

The Search Within

Art between implosion and explosion

an exhibition project between India and Austria on the occasion of the 1996 millenium

The Search Within

The millennium in 1996 and the Austrian chairmanship of the EU Commission in 1998 provide the occasion for a combination of the cultural and the international facets of Austria in an innovative project combining exhibitions with an artist-exchange programme between India and Austria. The project serves to increase understanding between the peoples in an encounter which crosses new frontiers, while examining the differences between contemporary art in India and that in Austria. The aim is to establish a new synergy in respect of these differences. At the same time, the implicit function of art as providing and conveying meaning is to be examined.

The individual artists' contributions are to demonstrate that art based on inner awareness and personal sincerity, showing integrity and the potential of experience gleaned from this, conveys this to the viewer.

Is this art more successful - i.e. does it inspire? The terms SAT (= an absolute, eternal, unaltered state of being), BRAHMAN (= the eternal, highest, non-dual reality) and ANANDA (=salvation and bliss) are identical in Indian philosophy.

Particular stress is to be laid on the contrast between contemporary Austrian art and its Indian counterpart, which has a tradition going back thousands of years, with its own spiritual and mythological background while also containing elements influenced by the Western discourse. The intention is to examine whether - and if so, to what extent - differences in the visual arts are to be discerned. And, in doing this, to establish a dialogue between an Indian and Austrian appreciation of art.

Premise:

The current condition of the visual arts' scene is a reflection of the condition of Western society, which is marked by a diversity of individual and group-specific priorities. This is itself often manifested in spurious artistic forms which often lead to the exclusion of the viewer. These artworks remain incomprehensible in meaning and purpose to a broader public; the viewer is unable to glean anything from such works

Is this communication not among the primary functions of art? Or is artistic practise to retreat still further into a position of self-inflicted marginalisation?

The exhibition seeks to find a way out of the above outlined impasse, in that it explores the possibility of establishing a dialogue between artists from Asia and from Europe, reminding them of the responsibility implicit in the reception of their work.

The Artists:

Twelve artists from India and twelve from Austria are being invited to participate. Each of the participating artists has ten meters of exhibition surface at their disposal. For practical reasons, individual works should not exceed 170 x 90cm in size. The selection of artists is to be made by Werner Dornik: as the result of a chain of meetings with artists, one having led to the next.

The focus: The spiritual content of the works of art (regardless of the form of representation employed).

This spirituality should have precedence over the selection of the artists and their relative success, regionally or internationally.

The result is to be a cross-section of artists, the internationally renowned and those of regional significance. The first choices have already been made, the final decision on the participants is to be made at ~~the end of 1996~~.

spring 97

Place and Time:

I. Events in Austria:

After an intensive search for a suitable place in which to hold the exhibition, in the course of which various exhibition halls and several castles and stately homes were considered, a decision was made. The choice fell on the monastery at Pernegg in the Austrian Waldviertel. It belongs to the Geras Foundation and, as a spiritual and contemplative centre, presents an ideal setting for the project, reinforcing its aims. The breadth and calm of the landscape contribute to a suitable atmosphere for candid encounters between artists, speakers and visitors. The art courses held simultaneously in the Geras Foundation will provide further impetus as well as perhaps making a permanent exchange programme possible.

Due to the extent of the necessary preparation (for example, in the proposed integration of the workshops in the Geras Institute's art course), long-term planning is required. The actual realisation of the project will not be possible until Spring 1988.

The opening of the exhibition, to last six to eight weeks, is planned for May 1988. In conjunction with this, the participating artists from India are to be invited to spend one or two weeks at the monastery at Pernegg.

II. Events in India:

With the aid of the BMAA and the BMWVK, the exhibition is to be subsequently transferred to India, where it is to be shown in New Delhi (site not yet fixed). *+ Bombay*

The Austrian participants are to be enabled to spend 7 to 14 days in India.

Extent of the Exhibition:

Provision is made for three to five works per artist, the total number should not exceed 100.

*One should be made on the title
+ Projekt!*

Programme and Events:

For the duration of the exhibition, the separate sites should be used as intensively as possible for a whole row of fringe activities: The spectrum ranging from music, dance and film festivals, to performances and lectures. In Austria, a symposium on the theme of the project is planned in conjunction with the Society for Inter-cultural Philosophy. In conjunction with the Geras Kunstverein, workshops are also planned with the artists from Austria and India.

Mediation in Schools:

Schools in the vicinity of each of the exhibitions are to be integrated as far as possible (questionnaires to be completed by pupils); visits to the exhibition should be made possible free of charge.

Integration of the Visitors:

As for pupils, questionnaires should be given to visitors to the exhibition for them to express their opinion. Criticism and opinions so gleaned are to be collected at the end of the duration of the exhibition, and published within the framework of the Austro-Indian Society's send-outs.

Catalogue:

The exhibition is to be accompanied by a catalogue in English and German, containing the artists' biographies, illustrations of the exponents, and texts appropriate to the aims of the project (four-colour, format: 28x28cm, 260 pages).

Film Documentation:

It is planned that the fundamental elements of the project should be documented on film. To this end, talks with the ORF and ARD are yet to be held.

Organisation

Project patronage: Austro-Indian Society - Curator: Werner Dornik

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