

## Critical Troublemakers

### *The Artist As Troublemaker*

Austrian Cultural Forum New York  
11 East 52nd Street, New York, NY 10022  
December 10, 2008 - April 3, 2009



The Austrian Cultural Forum is a beautiful skinny sliver of a contemporary art building in midtown Manhattan. Its fluid floors include an exhibition space, a performance venue (mostly free programs), a massive library on Austrian art and culture, offices, and a penthouse for the Director. Its current show is, but for one exception, not about artists gone wild, as the title may suggest, but in fact of artists providing institutional critique by creating ideal museum spaces that questioned social, educational, and historical constructs.

The show highlights various projects in which the artist's actions change public space, incorporating both the practical and utopic. In 2008, Austrian Dorit Margreiter created *European Kunsthalle c/o Ebertplatz*, designing the plaza outside of the exhibition space. As a shared, transitory and intermediately space, Margreiter designed accommodating, 'open source' architecture that blended the openness of the Kunsthalle inside with the vast outdoors, connecting it to everyday life. *Documentation for Delphine*, created in 1999 by American artist Diane Thater, shows the multimedia site-specific artwork designed for large Kunsthalle spaces. Video projections of dolphins made for a transformative experience for the jaded art visitor.

Artists who want viewers from outside the art world place their work in unusual sites. Martin Kippenberger's *Momas* (1994-96), a mythological museum on the Greek island Syros, was a utopian space for him and his artist friends to create works outside the boundaries of the collective art world. Israeli artists Clegg & Guttman's situated their work *Sha'at'nez*, a "displaced library," outside of the Freud Museum in Vienna. It was a "place to sharpen awareness, and a storeroom for working materials," a social sculpture that highlighted the role of the reader/participant within volumes of ideas and information.

The exhibition also features a photo gallery of Austrian Gunter Brus' 1960s sadomasochistic art performances. His self-mutilations became quintessential theater for Viennese Actionism. *The Artist As Troublemaker* optimistically shows institutions trusting artists to do what they do best -- reimagining society.



Images: Dorit Margreiter, *European Kunsthalle c/o Ebertplatz* (2008); Diane Thater, *Documentation for Delphine* (1999).  
Courtesy Austrian Cultural Forum.

Posted by [Alison Levy](#) on 1/11