

Press Release

Herwig Steiner: Law and Crime

Opening and Book Presentation

Tuesday, December 5, 2006, 7 p.m.

Manak & Partner, Rechtsanwälte
Stephansplatz 6/3 (2nd floor)
1010 Wien/Vienna
Austria

Welcoming words: Dr. Andreas Manak
About the artwork: Prof. Martin Prinzhorn
About the book: Dr. Peter Engelman (Passagen Verlag)

The permanent installations "Law and Crime (Gesetz und Verbrechen)" and "Not one more execution!" on a 65 square-meter glass wall will be open for visit from December 6, 2006. Open Monday to Friday, 5:00–8:00 p.m. or by appointment, phone 0699 192 48 752.

The Installations

"Brian Baldwin was executed despite compelling evidence of his innocence and evidence that he did not receive a fair trial. Allegations of torture and racial bias by the State of Alabama, in violation of constitutional and international human rights, were sufficiently egregious to warrant a reversal of the trial court's decision. The initial appeal alleging improper procedure and racism was heard by the same judge who had convicted Baldwin, and against whom some of the allegations of racism and misconduct were being made ..."

Herwig Steiner's installation entitled "Not one more execution!" uses English text excerpts from the "Grassroots Investigation Project" case-study report about, all in all, 15 people who were sentenced to death and executed in the USA between 1974 and 2001, although they were, in all probability, innocent, and incorporates them in an abstract composition of shapes and colors. This semitransparent fabric of textual and visual particles covers glass walls and doors behind which lawyers and their assistants pursue their daily work.

In the entrance area of the office of Manak & Partner, another installation based on the same design principle provides a glass barrier between the outer office and the reception area. Incomers will read text passages of the following kind: *"Jews are excluded from the profession of a lawyer."* Or: *"As far as Jews bare other forenames than they are permitted to bear according to Sec 1, from January 1, 1939, onwards they are obliged to assume an additional forename, namely Israel for male, Sara for female persons."* For this installation entitled "Law and Crime", Herwig Steiner used excerpts from Nazi laws and regulations of the years between 1933 and 1943.

"In this pictorial subtext of 'dematerialization in favor of utopia,' to use Carl Einstein's words, the text of horror is inscribed in the form of an abstract, prismatic space of 'splendid' and radiating fields." (Sabine Folie)

"This is exactly what corresponds with Herwig Steiner's artistic practice: opposing the inviolability of the word or the law, opposing the concept of a monument that aims to remain in place for all eternity. The work is thus public art in the best sense; it does not moralize from a fixed position. Instead, art, as a game that remains permanently open, is brought into a realm in which the meaning of openness, while perhaps different, is, at least, equally important." (Martin Prinzhorn)

"The two art works are not political manifestos in the narrow sense. They are not aesthetic museum objects, but instead, permanent provocations. They demand that we doubt the reliability of everyday perception and they raise doubt, precisely with regard to lawyers' concrete responsibility for their decisions." (Andreas Manak)

The Book

As an integral element of this hybrid of art, architecture, and text-reflective meta-levels, this publication includes a series of photographs of all parts of the installation plus panoramic view of the rooms situations as well as textual contributions discussing aspects of the art work and

the subjects it addresses (law, society anti-Semitism ...). The source texts of the quotations used in the images are reprinted in full; in addition, Herwig Steiner's preparatory work ("pre-prints") is documented in a survey of the development of the final installation.

"Herwig Steiner: Gesetz und Verbrechen | Law and Crime" (ed. Andreas Manak)

With contributions by Oliver Elser, Sabine Folie, Andreas Manak, Peter Moeschl, Manfred Nowak, Martin Prinzhorn, Erika Weinzierl, Lucas Gehrmann/Herwig Steiner and with reprints of all source texts used.

German/English, 224 pages, more than 75 color plates, 28×20 cm, hardcover.

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29.90 Euros

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Complementary Special Exhibition

From December 9 to 12, 2006, the exhibition "Herwig Steiner: Pre-Prints" will be shown at the artist's studio, Schönbrunner Straße 95/3 (3rd floor), 1050 Vienna. Open from 12 noon to 6 p.m. or by appointment, phone 0699 192 48 752.

Press Information

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As of December 4, 2006, royalty-free printable photos for publication in the context of exhibition or book reviews will be available for download at www.manak.at.

Before December 4, please order electronic photos by e-mail at gehrmann@rotat.at or by phone at (+43 1) 524 87 85.

The artist

Herwig Steiner, born 1956, studied history; architecture, and sculpture (diploma with Bruno Gironcoli, Vienna Academy of Fine Arts). Since 1986, numerous projects and exhibitions, e. g., Grand Palais, Paris; Museum moderner Kunst Wien; Kunstverein Erfurth; Sala Parpalo, Valencia; Convention Center, Los Angeles; Royal Nepal Academy, Kathmandu; Kunsthalle tmp, Steyr; Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta; Muzej Istorije Jugoslavije, Belgrad; Kunsthalle Wien; India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.