



The School of Kyiv – The Biennial 2015 in Kyiv

Curators announce the dates, conceptual framework, and organizational structure of the biennial “The School of Kyiv”

The biennial of contemporary art “The School of Kyiv” will start on the 8th of September and will last till the 1st of November 2015, as the curators of the project, Hedwig Saxenhuber and Georg Schöllhammer announced at a press-conference at Ukrainian Crisis Media Center on the 17th of April in Kyiv, Ukraine.

“The School of Kyiv” proposes a new format of an art biennial related to the current situation in Ukraine, the curators said, integrating art and arenas for public debates. The programmes within the biennial will be exploring the burning issues Ukrainian and European society is facing, reacting to the challenges of today. The project will present a cross section of Ukrainian and international contemporary art. Separate departments of the biennial in Kyiv will simultaneously open in a series of institutions across Europe as an integral part of the project. These departments will be dedicated to the unknown histories of avant-garde art in Ukraine and its contribution to global art history. A number of ‘Schools’ and exhibitions will be set as a basis for long-term structures that will keep functioning after the biennial is over. “The School of Kyiv” responds to a need in tools provided by art and its institutions to deal with many urgent issues in a country that had just went through a revolution and is now going through a war.

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“The School of Kyiv”, organized by curators Hedwig Saxenhuber and Georg Schöllhammer together with Visual Culture Research Center (Kyiv), is an open and inclusive project developed in cooperation with a network of Ukrainian and international cultural institutions, NGO’s, and independent agents. “The School of Kyiv” will have branches and departments in Vienna, Leipzig, Trondheim, Sofia, Prague, Budapest, Karlsruhe, Bucharest, and other cities. One of the main goals of the project is to keep the channels of artistic and intellectual exchange open, while highlighting the importance of local cultural production in the European context.

“The School of Kyiv” will encourage the development of artistic and intellectual scenes in Ukraine, and reveal the oeuvre of Ukrainian artists of the 20th century to the international public. The biennial aims at creating the alternative civil space of reflection, breaking down barriers, building bridges and imagining scenarios for the future.

Georg Schöllhammer and Hedwig Saxenhuber, curators, “The School of Kyiv”:

This biennial is really desired by Ukrainian society far beyond the art world. Immediately after Mysetskyi Arsenal had declared its inability to organize the project a month ago, a series of renowned cultural institutions, NGO’s and off-spaces as well as society activists from Ukraine and Europe have declared their support for the project. They said society needs an arena like the biennial to gather, and reflect and discuss the current traumata in a civic space. We see this as a strong sign of their will to get out of the closure Ukraine is trapped in through the warfare in the East and the economic crisis, and of imagining a peaceful and democratic future. We hope “The School of Kyiv” will contribute to this by offering agoras of encounter and debate as well as the poetics and imaginaries of contemporary art.

Vasyl Cherepanyn, Head of Visual Culture Research Center:

It is crucially important that “The School of Kyiv” biennial will take place after the Maidan revolution and during the war against Ukraine. These events further underline the need for such a public platform for social reflection in our country. We believe art and knowledge have great political potential. Kyiv Biennial is not a glamorous blockbuster, but an open engaged project. We treat the biennial of contemporary art as a continuation of the idea of Maidan. Kyiv biennial is a Maidan of culture on the international

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scale, aimed at the representation of artistic and political experience of Ukraine in the European context. “The School of Kyiv” is needed because it gives an opportunity to speak about local Ukrainian problems in universal language.

Lesya Prokopenko, Head of Exhibitions, “The School of Kyiv”:

“The School of Kyiv” demonstrates a new type of organization, which includes and involves equal participants instead of reproducing power relationships and hierarchical structures. The programme of the biennial is constructed of open platforms where current art processes, cultural and political research, and individual reflection are of similar importance. “The School of Kyiv” creates the possibility to teach and learn simultaneously, generate questions, test and shatter the habitual boundaries.

Ukrainian project partners include the National Art Museum of Ukraine, National Academy of Arts of Ukraine, National Museum of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, Pinchuk Art Centre, Union of Artists of Ukraine, Modern Art Research Institute. Among the international partners of the project are ERSTE Foundation, Institute for Human Sciences – Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (Vienna), CIMAM/ICOM, Allianz Kulturstiftung, Akademie der Künste der Welt (Cologne), Athens Biennial, Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA), Badischer Kunstverein (Karlsruhe), Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst (Leipzig), tranzit (Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia), Bundeskanzleramt Austria, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Austria, Embassy of Austria in Ukraine, Auswärtiges Amt (Germany), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven), Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw), Trondheim Kunsthall, Burgtheater Vienna, Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung (Karlsruhe), Universität der Künste (Berlin), Universität Leipzig, European Humanities University (Vilnius), AICA Armenia (Yerevan), The International Cities of Refugee Networks, Nordic Culture Point, British Council, Goethe-Institut, Italian Culture Institute in Kyiv, Institut Français in Kyiv, Embassy of the Republic of Croatia in Kyiv, Czech Centre in Kyiv, South African Embassy in Kyiv, among others.

The list of partners is to be updated.

Website: <http://theschoolofkyiv.org/>