FACILITIES, CORONA AUGUST 28, 2020

BACK

Principle Hope

66 art venues, 200 exhibitors - and all of them analogous: From August 28 - 30, the Moabit art festival Ortstermin 20 will take place - under clear rules of hygiene, with a strict hygiene concept. How does art under conditions work? What can a festival like Ortstermin 20. do for the location Moabit and what does the art city Berlin look like after Corona?

INTERVIEW: **ALINA MACK** AND **JENS THOMAS**

CCB Magazin: On the weekend the Moabit art festival starts Ortstermin 20. What can the visitor expect?

Ortstermin 20: A whole lot. It starts on Friday with 66 art locations and 200 exhibitors. Afterwards, for three days, artists and cultural workers will open their studios. They will present exhibitions, actions and performances developed especially for the festival in private homes, project spaces, galleries, stores and public spaces.

CCB Magazin: Berlin is teeming with art festivals. What is so special about the art festival Ortstermin 20?

> *Our goal is to bring the former location Moabit with its cultural potential into the public perception. Because Moabit has unfortunately become an island of investors for unused weekend apartments and overpriced commercial premises in recent years. This is exactly why art has to show itself at these places*

Ortstermin 20: The Ortstermin art festival is geographically the smallest of the festivals, such as the festival of open studios. But it is also the only one in the Mitte district: since 2006 the Kunstverein Tiergarten e.V. has been organizing the festival in addition to its comprehensive program in the Galerie Nord Kunstfestival on Moabit Island. The aim is to bring the former location Moabit with its cultural potential into the public perception and to show the diversity in the then culturally ignored district. Meanwhile there are also many artists and creative people in Moabit. Unfortunately, in the last few years, the long disparaged former workers' and dirty district has become an island of investors for unused weekend apartments and overpriced commercial premises. This is precisely why art has to be shown at these places.

CCB Magazin: Currently all festivals are going digital. You go analog. What is the reason for that? One can certainly misunderstand that in view of the announced Corona denial protests at the weekend.

Ortstermin 20: We are far from ignoring or carelessly dealing with the corona crisis. We have simply been very lucky. Our festival traditionally takes place later in the year, people now know a bit more about the virus and the pandemic, so we can take the step into the analogy. The Artspring and 48 Stunden Neukölln festivals were in a completely different situation. But even for us the planning was not easy: "How far to go, how long to wait, do or leave, online or analog? Everything was connected with a lot of uncertainty, risk assessment, defiance, confidence and hope. But we decided on the principle of hope.

> *For our festival, we have adapted hygiene requirements to the most diverse room sizes. According to the current distance rules, a minimum distance of 1.5, better 2 meters between the people in a room will be maintained*

CCB Magazin: You have developed a clear hygiene concept. How exactly does that look like? What regulations are there?

Ortstermin 20: In consultation with the participants, we have developed several alternative analog presentation formats for the artists. For this purpose we reduced the group sizes for the moderated tours through Moabit. We have adapted the hygiene requirements to different room sizes. Of course, masks are compulsory at all locations. At all closed places, i.e. studios, private apartments, etc., a list of presence must also be kept. According to the current distance rules, a minimum distance of 1.5, better 2 meters will be kept between the persons in a room. In addition, the individual studios or private apartments will determine the possible number of guests according to the size of the room, and admission will be regulated accordingly. This is of course all very complex. But it can be accomplished with a lot of support.

CCB Magazin: What is lost at such a festival when everything has to take place under such conditions?

Ortstermin 20: The spontaneity of course, the light-heartedness, the freedom to celebrate and of course the closeness, the immediacy and the physical contact. On the other hand, we know from several of the participants that, together with others, they take an inventive approach to the editions; for example, they are prepared to take their work "outside" the coming weekend, take it with them on the street and seek direct dialogue with the guests. In this way, many of them find a new form of togetherness in public space, and since the people of Moabit are very well connected, good ideas are passed on very quickly. So a lot is gained as well.

CCB Magazin: Question into the future: What does art look like after Corona? Will Berlin remain this city of art and culture?

Ortstermin 20: Our topic "bis hierher und nicht weiter. This far and no further" has, in retrospect, been subjected to a huge leap in thinking and discussion. COVID-19 and the accompanying curtailment of encounter and basic rights, culture and quality of life have expanded our entire topic to include existential questions. The forced temporary withdrawal from consumption and performance contexts has acted as an extreme amplifier for the awareness of social injustice and the dependence on capitalist production chains. Especially the artists and solo self-employed have been hit by the crisis in a most elementary, even existential way. This has once again made it clear to us in the clearest possible terms what a socially and financially marginalized position those who clearly shape the nimbus of Berlin as a city of art and culture find themselves in. In a time like this, marked by uncertainty, rebellion, but also new alliances, the question of the potential of creative restlessness arises more than ever: What strategies do artists use to counter individual and social restrictions? How do they deal with panic-mongering and trivialization, as well as racist and nationalist exclusion, which have been booming in a mood of general uncertainty not only since Corona? Before Corona, no one could have known what it would mean to be pushed into such isolation and also into anger, and so we will stand unprepared and as ignorant people before the next upheaval, from whatever corner it may come.

> *The corona crisis is advancing the digital, but it is no substitute for the presence of a work of art or the magic of a voice on the opera stage: art is existential food for the soul. It is resistant. It is always good for surprises. And we have to be awake and react, especially today, the corona rules do not make it any easier*

CCB Magazin: What can art contribute to this discourse?

Ortstermin 20: Art is resistant. Art is always good for surprises. Artists are inventive - they make art on the balcony or convert to digital formats. All this has helped us to get through this first difficult period, but in the long run it is among other things the task of municipal galleries and many allies not only to maintain and preserve spaces of encounter, but above all to open up new ones.

CCB Magazin: Many people say that digitale will become even more prevalent in the future.

Ortstermin 20: That can be. The digital is one of many forms of art mediation. But it is no substitute for the presence of a work of art or the magic of a voice on the opera stage. Art is existential food for the soul. We suspect that the economic and spatial situation for artists will become even more dramatic, because the repression is progressing unperturbed even under the mask of the pandemic, perhaps even faster. It is very disturbing to see how many cultural life dreams are currently dying. So what we have to do: We have to be awake and responsive, and that doesn't make the rules any easier. But Berlin has survived a lot at all times - it is a city of rebellion and change and of always reinventing oneself!

Ulrike Riebel, Karen Scheper, Veronika Witte from the festival team Ortstermin 20.

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