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Outline:

An intercultural comparison of art in the public sphere

The participants in this project have adopted the approach of “**research-based art**” to examine the possibilities and perspectives of researching, revitalizing or making artistic interventions in the public sphere.

Various contemporary processes of communication and research employed by artists in their inquiry into specific urban spaces are analyzed in relation to different urban cultural contexts. The resultant comparative study of the question of art in the public sphere is intended to gauge the conditions that determine artistic interventions in the public sphere in the various participating regions in Europe and its neighbouring countries.

Here, the “public sphere” is taken not merely in the sense of three-dimensional physical space but also in terms of social, economic and cultural contexts, and encompasses unoccupied, inactive space, virtual space, temporal space and institutional space. The conceptual focus of the areas of exploratory artistic research will target:

- a) the city as a **space of cultural memory**, which is inscribed with traces of reconstructed, discovered and more or less significant events. These events offer narrative material or are the basis of mystification; they are deciphered, rendered perceptible and visible.
- b) the **space of cultural interaction**, where as a result of dialogue-based artistic interventions the public sphere is stimulated, appropriated or is (can be) made a site of identification.

Contributions to this international cooperation are provided by art academies and organizations in **Beirut, Belfast, Istanbul, Kiel, Lisbon and Ramallah**. The participating institutions accompany the project with their own discourse relevant to existing and freshly generated regional concepts for art in the public sphere, creating the potential required for the intended international comparison.

In addition, ten artists are granted residencies in the above-named locations lasting several weeks, enabling them to apply the **thematic approach of “research-based art” in their explorations of specific cultural urban spaces**. The concrete material collected during these residencies will be discussed and reviewed in an on-going exchange at three meetings due to be held in Istanbul, Beirut and Belfast. The results will be presented in a variety of formats and funded by grants from the Anna Lindh Foundation and the EU Culture Programme 2007.

A concluding **publication** under the aegis of the Muthesius Academy of Fine Arts will summarize the experiences gained in the different places and outline current theoretical thinking on this subject. The ensuing comparative assessment not only offers an overview of contemporary concepts and varying forms of critical response, but also allows these observations to be relativized according to different cultural conditions. This sheds light on the plethora of current artistic activities in public urban contexts and helps to further greater understanding of the respective cultural differences.

Also planned for 2011 is the presentation of some of the artists’ projects in a series of **exhibitions** due to be held in Lisbon (Lumière Cité, Alta Lisboa) or during a conference of the Heinrich Boell Foundation in Berlin on the theme of “art for social transformation”.



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