

# Terrassenparty. Archiv einer Wohngemeinschaft

## Terrace Party. Archive of a Commune

Installation on a roof garden with plants, labels and audio section

for: Privatgrün 2, Kunstraum Fuhrwerkswaage in gardens and on terraces, Cologne/Germany 2004



The project *Terrace Party. Archive of a Commune* documents the microcosm of communal life in one commune in Cologne. Pia Lanzinger's other works also thematize social processes, reflect urban structures, different forms of living and their effects on the lives of individuals. She is committed to an art that very decidedly focuses on our social environs.

Her interest in the theme of communes is easy to understand when we recall that this new form of living-together was originally meant as a public engagement. Its rise has been inseparably linked to the so-called '68 generation and their protest against (petty) middle-class conventions and morals. Carried by the socio-political hope for a dawning new era, however, this model of a communal life remained dubious to a large part of the population far into the 1980s. Not till the mid-80s did a change in mentality emerge, when several of the demands of the protesters had now become part of our everyday heritage. But also the ideologically motivated fusion into "communes" had in the meantime become relativized, up to a purely expedient fellowship for reducing rent costs. The impression that today the commune exists only as a transitional phase between the formation of an old and a new family could then be justified. Have today the hopes and expectations originally inherent in the communal idea then disappeared?

Even though the orientation pegs for normality are being more flexibly set than they were in 1968, the question remains whether this integral component of a widespread feeling for a new departure can evolve into its own cultural force or only exist as a trace of a past era. These linked questions are what Pia Lanzinger once again poses, using an example of a concrete commune, giving its history an aesthetic form and allowing a free play of associations.

Since 1978 the apartment and roof garden of the commune at Karolingerring has been occupied by alternating tenants: 31 persons, 31 private and communal residential models, 31 different concepts of life and blueprints of



identity came together here and gave the whole their respective new impulses. Pia Lanzinger's "Archive" is made up of 31 potted plants arranged into a group. In addition, each plant has been assigned to one person via a label that, instead of introducing a plant and instructions for its care, introduces and presents one resident. The concise portraits allow the persons to become concrete and clearly distinguishable as individuals. Under the headings "Terrace" and "Commune" they reflect on the site and on communal living and confront their own past in condensed form.

Lanzinger has researched the changing constellations in the commune via many conversations and telephone calls and, in an audio collage – a further element in the installation – lets the present and former residents have their say. Light is thrown on the commune and its terrace from different perspectives, whereby the ideological background occasionally shines through.

The "Archive of a Commune" in this way generates a communicative and artistic platform on which the "archived" residents thematize and reflect on their experiences with their commune's 26-year-old history. To the outside observer the question of the interaction between the individual conditions, expectations and realities of life in the commune is made paramount.

Pia Lanzinger's approach to her work is one of collaboration with her subjects and thus operates on a level that departs from any framework of a systematic symbolism and that directs our attention to the constitutive conditions of a reality in which the improbable becomes possible, because the symbolic prescripts of the participants can be changed. Therefore the issue here is less the propagation of a solid alternative model, and more the attempt to lure us into appreciating an active escapade with the conditions of daily existence. *Nikola Doll*