

# Ludwig Forum

für Internationale Kunst  
Aachen



Renato Guttuso, *Maggio 1968 - Giornale Murale* [Mai 1968 - Wandzeitung], 1968, Öl auf Karton und Leinwand, 280 x 480 cm, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, © VG Bildkunst, Bonn 2017, Foto: Carl Brunn.

## Press release

## Flashes of the Future The Art of the '68ers or The Power of the Powerless April 20 to August 19 2018

Opening, Thursday April 19 2018, 7 pm

**Patron of the exhibition:** Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier

February 1, 1968 – with a shot to the head from pointblank range the police chief of Saigon executes a Vietcong in front of reporters. The photograph goes around the world. It becomes one of the most striking icons of the twentieth century. And other images from the year 1968 also leave

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an indelible mark – tanks rolling in to quell the Prague Spring, students hurling stones during the May riots in Paris, children emaciated down to the bone in Biafra, the arson attack on a department store in Frankfurt, the murder of Martin Luther King, and the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke. 1968 was the year that the political upheavals, radical social transformations, and the protest movements of the postwar years all came to a head.

What kind of images did artists use to respond to these media images of violence and upheaval? Could traditional forms of art even give adequate responses? Which artistic strategies and means were employed in the revolt against authoritarian structures and the Nazi generation? How did artists stand up to the “ugly face of capitalism”, how did they engage the prude sexual morality and the rigid gender roles?

These are the questions explored by the exhibition *Flashes of the Future. The Art of the 68 Generation or the Power of the Powerless*, to be shown at the Ludwig Forum for International Art in Aachen from April 20 to August 19, 2018. The exhibition is generously supported by the NRW-Ministerium für Kultur und Wissenschaft, the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation, the Kulturstiftung der Länder and the Landschaftsverband Rheinland. Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier is the patron.

### **If it helps establish the truth...**

For the first time, the ideas, the campaigns and actions, the myths, and the self-interpretations of a generation are to be shown and analyzed through the mirror of its artistic production and practice. Here the aim is to trace the origins of the spirit animating the various forms of action performances and artistic languages of the time – and to show the inestimable worth they still possess today. In 2018, with the distance of half century, a comprehensive, transdisciplinary exploration of a key year (decade) of the twentieth century is to be undertaken, pursuing the overarching goal of offering a new and critical view of the years around 1968, but also motivated by the aspiration to identify parallels to the contemporary challenges facing society and discuss possible solutions in discursive forums. Taking as a starting point key works from the Ludwig Collection, which has its – legendary in its reputation – focal point in American Pop Art, thematic clusters will bring together a diverse range of issues and themes, from the Vietnam War through to the iconography of the student movement and performance/action art. Artists such as Lutz Dammbeck, Axel Heil and Rudolf Herz will offer retrospective commentaries on 1968.

At least at the beginning artists and students rose up together as individuals against the entrenched power structures. The powerless took on the powerful, took on the state and its power apparatus. They refused to be intimidated by the police (“the afternoon stroll demonstration”) or the courts (Fritz Teufel: “if it helps establish the truth...”). A thesis presented by the exhibition: only through the interaction between students, intellectuals, and artists could a cultural revolution unfold and gather pace that was capable of rupturing the authoritarian structures. Above all artists, declaring the artwork to be obsolete while in part working massively against the art market and a

commercially utilizable commodity 'art', contributed significantly to the desires and the imaginative visions of the student movement finding expression in provocative and pithy signs and images, enabling them to exert power over reality ("all power to the imagination!").

### **From the Beatniks via the Situationists to Beuys**

It all began in September 1964 with the Free Speech Movement on the campus of the University of California in Berkeley. There the nonviolent forms of direct action were first put into practice, the teach-in, sit-in, and go-in, and they gained the support of key beat generation figures such as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti with his legendary City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco. In 1957 they had gone to Paris, where the Beat Hotel in rue Gît-le-Coeur 9 became their headquarters. In Paris they met the happening artist and activist Jean-Jacques Lebel, who translated their texts into French and from whom the main title for the exhibition is taken.

In Europe, the initial surge came from the Independent Group around Lawrence Alloway, Richard Hamilton, and Eduardo Paolozzi. In the mid-1950s they set up an exhibition and discussion room at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in London where leftist artists, writers, and academics developed new ideas for interdisciplinary research and analyzing society. They formed the nucleus of British Pop Art. Their counterparts on the continent were the activists, artists, and intellectuals of the Situationist International, who since 1957 had sought a practicable dissolution of the separation between art and life.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock, and Wolf Vostell began to supplant the traditional artwork with a performative program that was half theatre, half teach-in. They planned their performances aware that art can only change and expand the scope of reality indirectly, via the circuitous route of thought and the perception of the viewer.

### **What remains...**

The year 1968 marks the highpoint of the artistic and political utopias of an extraordinarily productive period, one characterized by an art at once playful and activist which, moving away from being an end in itself (l'art pour l'art), sought to act as a medium for creating new, liberating situations within the prevailing conditions. At the same time however, the year 1968 also heralded the downfall of the utopia.

On August 21 1968, hopes for establishing democratic socialism were crushed when Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia and entered Prague. In the West, the movement, having started out by targeting and violating rules and conventions in a mixture of Dadaist provocation and political demonstration, was ossifying into cadre parties and ended in the terrorism of the RAF. The subversive actions carried out on streets and squares (Dieter Kunzelmann, "micro-rebellions") turned into hostility towards every form of artistic practice during 1968. In the eyes of the radical leftist students and their theorists, the neo avant-garde artist groups, including even the

Situationists, were now traitors, exponents of petit-bourgeois ideologies. One prime example of this shift was the violent prevention of the Fluxus concert I'll try to set (make) you free by Joseph Beuys and Henning Christiansen on February 28 1969 in the West Berlin Academy of the Arts, when West Berlin art students rebelled against what they alleged was the "asocial" idea of art expounded by the Fluxus artists.

In retrospect, the initially unified but later splintered movement of the powerless was ultimately successful on a number of fronts: the United States was eventually forced to withdraw from Vietnam in 1975, de Gaulle lost the 1969 referendum and resigned, societies became more liberal, laws on the 'procuring of women' were finally abolished, homosexuality is no longer a criminal offence, and ecological awareness is now firmly established and has been absorbed into the programs of political parties capable of governing.

As soft water eventually vanquishes hard stone, so in the mid-term the antiauthoritarian youth movement, aided and supported by artists, vanquished and eroded the authoritarian structures of state and society. They developed and made possible a multifaceted culture of discussion contra staid – and allegedly without alternative – official power politics.

Adopting a flexible approach in the field of tension marked by the poles of historical progress and current revisionist aspirations, Flashes of the Future is also seeking to make a political statement. Today, the populist 'Alternative for Germany' for instance is looking to rollback all the liberalizing and grassroots democratic achievements of the '68 generation, and the exhibition takes a stand contra such tendencies. And furthermore, besides engaging with recent art history, the exhibition is looking to foster a new jouissance for discourse and to raise awareness of socio-political interrelationships and developments – using the means of art and a diverse, in part participatory education and event program.

### **The structure and works of the exhibition**

Another starting point for the exhibition is the collection of Peter and Irene Ludwig, which has American Pop Art as its legendary focal point. Parallel to establishing a market for contemporary art (one of the first trade fairs featuring current art took place in Cologne in 1967), this section of the collection was greatly enlarged and art acquired on an extensive scale. In 1968 the contemporary art of Peter and Irene Ludwig was presented to the public for the first time in Aachen's Suermondt-Ludwig Museum. Selected major works from the collection will be shown in the main hall of the Ludwig Forum, forming the nucleus of the show from which the multifaceted thematic spectrum will then be elaborated in the adjacent rooms.

This structure includes clusters dedicated to specific themes and issues, for example American artists and the Vietnam War, or body art, happenings, and performance art. The iconography of the student movement is to be presented and discussed, as are the critique of consumerism, the end

of the subject and the death of the author, as envisioned and put into practice in the works by Bazon Brock, Gustav Metzger, Yoko Ono, Richard Hamilton, Heimrad Prem and Louise Bourgeois.

To anchor the horizon of contemporary history in the exhibition, a double wall is to be erected in the main hall as a timeline from 1960 to 1970, featuring important dates, comments, photographs, and film clips.

A total of some 280 works (painting, sculpture, installation, photography, drawing, and video) will be on show. Cooperation partners are the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, the RWTH Aachen University, and the International Newspaper Museum Aachen. The exhibition will be complemented by a comprehensive support program featuring lectures, discussion forums, film screenings, and artist talks.

**Curators:** Andreas Beitin and Eckhart Gillen

**Curatorial and research assistants:** Esther Boehle, Sabine Halver, Laura Weber (until September 2017), Sonja Wunderlich

### **Publication**

In conjunction with the exhibition, a comprehensive publication (592 pages with approximately 560 illustrations) will appear in the "Zeitbilder" series of the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/ Federal Agency for Civic Education (eds. Andreas Beitin and Eckhart Gillen), with texts by Nazes Afros, Maria Berrios, Bazon Brock, Gerd Conradt, Constanze Fritzsche, Ursula Frohne / Christian Katti, Eckhart Gillen, Blanca Gutiérrez Galindo, Axel Heil, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Bohdan Shumlovych, Noemi Smolik, Marie Luise Syring, Laura Weber, Peter Weibel, Sonja Wunderlich, and many more.

hardcover, German/ Englisch, 7 Euro

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### **Artists (selection):**

Georg Baselitz, Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock, Günter Brus, Carlfriedrich Claus, Lutz Dammbeck, Guy Ernest Debord, Niki de Saint Phalle, Erró, Valie Export, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Hans Haacke, Dieter Hacker, Richard Hamilton, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Edward Kienholz, R.B. Kitaj, Milan Knizak, Maria Lassnig, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Boris Lurie (No-Art!), George Macunias, Gustav Metzger, Marcel Odenbach, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, A.R. Penck, Sigmar Polke, Heimrad Prem, Martha Rosler, Eugen Schönebeck, Daniel Spoerri, Aldo Tambellini, Jean Tinguely, Günther Uecker, Wolf Vostell, Franz Erhard Walther, Peter Weibel, Vladimir Yankilevsky, HP Zimmer.

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## Contemporary Artists:

- Marcelo Brodsky: 24 works from the series *1968: El fuego de las ideas* (2014-2017)
- Lutz Dammbeck: *Seek II* (2009) and *Filmportrait of Masao Adachi* (2018)
- Axel Heil: *Congresso Cultural de la Habana...* (2007-2010)
- Rudolf Herz: *Revolutionäre Ungeduld* (2017/18)

## Sponsors

- NRW-Ministerium für Kultur und Wissenschaft
- Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation
- Kulturstiftung der Länder
- Landschaftsverband Rheinland e.V.

## Supporters

- Freunde des Ludwig Forums für Internationale Kunst e.V.
- Boris Lurie Art Foundation
- Goethe-Institut

## Co-operation partners

- Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (bpb)
- Internationales Zeitungsmuseum Aachen
- RWTH Aachen University



images

## Flashes of the Future

### The Art of the '68 Generation or the Power of the Powerless



Renato Guttuso, *Maggio 1968 - Giornale Murale* [Mai 1968 - wall newspaper], 1968, Oil on cardboard and canvas, 280 x 480 cm, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, © VG Bildkunst, Bonn 2017, Foto: Carl Brunn.



Sam Goodman, *Eichmann Remember*, 1961, Wooden construction with collage and objects, 103 x 116 x 25 cm, © Boris Lurie Art Foundation, Foto: Miles Ladin.



Boris Lurie, *Love, Series: Bound in Red*, 1962, Photomechanical magnification of a newspaper image and oil on canvas, 40 x 100 cm, © Boris Lurie Art Foundation, Foto: Miles Ladin.



Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1965, SW film, 8 Minutes © 1964/1965/2017 Yoko Ono.

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Martha Rosler, *Cleaning the Drapes* from the seria *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*. 1967-1972, photomontage, 60 x 50 cm, Deichtorhallen Hamburg / Sammlung Falckenberg, © Martha Rosler, Foto: Egbert Haneke.

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# Service

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The Ludwig Forum for International Art Aachen is a multidisciplinary cultural institution. It is based on the art collection of Peter und Irene Ludwig, which comprises key works of Pop Art, Photorealism and European art from the 1960s to the present day. It is a platform for an attractive and versatile programme of exhibitions and events.

## Opening hours

Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun 10 am – 5 pm, Thu 10 am – 8 pm  
Public holidays 10 am – 5 pm, Mondays closed

## Admission

Free for guests aged 21 and under  
Adults: 10 €;  
Concessions: 6 €  
Groups of 8 or more: 5 € per person  
Ludwig Forum + IZM: 12 € / 8 €

Thursday is ZENTIS Day:

Thursdays: admission free for everyone, 10 am – 8 pm!

Six for Six Museum Card: 14€ / concessions. 10€

The Museum Card entitles you to one admission each to the Suermondt Ludwig Museum, the Ludwig Forum, the Centre Charlemagne, the Couven Museum, the International Newspaper Museum and the Town Hall, valid for a period of six months.

### **Barrier-free**

Barrier-free access to the exhibition rooms, the library and the workshop is available via our parking-area and main entrance. The Ludwig Forum also has two lifts and a barrier-free toilet. On advance request, we can provide guided tours in sign language. In addition, our experienced museum educational staff can provide supervision for people with disabilities in individual workshops.

### **Guided tours for the general public**

Museum admission / 2 €

Sundays 3 pm (with childcare)

### **Guided tours for individual groups (D/E/F/NL)**

For special exhibitions and presentations of works from our collection, we offer guided tours for all age groups (from age 4). On request, the tour can be combined with practical activities in our workshop.

From 40€ / day care centres and school classes from 20€

Prior booking required

### **Information and booking of museum education services**

Karl-Heinz Jeiter

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karl-heinz.jeiter@mail.aachen.de

### **Getting to the museum**

Bus: bus stops Blücherplatz, Ludwig Forum: bus numbers 11, 21, 31

By car:

- From the direction of Düsseldorf/Cologne/Liège take the A544 from Aachener Kreuz motorway junction to Europaplatz;

from Europaplatz, follow the signs for "Ludwig Forum"

- From the direction of Maastricht/Antwerp exit the A4 at Würselen, follow Krefelder Straße in the direction of City Centre, then follow the signs for "Ludwig Forum". The Ludwig Forum has a visitors' car park and there are further parking options on Blücherplatz.

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