

ANARCHY AT HELDENPLATZ

50 Nazi-flags encouraging critique

On October 31st the artist Franz Wassermann, 3 drummers and 50 flag bearers march in *Heldenplatz* Vienna. But instead of the *Hakenkreuz* their Nazi-flags show the names of powerful companies, banks and hedge funds.

CREDIT SUISSE, KRAFT, DISNEY, LOUIS VUITTON – they all are part of the flag march at *Heldenplatz* in Vienna. 46 global players* have been drawn by chance by Franz Wassermann to be printed on flags. Also, the name of the artist himself is presented on one of the flags. 3 additional flags allude to the countless possibilities to extend this list – they carry no names but only a bare white circle on red background.

Within an hour the drummers and flag bearers walk round *Heldenplatz* 7 times – 4 times counterclockwise, 3 times clockwise. During the first four rounds the drummers who head the march play the rhythm of the *Peststromein* (pest drums) which have been used in medieval times to alert people in case of the outbreak of the disease. After changing directions the drummers transform the rhythm into a heartbeat which accompanies the flag bearers till they finally leave *Heldenplatz* through the *Heldentor*.

Franz Wassermann who is participating in the march as one of the 50 flag bearers describes the background of the project **HELDENPLATZ ANARCHY / When we are marching side by side** as follows: “It seems that the only reality existing is the reality of capitalism. People only count as manpower or consumers. The consequences are a lack of solidarity, social isolation and separation. My aim is to publicly take a stand against the feeling of powerlessness which has come over a lot of people who live in capitalistic systems.”

But then again, the artist insists on pointing out the complicity in which we act as victims *and* perpetrators at the same time. Wassermann: “We allow capital to infantilise us. We want to have everything, and we want it to be *cheap*. We have the right to shop; we presume the right to fulfill all our wishes. We don’t refrain, but we decline our global responsibility – the lives of other people are none of our business.”

Hence, choosing *Heldenplatz* as the location for the project was a logical step: “Ultimately, the project is about forms of mastery. At *Heldenplatz* the seemingly last dictatorship in Austrian history started. But from a global point of view we already live in a dictatorial system again; a dictatorial system that aims to remain hidden.” This became apparent during the preparations of the project as well: “Half of the flag bearers are volunteers, the other half is paid. A lot of people who I invited to join the project were afraid to march with us because their employment contracts do not allow them to criticise their employer’s companies and partner companies. Other people feared to be pictured on photos which could appear in social media and force them to take up a position in public.”

To realise the project **HELDENPLATZ ANARCHY / When we are marching side by side** at *Heldenplatz*, Franz Wassermann made use of his democratic right of assembly and planned the project as a political demonstration. Wassermann: “Even if art does not have the power to legislate law, it nevertheless has the power to enable people to develop consciousness. Yes, capital repeatedly tries to domesticate art, to reduce it to some sort of decoration or investment. But this is exactly why I am here today: to show that art has another responsibility and another function.”

* MONSANTO, BAYER, DANONE, IKEA, LOUIS VUITTON, BOEING, CREDIT SUISSE, FRANZ WASSERMANN, SANOFI, THALES, COCA COLA, KRAFT, AMAZON, ALLIANZ, H&M, STANDARD AND POORS, GAP, DISNEY, NESTLÉ, JP MORGAN, IBM, NOVARTIS, FACEBOOK, DEUTSCHE BANK, VOLKSWAGEN, AIRBUS, SONY, UNILEVER, BLACK ROCK, UBS, BAIDU, SHELL, GOLDMAN SACHS, ORACLE, PFIZER, JOHNSON & JOHNSON, GENERAL MOTORS, MICROSOFT, EXXON MOBILE, HSBC, AXA, ADIDAS, GOOGLE, FIFA, ALPHABET, MOODYS, APPLE

Biografie

FRANZ WASSERMANN, born in 1963, lives and works as a sculptor in Vienna. In his last exhibitions he critically explored data protection in social media (**I FEEL LOVE**, Gallery Schleifmühlgasse 12 – 14, Vienna) and the relationship between majorities and minorities (**MAKE YOURSELF VISIBLE.**, Museumsquartier Vienna) Wassermann's work is concerned with structures of power in our society and explores the coming and going of power and powerlessness that influences the individual as well as the collective. His performances and sculptures deal with tabooed issues like for example sexual abuse of children (**SCARS**), National Socialism and culture of remembrance (**TEMPORARY MONUMENT**), Aids and stigma (**BARBIE + KEN = HIV+**), migration (**ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS**), authority and symbolic capital in the cultural sector (**ALBERTINA, ICONS**) and the power of the media and the image (**ACTION CARRIERS**).

Wassermann makes these topics visible in public space and starts dialogues to which he reacts by means of art and which become parts of his work. Therefore, the artist cooperates with different partners e.g. the public, associations, activists, companies and experts from other fields of knowledge. The traces of these dialogues are presented in the gallery space as object, videos, photos and prints where they initiate a second kind of discussion

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