

## Why artists establish a gallery

To begin with, one reason is one's own experience: the opportunities for students and graduates of the Academy of the Arts to exhibit are as bad as they possibly could be. Moreover, works of young, unknown artists outside of the mainstream are too rarely exhibited in Munich; the established art circles are not interested, there is too little money, and therefore the development of a scene is very difficult. The art which is displayed is only too well-known, too uniform, and fails to show any willingness to take risks; good exhibition rooms are expensive; and you will not get any of the little money that there is.

There are only a few people who realize this dilemma, and those are the only ones to give new impulses to the field; but a lot of people suffer because of this situation. One neither wants to accept nor support this kind of cultural business.

This state of affairs led to the idea to make a difference and to create something new - an exhibition room as an independent platform for young art, not commercial, not provincial, not spick and span, not heavy with theory etc.

For one year Café Helga had been running with great success. But this surely could not have been it for artists? unless you decided to merely offer catering services for leisure-time fun culture. The renovation of the summer house continued and the gallery Goldankauf (literally "gold purchase") was opened. Incidentally, the sign with the name-giving letters was found on the refuse, and certainly no one would have been able to invent a better name. In stark contrast to our own goals it causes confusion or poetical reflections: „gold for fillings, gold leaf, art? Purchase, selling, exchange? ... Here, in the gallery in the Café Helga gold was discovered. Whether it was digged, stolen or alchemistically produced, remains the secret of those involved in the process.” (Benjamin Heisenberg)

*How artists exhibit art.* The gallerists comment on the program as follows: there will be no topical focus as in conceptually bound exhibitions; the gallerists neither want to be gallery-owners in the usual sense nor curators; there will be no exhibition from Munich artists. On the other hand, artists from Germany and abroad are invited and given a free hand in the choice and design of their exhibition; there are just exhibitions but no sales. Gallery Goldankauf provides an exhibition room and organizes – together with the exhibitors - transport and travel, builds up and dismantles the exhibitions, organizes the opening, accommodations and invitations, informs the press, and generally takes care - personal initiative is urgently desired - for financing; everything on a small scale, low budget and self-help.

However, even this rough-and-ready offer appears very much to be a service free of charge that borders on self-exploitation. And apart from an emancipatory approach and a lot of idealism this may cause one to assume some naiveté and to suspect the attempt to distinguish yourself at the expense of others - is that possible?

After two years in the exhibition-business another question arises: Is it not necessary to keep a certain amount of dilettantism to keep such projects from losing their edge? Without a professionalism that degenerates into routine, without firm resolutions which prevent spontaneity, without a permanent framework of time and place which structures everything and calls for conformity. In fact, a slightly chaotic and unstable state, against which sooner or later all institutions keen on order and discipline - from the academy to the local administration and the police - have intervened, continues to give those running the gallery something special: work that is guided by the pleasure principle. Everything was done by fancy: invitation and opening, organization and closing, spontaneously, by chance, unconditionally. A vague structure and a flexible framework resulted from first intentions and the ensuing experiences and were changed according to new circumstances. That the gallery Goldankauf did not fizzle out in a meaningless anything goes and a never-ending party is due to the serious and emphatically pursued intention to support the exchange with other artists and to keep in touch with non-artistic circles. Even without a fixed agenda, the selection of the invited artists reveals a concept carried by interested curiosity, which - after all, artists exhibit artists - first of all has to overcome a competitive mindframe: what do the others do? What do they deal with? What are their results? Not the repetition and confirmation of your own approaches but other topics, methods and perspectives are interesting. However, all projects should share a dissolution of the boundary established by the traditional classification of

art - and here certain parallels to one's own practice become apparent. Anyway, this boundary has been outdated for a long time, even though it still survives as a kind of 'help.'

*Success and (Self-)criticism.* The pleasure of the artists with their work infected nearly all participants and those concerned and also greatly contributed to the success of the project. That some (disappointed artists, enraged visitors, displeased neighbors and policemen) had no fun was due to misunderstandings and wrong expectations, which went hand in hand with this new form of exhibiting. The reproach of wanting to distinguish yourself at the expense of other artists evaporates if you look closer: the principle of an equal but not uncritical partnership has never been dominated by egotistical interests; no one was forced to participate, and everybody knew what he was in for.

The success of gallery Goldankauf shows that the aims were reached gradually: with every exhibition more unknown young artists came from Cologne, Leipzig, Frankfurt and Berlin, from Austria, Switzerland, France and Italy to Munich; coffee shop and gallery became the meeting-point where people talked, discussed and had a party in a good-humored and friendly atmosphere; by combining the functions of club and white cube, night-club and off-gallery entirely different circles and more and more of the general public were addressed. Indeed, Munich has another alternative spot - non-commercial, non-provincial, unconventional and independent. Dealing with the success meant after a certain time to stop the rush of people that could no longer be handled and to direct it into new channels. The critique of aiming more for fun and less for discourse seemed to become true, and it was necessary to correct the course. The focus was changed from the coffee shop to the gallery; running the bar was limited to the opening times of the exhibitions.

*A bit of statistics and a short survey.* Since July 1999 works of more than thirty artists, artistic duos, groups and collectives have been shown in two places in fourteen exhibitions. These artists work with all kinds of media, often in combinations, they are named separately in what follows only for the sake of surveying them: Painting (with drawings installed in the room by Alexander Wolff / Frankfurt); Drawing (on paper in post-card size, nearly two-hundred 'Döner' [Turkish meat sandwiches] by Isabelle Krieg / Switzerland), faxed (political, trenchant, but also funny by Dan Perjovschi / Romania), as installation directly on the wall ("Munich Slant" by Haegue Yang / Frankfurt); Photography (Horizon, which opens new horizons by Olaf Unverzart / Leipzig and Bruno Augsburger / Zurich; low resolution copies by Samantha Font-Sala / Nice after Karl Blossfeld's "Original forms of the Art "); installations of all kinds: audio (thirty-three phrases from the everyday-life of a relationship, newly mixed by Pasqual Reuther and Carsten Fink / Cologne), with light (Michael Pfrommer / Frankfurt), documentary ("the perfect gun" of a 10 to 15-year old junior by Tyroller & Tyroller; the "Private Library" by Silvia Cini / Milan); sculpture and object (irritating 360°-head portraits as lamps by Daniel Knorr / Berlin; Marlene Perronet / Nice prepares the Nike-Air-Sneaker for tap-dance; Antje Blumenstein's hip- or elbow support offer the visitor urgently needed hold); action, intervention and performance (we dig for a new planet in the garden of the Academy or think, speak and press at the conference table with PAC / Switzerland); lots of video (Romain Gilbert / Nice e.g. as star "When I'll be famous"; by Marko Lulic / Vienna about a former kung-fu-cinema with the appropriate sound from Bruce-Lee movies by Harald Krejci / Vienna; one pornographic movie, that despite Lego-figures is rather unsuitable for children by Achim Stiermann / Vienna; about stagefright backstage by "Chicks on Speed" / Berlin; Christian Mayer / Vienna offers a direct instruction manual of a video-camera by a salesman; Mandla Reuter / Frankfurt shows "The End" in four hours of credit titles); computer (Fabrizio Basso / Italy completes his three audio/video installations with the internet-address [www.undo.net/mind](http://www.undo.net/mind); Mario Gorni and Zefferina Castoldi present "Care of," an archive for documenting the works of contemporary Italian artists in Milan under careof@tin.it). In the internet you will be able to inform yourself about Café Helga / gallery Goldankauf at some point on the homepage [www.goldankauf.net](http://www.goldankauf.net);

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