Stiftung Kunstsammlung
Nordrhein-Westfalen
Grabbeplatz 5
40213 Düsseldorf
+49 (0) 211 83 81 730
presse@kunstsammlung.de

Press kit: Christoph Schlingensief. Kaprow City

April 24 – October 17, 2021 (tbc.)
K20

The planned press conference on Thu, Apr 22, 2021 will not take place due to the current Corona measures and the associated renewed closure of the museum. Subject to possible changes, individual press tours of the current exhibitions in K20 and K21 can be arranged.

K21

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#K20Schlingensief
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Christoph Schlingensief
Kaprow City
April 24 – October 17, 2021 (tbc.)
K20

Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is presenting the multimedia artwork *Kaprow City* by Christoph Schlingensief (1960–2010): one of the few installations by this important filmmaker, political action artist, and theater and opera director that has survived. The large-scale work, which plays a central role in Schlingensief's cross-genre oeuvre, was created for a solo exhibition at the Migros Museum in Zurich in 2007 and has been part of the collection there ever since. The artwork, which has been preserved in its entirety, is now being presented at K20 in Düsseldorf and thus for the first time in a German museum.

"Christoph Schlingensief was always active at the interface between genres and did not believe in the unambiguousness of the world. With his dissecting and at the same time generous manner, uninhibitedly critical and simultaneously humorous, as well as with, on the one hand, his tendency to overload and, on the other hand, his directness and above all his profoundly social concern, he has commented more aptly than anyone else on the political and social events of his time. His art is missed. I am therefore delighted that, together with the Filmmuseum Düsseldorf and the Julia Stoschek Collection, we are making it possible to experience the breadth of the work of this extremely important artist ten years after his far too early death," explains Susanne Gaensheimer, Director of Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, about this exceptional German artist.

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Christoph Schlingensief is one of the most important artists in Germany, whose early death in 2010 left a gap that remains visible to this day. His art transcends borders and encompasses all genres—from film, theater, and opera to installation, political actionism, and television. His work was very much characterized by his physical presence and charisma. Schlingensief himself called his actions "Theater der Handgreiflichkeiten" (Theater of Physical Harm), which consisted of Social Sculpture, pithy social criticism, physical presence, and cleverly applied provocation. His role oscillated between self-representation and self-dissolution, always out of his sense of commitment to people and society. He was one of the few artists of his generation whose work was not only politically motivated, but actually made a significant contribution to discourse in society.

***Kaprow City* at Volksbühne on Rosa Luxemburg Platz in Berlin**

Kaprow City was originally an accessible installation that Schlingensief conceived as his last theater piece for Volksbühne Berlin in 2006. Having coined the term "Happening," Kaprow performed one of the first Happenings in the context of visual art in 1959 in New York with the action *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Kaprow's understanding of art was a major inspiration for Schlingensief's production of *Kaprow City* at the Volksbühne, which he subtitled *18 Happenings in a Second*.

Ostensibly chaotic, acoustically and visually overwhelming, and placed on a rotating platform, the stage design created by Schlingensief was occupied by actors and the audience alike. Following the ideas of Allan Kaprow, the visitors were divided into groups and confronted with everyday actions.
One of Schlingensief's other ideas for the play was to make a film about the last hours of Lady Diana's life. The casting of actress Jenny Elvers-Elbertzhagen in the role led to an extraordinary media frenzy in the run-up to the premier of the play. The mysterious circumstances of Lady Diana's death, fused with Kaprow's themes, prompted him to reflect on truth and the relationship between reality and fiction in life as well as in the arts.

***Kaprow City* at K20**

The large-scale installation *Kaprow City* as it can be seen at K20 is the result of a transformation by Schlingensief: For the exhibition *Querverstümmelung* (Cross-Mutilation), which Schlingensief presented in the fall of 2007 at the Migros Museum in Zurich, the stage set was converted into an independent work of art. It was his largest solo show in a museum during his lifetime, and *Kaprow City* served as the prelude to the exhibition.
For this (re)deconstruction, as it was described in the context of the exhibition in 2007, Schlingensief used three quarters of the original theater stage for the basic structure of the new work. In an organic process, he converted it, freed the room segments from many props, and included film clips. Made inaccessible by foils, the work presents itself today as a soundless, cinematic, large-scale installation to which its own history is directly inscribed.

For Schlingensief, the realization of this installation marked a new phase in his artistic work: that of reflecting on the work of art as something independent of the person of the artist. He thus used the museum as a "protective space" to reflect on his own presence and described this as follows:
"After my experiences with the theater, I fully embrace the protective space of the museum. I don't have to worry about whether 400 people come in the evening and whether, after two hours, I'm applauded or hooted at. I can now do what I've always done. And I can do it alone, like in the editing room. For me, a museum has an aura, as though everyone outside was in a deep sleep, and you can work on your own. I like that very much. […] And the most beautiful thing for me is the realization that the pictures still talk to each other even when I'm already at home." (Schlingensief in an interview with Cornelius Tittel for the German magazine *Monopol*, 1/2008)

The transformation of the stage design into an artwork in the form of an installation is rooted in a fundamental trait of Schlingensief's creative work: to use the freedom of reflection—about himself and his own actions, as well as about current circumstances and social conditions—as an ongoing process for creative work. With a great sense of implicitness, Schlingensief reacted to private situations and moments, such as an eye disease he experienced or the death of his father in the same year of the exhibition, and introduced these into the work thematically, along with other pieces and projects he happened to be working on at the time.
The years 2006/07, in which the theater piece *Kaprow City* and its conversion to an installation took place, can be described as a very productive time for the artist. The *Animatographs* in Iceland, Germany, and Namibia, the presentation of *Mozart Balls - Cokocko* in Salzburg, the opera *The Flying Dutchman* in Brazil, and the film *Fremdverstümmelung*

(Foreign Mutilation) are all echoed in *Kaprow City* and intertwine in a process of free and spontaneous meandering. Schlingensief, who drew no strength whatsoever from being pinned down and consciously evaded this time and again, invites us to engage with the work with its many associative overlays.

The genre-specific moments of its genesis, as well as other references, are inscribed in the artwork *Kaprow City*. The performative character of the theater piece with its countless actions, for which the stage was understood as a camera in the sense of the *Animatographs*, immediately transports itself to visitors. The presence of the past moment interweaves with the level of the art object, which radiates a completely different temporality with the introduction of the film clips and the closed façades and, in the new context of the museum, creates aesthetic references to visual artists such as Paul Thek.

The film *Fremdverstümmelung*, which he incorporated into the installation in excerpts, thus transforming the room segments into cinemas, was originally made for an opera project in Bonn shortly before the exhibition in 2007. The project was based on the film *Freaks* (1932) by Tod Browning, which Schlingensief admired and in which people of small staure and disabled people play the leading roles as “freaks” in a circus. However, due to differences of opinion regarding the role of disabled people in the opera production, Schlingensief withdrew from the project. In Schlingensief’s opinion a play about disabled people should also take place with them in leading roles.

Film, with all its possibilities, again played a major role for Schlingensief during the conversion phase. The realization “I see something you don’t see,” which brought him to film early on through his father, is a formative thought that is reflected in this installation. Schlingensief transferred the experience of accidental double exposure in analog film to the level of critical reflection.

With the help of film clips, photographs, and other archive material, the exhibition project at Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen aims to trace the path of *Kaprow City* from a theater project to an artwork in a museum. In addition to the installation, which can be seen in the Grabbe Halle of K20, selected archive material from the artist’s estate documents his typical working method.

Curator: Kathrin Beßen

Partners and Sponsors

A project of Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in cooperation with Christoph Schlingensief Estate and Aino Laberenz.

Media Partner of Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen:
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

Supported by the Ministry for Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Short Biography

Christoph Schlingensief (b. in 1960 in Oberhausen) began making films already as a child. After his first longer feature film *Tunguska* in 1984, he received his first major recognition in 1985 with the film *Menu total*. This was followed by, among others, the Germany trilogy with the films *100 Years of Adolf Hitler*, *The German Chainsaw Massacre*, and *Terror 2000* (1989–1992). In 1993, Schlingensief was invited to the Volksbühne by Mathias Lilienthal and presented his first play, *100 Years of CDU*. In 1997, he participated in documenta X with the play *My Felt, My Fat, My Hare – 48 Hours Survival for Germany*. Schlingensief participated in the 1998 federal election campaign with the newly founded party “Chance 2000” in order to give a face to those who are overlooked in society. In 2004, Schlingensief staged an opera for the first time: *Parsifal*, for the Bayreuth Festival. For the Reykjavik Art Festival, Schlingensief developed the Iceland *Animatograph*. Stops in Neuhardenberg and Lüderitz, Namibia, follow. During the run of the solo exhibition *Querverstümmelung* at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Schlingensief was diagnosed with lung cancer in January 2008. In direct reaction to the illness, projects such as *A Church of Fear of the Stranger in Me* were created in 2009; and in the spring of 2010, the foundation stone of the opera village in Burkina Faso was laid. At the invitation of Susanne Gaensheimer, Schlingensief developed initial ideas for the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The pavilion was set up posthumously by Susanne Gaensheimer and Aino Laberenz in 2011. Christoph Schlingensief died on August 21, 2010.

An extensive **K+ multimedia guide** with a great deal of additional information and materials about the exhibition will be available online.

https://www.kunstsammlung.de/de/exhibitions/christoph-schlingensief

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Schlingensief in Düsseldorf, Germany

Beside the exhibition at K20, Düsseldorf Film Museum shows the movie "Christoph Schlingensief: Projektionen" produced by Eckhard Kuchenbecker (Apr 24 – Aug 31, 2021).

Moreover, JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION presents works by Schlingensief from her collection in an exhibition and a movie screening (Apr 24 – Dec 19, 2021).

More information:
duesseldorf.de/filmmuseum
jcs.art

Opening day
Saturday, 24.4.2021 will not take place!
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Due to the current Corona measures, the exhibition will open at a later date. Current changes to this will be announced on the website and on the social media channels of the art collection.

Exhibition preview

Isa Genzken. Works from 1973 to 1983
Isa Genzken. Here and Now
May 8 – September 5, 2021
K21

With two parallel exhibitions dedicated to Isa Genzken (b. 1948), Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen offers a special insight at the work of one of the most important contemporary women artists worldwide. The focus is on two work phases from her career spanning five decades. On the lower floor of K21, the emphasis is on her visionary early work, a period that has never before been honored to this extent in any other exhibition. In parallel, current works from the last decade are on view on the bel étage. This exciting compilation draws attention to developments within the oeuvre, as well as to Isa Genzken's attitude towards the world. It testifies to her ability to continually reinvent herself artistically, to appropriate new materials and techniques, and to respond precisely to the circumstances of her time.
A cooperation organized by Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf and Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

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The exhibition "Isa Genzken. Works from 1973 to 1983" was conceived by Kunstmuseum Basel in cooperation with Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

The exhibition "Isa Genzken. Here and Now" is sponsored by the Foundation for Art, Culture, and Social Affairs of Sparda

Press conference: May 6, 2021, 11 am at K21 (tbc.)
Opening day: Saturday, May 8, 2021 at K21 (tbc.)