

Universalmuseum Joanneum
Mariahilferstraße 4, 8020 Graz, Austria
www.museum-joanneum.at

presse@museum-joanneum.at
Telephone +43-316/8017-9211

Human Condition Empathy and Emancipation in Precarious Times

Kunsthaus Graz, Austria, Space02

Duration: 12th June – 12th September 2010

Opening: 12th June 2010, 11am,

Curator: Adam Budak

Information: +43-316/8017-9200

The exhibition *Human Condition* offers a journey into human ethics where the structures of address, responsibility and moral agency are at stake. “Who are we?” asks Hannah Arendt in her *Human Condition* and refers to processes of thinking, willing and judging. “What are we made of?” asks Jeremy Rifkin while introducing Homo Empathicus, the main protagonist of his “new view of human nature.” “What counts as human? What allows us to encounter one another?” investigates Judith Butler.

Human Condition is the portrait of a precarious world of instability and an uncertain future, where social vulnerability is challenged and the frailty of human affairs is exposed. What is the relationship between emancipation and empathy? How do they shape the human condition? Between emancipation and despair, self-empowerment and a rapidly growing rupture of social Gestalt, between communal desire and individualistic mentality, the exhibition collects models of contemporary realities and sites of conflict. Faced by the unpredictability of the future and confronted by the suspension of previously available patterns, it asks for a chance of hope and searches for possibilities of the heroic in an age of corrupted values devoid of historical reference.

The exhibition examines contemporary rites of passage that determine social, political and cultural developments of societies at the wake of the new millenium. The complexity of current situation that foregrounds precariousness and fragility of global systems of economy and political order calls for a more profound reflection upon contemporary mechanisms of social movements, structures of labour, distribution of power and the ethics of judgment.

Critical and self-referential at its core, *Human Condition* revisits the crucial areas of human activity and it studies contemporary forms of life. As such, it loosely refers to the seminal oeuvre, *The Human Condition* (1958) by one of the most prominent philosophers of the 20th

century, Hannah Arendt where the author undertakes the analysis of the possibilities of the *vita activa* in the modern world.

Participating artists: Lida Abdul, Marcel Dzama, Maria Lassnig, Mark Manders, Renzo Martens, Kris Martin, Adrian Paci, Susan Philipsz. Loans amongst others from the Sammlung Deutsche Bank.

A catalogue with texts by Adam Budak, Sophie Loidolt, Hannah Arendt, Jeremy Rifkin, Judith Butler, and a foreword by Peter Pakesch accompanies the exhibition (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne; € 29.90)

The Human Condition is part of our series *The Way We Live*, in which conditions of human existence are looked at in the context of a museum presentation. Inspired by the philosophical work of Hannah Arendt, two overlapping but also complementary exhibitions (*Human Condition & Fabricators of the World*) explore the basic conditions of human existence and changes to them in a globalised society from the perspectives of contemporary art and cultural studies.