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Gardens in the Exosphere Poems and Picture-Poems by Günter Brus

BRUSEUM, Neue Galerie Graz, Joanneumsviertel, 8010 Graz

Opening: October 5, 2012, 7 pm

Duration: October 6, 2012 to February 3, 2013

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Exosphere is the name of the outermost stratum of the Earth's atmosphere; it describes the threshold where gravity breaks down and a different kind of order begins. In these spheres detached from the earth's gravity Günter Brus has located his poetic gardens which conform to their own rules and regulations. *Gardens in the Exosphere* open up a new cosmos over which the poet presides as *alter deus*.

The new exhibition in the BRUSEUM focuses on the poet Günter Brus, presenting for the first time his literary legacy which was purchased in 2009. This collection of his picture-poems from all his periods of work, structured by his literary output that has been published since the 1970s, opens up the poetic sphere in which Günter Brus has been working for over 40 years, spanning all types of media. The element linking it all are blue, small-format school notebooks which he has been using from the very outset to note down his ideas; they form the visible nucleus of all his artistic work. One can find not only a multitude of literary genres such as poems, prose, aphorisms, theoretical reflections, diary entries, fictitious letters and dialogues, but also sketches and drawings which allow a glimpse into the creative process of the multi-talented artist.

The literary estate (donated while the artist is still alive) comprises around 700 notebooks, manuscripts and drafts on over 20.000 written pages. This serves as the starting point of an exhibition that can still offer no more than a glimpse into this diverse bundle of papers. Only a small part of the hundreds of notebooks is open; the others are closed, serving as the connecting element of the exhibition: a blue ribbon linking the various rooms as well as the different periods of work of the artist, serving also as the horizon line for the visitor, giving her a view of future insights, realisations, presentations and publications.

'*All things interlock*', Friedrich Hölderlin said; and the poetic round dance begins with a picture-poem in his honour. Brus follows the maxim of this poet, though does not limit him to the mere interplay of consonants and vowels, but rather widens the web of interplay to a relationship between words and images. Picture-poems are a synthesis of word and image, although these two ways of expression do not necessarily determine one another; rather they lead an associative, often dialectic existence both besides and with one another. Although rich in linguistic images and metaphors, the text never tries to explain the picture nor does the drawing illustrate what is written, though it also tells poetic stories.

'*No motto. No preface, no introduction, no actual execution. Only wallowing in the present.*' This is how Brus starts his picture-poem *Trockenmilch*. Thus he also expresses a literary principle that he himself called 'Carry-on Writing'. It describes a highly spontaneous way of writing whereby the writer writes down the flow of his thoughts, sometimes even using different literary genres; in this process the content is only created by the process of writing itself. This technique of associative writing – and also drawing in the case of Günter Brus' picture-poems – most of the time means the dissolution of classic narrative structures when it comes to stringent content and re-telling a story. Just like in his Actionism and picture-poems, Brus widens the limits of literary genres and norms in his literary oeuvre.

The correlations, references and congruence between the books, picture-poems and notebooks are a clear indication that they are not separate aspects of Brus' work but rather a poetic continuum that expresses itself in various forms of media. '*When a book is created it means nothing else but letting my blue notebooks enter a relationship with a different self of their being; meaning, an intimate medley of "a beginning that does not plan an ending" and "a beginning that at some point wants to get to an end". This means that all my literary work only consists of a beginning, it does not strive for any form in the sense of extension or expansion of its content; a beginning that does not strive to be anything else, but still at the same time feels lonely just being that. Actually, all my poems, stories, novellas and novels are just a beginning. All my picture-poems are just a beginning.*'¹ Keeping this in mind the exhibition is also only meant as a beginning; the beginning of exploring and presenting the poetic cosmos of Günter Brus.

Parallel to the launching of the exhibition *Gardens in the Exosphere*, the presentation *Inside-Insight* will also be opened; this small show allows a concise insight into the highly varied work of Günter Brus within the confines of a single room.

¹ Notebook, 1987, BRUSEUM, Inv.-No. XVI/348.