.e. x-ray videos, invented by Jena-based scientists led by Professor Dr. Martin S. Fischer, to 'create' a whole host of animal species. Her artistic processing transforms them into a touching image/sound animation, encouraging us to reflect upon endangered species – including mankind. The work is accompanied by Ludger Brümmer's electronic composition "Spin Loop".

Moving on to the front of the New Graduation Tower, the visitor almost stops in his tracks. There, a ghostly, androgynous figure, made of water, dances to grippingly soulful vocal music on a water fountain. Israeli artist **EYAL GEVER** used state-of-the-art 3D simulation technology to create the moving image "Water Dancer", a female dancer made of water (based on a performance by Sharon Eyal) moving to the song "Overgrown" by Another MP on the fountain.

The long side of the New Graduation Works facing the town is shared alternately by two artists. **ROBERT WILSON** presents his "Video Portraits" here, including famous celebrities such as Brad Pitt and Princess Caroline of Monaco, as well as artists such as Zhang Huan and special animal portraits. At first sight, they appear to be photo portraits or paintings, but then they suddenly start breathing and come to life. They mutate into *tableaux vivants*, theatre staging at its very best.

Then the scenery changes, as does the music, which plays a major role in **RYOJI IKEDA's** work. The Japanese artist and composer, who feels at home in the world of quantum physics, composed a visual and sound epos comprising radar images of outer space, approaching the limit of the universe perceptible by humans – up to 46 billion light years away.

At the front of the New Graduation Tower, the visitor comes across another interactive piece of work, created by the group of artists **RANDOM INTERNATIONAL**. "Aspect (white)" plays with viewers' physical interaction. Shadows of their movements are projected repeatedly onto the tower, and fragmented into pixels, lines and colours, encouraging visitors to use their movements to communicate with each other.

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The lichtsicht 5 catalogue, published by Kehrer Verlag, is available from the lichtsicht Shop at the subscription price of € 29.90. The catalogue contains an essay, comprehensive texts about the works, numerous images and a link to the video documentation of the biennale. (Authors: Peter Weibel, Idis Hartmann, designed by 2xGoldstein+Froneczek, 128 pages, 104 coloured photos, German/English, retail price € 34.90).

Final remarks

After the tour, the participating artists and organisers enjoyed a get-together, culminating in brief speeches by Robert Wilson and Peter Weibel.

In his calm but firm manner, Robert Wilson presented an allegory. Peter Weibel countered, adding almost philosophical remarks. Read Peter Weibel's verbatim records of this remarkable discourse:

"On the evening of the opening ceremony in Bad Rothenfelde, Robert Wilson in brief stated something along the lines that he was from Texas and, when starting out on his career, he studied Architecture under Sibyl Moholy-Nagy in New York. One day, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy tasked her students with drawing a city in three minutes. Wilson drew an apple containing a crystal cube. In response to her query as to what it was supposed to be, he stated that the city is a structure that people are supposed to fill with life. In the middle of this structure was a church where people gather, acting as a centre. Here in Bad Rothenfelde, art – the graduation tower – is this church because it brings together lots of artists from many countries, and many languages. A community needs a centre around which it can evolve. It used to be the church, now it is art. It is intercultural. Quotation by Wilson: 'Politics and religion divide people. But art stands above all nations and religions.'

At which I retorted: 'Yes, Bob, you're right: in Bad Rothenfelde, everything is gathered around a church, and yet this church is not vertical, but horizontal. The graduation tower is a horizontal church of art around which this place is gathered and centred because art takes place here. The graduation tower is a projection surface, as was once the case with religion. Art embodies people's hopes and dreams but not, as before, in an upward but a horizontal – interpersonal – tension. The French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari used the word "rhizomatic" to describe this. Normally, the tree of knowledge is a vertical symbol, and we focus on the top of the tree. In contrast, the two philosophers declared that the root system that spreads horizontally in the ground – the network – was important. And, indeed, the graduation tower consists of a network of brushwood. Hence it is a rhizomatic church. You're right, dear Bob,

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all of the world's cultures, languages and nations are reflected in art. And because at the lichtsicht biennale we have so many artists from all over the world, from New Zealand, South Africa, Israel, Japan, England, America and Germany, not only art, but also the world is reflected on the graduation tower. Thank you for allowing me to complete your thoughts."

Heinrich W. Risken, initiator and founder of lichtsicht – Projection Biennale, was visibly moved by these words, which summed up his intention in a nutshell so precisely, intelligently and comprehensively. Whereupon Mr. Risken related the history of lichtsicht to all those present, starting from the idea that came to him while contemplating the graduation towers in winter darkness, to the first steps taken with Paul Anczykowski and the subsequent lichtsicht productions under the curatorship of Manfred Schneckeburger, the grand documenta curator.

Finally, it was Manfred Schneckeburger's turn to speak – he symbolically and verbally passed the lichtsicht baton to Peter Weibel.

Despite the poor weather, almost 11,000 visitors flocked to Bad Rothenfelde on the weekend of the opening. In its 10th year in existence, this top-ranking event, with a unique selling point, has reached the German and international art world. We can't wait to discover the surprises and innovations that future biennales have in store for us.

Sabine Weichel

Media contact:

Sabine Weichel, lichtsicht@sabineweichel.de

Kerstin Kollmeyer, KKollmeyer@lichtsicht-biennale.de

<http://www.lichtsicht-biennale.de/>

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Here is a link to a selection of images for editorial purposes:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/em31pxgke24uj2a/AADM2AFLYoXmvUSOoFqJi-rla?dl=0>

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