

Questions & Answers on the Collaboration Between Ingrid Wildi Merino and Kathleen Bühler, Kunstmuseum Bern

Q: How did you become aware of the project?

Kathleen Bühler: During my first themed exhibition *Ego Documents: The Autobiographical in Contemporary Art* (2008) pursuing the thesis, among other goals, that certain artists work autobiographically in order to interpret personal experiences against a political background. Ingrid Wildi Merino asked us then if we were interested in this project.

Q: How did you convince the museum management to show the exhibition?

Kathleen Bühler: The Kunstmuseum Bern adheres to a basic policy of realizing exhibitions on "pressing cultural issues." And with current political events there is no issue more pressing than dealing with people who migrate. Confrontation with their cultural identities leads to us to question ours. The exhibition contains works that view migration as a product of economic and political developments. Economic decisions and fiscal policies today transgress national boundaries by far. We call this, among other terms, globalization. Globalization reduces individuals' and our democratic systems' scope of influence.

Q: What work is involved for you as a curator of the Kunstmuseum Bern in taking over an exhibition?

Kathleen Bühler: An exhibition is not a fixed entity. Especially artworks produced specific to a location must be – or at least some of them – greatly modified or adapted so that they "make sense" and are also articulate at their new location. On the other hand, I also had to give the artists – some of whom had never been to Europe – a feeling for the new location, for the Kunstmuseum in Bern. Added to this, I had to think about what Chile's relevance is for Bern. And at the same time we were responsible for the realization of the catalogue, which is published in two languages (German/English) but also contains contributions that were written in German, Spanish, and French.

Q: Was it clear right from the beginning that the exhibition project would also be showing in Switzerland?

Kathleen Bühler: That was the goal from the beginning. The exhibition had a much greater impact on the Chilean public by giving it to understand that "Chile is everywhere." This would not have been nearly as great if the show provided only a mirror of Chile's situation. Chilean and Swiss or European artists were invited because we Europeans experience and interpret certain phenomena like migration and displacement against a different historical and political background to Latin Americans. These two traditions of thought were transfused into the artworks and allow viewers also to gain a new awareness about and comprehension of global challenges that concern all of us.

Q: What is different in the exhibition in Bern to the one in Santiago de Chile?

Kathleen Bühler: The exhibition was shown at seven different locations in Santiago de Chile. Like a small biennial it was spread all over the city and resided in fine-art museums, bookshops, "offspaces," and galleries. The individual works bore relatively explicit references to the locations in which they were exhibited. In contrast, the exhibition in Bern is concentrated within a single location. This has the advantage of making it very compact. But naturally it is also conducive to the musealization of the project.

Q: What sort of impact do you hope the exhibition will have on Bern?

Kathleen Bühler: That, by presenting certain knowledge and facts in a new way, it makes us sensitive for occurrences that affect us all. And that the insights we gain help us understand that everything we do or happens to us is – and was – always political in essence.

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