

Lots of Grass-Green Hares

Spectacular arts installation by Ottmar Hörl to celebrate another Albrecht-Dürer anniversary in Nuremberg this year

"Classic works of art" need not be dusty, and they need not be for experts only. Instead, they can resemble inspiration and liveliness here and now – as proven by the hare's anniversary in Nuremberg last year. On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Albrecht Dürer's famous painting titled "young hare", a festival took place in Nuremberg's historic Sebaldus district. It caused quite a stir in the feature pages of newspapers throughout Germany.

Of course, this year 500 years ago, Nuremberg's famous son had another stroke of a genius. And since one should use all opportunities to celebrate, Nuremberg will celebrate the anniversary of Dürer's painting titled "the tall grass".

The city of Nuremberg's cultural department found the right partner for this project by hiring concept artist Ottmar Hörl. He became famous through big installations in Berlin, Munich and other cities. Now it's the first time he will do one of his spectacular "arts in public" projects in Nuremberg – the city where he has been a teaching professor at the academy of fine arts since 1999. Some 7,000 green plastic replicas of Dürer's hare will turn the central square of Nuremberg's historic city center into a huge green area about 2,500 square meters (approx. 27,000 square feet) in size. For two weeks, Hauptmarkt square in Nuremberg will be all hares before Hörl's work of art will dissolve into its individual parts to "mix with the public". In German, the name of the painting and that of the installation sound very similar, so the relation between the two works of art becomes even more clear: The painting is titled "Großes Rasenstück", while the installation is called "Großes Hasenstück".

The manifold duplication, the idea of forming a series and involving large numbers always are at the core of Hörl's projects. His work of art intends to stimulate communication and to get as many people involved as possible.

The disintegration of the "Hasenstück" installation thus constitutes a main element of the artistic concept. After two weeks, anyone can take a piece of the installation home – the hares leave the public and move into people's private life. "With my work, I want to take up contact. I want to create an impulse and give people their own Dürer, so to say. Then, they can deal with it individually and undogmatically."

The idea of creating such a series even offers another benefit: "The original hare painting is in the Albertina in Vienna," Hörl explains, "but it shouldn't happen to the Nurembergers again that they lose their hare. If one or the other hare is taken to Tokyo or San Francisco, that's fine. There will be enough hares in Nuremberg." Great idea: hare and hedgehog switch their roles. Whoever tries to take the Nurembergers' favorite animal will run his legs off looking for it. Wherever he may look, the hare will always be there first.

Hans-Jörg Sigwart