

OUR HAUS - 10 YEARS

by Andreas Stadler, Director

On the occasion of its tenth anniversary, the Austrian Cultural Forum New York presents a special exhibition that is crucially inspired by the unique architecture of the building. The show is dedicated to ten artists and collectives who offer a very subjective survey of transcultural creativity between Austria and the United States of America.

Already in 2002, the imaginative design contrasting the usual profit-oriented glass boxes in its vicinity, attracted worldwide attention. The building, designed by Raimund Abraham, became an attraction to architecture and design tourists from all over the globe. Since 2009, *Wallpaper City Guide New York* has the Austrian Cultural Forum listed as one of the city's five landmarks; a book about New York architecture, edited by John Hill and published in 2011, sports a photograph of Abraham's masterpiece on the cover.

Going far beyond the scope of its compact, five-story gallery, the 80-seat concert space, and the library with its ten thousand books, the cultural program itself has gained widespread attention in the media, predominantly its selection of fine arts, 20th century and contemporary music, and literature.

The New York Times, for instance, frequently raves about our exhibitions which have focused on topics such as the death penalty (*Under Pain of Death*), arts and mass sports (*Bread and Soccer*), and digital surveillance and language control (*NineteenEightyFour*). The latter was named "Best in Show" by *The Village Voice*. The 2012 exhibition, *It's the Political Economy, Stupid*, received the same accolade.

The Austrian Cultural Forum New York has also acquired an outstanding reputation in the world of contemporary music. Past highlights include a performance of Georg Friedrich Haas' "In Vain," named one of the best concerts of the year 2009 by both *The New York Times* and *Time Out*, which also received a laudatory review from Alex Ross in *The New Yorker*. In 2011, *Artforum* named our Olga Neuwirth composer's portrait concert with Talea Ensemble as one of the year's best.

It is, without doubt, thanks to our consistent contemporary program that the Austrian Cultural Forum New York has become a model institution for many other, smaller, European countries. Cultural delegations from various nations have visited our building to get inspiration for their own representational duties. When the *New York Times'* Larry Rohter picked up my quote, "Culture is a basic need," in a March 2012 article about European cultural politics, this was an honor and a distinction not only for the Forum itself, but also for its cultural programming.

Austria has truly erected an artistic lighthouse in this metropolis of creativity and communication – a signal that Austria will neither rest on its past laurels, nor on those of its cuisine or its landscapes. We took a brave step with an international architecture competition in 1992 that selected theoretician, MoMA-artist, and teacher Raimund Abraham from a group of 226 competitors. His vision provided the blueprint for the Forum's future cultural and intellectual programming. Bold and radically opposed to stereotypical representations, the Forum not only changed Americans' image of Austria, but also - and maybe even more importantly - helped change the cultural self-image of Austrians.

In the past ten years, the gallery has shown approximately 40 exhibitions, which have provided a stepping stone to hundreds of predominantly Austrian artists in the visual, architecture, photography, multi-media, and performance arts. Off the beaten track of the art market's commercial compulsions and the institutional corsets of museums, the Austrian Cultural Forum developed a rehearsal stage for first-class innovation in aesthetics and content.

The Austrian Cultural Forum is a political location for art. An agency of the Austrian Ministry of European and International Affairs, and financed by Austrian tax payers, it attempts to push the envelope and cross borders between foreign policy and cultural policy, between Austria and the United States, and between Europe and the world. It neither subscribes to an official language regime, nor does it have the freedoms of a university. It presents Austrian artists and intellectuals abroad – people who do not necessarily represent Austria or even want anything to do with Austria. As part of the Austrian cultural and intellectual field, the Austrian Cultural Forum offers a sense of homeland, but also has its requirements within its and scope and mission. No matter how subversive, every artist accepts this scope and becomes a representative of a country which has learned to appreciate creativity and contradiction as both a democratic and aesthetic achievement.

Raimund Abraham has expressed this dilemma with his language of forms. A slim 23 feet across, twenty stories, state-of-the-art technology, and a cascade-like, slanting façade, which the architect once famously compared to a guillotine – all of these qualities demand culmination and condensation. Every part of programming has to adjust to this: No mediocrity, consensus, or adaptation feel welcome in this structure.

At the same time, the building's architecture is not an end in itself. Thus, it is always used by new creative forces, challenging and engaging it on their way to the United States. In short: they see it as "Our Haus."

- New York, April 2012

OUR HAUS | MAY 17 - AUG 26, 2012 | Open Daily 10AM - 6PM

Artists: SABINE BITTER/HELMUT WEBER, JUDITH FEGERL, RAINER GANAHL, MATTHIAS HERRMANN, JOHANNA KANDL, MATHIAS KESSLER, FABIAN PATZAK, RAINER PROHASKA, TIME'S UP, WOCHENKLAUSUR

Curator Amanda McDonald Crowley

Exhibition Coordinator Natascha Boojar

Curatorial Assistants Hephzibah Druml (New York), Hannah Menne (Vienna)

Exhibition Assistants Mandana Hambrusch, Sara Oran, Ines Raub, Antonia Zippermayr

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