

DAS MINSK

KUNSTHAUS IN POTSDAM

PRESS RELEASE

I've Seen the Wall

Louis Armstrong on Tour in the GDR 1965

September 16, 2023 – February 4, 2024

DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam will present the exhibition *I've Seen the Wall* in the fall of 2023, focusing on the legendary concert tour that led Louis Armstrong through the GDR in 1965.

In the midst of the Cold War, the African American jazz musician performed in East Berlin, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Erfurt, and Schwerin. The tour was very tightly scheduled with 17 concerts in just nine days. The halls, with a capacity of no less than 2,000 to 3,000 seats, were quickly sold out—around 45,000 people experienced Louis Armstrong and his All Stars live in the GDR.

The exhibition at DAS MINSK takes this historic event as its starting point for an examination of the ambivalence of this official invitation against the backdrop of the civil rights movement in the United States and the Iron Curtain in Europe. Central questions in the exhibition are: What does it mean to tour the world, to visit oppressive systems and dictatorships in the name of freedom? What does it mean to repeatedly experience recognition and racism at the same time on the road and to return home to be confronted with racism all over again?

Armstrong's performance in the GDR is a sign of freedom, even if only for the duration of the show. It is a sobering observation that has been true for centuries in regard to Black music. Experiencing the love and amazement of the public on the stage contradicts the difficulties that the musicians were, and continue to be, confronted with backstage. Can love and hate, worldwide success and oppression, recognition and racism coexist?

I've Seen the Wall assembles paintings, photographs, archival materials, and installations by Terry Adkins, Louis Armstrong, Pina Bausch, Romare Bearden, Peter Brötzmann, Darol Olu Kae, Norman Lewis, Glenn Ligon, Jason Moran, Gordon Parks, Dan Perjovschi, Adrian Piper, Evelyn Richter, Lorna Simpson, Willi Sitte, Wadada Leo Smith, Rosemarie Trockel, Andy Warhol, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt.

Material will also be exhibited from the Louis Armstrong House Museum in New York, as well as from the holdings of the Sammlung Berliner Verlag / Archiv and the Agentur DDR Fotoerbe, including photographs by Kurt Böttger, Manfred Dressel, Christa

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Hochneder, Volkhard Kühn, Tassilo Leher, Peter Leske, Helmut Raddatz, and Horst E. Schulze.

In the fourth installment of the INTERPLAY series, an original trumpet by Louis Armstrong from the holdings of the Louis Armstrong House Museum is juxtaposed with a work by Andy Warhol from the Hasso Plattner Collection.

The exhibition is curated by Paola Malavassi and Jason Moran.

The exhibition is created in close collaboration with the Louis Armstrong House Museum (LAHM) in Corona, Queens, New York. With special thanks to the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation. The exhibition is co-curated by jazz pianist, composer, and visual artist Jason Moran, who also curated the permanent exhibition in the LAHM's new Louis Armstrong Center, which opened in summer 2023.

The exhibition at DAS MINSK is accompanied by a catalog published by Hatje Cantz Verlag with essays by Tina M. Campt, Paola Malavassi, and Jason Moran.

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OPENING HOURS

Daily except Tuesdays
Wednesday to Monday 10 am – 7 pm

ADMISSION

10 Euros, 8 Euros concession

Combined ticket 20 Euros, 12 Euros concession

The combined ticket is valid for the Museum Barberini and DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam.

The MINSK team is always happy to receive contact from contemporary witnesses of the former terrace restaurant "Minsk" by mail or e-mail: zeiten@dasminsk.de.

DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam is a project of the Hasso Plattner Foundation. The goal of the Hasso Plattner Foundation is to promote the digitalization of scholarship and education, to improve access to art and culture, and to support the preservation of the environment.

www.plattnerfoundation.org

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PROGRAM

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Exhibition text

I've Seen the Wall is an exhibition about the legendary concert tour Louis Armstrong made through the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1965, and also about the power of music, beyond walls and politics—a power that Louis Armstrong believed in his entire life.

It was to a West German journalist's question of whether Armstrong had seen the Wall that the musician answered succinctly with a serious expression: "I've seen the Wall. . . . I don't worry about the Wall, I worry about the audience. . . . I can't say what I wanna say, but if you'll accept it, I'll say it: Forget about all that other bullshit!"¹

In the midst of the Cold War, the African American jazz musician performed in East Berlin, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Erfurt, and Schwerin. The tour was very tightly scheduled with seventeen concerts in only nine days. With a capacity of no less than 2,000 to 3,000 seats, the venues were very quickly sold out—approximately 45,000 people experienced Louis Armstrong and his All Stars live in the GDR.

This historical moment is the starting point for an art exhibition that explores the ambivalence of Armstrong's official invitation by the Künstler-Agentur der DDR (Artists' Agency of the GDR) against the backdrop of the civil rights movement in the United States and the Iron Curtain in Europe.

Central questions raised by the exhibition are: What does it mean to tour the world and visit oppressive systems and dictatorships in the name of freedom? What does it mean to repeatedly experience recognition and racism on the road and then to return home to be yet again confronted with racism?

Armstrong's appearance in the GDR was a sign of freedom, even if only for the duration of the performance—a sobering observation that has been true for centuries in regard to Black music. Experiencing the love and admiration of the public on the stage contradicts the difficulties that the musicians were, and continue to be, confronted with backstage. Can love and hate, worldwide success and oppression, recognition and racism coexist?

I've Seen the Wall assembles paintings, photographs, archival materials, and installations by Terry Adkins, Louis Armstrong, Pina Bausch, Romare Bearden, Peter Brötzmann, Darol Olu Kae, Norman Lewis, Glenn Ligon, Jason Moran, Gordon Parks, Dan Perjovschi, Adrian Piper, Evelyn Richter, Lorna Simpson, Willi Sitte, Nadada Leo Smith, Rosemarie Trockel, Andy Warhol, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt.

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Material will also be exhibited from the Louis Armstrong House Museum in New York, as well as from the holdings of the Sammlung Berliner Verlag / Archiv and the Agentur DDR Fotoerbe, including photographs by Kurt Böttger, Manfred Dressel, Christa Hochneder, Volkhard Kühl, Tassilo Leher, Peter Leske, Helmut Raddatz, and Horst E. Schulze.

Parallel to the exhibition, three icons, renowned worldwide—Andy Warhol, the *Mona Lisa*, and Louis Armstrong—meet together in INTERPLAY NO. 4. In DAS MINSK's cabinet, Andy Warhol's *Mona Lisa Four Times* (1978) from the Hasso Plattner Collection is juxtaposed with an original trumpet from the holdings of the Louis Armstrong House Museum. A famous quotation from Louis Armstrong connects them: "A lotta cats copy the Mona Lisa, but people still line up to see the original."²

The exhibition *I've Seen the Wall* was curated by Paola Malavassi and Jason Moran. Moran brings the perspective of an artist and musician, Malavassi that of an art historian and music enthusiast. Moran sees the events from the stage and backstage because he knows what it means to tour around the world. Malavassi, on the other hand, looks out from the museum and the audience in the concert hall. Together, they decided to develop an exhibition that brings the audience backstage in order to take a closer look at the complexities of the production and reception of music, politics, and racism.

The curators have transferred the curtain from the old Friedrichstadt-Palast in Berlin, which they only know from black-and-white photographs, from imagination to reality, and have installed it in front of the exhibition spaces as an invitation to go backstage together and look and listen more closely.

On the ground floor, the focus is on Louis Armstrong and his legendary tour. Artworks and documentary material interweave to paint a complex picture of Armstrong in private and on stage. At the press conference in East Berlin, Louis Armstrong literally sits "on the fence": between two white men in black suits, between political systems, between translations in different directions. He sits there, between today and tomorrow, between press conference and concert, between journalists and audience—an audience that is hungry for the sound of freedom jazz embodies. When asked about the Wall, Armstrong quickly deflects to his music and his audience. His statements move between what is said and what is to be played the following day. He consistently keeps both in mind and always returns to his music, his trumpet, his upcoming performance. In a new video, which allows words and music to collide, Jason Moran combines film excerpts from the press conference and the concert in East Berlin in 1965, revealing the quandary Armstrong faced on tour.

The upper level goes beyond the historical tour to examine questions related to the

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production and reception of music, racism, and politics. Works of art are brought together from the 1960s to the present day. Music is the motivation, reference, inspiration, source, metaphor, method, material, or even subject of art. Many of the exhibited works play with the presence or absence of sound. Whether mouthpiece or mute, record player or trumpet: potential sound is central in *I've Seen the Wall* and a metaphor for different forms of activism. What is amplified in society? What is muted? Human history is steeped in racial violence, which is reflected in many of these works. The works exhibited here encourage us to reflect on the connection between music and racism, then and now, because "backstage," metaphorically speaking, is where actual reality takes place.

Text: Paola Malavassi

The exhibition was curated by Paola Malavassi and Jason Moran.

The exhibition was conceived in close collaboration with the Louis Armstrong House Museum (LAHM) in Corona, Queens, New York. With special thanks to the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation.

The exhibition's co-curator is the jazz pianist, composer, and visual artist Jason Moran. He also curated the permanent exhibition in the new Louis Armstrong Center of the LAHM, which opened in summer 2023.

A catalogue with contributions by Tina M. Campt, Paola Malavassi, and Jason Moran will be published by Hatje Cantz Verlag to accompany the exhibition at DAS MINSK, as well as a four-part podcast produced by art/beats. Further information can be found at: www.dasminsk.de.

Thanks to the lenders:

Agentur DDR Fotoerbe, the artist Peter Brötzmann and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago, the artist Darol Olu Kae, the artist Glenn Ligon and Regen Projects, Los Angeles, the artist Jason Moran, the artist Dan Perjovschi, the artist Wadada Leo Smith, Billy Hodges Family Collection, Bundesarchiv, Collection of Emily Fisher Landau, Collection of the Adrian Piper Research Archive (APRA) Foundation Berlin, DC Moore Gallery, New York, Deutsche Fotothek, Louis Armstrong House Museum, picture alliance, Pina Bausch Foundation, private collections, Sammlung Berliner Verlag / Archiv, The George Economou Collection, The Gordon Parks Foundation.

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1 Press conference with Louis Armstrong, ARD Video, 22:08 min, March 19, 1965, released by ARD Mediathek, <https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/reportagen-und-berichte-des-fernsehfunks/pressekonferenz-mit-louis-armstrong/ard/Y3JpZDovL2hyLW9ubGluZS8xMjg5NTA> (accessed July 11, 2023).

2 The quote first appeared in a tribute to Louis Armstrong in the *Saturday Review* on July 4, 1970, and was immediately picked up in other articles about Armstrong that appeared that same month. It has since been reproduced virally and as unattributed on the internet and has been translated into many languages, explained Ricky Riccardi, Director of Research Collections at the Louis Armstrong House Museum (LAHM).

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INTERPLAY NO. 4 ANDY WARHOL & LOUIS ARMSTRONG

"A lotta cats copy the Mona Lisa, but people still line up to see the original."
— Louis Armstrong

Parallel to the exhibition *I've Seen the Wall: Louis Armstrong on Tour in the GDR 1965*, Andy Warhol, Louis Armstrong, and the *Mona Lisa* meet in DAS MINSK's cabinet for INTERPLAY NO. 4.

Andy Warhol's *Mona Lisa Four Times* (1978) from the Hasso Plattner Collection is juxtaposed with one of Louis Armstrong's original trumpets from the holdings of the Louis Armstrong House Museum in Corona, Queens, New York.

When the singer Paul Anka, who emulated Louis Armstrong,¹ once asked him what he thought of imitations, he received a remarkable answer: "A lotta cats copy the Mona Lisa, but people still line up to see the original." The quote first appeared in a tribute to Louis Armstrong in the *Saturday Review* on July 4, 1970, and was immediately picked up in other articles about Armstrong that appeared that same month.² It has since been reproduced virally and as unattributed on the internet and has been translated into many languages—a further form of reproduction.

INTERPLAY NO. 4 addresses the significance of the original and the copy in both the visual arts and music by bringing together three world-renowned icons: the legendary icon on canvas, *Mona Lisa*, likely the best-known Pop Artist, Andy Warhol, and the most famous jazz musician in history, Louis Armstrong, or rather his trumpet. The trumpet on display is the one Armstrong played on tour in the 1960s.

Andy Warhol has reproduced pop culture celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, and Madonna many times. Hollywood's cult of stardom, advertising, and mass media were central aspects of his work.

Given his level of fame, Louis Armstrong could also have been immortalized in Warhol's oeuvre. In addition to famous African Americans such as Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, and Jean-Michel Basquiat, Warhol also captured police violence against Black protesters during riots in Alabama in his "Race Riots" paintings from the 1960s.³ He used excerpts from newspaper articles, which through their serial repetition express the emotionlessness and consumability of gruesome scenes in everyday media.

In *Mona Lisa Four Times*, Warhol reproduced Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (1503–

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06) four times, in other version of the work up to thirty times. The motivation was that the world-famous original painting traveled from the Louvre in Paris to Washington, DC for the first time at the turn of the year 1962–63. The *Mona Lisa* was welcomed like a high-ranking state visit. The painting was transported in a limousine and accompanied by numerous security officials. Two thousand important political and cultural representatives gathered for the ceremonial opening of the exhibition—a crowd similar to those who gathered in East Berlin, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Schwerin, and Erfurt to see Armstrong on tour in the GDR in 1965. The visit of the *Mona Lisa* to Washington, DC was a highly political affair against the backdrop of the Cuban Missile Crisis in the midst of the Cold War.⁴

Thousands of people still visit the Louvre in Paris, weaving their way through barriers, much like airport check-ins, to catch a glimpse of the original. The situation is comparable to that of pilgrims who travel long distances to behold a religious relic, often elevated, out of reach, and behind glass. Likewise, fans make pilgrimages to pop concerts. There, they queue up with another 20,000 people to follow the stars, sometimes from a great distance, with the help of live broadcasts on the big screen. Armstrong's tour of the GDR also presumably sold 18,000 tickets in one day alone. In Budapest, 80,000 people gathered on a single evening to see him live in a stadium.

The magical effect of the original seems to equally persist behind armored glass or in a live broadcast next to the actual concert stage, and Armstrong continues to ring true today: people still line up to see the original.

Armstrong's statement about copy and original attests to generosity and self-confidence. He casually compares himself to the *Mona Lisa* and equates his music to a work of art, a unique specimen. Yet the fact that others appropriated his music or imitated him certainly didn't cause him any sleepless nights. The history of jazz is full of reinterpretations of old songs that have led to innovations while also ensuring the preservation of certain titles and compositions for generations. Such a tradition builds on an awareness of the past and combines this with the freedom to keep making something new from it—to imagine and chart new paths, interpretations, and versions.

What is an original and what is a copy with regard to visual art and music? Warhol's *Mona Lisa Four Times* reproduces the *Mona Lisa*, but it is simultaneously an original Warhol with a distinctive aesthetic. Armstrong's trumpet is an original that accompanied him on his tours. It is the instrument experienced in the halls in East Berlin, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Erfurt, and Schwerin.

Jason Moran, co-curator of the exhibition *I've Seen the Wall*, and I decided to set up a

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listening room for our exhibition together with INTERPLAY NO. 4 in DAS MINSK's cabinet, so that Armstrong's concert in East Berlin can be heard as a vinyl recording to accompany the viewing of Warhol's work and Armstrong's trumpet.

Considering that *Schallplattenunterhalter* (record entertainers) at the former terrace restaurant "Minsk" were only permitted to play 40 percent of music from the West at the time, even at weekly dance parties, Louis Armstrong's tour with 100 percent music from the West seems extraordinary and ambivalent a decade before the "Minsk" was built and only four years after the construction of the Berlin Wall.⁵

45,000 people experienced Louis Armstrong live in the GDR. They experienced what in music can be called the original, a live performance, unique and unrepeatable. Vinyl records, on the other hand, are strictly speaking the reproduction of music, but in light of today's digital distribution of music they have gained the cult character of an original. They are physical objects, but above all they are counted, like an art edition.

With INTERPLAY NO. 4, DAS MINSK celebrates reproduction and original—with an original from Andy Warhol, who created originals with reproductions of icons, with the original trumpet from Louis Armstrong, and a soundtrack on vinyl, which reproduces the irretrievable sound from the old Friedrichstadt-Palast in East Berlin and thus makes it possible to experience it again.

Paola Malavassi

The exhibition was conceived in close collaboration with the Louis Armstrong House Museum (LAHM) in Corona, Queens, New York. With special thanks to the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation.

1 It is said that Paul Anka had a similar success with "Mack the Knife" to that of Louis Armstrong and this could have been the reason for his question to Armstrong. "Mack the Knife" is not an Armstrong composition (the original is from Kurt Weill's music for Bertold Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*), yet it is strongly associated with him because he was so successful with it. Lotte Lenya once sang this song together with Louis Armstrong in Hamburg.

2 Ricky Riccardi, Director of Research Collections at the Louis Armstrong House Museum, explained in an email to the author: "Paul Anka did an album which included his impression of Louis Armstrong. When they finally met, Anka asked if he minded all those impressions of him by singers and comics. Armstrong shrugged and made this famous statement. It appears Louis never wrote it down and spoke it on tape, but he did say it to Anka, who related it others. It was finally included in an anthology of quotes in 1985."

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3 See Michael Luethy, *Andy Warhol: Thirty Are Better Than One*, 1995, <https://michaelluethy.de/scripts/andywarhol-leonardo-mona-lisa-kennedy-kalter-krieg/> (accessed August 2, 2023).

4 The Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi dedicated a drawing to this fact in his April 2021 intervention at DAS MINSK *For No One And Everyone*. A figure leans against the old walls of DAS MINSK and says: "you can still hear the music, 40 percent West."

5 On the question of the presence of Black people in Andy Warhol's work, it's recommended to read an article that analyzes the power imbalance between Warhol and the BIPoC queer and trans people from Lower Manhattan who served as models for him for a series of works. Warhol anonymized the models in this series of works by titling it simply *Ladies and Gentlemen*, rather than naming the people depicted. See: Gürsoy Doğtaş, "How Warhol Erased the Identity of His Black Trans Sitters," in: *Contemporary And*, June 19, 2021, <https://amlatina.contemporaryand.com/editorial/andy-warhol-black-trans-sitters/> (accessed August 2, 2023).

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FACT SHEET TOUR LOUIS ARMSTRONG

1. The Tour

20.–22.3.1965:	Friedrichstadt-Palast, Ost-Berlin
23.–24.3.1965:	Messehalle 3, Leipzig
5.4.1965:	Friedrichstadt-Palast, Ost-Berlin
6.4.1965:	Hermann-Gieseler-Halle, Magdeburg
7.4.1965:	Thüringenhalle, Erfurt
8.4.1965:	Sport- und Konzerthalle, Schwerin

2. Louis Armstrong & his All Stars

Louis Armstrong (Vocals, Trumpet)
&
Jewel Brown (Vocals)
Tyree Glenn (Trombone)
Eddie Shu (Clarinet)
Billy Kyle (Piano)
Arvell Shaw (Bass)
Danny Barcelona (Drums)

3. Setlist

1. Set

When It's Sleepy Time Down South
Indiana
(What Did I Do to Be So) Black And Blue
Tiger Rag
When I Grow Too Old To Dream
Hello, Dolly!
Memories of You
Lover, Come Back To Me
Can't Help Loving That Man
When The Saints Go Marching In

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FACT SHEET TOUR LOUIS ARMSTRONG

2. Set

Struttin' With Some Barbecue
The Faithful Hussar
Royal Garden Blues
Blueberry Hill
Without A Song
How High The Moon
Mack The Knife
Stompin' At The Savoy
I Left My Heart in San Francisco
My Man
Mop Mop
When It's Sleepy Time Down South
Hello, Dolly!

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PODCAST EPISODE 1 – TRANSCRIPT

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Louis Armstrong:

"I've seen the Wall . . . I ain't worried about the Wall, I worry about the audience imma play to tomorrow night . . . I can't say what I wanna say, but if you'll accept it, I'll say it: forget about all that other bullshit!"

Announcer:

"Louis Armstrong!" (Applause)

[Music playing] Louis Armstrong and his All Stars playing the first chords of "When It's Sleepy Down South" live at Friedrichstadt-Palast, East Berlin, 1965

Paola Malavassi:

1965, four years after the Berlin Wall was built, during the Vietnam War, and in the midst of the Cold War, the African American jazz legend Louis Armstrong toured through the GDR, playing seventeen concerts in only nine days.

Jason Moran:

We are Paola Malavassi and Jason Moran, curators of the exhibition *I've Seen the Wall: Louis Armstrong on Tour in the GDR in 1965*, and in this first episode of our four-part podcast accompanying the exhibition at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam near Berlin, we'll be talking about music and art, about politics and all of its entanglements.

To start off, what is DAS MINSK?

Paola Malavassi:

So, DAS MINSK houses artworks from the period after 1945 with a focus on art from the former GDR, which are all part of the Hasso Plattner collection.

We opened in 2022, September last year, in the former terrace restaurant Minsk in Potsdam, which was built in the 1970s in the former modernist style of the GDR and which was a place of encounter, a very prominent one. And now it is again, but more in the shape of an exhibition space, focusing on GDR art and history in dialog with contemporary art.

I am the founding director of DAS MINSK, and I proposed this exhibition project from the very beginning, three years ago, with the aim to do a show on Louis Armstrong's tour through the GDR, which was frankly rather spectacular and still is retrospectively.

Jason Moran:

It definitely is. And that's why we're here.

Paola Malavassi:

Exactly. You're here as co-curator, Jason, of the exhibition, but you're also a musician,

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and you got me in touch with the team of the Louis Armstrong House Museum and the newly opened Louis Armstrong Center in Corona, Queens, New York, for which you curated the first show *Here to Stay*. We worked together years ago in Berlin, producing a performance to *APEX* by Arthur Jafa and have since then been in dialog about music and art from as many perspectives as possible. I am looking at things from the standpoint of an art historian and maybe a jazz audience, you from the standpoint of an artist and a musician onstage, backstage.

I dare say we both love jazz music in general. I mean, you make it, I listen to it. And we wanted to open this topic to a contemporary discourse. So, to not only look at this tour and its events from a historical point of view, but from today, and in order to see how ambivalent the invitation was, where we're at now, and what all this can mean for the production and reception of art and music today.

For that, we imagined the stage curtain at a Friedrichstadt-Palast, because we don't know the color, because all images are black and white, and the film's black and white. We just imagined it and installed it at the entrance to our exhibition as an invitation to join us to go backstage, and have a closer look and listen closer to the events.

[Music playing] Louis Armstrong and his All Stars playing the first chords of "Hello Dolly" live at Friedrichstadt-Palast, East Berlin, 1965

Paola Malavassi:

Armstrong's tour was scheduled with seventeen concerts in just nine days, so mostly playing two shows per day, which is crazy—East Berlin, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Erfurt, and Schwerin—starting on March 20, 1965, in the old Berliner Friedrichstadt-Palast, and finishing on April 8 in Schwerin. In between, he gave other concerts in the Eastern Bloc and went once to West Berlin, too. People in the GDR queued for hours and 18,000 tickets were sold in just one day.

The visit and tour of Louis Armstrong was an absolutely outstanding event, and it was maybe equally ambivalent as it is outstanding.

And we're listening now, I think, to the press conference and this inaccurate translation.

Host of the press conference on March 19, 1965, in East Berlin:

"A warm welcome to the great artist to whom belongs all our veneration and admiration, and a warm welcome also to the man Louis Armstrong, to whom belongs all our respect."

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Journalist:

"Are you going to see the Wall when you're in East Berlin?"

Louis Armstrong:

"I've seen the Wall ... I saw it, when I played concerts, you know? I saw the wall ... I ain't worried about the Wall, I worry about the audience imma play to tomorrow night ... I don't know about the Wall, I can't say what I wanna say, but if you'll accept it, I'll say it: forget about all that other bullshit!"

Translator:

(Laughs) "Well, his expression was rather strong, in the sense that he said, we should forget about everything else and think only about the music."

Host of the press conference:

"It is interesting, however, that the only political question of that kind came not from our side but from the Western society. We recognize that with great joy."

Paola Malavassi:

There's all this tension in the press conference in the airport in East Berlin, and a lot of translations are being made from English to German, from German to English, and from English to a slightly manipulated German from the GDR.

Jason Moran:

Yeah, yeah. It's also like translated in body language too, you know? The ease of Armstrong, who is now in his mid-sixties—he's a senior, and he has moved a lot through life. And so he's also coming into another new situation and is asked to give some language to the music that he makes, or the situation that he is not in control of, you know.

And I was thinking about the way you said "this ambivalent invitation"... and I watch it now today, that cultural institutions are often asked to propose a question to the artist to give an answer before society can. And it's unfair to the artist to be put in these situations to solve the ills. But what the work does is it begins to at least ask the question. And I think the artists in the show have definitely asked that question.

And early on in our research you wrote me, you said: "The press conference made me suffer, the concert I enjoyed. And I guess that says something about the power of music and the freedom reclaimed on the stage. The words versus the music."

Paola Malavassi:

Yes, and you wrote back very rapidly, and I am just trying to do a paraphrase, you quoted Thelonious Monk, who is, can I say an idol for you? A role model?

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Jason Moran:

– Yes. He is the reason.

Paola Malavassi:

– A reason for everything! And the quote was ...?

Jason Moran:

– The quote was ... He was asked a question by his arranger, Hall Overton, in 1959, about something about his music and technique in his music. And Monk said: "Well, rather than say it, can't I just play it?" He was really tired of the interview, and he just wanted to go play. And I thought, oh my goodness, I had never heard anyone say it that way, you know, because music unlocks another language, that is hard to pin down, you know, like when we look at the side of the hieroglyphics in Egypt, you know, like we're trying to pin down: what does the cat mean actually, you know? So, what does the sound mean? What do Monk's melodies mean? What does it mean to hear Louis Armstrong slur a note for so long, you know? What does it mean when, with his body language on the stage, that he points his trumpet up into the air, that he looks over his audience? There's something in all of that for us, to kind of try to ask. And that, you know, that excited me.

So these places he played, tell me about these places.

Paola Malavassi:

The halls, with a capacity of no less than 2,000 to 3,000 seats, were quickly sold out. Around 45,000 people experienced Louis Armstrong in the GDR. This raises a lot of questions. What does it mean to listen to jazz in postwar East Germany? And a document of the Stasi, the secret police in East Germany, calls to surveil the youth attending the Louis Armstrong concert in order to prevent any kind of rioting. There was no rioting whatsoever. This manifests, however, what kind of threat the GDR government saw in the concert at the same time.

And when we talk about words versus music, I mean, music is political and music can be a very powerful statement.

You know, when we talk about stage and a concert taking place, I mean, the musicians go back home, but also the audience goes back home.

Jason Moran:

That's right.

Paola Malavassi:

So, you just experienced an amazing concert, it was music from the West, and the system in the GDR was observing every book, every record, every film that you

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watched. And everything you listened to and so on could be very risky . . . So, I imagined all of these people returning back home and thought, it is almost sarcastic to offer one hour and fifty minutes of freedom to thousands of people that actually, in real life and the reality, and they turn back to reality after the concert, didn't have this freedom. I think it was a very ambivalent invitation.

Jason Moran:
Hmm.

Paola Malavassi:
And nevertheless, you always said, it's still a moment of freedom onstage. And no matter where Armstrong went to, there was this moment onstage.

Jason Moran:
Right, that allows you a moment of, what you call that, where you're able to have . . . amnesia. Just, you know, like momentary amnesia. "Oh, I've forgotten my troubles." That's for Armstrong, too.
You know, in 1965, America, it's on fire. Neighborhoods are burning. Black people have long been tired of yelling. America is trying to figure out how they can find a new way to oppress Black folk but meanwhile, say that we're going to give them some freedom, you know, whether it's in the vote or as in now, you can sit in the lunch counter. Right? So the lie continued. How were they going to fabricate a new lie for the 1970s?

Well, it started in the 1960s, and Armstrong has already grown up and seen all this stuff. And he's tired of it. He often speaks out in the press about things he's seen happening, you know, the way the children in Arkansas were not allowed to go to this high school without armed guards in Little Rock, Arkansas. He talks about this, you know, with disdain.

He talks about his relationship to the movement, you know. That if he would go to the movement, if he would go to the marches, that they would hit him in his mouth, so that he wouldn't be able to play anymore.

His camp has been infiltrated by the FBI. They planted moles in his camp as he traveled through other countries in Africa. So, he knows that there's something really troubling about the situation once he steps off the stage. But onstage, he's able to reveal something, I think, that is not just for the audiences but is for him, too, and those that are in his band. They are very well aware of the situation that they will return to, once they get off the plane in New York. And I think that's what we hear. You know, like you wisely noted, that he wasn't really performing that song "Black and Blue," but he put it near the top of the concert once he got here.

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Paola Malavassi:
For the whole tour.

Jason Moran:
Yeah. You know, like he was ready with a new set list for the moment. So, that's where we were. And there's always this thing like, "Oh yeah, democracy will save you." You know what I mean? Like, ah, ah, no, it won't. It won't.
And I don't know what wisdom I'll have as I would approach sixty-five, but hearing both Martin Luther King and Louis Armstrong enter this geography around that time, starts to give us a sense of what they thought about it, not only for themselves, but for communities worldwide. And that's important to note.

In 1958, Louis Armstrong was at the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island, and he played, at 2:30 in the morning, he played "The Star-Spangled Banner," the American national anthem.

[Music playing] Louis Armstrong playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" live at Newport Jazz Festival, 1958

Jason Moran:
He sunk the song deep into the night, free of ceremony. You know, usually we played this song at the beginning of a day at school, you know, or you play this song at the beginning of a football match or baseball game. Right? Somebody sings the national anthem, as this ceremony.
But he sunk it into the night after everybody's been drinking all day, and they're drunk with music, too. And he plays this song, and our great novelist and thinker, James Baldwin, was sitting in the audience, and he leans over to someone and says: "This is the first time I've heard that song and liked it."

Paola Malavassi:
Hmm.

Jason Moran:
And I think he's not only responded to the way Armstrong is performing it, but it's also the context that Armstrong is performing it in. And that is also key to trying to understand this tour, too. It's in 1965. This is like a very kind of watershed moment for the modern culture period; and trying to understand where we are going to move forward toward. And he is being used as a person who's going to bring a possible answer.

Paola Malavassi:
Hmm... and bring freedom, maybe. It is a moment of freedom.

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Jason Moran:

Yeah. It is a moment of freedom. And even if the freedom sounds old-fashioned, you know, meaning he's not necessarily playing new music, you know? I mean, he has a hit song, you know, around that time with "Hello, Dolly." But we couldn't say that that was a new style of song. I mean, literally, John Coltrane is playing "A Love Supreme," you know, Motown music from Detroit has exploded, and the beat has totally changed. And so he's still representing a kind of older idea. But there's something about what Louis puts in his music that never quite dates itself. And so it inherently has that particle in it, that always can unlock me at least, as a listener, you know?

Paola Malavassi:

During Armstrong's tour, or at least at Friedrichstadt-Palast, it's a long concert, two hours almost, and a lot of soli are being played . . . every musician has a solo in this concert. And the classic "Without a Song" is performed without its lyrics. They read:

"Without a song, the day would never end.
Without a song, the road would never bend.
When things go wrong, a man ain't got a friend
without a song . . ."

[Music playing] Louis Armstrong and his All Stars playing "Without a Song" live at Friedrichstadt-Palast, East Berlin, 1965

The trombonist (Tyree Glenn) playing this song, "Without a Song," uses a mute, and with this effect that the mute produces, you have the feeling that you're listening to a voice, that actually comes really close to the voice of Armstrong, even. You have the feeling that you're listening to a human voice.

Jason Moran:

Yeah, that's true. The trombone can do that. It has that ability to sound, you know, like a tenor voice. And with the plunger mute, it changes color. It's almost like the voice puts on a mask.

You know, the trombone puts on a mask in a way, and it unlocks another color. For brass players, it's very normal to have a collection of mutes, you know. I mean, it's such a funny phrase—in the music world is very normal. But when you bring it outside the music world: a collection of mutes . . . It's a very different kind of phrase.

And I think that's also what we're trying to do, too, is pull back some of maybe the phraseology that we use so frequently in music to discuss Armstrong and his band, but to really, like, set him inside a space that allows, well, for more of the ideas to ooze

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into one another because they need that kind of dissection as well, you know.

Paola Malavassi:

The title of the exhibition *I've Seen the Wall*, which we've heard Armstrong say in the press conference, implies that he's well aware of the political conundrum he finds himself in, when being asked about the Wall by a West German journalist whilst touring through East Germany, but he moves on rapidly. He says he's focused on the audience. "I'm worried about my audience," he says. "I'm worried about the music I'm going to play tomorrow to my audience." It's about the music. And he also says that he plays for everyone. However, it's documented that Louis Armstrong and his All Stars faced blatant racism while touring. I mean, not only in East Germany and West Germany and I mean out in the world, again and again.

Against the backdrop of the civil rights movement in the United States and the Iron Curtain in Europe: What does it mean to visit oppressive systems and dictatorships in the name of freedom? What does it mean to repeatedly experience recognition and racism at the same time on the road, and to return home to be confronted with love and racism all over again?

Jason Moran:

You know, you brought in Adrian Piper's *My Calling (Card) #3*. Adrian Piper is such a dear artist and mentor, and she really changed my entire life. I can say that affectively and truthfully. But tell us about the "calling card."

Paola Malavassi:

Oh, well, I picked up one of those in an exhibition in Berlin years ago, and it reads: "Do not touch, tap, pat, stroke, prod, pinch, poke, grope or grab me."

Jason Moran:

Hmm.

Paola Malavassi:

We also thought a lot about the experience on the road as a musician.

Jason Moran:

And also for Jewel Brown, the lone female in Armstrong's band, who was very young by that point, maybe she was twenty-four or twenty-five years old in this band. And she talked, in our interview, about what it felt like to be in the company, you know, of not only a band of men, but also the way men would react to her over here. She talked about the way that not it was worrisome to her, there was something that she had to be mindful of. And I felt like Jewel Brown needed this "Calling Card" to hand out to a

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lot of people. "Do not touch," you know, "my hair is not for poking," you know, "my body is not for groping" and also for Louis Armstrong's wife, Lucille Armstrong, that they really were receiving a different kind of glare as they traveled.

I mean, James Baldwin talks about this in "Stranger in a Village." You know, this sense . . . and when we talk about the traveling African American band of that era and for the decades before that, they're really, you know, coming to big towns and small towns, small villages across Europe and still to this day, as a traveling musician, there are moments where, you know, people could use a Piper "calling card" more frequently than maybe is acknowledged.

I think for an artist and especially a musician, we're often trying to find: How do we make impact? Some of us might think that just playing the song is enough, or the presence is enough. You know, Adrian Piper asked this question to her own self at some point during the sixties and seventies. Well, considering what's happening in the world, maybe I should switch something, you know? And for me, one of the things I learned from her, was the notion of intention around it, to not just leave it up in the air, but actually point it. And her work impacted me that way, because she was able to point directly into my chest through her works.

And I feel like Armstrong is able to do that to a degree. He was often noted and maybe maligned by younger student activists for not being vocal enough, right? But over time, all of those activists or many of those activists like Amiri Baraka, Archie Shepp, they all came back around to say, well, actually, Louis was most profound in his activism, because, as Lester Bowie, the great trumpeter said: "You know, the activist isn't the one always out there yelling on the street."

He said there's another way that people get in the room to spark change. And I felt that Armstrong does this, that he finds his way inside rooms, that the person on the street doesn't. And they do need each other as a community of activists to spark a kind of change, possible change.

For me, I felt like one of the great moments he has near the very end of his life, is that he makes this song in the sixties "What a Wonderful World," and people know it to this day, people can probably hear it in their head right now, right? But the last record he makes, he does a remix of that song. He addresses the students, the student protesters, and says, you know, the war, right? He says, okay, well, I know you all are thinking like "Pops, you know, this world is not really that wonderful," right? You know, and he's like, "I hear you. I hear you." And he says, "but man, if we just had love, you know?" He tries to turn it there.

And I think not every activist needs to try to choose love, right? Malcolm X did not choose love. He was like, nah man, we're gon' fight. It needs blood, right? But we do

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need people to share different versions of . . . MLK was nonviolence, right? You know, Fannie Lou Hamer was as well. . . . What are people's versions of where they see their activism lies? And as a community, it needs all that nuance in between, because no one has necessarily the golden ticket.

Paola Malavassi:

I remember you playing "What a Wonderful World" during the pandemic live online, and you never played the "World."

Jason Moran:

I never played "What a Wonderful World."

Paola Malavassi:

You kept going over this "And I think to myself . . .," over this sentence, again and again.

Jason Moran:

Because he has to say that phrase when he sings it. "And I think to myself . . .," and he has to pause . . . and you know, like, I think all of us, all of us know we're going to do some fucked up shit, we might not be talking about. And then when you think to yourself, like, am I making this up? Or is it possible for me to seek the silver lining, and where does my energy need to go for me to get through, you know? And it's always touching to think of Armstrong in that way. We have to give him that room as an artist, that he's not simply just performing this, but that he has nuance in his emotion, too.

And so by the sixties, like I say, he's sixty something, you know, the ideas that he still has in his performances, some of those things have kind of gone out of style as performance modes, you know? Wearing a tuxedo . . . it's not necessarily in style, you know.

But the other group that was also wearing a tuxedo during that time was John Coltrane. So, there's something that people are locking on to, that I feel represents classic material. And Armstrong is devoted to the classic, and love is a classic. Hate is easy to peddle, you know. Division is easy to peddle. Somehow, he keeps trying to work his way toward that.

And at the end, his last record, he centers on it by singing these gospel hymns and Negro spirituals, and "What a Wonderful World" as like a funky remix.

[Music playing] Louis Armstrong 1970s version of "What a Wonderful World" playing: "Some of you young folks have been saying to me 'Hey Pops, what do you mean "What a Wonderful World"? How about all them wars all over the place? You call them wonderful? And how about hunger and pollution? They ain't so wonderful, either. How about listening to old Pops for a minute? It seems to me, it ain't the world that's so bad.'"

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And one of the artists we brought in was a great saxophonist and artist, Peter Brötzmann, and he spoke on the topic of freedom. He says, quote: "We are old enough to know that the term freedom can be twisted in any direction. Most people understand freedom to mean doing what they want, not letting anyone or anything tell them what to do. But in music, that has always been a misconception. Freedom is something very individual. It existed for Louis Armstrong, just as it did for Don Cherry, only as an inner attitude, not as a program."

And Brötzmann, a German musician, multidisciplinary artist, who was very much influenced by Armstrong in his youth . . . he loved Louis Armstrong, he loved Sidney Bouchet, both from New Orleans, and he came from Fluxus, assisted Nam June Paik, and was one of the most notorious, and let's say, bold saxophonists until his very recent death, rest his beautiful soul. And I think, he very well reflects the multidisciplinary approach of this show.

Paola Malavassi:

Our visitors might think, ah, ok, Jason Moran brought the African American artist in and Paola Malavassi brought the German positions in. It was not like that. So, Jason Moran brought Peter Brötzmann in, Pina Bausch, I proposed Adrian Piper's "Calling Card."

Jason Moran:

That's right. Yeah, you proposed Glenn Ligon.

Paola Malavassi:

I proposed your friends.

Jason Moran:

Also, the exchange that Armstrong is also trying to accomplish, whether or not he ever says it . . . But he knows that the exchange is not with him in this Wall. The exchange is with the people. And when an audience lets down their wall, then they can receive the sound.

Armstrong grows up in New Orleans, in a very segregated New Orleans. A New Orleans he left happily, and rarely returned to, to perform, because of their segregation laws. And he had an integrated band.

But what makes Armstrong the first pop star is that he's able to puncture the fourth wall, between the artist and the audience. He's able to break through and touch them with just the music, and people began to crave that feeling. And as he brought that sound around the world, they wanted to be in front of that feeling. And so when you talk about all these people buying all these tickets in the first three hours, it's

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incredible. That's how satiating the experience can be, even for an elderly artist. You know, I keep bringing that up because it's important to note that he's not twenty-two. When we think about pop artists now, their youth is the crave, you know. But he is deep into his years and there's still a clamor for him.

Paola Malavassi:

We take an historical event as a departure point, but it is an art exhibition with a multidisciplinary approach and, aside from Peter Brötzmann and Pina Bausch, and we have also photography by Evelyn Richter, Gordon Parks, Glenn Ligon's neon installation *Untitled (Bruise/Blues)* . . .

We have also one of Armstrong's original trumpets, and his own collages that he did, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt's typewritings *Someday We Shall Overcome (Hommage à Martin Luther King)* or *Blue Blues* from the 1970s.

Jason Moran:

It's a beautiful band, you know? I often would visit exhibitions and kind of make a mythology around the relationships the artists have to one another, not necessarily to me, but just to one another. And, thinking about the ways that Pina Bausch centered a pivotal part of her choreography around Louis Armstrong's "West End Blues," which is a pivotal part of music history . . . they found each other, right? And that's essential. It's kind of like a dream band, you know.

Paola Malavassi:

It is.

Jason Moran:

And so we're also constructing a way for the work to have a kind of counterpoint in the same way Armstrong's music does as well. So the way that Gordon Parks spent time with Armstrong, photographing him, and also creating his own scenes based on, you know, things he's read, this is part of this mythology, too. And people like Rosemarie Trockel . . . I think the first exhibition I saw of hers in New York was at the New Museum, and somehow she found counterpoint with other works that were not her own. And that, to me, was like so rare to see an artist figure that out. And I was moved by it, you know, by her ability to find the other bandmates, you know?

Paola Malavassi:

Yes. Rosemarie Trockel is in the exhibition with a record player, a vinyl record player. But it's made out of a cooking . . . how do you call it, a cooking plate? Yeah, a heating plate.

Jason Moran:

A hot plate.

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Paola Malavassi:

A hot plate, and a needle to do crochet.

Jason Moran:

Yeah, it's so interesting.

Paola Malavassi:

And a mute by Terry Adkins and mouthpieces by Lorna Simpson . . . I mean, this is all very connected to the situation in which Armstrong was during the tour and in between press conference and concert. Like, I always think, he was between the "mouthpiece," you know, making the sound and the "mute," just manipulating it . . . and then we have a lot of works, where you have the feeling there is potential sound crossing walls, or you talk about "perforating the walls."

Jason Moran:

Perforating the wall, yeah.

Paola Malavassi:

And it's not the one wall. There are a lot of walls in this world.

Jason Moran:

That's right. That's right.

Paola Malavassi:

I don't know why anyone else hasn't done it already, the show about Louis Armstrong in the GDR.

Jason Moran:

Well, Paola, that's all you! And you have that beautiful space, in Potsdam, that can ask these kinds of questions. Oftentimes, as a musician, when you get a song you can decide to play it many ways. And it's up to you to decide which way you're going to attack the piece. And especially when it comes to the solo. The solo is like, oh, I can now depart even further. And given your position at the museum and given my position at the museum in New York, at the Louis Armstrong House Museum and Center, that we find a way to make a new song by knowing each other all these years, and to ask questions that maybe even the Center in Corona, Queens, cannot ask, but then, how do you play this song? That means that you have to make it. And the only way is to actually do it.

So when you first proposed it, I thought: "She's out of her mind!" But I also thought, that's so brilliant because I would have never imagined that. That stages, and spaces, and gallery spaces have to be filled, and they have to come up with something that

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generates friction in the air as much as it does on the wall. And Armstrong and his relationship to Germany is one to bring up. And that we have an opportunity to do that is a real flash point for me. And we have, over the past three years, been diving into Armstrong, and I'm glad that there's another way to show his vast approach to life, and to be able to discuss it.

You know, like when we were talking about Pina Bausch earlier, you know, the choreography around four movements to represent the four seasons from spring, summer, fall, and winter . . . it's called the *Nelken Line*. And you so aptly noted, that when Lucille arrived, that she's given a bunch of "Nelken."

Paola Malavassi:

"Nelken," carnation flowers. Yes.

Jason Moran:

That's also like this passage, this choreography, you know, because also Lucille Armstrong is a dancer by trade. She's known as one of the great dancers in New York City, and that's how Louis meets her. But she was also Louis's partner. And to a big degree, after Louis Armstrong dies, it's Lucille who saves the collection, it's Lucille who dedicates the house to become a museum.

She sees all of this that fifty years later, we're finally able, with resources, to act upon and create an exhibition like this, not only here in Potsdam, but also in New York City, in Queens. And it's just an important moment for us that I'm totally thrilled by. So, finding these crosscurrents . . .

Paola Malavassi:

It's quite unique to have a home in that condition preserved, of an African American musician, I don't know if it's even the only case.

Jason Moran:

Yeah. It's a feeling when you walk in the house. I mean, it's the house he dies in. He dies in his sleep. Jewel Brown, in her interview, she says, you know, he wanted to go out onstage. That's how he wanted to pass away. But, I don't even think she meant it when she said it, he died in the best way, people dream of, in his sleep. So he died while dreaming. I mean, come on, Louis. What a solo.

Let's have a conversation about Louis and Loui(s). I say Louis [pronounces the s] because I know the prominence of syllables in Black language and where we decide to drop a syllable at the end of a word, and when we decide to announce every part of someone's name, because of the respect we have for them.

And also the people whom I learned from how to pronounce his name, Like Wlynton

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Marsalis ... I don't say Wynt'n, I say Wynton Marsalis [pronounced]. I keep it formal, because of how much respect I have for what they represent in the music. So Louis [pronounces the s] Armstrong. To me, Louis is always the way.

Sometimes, when I'm walking around in the streets in New York, and I'm wearing my Louis Armstrong shirt and somebody walks by and says "Loui(s)!" [laughter], I think, oh that's right, people refer to him as Loui(s). I keep forgetting. So every time I hear Loui(s), I am also reminded that that's also part of his beauty, that he's allowed to fit in the mouths of different people, all kinds of ways. People call him Pops, people call him Satchmo, people call him Louis or Loui(s), you know? So he feels like he's part of you in the way you speak his name.

Paola Malavassi:

We're also showing a typewriting by Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt from the seventies, with this very famous sentence, coming from a gospel, right?

Jason Moran:

Mm hmm.

Paola Malavassi:

"Someday we shall overcome."

Jason Moran:

Mm hmm.

Paola Malavassi:

And she repeats that over the piece of paper, many, many times, like a mantra. But I ask myself, when will "someday" come?

Jason Moran:

Right.

Paola Malavassi:

When will it come, "someday"?

Jason Moran:

I often think about the way Ruth types, as its own sound recording ... it's almost worth a performance.

Paola Malavassi:

Oh, she types like a pianist.

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Jason Moran:

Yeah, I can feel it when you press the space bar, you know? And what MLK, Martin Luther King, says in his dedication to the Berlin Jazz Festival around one year earlier in 1964 ...

Paola Malavassi:

The very first one in 1964, it was the very first issue of this festival that still lives today.

Jason Moran:

Yeah. The last part of the quote for this text that he writes:

"Much of the power of our freedom movement in the United States has come from this music. It has strengthened us with its sweet rhythms, when courage began to fail. It has calmed us with its rich harmonies, when spirits were down. And now, Jazz is exported to the world. For in the particular struggle of the Negro in America there is something akin to the universal struggle of modern man. Everybody has the Blues."

Glenn Ligon, too.

[MLK quote continues] "Everybody longs for meaning, everybody needs to love and be loved, everybody needs to clap hands and be happy. Everybody longs for faith and in music, especially this broad category called jazz, there's a step pingstone towards all of these."

Powerful.

Paola Malavassi:

Those words are as powerful as music.

Jason Moran:

Oh yes.

Yeah, reading an MLK text is also a sound piece, because he was an incredible orator. You know, the way he'd summon an audience, it wasn't simply because of the words, it was in the delivery, too. It's in his tone, it's in his pause, it's in the rise of his voice to a crescendo. He's a musician, and he's married to the musician Coretta Scott King. She's a vocalist, a classical vocalist. They met in Boston. She went to New England Conservatory, and he was at Boston University. And so they met there. So, he's married to someone who understands the power of the music to manipulate a room, so that he's given the space, not long before he's assassinated, to say and give honor to the music that has found another home, here in Berlin and in Germany, is really powerful.

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Paola Malavassi:

Yes, I personally love the sentence: "Everybody has the blues."

The questions that we are dealing within the exhibition. They're all contemporary questions about political statements, activism, which way we all participate in society and which different ways there are to raise awareness of the situations we're in. A lot of things had not changed a bit.

And the work by Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt *Someday We Shall Overcome*, when we presented it in our show, I had the feeling, okay, this was made in the seventies, but we haven't moved a bit. Someday? I don't know. Why not today?

And we are also showing at DAS MINSK an original trumpet of Louis Armstrong, that we kindly could loan from Corona, Queens, from the Louis Armstrong House Museum. And we're showing it together with a work from our collection, by Andy Warhol, *Mona Lisa Four Times*. I mean, you said before Armstrong and the *Mona Lisa* this is just like the same, but the connection ...

Jason Moran:

Yeah, what's that quote that you had? So good.

Paola Malavassi:

Well, the quote is, Armstrong famously said something like: "A lot of cats copy the Mona Lisa, but people still queue in a line to see the original."

Jason Moran:

So good, so good.

Paola Malavassi:

It's a question of original and copy and, maybe, about live music and recording as a medium that reproduces the music. And so we have our listening room in the same space, with records.

I've Seen the Wall: Louis Armstrong on Tour in the GDR in 1965 is on until February 4, 2024. If you're in Potsdam or Berlin, come see the exhibition. We'd like to thank the Louis Armstrong House Museum in Corona, Queens, New York. And we'd also like to thank the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation.

[Music playing] Louis Armstrong and his All Stars playing "Black and Blue" live at Friedrichstadt-Palast, East Berlin, 1965: "How would it end? Ain't got a friend. My only sin is in my skin. What did I do to be so black and blue?"

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PAOLA MALAVASSI (born 1978 in San José, Costa Rica) studied art history and philosophy at Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg. From 2016 to 2020 she was head of Julia Stoschek Collection Berlin (JSC Berlin). Before that, from 2005 to 2011, she was curatorial director's assistant to Prof. Kasper König at Museum Ludwig Cologne, where she collaborated with such artists as Andreas Fischer and Tobias Rehberger. The exhibitions she curated included, "A. R. Penck: Past – Present – Future" (2010/11), "Georg Herold: wo man kind" (2007), and "Gabriel Orozco: Samurai's Tree invariant" (2006).

Paola Malavassi works in an interdisciplinary manner, frequently involving the areas of music and dance. Such an approach most recently became evident in the exhibition "Stan Douglas: Splicing Block" (2019, JSC Berlin) which she curated, and in the performance "APEX VARIATIONS" by the artist Arthur Jafa and the jazz pianist Jason Moran (2018, JSC Berlin). She had already organized performative events at Museum Ludwig, including a concert with Steve Reich and the Ensemble Modern on Gerhard Richter in collaboration with the Kölner Philharmonie, and a performance by the choreographer Anna Halprin in collaboration with Tanzhaus NRW (both in 2009).

Art outreach and education also play a central role in her work. Malavassi has held teaching positions at Freie Universität Berlin, Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf and Fachhochschule Potsdam. At Museum Ludwig she headed the art outreach project "kunst:dialoge" and was co-founder of the interdisciplinary series of events "Late Night Thursday." Both projects continue today.

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Jazz pianist, composer, and performance artist **JASON MORAN** was born in Houston, TX in 1975 and earned a degree from the Manhattan School of Music, where he studied with Jaki Byard. He was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2010 and is the Artistic Director for Jazz at The Kennedy Center. Moran currently teaches at the New England Conservatory. He was awarded the Deutscher Jazz Preis 2023 in the category Piano / Keyboard International.

Moran is deeply invested in reassessing and complicating the relationship between music and language, and his extensive efforts in composition, improvisation, and performance are all geared towards challenging the status quo while respecting the accomplishments of his predecessors. His activity stretches beyond the many recordings and performances with masters of the form including Charles Lloyd, Bill Frisell, and the late Sam Rivers, and his work with his trio The Bandwagon (with drummer Nasheet Waits and bassist Tarus Mateen) has resulted in a profound discography for Blue Note Records. The scope of Moran's partnerships and music-making with venerated and iconic visual artists is extensive. He has collaborated with such major figures as Adrian Piper, Joan Jonas, Glenn Ligon, Stan Douglas, Adam Pendleton, Lorna Simpson, and Kara Walker; commissioning institutions of Moran's work include the Walker Art Center, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Dia Art Foundation, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Harlem Stage, and Jazz at Lincoln Center.

The artist's solo exhibition, *Jason Moran: Black Stars: Writing in the Dark* is currently on view at Mass MoCA in North Adams through November 2024. Other recent institutional solos shows include *Bathing the Room with Blues* at The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (2021-22), and *Jason Moran*, organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN in 2018, which traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (a monographic publication accompanied the exhibition). Moran has participated in major group exhibitions such as the Whitney Biennial, Venice Biennale, and *Soft Power* at San Francisco Museum of Fine Art.

In 2018 Moran performed APEX VARIATIONS to Arthur Jafa's APEX in Berlin, where he met and worked with Paola Malavassi, director and curator at DAS MINSK, for the first time.

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GUIDED TOURS

Public Guided Tour in German Tour through the current exhibitions

Every Thursday and Friday at 11am, Saturday at 12pm and Sunday at 2pm

Cost: 5 € plus admission

The public tour guides visitors through the current exhibitions. In addition to offering background information about the exhibited works and artists, the tour also offers glimpses into the history of the exhibition house and information about the artistic interventions and artworks that are installed in and around the building. In dialogue with the art, and also with each other, the tour allows us to look forwards, backwards, and to the side.

Tour on the history of DAS MINSK in German

Every Sunday at 3pm

Cost: 5 € plus admission

This tour deals with the history of the building. Built in the 1970s in the modernist style of the GDR, the former terrace restaurant is a place laden with different memories. After its closure in 2000, vacancy and decline followed until 2018 when a debate about the fate of the building flared up again, ultimately leading to its reopening as an exhibition space.

The tour offers insight into the creation of the restaurant, the time of the vacancy, the transformation into an exhibition space, and the interior design, as well as interventions and artworks in and around the building.

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PROGRAM KITAS AND SCHOOLS

Guided tour for school classes

On request (besucherservice@dasminsk.de)

What is an exhibition space? Who works here? How does an exhibition work? The exhibition space is explored in a tour together with an art mediator. In the second part, the history of DAS MINSK and the current exhibition will be discussed in detail.

Photo workshop with Martin Maleschka

Vacation workshop for children aged 10–12 years

October 25–27, 2023, 10am–2pm

Cost: 30 € plus admission (Free admission for children and young people under the age of 18 and school pupils over the age of 18)

In a three-day school holiday workshop, participants will embark on a voyage of discovery of MINSK and its history together with the architect, photographer, and Modernism of the East expert Martin Maleschka. In and around the building, MINSK's architecture will be explored and photographed in a playful manner. The photos are then printed out and their outlines traced. From the drawings of the old, new, and an imagined, possibly future MINSK, pages will be created for coloring. After the workshop, a coloring book about the exhibition space will be produced, which will be sent to the participants free of charge.

With the participation in the workshop, consent is given to use the resulting drawings for a coloring book, which will be available to children at MINSK free of charge in the future.

The use of the technical equipment on location and the material are included in the ticket price. Participation on individual days is not possible.

Ceramics workshop for children from 8 years old

With the HB-Werkstätten für Keramik

November 5, 2023 and January 14, 2024, 12pm

Cost: 10 € plus admission

In the footsteps of Hedwig Bollhagen: Together with painters from the Hedwig Bollhagen Workshops in Marwitz, classic HB ceramics are painted with your own patterns. After the workshop, the painted ceramics will be brought to the Bollhagen workshops where they will be glazed and fired. The results can be picked up from at the MINSK. The exact pick-up date will be announced on the day of the workshop. The ticket price includes the painting of one blank.

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PROGRAM

Jason Moran & Wadada Leo Smith: *Counterpointing Armstrong* Live Music on September 17, 2023, 4pm

On the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *I've Seen the Wall*, the internationally renowned musician and co-curator of the exhibition, Jason Moran (piano) will play together with one of the most acclaimed creative musicians, Wadada Leo Smith (trumpet), who is also one of the artists featured in the exhibition. Both came all the way from the US to Potsdam to celebrate Louis Armstrong's capacity to break down walls. Inspired by Wadada Leo Smith's art score *Louis Armstrong Counterpointing*, the duo will play music to the many counterpoints and interplays present in the current exhibition.

Jason Moran (b. 1975 in Texas, lives in New York)

Wadada Leo Smith (b. 1941 in Mississippi, lives in New Haven)

No additional ticket is required for the event. Admission to the concert is possible with a free time slot ticket in the period from 2 to 6 p.m.

Dance workshop *Frühling Sommer Herbst Winter* (*Spring Summer Autumn Winter*)

For Participants from 14 years old

October 1, 2023, 11am–1pm and 2pm–4pm

Cost: 5 € plus admission

The choreography of *Frühling Sommer Herbst Winter* (*Spring Summer Autumn Winter*) consists of four simple and impressive movements: spring, summer, autumn and winter. Each movement represents one of the four seasons and is originally danced in Pina Bausch's piece *Nelken* to Louis Armstrong's *West End Blues*. In 2017, the Pina Bausch Foundation created the *Nelken Line* Project, and since then thousands of people have danced the short choreography.

In the workshop, choreographer and performer Fiona Edwards and dancer and dance educator Alessandra Lola Agostini lead the sequence of movements. The workshop begins with warm-up exercises and an introduction to dance work with different body parts. Afterwards, the leaders show the four movements from *Frühling Sommer Herbst Winter* (*Spring Summer Autumn Winter*). These will be practiced together and finally danced in a walk through the MINSK.

No previous experience necessary. Parts of the workshop will take place outside, please bring comfortable and warm clothes.

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WORTE VERSUS MUSIK

Talk

October 18, 2023, 7pm

Cost: 10 € (Admission), 8 € (Concession)

With the curators of the exhibition Paola Malavassi and Jason Moran.

A prior visit of the exhibition is possible from 6pm and included in the event ticket.

Film program in cooperation with the Filmmuseum Potsdam

October 26, November 26, December 17, 2023

As part of a cooperation with DAS MINSK, the Filmmuseum Potsdam shows films accompanying the exhibition once a month from October to December. Admission to the MINSK is reduced with a cinema ticket of the film series; conversely, admission to a film of the series is reduced with an exhibition ticket.

Workshop »Louis Trumpet«

For children from 5–10 years

4th November 2023, 11–12:30am, 2nd December 2023, 2–3:30pm, 20th January 2023, 11–12:30am

Cost: 10€ plus admission

Can you simply build a trumpet yourself? And does music come out when you blow into it? The attempt is made in a workshop for children from 5 years: Hose trumpets are built from garden hoses, household funnels, champagne corks, and electrical ducts. The second part is particularly interesting: the trumpet is given a mute specially developed for the exhibition. The finished trumpet object can be extensively tested after assembly.

No previous knowledge is necessary. The material is included in the ticket price.

Ceramics workshop for Adults

With the HB-Werkstätten für Keramik

November 5, 2023 and January 14, 2024, 1:30pm and 3:30pm

Cost: 10 € zzgl. Eintritt

In the footsteps of Hedwig Bollhagen: Together with painters from the Hedwig Bollhagen Workshops in Marwitz, classic HB ceramics are painted with your own patterns. After the workshop, the painted ceramics will be brought to the Bollhagen workshops where they will be glazed and fired. The results can be picked up from at

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DAS MINSK. The exact pick-up date will be announced on the day of the workshop.

The ticket price includes the painting of one blank.

Live Music: Kassa Overall (solo)

A solo improvisation between Mona Lisa and Louis Armstrong

November 27, 2023, 7pm

Note: Tickets will be available soon.

For more information, events and tickets visit our website at www.dasminsk.de/en/program.

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COLLECTION AND FOUNDATION

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"We're showing works from the collection at DAS MINSK that were created after 1945 and deal with the GDR. I've always been interested in the diversity of the art from the former GDR. It's remarkable how many of the painters in particular have dealt with modernism and the Old Masters in their own unique way. The fact that this art is still only rarely seen in museums is a great pity. Showing these works their due appreciation at DAS MINSK can be understood as a recognition of the life achievements of the GDR citizens in general."

– Hasso Plattner

Art from the Hasso Plattner Collection at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam

The former terrace restaurant "Minsk", built in the 1970s in the modernist style of the GDR, has become a place of encounter between modern and contemporary art—and between people. Artworks from the former GDR, which are part of the Hasso Plattner Collection, will be shown here in new contexts.

"For many Potsdamers, the building is associated with happy memories. The architecture from the time of the GDR is part of the city's history and I want to give the place back to the people of Potsdam."

—Hasso Plattner

One focus of the Hasso Plattner Collection is art from the former GDR, and DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam maintains the works from the collection that were created after 1945. Developed over the course of years, the extensive collection of significant works by renowned artists from the former GDR, such as Wolfgang Mattheuer, Bernhard Heisig, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, forms the starting point for the museum's program. Works from this time will be brought into dialogue with contemporary art at DAS MINSK.

"In the new exhibition space, works from after 1945 in the collection will find a home. Art from the former GDR is still scarcely represented in museums today and does not receive the appreciation it deserves. We want to change that by making the works available to the public and showing how diverse and significant the art of this time is."

—Hasso Plattner

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Commitment to Art, Science, and Nature Conservation

As cofounder and long-time chairman of the software company SAP, Hasso Plattner is one of Germany's most distinguished entrepreneurs. The city of Potsdam now has him to thank for founding two museums and the Hasso Plattner Institute. He was honored with honorary citizenship of Potsdam in 2017 for his great commitment to the city as his second home.

The long-term philanthropic activities of the Plattner family have been consolidated into the Hasso Plattner Foundation since 2015. The internationally active Potsdam-based foundation has set itself the goal, among other things, of accelerating the establishment of digital technologies in science and education, improving access to art and culture, and combining environment and social commitment.

As sponsor and shareholder of both cultural venues DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam and Museum Barberini, the Hasso Plattner Foundation finances museum operations, the exhibition program, and the expansion of the collection.

"The former terrace restaurant Minsk is connected with memories for many Potsdamers. Many of them fought for the preservation of the old Minsk precisely for this reason, because to a certain extent it was also about the preservation of their own identity and that of the city. DAS MINSK wants to pick up exactly where it left off and once again establish itself as a place of encounter that extends beyond art. Here we show, search, discuss, endure, and bring together, and hopefully also dance and laugh together again. I hope for being together and for each other."

— Stefanie Plattner