

DAS MINSK

KUNSTHAUS IN POTSDAM

PRESS RELEASE

DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam opened on September 24, 2022

DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam is the newest project of the Hasso Plattner Foundation. On September 24, 2022, the new institution opened to the public with the two exhibitions: *Wolfgang Mattheuer: Der Nachbar, der will fliegen* and *Stan Douglas: Potsdamer Schrebergärten*. The former terrace restaurant "Minsk"—built in the 1970s in the modernist style of the GDR—thus becomes a place for encounters between modern and contemporary art. In the future, works from the former GDR, which are part of the Hasso Plattner Collection, will be shown here in new contexts.

Both opening exhibitions (Duration: September 24, 2022 – January 15, 2023) present two artists from the Hasso Plattner Collection who are dedicated to the thoroughly political theme of landscape—a subject that occupies a central role within the collection, from Impressionism until the present day. Wolfgang Mattheuer (born in 1927 in Reichenbach/Vogtland; died 2004) repeatedly painted his immediate surroundings and his own garden. Sometimes his landscape painting seemed to arise from visible reality, while at other times they contained mythological elements. The exhibition shows works from 1960 until 2000. The photographer and filmmaker Stan Douglas (born in 1960 in Vancouver) photographed the *Schrebergärten* in Potsdam as part of the DAAD Program at the beginning of the 1990s, documenting the city immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall. For his film *Der Sandmann* (1995), also shown in the exhibition, he built and filmed two *Schrebergärten* in the former DEFA Studios in Babelsberg. The concurrent exhibitions and accompanying publication reflect on both vast and enclosed nature, as well as the city and industry, in the tension between preservation and renewal.

The artist Olaf Nicolai (born in 1962 in Halle/Saale) was invited to react to these exhibitions. Under the title *Ménage de la maison* (eng. House Cleaning) Nicolai develops a temporary, site specific performance for DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam, which will take place every Wednesday to Monday during lunch time from 22.10.2022.

In the ongoing collection format INTERPLAY in the DAS MINSK Kabinett, a work from the Hasso Plattner Collection encounters a work from another collection, thus providing recurring insights into the museum's own holdings and other collections.

"The architecture from the former GDR will be preserved and we have also decided to preserve the historical name 'Minsk'. Through the means of art, the exhibition venue

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critically grapples with the chapter in history in which it was created," says the founding director Paola Malavassi. "From the present we thereby reflect upon the past, in the conviction that our contemporary moment can't be understood without it. The complexity and contradictory nature of life experiences forms the foundation of our program. We thereby differentiate between political systems and the people who live within them." Since its inception the restaurant "Minsk" was also a place for events and music. Subsequently, in addition to the exhibitions, concerts, readings, and performances will also be held here from time to time.

For the three poles in front of the DAS MINSK, the Belarusian artist Rufina Bazlova (born in 1990 in Grodno) has designed flags that go back to her cross-stitch embroideries. In her intervention *Such a Minsk*, Bazlova refers to the current political situation in Belarus. The collaboration with Bazlova is a reference to the design of architectural elements by Belarusian artists in the old "Minsk".

In the DAS MINSK's stairway to the Brauhausberg the work *Cagy Being (Käfigwesen)* 3 by Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt has been installed. The large-scale wall work was planned for a kindergarten in 1989 but was no longer realized after the fall of the Wall. Now, thirty years later, this significant work, which depicts five children in geometric abstract form, will be on view for the first time. The installation heralds the comprehensive retrospective of the artist Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt entitled *Nichts Neues* at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam in early 2023. Born in Wurzen in 1932, the artist is considered a pioneer of Mail Art in the former GDR. Her work encompasses "typewritings," prints, collages, and painting. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Wolf-Rehfeldt ceased to work as an artist. In November 2022, her work will be distinguished with the Hannah Höch Prize of the State of Berlin.

With its large window façade and spacious forecourt, DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam like the former terrace restaurant, exudes openness. The Cafébar, terrace, and foyer are open to the public, regardless of whether they are visiting the exhibitions. "For many Potsdamers, the former terrace restaurant 'Minsk' is associated with many memories. Many of them fought for the preservation of the old 'Minsk' precisely for this reason, because it was to some extent also about the preservation of their own identity and that of the city. DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam wants to pick up exactly where it left off and establish itself as a place of encounter that goes beyond art. Here we will show, search, discuss, endure, and bring together as well as hopefully dancing and laughing again. I hope to spend time with, and for, each other," says Stefanie Plattner, the representative responsible for the DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam on behalf of the Hasso Plattner Foundation.

Inside the building there are reminiscences of the old "Minsk", such as the large spiral staircase and the rounded bar counter in the original location, with a new look: the

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interior design of the foyer and bar was realized by the architectural office Linearama from Genoa in collaboration with the Hedwig Bollhagen Werkstätten in Marwitz, Brandenburg.

Back in April 2021, Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi (born in 1961 in Sibiu) inaugurated the future exhibition walls of the DAS MINSK with his drawings, which were absorbed back into the building as construction work progressed. Now he has returned and continued his drawings in the lift and on the columns of the Cafébar for everyone to see.

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We would be happy to assist you if you need further information or images.

Further Information

DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam
Max-Planck-Straße 17
14473 Potsdam

www.dasminsk.de
Instagram: @dasminsk

OPENING HOURS

Daily except Tuesdays
Wednesday to Monday 10 am – 7 pm

ADMISSION

10 Euros, 8 Euros Concession

Natanja v. Stosch, Communication DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam
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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

Status: Potsdam, October 19, 2022

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PROGRAM

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WOLFGANG MATTHEUER

Der Nachbar, der will fliegen

STAN DOUGLAS

Potsdamer Schrebergärten

The exhibitions by Wolfgang Mattheuer (born in 1927, Reichenbach in Vogtland, died 2004, Leipzig) and Stan Douglas (born in 1960, Vancouver) in DAS MINSK, are devoted to the political theme of landscape—a subject that occupies a central role within the Hasso Plattner Collection, from Impressionism to the present day. With the simultaneous exhibitions of two artists from the collection, we investigate this theme through painting from the former GDR as well as photography and film, which reflect a time of upheaval in Potsdam some thirty years ago. It is about vast and confined nature, as well the city and industry in the tension between preservation and renewal. Both artists have repeatedly managed to connect the visible and the invisible, the seen and the thought, reality and fiction. Whether outside or in the studio, whether painted, photographed or filmed: in the exhibitions it is the *Schrebergarten* that becomes a microcosm and a reflection of sociopolitical conditions—then as now.

Wolfgang Mattheuer: Der Nachbar, der will fliegen

Der Nachbar, der will fliegen (The Neighbor Who Wants to Fly) is the title of a significant painting by Wolfgang Mattheuer from the collection of the Ludwig Museum, Budapest, and also the title of one of the two opening exhibitions at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam. This painting brings together a number of the exhibition's essential themes such as landscape, (*Schreber*-)gardens, environmental issues, and the mythological Icarus figure. The title's suggestion that the neighbor wants to fly leaves open where and what he will find beyond the horizon—an unresolved tension, which is evident in the exhibition.

Just as the mythological figure of Icarus sometimes embodies departure and the lust for adventure, and at times human pride and failure, Mattheuer's works are full of subtle contradiction. The artist reflected critically upon his time. How radical the statement "I... seek the contemporary, the problematic, the essential"¹ must have been in 1973, and can only be understood within the context of that time. However, it still constitutes the modernity of his art today.

The exhibition shows works from 1960 until 2000. Wolfgang Mattheuer repeatedly

¹ Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Äusserungen: Texte, Graphik* (Leipzig, 1990), p. 39.

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painted his immediate surroundings and his own garden, which was also a place where he produced his art. He often escaped from the confines of Leipzig, where he was based, to find refuge in the garden of his birthplace in Reichenbach (Vogtland) and the vast countryside. At times, his landscape painting seems to arise from visible reality, while other times it contains mythological elements.

Mattheuer paints what can be seen just outside his door, which also turns out to be "world landscapes" that convey his observations about a changing environment and society. They capture the immediate landscape yet go far beyond it. They have the quality of spatially and temporally detaching themselves from their geographical origin and claiming a sense of timelessness and universality. In a diary entry from 1984, the artist himself writes: "No one manages to make the entire world their home. But whoever understands their home as a piece of the world, can be a world citizen." (Wolfgang Mattheuer, October 3, 1984)

The exhibition assembles approximately 30 of the artist's works from the Hasso Plattner Collection and from private and institutional lenders.

Stan Douglas: Potsdamer Schrebergärten

Potsdamer Schrebergärten is the title of a photographic series by the artist Stan Douglas, as well as his exhibition at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam. Created in Potsdam at the beginning of the 90s, the series will be shown together with the film *Der Sandmann* (1995).

During his one-year residency with the DAAD in Berlin, Stan Douglas captured the city of Potsdam immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall in documentary form: Sacrow, the area around Sanssouci, and the Schlaatz housing estate. The series *Potsdamer Schrebergärten* (1994/95) captures moments of transition: an abandoned dacha, a former wall fence, gardens that have since disappeared; a "Trabbi" (an East German-produced car) parked before a *Kleingarten* site. This early series already reveals a theme that Stan Douglas also explores in his later photographs: how cities change over time and how history leaves its traces in the urban landscape, whether in Detroit or Vancouver or in Potsdam. After shooting the photographs in the *Schrebergärten*, which seem like a typological study, Douglas reconstructed the *Schrebergärten* in a film studio in Babelsberg to film them, so that the garden, even if recreated, becomes a site of artistic production.

The film *Der Sandmann* consists of a double projection and deals with a "doubled" garden—a *Kleingarten* at different points in German history, before and after the fall of the Wall. The protagonist Nathanael, a Black German from the former GDR, explains in a letter how a childhood experience in a Potsdam *Schrebergarten*

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catches up with him when he revisits the scene twenty years later, after reunification. *Der Sandmann* is a film about identity, between memory and repression, and is a film about the idea of Doppelgänger, particularly in German-German history.

Douglas's works are often about "local symptoms for global conditions."² The artist believes that the more specific one is, the more universal something becomes. He is interested in so-called minor histories. In many cases, these form the starting point from which he sketches other courses of history, thereby blurring the line between reality and fiction. His works do not so much provide answers as raise questions about history, with its contradictions and its blind spots.

That Douglas shot his film *Der Sandmann* in the former DEFA-Studios in Babelsberg, which have their own history of division, unification, and privatization, is only one of the many layers and references that come together in this exhibition. Ironically, the Vancouver artist brings the local reference. Both the film and the photographic series will now be presented in Potsdam for the first time, the place where they were created. Douglas delved deeply into local historical research, yet *Der Sandmann* and *Potsdamer Schrebergärten* are not only works about Potsdam and German reunification. They are works about unresolved moments in history, whose consequences remain palpable today.

Text: Paola Malavassi, Director DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam

Thanks to the lenders:

Brandenburgisches Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, private collections, Sammlung Fritz P. Mayer, Frankfurt am Main/Leipzig, Ursula Mattheuer-Neustädt und Wolfgang Mattheuer Stiftung, Stan Douglas, Victoria Miro and David Zwirner

² Stan Douglas, lecture, The Cooper Union: Public Arts Fund Talks, January 28, 2021.

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MEDIA PARTNERS

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Magazin für Kunst und Leben

ARTIST RESEARCH FELLOW

Karina Griffith, supported by the Canada Council of the Arts, is the current Artist Research Fellow at DAS MINSK in the framework of the Stan Douglas exhibition. For the catalogue accompanying the opening exhibitions, she spoke with the activist Joshua Kwesi Aikins about a *Schrebergarten* community in Berlin-Wedding, formerly named "Dauerkolonie Togo".

Karina Griffith's films and installations have been shown at international galleries and festivals, and she has curated film and transdisciplinary programs for the Goethe-Institut, Berlinale Forum & Forum Expanded, alpha nova and galerie futura, and VTape, among others. In 2021, she curated the first Black Reels Festival of German films with Black Art Action Berlin and is an active member of the Schwarze Filmschaffende Community.

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PAOLA MALAVASSI, DIRECTOR DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam

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 and Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf. 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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AUDIOSTORIES

What does a world view that enables an artist to make artwork sound like? What is the soundtrack of the time in which an artwork was created? And what kind of echo can an artwork elicit in the viewer? These and many other questions form the starting point of the AUDIOSTORIES by DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam.

The AUDIOSTORIES accompany DAS MINSK's exhibitions in unusual ways. This is because, in contrast to a classical audio guide, they are not based on descriptions of works, but rather the larger social contexts surrounding the exhibited works and their creation. The AUDIOSTORIES function in an associative and playful manner, are personal, and always well-researched. Whether directly in the exhibition or from your sofa, DAS MINSK's AUDIOSTORIES can be accessed on the museum's website and therefore can be listened to anywhere at any time.

The cultural journalist and documentary filmmaker Sylvie Kürsten produced the stories. She takes the audience on an inspiring tour that brings the past and present to mind in a fresh and unbiased way, celebrating the sociopolitical relevance of art. Accompanied by soundscapes by the Leipzig composer Fabian Russ and the voice of Knut Elstermann, a poly-vocal, multilayered, and at times cryptic approach to art is thus made possible.

Sylvie Kürsten, born 1979 in Berlin, is an independent cultural journalist and has worked as a documentary filmmaker since 2011. For the film *Venus auf Abwegen* from the 3sat-series *Kunst und Verbrechen*, she and her team received the 2016 Grimme-Preis. In 2020, she released *Kunst aus der DDR: Vom Westen gehasst, vom Westen geliebt*, a one-hour audio feature commissioned by the WDR. The cultural researcher also moderates from time to time and supports the initiative "Wir sind der Osten."

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INTERPLAY

INTERPLAY is an ongoing collection format of DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam. In each INTERPLAY, a work from the Hasso Plattner Collection encounters a work from another collection. Bringing the works together temporarily in the DAS MINSK Kabinett provides insights into the museum's own holdings and other collections. Sometimes INTERPLAY shows similarities, and sometimes differences between art and artists. This opens up new perspectives that can only arise in the space between works of art.

Good music is characterized by the perfect interplay between different instruments and voices. In jazz, musicians can get in each other's way and challenge bandmates. This is also the case in DAS MINSK's Kabinett, where two artworks encounter one another, not exclusively seeking harmony, but also confrontation. Just as in an interplay in jazz, an interaction occurs in which each side influences the other. Both work together and yet each is independent. Sometimes they attentively listen to one another, interrupt each other, or paraphrase one another. The interaction of the works creates a reciprocal effect that is transmitted into the exhibition space like the sound of a good piece of music.

INTERPLAY NO. 1: Willi Sitte & Monika Geilsdorf

In the first INTERPLAY at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam, two painted self-portraits meet: the *Self-Portrait with Paint Tube and Safety Helmet* (1984) by the artist Willi Sitte from the Hasso Plattner Collection and *Self-portrait* (1976) by the artist Monika Geilsdorf from the collection of the Brandenburgischen Landesmuseums für moderne Kunst (BLMK).

Self-portraits occupy a special position within portrait painting because they are simultaneously forms of both self-exploration and self-portrayal. In order to produce a self-portrait, the artist must rigorously observe themselves. They often use their own reflection as a model in these paintings, so they must be able to look themselves in the eyes. In any case, this intensive process can be arduous, both literally and metaphorically, but especially when the artist lives and works in a politically restrictive system, in which daily life as well as art demand particular existential decisions.

In a painted self-portrait, attention is given to every detail. These are artistic decisions, on a formal as well as on a personal and political level, which are consciously made by the artists in order to immortalize themselves in painterly form. The gaze or expression that the artist chooses for themselves is thereby just as decisive as the situation in which they present themselves, including the clothing and the attributes with which they are depicted.

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In the Kabinett of DAS MINSK the self-portraits are shown on opposite walls, so that the gazes of Monika Geilsdorf and Wille Sitte meet in the center of the exhibition space. Yet they are not only looking at each other, but also the visitors in the exhibition space.

The strong sense of tension between the self-portraits shown in the framework of INTERPLAY NO.1 begins with how they are painted. The style of both artists couldn't be more different: expressive brushstrokes with Sitte and precise objectivity and attention to detail with Geilsdorf.

While Monika Geilsdorf simply titles her work *Self-portrait*, Wille Sitte gives his painting the longer title *Self-Portrait with Paint Tube and Safety Helmet*. The artist thereby draws attention to two ostensibly decisive attributes for him: the paint tube and the hard hat. Painting implements such as a tube or brush are frequently found in self-portraits, but a hard hat? Sitte depicts himself as a painter, is naked and wearing a construction hard hat, a clear worker's symbol, or perhaps a metaphor of protection, whereby the easel also becomes a protective shield.

Monika Geilsdorf, on the other hand, does not present herself with a brush, but in her self-portrait instead holds a cigarette in her hand, the indispensable attribute of the moderns. The gesture is not new and recalls many a sophisticated self-portrait by Max Beckmann or Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler. And yet Monika Geilsdorf also gives a clear indication of her painterly identity: like Willi Sitte, she also integrates paint tubes in her self-portrait, placed on the wooden structure behind her. Her top resembles a jersey and shows her muscular shoulders, perhaps indications of her strength and agility. Her hairstyle and glasses are of a striking modernity. One almost gets the impression that the self-portrait is painted today, in 2022, not only because of the style but also because of the aesthetic and impression with which the artist shows herself: in everyday life, nonchalant, almost a bit noble with a defiant and self-assured gaze.

Monika Geilsdorf was a member of the Association of Visual Artists (VBK) of the former GDR. Her *Self-portrait* from 1976 was immediately presented in the VIII Art Exhibition of the GDR. In her 1978 publication commissioned by the Ministry for Culture and produced by the VBK on the occasion of the exhibition, the art historian Helga Möbius concludes that terms such as heroism, pathos, activism, and optimism could only be applied to a few paintings in the exhibition.¹ While the "efficacious, active, optimistic socialist persona" could still be found in "epochal images", the artists of the VIII Exhibi-

¹ Helga Möbius, "Menschenbild von heute und morgen", in Georg Kretschmann, ed., *Kunst im Dialog: Die VIII und die Öffentlichkeit* (East Berlin, 1978), pp. 93–97 (first published in *Bildende Kunst*, 1 [1978]).

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tion found a more realistic and contemporary means of expression. What is striking in these works is a new "sobriety, everydayness . . . that is no longer oriented toward outstanding individual personalities or special events, but rather toward the often difficult and stressful everyday life of the working people." Referring to the portraits on view, including the one by Monika Geilsdorf, Möbius says: "from their motionlessly still posture, firmly fixed in pictorial space, and their unassuming appearance, comes the impression of steadiness and reliability, of willingness and ability to take on and cope with burdens not only in a one-time feat of strength, but in the long run."² What from a contemporary view can be interpreted as a challenging view toward the system, almost rebellious, was thus interpreted by Möbius at the time as a sign of continued perseverance in the system. The subversive, modern, and everyday qualities of Geilsdorf's portraits were thereby inverted into a symbol of subordination.

After making statements critical of the system and attempting suicide twice in the early 1960s, the artist Willi Sitte experienced what criticism from above can lead to: "What a brilliant artist comrade Sitte could be if he consistently chose Socialist Realism,"³ was the unambiguous demand of Bernard Koenen, first secretary of the district manager of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) in Halle, in the newspaper *Neues Deutschland* in December 1962. In the following year, Sitte published a self-critical statement in the same paper. 1963 thereby turned out to be a decisive year for the artist's work. A change of heart took place, caused by the pressure exerted by a high-level party functionary as well as the Stasi. This experience would henceforth make an impact on his painting. Sitte's public commitment to the party was rewarded by a large exhibition in 1971 in Halle. In 1989, he said, "In the moment that art is autonomous, making itself independent of state and party, it withdraws from life, from people. I consider this very dangerous."⁴ This brings us back to the hard hat: Did a painting style that conformed to the system form the hard hat?

From a contemporary perspective, the hard hat could be understood as a subversive commentary within a political system that had, to some extent, forced the artist to publicly criticize himself. But can an artist considered a "party painter", such as Willi Sitte, who consistently held different official positions within the system, be subordinated?

"Arbeit am Ich" was the title of journalist Andreas Platthaus's review of Willi Sitte's

² Ibid., p. 93f.

³ Bernard Koenen, "Erfolg und Schwanken Bildender Künstler," in *Neues Deutschland*, December 19, 1962, p. 6.

⁴ Willi Sitte in Renate Luckner-Bien, "Bildende und angewandte Kunst" Gespräch mit Willi Sitte," in *Sittes Welt: Willi Sitte: Die Retrospektive*, Christian Philipsen, ed., exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle/Saale (Leipzig, 2021), p. 292.

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comprehensive retrospective in 2021 in Halle an der Salle, fifty years after his very first retrospective in the same city and 100 years after his birth. The *Self-Portrait with Paint Tube and Safety Helmet* from the Hasso Plattner Collection was also shown there. With regard to this comprehensive and meticulously researched exhibition, Plattenhaus states, "In this painter of German discord, the duplicity of our nation after 1945 is reflected. One looks and gazes in astonishment and learns."⁵

"Arbeit am Ich" is indeed central to the understanding of German-German history after 1945. This was a time in which the personal, political, and artistic were interwoven in an existential way. It is central for many of the exhibitions at DAS MINSK. Thus, the first INTERPLAY opens with self-portraits by two artists whose work could not be more different formally. But both chose the self-portrait, which likely reveals more about the artist's preoccupation with themselves and their surrounding society than any other genre.

"How much 'for' is necessary and how much 'against' is possible without breaking from the circumstances and betraying one's own roots?" This question, which was raised by the journalist and filmmaker Sylvie Kürsten in our first AUDIOSTORIES, leaves space for many different answers and perspectives, then and now. It's worth listening carefully to the responses of both artists in DAS MINSK because they not only tell us something about their own time, but also about the present, and they make palpable the fragility of artistic freedom, which is too often taken for granted.

Text: Paola Malavassi, director DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam

⁵ Andreas Platthaus, "Arbeit am Ich: Ein Leben wie gemalt für das zwanzigste Jahrhundert: Das Museum Moritzburg in Halle zeigt das Werk des umstrittenen DDR-Künstlers Willi Sitte," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 228, October 1, 2021, p. 9.

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RUTH WOLF-REHFELDT, *CAGY BEING (KÄFIGWESEN) 3, 1989/2022*

“Type your own art’ is my special invitation to people wanting to express themselves in an artistic mode for the purpose of becoming, living and altering facts more consciously.” (Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, from her text *Signs Fiction*)

The work *Cagy Being (Käfigwesen) 3* by Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt is installed in the MINSK’s stairway to the Brauhausberg. The large-scale wall work was planned for a kindergarten in 1989 but was not realized after the fall of the Wall. Now, thirty years later, this significant work, which depicts five children in geometric abstract form, is on view for the first time.

Already in early *Typewritings*, the artist visualized forms like “cubes,” “boxes,” and “cages” on paper with her typewriter through the use of punctuation, special characters, and letters. Interlocked, overlapping, and building on each other, numerous figurations with the title *Cagy Being (Käfigwesen)* were created from these character forms—autonomous, fictive (character)-beings. In the title, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt plays with the ambiguity of language. By combining “cage” and “being,” she detaches the words from their original meaning in a subversive and humorous way.

With the wall work *Cagy Being (Käfigwesen) 3*, now installed at DAS MINSK, the figurations are transferred from paper to the wall. The figures resist a simple interpretation. They are about closed and open spaces and systems and therefore how boundaries and limitations can be tested and overcome. The treatment of such topics requires taking a stance, then and today, and constitutes the contemporary relevance of Wolf-Rehfeldt’s work.

The installation heralds the comprehensive retrospective of the artist Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam in early 2023. Born in Wurzen in 1932, the artist is considered a pioneer of Mail Art in the former GDR. Her work encompasses *Typewritings*, prints, collages, and painting. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Wolf-Rehfeldt ceased to work as an artist. In November 2022, her work will be distinguished with the Hannah Höch Prize of the State of Berlin.

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DAN PERJOVSCHI

In April 2021, the Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi (*1961 in Sibiu) began to inaugurate the walls of the future exhibition spaces of DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam with his drawings. Amid construction noise and dust, he drew at DAS MINSK for an entire week on various surfaces of the building.

Perjovschi has worked with this medium since the early 1990s, enabling him to react spontaneously to his surroundings. His sketches, reduced to a striking line, are both humorous and critical, posing uncomfortable questions and exposing contradictions. His art opens up a space for complexity.

The title of Perjovschi's intervention at DAS MINSK is *For No One And Everyone. A Drawing Performance by Dan Perjovschi* referring to the specific environment of the construction site that was concealed from public view. As the construction work progressed, the drawings were reabsorbed by the building. They are inscribed in the masonry behind the exhibition walls but are hidden.

In summer 2022, Dan Perjovschi returns to DAS MINSK in order to continue his drawings in the elevator and the columns of the Cafébar under the title *The Elevator And Some Columns. In Situ Drawings by Dan Perjovschi*. For the first time, these will be visible to all on site.

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OLAF NICOLAI

MÉNAGE DE LA MAISON

OCTOBER 22 – NOVEMBER 7, 2022

The site-specific performance *Ménage de la maison* (House Cleaning) by artist Olaf Nicolai (*1962 in Halle/Saale) takes place at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam between October 22 and November 7, 2022, from Wednesday until Monday during lunchtime, between 12 and 1 pm.

On the premiere day, October 22, 2022, the performance takes place twice: at 11.30 am and at 12.30 pm.

It might seem irritating to subject a freshly renovated building to a house cleaning shortly after its opening, but this rhetoric is typical of Nicolai's way of working. The artist continually breaks with expectations and hasty observations. He questions the familiar and painstakingly examines the spaces in which his works are shown.

In *Ménage de la maison*, people sweep with a green plastic broom while speaking, humming, or singing. This activity can initially seem natural in the everyday operations of the exhibitions and café at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam, and perhaps therefore remain unnoticed. The performance, however, invites visitors and passersby to pause and more closely explore the meaning of what happens around them.

The green broom, which symbolizes house cleaning at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam, has already been used by the artist in earlier works. In 1998, Nicolai had a ten-by-ten-meter *Labyrinth* reconstructed from numerous green plastic brooms belonging to a Parisian cleaning department. The layout of this maze was based on a baroque garden design, which is, however, quite contemporary: the path to be covered referred to the principle of the maximum length of a limited surface, which is used today to design shopping centers, among other things. In its geometric form and artificial material, the hedge made of plastic brooms illustrates the fine line between the natural and the artificial in the urban context, which is also alluded to in *Ménage de la maison*. A house cleaning, just like a city cleaning, should restore a desired or hoped-for condition. The attempt to reach this state can lead to something being seen anew or something underlying, even repressed, being revealed again. In a figurative sense, an examination of present and past takes place during a house cleaning, whereby new encounters with places, events, and memories simultaneously arise. Both aspects are essential for DAS MINSK: "It is a new old place, which must find its identity between memory and the present," director Paola Malavassi says.

Ménage de la maison responds to the concurrent exhibitions by Wolfgang Mattheuer and Stan Douglas, which also examine human-designed environment and the urban

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landscape. While in Mattheuer and Douglas's exhibited works the (*Schreber*-)garden becomes a reflection of sociopolitical conditions, with Nicolai it is the everyday ritual of cleaning that offers the occasion to casually address social constructs and behavioral patterns.

Text: Marie Gerbaulet, Curator of the performance

Concept: Olaf Nicolai

Performers: Meike Droste, Thomas Rudnick

Curator of the performance: Marie Gerbaulet

Assistant Dramaturg: Sylvie Kürsten

Production Assistance: Alina Stoll

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HISTORY

COLLECTION AND FOUNDATION

ARCHITECTURE

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HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

The former terrace restaurant "Minsk" was built from 1971 to 1977 on Potsdam's Brauhausberg in the modernist style of the GDR according to a design by the architects Karl-Heinz Birkholz and Wolfgang Müller.

As early as 1962, the development of the Brauhausberg area was planned with a swimming hall and a restaurant, connected through a terrace complex with fountains. That the so-called Brauhausberg Ensemble would only be finished many years later is, on one hand, due to the fact that the rubble was not cleared from the area until 1967, and on the other hand due to financial shortages in the city of Potsdam's economic plan and difficulties procuring materials. The architect Karl-Heinz Birkholz reported in an interview¹ that the steel intended for the construction was used for the completion of the Palast der Republik in Berlin, among other projects. The swimming hall opened in 1971. However, it was to take another six years before construction was finished on the restaurant. In 1977, the terrace restaurant "Minsk" was finally completed with the participation of Minsk artists and architects as a Belarusian folklore restaurant. Conversely, the city of Minsk had already opened the restaurant "Potsdam" in 1971. The naming partnership is based on the exchange between the two cities that began in 1968.²

During GDR, the "Minsk" was a popular place of recreation and excursion destination. The restaurant was a place where guests came together, talked, celebrated, and danced. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the restaurant's closure in the mid-90s, the building was increasingly neglected, and the ruin ultimately seemed doomed for demolition. It was the citizens of Potsdam who actively helped to prevent the demolition plans. In 2019, the Hasso Plattner Foundation purchased the building to refurbish it and make it accessible to the public once more. The old "Minsk" thus became DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam.

Inside the building, reminiscences of the old "Minsk" can be found, such as the large spiral staircase and the rounded bar counter, but with a new look: the interior design of the foyer and bar was realized by the architectural office Linearama from Genoa in collaboration with the Hedwig Bollhagen Werkstätten in Markwitz, Brandenburg.

¹ See Jörg Fröhlich and Luise Fröhlich, *Das Potsdamer Terrassenrestaurant "Minsk" und der Brauhausberg im Wandel der Zeit (1970–2015)* (Norderstedt 2015), p. 59.

² See Thomas Wernicke, "Minsk – Potsdam. Zwei Städte, zwei Restaurants und die 'deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaft'", in: *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Kultur und Geschichte Potsdams*, 23, ed. by the Vorstand der Studiengemeinschaft Sanssouci e. V. (Potsdam 2018) pp. 7–32, here pp. 9–28.

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COLLECTION AND FOUNDATION

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 Matheuer, 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

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.

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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

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QUOTES ON THE ARCHITECTURE

Karl-Heinz Birkholz

Architect Terrassenrestaurant "Minsk"

"Good architecture can already be discerned in a sketch through convincing relationships between the planned structure and the selected location. Potsdam's urban landscape is rich in fine examples of this tendency through the activities of many architects and master builders—and their primarily royal patrons. In the case of Minsk, the architectural quality achieved was rediscovered belatedly and often only by looking at it from the outside.

Originally planned over 50 years ago as a part of an urban ensemble at the foot of the Brauhausberg, it enjoyed great popularity as the terrace restaurant Minsk with an unobstructed view of the city center. Thankfully, Potsdam's citizens and civic associations took a strong stand against the threatened demolition and plans for a massive densification of buildings.

The tides literally turned at the last minute for everyone involved. Hasso Plattner's private vision, combined with a realigned urban policy, enabled the surprising gift of reclaiming part of Brauhausberg. His appreciation of Minsk's compelling charisma as a solitary structure on a green slope returns the familiar view, along with its fountains, to the urban community—now in a new, elegant guise as DAS MINSK Kunsthau in Potsdam."

Dr. Alexander Gyalokay, Heinle Wischer Gesellschaft für Generalplanung mbH

Planning and execution renovation

"On Brauhausberg in Potsdam, the revitalization of the former terrace restaurant "Minsk" as a museum creates not only an outstanding new venue for art, but rather overhauls the suburb of the southern station and offers a new space for its residents. The path up to the museum is via a promenade accompanied by four fountains, an apt approximation of the historical model. The building's conversion was carried out in accordance to the early design and overall shows a strong connection to classical modernism."

LINEARAMA and VALTER SCELSI

Interior Design: Foyer and Cafébar

"In developing the interior design for the iconic entrance area and the Cafébar at DAS MINSK Kunsthau in Potsdam, the point of departure was aiming to acknowl-

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edge and honor the history of the space, starting from the present. Through following all the historical traces we could find and interlacing them with the given parameters, we started becoming more acquainted with the 20th-century aesthetics of the space and the work of the iconic GDR ceramist Hedwig Bollhagen, who was introduced to us by DAS MINSK. By working with her handmade tiles, reproduced for the occasion by her own factory in Brandenburg, we saw and felt the memories of the place resurface, respectfully accentuated and recomposing the images of a past that is still close at hand."