

Press Release April 2008

Nicolaus Schafhausen has been appointed curator of the German pavilion at the Venice Biennial for the second time

Foreign Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier has again appointed Nicolaus Schafhausen, director of Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, as curator of the official German contribution to the 53rd Venice Biennial in 2009. Schafhausen already curated the pavilion in 2007 with an exhibition of works by the artist Isa Genzken. The renewal of the appointment is based upon a recommendation of the Art and Exhibitions Board of the Foreign Office, which includes museum directors and experts from the art world.

Nicolaus Schafhausen (born 1965) lives in Brussels. He has established his reputation as artistic director and chief executive of several art institutions, as curator of many important exhibitions and as editor of numerous publications on contemporary art. The posts he has held previously include director of the Frankfurter Kunstverein (1999 - 2005), founding director of the European Kunsthalle Cologne (2005 - 2007) and curator at the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art in Helsinki (NIFCA, 2003 - 2005). In 2007, together with colleagues from North-Rhine Westphalia and the Benelux, he founded the Rosendaal Committee. Since 2008, Schafhausen has been a member of the international advisory committee of the Mondriaan Foundation and a member of the advisory board of Independent Curators International (iCI), New York. Additionally, he has been a member of the managing committee of the Ursula Blicke Foundation, Vienna, since 2000.

Schafhausen is currently preparing solo exhibitions of the Berlin-based artists Saâdane Afif and Annette Kelm for Witte de With. He has initiated numerous international conferences and symposiums, among them the "Cornerstones" series of lectures currently taking place in Rotterdam, which places the art historian at the core of institutional action (featuring Douglas Crimp, Catherine David, Michael Fried, Peter Osborne, John C. Welchman among others). For the spring of 2009, Schafhausen will curate the large scale, thematic group exhibition "Morality".

Taking place every 2 years, the international Venice Biennial is the foremost international forum of contemporary visual arts. Traditionally, the Federal Republic of Germany is represented by a national contribution, commissioned by the Foreign Office and also financed by it to a large degree. In this way the Foreign Office contributes significantly to the advancement of a lively arts scene in Germany and to worldwide cultural exchange. The German pavilion is realised in association with the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, ifa).

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