

ARTSPACE
1 October – 27 November 2005

GERMANY



Image: Simone Mangos *Ferrying* 1999

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ARTSPACE

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The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery is pleased to present *Artspace Germany*, a survey of fourteen international artists who have lived and worked in Germany since the 70s onwards. Transcending media and generations, this exhibition presents works by Armando, Tony Cragg, Marianné Eigenheer, Ayşe Erkmen, Christine Hill, Magdalena Jetelová, Per Kirkeby, Joseph Kosuth, Marie-Jo Lafontaine, Simone Mangos, Nam June Paik, Giuseppe Spagnulo, Wawrzyniec Tokarski, herman de vries.

While a nation seeks to define its cultural specificity, art wishes to be international. Contemporary art can no longer be regarded regionally or nationally due to the transience of artists across the globe. While in the 50s many Germans moved to Paris or to New York after the 70s, a current of migrant artists chose Germany as the centre for their life and work, shaping the artistic life of this country. As in the period between 1918 and 1933, when the arts flourished in Germany as a flow of international artists moved in enlivening its artistic scene, Germany regained its magnetic pull offering new opportunities to artists.

Modern art until 1945 may have been regarded as uniquely Western or European however, migrant artists triggered many of its manifestations. Wassily Kandinsky or El Lissitzky introduced their fellow German artists to the Russian avant-garde and were responsible for its intellectual effects and formal innovations. Early 20th century Expressionism or Cubism would be inconceivable without the influence of African and Oceanic art. Paris remained the artistic centre from Impressionism onwards until WWII. The war deprived Europe of its intellectual and artistic life and many artists emigrated to the United States of America (USA), key figures such as Josef Albers, André Breton, Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, Hans Hoffman, Ferdinand Léger, Piet Mondrian, László Moholy-Nagy and Yves Tanguy. The avant-garde discourse in Modern art started to move away from Europe. The artistic isolation felt in the New World pre-WWII tilted the other way, turning New York into the new international hub for art and intellectual thought, at first alongside Paris, since some artists remained there, but by the 60s indisputably becoming the world artistic capital. Pop Art, for example, was a movement that entirely originated in the USA.

Meanwhile, in post-war Germany there was a desire to rehabilitate Modern art after it had been banned under National Socialist policy. While some artists wanted to pick up the lost scene, others tried to catch up with the contemporary artistic trends in Europe. They saw abstract art – USA's Abstract Expressionism and France's Art Informel – as the artistic international language of freedom and democracy, embracing the Modernist notion of the autonomy of artistic practice and non-representational art as a rejection of nationally driven traditions. Germany's new cultural policy embraced these trends, reflecting a reborn confidence in the expression of a democratic new way of life through the arts. Initiatives such as the creation of Documenta in 1955 are exemplary of Germany's struggle to gain the world recognition as an artistic and free Western country. It welcomed the migration of artists and artistic influences. French artist Yves Klein's first exhibition



Tony Cragg *Flotsam* 1997

in Düsseldorf in 1957 or Piero Manzoni's visit in 1959 had determinant impact in the development of the ZERO movement in Germany, founded by Otto Piene together with Heinz Mack and Günther Uecker as reaction to Art Informel and Abstract Expressionism and characterised by its reduced and controlled style. One of the best examples of the rapid internationalisation of the arts in Germany was the Fluxus movement. Even though the first Fluxus activities initiated in the USA during early 60s in the context of the anti-war movements and under the legacy of Marcel Duchamp, Fluxus soon spread to Germany where it gained momentum. Under the influence of John Cage, George Maciunas one of Fluxus main protagonists, started the 1st Fluxus concert in Wiesbaden that set the movement off and attracted others such as Nam June Paik who became one of its most important exponents.

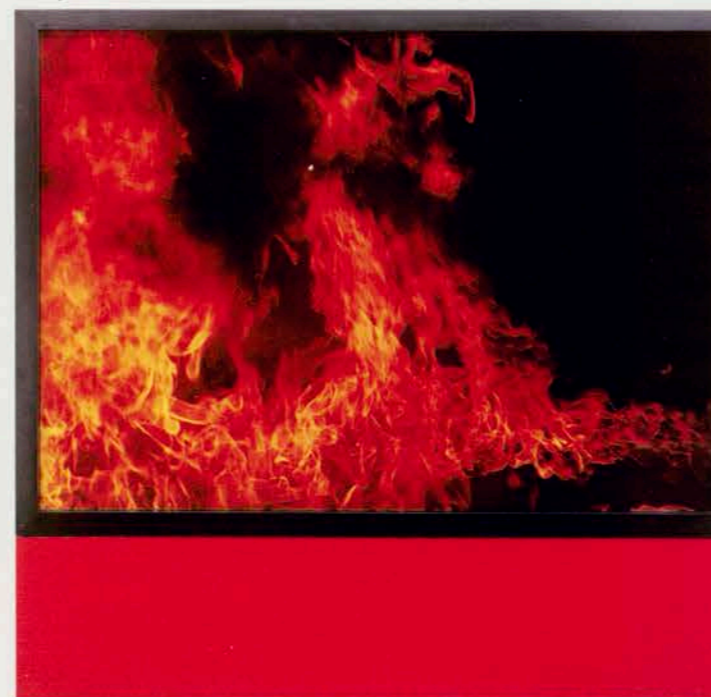
Since the 70s, Germany's pluralist art system allowed the development of the artistic practices of key national and international figures such as Joseph Beuys, Jannis Kounellis, Georg Baselitz, Luciano Fabro, Markus Lupertz, Jörg Immendorff, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter and Per Kirkeby. International artists were drawn to the rich discourse of German academies and the work opportunities offered by them. Many came from the USA or Europe with scholarships through the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) including Edward Kienholz and



Joseph Kosuth *One and three pans* 1965



Nam June Paik *Candle TV* 1975



Marie-Jo Lafontaine *Bateau de feu* 1996

Armando. West Berlin became a city for experimentation since it was cut off from the art market held in Cologne and offered more empty studios for artists than elsewhere in Germany. Other cities attracted artists as well, like Bonn the capital, Düsseldorf and Cologne with its network of art dealers and private collectors. Düsseldorf Academy was also influential in welcoming artists who came to study or were offered teaching positions. Joseph Kosuth, after exhibiting regularly in Germany since the 60s, taught in Hamburg and Stuttgart during the late 80s and early 90s. His conceptual art had a tremendous impact on his students, among them Wawrzyniec Tokarski, and the cities became central to collections and exhibitions of his work. Likewise many of the other artists in this exhibition – Tony Cragg, Marianne Eigenheer, Magdalena Jetelová, Per Kirkeby, Marie-Jo Lafontaine, and Giuseppe Spagnulo – left their imprint through their teaching.

Globalisation does not erase regional and national difference, as predicted a long time ago, but sharpens our awareness and sense of their idiosyncratic qualities. Structural globalisation and cultural fragmentation are taking place simultaneously. In today's pluralistic society it is precisely the 'non identical' that creates identity today; the specific experience that makes a person different from others. As Bassan Tibi identifies, "Globalisation has created a 'global village', but not a world culture". This survey is exemplary for it presents a group of artists who have chosen to live in Germany bringing views, knowledge and stimuli and it stands for artistic diversity in trans-cultural unity.

Artspace Germany lecture series:

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in association with the Goethe Institut presents a series of lectures by artist Simone Mangos. Born in Sydney, Mangos has been working in Berlin since 1988. At a time where Eisenman's Holocaust Memorial in Berlin has taken its definitive shape, Mangos questions the historical sense and sensibility of a culture that still appears to be highly uneasy about the predicament of its own history.

Wednesday 28 September 6.00pm

10AO2 Lecture theatre in the old museum building
Massey University, Wellington

Monday 3 October 6.00pm

Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland
Main entrance, ground floor, building 431

Opening weekend special event:

Sunday 2 October 2.00pm: Exhibition tour

Join Gallery staff and *Artspace Germany* artists for a tour of the exhibition.

Sunday specials:

Sunday 9 October 2.00pm: Talk on Nam June Paik

Peter Wareing, independent film and video artist from New York discusses the work of Nam June Paik in the exhibition *Artspace Germany*.

Sunday 30 October 2.00pm: National Children's Day

Explore the *Artspace Germany* exhibition with Chris Barry through a lively and interactive art trail suitable for all ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Sunday 6 November 2.00pm: Talk on Joseph Kosuth

Tina Barton, Senior Lecturer in Art History at Victoria University of Wellington discusses the work of highly acclaimed conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth whose work is included in *Artspace Germany*.

Sunday 13 November 2.00pm: Talk on Christine Hill

Curator of contemporary art, Mercedes Vicente talks about the work of Christine Hill in the exhibition *Artspace Germany*.