

Press release, 01/28/2021

The HMKV's exhibition *Artists & Agents – Performance Art and Secret Services* selected as “Exhibition of the Year” 2020 by AICA

In spite of these times of closed exhibitions, the HMKV is happy to receive more pleasant news: the German section of the International Association of Art Critics **AICA** has just chosen the exhibition *Artists & Agents – Performance Art and Secret Services* (2019-20) by HMKV Hardware MedienKunstVerein as “**Exhibition of the Year**” 2020.

Together with the **HMKV**, awards went to **Bauhaus Dessau** (“Museum of the Year” 2020) and **Brücke-Museum Berlin** (“Special Exhibition” 2020). The approximately 200 authors, critics, journalists, and publicists united in the German AICA section present three non-monetary awards each year to museums and for special individually successful art exhibitions.

The exhibition *Artists & Agents - Performance Art and Secret Services*, which opened on 25 October 2019 in a ceremony attended by many of the participating artists, focuses on the surveillance of performance artists by secret services – and the multi-layered interaction between them. “I am very happy about this award from the German section of AICA. It is a great recognition of our work!”, says **HMKV director Dr. Inke Arns**.

The **extensive research** underlying the international group exhibition *Artists & Agents* was highlighted in the explanation for the choice of award: “Academic research work is very important,” says Inke Arns, “but unfortunately it all too often remains in an academic context. **We made research visible and accessible with this exhibition**, which also brought together current artistic works on the subject. The outstanding exhibition design by **please don't touch** from Dortmund and **prjctr. [projektor_berlin]** has significantly contributed to this.”

Based on the historical archive material from the **former GDR and Eastern Europe**, the goal of the exhibition curators was to raise the awareness of the visitors to current topics and issues. “The files, in which the work of the intelligence agents materializes, became a point of departure and condensation for something that is otherwise difficult to grasp, especially in the age of digital communication,” says Inke Arns.

The exhibition is the result of a collaboration with the **University of Zurich**: with **Sylvia Sasse**, Professor of Slavic Studies at the University of Zurich, and with **Kata Krasznahorkai**, who researched the secret service archives of many countries as part of a research project on performance art in Eastern Europe at the University of Zurich.

An earlier collaboration between Sylvia Sasse and Inke Arns has also resulted in an award: for ***The Storming of the Winter Palace – Forensics of an Image*** (2017), the curators, together with Igor Chubarov, received the “Justus Bier Prize for Curators” 2018/19.

The AICA award for *Artists & Agents* is the third won by an HMKV exhibition: in 2003, ***games. Computer games by artists*** and in 2012 ***Sounds Like Silence*** (to 4'33" by John Cage) were awarded, both in the category “Special Exhibition”.

Further information about the exhibition:

Artists & Agents – Performance Art and Secret Services

26 October 2019 – 19 April 2020
HMKV at the Dortmunder U, Level 3

The group exhibition ***Artists & Agents – Performance Art and Secret Services*** focuses on the interaction of secret services and performance art—an art form that was considered particularly dangerous. Accessible archives exist almost exclusively in Eastern Europe and reveal the “disruption” and “liquidation” of dissident artists by state security services. For this, however, some of the agents had to become ‘performance artists’ themselves. ***Artists & Agents*** presents examples of artistic subversion and secret service infiltration, some of which have never been shown before. Recent works show that the issue of the increasing use of secret service methods in today's politics and everyday life is highly topical.

Curators: **Inke Arns**, Director HMKV Hardware MedienKunstVerein, **Kata Krasznahorkai**, Research Assistant at the project "Performance Art in Eastern Europe (1950-1990)" at the University of Zurich, **Sylvia Sasse**, Professor of Slavic Studies at the University of Zurich

With works by artists from Bulgaria, Germany, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Russia, Hungary, and the USA:

Alexandru (Sándor) Antik (RO), Tina Bara & Alba D'Urbano (DE), Kurt Buchwald (DE), Károly Elekes / Árpád Nagy / Gruppe MAMŰ (RO), György Galántai / Artpool (HU), Ion Grigorescu (RO), Sanja Iveković (HR), Voluspa Jarpa (CL), Jens Klein (DE), Daniel Knorr (RO/DE), Csilla Könczei (RO), Korpys/Löffler (DE), Jiří Kovanda (CZ), Jill Magid (US), Simon Menner (DE), Arwed Messmer (DE), Clara Mosch (DE), Orange Alternative (PL), Peng! Collective (DE), Józef Robakowski (PL), Cornelia Schleime (DE), Nedko Solakov (BG), Gabriele Stötzer (DE), Tamás St.Turba (NETRAF-agent) / Gábor Altorjay (HU)

Files: Politische Polizei, Switzerland; Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (MfS), GDR; Służba Bezpieczeństwa (SB), Polish People's Republic; Štátní bezpečnost (ŠB), ČSSR; Komitet gosudarstvennoj bezopasnosti (KGB), USSR; Belügyminisztérium (BM), Hungarian People's Republic; Securitate, Socialist Republic of Romania; Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA), Chile; Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD), The Netherlands; Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), Germany

Publication at Spector Books:

Kata Krasznahorkai, Sylvia Sasse (Eds.): *Artists & Agents. Performance Art and Secret Services*, Leipzig: Spector Books, 2019, 690 pages, 34,00 €

Authors: Inke Arns, Mădălina Brașoveanu, Anna Krakus, Liliana Gomez, Hristo Hristov, Kata Krasznahorkai, Tomáš Pospiszyl, Łukasz Ronduda, Sylvia Sasse, Tamás Szőnyei and Anikó Szűcs

HMKV Exhibition Magazine 2019/2:

Artists & Agents – Performancekunst und Geheimdienste / Artists & Agents – Performance Art and Secret Services, ed. by Inke Arns, Kata Krasznahorkai, Sylvia Sasse, Dortmund: Verlag Kettler, 2019, German/English, many illustrations, 228 pages, 18,00 €; PDF download (free of charge) via <https://hmkv.de/shop-en.html>

An exhibition by the HMKV Hardware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund, in cooperation with the Slavic Department of the University of Zurich, Switzerland

Funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and by the European Research Council (ERC) in the framework of the project "Performance Art in Eastern Europe 1950-1990. History and Theory".

Funder HMKV: The Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Stadt Dortmund / Dortmunder U.

From the press:

"*Artists & Agents – Performance Art and Secret Services*' is the name (...) of the group show with art and materials from secret service archives, with which the Hardware MedienKunstVerein in Dortmund, renowned for a courageous program, lives up to its name (...) The presentation, divided into six thematic areas, balances out the textuality as well as the scientific undertone through a playful as well as successful exhibition architecture and through convincing artistic quality." [Kunstforum International](#)

"*Performance art and secret services*" make connections in this group show that may easily seem a bizarre curiosity from today's perspective, but were suitable and designed to intimidate, silence, destroy artistic existences." [FAZ](#)

"(The exhibition) shows what kind of destructive thrust and dangerous potential against artistic subversion secret service and other similar organized authoritarian structures might have in the future. In view of the sometimes helpless data collection attempts of the past that are on display here, one occasionally has to laugh. A laugh that becomes empty in the face of today's possibilities." [Monopol](#)

"The exhibition 'Artists & Agents' is more than a reassessment of the complex relationship between art and control during the Cold War in Eastern Europe."
[DLF: Corso](#)

"30 years after 1989, the exhibition and the accompanying book are a spectacular achievement."
[Der Freitag](#)

Exhibition Magazine as Download

Artists & Agents – Performance Art and Secret Services

Publication | 2019 | Dortmund: Verlag Kettler | 18,00 €

Download the free PDF on HMKV's website:

<https://hmkv.de/shop-en.html>

Order the print version directly via the publishing house Verlag Kettler: www.verlag-kettler.de

Artists & Agents Online

On this website, additional material, videos, podcasts, etc., which illuminate special aspects of the exhibition remain available:

<https://hmkv.de/exhibition/exhibition-detail/artists-agents-online-en.html>

HMKV awards at a glance

The HMKV exhibition *games. Computerspiele von KünstlerInnen* (Computer Games by Artists) (2003) was awarded the title "Special Exhibition" by the German section of the AICA (International Association of Art Critics) in 2003 and received the Innovation Prize of the Fonds Soziokultur in 2004. In 2011, the HMKV was awarded the JUMP Annual Sponsorship Prize for Art Associations by the Kunststiftung NRW. HMKV's exhibition *Sounds Like Silence*

was awarded "Special Exhibition 2012" by the German section of the AICA (International Association of Art Critics). In 2017, HMKV received the ADKV-ART COLOGNE Award for Art Associations, having been nominated for this award for the sixth time this year (after 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013 and 2014). In 2013, it had received an honourable mention within the framework of this prize.

2020

The HMKV exhibition *Artists & Agents - Performance Art and Secret Services* (2019-20) is awarded "**Exhibition of the Year 2020**" by the German section of **AICA** (International Association of Art Critics).

2018

Justus Bier Prize for Curators 2018: Inke Arns, Igor Chubarov and Sylvia Sasse for the exhibition and publication *Sturm auf den Winterpalast - Forensik eines Bildes* (The Storming of the Winter Palace – Forensics of an Image, HMKV 2017/2018, Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz, 2018).

2017

ADKV-ART COLOGNE [Prize for Art Associations](#)

2014

HMKV nominated for the 5th time for the **ADKV-ART COLOGNE Prize for Art Associations**

2013

The catalogue *Sounds Like Silence* named one of the "**most beautiful Swiss books 2012**". 454 books were submitted, 19 were awarded this prestigious prize.

2013

HMKV nominated for the 4th time for the **ADKV-ART COLOGNE Prize for Art Associations: Honourable Mention**

2013

The HMKV exhibition *Sounds Like Silence* is awarded "**Special Exhibition 2012**" by the German section of **AICA** (International Association of Art Critics) at the Biennale di Venezia 2013. Read more...

2011

JUMP Annual Award for Art Associations by the Kunststiftung NRW

2011

HMKV nominated for the 3rd time for the **ADKV-ART COLOGNE Prize for Art Associations**

2010

The US art magazine **ARTFORUM** names *Arctic Perspective* among the "**best exhibitions 2010**"

2008

HMKV nominated for the 2nd time for the **ADKV-ART COLOGNE Prize for Art Associations**

2007

HMKV nominated for the 1st time for the **ADKV-ART COLOGNE Prize for Art Associations**

2004

Innovation Award of the Fonds Soziokultur for the exhibition *games. Computerspiele von KünstlerInnen* (*games. Computer games by artists*)

2003

games. Computerspiele von KünstlerInnen (*games. Computer games by artists*) is awarded the title "**Special Exhibition**" 2003 by the German section of the **AICA** (International Association of Art Critics).