

Press release: Conclusion

WUNDER DER PRÄRIE 2015
International Festival for Performance-Art & Networking
18.-26. September 2015 in Mannheim

In its ninth edition, the WUNDER DER PRÄRIE festival came to an end last Saturday with a grand finale. During a total of nine days we have tested, experienced, discussed and assumed what “alien” is, together with artists and visitors in different places in Mannheim. WUNDER DER PRÄRIE came into being by the kind patronage of BASF SE, the Hector-Foundation, the City of Mannheim as well as the INTPA-*INTERNATIONAL NET FOR DANCE AND PERFORMANCE AUSTRIA of the Tanzquartier Wien, funded by the FCA and the FMEIFA.*

We have had a total of 39 events with 14 projects on nine days, among them 5 festival productions, 2 premières and 3 German premières. With a 96% utilization of available seats during the performances and evening events we draw a positive balance. This year’s “Wunder” was a huge success, tying in with that of previous editions. The festival was avidly followed by experts: theatre managers, curators, dramaturgs and festival managers from places such as Munich, Bremen, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Strasburg, Berlin, Basel and Vienna sought their way to Mannheim and left the city with all expectations met.

The broad and diversified festival program offered a variety of platforms. “Angela Loij” by Juan Gabriel Harcha and AL13FBx3 by Fernando Belfiore represented the realm of dance performances. Otmar Wagner’s essay performance “Zaster und Zombies” covered the conceptual space between these performances and the (performative) installations of several days’ duration. These were “training. Stage for inclusive humanism” by hoelb/hoeb, “some democratic fictions” within the context of “catastrophic paradise” (Claudia Bosse & theatercombinat) and “Zakopane” by F.Wiesel, inspired by Stanislaw Lem’s novel “Solaris”.

The discursive frame was provided by the TABLE TALKS in different public spaces in the city of Mannheim, in addition to two lectures (“Every person is unequal in front of the law” on the fundamental rights of foreign immigrants in FRG and “Identities-in-difference” on mechanisms to distinguish the own identity from the alien). Bernd Mand discussed together with invited guests and visitors about topics such as “intimacy”, inclusion, tradition and custom, animal ethics and paradise on a greenfield site in the Lindenhof borough, in a parking lot close to the S4 block, at the “Alte Feuerwache” or in the yard of zeitraumexit. The table talks not only offered a platform to discuss a certain topic but also a chance to interact with the artists at the festival. Our aim was to choose a different path for the festival, and to get in touch with other people e.g. through our table talks in different place of the city. We have succeeded in presenting and discussing current state of art and important political and social questions in the urban area.” (Gabriele Oßwald, Head of festival).

Additionally, the URBAN TRY OUTS by “catastrophic paradise” led to direct interaction between artists and visitors, taking place like the cafeteria of the Richard Böttger retirement home (Lindenhof), the Quartiersplatz and the Muckibude gym, both in the

Junbusch borough. With these public rehearsals of fragments of the work, artist Claudia Bosse sought to create a tension between the world of theater and the real one.

Special highlights of the festival were three Austrian productions. With the performance “catastrophic paradise” by Claudia Bosse and theatercombinat, the festival direction have brought an artist of international reputation to Mannheim. She achieved her goal of connecting her performative and installation work with various places and people of the city, leading to a public discussion that will last long after. The dance performance “Sons of Sissy” fired the audience’s enthusiasm on two evenings with an exaggerated representation of German-Austrian folk music and Alpine customs and dances. The four dancers tenderly questioned and broke the inherent conservative-nationalist and gender-dividing phenomenons. Both the audience and the press were equally enthusiastic about “ravemachine”. In it, Doris Uhlich and the spastically disabled dancer and choreographer Michael Turinsky offered a bodily spectacle amidst booming techno beats, in which the disabled body remained superior to the healthy one - to the point of ecstasy.

The festival directors Gabriele Osswald, Wolfgang Sautermeister and Tilo Schwarz look back, together with a team of 30 volunteer helpers, to a successful festival. In its ninth edition, it nonetheless turned out to be a pilot project: the exploration of new festival structures, entering the city, the examples of different locations and the interaction with citizens shall be developed in upcoming editions of “Wunder”. “This can be our contribution to a vibrant and versatile city. We want to thank the artists that face these challenges and we are very glad about an audience willing to go all the way with us and the artists”
(Gabriele Osswald)