

## The Rainbow Prelude

*"If art doesn't do politics, who will?" - Dieter Roelstraete, curator of Documenta 14 and former curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.<sup>1</sup>*

Art is a pillar of democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany. In times of progressive change and resulting uncertainties, vacuums of action can form, and it is precisely here that art takes on a supporting role. In the recent history of the FRG, "Capitalist Realism" around Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke and Konrad Lueg artistically set a political counter-position to the then prevailing canon. Art can offer politics a surface for reflection as a means of discourse.

In their work, artists necessarily take up moods and currents of the society in which they live. Through art, these are directly or indirectly captured and symbolized. Thus, art is a tool to question habitual mechanisms of perception. Political art thematizes topicality and takes a stand. Pablo Picasso's 1951 work "Massacre en Corée" and the artist himself were called naïve and propagandistic by positions of cultural power in America, and the exclusion of political art in state museums was demanded.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Beuys coined the term social sculpture. In art theory, this term refers to works of art that have a concrete effect on the existing society and thus become a kind of inspiration for action on the part of art. A spiritual change of direction needs these authoritative impulses.

The artist group Arquus, which appeared in the fall of 2020, is itself looking for emancipatory ways to formulate updated claims to social sculpture and discusses newer and newest forms of action with a growing cultural studies network. And this in the awareness that contemporary phenomena of communication guerrilla such as the PENG collective, whose early references can possibly already be found with the Dadaists, despite years of group-internal mediation, first fragmented unnoticed, only to break up recently. Just as Marcel Duchamp did not call himself a Dadaist, the artists of the Prelude do not call themselves new representatives of Social Sculpture. Even the attempt made at the beginning to classify them, for example, in the context of the completed Capitalist Realism can only be a reference.

The Rainbow prelude cleverly draws nationwide attention to the complexity of the question surrounding the (artistic) treatment of Nazi buildings. The Rainbow Prelude is a temporary work of art that was applied directly to the former main grandstand of Nuremberg's Zeppelin Field. The grandstand as a place of stylization and accumulation of the inhuman ideology of the Third Reich was transformed by the rainbow coloring of the blind columns into a poetic pictorial icon, which positively changed the heavily afflicted "memory of architecture" in a discursive sense. In the

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/politische-kunst-was-bewirkt-die-waffe-kunst.691.de.html?dram:article\\_id=389177](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/politische-kunst-was-bewirkt-die-waffe-kunst.691.de.html?dram:article_id=389177) (Stand: 27.07.2021).

<sup>2</sup> Frascina, Francis. Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America. p.225 - 226. Vereinigtes Königreich, Manchester University Press, 1999.

future, viewers will always see this place with the colors of the rainbow - architecture made of neurons instead of concrete and shell limestone!

The changed pictorial memory calls up questions about the culture of remembrance and puts the set memory into a new relation: Who remembers at all? And at what time and in what form?

In response to a long-standing and sensitive political issue regarding the memory-cultural treatment of the Tribune, including artistic practices, the group responded with pictorial conciseness. In keeping with an idea of coming of age, urban promises are pre-fulfilled by its people. If one considers politics, the media, and the arts as systems in their own right, each following its own internal logic, the direct negotiation of social conditions by means of the arts succeeds quite rarely. Even more rarely from the OFF - without competition, without well-known names or major funding. Despite water-soluble and thus temporary paint, artists created an image for the collective memory with the help of social media. The project received a great deal of media attention, and the impulse within society was given. A counter-memorial that makes a statement with deliberate emphasis and can already be found printed in school textbooks.

For this year's Rathaus Art 2021, the Bode Galerie presents a graphic, an embossed print and a photo edition of the Rainbow Prelude. By digitizing the work, it could already act as a redefined form of a contemporary witness, now as a tangible work of art.

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